



Details

Monday 3 May
1-2:30pm
Lectorial 2,
Level 1
RSSS Building

Contact

Liliana Oyarzun
E – liliana.
oyarzun@anu.
edu.au

Please RSVP
with your dietary
requirements

CRICOS Provider #00120C

ANU School of Sociology

Researching Australian Boyhood

THIS PANEL IS RELATED TO THE ARC PROJECT, “BOYS
AND FEMINISM”

This panel features four papers concerning histories, representations, and experiences of Australian boyhood. At its core is a strategic commitment to understanding boys, boyhood, and boys’ culture in ways that avoid negatively defining them as likely future social problems in the field of Australian gender relations. It will thus offer vital new perspectives on gender roles, ideals and relations in Australia, including with reference to schooling

and intransigent problems of gendered violence. Moving beyond seeing boys as nascent social and health threats, these papers will offer insights of use to developing new strategies for positive mental and sexual health for Australian boys.

Scroll down for panel abstracts.



**Australian
National
University**



Catherine Driscoll, “Arrested Development: the temporality of boyhood”

In both popular and scholarly texts, boys and boyhood are often brought into view as problems with the completion of mature male adulthood. While there are still popular boy heroes and narratives of young male triumph, in a vast array of texts boys are framed by temporal figures of suspension, arrest, delay, and incompleteness. While such discourse also often refers to boys in spatial terms – introducing boy worlds, or guyland, or spatialised rites of passage – these are spaces through which the temporal logic of boys becoming men is to be played out, but usually does not. This disruption or suspension seems, however, to always keep its presumed end in view and intact, and in this respect it does not fit into the accounts of always in process becoming that have been linked to figures of “the girl”.

This paper considers the not-adulthood of boys in relation to the distinction between “becoming” and “being” that has been so theoretically influential, exploring the figure of “boys” as constituted in narratives of risk, crisis, deviation,

or resentment that disrupt, while they remain anchored to, a teleological model of masculine development. The consistency of this figure has a kind of authority over actual boys’ lives through its institutional and other cultural impacts. It obscures actual (more minor?) achievements, pleasures and connections, subsuming boys into their place on a path to something deemed impossible.

Catherine Driscoll is Professor of Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney. Her books include: *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory* (2002), *Modernist Cultural Studies* (2009), *Teen Film: A Critical Introduction* (2011), *The Australian Country Girl: History, Image, Experience* (2014) and (with Heatwole) *The Hunger Games: Spectacle, Risk, and the Girl Action Hero* (2018). She is lead CI for the ARC-funded project “Australian Boys: Beyond the Boy Problem” (2021-2023).



Shawna Tang, “Notes on Transkids: An affirmative feminist study of transgender boyhood in Israel’s sexual modernity”

Transkids is a documentary on gender transitioning children in Israel. My interest is in the quotidian lives of the three transmasculine youths portrayed in the film. In reading the documentary, I draw on existing queer feminist cultural studies scholarship on Israel to frame the specific conditions under which these youths realise their boyhood and manhood. In this paper, I ask after three questions. One, what are the community support systems and options for transition available to transmasculine children in Israel? This is a question of gender transition. But I am also interested in the question of age; that is, the boy’s coming-of-age as men. Thus, my second question: what are the pathways available to these transmasculine children in their development from boyhood to manhood in Israel? Altogether, this paper looks at the possibilities for gender transition for transmasculine children, and also the pathways and promises of a futurity post-transition. Following the gender transitioning process of Ofri, Liron and Noam, Transkids offers an interesting case for the ease with which one becomes a boy and one becomes a man in Israel’s sexual modernity. How might we read this from an affirmative feminist perspective? In the third and final section of the paper, I ask after the ways in which existing feminist scholarships

on queer politics in Israel might impact how we think and feel about the trans boys’ everyday lives, which in turn raises further questions for the development of an affirmative feminist boys studies.

Shawna Tang is Lecturer of Gender Studies at the Department of Gender and Cultural Studies, University of Sydney. Shawna researches sexuality, gender and race, with a focus on Asia and Australia. She inhabits the multiple fields of queer cultural studies, intersectional and affective transnational feminisms, transgender studies and critical race theories addressing racialised questions of queer identity, politics and futurisms. Shawna is the author of *Postcolonial Lesbian Identities in Singapore*. Her current ARC-funded research focuses on transmasculine boyhoods. She has published on sexuality studies in Asia, non-normative women and same-sex intimacies in Singapore, the globalisation of same-sex marriage and LGBT politics in Singapore and Indonesia, and the politics of the intimate in neoliberal university settings. Her ongoing projects include older transmasculinities in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore, Queer Southeast Asia, queer Asian migration, politics of LGBT knowledge production in Malaysia, and pedagogies of difference and inclusion in Australia as part of Asia.

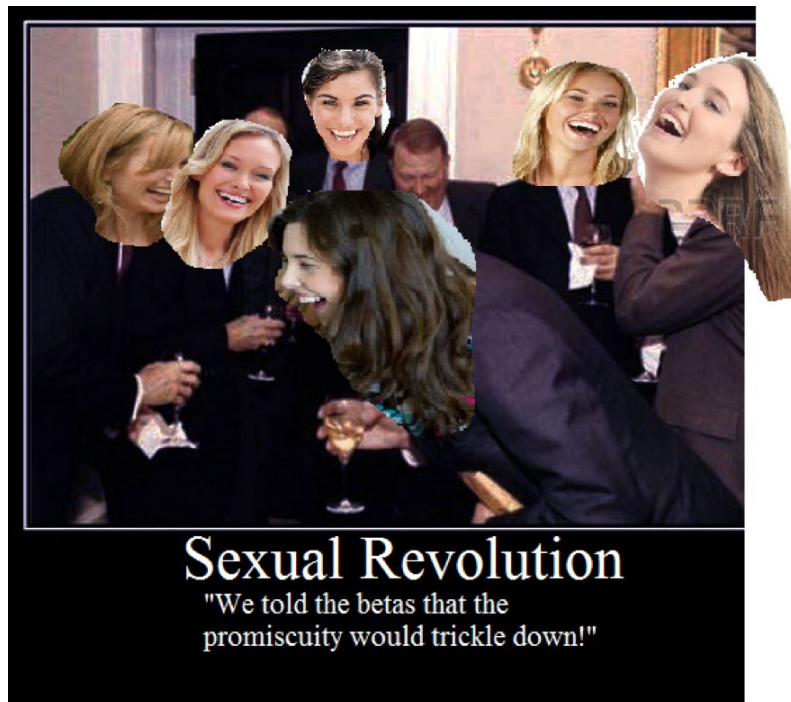


Timothy Laurie, “From Violence to Domination: Reading adolescent masculinity in Australian film”

This paper explores the relationship between representations of male violence in popular culture and critical theories of masculinity as a social process, with a focus on the model of “hegemonic masculinities” developed by R.W. Connell. As Connell, Jeff Hearn and others have argued, most direct or personal violence cannot be explained directly through the relations of consent that hegemony implies; at the same time, it is commonplace for popular film and television to caricature marginalised groups of men as pathologically violent, which can then obfuscate those indirect processes that Pierre Bourdieu describes in terms of “symbolic violence”. But this does not mean that studies of hegemony have nothing to offer studies of violence. Instead, we can ask how certain acts of violence, produced most often by men, come to be under-reported, trivialised, obfuscated, or otherwise excused through social arrangements that depend on hegemonic structures of power. To develop this argument, this paper considers the ways that violence has been presented as a “coming-of-age” device in

Australian films about boyhood and male adolescence, taking as case studies Justin Kurzel’s *Snowtown* (2011) and *The True History of the Kelly Gang* (2019).

Timothy Laurie is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Communication at the University of Technology Sydney. His core research interests include cultural theory, gender and sexuality studies, studies in popular culture, and philosophy. Timothy has recently co-authored *The Theory of Love: Ideals, Limits, Futures* (Palgrave, forthcoming) with Hannah Stark, and co-edited *Unsettled Voices: Beyond Free Speech in the Late Liberal Era* (Routledge, forthcoming) with Tanja Dreher and Michael Griffiths. He is also the Managing Editor for *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* and a Chief Investigator on the Australia Research Council grant “Australian Boys: Beyond the Boy Problem” (2021-2023).



Grace Sharkey, “Bad Boys and Bad Objects”

Feminism has a complex relationship to boys and boyhood. Boys are often positioned as a problem to be reckoned with. Steven Roberts (2014) writes that young men are inevitably thought of as “both at risk and also a risk to others”. For popular feminism, this usually raises concerns of how to raise boys to be better men and leads to calls to protect boys from media that might harm them or cause them to gain the wrong ideas about women and the world (video games and, of course, pornography).

Using scholarly objects that at first glance seem counterintuitive allows us to unsettle the surface of our academic and political projects. Annamarie Jagose (2013) and others have noted the usefulness of such counterintuition, and I will be drawing on my previous work on pornography (feminism’s big bad object) to continue with this line of thinking in my work on boys. My focus becomes what the incel (involuntary celibates, usually men) as a spectacle can tell us about young men and their relationship to a world changed by feminism. I will be

drawing on some preliminary digital ethnography of incel spaces to ground these claims, focusing on how incels themselves conceive of feminism as the reason for their formation.

Thinking through the bad objects of pornography and incels, I aim to flesh out this theoretical approach and situate it in the context of an affirmative feminist boys studies.

Grace Sharkey is a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Department of Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney. Her research interests include feminist and queer theory, youth and popular culture.