



Australian
National
University



Gender Studies Symposium

Program

DATE / TIME Tuesday 31 May - Wednesday 1 June 2022,

10 am to 5.30 pm

VENUE RSSS Auditorium, 146 Ellery Crescent, Canberra

Session 6 (Day 2) will take place in the Larry Sitsky Recital Room,

The School of Music, Building 100, William Herbert Pl

ORGANISERS ANU School of Sociology & ANU Gender Institute

Day 1. 31 May 2022

10 am	Registration, Morning tea	RSSS Foyer
10.20 am	Welcome and Introduction Coordinator of Gender Studies Major, Professor Melinda Cooper	RSSS Auditorium
10.30 am - 11.30 am	Session 1 <i>Chair: Natasha Szuhan</i>	
10.30 am	Women's fruit: Gendered labour in the global commercialisation of the aguaje palm fruit <i>Diana Tung</i>	
10.45 am	The hard work of daigou: conceptualising a precarious feminized labour in Australia <i>Jessie Liu</i>	RSSS Auditorium
11.00 am	The "Nothing" that Women Do: Inquiring into the Lives of Japan's Sindhi Merchant Wives <i>Mamta Sachan Kumar</i>	
11.15 am	Questions and Discussion	
11.30 am - 12.30 pm	Session 2 <i>Chair: Matt Withers</i>	
11.30 am	In the Forest of Power: Indigenous women's struggles for resource rights <i>Dipika Adhikari</i>	RSSS Auditorium
11.45 am	"We are granddaughters of the witches you couldn't burn" – Black Protests and collective strategies of abortion resistance in contemporary Poland <i>Inga Koralewska</i>	

	12.00 m	How do women workers in Sri Lanka's apparel industry action and legitimise new forms of collective voice in resisting and reshaping labour regulation? <i>Achalie Kumarage</i>	
	12.15 pm	Questions and Discussion	
12.30 pm - 1.30 pm	Lunch RSSS Foyer		
1.30 pm - 2.30 pm	Session 3 Chair: Melinda Cooper		
	1.30 pm	Climate change, gender, and human security: situating insecurities within gendered institutions <i>Elise Howard</i>	
	1.45 pm	Buy now, pay later apps as responsible finance: reframing, expanding and enclosing debt-financed consumption through digital interfaces <i>Rachel Aalders</i>	RSSS Auditorium
	2.00 pm	Questions and Discussion	
	2.15 pm	Short break	
2.30 pm - 3.30 pm	Session 4 Chair: Julieanne Lamond		
	2.30 pm	Towards a feminist history of reading: archival remnants of the Australian teenage girl, 1970–2010 <i>Saskia Roberts</i>	RSSS Auditorium
	2.45 pm	Feminist Experts: A Historical Case Study <i>Michelle Staff</i>	

3.00 pm "Ladies Day" in the bush: Settler women bushwalkers, gender dynamics and nascent environmentalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century
Ruby Ekkel

3.15 pm Questions and Discussion

3.30 pm -
4.00 pm

Break time

4.00 pm -
5.00 pm

Gender Institute Prizes Ceremony, and reception

RSSS Foyer

Day 2. 1 June 2022

10 am

Morning tea

RSSS Foyer

10.30 am -
11.15 am

Session 5
Chair: Celia Roberts

10.30 am From boots to babies and back again: The experience of pregnancy, birth and mothering in the Australian Army
Maureen Montalban

RSSS
Auditorium

10.45 am Communicating a women's disease
Susanne Ilchner

11.00 am Questions and Discussion

11.30 am - 12.30 pm	Session 6 Venue: <u>SCHOOL OF MUSIC: Larry Sitsky Recital Room</u> Chair: Bonnie McConnell	
	11.30 am “My voice is my instrument” - the marginalisation of female vocalists in the Australian jazz scene <i>Rachael Thoms</i>	School of Music Larry Sitsky Recital Room
	11.50 am Women’s Lives and Loves: practice-led research into the mid-career transitions of dramatic female voices <i>Katrina Waters</i>	
	12.10 am Questions and Discussion	
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12.30 pm - 2.00 pm	Lunch	RSSS Foyer
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2.00 pm - 3.30 pm	Session 7 Chair: Mary Lou Rasmussen	
	2.00 pm Reframing Queerness and Abuse: The Affirmation of Compromised Queer Identities in Carmen Maria Machado’s in the Dream House <i>Isobel Lavers</i>	
	2.15 pm Minority stress and LGBTI health: understanding practices of care and consumption in the queer community <i>Isabel Mudford</i>	RSSS Auditorium
	3.00 pm Private “Cosplay”: Performing Self, Identity and (A)Sexuality <i>Weifeng Tao</i>	
	3.15 pm Questions and Discussion	

3.30 pm - 4.00 pm	Afternoon tea	RSSS Foyer
4.00 pm - 5.00 pm	Session 8 Chair: Helen Keane 4.00 pm Couvade: Feminist Futures? <i>Susie Russell</i> 4.15 pm Love, Disappointment, and Injury in the Manosphere <i>Simon Copland</i> 4.30 pm "The Woman Always Pays": Colonial Women's Writings and Cultural Understandings of Intimate Violence and Gender in Australia's Eastern Colonies, 1880-1914 <i>Zoe Smith</i> 4.45 pm Questions and Discussion	RSSS Auditorium
5.00 pm - 5.15 pm	Closing remarks	RSSS Auditorium
7.00 pm	Dinner (Venue: TBC)	

Book of Abstracts

Diana Tung
*School of Archaeology
and Anthropology*

Women's fruit: Gendered labour in the global commercialisation of the aguaje palm fruit.

The aguaje (*Mauritia flexuosa*) is a palm fruit that is on the verge of becoming the next big thing in the global superfood market due to its high concentrations of vitamin A and omega acids, as well as its reputed benefits for women. Although native throughout large swathes of the South American continent, the aguaje's cultural and economic significance in the Peruvian Amazon is unparalleled. Within this context the aguaje is referred to as the 'tree of life', and the consumption of its fruit is considered integral to Amazonian identity. Currently there are two major multi-million dollar commercialization projects, one from the private sector and another from the state government of Loreto. Even conservationists are keen to commercialise the aguaje, with the assumption that the commodification of the aguaje fruit will incentivize harvesters to climb and pick the fruits instead of felling the palms entirely. As such, the carbon-capturing palm swamps will be preserved, the Amazon jungle will be left intact, and all actors along the aguaje supply chain will get rich—a win-win outcome for all. Based on twenty months of ethnographic research, this presentation examines how aguaje's transformation from a prized local foodstuff to a global superfood is predicated on women's visible but undervalued contributions to the local aguaje economy.

Jessie Liu
School of Sociology

The hard work of daigou: conceptualising a precarious feminized labour in Australia.

Infant formula parallel importation between China and Australia, also known as daigou, is a multi-million dollar industry. The trade is highly gendered with the majority of buyers and clients being women. The trade has been represented by Australian media as a 'foreign and exotic practice' to Australia. In this talk I reject this representation of the trade and, through drawing on interviews with my participants, paint a different picture of the trade as constituted by Australia and by a longer history of gendered work. Arguing against the label of 'foreignness', I show how daigou's emergence as a gendered trade is related to the inaccessibility of the Australian labour market for migrant women. In addition, rejecting the label of exotic, I highlight how daigou can be read within a broader tradition of the feminized labour of direct sales where women sell to friends and family. Reading daigou alongside Tupperware parties and Avon, I consider how we can understand the gendered work of economizing social relations, and the specific transnational and digital iteration of this form of work that we see in the case of daigou.

Mamta Sachan Kumar
*School of Culture,
History and Language*

The “Nothing” that Women Do: Inquiring into the Lives of Japan’s Sindhi Merchant Wives.

This presentation shares the origin story of my PhD thesis. My case study takes me back to the city of my birth – Kobe, Japan, where I seek to gather stories of women in the community of my childhood. This is the Sindhi merchant community – a diaspora with a 150-year history in Japan. The women in focus are of my mother’s generation and currently in their late 60s and older. They largely identify as ‘housewives’ and belong to the upper-class stratum of society, where their husbands – the merchants – are mainly self-employed traders. Many of these women relocated to Japan by way of marriage facilitated by the diaspora’s strong, transnational networks. A few years ago, in conversation with my mother on her experiences as a new bride in 1970s Osaka, I got to hear about a range of activities, emotions and challenges that coloured her early days in foreign surroundings. When I attempted to sum up our chat and asked what she did all day while my father was at the office, she told me quite promptly that she did “nothing”. As I spoke to a few aunties, “nothing” began to emerge as a pattern that I could only discern at the time as self-dismissal. It looked like a dead end for my grand plan to expose the lives and roles of women as substantial and critical to the functioning of the diaspora. I took “nothing” to consultation in a bout of frustration and near defeat – what would I research if there was “nothing”? I came out of that pivotal meeting being made to realize that “nothing” was, in fact, my entryway into these women’s worlds. And so here is where I begin – with “nothing”.

Dipika Adhikari
*Crawford School of
Public Policy*

In the Forest of Power: Indigenous women’s struggles for resource rights.

Despite growing recognition for a rights-based approach in forest governance for socially just and ecologically sustainable outcomes, indigenous communities around the world continue to grapple to claim their resource rights. The passing of the Forest Rights Act in 2006 in India was meant to tackle this historical injustice by recognising Indigenous people’s rights, but limited acknowledgement of rights themselves, abysmal implementation by state agents, entrenched power asymmetries made the Indigenous people unable to claim what is their rightful entitlement. Scholars have shown that the role of indigenous women in managing forest resources is central in forest-dwelling communities, yet neither their contribution nor their equal legal rights are recognised. Within this background, I argue that a more gendered and decentralized forest governance with state and non-state actors located at multiple levels of jurisdictional or administrative scale might have different outcomes. These actors would have different interests, goals, and powers to perform different functions in a resource system, allowing power to flow both ways and enhancing the interactions between multiple actors across the scales in such a way as to securing property rights of communities. My research is being carried out with the Van Rajis, a small forest-dwelling tribal group in the foothills of the Himalayas in Northern India, and the presentation draws empirical material from this study to inform how gender plays a critical role in a dynamic power context in

forests.

Inga Koralewska
School of Sociology

“We are granddaughters of the witches you couldn’t burn” – Black Protests and collective strategies of abortion resistance in contemporary Poland

In the years following the right-wing populist Law and Justice Party’s overwhelming success in the 2015 parliamentary election, Poland was shaken by a series of protests against the government’s attempts to tighten abortion laws. Between 2016 and 2020, the so-called ‘Black Protests’ brought hundreds of thousands of women and their allies into the streets. The mass mobilization of women was unprecedented in the history of post-communist Poland and Polish feminism. While the Black Protests did not stop the government from narrowing the already tight abortion laws to a near total ban in 2021, their significance for feminism in Poland cannot be overstated. In this paper, I will reflect on how the protests re-shaped narratives around reproductive health and abortion in Poland. I will show that the engagement of ‘ordinary women’ and practices of ‘weak resistance’ (Majewska 2017) initiated an ongoing, structured process of collective civil disobedience [that had until then been confined to the private realm and individual acts]. I will argue that the protests paved the way for the emergence of a collective, self-help abortion movement that aims to reassert Polish women’s control over their reproductive choices.

Achalie Kumarage
*School of Regulation
and Global Governance*

How do women workers in Sri Lanka’s apparel industry action and legitimise new forms of collective voice in resisting and reshaping labour regulation?

My PhD is socio-legal research that examines how women workers in Sri Lanka’s apparel industry action and legitimise collective voice in resisting and re-shaping labour regulation in the industry and across its associated supply chain. In a context where labour law’s traditional mechanisms to express worker voice has significantly weakened, and further disrupted during the pandemic, the research focuses on how these women workers resort to non-conventional forms of collective voice to bolster an otherwise precarious position in employment. In answering this question, I use three case studies and semi-structured interviews with women workers, trade unions and women’s organisations, and other non-state and state actors at local, national, regional, and international levels. I use networked regulation as a theoretical lens, in tandem with Transnational Feminist Movements (TFM), to analyse how networks of actors impact the regulatory agency of workers (and their representatives) in amplifying collective voice of workers and actioning their rights at workplace. Findings of this research will have implications for how we think about women as industrial workers in the global south, evolving forms of worker activism and different normative framings in legitimising worker voice that enable women workers to leverage power in labour regulation.

Elise Howard
*School of Asia Pacific
Affairs*

Climate change, gender, and human security: situating insecurities within gendered institutions

Human security has provided an important analytical frame to expose gender inequality as a key driver of differential vulnerabilities to climate change. Conceptualised with the intention to recognise the intersecting nature of crisis and insecurities, the concept has drawn attention to the unjust nature of differential vulnerabilities that communities across the globe experience in relation to climate change. As a result, a wealth of scholarship has been dedicated to highlighting women's vulnerabilities and calls for greater inclusion of women in climate change policy adaptation responses. Yet there are risks in the translation of these intentions that approaches to address gendered insecurities are reduced to simply adding women into existing forums or policies with a masculine bias. This paper intends to flip the approach by exploring women's agency and resilience by drawing on examples in the Pacific Islands Region, one of the most vulnerable locations across the globe to climate change. In doing so, the paper exposes a bias in policy that devalues or renders invisible women's work. By exploring how women's work is a key contributor to security, we can reveal more about the root causes of gendered human insecurity that impact on women and men in a time of climate change.

Rachel Aalders
School of Sociology

Buy now, pay later apps as responsible finance: reframing, expanding and enclosing debt-financed consumption through digital interfaces

Buy now, pay later (BNPL) is a contentious form of finance. While its proponents claim these interest-free loans that are repaid in installments help consumers manage their finances, critics argue they encourage financially vulnerable people to take on unsustainable levels of debt. Although these products are similar to existing forms of consumer credit in a number of ways, BNPL companies have rhetorically reframed debt-financed consumption as responsible finance, in which the BNPL companies are responsible lenders and the BNPL users are responsible spenders. Through an analysis of corporate documents and app store listings of three popular BNPL products (Afterpay, Klarna and Zip), I argue this reframing is largely achieved through the platform nature of BNPL products, many of which connect merchants and consumers through an app. The use of these apps, which are the primary interface for transacting on and managing BNPL accounts, result in an expansion of debt-financed consumption and an enclosure of that consumption within specific BNPL platforms. But this expansion and enclosure does not affect everyone equally: the types of economic transactions typically allowed and encouraged by BNPL apps mean that the impact of these financial technologies is gendered and classed.

Saskia Roberts
School of History

Towards a feminist history of reading: archival remnants of the Australian teenage girl, 1970–2010

From the 1970s until approximately 2010, Australian girls turned to teen magazines, such as *Dolly* and *Girlfriend*, to supplement the often narrow and limited sex education they received at school. The texts girls read encompassed the conservative and didactic as well as the playful and provocative. But what did teenage girls themselves take from their readings? In this paper, I analyse archival remnants, such as magazine marginalia and unpublished letters to the ‘Dolly Doctor’ medical advice column, to uncover how teenage girls engaged with reading material about intimacy. Some girls faithfully followed the magazines’ dictates and others outright rejected them, yet still others queried and questioned what they read in playful and surprising ways. Earlier scholarship has focused on discourses of femininity and purity in texts for girls, as opposed to how girls interpreted these messages. However, more recent histories have begun documenting girls’ varied responses to reading material. By focusing on unexpected reactions to the magazines and situating my research among this newer body of scholarship, I take some preliminary steps towards a feminist history of reading. In doing so, I outline how feminist theory can be productively combined with the history of reading to enrich and complicate our understandings of girlhood in history.

Michelle Staff
School of History

Feminist Experts: A Historical Case Study

In 1923, the British feminist Margery Corbett Ashby reminded the world’s enfranchised women that ‘we are also specialists and experts with special work to do, and our work as humans must not be at the sacrifice of our work as women’. The international feminist movement of the 1920s and 1930s—of which she was a leading figure—was centrally preoccupied by how women would take up their new roles as domestic and international citizens. Against the backdrop of developments such as the League of Nations’ increasing emphasis on technical expertise and the growth of technologies such as the radio, which provided fresh avenues for women to have a public voice, many feminists took on roles that showed that they saw themselves as more than just volunteers or activists—whether because of their education, their experiences, or simply their standing as women, they considered themselves to be experts. While my research is primarily empirical in nature, in this paper I want to reflect on and learn how some theoretical concepts from history and other disciplines may enrich my work. Using various archival records—from newspaper articles to radio transcripts to official documents—I will explore the gendered concept of expertise. I will ground this in the context of my case study by examining interwar feminists’ relationship to this idea, including their self-perception and self-promotion as people worth listening to. I will reflect on how this played out alongside contemporary debates over the essence of feminism itself to better understand the conceptual underpinnings of interwar feminism.

Ruby Ekkel
School of History

“Ladies Day” in the bush: Settler women bushwalkers, gender dynamics and nascent environmentalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century

Recreational bushwalkers were some of the first settler Australians to articulate the importance of environmental conservation, well before these ideas crystallised into an organised political movement. Their strong attachment to ‘untouched’ and beautiful landscapes and their abhorrence toward damaging tourism or clearing were influential in developing settler attitudes regarding native flora and fauna. This paper aims to investigate the particular place and influence of women bushwalkers, who were initially excluded from the popular bushwalking clubs formed in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The experiences and ideas of male recreational bushwalkers, including the influential Myles Dunphy, will be contrasted against the experiences of women like those of the pioneering Melbourne Women’s Walking Club, formed in 1922. Alice Mansfield, or ‘Guide Alice’, will also be featured as an albeit unusual example of a woman who made a name for herself as a bushwalker, popularized and facilitated women’s bushwalking, and held a deep understanding of and appreciation for the natural environment in which she lived and worked. Ecofeminist concepts, which posit an inherent or constructed connection between feminist and environmentalist struggle, will be critically applied to this period to test their relevance and potential productiveness in an earlier colonial context. As part of a broader study of settler Australian women and emerging environmental consciousness between 1788 and 1939, this paper seeks to identify the role of white women bushwalkers in forming or transforming attitudes towards native flora and fauna in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Rachael Thoms
School of Music

“My voice is my instrument” - the marginalisation of female vocalists in the Australian jazz scene

Jazz has long been regarded as a masculine domain, which has resulted in the minoritization of women participating in jazz performance and education. A 2009 Australia Council survey found that while around 50% of music students in Australia are female, women represent only 32% of professional working musicians. On top of that, an internet search of music faculties reveals that less than 10% of jazz academics in Australian tertiary institutions are female. However, when it comes to voice, women tend to dominate. Perhaps due to this preponderant visibility, female vocalists are often left out of studies and discourse about jazz’s male bias (which tend to focus on female instrumentalists) and how it impacts women’s participation and achievement in jazz performance and education. Furthermore, there is a prevalent assumption within jazz that vocalists are inferior musicians and ineffectual improvisors and are not taken seriously by those in the scene. Through a qualitative methodology triangulating autoethnographic observations, semi-structured interviews with renowned pedagogues and performers, and drawing on Engel’s ‘biopsychosocial’ model (1977), this initial exploratory study proposes several possible reasons for the lower status of female vocalists in the Australian jazz scene, while highlighting the female vocalists’ experience

of the broader gender imbalance. A discussion of the biopsychosocial limitations and expectations impacting women and the perceived issues in tertiary institutions which gives rise to educational disparity provide insights to direct future investigation. Several recommendations emerge which seek to supplant negative and exclusionary attitudes experienced by female jazz vocalists, and address academic, creative, and participatory barriers.

Katrina Waters
School of Music

Women's Lives and Loves: practice-led research into the mid-career transitions of dramatic female voices

My practice-led research investigates how a dramatic soprano builds a voice, body and psyche to deal with the demands of singing Wagner's biggest dramatic role, that of Brünnhilde in The Ring Cycle. Based on Smith and Dean's iterative cyclical web (2009), I have devised a series of staged song cycle projects to explore these issues. This project investigates the suitability of the dramatic female voice to interpret Schumann's 'Frauenliebe und Leben' (1840) and Frances-Hoad's modern-day response to Schumann's work, 'One Life Stand' (2011). It asks whether dramatic female voices, which have thicker vocal folds than other sopranos, can effectively negotiate repertoire that was originally composed for the historically feminine domain of 'The Parlour'. It also asks what is conveyed when a dramatic female voice, which typically has a big, emotive, and powerful tone that can assert itself over a large orchestra, performs this music. The outcome of my project will be a performance of excerpts of the two cycles and description of my reflexive practice, which interrogates how my dramatic voice negotiates these songs. I will detail what processes I have engaged in to develop ownership over my interpretation of the works as a singer with a dramatic female voice. This research suggests that the qualities of the dramatic soprano voice, while not ideally suited for music from 'The Parlour' tradition, can challenge traditional notions of voice and gender embodied in the works. This creative exploration develops insights both into the works and the development of the voice, body, and psyche of the dramatic voiced female singer.

Isobel Lavers
*School of Literature,
Languages and
Linguistics*

Reframing Queerness and Abuse: The Affirmation of Compromised Queer Identities in Carmen Maria Machado's in the Dream House

In this, article I undertake an investigation of the queer archive – that collection of queer cultural memory which delineates queer identity. Deriving my definition from Aleida Assmann's conceptualization of cultural memory, this article understands the queer archive as the actively remembered "canon" and passively remembered "archive" of queer cultural memory. However, there exists a notable gap both within the queer archive and the adjacent scholarly literature, wherein discussions of intimate partner violence are dismissed and diminished. Engaging with the queer archive's minimal acknowledgment of intimate partner violence (especially between two women) within cultural memories and discourses, I examine how this gap within the literature perseveres, and the efforts memoirs such as Carmen Maria Machado's In

the Dream House have played in rectifying this literary absence. Through a close analysis of Machado's text and its reception, this paper argues that Machado's extensive experimentation with memoir form – evident in her use of genre, critical perspectives, and second person language – forges new methods of understanding queerness and queer abuse. Moreover, this article proposes that Machado's experimentation with form reveals Dream House's metatextual tendency to both address and attempt to fill the archival silences within queer cultural memory, in turn creating a space for queer identity to expand. That is, I contend, Machado's experimentations with memoir form recognizes – and demands recognition of – queer abuse in an autobiographical answer to the archive's absence, culminating in the active remembrance of her narrative and the affirmation of 'compromised' identities within queer discourses. Keywords: memoir, queer archive, cultural memory, life-writing

Isabel Mudford
School of Sociology

Minority stress and LGBTI health: understanding practices of care and consumption in the queer community

In 2013, ACON (formerly the AIDS Council of NSW) launched a campaign entitled Ending HIV with the objective of reducing transmissions of HIV in NSW by 80% before 2020. Ending HIV marked a turning point in history of HIV/AIDS Councils across Australia, recognising that biomedical developments such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) had fundamentally shifted the objectives of HIV advocates. Over the last decade, while working towards the goal of 'virtual elimination', Australian AIDS Councils have simultaneously begun to broaden their objectives from HIV prevention and advocacy to the provision of services and advocacy on other health and wellbeing concerns of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) 'community'. These health concerns vary from alcohol and other drug consumption and mental health to the prevention and screening for cancer and treatment for STIs. Understanding the shared thread of these experiences to be identification with the LGBTI community, LGBTI Health organisations commonly draw on the theory of minority stress (Meyer 1995) to explain what they see as patterns of particular ill-health resulting from marginalisation and discrimination on the basis of non-normative sexuality and/gender identity. Critically engaging with the theory of minority stress, I consider how practices and experiences of care and consumption within the queer community are reduced by LGBTI Health organisations to experiences of self-harm and vulnerability. I argue that the interventions proposed by these organisations to combat these vulnerabilities contradict more radical possibilities of collective care by prioritising the self-management of the body over social change. As the category of LGBTI Health is in a rapid process of development at the 'end of HIV', it is important we critically engage with how queer people are being constituted by the category of LGBTI Health and the impact this has on the way we can envisage what it means to be queer.

Tate McAllister
School of Sociology

Consuming gender: YouTube, micro-celebrity and the commodification of (trans)gender expression

The internet is well known as a crucial site for the formation of both trans identities and communities. YouTube in particular has played an especially important role; as media studies scholar Laura Horak (2014: 572) wrote about the platform in the early 2010s, 'for the first time, media created by trans people is being produced, distributed and consumed on a mass scale.' Studies of trans communities on YouTube, including by Horak and Tobias Raun (2016), have focussed on the ways in which the vlogging medium has allowed trans people to narrate their own lives, share knowledge and build digital communities. In this paper I extend this work to explore the rise of the trans social media influencer. Through an analysis of videos created by Chase Ross, a well-known trans YouTuber, I explore how trans micro-celebrities are able to leverage their audiences to generate income through their digital activities. I argue that Ross interweaves personal, educational, and branded content about gender expression products in ways that make it difficult to separate commercial and non-commercial messages, and which cloak consumerism in advocacy work. Through this argument I seek to contribute to scholarship about 'rainbow capitalism' and consider the role of social media influencers in commodifying (trans)gender expression and promising self-actualisation through consumption.

Weifeng Tao
*Bachelor of Arts,
Research School of
Social Science*

Private "Cosplay": Performing Self, Identity and (A)Sexuality

Cosplay is an emerging subculture in fandom communities worldwide. The concept of "cosplay" originated from the words "costume" and "play". Cosplay is a form of the role and/or identity transformation from an ordinary person to a performed role. The costumes and imitations of different roles together make the "performativity" of cosplay visible. Existing cosplay research studies examine cross-dressing cosplay and gender subversion, gender fluidity, the stigma around cosplayers, and so on. To contribute new knowledge to this field, my research focuses on private cosplayers and their experiences of attraction, fantasy, and pleasure. This study aims to explore the following research questions: Why do people take part in sexualized/attraction-based cosplay? What is unique about the kinds of sexual attraction/desire/fantasies that are experienced in the context of cosplay? What are the different experiences of attraction that people bring to one space? This research employs a combination of autoethnographic and ethnographic approaches including direct participation, photography, observation, and in-depth one-to-one interviews. As a researcher and cosplayer myself, I used autoethnography to study the 'cosplayer I' through personal stories of cosplay. I also observed and interviewed other cosplayers who identified as trans female, cross-dressers, asexual, agender and non-binary people to expand my knowledge and research in this field.

Susie Russell

Centre for Art History
and Art Theory -
School of Art and
Design

Couvade: Feminist Futures?

Since its coinage in 1865 as an anthropological term to encompass a range of practices surrounding childbirth, including dietary and hunting restrictions, and so called “male lying-in,” couvade has proved exceedingly useful in a range of disciplines and discourses for over 150 years. First, nineteenth century anthropologists took it up in theories of sympathetic magic, as well as to espouse purported human evolution from matriarchal to patriarchal social forms. Couvade went on to be used in psychoanalytic theory, as well as in military medicine, including secondary traumatic stress in the families of returned soldiers. The title of a mid-twentieth century article ‘The Weird Psychology of Sex Changes’ in a North American men’s magazine gives some sense of a sensationalised cosmology of gender, in which trans women’s experiences and couvade could become of a piece. Today, couvade appears on websites entitled ‘Weird Universe,’ and in parenting articles such as ‘He thinks HE’S Pregnant?! The weirdness that is couvade syndrome.’ Couvade is among the rituals showing how human bodies are always becoming (Villaça 2005: 240). While this might evoke enticing possibilities of what might lie beyond the model of a stable, individuated body, the examples above attest to just some of the many reductive appropriations of couvade in Anglo-American dominant contexts. Couvade is far from a benign category, having long been implicated in the construction and maintenance of racial hierarchies (including through colonial visions of gendered inversion among colonised peoples). In this paper I explore how we might grapple with couvade’s histories, entangled as they are with multiple and intersecting modes of subjugation, while contemplating more expansive possibilities for couvade in theorising gender and sexuality. Following Amazonian anthropologist Laura Rival, I consider one of these possibilities – critiquing postmodern constructions of sexuality by observing how androgynous reproduction can function.

Simon Copland

School of Sociology

Love, Disappointment, and Injury in the Manosphere

The manosphere is a collection of online blogs, forums and social media channels based in anti-feminist ideas. The community has been connected to several online misogynistic harassment campaigns as well as violent attacks. While a lot of work has been done to examine the misogyny and violence of the manosphere, comparatively little has focused on the ‘connective tissue’ that binds individuals together in these spaces. In this paper I argue manosphere men bind together through a common attachment to conventional white heteronormative ideals of love and a disappointment about the failures of this love – what I call the male complaint. Disappointment about failures in love provide the strongest emotional glue for manosphere men, providing a sense of connection, identity and belonging. This sense of disappointment also provides a justification for misogyny, with manosphere men positioning women as the inherent causes of their problems. These complaints are not necessarily rational or well-founded, but provide an affective pull for men, particularly through creating a sense of commonality and collective identity based around the notion of ‘injury’. This feeling of being injured is

centred primarily although not exclusively on white men's sense of ongoing systemic crisis and inability to achieve the fantasy of a good life. This paper provides a unique insight into the connective tissue that binds individuals together in the manosphere, furthering our understanding of why men come to these spaces, what it provides for them, and how misogyny develops within.

Zoe Smith
School of History

“The Woman Always Pays”: Colonial Women’s Writings and Cultural Understandings of Intimate Violence and Gender in Australia’s Eastern Colonies, 1880-1914

The historiography on domestic and sexual violence in late nineteenth/early twentieth century Australia is a small but expanding field, revitalised in the last few years in the wake of an important spotlight being shone upon violence against women in contemporary Australia. Under this spotlight, understandings of domestic violence have recently broadened beyond physical violence to include underrepresented and misunderstood types of abuse, such as coercive control, emotional, economic, psychological, and verbal abuse, which can be defined as intimate violence. Building on recent literature in the fields of gendered and domestic violence, this paper will provide a brief introduction to the early stages of my PhD thesis – which seeks to analyse cultural and gendered understandings and depictions of intimate violence between 1880 and 1914. My thesis will ask how colonial female writers, such as Barbara Baynton, Ada Cambridge, Louisa Lawson, and Rosa Praed, used their fiction and non-fiction writings to draw attention to the ways in which the dominant masculinist tradition facilitated violence and brutality towards women. This masculinist tradition was bolstered in male-dominated literature and newspapers such as *The Bulletin*, and my thesis seeks to read this literature and these newspapers in comparison to the works of these colonial women, drawing on theoretical ideas of gender performativity and hegemonic masculinity as well as feminist theoretical literature on sexual and gendered violence as conceptual frameworks. Analysing the writings of Baynton, Cambridge, Lawson, and Praed together, alongside contemporary accounts of ‘cruelty’ and ‘wife beating’ in newspapers, will recast and deepen our understanding of cultural attitudes and representations that both surrounded and aided in perpetuating intimate violence in all forms - physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, and economic - at the time of Australia’s national foundation.
