



‘Making space for queer identifying religious young people’

Young, LGBT...and Christian?? Some of the participants in this study didn't realise that there were other young people like them: 'I think once someone identifies as gay they will probably, even if their parents brought them up as Christian or their parents are Christian, they'll probably just shrug it off and assume automatically "I can't be Christian"... Yeah I would be surprised if I met a gay Christian. I would definitely want to talk to them' (Susan, 19).

As a result, some participants kept their sexual identity secret from their churches for fear of excommunication and some were actually turned away when they 'came out'. Others had much more affirming experiences and were embraced by their churches and congregations 'as God made me' or sought out inclusive churches like the Metropolitan Community Church in Newcastle (MCCN) or Christian gatherings like MAZE in Durham which serve LGBTQ people.

But this breadth of experience has not been conveyed in the existing literature or research. Whilst the Christian stance on non-heterosexuality has been vigorously debated, the voices and accounts of young people have been overlooked. There is a presumed antagonism between the reconciliation of sexual and religious identity.

Yeah I would be surprised if I met another gay Christian. I would definitely want to talk to them.

(‘Susan’, 19)

Young people are particularly marginalised and positioned as 'obvious' absences given the assumed dichotomy and mutual disinterest between 'youth' and 'religion'. Queer-identified youth are further negated within this sweep.

Early research for this project, however, highlights an interesting array of experiences around the intersections of youth, sexuality, and religion: 'The only person I knew didn't have a problem with it [his sexuality] was God' (Martin, 21).

This study therefore aims to 'make space' for young people's experience of being in – or absent from – religious *and* sexualized spaces. It will explore how their sexual and spiritual identities might mutually and complexly construct one another, rather than assume an uneasy convergence.

The project began in September and the first phase of research has been completed: participants aged between 16-25 years old in Newcastle and Durham who identify as LGBT Christians have been interviewed, completed social identities mapping exercises, and personal diaries. The next phase will begin in 2012 with participants from Edinburgh and Manchester. For further information, please see our website (below). If you could promote the project, please use the contacts to the right and we'll happily forward you any information. If you know anyone that would be interested in participating please pass on our details or see the advert overleaf.



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Queer Religious Youth?

‘Making space for queer identifying religious young people’ GET INVOLVED!

Are you an LGBT Christian?

Do you live in Manchester or Edinburgh?

Are you 16-25 years old?

If you have answered YES to all of the above and would like your experiences to be heard then you are invited to take part...

Your participation is completely anonymous.



If you have any questions or would like to arrange an interview at your convenience, please

EMAIL: Ria Snowdon

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For further information, check out our:



page under ‘Queer Religious Youth’.

Or visit our website:

<http://queerreligiousyouth.wordpress.com/>

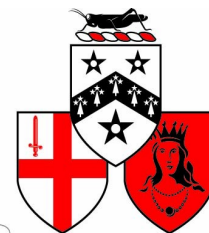
We look forward to hearing from you soon!

**What the team members are
upto
Prof. Yvette Taylor (Taylor@lsbu.ac.uk)
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Gresham College Lecture

‘Queer Presences and Absences: Citizenship, Community, Diversity - or Death’. This lecture was given by Yvette Taylor at Gresham College, London in November. She considered moments of US and UK sexual citizenship situating these in terms of LGBT campaigning groups' actions, institutional reactions and broader public relations evident in the course of claiming and lamenting citizenship, community and diversity. To read the lecture transcript, please visit:

<http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/queer-presences-and-absences-citizenship-community-diversity-or-death>



GRESHAM COLLEGE

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Call for Chapters

‘Intersecting Contradictions? Queering Religion, Religious Queers’

Yvette Taylor and Ria Snowdon (eds)

What are the intersections (and contradictions) between religious and sexual identities? Do they interplay with other forms of identity, groups, and contexts?

These are the questions Yvette Taylor and Ria Snowdon are interested in tackling in this new edited collection. They are currently inviting interested researchers to submit chapter proposals that consider, but are not limited to, the following:

- Intersecting inequalities: class, race, gender, sexuality
- Competing equalities, different diversities

- Generational (dis)continuity: past, present, and futures
- Mapping methods
- Queering youth: LGBTQ and heterosexual identities

Anyone interested in submitting a proposal are asked to email their abstract along with a brief biography to Ria (snowdonr@lsbu.ac.uk) and Yvette (taylor@lsbu.ac.uk) by 06 January 2012.

Further information can be found on our website: <http://queerreligiousyouth.wordpress.com/call-for-chapters/>



LGBT Dialogue Day

Research Beehive, Newcastle University
24 February 2012, 1.30-5.30pm

This afternoon conference seeks to create an open and inclusive space to encourage dialogue amongst academics and those working with LGBT communities through exploring the relationship between sexuality, social class and gender in a changing UK and International landscape.

Yvette Taylor will present a paper: ‘Queer Suicide: The Life and Death of Queer Futures and Failures’, alongside Mark Casey of Newcastle University: ‘Lesbian and Gay Lives in Newcastle’.



There will be room for dialogue and exchange of ideas, particularly examining:

- Queer Youth
- Experiences of advantage and disadvantage
- ‘Belonging’ in the city and rural spaces
- Inequalities and injustices: socio-legal transformations
- Past and Present LGBT lives
- Sexuality and Religion

Places on the day are free, but are limited to 30 people. Those wishing to join us should email Mark M.E.Casey@ncl.ac.uk and Yvette taylor@lsbu.ac.uk.

MA Gender and Sexuality

An MA in Gender and Sexuality will be introduced by Yvette, Taylor as Head of the Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, at London South Bank University from September 2012.

Yvette states that the course 'promises to be truly interdisciplinary' with modules delivered by experts in the field of Sociology, Social Policy, Cultural Studies, History, and Human Geography. Modules include 'Feminist Perspectives on Gender, Sex and Sexuality'; 'Love, Intimacy and Alternative Families: Queering Gender and Sexuality'; and 'Genders and Sexualities in the Media'.

Ria Snowdon will offer a module with Dr Cait Beaumont on 'Understanding Sexuality and Gender Across Time and Place' historically situating the students' understanding of issues relating to gender and sexuality drawing on her background as a gender historian.

The course will provide students with expert knowledge of historical change and contemporary transformation; legislation, policy analysis and the opportunity to acquire specialist skills to explore gender and sexuality empirically and theoretically. The course offers students an opportunity to study equality, social justice, human rights, multiculturalism, social cohesion, globalisation and migration. There are specialist modules to develop in-depth theoretical knowledge of 'intersectionality' and aspects of race, social class, religion, disability and age. The aim is to provide students with a range of skills such as policy management and a firm theoretical basis which can be used effectively in a professional capacity in the workplace.

This course will be offered 1 year full time and 2 years part time. Interested students can contact Yvette for further information (see contact details above).



Conference attendance

There have been some excellent conferences, seminars, and lectures hosted by several institutions this year that have been pertinent to the Queer Religious Youth project (writes Ria Snowdon).

These included the 'Connected Communities' symposium, hosted by Culture Lab at Newcastle University in September. Their aim was to investigate the complex relationship between digital technologies, their creative uses by communities, and the socio-cultural impacts of this use. A panel on '(Hi)stories' saw Alex Henry, Project Coordinator for the Culture Shock project based at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums, discuss the collection of 1,000 digital stories from people in the North East of England; preserving them in perpetuity using digital technology; and sharing them as widely as possible. Some of the problems she encountered and advice proffered spoke to the Queer Religious Youth project, in-



cluding techniques for contacting hard to reach communities and issues of anonymity.

In October I was kindly invited by Rev. Andy Braunston to the 'The Network Gathering of European Metropolitan Community Churches' in Manchester. This event served as an excellent platform to meet MCC church leaders and congregation members, giving a real sense of the scope of young LGBT people worshipping in their churches.

Middlesex University's 'Gender, Migration, and Religion' conference in November offered some thought provoking papers. Through the lens of gender and migration, this event provided the opportunity to compare and contrast diverse communities, including Jewish, Muslim, Jainist, and Hindu. But the absence from the programme on queer religious spaces, Christians, and young people was commented on and highlighted the research gap identified by the Queer Religious Youth project.