**Transcript for In Queer Minds episode one, representation in health, with Assoc. Professor Sam Winter and Dr Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli.**

MADDY: Hello everyone, I'm Doctor Madison Magladry. Before we get started, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land I'm on today recording this podcast, the Whadjuk Noongar people. I'd like to pay my respects to elders past present and future, and extend that respect all indigenous peoples in our audience today I also like to acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded, Australia is stolen land and always was and always will be aboriginal land.

So welcome to the first episode of ‘In Queer Minds’, a project emerging from the Human Rights Visionary seed grant from Curtin University. This is the first in a series of four episodes that explores the ideological and practical approaches of individuals operating within queer intersectional academic activist or community spaces.

Initially when I scripted today's episode, the topic was health because of the backgrounds of our guests today. However, once I started preparing questions it became evident that today's topic, focuses more on matters of representation. What it means to represent, among other things, health concerns of queer and trans populations, and what ethical or political issues might come up.

Joining me to discuss this today are our special guests Associate Professor Sam Winter, and Dr Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli, to speak to these topics in relation to their own work. So, on behalf of my, co-investigators on this project, Doctor Deb Hunn and Doctor Bri Mckenzie, Thank you so much for joining me today. Before we get started, I’ll introduce you properly.
Associate professor Sam Winter is a clinician, researcher and teacher working in the field of trans health, wellbeing and rights. Sam works here at Curtin in the school of public health.

Dr Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli is an honorary fellow at the school of communications and creative art At Deakin University and founder of the AGMC. Her areas of research include cultural diversity, gender diversity, sexual diversity, family diversity, HIV and AIDS and social diversity in health and education with a specific focus on adolescents and young people. Welcome. Thank you so much for joining me, both of you.

SAM: Hi.

MARIA: Thank you Maddy.

MADDY: So both of you have worked on research involving how queer visibility is negotiated.
To what extent is visibility important in the queer community and its intersections, and what are some issues barriers are conflicts with this? Sam, would you like to respond to that?

SAM: Well, my work is in the area of transgender health, well-being and rights, and I think a major problem for trans people worldwide has been that of *invisibility* until relatively recently. Even perhaps, to some extent today. Invisibility within the LGBT umbrella; too often transgender people have been the ‘poor brothers and sisters’, to be a little bit binary about it, within, within the community of sexual and gender minorities, and invisibility in research to a major problem has been invisibility in HIV and aids research. For so many years, HIV and AIDS research within sexual and gender minorities conflated, transgender people with, essentially with men who have sex with men. And so a major fight for trans people and their Allies – and I would count myself as an Ally – and in, in advocacy, has been to make trans people visible.

MADDY: Thank you, that's a very good response. Maria how does that…How does your work inform your response to that question?

MARIA: Yeah, it’s a very, very important question and first of all Maddy, I'm a founding *member*, of the AGMC, I wish I was the founder of such an amazing organisation, but our founder is Cinzia Ambrosio.

MADDY: Oh, excuse me!

MARIA: I think very importantly – oh no not at all – I think very importantly, visibility is important, there’s no doubt about that, we need to have representation. The amazing bisexual activist and writer BJ Epstein said, ‘texts, art, visibility, is, should be about being a window and a mirror’; a window to the many worlds that are out there so that we do not misrepresent or underrepresent, you know as Sam talks about. And also as a mirror; how do we see ourselves, what are the various ways that we can be and represent ourselves, and curate our self or multiple selves.

On the other hand, some of the communities I work with such as LGBTIQ+ from Muslim backgrounds, and this is not just stereotype Islam or any of those, any of those kinds of generalisations. Very importantly, visibility can sometimes bring harm; harm from members of one’s community or multiple communities, and harm to oneself because the repercussions. So, visibility is, extremely important. But the safety, and security, and the ways we go about being visible – in our agency *Living and Loving in Diversity* book, We had a couple of members of diverse cultural backgrounds who talked about why sometimes, they prefer to stay invisible in a world that cries out for visibility.

SAM: And I, I’d just like to extend that; across much of the world, merely to leave one's home as a transgender person puts one at risk. Of arrest; of violence, of-

MARIA: Mmm.

SAM: -Police harassment. So yeah, visibility certainly can be a problem at the very, very most basic; level. But as a community to me it seems to me that the way forward in asserting one’s rights and, achieving equality and, Inclusion more broadly, inclusion in society, is, is to make one's self visible as a community. It’s a tricky one, isn't it Maria?

MARIA: It absolutely is, Sam, and because it is that complexity of ‘yeah we need visibility, we need people to be out there with lived experience’ and, representing themselves and their communities at the same time. There can, there can be danger with certain members of our communities in being very visible. And I think that’s where… and you talked about yourself as an Ally, which interestingly is how I see myself, as an Ally, and I think sometimes those of us with privilege can actually put ourselves out there without appropriating, and without owning, a way of being and representation.

But there are ways that perhaps Allies can open doors; take some risks that, say for example trans and gender diverse and people I know from Muslim and other communities that I work with, may not be able to yet. So that hopefully, soon, those issues of safety and concern that we’re both speaking about, won’t be, won’t be there. That we can just bow out, get away and get out of the way, and invisibility will be safe.

SAM: Yes.

MADDY: Thank you both for those responses. I think there's a dominant narrative about this idea that we need to do away with labels that we need to all be this happy family kind of thing; Even the shifts to things like all gender bathrooms have sparked debates on that. And don't worry, this isn't a directed question but just something I'd like to add. It is clear from what you're both saying, about your research. That visibility is important as a step to take, for safety so that people do not have to, I suppose, make themselves vulnerable in, in the future.

Now, on visibility; both your work examines and makes visible previously under represented issues in marginalised populations. And while it's very important to correct negative narratives or stereo types, about trans people about queer people about families about; you know, religious groups. How do you as researchers handle when you have to, or must, discuss issues that might be read by the public as “confirming” and I’m, I'm using air quotes but you can't see it because it's in a podcast.

MARIA: \*laughs\*

MADDY: It's confirming negative beliefs about certain groups, for example Maria, I'm thinking about a paper you published recently about, discussing violence and, and homelessness. Maria would you like to respond to that?

MARIA: Yeah, that’s such an important question and I’m sure that you know, in Sam’s work as well. It’s something that sits with us, and it should in the way that we do, our research and do our representation. For me, and it’s come up very recently, I'm, I'm working on a project called Mobs and Wogs, which is the Aboriginal First Nations people, and I should’ve said from the beginning, apologies, I’m on Wurundjeri Country, European name here Melbourne, and it's really important when I look at First Nations people, Aboriginal people and their relationships and the contestation with Southern European on people and the fact that; we need to acknowledge that migrants, of my background, were settler-colonisers as well. And all those things come out very strongly. One of the ways… Two things that are very important in doing work for me if I constantly go back to systems and structures. So when I'm talking about violence, among young people who are homeless, I talk about systems and structures, and what led them To this violence. What are the causation effects in family, community, society, politics, economics. So the intersectional facets of that.

When I talk about some of the horrific stories that have not been represented; in Australian history, between say Italian, Greek and Maltese migrants and their relationship... Well, relationship in air quotes, with aboriginal people on whose land they also settled and colonised. I'm constantly aware of the White Australia policy, and the, the other factors that were going on and I try to provide a different narrative as well. So for example my ancestors, my heri- I’m, I’m Italian background. My family came here; and they were part of getting away from fascism, and reminding people, that Mussolini and Italians had actually colonised Northern Africa. Which is, which ended in destitution and you know, terrible, and that's how we ended up being in the country.

So for me, I’d, I’d, I’d be interested in what Sam says, in terms of psychology because for me as a sociologist I deconstruct the why, the how, who’s invested in a particular narrative and constantly go back to the bigger picture within which people are making decisions or are forced to make certain decisions and carry out certain behaviours.

MADDY: Thank you. Sam?

SAM: I think in the area that I work in, trans health and wellbeing, and rights; I think, the major problem; is that discrimination, prejudice; all of those things that go with it, harassment, marginalisation economic legal social. They so often rest at the individual level and at the level of organisations, at, on a wide range of negative beliefs, stigmatising beliefs and I think that, that, that's one problem I think that one has to aware of, working in trans health. That is that there are widespread ideas that transgender people, in some sense violate natural law; nature itself; violates, contradicts god's law, in some places, some people. [They] violate the culture in which they live; that they are mentally disordered and that they are deceivers and pretenders. And that they are, that their gender presentation, indeed even their identity is motivated or based by; by, by sexual issues. And all of those negative, those stigmatising beliefs actually feed into ideas about trans people and toilets for example. Their rights to be recognised as who they experience themselves as... And so one has to be aware of all that. And so I think. All the time, I'm trying, and I'm not alone in this, I think we all try nowadays to... emphasise that some, diversity is part of nature, part of the human experience that is something to be celebrated. That diversity doesn't mean disorder.

Recently now, one can refer to the decision of the World Health Organisation to take the trans diagnoses that provide access to healthcare out of the mental disorders chapter, into the one on conditions related to sexual health. I was very centrally involved in that. But it’s another story for another program, maybe. I think that the… I think the negative - I’m rambling a bit here, so I want to, I should pull myself in a bit. I think the real problem…Yeah. If one’s talking about confirming negative beliefs, I think the real problem is when one actually is researching trans sex work. Because the very fact of trans sex work feeds into one particular one of those stigmatising beliefs that is set on this whole thing is, is built on sexuality and sexual needs.

That’s a real problem. Because, the simple fact is that so many trans people worldwide are involved in sex work. And not just trans women, but others too. Because they need to put food on the table. And they simply need to survive. They might, they may indeed be supporting their families. So, and there are not other options available for them. So, I think one has to make that point; The point that I just this second. Very, very forcibly indeed, wherever one is writing about trans sex work. I should stop there.

MADDY: No that's, that's great! What I'm hearing from both of you is that your work involves so much of an unpacking between structures and individuals. Perhaps a lot of these negative stereotypes come from a base of, you know, suspicion of an individual, but what we in fact need to do is, examine the structures that frame or produce that individual for example, violence and homelessness or trans sex work. Thank you that was a very good response.

SAM: And there may be an underlying message…The most fundamental message of all, perhaps, is to stress the point that trans people are people.

MADDY: Yep.

SAM: And that they’re people first of all. And they are trans, well, if not second then may be further down the line. They are people first. Just like you, just like me, just like everybody, and they deserve the respect that all humans involve. I mean that’s such a, it sounds so trite when I'm saying it that but, but it really is a fundamental, fundamental point because I think that that point, that essential fact gets lost in so many people's minds when they, when that thinking becomes governed by the stigmatising beliefs. And that they are dehumanising beliefs.

MADDY: Absolutely, very well said Sam. Maria, did you have a response?

MARIA: Yeah, yeah Sam, totally, totally, with you and support that and I think; sometimes we’ve got to be applying the critical deconstruction, you know, I, I think about this demonisation; the vilification of trans sex workers, and also, and you know, the other side to this is that we've got to be careful not to constantly try to defend or justify; and what I mean is, there are trans; just like anyone else who wants to, perhaps coercively, or perhaps selecting sex work as their career; if there are safety and other protocols in place; so, and you know, some of it, and also; do we ever think about the client? I mean obviously there are people, you know, and usually they, they can be quite heteronormative. Patriarchal, hetero-patriarchal masculinity, that we don't actually think about. But for me again, the critical deconstruction approaches. Yes, as Sam said, absolutely... marginalisation, discrimination, that leads people into homelessness or positions of vulnerability and having to do what they don't want to do.

 At the same time, let's go back and look at those systems and structures, and think about very carefully about who’s in power. And who’s creating certain situations; who’s doing the vilification? I remember working in family violence, and I remember thinking about, and researching how violent; violence being written about being perpetrated in same-sex relationships and etcetera. And that seems to have been for a while; and I don’t know what happened in in West, In West Australia but it’s been here for a while; it seemed to become this, ‘Oh there you go, you’ve got gay men and lesbians etcetera, are perpetrating’. And, just a reminder that the majority of the violence was and is still coming from heterosexual men. In families, against cisgender women.

So sometimes you know we've got to be careful not to try and defend or justify or anything like that, but let’s turn the gaze back on hetero-patriarchy, hetero-cis-gender patriarchy. And that’s where we’ve got to look at what's happening and why.

MADDY: Well said.

MARIA: I hope that makes sense!

MADDY: It absolutely does.

SAM: And, and I want to thank Maria for just making me pause and think a little bit about what I was saying and the way that I was saying it. Yeah I, I really want to make that… I want to underline that point that sex work is just another form of work. And I think what I want to say, I think more clearly is that, that any form of work is problematic, including working at the university,

MADDY: Indeed!

MARIA: Oh yeah!

SAM: If it is the only choice available to one for surviving. And, well, luckily you know we’re not in that position but, but many trans people are. So yep, so I want to emphasise that, and I think that didn't come out all that clearly so there we go.

MARIA: And I really loved your point, Sam, about, you know, the way that culture and religion, and I mean, that that's what we're dealing with at the moment in the research we're doing here around conversion practices. You know, in terms of ‘our faith says this’, and our God, and this constant need to deconstruct those privileged positions, the powerful positions, the powerful voices, the gatekeepers who present a particular version of their faith, or a particular version of their culture.

And one of the things that we're doing at AGMC and this issue around LGBTIQ+ Muslims – and shout out to Aisya Zaharin, who invited me to write with her on transgender and Islam in the International Journal of Transgender Health. I’m so excited for Aisya to do this. I think one of the things we go back to is ‘OK, What was there in those cultures, in those faiths, pre-colonisation, pre-Christianisation, or you know, Islamic Wahhabism for example. So again, that, that deconstructing of what Sam, you know, pointed out, like what's going on in faith, what's going on in culture. A lot of those statements that they say are definitive and absolute, but how do we actually interrogate, unpack – like you said, Maddy – is really important.

MADDY: We might move to the next question but that was a very good discussion and I really appreciate both of your contributions. Much of – actually this, to some, flows quite nicely on to the next question. Much of your work deals with the telling and retelling of stories of people who are often denied the ability to speak for themselves, and as you said, you both consider yourselves Allies and you are using your platforms of visibility and rights to get visibility and rights for those who don't have it. How do you, as researchers, manage narrating case studies without reaffirming, you know, an ‘us and them’ divide. An ‘I get to speak and you don't’ or ‘I get to speak about you and you don't get to speak about yourself’.

SAM: Ah, so, in asking that question, you’re talking about a divide – an alleged divide – between researchers and researched.

MADDY: Oh, no not necessarily. More about between people who have rights and people who don't, I suppose, if that makes sense. That can be about researchers, but I'm also thinking about public commentators or the media commenting on how people who are denied voices get to represent themselves. Does that make sense?

Maria: Yes.

SAM: Sort of.

MARIA: I guess for me, and I know it does with you Sam with your work in transgender health, these are questions that sit – and should – be sitting on my shoulders all the time. These are the questions that should be guiding and framing what I do. And so I rely on the concepts of Allyship, and I rely on decolonial research practice. Aileen Morton Robinson’s ??? work all the time. And that for me is about collaboration, not appropriaton; it’s about constantly finding ways to support and provide space for lived experience, for voices to come through. And then, knowing when to step back and get out of the way. And leave communities when it’s safe to do so.

Decolonial practices, I think, working in places such as, the people I work with and research own their material, and they can use their material anyway they want. I do refuse to be part of any research team or any research work that does not have those very strong constructs of Allyship and decolonial practice. And I’ve learned, I learned that very strongly from working with some indigenous communities. And I think it should be applied everywhere. But it does mean, and there’s another great theory that came out of the States called ‘Queer Coyote Researchers’ from people on that border of Mexico and that, ‘coloniser and the colonised’ etcetera research; and that means that we also then take the risks. That we understand that we make a commitment; and the commitment is called *compromisso*.

And the commitment is to work for and work with, and just because the research project ends, it doesn't mean that we suddenly disappear: ‘Thanks very much for your so-called data, off I go and you'll never hear from me again!’ This constant relationality, this constant communication, collaboration and this constant awareness that, I mean I'm sixty now; I'm on my way out, what legacy do I leave? How do I support and encourage younger academics; especially younger academics who might be First in Family, which is another term that our universities have come up with, hey Sam?

But also, you know, young people who are coming up through marginalised perspectives who can write about themselves. It also means being open to criticism. I mean, I cringe when I look at some of my earlier work, and I invite academics to critique it, feedback it and extend it. So all those practices, I think, are very important.

The last thing I would say, and Sam, please come in and critique, I was asked by the Equinox Gender Centre here in Melbourne to undertake an evaluation of the, of the gender centre. And here I am a, cisgender heterosexual woman doing this work, and these issues were very strongly coming to the fore in how I do the research, who I do the research with. The voices that needed to come through, that needed to be foregrounded. And it was an absolute honor to be invited on and find points of connection, but also honor the points of difference on the lived experience in the writing-up of that. So I had certain skills as an evaluator, as a researcher, as an academic, rah rah rah, but for me, ultimately in anything I do, it’s about what do the community require. What would the community make of this and how does the community own it. And dare I say, it’s put me into a bit of trouble with university politics!

MADDY: \*laughs\*. Thanks Maria. Sam, what do you think?

SAM: Well, I don't think so much of my work involves case studies. But, I think, you know, the question that you’re that your asking is one that could be asked of all research. And the simple answer is to work with trans people as partners.

MARIA: Yeah.

SAM: And that can mean a lot of different things. If I can digress, just talk for maybe three minutes maybe about a recent research project in four countries: Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia, that we did a couple of years ago and that we’re still reporting it. We did a job audit, in which we, we sent applications for jobs that had actually been advertised in those four countries. We had initially constructed CV's that, we could be absolutely confident were, equivalently attractive in the job market. In each of the job sectors in each of the countries that we were researching and. And we did that by applying for jobs and looking at responses. And once we were sure that we have pairs of CV's that were equivalently attractive, we added some information to one of them to indicate that the applicant was trans. And then we just carried on applying for jobs that had been advertised and we just counted the call-backs.

And that was research that we did in partnership with Asia Pacific Transgender Network the regional, *the* regional trans-led organisation. We got a little bit of funding from UNDP; no, *through* UNDP, with some funding from a, a private donor. And we we, liaised with local trans organisations in each of the four countries and, well, most of our research assistants were trans themselves. And so in the formulation of the research, in the design of the research the prosecution of the research in the reporting of the results, we, we were working with the trans community as partners, and I think that's really, really very important. Can I, can I-

MARIA: Yeah, Sam, that just gives my heart such joy! \*laughs\* That’s the kind of research that I'd just wish with across the board. What you’ve described there is the model that I think, you know, we need to make sure is there but sometimes in our corporatised, managerialised universities, you know, it, it is something that we have to insist on; it's wonderful to hear.

SAM: I think there is a problem now, more than there was twenty years ago when I started working in this field. In some… What I want to say is that there is an increasing antagonism. I think in some quarters between researchers and the trans community. This is not a worldwide phenomenon. But there are sectors, I think within both communities in some places in the world that did cause me some concern. I do see increasingly, that cisgender people, cisgender researchers are seen as, in a hostile way. Now sometimes that hostility is justified. Because sometimes it's not, and it’s very generalised.

 I could go on for forty minutes on this, but if I can just give you one example, increasingly in a social media, cisgender people are referred to as ‘The Cis’. The Cis. Which is a reference to *Star Wars*; the Sith. Now as I recall, the Sith were the antithesis of the Jedi, am I right?

MADDY: Yes you are.

SAM: Hi. So, you know, I, I don't want to put too much of a spotlight-

MARIA: This is interesting, I’ve never known that!

SAM: I don’t want to put too much of, I don’t want to make too much of a thing and blow something up which is really just a clever, clever pun, actually. But I think it's symptomatic of something that I think the community and cis research are going to have to deal with. They’re really gonna have to deal with it. Because I think that, I honestly think that both communities, the research community and the trans community, the researchers, or the cis researchers as at least, and the researched will stand to lose, if the Allyship that does exist is not built upon but is undermined. And I see some dangerous trends towards an increased undermining of the Allyship, that relationship that has begun to get us somewhere.

MARIA: Mmm.

MADDY: No no, that's a very good response and thanks for that. I think that's really important to consider on the ways in which Allyship is useful and also developing; and faces those responses. Okay so,

MARIA: Yeah, and – sorry Maddy, sorry – I want to also say Sam that that is so important and it is a bit of a heads up because I have seen it. I haven’t seen it much so far, but I'm sure I'll be called up to it if I ever, you know, if I ever overstep on my communities. But it is something to be aware of. You know again, it’s that what you said Maddie about identity. And where identities can be enveloping and supportive, but sometimes we let, you know, the labelling; labelling can also be divisive. And it's more in terms of action, of what we do, rather than the labels that we have: researchers, researched etcetera. And what about those of us who are both the researched and the researchers, you know? \*laughs\* For example, every time I read anything about migration, it’s like ‘Oh yeah, I’m there!’ as the researched and the researcher. So I think they're very important points that you make, Sam, and we've got to be aware that we don’t undo the amount of work to be done so far, and the amount of work that needs to be done if we constantly worrying about who does what and why. I think it's about how we all collaborate, and be very clear about power structures.

MADDY: Thanks Maria. That's great and then it leads, very nicely into the next question. Michel Foucault, who is, for readers who aren't familiar, he was a famous Postmodern- Well, would he have called himself a postmodernist, probably not. But he was a famous philosopher, and he once wrote ‘visibility is a trap’. I wonder to what extent is the project of inclusion in health also one of surveillance, and how might that relate to your work.

SAM: Well, shall I go first?

MADDY: Yes please!

SAM: And this time I’ll try not to ramble on quite so much.

MARIA: Oh no, I’m enjoying the conversation!

SAM: I would return to that point that the critical problem for trans people has been invisibility up to now. And, and that to some extent it's still a problem. But yeah I am aware that… I mean, I think this goes to the issue of gatekeeping. Because in those parts of the world, where there is healthcare to access, gender affirming healthcare that one can access, so often the criticism has been one that the professionals act as gatekeepers. And that that gatekeeping is in many, in some sense institutionalised by the WPATH Standards of Care, which is currently being revised.

There is this tension, I think between wanting access to healthcare, and having to submit oneself to the sort of – I think many trans people find demeaning – gatekeeping assessment processes that go on. There’s an increasing move towards an informed consent model, which as the name suggests is based on simply ensuring that the person understands what they're doing. And then makes a decision.

MADDY: Yep; that's great Sam. Maria, what do you think?

MARIA: I guess for me, there’s different forms of surveillance. Some I welcome, some I really, as part of my work as an advocate, as an activist and an academic, I guess in a way is to derail that surveillance or critique it. I welcome surveillance from research participants, like Sam says I welcome surveillance from the communities I work for. Like the Indigenous Mobs and Wogs project; my steering committee is made up of many Indigenous leaders, elders, who, you know, I want them to scrutinise what I do and how I do it. And it's the same with any work I’ve done for AGMC is to have a group of people who will oversee and can say to me ‘no you've just missed that bit’ or ‘you didn't understand that about my life’, or there’s a whole policy out there that you need to be made aware of, I would like you to go and challenge the policy, not constantly consider us. You know, those sorts of things.

The surveillance I do worry about as an academic is sometimes the debilitating grant processes. The ways that some people from marginal communities are not able to produce a grant application or submission for funding or have more control over funding. Because they have to construct their applications, they're under surveillance in the very way they go about constructing an application or managing their funding, they’re being monitored. And those sorts of things can be very… and unfortunate I’ve been subjected to that. So my allegiance was to a minority community who had managed to get a little bit of money. And that money was for that small minoritised community. And to have to, have to come under the surveillance – and not a, an ethical surveillance, which we all need in terms of finances, but a surveillance of a university, or a system, or to particular people in power there who wanted to own the research, own the money. That kind of surveillance, I think we, working in these institutions, need to speak up and be able to critique.

MADDY: So last week, I read that it was the three-year anniversary of the same sex marriage postal survey results. In this time, have you studied or found data, or heard accounts of lasting traumatic or otherwise negative response in mental health or physical health or any other kind of health for queer people. How have, or how do you think other recent events, such as the religious freedoms act, Mark Latham's crusade against safe schools etc... how have these events compounded this trauma, if there is such a trauma?

MARIA: Mmm. Yeah, wow. It depends on the communities that I’ve been working with. So for example with the marriage equality – let’s just start with that one – where, for many of our multicultural, multi-faith communities, it did compound harm and mental health concerns. Sometimes it opened wounds that families had agreed to disagree on or not discuss. It had picked at the scar tissue of issues about homo-, bi-, trans- and queerphobia. In other ways though, with multicultural, multi-faith LGBTQ communities, we found that those faiths, those cultures that see the family as children, and constructing a family and having children to take care of you in your old age, some of those tropes, I guess, that are for some people incredibly valuable, marriage equality actually led to connections and cohesion. Sometimes in funny ways where you had grandparents going ‘Oh, you can get married now. So you know, go and find a great same-sex partner, go and get married and have your kids.’

But that raises the other issue of mental health, because in some of our communities, especially bisexual, polyamorous, consensually non-monogamous communities, trans communities, gender diverse communities, it actually created harm. Because it was this homo-assimilationist, or sorry, hetero-assimilationist narrative of what it means now to be a good gay person. And that was like ‘Okay, you can get married now’ but suddenly it became; more about adhering to certain norms or marriage, monogamy, mortgage – the triple M – rather than ‘let’s queer up traditional relationships; let’s queerify the ways that people live, that we can all share the raising of children without having to be biological parent. So I've seen both of those.

The ongoing onslaught with the religious freedom – \*scoffs\* ‘freedom’ in inverted commas – bill and the Safe Schools stuff is constantly moving on the borders of those two. Where people are constantly having more conversations in their homes in the community. But there is still a sense that some communities and some ways of being queer are being missed out, or again now being – yeah, under surveillance – they’re being legitimated or illegitimated sometimes within their own LGBTQI+ communities. That’s been very difficult working with the poly communities, with the bisexual communities, trans communities, working for culturally diverse communities. Yeah, lots of ways of doing this. I think I’ve made a mess of that answer! Sam, help me out!

SAM: I think… Well, first thing, there is a bit of research to show just how, the extent to which that debate around the postal survey, coming up to the postal survey, did actually contribute to, or add to psychological distress for LGBTI plus people. I think – well, I know – that there was a study in the *Australian Journal of Psychology* last year by Saan Ecker and others that convincingly demonstrated that, and I think one can only imagine that debates around Safe Schools and so on so forth that have the same sort of effect, although I'm not aware of any study that’s been done; there maybe one out there, I just haven't done the due diligence. So I would refer to that research by Ecker, Ecker and others.

I think on one level the impact of the Equal Marriage legislation on trans people was very beneficial because it meant that various states and territories had to go back and look at their legal gender recognition legislation to them to take out clauses which require trans people get divorced – married trans people to get divorced before they change the birth certificate. As a prerequisite, for changing their birth certificate. And that offered a window to look more broadly at some states and territories at what sorts of reforms, legal reforms, needed to be done. In Tasmania, for example you have some of the most progressive legislation in the world… *now*. And it pretty much started with the Equal Marriage legislation passing three years ago I think. I think I may be simplifying that but, I think that's a pretty fair, simplified summary.

But I do want to say this, that I think, that perhaps the people who have suffered most in the last three years, and it’s linked to the equal marriage legislation, is trans people. I think what's happened is this; is that there are various conservative forces across Australia, who had been so very energised against equal marriage, lost that battle; and have now turned their attention – very energetically, very passionately, very systematically – at trans people. Trans people, their rights and their health, their access to health care particularly trans youth. And so perhaps trans people in Australia are going through a… what’s the metaphor? Are really going through quite a difficult time right now. You have some conservative organisations like CAUSE in Victoria; you have ACL, the Australian Christian Lobby; you have some academics like John Whitehall, is it, at the University of Sydney [factchecked to be Western Sydney University], you have people like Mark Latham,

MARIA: Yeah.

SAM: You have newspapers like *The Australian* and journalists like Bernard Lane. You have really an unholy alliance, and let's not forget some women's-

MARIA: Oh binary, Binary Australia.

SAM: Women’s – sorry?

MARIA: Binary Australia is another one.

SAM: Thank you, thank you. And I was thinking of Women Speak Tasmania. You have a fairly unholy alliance of Christian conservatives, medical conservatives, a vanishingly small number of them; You have conservative politicians, whose motives I don’t – who knows what their motives are in any one particular case – and you have feminists, some feminists, at least, who are now engaged in I think, I call it an unholy alliance, against trans people and their rights, including rights to healthcare. And that's. Really something that reflects what's happened elsewhere in the world. You can really see that the same thing happened in the United States. Of course there are so many things happening in the United States, Trump being one of them. He came to, actually took over in, early 2017 of course. When was the Obergefell Marriage Equality thing, it was around about the same time.

So lots of things happening at the same time, but no doubt about it, trans people within the United States are under fire right now. In the United Kingdom sixteen years ago in 2004, the United Kingdom passed legal gender recognition legislation. At its time this was really probably the most progressive in the world, with the minimum of hullabaloo. Sixteen years later, the world has moved on. The 2004 gender recognition act is not as progressive as it once was. And the attempt to bring the United Kingdom up to date; up to speed with much of the rest of the world is stymied by a massive, massive campaign undermining the legislative initiative

I think that the campaign against trans people's rights, and there's the campaigns against healthcare too for trans youth in the United Kingdom is just, and gender recognition is just one of the things that that has been a casualty of this cultural battle. I think that battle has been all the more intense after equal marriage legislation passed in the United Kingdom, same thing happening. All of the energy, all of the focus passes towards, and is directed towards trans people.

MADDY: Thanks Sam. Yeah that's really unfortunate and kind of goes back to a little bit of what I was saying in my previous question about visibility being a trap. The more something is raised into a public conversation as Maria said, it can create change, it can create conversations, but it does also leave room for, vulnerability unfortunately.

So, I Think that's all we have time for today, thank you both so much for joining me and for your considerate responses. I think one of the main things that I’ve drawn from both of your responses today has been the importance of understanding research about queer and trans people as dynamic, as nuanced, as something that you need to, consult or collaborate with your, you know, you’re ‘researched’ or research subjects. And this, I guess tension between visibility and safety as well. There's lots of things to think about. Thank you so much to both of you again for joining me and thanks to everyone listening. I look forward to the next one. Until then this has been In Queer Minds.

MARIA: Thank you, Maddy, thank you Sam!

SAM: Bye, thank you Maria.

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