

Program Day 1

Session 1: Approaching Digital Intimacies

9.00am to 10.00am

Introduction, Amy Dobson (UQ)

Digital Rhythms: A Longitudinal Ethnographic Study of Australian Household Digital Media Use, Tania Lewis (RMIT)

Digital media use has become a thoroughly domestic affair. Digital devices have found their way into most rooms in the house including the more unlikely spaces of kitchens and toilets, at the same time inveigling their way into and reshaping household routines and practices. The embedded-ness of the digital in our most intimate spaces, routines and habits—and the associated naturalisation of digital devices as somehow essential to our everyday lives—makes it difficult to research these quiet transformations using conventional approaches.

In this talk I discuss a project conducted for the global accounting firm KPMG in which we use a digital ethnographic approach in order to capture shifting and emergent household experiences around digital devices, content and use, drawing on video methods combined with immersive fieldwork. Digital ethnography as a research approach offers particular insights into the often mundane and hidden dimensions of how and why digital media and content are co-articulated with everyday life practices (Pink et al 2016), foregrounding findings that are typically obscured in standard interview or survey based approaches. How might this fine-grained, household research inform and complicate large-scale enquiries into digital media ‘disruptions’? How are digital media and content circulated, consumed, exchanged and thought and felt about in Australian households? In this paper I discuss key findings from a longitudinal study of 12 diverse households in New South Wales and Victoria, reflecting upon how an ethnographic approach to understanding digital rhythms might help to close the gap between big data research and household experience.

Tania Lewis is Deputy Dean of Research and Innovation and an Associate Professor in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University. Her research focuses broadly on questions of lifestyle politics, sustainability and ethical consumption, and on global media cultures. Her books include *Smart Living: Lifestyle Media and Popular Expertise* and *Telemodernities: Television and Transforming Lives in Asia*. She is also a co-author (with Sarah Pink et al) of *Digital Ethnography: Principles and Practices* and editor and co-editor of 4 collections with Routledge, including most recently *Green Asia: Ecocultures, Sustainable Lifestyles, and Ethical Consumption* and *Lifestyle Media in Asia: Consumption, Aspiration and Identity*. She is a chief investigator on the ARC discovery project, ‘Ethical Consumption: From the Margins to the Mainstream’ and on ‘Work-life ecologies: lifestyle, sustainability, practices’, funded by RMIT’s Sustainable Urban Precincts Project. She is also currently working on a book project on Digital Food.

Session 2: Feeling

10.00am to 11.15am

Mobile and Social Media Surveillance for Mental Health: ‘Proper Distance’ in Dataveillance, Frances Shaw (*Black Dog*)

The use of social media and mobile data for mental health research and population-level monitoring potentially raises new ethical questions. I present considerations of digital ethics being carried out at the Black Dog Institute in the context of contemporary innovations in the collection and analysis of two kinds of data: sensor data on the one hand, and social media data on the other. These considerations look at the ways data is being used to identify people at risk of mental health issues, or changes in symptoms of people with existing mental health diagnoses.

While there are many ethical considerations in this sphere of research, this presentation will focus on one question. Through the development of tools to detect mental health problems, potential problems, suicidality or emotional distress more broadly, do data-mining practices alter the relationship between organisations and potential recipients of help, and between healthcare providers and patients or potential patients?

Using the notion of “proper distance” (Silverstone 2004), I consider how surveillance of mobile sensor data and social media for reasons of diagnosing mental health might problematise notions of proper distance, alter caregiving relationships, and create new ethical responsibilities or dilemmas. In particular I look at diagnostic algorithmic analysis in the creation of potentially private data where public data previously existed. Examples of such analysis include the identification of depression or suicidality in tones of voice, turns of phrase, movement patterns, or even the amount of colour in an Instagram filter. These and similar potential algorithmic analyses are proliferating in contemporary mental health research and in the popular imaginary about the mind. I consider these distanced intimate surveillances through the literatures of surveillance culture, digital ethics, and mediated communication theory.

Messenger Made Material: A “Real Life” Drama in Adolescent Lived Experience, Deborah Tolman (*Hunter College and THE CUNY Graduate Center*)

In a study of adolescent girls’ experiences of sexuality, I conducted 40 individual interviews to revisit questions about sexuality and desire in the present that I explored in my earlier work (Tolman, 1994, 2002). I bore witness to a relationship “drama” (Marwick & Boyd, 2014) that lay at the intersection of the public and private (Subramaham & Smahel, 2011), splicing online and offline fragments, transforming the ambiguity of a flirtatious Messenger chat into a rigid material “real life” tale of illicit desire, malevolence and betrayal. The “facts” of the situation are slippery at best: Two teenaged heterosexual couples (aged 16) within one social circle of one urban high school community, the boyfriend in one and the girlfriend in another, who are close friends, engaged in this private, playful, and sexually-tinged exchange of cryptic phrases and emojis. Through sly digital violations (stealing of passwords, furtive reading of the chat), the protagonist’s boyfriend discovered and wrested interpretation of the chat, arranging a reveal of the “the betrayal” by printing out—making material—and distributing the chat to 10 friends in a pizzeria. Transmogrified from private subject leveraging indeterminate meanings into voiceless object of female “whore,” who bears exclusive responsibility for treachery, the protagonist is branded and remade into a social pariah (boy recedes). Garnering insight into the drama from three study participants—the perpetrator/victim, the stand-up girl refusing to betray her, and the bystander who represents the chorus—I describe an unfolding set of relational engagements and violations, contested intentions and meanings, identity management,

and emotional, material and social effects of this wresting of the private into the public sphere. I weave multiple versions of the drama to consider its effects and affects. I consider the offline implications when the ambiguity of digital intimacy morphed into an entrenched real-life heteronormative trope, where ambiguous affect became immobilized infraction fixed by sedimented affect with offline consequences.

Digital Extimacies: Exploring Self-branding Practices on Badoo and Facebook, *Cristina Miguel (Leeds-Beckett)*

On social media platforms a lot of content users share is related to their private lives. Paula Sibilia (2008) applies the Lacanian concept of *extimacy* (the public exhibition of intimacy) to the social web. Users curate and commoditize their intimate lives in order to promote themselves in the network and create value in the “attention economy” (Marwick, 2013). Illouz (2007) suggests that we live embedded in an emotional culture based on an ideal of authenticity through the display of intimacy, which generates new intersections of public and private life. In this culture of “emotional capitalism”, Illouz (2007) argues, the management of personal relationships follows the logic of the market. Marwick and boyd (2011) identify tensions between me-marketing and the possibility of creating deeper connections through social media with other users since the practice of commoditizing one’s private life is seen as anti-normative. While some users upload intimate and sexy pictures to claim other users’ attention, at the same time, users (specially female users) often police sexy pictures or images showing relationship status or sexual orientation (Miguel, 2016). This study is focused on two platforms: Badoo (hookup platform) and Facebook, and includes 24 participants (aged 25-49 years). In this paper, I discuss to what extent participants commoditize their private lives and engage in self-promotion, what Hearn (2008) labels “self-branding”, to gather public attention or achieve their romantic goals. Heino et al. (2010), in their research about the marketplace metaphor, argue that online daters feel better about themselves as a result of self-branding practices. In my study, on the contrary, some participants expressed frustration with their self-marketing skills, which they deemed responsible for their lack of dating success. Combining user profiles analysis with interviews, this research project aims to bring together a critical analysis of brand culture (Banet-Weiser, 2012) with users’ perspectives.

Morning Tea

11.15am to 11.30am

Session 3: Practices

11.30am to 1.10pm

Micro-Minorities: The Emergence of New Sexual Subjectivities, Categories and Labels among Sexually-Diverse Youth Online, *Rob Cover (UWA)*

Co-creative digital media environments and their associated interactive cultural practices are recently playing a central role in fostering opportunities for sexually-diverse young adults to participate in the production of new, emergent discourses that are re-defining, re-labelling and re-categorising new norms and counter-norms for gender and sexuality. Recent figurations of sexuality and identity have emerged that present a widespread range of sexualities and genders beyond the more traditional hetero/homo dichotomy or LGBTI labels that help to describe a more specific self-identification of sexual practices. The emergent configuration includes terms such as heteroflexible, asexual, homoflexible, sapiosexual, demisexual and others, including multiples and combinations. New practices of articulating, categorising and living sexualities and genders has some significant implications for young people, minority resilience, health practices, family law and the assumptions around what straight people (should) do sexually.

There are two available approaches to understanding the cultural framework through which these new terms and descriptors emerge: Firstly, as an articulation of “gender and sexual diversity” that rejects the labels of earlier generations and seeks to produce a specificity that more ‘accurately’ describes a set of deeply-felt attachments, desires and orientations, cited and performatively expressed in online and offline settings that helps describe and express a post-identity queer fluidity. Secondly, as a set of “micro-minoritisations” in which different labels compete on a ladder of greater-or-less oppression or exclusion, with borders and bounds highly policed in online settings. Both of these approaches point to the limitations of minority descriptors and identity categories, albeit with different sets of ethics in their use and articulation.

This paper accounts for the digital emergence “micro-minority” taxonomies of sexual and gender identity, theorising nascent practices in terms of digital affordances, resistances to hetero/homo dichotomisation, while acknowledging the ways in which such labels produce new normativities, exclusions and marginalisations. The paper discusses these in the context of digital interactivity, queer theory and emergent cultural understandings of sexuality.

Digital and Liquid Traces: Affordances and Practices of Tributing on Reddit, *Emily van der Nagel (Swinburne)*

‘Tributing’ is the practice of ejaculating onto a sexy photo, whether a printed page or digital image on a tablet or smartphone. It involves an entanglement of platforms, screens, materiality, online identities, and bodily fluids, especially when it plays out on bulletin board Reddit’s TributeMe subreddit. TributeMe sees women offering photos of themselves posing suggestively, inviting men to send them back their photos adorned with ejaculate – but they can only submit once they have verified their account through holding a handwritten sign with their username, the date, and the name of the subreddit. This verification process builds consent into the TributeMe subreddit, which exists among a landscape of revenge porn, misogynistic harassment, moral panics over teen sexting, and a voting system on Reddit that leads to an automatic curation of the submitted images. It also results in the visibility of young, female, heteronormative bodies, which are most often voted to the top of the page.

In this presentation, I explore the tensions between platform affordances and user practices on TributeMe. People who post their photographs to the subreddit understand that tributing, while deeply intimate, involves public photos and blurred boundaries between the online and offline. Because of this, people often take steps to obscure their identity by using pseudonyms and leaving their faces out of the images. If digital traces are the data we leave behind as we search, browse, post, and communicate online, I want to question what role the liquid trace of material bodily fluid plays in this confluence of desire and the digital. I argue that pseudonymity allows people to take advantage of Reddit's platform infrastructure and curation systems in order to enact a consensual and playful experience of tributing.

“U mad I’m stylin on u brah with my aesthetics?”: Embodiment and the Performance of Gender in the Zyzz Fandom of Recreational Bodybuilders, *Mair Underwood (UQ)*

Aziz Shavershian began as a self-confessed “geek” and “extreme ectomorph” who was rejected by women. Then after selling his World of Warcraft profile he bought a gym membership and transformed himself into a muscular ‘Adonis’. He ‘levelled up’, becoming ‘Zyzz’, one of the world’s first online fitness celebrities. In so doing he became an aspirational figure for thousands of young men worldwide. This paper describes the relationships these young men continue to have with Zyzz despite his death in 2011 at just 22 years of age. For these young men Zyzz guides them on a process of self-discovery as they unlock their “inner Zyzz”. Zyzz provides them with a sense of security and protection as he watches over them and “spots them every rep”. His philosophies provide a template for how to live their best life, and his legacy is one of belonging to something bigger than themselves: the Zyzz revolution. Zyzz allows young men to express love for each other through him. But most of all he provides hope and inspiration that “we’re all gonna make it brah”. Through the results of a multi-sited online ethnography I describe how the digital affords young men the ability to live intimately with a dead man.

Juxtapolitical Affect and Shifting Incorporations of Feminism, *Akane Kanai (Newcastle)*

This paper follows Berlant's (2008) notion of the juxtapolitical as a space rich in feelings of recognition and commonality that is *proximate* to but provides relief from politics, as a way of understanding new forms of vaguely feminist affect that circulate in digital spaces and what such affect does. To do this, I consider a juxtapolitical digital space, an intimate public on the microblogging platform Tumblr, in which young women articulate humorous reactions to everyday situations through GIFs (looping images) and captions. Whilst the blogs primarily articulate what have been understood to be postfeminist or ‘post-girl power’ (Dobson and Harris, 2015) concerns of beauty and appearance, heterosexuality and education and career (McRobbie, 2009), I suggest there is a changing relation to feminism that sustains the legibility and significance of feminine identity in this space. My argument is that juxtapolitical pleasures play a central part in how young women feel they belong in this public, providing a nebulous sense of feminist connection. I chart the move from a solipsistic postfeminist individuality in which the necessity of feminism is disavowed, to one in which feminism figures as a feeling offering an individualised reassurance. Rather than a rallying cry to political, collective mobilisation, a vague sense of proximity to feminism, in line with other consumption-based pleasures, provides individual validation of normalcy and belonging.

Lunch

1.10m-2.15pm

Session 4: Commercialising Intimacy

2.15pm to 3.30pm

Swipe Right to Purchase: The Role of Off-label Use in Tinder's Commercialization of Intimacy, Stefanie Duguay (QUT)

This paper explores 'off-label' use of digital platforms through a case study of the mobile dating app Tinder. By examining an app that brings partner-seeking users together in a space of intimacy, it is possible to identify the prescribed uses of the app, users' expectations of the space, and uses that contravene either or both of these perspectives. Through an analysis of media articles about Tinder, multiple uses outside of dating, casual sex, and meeting people were identified, including several commercial, political, and cause-based campaigns. These activities were further examined through in-depth investigation of four instances, including interviews with individuals carrying out these alternative uses. When paired with data from a platform analysis of Tinder over time, these multiple approaches provide findings about the range of activity on the app and the company's response to off-label use.

Tinder prescribes a particular 'on-label' use, which is adapted through user practices and norms. While off-label uses exist outside or counter to what is prescribed and range in opposition to user norms, the most disruptive activities conflict with user beliefs about the app's proper use. They garner user and media attention through tactics of shock or deception, which are often integral to their success, but also invoke confrontational responses from users and the app company. Tinder updated its design and business strategy in response to off-label use, shutting down uses threatening its profit-making potential while adopting profitable uses into its business strategy. This study highlights the contested space that arises from the commercialization of intimacy and an app's negotiation of platform politics in profiting from the intimate space it fosters. It also gives shape to the notion of off-label use as playing a role in platform development, raising questions for the concept's applicability to other digital platforms.

Socialising in Commercial Spaces: Perceptions of User Ambivalence towards Privacy on Facebook, Ellen Wilkinson (Wollongong)

Privacy is often positioned in between Facebook's commercial interests, the interest of third party companies, and protecting individual user interests. This positioning can lead to users modifying their social practices to overcome the structural technological boundaries of Facebook. Facebook privacy policies seek to make users feel more secure by giving them control so they will continue to share their personal information, which in turn, is commodified for profit. Fuchs argues that Facebook users are 'double objects of commodification' as their data becomes commodified, while simultaneously users are commodified through advertising (2014, p169). The Privacy policy and Terms and Conditions are written to protect the economic interests of Facebook not to protect individual user rights. To overcome structural privacy boundaries users often modify their social practices, for instance, by changing privacy settings, modifying tagging practices, practices around the taking of digital photos to clarify ownership and whether the photo is 'Facebook appropriate', and being aware of both public and private spaces on Facebook. A prevalent perception is that young adults are ambivalent towards privacy on Facebook. My qualitative PhD study about user perceptions of privacy when sharing photographs on Facebook, highlights that young adults are not ambivalent towards their privacy, rather they are more concerned with individual privacy violations than with institutional privacy. Individuals use Facebook for a variety of reasons including, self-publicity, socialising, both the visibility and limiting of networks, and ease of access. Individuals often

perceive that their profile is only visible to a limited number of other users, rather than the number of other users set by the structural boundary that the technology allows. Many users have become ambivalent about allowing personal data to be collected and consider that giving third party access to data is a 'trade off' for free Facebook access.

Commodification of Domestic Spaces and Intimate Connections in AirBnB and the Sharing Economy, *Jenny Kennedy (Melbourne)*

Through the sharing economy people rent rooms in private homes, ride in other people's cars, crowd source funds for personal projects, eat food prepared in other people's kitchens, circulate used objects, and learn from others, among other things. The sharing economy is novel compared to pre-existing forms of kin and community-based sharing because it enables sharing between strangers through platforms that seek to extract value from the exchange. The most recognizable platforms in the sharing economy are Uber and AirBnB. Uber was valued in 2016 at approximately US\$62.5 billion, and Airbnb is estimated at a value of more than US\$25 billion.

Sharing economy platforms need to be thought of critically in terms of how they are shaping social experience, how they connect (and disconnect) people, and how they derive value from users. Social connection is a key motivation for users of sharing economy platforms, however platforms in the sharing economy have conflicting objectives, and regularly 'fail to deliver durable social ties' (Schor and Fitzmaurice 2014: p.414).

While advocates of the sharing economy claim that it can contribute to a more equal and socially progressive economy, careful attention needs to be paid to how the sharing economy sustains existing socio-economic inequalities. Fitzmaurice and Schor (2014) show how people engage in food swaps with those who they perceived to have similar cultural capital, with value judgments made based on the person's appearance. Those trading skills in time banks are likely to trade skills with persons that replicate existing cultural capital bias (Dubois et al 2014). Racial bias also impacts participation. Edelman and Luca (2014) show that users of AirBnB discriminate based on race, with users paying 12% more to stay at the properties of whites than non-whites.

This paper draws out the ambivalences of sharing economy platforms that commodify domestic spaces and leverage intimate connections, and sets a research agenda for the study of these platforms.

Short break

3.30pm to 3.45pm

Session 5: Nondominant Intimacies

3.45pm to 5.00pm

Cruising for Cash: Prostitution on Grindr, Joseph Brennan (Sydney)

Grindr is currently the world's leading gay geosocial smartphone app. Its popularity has been accompanied by much scholarly interest, in particular regarding its spatial and proximity characteristics (Bumgarner 2013; Licoppe et al. 2016), its impact on the mental health and self-image of participants (Fox 2014; Goedel et al. 2016a), and of unsafe sexual practices that may be resulting from its 'hook-up culture' (see Rice et al. 2012; Goedel et al. 2016b). Some scholars have also noted the potential impacts of Grindr on sex work (Ellison and Weitzer 2016 on street prostitution for instance), yet none have considered how otherwise ordinary users might be incentivized to make use of smartphone technology to solicit sex in exchange for cash, which is in violation of Grindr's terms of service. To address this, this paper employs textual analysis in the cultural studies tradition to analyse reddit discussion forums dedicated to the use of Grindr for such purposes. I do consider examples of professional appropriation of the service—escorts who offer services via Grindr for instance.

However, I am particularly interested in what motivates more amateur use of the app for paid sexual encounters. The discourse analysed is organised into themes or 'scripts,' examples of which include financial—'cash for my student debt' and 'bills to pay'—and erotic imperatives—'I do get turned on by being paid for it.' Such scripts offer insight into both Grindr as a tool for 'selfpornographic representation' (Phillips 2015), and of the motivations of exploiting such a tool, in particular by participants who would not otherwise engage in 'cruising for cash.' The discourse is also considered in light of Sarah Banet-Weiser's concept of 'brand cultures' (2012), while criticism of the suggestion of prostitution on Grindr is read in accordance with 'policing of self' (Roth 2015) in gay digital communities.

Intimacy among Contractual Workers in Metro Manila: Emergent Moralities, Affective Labour and Digital Media, Jozon A. Lorenzana (Ateneo de Manila University)

Looking at off- and online practices and personal narratives of contractual workers in Metro Manila, I examine current configurations of intimacy under conditions of economic uncertainty and widespread use of digital media. As the conduct of relationships increasingly depend on digital media, which increase the capacity to communicate beyond spatial and temporal constraints, new norms of conducting relations emerge as well as forms of transgressive behaviour. My research focuses on how people in precarious economic situations experience and practice intimacy with the use of digital media. Based on initial ethnographic fieldwork, I describe how meanings and expectations of trust, fidelity and reciprocity are reconfigured as intimate relations are partially or wholly conducted, sustained and experienced through digital media. Stories from research participants reveal the particular ways in which precarious economic situations intersect with moral expectations in intimate relations. The emergent moral demands of intimacy require forms of affective labour that are deeply gendered and classed. I reflect on the implications of the gendered nature of affective labour as new moral expectations in intimate relations emerge.

Creative Curation of Collective Gender-Diversity, Sonja Vivienne (Flinders)

In this paper I explore methods for curating collective narratives in ‘popular’ and ‘academic’ realms. I draw on a trans and gender-diverse (TGD) case study in social media storytelling, ‘Stories Beyond Gender’. Methodologically speaking the [‘Stories Beyond Gender’](#) initiative has been open-ended and unstructured, guided as much by community impetus as my own engagement as an ethnographer/facilitator. In terms of measurable outputs participants have produced a range of visual and verbal materials around themes of self-realisation, transformation, obstacles/haters, affirmation/allies and self-determination. However the many negotiations they undertake with friends, family members, peers and colleagues, the *affective labour* (Chambers & Terranova, 2014; Gregg, 2009) that is (arguably) central to social change, is harder to quantify.

Forlano and Jungnickel (2015) argue that, as scholars, we can engage in ‘the hands-on creation of artefacts and prototypes (both physical and digital) that make complex philosophical arguments (Galey & Ruecker, 2010) often defying the binary categories that are present within Western scientific traditions and manifested through language’. This paper asks how cultural studies in particular and academic scholarship more broadly can attempt to measure the affective strategies and impact that is at the core of changing understandings of gender. Secondly, it asks how we can represent cultural discourse and disseminate it, in the face of systemic privileging of verbal output, recondite analysis and quantifiable measures? What possibilities are generated by the ‘ambivalent entanglement’ of measurable academic outcomes and vibrant, affective popular culture?

Evening Drinks

5.00pm to 7.00pm

Program Day 2

Session 1: Queer Space

9.00am to 10.15am

Cataloguing Bodies: Tribes on Grindr, *Simon Clay (UQ)*

In 2013, Grindr added a feature to its interface called 'Tribes', a function allowing users to select and list what tribe they identify with. While Grindr was not the first to do this, the app's highly influential position deeply altered the way in which gay men interacted with each other online. These 'tribes' refer to a distinct and unique system of sub-cultures that exist within the gay community, formally dating back to the early 1980s with the genesis of the gay Bear, but can arguably be traced back to the early 20th century in North America and Britain. My study sought to examine how this system of sub-cultures exists on Grindr, the ways in which users integrate these identities into their offline realities, and how individuals embodied and approached tribal identity. Through interviewing 26 Grindr users, my study found that tribal identity is heavily influenced by the setting in which it occurs, has a propensity to Other individuals, is strongly linked to a kind of social visibility, is performed through various types of embodiment and presentation, and is viewed by many as an institutionalised system of marginalisation and discrimination. One of the key findings of my study was the way in which apps of Grindr's ilk manufactured differing experiences of tribal identity, and through their targeted marketing, produced a digitalised commodification of bodies in direct relation to the set of tribes each app offered. The significance of these findings help to further elucidate the unique way in which gay men and MSM interact with digital media, the relationship between social network app designers and its users, and demonstrates the increasingly complex way that gay subjectivity is experienced.

Discrimination is Now an Inevitable User Experience on Various Gay Mobile Dating Applications, *Joe Xie Quin Lim (Auckland)*

Discrimination is now an inevitable user experience on various gay mobile dating applications. This bears the question as to what exactly the roles of these applications are, other than individual dating preferences in relation to the phenomenon of racial hostility on these applications? One of the important lessons from Grindr's 'no blacks, no femmes, no fatties, no Asians' phenomenon is about how these applications are constructed in a way to promote western ideals of a desirable and acceptable gay identity and body image that alienate non-white users as a result. The ideal and accepted gay identity is commonly constructed as a middle-class, well educated, adult European descent man with a masculine body. These applications are the purveyors and promoters of idealized western gay male identity. These idealized tropes and standards of what constitute a contemporary gay male representation and identity permeate all levels of these applications (ranging from interface designs to users' interaction in them). Therefore, non-white members often find themselves in an unfavorable position in which they are unable to subscribe to these unattainable ideals due to their ethnicity, social positions, and cultural background.

However, non-white users could use these applications as an important tool and 'arena' for them to subvert hegemonic expectation, and they are strategically deploying these applications as a way to refashion their sexual identity to gain sexual citizenship. My paper focuses on one particular group of users, gay Asian men and I suggest that their self-representations on these applications are an act of

discursive identity performance, in which they utilize the interface of these apps pragmatically to retain their visibility and to perform their desired sexual identity.

Tumblr as a ‘Queer Ecosystem’ amongst Young LGBTIQ+ People in Australia, *Brady Robards (Tasmania) with Paul Bryon, Brendan Churchill, Sonja Vivienne and Ben Hanckel*

For young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) people, the internet has long been considered a valuable resource for finding connections, friendship, and a sense of belonging in heteronormative and sometimes hostile worlds. For young LGBTIQ+ people in regional and rural areas, where access to visibly queer spaces (bars, parades) and services (sexual health clinics, mental health services) is limited, digital social media provide a potentially even more significant resource. In the Scrolling Beyond Binaries survey, we sought to better understand the role of social media in the lives of young LGBTIQ+ people. Our respondents (n=1304), aged 16-35, reported using a range of social media platforms, including Facebook (97%), Instagram (70%), Snapchat (67%), and Tumblr (64%). In other research on social media use among the general population, Tumblr use is three to six times lower (Pew Internet Research, 2015). This suggests that Tumblr plays a significant role in what Cho (2015) calls a digitally mediated ‘queer ecosystem’.

In this paper, we argue that Tumblr provides a space for sourcing information on sex, gender and sexual identities, sexual health, and LGBTIQ+ cultures. The anonymity of the platform supports this information seeking, providing a feeling of safety for many young people. However, many participants also reported that this anonymity also contributed to what they described as a sometimes ‘toxic environment’. Respondents also report that Tumblr is most used to ‘communicate with people who are like me’, more so than for Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, which tend to be centred around existing local networks. This suggests that Tumblr is not only a space of intimate communications, but is a key space for identity practice and formation, where one’s peers are present, despite geographic limitations, including for young people living in regional and rural locations. Participants who grew dissatisfied with their Tumblr communities and experiences speak of leaving this space, but often clarified its importance for them at a particular time of their lives. For many, Tumblr is cast as a beginning for identity-work around diverse genders and sexualities, where users became exposed to a range of queer and gender diverse identity projects, and could access a range of people offering their experience based knowledge of these. We draw on Cho’s (2015) formulations of Tumblr as a ‘queer ecosystem’, and the notion of ‘queer reverb’, to contextualise our empirical work.

Morning Tea

10.15am-10.45am

Session 2: Intimate Technics

10.45am to 12.00pm

Things to Come — Imagining the Future of Digital Intimacy, *Suzanne Woodward and Luke Goode (Auckland)*

This paper critically interrogates the ways in which the future of sex and intimacy are imagined in popular culture. In particular, it examines the ways in which technological mediation and technological fetishism are depicted in futuristic texts. A range of popular genres feature futuristic representations of sex and intimacy. These include: futurist genres of pornography; mainstream science fiction featuring 'sexbots' and other technological fantasies; pornographic spoofs of mainstream science fiction; marketing, advertising and journalistic discourse around teledildonics, cybersex and other 'porn valley' innovations. Such a study is pertinent for two reasons. Firstly it tells us much about the sexual politics of the present. Secondly, the way the future is imagined and discussed affects the way the future itself unfolds or is permitted to unfold both in terms of culture and technological innovation: imagined futures open up some and close down other potential futures. Unsurprisingly, though with certain exceptions, the future of technologized sexual intimacy looks depressingly masculinist, heteronormative and commodified.

Technologies of the Intimate Self: Dating and Hook-up Apps and their Consequences for Seduction, Sex and Courtship, *Mitchell Hobbs (Sydney)*

Dating and hook-up applications (apps) have become powerful 'social intermediaries', partially displacing the role of traditional matchmakers and locales for meeting potential lovers and long-term partners. Popular dating apps like *Tinder*, and its many clones, use a photo-driven design tailored for smartphones. Users are shown photos of nearby individuals and can swipe right to 'like' and left for 'dislike', with mutual right swipes resulting in 'a match'. According to two of the founders of *Tinder*, Sean Rad and Justin Mateen, their app was intentionally designed to foster the experience of a game, which was 'easy' to join and 'fun' to play. Their goal was to challenge and displace internet dating websites by creating a software platform that required less time and emotional investment from the user. The burgeoning popularity of dating apps is, then, a result of their tactile functionality, mobility, and the gamification of seduction and courtship. This investigation seeks to understand the various affordances provided by dating/hook-up apps and their influences on the courtship and seduction practices of users, employing a methodology comprised of in-depth interviews, online surveys, and digital ethnography. The data collected for this study suggests that participants had a commodified understanding of the self. They acknowledged the need to engage in self-branding activities to market themselves as desirable commodities in a crowded relationship marketplace—a process of self-stylisation for self-transformation and part of the contemporary 'technologies of the self' facilitated by social media. This study also explores the views of users regarding the impacts of the technology on their desires, sex lives, relationships, and emotional states. Ultimately this investigation considers whether sociological ideas such as confluent love, plastic sexuality, and the pure relationship are enhanced or hindered by 'networked intimacy'.

The Promotional Infrastructure of Intoxication, *Nicholas Carah (UQ)*

Media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat can be productively approached as brand-funded engineering projects. In this presentation I'm particularly interested in how embodied participation in cultural spaces like nightlife precincts and music festivals is incorporated into the branding and promotional strategies of alcohol brands and licensed venues. I consider the how media platforms help to make the affective nature of public intimacy available to the calculative logic of marketers. I consider the work of promo labourers, the participation of consumers in nightlife photography, and the logistical use of Facebook and Snapchat as instances where the capacity to affect and publicisation of intimacy take on a promotional character. I argue that media platforms sense, modulate and capitalise upon the affective nature of public intimacy. And so, account of the commercial imperatives of media platforms must be infrastructural. Accounts of the advertising model of platforms that focus predominantly on the use of data to target advertisements elides the development of a promotional infrastructure woven into our intimate cultural practices and public cultural spaces. I propose the promotional presentation of the self, cataloguing and coding experience, producing real-time and locative atmospheres and the using smartphones to do the logistics of intimate life are all productive activities within the commercial structures of media platforms.

Session 3: Domestic and Everyday Intimacies

12.00pm to 12.50pm

The Secret of Happy Families? Combining Intimacy and Instrumentality with Agile Family Management, *Kate Miltner (Annenberg)*

“Agile” is an umbrella term for a group of software development techniques that rely on self-managing teams working in a task-oriented manner on short timescales. With adoption by corporations in over 100 countries, Agile approaches are positioned as optimal production methodologies for projects requiring iteration and rapid development.

In 2013, *New York Times* parenting columnist Bruce Feiler published a book entitled *The Secrets of Happy Families*. In it, Feiler encourages the application of Agile software development processes to family contexts, a practice Feiler dubs “Agile Family Management”, or AFM. The book became a *New York Times Bestseller* and media outlets ranging from *NPR* to the *Harvard Business Review* extolled AFM’s virtues as a superior method for dealing with the chaos of contemporary family life.

AFM is a system of process based on a moral framework of efficiency; its goal is to solve the “problem” of family chaos by implementing workflow solutions that result in the deliverable of a “happy family”. The incorporation of workplace values and systems into the family and home has been taking place in technologically-oriented communities for decades (English-Lueck, 2002). However, the mainstream resonance of Agile Family Management in popular press indicates a shift: the incorporation of technological management practices within the family is now proposed as a solution for *all* families to achieve happiness, no matter their location, configuration, or circumstances.

This paper argues that the positioning of Agile Family Management as the ideal set of rules for managing family life is connected to the widespread adoption of digital technologies and subsequent rise of “work’s intimacy” (Gregg, 2013). It also explores how the “ideal” family configuration offered by AFM is influenced by historical myths, disregards intersectionality, and is based in market logics. Finally, it investigates some implications and outcomes of the collision between intimacy and instrumentality.

Public Sharing of Private Spaces: #watchingtv, *Kim Barbour (Adelaide)*

Through Instagram, people are publically sharing images of what have previously been considered private spaces, including their homes. When these images come from publicly accessible accounts and use popular hashtags, they change the way that the privacy and sanctity of the home can be understood: through these images we get insight into everything from interior decorating, the place of technology through televisions, computers, food, and pets, to depictions of family life. Drawing from data of Instagram images tagged with #watchingtv, this study investigates the way that watching television, which can be understood as a private activity, is performed through the popular social networking and image sharing site.

A number of visual themes emerged from the images associated with this hashtag. Some were expected, such as point-of-view images of feet up on coffee tables or ottomans, with the television in the background, or couple selfies for date night. Others were unexpected but not surprising – there are a significant number of people who photograph their pets watching animal programs. Others give insight into family lives and gender roles, through images taken by mothers of fathers relaxing and watching television with their toddlers, while images of mothers similarly engaged are

almost entirely absent. A final theme excluded the television altogether, and instead focused on the food that accompanied the television watching experience.

The production and sharing of images of homes and their inhabitants can be seen as a performance, through which we selectively share elements of our personal lives and spaces. This project, and the upcoming research emerging from it, aims to look broadly at the public presentation of private space, asking how images can be understood as expressions of changes in our conceptualisation of a public/private dichotomy.

Lunch

12.50pm