

July 2013, Issue 4

NEWSLETTER: 'Making Space for Queer-Identifying Religious Youth' project

EMAIL: Yvette Taylor TaylorY@lsbu.ac.uk and Ria Snowdon SnowdonR@lsbu.ac.uk
TEL: 020 7815 5850 <http://queerreligiousoyouth.wordpress.com/>

Project Update!

CONTENTS

Project Update!

'Diversity Role Models': Finding the (lesbian) women in leadership

NEW: MA Gender and Sexuality @ Weeks Centre

Edited Collections

Articles and Chapters

Policy Recommendations

Expanding the Feminist Classroom: Hollie McNish

Critical Diversities @ the Intersection

Yvette Taylor (Principal Investigator) and Ria Snowdon (Research Associate) have now completed the fieldwork for their ESRC funded project, 'Making Space for Queer-Identifying Religious Youth' (2011-2013).

spectives and perceptions. Some sources and policies cast religion as *automatically* negative or harmful to the realisation of LGBT identity (or 'coming out'). Others cast religion as the instinctive and natural saviour of

So, what is meant by 'Queer-Identifying Religious Youth'? The project variously answers, queries and debates that question, seeking to shed light on youth cultures, queer community and



Yvette Taylor and Ria Snowdon at the AAG conference in April

religiosity. The question – and perhaps surprise – around these intersecting categories, is situated against the lack of empirical research examining queer Christian youth, their experiences, per-

traditional ways of living and loving, harmed by specific sexual subjects. But rather than assume that sexuality and religion – and in our case Christianity – are separate and divergent paths, we explore how they might mutually and complexly construct one another. To do this, we adopted a mixed-method research design (interviews, diaries, and social mapping exercises), and recruited 38 respondents across 3

sites: Newcastle, Manchester, and London.

As well as writing our blog pieces (see Y. Taylor's, ['Making space for queer identifying religious youth \(2011-2013\)'](#) and R. Snowdon, ['Making space for the straight talking/acting interviewer?'](#)) we have disseminated the results of the study at some exciting international conferences, including the American Association of Geographers (AAG) in Los Angeles, California in April. The 5 day conference featured over 6,000 presentations, posters, workshops, and field trips by leading scholars, experts, and researchers. Our paper, 'Queer Religious Youth: An Intersectional Analysis', explored how religious identity interplays with other forms of identity, specifically those relating to sexual identity. It drew upon Yvette's edited collection [Theorizing Intersectionality and Sexuality](#) (2010, Palgrave) and asked specifically if 'intersectionality' could be used to speak to and bridge the dis-connections between sexuality, religion and youth.

On returning from the AAG we presented as part of a panel session, 'Sexuality, Spirituality, and the Educational Experience' at the Gender and Education Conference, hosted by the Weeks Centre.

We are now in the process of co-editing two collections, *Queering Religion, Religious Queers* (Routledge, 2014), see endorsements by [Andrew Gorman-Murray and Ana Cristina Santos](#) on Amazon, and a Special Issue for *Sexualities* 'Sexuality and Religion' (forthcoming) with contributors from the U.K. and Europe, USA, Canada, and Australia. We have recently submitted articles to *Sociological Review* and *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, as well as a chapter for the publishing house Brill as part of their 'International Studies in Religion and Society' series. To our surprise, and motivated by the efforts 'in the field' we are currently turning our attention towards an article for the journal *New Media and Society* examining queer youths' use of online religious communities, as well as social networking sites such as Facebook.

The online digital field raised some interesting, and often unexpected, methodological questions and challenges throughout the project. As researchers, our own online identities and public profiles can 'announce' us before we arrive in the field. For example, as Research Associate, Ria [blogged](#) reflexively about the impact of her pregnancy and 'straight' identity on the interview process (whilst the fieldwork was on-going) thus 'outing' herself to

participants pre-interview. In addition, we set up a 'closed' Facebook group (Queer Religious Youth) to engage potential respondents but the 'private' online profiles of researchers can become part of the research process, particularly where the use of an existing profile adds legitimacy to the project's call for participants and where young people request to be 'friends' post-project involvement. Nicola (21, Newcastle) sent a 'friend request' on Facebook when finalising the details of the first meeting. Mindful of the sensitive questions posed in interview, Ria, as Research Associate, accepted this request in the hope that an online potted history of her private life would provide reassurances about her participation in the project (the 'researched' becoming the 'researcher'). Whilst Nicola was an unobtrusive 'friend', she was subsequently 'deleted' (after the fieldwork stage), restoring Ria's preferred reservations of her profile for 'private' rather than work communications. Both Ria, as Research Associate, and Yvette, as Principal Investigator, struggled with this decision and the process of (dis)engaging (Lewis, 2009), particularly in light of the difficult and traumatic experiences spoken about (Reavey, 1997, 2011). Thus the lingering virtual 'connections' these online tools create can pose difficulties in exiting the field.

The advisory group for the project includes Jodi O'Brien, Andrew Yip, Andrew Murray-Gorman, and Tracey Skelton who have been a great source of advice, as well as providing opportunities for collaboration. For example, Andrew Yip and Yvette recently gave a seminar on youth, sexuality, and religion as part of the Families and Social Capital Group at Weeks Centre. In addition, Andrew wrote a feature for the project newsletter (May 2012) reflecting on a career spanning two decades researching sexuality and religion, and Jodi O'Brien followed this up (October 2012) with a piece 'How Big is Your God?', exploring, among other things, the reactions to her dismissal as an 'openly queer' dean at a Jesuit Catholic University.

You can learn more about the project at <http://queerreligiousyouth.wordpress.com/> and browse our three project newsletters, where we include many interesting features, including a recent interview with Reverend Dawn Harrison exploring the challenges she has encountered both inside and outside of her church in taking up a new role as Chaplain to Lesbian and Gay Youth Manchester (LGYM).

‘Diversity Role Models’: Finding the (lesbian) women in leadership

On the 21 November 2012, the Church of England’s governing body, the General Synod, voted against allowing women to become bishops. The young women participating in our project were incensed.

Andrea (24, Newcastle) was writing in her project diary when news of the vote was broadcast live, she interrupted her entry with:

‘*Wait – I’ve just been watching the BBC News live news feed from the CofE general synod and just heard that they have rejected the introduction of women bishops. I cannot believe it. What makes even less sense is that the house of laity voted against it whilst the Bishops and the Clergy were overwhelmingly in favour. I’ve just looked at the stats apparently a 2/3 majority is needed and the laity voted 132 for and 74 against if another 6 had voted the other way we’d be looking at a world with women bishops in the CofE! I can’t quite believe it. I’m worried now the CofE will look even more irrelevant and I think it will really struggle to justify it’s [sic] union with the State now. If we can’t even have women bishops what’s the hope for same-sex marriage?’

Evelyn (26, Manchester) returned her diary with thoughts of leaving the church in protest against the General Synod’s announcement: ‘I don’t know how many House of Bishops statements that would take’. She recounted a conversation she had with a work colleague about Diversity Role Models, a charity aimed at helping schools eradicate homophobic bullying: ‘they send normal people into schools to go “I’m gay, I’m normal, feel free to ask your questions” (as a side note which just occurred whilst working on this – maybe the House of Bishops need to meet a Diversity Role Model).’ Here, Evelyn was voicing a frustration, common amongst participants regardless of denomination, at a lack not

only of women but non-heterosexual role models in their churches.

Female leaders represented a more inclusive, liberal church to participants. Estelle (25, Manchester) described her local Anglican church in these terms: ‘it’s quite diverse and it’s a woman vicar, which I’ve found to mean that they are more liberal... the vicar there, she openly talked about LGBT stuff and women’s stuff in sermons, and that’s made me want to go back.’



The Church of England General Synod voted against having women bishops

At least 4 of the young women that participated in the projects had aspirations, were in the process, or were already acting as lay or ordained ministers of their churches. Claire (24 years old) would consider ordination and has made tentative plans with her wife to ‘plant’ a new church in Wales. Kelly (26, London) is training on a non-stipendiary basis for ordination

with MCC and is considering a chaplaincy career for the future. Andrea (24 years old) has acted as a lay minister in the past and Kirsty (30, Manchester) qualified as a youth minister. Kirsty’s story, however, highlights that women’s aspirations and trajectories within the church are not always straightforward, particularly amongst those that identify as lesbian.

Kirsty (30, Manchester) studied at university for a degree in Youth Work and Ministry. She got married to a man when she was 19. At 22, whilst on university placement as a youth worker at her church (where her husband was a worship leader), she developed feelings for a close female friend. When she realised her feelings were reciprocated, Kirsty left her husband but suspecting that her church leaders, and placement mentors, would not support her new relationship, initially she kept it from them. However, when she came under increasing pressure from her church colleagues to apply for her placement position, as a youth worker

‘If we can’t even have women bishops what’s the hope for same-sex marriage?’

(Andrea, 24, Newcastle)

and minister, to become permanent, she felt compelled to disclose her non-heterosexuality in the interests of honesty:

“Nudge, nudge, wink, wink, you’ll get it if you apply, you really should apply...” and I tried to fob them off with, ‘No, I think it’s time to move on and look at new things’ but in the end I just had to say, ‘Look, I’m gay’ and the Minister backtracked a heck of a lot, suddenly it wasn’t so certain I would get it and he’d have to speak to the Bishop and get some advice and they didn’t think he could support me and a lot of families would leave the church if I were to be there, and all of this business.’

Kirsty’s placement subsequently broke down as the church grappled with her sexuality. She felt she had no choice but to leave university, qualifying with a Diploma rather than graduating with a Degree: ‘he [the priest and placement mentor] said, “Well I don’t think I could support your way of life if you were to stay here with the Youth Minister and I think it’s incompatible with

what the Bible says.”’ As a result, Kirsty aspires to work in leadership and ministry but has accepted that ‘it’s not really likely... There aren’t a lot of churches that are accepting of gay people really, or if they are accepting then you’ve got to stay celibate and you can’t be in a relationship, and I think that’s absolute rubbish.’

‘[working in church leadership] it’s not really likely... There aren’t a lot of churches that are accepting of gay people really, or if they are accepting then you’ve got to stay celibate and you can’t be in a relationship, and I think that’s absolute rubbish.’

(Kirsty, 30, Manchester)

Respondents to this project participated at a crucial time when the intersecting tensions between the ordination of female bishops and religious same-sex marriage debates were at the forefront of the public imagination in the UK. Our participants spoke to this discrimination and marginalisation they felt through their age, sexuality, and gender within heteronormative church space. On the whole,

participants were often supportive and sometimes pro-active in making space for (lesbian) women in church, but they did so within a policy context which reinforced an institutional glass-ceiling for women, creating disillusionment and dismay amongst respondents who feared for the church’s future and sometimes their own role within it.

NEW: MA Gender and Sexuality

An MA in Gender and Sexuality will be introduced at the Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, at London South Bank University from September 2013.

Professor Yvette Taylor, Head of the Centre, 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 teach on Dr Cait Beaumont module ‘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).



Edited Collections:

- *Queering Religion, Religious Queers*
(Forthcoming, Routledge)

- Special Issue: 'Sexuality and Religion',
Sexualities (forthcoming)

Co-edited by Yvette Taylor and Ria Snowdon

Queering Religion, Religious Queers (eds. Yvette Taylor and Ria Snowdon)

We are delighted to announce that this edited collection will be published with Routledge US in 2014.

This collection will consider how religious identity interplays with other forms and contexts of identity, specifically those related to sexual identity (Stein, 2001; Yip, 2005; Taylor, 2009, Taylor et al., 2010). It asks how these intersections are formed, negotiated and resisted across time and places: 'contradictions' are both privately and publically inhabited in the context of legislative change and increasing, but often competing, socio-legal recognition. Considerations of 'sexual citizenship' are still positioned as separate from and indeed negated by, religious rights. Questions around 'queer' engagements in civil partnerships and other practices (e.g. adoption) have created a number of provoking stances and policy provisions – but what remains unanswered is how people experience and situate themselves within sometimes competing, or 'contradictory', moments (Weeks, 2001, 2007) as 'religious queers' who may be tasked with 'queering religion'.

Additionally, the presumed paradoxes of 'marriage', queer sexuality, religion and youth combine to generate a noteworthy generational absence. In looking at interconnectedness, this collection houses international contributions which bridge the 'contradictions' in queering religion and in making visible 'religious queers'. It hopes to offer insight into older and younger people's understandings of religiosity (where Anglican-based LGBTQ organisations are also demonstrably those of 'older' adults), queer cultures, and religious groups. A small but active religious minority in the US has

received much attention for its anti-gay political activity; much less attention has been paid to the more positive, supportive role that religious-based groups play in e.g. providing housing, education and political advocacy for queer youth (see Browne, Munt, Yip, 2010).

Queer methodologies (Browne and Nash, 2010) and intersectional approaches (Taylor et al., 2010), potentially offer a lens both theoretically and methodologically, to uncover the salience of related social divisions and identities: the collection hopes to be innovative and sensitive to 'blended' identities and their various enactments.

Special Issue: 'Sexuality and Religion', *Sexualities* (eds. Yvette Taylor and Ria Snowdon)

The international contributors to this Special Issue situate the debates around sexuality and religion in its global context. This collection of articles will examine how different religious and sexual identities interplay and how these intersections are formed, negotiated and resisted across established religions as well as new religious movements.

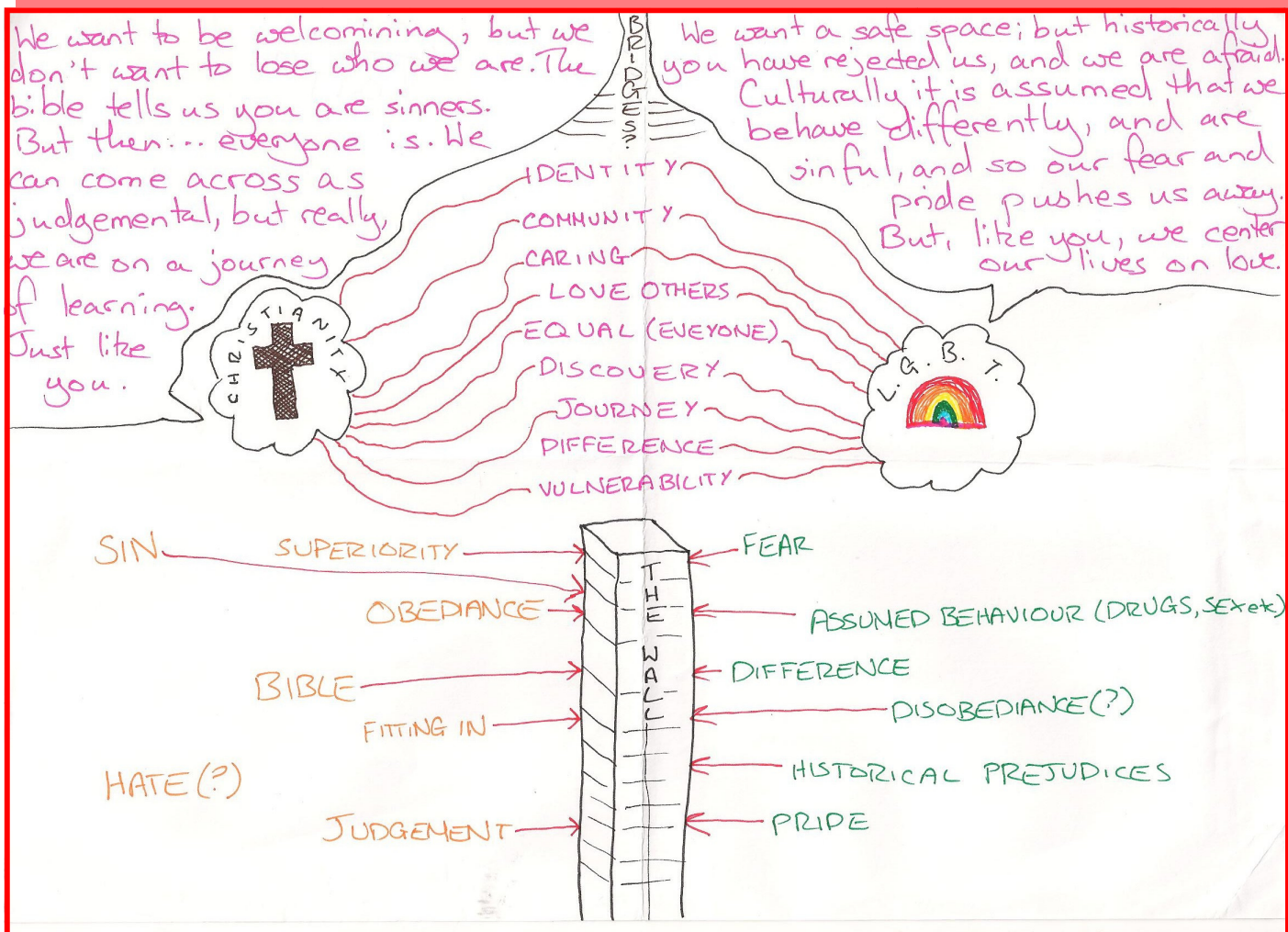
This issue will distinguish itself in several ways. It will offer a timely and fresh perspective on the intersection of sexuality and religious belief complicating the assumption of incompatibility between these identities. Transgender and bisexual engagement with religious community, groups often written out of the discourse on sexuality and religion, will be examined as well as that of lesbians and gay men. It will also depart from the earlier important work done by Andrew Yip (Special Issue: *Sexualities*, 2010) by looking beyond a UK-US axis, exploring a range of geographical contexts and a breadth of belief systems.

Articles and chapters

Co-authored by Yvette Taylor and Ria Snowdon

‘Mapping Queer, Mapping Me: Visualising Queer Religious Identity’ (forthcoming, Brill), H. Shipley (ed.), *Globalized Religion and Sexuality: Policies, Voices, Contexts*

political climate, we seek to explore if, where, why and when these identities become more or less prominent. Under what circumstances are (dis) identifications and (dis)associations produced (in more or less religious/sexual spaces)? This chapter will situate the methods of ‘queer productions’ as an occupation involving the research-researcher-researched (Taylor and Addison 2011). A mix of qualitative techniques (interviews, maps and diaries) allowed rich insights into the everyday lives, prac-



*** Mind-map (Tom, 20, Manchester)**

Here, we focus on the ‘maps’ produced by young people participating in the project. Visual methods are a way of re-engaging, representing and even resisting identities and practices based on sexuality and religion (Taylor 2007). In a changing socio-

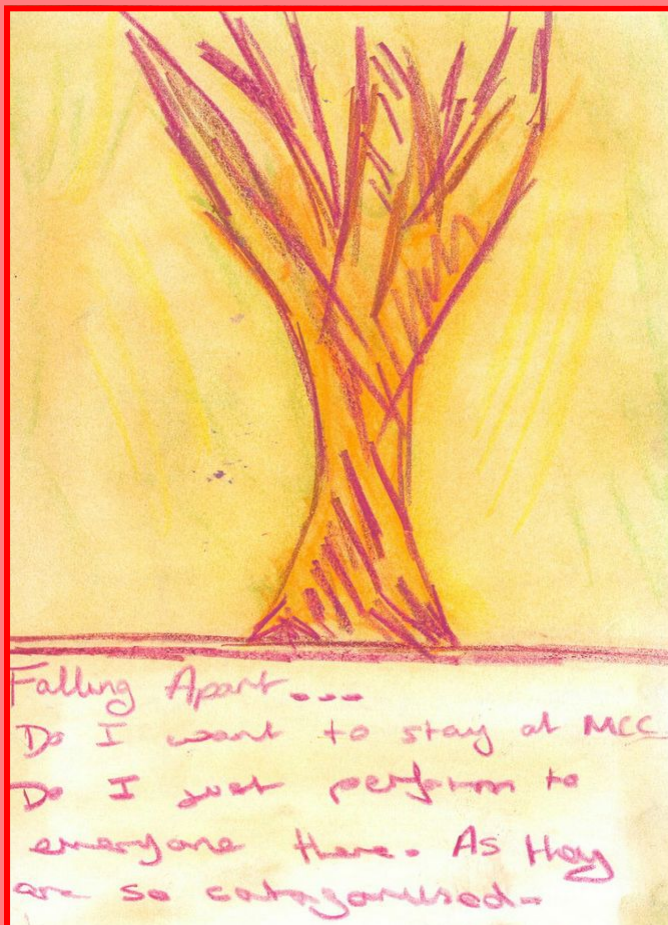
tics and identities of queer religious youth: these techniques ‘make space’ to account for young people’s experience of being in – or absent from – religious *and* sexualised spaces.

‘Making Space for Young Lesbians in Church?’ (in-progress), S. J. Creek (ed.),

Special Issue:

‘Global Religious Experiences and Identities among Lesbians’, in *Journal of Lesbian Studies*

This article is a case-study exploration of Christianity and sexuality in the lives of young lesbians in the UK. Current tensions around the ordination of women bishops in the Church of England is exacerbated by male-dominated church hierarchies, religious same-sex marriage debates, and declining congregations, particularly amongst young people. Through a mix of qualitative techniques (interviews, maps, and diaries) we explore young lesbians’ (16 to 30 years old) understanding, uses, and experiences of religion today and how marginalisation and discrimination is managed within heteronormative church space.



** Diary (Rebecca, 22, Newcastle)

‘Queer Identifying Religious Youth: Mapping Methods, Meanings and Meeting Points between ‘Sexuality’ and ‘Religion’ (in-progress), *The Sociological Review*

Here, we explore the methodological difficulties in locating a sample when participants ‘make space’ for their intersecting identities within and/or beyond overtly sacred spaces (eg they may attend several churches or worship in their own bedroom). Defining a sample was also problematic (eg defining ‘youth’), as well as maintaining the anonymity of respondents when they sought acknowledgement of their involvement (attempting to ‘make space’ for their identities through the project) are also examined. Thus, through this article, we show that the ‘lived religion’ of participants complicated traditional notions of worship and belief, and blurred the dividing lines between the secular and sacred, bringing us closer to how queer identifying religious youth craft their faith in a complex world.

* Mind-map (Tom, 20, Manchester)

** Diary (Rebecca, 22, Newcastle)

These images are examples of the diaries and mind-maps that participants kept/drew for the project and we used to inform our analysis of the interview data for chapters and articles discussed.

In Tom’s mind-map, he represents the antagonisms between his Christian and non-heterosexual identity as ‘An impenetrable wall’ (sin, fear, historical prejudices, the Bible) but possible points of reconciliation as ‘bridges’ (identity, community, love others, equality).

Rebecca chose not to write a journal in a conventional sense but drew pictures that reflected her experience of Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) services. Here, she feels that despite the inclusivity of her church, she is ‘falling apart’ trying to fit their rigid definition of LGBT as she sought a more fluid description of her sexuality.

‘Queer Youth, Facebook, and Faith: Facebook Methodologies and Online Identities’ (in-progress), S. Lincoln and B. Robards (eds.), Special Issue: ‘10 Years of Facebook’, *New Media and Society*

Based on interviews with 38 LGBT religious young people, this article examines the role Facebook plays in the reconciliation of sexual and religious identities amongst today’s queer Christian youth. ‘Interested In’ and ‘Religious Views’ posed complex questions in ‘coming out’ as LGBT and/or religious. Whilst reactions from ‘friends’ could be varied (including trolling and ‘unfriending’), Facebook ‘made space’ to construct an identity, forge connections and articulate voices otherwise subjugated in some offline spaces. As churches are under increasing pressure to keep pace with digital devel-

opments and to revolutionize their outreach and ministry to be relevant to this internet savvy generation, the impact church ‘groups’ on Facebook have on respondents online identities is considered.

This article also explores the importance of Facebook to our research methodology in recruiting queer religious youth as project participants. In addition, the lingering virtual ‘connections’ this left behind when respondents ‘friended’ us, raised interesting methodological questions about the online private and personal life of the researcher.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In the ESRC project ‘Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Youth’ there are two overarching policy themes to our interviews with project participants:

School: many participants spoke of lack of resources on LGBT issues and/or religious attitudes to non-heterosexuality, homophobic bullying, and concealment of identity to avoid testing their peers and institutional tolerance;

Future aspirations: many participants envisaged having (religious) marriage and children and spoke passionately, and at length, about the ‘second-class’ status of Civil Partnerships.

Young people’s voices, however, are marginalised within recent UK debates on the Civil Partnership Act (2004), the Equality Act (2006) and Same-Sex Marriage Act (in progress), often positioned as ‘obvious’ absences, given the presumed paradoxes of youth, ‘marriage’, queer sexuality and religion.

Thus, whilst questions around the propriety of gays and lesbians engaging in civil partnerships and other practices (e.g. adoption) have created a number of thought provoking stances in a heightened moment of sexual citizenship— what remains unanswered is how *young* people experience and situate themselves within such moments, despite the impact these changes will have on *their* lives.

In addition:

⇒ 90% of secondary school teachers have witnessed bullying of students for being, or perceived to be, LGB (Stonewall)

⇒ 75% of gay pupils experience verbal abuse; 30% physical (Stonewall)

⇒ 90% of secondary school teachers say they have not received any training on how to tackle homophobic bullying (Stonewall)

⇒ Some of our participants found their schools to support them when they 'came out' and became more willing to discuss LGBT issues in class but this support and education was reactive rather than pre-existing.



75% of gay pupils experience verbal abuse; 30% physical (Stonewall)

This is despite the fact:

⇒ **The Equality Act 2010** requires secondary schools to actively protect those who might experience homophobic bullying

⇒ **Ofsted** inspectors (under the 2012 framework) ask secondary students whether their schools have taught them about how to respond to cases of homophobic language and bullying, and about different families - including children with same-sex parents

We therefore propose the following:

Schools should be required to invite specialist organisations (eg Stonewall Secondary School Champions Programme) or to use specialist resource packs (eg Lesbian and Gay Foundation's Safer Schools Pack) to empower and help teachers tackle homophobic language and bullying.

LGBT issues, same-sex relationships and families should form a consistent part of the National Curriculum (see Stonewall's 'O no not the gay thing' teaching pack with ideas on how to integrate LGB issues in PSHE,

English, Modern Languages, History, Geography, Sciences and Religious Education).

Where teachers or schools find this to run contrary to their faith belief, we propose that they utilise lesson plans provided by organi-

sations such as the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement's (LGCM) 'Faith and Sexuality' project (e.g. 'Families and Relationships: all religions value the family but families are not all the same'; 'Prejudice and Discrimination: religions can both cause prejudice and also help overcome it'). These lesson plans are specifically designed to give the facts without agreeing or promoting the content, thus safeguarding freedom of conscience without diminishing the protection of pupils from homophobic bullying.

Additional resources (including an online film and reflexive toolkit) can be drawn on from the ESRC 'Challenging Ideas About Disaffection' project (<http://www.challenging-ideas.org.uk/>) by Prof. Val Gillies and Dr Yvonne Robinson, Weeks Centre.

What else we've been up to....

Expanding the Feminist Classroom: Hollie McNish

By Ria Snowdon



From left to right: Nicola Horsley, Yvonne Robinson, Yvette Taylor, Hollie McNish, and Ria Snowdon

The spoken word poet, Hollie McNish, recently performed to a packed theatre as part of the Weeks Centre's [Expanding the Feminist Classroom](#) series organised by Yvette Taylor, Nicola Horsley, and Yvonne Robinson. The series, supported by the ESRC, has been incredibly successful in celebrating feminist thought through film, poetry, and storytelling, creating a space beyond the academic table where not only colleagues but students and the general public can explore a diverse range of feminist issues.

For this closing event, Hollie delivered a spectacular performance to a captivated audience. Media sexism ([Reverse](#)), immigration ([Mathematics](#)), sex post-baby (Breasts), sensuality (My Boyfriend Can Cook), body issues ([WOW](#)), and the infantilisation of women ([Cupcakes or Scones](#)) were amongst the plethora of topics explored through her poetry.

It is little wonder that she has been commissioned by [Radio 4 Woman's Hour](#), WOW festival, Tate Modern and Channel 4 Random Acts. Both her written and spoken poetry has been received to critical acclaim and she has performed across the UK as well as abroad. As well as writing and reading her poetry, Hollie runs workshops and recitals for schools, museums, and youth venues around the country through her poetry education organisation, [Page to Performance](#).

Recently Hollie's work has gone viral with poem '[Mathematics](#)', an exploration of British attitudes to immigration, economics, and unemployment. It manages to unpack some quite complex theory and debunk unhelpful rhetoric around 'one in one out' and 'they come here stealing our jobs' in a very accessible way (a teacher friend of mine used this in one of her Citizenship classes which students responded to enthusiastically).

cally).

The interest in Hollie's work was reflected by the audience's enthusiastic engagement with her in the discussion following her performance. Hollie answered with the same honesty that abounds in her poetry: when considering the importance of social media to her work, Hollie talked about the debates it can stimulate with her online audience, where their opinions, as well as her own, can be reshaped by the encounter. She also spoke about how she overcomes her natural timidity when performing next to her drama schooled counterparts.

This was something we had spoken about before the show as my own nerves began to fray at the prospect of introducing her to a large crowd. For Hollie, the key is preparation, arrive early and practice. For me, I needed to deliver my short piece at a distance from the formality of the performer's microphone, to be away from centre-stage and its bright lights, sat not stood. A lot of this was tied up with my own apprehensions about speaking to an audience (could I do Hollie justice? Would I give the correct directions to the fire escape?) but some of it was the discomforts around standing and pregnancy (what if I look too informal sat down? What if I feel ill stood up? Also, see my [blog](#) on the difficulties of fieldwork and pregnancy) Hollie however put me at ease as we chatted about the trials and tribulations of early pregnancy, when you feel the full weight of symptoms and sickness but don't look pregnant 'enough' for special dispensations ('here, please take my seat', said no Tube user ever).

This reminded me of the first time I heard Hollie's work. I was introduced to it through her poem '[Reverse](#)' when a friend posted a YouTube link on Facebook. Hollie was using the poem to promote the [No More Page 3 Campaign](#)'s petition (that now has over 100,000 signatories), started during the 2012 Olympics when the largest female image in The Sun was a young woman in her pants the day after Jessica Ennis won Gold. I have been a fan of Hollie and a supporter of the No More Page 3 Campaign ever since. Recognising Hollie's huge talent and her ability to sum up my own thoughts and feelings on the

se important feminist issues in ways that I could never imagine doing – I undertook some internet sleuthing and found her album '[Push Kick](#)'. This is a collection of poetry that Hollie wrote during pregnancy, through labour and motherhood and doesn't fail in its promise to be 'a journey through the beauty, brilliance, and bollocks of having a baby'. Being on maternity leave at the time with my first child, tracks like 'Do you know how funny you look?', 'DILF', 'Breastfed', and 'Marketing Motherhood' really helped me in realising that I wasn't alone and I wasn't going mad!

I continue to be struck by how quickly, creatively, and eloquently Hollie responds to controversial issues big and small. Take her poem '[Merida from Brave](#)' which opposes Disney's makeover of the character to be more in keeping with their Princess line, exchanging her bow and arrow for lip gloss, defiant nature erased by the Disney diktat that she must now 'look coyly in the camera'.

As I write this, it is in the knowledge that Disney retreated from this version last month after widespread criticism (including Hollie's protest poem that stands at nearly 40,000 hits on YouTube). Whilst planning my lectures for the Weeks Centre's forthcoming [MA in Gender and Sexuality](#), I am heartened by this example of protest bringing about change that I can discuss with students. However, as [Prime Minister's Questions](#) plays in the background and David Cameron scoffs at Caroline Lucas' question about the legitimacy of Page 3 in a family newspaper, I am reminded that the feminist classroom must continue in its expansion when the objectification of women continues to be normalised, not only by big business and the media, but by the country's leaders: '[Reverse](#)' anyone?



Critical Diversities @ the Intersection: Policies, Practices, Perspectives

In June, the ESRC seminar series 'Critical Diversities' led by Yvette Taylor and Sally Hines, held their second seminar (hosted by the Weeks Centre) 'Divisive Realities: Lived Experiences, Diversity Dis-Junctures'. We presented a project paper on the educational experiences of queer religious youth. This



Ria Snowdon, Sasha Roseuil, and Yvette Taylor discussing intimate citizenship and queer religious youth

well-attended session provided excellent debate around issues on how diversity compels a (personal, institutional, academic) response from those occupying (non) normative identities. The next seminar (details below) promises to be as fruitful with a range of national and internal scholars, postgraduate and ECR speakers.

ESRC Seminar Series: *Critical Diversities @ the Intersection: Policies, Practices, Perspectives (2012-2014)*

Yvette Taylor (PI): Head of the [Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research](#), London South Bank University.

Sally Hines (Co-I): Director of the [Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies](#), University of Leeds.

Series Outline

The Series will reflect a current wave of work within the social sciences, humanities and arts which offers new ways of conceptualising and empirically researching diversity, and which turns its attention to previously marginalised and mainstreamed positions. The series includes:

Four seminars with papers from established and emerging scholars

Author meets critic and book launch sessions.

Two day International Conference *Critical Diversities: Policies, Practices and Perspectives* (July 2014)

Dedicated Postgraduate/ECR panels. Graduate Student Paper Prize.

Launch of new Routledge book series *Advances in Critical Diversities* (co-edited Y.Taylor&S.Hines)

Seminar 3: *Diverse Policies: Colliding Concerns*

25th October 2013: Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, University of Leeds

Seminar 3 will address the complexities in attempts to legislate for diversity and explore the tensions that arise when divergent social groups are included within a diversity umbrella within law and policy.

Confirmed speakers so far: Dr Kath Browne (University of Brighton); Leela Baski (Brighton); Prof Les Back (Goldsmiths); Dr Sally Hines (University of Leeds)

Postgraduate/ECR Panel: Amy MacMillan (Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, University of Leeds); Sumi Hollingworth (Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, London South Bank University); Dr Elizabeth Mathews (Maynooth); Jill Wilkens (Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, London South Bank University)

Book Launch: Sanger, T. and Taylor, Y. (ed) (2013) *Mapping Intimacies: Relations, Exchanges, Affects*, Palgrave Macmillan

***To book for Seminar 3 please RSVP to Sally Hines: s.hines@leeds.ac.uk.**

There is no charge for the Seminar but places are limited so early booking advised