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**The Affective Intensities  
of Masculinity in Shaping  
Gendered Experience**  
From Little Boys,  
Big Boys Grow

**Amanda Keddie**

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# The Affective Intensities of Masculinity in Shaping Gendered Experience

“Through a longitudinal study and interviews spanning twenty years, this engaging and insightful book fills a significant gap in understanding the ways in which boys become men. Drawing upon affect theory and interviews with one male subject at four critical time periods in his life, experiences of masculine physicality, male peer cultures and the othering of girls and women, come powerfully to life. This highly-readable book makes a major contribution to critical masculinity studies and offers hope for a future beyond violent and abusive masculinities.”

—Bob Pease, *Honorary Professor, Deakin University, Adjunct Professor, University of Tasmania and author of Facing Patriarchy: From a Violent Gender Order to a Culture of Peace*

“In this captivating book, Amanda Keddie undertakes a nuanced longitudinal exploration of the movement, sedimentation and ambivalences of affect in the production of masculinities through and beyond schooling. Through observing and listening to the discursive narration of affect by one subject - from his primary schooling to his secondary schooling, to his account of life in his twenties - Keddie develops rich insights into the felt complexities of hegemonic masculinity, school and gender politics. In reflexively attending to affect across this longitudinal body of work, her book makes a significant contribution to methodological questions of how affect works in variously forming, affirming, troubling and unravelling gendered subjectivities across lives.”

—Dr. Eve Mayes *is a DECRA Senior Research Fellow at Deakin University and author of the book, The Politics of Voice in Education (Edinburgh University Press)*

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## ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book tells a story of masculinity through the experiences of one boy, ‘Adam’. From four different studies and time periods, it tracks moments of significance in his life over a period of 20 years. The book analyses these moments drawing on theories of affect to highlight the intensities of gendered experience that move him towards and away from a hegemonic masculinity of physical toughness, domination, competition and an opposition to ‘the feminine’. The book is set against the backdrop of a long history of contentious gender politics in Australia and globally but particularly responds to the renewed attention to issues of masculinity in the current #MeToo climate. Against this backdrop, nuanced and longitudinal accounts of boys’ and men’s experiences of masculinity are rare but significant because they can offer insight into the complex bodily, social, economic and historical forces that configure masculinities. This book provides such insight through Adam’s story towards better understanding the power of these experiences within their specific and broader social contexts. Such understanding is central in our endeavours, as those who educate, support and work with boys and men, to transform gender inequalities.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Amanda Keddie** is a Professor of Education at Deakin University. Her research examines the processes, practices and conditions that can impact on the pursuit of social justice in education settings. Amanda's qualitative research has been based within Australia, England and the USA and is strongly informed by feminist theory with a particular interest in issues of masculinity.



## CHAPTER 1

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# From Little Boys, Big Boys Grow

**Abstract** This chapter introduces and describes the research informing the stories of masculinity that weave throughout the book. It provides an overview of the three key themes that organise the book: masculinities and physical power; masculinities and peer culture; and masculinities and ‘the feminine’. The chapter explains the theories of masculinity and affect that shape how Adam’s story is told. These theories help to understand the bodily, social, economic and historical patterns through which Adam configures his masculinity and, in particular, the intensities of experience that, repeated over time, draw him towards and away from a hegemonic masculinity of physical toughness, domination, competition and an opposition to ‘the feminine’. The chapter describes the analytic processes that shape the stories where Adam’s reflections and analysis of particular affective moments are interspersed with mine in an attempt to better understand the affective intensities of masculinity that shape his gendered experience.

**Keywords** Masculinities · Gender · Feminism · Affect theory