Young, Indigenous, LGBTIQ+: Understanding and Promoting Social and Emotional Wellbeing

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Editorial

Social Inclusion and Exclusion for First Nations LGBTIQ+ People in Australia

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Abstract

This thematic issue of *Social Inclusion* highlights the connections between First Nations LGBTIQ+ people's intersecting identities and inclusionary and exclusionary process in settler-colonial Australia. In this editorial, we briefly introduce key concepts and summarise the different contributions in the issue, providing some general conclusions and guidance on a possible future research agenda.

Issue

This editorial is part of the issue "Young, Indigenous, LGBTIQ+: Understanding and Promoting Social and Emotional Wellbeing" edited by Karen Soldatic (Western Sydney University, Australia), Linda Briskman (Western Sydney University, Australia), William Trewlynn (BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation, Australia), John Leha (BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation, Australia), Corrinne Sullivan (Western Sydney University, Australia) and Kim Spurway (Western Sydney University, Australia).

1. Introduction

In this thematic issue of *Social Inclusion*, we interrogate some of the contested, complex and intersecting meanings around the social inclusion and exclusion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people in modern colonial settler Australia. The thematic issue originally aimed to include studies of First Nations LGBTIQ+ people worldwide. However, the current issue only focuses on First Nations LGBTIQ+ people living in Australia. This is in part due to the impact of Covid-19 on authors from North America, for example, who were forced to withdraw their articles due to the impact of Covid-19 on their families and communities. We also acknowledge that this thematic issue reflects the fact that the journal is published in English and this may have excluded research from non-English speaking countries with significant First Nations populations.

The publication of this thematic issue is highly significant for several reasons. There has been very little published on the lived experiences, needs and aspirations of First Nations LGBTIQ+ people. Globally, what research exists in English has historically focused on North American First Nations populations (see Soldatic, Briskman, Trewlynn, Leha, & Spurway, 2021a). This issue is unique in that all the articles investigate issues around Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people living in Australia. The articles combined, therefore, represent a unique collection of First Nations LGBTIQ+ people's experiences in Australia. There has been minimal research into pre-invasion and contemporary First Nations cultures and gender and sexuality diversity in Australia (Bayliss, 2015). The US and Canada both started to gather information on this topic much earlier and have rich, extensive bodies of research. In New Zealand, there also has been some limited research in the early

2000s through initiatives such as the Māori Sexuality Project at Auckland University (Aspin & Hutchings, 2007). As such, this thematic issue gives a unique insight into the Australian experience, demonstrating the diversity of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people's identity and cultural resistance to heteropatriarchal and heteronormative colonial settler value systems. We add significant new insights and findings to the existing body of literature in English from the US, Canada and New Zealand.

The editors believe that research such as this should be designed and led by First Nations LGBTIQ+ people both as researchers and as participants. One of the few published reports on First Nations LGBTIQ+ people in Australia rightly states: "Sexuality and gender diverse populations are an invisible minority in a national minority group" (Dudgeon, Bonson, Cox, Georgatos, & Rouhani, 2015, p. 3). In keeping with some of the of the principles proposed by authors such as Tuhiwai Smith (2013) and Sullivan (2020) in researching with Indigenous communities, the editors of this thematic issue prioritised articles authored by First Nations researchers, preferably First Nations LGBTIQ+ researchers. As a consequence, one of the most important features of this issue is that four out of the five articles are authored or co-authored by First Nations LGBTIQ+ people. Out of the 11 authors in this issue, six openly identify as First Nations LGBTIQ+ people, and four of these are academics at an early stage of their career.

Bronwyn Carlson (2016, p. 13) observes that "expressions of Aboriginal identity are multifarious" and this diversity is reflected in the variety of terms used by authors in this issue to identify the variety of people included in their studies. Henningham (2021), in interrogating her own lived experiences through autoethnography, uses terms such as 'Blak,' 'Bi+,' 'LGBTIQ+' and 'Queer.' Phelan and Oxley (2021) look at the needs of Aboriginal LGBTIQ(SB)+ in youth detention in Victoria, adding uniquely Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identities, 'sistergirls' and 'brotherboys,' to nuance the more generic acronym. In their study on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB's inclusion in education, Rhodes and Byrne (2021) also add sistergirls and brotherboys to the acronym. Soldatic et al. (2021b) look at the impact of inclusionary and exclusionary practices and institutions on First Nations LGBTIQ+ young people's wellbeing. Sullivan (2021), in turn, investigates the lived experiences of an Indigenous gay cis-male sex worker. Though we recognise that this selection of articles does not represent the diversity and extent of First Nations LGBTIQ+ experiences and identities in Australia, it nonetheless gives a small glimpse at the breadth of First Nations sexuality and gender diversity identities in the country.

2. Overview of Contributions

The overall aim of this thematic issue is to interrogate the contested and complex meanings for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people living in the modern settler colonial state of Australia. Authors have all taken very different paths towards investigating the impact of exclusionary and inclusionary practices, processes and structures on First Nations LGBTIQ+ people. Henningham (2021) uses autoethnography to reframe and explore the challenges of living as an Indigenous Bi+ woman in Australia. She uses Borderland Theory to help her analyse her experiences of living on the border spaces of different communities exploring her intersecting identities being Blak and Bi+. She concludes that this act of self-interrogation itself can be self-isolating and has the realisation that she is viewed as being too disconnected from Indigenous communities to be considered 'Blak' and not queer enough to be accepted by non-Indigenous LGBTIQ+ communities. As a result, her exclusion from multiple communities has impacted on her "performative self-expression of sexual identity, self-sabotage, institutionalized racism and shadeism, and community acceptance, particularly for Bi+ sexual identities" (Henningham, 2021, p. 7). Despite the relative privilege of 'passing' in both communities, Henningham also identifies internalised phobias that contribute towards poor wellbeing based on fear of exclusion and rejection. Henningham's lived experiences demonstrate the importance of interconnectedness of all aspects of her wellbeing from the individual to the collective level (community, culture, country). Future research, she argues, needs to broaden its scope to include understandings of the complexities of these intersecting, plural identities. Henningham further identifies issues for future research such as suicide and intergenerational trauma and calls for more work on mental health to reduce suicide rates and improve wellbeing for Indigenous LGBTIQ+/Bi+ youth.

Phelan and Oxley (2021) focus on Aboriginal LGBTIQ(SB)+ youth in detention in the state of Victoria in the southeast of Australia. Significant harm is being done to Aboriginal LGBTIQ(SB)+ youth by the professional disciplines involved in their incarceration processes. Young people are being problematised and pathologised as social justification for violent, exclusionary and discriminatory practices within the criminal justice system. The authors find that there has been some progress to date, however, these problematic practices continue to exist either out of conscious or unconscious racism and heterosexism. These racist, heterosexist practices impact on any opportunity to improve service delivery, treatment, recovery and rehabilitation programmes. The authors call for mental health and therapeutic programmes in the criminal justice system to take a strength-based approach that promotes and prioritises the unique cultural needs of Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ youth. The current system is failing because it is based on Western racist, heterosexist paradigms that are culturally biased and discriminatory. To develop better youth justice frameworks, criminal justice programmes need to be centred on the voices and experiences of Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ youth. In order to do this, the sys-

tem needs to better engage with Aboriginal and LGBTIQ+ community-controlled organisations that can better represent the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ young people.

Rhodes and Byrne argue for the need to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB issues into Australian primary school educational curricula. Although a contested concept, the authors use Intersectionality Theory to highlight "the multitude of racial, social, political, and economic factors which can serve to marginalise people" (Rhodes & Byrne, 2021, p. 32). The authors demonstrate the need for curricula that present different ways of being that are based on culturally appropriate and affirmative approaches. Starting the process with teacher training is important, they argue, since in order to effectively educate students, teachers need to understand the context of their students' lives. This means that teachers need to be inclusive of the needs of all students and understand the intersecting, multiple identities that can lead to complex disadvantages and a lack of progress in educational terms. To achieve this goal, Rhodes and Byrne argue, teachers need to be affirmed and supported through government policy and regulation. Schools and state Education Departments also need to modify policies to create affirming and safe environments for Aboriginal LGBTIQ+. Teachers need to be proactive, engaging with the key concerns of their students and undertaking their own research. The authors conclude, however, that inclusive and critical Initial Teacher Education programs play a pivotal role in equipping teachers with the requisite knowledge and understanding of intersectional disadvantage and educational needs of Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ people.

Soldatic et al. (2021b) investigate the social, cultural and emotional wellbeing of queer identifying urban Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth living on the east coast of Australia. The authors use Indigenous definitions of social inclusion and exclusion, predominantly basing their approach on Indigenous understandings of social inclusion/exclusion that include community, culture and country. Their research demonstrates the importance of acceptance and support from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families and communities for social inclusion and exclusion. In particular, participants highlighted the importance of the role of mothers in feeling accepted, safe and comfortable, enabling participants to overcome challenges to their wellbeing. Other relatives such as sisters and brothers as well as friendship networks were also important but not highlighted to the same degree as mothers. Despite some challenges encountered with extended families still living on country, many participants stressed the importance of an ongoing connection to country and extended family and kinship groups (grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.). For some First Nations LGBTIQ+ youth, non-Indigenous LGBTIQ+ communities could act as a second family that provided protection and support for their wellbeing. Some young people expressed

concern, however, about the levels of racism within these communities, making them feel excluded and marginalised. Despite this, participants demonstrated how they effectively navigated and resisted neo-colonial attempts to erase identity, culture and wellbeing with support from mothers, families and communities.

Drawing on Indigenous Standpoint and Wellbeing Theory as an analytic tool, Sullivan (2021) explores the lived experiences of a young, gay, cis-male sex worker in Sydney, Australia. She finds that although Jack is, in many ways, socially and financially well, he is also excluded by the lack of social/cultural validation and belonging. Sullivan draws out Jack's social exclusion; he is culturally marginalised, has restricted mobility and social inequalities. His status as an Aboriginal man is the foundation for much of Jack's social inequalities caused by racism in the non-Indigenous queer communities. Despite this, urban Indigenous queer people like Jack are creating their own spaces of inclusion, creating new communities separate from urban queer and Aboriginal spaces that allow them to thrive. Jack's "connection to other queer, and sex worker, Indigenous peoples has given him a space in which to connect to his culture by forming his own communities of practices, values, and knowledges" (Sullivan, 2021, p. 57). Jack's exclusion from his Aboriginal community makes Sullivan question the idea of an Indigenous whole of community concept and its importance to individual wellbeing. She argues that there is also the need for individual empowerment as an essential element for any community wellbeing and structural change in community. Inclusion, belonging and connecting is very context based, Sullivan concludes, and is closely linked to how various social and cultural networks affect individuals with both negative and positive implications for wellbeing. She also finds that the experiences of sex work are much more nuanced than current literature suggests, as it ignores Aboriginal sex worker experiences and overly focuses on negativity and anxieties around cultural taboos. Jack's lived experiences challenges these assumptions, especially as he does not fit into the dominant cultural heteronormativity of many Aboriginal communities. Sullivan (2021, p. 58) calls on researchers to acknowledge the complex layers of identity for people like Jack and to speak back to "coloniocentric narratives."

O'Sullivan's commentary demonstrates, through their own research agenda on creative representation and personal reflection, the need to shine light on the diversity and multiplicity of LGBTIQ+ Indigenous peoples. O'Sullivan (2021) brings to bare the limited presence of Indigenous and/or queer peoples within creative spaces such as film, television and beyond, and what effect queer visibility has on the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous LGBTIQ+ people. This limited presence is a reflection of the absence of visibility and a pertinent reminder that for Indigenous queer people "you can't be what you can't see" (Young, 2018, as cited in O'Sullivan, 2021, p. 63). O'Sullivan therefore insists that visibility be narrated by Indigenous LGBTIQ+ peoples

amidst the construction of their multiplicities, complexities and diversities, and furthermore that space remains for young Indigenous LGBTIQ+ peoples to imagine and determine their own futures.

3. Discussion and Conclusions

First Nations LGBTIQ+ people living in the Australian colonial settler state share a lot of common experiences with other First Nations people in the US, Canada and New Zealand. The most significant, would be the impact of colonisation, invasion, genocide, forced displacement and ethnocide upon First Nations people as a whole. This has set up heteropatriarchal, heteronormative value systems, processes and practices that exclude First Nations LGBTIQ+ people based on race and gender/sexuality diversity. However, although the articles in this issue reflect similar issues, we believe this issue stands alone by adding uniquely Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander voices to this body of literature. This thematic issue also adds to the emerging body of research that highlights the unique, complex and place-based experiences of First Nations LGBTIQ+ people within Australia (see, for example, Bennett & Gates, 2019; Clark, 2015, 2017; Costello, 2004; Day, 2020; Dudgeon et al., 2015; Dunn-Holland et al., 1994; Farrell, 2015; Hodge, 1993, 2015; Hope & Haire, 2019; Kerry, 2014, 2017a, 2017b, 2018; Leonard et al., 2012; O'Sullivan, 2015, 2019; Riggs & Toone, 2017; Ross, 2014; Sullivan, 2019; Willis, 2003).

Authors' approaches to examining the issues and meanings surrounding the lived experiences of First Nations LGBTIQ+ people in Australia were diverse. Various conceptual frameworks were used to interrogate data including Indigenous research methods, Indigenous Standpoint Theory, Critical Pedagogy, culturally appropriate social and emotional wellbeing, Borderland Theory and Intersectionality. All of these frameworks enriched the discussion and enable a more in-depth understanding of people's lives and experiences. Our authors also identified critical issues for First Nations LGBTIQ+ people and for future research agendas. Henningham (2021) argues that future research needs to focus on suicide and intergenerational trauma calling for more research into mental health to reduce suicide rates and improve wellbeing for Indigenous LGBTIQ+/bi+ youth. Phelan and Oxley (2021) conclude that, in order to improve youth justice approaches, criminal justice programmes need to base themselves on Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ youth voices, not Western constructs that currently skew approaches to criminal justice. This means a stronger engagement with Aboriginal and LGBTIQ+ community-controlled organisations, that can better represent Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ young people within the criminal justice system. To achieve the goal of an inclusive classroom, Rhodes and Byrne (2021) find that there is a need for a more systemic approach, with individual teachers having a pivotal role. However, they cannot do it alone and need appropriate education and training at university level,

as well as support from state Education Departments and schools, which need to modify accepted practices and policies to create affirming and safe environments for Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ young people. Soldatic et al. (2021b) describe the numerous strategies young First Nations LGBTIQ+ people demonstrate when navigating and resisting neo-colonial attempts to erase identity, culture and wellbeing. Young people rely on networks of support from mothers, families and communities. Sullivan (2021) finds that existing literature does not capture the nuanced experiences of sex work, ignoring Aboriginal sex worker experiences and focusing too much on negativity and anxieties around cultural taboos. She calls on researchers to acknowledge the complex layers of identity for Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ sex workers and to speak back to "coloniocentric narratives" (Sullivan, 2021, p. 58).

Setting out a broader future research agenda is challenging given the fact that there is so very little published. The first important consideration would be that any research agenda be designed and led or co-led by First Nations LGBTIQ+ people. We believe that, given the fact that First Nations cultures are place-based, this research agenda should also take a place-based approach and focus on the priorities and needs identified by First Nations LGBTIQ+ people themselves. Research also needs to balance strength-based with deficit approaches to give a more balanced understanding of not only disadvantage and exclusion but also strength and inclusion. As many of the articles discussed in this thematic issue, First Nations LGBTIQ+ people are overcoming feelings of isolation and disconnection and are creating opportunities to benefit their wellbeing and social inclusion and community connection. Finally, we need to understand the complexities of what we have generically termed First Nations LGBTIQ+ people. There is much diversity within First Nations LGBTIQ+ communities, gender and sexuality as well as Indigenous identities. As the collection of articles here suggest, a comprehensive, locally driven research agenda is required to better understand the ways in which different First Nation and LGBTIQ+ identities intersect and the impact of modern settler-colonialism on different genders, sexualities and Indigeneities. Looking at the existing literature in Australia, it is more developed in terms of research into cis-men, sistergirls, brotherboys and trans people, with a much smaller group of studies investigating lesbians, Bi+ and queer cis-women. It is clear that a more in-depth understanding of the experiences of all these groups is needed, but with more of an emphasis on the latter.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Blak, Bi+ and Borderlands: An Autoethnography on Multiplicities of Indigenous Queer Identities Using Borderland Theory

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Abstract
Indigenous queer people often experience a conflict in identity, feeling torn between long-standing cultures and new LGBTIQA+ spaces; however, conflicts are being reframed by new generations of Indigenous queer academics who consider decolonising ideas about white heteronormativity. The following autoethnography of my own Indigenous queer journey (*muru*) uses narrative analysis to explore the challenges of living between worlds as well as the difficulties in gaining acceptance from multiple cultures. This story, like many others, highlights the power of narrative as it reflects the nuanced experiences of Indigenous queer people with identity multiplicity via the application of borderland theory. The narrative analysis forefronts the wide impact of internalised phobias (homophobia, biphobia, and racism) and its impact on performative self-expression of sexual identity, self-sabotage, institutionalized racism and shadeism, and community acceptance, particularly for bi+ sexual identities. This article will explore existing literature which illustrates how navigating the multiplicity of identities may result in poorer social and emotional wellbeing, particularly for Indigenous queer youth. The article concludes with final comments and suggests future directions in mixed method research with Indigenous queer Australians to better understand and improve their social and emotional wellbeing.

1. Introduction

Indigenous queer people often experience a conflict in identity between long-standing cultures and new LGBTIQA+ spaces (Kerry, 2014); however, conflicts are being increasingly reframed as new generations consider decolonising ideas about white heteronormativity. This article reimagines some previous discussions surrounding Indigenous queer identities (Henningham, 2019) via autoethnographic methodology. Furthermore, I also share my own lived experiences through narrative analysis accompanied by reflexive writing to invite readers into the emergent experience of conducting

research. This analysis and reflexivity are underpinned by Gee and colleague's definition (as cited in Australian Government, 2017) of social and emotional wellbeing that encompasses mental and physical health for Indigenous peoples—a holistic concept that interweaves the connections between body, mind and emotions, family and kinship, community, culture, country, and spirituality and ancestors.

To provide some background of where I am situated in my identities, I will share my personal *muru* to learning and living culture, as well as my *muru* to becoming an Aboriginal queer academic. Building upon this, I explore how Indigenous queer journeys involve conflict

around sexual and cultural identities using borderland theory (Anzaldúa, 1987). Following this narrative analysis, I will discuss how this relates to existing literature regarding the needs of Indigenous queer youth and conclude with my developing research which aims to contribute to the emerging field of Indigenous Queer studies. To begin, I will address the backgrounds of the ethnographic approaches that underpin the development of this article.

2. Terminology

This article most frequently uses the term 'Indigenous peoples' for Australia's First Peoples (or 'Indigenous Australians,' if the term is being discussed in a global context), however, some examined studies use the term 'Aboriginal,' which will be maintained if used by the authors. 'Blak' is an Aboriginal English and Creole word used as an empowering descriptor for my self-identity and is used in various writings by Aboriginal people to reclaim stereotypical, representational, and historical notions of Blackness (Hazel, 2018). I use 'white' not in reference to the literal pigmentation of the skin, but in reference to people who (knowingly or not) are engaged in the racialised social structures they are positioned within. *Muru* is an Aboriginal word from Dharug language meaning 'roads/path' (Troy, 1994/2019) and is used to reclaim culture amongst otherwise moderately colonialised language and symbolises holding Indigenous knowledges throughout my narratives.

'LGBTIQA+' is an umbrella term for all non-heteronormative sexual, sex, and gender identities; the term is used in this article interchangeably with 'queer,' which may be perceived by some as more inclusive. The term 'bi+' is used, as it encapsulates a range of non-monosexual (not homosexual or heterosexual) identities such as bisexual, pansexual, plurisexual, ambisexual, asexual and other multi-gender attracted identities that experience the romantic or sexual attraction to more than one gender, but not necessarily to the same degree, at the same time, or in the same way (Nelson, 2020). 'Bi+' is also used interchangeably with 'non-monosexual' in contexts of the broader monosexual/non-monosexual dichotomy. 'Bisexual' is only used if a referenced study has mentioned this term, as it may not have included other bi+ identities in their research. In reference to my own sexual identity, the terms 'bi+' and 'queer' are used interchangeably.

The broader term of 'internalised phobias' is the internalisation of negative attitudes and beliefs and here refers to internalised homophobia, biphobia, or internalised racism. While homophobia and biphobia are sometimes used interchangeably, some contexts exclusively refer to internalised biphobia as it is more specific in conversations surrounding monosexuality/non-monosexuality rather than heterosexuality/homosexuality.

3. Exploring Narratives

Narratives are often referred to as a historical and universal concept that transcends, not only disciplines, but societies and cultures globally; "a fundamental operation of the normal mind functioning in society. To learn to speak is to learn to tell a story" (Le Guin, 1989, p. 39). They are used to explore the lived experiences of marginalised groups as it allows for an intimate navigation of experiences that quantitative approaches may not identify.

The purpose of Indigenous (auto)ethnography is to disrupt the power imbalance in research via the narratives of Indigenous voices. This approach challenges the status quo (heteronormative, masculine, white, middle- and upper-class research/ers) by rejecting the subjugation of marginalised people and colonised approaches and forefronts one's own cultural and personal stories (Smith, Denzin, & Lincoln, 2008).

I will also utilise a narrative autoethnographic approach to explore patterns of self-reflection and analysis of existing literature. Reflexivity will be used to illustrate the connection of these thought processes in addition to providing context; it offers reflection and analysis via a personal lens. This subjectivity adds meaningful and emotional depth to the analysis via introspection and 'vignettes' (a vivid portrayal or evocative short story detailing an experience or critical event used as a form of data to highlight a theoretical concept; see Erickson, 1986; Jarzabkowski, Bednarek, & Lê, 2014), furthering the readers' understanding behind the personal motivations for pursuing this research topic (Ellis, 2004). Layered accounts are formed by questioning and comparing one's own experiences against existing research and theory rather than using the more rigorous grounded theory-based pursuit for 'truth' (Charmaz, 1983).

I wish to acknowledge that I am writing this article from the positioning of someone who identifies as a middle-class, hetero-passing, white-passing, Indigenous queer woman investigating internalised phobias and their impacts in relation to the multiplicity of my own sexual and cultural identities.

4. Yearning for Identity

4.1. Muru *to Learning my Indigeneity*

My path to learning about culture has been long and complex. My mother was adopted in infancy and there is limited information on her family history. With no connections to family, country or culture, I have had to learn about my culture through non-traditional methods like websites, courses and books, the whitefella way, a true example of the ongoing impacts of colonialism:

> It has been a decade long journey to find cultural acceptance and understanding. I feel like I am both inside and outside my own culture; forever feeling like I am staring at my own culture through the looking

glass. I feel like a child surrounded by white art curators, scrutinising my every move, waiting for me to touch something.

This experience of cultural rejection or mourning a lack of culture or kinship is not uncommon with other Indigenous peoples who have had taken or adopted family members (like mine) and have subsequently had shattered community and cultural connections, not quite knowing where they come from, with no one to pass on cultural histories, stories, and traditions.

As part of my own cultural *muru*, I started to attend cultural classes where I can share my story and learn cultural practices and traditions the right way where I can yarn with other Indigenous peoples and share our stories. While it is not the country of my ancestors, it is the country I was born and raised in. I still feel some connection, even if it is not quite the same. It is both a culturally safe space where I can learn and where I can mourn what I never had.

I found that few people had the same story, highlighting the diverse experiences of being an Indigenous Australian. I value every session I have at the centre and feel grateful that there is a space to learn culture the right way, from our people rather than from a book or website which had left me clambering for cultural connection.

4.2. Muru *to Indigenous Queer Research*

Whilst my familial cultural connections are fractured, I am involved and accepted in the Indigenous community at the University of Sydney from my time there teaching and researching the health and wellbeing of intersex populations. I have worked as a teaching fellow and an Indigenous tutor under the Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) working with many Indigenous students of all levels to further their skills in academic development. I am a valued and respected scholar amongst fellow Indigenous staff and have built some amazing relationships working with them on Indigenous research projects. Being accepted into the Indigenous community there helps me feel supported; a notion that has been identified in existing research which highlighted the importance of how building relationships at University is vital to success in higher education for Indigenous Australians (Hill, Winmar, & Woods, 2018).

I have always been very eager to expand my engagement in other Indigenous communities; it is how I find and foster connection to community as an Indigenous woman who did not get to grow up on country. However, it is difficult to make connections without someone bringing you in. Despite the challenges of this, I persist. I use this sense of resilience to push myself further in my career, as well as using it as a building block to mentor other Indigenous students and researchers.

I have found that the difficulties of cultural acceptance or access is a shared experience amongst many Indigenous Australians, it feels like everyone has a story. Sharing these stories makes us stronger together and builds our collective resilience as a community. Resilience is a strong trait of Indigenous peoples that is required to survive and thrive at university (Hall et al., 2015).

5. The Borderland Between Indigeneity and Queerness

5.1. Holding onto Two Cultures

The application of borderland theory can offer greater insights into the difficulties of 'identity multiplicity' such as holding both Indigeneity and queer identities. For context, borderland theory grew from the lived experiences of Gloria Anzaldúa and others living between the two cultures of Mexico and the United States of America on the border, navigating the difficulty in holding onto two cultures with power imbalances (Anzaldúa, 1987).

There are similarities between explanations of queer and the borderlands. Callis (2014) explained the diversity within queer itself, how queer does not particularly refer to anything specific; even as an identity and theory, queer is a fluid concept. Similarly, Anzaldúa stated the borderlands is "an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries" (Anzaldúa, 2009, p. 243). Therefore, queer identities and the borderlands are both defined as being moveable, hard to define, and confine. Borderland theory forefronts identity multiplicity: it can be used to explore the intersectionality between various self-identities including sexual identity, gender identity, Indigeneity, ethnicity, race, and class (Callis, 2014).

For example, the complexities of holding multiple identities such as identifying as queer and Indigenous can be better understood by this model; queer people navigate a heteronormative (western) world not built for them, and Indigenous peoples navigate a colonised world that was imposed upon them. Whilst both are marginalised populations and do not have a lateral power imbalance (despite still experiencing lateral violence), both groups are subjugated by the powers of white heteronormativity. Someone with Indigenous and queer identities may end up navigating four or more borderland communities: mono-sexual/non-monosexual and Indigenous and non-Indigenous. This demonstrates the layered complexities of identity multiplicity.

5.2. Additional Barriers for Bi+ Identities

This becomes more layered when looking specifically at those with bi+ identities. Modern interpretation of sexuality is often understood as a monosexist binary between homosexuality and heterosexuality, leaving those with bi+ identities fighting for recognition and inclusion. Callis (2014) used borderland theory to discuss how bi+ identities remain outside of the homosexual/heterosexual binary, fighting to be a part of both communities while navigating the borderland of marginalised homosexual-

ity and hegemonic heteronormativity. This is a prime example of the struggles bi+ people face as they try to hold onto multiple identities with stark differences in power balances.

Navigating these borderlands is a diverse experience due to the additional subjective contexts (ethnicity, prior sexual identities, age, or marital statuses, etc.) from one's identity multiplicity that influence their lived experiences. Irrespective of this subjectivity, these different pathways can all be considered as having borderland sexualities (Callis, 2014). As such, "each of these people would understand their identities in completely different ways, and not necessarily feel as though they shared any commonalities with one another" (Callis, 2014. p. 70). Hence, it is possible that navigating bi+ sexual identities with pre-existing identity multiplicities may still be an isolating experience, regardless of other bi+ people following the same roads to the borderlands.

These added layers likely contribute to the poorer mental health outcomes of bisexual people due to experiencing invisibility, erasure, biphobia and being 'out' (Taylor, Power, Smith, & Rathbone, 2019). Bisexual people are more likely to be diagnosed with mental health disorders and engage in self-harm or suicidal thoughts. Taylor et al. (2019) identified higher levels of psychological distress in bisexual people with a total of 58.5% experiencing high or very high psychological distress compared to 11.7% of the general population. These overall findings support existing research that bisexual people experience poorer mental health than those who are heterosexual, gay or lesbian (Loi, Lea, & Howard, 2017; McNair, Kavanagh, Agius, & Tong, 2005; Persson, Pfaus, & Ryder, 2015). These statistics are also comparable to Indigenous Australian youth who reported high to very levels of distress, 2.4 times higher than non-Indigenous youth (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2011). While both populations individually experience high levels of distress and poor mental health, this does not reflect the added complexities brought about by an intersectional identity.

6. Internalised Phobias: A Narrative Analysis

6.1. Introducing Internalised Phobias

If one does 'cross the border' to the other community, there is the threat of being caught and expelled. This occurs when bi+ people are excluded from heterosexual groups as well as being rejected by biphobic queer spaces (Li, Dobinson, Scheim, & Ross, 2013). This contributes to the affirmation or development of internalised biphobia (Chard, Finneran, Sullivan, & Stephenson, 2015); never feeling or being accepted as 'queer enough' or feeling like they have something to prove. It is a double-edged sword of both privilege and isolation.

The following personal narrative analyses inspired three epiphanies; understanding the interrelationship between internalised biphobia (and other inwardly

directed negative social norms and attitudes) and performative social interactions, the presence of parallel internalised racism when examining these concepts under an Indigenous lens, and the links between internalised biphobia and the yearning for community acceptance.

6.2. Internalised Phobias and Performative Self-Expression of Identity

In my own experiences, I feel the same about approaching Indigenous cultural events and queer events; I feel that I am not 'gay enough' for queer communities and feel too disconnected to be accepted into Indigenous Australian communities. How does one project or enact a cultural identity? How do you flag yourself to peers you want to connect with?

Hegde (2002) suggested that enacting and negotiating identity is influential in everyday social interactions and relationships. Therefore, my white-passing skin tones, brightly dyed hair, mannerisms, vernaculars, and mild alternative aesthetics are a moving part of daily social interactions with others that formulate the process of negotiating and renegotiating my various identities; how they are projected and how they are received. I recently had an incidental reflective experience as I watched footage of myself prepare to host a bi+ community meeting called 'I Might be (Bi)as' via an online platform:

I played the video recording of the session. There was eight, long minutes of only myself on the screen as I had logged on and pre-maturely hit record prior to participants' arrivals. I hadn't planned on self-observation, but the opportunity presented itself. As I peered through the looking glass, she became a distal character before me, unbeknownst to her. I immediately felt vulnerable. Watching yourself waiting alone says more than I ever could have expected. Watching her, I recalled feelings of inadequacy, did I look queer enough to host and facilitate a queer workshop? I saw her obsessively tussle her hair, desperately trying to fluff it up to a more 'queer-friendly' style. I observed her putting on her rainbow earrings. She was repeatedly checking to see if they were visibly rainbow through the webcam, needing to flag her queerness. I began to realise just how fraught my body was with internalised biphobia and the accompanied craving for belonging. She didn't feel queer enough. I never feel queer enough.

My observations of how I negotiated and enacted certain perceived 'queer aesthetics' emphasise the role that doing gender (Butler, 1990) plays in expressing sexual identity. My need for enacting and negotiating my projected identity reflected a desire for acceptance from my peers.

This acknowledgement allowed me to confront the deep fear of rejection experienced from multiple com-

munities which manifested into the internalised biphobia I held within, a rejection from other communities and a rejection of the self. While I understood the rationality of these fears among monosexual communities and Indigenous communities (i.e., communities I have experienced difficulties accessing/gaining visibility), I had no cause to anticipate rejection from my peers in the bi+ community; we were on 'equal ground' in terms of roaming the borderland seeking acceptance. Why did I not feel queer enough among my own?

General populations often associate sexual identity with the performative nature of one's expressed gendered behaviours (or how one 'does gender') rather than the less visible specific sexual partners. For example, lesbian identities who perform a very feminine expression are often mistaken as heterosexual women. However, some choose to follow a certain style away from 'normative femininity' to self-represent as 'queer femmes,' to use femme to represent queerness for recognition and to fit into queer spaces (McCann, 2018). This gets more complex when considering bi+ identities as living on the borderland of homosexual/heterosexual and feminine/masculine leaves limited space for self-presentation, and self-expression, and media representation, a contributing factor to bi+ invisibility. Whilst this does make space for playfully combining or recombining varied elements of self-expression across many of these identities/expressions, the lack of clear visible markers for bi+ sexual identities raises questions regarding how to represent one's sexual identity and if others can interpret this representation (Nelson, 2020). This makes performative self-expression or 'doing beauty' (Hammidi & Kaiser, 1999) challenging for bi+ sexual identities as they struggle to express themselves in a way that does not isolate them from one community/subset of dating experiences or the other (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013). Further, it takes vigilance to consistently scrutinise one's own behaviours and actions to ensure it is adhering to the cultural norms of a chosen community (Callis, 2014).

This self-scrutiny reaffirms the desire for acceptance and recognition even in one's own peer group. Thus, the presence of internalised bi/homophobia dictates the perceived necessity to gain or shred certain identity performances for acceptance and is so ingrained that bi+ people feel they need to emphasise their identity performance to 'prove' their dedication to queerness, even to appease their own (Callis, 2014). Alternatively, monosexist gender performativity can create pressures to adhere to the safety of social norms prescribed gender binary, perpetuating cisnormal social structures which contributes to a heterosexist and transphobic culture (Nelson, 2020).

6.3. Internalised Phobias and Indigeneity

As I am writing this from the perspective of someone with identity multiplicity, I reflected on these same attitudes under the context of indigeneity. Upon reflection,

I am certain I would have been fraught with a parallel panic if other Indigenous queer participants attended; I would have a strong desire to flag my identity as a proud Blak woman, to show that I belong, that I am 'one of us.'

I imagined myself decolonising how I 'did beauty,' like not straightening my curly hair, which I have been socially conditioned by the "imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (Hooks, 2000, p. 46) to 'diss-appreciate' in its natural state (Norwood, 2018). Whilst this would be a liberating experience, to free my Indigenous, authentic self and thrust it into visibility, I often withhold the desire out of fear of experiencing shadeism (from non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples) as a light-skinned Aboriginal woman.

6.4. Internalised Phobias, Shadeism, and Institutionalised Racism

Shadeism privileges people of colour with lighter skin tones over those with darker skin tones, granting greater access to employment, housing, and education (Hunter, 2007). This lens demonstrates how "dark-skinned people may be perceived as more racially and culturally authentic than light-skinned people and may therefore be considered desirable additions to workplaces where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence is a requirement" (Plater, Mooney-Somers, Barclay, & Boulton, 2020, p. 495). Yet, darker-skinned people are more often ignored or othered by a dominant workplace culture. Often this racism comes in the form of 'soft bigotry' by having low expectations of people of colour and employing them under 'compassion' from white/settler guilt, only to infantilise and exoticise the employee to reclaim white moral authority (Plater et al., 2020; Steele, 2006). As a light-skinned Aboriginal woman, I have a myriad of experiences where I have seen people (including potential employers) doubt or blatantly reject my Indigeneity; I did not present 'authentic' enough for a check-box hire:

> I was nervous walking into the nurse's office prior to my operation. We sat down and began to go through some paperwork. We eventually got to the question I always dread: "So, Mandy, are you Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?" She asked it whilst not looking up from the form. "Yes." I replied. "Oh!" She paused as her eyes darted from the page. I could feel her eyes scanning me, scrutinising my appearance. "You don't look it at all. Look at your red hair!" "Well, I am," I said assertively. I was tense. Despite my vigilance, it still catches me off guard. It is hard to stay assertive when someone is questioning your identity, your soul. "Okay then….Aboriginal. You're sure?" "Yes!" I repeated, trying not to sound too defensive. She raised her eyebrows in disbelief and continued to fill out the form.

It is instances like these that are firm reminders of the difficulties in even disclosing identity. Most of my racist or

shadeist experiences have been a result of institutional racism. The above example in a healthcare setting, the general public as a result of colonial education in the Australian school system ("what percentage Aboriginal are you?"), and lateral violence from organisations and places of potential employment.

I have had challenging and traumatic experiences trying to gain legal paperwork for 'official recognition' as an Indigenous person. Further, gathering this 'proof' of my identity has been incredibly invasive and can be personally trauma inducing for myself and my family, as well as being a barrier to gaining employment. Institutions of power (laws, governing bodies, organisations) create 'identified opportunities' yet the requirements for 'qualifying' for a 'proof of Aboriginality' document vastly ignores the challenges faced by those (and there are many) who have a family history of adoption or displacement (like mine); they have set us up to fail.

Analysing these attitudes and behaviours regarding my indigeneity expanded my thinking about other places this may impact my life. I am reminded of work by Gonsiorek (1988) who discussed a common form of 'covert' internalised homophobia where one is accepting one's own identities yet finds ways to self-sabotage one's own efforts. I resonated with this interpretation and applied it to internalised racism which enabled me to recognise it in my own patterns of behaviour, particularly towards career development. I am hesitant to apply for Indigenous-identified roles out of fear of reigniting the traumas over 'official recognition' or the potential for not being taken seriously by academic peers who take a reductionist view and see my appointment as 'special treatment.'

Reflecting on that scenario under a Queer lens, I have similar reservations for queer-identified roles. Heteronormativity dictates that I am a heterosexual, married woman until proven otherwise, as though the institution of hetero-marriage strips me of my queerness and reduces me to heteronormative functionalism. Thus, there is the ever-present concern that I will be perceived a fraud in a queer role. Reflecting on how these are intertwined, it becomes more apparent that the internalisation of dual-wielding oppression is difficult to escape.

6.5. The Cycle of Internalised Phobias and Yearning for Peer Acceptance

There appears to be a cyclical nature to internalised phobias and connection-building; how internalisation of constant community rejection builds a greater longing for community acceptance which in turn, impact how we visibly project our sexual identity to others. Despite wanting to flag ourselves to peers, we still hold a sense of community rejection, even from others perceived to be 'like us.' This leads to covert internalised phobia wherein we may self-sabotage potential connections by expecting rejection or focus on 'othering' ourselves due to additional identities. This may be an example of how identity

multiplicity can feel isolating even in unity, supporting Callis' (2014) theory how those with identity multiplicity see themselves differently to some cohorts with other dual+ identities.

6.6. The Duality of Sexual and Racial Minority Stress

Bi+ people experience antibisexual prejudice, lateral violence within the LGBTIQA+ community, and assumed monosexuality, while LGBTIQA+ people of colour are subject to unique discrimination including racism within LGBTIQA+ communities in conjunction with heterosexism from their racial/ethnic community (Meyer, 2003). These negative experiences are often referred to as sexual/racial minority stress.

Clark (2014) discussed their own experiences of disclosing sexuality or race; people had asked them about difficulties of being both queer and Aboriginal or had even questioned that people like them exist. The very questioning of both identities signals the idea that being queer and being Aboriginal are incompatible cultures, yet, Aboriginal Australia has a queer history. Baylis (2015) examined how gender and sexual diversity of Indigenous peoples is scarcely mentioned in Australian histories which reinforces the hetero-centric literature surrounding historic Aboriginal cultures. Despite this, more recent research suggested that sistergirls (Indigenous trans-femme identity identities falling outside western gender binaries) have long been a part of Aboriginal communities since before colonisation (Riggs & Toone, 2017).

Like Clark (2014), I too am met with intrigue at either my race or sexuality, sitting 'on the fence' of both; a light-skinned Aboriginal woman disconnected from culture who is navigating subjective lived experiences of bi-erasure. I recall a difficult but powerful memory from a yarning circle about totem animals:

We were going around the circle, discussing our totem animals. I felt so anxious, how would I know that I picked my totem the 'right way'? Will my totem animal be accepted? Will people doubt my indigeneity? Everyone told a beautiful story of connecting with a native animal, until it was my turn. "I know that mine is a bit controversial," I started "but please hear me out. My totem animal is a fox. I know! But fox is here. Fox didn't ask to be here, no knowledge of their origin, trying to adapt to a land they are not naturally acclimatised to. Fox is disliked everywhere for being a pest, but fox didn't ask to be here. Ruining native wildlife, upsetting farms….But fox is just trying to survive in a world not built for them. I am fox." I gestured towards my red, fox-like hair. There was a silence as everyone processed my totem. Finally, someone said: "I've never liked foxes. They've always gotten to my chickens and I never saw them as anything but a feral pest. But what you said, just now, that's given me a new perspective. I never thought about foxes that way, it's not their fault, they didn't ask for this….Thank you."

This vignette illustrates the difficulty of identity multiplicity; torn between worlds, I am forever living on the borderland of Indigenous ways and whitefella ways, but never truly either. Similarly, monosexist hegemony gatekeeps me from finding belonging in some heterosexual and queer spaces.

Stories of marginalisation towards multiple identities is also expressed in the artworld. Rea is a Gamilaroi/Wailwan photographer/digital media, and installation artist who conceptualises the internalised racism and homophobia experienced by many Indigenous queer people, or 'blak kweers' (Bartleme, 2000). Rea's work invites viewers to re-evaluate their own positioning in the multiplicities of race, power, sexuality. As both Indigenous and queer people have a history of being vilified, her series rea-code 1998 featured targets as symbolism. Further, she disrupts assumptions of Indigenous female sexuality by inserting herself into her works to illustrate taking back control, no longer the subject of the western gaze (Bartleme, 2000). The power of her pieces illustrates the multiple ways one can tell a narrative in a way that is meaningful to both artist and audience which may invite a different audience.

Clark's (2014), Rea's (Bartleme, 2000), and my own experiences are subjective but not isolated incidents; there is power in the collection of narratives, and I share my stories in this article to reflect the diversity of experiences had by Indigenous queer people. Clark (2014) discussed how there are various Indigenous queer narratives, yet people are still not listening to them; a blind eye turned to the multiplicities of culture, lived experiences, and community.

Navigating my queerness is not unlike discovering my cultural/ethnic journey. My biological makeup and my presenting mono-cis-het relationship status does enable me to retain white-hetero-monogamous privilege which does assist in protecting myself from certain discriminations or unsafe scenarios under white, and 'bisexual privilege'; having an other-sex partner allows for the freedom of a bi+ identity within the parameters of hegemonic hetero-safety (Anderson & McCormack, 2016). However, by striving to hold on to both communities, people who identify as bi+ often experience rejection from both (Callis, 2014). Living between polarising identities may result in one or often both communities misreading one's identity, leaving bi+ people invisible or 'twice-rejected' from a community for presenting either 'too straight' or 'too queer' (Shokeid, 2002).

Historically, the queer community has struggled to welcome Indigenous voices in Australia, which is also reflected in Queer theory as it often fails to recognise how some Queer theories and histories once originated from the colonial and violent epistemologies (Clark, 2014). For example, Clark (2014) discussed commentary surrounding the inclusion of a gay character on Aboriginal television show, *Redfern Now*. Comments about the character sparked online debates on what is and is not 'real' Aboriginal culture in terms of accepting queerness.

The arguments made about Redfern Now supported the tenet that Aboriginal culture either ties a person to the savagery and conservatism on one end of the spectrum (barbarism comments including how ancestors would 'have their heads' for it), and 'civilisation' or western acceptance of sexual diversity on the other (that accepting homosexuality is a western idea, that you 'enjoy being western'). This highlighted the issues surrounding what it means to be 'authentically' Aboriginal and further reiterated the perceived 'incompatibility' of queer and Aboriginal cultural identities, creating a cultural borderland.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Final Thoughts

By using reflexivity while analysing my subjective narratives, I have grown my understanding of broader cultural experiences (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011) both personally, and academically via connecting these reflections with theory.

On a personal level, I discovered that the internalised biphobia I carried with me had such a strong impact on my outwardly projected self-expression of my identity. Further, these same principles uncovered internalised racism which I did not realise was present. It manifested as an enabler of self-sabotage, acting as a barricade to accessing Indigenous specific roles or services which I was sure I would be rejected from; I actively had been othering myself from my own communities due to the negative experiences I had from various institutions of power.

The findings from the narrative analysis and literature suggest that internalised phobias are, in my own experiences, contribute towards fears of rejection due to our often marginalised identities. There is a desire to 'prove one's queerness' as a result, to adjust one's performative identity accordingly for specific communities. This is particularly true for bi+ identities who remain invisible on the dichotomous masculine/feminine scale of doing gender. It drove the need for enacting and negotiating my projected identity, particularly as both my blakness and queerness are invisible. As internalised phobias are the internalisation of constant community rejection, it fosters a greater desire for belonging which may then inform our choices surrounding the performative self-expression of sexual identity.

Therefore, there is a clear, cyclical impact of internalised phobias on how we perceive ourselves and our expectations on being perceived; a desire for community acceptance is born and fostered by performative self-identity expression, only to self-sabotage our efforts by othering ourselves from other identity, and out of fear of rejection. This cements the cycle of rejection and isolation felt by those who experience identity multiplicity, including Indigenous queer people. The cyclical nature of this social exclusion directly impacts social and emotional wellbeing.

Having a plurality of identities has had a strong impact on my social and emotional wellbeing as an Indigenous queer woman. While I have made some community connections at the University, I am still disconnected from my country and from my unknown family as a direct result of colonialism and assimilation. With my paleness mistaken for whiteness and my romantic relationships passing for heteronormativity, I often feel invisible, roaming the borderland, unseen and alone with no scripts or visual markers to signal my peers.

My lived experiences demonstrate the interconnectedness of all aspects (body, mind, emotions, family, kinship, community, culture, country, spirit, and ancestors; see Australian Government, 2017) of social and emotional wellbeing. Despite the social and emotional isolation explored in this narrative, I acknowledge that my experiences come from a place of privilege as a white-passing, hetero-passing educated woman.

As my story is just one detailed account of a lived experience of existing on the fringe of multiple identities, it is essential to broaden the scope to wider literature to gain a greater understanding of the interrelationship between plural identities, social and emotional wellbeing in the context of Indigeneity, queerness, and youth.

7.2. Identified Problems in and for Further Research

These interrelated concepts strongly impact the social and emotional wellbeing of this population, which young people may be particularly vulnerable to experiencing. Suicide affects 95% of Indigenous peoples either directly or within close generations (Korff, 2019). Indigenous Australia has the second highest youth suicide rate in the world, twice the rates of overall Australians. In 2017, suicide was the primary cause of death for 40% of Indigenous Australian youth aged 5–17 years (Dudgeon et al., 2018). The death toll from suicide in Indigenous Australians is rising: 169 Indigenous Australians were victims of suicide in 2018, up from 140 deaths in 2012 (Korff, 2019). Statistics from 2013 showed that suicide is most common in young Indigenous men (aged 25–29), four times the rate for non-Indigenous men (Dudgeon et al., 2018). This often occurs after long durations of suppressed rage from being in powerless positions, enduring the ongoing impacts of colonisation (Korff, 2019).

Intergenerational trauma is another contributing factor, with Indigenous peoples being victims of child abuse from foster parents as well as being subjected to forced removal from their homes and country; this is often compounded with years of institutionalised racism and poverty, building multiple traumas over time. These traumas are passed on either collectively or transgenerationally and can lead to a sense of hopelessness (Korff, 2019). Indigenous elders have identified other factors that contribute to high suicide rates in Indigenous youth such as low self-esteem, the isolation of youth from family disconnection, and a lack of cultural resilience and cross-cultural confusion.

When looking at the needs of minorities within minorities like Indigenous queer youth, there is a greater need for more representation on mental health and suicide prevention forums (Korff, 2019). Whilst data for Indigenous queer youth in Australia is scarce, data from North America found high levels of physical and sexual abuse, high usage of mental healthcare services, suicide risk, and severe poverty in Indigenous LGBTIQ people (Ristock, Zoccole, & Passante, 2011).

More work needs to be done to improve the mental health of Indigenous queer youth to improve suicide prevention, contributing to their overall social and emotional wellbeing. This social and emotional wellbeing extends to social relationships, family dynamics, romantic and sexual relationships, community experiences, and school experiences.

A 2010 Australian study on LGBTIQ youth found 3% were Indigenous Australians which reflected the broader Indigenous Australian population figures (Hillier et al., 2010). Indigenous Australian students were less likely to finish their schooling and less likely to reside in their family homes than the wider LGBTIQ youth population (Hillier et al., 2010). This stressed an intersectional barrier to education and stability for Indigenous queer youth in Australia.

Further literature found that bi-erasure and bullying is widespread in Australian schools (Jones & Hillier, 2016). A Canadian study advocated a two-spirit antibullying model which incorporated a range of queer identities in a fluid, cyclical approach rather than a colonial and dichotomous one (Robinson, 2014). Perhaps this approach could be appropriately considered in a local context.

Given the high rates of suicide in both queer youth populations and Indigenous Australian youth, it can be hypothesised that the triangulation of these identities would experience very high incidences of depression and suicide ideation amongst the Indigenous queer community. Working with this community in a qualitative capacity may identify some factors surrounding depression and suicide ideation which may then inform suicide research.

These alarming statistics reiterate the imperative need for more research-informed resources surrounding the wellbeing, support and harm-minimisation needed amongst this intersectional population.

7.3. Research in Development

With my combined research history in marginalised populations (Indigenous students and LGBTIQA+ populations), I aim to combine these research areas to work with Indigenous queer youth. My work aims to explore their lived experiences in; schools, healthcare systems, identity-based communities, social, platonic, and romantic relationships to gain a more comprehensive understanding of what it means to be an Indigenous queer young person. This will be used to identify the needs of young Indigenous queer people; to evaluate how they

can be better supported in their multiple communities such as school systems, healthcare, and community and peer support.

Further, the findings may produce data surrounding the contributing factors of self-harm and suicide for Indigenous queer youth. Whilst there is research on the broader queer, and trans and gender diverse populations in Australia, the specific needs of populations with intersectional identities like Indigenous queer young people are imperative. There is a great need to address the potential cultural conflicts, exclusion, racism and homo/bi/transphobia, and high rates of self-harm and suicide that is experienced by this community.

The study being developed will use borderland theory and Queer theory to gain an in-depth understanding of Indigenous queer youth lived experiences using diverse methods and methodologies. A Queer Indigenous lens reframes colonialism as a system of racialised heteronormativity; to challenge the status quo via a critical framework (Hames-García, 2013). Specific methods may include traditional methods of quantitative and qualitative data via surveys and interviews (yarn-ups), and content analysis of Indigenous queer content online. Ethnographic methodologies will be employed for deeper insights, such as conducting fieldwork at Indigenous queer events, and other community-based participatory research approaches such as photovoices (Nykiforuk, Vallianatos, & Nieuwendyk, 2011) or other artworks.

Additionally, community autoethnographies combine personal experiences of researchers and working alongside communities to identify how a community develops certain cultural or social issues (Toyosaki, Pensoneau-Conway, Wendt, & Leathers, 2009). This facilitates an environment for further community-building research practices and offers a collective space for socio-cultural intervention (von Kardorff & Schönberger, 2010). By allowing space for different research methods, the study may be more inviting to additional potential participants who prefer more creative ways (rather than written or spoken) of telling their narrative.

Several academics across Australia are pioneering the new field of Indigenous Queer studies, drawing on intersections of new queer ideas with the world's oldest cultures to look at contemporary problems. It is an exciting time in research to be contributing to this emerging field, especially for Indigenous and queer academics alike across an array of disciplines.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

Understanding the Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal LGBTIQ(SB)+ Youth in Victoria's Youth Detention

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Abstract

Aboriginal youth are overrepresented within Victoria's criminal justice system (Cunneen, 2020). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are diverse people with diverse needs: It is imperative to understand what those needs are and how they can be supported within Victoria's youth justice centres. Research has identified that Aboriginal youth in Victoria's justice system have higher rates of psychopathology (Shepherd et al., 2018), higher rates of recidivism (Cunneen, 2008), higher pre-custody rates and post-release rates of substance abuse (Joudo, 2008) and lower rates of rehabilitation (Thompson et al., 2014) than non-Indigenous counterparts. It is critical to explore how the Victorian youth justice system identifies and implements the provision of services that consider lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, sistergirl and brotherboy (LGBTIQSB+) identities of Aboriginal youth in custody. This is because additional levels of systemic disadvantage, discrimination, stigma, and social exclusion that impact LGBTIQ+ youth specifically (Cunneen, Goldson, & Russell, 2016) as well as Aboriginal identity, further compound and jeopardize the social and emotional wellbeing of those embodying intersectional identities. This article will examine the services available to Aboriginal LGBTIQSB+ youth in the Victorian criminal justice system. Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Indigenous and First Nations People will be used interchangeably throughout this document.

Issue

This article is part of the issue "Young, Indigenous, LGBTIQ+: Understanding and Promoting Social and Emotional Wellbeing" edited by Karen Soldatic (Western Sydney University, Australia), Linda Briskman (Western Sydney University, Australia), William Trewlynn (BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation, Australia), John Leha (BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation, Australia), Corrinne Sullivan (Western Sydney University, Australia) and Kim Spurway (Western Sydney University, Australia).

1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to explore the services and/or programs for Aboriginal Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Sistergirl and Brotherboy (LGBTIQSB+) youth in Victoria's juvenile criminal justice system. Sistergirl and Brotherboy refer to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People in the community who embody an assigned gender, however live partly or fully as male (Brotherboy) or female (Sistergirl; see Anae, 2020). This article provides a background into the overrepresentation of Aboriginal youth in the Victorian youth justice system as well as an overview of the historical context and the impact of colonisation. The inclusion of Aboriginal youth within the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) report

and recommendations, and the latest strategic plan in Victoria with aims to address overrepresentation and reduce offending rates of youth will also be examined. The article will explore the importance of social and emotional wellbeing in Aboriginal cultures, mental health, intersectionality and servicing the needs of Aboriginal LGBTIQSB+ youth throughout the Victorian juvenile and criminal justice system. The authors of this article have deliberately chosen the literature, where possible, to cite Aboriginal scholarly work and centre lived experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB+ people. The conscious decision to undertake this methodological approach prioritises sovereignty of this topic.

2. Background

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People are overrepresented throughout the Australian criminal justice system in every State and Territory (Behrendt, Cunneen, Libesman, & Watson, 2019; Blastock, Bamblett, & Black, 2020). According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW, 2018, p. 3) in 2016, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people, aged between 10 to 24 years of age, made up around 5% of the total Australian youth population. The report states that "of these, around 36% were aged 10–14, 34% were aged 15–19 and 30% were aged 20–24" (AIHW, 2018, p. 3). In Victoria, Aboriginal youth comprised 1.3% of the total Victorian youth population (aged 10–17 years) in 2016, however, Aboriginal youth now make up 16.9% of all youth in detention (AIHW, 2020). Under the *Sentencing Act 1991,* Victoria operates a unique dual track system which was established to enable the adult courts to sentence young offenders under the age of 21 to serve their sentence in youth detention as opposed to an adult prison. The Victorian dual track system was designed to prevent young people from entering the adult prison system from an early age (Sentencing Advisory Council, 2019).

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB+ young people in Victoria who are in youth detention or custody may require particular medical or accommodation considerations (Victorian Government, 2020). In order to ascertain the needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB+ needs, there must be inclusion of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and youth justice health organisations. According to the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People (2016, pp. 54–57), Aboriginal children who are engaged with an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation will have better health and wellbeing outcomes with the continued connection to culture. If Aboriginal LGBTIQSB+ youth within the criminal justice system in Victoria are centred, and their needs are not just met but understood and respected, then serious progress must be made relevant to the level of care provided to these young people. When people identify as Aboriginal and LGBTIQ+ it is crucial that their needs be considered to

ensure there is safety within the criminal justice system and access to specific services.

3. Historical Context

In order to understand the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and/or LGBTIQ+ children in youth justice, the rates of imprisonment for children and young people in Victoria will be examined as well as the historical context and relationship between the criminal justice system and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB+ youth. Victoria's first legislation in relation to enacting a Protection Act, the *Aborigines Protection Act 1886*, was established in 1886. This act allowed the Board for the Protection of Aborigines to control the lives of Aboriginal people through forcibly removing 'half caste' Aboriginal children from missions and reserves to be assimilated into white society (AIATSIS, 2020). This specific Act was the beginning of what is now termed the Stolen Generations. Victoria was not the only state to enact such policies. In New South Wales, the Aborigines Protection Act 1909 gave power to the Board of Protection to remove children from families and place them into white families to be assimilated (Cunneen & White, 2011). Over the next few decades, Aboriginal protection policies and racist legislation that forcibly removed children from their families and communities continued well into the 1970s (Barta, 2008). The RCIADIC sparked a much-needed investigation into the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people within the criminal justice system (Cunneen, 2001). According to Cunneen (2020), there was difficulty in accessing appropriate data and statistics in relation to young people, however, there was a sense that the overrepresentation of Aboriginal young people was increasing. Cunneen (2020, p. 13) also notes that "it has only been since 1993 that national information has been available on incarcerated youth which identifies whether a young person is Indigenous or not." Given this to be the case, it must be assumed that information on LGBTIQ+ youth would be as difficult to obtain.

Identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and a young queer person impacts greatly on policing practices. There is a great deal of research into policing methods towards young LGBTIQ+ youth as well as the policing of Aboriginal youth (Cunneen, Goldson, & Russell, 2016; Dwyer, 2011). Aboriginal youth are often targeted by police and policing practices. The misuse of police discretion in relation to Aboriginal youth as well as specific taskforces where Aboriginal children are constantly under the surveillance by police is presently occurring in communities throughout Australia (Cunneen, 2015; White, 1999). For LGBTIQ+ youth, the surveillance usually commences within the school and may result in criminal sanction and/or punishment (Snapp, Hoenig, Fields, & Russell, 2015). In a paper by Angela Dwyer (2015), LGBTIQ+ youth were found to have learnt from interactions with police, firstly not to draw

attention to their queerness, and, secondly to evade police by changing their appearance so as not to appear queer. The same cannot be said for Aboriginal youth, as their appearance is used as a racially profiling practice by police and is a contributing factor in the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people, in general, within the criminal justice system (Cunneen, 2006). The types of policing methods in relation to Aboriginal and LGBTIQ+ youth have impacted on the overrepresentation of these populations within youth justice. A robust examination of the appropriate and broad-ranging services available for Aboriginal LGBTIQSB+ youth within the criminal justice system, those that identify and meet the diverse needs of this population, must be undertaken. The psychological distress and harm of incarcerating Aboriginal LGBTIQSB+ young people have detrimental effects on their social and emotional wellbeing, continues the cycle of incarceration well in adulthood, and impacts not only the individual but also upon their family and community (Gee, Dudgeon, Schultz, Hart, & Kelly, 2014). Alternatives to incarceration must be explored as well as services that adequately respond to the needs of Aboriginal LGBTIQSB+ children and young people.

4. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

The RCIADIC was established in October 1987 due to a public growing concern regarding 99 Aboriginal deaths that occurred between 1980 and 1989 (RCIADIC, 1991). In 1991, the RCIADIC made 339 recommendations in relation to a range of criminal justice, health, education, housing, employment, and social systemic issues (Whittaker, 2018). There were 20 of the 339 recommendations made that related to youth or juvenile from the RCIADIC. One of the most prominent recommendations made in the report, highlights the urgency in reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in criminal and welfare systems, particularly young Aboriginal people:

> That governments and Aboriginal organisations recognise that the problems affecting Aboriginal juveniles are so widespread and have such potentially disastrous repercussions for the future that there is an urgent need for governments and Aboriginal organisations to negotiate together to devise strategies designed to reduce the rate at which Aboriginal juveniles are involved in the welfare and criminal justice systems and, in particular, to reduce the rate at which Aboriginal juveniles are separated from their families and communities, whether by being declared to be in need of care, detained, imprisoned or otherwise. (RCIADIC, 1991, Vol. 2, p. 225)

Yet almost 30 years since the RCIADIC delivered its report and 339 recommendations, Aboriginal youth continue to be overrepresented throughout each Australian State or Territory criminal justice systems. On any given day in the Northern Territory, Aboriginal children tend to make up 100% of youth in detention (Allam, 2020). As previously mentioned, in Victoria the statistics for Aboriginal youth are just as alarming, given the small percentage from the total population of Aboriginal youths in Victoria.

Since the RCIADIC, there has been a separate Royal Commission that focused on the treatment of children in detention in the Northern Territory. The Royal Commission and Board of Enquiry into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory report and recommendations were tabled in Parliament in 2017 (Whittaker, 2018). The findings from this royal commission conveyed that the use segregation and isolation as a behavioural management tool had ongoing psychological effects on individuals (Grant, 2016). A submission into the inquiry of youth justice centres in Victoria (Naylor, Grant, & Lulham, 2017), found that similar treatment of children and young people in youth justice centres was occurring in the Northern Territory, Queensland, and New South Wales. Although the Royal Commission into the detention and protection of children in the Northern Territory was conducted in and on children and young people in the Northern Territory, the findings from the report and recommendations can be applied to the treatment of children and young people in Victoria and across Australia; particularly Aboriginal and LGBTIQ+ children and young people. It is important to examine the rhetoric of the criminal justice system in relation to Royal Commissions and the report and recommendations that result from the investigations undertaken by the commissioners.

5. The Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2020–2030

The Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2020–2030 was established in May 2020 to reduce youth offending and promote working together with other justice agencies to meet the needs of children and young people in Victorian youth justice centres (Victorian Government, 2020). A thematic analysis was performed on the Youth Strategic Plan 2020–2030 document to examine the representation of LGBTIQ+ youth as well as Aboriginal youth. It is rarely seen in any documents on justice related outcomes, that intersectionality exists within the space of Aboriginal LGBTIQSB+ youth, therefore, the thematic analysis explored sections of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Indigenous, LGBTIQ(+), sexuality, youth, young people/person, juvenile, mental health, social and emotional wellbeing.

A thematic analysis (Merton, 1975) was employed to identify the number of times certain words were used throughout the Victorian Youth Strategic Plan 2020–2030. It is necessary to examine whether a pattern or whether a repetition of words was presented within the document to show where the priorities are in relation to Aboriginal LGBTIQ children and young people. To give a brief overview, Aboriginal was mentioned 84

times, LGBTIQ was mentioned 14 times, mental health was mentioned 49 times, wellbeing was mentioned nine times and social and emotional wellbeing was mentioned only once, throughout the 53-page document. Addressing overrepresentation of Aboriginal LGBTIQSB+ youth within the juvenile justice system in Victoria, it was necessary to undertake this analysis to form part of the critique that Victoria's criminal justice system has not progressed enough to efficiently deal with the diverse needs of this particularly unique group of children and young people. The thematic analysis found the notable absence of Aboriginal LGBTISQ+ youth. For example, when explaining how youth justice will address the needs of LGBTIQ+ youth, there is simple statements is to "work with" and "collaborative with" (Victorian Government, 2020, p. 34). The language shown here is passive and any details as to whether there will be specific programs implemented or any connection to outside support groups is not mentioned.

As for Aboriginal youth, the 84 mentions indicate that there must be significant support mechanisms in place to support Aboriginal young people in youth justice. This is evident in the statistics and overrepresentation faced by Aboriginal children and young people. From the 84 mentions, five of the mentions are in the acknowledgement section (Victorian Government, 2020, p. 2). The following is from the Minister's Foreword, which states:

> A disproportionate number of these young people are Aboriginal Victorians or members of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. (Victorian Government, 2020, p. 4)

There are two pages in this document that relate to Aboriginal youth. On those pages, exists a border consisting of Aboriginal artwork. Fredericks (2010) states in relation to feminist research, there is an element of tokenism when asking or expecting an Aboriginal person to be engaging in culture through a Western lens. The Western lens, in this case is the criminal justice system, whereby the idea of what Aboriginal culture is, can be seen in artwork in a document or hanging up on the wall of a courtroom, when in fact, this is simply not the case. There is an assumption by the western legal system that Aboriginal culture is a monoculture (Westerman, 2010). The displayed Aboriginal artwork within this document is tokenistic, as it ignores a true representation or understanding of what Aboriginal culture actually entails. Aboriginal culture is represented as dots and lines, rather than a deeper meaning of connection to country, to kin and to language.

In order to address the overrepresentation and explore that "the overrepresentation of Aboriginal young people in Youth Justice is unacceptably high and is an ongoing concern" (Victorian Government, 2020, p. 22), the system must link Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ youth to external services in order to make well-considered connections and establish meaningful relationships on the

'outside,' while they are on the 'inside.' Success in meaningful partnerships between community and the criminal justice system has been observed from programs in NSW, such as the "Never Going Back" program, where Aboriginal people in prison on day release from prison engage with the community, whereby upon release, they have already made strong connection with community (People DAA, 2016). Furthermore, the only time that Aboriginal and LGBTIQ+ are mentioned in the same sentence is in the following statement which calls for an awareness of individual needs, noting the need to:

> Deliver individualised services that are cognisant of young people's age, gender, Aboriginal status, cultural background, family circumstances, health, mental health, disability and social needs, and sexuality and gender identity. (Victorian Government, 2020, p. 16)

From the thematic analysis, the above statement conveys that there is a lack of understanding around intersectionality, specifically when it comes to considering the children and young people who identify as Aboriginal LGBTIQSB+ within the criminal justice system. Given the issues that Aboriginal young people face within the criminal justice system, particularly with over-policing and surveillance of Aboriginal young people, intersectionality should be given more recognition and prioritised to reduce the interactions with the criminal justice system. There is a missed opportunity to engage with this particular group of young people throughout this strategic plan, which is further shown by the absence of services provided by Victorian corrections within youth justice to adequately meet the unique intersectional needs and requirements of Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ young people. Social and emotional wellbeing programs or services for Aboriginal or LGBTIQ+ young people are also inadequately met, only being referenced once throughout the document, which stated:

> This whole-of-system examination has been designed to: address issues that affect the cultural connectedness and social and emotional wellbeing of the young person. (Victorian Government, 2020, p. 23)

6. Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Aboriginal People

The terms social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB), mental health, mental health problems, mental illness, and mental condition and/or disorder are often used interchangeably and can be a source of confusion when discussing the psychological wellbeing of Aboriginal people. Social and emotional wellbeing is a multidimensional concept that encompasses a range of domains of health and wellbeing. The SEWB of individuals, families, and communities is influenced and impacted by a connection to body, mind, emotions, family and kinship, community, culture, land, and spirituality (Gee et al., 2014).

Connection describes the experiencing and embodiment across these SEWB spheres throughout the lifespan; the nature of these connections will vary across people's lives according to the different needs of childhood, youth, adulthood, and older age. Disruption to connections across these domains generate poorer SEWB, whilst reanimating, strengthening, and healing promotion leads to increased SEWB (Gee et al., 2014).

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, health is not defined by the physical wellbeing of an individual, but refers broadly to the social, emotional, and cultural wellbeing of the whole community (Gee et al., 2014). In contrast to the Western medical models founded in reductionist approaches to health, where theoretical and practice inclinations are oriented toward deficit-centring and pathologising (focused primarily on inadequacy, dysfunction, and disorder), SEWB is a broader concept where the emphasis instead is oriented toward holistic and inclusive individual and community paradigms of strength and wellbeing (DHS Vic, 2008).

7. Mental Health Considerations in Aboriginal Populations

Aboriginal people experience higher levels of psychological distress in contrast to any other group in Australia, with the historical and current impacts of colonisation having perpetuated and continuing to perpetuate devastating impacts on individuals and communities at every level. Practices encompassed include war, massacres, and genocide; dispossession, displacement, and forced relocation, protectionism, surveillance, and incarceration, loss of traditional lands and ecological destruction, intentional and unintentional spread of deadly diseases, assimilation, regulation of marriage, and removal of children, forced labour, slavery and stolen wages, banning of Indigenous languages, and eradication of social, cultural and spiritual practices (Doyle, 2011; Paradies, 2016). The continuous and pervasive influences of white and/or Eurocentric supremacy, and the consequent racism, marginalisation, social inequity, loss of culture and identity, and issues of transgenerational trauma on Aboriginal health and wellbeing are well recognised (Balaratnasingam et al., 2019; Shen et al., 2018).

Critical to the nature and prevalence of Aboriginal psychological ill-health is the unresolved grief, loss, and trauma, of past and present State and coloniser-mediated violence and oppression, including the continuation of deeply paternalistic and disempowering policies and practices that undermine and neglect self-determination and cultural sovereignty of Aboriginal peoples. These factors are paramount in the sustained presence of historical traumatic wounds, and in the generation and perpetuation of new and unceasing trauma for Aboriginal people:

> The legacy of traumatic experiences and oppression sustained through ongoing colonisation has ensured that the injury experienced has not been given an opportunity or space to heal. Grief and loss have been felt deeply and in ways people were not able to effectively deal with; instead, they had to fight just to survive. The legacy of this unacknowledged trauma and unresolved grief has resulted in its internalisation and festering of wounds which have been labelled as dysfunctional behaviours of the individual and collective sufferers. (Sherwood, 2015, p. 1)

In the 2014–2015 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS), it was found that 29% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People reported a diagnosed mental health condition (25% of males and 34% of females). Young people were less likely to report mental health conditions (22%) compared to those in older age groups (ranging from 30% to 35%). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in non-remote areas reported mental health conditions (33%) at twice the rate than those in remote locations (16%; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). A systemic review identifying the prevalence rates of psychiatric disorders in Australia's Indigenous populations (Black et al., 2015) revealed that major depressive disorder (4.3–51%), mood disorders (7.7–43.1%), post-traumatic stress disorder (14.2–55.2%), anxiety disorders (17.2–58.6%), substance dependence (5.9%–66.2%), alcohol dependence (21.4–55.4%), and psychotic disorders (1.68–25%) were most prevalent, although stated that there is limited evidence on the occurrence of psychiatric disorders for Indigenous people in the general community.

8. Mental Health Considerations in LGBTIQ+ Populations

LGBTIQ+ people face astonishing rates of mental health concerns compared to the non-LGBTIQ+ population, as a direct result of the prejudice, discrimination, stigma, harassment, and violence that LGBTIQ+ people face in their communities, both underpinned and perpetuated by rampant heteronormative and heterosexist attitudes and ideologies (Meyer, 2003). LGBTIQ+ people suffer significant health disparities, higher incidents of moderate to severe mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress, self-harm, suicidality and suicide rates (particularly in trans youth), substance abuse, and comorbid mental health and substance abuse (Leonard & Metcalf, 2014). Other important considerations are the high rates of poverty, higher rates of unemployment or unstable employment, homelessness, and increased probability of violent victimisation compared with heterosexual and cisgender peers (Carman, Bourne, & Fairchild, 2020).

9. Intersectional Considerations

For Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people, being both Indigenous and identifying as

LGBTIQSB+ creates a unique experience where the extensive health and socioeconomic disparities identified are compounded (Uink, Liddelow-Hunt, Daglas, & Ducasse, 2020). Further compounding occurs based on other attributes and identities such as gender (specifically girls and women), age, disability, and class, and for individuals whose identities and existential realities are more complex, the impacts on health and wellbeing are multiplied by however many of those identities lie at their core. The phenomena of overlapping minority status, intersectionality, theorises and acknowledges the combined impacts on an individual, or marginalised community, of racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, and xenophobia (Crenshaw, 1990).

In relation to this article, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB+ youth who are also involved in the criminal justice system have a multitude of complex forces compounding and impacting on their lives and their mental health continuously. Add to this, the high proportion of Aboriginal youth (AIHW, 2019) in detention who have a disability (Frize, Kenny, & Lennings, 2008) and those who are girls/young women and it becomes much more apparent the level of vulnerability this particular population embody, and the complex mental health and cultural services required to appropriately meet their health, wellbeing, and safety needs.

10. Youth Mental Health

Adolescence is a vulnerable period for youth with a range of biological, interpersonal, cognitive, environmental-ecological changes and life transitions taking place, and an increase in the occurrence of stressful life events and adaptive functioning required. For those with mental health concerns and conditions, the stress can be persistent, disruptive, and all-consuming. For youth who are under the scrutiny of the criminal justice system, the additional high-level physical and psychological stress associated can be overwhelming and incredibly harmful (The Royal Australasian College of Physicians, 2011).

Adolescence is understood to be a pivotal phase for the development of psychological ill-health, with evidence supporting that the presence of psychopathology in adolescence is a risk factor for psychopathology and subsequent long-term dysfunction into adulthood (Sheffield, Fiorenza, & Sofronoff, 2004). Addressing it during this vulnerable time may prevent or minimise the impacts on the social and emotional wellbeing of young people as they mature.

11. Mental Health Help-Seeking

Attitudes towards help-seeking play an important role in the willingness to seek professional psychological assistance and has been shown to be a significant predictor of intentions and motivation to seek help for personal problems and psychological concerns, including suicidal ideation (Carlton & Deane, 2000). Barriers to

help-seeking behaviours in youth populations generally include factors such as stigma and negative perceptions around mental health conditions, concerns around what others may think, reduced access due to cost, poor mental health literacy, uncertainty of where to seek help, lack of trust in mental health systems and/or professionals and concerns of confidentiality, hopelessness, and preference for self-reliance (Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2010; Velasco, Santa Cruz, Billings, Jimenez, & Rowe, 2020). These factors are consistent with what is found in Aboriginal and LGBTIQ+ youth populations, however additional barriers to mental health help-seeking exist within these groups (Brown, Rice, Rickwood, & Parker, 2016).

Other barriers specific to Aboriginal youth populations in help-seeking for mental health issues include discrimination, intergenerational stigma and feelings of shame associated with help-seeking particularly regarding mental illness (Price & Dalgleish, 2013), concerns regarding confidentiality and being misunderstood (Adermann and Campbell, 2007), fear of potential ramifications such as government intervention and being ostracised by community (Lumby & Farrelly, 2009), a lack of availability of culturally-safe services, geographic isolation for Aboriginal people living in rural and remote communities, and poor-help seeking experiences in the past. It is also important to note that cultural paradigms and conceptualisations of mental illness, and what defines a mental health problem, are often distinct and antithetical to Western conceptualisations of psychological health and mental illness.

LGBTIQ+ youth also experience additional barriers (Kilicaslan & Petrakis, 2019; Williams & Chapman, 2011; Wilson & Cariola, 2020) to help-seeking and in accessing mental health assistance, including discrimination and lack of LGBTIQ+ culturally appropriate and safe services (McNair & Bush, 2016), fear of stigmatisation, shame, and embarrassment (Brown et al., 2016). LGBTQI+ youth who are homeless, rural, or who are substance-users face additional barriers to seeking help (Brown et al., 2016).

12. Aboriginal LGBTIQSB+ Youth in Detention

Within Australia there is a considerable gap in the literature around the policy approaches, prevalence, nature, and therapeutic frameworks and practices of mental health and wellbeing within youth criminal justice populations, and even less so when it comes to looking at any of these areas from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander youth and LGBTIQ+ youth perspective. As far as examining the experiences and requirements of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB+ youth within detention in Australia, there was no academic literature to be found. Internationally, there is some literature that addresses LGBTIQ+ youth populations' experiences within the justice system (Jonnson, Bird, Li, & Viljoen, 2019; Mountz, 2020; Irvine, 2010; Trimble, 2019; Wilson et al., 2017), and others that address both racial and LGBTIQ+ identity (Alvarez, 2020; Hovey, Zolkoski, &

Bullock, 2017) within youth justice systems, however research addressing the intersectional understanding and nuance between Indigeneity, LGBTIQ+ identity, and youth experiences in relation to the justice system and mental health servicing is scant.

Adolescents who commit serious offences experience a wide range of psychosocial challenges, as well as reduced educational, occupational, and social opportunities (Melton & Pagliocca, 1992). The mental health requirements and care of all adolescents involved with the juvenile criminal justice system requires considerable attention and prioritisation. A range of studies (Bickel & Campbell, 2002; Kosky, Sawyer, & Fotheringham, 1996; Teplin, Abram, McClelland, Dulcan, & Mericle, 2002) have recognised, even after excluding conduct disorder, the "higher prevalence of mental health disorders and behavioural problems among young people in the youth justice system when compared with the general population, with rates of up to 75% reported to fulfil the criteria for one or more diagnosable psychiatric disorders" (The Royal Australasian College of Physicians, 2011, p. 17). Within this population, research shows alarming rates of self-harm, suicidal ideation and suicide, substance abuse, major depression and chronic dysthymia, anxiety disorders, and posttraumatic stress, as well as high rates of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and autism (Shepherd, Spivak, Borschmann, Kinner, & Hachtel, 2018; Stathis & Martin, 2004). There is also expanding evidence that suggests a significant comorbidity between substance abuse and mental health issues exists within this group, with notable comorbidity between drug use and drug-induced psychosis (Degenhardt et al., 2015). Based upon data regarding the elevated prevalence, nature, and severity of mental health and wellbeing concerns in Aboriginal and LGBTIQ+ populations as outlined above, it can be assumed that Aboriginal LGBTIQSB+ youth in detention are an incredibly vulnerable population with critical mental health considerations, whose social and emotional wellbeing requirements must be appropriately prioritised and advanced.

Of particular concern for the health and social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal LGBTIQSB+ youth within detention, is the absence of specific recognition and protection of their rights within the juvenile justice system in Australia based upon their LGBTIQ+ status; a case meticulously dissected and articulated by Richards and Dwyer (2014). Although there are a number of international human rights frameworks that protect the rights of young people engaged with the criminal justice system, frameworks that inform the Australasian Juvenile Justice Administrators (AJJA) and from where the AJJA draw their national standards, the LGBTIQ+ status of young people has been explicitly excluded from the list of protected attributes. This omission has considerable implications for national and state-based policies, practices, and standards that shape youth justice, effectively erasing LGBTIQ+ youth from all consideration.

13. Servicing the Needs of Aboriginal LGBTIQSB+ Youth

Historically, the disciplines of psychiatry and psychology and the health professionals and researchers who practiced in and around these spheres (including but not exclusive to psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health nurses, and social workers) have done inexplicable harm to both Aboriginal populations and the LGBTIQ+ community (Carr & Spandler, 2019; Gone, 2013; Harms et al., 2011). Within an Australian context, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and LGBTIQ+ people have been problematised and pathologized by these professional communities (Askew, Lyall, Ewen, Paul, & Wheeler, 2017; Bond & Brady, 2013) lending scientific legitimacy to the broader labelling, cultural stereotyping and stigmatisation of Aboriginality and minority sexualities and genders, promulgating and maintaining social validity for widespread practices of exclusion, oppression, violence, and criminalisation (Kenny, 2014; Sweet, Musulin, McCallum, & Geia, 2016).

Although health professions have made good progress in this space by aligning professional education, ethics and practices with legal requirements around anti-discrimination law and diversity practices (Ewen & Hollinsworth, 2016), much of the pathologising, stigmatisation, and coercive corrective practices still exist through conscious and unconscious racism and heterosexism, both founded in and perpetuated by a culturally white (Eurocentric) heteronormative ideology (van der Toorn, Pliskin, & Morgenroth, 2020; Wilson et al., 2017). These attitudes and practices deeply impact the likelihood for help-seeking behaviour, motivation to participate in sustained therapeutic engagement, success of therapeutic approaches, potentiality for recovery, or successful corrective rehabilitation evidenced by lack of recidivism.

Mental health supports and therapeutic approaches for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB+ youth in detention, must be those that promote and prioritise the specific and unique cultural needs of both their Aboriginality and their sexuality and/or gender identity. A multidisciplinary approach to social and emotional wellbeing must be social model oriented rather than biomedically reductionist, culturally-centred, and strengths-based (Cunneen, 2018; Durey, Wynaden, Barr, & Ali, 2014; Whitton & Indig, 2012), and, not wholly or explicitly directed and/or moderated by a Western medical paradigm with psychiatry at the helm. The current mental health practice models within Australian youth justice centres do not support any progress toward a culturally-appropriate and robustly intersectional approach for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB+ youth, in part due to the dearth of culturally-aligned and culturally-validated evidence based screening and assessment tools, outcomes measures, and therapeutic approaches (Singh, Kasinathan, & Kennedy, 2017; Stathis, Harden, Martin, & Chalk, 2013; Stathis et al., 2008).

14. Conclusion

This article provides a foundational exploration and understanding of the social and emotional wellbeing needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB+ youth engaged with the criminal justice system in Victoria. As far as the authors are aware, it is also the first to do so across any Australian jurisdiction. Based upon critical engagement with the literature and the findings presented throughout, the social and emotional wellbeing needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB+ youth in detention must be prioritised and serviced by a more meaningful engagement with services and/or programs that adequately meet and respond to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB+ needs—those that prioritise and centre intersectionality. This includes a more nuanced and holistic understanding and interpretation of international human rights law and frameworks as it applies to youth in detention by the AJJA, with specific inclusion of LGBTIQ+ in anti-discrimination policies and procedures within the national standards and framework, to be both disseminated and upheld throughout each jurisdiction in Australia. The use of language, and the inclusion of LGBTIQSB+ lived experiences within the youth justice frameworks would need to be extended to centre those voices with lived experiences of being an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB+ individual, as the centred voices encompass a depth of cultural knowledge; particularly important when exploring the methodological and ethical issues associated with researching within Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander spaces (Holt, 2004). Prioritised engagement of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB+ health and social and emotional wellbeing services that centre self-determination and ensure that programs and/or services are designed, directed, and delivered by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB+ people must also be acutely considered.

As a final note, Grisso (1999) proposes that a punitive trend in juvenile justice in a number of jurisdictions (leading to an elevated number of youths becoming incarcerated) is providing a promising academic landscape for researchers interested in psychological spheres of criminology and youth justice, presenting opportunities and "unexpected resources…to learn more about mental illnesses among youthful offenders than we have known before" (Grisso, 1999, p. 150). What must be avoided at all costs, particularly when considering Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQSB+ youth engaged with the criminal justice system, and especially by non-Indigenous and non-LGBTIQ+ researchers, is the exploitation, harvesting, adapting, or reproducing of narratives, knowledges, and experiences of these highly vulnerable groups to promote the researchers own academic and professional agendas, expertise, and reputational kudos.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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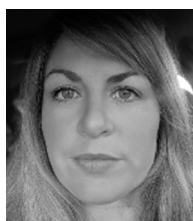
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Article

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Issues in Primary Initial Teacher Education Programs

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Abstract

Existing research has explored inclusion in education, however, issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ young people, with some notable exceptions, have, until recently, seldom been included in any meaningful academic discussion. Issues of youth race, gender and sexuality have been interrogated as discrete issues. This small but growing body of research demonstrates the potential impacts of intersectional disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ young people in Australia (Uink, Liddelow-Hunt, Daglas, & Ducasse, 2020). This article seeks to explore the existing research and advocate for the embedding of a critical pedagogy of care in primary Initial Teacher Education (ITE) curricula, inclusive of diversity of race, ethnicity, socio-economic-status, gender and sexuality. Employing intersectionality theory, this research will examine the specific disadvantages that arise as the result of occupying multiple minority demographic categories, which are relational, complex and shifting, rather than fixed and independent. Primary educators are well positioned to name disadvantage, racism and heterosexism, make them visible and, through culturally responsive pedagogical approaches and inclusive curricula, challenge the status quo. To ensure that learning and teaching moves beyond stereotypes, primary curricula should be representative of all students and present alternate ways of being human in culturally appropriate, positive ways, to the benefit of all students. ITE programs provide the ideal arena to equip teachers with the knowledge and competency to respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ young people.

1. Introduction

Critically examining who is included and who is excluded in educational curricula and school policies is crucial to understanding how multiple and overlapping points of oppression influence student representation, achievement, retention, progress, academic outcomes and ultimately life choices. The current research seeks to advo-cate for the inclusion of genuine diversity in primary school curricula, which addresses issues related to the intersections of race, gender and sexual orientation, par-ticularly as it relates to LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. The authors argue for this inclu-sion to occur from the primary years of education, as it is arguably too late to begin addressing any issues relat-ed to sexuality and gender diversity in secondary school.

We argue that the preparation for this inclusion should occur in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs, where future teachers can be prepared with the appropriate language, understanding and knowledge to approach issues related to genuine LGBTIQ+ inclusion.

Inclusive sexuality education remains highly politicised in Australia, and research indicates that where sex education is included in the curriculum, it is often very conservatively delivered, and often excludes sexuality or gender diversity. Importantly, when it is delivered it is usually in the secondary curriculum. While many young people will not become sexually active until their later teenage years, there are a significant proportion of young people who become sexually active in their early teenage years. Race is rarely included in most school-based sexuality education. There is a need therefore to provide age-appropriate, inclusive sex, sexuality and gender education in the primary curriculum which adequately prepares young people for critical decisions which can have significant impacts on their lives.

Over the past decade, significant improvements have been made in promoting inclusion in education for a range of marginalised groups in Australian society. These developments are in response to the demonstrated need to build safe, inclusive and connected school communities, that promote positive social and emotional wellbeing and learning for all students, staff and families. The intersections between race and sexuality and gender, however, are often ignored, silenced, or misunderstood in educational settings, particularly primary schools. As a result, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, sistergirl and brotherboy (LGBTIQ+SB) young people can potentially, and often do, face increased negative outcomes, disadvantage and marginalisation.

While the discrimination and disadvantage faced by marginalised groups in Australia has long been identified, any proactive responses made in education have largely been targeted at addressing the disadvantage faced by discrete groups, for example Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, or LGBTIQ+SB cohorts, but rarely both simultaneously. The authors will critically discuss how issues related to intersectional disadvantage, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ issues are being incorporated into an ITE program at a university in Western Australia, to better equip graduate teachers to address issues related to race, sexuality and gender diversity in primary schools. Homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic epithets, racism, and discrimination are not limited to secondary classrooms. Principals, teachers and parent organisations should be able to advocate for the use of inclusive materials, incorporating the full range of diversity within minority groups, to be used in our primary schools as appropriate to their school context (Rhodes, 2017).

The present article identifies current research on the social and emotional wellbeing of people who are young, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and identify as LGBTIQ+SB. We advocate the embedding of a pedagogy of care in primary school educational curricula, which is inclusive of diversity of race, class, gender and sexuality (Kumpula, De Leo, & Kõlves, 2013). Arguably, primary school educators are well placed to provide their students with age-appropriate information and curricula, which challenges heterosexism, and promotes greater understanding of issues relating to sexuality and gender diversity, creates inclusion, and prevents bullying and discrimination.

It is important to note that neither of the authors are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ancestry. One of the authors identifies as a cis-gendered, gay man. The second author identifies as a cis-gendered, heterosexual man. Our intention is not to speak on behalf of First Nations people, but rather, as teacher educators we seek to explore inclusion and diversity through a critical pedagogy of care in primary school environments, through inclusive ITE, to enable all students to achieve and develop a sense of belonging and purpose.

2. Literature Review

A review of relevant literature was conducted to investigate the key themes and issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB young people in Australia. Moreton-Robinson, Singh, Kolopenuk, and Robinson (2012, p. 4) argue that there is a "paucity of Australian and international Indigenous education literature analysing the impact of racism on educational outcomes." They further contend that unless the relationship between racial privilege and racial disadvantage is critically interrogated, the development of an effective Indigenous pedagogy remains beyond the scope of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) standards (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012). Sexuality and gender diversity are often absent from this literature. Similarly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, are absent or are given 'token' mention in scholarly literature which focuses on the area of LGBTIQ+ inclusion.

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) outlines the basic human rights protections all people should expect, at a minimum, which includes, in Article 26:

> (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (United Nations General Assembly, 1948)

The *Uluru Statement from the Heart* also reinforces the need for equitable access to inclusive education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It states:

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: the coming together after a struggle. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination. (Uluru Statement from the Heart, 2017)

Goal 1 of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008) states that: "Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence." However, in many Australian schools there is an absence of any meaningful inclusion or acknowledgement of sexual and gender diversity, particularly in primary schools. The AITSL developed the assessment criteria for Graduate Teacher Standards 1.4 & 2.4 through the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy 2015. The aim is to ensure "the appropriate pedagogical content knowledge that teachers require to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and to teach all students about Indigenous histories, cultures, and languages…the Teacher Standards have incorporated specific reference to these knowledges and skills" (AITSL, 2018). There is however an absence of any reference to LGBTIQ+SB students in equity and diversity to the standards. Despite the legislation, policies, and standards outlined here, the educational outcomes for Indigenous students in Australia are still not positive.

In December 2008, the United Nations Human Rights Commission was presented with the *Yogyakarta Principles* (International Commission of Jurists, 2007), calling for the inclusion of freedom of sexuality in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948). The equal rights of LGBTIQ+ people have also remained on the national agenda of western societies throughout the opening decades of the twenty-first century (Rhodes, 2017). Equal relationship rights, including marriage, have been obtained for same sex attracted people in many countries around the world, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia. Therefore, the continuing absence of any meaningful discussion of sexuality and gender diversity in the curriculum and national ITE accreditation process and documentation is very disappointing, especially considering that significantly, the 2017 Australian same-sex marriage postal survey result was clearly in favour of equality. The *Marriage Amendment (Definition and Religious Freedoms) Act 2017* has been legislated for over three years, and therefore there is now an obligation to deliver inclusive sexuality education in schools. While this remains critical, it is largely unfulfilled. Indeed, with the prospect of a national *Religious Freedoms Bill* proposed (not yet tabled in Parliament), previously hard-won gains toward genuine inclusion of same sex attracted and gender diverse Australians could potentially be rolled-back.

Attitudes to sexuality and gender diversity have not remained static in Australia, as in the rest of the world,

they are subject to change. Australia is a colonised and occupied land, which has adopted Eurocentric definitions of gender, sex, and sexual norms (Driskill, 2010). This has resulted in many myths and assumptions about Indigenous sexualities prior to British invasion in 1788. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and beliefs were not static across the 60,000+ years of Indigenous Australian history prior to colonisation (Farrell, 2020). The diverse geographical landscapes throughout the continent, and the complex networks of people across hundreds of sovereign First Nations peoples, challenges Western concepts of Indigenous Australians attitudes and cultural practices related to sexuality and gender (Farrell, 2020), with Indigenous sexuality having been colonised, sterilised and whitewashed (Bonson, 2017).

2.1. Intersectionality

The term intersectionality, initially used by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a Black, feminist, United States legal scholar, highlights the 'multidimensionality' of marginalised peoples' lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139). The term emerged from Critical Race Theory (CRT), which began in the legal academy, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, highlighting the institutionalised racism that exists within the justice system (Atewologun & Mahalingam, 2018). CRT focuses on white authority, white privilege, and social practices that impact on people of colour (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw sought to explain how race, socio-economic background, gender, and other individualities 'intersect.' Intersectionality identifies that all people have their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression. Therefore, intersectionality forces us to consider the multitude of racial, social, political, and economic factors which can serve to marginalise people. Intersectionality is a highly contested concept, which some conservative commentators (Tomlinson, 2013), regard as creating new privileges that advantage minorities. However, rather than attempting to privilege the 'other,' Crenshaw (1991) was seeking to identify the subjectivity of minority disadvantage and destroy racial privilege.

Having its basis in CRT, intersectionality is a critical theoretical framework which allows the opportunity and an appropriate vocabulary to scrutinise the often complex and competing identities, interconnections and interdependencies when individuals and groups occupy multiple demographic categories (O'Connor, Bright, & Bruner, 2019). Intersectionality is relevant for educational researchers and teachers because it offers explanations of the distinctive ways diverse members of specific groups (for example, women) may engage with and experience society in different ways, as a result of their various intersecting social identities, such as race, gender, socio-economic status, and/or sexuality (Atewologun & Mahalingam, 2018). Intersectionality specifically addresses the way racism, sexuality, gender,

and other potentially inequitable systems promote layers of disadvantage which particularly impact on minority and marginalised groups (United Nations, 2000). Atewologun and Mahalingam (2018) argue that, "[a]s a critical theory, intersectionality conceptualises knowledge as situated, contextual, relational, and reflective of political and economic power. Intersectionality tends to be associated with qualitative research methods." Rodriguez (2018) contends that:

> Intersectionality is one of the most influential advances in the theory, research, and practice of gender and diversity scholarship. It is considered an instrumental tool to study the reciprocities of gender and other categories of difference and how these are created, reproduced, and perpetuated as part of systems of power and inequality that sustain privilege and disadvantage in everyday life. (p. 429)

A range of scholars who employ Intersectionality as a methodological approach, caution the importance of being cognisant that gender, sexuality, class, and other intersections function in differing ways, at both a systemic and an individual level, and are influenced by power and privilege. There is no one way to employ Intersectionality, and the approach will be dependent on power relations in particular locations and contexts (Christensen & Jensen, 2012, p. 110).

2.2. LGBTIQ+

The acronym LGBTIQ+ is an umbrella term used to refer to people of diverse sexualities and/or genders. LGBTIQ+ people are recognised as a specific minority demographic. As individuals, LGBTIQ+ come from of all other population groups, whether those demographics are racial, religious, or socio-economic. LGBTIQ+ people identify themselves in a range of different ways, including age, race and socio-economic status. Based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2019 general social survey, 2.7% Australians (slightly over half a million) identified as being lesbian, gay, or bisexual in 2019 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Those who identified as LGBTIQ+ were more likely to report experiencing discrimination than their heterosexual peers (33.5% compared to 16.9%) and were less likely to have access to support outside of the home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

A significant challenge to researching and interrogating the development of children and adolescents who identify as LGBTIQ+ is that "they are children in a minority that society has chosen to regard as solely adult" (Unks, 1995, p. 4), which has often precluded substantive research. There remains a prevailing (mistaken) belief that sexual orientation materialises in late adolescence and that any same-sex attraction in childhood is experimental or 'a phase.' Research about young people's sexual and gender identities has traditionally

been problematic, as researchers face obstacles within the academy (for example ethics boards), from the community, and from organisations and individuals who seek to 'protect' young people. Young people who identify as LGBTIQ+ are members of groups that have been labelled as solely adult, and therefore any developmental research has, with some notable exceptions, been largely considered taboo. Hillier et al. (2010, p. 20) suggest that:

> It is important for education policy makers and sex educators to consider that more than half of these young people will know they are same sex attracted at primary school and may make up around 6% of the primary school population. In the past in Australia, there have been prohibitions on talking about this subject with young children at school.

The frequent absence of LGBTIQ+ issues in the curriculum, is accompanied by a resounding silence about sexual and gender diversity amongst minority groups, including Australia's First Nations peoples, which can negatively impact on the mental health and social and emotional wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ young people. LGBTIQ+ inclusive curricula, including sexuality education, should embrace the diversity evident in the classroom, amongst students, staff and parents, and should be reflected in whole-of-school policies. When schools adopt LGBTIQ+SB inclusive curricula, including sexuality education, which incorporates the full range of diversity, this decreases negative stereotypes and raises awareness, creating safer school environments for all students, not only LGBTIQ+ students.

It is also important to note that LGBTIQ+ communities are not immune to racism due to their status of being a minority themselves. Indeed, there are many aspects of LGBTIQ+ communities that enable racism and give it a level of acceptability. The absence of any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence in LGBTIQ+ media, and the traditional dominance of white, middle-class (often male) agendas even in LGBTIQ+ activism, and the absence or silencing of Indigenous voices (and faces) remains an area of contention and debate. The resistance, for example, to the inclusion of a Black stripe in the Rainbow Flag, the symbol of LGBTIQ+ unity, is highly symbolic of this silencing of Indigenous voices.

2.3. Health and Wellbeing

Andrew Farrell, a Queer-identified Aboriginal Australian, argues that "racism bleeds into many aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives" and that, as a result, LGBTIQ+ Indigenous Australians must "dare to exist" (Farrell, 2015, p. 3). Farrell explains that queer Indigeneity has its own unique history, which does not mirror the narrative of Western LGBTIQ+ history, and that as a result, LGBTIQ+ identifying Indigenous Australians are left out, in a precarious space. Farrell

notes the absence of any data on suicide among LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, suggesting this is an identifier of the lack of visibility these groups experience (Farrell, 2020). Bonson (2017) explains that many LGBTIQ+ Indigenous people experience racism when accessing LGBTIQ+ health services, while also often experiencing homophobia when accessing Aboriginal health providers. These intersectional disadvantages and experiences of exclusion, or othering, have compounding effects on the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people. Carlson (2016) argues that the only way to combat these negative impacts is through authenticity and visibility.

The National LGBTI Health Alliance (2020) lament the lack of specific LGBTIQ+ health data. They argue that "[w]hen considering mental health statistics for LGBTI people, it is vital to consider how intersections with other identities and experiences may impact on an individual's wellbeing; however, available research often has not provided a comprehensive analysis of data" (National LGBTI Health Alliance, 2020, p. 10). In the 2020 snapshot of mental health and suicide prevention statistics for LGBTI+ people, the authors state:

> While Australian and international research provide evidence that demonstrate significant concern regarding mental health outcomes and suicidal behaviours among LGBTI people, significant knowledge gaps remain. This is due to lack of inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status in population research and data collection in mental health services. As data informs evidence-based policy, this exclusion has led to inaccuracy in reporting and significant underestimates, which in turn impacts on LGBTI inclusion in mental health and suicide prevention policies, strategies and programme (National LGBTI Health Alliance, 2020, p. 2).

The data that is available is not uplifting reading. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide rates are significantly higher than for the general population. For example, in 2011, 80% of suicides in Australia by young people aged 10 to 24, the victim was Aboriginal. The suicide rates of Aboriginal young people are rising annually. "Worldwide Australia ranks 64th for suicide rates, while Aboriginal Australia ranks 12th. The Aboriginal youth suicide rate is higher than [in] every [other] country in the world, except for Greenland, where the suicide rate is rising amongst the Indigenous youth population" (Dudgeon et al., 2018).

2.4. Education

Indigenous populations throughout the world experience much higher rates of educational disadvantage compared to non-Indigenous cohorts (Gray & Beresford, 2008; Howard-Wagner, 2018). The causes of this educational disadvantage are complex and are largely the result of a multitude of factors resulting from these countries colonial past. Two such examples are New Zealand and Canada, countries which have minority Indigenous populations who comprise less than five percent of the total population, along with similar political structures directed toward Indigenous issues (Beresford, 2003).

There is a need to identify and develop targeted programs, which have a positive impact on educational achievement for Indigenous students is one way of addressing this disadvantage. Approaches that are more culturally competent where an "understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and way of life enables more confident and effective interaction with Aboriginal people and the wider society" (Gower & Byrne, 2012), can contribute to this positive impact. It is also important to recognise which factors impact negatively on educational achievement for Indigenous students in different contexts can also be an important element in addressing education disadvantage for Indigenous people. Though, such approaches can be seen in themselves as contributing to educational disadvantage given such programs and approaches often preface and privilege views from the dominant non-Indigenous culture.

The 2007 *Uluru Statement from the Heart* called for the establishment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to be enshrined in the Australian constitution where Indigenous Australians have power over their own destinies. This power is seen to be central to future generations being able to flourish and enable them to "walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country" (Uluru Statement from the Heart, 2017). Educational disadvantage in this light can be seen more from the perspective of school education being imposed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with frequently, "little or no opportunity for input or collaboration" (White et al., 2019). Addressing this issue by working to "privilege and honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's experiences and knowledges, ensuring they are at the centre of the embodied enactment of schooling in every community" (Reid et al., 2010) should be at the heart of any educational undertaking going forward.

2.5. Initial Teacher Education: An Australian Context

The AITSL (2020) endeavours "to provide national leadership for the Commonwealth, state, and territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership." As AITSL is managed by the Australian Government it is the peak federal regulator for the teaching professional. AITSL has a focus on ITE, teaching and school leadership.

AITSL (2020) works with state and territories on a national approach to accreditation "to ensure all accredited ITE programs align with the nationally agreed standards," which are referred to as the Accreditation Standards and Procedures. Fundamentally these stan-

dards and procedures are designed to ensure that all graduates of ITE programs meet the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APSTs) at the graduate career stage (AITSL, 2018). The APSTs consist of seven standards and 37 elements which Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs) need to meet at the graduate career level in order to graduate and be registered as a teacher by state based regulatory authorities.

ITE across Australia is one of the most highly regulated spaces in Australia. ITE providers endeavour to develop the highest quality of teachers at the graduate career level. As seen above the APSTs are the centre piece of all ITE programs across Australia and determine the standard of teachers at the graduate career level across Australia.

3. Method

This research seeks to, firstly explore the status quo in Australia, through a review and critical examination of the existing research, identifying and analysing themes related to the social and emotional wellbeing of people who are young, identify as LGBTIQ+SB and are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. It discusses Indigenous LGBTIQ+SB student rights and availability and access to support, sexuality education, relevant inclusive curricula, and role models, through an investigation and interrogation of a range of educational research and policies. CRT and Queer Theory will be employed to conduct the analysis of the existing research.

Within this context the article will secondly detail initial findings of a pilot study which investigated the embedding of LGBTIQ+ perspectives within an ITE Primary undergraduate and postgraduate program from July 2019 to July 2020. The pilot study drew on qualitative research methodology and was conducted as a single case study of an existing ITE Primary Program that included the Bachelor of Education Primary as well as the Master of Teaching Primary, its staff, students and broader School of Education and community that made up the interconnected whole. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007, p. 253) define a case study as "the study of an instance in action." According to Yin (2018, p. 33) "the more questions seek to explain some contemporary circumstance (e.g., 'how' or 'why' some social phenomenon works), the more that case study research will be relevant."

Critically examining who is included and who is excluded in educational curricula and school policies is crucial to understanding how multiple and overlapping points of oppression influence student representation, achievement, retention, progress, academic outcomes and ultimately life choices. The emphasis for LGBTIQ+SB inclusive education in Australia has largely been focused on secondary school environments. Early childhood and primary educational environments have remained contentious spaces for LGBTIQ+SB inclusion and diversity education. This is due in part to a resistance by governments to create policies that mandate sex, sexuality, and

relationship education across the curriculum. Indeed, some attempts by governments to introduce LGBTIQ+ specific programs, even when voluntary, rather than compulsory, have been met with vocal opposition by conservative elements within government, in the media, and by religious and other conservative (or even reactionary) groups within the community. Some Indigenous groups can also be resistant to Indigenous LGBTIQ+ inclusion (Farrell, 2020). This therefore remains a contested, and politically charged space, and therefore makes this important research.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

The present research is informed by CRT and Queer Theory (Cohen, 1997). Both theoretical frameworks stem from Critical Theory, which is a theoretical framework used for reflective assessment and critique of society. While each of these theoretical frameworks is useful in generating understanding about the social, political and economic disadvantages faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and LGBTIQ+ people, neither adequately addresses the intersections of these disadvantages. Cohen (1997, p. 29) argues that:

> Diminishing the returns from this very important theoretical work has been the incredible silence in many of the writings by queer theorists on the subject of race, in particular the structural access to power that results from the designation of Whiteness in a relatively persistent racial order where White and Black root opposite poles of at least one dimension….Disappointingly, left largely unexplored has been the role of race and one's relationship to dominant power in constructing the range of public and private possibilities for such fundamental concepts and behaviors as desire, pleasure, and sex. So, while we can talk of the heterosexual and the queer, these labels and categories tell us very little about the differences in the relative power of, for example, middle-class White gay men and poor heterosexual Black women and men.

Cohen does not dismiss Queer Theory completely; however, she does indicate that to articulate the experiences of queer people of colour, there is a need to incorporate theoretical frameworks which address race in ways which Queer Theory has failed to do. Therefore, Intersectionality theory is a guiding theoretical framework in the present article. This theoretical framework was adopted by Uink et al. (2020) in their study of the specific health needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQ+ young people:

> We suggest intersectionality theory as a guiding principle for research and practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQ+ young people. An intersectional approach means recognising that patients belong to multiple identity groups, such as sexual ori-

entation and cultural groups, which are socially constructed and which affect their social positioning and subsequent treatment, such as discrimination, within health care systems. (Uink et al., 2020, p. 201)

Intersectionality Theory can assist in interrogating how societal oppressions of racism and heterosexism within Australia's education system influence an individuals' self-conception and how the absence of LGBTIQ+ specific curricula, and stigma regarding multiple minority groups can amplify risk factors. Significantly, individuals living within multiple minority groups may experience increased educational disadvantage because of their unique social and cultural identities (Uink et al., 2020). For example, LGBTIQ+ Indigenous Australians belong to intersecting minority groups that are particularly vulnerable to educational disadvantage, and as a result may face limited life choices, and negative health outcomes. Therefore, there is a need to identify and address the layers of potential disadvantage.

3.2. Primary Pedagogy Pilot Study

The initial pilot phase of the project endeavoured to explore how LGBTIQ+ issues and perspectives were being addressed in an ITE Primary program as well as the rationale around why these perspectives should be included. The information gleaned from this investigation was to inform the next phase of the project which was to provide some insight into the options and approaches to successfully embedding LGBTIQ+ in a Primary ITE program. This pilot study drew on qualitative research methodology, through a working committee and progressed research proposal.

The pilot project comprised three key aims:

1. Explore the rationale of why LGBTIQ+ perspectives should be addressed within a primary ITE undergraduate and postgraduate courses.
2. Mapping LGBTIQ+ content, i.e., understanding what, when and how LGBTIQ+ is addressed within primary undergraduate and postgraduate ITE courses, including whether Indigenous voices are present.
3. Options and approaches to embedding inclusive LGBTIQ+ perspectives within primary undergraduate and postgraduate ITE courses.

3.2.1. Curriculum Audit

Critically examining who and what is included, and who and what is excluded in educational curricula and school policies is crucial to understanding how multiple and overlapping points of oppression influence student representation, achievement, retention, progress, academic outcomes and ultimately life choices.

A review of the existing research indicates that there is little content related to LGBTIQ+ issues, and a distinct absence of LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content, in Australian educational curricula. Therefore, through a pilot project, an audit was made of the curriculum content in an ITE (primary) course at a Western Australian university.

3.2.2. Pilot Project

This section will detail how the project came to fruition and the steps undertaken in the initial pilot project. The research was proposed by a member of staff with expertise in LGBTIQ+ issues and perspectives and presented to the school (faculty) leadership for consideration. The relevant Associate Dean endorsed the project and appropriate school approvals were granted to conduct an initial pilot investigation into the embedding of LGBTIQ+ perspectives within Primary ITE undergraduate and postgraduate courses. This pilot project aligned well with the overall Primary Pedagogy Strategic Initiative 2018–2020 of the Primary Discipline that focussed on modelling an integrated approach to curriculum in the ITE context. What makes primary teaching unique is that they are general specialists who have a deep and full knowledge of the curriculum across all the Learning Areas and know how to teach children aged five to 12 years of age. In this sense, Primary Pedagogy can be described as a 'pedagogy of care' where a genuine freedom to integrate, inspire and innovate exists and pervades all relationships, learning and teaching in the primary education context. The Primary Pedagogy project endeavoured for Edith Cowan University, School of Education, Primary Discipline to explore and evidence how to effectively model Primary Pedagogy in an ITE context. This will involve:

1. Collaborative practice: How to work more collaboratively to support learning and teaching and research across the Primary Discipline and build a culture of peer review.
2. Sharing content: How to share content across all units within the discipline to make our courses more cohesive and more relevant, meaningful and developmentally aligned for our PSTs.
3. Sharing assessment: How to share assessment across units and within out courses where appropriate bearing in mind the challenges posed by the tertiary assessment and enrolment context.
4. Learning area scope and sequence: Continue work on a scope and sequence of each learning area across the Primary Discipline. Map key content/process for each primary learning area both within and across each year level. Provide a pathway of how we develop PSTs knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge linked to course level outcomes and the AITSL standards within each Learning Area and how they may interrelate. This process will encourage strategic developmental alignment within our discipline. PSTs will have a

clear map of how we prepare them to effectively teach each of the Learning Areas and how the integrate and interrelate.

Due to the sensitivity and politicised nature of these issues, it was decided to form a small working group for the initial pilot phase as to avoid the potential for some students and staff to react in stereotypical or disrespectful ways. University support for the project included the endorsement of the Pro Vice Chancellor (Equity and Indigenous), the Inclusive Education Committee and the Executive Dean of the School of Education at the University. The University is strategically developing inclusive practice across the institution, and this research is seen to be supporting this work. Therefore, the project was supported at University level and coincided with establishment of a University-wide strategy to promote gender equity, and the promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inclusion.

The working group from July 2019 to July 2020 conducted an audit of the Bachelor of Education and Master of Teaching (Primary) to see where, if at all, LGBTIQ issues are raised, identified and how they are discussed; it identified what percentage of the course/unit material contains direct mention/discussion about LGBTIQ+ issues and which units do this well. The working group also mapped LGBTIQ+ across both undergraduate and postgraduate courses, identified where there were gaps and how LGBTIQ+ perspectives could be included, the messaging and language relevant to LGBTIQ+ within units and across the courses, and trialled a series of two-hour professional development sessions for Edith Cowan University staff and students within the Primary Internship program to support the articulation of LGBTIQ+ in appropriate ways, using appropriate language.

4. Discussion

The following section will detail the major findings from the pilot project and the initial insights gained into the embedding of LGBTIQ+ issues and perspectives within a primary ITE context. From the initial mapping exercise undertaken it was found that there was very little reference to LGBTIQ+ issues and perspectives in either the undergraduate Bachelor of Education (Primary) or the postgraduate Master of Teaching (Primary) pre-service teacher education courses. Some relevant material was included in the Bachelor of Education Primary course but was found to be of a more ad hoc manner or fitted in around other issues or examples related to diversity and inclusion. There was little evidence of explicit reference to LGBTIQ+ in any unit/course rationale, learning outcomes, content or assessment. The findings of the mapping exercise reinforced the need to formally embed LGBTIQ+ relevant material into the courses, and to ensure that this is inclusive of the full range of diversity that the umbrella term LGBTIQ+ represents, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

4.1. Findings

It was clear from the pilot study that there was no clear plan or mandate to address LGBTIQ+ issues and perspectives within the Bachelor of Education Primary and the Master of Teaching Primary courses. This seems consistent for ITE courses across Australia (Jones, 2019). While there is one specific unit in both programs where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education is addressed, there is a complete absence of LGBTIQ+SB issues in the unit content. As detailed earlier in this article there is a clear and growing rationale to include and explore LGBTIQ+ issues and perspectives in the unit and course offerings for Primary ITE undergraduate and postgraduate offerings. Given the significant absence of this topic in the Primary ITE curriculum and the disproportionate rates of anti-LGBTIQ+ harassment and discrimination in our society, it is important to inform and educate PSTs about these issues.

Cultures of inclusion are important to the survival of Indigenous LGBTIQ+SB Australians. It is therefore important that schools provide inclusive sexuality education, which validates the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+SB Australians. This is particularly important as Bonson (2017) highlights, to end the racism that is faced by those accessing LGBTIQ+ services, and the homophobia that can be faced accessing Aboriginal services. ITE programs need to provide inclusive curricula, to educate teachers, and to make ITE programs more accessible for LGBTIQ+ Indigenous people, who may wish to become teachers. Universities remain privileged spaces, and are still often inaccessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly those who identify as LGBTIQ+SB.

Arguably, Primary educators are well placed to provide their students with age-appropriate information and curricula, which challenges racialised settler heterosexism, and promotes greater understanding of issues relating to Aboriginal sexuality and gender diversity, creates inclusion, and works to prevent bullying and discrimination. However, there is a note of caution from some commentators (Towle & Morgan, 2002) who argue that LGBTIQ+ Indigenous inclusion can be problematic and warn about the dangers fundamental to using queer Indigenous people as a form of cultural diversity work, as it separates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people from their Indigenous identity and reduces them to being a resource for academics and educators. Therefore, it is important that teachers should include this work by employing an appropriate liberation agenda, rather than being tokenistic.

4.2. The Way Forward

Based on the findings of the Primary Pedagogy pilot, it became evident there was a need to adopt a range of approaches to successfully embed LGBTIQ+ inclusive material into the Primary ITE program. The Primary

Pedagogy project is an example of a strategic approach that can provide the vehicle and process to meaningfully address and embed 'cross curricula priorities,' including LBGTIQ+ perspectives in pre-service teacher education courses. Given the highly politicised (and often) polarised nature of incorporating sexuality and gender diversity into the curriculum, as discussed previously with reference to the vilification of the Safe Schools program, there is a need to approach this issue with assertive sensitivity. It is important that staff (academic teaching staff and unit coordinators) are supportive of inclusive practice.

Staff were introduced to the concept of LGBTIQ+ intersectional inclusion in a Primary Discipline staff meeting. Amongst issues raised were the rights of intersex people and a discussion of the *Darlington Statement* which has significant implications for universities (Black et al., 2017). The *Darlington Statement* was an opportunity to include a discussion about intersectionality, including LGBTIQ+, rural and regional, gender and Indigeneity. The intersection of intersex status and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity provided a catalyst for some interesting debate about a range of issues related to intersectional disadvantage. The University policies related to inclusion were discussed and staff were asked to input about how they could include issues and material related to intersectional inclusion (specifically LGBTIQ+) into their pedagogical practice. Some interesting and creative ideas were generated. It was also decided that staff will need to be provided with professional learning to develop and strengthen their knowledge about issues related to intersectionality, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural security, LGBTIQ+ issues (and appropriate language usage, for example pronouns).

It is apparent that there is a need for a broad diversity unit. Currently the ITE courses include two discrete diversity units: one focuses on working with Aboriginal children, families and communities; the other focuses on special learning needs. This is problematic as the discrete units minimise the opportunity to discuss intersectional disadvantage in any significant or meaningful way. A broader diversity unit could bring the full range of intersectional disadvantage into focus and develop a more authentic understanding of issues related to, and resulting from, intersectional disadvantage. There is also an urgent need to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and LGBTIQ+ issues are embedded in every unit across the curriculum, and that Indigenous, LGBTIQ+ relevant material is included.

4.3. Further Research and Recommendations

A key finding from the pilot study was that there was no clear plan or mandate to address LGBTIQ+ issues and perspectives within the undergraduate Bachelor of Education (Primary) and the postgraduate Master of Teaching (Primary) pre-service teacher education

courses. This was in line with many ITE courses across Australia (Jones, 2019). Given that there is no explicit refence to LGBTIQ+ issues and perspectives in the APSTs and the Accreditation Standards and Procedures this is not surprising. Some minor changes to the APSTs to include LGBTQI as part of the diversity agenda could be a pivotal step in supporting the embedding of LGBTIQ+ perspectives within ITE. The addition of LGBTIQ+ as a diverse group within standard 1.3 is one way to facilitate this inclusion:

> Standard 1.3: Graduate level: Demonstrate knowledge of teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious, LGBTIQ+ and socioeconomic backgrounds.

It is critical that data related to LGBTIQ+ Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, is collected by state, territory and federal governments, who have until recently ignored LGBTIQ+ communities in demographic data collection, such as the national census. While some federal, territory, and state data collection undertakings include metrics on sexuality and/or gender identity, and others do not, there are significant gaps in the data collected. All levels of government can and should endorse policies that require their respective data collection undertakings to be fully inclusive of LGBTIQ+ people, including transgender and non-binary individuals. Through such undertakings, research into LGBTIQ+ intersectional disadvantage can be more fully explored, and informed policies and laws enacted. There is a need for data on LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including suicide rates, HIV infection, STIs, etc., so that responsive programs can be put in place.

Primary school education is the ideal forum to challenge stereotypes, but the invisible must be made visible. Teacher education programs provide the opportunity for future teachers to develop the knowledge and understanding related to all their students, and the ability to challenge stereotypes. Future teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to know and challenge intersectional disadvantage. This can only be achieved through explicit inclusion of all representations of LGBTIQ+ and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and those who are both Indigenous and LGBTIQ+.

5. Conclusion

To effectively engage with young LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, teachers need to understand the cultural context of their students' lives. School policies and environments should be modified to be inclusive of all minority groups, including the most marginalised, appreciating that these various identities will intersect for many young people. Teachers need to educate themselves about the issues of importance to their LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

students and reflect upon their personal attitudes which may prevent them from providing an affirmative and inclusive educational environment, be it in the classroom or at a whole-of-school level, which includes and celebrates diversity in all its forms.

ITE programs need to be able to equip graduate teachers with the knowledge, language and understanding of the intersectional disadvantage experienced by particular demographic populations in their classrooms. Without the impetus of government regulation, specifically in the AITSL standards, primary teachers may not feel either confident, empowered, or supported enough to develop truly inclusive curricula, learning materials, or lesson design into their pedagogical practice.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Social Exclusion/Inclusion and Australian First Nations LGBTIQ+ Young People's Wellbeing

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Abstract

There is little known about the social, cultural and emotional wellbeing (SCEWB) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ young people in Australia. What research exists does not disaggregate young people's experiences from those of their adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ peers. The research that forms the basis for this article is one of the first conducted in Australia on this topic. The article uses information from in-depth interviews to inform concepts of social inclusion and exclusion for this population group. The interviews demonstrate the different ways in which social inclusion/exclusion practices, patterns and process within First Nations communities and non-Indigenous LGBTIQ+ communities impact on the SCEWB of these young people. The research demonstrates the importance of acceptance and support from families in particular the centrality of mothers to young people feeling accepted, safe and able to successfully overcome challenges to SCEWB. Non-Indigenous urban LGBTIQ+ communities are at times seen as a "second family" for young people, however, structural racism within these communities is also seen as a problem for young people's inclusion. This article contributes significant new evidence on the impact of inclusion/exclusion on the SCEWB of Australian First Nations LGBTIQ+ youth.

Keywords

Aboriginal; Australia; First Nations; LGBTIQ+; social inclusion; social exclusion; Torres Strait Islander; young people; wellbeing

Issue

This article is part of the issue "Young, Indigenous, LGBTIQ+: Understanding and Promoting Social and Emotional Wellbeing" edited by Karen Soldatic (Western Sydney University, Australia), Linda Briskman (Western Sydney University, Australia), William Trewlynn (BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation, Australia), John Leha (BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation, Australia), Corrinne Sullivan (Western Sydney University, Australia) and Kim Spurway (Western Sydney University, Australia).

1. Introduction

There is very little known about the social, cultural and emotional wellbeing (SCEWB) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer/Questioning) young peoples in Australia. A recent scoping review, for example, found only one published report that included young First Nations LGBTIQ+ participants in Australia (Soldatic, Briskman, Trewlynn, Leha, & Spurway, in press). In Australia, publications on the mental health of LGBTIQ+ youth do have small Indigenous samples but do not explore the responses of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants separately from non-Indigenous ones (Robinson, Bansel, Denson, Ovenden, & Davies, 2014; Smith et al., 2014). There has been no academic investigation of

their SCEWB, mental health and associated risk factors that could provide an understanding of culturally appropriate protective and/or responsive mechanisms, supports and services. This gap in research has been recognised in recent reports, which acknowledge that Indigenous LGBTIQ+ people continue to be unrepresented in research and LGBTIQ+ service provision, and that there are specific and distinct barriers that are faced by this population (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2015; Dudgeon, Bonson, Cox, Georgatos, & Rouhani, 2015; National LGBTI Health Alliance, 2016; Northern Territory Mental Health Coalition, 2017). These documents state that the needs of this unique population are unlikely to be met within existing services that target the LGBTIQ+ community, or those specifically for Indigenous people's mental health and wellbeing. Indeed, the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing* refers to the need to, "develop strategies to support the mental health and SEWB [social and emotional wellbeing] of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people" (Australian Government, 2017, p. 25). This article, and the larger research project of which it is part, aim to fill some of these knowledge gaps with a view to present the lived experiences and needs of young participants, ultimately to improve service design and delivery for this group.

There is a small body of literature on the SCEWB of First Nations LGBTIQ+ young people worldwide (see Balsam, Huang, Fieland, Simoni, & Walters, 2004; Dudgeon et al., 2015; Elm, Lewis, Walters, & Self, 2016; Jackson, & Jim, 2015; Lehavot, Walters, & Simoni, 2009; James, Passante, 2012; Ristock, Zoccole, & Passante, 2010, 2011; Scheim et al., 2013; Yuan, Duran, Walters, Pearson, & Evans-Campbell, 2014). This body of research includes young First Nations LGBTIQ+ participants, however, many studies do not disaggregate young peoples' data from that of their adult First Nations LGBTIQ+ peers. First Nations LGBTIQ+ young peoples do share common histories, cultures and communities with other First Nations Peoples, however, it cannot be assumed that their lived experiences, perspectives and needs are necessarily the same. For both adult and young First Nations LGBTIQ+ peoples, settler-colonial state policies and practices targeted their collective Indigeneities, cultures, communities and spiritualities, as well as attempting to control, shape or eliminate First Nations LGBTIQ+ peoples' sexuality and gender diversity (Balsam et al., 2004; Dudgeon et al., 2015; Elm et al., 2016; Lehavot et al., 2009; Passante, 2012; Ristock et al., 2010; Scheim et al., 2013; Yuan et al., 2014). For First Nations peoples in British colonies such as Australia, the imposition of Christian heteronormative, heteropatriarchal and cis-gendered values played a key role in the attempted erasure of First Nations cultures (Balsam et al., 2004; Dudgeon et al., 2015; Scheim et al., 2013; Yuan et al., 2014). Research from the US and Canada in particular highlights the ways in which First Nations' gender

and sexuality diversity were targeted for erasure during colonial expansions into their territory as they were perceived as a threat to settler-colonial Christian values (Scheim et al., 2013).

A key feature of colonial state strategies of ethnocide and assimilation, a form of enforced inclusion through erasure, was the forced removal of children from their families and communities. The removal of First Nations children from their families and communities in the US, Canada and Australia is well-documented, leading to collective inter-generational trauma. Christian churches and missions played a key role in the removal of First Nations children (Balsam et al., 2004; Dudgeon et al., 2015; Lehavot et al., 2009; Passante, 2012; Scheim et al., 2013; Yuan et al., 2014). Children were taken and incarcerated on reserves, boarding schools and missions, trained to work as unpaid labour for settler households, farms and businesses. In the US and Canada, settler-colonial institutions such as Boarding Schools embodied this policy of targeting First Peoples' languages, spirituality, cultures and gender and sexuality diversity (Lehavot et al., 2009; Scheim et al., 2013; Yuan et al., 2014). In a similar way, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were forcibly removed from their families and communities by successive Australian governments, welfare agencies and churches (Dudgeon et al., 2015; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission [HREOC], 1997). Once removed from family and community, all aspects of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' lives were controlled including the kinds of intimate personal relationships they were allowed to have (HREOC, 1997). Even though this policy does not directly apply to the participants of this research, the inter-generational effects of this policy, as the research participants discuss later, are felt by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth to this day.

1.1. Inclusion/Exclusion and First Nations LGBTIQ+ Wellbeing

A 2016 thematic edition of the journal *Social Inclusion* provided a forum for discussions around the meaning of social inclusion and exclusion for First Nations Peoples. Some of the articles provided an excellent discussion of the literature on social inclusion and exclusion from First Nations' perspectives (see Habibis, Taylor, Walter, & Elder, 2016; Pidgeon, 2016; Walter, 2016). As noted by leading Indigenous scholar Maggie Walter, "social exclusion, as a concept, is culturally, socially and economically not the same for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as it is for non-Indigenous populations, in Australia or elsewhere" (Walter, 2016, p. 74). Good definitions of inclusion/exclusion recognise the "social aspects of poverty" and "power relationship dimensions" where one group's exclusion props up the entitlement and privilege of other groups (Walter, 2016, p. 69). These mainstream understandings of social inclusion/exclusion lack the necessary contextual understanding of the patterns and processes that lead to exclusion as well as

the complex specificities of what social inclusion means for First Nations Peoples living in modern settler-colonial states (Walter, 2016).

A growing body of Indigenous led research argues that First Nations Peoples' circumstances, life experiences and value systems are so disparate from non-Indigenous ones, it is meaningless to use the same metrics to measure inclusion or exclusion (Hunter & Jordan, 2010). Many of the indicators used to measure inclusion and exclusion are not relevant to Australian First Nations peoples' values or lived experiences. Indicators framed on "Aboriginal failure" (Hunter & Jordan, 2010, p. 75) do not include the complexities of Indigenous understandings, knowledges or perspectives on issues such as wellbeing. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples do not have the same conceptualisation of what a "good life" means (Walter, 2016, p. 75). Walter goes on to argue that, there is a need for "Indigenous interpretations of a decent life" that include connections to community, culture and country as "core functioning for Indigenous people" (Walter, 2016, p. 75). The term SEWB, for example, tends to focus more attention on the individual, whereas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander conceptualisations focus more on collective wellbeing and the importance of connections to country, community and culture (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018). This is the reason in this article we have added culture to the acronym to create SCEWB emphasising the importance of culture in the settler state context.

For First Nations peoples to become part of the colonial state, they were expected to abandon country, culture, languages and community (HREOC, 1997). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were too 'black' or too culturally embedded to be 'saved,' faced the full force of the Australian settler state's racially-motivated policies of attempted genocide and ethnocide. All done in the vain hope that First Nations Peoples would eventually be eliminated, assimilated or disappear. This policy was actively pursued through the forced removal of First Nations Peoples from lands and waters and their displacement by settler-colonial migrant populations, cultures, institutions and values (Veracini, 2010).

The impact of settler-colonialism is also reflected in the current literature on the SCEWB of First Nations LGBTIQ+ youth. Racism, discrimination, marginalisation, poverty, homelessness, loss of community, LGBTIQ+-phobia, food insecurity, discrimination, unemployment, incarceration and out of home placement of children have been found to be significant factors affecting First Nations LGBTIQ+ adult and youth wellbeing. At the individual level, this played out in terms of higher reported levels of inter-personal violence, childhood physical abuse, childhood sexual abuse, micro-aggressions, intimate partner violence and victimisation (Balsam et al., 2004; Barney, 2003; 2003; Dudgeon et al., 2015; James et al., 2015; Lehavot et al., 2009; Scheim et al., 2013; Yuan et al., 2014). Much of the violence, mal-

treatment and abuse reported by First Nations LGBTIQ+ peoples took place when they were young, when in the care of adults in boarding schools, missions or family households who targeted them for being different (Balsam et al., 2004; James et al., 2015; Lehavot et al., 2009; Scheim et al., 2013; Yuan et al., 2014).

The literature highlights the exclusionary practices that have negatively impacted on this group in both First Nations communities and non-Indigenous LGBTIQ+ communities. Once their gender diversity and/or sexual preferences becomes known in community, some First Nations LGBTIQ+ peoples experienced psychological distress from micro-aggressions, discrimination and acts of outright violence (Balsam et al., 2004; Passante, 2012; Ristock et al., 2010, 2011; Scheim et al., 2013). If First Nations LGBTIQ+ young people experienced discrimination in their home communities, they often moved to larger urban areas and capital cities (Balsam et al., 2004; Passante, 2012; Ristock et al., 2010, 2011). However, this can lead to loss of connection to culture and community and exposes young people to racism and discrimination from non-Indigenous mainstream and LGBTIQ+ communities (Balsam et al., 2004; Passante, 2012; Ristock et al., 2010). Issues related to discrimination and racism impacting on young First Nations LGBTIQ+ peoples include high levels of unemployment, homelessness, food insecurity, high rates of incarceration, low incomes and poverty (Dudgeon et al., 2015; James et al., 2015; Passante, 2012; Ristock et al., 2010; Scheim et al., 2013).

International research shows that outcomes for First Nations LGBTIQ+ peoples are mixed. They depend not only on individual success in overcoming negative life experiences but more importantly on the degree and kind of collective support, respect and acceptance found within both First Nations and non-Indigenous LGBTIQ+ communities. If First Nations LGBTIQ+ young people experienced racism, disadvantage and discrimination without mitigating collective support and acceptance this frequently led to negative SCEWB outcomes. SCEWB outcomes in the literature included post-traumatic reactions, depression, suicidality, alcohol abuse, substance use and psychological distress (Balsam et al., 2004; Dudgeon et al., 2015; James et al., 2015; Lehavot et al., 2009; Passante, 2012; Ristock et al., 2010, 2011; Scheim et al., 2013; Yuan et al., 2014). The literature also makes a connection with alcohol and illicit drug use, with young Indigenous LGBTIQ+ peoples reporting drinking at a younger age and drinking to alter emotional states (Balsam et al., 2004; Passante, 2012; Ristock et al., 2010; Yuan et al., 2014).

The literature also highlights the importance of connection, culture and community as buffers against the long standing inter-generational effects of colonisation. The research noted that there were some communities with strong connections with pre-invasion cultures that valued gender and sexuality diversity. While this does not appear to be consistent across all existing

communities, there is some evidence that where gender and sexuality diversity was accepted prior to invasion, the continuity of these values afforded participants feelings of belonging and mutual respect (Elm et al., 2016; Passante, 2012; Ristock et al., 2010, 2011; Yuan et al., 2014). In some communities in the US and Canada, for example, First Nations LGBTIQ+ youth continue to be respected members, have integral roles and responsibilities and actively participate in and lead community and cultural activities (Balsam et al., 2004; Passante, 2012; Ristock et al., 2010, 2011; Scheim et al., 2013; Yuan et al., 2014). The evidence base is less robust in Australia, however, where research on Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ communities is much less well developed (Bayliss, 2015). This highlights the need for research projects such as this one that are co-designed and co-led by First Nations LGBTIQ+ peoples. Understanding the lived experiences and needs of young people will help increase understandings of the processes that lead to the inclusion or exclusion of First Nations LGBTIQ+ young people as well as improve service provision to this group. As one of the first research projects on this topic in Australia, this article adds substantial and important insights to the international literature. The article uses a social inclusion/exclusion lens to interrogate key themes emerging from in-depth interviews with First Nations LGBTIQ+ youth living in eastern Australia.

2. Methods

This article is the first of a series of papers interrogating the data from a set of interviews with First Nations LGBTIQ+ youth in Australia. These interviews were part of a preliminary phase in a larger project investigating the SCEWB of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ youth. This study was supported by the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council under its Targeted Call 2018 Indigenous Social and Emotional Wellbeing funding round. The principal objective of the study was to understand how being First Nations, LGBTIQ+ and young intersected with SCEWB. The project also aimed to assist in the development of supportive programs and services. The project has a three-phase methodology, with each phase informed by preceding phases. The data used in this report are from 11 in-depth narrative interviews of First Nations LGBTIQ+ youth aged 14–25 years. Participants were recruited from November 2019 to May 2020 through First Nations LGBTIQ+ social networks, social media posts by partner organisations (BlaQ and ACON Health) and service provider networks (e.g., Twenty10, Campbelltown City Council, Infant Child Adolescent Mental Health (ICAMHS)/NSW Health). Given the predominance of deficit-based approaches, the larger project took a strengths-based approach focusing on the resistance, successes, voices and perspectives of First Nations LGBTIQ+ youth in overcoming challenges to their SCEWB.

The first phase involved in-depth interviews with young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people living in urban centres. These interviews will inform the content of phase 2, an online survey of First Nations LGBTIQ+ young people to obtain quantitative data regarding wellbeing, risk and protective factors, and experiences of health services. A final phase will use participatory action research methods to work with First Nations LGBTIQ+ young people, their organisations, relevant service providers and stakeholders to co-design programs that can support young people's SCEWB. All phases of the research process have been guided by a Youth Advisory Group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ young people.

Prior to submission, this article was reviewed by members of the Youth Advisory Group and the NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council's (AH&MRC) Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The project received ethics approval from the AH&MRC (HREC Ref. 1536/19) on 27 August 2019. All quotes used were also verified and cleared for publication with each of the participants in acknowledgement of their ownership and control of their own stories. The project has taken a Dharug name to reflect this: Dalarinji or 'Your Story.'

2.1. Data Analysis

This article thematically analysed transcripts from interviews with participants who identified as First Nations LGBTIQ+ young people. Thematic analysis allows for the development of complex conceptual and thematic categories that emerge from inductively analysing transcripts rather than deductively testing pre-existing theories or hypotheses. Thematic analysis involved different levels of analysis with open, axial and selective coding as foundational techniques (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the first stage of thematic analysis the research team read through the transcripts to open up the text and identify broad themes that lead to more in-depth examination. The transcripts were read line by line to identify and classify recurring themes and common conceptual groupings as well as any outlying or contradictory categories. Conceptually similar themes were grouped together into categories and whereby key relationships and linkages between cases (participants), concepts and categories were identified (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The analysis organised themes and categories around key explanatory concepts emerging from the interviews. Themes and categories built on each other incrementally through abstraction and the generation of higher-order concepts and metaphors with any overarching patterns and categories identified from within the emerging themes. The analytic processes were iterative with different types of analysis feeding back and informing other stages generating increasingly meaningful and thick description. Constant reference was made between the original transcripts and emerging codes

and categories, ensuring that the codes, categories and concepts retained a close link to the original text.

3. Findings

All participants identified as proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The participants identified with many different First Nations Peoples across Australia including Birpai, Bundjalung, Djangadi, Gumbayngirr, Kamilaroi, Meriam, Murri, Muruwari, Mineng/Noongar, Nunukul, Wakka Wakka, Wiradjuri, Wuthathi and Yuin. One participant, however, was unable to name their People as their family was part of the Stolen Generations, and consequently did not know where their grandparents came from. The Stolen Generations were the result of assimilatory policies, particularly targeted at children designated as 'mixed race' by state and federal governments in partnership with church and welfare agencies (HREOC, 1997). These policies removed First Nations children from their families and placed them in workhouses, missions, boarding schools and orphanages, as well as adoption into non-Indigenous families (HREOC, 1997). The result was disconnection from family, community, culture and country, frequently combined with abusive practices to create negative outcomes in terms of social, emotional and physical wellbeing.

Participants also identified across a range of gender and sexuality diversity: bisexual, fluid, gay, lesbian, non-binary, omnisexual, pansexual, queer, trans and unsure. Participants were all from significant urban areas as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2016) including Hobart, Canberra and the Western and inner Western suburbs of Sydney. Despite living in urban areas, almost all of the participants reported strong links with First Nations' kinship groups and the lands and waters under their custodianship (called 'country' in Australia).

3.1. Sustaining Wellbeing

SCEWB outcomes were linked to the degree and ways in which different families or communities were exclusionary or inclusionary in their practices and processes. On the deficit side, the interviews demonstrated some of the challenges encountered by participants as they struggled to recover or sustain SCEWB and health. At a structural level, LGBTIQ+-phobia was seen as being more prevalent in more conservative, rural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Participants reported feeling 'comfortable' in urban Queer-specific spaces such as nightclubs, the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and other events. However, some young Aboriginal LGBTIQ+ people reported experiencing racism within non-Indigenous LGBTIQ+ urban communities, making them avoid certain events and venues. Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ participants frequently used the word "comfortable" to describe when they felt supported and safe, and "uncomfortable" when they felt threatened, excluded or unsafe.

3.2. "I'll Always Love You": The Centrality of Mothers

And then I think my mum was the first person I told and she knew since I was young. I stood to her in the kitchen and I said, "Mum, what would you do if one of your kids was gay?" And she's like, "Why? Are you gay?" And she was like, "I've known since you were 13," and then she just gave me a big cuddle and said, "I'll always love you just the same as all your other brothers and sisters, so don't worry about me not loving you as much." (Young Djangadi Lesbian)

Within participants' families, mothers were considered pivotal to feelings of inclusion and seen as being the most supportive of young people's LGBTIQ+ identities, attaining and sustaining positive SCEWB outcomes. Except for one young gay man who was shunned by his parents because of his gay identity, all other participants reported the centrality of mothers to their wellbeing. Most young people spoke of the importance of their mother's acceptance and support. A young Wiradjuri queer cis-man describes coming out to his mother as an affirming, loving experience:

I didn't know how to start. I was sitting there for five minutes probably just thinking, "How do I voice it?" And I just said, "Hey, mum, would you care if I was into men?" She said, "No, I don't care." Like, "Doesn't concern me," like, "That doesn't matter to me," like, "You're still my son." I said, "Well, good, 'cause I do like men." And she welcomed me with open arms and she just said, "Yeah, kind of figured."

A young Djangadi gay cis-man also described the acceptance and love he got from his mother whom he sees as his "role model" in life:

She didn't stop me from playing with Bratz dolls. She didn't stop me from doing the dance groups, drama. She didn't stop me with playing netball because she was netballer. She didn't stop me taking me to girly concerts or watching girly shows. She just let me be me. I think that's what helped me the most. She's taught me about I can do anything and I clearly nailed it.

3.3. "I Lean on Them": Family, Kinship and Community

Sisters and brothers also played an important role in supporting young people when they came out, as a young queer Wiradjuri cis-man explains:

My sisters are a big support mechanism for me. I lean on them, they lean on me. Just to have that—we talk about everything and they knew my partner and so, it was good for—as well as a couple close friends. I had that support there.

This did not mean that other family members were not considered important, however, cousins, uncles, aunts, grandmothers, grandfathers and fathers were not discussed to the same degree. And they were not always seen as being as supportive of sexuality or gender identities nor as central to participants' wellbeing.

In many instances, young people had not discussed their sexuality or gender identities for fear of a negative response from extended family members, especially if they lived in more socially conservative rural communities. One young bisexual Murri cis-woman with connections to the Meriam/Wuthathi peoples explains:

> I think one of the things that I feel with my grandparents is that one of my grandfathers was stolen and he's got a lot of trauma and he's quite homophobic. I guess the thing that—I never talked to him about being queer 'cause that would make our relationship even worse that it already is. I think we don't have a good relationship already.

Family and community were very important for young First Nations LGBTIQ+ people. Many of the participants talked about the differences between their urban relatives and those living in country towns. A young Wiradjuri lesbian describes the difference between visiting her relatives in a large regional city (Dubbo) and another small rural town (Peak Hill), both in Wiradjuri country, and how this created a disconnect with her grandmother:

> So I've got more gay family on my dad's side. So, when I go back to country, I can't actually go back to Peak Hill. I said I'm just really uncomfortable there. So I can't go home. I go to Dubbo and I stay in Dubbo. That's where I feel more comfortable because there's more gays on dad's side of the family and they're more welcoming…but that small town of Peak Hill, where there's 1,400 people in that town, not many, you feel very uncomfortable there, but—yeah, I can't go back…it's very negative. It's had a really negative impact. My grandmother lives in Peak Hill, so I can't really go and visit her. I see her when her and pop come down here [Western Sydney]. I can't actually go there because I feel uncomfortable going back to my hometown. So the only time we go home is for sorry business, but then—and then we leave, head back home.

Despite this, participants felt a connection to First Peoples' Nations and country. Many reported returning to visit country albeit infrequently and despite the likelihood of encountering phobic reactions from their families and rural communities:

> Home is—home is tough, 'cause I've moved around a lot as a kid. And so, I definitely have roots in Western Sydney, growing up there majority of the time, but I feel a really strong connection to where my people

are from down Wiradjuri country in Narrandera. Me and my siblings try to go down there once a year to reconnect with our family as well as with the land and we just get a sense of—like our batteries recharged is what we call it.

3.4. "A Second Family"? LGBTIQ+ Communities and Friendship Networks

Participants had mixed experiences in LGBTIQ+ spaces. Despite the high profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people in large community events such as the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, some participants found that racist behaviour made them avoid some LGBTIQ+ venues and events. A young bisexual Murri cis-woman with connections to the Meriam/Wuthathi peoples spoke of her experiences at white lesbian parties:

> It was like a lesbian party and I was there and then this girl came up to me and she was just like, "Oh, you're so brave to come here. Your skin is so beautiful," it was really weird. She was just talking about my skin and making me feel really uncomfortable. She obviously thought it was weird that I was there.

A young Kamilaroi gay man also spoke of the racism he encountered in the LGBTIQ+ gay scene:

> I don't like going out to the gay clubs in Sydney because you hear so many racist, disgusting things, also very misogynistic things as well, and sometimes it's not even racist things towards my own people, it's towards other races, but because I don't like that, I don't wanna hear that and, especially from people who are in a community that's so marginalised against, it just goes beyond my brain, it's like beating down those who are already beaten enough to the point where they can't get up, like you're beating on them even more and you don't even have a leg to stand on.

According to a young Djangadi gay cis-man, along with family, having a supportive group of friends was also seen as an important part of a young person's "support system." A young bisexual Murri cis-woman with ties to Meriam/Wuthathi country explains how she feels when her long-time friends do not understand what's important to her as a member of a First Nations people:

> I had a group of friends that I used to be friends with when I was in high school and then we are no longer friends because I started talking about politics and they'd be like, "Okay." [I would say] "It's January 26, I'm going to the Invasion Day March, why don't you come with me?" And then it would always be a really uncomfortable like, "I don't wanna talk about January 26," even though obviously that's something that's important to me. (Young Wiradjuri gay cis-man)

Many participants also spoke of finding a "second family" in the LGBTIQ+ community. Young people spoke about the importance of having strong social networks of friends and peers, from both LGBTIQ+ and non-LGBITQ+ communities. Ideally, young people would like to have networks made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ friends and acquaintances but realise this can at times be difficult to achieve. Young people said that they felt most comfortable with others who understood their experiences of both Indigeneity and sexual/gender diversity and who did not require them to constantly justify or explain their identities or experiences.

A young Gumbaynggirr/Bunjalung gay cis-man with ties to the Djangadi, Birpai, Yuin and Nunukul nations describes how important it was to find a safe, accepting space and friendships within the LGBTIQ+ and creative communities in Hobart. These communities became his "new family" and the support this gave him after being ostracised by his parents:

> I found a whole new family and believe it or not, I think it's so much better than what my old family is and was. And you can't pick your family, but you can pick your friends. And I think as LGBT people, we get to choose our families anyway….I had to find somewhere that I was gonna thrive because I felt like what I wanted to do was too important not to. And I think, as people, we all deserve to thrive and to have opportunities and to be successful.

4. Summary and Conclusions

This article analysed interviews from young First Nations LGBTIQ+ people about their SCEWB using a social inclusion/exclusion lens. These findings provide significant new information that supports and adds to the small body of research from Australia (Dudgeon et al., 2015), the US (Balsam et al., 2004; Barney, 2003; Elm et al., 2016; James et al., 2015; Lehavot et al., 2009; Yuan et al., 2014) and Canada (Passante, 2012; Ristock et al., 2010, 2011; Scheim et al., 2013). Research into the SCEWB of First Nations LGBTIQ+ youth in Australia is practically non-existent. A previous scoping review (Soldatic et al., in press) found only one piece of research that had explicit findings about young First Nations LGBTIQ+ participants in Australia (see Dudgeon et al., 2015) and one study with participants from the US (Barney, 2003). Other studies have included participants from this group in their research but the published papers do not consistently present the findings of young First Nations LGBTIQ+ participants separate from other LGBTIQ+ participants especially regarding this group's SCEWB (see Kerr, Fisher, & Jones, 2019; Smith et al., 2014; Hillier et al., 2010, for example). The lack of research highlights the importance of this study as one of the first to focus on young First Nations LGBTIQ+ peoples and the implications for their SCEWB. The interviews highlight

important socially inclusive/exclusive spaces, processes and practices that inform understandings of the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ young peoples. Social inclusion/exclusion for this group is a multifaceted, complex issue that includes processes of disconnection, connection and reconnection with family, community, culture and country (Walter, 2016; see also Abramovich, 2016).

To the best of our knowledge this is first time that the role of mothers has been identified as being so critical to the ongoing wellbeing of their LGBTIQ+ children either in Australia or overseas. Almost all of our participants had strong connections with their mothers, with mothers seen as providing strength and protection in times of need. For most of our participants, their mothers were the first person they 'came out' to and played an ongoing role of supporting and protecting their sexuality and gender diverse children from discrimination, phobia and negativity. Some participants considered their mothers as their "best friends" and their "role models" for life. As such, the ways mothers reacted to the news of their child's sexuality and/or gender diversity were critical to feelings of inclusion/exclusion for young people and deeply affected their SCEWB.

In addition to their mothers, the acceptance and support of both immediate and extended family and kinship networks were important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ youth. Participants did not feel as strongly about the role of other family members, and experiences and feelings were much more mixed. Some participants reported close connections and acceptance from sisters, brothers and fathers, but this was not as strongly and consistently expressed as that from mothers. Some extended family such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, also provided social, cultural and emotional support, but others did not. Some participants were rejected by extended family members, many of whom lived in socially conservative rural towns and communities. Even so, maintaining connections to extended family members was important for many of the participants. If participants had affirming and accepting relationships, this enabled them to visit community and country without having to worry about the potential antagonisms of LGBTIQ+-phobia.

This supports the existing literature's findings on the importance of immediate and extended family connections. Dudgeon et al. (2015, p. 3) report, for example, found that "discrimination and negative perceptions" from First Nations communities and families affected wellbeing. The report also found that experiences were mixed, with some remote and rural communities supportive and accepting, while others were not. This is also apparent in our participants' stories. Some had good connections with extended families while others avoided certain family members, towns and communities for fear of phobic reactions and discrimination. The American and Canadian literature also highlights the importance of supportive First Nations families, communities and

cultural practices as well as the negative effects that phobia, discrimination, childhood trauma and abuse can have (Balsam et al., 2004; Barney, 2003; Elm et al., 2016; Passante, 2012; Ristock et al., 2010, 2011; Scheim et al., 2013). In much of the existing literature, healthy collective relationships and connectivity (family, community, culture) were pivotal to First Nations LGBTIQ+ peoples achieving and sustaining health SCEWB outcomes. Our findings add to this body of research on the importance for this group of "collective resilience" (Elm et al., 2016, p. 359) in the form of supportive and accepting families and communities.

Our participants also talked about the importance of finding a space to feel comfortable, accepted and supported. For many of our participants, this was non-Indigenous LGBTIQ+ communities and friendship networks, often located in urban settings. LGBTIQ+ communities and friendship networks were important, but participants reported mixed experiences in these spaces. Many were positive about the urban Queer communities, however, some have had disconcerting experiences that made them feel unsafe. In a similar way, friendships were important but some young people reported that social networks had to be carefully negotiated, with participants avoiding social events such as parties where they knew they would not feel comfortable. Finding spaces and networks where they do not have to constantly explain their sexuality/gender diversity and their experiences as First Nations Peoples was important for participants and for their overall SCEWB. Urban spaces provided young people with some much needed anonymity that also allowed them to express their sexuality and gender diversity.

This is also reflected in the current body of research. Dudgeon et al. (2015, p. 18) report states that "where you live matters" with First Nations LGBTIQ+ peoples relocating to safer spaces, usually located in larger towns and cities. The US and Canadian literature also reports that negative experiences in Indigenous communities can result in Indigenous LGBTIQ+ youth moving to larger towns and cities to find communities and spaces where they feel comfortable and able to openly express their sexuality and gender diversity (Balsam et al., 2004; Passante, 2012; Ristock et al., 2010, 2011). The Australian, US and Canadian research also shows that relocating away from community can lead to loss of connection to culture and kinship groups, potentially exposing young people to racism and discrimination from non-Indigenous communities (Balsam et al., 2004; Dudgeon et al., 2015; Passante, 2012; Ristock et al., 2010). Connecting with extended families was important to our participants, as was being able to return to country and community. Not being able to visit grandmothers, grandfathers, aunties, uncles and others in community was seen as a loss of connection valued by participants.

The experiences of young First Nations LGBTIQ+ peoples in Australia are diverse and the research team recognises that this is a small body of interviews. These stories do not necessarily represent the lived experiences of all First Nations LGBTIQ+ young people in Australia. As the findings show, participants encountered challenges that come from living in a modern settler colonial state. However, they also learnt, with support of mothers, families and communities, how to navigate and resist neo-colonial attempts to erase identity, culture and wellbeing. In Australia, First Nations LGBTIQ+ youth are organising and advocating for themselves for the first time demonstrating a capacity for resistance and strength in the face of adversity (Black Rainbow, 2020; BlaQ, 2020; First Nations Rainbow, 2020). This capacity was demonstrated in all of the interviews, as a young gay Bunjalung/Gumbaingirr cis-man so aptly puts it:

> I think as a black LGBT person, I think it's more important…to be pushed through or to work harder because there's gonna be a thousand other people there that haven't gone through anything that you've survived, or gone through, and so that's just gonna make you stronger I feel. If you can push through it, if you can learn, and you can watch, and you can listen, and you can somehow say that was a then thing, that was in the past and then push through, I think that will give you more success.

Acknowledgments

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

'Hot, Young, Buff': An Indigenous Australian Gay Male View of Sex Work

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Abstract

Research has historically constructed youths who are involved in sex work as victims of trafficking, exploitation, poverty, and substance abuse. These perceptions often cast the sex worker as deviant and in need of 'care' and 'protection.' Rarely seen are accounts that provide different perspectives and positioning of youth engaged in sex work. This article explores the lived experiences of Jack, a young gay cis-male who identifies as Indigenous Australian. Despite being a highly successful sex worker, his involvement in such a stigmatised occupation means that he must navigate the social and cultural perceptions of 'deviant' and 'dirty' work. This qualitative study explores the ways in which Jack negotiates his work, his communities, and the capitalisation of his sexuality. Drawing on Indigenous Standpoint Theory and wellbeing theory, Jack's choice of sex work is explored through the intersections of sexuality and culture, with the consequences of Jack's social and emotional wellbeing emerging as his narrative unfolds.

Issue

This article is part of the issue "Young, Indigenous, LGBTIQ+: Understanding and Promoting Social and Emotional Wellbeing" edited by Karen Soldatic (Western Sydney University, Australia), Linda Briskman (Western Sydney University, Australia), William Trewlynn (BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation, Australia), John Leha (BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation, Australia), Corrinne Sullivan (Western Sydney University, Australia) and Kim Spurway (Western Sydney University, Australia).

1. Introduction

Sex work can take many forms but, generally speaking, it is an exchange of sexual-based services in exchange for money, or other in-kind goods or services of value, such as accommodation, drugs and/or alcohol, transportation, and gifts (Hubbard, 2019). There is a large body of literature crossing numerous academic disciplines addressing sex work as a multifaceted industry grounded in economic (Hubbard, 2019; van der Meulen, Durisin, & Love, 2013), social (Smith, Grov, Seal, & McCall, 2013), cultural (Sanders, 2013; Sullivan, 2018a), political (Weitzer, 2009), and sexual and gender expression (Gamson & Moon, 2004; Sullivan & Day, 2019a). Predominantly, sex work literature focusses on cis-female sex workers and almost exclusively on Western subject positioning, only rarely are people of colour, including Indigenous Australians, the focus of, or even included in, sex work studies (Sullivan, 2018a). Another significant absence in

the research is age-based: Youths involved in sex work are rarely mentioned, though when it occurs they are usually framed as victims of trafficking (Ditmore, 2011; Mehlman-Orozco, 2015), exploitation (Ditmore, 2011), homelessness (Frederick, 2014), are routinely intermixed with poverty and substance abuse (Frederick, 2014; Lantz, 2005; Mendes, Snow, & Baidawi, 2014) and in need of 'care' and 'protection' (Ditmore, 2011). It is prudent to emphasise that given the evidence presented in this literature some youth may experience traumatic and damaging experiences in sex work, however, this is not definitively the case for all involved. At present the existing literature is comprised of health-based studies that are primarily quantitative and are not adequate in exploring the landscape of sex work experiences of youth. Furthermore, the experiences of males in youth sex work studies, and sex work studies more broadly, does not capture the nature of their lives and experiences from a social or cultural perspective (Smith et al., 2013). In many

instances, gaps in this research area may exist because they have been previously addressed from rigid methodological approaches, therefore this article is as an example of the kind of data that can be extrapolated from stories, and serves to highlight that qualitative approaches can assist in uncovering different questions relating to sex work experiences that could be addressed in large-scale quantitative studies.

Men engaged with sex work are often stigmatised (Minichiello & Scott, 2014) and have drawn parallels with 'recruitment' into homosexuality which has been conflated with child sex abuse of youth (Crofts, 2014). Male youths in sex work are often seen as victims to the depravity of gay men and believed to be significantly in need of 'care' and 'protection' (Ditmore, 2011). Youth male sex work has typically occupied only marginal public space, often relying on known 'gay beats' or in adjoining urban spaces that were known as being 'gay' or 'gay friendly,' for example, 'the Wall' in Sydney's urban suburb of Darlinghurst (Crofts, 2014). Not only is youth male sex work hidden or clandestine in society with its relegation to 'gay spaces,' it also remains significantly hidden in academic literature, although there has been some interest in the domain of the social sciences. However, within the available literature little is shared on how youth male sex workers experience stigma and its effects on social and emotional wellbeing, let alone strategies to prevent the effects of such stigma in the Indigenous Australian context.

The geographic and population size of Indigenous Australian males in sex work is unknown although it is understood that Aboriginal sex workers are estimated to represent 20–23% of the sex industry (Donovan et al., 2012). Further, Aboriginal sex workers are usually thought to be involved in street-based economies (Donovan et al., 2012), as opposed to brothel or private work. This data is outdated and somewhat unreliable as the estimation is drawn from a New South Wales-based survey that is reflective of the greater Sydney region and does not include information from rural and remote areas, from those that do not identify as 'sex workers,' and is not inclusive of Indigenous Australian male and transgender sex workers. Furthermore, this data does not capture the uptake of technologies by Indigenous people, particularly youth (Carlson, 2020).

Although there have been several quantitative surveys on the sex worker population generally within Australia the research specifically on Indigenous sex workers remains limited, and further research is required. By centring on a single narrative, the scope of existing academic literature is expanded. The inclusion of a rich and in-depth account of an Indigenous cis-male person's experience of selling sex is wielded to create new knowledge, challenge assumptions and contest dominant discourse shining light on how involvement in the sex industry encompasses a range of diverging meanings, motivations, and practices. Jack is a young, gay, cis-male, Indigenous Australian sex worker. These

multiple identities are part of Jack, being Indigenous, young, gay, male, and a sex worker, they are all cultural, they intersect and shape belief systems, knowledges, meanings, interactions, and self-worth (O'Sullivan, 2019). In this article I will discuss how these cultural identities influence Jack's sense of social and emotional wellbeing in both positive and negative ways. This influence shapes and produces the way in which Jack feels that he is accepted and included in his social and cultural communities. The tensions between Jack's identities and his sense of acceptance and inclusion can offer ways of thinking through the difficulty of negotiating these spaces and the implications they have for social, cultural and political thought and action both within and outside of Indigenous communities. An application of Indigenous Standpoint Theory, and the concept of Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing, helps draw out meaning from Jack's narrative that highlights the different ways that sex work is lived.

2. Positionality

Before outlining the conceptual framework applied in this article, it is important that I introduce myself, and detail my lens of analysis used within this article. Framing my cultural connection and positionality to the project is an important and integral foundation of undertaking research with and for Indigenous peoples (O'Sullivan, Hill, Bernoth, & Mlcek, 2016; Walter, 2013). I am a cisgender Indigenous Australian woman from the Wiradjuri nation in Central-Western New South Wales, I also identify as lesbian/queer. Situating myself in the research is demonstrative of my social/cultural/political positioning, and my Indigenous ontological (ways of being), epistemological (ways of knowing), axiological (accountabilities and values) and methodologies (ways of approach) frameworks in which I operate (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003). As an Indigenous person doing Indigenous research I have accountabilities and responsibilities to other Indigenous people, and to my own communities (for example, my Indigenous family, the Indigenous communities in which I live and work, my ancestral home, as well as the broader national Indigenous community). In conducting this research, I have drawn on my experiences as both an Indigenous queer person to view, analyse, and interpret the literature and narratives of participants in the study. This research comes from a position that is partial and situated by my Indigenous standpoint: According to Haraway (1991, p. 196), "[t]he only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular."

However, I do emphasise that although the participant in this article and I both identify as 'queer,' I do not suggest that we, or our experiences and knowledges are the same. I have taken this strength-based position to mobilise and liberate the collective sexual agency we possess as Indigenous Australian peoples and use my position to catapult our voices and knowledges. It is

composed of shared meanings and social/cultural norms of Indigenous peoples, not as an effort to produce a grand narrative or provide a sense of pan-Aboriginality. Rather this positioning is a basis of shared meanings that make understanding aspects of Indigenous Australia visible. The privileging of Indigenous voice is intended to un-silence and demarginalise our position as queer Indigenous Australians and our voices are raised to bolster knowledges of our own sexual landscapes. My intention as an Indigenous Australian scholar is to assert Indigenous scholarly narratives of agency, autonomy, and self-determination. Therefore, I take an Indigenous Standpoint in the research methodology and the research methods employed within the study.

3. Conceptual Framework

There are two distinct lenses in which this article is contextualised: Indigenous Standpoint Theory and the concept of Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing. Research with Indigenous Australians requires a thoughtful and ethical approach that demands responsibility and accountability (Rigney, 1999). Therefore, this article draws on Indigenous Standpoint Theory as this framework values and centres Indigenous voices and perspectives, it is appropriate here to bring Indigenous experiences, ways of knowing and doing to the fore (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003). Indigenous Standpoint Theory recognises knowledge as acquired through interaction, engagement, and relationships (Foley, 2003, 2008; Kwaymullina, 2016; Moreton-Robinson, 2013; Nakata, 2007). Importantly, Indigenous Standpoint Theory does not represent individuals as a homogenous group: Rather, it is a position that recognised Indigenous people are the "primary and most authentic sources of our own cultures and experiences" (Kwaymullina, 2016, p. 446) and that our stories, "however expressed or embodied, hold power, spirit and agency" (Kwaymullina, Kwaymullina, & Butterly, 2013, p. 5; Nakata, 2007).

Accordingly, Indigenous peoples needs and interests are prioritised as a means of empowerment and self-determination (Moreton-Robinson, 2013), doing so locates Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003) to produce agency and autonomy within the research process, analysis and outcome (Tur, Blanch, & Wilson, 2010). Bringing Indigenous voice and centring it in this way responds to coloniocentric stereotypes of Indigenous people and supports the (re)construction of Indigenous representations on our own terms (Sullivan, 2020a). I employ the term coloniocentric to emphasise the "coloniality of power" (Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 3) that stems from social, political, and historical conditions that are influenced by whiteness, Western, Eurocentric, heteronormative, and Christian norms, which effect those that have been colonised, in this case Indigenous Australians. These 'norms' dominate hierarchies of power, social/cultural/political oppression, and unilateral

knowledge that continues to be (re)produced within Western scholarship.

Untangling Indigenous people from pre-conceived stereotypes that limit us, is a key principle of Indigenous Standpoint Theory, as we strive to determine "who, what or how we can or can't be, to help see ourselves with some charge of the everyday, and to help understand our varied responses to the colonial world" (Nakata, 2007, p. 217). In this article I have looked to spaces where Indigenous representation is silenced or mis-understood with an emphasis on the position of young Indigenous male sex workers and their social and emotional wellbeing. Hopkins (2020), drawing on Sullivan (2020b), indicates that engaging in these spaces is crucial to the "construction and contestation of Indigenous Australian sexualities" (Hopkins, 2020, p. 6). The concept of social and emotional wellbeing is situated in a framework that places Indigenous Australian world views and culture as central. Connection to culture, family and community can shape Indigenous Australian experiences and is a key understanding of what social and emotional wellbeing means for Indigenous peoples (Gee, Dudgeon, Schultz, Hart, & Kelly, 2014). Communities in the context of Indigenous Australia are largely recognised in multiple ways, and include physical, political, social, psychological, linguistic, economic, cultural, and spiritual spaces (Sullivan, 2020a), and are usually regarded as family or kinship groups, or localised communities of people who are geographically co-located (Carlson, 2016). Indigenous Australian conceptions of social and emotional wellbeing has developed and deepened understandings of mental health as being more than a singular entity (Raphael, 2000). Instead, it is a holistic view that encompasses the social, cultural, and emotional health and wellbeing as a whole of life view at both the level of the individual and of whole communities (Tsey, Harvey, Gibson, & Pearson, 2009).

Critical to this study, and as a key analysis of Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing, is the concept of empowerment, whereby people gain power and can activate their agency and autonomy. As a theoretical construct, empowerment includes both the process and the outcomes that can transform and strengthen the way an individual thinks and feels about themselves and their place in the world (Tsey et al., 2009). Tsey et al. (2009) discuss individual empowerment as a vital component of social and emotional wellbeing in achieving whole of community structural change, and is understood as an "integrated process between the individual and the community" (Whiteside, 2009, p. 12). However, this places the onus on individuals to generate positive social/cultural/political structural change of the whole community of which they may have no control. This becomes a point of contention, if an individual is not accepted in their communities, how are they to expected to generate the structural changes required to be accepted, to facilitate the concept of Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing of whole communities?

Empowerment is a connecting concept across Indigenous Standpoint Theory and Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing, which is underpinned by concepts of agency and autonomy, hence the relevance of application to this study. A useful principle to apply Indigenous Standpoint Theory is the recognition and amplification of Indigenous agency as framed within the limits and possibilities of what can be known (Nakata, 2007). Indigenous Standpoint Theory and Indigenous concepts of Social and Emotional Wellbeing can invigorate and strengthen Indigenous peoples and support efforts to achieve self-determination. In an academic context, these two theoretical orientations assist us to read narratives such a Jack's in a way that fosters self-determination and recognition of agency, as opposed to sometimes tired readings of victimisation and marginalisation. Therefore, the analysis of Jack's narrative, and the re-telling of his story in this article, is an act of agency and resistance, and is positioned in this article as more than representation; rather, it re-tells Jack's story to create places, space, peoples and knowledges (Behrendt, 2019). The bringing together of Indigenous Standpoint Theory and Social and Emotional Wellbeing is a useful framework in which to understand, interpret and analyse the histories and geographies of Jack.

4. Methodology

This article forms part of a doctoral study that explores the lives and experiences of seven cis-male, cis-female and transgender Aboriginal sex workers, some of whom also identify as sexually diverse. All participants in the study identify as Indigenous Australian or Aboriginal and all use these terms interchangeably; it is also important to note that I identify as Indigenous Australian. Each participant was over 18 years old at the time of data collection. This study has ethical approval through an Australian university ethics committee process, and all participants involved took part with informed ethical consent which could be withdrawn at any time. Each research participant either self-selected or were assigned a pseudonym to maintain their anonymity and these strategies help to give opportunities for assertion of agency and necessary protection of identity. Further each participant was compensated for their time, as appropriate according to ethical guidelines and best practice for both Indigenous peoples, and sex workers (AIATSIS, 2012; Jeffreys, 2010).

Although the larger study included people of diverse gender and sexual identities, the data presented here were collected through a single qualitative semi-structured interview with a cis-male. The interview consisted of a set of questions related to his experiences as a sex worker and was subsequently analysed using Indigenous Standpoint Theory. Current academic literature does not account broadly for Indigenous Australian sex workers, particularly so those that fall into categories of being youth, queer, and Indigenous. Therefore, the inclusion of a single narrative is warranted as this story provides a unique working knowledge of the sex industry as an Indigenous gay male, providing a rich and detailed contribution to the literature.

5. Getting to Know Jack

Jack, an Aboriginal man, identifies as young, gay, male. Jack also works as a sex worker. "I don't really like all the labels," he said, "I am not all these things all the time. Sometimes, who, or what I am depends on who I am with." He was born and raised in a country town of New South Wales and moved to the city at the age of 16 years old. He says, "I left my family and community and moved [to the city] to get away from them. They didn't like that I was gay. I was the only gay kid in the community—that they knew about." Here Jack expresses that he did not feel able to stay at home due to homophobia within the family and in his broader community. Jack details:

> Growing up there were lots of comments being made about gay people, and things that were considered to be gay…like wearing certain clothes, or even what you drank. My mum used to say things like only white women and gay men drink wine. Really stupid stuff, but it stuck. I really tried to hide who I was…but some people just, like, it's like they knew. I would hear slurs like, faggot and fairy. It really stressed me out. I couldn't be who I wanted…when I was sixteen, nearly seventeen, I left home. I moved to Sydney in with some friends who I knew there. It was a great time.

The significance of sexual diversity in Indigenous communities has been minimized and obscured by the force of social and cultural taboos (Farrell, 2016; Sullivan & Day, 2019a), and is rarely reflected in the literature. The distancing from sexual diversity in some Indigenous communities, I would argue, stems directly from the impact of the invasion and subsequent colonisation of the country now known as Australia. Colonisation brought with it Western and Christian values and beliefs about sexuality and gender (Sullivan, 2018a). The coloniocentric narrative has infiltrated some Indigenous communities and individuals to the point where Christian values are now conflated with Indigenous Australian cultural ways (Jolivette, 2018). An example of this conflation can be found in a 2013 social media post by infamous Indigenous Australian boxer Anthony Mundine who wrote homophobic remarks in response to a gay Indigenous male couple who were featured in the television series *Redfern Now*. He wrote (as cited in "Anthony Mundine says homosexuality and Indigenous culture don't mix," 2013, para 5):

> Watching redfern now & they promoting homosexuality! (Like it's ok in our culture) that ain't in our culture & our ancestors would have there [sic] head for

it! Like my dad told me GOD made ADAM & EVE not Adam & Steve.

Such belief systems demonstrate the importance of acknowledging and affirming sexual diversity across Indigenous communities as this discrimination and homophobia can have a direct impact on social and emotional wellbeing. As a gay Indigenous male, Jack did not feel that he could remain part of his family and community and be an 'out' gay man: "I was not kicked out of home, I chose to leave, it did make me sad, but I was also really happy to be free of the bullshit." To express his identity safely, Jack made his way to the city, living with friends and to support himself financially, he eventually turned to sex work. He says:

> I never intended to go into sex work. It was a bit of an accident to start with. I was having sex and enjoying the Sydney queer scene…here I am accepted for who I am….I would often find that, probably because of my age, I was given lots of gifts. I guess I was a bit of a sugar baby. I got clothes, shoes, cigarettes, and alcohol. Nights in swanky hotels, one guy even took me with him on holidays. Sometimes I was given cash. Everything I got was expensive. I liked it. Eventually I decided to actually make it my job….I probably really started actual 'sex work' when I was 18, or 19. I wanted to go to Uni[versity] so I needed something stable, but didn't take up my time. I only do high-end work…when I first started I worked for an [escort] agency, now though I see regulars [clients] only.

Here Jack discusses his experience of becoming a sex worker. Jack's experiences are not usually recorded in academic literature, the voices of young, gay Indigenous males who are also sex workers are rarely, if ever, featured. His experience provides an example that refutes academic discourses of males engaged in sex work as being trafficked, homeless, exploited, in poverty, or in need of protection (Ditmore, 2011). The indication to Jack being a 'sugar baby' could imply sexual exchanges that could be read as coercive, or evidence of deviancy on the part of older men (Crofts, 2014). A sugar baby refers to someone who participates in dating, talking, or having sexual interactions with a sugar daddy or sugar mummy. The arrangement replicates a dating relationship, instead of exchanging money for a single service, a sugar baby may receive material goods and benefits, such as money or accommodation, in exchange for being in the relationship, typically with someone who is older (Rakić, 2020). Indeed, Jack's account of his role as a sugar baby, is not a coercive, or deviant act. Conversely, he sees his role as a sugar baby as a powerful and niche act of agency that enabled him to access money and material goods, sexual experiences, and social status. Agency in this context highlights Jack's ability to make autonomous decisions in the pursuit of his desires. Agency is struc-

tured by a person's socially and culturally shaped position and can be constrained in application by their social, cultural, political, and economic circumstances (Nakata, 2007). Jack's statement clearly elucidates that he has made an agentic choice, one that works for him and his schedule, and capitalises his social status and physical desirability, he adds:

> I am hot, young, buff and hung….I'm also clean, I am not a junkie, I am fit and healthy. I am really masc[uline], I work hard to play that role. I can command how much I want to make. I don't fuck for less than a thousand bucks.

Sex workers capitalise on their bodies to work and promote themselves as appealing, sexual, and viable (Browne & Minichiello, 1996). Notwithstanding the transgressions of social and cultural taboos, capitalising on the body is often seen by sex workers as "another day in the office" (Perkins & Lovejoy, 2007, p. 153) and similarly, sex work for Jack is a way to earn an income through his body and sexuality. Nussbaum (1998, p. 693) argued that we all "take money from the use of our body" (p. 693), then the consideration of sex work as somehow unique in terms of bodily exploitation could be read as inconsistent and hypocritical. Except for the unemployed and the independently wealthy, she contends that making money from the body is not different from other forms of work. This sentiment is implied in Jack's statement: "You wouldn't hold it against a carpenter for using their hands to make money, why is it so different that I use my body?" Evidently, he does not feel that he is need of 'care' and 'protection' (Ditmore, 2011), or that he is being exploited or that he is doing sex work through lack of choice. He claims:

> I'm a good lookin' guy. I know what I have and I know what others want. This is my time to make as much money as I can. I'm not gonna be pretty forever you know…later when I'm old I will go back to office work. I've been doing some consultancy work to keep my 'normal' career going for later, but for now I just want to make a tonne of cash and have fun.

Jack identifies as a 'high-end' worker, and that sex work, and being part of the queer scene has had positive impact on his sense of self-worth, being in a position to command such income for his attractiveness to other gay males is meaningful to Jack: "I am accepted for who I am, and what I do," he says. For Jack, his youth is an important part of his identity, as both a gay male, and as a sex worker. He is emboldened by his masculinity, his looks, and his youth. Being young is an exciting time for Jack, he is able to explore different aspects of his identity and has been able to engage freely as a gay man. The importance of being recognised and accepted for being queer is evident. For Jack sex work is a financially viable option that allows him to live in the city and be close to the gay

scene is a positive experience, thus contributing to positive social and emotional outcomes for him.

However, although Jack is now accepted for being gay, he does not feel that he is accepted for being Indigenous:

> I definitely don't advertise or discuss that I am Indigenous with my clients. You have to promote yourself in certain ways. Being Aboriginal is not considered a sexy thing in the gay community. There's lots of racism, you know, and all sorts of other prejudices, like being Asian, or fat….I guess I play into that when I am working. I am too dark to say I am white…other guys cannot make as much money as me, maybe they are too skinny, or too old, too fat, too something. It's interesting, you know, I am brown, so I can get away with being tan, but not black.

Here Jack identifies that although his sexuality is accepted, his culture is not. He declares his unwillingness to advertise as being Indigenous Australian and does not discuss his Aboriginality with his clients due to inherent racism in the queer scene. Jack is therefore carefully curating and managing his identities to fulfil his image as sexually attractive to other gay men but must also negotiate inherent racism. The curation of online identities by Indigenous people (Carlson, 2020) and other people of colour (Logan, 2017) online suggests that sexual 'preference' is highly racialised. As Jack points out, being Indigenous is not financially viable as it is not considered to be 'sexy.' Carlson (2020, p. 135) has noted in her research with Indigenous people and dating apps, that the racism that prevails against Indigenous people is not always related to physical or "phenotypical factors" that influence attractiveness or desirability, rather it is rooted in social and political overtures of "conventional racism." Further, Jacks' narrative is indicative of the social exclusion that can be felt by Indigenous queer people from their social and cultural communities (Sullivan & Day, 2019b). In his Indigenous community Jack is socially and culturally excluded, in the queer community Jack is culturally excluded. Jack is dependent on his communities for acceptance and affirmation. Indigenous Standpoint Theory helps us to see that this is a difficult and tenuous social/cultural/political positioning that occurs at the cultural interface (Nakata, 2007). Jack experiences marginalisation that is contingent on the cultural space that he is inhabiting, the application of Indigenous Standpoint Theory shines light on the racial oppression and coloniocentric processes that (re)produce, inscribe and maintain difference between Indigenous and 'other' bodies (Radcliffe, 2018). For Jack, the only place that he feels that he gets complete sense of self-value is from other Indigenous sex workers. He says:

> Over the years I have met heaps of Indigenous queers who have moved to the city because of the homophobic shit in their communities. Many of them have done sex work here and there. When we start yarnin' and feelin' comfortable with each other you start to hear stories. Sex work is pretty common, you know, I don't know…but I know a few guys, and girls, that have worked the streets over the years. I like hanging out with them, sometimes it feels like it's the only time I can just be myself. I don't have to lie about what I do, or who I am. I can just be.

Yarning is an Indigenous Australian cultural term that, at its simplest explanation, is a synonym of conversation. It is a process of storying and storytelling that can be both formal and informal depending on its use (Barlo, Boyd, Pelizzon, & Wilson, 2020). The context in which Jack employs the term is suggests a conversation that involves the sharing of stories. For Jack, it is yarning and feeling with his peers, that are also Indigenous sex workers, that he finds a sense of belonging. Few studies of Indigenous sex workers explore belonging and the locality of belonging spaces as mediators of social exclusion and inclusion (Sullivan, 2018b). Building this sense of belonging is a source of empowerment for Jack. Knowing people like him, give him a sense of belonging and community, highlighting that a sense of empowerment "enhances individual social and emotional wellbeing" (Tsey et al., 2009, p. 9). At present, the literature discusses the concept of Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing and expresses the importance of whole of community wellbeing as integral to the individual. The limits in the literature express 'whole of community' as being connected to land and country or geographically located, and familial relationships. For queer Indigenous people, and other apparent 'deviants,' such as sex workers, this is not always possible (Sullivan, 2020a). However, it is clear from Jack's story that building and maintaining connection to Indigenous community can be understood in multiple ways. His connection to other queer, and sex worker, Indigenous peoples has given him a space in which to connect to his culture by forming his own communities of practices, values, and knowledges (Farrell, 2016).

6. Discussion

For Jack, sex work is a space of financial stability and is also where he has been able to explore his sexual expression and self-value. However, despite being socially and financially well, his feelings of social and emotional wellbeing are limited by the lack of social/cultural validation and belonging, resulting in social exclusion. For Indigenous people, a sense of belonging is an important aspect of identity and wellbeing (Franklin, 2014). The concept of social exclusion denotes multifarious interactions, that include cultural marginalisation, restricted spatial mobility, and social inequalities (Moore, 2014). Indigenous social standing is a critical factor underpinning social inequality (Sullivan, 2018a), challenging this social position is important toward achieving social justice and so we need to be explicit-

ly political in advocating for it within our communities (Hopkins, 2020).

Retuning to Tsey et al. (2009), who discussed the importance of individual empowerment as essential to community structural change, it is my position that Jack has achieved that, just not in the way that is understood currently in the literature. Indigenous spaces are emerging for Indigenous queer people that should be thought of, and understood, as Indigenous communities. For example, Jack's community with other like-minded people, although an informal and fluid group, they are a community that have built connection and a sense of belonging to enhance their own sense of social and emotional wellbeing as empowered people. Additionally, there are community-based groups that are working toward social/cultural/political structural change for Indigenous queer people such as, 'Black Rainbow,' and 'Blaq Aboriginal Corporation.' Both are Indigenous community advocate groups who provide spaces of social inclusion to Indigenous queer people and are crucially working toward building capacity within familial and geographically located Indigenous communities. This work is vital, it recognises Indigenous queer people as always existing within our familial and kinship communities, it is my position that our inclusion within these communities is fundamental to the social and emotional wellbeing of those communities—they need us.

The concept of whole of community in Indigenous social and emotional wellbeing is a narrowed vision and understanding of what constitutes 'Indigenous community.' The concept of 'whole of community' needs to be interrogated further and recognised as plural. Additionally, the concept of empowerment is elemental and can occur on multiple levels, including at the individual and community level, however, should not imply that you cannot have one without the other. Furthermore, this article has bought to the fore the importance of capacity building within and outside of Indigenous communities. I highlight that experiences of belonging and connection are contextual, being closely linked to different forms of social and cultural networks, and the negative and positive implications for social and emotional wellbeing.

7. Conclusion

The experiences of sex workers are often more nuanced than debates have led us to believe, particularly when such arguments fail to offer Indigenous Australian sex workers' perspectives. Sex based research with Indigenous people poses challenges. For many, it implies a focus on negative issues and exacerbates anxieties around particular social and cultural taboos. As a result, there has been an apparent reluctance in the research community to undertake sex and sexuality research directly involving Indigenous people. However, Indigenous involvement in sex based research can challenge the social and cultural signification of sexuality

and gender and, it can also shine light on how queer and sex worker are identifiers that are positioned outside the cultural (hetero)norms of sex-gender and inclusion/exclusion dualities that exist in some Indigenous and non—Indigenous communities.

This article has explored sex work through the lenses of Indigenous Standpoint Theory and social and emotional wellbeing drawing attention to the intersections of culture and sexuality with the consequences of Jacks' social and emotional wellbeing discussed. Jacks' story highlights the way in which Indigenous people, and non-Indigenous people disregard Indigenous gender and sexual diversity leading to social exclusion that can have a detrimental effect on social and emotional wellbeing. Providing a story told by an Indigenous youth is evidence that Indigenous communities are still subjected to coloniocentric ideologies that stifle our identities and philosophies. As queer and Indigenous people, we must assert our multiply located and queer identities and speak back against coloniocentric narratives that seek to homogenise our communities, and Indigenous people more broadly. More work is needed to better understand the practice of sex work for queer Indigenous youth and its impacts on social/cultural relations, sexuality and gender, and social and emotional wellbeing.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Commentary

Saving Lives: Mapping the Power of LGBTIQ+ First Nations Creative Artists

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Abstract

In 2020, I was funded by the Australian Research Council to undertake research that examines the ways in which queer Indigenous creative practitioners create impact and influence. With a program titled "Saving Lives: Mapping the Influence of LGBTIQ+ First Nations Creative Artists," the mapping is currently underway to explore how creativity has been used to demonstrate our reality and potential as queer First Nations' Peoples. The title of this commentary explicitly reframes this from influence, to one of insistent resistance. It explores beyond how we persuade, to understand why the resistance in the work of First Nations' queer creatives lays the groundwork for a future where the complexity of our identities are centred, and where young, queer Indigenous people can realise their own imaginings.

Keywords

Aboriginal; creative arts; First Nations; Indigenous; LGBTIQ+; queer; transgender

Issue

This commentary is part of the issue "Young, Indigenous, LGBTIQ+: Understanding and Promoting Social and Emotional Wellbeing" edited by Karen Soldatic (Western Sydney University, Australia), Linda Briskman (Western Sydney University, Australia), William Trewlynn (BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation, Australia), John Leha (BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation, Australia), Corrinne Sullivan (Western Sydney University, Australia) and Kim Spurway (Western Sydney University, Australia).

1. Introduction

As a central provocation, this commentary proposes a future for young, queer Indigenous people, and for our descendants, where the complexity of their lives is a gift, and not a burden. It explores the richness in locating the representation of what it is to be queer and Indigenous, and it reveals creative practice that explores the complexity of our queerness combined with other aspects of our identities. As provocation, it also ponders the ideas of Gomeroi theorist, Alison Whittaker's proposal that the colonial system is tested by queerness, and often found lacking in its willingness to understand the complexities of First Nations Peoples (Whittaker, 2015, p. 226). Finally, it questions the value of resistance and how, through this act, comes the centring of complex First Nations peoples' lives and a challenge to the colonial project of gender and sexuality (O'Sullivan, 2019, p. 107).

The "Saving Lives: Mapping the Influence of LGBTIQ+ First Nations Creative Artists" project is new, and aims to support a better understanding of our complexities

through creative practice; but creative representation as a means to comprehend the multiplicity of who we are is as old as First Nations culture(s). Story as a measure of cultural transmission is central to Indigenous ways of being and knowing, and is informed by a deep history of connectedness and kinship (Behrendt, 2021). This measure has been reinforced by cultural imperatives to retain and share knowledge where our records were otherwise erased and dismissed through the enaction of the colonial project (Russell, 2005, p. 163). Storytelling, however, is complex and not merely a simulacrum of iterative colonial categorisation and record keeping. It is expansive, and it grows with each story and through each storyteller, helping us make sense of our world (Behrendt, 2021, p. 11; O'Sullivan, 2019, p. 111).

In this brief provocation, I will consider the ways in which expansive representation and complexity supports young, queer First Nations people. The importance of belonging is evidenced in examples of this idea of story as empowerment. In *N'tacinowin inna nah: Our Coming in Stories* (Wilson, 2008, p. 194), Opaskwayak

Cree researcher Alex Wilson invokes the power of 'coming in' as an inverted and inclusive response to 'coming out.' The project gathered stories of belonging, explored community nurturing and supporting people in their entirety, as central within their community. These and other community-developed programs offer strategies for us to curate our own experiences, and to make opportunities that allow multiple and diverse voices to emerge. Young queer First Nations' people have a right to take pride of place centred in their cultures, and they have a fundamental right to the tools to imagine and deliver their own futures.

2. Visibility: Challenging Symbolic Annihilation

For people of colour and LGBTIQ+ people, representations on screen that are available to young people have a positive effect on their sense of self and wellbeing (Peruta & Powers, 2017, p. 1134; Yan, 2019, p. 849). The inverse is also true: Character portrayals can reinforce stereotypes or tropes of intersecting identities (McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2017, p. 1197). What we do not know is the effect that the limited presence of Indigenous or queer screen-based characters—and the complete absence of intersecting queer, Indigenous characters—has had on older queer Indigenous people. There have been no studies and no mapping of where these intersecting characters were available or present, how they were perceived, or the impact they had when they became available. The "Saving Lives" project will seek to remedy this, but it will also extend to the limited—but at least present—intersectional representations available today both on screen and in broader creative spaces. In this way, "Saving Lives" frames a challenge to a symbolic annihilation that comes with a lack of representation (O'Sullivan, 2019, p. 111) by mapping the presence of queer, Indigenous creative representations and by analysing the impact these representations have on Indigenous peoples, whether queer or not.

Beyond fictional or retold characters, what role does the story from an individual tell, what impact will it have on young people for whom greater representation is available? Furthermore, what impact will the complexity of representation have on people 'coming in' to their sexuality and gender? Enter Steven Oliver (Kuku-Yalanji, Waanyi, Gangalidda, Woppaburra, Bundjalung, and Biripi) with his recent cabaret, *Bigger and Blacker*. He presents his story—or parts of it—as a performer instantly recognisable in Australia as a protagonist asserting his queer Blackness across the ABC TV sketch series, *Black Comedy* (Watego, 2021). Unlike the scripted *Black Comedy*, *Bigger and Blacker* privileges his voice, experience, influence, and his history. Chelsea Watego writes that *Bigger and Blacker* does not cater to a non-Indigenous audience, but instead uses inside jokes and references aimed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (Watego, 2021). Oliver's script and

performance comes from a place of being Black and queer in this continent, as he ponders the concerns of representation—in particular, the risk of stereotyping in role he is best known for. He conversely explores the risks of a lack of representation by flexing his broad experiences and coding them as gay, and Black, and his.

What is profound in Oliver's performance, is in telling his individual history, he does not continuously navigate between being gay or Black. This is framed from the outset, linguistically and specifically. In this way, with no sexuality reveal, and no reveal on what his Aboriginality means beyond his own experience, the audience is told a more complex storying of his life, his queerness, and—separately and in complexity—his Blackness. He expands the conversation and leads the audience into the pathos and reality of the untidiness of life and the meaning of specific events. This work, like many creative works by queer Indigenous peoples, where the movement is beyond being a marker of queerness (or of Indigeneity), allows an expansive view into the complexity of the rest of our lives.

Deborah Cheetham (Yorta Yorta) is this continent's most prominent First Nations' composer, singer and producer of opera. In her first major work, *White Baptist Abba Fan*, Cheetham explored how as the only Aboriginal person in her adoptive family, as a fan of opera, and as a lesbian growing up in an otherwise heteronormative, white, religious household she was simultaneously othered (Cheetham, 2018, p. 51). When she went on to create the first Indigenous opera, *Pecan Summer*, and the first Indigenous opera company, *Short Black Opera*, her queerness may not have appeared centred, but she argues her sexuality, as a part of her whole, informs the complexity of her work, her existence, and her resistance. That resistance manifests as a performer within a conservative field, through her refusal to perform the Australian National Anthem, is informed by all aspects of her resistance (Cheetham, 2018, p. 51).

While Oliver and Cheetham explore different terrain, they both tell a story of identity and belonging, through a lens of queer affect and resistance to the colonial project of forced identity. These are only two stories among thousands of creative representations from queer First Nations' people: luminaries, too many to list, like actor/playwright Uncle Jack Charles, theatre director Liza-Mare Syron, actor and writer Uncle Noel Tovey, singer Lou Bennett, performance poet Romaine Morton, novelist Melissa Lucashenko, visual artist Peter Waples-Crowe, writer Maddee Clarke, poet Ellen van Neerven, artist Todd Fernando, cabaret performer Ben Graetz, curators Genevieve Grieves and Myles Russell-Cook, and actor and producer Jacob Boehme. And even that list is inaccurate, as many of them work across far more than the ascribed creative practice area. Outside of the more established names, there is an emerging number of queer First Nations' peoples who are exploring their own complexities of who they are and who they may be. In mapping the increasing numbers, a compre-

hensive list of LGBTIQ+ Indigenous creatives will reflect the sheer volume and complexity of work being created across this continent. Rather than reducing us to our Indigeneity or our queerness, by noting them in a strategic and gathered way, it aims to serve as a testament to their persistence, contribution, and resistance.

3. Conclusions: Saving Lives

The overarching program of "Saving Lives" aims to challenge symbolic annihilation by locating and centring our presence as a challenge to colonial erasures. Recalling our contributions responds to two central ideas: The first reminds us that representation and a sense of belonging is central to us as First Nations Peoples, as we work toward challenging the highest levels of youth suicide in the world (Bonson, 2016). Secondly, it recognises that 'saving' can challenge the ways in which we have been erased from the colonial record and even the ways in which we have been written in. As Lynette Russell points out, where there is truth in unreliability it is less about confabulation and more a result of the inconsistencies of record keeping in the colonial project of managing First Nations' Peoples (Russell, 2005, p. 164). We have the receipts, lets show them.

In research work conducted by Indigenous researchers about our Communities, there is often a story that sparks an initial kernel of interest. In a previous large study that I completed on representation in museums (O'Sullivan, 2019), it became apparent that there was little recognition of the influence of First Nations queer contributions. Like many queer Indigenous people my age, this lack of representation was born decades ago. At 55, I can recall that the first queer person I saw represented was white, and all representations of Black people across the first few decades of my life were cisgender and straight. For me, cisgender, white characters in any story demonstrated an ability to move through the landscape with no identity questions asked of them. I saw them as baggage free, representing a blank slate on which I could write a story of hope and dreams, though as a transgender Black kid, never one I could realise. For decades, the civil rights activist Marian Wright Edelman has proclaimed that "you can't be what you can't see" (Young, 2018, p. 992), and my own story exposes that we have to challenge our own colonial mindset. On this continent, Alison Whittaker posits that the colonial structures will never deliver that sense of self, but proposes that we take control of the story of who we are as Indigenous queers (Whittaker, 2015, p. 227). Through this work, we can provide a level of visibility using our own, increasing and expanding constructions of diversity and complexity. While we must better understand the effect that queer visibility has on the wellbeing of Indigenous LGBTIQ+ people, we also must hold space for young people to create their own, complex futures.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Sandy O'Sullivan is a Wiradjuri (Aboriginal), trans/non-binary Professor of Indigenous Studies at Macquarie University. Sandy works across museum studies, gender and queer studies, and across First Nations' body-resistance that challenges the colonial project. They recently completed a 470-museum study that explored the representation and engagement of First Nations' Peoples across museums and "Keeping Places" and continue to work in the University of Winnipeg's Museum Queeries collective. Sandy was recently awarded a million dollar 4-year Australian Research Council Future Fellowship for their project "Saving Lives: Mapping the Influence of Indigenous LGBTIQ+ Creative Artists."

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