EXTERNAL ORGANISATION: YWCA of Hamilton

SUPERVISOR/S: Riikka Anderson and Katrina Roen (UoW)

PROJECT TITLE: Embracing our differences: An intersectional approach to empowering young people in the Waikato

FIELD: Gender & Sexuality Studies

PROJECT LOCATION: Hamilton

PROJECT AIM:
Engage people in thinking creatively and constructively about local community, identity, belonging and embodiment and build bridges across differences, creating productive dialogue about topics that might otherwise be considered challenging and avoided.

PROJECT ABSTRACT:
The YWCA has recently completed a project on body image, emphasising the importance of valuing diverse ways of being embodied. The present project uses that as a springboard to think about embodied and other aspects of intersectional identities in Waikato, with a focus on young people. Education policy in Aotearoa New Zealand emphasises the importance of talking with young people about the body, health and sexuality in ways that respect and embrace diversity. The proposed project explores how (and whether) the current education policy and resources contribute to empowered and informed ways of thinking about sexuality, gender, embodiment and diversity.

Who we are and how others perceive us can open doors or put up barriers. This project focuses on diversity as a strength and works with young people (especially young women and non-binary people) in the Waikato. A key focus of this project is empowerment through talking across difference. It begins with questions about who we are and how we can create dialogue across difference. Through this project we will workshop building understanding and breaking down barriers. This is a scoping project that will engage diverse parties in dialogue and generate the materials for developing a new resource.

This project will involve a series of informal conversations with 3 - 5 staff who work with young people in the Waikato to identify key issues in relation to young women’s embodiment and identity, from an intersectional perspective. These conversations will be informed by existing research literature and will be a foundation for the next steps in the project. The next steps will be to hold workshops with small groups of young women and rainbow/non-binary people and to develop a resource to be used by people working locally in this sector. This is understood as a creative and co-constructive process whose focus is on building shared understandings rooted in local diversity and experience.

STUDENT SKILLS:
- Expertise in engaging across diverse communities locally (this could take many forms e.g., knowledge of te reo, connections with migrant communities, networks within rainbow community, engagement with local Pasifika community)
- Ability to listen well and engage people in dialogue, including in small groups
- Literature searching skills
- Writing skills
- Creative and technical abilities (e.g., for creating an attractive digital resource)
- Experience in volunteer work with youth and/or engaging with community organisations focused on youth empowerment

PROJECT TASKS:
- Seek out relevant grey literature and policy documents
- Identify key academic sources
- Contribute to conversations with project partners, including staff and young people
- Help to develop workshop plan and facilitate workshops
- Play a key role in creating a new resource
- Write project report and create a poster for submission to the University of Waikato
EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

- Student’s Research Poster (as per clause 6 of the Scholarship regulations)
- New dialogue about inclusion in the Waikato will be opened up
- A written report to share insights from this project
- A blog or popular science article will be prepared for publication
- A resource (e.g., a creative, digital, informational resource) will be produced, according to the expressed needs of those consulted.