

Mapping policy
understandings of
gender & sexuality:

Thematic analysis.

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BBR Report 2302v1, September 2023.

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Appendix 1: Thematic analysis data policy list



The Breaking Binaries Research (BBR) programme was founded by Katrina and Helen to explore complex and diverse identities at work. We spend most of our lives in work and are shaped by the workplaces and types of work we engage with. Therefore, we believe work and workplaces have a significant role in wider equity and equality agendas and demand a greater level of focus. Our research programme challenges problematic categorical understandings of difference in the context of work. We are interested in exploring the multifaceted ways in which identities are understood, assumed, and constructed. Research has yet to take account of how diverse identities are not simply categorical but complex and intersectional, as individuals self-identify beyond, between or across identity binaries. Our programme of research projects seeks to address and progress current conversations of diversity at work.

This is the second BBR report and is written by Professor Katrina Pritchard, Dr Helen C Williams, and Alice S Elworthy, School of Management, Swansea University, 2023.

This research was part-funded by ISBE (The Institute for Small Business and Entrepreneurship) RAKE Knowledge Exchange fund (RAKE2022-01) and part-funded by Swansea University. BBR logo and illustrations were designed by [Frank Duffy](#) for our exclusive use. Correspondence to: k.l.pritchard@swansea.ac.uk

If you are using this document in your own writing, our preferred citation is:

Pritchard K, Williams HC & Elworthy AS (2023). Mapping policy understandings of gender and sexuality: thematic analysis. BBR Report 2302v1.

DOI: [10.23889/SUreport.64441](https://doi.org/10.23889/SUreport.64441)

Date of online publication: 05/09/2023

1 Introduction

This second report from the Breaking Binaries Research (BBR) programme extends and develops our first report which offered a preliminary review of mapping understandings of genders and sexualities across policy data (Pritchard et al., 2023). As in our first report, we focus on the implications of these understandings for entrepreneurs and small businesses in relation to how diversity is constructed by policy makers. We define gender and sexuality diversity as including all those who self-identify as not conforming to binary identities and/or bodies, and those who identify in various, and sometimes multiple ways, as part of LGBTQIA+ and non-binary communities. Policy makers labelling of these identities, especially the use of pre-given categories, is problematic (Guyan, 2022). Within the overarching initialisms or acronyms, like LGBTQIA+, sit host of diverse, and in most cases, intersecting communities, which are oversimplified and little understood.

Our first report (Pritchard et al., 2023) provides further background on our research approach and offers an overview of our policy data set along with a quantitative content analysis. It outlines our initial observations on ‘thematic contours’ and three key findings: a notable absence of diverse genders and sexualities terminology across policies; the use of homogenous initialisms (LGBT and variants) with limited discussion of individual communities and limited discussion of intersectionality or intersectional application of terms. In this report we first explain our scope and approach, before presenting the three themes constructed through this analytic process: vaguely visible; pseudo-visibility; and, invisible.



Visibly vague



Pseudo visibility



Invisible

These themes offer a more complex assessment of the construction of understandings of gender and sexuality diversity across policy. In doing so we seek to move discussions of diversity beyond a straightforward binary view on in/visibility. Within our thematic analysis, we draw attention to the potential impact of these constructions. Readers will note that at this time we have not offered further detail on our visual analysis of policy images which will follow in a later report. An additional publication focusing on recommendations and next steps - for both researchers and policy makers – will also follow later in the year.

2 Scope and Method



In our first report we outlined the broad sweep approach to policy identification and collection, and our focus on policy categorised as: 1) UK-wide and/or English, 2) Welsh, and 3) Scottish. We noted that the first category (UK-wide) was not always clear in relation to geographic relevance, and this has been retained as a composite category. At the time of the research project, due to the ongoing suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly, NI policy was excluded. A total of 59 policy documents were collected, totalling 3099 pages, and included: 18 UK/English policies, 11 Welsh policies, and 30 Scottish policies published between 2018 and 2022 (see Pritchard et al., 2023 for further detail). Table 1 summarises the overall data set.

Table 1: Policy dataset by category and country

| Category | UK/England | Wales | Scotland |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Art, Culture & Sport | 2 | 0 | 4 |
| Business, innovation & Digital | 3 | 3 | 11 |
| Communities & Regeneration | 5 | 2 | 4 |
| Jobs & Employment | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Political, economic & post-covid | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Gender | 3 | 1 | 5 |
| Total policy documents (pages) | 18 (1004) | 11 (364) | 30 (1731) |

Our reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) focuses on those policies which included discussion of gender and sexuality diversity, having previously noted this was absent from much of our data set. Our content analysis – reported previously – was used as the basis for identifying data extracts to further examine regarding the construction of genders and sexualities. We thus focused on those policies in which there was evidence of substantive discussion of these identities and/or entrepreneurship. This resulted in data for thematic analysis drawn from 17 policy documents (see Appendix 1). Whereas our content analysis summarised the count of search terms (see Pritchard et al., 2023), here we analyse the surrounding text following the protocol provided by Braun and Clarke (2021) and set out (in Table 2) below.

Table 2: Thematic analytic process

| Reflexive TA Step | Our process |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Data set familiarisation | Our first stage of content analysis allowed a detailed review of dataset by all three authors. At this stage, while our focus was a quantitative content analysis, we also reviewed and read the extract surrounding each content 'hit'. This resulted in an initial overview of our response to these data as presented in our previous report. The three authors also recorded a podcast summarising these initial views (see Prefer not to say). A sub-set of the policy data was identified to allow the thematic analysis to further examine understandings of genders and sexualities. |
| Coding | Coding was completed by the first author through repeated reading of these data. Where necessary, extract reach was extended to ensure sufficient context. Coding was supported by Babbage & Terry's (2023) tool to enable selection and sorting of coded text within excel. Through this process the initial coding was conducting in word document organised by policy type with first codes and commentary exported to excel. Subsequently the code organisation was merged, and further rounds of coding undertaken across all data to consolidate understanding. |
| Generating initial themes | Once the codes and associated text had been exported into excel each code was reviewed and revisiting to consolidate and clarify understanding. Additional tags were added to each code to begin the process of grouping and regrouping into themes. This iterative process involved revisiting policy documentation and discussion amongst the team to confirm understandings. |
| Developing and reviewing themes | An iterative process consisted of reviewing the original coding and tags and organising these data into themes. Listening to our previous podcast and reviewing our previous report provided further prompts for consideration. As two of the authors had previously undertaken a related policy review (Williams et al. 2023) this analytic frame was also revisited and resulting in exploration of the notion of visibility across the developing thematic framework. |
| Refining, defining & naming themes | The three themes presented below solidified through the analytic process and the first author wrote a preliminary description for discussion before the organisation of extracts around key thematic elements continued. The developing ideas of vague visibility, pseudo-visibility and invisibility were consolidated, and sub-thematic structures were confirmed. |
| Writing up | The narrative account was developed and is presented in this report for a non-academic audience. |

From our analysis, three overarching themes were identified:

**Visibly vague****Pseudo visibility****Invisible**

Below we expand on each of these themes and provide illustrative quotes before discussing the potential implications of these understandings. Our tables of quotes are colour coded (or shaded in non-colour versions) according to the policy origin, matching the key to charts presented in our first report.

Through the discussion of our themes, we avoid binary views on in/visibility to offer a more complex assessment of the construction of understandings of gender and sexuality diversity across policy. Often in/visibility is discussed as a double-edged sword within the academic literature; dichotomising identities as either public/private and/or visible/invisible. Being seen or unseen have long been significant with regards to non-conformity, sometimes with legal implications. Notions of closeting and passing are two examples of the ways in which (in)visibility are relevant here (Edenborg, 2020). Nevertheless, visibility is now mostly understood as a positive outcome, related to an increasing social and political visibility of genders and sexualities. These are, fundamentally, Western-centric notions of global queer communities and of “out and proud” visibility, which assumes the more non-conforming identities are recognised in public spaces, the more normalised (and presumably) tolerated they become (Marlow et al., 2018).

Within each theme, we draw attention to specific aspects in need of further investigation. In summarising the first theme ‘vaguely visible’, we highlight the ways in which this is developed in discussions of entrepreneurship and enterprise; when exploring ‘pseudo visibility’ we home in on considerations of intersectionality in policy, before turning to discuss our final theme ‘invisibility’, examining the binary data legacy and the focus on the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) sector.

3 Theme one: Visibly vague



In this first theme, we highlight how the visibility of diverse genders and sexualities within policy is due to broad discussions associated with general aims. These discussions offer little specificity about either the needs of community members or how such needs might be addressed. We note that such criticisms are often levelled at policy documents, but do not feel that this should simply be excused as ‘the way things are’. If policy making is to deliver, it is insufficient to be visibly vague and ambivalent in their intended outcome. Extracts which highlight the extent of this visible vagueness are presented below (Table 3).

Table 3: Visibly Vague

| | | |
|--|--|--------|
| Preserve and advance Scotland's reputation as one of the most progressive countries in Europe in terms of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) equality. (p.104) | Scottish Government. (2018a) Delivering for Today, Investing for Tomorrow The Government's Programme for Scotland 2018-19. | Yellow |
| ...provides more opportunities for all ages, genders and abilities, helping to address social and physical exclusion by improving access to employment. (p.16) | Welsh Government. (2018) Tech Valleys Strategic Plan. | Orange |
| ...promote gender equality across Scottish public life. (p.21) | Scottish Government. (2019b) Protecting Scotland's Future. | Yellow |
| This roadmap sets out our vision to enable everyone to contribute to the country's economy and balance caring responsibilities with a rewarding career. (p.4) | HM Government. (2019) Gender equality at every stage: a roadmap for change. | Pink |
| Our ambition is for everyone, regardless of age, background, gender and ethnicity, to be digitally included. (p.13) | Welsh Government. (2021) Digital Strategy for Wales. | Orange |
| We know the earlier stages of research careers can be precarious, particularly for women and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and we can do more to support our talented people to thrive. (p.10) | Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. (2021). R&D People and Culture Strategy. | Pink |

Key: UK: pink/dark shading; Wales: orange/mid shading, Scotland: yellow/light shading

We see a general rallying cry across policy documents that addresses the needs of ‘all’ or ‘everyone’ or even ‘our talented people’. How needs are unpacked varies in specificity, as we noted in our previous report (Pritchard et al., 2023), Scottish policy is more focused in highlighting by both acronym and spelling out in detail LGBTI as an area of focus. Below we highlight further extracts from our analysis to illustrate how the vagueness is extended in discussions of enterprise and entrepreneurship (Table 4).

Table 4: Enterprise, Entrepreneurship and Vague

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Establish a campaign to foster entrepreneurship and ambition across society, with particular focus on inclusivity (p. 10) | Scottish Government Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board. (2018) Working Collaboratively for A Better Scotland: Strategic plan. | |
| It is imperative going forward that we act to redress the impact the pandemic has had on women in the economy, ensuring that women's economic position is improved, that they have equal access to skills and career opportunities that allow them to progress to senior decision-making positions and thrive in the labour market and wider society (p.9) | Scottish Government. (2019d) Behaviour and Motivation of Businesses in Scotland Qualitative Insights. | |
| It has been well documented that entrepreneurship is a strong basis for women's economic independence as well as important for growth and employment generation – both locally and nationally ... This Good Practice Guide will support the partners engaged in the Welsh business eco-system to tackle inequality and ensure that the needs of entrepreneurial women in Wales are being fully met. (p.2) | Business Wales. (2019) Supporting Entrepreneurial Women in Wales: Good Practice Guide. | |

Later we directly focus on the ways in which diverse genders are made invisible, however here these extracts serve to illustrate that there remains a lack of specificity in attending issues of 'inclusivity'. Offering 'support', 'establish a campaign to foster' or 'act to redress' may sound like policy is heading in the right direction, but these broad and general terms provide a high degree of interpretative flexibility when it comes to assessing the outcomes. This of course is one reason these phrases are used in policy, hinting at a general direction without tying actions or budgets to more specific achievements. To that extent, use of diverse terminology appears virtuous in their inclusion, yet deliberately vague in application.

The risk however is that it is also possible to point to such policy statements as evidence that the needs of those with diverse genders and sexualities in the UK are indeed being addressed by policy makers.

4 Theme two: Pseudo-visibility



We argue that pseudo-visibility occurs when specific groups are named (thus seemingly visible) but are simply identified alongside others, often in lists. This naming indicates a level of recognition, but this is not developed through a meaningful discussion related to the concerns of community members – thus we call this pseudo-visibility. The examples in Table 5 illustrate various forms of pseudo-visibility that we identified through our thematic analysis. We suggest that our identification of pseudo-visibility extends existing concern with initialism; in which acronyms used as shorthand offer the

illusion that all the individual 'components' of the acronym have been considered. There is discussion of variations of the LGBTQIA+ in this respect (Guyan, 2022) but here we offer analysis of a variety of forms of pseudo-visibility.

Table 5: Pseudo-Visibility

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| helping to create a nation of dynamic and high achieving entrepreneurs, with a focus on inclusivity (women, rural, minority ethnic groups and others) (p.9) | Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board. (2018). <i>Working Collaboratively for A Better Scotland: Strategic plan</i> . Scottish Government. | |
| Our ambition is for everyone, regardless of age, background, gender and ethnicity, to be digitally included. (p.13) | Welsh Government. <i>Digital Strategy for Wales</i> . (2021) | |
| Projects on issues....such as LGBTQ+, food poverty, homelessness, bullying, gender equality and refugees (p.46) | HM Government. (2018). <i>Civil Society Strategy: Building A Future That Works for Everyone</i> . | |
| However, evidence suggests that there is still a lack of diversity across gender, disability, sexuality, age and socioeconomic background in the workforce. (p.7) | Scottish Government. (2019a). <i>Policy Statement for the Creative Industries</i> | |

In Table 5 (above) we see all extracts list aspects of diversity in different ways that suggest that the individual groups are all being considered by virtue of their inclusion, even if there may be different issues, needs and concerns related to these separate groups. Where initialisation highlights this with respect to groups seemingly captured within an acronym (such as LGBTQ+ in the example above), we note that this is compounded as the naming umbrella covers multiple groups. We also note some hedging within these statements, lest groups have been inadvertently forgotten, thus we are asked to read for 'others' and accept that 'such as' might indeed require us as readers to add to the list. In this way, we also observe the use of '+' or 'etc' as an accepted catch-all for diverse genders and sexualities, again this denotes a sense of recognition without acknowledging the intersectional or multifaceted ways individuals within these communities live out their identities. These extracts illustrate in subtle ways how the wording can suggest that these groups or issues are distinct (such as in the examples in rows 1 and 3) or somehow related. Below then we further explore the concern with how pseudo-visibility plays out in policy which references intersectionality.

Table 6: Pseudo-visibility and intersectionality

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| should adopt an intersectional perspective on equalities impacts, as those people who have more than one protected characteristic (for example, minority ethnic women, young care-experienced LGBTQIA+ people, EU 10 nationals on precarious work contracts, or disabled single mothers) (p.10) | Scottish Government. (2020). <i>Social and Equality Impacts of Brexit</i> . | |
| It will tackle the causes of workplace inequality, particularly focusing on disabled women, minority ethnic women, older women, women from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds and women with caring responsibilities. (p.81) | Scottish Government. (2019b). <i>Protecting Scotland's Future</i> | |
| a number of focus groups (including women with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, young women, LGBTQ women, and migrant women) (p.29) | Scottish Government. (2018b). <i>Equally Safe Year One Update Report</i> . | |
| ...promote the economic contribution made by women, the missed productivity by employers and tax revenue by Government and include supporting all elements of the affected population including ethnic minority, disabled and LGBTQ. (p.4) | Department for Work & Pensions. (2022) <i>Menopause and the Workplace: How to enable fulfilling working lives</i> . | |

It is critically important that the impact of intersectional disadvantage is addressed in policy, and is positive to see mention of this, particularly in relation to aspects that have not always received sufficient attention (as in the example referring to diverse experiences of menopause in Table 6). However, we also identified through our analysis that these examples could also be considered as pseudo-visibility. Firstly, as we have highlighted above, these usually involve a mention in passing, nearly always as part of a list of examples that are then not further considered in detail within the policy document. Secondly, while the hedging highlighted previously continues here (including, for example) there is perhaps more of a risk that readers will not be able to extend or imagine wider or more complex examples of intersectionality. While more straightforward lists tend to reference the UK Equality Act 2010 list of protected characteristics – a well-known set of categories – intersectionality is inherently more complex and there is no readily available reference. This makes it more likely that readers will regard category lists as the most likely and most worthy forms of intersectionality. Thirdly, this leads to a concern that the listed intersectional identities become regarded as the only valid forms, potentially leading to stereotypes, and excluding consideration of other intersectional identities. For example, there is an assumption that all young LGBTQIA+ care-experienced individuals will experience similar levels of disadvantage. However, when seeking to examine such experiences of identities within the LGBTQIA+ initialism and indeed beyond it, we note that that the challenges particular communities face are far from homogenous. We began this paragraph noting the critical importance of intersectional disadvantage. Thus, we do not seek to discourage the consideration of this within policy debates but suggest that it is vital that there is a better explanation of intersectionality which does not reduce this to a few examples listed for illustrative purposes.



5 Theme three: Invisible

Our final theme explores how aspects of gender and sexuality diversity can disappear in discussions which foreground binary perspectives. These tend to focus on differences between men and women or male and female in heteronormative ways. While there are occasionally a few ambiguous uses of genders – plural – the surrounding text of such extracts signals this plural is being used to summarise the binary and is not used in a more inclusive way. Throughout our analysis of this theme, we found that the data legacy reinforces the construction of binary gender through the presentations of gaps and splits as problematic and balance as the end goal.

We recognise there are important issues to be considered regarding the relative positions of different groups of men and different groups of women. However, the reduction of difference to a binary not only excludes other identities but oversimplifies the experience of these various groups of men and women. It was interesting to note that there was almost no use of academic evidence across the policy documentation considered in our thematic analysis, while consultancy reports and similar sources were widely referenced. Along with the data legacy evident in much official statistics, we suggested this impacts the how gender and gender difference is conceptualised. In Table 7 we illustrate the various forms of binary dominance that lead to the invisibility of diverse identities.

Table 7: Invisibility

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| The government's aspiration to see gender balance at all levels across financial services firms. A balanced workforce is good for business – it is good for customers, for profitability and workplace culture, and is increasingly attractive for investors (p.1) | HM Treasury. (2022). <i>Women in Finance Charter</i> . | |
| Female role models are vital to inspire more women to unlock their entrepreneurial talents and create a diverse, gender balanced and innovative business ecosystem (p.16) Help create an entrepreneurial environment which is beneficial for all entrepreneurs and creates an inclusive and enabling support landscape for entrepreneurial women and men. (p.19) | Business Wales. (2019). <i>Supporting Entrepreneurial Women in Wales: Good Practice Guide</i> . | |
| The experience of women in Scotland's labour market tells us that disabled women face greater labour market barriers than nondisabled women and greater disadvantage than disabled men. (p.14) | Scottish Government. (2021). <i>A fairer Scotland for Women: A gender pay gap action plan annual report</i> . | |

This table highlights how balance acts as a reinforcement of a gender binary, sometimes, as in the second example, reinforced by reference to 'entrepreneurial women and men'. This suggests there are no other entrepreneurial identities that exist, or indeed are necessary to achieve the positive outcomes that are portrayed from the achievement of balance. This is the critical impact of the presentation of balance, it is not simply that other identities are excluded when balance is discussed,

it is that these identities are also excluded from the superlative discussions of the positive outcomes of such balance. Diverse identities become both invisible and ultimately irrelevant. The third example in our table above is somewhat different as it highlights how gender binaries become embedded in discussions of intersectionality, which results in invisibility for more marginalised identities.

Above we highlighted how problematic representations of differences between men/male and female/women are often presented as the 'gender problem'. Through our thematic analysis we noted the ways in which these differences – usually referred to as the gap – become a hole into which gender diversity disappears.

Table 8: Mind the gap

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| We have invested in a range of measures to support female entrepreneurship and are seeing a significant rise in the proportion of women starting a business and a reduction in the gender gap in entrepreneurship. (p.70) | Scottish Government. (2019b). <i>Protecting Scotland's Future</i> . | |
| ensuring that your business support and advice services consistently meet the needs of your women clients and are well placed to tackle the gender gap in enterprise. (p.8) Do we have a fair split, representing women in business and men in business? (p.9) | Business Wales. (2019). <i>Supporting Entrepreneurial Women in Wales: Good Practice Guide</i> | |
| In the UK today women are, on average, more likely to enter the workforce with higher qualifications than men, but earn less per hour.... It's clear that we as Government need to act, following through on our commitment to ensure everyone in this country can reach their true potential. (p.3) | HM Government. (2019). <i>Gender equality at every stage: a roadmap for change</i> . | |
| ...our economic potential as a country cannot be fully realised if we do not draw effectively on the talents of women and share the benefits of success more fairly across the genders. This makes good business sense as well as being a fundamental part of a civilised modern society. (p.10) | Scottish Government. (2019c). <i>A Fairer Scotland For Women: Gender Pay Gap Action Plan Annual Report</i> . | |

As we noted in our discussion of Table 7 previously, these example extracts further highlight our concern that it is not simply that non-binary and alternative identities become invisible in the discussion of the gender gap, it is that they also become irrelevant to the outcomes that are presented, for example, being 'a civilised modern society'. We suggest that wider and more sophisticated data capture and reporting is needed so that these gaps are not simplified in terms of binary genders, which already hide important differences.

Table 9: The STEM story

| | | |
|---|---|--|
|address the underrepresentation of women in STEM, increase business startup rates for women and the number of women in senior positions and encourage men into childcare to help to change the perception of caring as 'women's work'. (p.49) | Scottish Government. (2019c). <i>A Fairer Scotland For Women: Gender Pay Gap Action Plan Annual Report</i> . | |
| Further, digitally skilled employment currently suffers from a heavy gender bias, with only around 20% female. (p.31) | Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board. (2018). <i>Working Collaboratively For A Better Scotland: Strategic plan</i> . Scottish Government | |
| Gender equality measures such as the removal of gender stereotypes in education; awareness raising and activities to tackle occupational segregation, such as the promotion of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects to girls and women, can encourage more young women to consider setting up their own business (p.2) | Business Wales. (2019). <i>Supporting Entrepreneurial Women in Wales: Good Practice Guide</i> . | |
| Reducing gender gaps in labour market participation, Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) qualifications and wages, could increase the size of the UK economy by around 2% or £55 billion by 2030. (p.4) | HM Government. (2019). <i>Gender equality at every stage: a roadmap for change</i> . | |

Across our analysis of binary gaps, as well as the focus on enterprise and entrepreneurship we noticed a particular emphasis on STEM as an important sector. This reflects a long-held concern across several areas (particularly education) that a lack of diversity of this sector needs to be addressed. However, through this discussion we observed how 'men' and 'girls' are enrolled as a way of emphasising the importance the issue, but in ways that reinforce the invisibility of gender diversity. The data legacy is particularly evidenced here how participation and its effects are understood in binary ways as solely an issue between men and women/girls.

6 Summary

In this report we present our thematic analysis highlighting how discussion of diverse genders and sexualities in policy is vaguely visible, pseudo-visible and invisible. We suggest that issues of visibility are particularly relevant when discussion gender and sexuality diversity given historical significance of being seen (or unseen) and Western-centric notions of “out and proud” visibility. This assumes the more non-conforming identities are recognised in public spaces, the more normalised (and presumably) tolerated they become (Marlow et al., 2018).

We have engaged with queering visibility as a means of making the seen/unseen binary uncomfortable and within our discussions draw attention to the ways visibility becomes bounded. In summarising the first theme ‘vaguely visible’, we highlight the ways in which this is developed in discussions of entrepreneurship and enterprise; when exploring ‘pseudo-visibility’ we home in on considerations of intersectionality in policy, before turning to discuss our final theme ‘invisibility’, examining the binary data legacy and the focus on the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) sector.

In summary we note three findings:

1. The means by which diverse genders and sexualities are made visible in policy are problematic and limited.
2. Identity complexity is poorly addressed, in part due to the binary data legacy.
3. The implications of the forms of visibility we explore extend beyond issues of textual formulation and may carry through to resource allocation or support provision, for example.

Reflecting our content analysis, we note that overall Scottish policy was more reflective of the LGBTQIA+ and non-binary community and the constituent communities within this. Moreover, that debates are absent from policy is not itself an indication of absence of debate. We are sure that across the UK there will be many groups and individuals working within the constraints of policy making and policy implementation who are aware of and seek to address some of the issues we raise here. That these discussions are often invisible is a further layer to consider as we seek to move discussions of diversity beyond a straightforward binary view on in/visibility.

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Appendix 1: Thematic analysis data policy list

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