

Report on the
Postgraduate Conference: Transforming the Field of Study
26-27 November 2015
Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU

Organisers

Joyce Das (PhD candidate, Crawford School of Public Policy)
Evi Eliyanah (PhD candidate, College of Asia Pacific)
Benjamin Hegarty (PhD candidate, College of Arts and Social Sciences)

Overview

On 26 and 27 November, postgraduate HDR students conducting gender studies as part of their research gathered at the Crawford School for the postgraduate conference 'Transforming the Field of Study'. The event sought to bring together HDR students from across campus in order to obtain a better sense of the variety of gender studies research conducted at the ANU. The event was well attended with approximately 50 people attending across the two days. Academic staff and HDR students from all disciplines within the arts, social sciences, law and development were represented. This was commented on as a strength of the event, with many students making connections with other students and academic staff members that they were previously unaware of. The event was made up of 5 panels with a number of papers and discussion session moderated by a senior scholar from ANU (in brackets): Gender, Identity and Politics 1 (Professor Kirin Narayan) and 2 (Dr Shameem Black); Gender and Sexuality (Professor Peter Jackson); Gender and Law (Professor Kim Rubenstein); and, Gender and Development (Dr Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt). The detailed comments provided by each of these scholars on the panels brought out some very interesting themes and allowed for a rich discussion to follow each set of papers. Participants also benefitted by an opening session and closing remarks by Gender Institute Director Dr Fiona Jenkins, who reflected on the positive benefits of gender studies networks in developing a strong research community at the ANU. Furthermore, each of the panels benefitted from the presence of a senior scholar in the field acting as discussant.

Impact and benefits

Throughout the event students were able to find out more about the breadth of gender studies research undertaken at ANU. Many commented that the nature of gender studies at ANU is that it is located in a broad range of disciplines and fields throughout the university. As such, even though students might be working on related topics, they are not aware of the fact. Therefore, such events are essential to developing a strong gender studies HDR network at the ANU. The panels were a fascinating opportunity to hear from the latest research being undertaken at the ANU in gender studies. Students presented on their topics at a range of different stages in their research: from first year to final year. This was a great benefit to the event, enriching the event for presenters and other participants alike. Students also received much-needed feedback from both discussants and other presenters on their topics. Lastly, aside from academic rewards of putting on such an event, students benefitted greatly from the informal networking made possible through the conference. This took place at lunch and coffee breaks as much as during formal sessions. As such the success of the event was in its ability to bring together students working on gender studies topics from across the ANU, facilitating discussions that will continue throughout their research.

Conclusion

The number of attendees, presenters and success in attracting high profile moderators was a testament to the success of the event. Over the course of two days new connections were made, intellectual insights developed and avenues for possible collaboration identified. Many HDR students commented on the day that although the research and writing of a PhD can be daunting and feel isolating, such events that bring students together reveal the possibilities for fostering a community around gender studies research. Furthermore, the intellectual liveliness shown by HDR scholars and moderators show that the gender studies community at the ANU is enriched by such events. Many participants expressed a desire for a regular forum in which they can collaborate and share research findings. Hopefully a similar postgraduate forum can be held in 2016 and future years in order to further strengthen the gender studies community across the ANU.

Images

A selection of images taken throughout the event:



Dr Fiona Jenkins provides the introductory remarks



Professor Kirin Narayan (L) and Professor Kim Rubenstein (R)



Panel presenters and moderator Professor Kirin Narayan



Panel presenters and moderators Professor Peter Jackson (L) and Dr Shameem Black (R)



Panel presenters and moderator Dr Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt (R)