Gender and the Everyday Conference

Friday, 29 September 2017

Murdoch University

9.00am to 4.30pm (followed by informal drinks)

WACCM “Gender and the Everyday” Conference Organising Committee:
Kyra Clarke (UWA), Lauren O'Mahony (Murdoch), Debbie Rodan (ECU), and Michele Willson (Curtin)

Abstract Reviewers: Kyra Clarke (UWA), Rob Cover (UWA), Lauren O'Mahony (Murdoch), Melissa Merchant (Murdoch), Debbie Rodan (ECU), and Michele Willson (Curtin)
WACCM Forum:

Opening Spaces: Collegiality and Dialogue within Gender and the Everyday

Forum chairs: Michele Willson and Debbie Rodan

Today, the panel discusses examples and issues around gender in the everyday. We live, relate, teach and learn in ways influenced by our expectations and understandings of gender, particular gender types, roles and practices. Given the intricate ways in which these practices and understandings are so deeply entwined with our identities and our worldviews, issues around gender and the everyday can be problematic, emotive, conflictual and certainly heterogeneous, making it tricky terrain at times to navigate.

Panellist Bios

Alison Bartlett teaches Gender Studies, English and Cultural Studies at UWA. Her books include Jamming the Machinery: contemporary Australian women’s writing, and Breastwork: Rethinking Breastfeeding, and edited books on the public sphere, postgraduate pedagogy, maternal ethics, feminist material culture, and recent journals issues on social memory, and feminist museology.

David Buchbinder teaches and writes in literary and cultural studies, focusing especially on the cultural representations of men, masculinities and male sexualities. The author of Masculinities and Identities (1994) and Contemporary Literary Theory and the Reading of Poetry (1991), he is a graduate of Tel Aviv and Cornell Universities.

Liz Byrski is an Associate Professor in the School of Media Culture and Creative Arts at Curtin University. She is a novelist, non-fiction writer, the author of nine novels and twelve non-fiction books. Her books articles and essays have been published in a variety of countries.

Michelle Carey is a lecturer in the Australian Indigenous Studies program in Murdoch University’s School of Arts. Her research interests include problematising the ‘de-colonial’ in both the writing of Indigenous Studies curriculum and settler colonialism.
Abstracts (alphabetical order by surname of first author)

Mums and social media: The everyday, digitised ‘third place’ for mothers in Australia

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In 21st Century Australia, parenting continues to play out in the everyday along gender lines, with women doing most of the childcare, often only in paid part-time work, and fathers continuing to act as the main breadwinner. Despite more young women achieving higher rates of education than their male peers, the stay-at-home/part-time working mum and full-time working dad continues to be the norm. Women experience significant changes and often isolation following the birth of their first child. In their new roles, many first-time mothers turn to social media daily for community and connection. This paper, using the theoretical lens of the ‘third place’, reports on and discusses empirical research into the social media use of mothers of young children in Western Australia (WA). Ten focus groups were conducted within rural and metropolitan playgroups. Facebook was the dominant social media used with more than 90 per cent of mothers reporting using the platform. The main motivations for use were maintaining contact with the outside world and keeping in touch with family and friends. Mothers also used Facebook in particular to zone out, relieve boredom, keep up with news, find information, to ‘stalk’ or check up on people and to follow businesses or brands. ‘Fear of missing out’ (FOMO) was a strong theme which emerged. While social media provided many benefits, participants also raised serious concerns about the darker side of this third place.

Commemorating a rape: Mary’s Place project, 1997 and 2010

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In January 1996, a young, lesbian woman named Mary was verbally abused and physically and sexually assaulted in a laneway in Surry Hills, an inner suburb of Sydney. She was attacked after attending a female-only lesbian night by two men who had been denied entry to the pub. The hate crime became the catalyst for a place-based art project that reclaimed the laneway for Sydney’s LGBTIQ community. Flood Land was renamed Marys Place, and the place of the attack was covered with a painted mural. When the mural was destroyed in 2008, it was replaced by a high profile public artwork named ‘Lamp for Mary’ (2010). This paper offers a comparison of these two place-based commemorations, one in the late 1990s, the other almost two decades later. Although only a relatively short period separates them, the social context is radically
different, as is the response to the hate crime. Whereas the first Mary’s Place artwork focused on the LGBTIQ experience of violence, the 2010 commemoration emphasised Mary’s female-ness. By exploring the similarities and differences of the two responses, this paper explores changes over time in social responses to LGBTIQ people and the power of language in responses to violence.

Heartland and Redfern Now: Revisiting Langton’s intersubjective dialogue

Michelle Carey (Murdoch University)
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In 1993, Marcia Langton, at the behest of the Australian Film Commission, published her treatise on representations of ‘Aboriginality’ in Australian film. I heard it on the Radio, I saw it on the Television, eschewed one-dimensional, culturally essentialising and ultimately authoritative representations of Aboriginality and argued that truly anti-colonial representations of Aboriginality should be constructed in a field of intersubjective exchange between both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Nearly twenty-five years following its publication, this paper builds on Langton’s thesis, arguing that anti-colonial constructions of Aboriginality are constructed out more diverse sites of personal identification than Langton first alluded. Drawing on the examples of both the 1994 mini-series Heartland the more recent mini-series, Redfern Now, this paper argues that an expanded understanding of intersubjective exchange must, in addition to Aboriginality and non-Aboriginality, incorporate an understanding of gendered, classed and sexual identities and bring these to bear in our ongoing endeavours to decolonise representations of ‘Aboriginality’.

Tropfest, short films and the gendered everyday

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Following its resurrection in 2016, Tropfest, self-described as ‘the world’s largest short film festival’, was critiqued for the lack of female directors in the list of finalists, and the lack of women depicted in the films. Over the years, Tropfest has been criticized for the content of finalist films and choice of winners, homophobia and transphobia, licensing of the films, as well as the impact of the competition on Australian short filmmaking in general, however, much of the media surrounding the 2017 festival focused on gender, with a significant increase in female finalists to “half”. In this paper, I compare the 2016 and 2017 competition finalists, to consider how “everyday” issues of gender play out in the representation of the festival, and the content of the films. This is considered alongside the Junior event, which has received less critical attention.
but is significant for thinking about long term change. While entering such competitions in contemporary times where such media technologies have become everyday tools is said to be “easier”, this paper contemplates what barriers to entry might remain and how they play out in recent competitions.

Health narratives of immersion in public blue space: A focused ethnography of Perth’s local beaches

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Time spent in green natural environments (e.g. open countryside, urban parks) and blue spaces (e.g. beaches, coastal paths, rivers) is seen as promoting health by facilitating physical activity and delivering psychological health benefits (Ashbullby et al., 2013). The health impact of blue space, however, remains less studied than that of green space (Triguero-Mas, et al., 2015), and in-depth knowledge of the “day-to-day dynamic between restorative environmental and health and wellbeing” remains scarce (Beute, et al., 2016, p.2).

Despite Australia now having well established communities of open-water swimmers, recreational open-water swimmers remain less studied than surf lifesavers, surfers or elite competitors in other surf-based sports. Public and private discussions about the hazards posed to human health by sharks and rips also overshadow topics that explore the salutogenic benefits of ocean swimming in particular.

The pleasures and benefits of a dip even in shark-inhabited seas may appear obvious in a hot summer, but less clear is how Australian adults derive health promoting benefits through their experience of sea swimming. This focused ethnography explores the sea-swimming practices of older men and women who regularly swim, even into the winter months, off the beaches in the coastal city of Perth. It explores the role of individual agency, personal experiences and social connectedness in mediating the use of this public blue space to enhance, restore and maintain health and wellbeing. It complements Foley’s (2014, p.218) exploration of outdoor swimming in Ireland as “an emplaced and performed therapeutic encounter”.

Getting angry again? The problematisation of girlpower mythologies in young women’s post-GFC media

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Feminist scholars have begun to unpack the ways in which neoliberalism is underpinned by particular gendered affective investments: drives for perfection (McRobbie 2015), confidence (Gill and Orgad 2015), and the careful observance of feeling rules mandating a pleasing balance of resilience and approachability (Kanai forthcoming). In this context, we are interested in mapping the cultural production of affective dissonances (Hemmings 2012) with neoliberal modes of thriving. We draw attention to newly visible areas of post-GFC popular cultural production by women that articulate affective dissonances with the confident, optimistic, and invulnerable emotional subjectivities associated with girl-power neoliberal cultural mythologies. We suggest, first, that within recent, largely US, television some important questioning of such mythologies is taking place through the articulation of insecurities, disappointments, and misplaced confidence. Such affective dissonances to some extent serve to problematize myths about both the accessibility and appeal of highly individualist career-oriented lifestyles idealised in representations of powerful ‘can-do’ (Anita Harris 2004) girls. Second, we highlight some recent popular feminist commentary channelling outward-oriented rather than self-directed anger and frustration connected to social formations of power. In doing so, this article seeks to highlight the role of affect in connecting modes of femininity to more socially-oriented agendas.

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**Social media and body image: Are we what we post to be?**

**Darren Elliott (University of Waikato)**

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In a social media world it can be hard to escape from images that emphasize the desirability of impossibly thin and toned female and male bodies. Research has shown that participants viewing ‘thin-ideal’ media representations is correlated with greater body image dissatisfaction and eating disorders. Participants perceptually gauge the physical differences between themselves and the ‘thin-ideal’ leaving them feeling that their bodies don’t measure up to what a body should be.

While this field has matured over the past 50 years divisions have occurred. The vast majority of research has centered on how females are implicated with this phenomenon while men have received considerably less attention. Furthermore, the broader social and cultural discourses that surround body image representations and the influence they may have on inciting body dissatisfaction or satisfaction for that matter are largely absent from academic writing.

This research has outlined discourses ranging from the body’s symbolic representation of socio-cultural notions of economic and inter-personal success to body politics of fatness, gender and identity. These findings suggest that discourse and social media is a pervasive force in influencing how we feel about our bodies.
Living Outside the Binary in Australia

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The LGBTI community has faced many human rights challenges historically. In recent times in Australia there has been increased recognition of same-gender attracted people, and to a lesser extent binary transgender people. However, people who do not fit into a socially normative binary definition of sexuality (non-monosexual) and gender identity (non-binary) have not reached the same level of recognition. As such, they can be more vulnerable to systemic and individual victimisation than those who fit within more binary models. Even within the LGBTI community, non-monosexual and non-binary people may face discrimination.

It has been suggested that this population may be larger than the same-gender attracted or binary transgender populations combined. Despite this, there is significantly less specific research available exploring their unique issues, experiences, and intersectionality. This presentation will explore the theoretical, historical, and psychological reasons for the lack of acceptance for this population. It will discuss preliminary findings of research that aims to make the experiences of non-monosexual and non-binary people in Australia visible, particularly in relation to social recognition within the LGBTI community. Members of this population, the presenters will discuss unique issues they face and propose strategies to increase recognition by encouraging social change and positive encounters across Australia.

Affect and culture: a thematic reading of BBC’s Sherlock and its representations of masculinity

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This study focuses on the affective representations of masculinity in the BBC television series Sherlock. The project considers three central questions: 1) How is masculinity used in a television series to understand one’s social world? 2) How does masculinity influence the viewer to act meaningfully and effectively in that world? 3) How do these representations of masculinity provide a fantasy-escape from social tensions? The study is organized around the concept of affect, with Sherlock’s portrayal of masculinity subconsciously influencing the implied viewer. By having the audience situate themselves in the text, the male gaze becomes an affective cultural influence, offering insight into postmodern society and the meaning of gender. Holmes and
Watson, despite now being situated in a postmodern diegesis, represent the comeback of the affluent white male of modernity. How does this change represent shifts in our cultural thinking about masculinity? And how do these shifts correlate with ideas of rationalism and affective engagement with onscreen violence? This study highlights the correlations between masculinity, rationalism and context, and how such influences not only affect viewers, but also the culture it represents.

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**HBO and Humanity, pronatalist discourse is popular and powerful**

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Home Box Office (HBO) is arguably one of the most popular television networks in Western media today. As a cable television network HBO relies less on advertising revenues, enabling HBO the freedom to create content for niche audiences. This freedom allows HBO to offer audiences representations of gender that challenge or subvert the dominant, patriarchal gender roles. Another area in which HBO is able to explore non-normative representations of gender is within supernatural narratives. Supernatural texts encourage an exploration of the unknown and are often embedded with Gothic sensibility, giving further space to negotiate or renegotiate the cultural construction of gender. Pronatalism and the cultural construction of gender are inextricable. Pronatalism is a highly mobile concept that uses discourse to encourage human procreation by naturalising the notion that humans have the ability, responsibility, and desire to parent a human child. This is important as Western countries perceive parenthood as a way of reaching adulthood, positioning essentialist conceptions of gender to constitute a normalised identity. By analysing pronatalist discourse in two HBO productions, True Blood and Westworld, this paper explores the way in which humanity and human characters are qualified by their reproductive capabilities. It is important to investigate pronatalist discourse in popular cable networks as they continue to be delivered through broadcast television networks that remain predominantly within the home; a signifier of family, the site where pronatalist ideology functions.

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**Creating the antagonist: From the Queen of the Night to the Birdwoman**

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Artistic works for the stage and screen play important and influential roles in our lives, modelling human behaviour and mirroring relationships and gender roles in society. An absorbing and challenging aspect of my current work as practice-led researcher and composer is the complex investigation of young people’s interpretation and engagement with dramatic concepts and
characters. Recurrent questions are asked of the creative and research minds in terms of characterisation, gender representation and dramatic concepts. Presenting dramatic material to young, impressionable minds is surely a responsibility requiring thoughtful reflection and insight.

This paper discusses the creative evolution of the Birdwoman, one of five main operatic characters from Beyond the Wall, an original opera for children. This character represents a smaller and more focused aspect of a complex practice-led PhD research project, involving the creation of an original operatic libretto and score.

A complex conceptual and theoretical framework, designed specifically around three key areas of Relevance, Appeal and Comprehension, has informed the Birdwoman’s creation as it has informed the broader work. Relevance, Appeal and Comprehension will be discussed in detail, as well as their combined role in bringing about the development of a child centred approach to the creative process and resulting piece.

Drawing upon these sources, this paper will also discuss the development of innovative methodological tools and research strategies to assist in the process of developing more engaging works for children in the children’s opera genre and beyond.

Can anyone recommend a good hairdresser?: reflections on the Australian Defence Force, social media and gender

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Life as the partner of an Australian Defence Force (ADF) member is guaranteed to deliver two things, frequent change and instability. A life that is inherently full of risk drives these partners to seek networks that assist them to mitigate some of those risks. Previous surveys of ADF partners indicate that they use social media as a communication tool. This paper aims to explore the activities of ADF partners online, particularly in the way that they use social media to generate networks that help them to mitigate the risks faced in their role, using the event of relocation as an example. This paper reflects on qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 24 Australian Army, Navy and AirForce partners. Research participants were all female and were either currently or previously partnered with a male serving member. This paper discusses that while the male ADF member retains security, given by the set structure of the ADF itself, the female partner carries the risks of the relocation. These risks are offset through social media networks. Understanding the unique experiences faced by ADF partners is important for continuing to deliver services that ensure the well-being of this important group. This paper contributes to a currently limited field of research of military partners by suggesting that social media activities that look mundane, such as service seeking, are in fact evidence that partners use social media for overcoming their inherently risky lives.
Gender Dilemmas in the Field: To Protest, or Not to Protest -- that is the question

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Reflexive practice is a critical tool for anyone living, working, and relationship-building in a cross-cultural setting. This paper reflects on a two-year stay in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), examining the intersections between gender, race, culture, and communication in the everyday life of a white woman living in DRC. In a context where the interventions of international actors can have a distinct air of neo-colonialism, the author practiced critical awareness around her ‘white-ness’, privilege and cultural bias; resisting the narratives of the ‘civilising mission’ which paint African women as “ultra-victims” of “barbarous Third World men” (Hunter, 1996). However, efforts to respect cultural norms and to assume positive intent are challenged through a series of uncomfortable incidents with regards to broaching personal space. As the author manoeuvres public spaces dominated by Congolese men, the role of gender becomes more critical in the interpretation of everyday interactions. It becomes evident that agency is “situational and relationally defined” (Dahl 2009), as in some encounters the author is perceived as white and [therefore] powerful and in others as female and [therefore] weak. The dynamics of protest regarding affronts to the author’s gender are therefore complicated by the status accorded to her race. This paper discusses the dilemmas around protest and the impact of gender, race and culture on how, when and if we communicate our discomfort in cross-cultural interactions.

Race and gender in *Overwatch*: the challenges of challenging dominant video game character representation

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Released in May 2016 by American company Blizzard Entertainment, *Overwatch* is an internationally popular team-based, multiplayer online videogame. In an industry which still struggles to deviate from mainstream and dominant representations of race and gender, *Overwatch* has been applauded for making a conscious effort to embrace diversity (Catling and Hinton 2017). The game includes characters from many regions, representing a variety of ethnicities. It has also captured attention for the way female characters have been constructed: *Overwatch* features 11 playable heroes who identify as female, are mostly non-white and
includes an openly gay character.

This diversity and recognition of representation issues needs to be read in context, and in this paper we look back at one of Blizzard’s previous products, *World of Warcraft*, a highly popular MMORPG which at its peak had around 12 million subscribers (Statista 2017). World of Warcraft’s popularity sparked several studies into the role of gender both within the game as well as in the performance of play (Behnke 2012; Bergstrom et al. 2011; Brehm 2013; DiGiuseppe and Nardi 2007; Eklund 2011). While not perfect, the game was acknowledged to be taking steps towards gender-inclusive design (Corneliussen 2014). This greater scrutiny and awareness of representation issues has clearly influenced Blizzard, and the company’s consciousness of the way gender and race are constructed has resulted in much popular debate. In this paper we examine how the company’s efforts towards greater diversity allows for a critique of gender and race representations in a complex text such as *Overwatch*.

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**Lust and Disgust: The stark dichotomies of the monstrous-feminine in graphic culture**

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Within graphic culture, depictions of the feminine consistently linger in the liminal space between object and abject. Across ephemeral visual media (advertisements, posters, comics, memes, etc.) female monsters can be classified into three main categories: monstrous humans (women acting outside their prescribed nature); concealed threats (alluring but dangerous creatures who may undergo metamorphosis into their true form); and the feminine-grotesque (monsters who are abject internally and externally). This research aims to unearth what makes a monster feminine whilst also asking the question what makes the feminine monstrous? Throughout this paper I dissect the anatomy of the feminine monster by utilizing a Kristevean theoretical perspective, unveiling the desirable, visceral and sexual facets of monstrous women in visual culture. I employ the methodology of visual rhetoric to look across the image data to realize patterns emerging between graphic culture and societal fears of the feminine. The adoption of this rhetorical perspective permits the simultaneous exploration of complex social, cultural and psychological meanings created and communicated by such feminine monsters. This structure allows me to analyse the object/abject dichotomy by establishing the rhetoric occurring within and between these images and their audiences. This study opens up discussion on how female creators are forcing a shift in this rhetoric, finding that it is possible to entirely reinvent the feminine monster and what she represents; moving away from depictions of demonisation, in favour of characterising strength, power and heroism.
“What gay, vain, prating thing is this”: Discourses of femininity in Thomas Shadwell’s adaptation of *Timon of Athens*

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During the Restoration era (1660 to 1700), the plays of Shakespeare were routinely adapted in order to make them “fit” for the new stages and for the new society in which they were being produced. Notions of ‘femininity’ and ‘woman’ were re-negotiated following a tumultuous period in English history and the evidence of this can be seen in the changing representations of women in the Shakespearean adaptations. Theatrical depictions of women within the dramas produced during this time drew on everyday discourses of femininity and were influenced by the new presence of professional actresses on the London stages. In a time before widespread literacy and access to multiple media platforms, the theatre served a didactic function as a site which could present “useful and instructive representations of human life” (as ordered by Charles II in his Letters Patent to the theatre companies in 1662). This paper argues that Restoration women were afforded three roles, ‘ideal’, ‘gay’ or ‘fallen’ and that we can see each of these in Thomas Shadwell’s adaptation of *Timon of Athens*.

New Fathers in New Media: Representations of Fatherhood in User-Generated Vlogs

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Traditional media has struggled to keep pace with shifting expectations of fatherhood. While representations of the father as breadwinner and disciplinarian tend to be rendered with critical irony in period pieces like Mad Men, traditional media representations of the “new father”—an emotionally available and domestically dexterous father—are typically limited to depictions of men playing the role of teacher or playmate for their children. However, this “new father” model is also readily found in new media, where an array of divergent examples proliferate. YouTube vlogs provide several rich examples of fathers communicating their experience of being a father to other fathers. Through these highly popular vlogs, these fathers set up expectations and model behaviours for other men that are informed both by the gender norms portrayed through traditional media, and also by the lived reality of being an involved parent. It is the convergence of these two cultural dimensions—public and domestic—that produces the greater divergence in representations. This paper explores this diversity by focusing on two strands of the “new father” model of fatherhood found in popular “how-to be a dad” vlog series. The first strand
examines how the fathers featuring in the videos navigate and reconcile the competing demands of (Western, middle-class) hegemonic masculinity with the emphasis on care that attends the “new father”. The second considers how the topics of the videos reveal the perpetuation of traditional gender roles despite the men’s more involved parenting.

From Polite Society to the Pilbara: The ingénue abroad in Evelina and The Girl in Steel-Capped Boots

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The romance novel—persistently at once one of the most popularly successful genres from the eighteenth century to today, and one of the least critically respected—demonstrates surprising consistencies across geographic and temporal divisions, and a habitual attention to gender politics that reflects the gendered assumptions and aspirations of the societies out of which it emerges. This paper explores the commonalities between two novels that, despite being produced in different times and places, nevertheless share distinct concerns and tropes, often to a surprising extent. By reading Frances Burney’s Evelina (1778) and Loretta Hill’s The Girl in Steel-Capped Boots (2012), and paying close attention to their similarities and differences, this paper demonstrates generic continuities over more than two centuries. Both novels take young, inexperienced women for their heroines, and through them introduce their readers to specific, exotic settings: respectively, fashionable London of the late-eighteenth-century “Season”, and the fly-in, fly-out mining society of the West Australian Pilbara region. In this study of two novels, one published in Georgian England, and the other in early twenty-first-century Australia, it is possible to recognise the ways in which such fictions are capable of idealising, reproducing and reinforcing gendered stereotypes, and at the same time of revealing the oppressive effects of such stereotypes on the imagined lives of men and women.

Radio and Gender Equity

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When I was a teenager in the 1980’s in the United Kingdom, music culture of all types was primarily delivered by the medium of public and commercial radio. I never stopped to consider that the voices of delivery were mostly male. Community radio has traditionally been the sector where gender inequality has been countered by alternative staffing practice (Mitchell 1998, 74). High profile female radio identities in the public and commercial were almost “completely absent” until the early 1990’s (Michaels and Mitchell 2000, 239). Rosalind Gill’s (1993) survey of UK
male radio controllers and presenters suggests a “flexible sexism” has been used to justify the lack of women. The nature of the “flexible sexism” was clear in survey responses, where male radio controllers and presenters claimed women did not apply to become presenters; listeners preferred male voices because women’s voices are too shrill, women do not have the skills for radio, and the predominantly female audience preferred male voices. Gill indicated it would be useful to discuss these responses rather than accept them as statements as fact (Gill 1993, 90).

This paper asks whether this discussion has progressed since Gill’s seminal paper was published in 1993. This paper reviews the literature devoted to the gender composition of the radio sector and finds a paucity of research on this topic in recent years. What has been written focuses primarily on women and community radio in developing countries. The current vacuum of research in this area begs the question: Has gender equity in radio in the developed world become a non-issue, while community radio offers a developmental and empowering space for women in the developing world?

Multiple narratives of identity: German migrant women’s cultural identity represented through portraits and mementoes

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This paper focuses on the visual representation of the cultural identity of four German women who immigrated to Western Australia between 1945 and 1973. Drawing on visual ethnography methodology and literature on material culture, as well as my professional experiences in the field of photography, diptych photo-narratives were produced. The photo-narratives were composed of the women’s portraits and personal mementoes that signified their cultural identity. Analysis of the diptychs revealed that everyday material objects acted as substitutes for people, places and events and carried multifaceted biographical narratives and personal meaning that were unique to each individual person. In the photographs, the boundaries of time receded to reveal a space where complex, multilayered narratives co-existed within the one space. Consequently, the diptychs offer a new and distinctive way of looking at and interpreting cultural identity. These diptych portraits seek to contribute to the discussion and understanding of the fluidity of cultural identity and the spaces between the cultural identities represented. In addressing the analysis of the women’s cultural identity through a visual ethnographic approach, the photo-narratives provide rich and powerful insights that transform the women from invisible to real people.
Beyond Bromances: X-men and X-women

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The representation of women in mainstream media has been a topic of academic and general discussion for many decades, following the waves of feminism. Most recently, the presentation of stronger female characters in films such as Wonder Woman (2017) and Star Wars: The Force Awakens (2015), and revival of feminist narratives such as The Handmaid’s Tale (2017) is suggestive of a media industry seeking to equalise gender disparities in onscreen representation. However, the reality is still very much the opposite, with widely publicised pay gaps between male and female actors in Hollywood, and male and female presenters on the BBC.

A current trend in the promotion of films or celebrity figures is to create or perpetuate so-called celebrity ‘bromances’ as a means to generate interest in celebrity pairs, which are close but not romantically connected. As the term suggests, these pairs are exclusively between male celebrity figures, discounting any male/female or female/female celebrity pairing. In group casts there is often a focus on the male bonding, with female cast members frequently sidelined or transformed into ‘one of the guys’. The exploration of celebrity dynamics, and in particular its reporting, is revealing of broader gendered discourses that influence non-romantic human relations.

This is explored through an in-depth case study of the X-Men film franchise cast. Through an analysis of the cast dynamic, it becomes evident that there is a need for terms that are more gender inclusive. This paper proposes the term ‘Buddy Banter’.

Ladies, Gentlemen and Guys: The Gender Politics of Politeness

Elizabeth Reid-Boyd, Kwadwo Adusei-Asante, Sonam Pelden & Lucy Hopkins (ECU)
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The terms ‘lady’ and ‘gentleman’ have both made comebacks in the 21st century. Lady became particularly unpopular with second wave feminists, who preferred ‘woman’. Gentleman was seen as similarly politically incorrect: class, race and culture bound. Here, we explore why the lady and gentleman are back, why they went away and what their future might be. We consider how the more casual, etymologically gendered term ‘guy’ has been utilised for men and women, and how it functions to reflect and obscure gender. While the return of the lady and gentleman might be considered a consumer fad, a neo-conservative post-feminist backlash, or nostalgia for an
elite ‘polite society’, it also offers an opportunity for a deeper discussion about civility, as part of a broader conversation that in the Western world is gaining impetus. Politeness is personal and political. We critically consider the re-emergence of the lady and the gentleman as reflecting a deeper desire for applied sexual and social ethics. Such gender ethics have global, social and cultural ramifications that we ought not to underestimate. The desire for a culture of civility is gaining momentum as we are increasingly confronted with the violent consequences of a culture without it.

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Shopping for change: Women territorialising animal welfare through their everyday activism

Debbie Rodan (ECU) and Jane Mummery (Federation University)
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Lyn White, the Campaign Director for Animals Australia, is acknowledged as one of Australia’s foremost and “most formidable” animal welfare advocates and animal cruelty investigators (Animals Australia, n.d.; Barrowclough, 2015). For ABC journalist Sarah Ferguson, Lyn White, in targeting mainstream consumers, bought about a paradigm shift by moving animal welfare “from the fringe to the mainstream” (cited in Barrowclough, 2015). This is despite the views of a) many animal rights activists who regard Animals Australia as too conservative an organisation, and who contend that veganism is the only possible ground for animal activism, and of b) the MLA and NFF who claim all animal activists want to turn Australia into “a land of vegetarians” (VFF, 2013).

We contend, however, that it is only with mainstream consumers changing their everyday practices that social and political change will develop with regards to the status of animals. In this line, Animals Australia use affective framing to invoke feelings and emotions so as to marshal mainstream consumers to identify and function productively as everyday animal activists. Interestingly, this also appears to be a strongly gendered – predominantly female – process (also see Chen, 2016, pp.178-179). In our analysis of Animal Australia’s “Make it Possible” campaign, for instance, while 58% of posters on the “My Make it Possible Story” website advocated shopping for change as well as personal everyday activism, over 80% posting in the site are female (Rodan & Mummery, 2016). In this paper we examine not just the gendering of animal welfare apparent throughout the “Make it Possible” campaign, but how women are territorialising a range of diverse positions within both everyday consumerism and animal welfare activism.

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The schizoid construction of Miley Cyrus: Reframing media sexualisation discourse and media effects on children

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This research examines the media sexualisation debate in Australia and the potential effects that sexualisation has on children’s identity formation. Most psychological research incites moral panic where children are positioned as naïve media consumers. Media studies offered alterative views where children are located as media literate when exposed to sexualised media content. Conflicting views prompted this research into the composition of the body in pop culture. It questions whether representation of the female body in the media is always sexualised and if the fear incited by moral panics is an ‘objective truth.’

This study analyses pop culture images via semiotics to gauge the subjectivity inherent in media identities. I use pop star Miley Cyrus’s image given her highly sexualised performances in the mainstream, which prompted outrage from a concerned society about Cyrus’s influence on pre-teen identity. Semiotics enables a deconstruction of Cyrus’s identity to investigate links between her image and negative media effects.

Using schizoanalysis via the work of Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari and Rosi Braidotti, this thesis locates Cyrus as an emerging human equipped with multiple identity subjectivities, surpassing the limits of the organic body; or the ‘hyper-sexualised female’ that moral panics cite. Subsequently, the body that is dangerously sexualised is only one potential signification among many that exist simultaneously within texts. Whilst not refuting sexualisation concerns, this research rather questions them through a schizoanalytic/semiotic framework. The study also acknowledges the economic links that identity diversification formulates.

Unheard and Unseen: The Voiceless STEM Community at the University

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*40 minute panel*

It was after eight months of sitting in Athena Swan meetings when colleagues realised that we
were one of the unseen and unheard communities within the University. Eight months previously we had enthusiastically nominated to be part of the Humanities Self-Assessment Team (SAT), that would feed into the SAGE STEM Athena Swan project looking at gender-equity in the university, in a hope to communicate joyfully about being part of the STEM community at Curtin University.

Surprise and then disbelief surfaced as we unpacked the data; we realised that we were not included in the statistics - we were the unseen community. Teaching and researching in STEM, yet situated in the Faculty of Humanities not in Science, Medicine or Engineering, we were not counted in the statistics; we felt disempowered, dismissed and that our voice was denied.

While Athena Swan is a useful enabler for examining issues of gender discrimination/ inequity in the sciences, the approach to identifying STEM staff in Australian tertiary institutions has left much to be desired. The university through SAGE is “defining” STEM staff as those who are situated in obvious Faculties such as Science and Engineering, Chemistry, and Health Science and 1-12 ERA – we consider this to be hugely problematic and divisive. While SAGE have recently capitulated and now state that universities can elect to consider a wider definition of STEM, SAGE’s initial narrow definition seems to already have had other implications. For example, the Superstars of STEM program by Science and Technology Australia that was initiated to identify 30 superstar women currently in STEM, work with them to create role models for young women and girls, and thus move towards equal representation in the media of men and women in STEM, appears to have used an exceptionally narrow view of “science” and “technology” to select candidates. There is a particular gender bias here – many women working in science and technology are working in science communication, education and management – yet are excluded due to the narrow definition.

For some of us this was the first time we had be drawn into a gender conflict, especially one so cynically and carefully created - at best for convenience, at worst through disrespect. This panel enables us to have a voice, to tell our story and to be heard in this space.

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Wadjemup: Black Prison – White Playground

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The Island of Rottnest is more commonly known to Nyungar 1 as Wadjemup, meaning "place across the river" or from its colonial origins the “Isle of Spirits”. Rottnest is located approximately 18 km off the coast of Western Australia, near Fremantle, and is world renowned as a current (post-colonial) tourism precinct with a (mostly) hidden history related to Aboriginal incarceration, dispossession and death...a place where nearly 4000 Aboriginal men, from around the state,
were incarcerated and nearly 400 are still buried on the island in unmarked graves.

Australia’s history can be termed via a three-fold transition; firstly a pre-colonial past, sometimes phrased as ‘ancient’ or ‘prehistoric’, colonial past, often referred to as ‘modern’ or ‘historical’, to the third stage classed as ‘Postcolonial’ or ‘Postmodern’, in which repatriation (of Ancestors, History and Culture) or more suitably reconstruction (of history, culture and memorial) is the basis of our ‘new world order’. 2 Thus Australia was “Possessed, dispossessed, [and is now] repossessed.” 3 This current ‘post-modern’ third-phase is where the ‘true’ accounts and alternative narratives of Australian (Aboriginal) history can be (re)written without fear of reprisal or mockery. A period, where post-Apology, 4 promotes the true aspects of our history, the recognition of Aboriginal struggle and colonial resistance, so the scars of the past can be healed and the spirit of reconciliation nurtured and fostered.

This paper questions: What effect did this Island prison have on the Aboriginal population – then and now? And what effect did it have on not only the male Aboriginal population but also the Aboriginal women left behind to cope with the forced removal and incarnation of their husbands, fathers, brothers, sons and leaders? Finally the paper will question the role that films (particularly documentary), that depict heinous historical events, play within a contemporary audience.

“...I think the title of this documentary [Wadjemup: Black Prison – White Playground] is very appropriate to remind people that you can’t dance on the history of our people and you can’t dance on justice and on the grave of justice, history and the truth...”

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**Capitalism and Womanism in Theodore Melfi’s Hidden Figures**

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Theodore Melfi’s 2016 film Hidden Figures dramatizes the true stories of three Black women who worked as “computers” at NASA during the Cold War space race – Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson. Depicting a period of heightened tensions between the USA and the USSR, the film is underpinned by an assertion of the superiority of capitalist democracy, especially against the totalitarian communist Russian government. Within this broader framework, however, Hidden Figures repeatedly addresses the social and institutional inequalities faced by Black women and men in this democracy, giving examples of segregated spaces as well as outright and covert hostility, to illustrate the racism that shapes Virginia (and arguably the rest of the US) at this time. As Katherine, Dorothy and Mary fight for the development of their careers in the face of this racism, the film provides a multilayered approach to reading the everyday possibilities of resistance available within a capitalist society.
In order to explore these forms of resistance, this paper focuses predominantly on Dorothy Vaughan (Octavia Spencer), considering how her actions throughout the film can be read in terms of a womanist prioritisation of community-building, adaptability, and “making lives better for herself and people around her however she can” (Maparyan 2012, 29-30). While Dorothy’s actions may not challenge capitalist frameworks as a whole, her actions arguably enable a reimagining of the competitive individualism deemed necessary to capitalism, privileging instead an understanding of success as relational, and as belonging to the whole community.

Communicating responsibly through critical reflective practice

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In his 2012 article “Non-Indigenous Lawyers Writing About Indigenous People: Colonisation in practice”, Allan Ardill points to problems that can arise when non-Indigenous people (e.g. lawyers) write about Indigenous Australians, because our colonial history has often resulted in homogenising, patronising and misrepresenting them. To that list of faults can be added romanticising and sensationalising. This does not legitimise non-Indigenous commentators and academics opting out of writing and speaking about issues affecting Indigenous peoples because I argue to do so suggests that our lives are not interconnected. Rather, we have a responsibility, through critical reflective practice, to communicate with and about a wide range of people and issues, no matter how difficult or sensitive the subject matter, in ways that are respectful and productive. To explicate relevant issues, I reflect on writing a discussion paper for the Western Australian Law Reform Commission concerning Aboriginal customary laws, which raised issues including about violence in a community and how to deal with it. This writing and the conversations that informed it foreground several issues. When Indigenous people ask an academic to write on their behalf, what circumstances influence our obligation to do so? Should we mediate what we write to limit criticism of Indigenous people, despite such silence on sensitive issues disabling the very discussion we have been asked to facilitate? Why might writing come from a joint process but be published in a single name?

Women, Sport and Social Media: A case study of the first season of the AFLW

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The commencement of the first Australian Football League Women (AFLW) season in 2017
impacted upon the Australian cultural and sporting landscape in multiple ways. While it officially confirmed for the sport, the media and the public that the highest profile sport in Australia was now a professional sport option for women, this first season has also generated a range of questions and concerns about gender equity, identity and representation in the AFLW (Niall, 2016).

One of the arenas where these questions and concerns are played out is social media. Here, fans, players, teams and sporting bodies can produce and engage with various constructions of gender identity, player representation, and broader social and cultural concerns (Shields Dobson 2015, Creedon, 2014). It is also another locale for the professionalised construction of the female athlete by organisations and the players themselves. In this paper we present a case study looking at the AFL Women’s teams and players in the social media landscape and explore the myriad of ways social media has served as a platform to highlight, unsettle, redefine and recreate gendered professional sporting narratives.

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**Honour based violence against Brazilian women: historical, cultural and current perspectives**

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Honour cultures can be characterised as cultures in which honour plays a vital and crucial role, with the concept of family and masculine honour permeating inter-personal interactions and individual choice. Societies which value honour, it becomes a fundamental component for social status and ascendance. It is argued that honour is an essential socio-cultural component of Mediterranean societies, such as Spain, Portugal and Greece. In either Christian or Muslim Mediterranean cultures, honour sets out gender roles, social relations, as well as systems of patronage. If a female breaks the honour/shame and chastity code, violence to ‘protect’ family honour is not only justified, but perceived as a social duty. Honour based violence are crimes which are motivated to protect family or masculine honour and reputation, with mostly women being victimised. Available literature on honour based violence in Brazil deals with structures of power and inequality between the sexes. Such relations would be embedded in a discourse of family honour enforcing gender relations that are unfair and unequal. In honour cultures such as Brazil women and female modesty (chastity code) are perceived as social commodity. A woman’s social ‘misbehaviour’ can bring shame to a family’s reputation, compromising ‘family honour’. This cultural ethos has prevalence in rural Northeast and South of Brazil, but it influences Brazilian culture and gender perceptions throughout the country. This paper wishes to address how honour culture, its discourses and female chastity code has been shaped during Brazilian colonial times, and how it might influence honour based violence against women in
The Invisible cloak of gender discourse: rethinking the issue of gender injustice and SDG 5

Sonam Pelden and Kwadwo Adusei-Asante (Edith Cowan University)

The issue of gender equality as a fundamental human right is well established but fractured with contradictions. The Sustainable Development Goal advances gender equality as critical to all areas of a healthy society. SDG literature presents gender equality and women empowerment interchangeably rendering invisible the needs and issues of injustice and violence against men. This reflection of ideology summons a conceptual war and resistance. The differentiation between women and men conflicts gender inclusive initiatives. A paradox of gender equality discourse, the problematics of referring to men as an analogous group, the stereotype concept of masculinity and muted troubled stories of men need unpacking. Gender equality is incomplete without considering the issues, dilemmas and muted spaces of both women and men. While research has increasingly evidenced violence against women by men is higher than violence by women against men, ordinary voices of men have remained invisible and barely represented in the statistical profiles of gender ideological wars. Without negating the need to empower women, this paper will explore, examine and discuss studies that conceptualise issues troubling men. It will consider the impact of SDG 5 on ‘oppressive’ societal attitudes and practices against men and the ripple effect on social harmony. Conversations to identify and respond to systemic exclusion and disempowerment of men needs to occur and forged into SDG to achieve gender equality.

Life after formal employment: A comparative study of female ‘garments and textiles’ and ‘all other’ factory’ workers in Sri Lanka

Peter Hancock, Kwadwo Adusei-Asante, Jonathan Georgiou, Geoffrey Carastathis & Isaac Boafo (Edith Cowan University)

This paper compares the post-employment socio-economic profiles of women who previously worked in Sri Lanka’s manufacturing sector. We surveyed 1031 female respondents, consisting of 775 former garment and textile (G&T) workers and 256 other former factory
workers. We assessed the statistical significance of any differences between these two groups. Results showed that women who worked in G&T factories were 1.8 times likely to have left employment for marriage, whereas the other factory workers were 5.1 times more likely to have retired. Former G&T workers were also more likely to have reported bringing back ‘useful’ skills and knowledge. There was a statistically significant association with regard to whether respondents felt more accepted in their communities; with those who had worked in ‘other’ factories, 1.49 times more likely to report feeling accepted upon their return home. Generally, across both groups, a significant proportion had also set up their own businesses and (or) now owned properties since leaving formal employment. Contrary to the negative portrayal of factory work and the purported ‘plight’ of female workers in Sri Lanka’s manufacturing industry, our research found that women – regardless of their former workplace – had retained socio-economic capital (post-employment) in important aspects of their lives.
WACCM conference locations

Registration and parallel sessions: Learning Link (513)

Morning Forum: Herbert Smith Freehills Law Lecture Theatre (465)

Visitor Pay and Display Parking: car parks 4/5