

QUEER YOUTH HISTORIES WORKSHOP

10am-5pm, 19 June 2014

Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, Keyworth K407
London South Bank University

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

TIME	SESSION	DETAILS
1000-1015	Welcome and introduction	Daniel Marshall
1015-1045	“On the history of Schools Out and LGBT History Month”	Sue Sanders, Schools Out, UK.
1045-1115	“Frameworks for Historicizing Representations of Queer Youth”	Charles Upchurch, Florida State University, USA.
1115-1145	BREAK	
1145-1215	“Eight Women And It – Talking About ‘Lesbos’”	Sneha Krishnan, University of Oxford, UK.
1215-1245	“‘The [Gay and Lesbian Student Union] is not here to remain silent’: Researching American College Campus Experiences for Gay Youth”	Mark Walker, University of Essex, UK.
1245-145	LUNCH	
145-215	“A younger religion? Queer temporalities, transitions, and traditions”	Yvette Taylor and Ria Snowdon, Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, LSBU, UK.
215-245	“The Religiosity of Queer Muslim Youth and Social Change”	Shanon Shah Mohd Sidik, King’s College London, UK.
245-315	“Growing up with gay and lesbian parents”	Shannon Snow, York University, Toronto, Canada.
315-345	“Anxious Times: Theorizing Archives, Homosexuality, and Youth”	Daniel Marshall, VS, Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, LSBU, UK. / Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia.
345-415	AFTERNOON TEA	
415-445	Respondent and Closing Discussion	Jeffrey Weeks, Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, LSBU, UK.
445-5	Conclusion	Daniel Marshall
5pm-7pm Keyworth Mezzanine	Wine reception to celebrate the book launch of <i>Queering Religion, Religion Queers</i> (2014), Routledge, edited by Yvette Taylor and Ria Snowdon. Please see: http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415843881/ 20% off discount flyers will be available at the launch.	Introductory remarks will be provided by Dr Kristin Aune, Director of the Centre for Society, Religion and Belief, University of Derby.

**London
South Bank
University**

Weeks Centre
for Social and
Policy Research

ABSTRACTS

“On the history of Schools Out and LGBT History Month”
Sue Sanders, Schools Out, UK.

This talk will provide a chance to learn what Schools OUT has been doing for the last 40 years in making LGBT people visible and safe

Sue Sanders is a British LGBT rights activist. Since 1967, she has been a teacher, tutor and a lecturer on women's studies, drama and homophobia in schools, universities and other organisations. In 2000, she became the co-chair of Schools Out, a group working for the equality of LGBT people in the education system, which she co-founded in 1974. With the help of the Schools Out committee, she instituted the UK's first LGBT History Month in the wake of the abolition of Section 28. LGBT History Month was launched in December 2004 at Tate Modern and took place the following February.

“Frameworks for Historicizing Representations of Queer Youth”
Charles Upchurch, Florida State University, USA.

Youth is a category that needs to be addressed when analyzing same-sex desire in early nineteenth-century London. Dozens of literary texts and hundreds of newspaper reports circulated publicly and privately in this period depicting homoerotic relationships involving queer youth. Yet the youth in these depictions were almost always the objects of desire rather than the subjects, and the texts most often record the thoughts and desires of the older partners of younger men.

The primary sources indicate that age differentials were central to how many older men justified their homoerotic desires to themselves, but to what degree can the motivations and desires of queer youth be recovered, and are the methodologies used to recover the voices of subaltern and subordinate groups in society appropriate to this investigation? Is it true to the circumstances of the period to emphasize the tensions and power differentials that existed along this age divide, or was a shared experience among those prosecuted for their sexual behaviors enough to override these tensions?

The recovery of evidence related to efforts to repeal the sodomy laws in this period, organized by men who argued for the naturalness of same-sex desire, but only for same-sex desire where a significant age differential existed between the partners, places the issue of youth and sexuality at the center of my current research project. My presentation will provide an overview of the new evidence, and put forward several methodological frameworks I am considering for its interpretation.

Charles Upchurch is an Associate Professor of British history at Florida State University and received his PhD in from Rutgers University in 2003. His book, *Before Wilde: Sex Between Men in Britain's Age of Reform* (University of California Press, 2009) is a social history of how sex between men was understood and publicly discussed in the early to mid nineteenth century. Professor Upchurch has previously published on cross-dressers and British society in the

1870s, and his articles have appeared in *The Journal of Social History, Gender and History*, and *The Journal of the History of Sexuality*.

“Eight Women and It – Talking about ‘lesbos’”
Sneha Krishnan, University of Oxford, UK.

This paper draws from a yearlong ethnographic project studying spatial narratives of sexuality among upper middle-class college-going women in the city of Chennai in India. During this time, I encountered many women who used the pronoun ‘it’ rather than ‘she’ to talk about lesbians -‘lesbos’ - with other straight-identified female friends.

This paper interrogates how the homosexual “It” is constituted as a figure at once of ridicule and fear. I demonstrate that this is done not by excluding same-sex erotic practice from the performative repartee of heterosexual femininity but instead by co-opting some of its elements within a frame of sexualised horseplay that acts out the fear of the homosexual gaze, and casts the lesbian always as a potential rapist.

Reading Suniti Namjoshi’s writings on the spectral figure of the monster lesbian in the South Asian context, with Butler’s ‘melancholic gender’, I argue that the playful trope of the rapist-lesbian is strategically deployed as a means of exploring homoerotic desire without relinquishing the frame of normative heterosexuality, or even virulent homophobia that shames and stigmatises those publicly identifying as lesbian. I then place this argument in the context of the role sexual risk plays in the constitution of upper-middle-class femininity arguing that women are often forced to relinquish agency in their narratives of transgressive experiences, in order to retain power within a discourse where they are constructed in opposition to sexually excessive and predatory ‘others’ such as the woman of lower caste and class and the openly homosexual woman.

Methodologically, my work seeks to recuperate a queer archive of everyday experience in Chennai - a practice that, I will discuss in this paper, highlights the challenges and possibilities offered in a field where the vocabulary of queer identification has come to be fraught with both social and legal significance. Second, I locate my ethnographic exploration of young women's erotic practice in the socio-historical context of Dravidian Movements and the intersection of caste and gender/sexuality discourses in Tamil Nationalism that continues to shape the experience of female youth, and identitarian politics around non-normative sexualities. As such, this paper will draw upon oral histories and archival material to examine the construction of heterosexual femininity, and the accommodation and exclusion of homoerotic practice within this.

Sneha Krishnan is a Doctoral Candidate in International Development at the University of Oxford. Her thesis examines young women’s everyday practice of sexuality in the South Indian city of Chennai. Her previous graduate work has examined masculinity and nationalism in early 20th century India.

“The [Gay and Lesbian Student Union] is not here to remain silent’: Researching American College Campus Experiences for Gay Youth”
Mark Walker, University of Essex, UK.

In 1989 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported, “lesbian and gay youth are the most invisible and outcast group of young people with whom you will come into contact”. However, this did not mean that gay youth voices were silent in the United States and especially at its colleges; instead they can often be found in their experience of organizing the institutions they needed and on American college campuses these took the form of gay-straight alliances (GSA). They developed amidst local and campus environments which could prove hostile but these groups struggled on to establish and integrate themselves into the institutions of student life. The journey from outcast group to accepted members of their wider community for young gay men and women can be discovered in reconstructing these stories. Drawing off my own research into the formation of one of these GSA organisations in the late-1980s and early-1990s at Old Dominion University in Virginia this paper explores how this kind of archival research can help us discover not only what it was like to be a young LGBT person on an American campus but also help us gauge how places that were once hostile and unwelcoming have now changed for the better.

Mark Walker is currently a third-year full-time PhD history student at the University of Essex. He previously studied at Old Dominion University in Norfolk VA. His doctoral research is on the rituals of the early modern British monarchy (c.1685-1714) but before taking on this project his previous long-term project was done on behalf of the LGBT student group at Old Dominion University. Using the University’s archives, including long-forgotten records about the LGBT student group itself, he reconstructed the early history of the organisation and how they interacted with the local community and integrated themselves into the campus environment.

“A younger religion? Queer temporalities, transitions, and traditions”
Yvette Taylor and Ria Snowdon, Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, LSBU, UK.

Within the context of overall decline in church membership, there is an assumed dichotomy and mutual disinterest between ‘youth’ and ‘religion’. Queer-identified youth are further negated within this sweep, positioned as ‘obvious’ absences. Whilst non-heterosexuality is often associated with secularism, this paper works against this dominant discourse by exploring the experiences of young lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people’s connections with Christianity in the UK. This will be based on the findings from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded project ‘Making Space for Queer-Identifying Religious Youth’ (Taylor and Snowdon 2014). This is a case-study exploration of Christianity and sexuality in young people’s lives using a mix of qualitative techniques (interviews, maps, and diaries). Rather than assume that sexuality and spirituality are separate paths that uneasily converge (Wilcox, 2000), we will explore how they might mutually and complexly construct one another.

Yvette Taylor is Head of the Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research at London South

Bank University, UK. She has published three sole-authored books: *Working-class Lesbian Life* (2007), *Lesbian and Gay Parenting* (2009), and *Fitting Into Place? Class and Gender Geographies and Temporalities* (2012) and has several successful edited collections including: *Theorizing Intersectionality and Sexuality* (2010); *Educational Diversity* (2012); *Sexualities: Reflection and Futures* (2012); and *The Entrepreneurial University* (2014).

Ria Snowdon was Research Associate in the Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research at London South Bank University, UK working alongside Yvette on the ESRC funded project 'Making space for queer identifying religious youth', and is now a Visiting Fellow. She completed her Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) PhD at Newcastle University (2007-2010) and has co-edited *Queering Religion, Religious Queers* (2014) with Yvette.

“The Religiosity of Queer Muslim Youth and Social Change”
Shanon Shah Mohd Sidik, King’s College London, UK.

Often, religion and sexual diversity are seen as mutually oppositional; however, new research on religious and queer self-expressions is highlighting more nuanced dynamics of young people negotiating diverse identity constructions. In the UK, the dominant image of religious institutions is that they have problems with sexual diversity; yet, there are also religious actors who advocate acceptance of sexual diversity. My research compares how self-identified gay Muslims respond to dominant attitudes about Islam and sexual diversity in Malaysia and the UK. I focus on how social and political contexts influence the dynamics of identity construction among gay Muslims. I conducted ethnographic research in both countries between October 2012 and September 2013, consisting of participant observation, in-depth interviews with self-identified gay Muslims mostly in their 20s and 30s, and an analysis of relevant mass media coverage. In the UK, I focused on Imaan – an organisation catering for the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or intersex (LGBTQI) Muslims, many of whom are youth questioning their religious and sexual identities. My presentation will highlight how their questions and advocacy are linked with shifting trends in public perceptions of Islam and sexual diversity, and how these contribute to re-articulations of Islam and sexual diversity. I suggest that these dynamics show how research on queer youth histories could benefit from examining the role of youth in contesting or constructing other histories – in this case, of religion.

Shanon Shah Mohd Sidik is a doctoral candidate in the Sociology of Religion at the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, King's College London. He completed his MA in Religion in Contemporary Society also at King's, with a dissertation focusing on LGBT Anglican activism within the Church of England. He is also involved in Muslim organisations in the UK and Malaysia, including Imaan, the Muslim Institute and Sisters in Islam.

“Growing up with gay and lesbian parents”
Shannon Snow, York University, Toronto, Canada.

In Canada, many legal rights have been established for lesbians and gays seeking to marry, conceive, or adopt in order to form their families. Despite these gains, conversations about our

families continue to focus around a question of the legitimacy of gay and lesbian parents. Children of these parents are regularly called to narrate their experiences in order to shed light on what makes an acceptable family, and what sexual difference has to do with parenting. The call for youth narratives began decades ago within custody hearings, where telling a good story of the family meant keeping the family intact. But these cases also set historic precedent, and so personal narratives mattered in the establishment of new social norms. Contemporary youth with gay and lesbian parents inherit a history of advocating for parents, both in legal and political settings and in casual conversations. This paper explores what youth make from the legacy that surrounds their home life. For teenagers trying to find their own, independent story from within the family unit, the ability to rebel and break away from the family is a necessary part of development (Winnicott, 1971; Waddell, 1998). However, when a parent's authority feels precarious, children tend to tell stories about family that are flattened-out, defensive, and repetitive (Ehrensaft, 2000; Crapanzano, 2009). This paper draws on contemporary stories of growing up with gay and lesbian parents to describe how these youths' inheritance can offer both narrative constraints and resources.

Shannon Snow is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Education at York University in Toronto, Canada. For her dissertation, she is studying how youth with gay and lesbian parents tell stories about their families, and what this storytelling can teach us about queerness, families, and adolescence. She finds herself frequently drawn to thoughts of psychoanalysis, development, families, research methodology, and psychosocial histories, but her curiosity often exceeds these broad categories.

“Anxious Times: Theorizing Archives, Homosexuality, and Youth”

Daniel Marshall, VS, Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, LSBU, UK. / Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia.

This talk will draw on Australian archival research to examine the transnational production and circulation of anxieties about homosexuality and youth within the context of 1970s gay politics. Attentive to the historical mobility of the disciplinary relationship between homosexuality, youth, and anxiety, this talk offers a reflection on the ways in which anxiety binds together and animates homosexuality and youth as historical knowledge. In light of this significance, the talk considers the relationship between this historical anxiety and engagements with the archives that we inherit.

Daniel Marshall is a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. His current work focuses on queer youth histories, contemporary queer youth cultures, archival theories and queer methods. Current projects include work on his first book, *Growing Queer*, which focuses on queer theories of sexuality, growth and popular culture, as well as editing a double special issue of *Radical History Review* on “Queering Archives” (with Zeb Tortorici & Kevin Murphy). He has a PhD in Cultural Studies from the University of Melbourne and is currently a Visiting Scholar at the Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, LSBU, UK.

Respondent

Jeffrey Weeks, Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, LSBU, UK.

Jeffrey Weeks is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, LSBU. He was formerly Executive Dean of Arts and Human Sciences (2003-6) and University Director of Research (2006-8). He is the author of over twenty books, and more than 100 articles and papers, mainly on the history and social organisation of sexuality and intimate life. His books include *Coming Out* (1977), *Sexuality and its Discontents* (1985), *Invented Moralities* (1995), *Making Sexual History* (2000), *Same Sex Intimacies* (with Brian Heaphy and Catherine Donovan, 2001), *The World We Have Won: The Remaking of Erotic and Intimate Life* (2007), *Sexuality*, 3rd edition (2009) and *The Languages of Sexuality* (2011). A new edition of *Sex, Politics and Society*, which first appeared in 1981, was published in July 2012. He is currently working on a book called *What is Sexual History?*

**London
South Bank
University**

Weeks Centre
for Social and
Policy Research