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# ‘We never get a space to just have a good time together’: indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people carving out alternative viable lives

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper, we begin to explore the connections between Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people’s intersecting identities and their everyday practices of constructing viable alternative lives in settler-colonial Australia. Drawing upon a series of in-depth narrative interviews and workshops with Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people that occurred across a four-year period (2019–2022), the paper discusses the core ways in which Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people are actively engaged in collective and individual processes of remaking their lifeworlds in efforts to realise viable socially inclusive and just communities of belonging and welcome. The article first briefly introduces key concepts and summarises the broader concerns of the young people involved in the research, as articulated during in-depth narrative interviews. The young people identify key areas they believe need to be seriously taken up for consideration in building alternative Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ futures. Young people collectively articulated these as enabling alternative futures of pleasure and desire, creating opportunities for gender, sex and sexuality education and, finally, collectively creating safe spaces for Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ gathering, welcoming and belonging.

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## Introduction

Carving out viable alternative Indigenous futures of belonging and community has become a core priority of Indigenous young people, particularly for Indigenous LGBTIQSB+<sup>1</sup> young people living in settler colonial states including Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America (Carlson 2020). As Sullivan and colleagues (2022a) have documented, Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people have been a core group among Indigenous people to reimagine the possibilities of a post-covid viable future and

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second, to take action to make real these imaginaries through everyday practices of co-creation. Importantly, this research identifies the critical innovations of Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people and their practices in co-creating a collaborative, shared imaginary that spurs on a collective sharing of ideas of viable futures.

The practices of shared thinking across Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people are both collaborative and welcoming. First, it has enabled a reckoning with the historical constraints of settler colonial racism and dispossession, that is, a thinking through the continuities of existing constraints. Second, Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people are building a shared dialogue that is assembled out and beyond such constraints, disrupting and displacing settler colonial narratives with narrations of their own. These shared efforts in thinking and action have enabled Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people to increasingly realise their desires for new communities of belonging, welcoming and inclusion, rather than waiting for these spaces, places and imaginaries to exist in some future time. This article demonstrates the ways in which the young Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ people's shared critiques of a 'bearable life' under the constraints of a modern settler state expand to include and define aspects of what they believe 'constitutes a "viable life", a life worth living' (Hage 2020, 81).

Working in partnership with Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people, in this paper we explore the critical supports and platforms that the community narrate as central and necessary to their future imaginaries for a viable life as an Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young person. This focus on future imaginaries and the crafting out of alternative viable lives, is 'intentional on our part' and has been explicitly designed to counter negative, dismissal narratives embedded within settler colonial discourses on Indigenous sexuality and/or gender diversity. Indigenous scholars such as Day (2020) explain how settler colonial heteronormative political narratives have been critical to sustain embodied white settler colonial power, which continue in more subtle forms through everyday practices of stigmatisation, exclusion and marginalisation. To counter such narratives, in more recent years through the emergence of the Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ movements, Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ researchers have begun to explore the ways in which Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ peoples and communities are carving out alternative lives, communities and kinship relationships to move beyond the heteronormative dominance of settler colonial understandings of Indigenous health and wellbeing (Day 2017, 2020; Farrell 2021; O'Sullivan 2019; Sullivan and Day 2019; Sullivan 2020a, 2021, 2022).

A common theme to emerge from the research across settler colonial states by Indigenous researchers within the queer space, is the ways in which Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ communities are not just creating communities of belonging of their own, but actively and intentionally, carving out alternative life pathways that offer a rich diversity of life possibilities (see Elm et al. 2016; Evans-Campbell et al. 2007; Hill et al. 2021; Scheim et al. 2013; Walters 1997; Walters et al. 2006). It is thus, not just a life of surviving under settler colonial contexts and regimes of rule, but actively crafting an alternative life that is viewed, from their own standpoint, as a viable life for oneself yet in community with others that are welcoming and inclusive of sexuality and gender diverse values, cultures and practices. Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ people's construction of viable futures demonstrates the ways in which it is possible to expand viability beyond the constraints of simply surviving and tolerating a 'just-bearable life' in modern settler states (Hage 2020, 82).

While existing research provides insights into Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ individuals' lived experiences, there remain significant gaps within the literature that warrant further exploration. There has been little emphasis on the positive aspects and experiences of occupying intersecting Indigenous and LGBTIQSB+ identities. Although early research primarily focused on the Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ population's interactions with their own communities with limited acknowledgment of discrimination from other spaces, current research is only just starting to provide more detail on how this discrimination manifests (Briskman et al. 2022; Hill et al. 2021; Kerry 2018; Spurway et al. 2022). Furthermore, while there has been some research with Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ populations in Australia (see Bonson 2017; Farrell 2021; Hill et al. 2021, 2021; O'Sullivan 2017; Riggs and Toone 2017; Soldatic et al. 2021, 2022b), there has been little that has explicitly examined the narrative imaginaries of Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people of the types of futures that they see as possible to enable a life of belonging, community and flourishing, facilitating their social, emotional, cultural and political wellbeing across their future life course. In this article, young people explore their imaginaries of an Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ futurism drawing upon their lived experiences, including that of almost two years of Covid-19 lockdown at the time of the focus groups and workshops. Participants' hopes and desires for alternative welcoming and inclusive futures of belonging can be framed around their collective and individual desire to learn about sexuality and sexual desire, creating spaces that enables them to discuss, explore and examine Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ pleasures, and finally, expanding the availability of Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ safe spaces beyond that of the primary urban hubs in central Sydney to increase their accessibility for emerging Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ youth in the coming years ahead.

## Methods

This article forms part of a larger research project that explored the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ youth in New South Wales (NSW), Australia, over a period of four years (2019–2022). The broader research project included 16 in-depth interviews, an online survey with Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ people, and three workshops with Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ Youth ( $n = 7$ ); Indigenous Elders ( $n = 4$ ) and LGBTIQSB+ service providers ( $n = 8$ ) encompassing Indigenous, non-Indigenous, sexual health and mental health and wellbeing services. Only one of the interview participants also attended the young people's focus group workshop.

All phases of the project were co-designed and co-led by Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ individuals throughout each stage of the project. The article's writing team included gender and sexuality diverse people from the Wiradjuri, Birra Gubba, Wakka Wakka, Nucoorilma and Dunghutti First Nations as well as those who identify as Jewish, Istro-Romanian, Croatian and Anglo-Celtic. The project was co-designed and co-led by its Indigenous project partners, BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation and the Aboriginal Project at ACON as well as members of an Indigenous Research Governance Committee. The workshops were facilitated by researchers from both Western Sydney University and BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation. Preliminary data analysis was carried out by an experienced qualitative researcher from the WSU team with later analytic stages involving researchers from WSU and BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation. All authors had access to transcripts to double check analyses reflected information provided by participants.

Participants were recruited through a variety of networks, including Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ social and service provider networks. Interviews were conducted initially face to face at the end of 2019 and then converted to Zoom due to Covid-19 restrictions within Australia. Workshops were also conducted in Zoom and were co-facilitated via the research project's Indigenous community partner organisation. The six young Indigenous people quoted in this paper self-identify as being sexuality and/or gender diverse. The article uses the term 'Indigenous' for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the country now known as Australia as this is the preference of our Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ authors. However, the paper also includes other terms such as 'Aboriginal', 'First Nations' and 'mob' when used by participants or in the names of organisations. This article focuses on the experiences of participants who participated in the final young people's workshops. Participants in the focus groups reviewed the key findings of the interviews and community co-designed survey. There was a total of seven young people involved in the young people's focus group, all of whom are Indigenous and identify as sexuality and/or gender diverse. However, only six participants actively engaged with the topic, and it is their narratives that are included here. Their narratives are presented as a dialogue with each of the participants contributing and building upon not just the findings of the previous collected data but, scaffolding on these themes through the dynamic discussions that occurred during the workshops.

Each participant's interview was hand coded and thematically analysed to allow for concepts and themes to emerge. Analysis used different levels of open, axial and selective coding as foundational techniques to interrogate the text (Charmaz 2014; Corbin and Strauss 2008). The research team read through the transcripts to open up the text and identify broad themes. Interview transcripts were then read line by line to further capture common themes and conceptual categories. Themes were organised into categories, identifying key relationships and linkages (Charmaz 2014; Strauss and Corbin 2012). Using an iterative approach, the themes and categories built on each other and generated higher levels of abstraction, which then informed later stages and generated increasingly meaningful and thick description.

The article was also reviewed by Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ people from the project's Indigenous Research Governance group, BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation 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 and approval to publish this article on 24th August 2022. This article is one of several outputs from a research project funded by the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) under its Targeted Call 2018 Indigenous Social and Emotional Wellbeing Funding Round (Grant ID: 1157377).

The importance of the participants' Indigenous and LGBTIQSB+ identity in their sense of self and lived experiences was evident throughout the focus group workshop. While their experiences and relationships with their families and communities were critical to supporting their social, emotional and cultural wellbeing, this paper reflects upon their individual and collective ideas of what an inclusive Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ futurism materially entails with a strong foregrounding of pleasure, sex, gender and sexuality education, and the collective co-creation of safe and dynamic welcoming spaces of belonging. It is these core thematic areas where all the workshop participants were unified in their resilience and pride in their identities.

## Creating alternative viable lives: Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ youth crafting out alternative futures of community and belonging

Participants' presented practices, purposeful efforts, novel ideas, articulations, visions and constructions of their preferred and viable, alternative futures (Inayatullah 2013; Masini 1983; Schulz 2019; Sjoberg, Gill, and Cain 2003) predominantly and consistently centred on their desires to be genuinely included, represented, accounted for and cared for, in institutional and non-institutional public spaces. This is opposed to being subjected to performative or tokenistic care and inclusion, or unaccounted for entirely or divisively (only accounting for their Indigenous *or* LGBTIQSB+ identity), which are all common negative experiences reported by participants.

Additionally, through their constructions of alternative futures, participants sought the creation of safe spaces where their collective Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ identities and bodies could be respected, celebrated and enjoyed in the company of like others. Important too, were participants' desires to belong and feel connected in spaces that are free from judgement, discrimination, ostracism and so on. Participants frequently employed critical thought, critiques of their present and scenario building of alternative paths for the future (Inayatullah 2013; Schulz 2019), in their articulations and constructions of the tomorrows they individually and collectively desired and were agentially pursuing.

Specifically, participants engaged with the future through their critiques, visions and constructions (Sjoberg, Gill, and Cain 2003) of an increasingly relevant, informative and inclusive sex education system that addresses diverse genders, sexes and sexualities, both at inner individual levels, and at larger external collective/community levels (Inayatullah 2000; Saul 2001). The Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people involved in the project engaged in complex ideas in relation to intersectionality especially when associated with inclusive sex education systems within the settler colonial educational context. These were particularly significant and confirmed the importance of positioning sexuality and gender diverse education systems, institutions and practices as a critical component of 'resistant knowledge traditions among subordinated peoples who oppose the social inequalities and social injustices they experience' (Collins 2019).

Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ futures were articulated as rich, nuanced and divergent sexuality and gender educational imaginaries as both a critical component of contesting dominant settler colonial heteronormative framings of sexuality and/or gender *and* refuting the claims of longstanding racialised discursive practices of white supremacy within the broader educational system overall. Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people's ideas about and on the inclusion of narratives of intersectionality within the educational realm was, therefore, a core component on reframing Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ futures, individually for themselves, and collectively, as a shared act of Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ people reclaiming the continuities of the settler colonial order (see Day et al. 2023). The participants constructed sexuality and gender education as central to facilitating a deep cultural confidence through safe and secure environments as a group of young people who have experienced high levels of marginality and isolation, particularly members of Indigenous communities who live at the intersections of multiple identities (see Anderson et al. 2022). This is what Njeze and colleagues have described as an intersectionality of resistance, a global embodied practice of Indigenous young people contesting long standing racialised narratives of dispossession (Njeze et al. 2020).

Further, participants drew on their understandings, and experiences of safe and non-safe spaces, to envisage the emergence of positive queer black spaces and events, such as 'Koori queer spaces' and 'mob picnics'. Participants' agentic efforts to construct viable, alternative futures not only provided resolutions to current struggles being faced (Sjoberg, Gill, and Cain 2003), but also, created the possibility for a new future in which they have a greater chance to understand, affirm, sustain and strengthen their diverse subject formations; to feel seen, heard, supported and welcome (Farrell 2017; Sullivan 2022); and to existentially flourish (O'Sullivan 2019).

### ***'We didn't even talk about orgasms or pleasure': thinking through pleasurable futures***

Multiple participants expressed that the sex education they received throughout their schooling lives lacked relevance. As well, they found it to be exclusionary, and at times, shaming and stigmatising. This contributed to making positive identity development and formation difficult for some participants. As a result of the dominant, obsolete, heteronormative sex education curriculum in Australia, which systematically excludes gender, sex and sexuality diverse peoples and their experiences (Brömdal et al. 2021), participants were forced to purposively seek out their own resources that represented, and had relevance to, their diverse and intersectional identities. These resources were sought in efforts to navigate difficult conversations within families, communities and social networks, and to understand, develop, form and affirm their identities, along with the sexual practices they were engaging in, or had yet to engage in. Participants' self-education had crucial importance for their identity and bodily figurations and connections, for building the futures that they desired for themselves.

Initiating the sex education conversation in relation to their own anguishes around their individual coming out experience, participant 3 expresses that, 'Coming out is hard for queer youth because of the lack of education ... I think a big one [issue to address] is education and normalising it [queerness]'. Following this experiential comment, participant 3 reflexively poses a question to the other workshop participants, asking, 'Was there any discussion around gay sex [during your High School sex education], and not just about reproduction and wearing a condom? Was there anything about pleasure or catering to the queer community?'

Participant 5, responding to participant 3, encapsulates multifarious issues with the current system which forced the need for them to self-educate in efforts to make their 'wellbeing okay' when navigating their own self-formation. Additionally, participant 5 articulates the possibility of a contemporary, and increasingly inclusive, and supportive curriculum, to help to build an alternative, safer, more informed future for LGBTIQSB+ and questioning youth. Participant 5 asserts:

I want the whole curriculum changed. It was just ridiculous. We didn't even address that it [gender, sex and/or sexuality diversity] was a possibility. We didn't even talk about orgasms or pleasure. It was just purely, you need to be careful not to get pregnant, and you should use a condom and like, don't get assaulted. That was the extent of our education. And you know, if I had some resources on questioning, or how to talk to my family about it, or how I might not be the gender I was assigned at birth; that would have made a huge difference. But I had to go out and find those things out for myself. At that age, who knows if you're

getting the correct information, you know. You want the school to give you everything that's correct and safe and make your wellbeing ok and not actually detrimented [harmed] because of this curriculum.

Corroborating that they were also not exposed to relevant, inclusive and supportive resources and the concomitant need to self-educate, participant 4 expresses, 'We had to go and do it ourselves because there wasn't any of that visibility'. Further, participant 7, taking the lead from participant 5, also imagines an alternative educational arrangement which could provide some solutions (Sjoberg, Gill, and Cain 2003) to the resourcing and representational problems participants identified in the current curriculum.

Additionally, her ideas may be conducive to increased community acceptance. Participant 7 suggested, 'I think that personal experiences of black queer people would be super informative and super useful for other black and questioning queer people, and more promotion, education and exposure of these resources, especially in communities, would be useful'. Many participants supported participant 7's suggestions, feeling too, that the onus to be educated was not solely a personal responsibility. Participants placed equal importance on communities, family members, close others and so on also being provided with relevant and accessible resources to enable them to be better informed and potentially, more supportive and accepting of their gender/sexuality diverse identities.

Thus, participants' collective identification of some of the critical systematic failings of the sex education curriculum within the current Australian schooling system, led them to collaboratively pre-figure an alternative and viable educational path for the future (Shultz 2019; Wright 2000). Participants' specific visions included: a sex education system which caters to their complex, Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ identities. This could take place through, for example, exposure to relevant, inclusive and affirming resources that address and encapsulate diverse gender, sex and/or sexuality needs and desires, and which, out of inherent necessity, expand far beyond the current heteronormative indoctrination; a sex and gender education system that addresses pleasure; a teaching system that is targeted beyond the individual student, extending to family and community members for educational, acceptance and safety purposes. Further, in response to educational and representational failings, some participants purposefully sought their own recourses through undisclosed means, in attempts to grasp and affirm their own gender, sex and sexuality, as well as to begin to construct a future for themselves that is reflective of their unique identities and attached wants, needs and desires (Schulz 2019).

### *What makes a place safe: thinking about pleasurable spaces*

An additional way that participants imagined a viable safe, inclusive and flourishing alternative future for themselves, is through the creation of venues and events that are specific for Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ peoples, or which are genuinely inclusive of, and caring towards, their intersectional identities. To envisage these alternative spaces, participants draw on already established venues and events where they were/are not required to perform/be someone that they are not, and connectedly, where the venue/event and its employees are not performative in their care and inclusiveness. To construct their positive visions of the future (Schulz 2019), participants first worked to define what

safe and unsafe environments look like to them, drawing from their individual understandings and experiences.

Participant 1, for example, defined a safe space as somewhere 'where you can be your whole self, with no kind of like, holding back or no shame'. Similarly, for Participant 2, a safe and inclusive space was 'Somewhere that we can feel comfortable, somewhere where we don't feel like we will be under attack'. Participant 2 shared with workshop a scenario she was confronted with when at work, where a colleague of theirs used inappropriate and offensive language 'we [participant 2 and three other Indigenous colleagues] really did not like'. While participant 2 confirmed that 'Management did talk to her, that person, and they did receive, like, cultural awareness training', this encounter made participant 2 feel less safe in her work environment as an attack could be instigated again, whether the perpetrator recognised it to be one or not. Participant 2 also questioned the effectiveness of such training, suggesting that there is a larger systemic issue at play.

In opposition to safe spaces, participant 3 conveyed what an unsafe place feels like to them, drawing from the fear they experience in relation to perceived and real rejection, and exclusion in non-inclusive environments. Participant 3 shared:

I think a big one is fear. It's almost like the polar opposite of love. I can't speak for everyone, but I know that in the queer community [from my experience] that we all want to share love – love is love. That's what it's all about. And I think the exact polar opposite of that is fear. The fear of being judged, made fun of, the fear of not fitting in, something that I'm sure we've all gone through. Something a non-safe space would have, is fear for the LGBTQI+ community.

Discussions within the focus group, that sought to define and explore safe and unsafe environments, and which looked to envision and create increasingly harmless and protective environments/futures stimulated participants to recount times and places/spaces/events where they have felt genuinely secure and supported. Additionally, participants considered whether venues need to signal their acceptance through, for example, a typically rainbow LGBTIQSB+ inclusive sticker which some participants described as tokenistic, or whether genuine inclusivity could be fostered and achieved through other means.

Participant 4, continuing the safe space conversation warmly expressed

When I think of a safe space, the first thing that comes to mind is 'The Bearded Tit', or something. I mean, they have a big poster at the front being like, 'You're on stolen land'. There's no sticker. I think it's holding space for each other that makes it feel like a safe space and you're all responsible for that.

One of the workshop facilitators who is Indigenous and transgender, also endorsed The Bearded Tit (a local LGBTIQSB+ bar in Redfern) as being a safe environment for Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ peoples. They continued:

What we want to see, and what I acknowledge as a safe space, is a space where I am not going to put any effort into feel valid. And that's what 'The Bearded Tit' does for me. I walk in and I'm like, I can be exactly who I am meant to be in this space. I'm not having to perform and they're not performing their care for me. You feel that and you notice that. They don't need a sticker there because the entire energy that surrounds the Tit is very left and very inclusive ... The way that they have built their atmosphere to be safe without even trying is really special. You can tell in the core of what they're doing that they want people who feel unsafe everywhere else, to feel safe there.

Similarly, although distinctively, participant 2 recalled

I remember a few years ago after Mardi Gras; because I have been with the First Nations float a few times, I went to one of the after parties and it was a purely black queer space, and it was the best time that I had ever had in my life, like, it was amazing! Just having a black queer space, just to be ourselves, and have a good time and be with mob – it was amazing and it's great.

Each of these participant contributions made apparent that a safe space is one that accepts, validates and holds space for them, just as they are – without having to tailor their identity expressions to conform to some other 'norm' or out of fear of judgement, ostracism, discrimination and so forth. Additionally, these excerpts highlight the importance of care and inclusivity to be genuinely and immersively enacted and felt, as opposed to being performative. Lastly, participant 2 pointed out the importance of specifically black queer spaces and events where 'community' members can be themselves and connect with like others; a reality many participants want to increasingly cultivate in their alternative futures.

### *Envisaging positive queer black spaces: creating Indigenous queer safe spaces for the future*

Perhaps the most palpable and widely agreed vision for participants' desired futures was that of increased spaces and events created specifically for Indigenous gender, sex and sexuality diverse people. Participants shared in the joy of scenario planning (Inayatullah 2013; Schulz 2019) fun events such as Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ warehouse parties, 'Koori queer spaces', 'mob picnics' and more. Scenario building is a fruitful way to add to participants' visions and extrapolate alternative paths to achieve the futures they desire (Inayatullah 2013; Schulz 2019).

Participant 5, for instance, envisioned and hoped for 'more positive spaces for queer black people'. She explained

I feel like we have a lot of spaces for addressing issues and it's very important, but we never get a space to just have a good time, together. I don't know, [we could have] one night a week at a club [that] is queer Koori night or something. And be able to play black music in public and to not be shut down or be questioned that we're being too rowdy; we're just being ourselves. Yeah, I think we're really lacking on fun places for queer black people.

Participant 2, enlivened by participant 5's idea added

Even something that is just for the everyday. Just a queer black space. Because not everybody loves a nightclub and not everybody loves that loud, in your face atmosphere. Just having a space where we can just exist together and be comfortable, and together, really.

Participant 5 responded: 'Yes! Both sober and non-sober [spaces]'.

Participants continued joyously to share their visions for the future: participant 1 suggested an Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ warehouse party, participant 2 enjoyed the idea of 'mob picnics' or 'just having that space where we're able to connect' – 'opportunities to make connections, really, is what I would love'. And participant 4 desired 'a space for, maybe, specifically sistergirls, brotherboys' saying, 'I would love, and honestly die, to see that happen'.

Participant 5 epitomised the critical importance of creating these specifically Indigenous queer spaces when they shared with the group a decline in friends since transitioning. Participant 5 openly communicated

I feel like this year for me I lost a lot of friends because I separated from friends when I came out as trans, and I would really like somewhere I can just turn up myself and there's going to be queer black people I can chat with and have a tea and just make friends. Yeah, just a space to find those people.

These anticipative and excited narratives make clear how participants are not only engaged in future thinking and construction to avoid negative futures, and reduce risk, but how they are also actively moving to create positive visions of the future that are completely viable (Shultz 2019). Abundantly paramount to their visions of their possible and preferred futures (Inayatullah 2013), are positive spaces where they can connect with like others, express their diversities without refrain or judgement, genuinely feel accepted and supported, and enjoy themselves without the watchful, and at times regulatory, eyes of outsiders. Participants articulations and constructions of their future desires, and their current engagements at The Bearded Tit or their involvements in The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ afterparty, are each purposive efforts in negating present confines and constructing alternative, positive futures that they can flourish within (Schulz 2019).

### Concluding discussion: creating viable alternative lives

This article identifies some of the critical innovations created by Indigenous LGBTIQ young people co-create collaborative, shared imaginaries of viable, collective Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ futures. The article demonstrates Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people's practices and discourses of shared potentialities of creative, pleasurable, and safer futures and spaces. The young people's narratives aim to create a reckoning outside of current and historical constraints of settler colonial racism in Australia, particularly at a historical moment where this space is becoming one of intense racialised political negotiations and contestations. Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people speak about the construction of shared dialogues that allows them to step outside of such constraints, disrupting and displacing settler colonial narratives with narrative future imaginaries of their own, at time and place, of their choosing. More broadly, Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people's disruptive narratives and action are examples of what Jeffrey and Dyson (2022) call 'positive action' that is, 'a tendency for young people to develop integrated forms of action that traverse life domains and provide bases for critique and new ideas' (Jeffrey and Dyson 2022, 1332). These positive, integrated forms of action create new ideas and help develop viable collective futures (Jeffrey and Dyson 2022).

Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people have increasingly realised their desires for new communities of belonging, welcoming and inclusion, rather than waiting for these spaces, places and imaginaries to exist in some future time. Through drawing upon rich, nuanced and complex narratives of identity, self, community and belonging, the Indigenous queer young people who participated in this study, were able to imagine the critical tools necessary for both their own futures and, the futures of Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people coming up behind them. Throughout the collective discussions during the

workshop, the future was not only one for themselves, but also imagined in solidarity with other Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people. These narratives exhibited existing narratives of intersectionality as a discursive practice of resistance and, expanded upon these intersectional narratives when engaging in rich dialogue with their peers through the methodological process utilised in this study as a praxis of research co-production and collaboration. The primary aim from participants throughout each stage of the study was to ensure that the possibilities, potentialities and opportunities for Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ futures for young people were engaged, rich, positive and culturally affirming (see Day et al. 2023).

Another central feature of this research project was the crafting of research collaborations that facilitated the narrative journeys of young Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ people. This article emerged out of more than three years of partnership with Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people, their communities and an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation located in Sydney, New South Wales. The paper placed Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people's voices at the centre of the project, focusing on the expressed aspirations of young people and their experiences of extant community supports and services as well as exploring those seen as central and necessary to achieve their future imaginaries for a viable life as Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people. This focus on future imaginaries and the crafting out of alternative viable lives, is intentional and is explicitly designed to counter negative, dismissive narratives embedded within settler colonial discourses on Indigenous sexuality and/or gender diversity.

The article highlights the core spaces, places and everyday practices that Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people are actively thinking through in their everyday engagements to transform, and potentially dismantle, settler colonial institutions to construct viable new ways of living collectively. Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ young people demonstrate they are not just building communities of belonging, but actively carving out intentional ways of living that transform social and cultural understandings of what it means to be 'queer, Indigenous and young' in settler colonial Australia. Participants, for example, not only collectively identify the critical, systematic failings of the Australian sex education system within the current schooling system, they also engage in a shared dialogue about what an alternative and viable sex education curriculum would look like. Young Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ people propose that any replacement curriculum must move beyond heteronormative programming and cater to their complex, intersectional identities and aspirations. They envisage this viable alternative to be inclusive and affirming, integrating their diverse needs, desires and pleasures.

This dialogue not only proposes future imaginings but, also show the potentialities of creating viable positive spaces that are not just performative management strategies to capture young people's loyalties but are genuinely supportive and accepting. Young people's shared futures (Inayatullah 2013), are positive spaces where they can connect with like others, be their authentic selves through openly expressing diversities without constraints or judgement, enjoying themselves without feeling observed and regulated by rules and values of outsiders. Participant articulations and constructions of future pleasures, desires and safe spaces are intentional endeavours aimed at abolishing present limits and co-creating alternative, positive viable futures in which they can flourish.

## Note

1. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Sistergirl, Brotherboy plus. Although not used across all Indigenous communities or by all Indigenous trans people, Sistergirls are often translated as 'transwomen' and Brotherboys as 'transmen', but this is not a completely accurate depiction as it ignores Indigenous understandings of gender diversity (Sullivan 2018, 2022).

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