

Sex, Gender, and Generations

A one-day symposium from the Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research
10.00am - 3.30pm Thursday 1 February 2007
Monash Conference Centre, 30 Collins St, Melbourne



Symposium theme

Generational metaphors and concepts of age-stratification are distinctive and pervasive features of social, political, and intellectual landscapes. From the popular identity markers of baby boomer, Gen X and Y and the so-called generational 'waves' of feminism, to the ubiquitous distinction between childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, notions of generational difference inform an extraordinarily wide range of cultural practices, knowledges, and accounts of individual, social, and historical change. This one-day symposium aims to explore the broad theme of 'sex, gender, and generations' from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives.

Our lead speaker is **Dr Shelley Budgeon** from the University of Birmingham who is a Visiting Scholar in the Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research. Author of *Choosing a Self: Young Women and the Individualisation of Identity*, her recent research examines how generational metaphors are deployed in feminist theory and constructions of gender identity.

Free Registration

Please register (for catering purposes) by emailing
Helen.torcello@arts.monash.edu.au by 30 January 2007.

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PROGRAM

10.00am – 11.00am LEAD SPEAKER

Feminism and Generational Difference

Shelley Budgeon (University of Birmingham)

Third wave feminism claims to give expression to a new feminist identity which is defined predominantly though age based difference. This paper will offer a critical assessment of the generational metaphor at the heart of this construction of difference and consider how this metaphor as a temporal register both contributes to and limits the furthering of the contestations which define feminism in late modernity.

11.00am - 11.30am Morning tea

11.30am - 1.00pm PANEL A

'I just don't like the idea that I'm a victim': Toward a Genealogy for/of the Third Wave Feminist

Leigh Boucher (Monash University)

According to a recent article in *The Age* newspaper, 'sex and empowerment can go in hand in hand.' According to this article, the prospect of posing in your underwear and maintaining a position as an empowered woman is not politically problematic for many young women. This paper reflects on the challenges of teaching feminist history to a body of students that has, by and large, been positioned to comprehend their subjectivity in terms of empowerment and entitlement in opposition to apparently feminist victim-hood and complaint.

Gen Y and alcohol consumption: Enacting class and gender

Jo Lindsay (Monash University)

This paper examines contemporary drinking cultures for Gen Y in Melbourne. I argue that drinking is not simply shaped by variables such as class and gender but is an enactment and expression of these social divisions. What, where and how a young person drinks is a simultaneous enactment of class and gender. This argument is based on research of drinking practices in pubs and clubs in Melbourne, Australia. The project used a qualitative methodology which involved a series of 30 field observations in 10 licensed premises. In addition 35 patrons (15 females and 20 males) aged 18-30 were recruited from the venues and participated in qualitative interviews about their drinking practices. Understanding drinking as an expression of social location has implications for models of alcohol research and health interventions and for our understandings of generational change.

Subjectivity, repetition and longing: cross-generational explorations of young women living on the margins

Julie McLeod (Deakin University)

This paper explores debates about new forms of femininity in late modernity through a discussion of generational dynamics between a group of mothers and daughters living at the margins of education and work and on the spatial fringes of a large Australian city. First, it considers what cross-generational approaches offer for understanding historical and biographical change, particularly in relation to questions about gender subjectivity, repetition and a sense of possibility. Second, it explores these mothers' hopes for their daughters, the shifting rhetorics of longing for a better life, and the relevance of a cultural politics of hope for understanding such generational, and historical, shifts.

1.00pm – 2.00pm Lunch

2.00 – 3.30pm PANEL B

Sex Education: Generations and Agendas

Mary Lou Rasmussen (Monash University)

This paper identifies and analyses some of the key discourses underpinning the production of Sex Education in Australia in the last two decades. In addition to considering how certain imperatives and traditions underpinning Sex Education narrow the curriculum, I also pay heed to the types of discussions that are clearly not on the agenda of Sex Education. I conclude by imagining a new agenda for Sex Education in Australia, an agenda that eschews a politics of inclusion as the remedy for Sex Education's gender and sexuality and gaps.

'I couldn't do both at the same time': On Being a Same Sex Attracted Young Christian in the 21st Century

Lynne Hillier (La Trobe University)

Historically, homosexuality has been described by the legal system, psychiatry and religion as a crime, a mental illness and an abomination to god. In the last 40 years there has been a progressive loosening of these hard line positions. However, the Christian Church, for the most part, remains stalwart in its opposition to the acceptance of homosexuality as a naturally occurring aspect of human sexual development and this has had great impact on the lives of same sex attracted young people, particularly those who are Christians. This paper is based on the stories of over 1000 same sex attracted young people, many of whom wrote about the difficulties of incorporating sexual difference and Christianity in one positive identity.

Crimes of Power? Students, Teachers, Sex

Steven Angelides (Monash University)

When a secondary school teacher and student enter into a 'consensual' sexual relationship together the teacher is said to have perpetrated an inevitable "abuse of power". The rationale behind this is the idea that the combination of generational power differences and institutional power hierarchies structuring the relationship compromises a student's ability to give informed consent and leaves her or him open to potential harm. This paper interrogates the suitability of dominant models of sovereign power for thinking about teacher-student sex specifically and the interplay between subjects and power generally.

3.30pm CLOSE

Inquiries to convenors:

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