YOUNG & RESILIENT RESEARCH CENTRE

Y&R 2024 SEMINAR SERIES

9 October: James Gardiner

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Understanding 'ordinary wellbeing' for queer youth in suffocating conditions: reflections from an online reading and writing group



'Wellbeing' has become a keyword in popular and academic understandings of young people. Queer youth have historically, and problematically, been represented primarily as at-risk victims of high school bullying and mental ill-health. Whilst scholars have proposed a counterapproach to studying and representing queer youth, which I brand 'queer thriving', this impulse generates a troublesome victim/thriving dichotomy.

This research asks after how queer youth articulate and embody wellbeing beyond the victim/thriving framework and consider what their reflections reveal about their conditions of living.

This study involved facilitating a fortnightly online reading and writing group with Australian queer (anyone who identified as other than heterosexual and/or cisgender) youth aged 16-24 for 6 months during 2021.

Through theorising "ordinary wellbeing", this research examines how queer youth: critique and exceed dominant ideas about identity affirmation; navigate temporal scripts of 'success'; generate feelings of belonging across differences and geographies; and employ practises of 'everyday tending and tenderness' in attempts to sustain life and its meaningfulness amidst large-sale crises that they have limited power as individuals, or as a social category, to transform on their own. I argue that contemporary conditions generate a constricting, suffocating atmosphere, defined by the culmination of housing, health, and environmental crises alongside neoliberal logics of individual 'thriving' within a cis-heteronormative world.

Biography

James is a social researcher whose interests cover youth studies, gender and sexuality, critical approaches to wellbeing, digital media, and qualitative and participatory research methods.

9 October, 12:00pm to 1:00pm

Parramatta South EA.1.22 & online