

# Breaking Binaries Live! Summary Slides

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BBR findings:  
Our approach

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# Overview

- ❑ Exploring minority and marginalized genders, sexes and/or sexualities workers experiences
- ❑ We use Sexual and Gender Minority (SGM) as an umbrella categorization for LGBTQIA+ communities
- ❑ UK Policy analysis
- ❑ Interviews with 29 participants self-identifying with minority genders, sexes and/or sexualities
- ❑ Qualitative questionnaire with over 100 responses
- ❑ Thematic and Narrative analysis
- ❑ Breaking Binaries Research is very grateful for funding received from the CIPD and ISBE
- ❑ Worked with lots of fantastic stakeholders!

# Publications already available

- ❑ Williams, HC, Pritchard K, Elworthy AS and Mares B (2026) Hidden from view? Examining government policy support with sexual and gender minority entrepreneurs. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*
- ❑ Pritchard, K, Williams, H.C, and Elworthy, A.S (2023). Mapping policy understandings of gender & sexuality: thematic analysis
- ❑ Pritchard, K, Williams, H.C, and Elworthy, A.S (2023). Mapping policy understandings of gender & sexuality: preliminary review
- ❑ These and other resources available from Breaking Binaries Research Website



# Framework of Exclusion

Williams & Pritchard, 2025

## Cisnormativity

Assumes individuals are cisgender or identify as either male or female & that male and female are the only and mutually exclusive options for gender identification (Suárez et al., 2022)

## Heteronormativity

Is distinct from cisnormativity in that it also points towards the normalisation of particular familial & relational heterosexual structures (Herz & Johansson, 2015).

## Homonormativity

Limited acceptance granted to some gay couples who reflect the majority group (racially, linguistically & educationally) & follow expected family and life course trajectories (Ozturk, 2024; Stryker, 2024).

## Hegemonic Masculinity

Refers to gendered social practices that normalise & legitimise men's dominance over women, & other men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2019).

Neoliberal ideals about the fit, healthy and productive body

BBR findings:  
Entrepreneurial Fitness?

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# Entrepreneurial 'fitness'

- ❑ Health/fitness in various forms central to neoliberal assertions about the successful entrepreneur
- ❑ Studies of health centre medical and psychological perspective. Emphasis both deficit and superhero stereotypes (Wiklund et al., 2018; Stephan et al., 2023)
- ❑ Literature on queer health focuses on certain conditions and stereotypes risk (-ve vs how usually portrayed in relation to entrepreneurship as +ve)

# Themes explored

- ❑ **Struggling to fit in:** Marginalisation is a life- long experience that is compounded within entrepreneurship, especially as this requires a coherent ‘origin story’; being othered is a complex experience bound up in multiple identities
- ❑ **Securing personal value via entrepreneurial productivity:** Narrative positioning which works to secure economic value, often engaging with entrepreneurship as the only possible answer
- ❑ **Entrepreneurial fit as constraint:** entrepreneurship might be the solution, but it is also the problem



# Implications

- ❑ Highlighting queer struggles to self-advocate in health contexts and the implications of this for their entrepreneurship
- ❑ Issues apparent beyond individual entrepreneurship extending into SME contexts
- ❑ Focusing on client relations, big organisations do not disappear and are often problematic – the freedom myth
- ❑ Positioning queer entrepreneurial instability as a patterned structural phenomenon rather than individual deficiency

# BBR findings: Workplace Safety

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# Workplace Safety

- ❑ Predominately the domain of occupational psychology
- ❑ Well known concept of psychological safety rests on authentic engagement
- ❑ But gender diversity rarely researched (Edmondson and Bransby, 2023) and then only re gender binary (Tang et al., 2021)
- ❑ Minority stress developed to model experiences of gay men at work, hypothesises (and individualises) additional 'load' (Meyer, 2003; Frost and Meyer, 2023)

# Themes Explored

- ❑ Reading the room: anticipation of normative spaces , feeling beyond the margins, particularly when regarding new social interactions.
- ❑ Balancing on the edge: the often visceral and all-consuming ways participants attempt to manage, and in some cases camouflage, their selves within the workplace
- ❑ Reconfiguring acceptable queerness: Acceptable queerness, a queer norm, emerges as a fragile state of identity configuration; through which participants find ways to perform an appropriate identity that might meet the expectations of others within the workspace

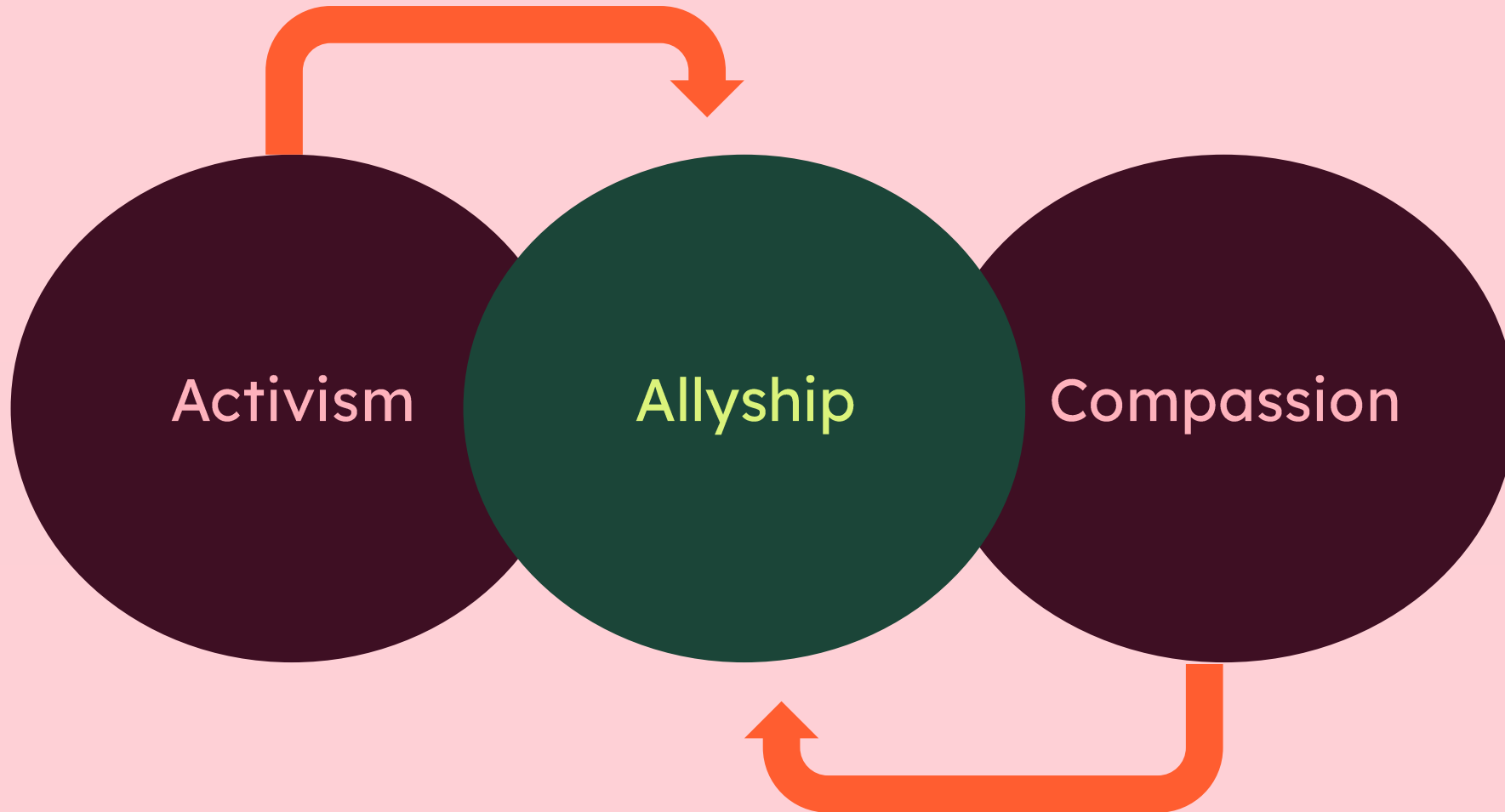
# Implications

- Disrupting the un/safe binary – safety as a social construct.
- Queer labouring: involved different, often viscerally felt ways of continually contorting themselves in attempts to meet the expectations of colleagues, customers and clients.
- Fragile queer assemblages: always temporary and fragile, highlighting tensions between safety and queerness.

# BBR findings: Allyship

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# What is allyship?



# Themes Explored

- ❑ Straight talking: Just be a decent person! Participants were attuned to what we have termed 'straight talking' in which norms are situated
- ❑ Fractured allyship: allyship is illusive, partial and fragile
- ❑ Proactive allyship: its not all bad news!



# Implications

- ❑ Allied labour – positioning oneself to engage an ally – includes evaluation, education and reassurance
- ❑ The visibility dilemma - allies expect some form of confirmation but the allied seek to avoid fuss and attention
- ❑ Problematic power hierarchies inherent in allyship; need to acknowledge power effects but also open up understandings of SGM communities

## Implications & Actions

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# EDI

- ❑ Since the 1990s, there has been conceptual shifts among EDI practitioners around the use of various terms (Vincent et al., 2024).
- ❑ This shift arguably obscured rather than attended to inequalities (Zanoni et al., 2010) a business case rationale has largely replaced social justice arguments for equality-related policies within workplaces (Noon, 2007).
- ❑ Much of the mainstream diversity literature presents a simplistic version of this 'business case', even when it lacks empirical support (Ely & Thomas, 2020, p. 118).

# Current Climate



- ❑ Increasing rejection of DEI and discussions of diversity as valid in the workplace as part of a woke backlash (Guyan, 2022; Blatt et al., 2025)
- ❑ UK Supreme court judgement on sex and gender followed by EHRC guidance that sex assigned at birth can overrule gender recognition certificates in some contexts (see <https://goodlawproject.org> for more information)
- ❑ May updated code of practice now before parliament for 40 days from 21/5/26:
  - Importance of 'balanced rights' across protected characteristics and emphasis on proportionate action
  - Sometimes separate or single sex provision may be required to be compliant
  - But requirements for service providers to consider alternatives and mitigations to separate and single-sex services
- ❑ UK has fallen to 22<sup>nd</sup> out of 49 in an annual ranking of LGBTQ+ rights in European countries – it was 1<sup>st</sup> in 2015 (see <https://rainbowmap.ilga-europe.org/> for more information)

# Myth Busting

- ❑ There is limited evidence that diversity training has any efficacy in the reduction of structural barriers
- ❑ Available empirical data demonstrates initiatives can backfire or have unintended consequences
- ❑ Increasingly the EDI 'industry' has been the subject of much debate and scrutiny
- ❑ EDI fatigue is real and needs to be addressed
- ❑ EDI training puts focus on individuals, rather than focusing on organisations/wider systemic change

# Key implications from BBR research

- ❑ Marginalised workers and entrepreneurs face systemic challenges
- ❑ While the nature of these challenges varies with work context, the impact is not materially different
- ❑ Across all of our research SGM participants reported a lack of understanding from colleagues, clients and customers



- ❑ Little understanding of SGM experiences across the life course
- ❑ Low awareness of more marginalised identities beyond being lesbian and gay
- ❑ Expectations that SGM individuals should/would educate others in the workplace creates additional pressure

# Key implications from BBR research

- ❑ The additional labour required by SGM workers/entrepreneurs is significant
- ❑ Increases when they are also required to undertake diversity labour (identity taxation)
- ❑ The visibility dilemma is significant and another source of labouring
- ❑ Implications of additional labour load must be considered across different industry contexts



# Key Actions



- ❑ Refocus on the importance of management training (less focus on leadership, more on good management)
- ❑ In SME contexts (but probably large organisations too), consider how/where education might be required more broadly (clients, etc.) and how to address ‘problematic’ interfaces outside the firm
- ❑ Create opportunities to discuss workplace challenges with all staff in ways that do not require disclosure (always avoid forced disclosure)
- ❑ Identify meaningful ways of providing 1-2-1 support for additional labour



# Key Actions



- ❑ Consider engaging with community groups which may provide alternatives to networks in SMEs
- ❑ Recommending pronouns may force disclosure/discomfort for SGM workers especially in SMEs – we don't recommend this as a first step
- ❑ Zero tolerance approach to harassment (no such thing as microaggression, it's just aggression)
- ❑ Beware of targeted interventions (short term effect, long term?)
- ❑ Use governance structures to reinforce equitable intent

# Collecting Data



- ❑ Collecting identities data requires innovating the tools we use to understand who we are
- ❑ Falling disclosure rates suggests mis-trust in how identities data is used/responded to
- ❑ Misuse of personal data: the rise in AI use is worrying given data governance protocols remain in their infancy

Next steps &  
future plans

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# Next steps

- ❑ Continue working with partners to translate BBR findings into practice
- ❑ Ongoing support of our fantastic doctoral students
- ❑ Progressing academic publications
- ❑ Eurogames 'Beyond Imagination' conference organisation
- ❑ New research underway (currently bound by confidentiality agreements)

But there are some big  
changes ahead...

# Future plans

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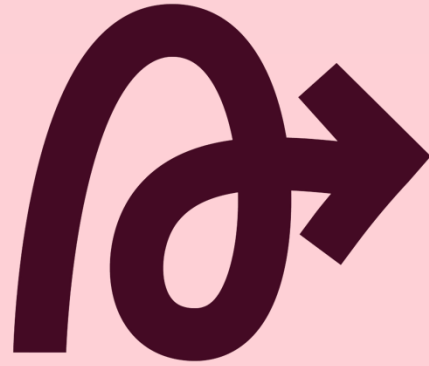
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Helen and Katrina are leaving Swansea University at the end of July. As we can't take Breaking Binaries with us, research after this date will be rebranded as Beyond Binaries. Same focus, same aims but a new name!

This is part of a bigger change.  
Beyond Binaries will be part of our new venture: Saeth Consulting.  
We will share more details when our new website and socials go live.

**S<sup>ð</sup>ETH**  
CONSULTING

# Thank You



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(coming soon!)