The body has become a key sociological theme of academic study. However, while the body has emerged as a central focus of much theoretical work, in youth studies the physicality and materiality of the body is often taken for granted as an ‘absent presence’. Where the body is directly addressed in the study of youth, it is frequently identified as the locus of social or cultural ‘problems’, more often than not reflecting the concerns of Western culture, such as in the growing alarm surrounding rates of childhood obesity, poor body image and sexualisation. In this presentation we discuss key theoretical perspectives which can enable a sharper focus on the body, and how this can deepen understanding of some of the contemporary concerns related to young people. Theorising the body has implications for youth identity research as all major social inequalities such as gender, class, race, sexuality, dis/ability, and place are necessarily embodied. A focus on the body and embodiment can provide a way of exploring the complex interplay of relations between youth, identities and society.

Julia Coffey is a Research Fellow at the Youth Research Centre in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne. Her work focuses on the body, health, youth, gender, feminism and social theory. She completed her PhD in sociology at the University of Melbourne in 2012, titled ‘Exploring Body Work Practices: Bodies, Affect and Becoming’.

Juliet Watson is a lecturer in Social Work, College of Arts, at Victoria University. Her research interests include bodies in society, gender, feminism, youth, violence against women and structural inequality. Her PhD, undertaken at the Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne, was submitted in 2014, titled ‘Young Women, Homelessness and Intimate Relationships’.

DATE
Tuesday 13 May 2014

TIME
3:30 pm to 4:30 pm

VENUE
Frank Tate Room, Level 9, 100 Leicester Street Building, University of Melbourne

RSVP
Kate Alexander by 8 May 2014
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