

22 MAI
2019
13h30

Workshops de Investigação

CIES-IUL



“As soon as it’s kissing on lips it would be a joke with the boys, it couldn’t be a display of affection”: examining change, continuity and inclusivity in young Australian masculinities

Current theorising of “inclusive masculinities” cites the renewed emphasis on intimacy evident in platonic relationships between men in Western societies as evidence of the disintegration of a hegemonic gender order. Given the expansion of online movements like MRA and incels, this at first might suggest a binary formation of contemporary young masculinities. Reflecting on this online phenomenon alongside findings from a study of young Australian men’s understanding and experience of homosocial intimacy, I point to the nuanced ways gender power continues to inform the lives of men who engage more openly in homosocial intimacy. Using qualitative data from focus groups with twenty-two men from five different subcultural peer groups and eight follow-up individual interviews, I illustrate that exaggerated intimate behaviours are not considered authentic displays of affection. Rather, they have been adopted into the repertoire of ways men can perform masculinity and therefore do not meaningfully challenge gendered power structures. However, this hybridity is neither a means of reconfiguring male power, nor evidence of entirely inclusive masculinities, but instead constitutes an initial step toward inclusivity; a transitory phase that is fragile and at times contradictory, but should be neither overstated or dismissed. Reflecting on this research I discuss the benefits of all-male focus groups as a method of examining the collective construction of masculine norms, and how they are contested and negotiated within groups of men. Looking ahead, however, I highlight the need for further research that examines the drivers of change and continuity in masculinities, and how men navigate the pursuit of a masculine identity amid social shifts toward gender equality. I conclude with a summary of my current PhD project, which adopts a multi-family-member approach to examine intergenerational experiences and understandings of masculinity and homosociality.

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