AARE 2023 Conference

Special Interest Group: Gender, Sexuality & Cultural Studies (Room 2).
Tuesday 28th November 3.30pm -5.00pm. Melb Uni, Parkville. Arts West North Wing-161.

Presentations
Rochelle Banks: Culture, Complaint and Confidentiality: Using an autoethnographic lens to explore impacts of sexual harassment in educational institutions.

Areej Yousef: "The only real Australians are Aboriginal Australians": Reconstructing ethnolinguistic identities in Australian classrooms.

Nina Ginsberg: Velo-onto-epistemology: Becoming(s)-with Bicycles, Gender, Education and Research.

Chair: Associate Professor Jen Jennifer - Griffith Uni (j.alford@griffith.edu.au).
Discussant: Associate Professor Lisa van Leent - QUT (lisa.van leent@qut.edu.au).

Symposium Description: Challenging assumptions about getting to the school gate; exposing systemic sexual harassment; resisting racist, colonial attitudes …all in a day's work for girls and women in schools?

This symposium presents three empirical papers that use divergent feminist theories and/or methodologies exploring how place/places/contexts shape the experiences of girls and women in education, and subsequently make more visible the truths of their experiences and their capacity to make their voices heard. Through investigating practices and entanglements of different kinds, these papers shed new light on critical matters pertaining to women's experiences within schools, either as teachers or students. Paper 1 excavates the entanglements, tensions and possibilities of a post-qualitative inquiry that foregrounds African landscapes, smells, desires, dynamics, beliefs, practices, and bodies with emerging feminist posthuman ontologies. The significance of this research lies in (re)turning (Barad, 2006) and challenging preconceived notions and habitual relationalities regarding bicycles and educational access for girls in Sierra Leone. By focusing on school trail experiences, this study sheds light on the complexities of traditionally overlooked experiences of schoolgirl journeys. In Paper 2, by using autoethnography and writing from the perspective of the survivor-researcher, the author sheds light on how sexual harassment is enacted through gendered language, the normalisation of sexist practices, and power-relations in ways that inform whose voice is heard and whose gets silenced. Drawing on Ahmed (2021), this paper captures the political life of a sexual harassment complaint to magnify the ways in which harassment works. Paper 3, through narrative inquiry, gives voice to Sham, a young Syrian refugee woman recently arrived in Australia. During high school, Sham encountered low expectations from teachers, linguistic racism and deep-rooted, monolingual biases from classmates for using Arabic. Using ethnolinguistic identity theory and postcolonial theory, the author demonstrates how young Middle Eastern refugee women may be more likely to resist colonial attitudes towards Australian citizenship and the persistent monolingual mindset. These data rich papers privilege frequently silenced voices in innovative and nuanced ways.

Rochelle Banks

Culture, Complaint and Confidentiality: Using an autoethnographic lens to explore impacts of sexual harassment in educational institutions.

Abstract: My research explores the impact of sexual harassment on one teacher – the paper's author and, in doing so, opens up conversations about the micro-realities of gender-based harassment in educational institutions. By using autoethnography as a method of inquiry and writing from the unique perspective of the survivor-researcher, I shed light on how sexual harassment is enacted through gendered language, the normalisation of sexist practices, and power-relations in ways that inform whose voice is heard and whose gets silenced. Informed by personal testimony, external data sources, and a historical perspective, a series of vignettes has been consciously constructed to critically examine the discursive power that circulates within institutional relationships and the fluid nature of identity as it moves through a particular context. By placing personal testimony and documentary evidence within a poststructuralist theoretical framework, feelings of powerlessness are merged with critical reflexivity and scholarly reflection to offer insights into the ways that institutional discourses and practices nurture and/or neuter individuals' efficacy and career potential. As the interconnectedness between the self and the cultural is examined and re-examined in light of new knowledge, I offer my autoethnography as a de/reconstructive process that analyses the barriers between the personal self (auto) and the social context (ethno) (Reed-Danahay, 1997). To evoke Sarah Ahmed (2021), what follows is a synopsis of salient events, a retrospective reflection as observed through the lens of complaint, to capture the political life of a sexual harassment complaint and to magnify the ways in which harassment often works.

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"The only real Australians are Aboriginal Australians": Reconstructing ethnolinguistic identities in Australian classrooms.

Abstract: Ethnolinguistic identity explores the interplay between ethnicity, language, and one's sense of self. Research has demonstrated the adverse effects of forced migration which can result in feelings of isolation, exclusion, a lack of belonging and acculturation stress. This study focuses on the experiences of refugee-background, young women who are particularly susceptible to these negative impacts. Specifically, the story of Sham, a young Syrian refugee woman who recently arrived in Australia, is examined through narrative inquiry. During high school, Sham encountered low expectations from teachers, linguistic racism and deep-rooted monolingual biases from her classmates for using Arabic. Despite these challenges, she spoke out against this monolinguistic mindset and declared that Indigenous Australians are the only true Australians. She also recognized that if she spoke a European language, she would likely not have faced such negativity, highlighting her awareness of White privilege and colonial ideologies in Australian classrooms. This presentation will use ethnolinguistic identity theory and elements of Postcolonial Theory to demonstrate how young Middle Eastern refugee women, such as Sham, may be more likely to resist colonial attitudes towards Australian citizenship and the persistent monolingual and monocultural mindset. While in no way diminishing the deep, historical injustices experienced by First Nations peoples, recognising the rich diversity of Australian society and empowering other marginalised groups, such as young refugee women, is also at the heart of truth telling. Implications for educational practices and preservice teacher training programs highlight the need for empathy and active listening as essential skills.

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Velo-onto-epistemology: Becoming(s)-with Bicycles, Gender, Education and Research.

Presently, 50 million sub-Saharan African girls lack access to education (UNESCO, 2022). This paper explores gendered school journeys in West Africa - within the broader context of educational access and equity. Specifically, it employs feminist New Materialisms to explore how bicycles feature in Sierra Leonean girls' access to secondary education. There is much about gendered bodies navigating school trails that commands attention, yet 'defies explanation' (McLure, 2013). This session shares the methodological unfoldings of one rider-researcher as she works to excavate the entanglements, tensions and possibilities of a post-qualitative inquiry that foregrounds African landscapes, smells, desires, dynamics, beliefs, practices and bodies with emerging feminist posthuman ontologies. The significance of this research lies in (re)turning (Barad, 2006) and challenging preconceived notions and habitual relationalities regarding bicycles and educational access. By focusing on school trail experiences, this study sheds light on the complexities and nuances of traditionally overlooked experiences of schoolgirl journeys. Key findings include three critical encounters experienced in Brisbane (Australia) and Lunsar (Sierra Leone) which highlight the significant role bicycles play in shaping local girls' educational access. By examining the skills, wills, spills, and thrills associated with school journeys, this study extends current education research by introducing an innovative velo-onto-epistemology – which recognizes the interconnectedness of bicycles, bodies, affect, voice, place and methodology (Ginsberg & Lennon, 2023). This research contributes to AARE conference themes and broader discussions on gender, education, and agency, and opens avenues for critical dialogue and transformative action in promoting educational access and equity in West Africa.

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