MAKING SPACE FOR QUEER-IDENTIFYING RELIGIOUS YOUTH

Yvette Taylor

▶ **Making Space for Queer-Identifying Religious Youth**

Also by Yvette Taylor

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Making Space for Queer-Identifying Religious Youth

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Introduction: Queer Religious Youth in Colliding Contexts

Abstract: *As points disciplinary dis-orientations, the fields of 'Youth Studies', 'Religion' and 'Sexuality' are often separate, representing other bridges to cross and query (Taylor 2009; Dillabough and Kenelly, 2010; Taylor, Hines and Casey 2010; Johnson and Vanderbeck, 2014). Religion has often been seen, especially within gender and queer studies, as anti-modern (Brown, 2006; Jakobsen and Pellegrini, 2008; Rasmussen, 2010), as traditional, backward and anti-democratic, as oppressive to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people and to women. Indeed, religion can be cast as* automatically *negative or harmful to the realisation of sexual-gender identities. Such debates on the place of religion and sexuality extend across public commentaries and academic disciplines, and this book hopes to connect religion, youth, and sexuality. It is situated within an empirical Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded study 2011–2013, '*Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Youth*', utilising diverse methods and thereby providing vivid examples of how queer youth are living their lives in relation to religion.*

What and where are the spaces of, and for, queer religious youth? What sentiments and subjectivities are fostered in – and between – these spaces? Perhaps you are wondering if such spaces exist, and who might occupy them: Academics, church leaders, policy makers, congregants? You may be trying to locate this question within an academic discipline or within social policies – who speaks for them and when is that voice united or divided as religious-queer? You may have paused at the first question, noticing three seemingly clashing categories – 'youth', 'religious', 'queer' – that do not normally sit side by side. You may imagine religion, sexuality, and youth as 'contradictory', or feel apprehensive about these coming to be seen as sites of trouble and struggle.

At certain points, disciplinary dis-orientations, the fields of 'Youth Studies', and 'Religion' and 'Sexuality' are often separate, representing other bridges to cross and query (Taylor 2009; Dillabough and Kenelly, 2010; Taylor, Hines and Casey 2010; Johnson and Vanderbeck, 2014). Religion has often been seen, especially within gender and queer studies, as anti-modern (Brown, 2006; Jakobsen and Pellegrini, 2008; Rasmussen, 2010), as traditional, backward, and anti-democratic, as oppressive to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people and to women. Indeed, religion can be cast as *automatically* negative or harmful to the realisation of sexual-gender identities. Such debates on the place of religion and sexuality extend across public commentaries and academic disciplines, and this book hopes to connect religion, youth, and sexuality. It is situated within an empirical Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded study 2011–2013, '*Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Youth*', utilising diverse methods and thereby providing vivid examples of how queer youth are living their lives in relation to religion.

Young people's voices are particularly marginalised within writings on religion and inclusion – often positioned as obvious absences, given the assumed dichotomy and mutual disinterest between 'youth' and 'religion'. Queer-identified youth are further negated within this sweeping generalisation and, as such, their (dis)comforts and (dis)investments are mostly absent. Much research on youth transitions has focused on the educational and employment related aspects of young people's transitions to adulthood, with other facets of their lives – such as religion – largely ignored. The recent UK NatCen Social Research Report on British Social Attitudes (2011–2012) implied a correlation between youth, secularisation, and 'liberal' attitudes to non-heterosexuality. In addressing the meaning of a general decline in religion, the report suggests that

the UK will continue to see an increase in 'liberal' attitudes to issues such as homosexuality and same-sex marriage. These apparent liberal attitudes to sexuality may, according to the report, produce 'an increased reluctance, particularly among the younger age groups, for matters of faith to enter the social and public sphere at all' (see below).[1]

'What does this decline mean for Society and Social policy more generally? On the one hand, we can expect to see a continued increase in liberal attitudes towards a range of issues such as abortion, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and euthanasia, as the influence of considerations grounded in religion declines. Moreover, we may see an increased reluctance, particularly among the younger age groups, for matters of faith to enter the social and public sphere at all. The recently expressed sentiment of the current coalition government to 'do' and 'get' God (Warsi, 2011) therefore may not sit well with, and could alienate, certain sections of the population'. **NatCen Social Research Report on British Social Attitudes (2011–2012 edition), p. 182–183**

Likewise, former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey, warned in 2013 that the Church of England was 'one generation away from extinction' (independent.co.uk). There has been a growing concern to examine the relationship between youth and religion, and to explore what changes need to be made to ensure that religion is more attractive to future generations. Yet an over-emphasis on secularising trends arguably obscures the influence of religion upon the complex convergence and intersection of personal, political, familial, and institutional realms (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005; Shipley, 2014). At the same time, this meta-narrative of secularity masks a range of diverse experiences and relationships, and cultural formations and social practices of praise (Dimitriadis and Weis, 2008; Sanger and Taylor, 2013; Yip and Page, 2013):

When liberals discuss religion, they often assume that the central question is the relation between the religion and the state. They neglect the broad effect that religious and quasi-religious laws, regulations and practices have on queer people, on non-believers (two subjects that do not completely overlap). Maybe even more problematically, liberals argue about religion as if it

> were a wall of separation that they can graciously invite religious people over from time to time (Mayo, 2006: 477).

Clearly, matters of faith continue to enter the public sphere: the British – and indeed international – context has seen large-scale political changes impacting on LGBT and religious lives and practices. Same-sex marriage rights, as well as international equalities legislation more generally, such as the protected status of religion and belief, alongside sex and sexual orientation, highlight the continued significance of religion's interface with sexual citizenship (Bell and Binnie, 20000. In such a context, it is interesting to consider the place of queer, religious youth where public commentaries and social policies, including equalities legislation, often address an older adult citizen (as partner, consumer, employee, resident, and so on).

Exceptions to addresses towards older sexual citizens include policies such as the UK Conservative government's infamous Section 2a/28, which was repealed in 2001 (Scotland) and in 2003, impacting on the provision of sex education, and the lowering of the age of consent for sex between males from eighteen to sixteen (Taylor, 2005; Rahman and Jackson 2010). In 2004, the Gender Recognition Act was passed, enabling transgender people to be legally recognised as the gender with which they identify (Hines, 2007; Davy et al., 2008; Sanger, 2010). Discrimination based upon both sexual orientation and gender identity in housing, employment, and the provision of goods and services was made illegal in 2007, and the 2010 Equality Act made it unlawful to discriminate against employees on the basis of sexual orientation. Same-sex attracted people now serve openly in the British Armed Forces and same-sex couples have been able to adopt since 2002 (Richardson and Monro, 2013). The UK government introduced the Civil Partnership Act, which enabled same-sex couples to enter into legally recognised relationships, in 2005. The first legally recognised same-sex marriages took place in the UK on 29th March 2014 following a change to the law brought about by the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government. Despite such far-reaching political changes, research shows that 22 per cent of respondents to the British Social Attitudes survey think that homosexuality is 'always wrong'.

Positive transformations have been captured perhaps most definitively in Weeks' seminal work *The World We Have Won* (2007), where sexual citizens, as part of the wider LGBTQ grouping, are seen to be in the middle of an unfinished revolution:

> We are living [...] in a world of transition, in the midst of a long, convoluted, messy, unfinished but profound revolution that has transformed the possibilities of living our sexual diversity and creating intimate lives. (2007:3)

Yet despite such policy progressions, and a feeling of the 'world we have won' (Weeks, 2007) in terms of LGBT rights and recognitions, 'sexuality' and 'religion' are positioned in contestation, with awkward imbalances between these two 'protected characteristics', as is apparent in the Equality and Human Rights Commission guidelines (see below).

> A Baptist Church was asked by a lesbian and gay support group if they could use its hall for training sessions for new volunteers. The Church said that it could not let them use the hall because its doctrine rejects homosexuality and it would cause upset to a significant number of its members. This would not be unlawful discrimination (*Equality Act 2010: What do I need to know? A quick start guide on religion or belief discrimination in service provision for voluntary and community organisations*)

In January 2013, the European Court of Human Rights published judgments brought by Christians (see also Johnson and Vanderbeck, 2014) in four combined cases about religious rights in the workplace. The implications of the judgment apply to employees with any religion or belief, or none, and it affects employer responsibilities for policies and practices protecting religion or belief rights in the workplace, the rights of employees (including job applicants), and the rights of customers (see http://www. equalityhumanrights.com /your-rights/equal-rights/religion-and-belief).

Religious institutions have confronted, negotiated, and even accepted, changing patterns of gender and sexuality by formulating doctrinal statements such as the Anglican House of Bishops' Pastoral Guidance on Same-Sex Marriage (2014) or the Papal encyclical Lumen Fidae (2013), even if these documents largely uphold traditional teaching. Comments have invoked universal rights – and wrongs – and the 'fit' into family and future, as conveyed by Minister for Women and Equalities, Nicky Morgan, and Skills and Equalities Minister, Nick Boles:

> Marriage is a universal institution which should be available to all. It is the bedrock of our society and the most powerful expression of commitment that

two people can make. While civil partnerships remain an important part of the journey towards legal equality, it is entirely understandable why so many same-sex couples want to be able to enter into the institution of marriage and express their love in the same way as their peers (Pink News, 2014).

Despite progressive voices within religious spaces, the dominant – and often high-profile – conservative voices discussing sexuality and gender have not only generated internal tension, but also perpetuated the pervasive discourse that religion is inimical to sexuality and gender equality and diversity (Valentine et al., 2013; Johnson and Vanderbeck, 2014). While a small but active religious minority has received much attention for its anti-gay political activity, much less attention has been paid to the more positive, supportive role that religion-based groups can play (Yip, 1997; Aune, 2009; Shipley, 2014).

There is also a possibility that the subversion accompanying some queer identities might contour itself directly in opposition to linear progression, mainsteaming and 'fitting-in'. As Halberstam (2011: 2) notes, such social success can take on normative overtones, and may not necessarily constitute a queer goal:

> Failing is something queers do and have always done exceptionally well; for queers failing can be a style, to cite Quentin Crisp or a way of life to cite Foucault, and it can stand in contrast to the grim scenarios of success that depend on 'trying and trying' again.

But this book, along with a number of others (Yip and Page, 2013; Braine, 2014; Gorman-Murray and Nash, 2014), seeks to complicate the story of religious-sexual 'success' and 'failure', queering too the perception that religion must be eradicated and that only a secular society can bring freedom to marginalised people.

Not all who hold a 'queer' identity necessarily revel in their failure and manage to escape the 'hidden injuries' that social structuring brings (Allen and Taylor, 2013). Religion can be a site of oppression for queer people, but it also offers vital resources, inspiring activism, and shaping relationships. Examples of this include Hopkins' (2014) descriptions of movements that 'sacralize queerness'; Fidolini's (2014) study of Moroccan young adults who legitimise sex outside marriage through re-appropriating the Islamic marriage ceremony, and Takhar's (2014) work on the South Asian lesbians in India who struggle against the right-wing Hindu nationalist movement's heterosexist ideology by pointing out the presence of lesbian sexuality in ancient Hindu art and literature. There is

now a wide range of empirical studies of 'religious queers': Jaspal's (2014) work on gay Iranian migrants to the UK, Braine's (2014) study of queer secular Jews in the USA, Kilmer's (2014) research on lesbian mothers and transracial adoption, and Creek's (2014) introduction to American ex- ex-gays. Increasingly, such studies of queer religious identities unpack the experiences of those 'wrestling the angel of contradiction' (O'Brien, 2014; see also Wilcox, 2006), noting too that religious faiths and denominations can officially hold a variety of perspectives towards homosexuality, from wholesale acceptance through grudging 'tolerance' to condemnation.

Heelas and Woodhead's (2005) subjectivisation thesis posits decreased participation in and adherence to 'life-as' religions – understood as subordinating to and conforming individual life to divine life – and an increased interest in holistic 'subjective-life' spiritualities (Aune, 2011; Taylor and Snowdon, 2014). The latter involves living in tune with *individual* subjectivities as a legitimate form of spiritual living. Current empirical studies among LGBT Christians support the latter position, with Yip (2003: 135) suggesting that non-heterosexual Christians are utilising aspects of de-traditionalisation and individualism, whereby senses of 'self' functions as '...the ultimate point of reference in the individual's life course'. Such privatisation is seen as characterising religious faith today to a greater extent than external authority structures do. There are, however, enduring tensions between 'self-cultivation' in religious subjectivisation and 'life-as' demands where gendered and sexualised scripts recirculate certain sources of authority. These positions can occur at the same time as queer people may not officially be welcomed or legitimised in the institutionalised church (as audiences, listeners, leaders – see Taylor and Snowdon, 2014), which in turn occurs in the midst of queerer places of religion.

In August 2014, the UK broadsheet *The Independent* published an article about the Christian rock star, Vicky Beeching, coming out. After moving through the painful story of Beeching's 'psychological torture, life-threatening illness, and unimaginable loneliness, imposed all around from a supposedly Godly environment', the article concludes that the telling of her story, and the happy ending of peace and resolution of sexual and religious identities, would be of huge comfort to other young queer Christians. The tone of the media coverage surrounding Beeching's journey of resolution sits alongside other, even more playful and imaginative stories, of living with and through 'contradictions'.

Rather than assume that sexuality and religion – and in this case Christianity – are separate and divergent paths, *Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Youth* explores how they might mutually and complexly construct one another. The story is not always one of happy resolve, like Beeching's. As one interviewee claimed, only half in jest, the one thing worse than 'coming out' as queer to the church was coming out as Christian to the queer community. Rather unexpectedly, the role of music, sounds, and sensations, as an emotional push *and* pull into and out of queer and religious spaces emerged. The apparent animosity between Christian and queer communities is not one-sided and several participants felt 'out of place' in 'scene' spaces and during activities enjoyed by their queer peers. One interviewee, for example, believed that the LGBTQ and religious communities operate in two completely different spheres, and in her experience, the two are equally disconnected, with practices and participants in each very hostile to the other.

Experiences such as these, which this book reports on, act to intervene in a particular time of vigorous debate on religious and secular stances on 'homosexuality', including same-sex couple provisions and equalities legislation, both within UK and the EU and more internationally, in country-specific religious structures, spaces, and sentiments of (non) secularity (Yip and Page, 2013; Braine, 2014; Gorman-Murray and Nash, 2014; Johnson and Vanderbeck, 2014). While the 'question of homosexuality' has been a central focus of discussion, there has been little attention paid to the multiple intersections involved in the enactment, refusal and approval of these as interconnected identities (Wilcox, 2003, 2006; O'Brien, 2004, 2014; Yip and Page, 2013; Taylor and Snowdon, 2014). Additive models of theorising identities and inequalities are problematised through empirical investigation of the interconnectedness and spatially situated salience of queer youth religiosity, further negotiated via gendered dynamics. Complex interactional personal identities also re-cast 'group' positions and explain 'how individuals with divergent values, interests and beliefs can *in practice* live with difference despite competing groups' rights claims in the public sphere' (Valentine and Waite, 2012: 490, italics in original). Considering such tensions, negotiations and practices in tandem allow for exploration of the relations between various *social* categories and experiences; between the everyday, ordinary – even contradictory – spaces of (sexual/religious) citizenship (Yip, 2005; Haschemi Yekani et al., 2010; Taylor et al., 2010; Sanger and Taylor, 2013).[2]

This book charts young people's 'understanding of religion' and their everyday practices and transitions, investigating the experiences, choices, and identities of queer (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) young people involved in inclusive churches in the UK. While the project was initially envisaged as a study of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) in three UK sites, participants' 'church hopping' practices of moving in and beyond MCC and 'traditional' churches required an expansion of the original methodology (see Chapter 1). 'Church hopping' practices of moving in and beyond MCC and 'traditional' churches intersected with specific 'queer transitions' including 'coming out' in public-private places (which were also variously religious spaces, such as in the 'Queer Religious Youth' Facebook group). Other findings include the importance of embodied feelings of being present and included, where both 'queer' and 'religious' spaces/subjects induced certain sounds (for example, music), tastes (such as non-alcoholic drinks, food sharing), sights (for example, architecture) and touch (for example, church pews). Young people's interpretations and experiences suggest their more complicated sense of how they intervene in religious/sexual landscapes, desiring and contesting specific futures, as welfare/equalities legislative interventions both promise and prohibit certain material futures, which are imagined nonetheless, including via 'imagined communities' of religion and sexuality both online and offline.

This book adopts an intersectional focus across selected themes, uncovering the salience of religious-sexual divisions and identities in young people's lives, although I was unable to include all thematic topics in this short book. A fully *social* focus avoids the pitfalls of individualised and psychologised frames that speak of 'cognitive dissonance' or resolving 'double stigma', where the site of examination of religious-sexual tension is often the individual rather than the social context (Stein, 2001; Yip, 2005). As O'Brien (2004) demonstrates, her investigation into the strategies used by LGBTQ Christians to 'integrate' conflicting identities was quickly dismissed in foregrounding the multiple identities held in 'workable tension' (Thumma, 1991). For participants, religion and sexuality can provide a framework for creating communities and 'making space', but this is also mediated, both subjectively and material, and through other forms of capital and social (de)legitimation (Yip and Page, 2013). This specific case-study exploration of Christianity and sexuality in young people's lives

provides methodological discussion and an illustrative focus on three substantive fields (congregational space, music, and online spaces.). These examples illustrate how participation shapes identifications; how marginalisation and discrimination are managed; and how religion and sexuality serve as vehicles for various forms of belonging, identification, and political expression. I demonstrate how 'religion' and 'sexuality' mutually and complexly construct one another, through gendered spaces, online spaces, spaces of worship, and sensory spaces. It is an intervention in those fields, showing that religion and sexuality matter, and explaining *how* they matter simultaneously.

Chapter 1: Contradictory Subjectivities? The Space of Research and Researcher-Researched Identities situates the methods of 'queer productions' as an occupation involving the research-researcher-researched (Taylor and Addison, 2014. It will contextualise the interviews, diaries, and maps produced by young participants, locating mixed and visual methods as a way of re-engaging, representing and even resisting identities and practices based on sexuality and religion. I am aware of the importance of, within and between categorisations (between 'religion', 'faith', and 'spirituality' and the need to diversify 'Christianity' rather than presenting this as homogenous). In fact, there were considerable variations between interviewees, as the discussion of methodological details will outline, with Chapter 1 introducing and questioning this at an analytical level.

Chapter 2: Making Space at the (Queer) Academic Table? continues with the previous concern surrounding the doing of research and the co-production, entanglement, and collision of research-researcher-researched identities, experiences and spaces. It further probes at the (mis)placement of such dynamics as a digestible numerical research finding, reduced to 'impact', sitting awkwardly against public sociology as a *process* of 'making space'. There are long-standing efforts and emphases, particularly from feminist researchers, on working with and making research relevant to plural 'publics' (Armstrong, 2010; Browne and Bakshi, 2014; Conlon et al., 2014; Santos, 2014). Yet some of those 'publics' – or 'users' – listed above may be unfamiliar with, sceptical about, or even hostile towards, sexualities subjects and those who define their identities with respect to sexuality.

Chapter 3: Creative Scenes: Sounding Religious, Sounding Queer explores the role music plays in the worship engaged in by 'queer-identifying

religious youth', including attitudes to 'progressive' and 'traditional' musical sounds and styles. It looks at approaches taken by inclusive churches to reconcile the different, and at times conflicting, identities of its members. Focusing on 'spaces of reconciliation', it brings together the embodied experience of Christian congregational music with the 'age appropriate' temporality of modern music in order to examine the complex relationship between age, music, faith,and sexuality.

There is a lack of attention to religion in relation to music and social networking within existing literature and Chapters 3 and 4 thereby represent a unique point of departure. Both areas represent substantive fields where 'youth' are typically situated, and yet this gap in relation to *religion* persists, and will be explicitly addressed within this book.

Chapter 4: Online Settings: Becoming and Believing examines Facebook, as well as social networking sites more generally. Engaging with the key concept of 'online embodiment' (Farquhar, 2012), it explores embodiment, emotion and temporality as expressed via Facebook. Furthermore, it links back to the methodological dilemmas (Chapters 1 and 2), situated here in terms of the presence of Facebook in qualitative research with specific groups of young people.

Chapter 5: Making Space for Young Lesbians? Gendered Sites, Scripts and Sticking Points offers a specific exploration of the young lesbians engaged in the project, in recognition of the persistent gendering of religious-sexual spaces. It asks how gender and sexuality are constructed in places of worship and religious institutional settings. What institutional norms persist regarding gender and sexuality and how do youth negotiate these norms and experiences? This chapter explores this aspect of the study, illustrating how religious participation can convey (de)legitimation within family, community, and society.

Chapter 6: Policy Spaces and Public Imaginations acts as a concluding chapter highlighting the importance of including the voices of queer identifying religious youth, and showing the implications of this research for politics, policies, and public imaginations, with Chapter 2 already having dealt with the limitations and labour of 'impact' inside and outside of academia. It is the online-offline sites of sexual-religious identity (un)making and (dis)identification which have been prioritised in this short collection.

Notes

1   NatCen Social Research Report on British Social Attitudes (2011–2012 edition), p. 182–183.
2   To 'queer' often signals a challenge to dualistic frameworks that limit and methodologically marginalise; there are tensions around the naming of identity but there are also links between queer theory and anticategorical approaches to intersectionality (Haschemi Yekani et al., 2010).

1

Contradictory Subjectivities? The Space of Research-Researcher-Researched Identities

Abstract: *This chapter situates the methods of 'queer productions' as an occupation involving the research-researcher-researched (Taylor and Addison, 2014). It contextualises the interviews, diaries, and maps produced by young participants, locating mixed and visual methods as a way of re-engaging, representing, and even resisting identities and practices based on sexuality and religion.*
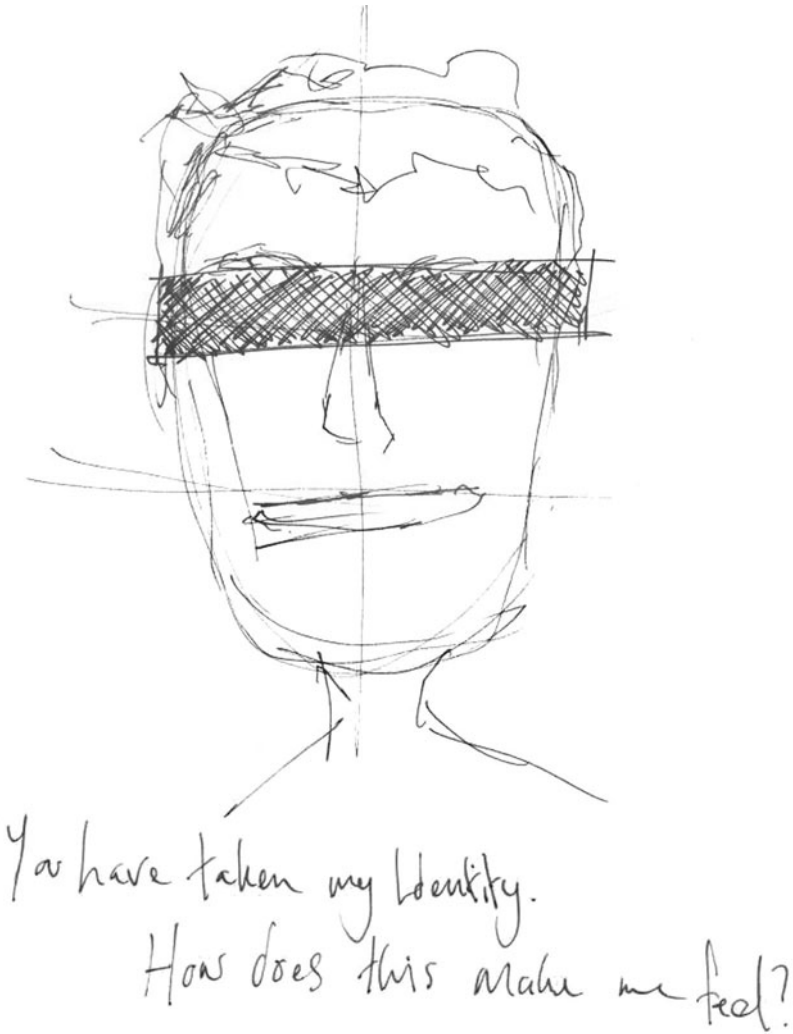
FIGURE 1.1   *'You have taken away my identity'*

This chapter explores the methods of studying queer placements and productions as an intersectional occupation involving the research-researcher-researched (Taylor and Addison, 2014; Braine, 2014). As Browne and Nash (2010: 1) note: 'Many scholars who use queer theorizations can use undefined notions of what they mean by "queer research" and rarely undertake a sustained consideration of how queer approaches

might sit with (particularly social scientific) methodological choices'. Macke (2014) responds to Browne and Nash's (2010) call, offering 'que(e)rying' as a distinct model of research that integrates ethnographic methods with queer theory and feminist praxis. 'Queering' is positioned as an important goal of social science research, intervening in the normative structures, discourses, and practices that construct and police sexual and gendered subjects. At the same time, 'que(e)rying' can denote a particular methodology driving the overall research, encompassing theory, methods of data collection, analysis, and presentation (Macke, 2014). Here we witness the creative tension between what queer is and what queer does, whereby queering can be situated as a process of doing rather than being (Valocchi, 2005; Browne and Nash, 2010; Macke, 2014).

In this chapter, by focussing on the visual and textual data produced in participants' and researchers' mind-maps and diaries, I hope to chart some of their mutual and complex constructions, in mapping and 'making space' for sexuality *and* religion. Across the course of the project, a mix of qualitative techniques (interviews, maps, and diary exercises) allowed for rich insights into the everyday lives, practices, and identities of queer religious youth: these techniques 'make space' to account for young people's experiences of being in – or absent from – religious *and* sexualised spaces. Yet methodological difficulties were encountered throughout, including in initially locating a sample, where some religious gatekeepers positioned potential participants as absent due to their identities not having been claimed, performed, or displayed. Visibly and publically making space for sexuality and religion through the project was also important for many respondents, seeking acknowledgement of identity rather than anonymity, and often disrupting research considerations of confidentiality and consent (see above image). This chapter considers the space of research-researcher-researched identities as in process, and both enabled and constrained by religious-sexual fields.

Diagramming, demographics, and decisions

Interviews (n = 38) lasted between one and two hours and were conducted between October 2011 and November 2012 in three UK locations: Newcastle, Manchester, and London, in participants' homes, a church, a cathedral, a youth centre, universities, cafes, and through a Skype interview. Interviews were semi-structured and key themes

explored included the location of religion in participants' lives, changes in religiosity over time, management of religious and sexual identities, religious identities and family life, participation in 'community' spaces, and biographies, transitions and materialities.[1] All participation was anonymous and pseudonyms were used throughout.

The (in)visibility of queer religious identity posed many methodological problems. Gatekeepers to churches, university LGBT societies, LGBT youth groups, support services, and LGBT/religious publications could deny access based on assumed knowledge of their members' religiosity and sexuality (Taylor, 2004, 2009; McDermott, 2010). As part of the recruitment drive, leaflets were distributed to congregations and groups, and links to our project website (http://queerreligiousyouth.wordpress.com/) and closed Facebook group, 'Queer Religious Youth', were disseminated through their mailing lists and posted to their websites and social media. This included postings to, and dialogues with, inclusive churches, university LGBT societies, LGBT youth groups, support services, and some snowballing through respondents. In response to an emailed request to circulate details of the project, the priest of an Anglican church insisted: 'I can't think of anyone in my congregations who is in that age group and would identify as LGBT'. Similarly, a leader of several LGBT youth groups stated that '[a]lthough some of the young people I was latterly involved with were Christians none of my current ones are so I am unable to help at the moment'. Where identity had not been publically claimed as 'out' or different, research requests could be considered as invalid or even disruptive and inappropriate, infringing on otherwise assumed-to-be cohesive and neutral space.

This sense of absence was further apparent in some participants' perceptions of their own social circles, which also inhibited snowballing. In response to our call to spread word of the project throughout their networks, James (17) stated: 'As you might expect, I know virtually no other LGBT religious youth, but if I can think of anyone who might be able to participate I'll forward the information to them'. Whilst researchers of difficult-to-access and marginalised populations propose the use of snowballing (Fish, 2000) project respondents never had an extensive network of young LGBT Christians which researchers could access.

Contestations over the meaning of 'queer', deployed variously as an (anti)identity category, exist, and this was also an issue in publicising the research title of 'Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Queer', as some participants did not view themselves as 'queer', or indeed as

'religious', instead identifying more specifically rather than generally. 'Queer' has been used as an umbrella term to encompass and stretch 'LGBT', and to highlight non-normative spaces and subjects. Notably, literature has queried the centrality of visibility, naming and 'coming out', with research showing that visibility may be a privilege not readily available to, for example, working-class lesbian women (Taylor, 2007, 2009). As Kong, Mahoney and Plummer (2001: 96) write, 'The very idea that various types of people named homosexuals ,gays, or lesbians can simply be called up for interviews becomes a key problem in itself'.

While aware of this key problem, it is nonetheless important to signal articulated identifications. In terms of sex and gender identity 19 participants identified as female, 15 as male, two as gender-queer, one as gender-queer and transgender, and one as a female-to-male transsexual. The sexual identity of participants can be broadly categorised as gay (15 respondents), lesbian (13), bisexual (5), queer (4), and asexual (1). Most of the participants considered themselves white British, with only a few identifying as white other such as Greek Cypriot (1 interviewee), Spanish (1), and Italian (1), and five participants had disabilities.

Some respondents wanted their queer religious identity to be publically visible through the project, seeking 'acknowledgement' of their participation rather than anonymity. At the end of Nicola's (21) interview, she joked about the pseudonym given to her:

INTERVIEWER: So this is your opportunity, is there anything you'd like to add for the record?
INTERVIEWEE: That my name is not 'Nicola' (laughter). No, that's everything.

TABLE 1.1   *Gender identification*

Female	Male	Gender-Queer	Gender-Queer and Transgender	Transsexual female-to-male	Total
19	15	2	1	1	**38**

TABLE 1.2   *Sexual identification*

Gay	Lesbian	Bisexual	Queer	Asexual	Total
15	13	5	4	1	**38**

But this jocular conclusion to the interview was contradicted by a series of harrowing reflexive images in Nicola's diary. The opening page reads 'You have taken my identity. How does this make me feel?' below a drawing of a distressed, blindfolded face. Another page has 'Nicola' written in the centre with the participant's real name repeated (29 times) around it, above the caption: 'Please don't take my Identity'. Similarly, Nicola's mind-map considers 'Identity' and is surrounded by personal nouns such as 'Friend', 'DYKE!', 'partner', 'Girlfriend', 'Granddaughter', as well as her 'real' name. The blanket application of anonymity was directly challenged by Norman (29) in an email exchange following his interview, highlighting that 'many participants who give time/information would like to be acknowledged rather than anonymised'.

Similarly, despite discussions of anonymity, Tom (20) kept his diary as an online blog where his identity is public (rather than hidden) therefore rendering this project data 'unusable'. In addition to Tom, at least two more project participants kept a blog that (publicly) explored their sexual and religious identities:

> I have a blog on bisexuality…and I talk about church as part of my life, as I would any other aspect of my life, in a very sort of definite way. Because they're the parts of me that are a minority, they're the parts that people might have a problem with, so I have to be them to the hilt…I very much see myself as part of this new movement because I want to be proactive in promoting gay rights and gay Christians and things like that. (Gloria, 20)

The Internet can offer safe spaces, particularly for people with counter-normative sexualities, to construct identity, forge connections, and articulate voices otherwise subjugated in some offline spaces (Vicente and Reis, 2010). However, researchers were bound by institutional ethical guidelines with regards to the anonymity and confidentiality of project participation, and did not want to pose a risk to the anonymity of those discussed in the interviews who had not consented to taking part, thereby taking the issue of ethics beyond the individual researcher-researched. In addition, researchers have to bear responsibility for the longevity of the project data (as opposed to participants' own online profiles) which resides in and becomes 'public', meaning the information is already 'out there' if participants changed their minds in the future.

TABLE 1.3　*Denomination*

Denomination	
Church of England	6
Methodist	3
Catholic	2
Quaker	2
Charismatic	1
Ecumenical	1
Evangelical	1
Unitarian	2
Metropolitan Community Church	15
Non-denominational	5
Total	**38**

The definition of 'Christian', and indeed 'religious', is contested – and often especially so for youth generally, and queer youth in particular (Yip and Page, 2011; Taylor and Snowdon, 2014). Various Christian denominations have articulated different perspectives that are enormously complicated and contrary (Gross and Yip, 2010) and the diversity within Christian organisations and practices as well as between Christian individuals has to be acknowledged. Most participants identified with the denomination of their church: Church of England (6 participants), Methodist (3), Catholic (2), Quaker (2), Charismatic (1), Ecumenical (1), and Evangelical (1). Two participants identified as Unitarian but with Pagan and Buddhist leanings. Where churches were non-denominational, like the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) (15 participants), some participants also identified with the denomination within which they had been brought up (Church of England, 3 participants; Catholic, 2; Greek Orthodox, 1; and Methodist, 1). Five other participants did not attend a church, attended a non-denominational church (other than MCC), did not know, or did not identify with, the denomination of their church.

In line with comparable youth studies (Kubicek et al., 2009; Yip, Keenan and Page, 2011), our first call for LGBT Christians to participate in the project defined 'young' adults as 16 to 24 years of age. However, 'youth' is a contested term and can signify a very wide age range, with the experiences and meanings associated with it being socially

constituted and varying both cross-culturally and historically (see, for example, Khattab and Fenton, 2009; Leccardi and Ruspini, 2009). In an age of austerity it is common for young adults to have a protracted period of dependence on their parent(s), with record numbers not leaving the parental home until their early thirties. For the purposes of this project, young people were then broadly defined as under 35 years, with the youngest respondent being 17 and the oldest being 34 years old (the mean age of respondents was 24 years old).

The same slippages in defining young adults can be seen in youth studies: Valentine, Skelton, and Butler (2003: 481) recognise that even when young people leave the family home it 'continues to be the site through which many of their individual biographies and expectations are routed' (beyond the 'tidy' age of 24). Thus, by increasing the upper age range of our participants to 35 the complexity in defining 'youth' and the significance of this (expanding) point in the life-course was acknowledged.

The majority of respondents did not easily identify with to social class as a personal identification, but *did* use this as a classifying device to describe others, their families, backgrounds, and schooling experiences, whilst often remaining reluctant to attach this to themselves *personally*: 'I don't like to say "class". I suppose other people would call me middle-class but I do not, I don't judge people by their class and I don't really approve of that' (George, 23). Despite the fact that overt identification with class was not always decisive or desirable, a socio-economic cross-section was somewhat represented, though the overwhelming majority of respondents could be described as middle-class (for research on class and religiosity see, for example, Mellor, 2010; Dinham, 2012; Strhan, 2012). Lucy (19), for example, identified as coming from a working-class background: 'I definitely come from a working class background. I wouldn't say that it was that important; sometimes at university, a lot of the people I know are more middle class so I might not fit in, kind of, but I wouldn't say it was that important. I just have a stronger accent'.

The project adopted a mixed-method qualitative research design, consisting of individual face-to-face interviews, diaries, and a mapping exercise. Many researchers (and respondents) were somewhat disillusioned with more 'removed' forms of data collection and the primacy of the spoken word, resting on an ability to speak, come-out, or tell a story (Taylor, 2005; McDermott, 2010). This mixed-methods design reflects our commitment to the study of meanings and lived experiences: 'meaning is not a function of the type of data collected (i.e. quantitative

vs. qualitative). Rather, meaning results from the interpretation of data, whether represented by numbers or by words' (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005: 379). Arguably 'showing a world' is more agentic than the more traditional format of 'telling a world' through interview, and so diaries and mind-maps were employed as participant-led methodologies, generating both textual and visual data to complement the oral accounts.

Since the 'social identities mapping' and diary exercises were intended to be participatory an overly prescriptive approach was avoided. The purpose was to offer insight into identities in an alternative format to the interviews and to represent different and intersecting components of lived lives. Each participant was invited to keep a diary for one month after the interview, in order to reflect upon the multiple intersections of their religious and sexual identities, the ways in which these are mediated by space and time, and the strategies they adopt in the management of these identities (Taylor, 2007). This reflected a commitment to enabling participants to record their mundane and significant reflections, prompted by routine and 'critical' or 'fateful' (Giddens, 1991) moments or events, enhancing their sense of control over the stories they told (see, for example, Holliday, 1999, 2004).

Participants were free to use this approach in an open-ended and creative way in order to represent various aspects of the multiple places and
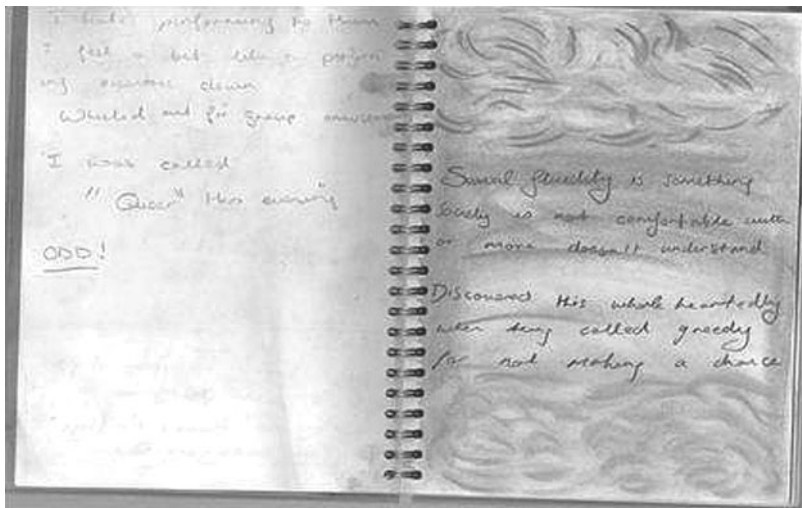

FIGURE 1.2   *Diary image*

identities central to their everyday lives. This use of visual approaches and transference of autonomy and authority to the participant can cause the distinction between researcher and researched to become destabilised. It can also create the potential for marginalised groups to 'show' and talk through their experiences with greater authorial confidence than when using traditional social science methods. Participants are able to disclose, with the freedom of an interim period (and to reflect on what they have said), clarify points, and use the visual to further explain their experiences.

In producing mind-maps, participants were asked to think about important sites in their everyday lives and the ways in which their identities, feelings, and experiences might change across these spaces and over time. Such exercises are characteristic of work within participatory research, where participants are given the opportunity to shape agendas (Kindon et al., 2007). This information was visually mapped onto a blank piece of paper with participants choosing different, creative, and often colourful, ways to express themselves. These 'displays' of identity were expressed in a number of ways including keywords in the centre of the page with ideas, concepts, and pictures radiating out from them; graphs; Venn diagrams; lists; and Mandalas.

Visibly queer? Embodied and claimed positions of the researcher-researched

Intersecting insider/outsider positions

> The Principal Investigator receives an email from her PhD student: it's several pages long and a potential chapter in itself. She realises this could be serious and jumps down the paragraphs trying to find the urgency in her inbox (and there are many urgencies in her inbox). The message is this: the student is going to have a baby, she knows this is a shock, she hopes it won't affect opinions of her or her commitment to work, she questions if this will be recognised, if her funding will continue, her deadline extended, her employability ended... She wonders if her potential is already being recast as a failure and the sense of being in the wrong time (too young to mother, too young to be a successful academic) is transmitted in these exchanges... Work is done in reading between the lines of emails, policies and funding guidance which speak of equal opportunities, a commitment to diversity, an 'investors in people' status: forms are completed, procedures are followed and pregnancy

is declared at the appropriate time – being 'pregnant enough' (for recognition, extension, advice) is stated as 22 weeks, the official time when institutional recognition can begin. 'You're not the first person to have a baby' is the relayed response to the student's concerns and questions. The phone rings – ESRC funding has been received and a research associate vacancy advertised. The potential candidate is ringing to ask is she is still eligible to apply? She's just found out that she is pregnant. The lecturer is thinking equal opps, she's thinking HR. And she's thinking ESRC deadlines. What would you be thinking? Her research associate gives birth, takes time out. She's not entitled to institutional benefits having not served enough time. But she's extending her maternity leave nonetheless ...

Feminist researchers argue that our reflections, embodiments, emotions, and the spaces we occupy with participants become useful mapping tools through which to interpret data and provide meaningful reflection on the entire research praxis, rather than just the findings that emerge. Both myself, as Principal Investigator, and the Research Associate, Ria Snowdon, kept reflexive journals throughout the fieldwork stages as a visual/textual map of researcher-research. The above extract hints at the complications of doing research, of occupying differential positions and responsibilities, and of having these differentially recognised and resourced, as precarious and powerful. Ria's entries are dominated by reflections on the impact her 'outsider' status had on the interview process: 'would young LGBT Christians be able to establish any kind of trust and rapport with a thirty-year-old straight agnostic, an outsider?' Ria was also troubled that her pregnancy further marked her out as the respondents' 'other', hinting at a 'straight' identity. Shortly before the interviews began, Ria attended *The Network Gathering of European Metropolitan Community Churches* to meet MCC church leaders, members, and gatekeepers to congregations in the research locations. Discussing her pregnancy over lunch, another woman related to Ria her own story of insemination, in vitro fertilisation (IVF), and eventual successful pregnancy: 'At least you didn't have to bother with all this messing around when you wanted a baby' she said kindly, indicating the potential recognition and mis-recognition of embodied positions in the field.

Kannen (2013) reflects on embodiments, particularly of (non)pregnant bodies, in qualitative research and suggests that 'our bodies are never silent or invisible to the interactions that we are involved in' (178). In her experience as a pregnant researcher, interviewing students and academics about their encounters with privilege and power in the university

classroom, Kannen found that her interviewees 'felt able to engage with me on a more personal level that, perhaps, enabled them to feel more empowered in our interaction' (2013: 178). Similarly, interviewing in the third trimester of her pregnancy, Ria found that an easy intimacy and rapport with participants was sometimes struck up in face-to-face meetings, facilitated by questions emanating from her pregnant body. At other times, personal questions may only be asked by the interviewer, but pregnancy gave respondents a hook into personal lives, facilitating a reverse mini-interview of sorts ('… and the father … ?'), and allowing them to unravel identity on their terms (the 'researched' becoming the 'researcher').

My own reflections are dominated by numerating completed interviews, authenticating the project through 'insider' credentials and university-sanctioned 'Principal Investigator' status, balancing project income and maternity leave entitlement – and fretting about End of Award Reports to the Economic and Social Research Council. These are the intersecting insider/outsider positions of a queer research project. In addition, my own fieldwork experience took me out of the UK context to the US, where I attended the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) in San Francisco – incorrectly introduced as from MCC UK, and thereafter awkwardly negotiating insider-outsider practices and positions. Both the PI and the RA position produced outsider/insider placements, interacting with intersections between respondents' sexual and religious identities and other factors such as class, gender, and ethnicity (Taylor, Hines and Casey 2010). Embodied identities did not only give researchers reason to pause, as the 'researched' expressed and 'displayed' concerns over the (in)visibility of their sexual and religious identities in various sites mapped across their daily lives.

Queer embodiments and (in)visible identities

> Probably gay dominates Christian quite a bit but that's just because it's easier to be gay than it is to be Christian, on an outwards appearance. I can walk round with a cross round my neck and if anyone asks me I'll say I'm a Christian, but you can kind of tell, people don't really need to ask that, you can tell, especially if you're holding hands with a girl, it's not like I can walk round holding hands with Jesus. (Nicola, 21)

With (less visible) Christian identities, participants could (dis)identify depending on context. In Andrea's (24) 'Mandala' mind-map she assesses

how comfortable she is with her sexuality (se) and spirituality (sp) in different spaces. The centre of the mandala represents the spaces and times in which she is most comfortable, with areas of less comfort radiating out from this point. Andrea then grades them from very uncomfortable (represented by '–') to very comfortable (represented by '+++') in 'displaying' her religious and non-heterosexual identities. In total she examines 11 sites of everyday importance and it is MCC Newcastle where Andrea feels most comfortable (+++) in identifying as both 'Queer' and 'Christian': 'So inclusive, such a mixture of backgrounds. It's so good not to feel like I'm the only one [and] not to have to "come out" as either Queer or Christian. Sexuality +++ Spirituality +++'. Whilst Andrea questions, 'is my spiritual identity here at all?' in relation to 'Bars and Clubs' (with comfort ranging from + to -), 'Medical Students' is the only site to be graded definitively as uncomfortable in religious terms. As a medical student she felt 'they' (as a collective): 'are a funny bunch [and] tend to love to be 1) evidence based 2) right 3) science-y [sic] 4) cool 5) "tolerant" which means that it's far easier to be gay than to be Christian'. Consequently, Andrea is not 'out' as a Christian amongst her student peers.

Similar discomforts in LGBT spaces were voiced by many participants, with Martin (21) relating: 'One of my favourite quotes, I don't know who said it actually, but it's, "The only thing more difficult than being gay in a church, is being a Christian in a gay community"'. Kelly (26) argued that 'Christianity is just old-fashioned bigotry to a lot of people in the gay community', with several participants claiming they were seen as 'silly' (George, 23), 'a betrayer' (Jacob, 30), 'as part of their oppression' (Lesley, 21), by people in the LGBT community because of their beliefs and their attendance at a Christian church.

These sentiments were echoed in Evelyn's (26) mind-map which is represented by a graph. She has drawn 15 sites (such as 'with my sister', 'university', 'with religious friends', 'my parents' house', 'the Anglican church') and plotted these along the X- and Y-axes depending on 'how easy it is to be openly LGBT or Christian', with each illustrated site accompanied by a brief rationale and score (from –5 to 5). '[I]deally everywhere would be high up the Y-axis and right in the middle – easy to be LGBT, easy to be Christian', the reality however is somewhat different. To Evelyn, LGBT spaces are represented by Pride and being in the company of gay friends. Whilst both have an LGBT score of 5, they actually feature at an extreme of the horizontal axis, as both score a -2

in relation to Evelyn being able to express her religious identity: 'I find it difficult to talk seriously about religious stuff (self-deprecating humour is fine) because I know it's tough for my non-religious LGBT friends and I'm not sure I have the answers'.

Evelyn and others felt they could choose to (dis)identify with their spirituality across spaces and times because they did not embody this identity: 'it's not like [they] can walk round holding hands with Jesus' (Nicola, 21). Similar strategies were pursued by participants who did not embody their queerness. Andrea (24), when reflecting on public places, including shops and cafés, found her sexuality not to be an issue because 'I'm not so visibly gay'. Susan (19) is not 'outwardly gay' (her emphasis) but is embarrassed when around her LGBT friends because she is 'still somewhat closeted'. Sally (20) does not 'look' gay but finds the presumption of 'straightness' to be burdensome in all but her girls' rugby team where 'no one assumes your [sic] straight'. Alternatively, Evelyn (26) claimed, 'I'm fairly obviously gay' but even at football matches, where she witnesses and hears a lot of homophobia in the stands, she does not feel 'unsafe or unwelcome', but muses 'if it would be the same if I was a stereotypically gay man though?' signalling the fractures and difference within queer experience rather than the homogenous collective that can sometimes be neatly depicted within the label 'LGBT'.

Within religious space, the embodiment of sexual identity could be problematic. In Nicola's (21) interview, she discussed her embodiment, visibility, and displays of lesbian identity through her clothes, hair, body piercings, and tattoos. Whilst she describes this metamorphosis from 'long hair … a little girl in a very pretty and frilly dress' to 'Doc. Martens; elegance out the window' as empowering in 'becoming' the 'real' Nicola, she simultaneously found that embodied presentations incurred challenges and caused tension when attending new churches:

> And sometimes it makes me feel really self-conscious when I go into a church and everyone can tell I'm gay and I'm like, 'Yes, okay, I'm gay and walking into church. Is there a problem with this? Are you going to kick me out?' and I don't like the anticipation of 'might be asked to leave'… but you never know, if a pastor is going to be a bit of a twat and he's just going to say, 'Actually no gay people, sorry'. (Nicola, 21)

Nicola found the conflict between embodied sexualities and religiosity to both cause and constrain her desire to enter religious space. Conversely, Rebecca enjoyed the process:

> [S]ome Churches absolutely love having you attend and they love to come over and talk to you if you attend, which as a church-hopper I do know quite well that people come over to you, 'Hello, how are you? I don't know your name but…' 'I'm okay, I'm fine. How are you?' (Rebecca, 22)

Rebecca's ability to 'pass' as heteronormative (in 'flowery dresses' rather than 'baggy jeans and checkered shirts') was expressed as relevant to a welcoming approach. Her mind-map, however, radiates around ideas of queer, identity, performance, physical, and metaphoric spaces and she asks 'Do I hold faith? If not why?…Maintaining Belief…comfortable within church?' These doubts translate into oil pastel images in Rebecca's diary as she struggles with displays and performance of religious identity. To Rebecca, taking Communion is symbolic of realising and embracing a Christian identity; yet she found members of MCC repeatedly questioning her choice to pass-over Communion (which is handed between the congregation in the church pews): 'Fabulous [and] Beautiful? Is it [MCC] fabulous? Yet another awkward question about why I didn't take communion'. Moreover, Rebecca does not identify as LGBT, instead forming relationships with people based on personality rather than sex/gender, but finding the bisexuality label to be too rigid and unable to offer the fluidity that she identifies with. In her diary a picture of a tree is annotated with the caption: 'Falling apart…Do I want to stay at MCC. Do I just perform to everyone there. As they are so catagorised [sic]'. Thus, Rebecca finds even this inclusive religious space to be too normative in terms of 'living' and expressing her spiritual and sexual identities.

Conclusion

The (in)visibility of queer religious identity gave participants reason to pause in inclusive and/or sacred spaces. Christianity was seen as a less visible identity that participants could (dis)identify with depending on context. But the embodiment of sexual identity could cause tensions in accessing religious space. Methodological difficulties were also posed in locating a sample when gatekeepers positioned potential participants as absent where these identities had not been claimed, performed, or displayed. Yet making space for their sexuality and religion *through* the project was also an important strategy for some respondents, seeking acknowledgement rather than anonymity and disrupting researcher

considerations of confidentiality and consent. In this chapter, by focussing on the visual and textual data produced in participants' (and researchers') mind-maps, diaries and interviews, the hope has been to chart some of their mutual and complex constructions, in mapping and 'making space' for sexuality *and* religion. Whilst participant disruptions could reposition research-researcher-researched, it is these disruptions that ultimately illuminate how queer religious youth crafted, stretched, and reconciled their identities in a complex world. The next chapter will explore the challenge of situating queer productions in and out of the academy, in the making of public academic space, and conversely, the 'failure' of such attempts.

Note

1   The interviews were then transcribed and coded in Atlas.ti and we used approximately 50 codes based on an analysis of the transcripts to draw out common themes discussed by participants.

2

Making Space at the (Queer) Academic Table?

Abstract: *This chapter continues with the concern surrounding the doing of research and the co-production, entanglement, and collision of research-researcher-researched identities, experiences, and spaces. It further probes at the (mis)placement of such dynamics as a digestible numerical research finding, reduced to 'impact', sitting awkwardly against public sociology as a* process *of 'making space'. There are long-standing efforts and emphases, particularly from feminist researchers, on working with and making research relevant to plural 'publics' (Armstrong, 2010; Browne and Bakshi, 2014; Conlon et al., 2014; Santos, 2014). Yet some 'publics' – or 'users' –may be unfamiliar with, sceptical about, or even hostile towards, sexualities subjects and those who define their identities with respect to sexuality.*

Where and how to disseminate:

▸ Offer workshops to bible colleagues.
▸ Discover resources to faith schools and other schools.
▸ Explore and consult educational authorities, diocesan educational authorities, teacher training courses, different denominations, Schools Out, Educate & Celebrate and Stonewall.
▸ Offer presentations/resources to local ecumenical groups.
▸ Make contact with British Sociological Association Teaching Group, specific guidance to A-level Belief and Society syllabus.

(*Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Youth Exhibition* feedback)[1]

Queering impact

This chapter continues the exploration of performing research and the co-production, entanglement, and colliding of research-researcher-re-searched identities, experiences, and spaces. It follows in further probing the (mis)placement of such dynamics as a digestible numerical research finding, reduced to 'impact', sitting awkwardly against public sociology as a *process* of 'making space'. For Burawoy (2005: 4):

> the challenge of public sociology is to engage multiple publics in multiple ways. These public sociologies should not be left out in the cold, but brought into the framework of our discipline. In this way we make public sociology a visible and legitimate enterprise, and, thereby, invigorate the discipline as a whole.

There are long-standing efforts and emphases, particularly from feminist researchers, in relation to working with and making research relevant to plural 'publics' (Browne and Bakshi, 2014; Conlon et al., 2014; Santos, 2014). Such attention complicates the composition of a holistic or indeed receptive public and makes explicit the private-public pain, workload, and (non)promotion involved in reaching-out, retreating to, and caring in and beyond, academia (Back, 2007; Taylor and Addison, 2014; Taylor, 2014). It complicates the 'legitimacy' of being public, with 'queer', 'religious', and 'youth' adding other complications on the path to being 'public'.

Multiple consultative processes took place throughout the project, with a notable example being the public exhibition event held at St George Church which included a varied (non)academic panel, distribution of a

policy report, a performance, and an exhibition based on participants' diaries and mind-maps. In the above feedback, the bullet points arguably orientate the researcher to do more, to extend into – and out of – classrooms, offering presentations, resources and workshops to diverse audiences. The exhibition dissemination event, open to the general public, came after three years of research (only two of which were – prestigiously and gratefully – funded by the Economic and Social Research Council [ESRC]). It came after the production of twelve peer-reviewed publications, four project newsletters, fifteen blogs, twenty presentations, one conference, and seven training events. It came in the hope that this 'ticked the box' of impact, as required by the ESRC, and in the hope that other research on sexualities might then also be recognised and funded as publically 'impactful'. And it came with the recognition that some of the 'publics' – or 'users' – listed above may be unfamiliar with, sceptical about, or even hostile towards, sexualities and/or religious subjects.

The 'still to do' list highlights project feedback as necessarily ongoing, rather than a simple tick. It suggests responsiveness to the work 'completed' and the work still-to-do, rightly providing myself as researcher with a view of where and why the research must continue to resonate. However, here I want to pause to consider such resonance, and the resources and recognition needed to continue to 'make space' at the (queer) academic table. This involves a certain knowingness and mobility, as a responsiveness to new funding regimes, new methods, new audiences; to be everywhere all of the time, and to be on budget. It also involves a certain scepticism and uncertainty around the potential for being 'un-seated' from the academic table (Dillabough and Kennelly, 2010; Ahmed, 2010).

Of course, it is inviting to map out and consider the possibilities in feeding back and forward, where the completion of research projects is rarely a neat finishing line. But there is perhaps also something to be said for incomplete research projects and indeed research subjects, even if this may challenge the very logic of showcasing research and having labour recognised. Balancing and communicating research projects and subjects in terms of 'what has been done', alongside 'what was not done', is arguably a precarious, rather than celebrated position.

The notion of 'impact' has become increasingly central to the practice of research in the UK[2] (Taylor, 2011, 2014; Colosi, 2014; Mountford, 2014). While many have long stressed the importance of research that has relevance outside the academy, the current drive for impact has triggered

a range of questions about the definition of impact, the repercussions of the 'impact agenda' for sexualities research, and the effect of the 'impact agenda' on how researchers work with external partners and organisations. Further questions triggered surround issues such as the marginalisation of certain disciplines and particular subjects (Parker, 2010; Colosi, 2014), as well as issues of promotion, recognition, and research report writing including in formal ESRC 'End of Award' reports and peer review assessments. This 'panopticization of the university' (Amit, 2000: 218) renders academics subject to the recording, monitoring, and measuring of performance and output in relation to research impact (Taylor and Addison, 2011). In order to 'be recognised' as effective and present at the academic table, one has to strategically display and assert impact, something which can be difficult in 'hard to reach' and under-resourced populations, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer youth.

In order to make research relevant, there is often a problematic imperative to impact upon publics, as calculated via a metric calculation of use, value, and knowledge transfer (Paton, 2010; Addison, 2012; Mountford, 2014; Taylor, 2014). When considering the *qualitative* experiences of marginalised groups, as often structural and embedded, measures of movement and progress can be hard to capture. Despite this, we write our impact reports before *and* after grant submissions and success, evidencing these in UK institutional Research Excellent Framework (REF) submissions for sector assessment/competition. Select institutional 'impact case studies' supposedly convey and substantiate the value of research, pressed into three-page REF submissions, rather devoid of the complexities, labours, and challenges of research impact as ongoing and incomplete.

Throughout the project, there was involvement from marginalised Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT)communities and users, reaching beyond advising the researcher(s) and extending to the decision-making processes, including the choice to host a public exhibition. As Browne and Bakshi (2014) have expressed, the goal was not simply to 'transfer' power/resources from the university to 'the community', as a one-way process which also falsely represents the idea of a cohesive community (Paton, 2010; Santos, 2014). Yet, just as the linear direction of transfer is queried, so too is the direction of public points, presences, and pressures, as complicated and confusing rather than just the 'bright lights' of celebratory impact.

In situating these legacies and continuations, I hope to be mindful of the longer moments (un)sustained in academic practices, beyond

the instant of 'impact' as a summary of what was done over the dura-tion of a particular project. The influence of the 'impact agenda' on the future trajectories of sexualities and queer research, as well as on 'queer researchers' themselves, is a question and dilemma presented in this chapter. The future impact of any research must be located within these embedded, and embodied, 'impacts', which sometimes produce exhaus-tion as well as public effect. Ultimately, in outlining ongoing efforts, I hope to offer some nuanced engagement with both the positionalities and power of the research-researcher-researched, and the possibilities of critical academics who seek to think, theorise, and understand alongside communities.

There is a certain queerness to this, a strange (in)visibility in heightened presences and urgencies of always proving and maintaining impact for everyone-all-of-the time. I say this, not because I am unconvinced of the long-practiced efforts of making research relevant to varied audiences, but rather because I fear that such relevancies, while being required – and desired – are not being effectively resourced and are instead being carried by the individual researcher. Highly marketised and competitive educational climates are complicit in producing reductive measures of impact, pre-determining and tying project success to policy transmis-sion and public visibility. What is left invisible, exhausted, and unfunded in these moments, and what does this mean for being present and on the page? Who will pay attention to and act on (qualitative) bullet points as opposed to metric scores? Certain disciplines and subjects are more precariously located than others in the placing of worth, value, and influence. Arguably, the space that is being 'made' is a normative insti-tutional space-subject as aligned with pre-determined economies of use, value, and subjecthood. Sometimes our efforts inside-outside academia 'unseat' us from being present at the table: 'If you lose your seat what happens? Activism is often a matter of seats. [...] the dissident is the one would be unseated by taking up a place at the table: your seat is the site of disagreement' (Ahmed, 2010: n.p).

Public points, presences and pressures: not all bright lights ... .?

Many academics who are also activists like to think of themselves as blur-ring the boundaries of 'the public' (or 'community') that they are engaged

with (Santos, 2014; Stella, 2014). However, being part of academia also demands consideration of complex power relations, which are not simply one-way; engaging with those outside of academia has the potential to efface or displace academic skills, including uncomfortably rendering (non)academics as non-experts to their authentic counterparts, or as simply technicians, providing technical skills rather than transforming the social relations of knowledge production (Browne and Bakshi, 2014). 'Local people' – as those often called on as the fixed and static authentic-in-place subjects who the researcher draws upon and 'out reaches' – may be sceptical about investing their time and may not see the benefit of the research. Participating in a research project also potentially decreases, rather than increases, over time and there are again resource issues to consider here for both the researched and the researcher: the invitation to feedback can itself become a call to action *from* participants.

By invoking and disputing the boundaries of 'dialogue' and 'community' the *Making Space for Queer Religious Youth* exhibition event necessarily engaged in thinking through epistemological, theoretical, and ethical issues around mobilising 'publics' and engaging as a 'public sociologist'. But even those terms, and *that language*, sounds academic, disengaging... What if efforts, sounds, and *different* dialogues collide rather than cohere in these efforts and urges?

Attending the event were policy makers and practitioners from across the UK, working in a number of NGO and local government posts. Between paper presentations, the audience was encouraged to break into small informal groups to reflect upon these questions but, arguably more importantly, to also draw from their own research, work, and personal experiences. In discussing current LGBTQ lives, different issues and urgencies (including youth suicide, hate crime, religiosity, and scene spaces) were brought to the table and the diverse lived realities and needs of LGBTQ communities debated and deliberated. In debating, one attendee stated that it is 'hard to find academic research that is actually helpful' and that 'language is hard to grasp – pretentious, designed for academic papers'.

Desperately hoping to move away from 'pretention', questions were posed such as: 'what is dialogue and when do we need it?', 'how can we foster and improve dialogue to ensure it is inclusive?', 'what is the role of academic research in informing NGOs and wider LGBTQ communities?' These may seem basic questions, instinctive opening points, but even with good intentions, it is easy to stumble at these starting blocks, where it can be assumed that 'we' (LGBTQ researching, presenting, appearing individuals)

are on the 'same page'. Such basic questions and understandings need to be re-clarified rather than solved in entering the (university, church, or public) room and sitting around the table, even if it is a shared one.

Different delegates were coming from – and going to – different places; the pain caused by the underfunding of voluntary agencies, in particular, meant that this seat at the table was threatened. The 'table' might have to balance rather sparse offerings in times of funding crisis and cutting back (impacting more on specific vulnerable communities). As resources are cut back, the pressure is on the 'innovating', 'enterprising', researcher to perform even more rigorous 'outreach', and this requires capturing *absence* and *undoing* at the table. The drive forward, to 'reach out' to other/every non-academic community, also likely misses out the cyclical, returning and reciprocal dialogue of these exchanges (beyond a *valued* economic exchange).

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer categories, and the communities that supposedly represent 'vulnerable' identities may be messy, exclusionary, and incomplete (Browne and Bakshi, 2014; Taylor, 2007, 2009, 2012). Such categories are often used expediently in research, both to 'get on the agenda' and to question the 'us' represented. To view 'communities' as heterogeneous collectivities that can be recreated, in particular ways, through research, rather than neutral representations, is to acknowledge tensions and complexities in 'publics' and 'community', as well as the multiple marginalisations 'from within' queer communities, which researchers may well inhabit and embody (see Chapter 1).

Many of these issues cannot be solved simply by an invitation to participate; rather efforts and communications have to be sustained. In addition, there needs to be acknowledgement that sometimes efforts 'fail', compelling honesty about the difficulty with dialogue as well as its collaborative potential. Having hoped for and experienced engaging project events, I still want to problematise the 'publics' that are brought into effect, and to consider what happens tomorrow when the exhibition is over and the Impact Report submitted.

Queer identifying religious youth and the making of space

> Perhaps it would be helpful for a paper or multimedia project to be produced as a co-effort from an academic and a member of the LGBT Christian

community, as multiple stories. Often, one academic voice is easily mistaken as scientific. The day was a great 'rainbow' of voices and ideas.

Collaboration between academics and practitioners/activists is crucial, more events of this kind! Organise dialogues within religious communities and LGBT communities about the relationship between religion and sexuality.

(*Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Youth* event feedback)

As has been suggested, there is a (voiced) pause between what are seen to be clashing categories – 'youth', 'religious', 'queer' – that don't normally sit side by side. Some imagine religion, sexuality, and youth to be 'contradictory', or are apprehensive that these spaces have come to be seen as sites of trouble and struggle, where widely held perceptions have often cast religion as *automatically* negative or harmful to the realisation of LGBTQ identities. Within such a public and policy context, the project aimed to 'make space' to account for, and make visible, young people's experience of being in/out of religious and sexualised spaces.

Project findings have implications for practitioners and policy makers working broadly in the fields of youth inclusion, religious participation, citizenship, and community cohesion, with similar potential for rethinking 'public imaginations' in sexual-religious landscapes more generally (see Chapter 6). This knowledge implicates a variety of institutions and individuals, and the potential future impact of findings across sectors and for other faith based groups (and indeed for those without faith) are recognised. Given the vastness of debates – and again the bullet point urges to think across the 'rainbow of voices and ideas' – it is perhaps unsurprising that the project's impacts are still in progress, facilitated by the initiation of an international academic advisory group,[3] alongside key events with policy makers, practitioners, non-academics, and community user groups (including Metropolitan Community Church, Diverse Church, and Equality Network). Such connections take an enormous amount of effort to sustain and develop, involving tangible resources and practices, as well as often intangible feelings, such as trust and confidence.

A key focus has been on building processes that facilitate both short and longer-term impacts through relationships with users and beneficiaries at the levels of consultation and collaboration, and which enhance professional practice. The policy report *Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Youth: Politics, Policies and Public Imaginations* (Taylor and Falconer, 2014) was an attempt at writing for audiences

other than those who are normally addressed in journal articles, with the report also disseminated online and linked to multiple blog postings written throughout the project.[4] This policy document engages with key users, and included circulation beyond the official funded duration of the project, including to school teachers; healthcare professionals, (counselling services, psychologists, general practitioners); relationship counselling and services (Relate, OnePlusOne); inclusive churches (such as Metropolitan Community Church, Diverse Church); traditional churches; MPs working in religion, education, equalities legislation; equality organisations (Commission for Equality and Human Rights); inter-faith dialogues/forums; gender and leadership organisations; LGBT organisations and activist groups (Stonewall, Queer Youth Network, Equality Network); specific campaign groups (No Outsiders, Stonewall's 'Gay By Degree' poll, Schools Out); universities. It has been sent, photocopied, emailed to many of the above organisations and, in turn, they have responded online, by telephone, by email and face-to-face, which exchanges cannot be captured neatly as impact evidence.

The report highlights the importance of including the voices of queer identifying religious youth, and the ways in which this research can shape politics, policies, and public imaginations: it is suggestive of possibilities including further research, and, in that regard, acts as an invitation to others to continue the dialogue and press for services and supports. The report highlights some key issues that need to be addressed in order to tackle the adverse public, private, and institutional experiences of young people who identify as religious and queer. It calls for a greater understanding of how multiple and co-existing identities impact upon young people and the services they access.

Alongside such embedded efforts lies an awareness that the project impacts have yet to be fully achieved, will likely 'fail', and will nevertheless continue in conversation with key (non)academic groups, taking into account the feedback received and ongoing conversations. The below statements are notable in relation to 'speaking back' to service providers and academics, as a series of demands that young people 'should have':

> Young people should have awareness about the public services that can help them with the various issues that they have to deal with. Young people should have more access to resources, information, and perhaps through the internet

and social media. GPs. Hospitals and health staff have to be more inclusive and non-judgemental achieved through training and seminars.

<div align="right">(Participant feedback from Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Youth event)</div>

The policy document has an appendix with full feedback from a project event. These sentiments constitute substantive outputs in themselves in making clear the positive personal and professional impact of the event. There is a certain qualitative generosity and appreciation (often absent from academic peer review) present in these feedback pages, motivating and inspiring efforts – not least when the project funds are spent. The policy document offers areas for future attention and potential impact and an opportunity for researchers to rethink the boundaries of their projects, through forming alliances, such as the multi-faith extensions suggested below:

> Maybe forming alliances with other religious and LGBT projects to see what strategies they have for dissemination of information and encouraging inclusion, for example, the Imam project (for LGBT Muslims).

<div align="right">(Participant feedback from Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Youth event)</div>

> I would just like to say thank you for creating this space. I lead a small non-denominational Church in Luton where there is a large Muslim population. I would love for faith groups to have more exposure to research which addresses the relationship between faith/religion and wider society. I think your work and that of those on the panel could make a huge difference to faith communities and how they handle these issues and provide space where people feel accepted and loved. Thank you!

<div align="right">(Participant feedback from Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Youth event)</div>

These *qualitative* experiences of marginalised groups, as often structural and embedded, can be hard to capture and I deliberately showcase these here, alongside the challenge of situating queer productions in and out of academy, in the making of publics-academic space, and conversely, the 'failure' of these (Browne and Bakshi, 2014; Santos, 2014). The 'making of space' can be generously appreciated and recognised as continuous and as happening in practice, rather than as contained or suppressed as of numerical value alone.

Conclusion

In outlining projects as continuous efforts, I hope to have offered some complications to and nuanced engagement with both the positionalities and power of the research-researcher-researched (and funders) and the possibilities for critical academics who seek to think, theorise, and understand alongside communities. Public sociologists come with a range of skills, expertise, and abilities but this does not negate the positions of power that university status brings, and these can be deployed and negotiated in various ways. Public sociologists can and will make mistakes. The 'still to do' post end of award reports make clear the necessarily ongoing work, rather than being a simple completion tick exercise. Reflecting on this is suggestive of a responsiveness to and appreciation of the work 'completed' and the work still-to-do.

'Public sociology' can contribute to processes of inclusion or exclusion (Burawoy, 2005; Back, 2007), depending on how knowledge is accessed, analysed, interpreted, delivered, and used within and beyond the walls of academia. As I have previously argued, the entrepreneurial university – and indeed the 'entrepreneurial' funded researcher – has been tasked with making an impact in responsibilising citizens to come forward and make a difference, as conveyed in shifting funding priorities, including, for example, 'changing behaviours' (Taylor and Addison, 2014). The strict differentiation of community/public sector, university/community is problematic, suggesting a one-way push – led by academics *into* the public – which effaces the dynamic and changing nature of engagement (and the realities of *dis*engagement). 'The public' or 'the community' can be disruptive and challenging and can stall attempts at 'engagement' with 'them' (Browne and Bakshi, 2014).

This chapter also raises questions about who becomes the proper subject for (non)academic attention in a time when 'publics' might be positioned as democratising and open or, conversely, as curtailed and shaped through specific and pre-determined economies of value and use. Moves forward, into and through the spaces of access, use, knowledge, and value have been troubled but I am cautious not to place the trouble on myself, as residing in my own research (in)capacities: as researchers generally, our troubles can act to resituate a more sensory, embodied, and politicised 'public sociology' which attends to the differences in

listening and in measuring and evaluating those unequal 'voices'(Back, 2007). Having hoped for and experienced an engaging project, events, and publics, I still want to problematise the 'publics' that are brought into effect and to publically ask 'what happens tomorrow when the Dialogue Day is over and the Impact Report submitted?' *Problematic* publics can be brought into effect as space is re-made at the academic table, confounding the 'bright lights' of celebratory 'impact'. The next Chapter, *Creative Scenes: Sounding Religious, Sounding Queer*, explores the role music plays in queer-identifying religious youth worship, in order to extend the focus on the sometimes intangible and immeasurable, but nonetheless present, sounds, and emotions of religion and sexuality. The field of music is somewhere, 'youth' are typically situated, and yet a gap in relation to religion persists, with the impact of these sounds and senses acting as a pull into as well as a push out of religious-sexual spaces.

Notes

1   For the End of Award Report see: http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/ RES-062–23–2489/outputs/Read/5543d236–42a6–4fe9–8ef1–7e41f13385f5
2   Research councils now expect research to have clearly defined 'pathways to impact', while the Research Excellence Framework has made the evaluation of impact central to its assessment of the research activity of universities.
3   The academic advisory group consisted of Dr Andrew Gorman-Murray, Prof. Jodi O'Brien, Prof. Tracey Skelton and Prof. Andrew Yip and thanks are given for their input.
4   Research has been publicised and communicated to a range of non-academic users and voluntary organisations and updates have been made available through the project website (www.queerreligiousyouth.wordpress.com).

3

Creative Scenes: Sounding Religious, Sounding Queer

Abstract: *This chapter explores the role music plays in the worship engaged in by 'queer-identifying religious youth', including attitudes to 'progressive' and 'traditional' musical sounds and styles. It looks at approaches taken by inclusive churches to reconcile the different, and at times conflicting, identities of its members. Focusing on 'spaces of reconciliation', it brings together the embodied experience of Christian congregational music with the 'age appropriate' temporality of modern music, in order to examine the complex relationship between age, music, faith and sexuality.*

Falling Apart...
Do I want to stay at MCC
Do I just perform to
everyone there. As they
are so categorised...

FIGURE 3.1   *'Falling Apart'*

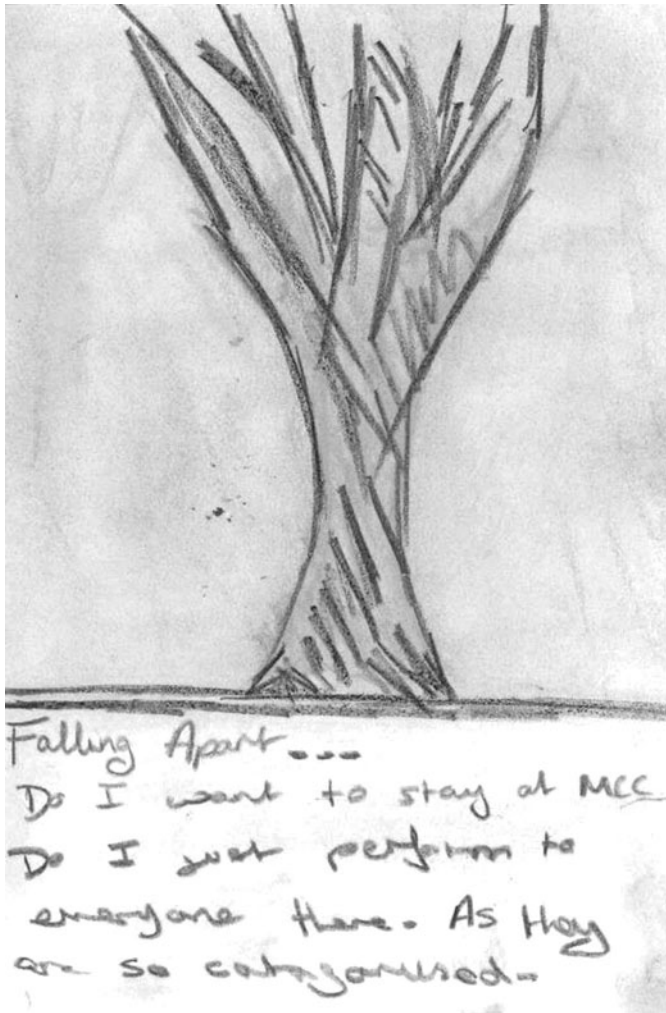This chapter explores the role music plays in 'queer-identifying religious youth' worship, including attitudes toward 'progressive' and 'traditional' musical sounds and styles. It looks at the reported approaches taken by inclusive churches, such as the Metropolitan Community Church, founded 'in, by, and for' LGBT congregants, to reconcile the different, and at times conflicting, identities of its

members – as well as the approaches of more 'traditional' churches. Focusing on 'spaces of reconciliation', embodied experiences of Christian congregational music are brought together with the 'age appropriate' temporality of modern music, to examine the complex relationship between age, music, faith, and sexuality. Young queers did not always feel ill at ease with 'tradition' as a style, practice, or sound, and, in fact, many felt pulled toward traditional choral songs and hymns. Embodied and affective responses to congregational music emerged in complex and multiple ways: faith-infused creativity, such as singing practice, enables queer youth to *do* religion and Christianity and to be a part of 'sounding religious, sounding queer'.

There is a body of musicological scholarship addressing queer music, gender, and sexual performances alongside other contemporary studies of music and culture (Brett, Wood and Thomas, 1994; Phillips, 2005; Whiteley and Rycenga, 2006). Here, existing social research into music, spirituality, and youth culture (Howard and Streck, 2004; Partridge, 2006; Beck and Lynch, 2009) is brought into conversation with that relating to the role of music in queer scene spaces (J. Taylor, 2010; Peterson, 2011). In doing so, questions arise about how queer identifying religious youth can both reflect and disrupt those expectations of an 'imagined community' prominent in spaces of both religious and queer identities. Where religion, youth, and non-heterosexuality have largely been characterised in opposition to each other, this chapter shows how music reshapes negotiations and resolutions of queer and religious identities, referred to throughout as 'spaces of reconciliation' for queer religious youth.

The role of music in formal Christian congregations, as well as in alternative spiritual youth subculture and queer scene spaces, evokes powerful embodied and affective experiences (Ingalls et al., 2013). With this in mind, this chapter incorporates an embodied analytical approach that accounts for how certain music, sounds, rhythms, beats, instruments, and even the audible volume of music are experienced through the bodies and particular spatial environments of participants. 'Spaces of reconciliation' are embodied and felt through music and the medium of music can interface and stretch with notions of 'imagined community' for young people who wish to bridge the perceived opposition of Christian and queer identities. The assumption that 'youth' and 'queer' are inherently incompatible with 'tradition' is problematised in thinking through the ways that certain music and 'sounding religious' or 'sounding

queer' can represent 'safe', 'good', or 'bad' spaces for queer identifying religious youth. Consequently, this chapter addresses interconnections between sexuality and religion through interviewees' relationships with both 'traditional' and 'progressive' congregational music, as well as with music located in queer 'scene space'.

The relevance of gender and sexuality remained a consistent undertone in the data, with music stereotyping and gender inequality noted by researchers. Furthermore, the class positions of respondents came through in discussions about music involvement and the resourcing and supporting of such involvements (see Chapter 1 for a discussion of the interview sample). Whilst this particular chapter forefronts examples of musical experience, representing youth, tradition, sexuality and temporality, it is important to note the tone and prevalence of the classed and gendered aspect of musical involvement (Taylor and Snowdon, 2014). Musical practice, arguably like religious practice, draws unevenly on held social and cultural resources. Socio-cultural experiences facilitated or impeded adjustments to religious environments and the dispositions of individuals to engage in different levels of religious practice. Similarly religious institutions and practices are not neutral, but rather laden with the social and cultural experiences of a particular intellectual tradition and or economic environment.

As stated, the project recruited a very middle-class sample. This is important because certain quotes from John demonstrate how class position has an impact on religion, sexuality, and music. For example, John (21) found his musical involvement to provide 'a place where you could be yourself because there were no expectations and it also gave me this insight into quite a middle class world because it's quite a middle class space if you were going to class it in that sense, and I'd never really had that before, and it opened up loads of doors for me'. Participation in music-making played a key role in the lives of many participants, including choristers (such as participants from London Gay Symphonic Winds and Manchester Gay and Lesbian Choir), a church music director, an apprentice organ builder, church band members, and various musicians who played bassoon, piccolo, drums, guitar, organ, and piano, as well as those who were eager to voice their appreciation, or critique, of their congregational music. This chapter will specifically analyse how the role of music emerged in these stories, often embedded within wider narratives of how young people occupy spaces of sexuality and religion.

Sounding religious, sounding queer: embodying community

Research exists in the embodiment of religious and spiritual music, both within formal, traditional Christian congregations and within the more alternative queer/spiritual scenes found in youth subcultures. Congregational music has the power to evoke deeply embedded emotional and embodied responses that go beyond the cognitive construction of identity (Wlodarczyk, 2003; Sai-Chun Lau, 2006). Ingalls et al. (2013) claim that embodied experiences of faith and spirituality are integral to shaping religious identities, both in singular rituals and within practices of everyday life. Music is 'particularly crucial to consider because it is frequently central to worship across a wide spectrum of liturgical forms. Rather than remaining separate from or subordinate to belief, experience – and the powerful emotions it involves – is integral to embodying it' (2013: 8). These embodied experiences of worship can be experienced through listening to music in certain church environments and within religious ritualistic settings and can be both individual and collective. In addition, this experience can be heightened through *creating* congregational music, again on a personal basis as well as through being part of an 'imagined community', playing instruments and singing. The embodied nature of singing as a form of communication with God has been documented:

> [T]hose desiring to really worship want to get to the place where they feel near to God and feel they're communicating with a Deity that has no physical presence and therefore offers no voiced or embodied response to their adoration. Perhaps it is because of this absence and silence that achieving a feelingful response in and to worship singing and song has become so important. Singing involves the singer in multi-layered interactions with and around music and word, content and context, attention and intent [...] And all of these experiences of singing are melded into notions of worship and interpreted in light of personal authenticity. (Adams, in Ingalls et al., 2013: 198)

However, it is not just the formal congregational music found in more traditional spaces of Christian worship that has produced interest in embodied experiences of music and spirituality. The assumption that young people are disconnected from the church, due to its traditional undertones, sits against a more modern approach asserting that young people are attracted to and maintaining interest in such practices. In

Open up the Doors: Music in the Modern Church, Evans (2006) argues that there is a widening schism in the world of church music that is proving to be just as divisive as the issues of gay clergy and female ordination. On the one side, there are ancient choral traditions, and on the other, one which is intensely informal and more akin to what Evans terms an 'evangelical approach'.

Within this 'evangelical approach', there has been an emphasis on alternative scenes of music and spirituality, such as clubbing scenes and rave culture in spaces such as Ibiza and Goa (Partridge, 2006; Sai-Chun Lau 2006; Beck and Lynch, 2009) and the 'splintered world' of Christian rock bands (Howard and Streck, 2004). Again, this research demonstrates how these music scenes are experienced through the (collective) body, providing affective description of drums, rhythmic beats, and the bass of trance music, smells of incense, the feeling of the ground under bare feet, and flashing lights, in order to highlight the sensual experience of spiritual connection and belonging. Such collective embodiment through music has been placed as generating a 'surrogate family' (Sai-Chun Lau, 2006) and a sense of a united 'imagined community' aroused through praising and worshiping through music (Gesa Hartje-Doll in Ingalls et al., 2013). This idea of an 'imagined community' is useful in analysing how musical communities such as choirs, as well as reactions towards the music culture in queer scene spaces, can shape feelings of collective belonging for queer religious youth.

Recent research into the role of music scenes in the LGBT community have focused heavily on gay men's dance clubs (Peterson, 2011) and the use of illegal drugs and sexualisation in LGBT music culture (Measham et al., 2011). Further, the role of music in queer 'scene spaces' has been viewed as integral to queer politics (J. Taylor, 2010). Our research is particularly relevant to discussions of the disruption of a 'progressive temporality' in what is perceived to be an opposition between 'traditional' (conservative) and 'progressive' (young, alternative, queer) music. For instance, J. Taylor (2010) argues that queer temporalities in music scenes challenge what is 'appropriate' behaviour for aging queers. This temporal propriety, alongside the nature of sexualised spaces associated with queer music scenes and youth culture, shall be unpacked in greater depth in the narratives of queer identifying religious youth and their complex relationship with music within 'spaces of reconciliation'.

Choirs, singing and affect: sensual connections to God

Singing in congregational choirs frequently produced highly embodied and affective responses, with regard to feeling attachments to, and distance from, (non)Christian identities, and also as intersecting and colliding with queer identities. For example, Susan (19) identifies as lesbian but asserts she ambivalently identifies and dis-identifies as Christian as a result of her sexuality. Susan reflects that, at present, she feels her choices are either to be Christian and celibate or in a lesbian relationship; she is currently in the latter.

However, despite dis-identifying as Christian, Susan's attachment to the church continues to come to the fore through the role of music and singing in her life. She is heavily committed to her involvement in the Chapel Services choir, which she attends every Sunday. Susan has a deep enthusiasm for music and would like to become a music teacher in the future. Indeed, music could act as a pathway to the church for young people who found this aspect appealing and comforting, as Lucy (19) notes: 'I spoke to a few younger people who say that they only really come for the music, because it is a nice way to spend your Sunday morning'. But Susan's passion for 'religious music' remains an *inclination* she cannot fully make sense of, especially as this is often tied to the sermons and customs within the church from which she actively disassociates. When asked about her role in the church, Susan replies:

> I sing in the choir [laughs]. That's the main thing. They say that if you sing in the choir you should take part in the service and I do find, especially the sermons, very interesting…I find religious music absolutely lovely. Whether or not that's related to the nature of the topic or whether it's just really nice music, I don't know. I always like my Chapel Services.

Susan's affective connection to the church remains significant, despite her decisive *dis*connection. She laughs when asked what role she still plays in the church, as if she expects being part of the Chapel choir may seem somewhat nonsensical when she has 'left' the church. Yet her explanation for this – that she finds 'religious music absolutely lovely'- points towards the embodied and affective reaction to the music and sounds found in these spaces. The music itself, as an audible and sensual experience, is what pulls Susan back into spaces of worship. That Susan also enjoys taking part in the sermons as a result of this demonstrates a re-connection to the church through her involvement in the choir.

In this way, congregational music can aid spiritual re-connection for young people who have previously rejected the church – or who are in periods of transition and 'church hopping' between inclusive and traditional Churches – as part of their reconciliation of sexual-religious identities.

Regarding her choices with respect to church involvement, and this affective relationship with congregational music does not occur separately from her cognitive decisions. Rather, the opportunities provided through her continued *affection* for this music make room for spiritual identities and connections with the church in different ways, where all involvement may otherwise have been severed. Indeed, Susan believes that the LGBT and religious communities operate in two completely different spheres, and in her experience, each is very hostile to the other. This hostility leads to her pre-empting difficult tensions when it comes to negotiating her role in both communities:

INTERVIEWER: Is your involvement with the Chapel something you're happy for people to know about?

SUSAN: Yes. If nothing else I can say it's because I'm in the choir, it's easy to say I'm going to Evening Song because I'm in the choir. But I'm not ashamed of saying – if someone said 'do you want to go to the pub on Sunday', I'd go 'no, I've got Evening Song'. And I won't say 'it's not because I'm Christian, I'm in the choir', I'll just say 'no, I've got Evening Song' fine, simple, leave it at that. I'm not at all ashamed.

It is clear that the Chapel choir is of great importance to Susan, yet the mention of 'shame' in relation to being Christian and part of a Christian Choir highlights some of the difficulties inherent in inhabiting both queer social spaces and church spaces, as was the case with other participants, such as John (21), who described being in a church choir as 'taboo' in his social circles. Susan is adamant that she is 'not ashamed' of being part of the choir, yet omits information about the Christian nature of this involvement when talking to friends who occupy different scene spaces. This also indicates that at times, within the queer community, involvement with the church may indeed be something hidden or at least partially cordoned off (Jaspal, 2014; Meek, 2014). Attachment to the church without the role of music may be a trickier bridging of identities for Susan, but through music she can maintain connections with the church as 'if nothing else I can say it's because I'm in the choir'. Music, it seems, makes reconciliation easier for those who experience tensions between faith, church, and sexuality.

   Participating in song and the embodied act of singing inspired both collective belonging and very personal experiences with spirituality. The role of congregational choirs, and more specifically the practice of singing as part of such choirs, emerged as a prominent theme. Stephanie (29) sings in a church choir and practices every Wednesday, singing with the church choir most Sundays in both the morning and evening. Like Susan, she finds that this commitment to the church choir arouses perplexity within her queer community, or for those for whom her identity as an 'out' lesbian is better known then her religious affiliations; 'They thought it was very strange that I went to church and that I sang in a choir' (Stephanie, 29). However, unlike Susan, Stephanie now identifies as both Christian and lesbian, and has been in a civil partnership for four years. Without a religious background, Stephanie joined the church through the influence of her partner, and started attending when they moved in together. Her partner, and other LGBT members sing in the church choir, , and so the social and collective experience of the choir provides an arguably unorthodox space where her identities as queer and Christian can meet in the same place.

   Interestingly, the choir played a key role in this connection with her 'newfound' faith, and singing 'very traditional hymns' helped her make the shift from attending the choir as a social activity to having a personal relationship with Christianity:

> Basically my partner had sung in choirs for a lot of her life, her friend was the assistant organist at our church and he said that they had a choir and would they like to join and I just went along for the giggles and I really enjoyed it. The church became an important part of my life ... After I'd been singing for a while with them, I got confirmed. ... I feel like when I sing it's the easiest way for me to talk to God. It's a really important thing for me and if I got to a church and maybe don't like the music then it does have an impact on how I feel. (Stephanie, 29)

That singing 'just felt right' for Stephanie is how she has found her place within the church and figured out her own faith. Through the act of singing in the choir, she can 'talk to God' and experience a personal, spiritual relationship with faith. Singing, both individually and collectively, has been documented as a key communicative process of worship, especially as it provides a sought after embodied connection to God: 'Singing involves the singer in multi-layered interactions with and around music and word, content and context, attention and intent' (Adams in Ingalls et al., 2013: 198).

Stephanie's interview reflects the importance of creating music as part of a collective group, with singing enabling 'multi-layered interactions' and a 'talking' connection to God as the prime affirmation of her faith. Additionally, the collective experience of singing in a choir that accepts her sexuality is an important layer of this 'multi-layered' experience. With regard to experiencing Christianity, music as a *collective* form of worship is of key significance, as studies of congregational music indicate:

> Exploring congregational music as a locus of Christian experience can provide insight into the human religious impulse conceived more broadly: in particular, the ways that individual and collective performances shape belief and create identity at the site of these powerful musical experiences. (Ingalls et al., 2013: 8)

Stephanie's reconciliation of her queer identity within the church choir is therefore of particular significance to this affective and collective sense of belonging and affirmation. But, as Ingalls et al. (2013: 10) show, 'simultaneous experience may or may not equate to shared experience'; the joining of voices in song plays only a part in feeling 'just right'. The choir is inclusive of Stephanie and her lesbian partner and provides a safe space for queer, religious, identities to be expressed openly and harmoniously. The combination of collective bodies singing together, the presence of her partner and other LGBT choir singers, and her communication with God (Adams in Ingalls et al., 2013) all culminate to produce the feeling of 'just felt right' for Stephanie, dissolving (at least within the temporal space of the music) the multiple tensions that often accompany reconciling queer and religious identities. Performing as part of a group is not necessarily a permanent state, indicating fulfilled belonging, rather 'performed theology of singing in church must be sufficiently in tune with the thinking/ singing of a church community to enable spiritual nurture and growth' (Boyce-Tillman in Ingalls et al., 2013: 49).

Stephanie's resolution has come about through her own journey with her sexuality, her partner and their shared and subsequent Christianity, and this is powerfully represented through the sensual realm of music and singing. This affective belonging resonates with the examples found in research into music and sexuality (J. Taylor, 2010) which examine the embodied importance of dancing and music to queer social life. Taylor's (2010) participants claim that dancing is an expression of their queerness which 'just grounds us, puts us in our own skin' in feeling 'really free on the dance floor' (2010: 903). Similarly, the organisation of Stephanie's

queer identity alongside her faith-infused creativity is intrinsically linked to her choir singing. The affectual and embodied impact of the choir music reminds Stephanie that she has (for now) arrived at the right place. As Ahmed (2006: 2) describes:

> Emotions are directed to what we come into contact with: they move us toward and away from such objects [...] At the same time, emotions shape what bodies do in the present, or how they are moved by the objects they approach [...] Emotions involve such affective forms of (re)orientation.

Arriving in spaces of reconciliation for queer identifying religious youth is determined by a myriad of factors, and music and singing can act as a lens through which to view these spaces differently. The literature into affectual feelings of belonging through alternative music scenes has focused on spiritual connections through shared embodied responses to rhythmic sounds, as well as the sense of a 'surrogate family' community brought about through this shared culture (Sai-Chun Lau, 2006). Gesa Hartje-Doll (in Ingalls et al., 2013: 150) supports this claim, noting the sense of a united 'imagined community' arising through praising and worshipping through music:

> Music presents a means of rendering the global 'imagined community' of evangelicals tangible for the individual thereby fuelling the feeling of fraternity among those constituting the 'community'. As the 'imagined community' of evangelicals finds itself united through [...] music, perhaps the music will become a platform for social justice, as the 'community' focuses not merely on self-creation but also on global social engagement for the greater good.

On an arguably smaller scale than achieving a global 'greater good', it appears that congregational music and singing can act as a platform for spiritual connections with God, as well as providing connection with others in the queer religious community. However, this space is not an easy one to inhabit. Queer identifying religious youth can feel ostracised from both LGBT and religious communities, and achieving an affectual 'imagined community' through performing music and spiritual song is most welcome. By most accounts, imagination remains within the realm of thinking or thinking-feeling (Massumi, 2008), while creativity moves us out into doing. Faith-infused creativity, such as practicing singing, enables queer youth to *feel* and *do* religion and Christianity and to be a part of 'sounding religious, sounding queer'.

Queer, young 'scene space' and traditional music of Christian faith

In negotiating spaces of reconciliation through music, imagined and affective religious communities are made, where a focus on how 'age appropriate' musical expectations intersect with faith and sexuality in complex ways (J. Taylor, 2010). Though culturally varied, young adulthood is a significant point in the life-course and maps a period of intense and increasingly uneven and fragmented transition. Youth is often characterised by experimentation, exploration, and change, representing a stage in the life-course that involves intense identity work in order to develop an 'inner voice' and an ontological anchor, vis-à-vis a fast-paced, fragmented, and pluralistic globalised culture (see, for example, France, 2007; White and Wyn, 2011). From this perspective, life experiences and priorities may be at odds with the rigidity and structure that religion seems to impose and demand. Nonetheless, research has shown that religious faith and connections do matter for many young adults, significantly informing the construction of their biographical narratives and strategic life-planning (see, for example, Collins-Mayo and Dandelion, 2010).

'Traditional' congregational music, perceived as highly conservative, may be misconstrued as incompatible with young people's experiences and tastes. The relationship with 'tradition', as well as conflicting feelings about other queer music scene spaces such as clubs, emerged in complex ways for participants (for example, as noted by Stephanie enjoying singing 'very traditional hymns'). Some participants did indeed adhere to the perception of 'modern' congregational music as more appealing to young people, and some assumed the association of 'tradition' with a more conservative heteronormativity. Andrew (24) agrees that 'in terms of young people, very often, because we have a choral tradition, they are brought in through music, which is great', and Thomas (34) does not at all 'think [young] people want to go and sing hymns and stuff like that'. These quotes hold connotations of a *progressive*, and thus inclusive, church as one that incorporates more modern music. On what makes a church an inclusive space for young queers, Tim (18) argues 'the fact that they use modern worship songs [which] also really helps, instead of the old fashioned hymns' and Lucy (19) asserts, 'instead of singing hymns we have our own band and it is like Christian rock music.

These accounts are steeped in notions of progressive temporality, equating 'modern' sexuality and youth with non-traditional forms of music and church environments. Susan (19) makes this explicit as she reflects on what attracts young people to the Church, claiming, 'I think a different type of music, a kind of younger person music'. 'Old fashioned' hymns are substituted for 'a kind of younger person music', such as modern worship songs and Christian Rock music. Claire's narrative is particularly temporally evocative:

> I like a lot of the music and stuff and church needs to be constantly evolving. I have a lot of sympathy for some of the traditions of the church and I love some of the old music and stuff and I think that should be used. But I think it should be a constantly evolving process and not get stuck in one place. So it should be something that helps Christians on their journey, it shouldn't be the be all and end all of being a Christian. (Claire, 24)

The 'journey' described by Claire is perceived to be a linear one, reflecting the temporal considerations of many discourses of progressive Christianity and the changing role of homosexuality in religion over time (Bialecki, 2009; Boswell, 2009). Inclusive tolerance for non-heterosexuality is perceived as breaking away from tradition and 'constantly evolving', and this tolerance is partly performed and exercised through the changing role of music. Music represents tradition, change, or evolution, and Claire implies that music being 'stuck in one place' implies that views towards emerging young queers are also 'stuck'.

Andrea (24) reflects on how the role of music within the Metropolitan Community Church challenged her previously ingrained views of what music was 'appropriate' for the congregation. The following quote aptly captures Andrea's journey through consideration of what is 'appropriate':

> The music at the church I used to go to, we had an organ and a choir and a music group, and they sung the *appropriate* songs with the *appropriate* people, and we weren't really singing very progressive, not any 'rock' songs or anything, it was my Mum playing the guitar so it wasn't really, it was just nice to be able to go a little bit faster than the organ tends to go. So I found that some of the hymns were a bit old and boring and I tended not to know them at St. Tom's, like, even after 5 years I was getting a few of them but they still tended to be really obscure, so I wanted something where, because music is so important to me I was like, 'Well this is clearly something that I can express myself with' and so when I did go to MCC it was interesting that they've got such a mix of music, they've got the organ sometimes,

they've got traditional hymns that I know and they've got hymns that I don't, and songs rather than hymns in some cases, and they do have a bit more rocky…I know when I was younger I could not have imagined going to a church where anybody played the drums…But the girl who plays drums is really good and you can see that it's just her sheer enthusiasm coming through, and they only use it when it's *appropriate*, so it's quite nice, and with those sort of songs, even if you don't know what they are you can guess a bit more easily where they're going rather than it being really convoluted as a tune with unexpected cadences. So yes, music is important to me and I think that was one of my reasons for finding somewhere new to go to. (Andrea, 24, emphasis added)

The notion of propriety appears in Claire's description of more modern forms of worship, and the use of an unorthodox instrument, such as a drum kit, seeming incongruous with congregational music unless played 'appropriately'. Discourses of tradition often referred to the affectual environment, or to the particular objects, instruments, sounds, and even smells that make up a congregational space:

And in general I would go for those more informal churches…I'm not really a pews and bells and smells kind of person; I quite like that modern worship, that idea that you can dance around a bit and have fun and it's not just sitting and kneeling. (Claire, 24)

Day (2009) highlights the importance of affective relationships with religion, and the spatial environments described above reveal some of the insightful ways in which young, queer participants perceive these religious environments. Claire admits she is not really a 'pews and bells and smells kind of person', associating the iconic, formal, and traditional imagery of these symbols as out of touch with the 'kind of person' she has become. In contrast, 'modern worship', which is characterised through 'fun' music, makes her feel more comfortable in these spaces. Again, this modern, fun identity is highly embodied, where bodies can dance around instead of remaining stationary, sitting and kneeling, which is arguably perceived as 'appropriate' for the traditional congregation. The disparity between what is deemed to be 'modern' and what is 'appropriate' is resolved by Tim, who enjoys Christian Rock and Pop music because it is similar to mainstream music which is listened to by young people outside of the congregation (and presumably in other circles such as those found in queer social scenes), yet, which he interestingly positions as 'a lot better for you'.

> They'll normally do like Christian rock and then Christian folk music as well and then Christian pop music, as well. So there is just a nice ... it's almost like what you listen to now but a lot better for you! (Tim, 18)

This comment, in line with the others below, is loaded with deep-seated readings into how *non*-Christian music is somehow 'bad' for the spiritual soul and associated with deviant and even sordid spaces of sexuality. Tim admits he prefers these more modern venues because he believes a more 'traditional' space represents the more traditional Anglican and Catholic churches that can be more homophobic. However, in other parts of his life, he describes his keen participation in queer social scenes, claiming he usually ends up out on the 'scene' at the end of a night out. Spaces of reconciliation are also spaces of tension for Tim with his queer religious identity, and 'good' congregational music is directly juxtaposed with the 'bad' music found in queer spaces.

The complex affective relationship with musical spaces, both within the church and in social queer scenes, emerged strongly as a theme which disrupted the linear perception of modern music as more socially progressive than the more conservative traditions of congregational music. Comparisons with more mainstream clubbing scenes and youth subculture often became apparent when participants described modern church music:

> But then, young people are drawn into things where there's these big meet-ings with pop music and drums and flashing lights and they are pretending they're raves and things, and they're being drawn into that too. (Thomas, 34)

Again this affective description of drums and flashing lights resonates with the sensual experiences highlighted in research into spiritual connections in youth rave culture and trance music (Partridge, 2006; Sai-Chun Lau, 2006; Beck and Lynch, 2009). Partridge describes the deep throbbing pulse of music, the smell of incense, and the sensual experience of 'transcendence' in the spiritual trance parties in Goa where 'the music was connecting dancers to that which was beyond the mundane' (2006: 47). It is clear that the affective environment is integral to the relationship with congregational space, and music plays a key role. Unlike the alternative communities in rave music culture, which is often perceived to be accompanied by hallucinogenic drugs, the church spaces Thomas describes, that are designed to appeal to a younger, progressive audience, are merely 'pretending' to be raves. Mimicking this alternative music scene, it appears that 'new' spaces of congregational

modern worship can provide 'modern' environments without the illicit associations attributed to the queer clubbing scene, such as illegal drugs and sexualised spaces. Indeed, these more disreputable spaces on the clubbing youth scene, which Tim equates with being less 'good for you', were often disparaged by participants:

> I find clubs abominable in the extreme but I do like parties … I think it's that they're designed for you not to think. The music is loud so you can't talk to people, it's generally a thumping beat, which is supposed to engage the primal instincts or something, the rhythm, the chanting, primordial instinct, and I dislike the sexual aspects of it heavily. (Isabelle, 18)

> The whole sexualisation of clubs, hate them. I hate the music – I don't hate the music, I like a lot of music but like Jason Derulo when he says 'In my head, I see you all over me' and I think that's disgusting. I don't want to know that men are standing thinking that they're seeing me all over them in their heads. (Susan, 19)

These narratives strongly convey the discomfort queer religious participants felt in these clubbing spaces.. Taylor and Falconer (2014) argue that the symbolic 'dirt' attributed to sordid queer scene spaces can make some members of the LGBT community feel either 'in' or 'out of place' depending on class, gender, and sexuality (Hubbard, 2000; Wilkinson, 2009; Taylor, 2012). These 'dirty' spaces are often characterised through a 'sleazy' heightened sexuality, as well as being perceived as dark, dingy, and polluting affective environments. The disgust assigned to the 'sexual aspects' of clubs is closely linked to the 'disgusting' music and what this represents, as indicated by Susan. Similarly, Isabelle feels a significant discord with the rhythmic thumping beats, and this relationship with the music shapes senses of belonging in scene space. Whilst rejecting some of the more sexualised aspects of queer scene space, these participants felt closer to 'cleaner', traditional forms of congregational music, preferring traditional hymns and quiet spaces. Volume, peace, quiet, and loudness of music emerged as affective responses that represented feelings of 'fitting in'. Martin (21) expresses that 'musical worship is very important for me, singing hymns or playing quiet pieces during communion and that sort of thing'. Lesley informs us:

> I like dancing, I don't dance very well but I like dancing, which makes a club a good place, but I like music and I like to be able to hear music with a bit more depth and like the sounds to be crisp and clear and quiet … I've been in MCC a few years now and as that time has gone by I've realised that there are

lots of different valid ways of worshipping and I'm more open to mixing it up a bit; to having some traditional songs – some of which are really beautiful – to having [some] that are quite loud. So I think what I prefer is still contemporary songs and stuff but I am more open to having that mixture and appreciating that there are lots of different ways of worshipping, now, than I was before. (Lesley, 21)

How music is sensed through volume appears to represent affective forms of spirituality; 'loud' and 'excessive noise' is juxtaposed with 'beautiful' and 'quiet' hymns, with the latter signifying the traditional congregational music more closely affiliated with 'appropriate' forms of worship. Andrew claims he will avoid anywhere with 'excessive noise' and 'absolutely detest(s) nightclubs and busy clubs'. Similarly, Georgina (20) dislikes clubbing 'because it's loud and busy and it's harder to maintain intimate relationships because it's always so fast.

Jodi Taylor (2010) argues that queer temporalities in music scenes challenge what is 'appropriate' behaviour for aging queers. Further to this idea, some of the young people in this research reject certain spaces where certain (loud) music represents the sexualised spaces associated with queer youth. Instead, they preferred traditional hymns and quiet music which is 'better for you'. The assumption in much of the existing literature is that both young and queer-identified people would reject 'stuffy' congregational music in favour of a fun, dynamic, and youthful culture representing progressive modernity. Such assumptions are also reflected in some inclusive church practices, such as those of the Metropolitan Community Church, with participants being somewhat sceptical about 'happy clappy' approaches. It is clear that the more complex relationship with spaces of reconciliation for queer identifying religious youth disrupts these assumptions. The conception of congregational music as a peaceful, slow, spiritual experience contrasts with research that depicts religious music as a powerful embodied experience that moves the body into heightened transcendental states. Here, young queer participants often preferred calming, safer spaces believed to be more conducive to quietly reconciling sexuality and religion. As Ingalls et al. suggest:

While some Christian traditions maintain and cultivate powerful 'sensual experiences', for others the emphasis on experience has receded. Liturgical scholar Martin stringer suggests that in some contexts, Christian congregational music has become 'muzak': music in the background that is 'safe', innocuous and unobtrusive. (Ingalls et al., 2013: 20)

It is clear from participant narratives that spaces of reconciliation are spaces which are also 'safe, innocuous, and unobtrusive'. In this respect, the relationship with both traditional and progressive congregational music does not necessarily follow a clear, linear pathway. Rather, young queer Christians negotiate their faith and sexuality by responding to music in ways which reflect their needs in and during particular times and spaces.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the ways in which participants use music in various ways to express and 'make space' for their sexuality *and* religion as 'spaces of reconciliation' have been charted. (Dis)connection and belonging to different spaces of Christianity, as well as the queer community scene, are played out through young people's relationships with music. Queer music scenes, subcultural enclaves of alternative spirituality, and the more conservative, congregational music of hymns and traditional songs all carry with them connotations of 'imagined community'. Participants questioned feelings of belonging, connection, and alienation from these communities by inhabiting and embodying the multiple identities of youth, religion, and queer sexuality. Individual connections with music may not necessarily relate to a chosen identity as 'queer', 'religious', or 'young', but rather play out in unexpected ways. In contrast to the assumption that young queers feel ill at ease with 'tradition', many of our participants felt pulled towards traditional, choral songs and hymns despite their young queer embodiment.

At times, participants rejected the young(er), queer spaces of the clubbing scene or 'inappropriate' congregational music and modern instruments such as drum kits in churches. This disrupts the idea of a progressive temporality that is inherent in some of the queer literature that examines age and sexuality (J. Taylor, 2010), but also takes this in a different direction, muddying the 'age appropriateness' of both congregational music and queer youth scenes. The hyper-sexualised spaces of queer music scenes remained taboo for some participants, and they felt unsafe with specific music and its associated behaviour, deemed as 'bad for you'. Instead, they preferred the safe and 'good' spaces of traditional, spiritual music. Interestingly, this is often demonstrated through the fast pace and high volume of 'bad' music, which is contrasted with 'good'

music that is peaceful, slow, and 'lovely'. Religious youth who identify as queer negotiate and reconcile these complex identities through their relationship with music, revealing at times unexpected 'spaces of reconciliation'.

This relationship is highly embodied. Embodied and affective responses to congregational music emerged in complex and multiple ways in the narratives of queer identifying religious youth, and were significantly shaped by their gender, sexuality, and 'age appropriate' expectations. Bodies respond to music, and this changes at different times in the life-course depending on 'where you are', as indicated by research on aging and sexuality, but also where you are in the process, and personal journey, of 'reconciliation'. For example, we have seen that participants who feel comfortable and accepted in specific congregational communities, such as Susan, feel 'just right' when singing in a choir. As Percey (in Ingalls et al., 2013: 217) asks, 'how does faith feel?' This feeling very much depends on embodied responses to music which reproduce, distort, and reshape the identities of religious queers as they move within and between spaces of reconciliation. Percey notes that '(t)he study of music, then, can help us decode the rhythms and movements of faith communities' (in Ingalls et al., 2013: 222). This chapter takes this decoding a step further, to take note of how music can enable us to examine the spaces in between these communities and *Chapter 4: Online Settings: Becoming and Believing* continues with this focus on emotion and temporality via the concept of 'online embodiment'.

4
Online Settings: Becoming and Believing

Abstract: *This chapter examines Facebook, as well as social networking sites more generally. Engaging with the key concept of 'online embodiment' (Farquhar, 2012), it explores embodiment, emotion, and temporality as expressed via Facebook. Furthermore, it links back to the methodological dilemmas situated here in terms of the presence of Facebook in qualitative research with specific groups of young people. There is a lack of attention to religion in relation to music and social networking within existing literature and Chapters 3 and 4 therefore represent a unique point of departure. Both areas represent substantive fields where 'youth' are typically situated, and yet this gap in relation to* religion *persists.*

IN

LEAVING CLUES...
PET HATE
HOMOPHOBIA + TRANSPHOBIA IN THE CHURCH

PARENTS

SISTERS
OUT!

FAMILY

MAIN

CHURCH

WORSHIP BAND

eventual end goal:
interested in Men and Women

CHURCH

INSIDE OUT (sh)

SMALL GROUP

HOTHOUSE (DISCIPLESHIP)

BLOG

FACEBOOK

SPIRITUALITY
SEXUALITY

MENTOR

INTERNET

FRIENDS BACK HOME

(MOSTLY) NON-CHRISTIAN FRIENDS

THE GRAND WORLD OF FORA

MAZE

TREASURE TRAP

ISH

advice

COLLEGE

sharing stories

PHYSICS COURSE

sharing stories

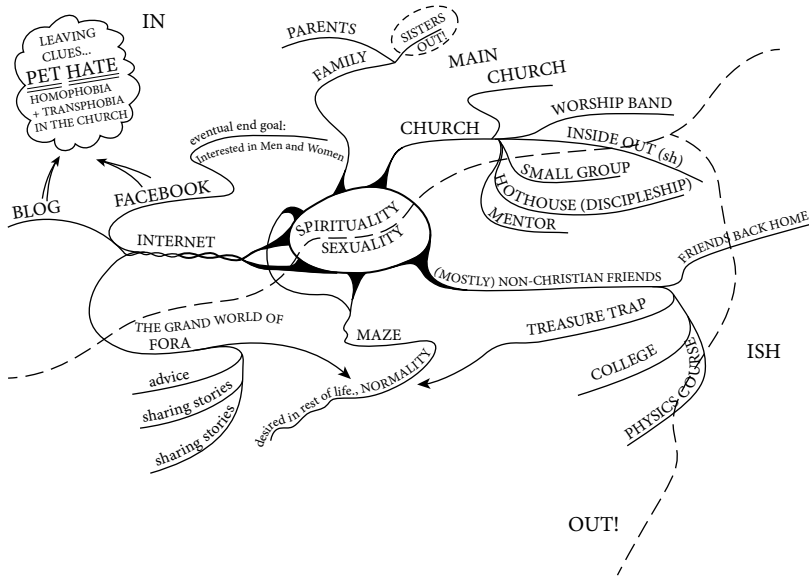desired in rest of life., NORMALITY

OUT!

FIGURE 4.1   *Online and offline spaces*

This chapter examines Facebook, as well as other social networking sites and online environments and communities more generally, engaging with the notion of 'online embodiment' (Farquhar, 2012). It revisits specific methodological dilemmas in qualitative research with specific groups of young people online. The lives of young people are increasingly played out online and young LGBTQ Christians are no different. Some have argued that the Internet can offer safe spaces, particularly for people of counter-normative sexualities, to construct an identity, forge connections, and articulate voices otherwise subjugated in some offline spaces. The complexities of 'coming out' as LGBTQ and religious are explored, in asking how Facebook 'makes space' to construct identities, forge connections, and articulate voices. Research on emotion, embodiment and temporality is engaged with here in order to gauge the opportunities afforded by (dis)embodied online profiles and the spaces and strategies utilised by queer religious youth. This involves examining how the role of (dis)embodiment in the construction of identities through online technology is developed, building upon earlier studies of Facebook to incorporate more recent theories around 'online embodiment' (Farquhar, 2012).

Facebook was an important arena within which to recruit queer religious youth as project participants, with researchers creating an online presence via the project's website (http://queerreligiousyouth.wordpress.com/) and a closed Facebook group (see Chapter 1). The lingering virtual 'connections' this left behind when respondents 'friended' researchers raised interesting methodological questions about the online private, personal, and embodied life of researchers-researched. Such considerations introduced some methodological dilemmas relating to the role of Facebook in qualitative research with young people, for whom communication is increasingly taking place through this medium, and whose online relationships have become normalised.

For example, it is useful to draw on a quote from one of the slightly older participants in the project who expresses a difficulty with the 'unhealthy' lack of control that can be associated with Facebook:

> I've been using Facebook for a couple of years now but I find it very strange and baffling still but I meet people that way too … Maurice [a younger associate] has a very different attitude to me with it because he'll talk to someone for two minutes and they'll be his friend on Facebook, whereas I am more circumspect. My two managers at work were friends on Facebook then I thought, 'Hang on, this is too weird, I don't want my managers knowing what I'm doing 24 hours a day' and so I had to delete them. I felt there was an element of control there that wasn't healthy. (Thomas, 34)

Thomas has reservations about allowing new 'friends' to access his profile. This reluctance is particularly the case with Facebook friends with whom he has been in a professional relationship, and indeed where there may be seen to be hierarchical power dynamics, such as with his managers in his workplace. The fieldwork evoked parallel concerns as young participants befriended researchers through their own personal Facebook sites.

The 'transition to friendship' (Oakley, 1981) between the researcher and researched is not a new dilemma for qualitative researchers, and has in fact been a longstanding feminist concern. Researchers have to 'live through and manage relationships which are simultaneously personal, emotional, physical, and intellectual' (Mason, 2002: 95), and these processes can be a particular issue for researchers who adopt more intimate practices, where participants can be at risk of manipulation or of feeling obliged to reveal information. The (de)friending of research participants on Facebook has led to a new set of methodological dilemmas:

> The introduction of social networking websites into the research context presents a new (technological) challenge for ethnographers in the face of an 'old' or traditional problem: of developing friendships with participants, sharing personal information and emersion into the field. (Hall, 2009: 266)

Whilst many of the participants saw disclosure of all aspects of their identity online as a positive step, the use of social networking sites raised interesting methodological questions about the online private and public lives of researchers (see Chapter 1). As researchers, our own online identities and public profiles can 'announce' us before we arrive in the field, at times 'outing' our own sexuality or religious affiliation to participants pre-interview. In addition, the 'private' online profiles of researchers can become part of the research process, particularly when the use of an existing profile adds legitimacy to a research project's call for participants and where young people request to be 'friends' post-project involvement. Nicola (21) sent a 'friend request' on Facebook when finalising the details of the first meeting with the researcher. Mindful of the sensitive questions posed in the interview, this request was accepted in the hope that an online potted history would provide reassurances about her participation in the project (the 'researched' becoming the 'researcher'). Whilst , was an unobtrusive 'friend', she was subsequently 'deleted' (after the fieldwork stage and having explained this), restoring the preferred reservations of profiles for 'private' rather than work communications.

The 'de-friending' of this young research participant upon completion of the empirical fieldwork was a decision that troubled the researchers working on the project. We struggled to reconcile the process of (dis)engaging (Lewis, 2009), particularly in light of the difficult and traumatic experiences spoken about (Reavey, 2011), with the lingering virtual 'connections' these online tools create. The need to identify a point where private lives and the research process remains separate has already been discussed by researchers who question the appropriate level of (de)attachment necessary when maintaining friendships with participants (Hall, 2009). Here, Hall argues that the current frameworks of ethical guidelines remain too formalised in their approach to ethnographic research, failing to take into account the reciprocal nature of interactions between the participant and the researcher. Having given their time, energy, and personal information to the project throughout the research process, Hall (2009) argues that it would then be unethical to ignore communication from participants after the research process had been

completed. This ethical dilemma points to the potentially exploitative nature of a friendship that is formed for the primary purpose of data collection, but which dissolves thereafter as the researcher loses time, interest, or resources.

It often seemed similarly uncomfortable to ask interviewees to expose at times highly conflicting or painful identities at times of significant transition (such as transition to university, employment, and/or exit form parental homes), whilst researcher identities remained only partially visible. That said, it was not uncommon for participants to report that they had 'Googled' the research, and indeed the researchers, gleaning, testing, and confirming personal and professional credentials in the reporting back of such searches via email and in person. Further dilemmas emerged when issues of confidentiality came into play, as the personal online profiles of the participants would become visible to the researcher's personal contacts if shared via electronic mediums, and indeed through participants' blogging of, for example, research participation. In order to adhere to the ethical guidelines of the project, it was necessary to consider, stretch, and uphold the increasingly tricky issues of confidentiality and to protect participants. Befriending and 'de-friending' on personal Facebook pages produced significant dilemmas around how researchers working with young people then exit the field, leaving behind these 'virtual' connections in similarly exiting the online field.

Negotiating such dilemmas involved taking seriously the fact that digital methodologies are becoming increasingly central in youth-centered research projects (McDermott and Roen, 2012). Online tools used to access this virtual field, such as the project's website and the Facebook group, were used for recruitment purposes and allowed participants to interact with the project and other respondents beyond the interview stage. This interaction meant participants were able to post links and document their views and experiences on a host of issues pertaining to religion and sexuality. This included links to their own blogs, and provided a forum for sometimes quite heated debates about coming-out in church, identity categories[1], and the language of homophobia. Thus, whilst respondents were already active in the blogosphere and on social media, the virtual space created by the project (Facebook group and website) to recruit and communicate with participants continued to be used by respondents to interact with each other and promote their own views on their intersecting identities. 'New media' became an unforeseen

platform for our participants, recognising that ' "everyday life" for much of the world is becoming increasingly technologically mediated' (Murthy, 2008: 849).

'Coming Out' as queer and religious online: negotiating (dis)embodied identities: 'I just said it on Facebook, typed in "I'm gay" and I hit "enter" '

Facebook, as a medium of social communication, has been identified as an increasingly important tool for identity construction. Interestingly, earlier studies make a distinction between the corporeal presence of the body in localised, face-to-face social encounters and interactions and the disembodied online profile, where new opportunities for claiming identities are facilitated by virtual forums free of the 'limitations' of embodiment. Referring to Facebook in particular, Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin (2008: 1817) claim that 'the combination of disembodiment and anonymity creates a technologically mediated environment in which a new mode of identity production emerges'. So, how are the identities of queer religious youth constructed, negotiated, and presented through online social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as other forms of virtual communication such as Skype? Here the focus is on the 'coming out' or 'outing' of queer religious youth through such online technology, highlighting the complex opportunities provided by Facebook to facilitate the transition from 'private' to 'public' identities. In considering this aspect of the study, this approach takes a closer look at the role of (dis)embodiment in the construction of identities through online technology, developing earlier scholarly studies on Facebook to incorporate more recent theories around 'online embodiment' (Farquhar, 2012). A key element of constructing online identities is the profiling of identities on Facebook. Profiling key characteristics of the self, such as religious or political views, preferences in music or film, membership to social groups, sexual orientation, and relationship status is central to what Farquhar (2012: 2) terms 'online embodiment':

> Facebook profiles can be thought of as an online embodiment of real persons using the site. The term 'embodiment' refers in this work to the individual's representative in a computer-mediated interaction [...] The profiles have conversations with each other; when we talk to someone online, we are talking to his or her profile [...] In the virtual world of Facebook, this embodiment

is present even when the Face booker signs off. Other users can still interact with it.

The concept of 'online embodiment' is a key point of engagement, and building on and problematising online embodiment is an important development for the role of Facebook in the case study of queer religious youth.

Research participants identified, sometimes awkwardly, as both religious, often specifically Christian, and queer, and have their Facebook profiles were of significant importance in amending and updating these allegiances and (dis)identifications. The 'About' page on Facebook was perceived as a culmination of key characteristics which were seen as constructing a particular public and personal persona. Many participants suggested that religious views and 'interested in' (that is, sexually interested in men, women, or men and women[2]) were, in conjunction with photographs and images of the self, equally important in the construction of their embodied identities online. Facebook allows users to write a description of themselves in their own words and to express characteristics of the self. Georgina highlights the immediate effect of disclosing information about her religion and bisexuality:

> Like say on Facebook or something, you've got a little box to fill in a brief description of you, their religious views and sexual orientation going to go in there definitely. The bisexual thing, the Christian thing, are definitely going to be in 200 words or less to write it down. But then so will the fact that I have brown hair; I'm a brunette, I'm a woman, I'm bisexual, they're not more important than each other. (Georgina, 20)

Interestingly, Georgina discusses her Christian and sexual identities as being as integral to her Facebook profile as her gender and the more visual embodied features such as hair colour. In describing herself ('brunette woman') she thus strongly claims that her queer and religious identities are not more or less important than these other foundations. In constructing an identity in less than 200 words, Georgina asserts that her bisexuality and Christianity are *definitely* 'going to go in there', indicating the vehemence of her desire to express the appearance, balance, and reconciliation of these identities as central to her profile description. The appeal of the Facebook profile is that it conveys an instant display of the self, and therefore key markers – such as image – become immediately registered by the viewer alongside religion, sexuality, and other such typologies. In other parts of Georgina's interview, it is clear that

being Christian and queer is more important to her then her hair colour, but these 'features' are balanced and sometimes disjointed in moving between the online and offline worlds. There are certain ways in which marking the self online and offline are different; in an interview there is more 'space' (over 200 words and no 'little box') and time to detail the complex interplays of identity matters beyond the Facebook profile, which is designed to register immediate affects via limited characters.

Not all queer religious youth had adopted such a 'definite' approach to their online Facebook profiles. Helen (20) used her project mind-map to explore the everyday spaces where she is 'out', for example in her college; some select Christian groups, certain online forums and the student union society. In other spaces, such as her regular church, this had remained hidden and Helen had not disclosed her sexuality to her parents. Her Facebook profile and her online embodiment was an in-process space in which, despite her religious identity and views being present, her sexuality remained omitted. Be that as it may, some participants, such as Helen, saw 'updating' the sexual preference of their online identities to be the culmination of this process, viewing coming out to online networks as an important milestone. Where Helen is only 'out' as bisexual to a select group of people, her 'eventual end goal' on her mind-map is to update her Facebook profile with 'interested in: men and women'.

The perception of coming out online as the ultimate and fully visible stage of this transitional process demonstrates the central significance of Facebook profiles in the lives of the young people involved in this study. Publically stating and profiling both 'religious views' as well as 'interested in' is key to the construction of the embodied, online self, without which the profile is determined to be partially incomplete. How queer religious youth manage this reconciliation is played out through this online embodiment (Farquhar, 2012; McDermott and Roen, 2012). For example, when Isabelle discusses her sexuality as *not* part of her public identity 'in any way', she immediately supports this claim by referring to the non-appearance on her Facebook profile:

> It's not part of my identity in any way; in Facebook I don't put that I'm 'interested in ...'. (Isabelle, 18)

It appears that, for Isabelle, and other queer religious youth, in order to truly publically live through potentially conflicting identities, these must be reflected by their online embodiment through Facebook. This is somewhat unsurprising seeing as Facebook has been positioned as

epitomising the ultimate identity constitution and formation (van Dijck, 2013).

Facebook profiles are routinely viewed and judged by others (Ivcevic and Ambady, 2012), and therefore the online embodiment of the profile is often the first port of call for those wishing to convey queer and religious identities. For Andrew, the decision to remove his sexuality from his Facebook profile was directly influenced by his religious identity and role within the church:

> [S]o I am not described as being interested in either men or women. And part of that was obviously due to my profession – obviously Facebook, as much as we believe it is private can become public – and because of my role within the church; I just wanted to be sensitive. It was my own way of saying my private life is my private life; I don't feel the need any more to advertise in that sense. Those who know me and those who are special to me in my life know who I am and that's all that matters, I don't need everybody to know it. (Andrew, 24)

The negotiation and re-emergence of the public-private divide has been ever-present in gender and sexualities scholarship, and has continued to be reshaped in social and legislative research (Richardson and Monro, 2013). Here we see how this divide is worked out in perceptions of Facebook as the 'public' space within which private lives need to be declared, managed and performed accordingly. Andrew's sexuality is now completely removed from Facebook, and is notable in its absence. The 'interested in' section of the profile is not left blank, but completely removed from view. This absence resonates with earlier work into the 'showing and telling' of identity on Facebook, such as that of Zhao et al. (2008: 1830), who argue that unlike heterosexual endorsements which were openly expressed on Facebook through photographs, declarations of heterosexual romance and marriages, the bisexual participants in their study expressed their sexuality in interviews but opted not to share their sexual orientation on their Facebook page. The declaration of identity on the Facebook profile comes with arguably irreversible consequences:

> 'Virtual selves' commonly refers to online selves and 'real selves' to offline selves, but, as has been shown here, Facebook identities are clearly real in the sense that they have real consequences for the lives of the individuals who constructed them. (Zhao et al., 2008: 1832)

It can be ascertained from Andrew's account that this decision is a calculated one, assessed through the potential consequences of adding

this information to his Facebook profile, in order to remain 'sensitive' to his professional role and responsibilities within the church. This highlights a shift in the 'full identity' of participants being displayed through Facebook profiling, as exemplified by Georgina and Isabelle above, as Andrew consciously attempts to create boundaries between his public profile and personal identities. Only those close to him have access to this information, and Andrew chooses this privacy as a form of protection.

The transition from being partially 'out' as both queer and religious in some spaces in everyday life to incorporating both identities is increasingly mediated through online profiling, amalgamating previously separate or fragmented identities. However, these identities can also be consciously removed from Facebook profiles, in order to give a stronger preference to either sexuality or religion as the publicised 'full' identity of online embodiment, while keeping sexuality (or in other cases religion) *dis*embodied from the Facebook realm.

In some cases, the 'showing without telling' conceptualisation of Facebook identities (Zhao et al., 2008) became increasingly apparent in the experiences of participants who actively came out through the medium of social networking and other online technologies. Research into sexualities has produced extensive literature on the complex social, emotional and political processes of coming out as LGBTQ. While there is a growing body of work focusing on how these processes are practiced through the medium of Facebook and other online technologies (Munt et al., 2002), there is significant room to merge these practices with the online (dis)embodiment of Facebook profiling. Gloria has not discussed her bisexual identity with her younger brother but conceded:

> He's probably picked it up, like I'm on Twitter and I think that's part of my description, so he'd be a bit dim if he hadn't picked it up by now but he just hasn't mentioned it. (Gloria, 20)

The assumption that Gloria's brother will 'pick up' her sexuality from her Twitter account is testimony to the power of online embodiment, and implies that to be 'shown' through these social networking sites is as effective as being 'told'. Other participants recounted similar positions:

> People kind of clicked on that I was gay because it was on Facebook that I was gay. You can't hide it; I'm not going to hide it from anyone. (Nicola, 21)

> I just worked myself up to the point where I couldn't deal with telling anyone face to face and … I was chatting [online to her friend] about something but her boyfriend had said something about where he worked in the summer

> there was only two women and they were both gay, and I made some references and basically told her. (Evelyn, 26)

> Obviously when I started seeing my current boyfriend it went on Facebook for all of my friends there, and they then knew. (James, 17)

Coming out through Facebook and Twitter muddles the distinction between online embodiment and the embodiment of face-to-face interactions. In Evelyn's case, she 'couldn't deal' with the corporeal, tangible embodiment of coming out through a face-to-face interaction, thus preferring to 'show without telling' online.

(Dis)embodiment, (dis)connection and temporality: managing emotions through online spaces

(Dis)embodiment outside online spaces continued to emerge as a key issue when negotiating queer and religious identities in different spaces and times. There appeared to be a strong temporal element to communicating online, where certain aspects of the young people's identities were more strongly illuminated at particular times. In addition to Facebook, Skype also featured heavily as a form of online technology, allowing specific presences. In contrast to 'showing' her sexual identity, Georgina discusses how it is her religious identity which comes out more prominently during her Skype sessions with her parents:

> It's hilarious, I talk to my parents once a week, on Skype, and I generally do it on a Sunday afternoon and all they hear about is St James. (Georgina, 20)

Inhabiting a specific time largely influences the fact that Georgina predominantly discusses her role in the church during her weekly communication with her parents; these sessions take place on a Sunday afternoon directly after her church attendance, thus religious activities are fresh in her mind. The choice to describe this level of religious involvement as 'hilarious' implies that Georgina is reflectively aware of the disproportionate weight she gives to her religious identity at these times (as opposed to her sexuality or other key constructions of the self). Were these encounters with her parents embodied at different times these perceptions, feelings, and identities may also be different. This temporary online embodiment was, at times, favoured by participants who discussed the merits of disclosing their sexuality to a parent via online media rather than in a face-to-face encounter. This differed slightly from

the 'showing without telling' coming out of earlier examples, as this was based on 'telling' through narrative articulation, yet remained disembodied and temporal:

> [On the subject of coming out to her mother] I thought a video Skype call actually worked quite well because you could see each other and could respond to each other properly and you weren't going to have that awful 'still seeing each other for the first time' if you'd spoken about it on the phone or written a letter. But then at the same time, when it was finished, that was it, I could sort of exhale and say 'Oh, I can't believe I've just done that' and not have to make polite chat for the rest of the evening. (Andrea, 24)

Andrea felt a welcome sense of relief due to the (dis)connectedness afforded by video chat. Nervous about the process of disclosing her sexuality, this relief was twofold. Firstly, Andrea acknowledged the benefit of a limited time frame for the conversation, after which the encounter could then be 'shut down', such that Andrea and her mother would not have to share awkward affects in the same space. Embodied shame and internalised heterosexism have been identified as key emotions integral to the process of coming out. The process of Andrea's disclosure to her mother is indeed a highly embodied and visceral one; Andrea exclaims that, after the Skype communication had been terminated, she could 'exhale' and allow her body to recover from the emotional process of the interaction. Secondly, however, Andrea was glad that this Skype encounter was, at least temporarily, *embodied enough* to avoid these difficulties having to occur at a later date. Andrea describes how seeing and responding to each other 'properly' meant that the 'first time' moment of when she would have to see her mother had been successfully avoided.

Researchers in sociology and the geography of emotion have argued that emotions such as anger, pride, and shame can greatly affect the body in different ways (Ahmed, 2004; Taylor and Falconer, 2014). It is interesting, therefore, to think through what *happens* to the visceral body, as opposed to the online body (for example the Facebook profile) during communication in online environments, and how this may affect the negotiation and facilitation of queer and religious identities for young people. Farquhar (2012) outlines the 'control' that can be maintained by online embodiment as opposed to the uncontrolled body, which can let down an interaction through, for example, blushing and twitching:

> The performer also gives both intentional and unintentional cues to his audience/audiences. Intentional cues are controlled messages and, in the current

study, almost all visual components of profile are considered intentional. Unintentional cues are often, in face-to-face interactions, non-verbal and include blushing, eye twitches, seating, and so on'. (Farquhar, 2012: 2).

Emotions such as anger, shame, and relief may indeed be prominent within sexual disclosures and can be managed and played out through social media. Andrew (24) describes the embodied emotions involved in coming out to his father via Facebook:

Interviewer: That's so interesting, you let Facebook do the outing for you?
Yes, it was wonderful. It sounds a little bit cowardly when I say it in that sense but in some ways, to the other person it might be a benefit because it gives them time to think about what they've seen and what they understand about me before they actually communicate that back. Anger ... it can be quite a destructive thing, it's how you respond to it. I remember when I first told my mum, there was no such thing as Facebook in 2001 so I had to tell her verbally; and again, it was that shocked response whereas I think if she'd seen something or understood it or saw it first, she might have had time to think about her response. So I can see the benefit of it, definitely, that approach to coming out (Andrew, 24).

Returning to the strategy of 'showing without telling' through Facebook, Andrew expresses his 'cowardly' guilt regarding how 'wonderful' it was to be able to 'come out' to his father without a visceral, embodied encounter. Through Facebook he was able to avoid the difficult embodied emotions, delaying face-face encounters and allowing a pause to think 'backstage' (Munt et al., 2002). Julian (20), also happy to avoid what he refers to as a 'weird situation', supports the idea of temporally controlled encounters online when 'coming out', claiming 'I think it's pretty good because it avoids a blazing row, it avoids saying anything in the heat of the moment'. The 'heat' of the visceral body is removed from the controlled, online embodiment of the Facebook profile. Through Facebook, it appears there are opportunities for emotions to take place and be placed without and prior to face-to-face interactions, and this has greatly benefited queer religious youth in their journeys of transition.

Online spaces, new opportunities?

Online spaces were largely identified as a gateway to new opportunities for negotiating queer religious identities for young people, where other,

more tangible spaces had previously appeared restrictive. Ganzevoort et al. (2011) investigate the clash between religion and homosexuality and examine strategies for dealing with 'religious identity confusion', arguing that individuals may eventually end up breaking down due to the complications inherent in living two completely different lives. Online networking arguably created 'new' and, at times (by no means always), safer spaces for young, queer Christians to work through their emotional and embodied identities:

> I remember sitting up all night and I had two Bibles and the Internet and I was like, 'Hmm … These feelings, this Bible, it just doesn't fit together!' and so I did put my Bibles away and I was like, 'I just have to put those Bibles away until I can work out what's going on in my head. I have to leave everything'. (Nicola, 13)

This extract from Nicola does not pinpoint a specific social networking site or blog, instead referring, somewhat powerfully, to the vast, inviting realm of 'the Internet'. Here, the Internet is perceived as opening up a new world for Nicola at a time when she is struggling to reconcile her identities as queer and religious. Sitting up alone all night in her bedroom, Nicola feels that the materiality of the 'two bibles' have become insufficient to help her resolve 'what's going on' in her head. In contrast, the realm of online information, networking sites, and virtual communication is perceived to provide endless (if not absolute) knowledge and support which, unlike Nicola's previous religious knowledge and experience, has not yet reached its limitations.

It can be argued that Facebook and online networking can provide forums for queer religious youth who, during their identity transition, feel neither comfortable in LGBT 'scene space' nor attending church. Thomas (34) and James (17) reflect on 'fitting into place' through online environments:

> I think they [queer religious youth] are disconnected to going to church every week but I still think they have faith, and having the internet is another way of expressing it, so instead of meeting people in a church, they are connecting with people from all over the world. (Thomas, 34)

> To be fair, most of my friends are people I've not met. I'm a member of several online communities and because of my interest in computer games with that comes being involved in these communities and I'm quite heavily involved in them, so a lot of my friends are older, younger, gay, straight, Christian, Muslim, secular. I've got friends who live in Australia, Canada … Close to home I'm quite good friends with the people at this centre and I've got

> friends from college who I don't socialise much with outside of Facebook and social media as much, just friends my age group locally and then people from around the world, online. (James, 17)

'Coming out', or indeed 'outing', through online social networking can provide opportunities for queer religious youth that offer a complex relationship between negotiating identities through online spaces or through face-to-face interactions. Participants in the project found the space of Facebook and other networking sites and technologies (such as Skype and Twitter) helpful in negotiating religious-sexual identities. The above quote hints at the privilege inherent to such usages and imaginings, as a mobile subjectivity is brought into effect in being 'everywhere' in multi-faith global connections, again returning us to the material conditions of (dis)embodied presences. Earlier studies of Facebook and identity construction as relatively disembodied (Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin, 2008) and position online identities as constructed separate from those of the 'present', corporeal body. The project data more closely resonates with recent conceptualisations of Facebook profiles as 'online embodiment' in itself.

Conclusion

The Facebook profile has come to be widely understood as the ultimate identity formation, featuring instantaneous information about bodies, identities, religion, sexuality, and religious affiliations. However, this chapter has explored the difficulties and complexities involved when certain aspects of young people's identities collide. In the case of queer religious youth, and often during periods of intense transition, exploration and change, Facebook and online networks and communication can be seen as a (new) space of deep significance, as evidenced through this chapter. In contrast to online technologies creating difficulties, risks, and unwelcome exposure, many of the participants worked with these new spaces in order to produce opportunities for negotiation between their religious and queer identities. Existing research into sexualities and the process of coming out as LGBT has shown that this continues to be a highly embodied and emotional journey, layered with complex social histories and discourses of shame, pride, anger, and fear (Hubbard, 2000; Taylor and Snowdon, 2014). The young people

involved in this research have highlighted how online technology can be used as a tool to negotiate this process in different ways. Using the spaces of Facebook, Twitter, and Skype to remove the visceral body from an otherwise highly embodied face-to-face encounter at times provides welcome respite for young people. These mediums can create new timescales as well as spaces, both speeding up and slowing down the temporal process of expressing queer and religious identities. Again, this can distort earlier patterns of the 'before and after' effect of 'coming out', and help avoid undesired embodied presences in particular moments of interaction or discovery. There is perhaps a need to examine more closely the role of embodiment, disconnection, and emotional complexities in social research into Facebook and other forms of social media. The conceptualisation of 'online embodiment' can incorporate a greater wealth of emotional and embodied geographies that can benefit the analysis of future research, beyond the specific cohort of this study.

Finally, this chapter has highlighted researchers' own online embodiment in the qualitative research process, as implicated in methodological developments and research advancements in and through Facebook. Befriending and 'de-friending' on personal Facebook pages evoked significant dilemmas for how researchers working with young people then exit the field. As researchers, it could be argued that we can never fully exit our online bodies from the field, as social networking is always present – only the removal of all Facebook and Twitter profiles entirely would be an 'end' to the research project. This dilemma does not end with this chapter, and for the future of qualitative research in a time of digital technology, such complications *should* reshape the formality of research ethics and 'make space' for such complexities. The next chapter *Making Space for Young Lesbians? Gendered Sites, Scripts and Sticking Points* further explores the specifically gendered intersections of public-private domains in the production of queer religious subjectivities and (dis)identifications.

Notes

1   Tom (20) identifies as transgender (female to male) and reflected at length about the difficulties the 2011 Census for England and Wales posed in its confusion of sex and gender ('They only had a sex category, not gender, and

when i [sic] asked them about it they were at first confused and then basically told me to write my gender, which means they had confused sex with gender').

2   One of the key features on the Facebook profile is to tick a box which indicates your sexual interest in 'men', 'women' or 'men and women'. If selected, this information appears on the Facebook profile page, If not selected, this information remains blank.

5

Making Space for Young Lesbians? Gendered Sites, Scripts and Sticking Points

Abstract: *This chapter offers a specific exploration of the young lesbians engaged in the project, in recognition of the persistent gendering of religious-sexual spaces. It asks how gender and sexuality are constructed in places of worship and religious institutional settings. What institutional norms persist regarding gender and sexuality and how do youth negotiate these norms and experiences? This chapter explores this aspect of the study, illustrating how religious participation can convey (de)legitimation within family, community, and society.*

FIGURE 5.1   *'Fabulous and Beautiful'*

This chapter offers a specific exploration of the experiences of the young lesbians involved in the project, in recognition of the persistent gendering of religious-sexual spaces. As such, it specifically focuses on a subset of data, involving 16[1] young lesbian women who identify as Christian. This chapter explores intersectional convergences and divergences, illustrating

how religious participation can lead to (de)legitimation within family, community, and society. Such (de)legitimation is revealed through the unpacking of scripts of inclusion and exclusion, which are recirculated via hetero and homo normative ideals, and perpetuated and contested in the context of intersectional equalities legislation (Richardson and Munro, 2013). Research has highlighted that young people's attitudes about gender are increasingly egalitarian, with some embracing feminism anew (Redfern and Aune, 2010; Shipley and Young, 2014). Indeed, there are new freedoms and constraints, including the empowerment of gender and sexual dissidents (Weeks, 2007), sexualisation of social media, gendered sexual norms that result in bullying and self-harm (Brown and Bakshi, 2014), and continued contestations about sexual and gender matters within religious spaces (Hunt and Yip, 2012). Here, the focus is on the highly gendered and heteronormative 'role models', 'mentors', and (familial) mediations experienced by young lesbian Christians as intersecting public-private domains in the production of queer religious subjectivities and (dis)identifications (Aune, 2008).

Sexual-religious 'intersections' may be located within contested, and increasingly globalised, policy reformations which challenge and consolidate key sites, institutions, and practices of heteronormativity and religiosity (Jackson, 2011). This is apparent in relation to same-sex marriage rights, international legislation and debates, and Christian 'backlash' responses against more integrative calls for inclusion. For some, such policies signal the 'arrival' of more liberal politics (Weeks, 2007), but for those still firmly attached to religious values, as rooted in heteronormativity and predicated on supposedly 'natural' laws and assumptions of a traditional gender division based on sexual reproduc-tivity (as *also* mirrored in religious/legal policy), these changes can be unsettling. The nuclear family, combined with traditional gender roles, is still a foundational pillar of many religions. Yet gender and sexual inequalities may be actively contested by participation in congregations, levels of ordination, and specific sacraments (such as marriage) (see Machacek and Wilcox, 2003; Aune, 2006). Again, young people are often sidelined within such debates and discussions.

These absences and contentions emerge when considering sexualised and gendered 'role models' and 'mentors' for young lesbian Christians, as mediated by intersecting public-private domains which produce *and* queer religious subjectivities and (dis)identifications. Alongside the passing of equalities legislation (Monro and Richardson, 2010) sits

the arguably contradictory and uncomfortable fact of continued male-dominated presences and church hierarchies, impacting on the making of religious and queer space as both gendered and sexualised. Such 'heteronormativity' is still the pervasive context within which young lesbians (re)frame their religious participation, from the public political-policy level, to the more intimate, everyday level, where the language of familialism (dis)allows and (re)circulates heteronormativity and, in the context of same-sex rights, certain 'homonormativities' (Duggan, 2003; Puar, 2007).

This chapter focuses on young people's understanding of religion as made up of fields which they enter, negotiate, participate in, and withdraw from, at times searching for and at others rejecting the role models and mentors provided in 'making space'. Frequently, younger (single) adults were welcomed into churches through an implicit – and sometimes explicit – *familial* framing of community, care, grouping, and identity. 'Space' is not simply theirs, or there for the taking, but rather created through processes, actions, and policies, including those which contest the place of women in church leadership roles (exemplified in recent tensions around the ordination of women bishops in the Church of England). *Gendered* exclusions operate alongside and intersect with *sexualised* exclusions and the purpose of this chapter is to unpack scripts of inclusion and exclusion in relation to young lesbians in church (O'Brien, 2014). Several studies have shown how queer, identified members of Christian churches have developed strategies of adaptation and resistance, reworking scripts of inclusion and exclusion, 'coming out' (or not) and troubling heteronormative theologies of sexuality (O'Brien, 2004, 2014; Wilcox, 2006). Beyond the recognisable material 'spaces' of religion (for example, in the sacralisation of space and the construction of places of worship, see Gorman-Murray and Nash, 2014), religion infiltrates the everyday, intimate, and political spaces of family, community, and identity, which are shaped and stretched by gendered sexual-religious relations. 'Queer religion' occurs within the intersections of personal, familial, organisational, and cultural domains.

'Heteronormativity' is central here, understood as a set of institutional practices that systematically legitimise and establish heterosexuality as the norm for sexual, and broader, *social* relations. Heterosexuality becomes the everywhere and nowhere organising principle of social life (Hockey et al., 2007) and the assumption that structures social relations (Weeks et al., 2001) and moral boundaries (Ahmed, 2006). Rahman

and Jackson (2010) argue that heteronomativity is often an invisible and silent, yet pervasive and entrenched, structure, also working as an 'assemblage of regulatory practices, which produces intelligible genders within a heterosexual matrix that insists upon the coherence of sex/gender/desire' (Chambers, 2006: 667). Highly gendered and heteronormative 'role models', 'mentors', and (familial) mediations are experienced by young lesbian Christians, and these intersect across public-private domains in the production of queer religious subjectivities and (dis)identifications. In bringing such domains to light, Macke (2014) offers 'que(e)rying' as a distinct model of research that integrates ethnographic methods with queer theory and praxis. Such 'que(e)rying' becomes a methodological strategy oriented toward the dialectical relationship between sex, gender, sexualities, and religious practices, organisations, and cultures. Many of the below examples and accounts are drawn from participants' diary entries, extending beyond fieldwork and/or religious space and highlighted within the dialectical public-privates at play.

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

On 21 November 2012, the Church of England's governing body, the General Synod, voted against allowing women to become bishops (2012). The young women participants were particularly incensed. What re-emerged in these public controversies was a re-visitation and recirculation of traditional gender and religious roles (and 'role models'), whereby leadership and public presences were legitimised, in official votes at least, as specifically male. This questions the 'coming forward' of young lesbian Christians in producing a queer religious space, a constraint which sat alongside continued gendered, familial, and heteronormative roles/spaces more generally. Andrea was writing in her project diary when news of the vote was broadcast live and interrupted her entry with the following:

> *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?
> (Andrea, 24)

Andrea was in the process of negotiating both her sexual and her religious
identities but felt this ruling undermined the progress she had made and
would alienate friends who might see her Christian faith as archaic and
irrelevant, which was further reflected in her diary: 'it is entirely possible
to be young queer and Christian. Sometimes it is easier than others (e.g.
it will be embarrassing to be a Christian within my social groups follow-
ing the rejection of women bishops – hopefully this will ease)'.

Evelyn (26) 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 frustration at a lack of not only women
but non-heterosexual role models in the Church.

The number of women in leadership roles, regardless of denomina-
tion, was a common concern amongst participants. At one end of this
extreme, Kelly (26) complained in her interview that there were too
many women in leadership roles at her MCC church:

> There are more men in the congregation, always has been, but our leadership
> team is almost entirely women, which is just as bad. Actually it's almost worse
> because if there were more men in the congregation there should be more
> men in leadership to reflect the congregation. (Kelly, 26)

Similarly, Claire (24) acknowledged that there were more women 'in
charge' in her local MCC, arguing that this was important to disrupt
traditional heteronormative leadership structures, which still arguably
persist beyond a numerical 'diversity count' (Ahmed, 2012):

> [P]eople are used to seeing 70% men and 30% women standing at the front of
> a church, when it's the other way round, they perceive it as a huge problem.
> Even if it's 50:50, they think because it's more women than they're used to
> seeing, they think of it as a problem. We had one person complain that there

weren't enough men in leadership and I just felt like saying, 'If it was the other way round and there were more men than women, you wouldn't even notice because that's normal.' (Claire, 24)

Participants also spoke of witnessing negative reactions from congregants towards authority figures because of their gender. Debbie (30) had attended a Pentecostal church when she was younger where a woman was discouraged from becoming a priest: 'there was a female person in charge who was involved in the church and it was before female priests and she was so hated because she wanted to be a priest! I thought that was awful. She has become a priest now but she's still getting negative connotations for being there'. Claire (24) had attended an Anglican service close to her university and commended the female curate: 'she has a PhD in Theology and she preached really, really well and she preached about women in leadership. And she obviously had a positive view on that being a female curate standing up there'. However, Claire noted a hostile reaction to the curate for positioning herself outside of traditional biblical gender norms: 'afterwards, she had a queue of 18 year old undergraduates, men mostly, going up to her telling her how she was wrong because the bible says women should stay quiet. And I just thought, "How dare you?!"'

Within Helen's Charismatic church, an overt message of equality between the sexes was preached: 'men and women are equal, they just have their different strengths'. Helen agrees with this in principle: 'of course only women can have babies, yes, that's obvious'. However, she has begun to rally against this dictate as she realised the restrictions it placed on women and the hypocrisy of the leadership structure:

> [T]he restrictions tended to apply more to women than to men, even though, you know, these perceptions that women can do the kids' stuff but men can also do that if they want, however the elders of the church are men and, 'No, women can't do that', and just this dichotomy and sort of inequality which most people are saying, 'No, no! What are you talking about? Men and women are equal' but then you look at the structure there and think, 'No, that's not true at all'. (Helen, 20)

As these accounts show, there are persistent gendered and heteronormative scripts which shape the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, as evidenced in public debates and congregational conversations and challenges; thus the (lesbian) leader can be limited in the, often bracketed and cordoned off, space that she can take up.

Where men dominated, some participants, like Helen, spoke of the informal leadership roles women could take on, particularly as wives to (male) authority figures, with women's access to authority formulated through heterosexual marriage: 'They have the authority role as elder's wife, which is like elder but it is not elder because they are the elder's wives, if you know what I mean. I think they have as much influence in the church as the actual elders, but the official authority is that of the elders; that's how it works' (Helen, 20).

Female leaders, however, often represented a more inclusive, liberal church to participants. Estelle (25) described her local Anglican church in these terms:

> [I]t's quite diverse and it's a woman vicar, which I've found to mean that they are more liberal and do actually dare to talk about things like gay stuff and race and stuff. So that's cool...the vicar there, she openly talked about LGBT stuff and women's stuff in sermons, and that's made me want to go back. (Estelle, 25)

At least four participants had aspirations, were in the process, or were already acting as lay or ordained ministers of their churches. Claire (24) would consider ordination and has made tentative plans with her wife to 'plant' a new church in Wales. Kelly (26) is training on a non-stipendiary basis for ordination with MCC and is considering a chaplaincy career for the future. Andrea (24) has acted as a lay minister in the past and Kirsty (30) has 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 who identify as lesbian.

Kirsty (30) 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 despite pressure from their mutual friends from church to stay together:

> So a 'friend' of ours came round with him [her estranged husband] and said to me, and I was always quite close to her, she was a little bit older than me and had a family and stuff and said how disappointed she was and how sinful it was and how bad I was behaving and didn't know what I was doing and really upset me. (Kirsty, 30)

Suspecting that her church leaders and placement mentors, would not support her new relationship, she initially 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 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, 30)

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'.

   Kirsty now worships at a Fresh Expressions church, which works with a broad range of denominations and traditions (Anglicanism in Kirsty's case) to encourage them to form new congregations alongside more traditional churches, primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church or have left in the past. Thus, they differ markedly from mainstream churches, often worshipping in unconventional spaces and creating unique approaches to their services, including through musical practices (see Chapter 2). Here Kirsty, alongside her girlfriend, is able to lead worship as congregants take it in turns, following a more democratised system. Of the congregation, she says: 'the church I go to has got a lot of gay people ... It's not a very big church and I think, statistically, it's one in ten people are gay then our church should have about 300 people in it (laughter)'.

   On the whole, participants were often supportive and sometimes proactive 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. Such fears and frustrations persisted in negotiating a place in church as 'God's family'.

'Scary Church Parents': locating young lesbian lives in church/through 'Family'

Participants often spoke of 'familial' and domestic links: it was important to '[feel] home somewhere, feel comfortable' (Claire, 24); 'I get to spend time with my extended family, getting to see people, getting encouraged and spending time with God in a space that's God's space' (Nicola, 21); 'It's an abode, a home' (Sandra, 24). Whilst Claire and Nicola had been excommunicated from earlier churches because of their sexualities, Sandra had left her Catholic church because of their expressed views on homosexuality. Thus, all three young women sought out a spiritual home after being, or feeling, rejected by the churches they had grown up in. Sandra found this in the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), an inclusive church founded in and for the LGBTQ community, and a space that shielded her from the vitriol she had experienced within Catholicism: 'MCC to me is security and warmth and a shelter from the storm'.

Strong adherence to a religious ethos can shape the degree of acceptability exhibited toward non-conforming gender and sexual expressions, and while Sandra experiences 'shelter', Sally is troubled by her 'scary church parents': 'Go visit the scary church parents tonight and my whole beautiful gay Christian world could be turned on its head' (Sally, 20). In her diary, Sally judged this visit to be a success as she 'didn't come back angry or wanting to cry'. Her 'scary church parents' are a married couple who 'adopted' her from an Anglican Evangelical church she had previously attended. There, married couples were encouraged to forge these links with young people in the congregation, to provide personal moral and religious guidance and support. Sally left the church (and joined the Methodists) when she realised that she fundamentally disagreed with their views, including those on abortion, 'fornication' and sexuality:

> I have sat in a sermon from that church and they have said, everybody here has sinned, there is probably at least one girl here who has had an abortion,

there are people here who have slept with people before marriage, there is a girl who is looking at another girl in the wrong way and it's like, 'What are you saying?' I just find it a bit creepy. (Sally, 20)

The queering of religion insists upon a shift away from 'sin' and 'abomination' in the religious script of homosexuality, but here we find evidence of their persistent scripting (Wilcox 2006) alongside the questioning/queering of religiosity.

Sally maintained a relationship with the couple, meeting for regular dinners, despite them labelling her a 'sinner' when she told them she had a girlfriend and giving her a book for Christmas which 'suggested I was just going through a phase'. She reflected in her diary that '#comingout [sic] to people who "adopted" you is harder than coming out to your mother'. Despite her diary entries, Sally is still fond of the couple, believing they are 'both brainwashed' and hoping she can help reshape their views through example. When talking about her Methodist discussion group at university, Sally told the couple that their talking point had been 'why does God hate gay people?':

When telling the scary-church parents this [her 'mother'] automatically answered 'but he doesn't!' Which whatever your view on gay people and God is true because God loves everyone but considering they view me having a girlfriend as sinning (which inherently isn't bad, because they view everyone as a sinner) ... it was quite nice to jump on it. (Sally, 20)

Here, Sally disrupts the traditional parental authority they assume over her as a young person by gently trying to expose the flaws in their arguments. However, a more successful example of this 'parental' relationship is represented by Helen (20) and her 'mentor'. Within their Charismatic church, older people are encouraged to mentor students in the congregation:

I am sort of mentored by an older woman at church who is married and had a family and we have a coffee every now and again and I found I was able to sort of discuss my feelings on sexuality and sort of where I felt I sat and my perspective on what the church was doing and how I related to that. So that, I think, was very valuable to me that I could, there was someone that I could discuss that with, someone who was a Christian and in the church who got that and so I found that very helpful. (Helen, 20)

Therefore, whilst Sally sought a new denomination (Methodism) because there was *no space* for her as a lesbian in her original church, a

troubled relationship with her adoptive 'church parents' is maintained in the hope of 'saving' them. Helen, on the other hand, has a more equitable relationship with her church 'mentor', and whilst she also disagrees with her church's views on sexuality (she continues to conceal her own from the congregation at large), her continued membership of their Charismatic church is forged through this outlet where she can discuss and debate freely her views in a one-to-one environment with someone she respects.

Not all participants, however, felt this anchoring and belonging within their churches. Evelyn (26) has been attending an Anglican church for four years but continues to feel isolated: 'it's a very big congregation and there are a few people I kind of smile to and say hello but I sit on my own'. In her diary, Evelyn wonders if this is because the heteronormative, family-orientated church does not know how to embrace a single lesbian:

> [A]t the 'all talk to your neighbour while the kids head off to their Sunday school groups' bit I spoke to no-one – partly me being shy I guess. I'm not convinced its [sic] actually anything about LGBT, I think they'd struggle with a straight, single young person who isn't that outgoing too. But I wonder sometimes. (Evelyn, 26)

During the service at Evelyn's church, they have a 'This Time Tomorrow' slot where a congregant talks about who they are, what they do during the week, the good parts and challenges, and what they would like the congregation to pray for. Perhaps sensing Evelyn's isolation, the curate asked her to speak in this slot at a forthcoming service but Evelyn declined:

> I think I'd struggle to be honest, I haven't yet heard anyone stand up and say 'I live by myself' and to be honest I'd probably want prayer for a welcoming church space for LGBT Christians – but I can't imagine standing at the front of 300 Christians who barely know me and saying that. (Evelyn, 26)

Intimidated by her 'minority' status, Evelyn felt unable to raise the issue of LGBT Christians and welcoming inclusive spaces, despite the fact that she was 'out' to the curate and vicar (but not to the wider congregation: 'I've never had that conversation, why would I?'). Evelyn does sometimes supplement her regular church worship with an additional LGBT service once a month and a bi-monthly Lesbian and Gay Christian Meeting (LGCM). However, she questions the efficacy of carving out that sort of specific space: 'I'd prefer just to know that I'm accepted in any church'.

Some participants did not know their church's stance on LGBT issues but continued to attend regularly despite the potential for prejudice and antigay sentiments (Yip, 2002). Andrea (24) is not 'out' at her parents' church: 'because everybody would gossip about it, and probably there'd be a few people who'd definitely raise their eyebrows, but I really don't know in terms of theologically what their stance would be'. Similarly, Lucy (19) has not disclosed her non-heterosexuality to her congregation but has surmised that they 'seem' accepting, if not overtly inclusive: 'I know there's definitely two lesbians there. They are more out than I am and the church always seems to be quite accepting to them, so I would say it is quite inclusive'. Others, like Helen, know their church is not inclusive, but it fulfils their spiritual needs first and foremost:

> I have often thought about thinking, 'Well what would it be like if I attended a church that was completely inclusive?' and I think I would really enjoy it and I think it would be a load off my mind, but at the same time, because I'm quite attached to my own church as it is and I have friends, a lot of support there, I find it really ... It meets my needs in terms of sort of prayer and worship, so I'd much rather feel that, as part of that community. (Helen, 20)

Scripts of inclusion are stretched, queried, and desired, evident in the public-private debate on same-sex marriage, and as a lead into – or step away – from the 'straight and narrow' hetero-homonormative family unit (Aune, 2006; Taylor, 2009).

'Doing it in the Eyes of God': leading into 'family'

Often participants did not want to explicitly test the institutional and grassroots (in)tolerance of their churches. Susan (19) for example, left her Evangelical church not because of their views against non-hetero-sexuality, but because she disagreed with God's perspective and did not believe she could continue to worship him under any denomination:

> I say 'I believe in God but I don't worship him', that's a kind of simple way of putting it. And whether you want to call that a Christian or not I don't know. I would probably say I'm not a Christian because I don't think I'm going to Heaven. That sounds a bit odd, I think I'm probably going to Hell because I'm not a Christian. Basically, God gave me the choice: he says 'you can either stay with your girlfriend ... and sort of outwardly gay and act like that or you can kind of push that part of you out and take me in, make space for me and in that case you would be very Christian'. And I said 'no, I love my girlfriend and

> I want to be with her and if that means I'm not going to do what you think's right so be it'. I don't think it's wrong but I understand that he thinks it's wrong. Basically, I disagree with God which is a very weird thing. (Susan, 19)

Whilst Susan has a deep belief in God, she does not attend a church or fully identify as a Christian, highlighting the ruptures that were felt by some participants at the intersections of religion and sexuality. Some participants reconciled incompatible scripts of sexuality and religion by invoking what O'Brien (2005) calls a 'bigger God' who challenges supposed 'natural law' through a commitment to equal love. Same-sex marriage was a significant setting through which participants tried and tested ideas of a 'bigger God'. Susan was unique in opposing same-sex marriage and civil partnerships:

> I can see why gay people are fighting for it to be marriage because they want equality...Really I think it's not marriage because marriage is a Christian thing. A unity not just between you and your partner but a unity between you and your partner and God. God isn't going to unite in a gay relationship so it shouldn't be a marriage really. I'm not going to march against gay people and civil partnerships but I'd probably – if I met someone who was really passionate about gay marriage, I would question them, I would challenge them. (Susan, 19)

More common was the view that even if interviewees themselves disagreed with the institution of marriage, they preferred to have the option of equal access:

> I think there should be marriage equality for those people that want it; I think it should just be 'marriage'. Civil Partnerships annoy me, it's like a second-class marriage, I think it's just horrible and I'd never have one. I'd never get married either but I'd rather that was the option rather than Civil Partnership. (Estelle, 25)

Some participants identified a contradiction between church leaders' and grassroots views on same-sex marriage, again revealing the links between official lines (as articulated by religious leaders) and congregational lives:

> Like when the Anglican Church said gay marriage is wrong and homosexuality is a sin and didn't consult anybody, any of their members about what they thought? That's completely rubbish. The leadership pretty much said that and didn't consult anyone. (Kirsty, 30)

Evelyn (26) even identified a contradiction in what the vicar of her parents' church said in private and public contexts. In personal conversations,

he had supported equal marriage but in a service she recently attended he led prayers on 'supporting marriage and the [heterosexual] family', which Evelyn saw as a direct attack on proposed legislative changes around same-sex marriage:

> [T]hey prayed for those 'supporting marriage and the family' this is taken from the Mother's Union prayer. The MU are anti-equal marriage. I don't really want to pray for people who are saying that I shouldn't be allowed to get married, and that my relationship wouldn't be worthy of that. Then they were praying for particular relationships, parent to child and husband to wife. Because obviously husband to wife is the only acceptable option. (Evelyn, 26)

Evelyn was concerned for those who might have attended the church for the first time and would not realise that it was actually an 'ok space' for lesbian (and GBTQ) Christians. Participants were mostly in favour of religious same-sex marriage and two participants were in civil partnerships (Claire, 24 and Stephanie, 29) and both received a blessing at their MCC church. But as a site of 'coming forward' as now-included, many championed seemingly homonormative ideals as a good 'fit': 'I want to get married, I want to get married in a church, I want to get married in my church' (Sally, 20); 'I want to get married and have a family' (Lola, 25); 'the really important bit [is] getting everyone together and doing it in the eyes of God' (Claire, 24). When 'getting everyone together', certain gendered and heteronormative scripts re-emerge which challenge, query, and sometimes reinforce the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in attempting to 'make' space, as a retention, rejection or affirmation of religious beliefs.

Conclusion

The young lesbian respondents in this project participated in 'queering religion' 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 UK's public imagination. Participants spoke about the discrimination and marginalisation they felt within heteronormative church space as a result of their age, sexuality, and gender.

These public-private intersections are also the spaces where inclusion and exclusion are determined across families, communities, networks, and organisations. Heteronormativity, based on 'natural law' and

traditional gender-binary roles, can expand to include homonormativity as a certain 'fit' into religious-sexual space; this form of inclusivity often reaffirms certain cultural values even as it stretches the related terms and conditions (as made and 'modelled'). Religious participation conveys (de)legitimation within family, community and society, as has become apparent in relation to scripts of inclusion and exclusion (O'Brien, 2014). Highly gendered and heteronormative 'role models', 'mentors', and (familial) mediations experienced by young lesbian Christians show that queer religious subjectivity is complexly negotiated via intersectional experiences, combining institutional 'official lines' with everyday intimate realities and (dis)identifications. Intersectional sites, scripts, and sticking points converge as young lesbians 'make space' in conversation, both contrasting and converging with institutionalised scripts. The next chapter *Policy Spaces, Public Imaginations* considers the intersectional policy relevance of the themes explored, summarises findings and points to remaining gaps in sexuality-religious research, as well as the gaps, tensions and failures within this book project.

Note

1   The number of women increases to 21 if bisexual (4) and asexual (1) participants were to be included; see Chapter 1 for a full demographic description, including religious (dis)identification.

6
Policy Spaces and Public Imaginations

Abstract: *This chapter acts as a concluding chapter highlighting the importance of including the voices of queer identifying religious youth, and showing the implications of this research for politics, policies, and public imaginations, with Chapter 2 already having dealt with the limitations and labour of 'impact' inside and outside of academia. It is the online-offline sites of sexual-religious identity (un)making and (dis)identification which have been prioritised in this short collection, summarised in this last chapter.*

The intersection of faith, sexuality, and gender is of importance to young people's lives, experiences, and identities, both specifically in the *Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Youth* project and more generally in terms of the policy, political, and public relevance of these spheres. Religion directly shapes many young people's experiences, through their religious affiliations and 'church hopping' practices. Religious and secular sites interface in relation to, for example, policy making and educational provision, faith schools, and faith-based welfare provisions (Rasmussen, 2010). In conducting this research, it has been clear that more research into bridging the divide between religion and sexuality is necessary; despite the 'making of space' during the project these divides continue, not least in policy, public, and personal spaces across the thematic areas discussed in this book.

This final chapter will highlight the importance of including the voices of queer identifying religious youth in reshaping politics, policies, and public imaginations, with Chapter 2 already having dealt with the limitations and labour of 'impact' inside and outside of academia. In practicing 'public sociology' I call for both caution and further critical debate in order to generate an ethics of public engagement. As with the long tradition of feminist research critically orientated towards public actions, Jones and Adams note that, '[q]ueer projects work to disrupt insidious, normalizing ideologies by way of re-appropriating parts of discursive systems and explicitly advocating for social change' (2010: 209). There are impediments to overcome in relation to what users and audiences consider legitimate knowledge and how critical researchers can be when engaged in its (co)production, and well as with respect to models of transferring knowledge into practice. Such enduring questions have implications for internal congregations and practices, researchers and researched, and external public debates and concerns around civic and religious (dis)engagement.

Inter-generational norms, expectations and age-'appropriateness' emerged as a strong theme in the project. In some cases, there remained a common, though contested, perception that religion is incompatible with the lives of teenagers and young people, as it is seen as 'old fashioned', 'stuffy', 'boring', 'backwards', or 'uncool'. As part of the end exhibition event, Reverend Ray Andrews discussed his experiences of being a gay vicar, having had these made into a Channel 4 documentary: *Father Ray Comes Out.* In discussion with academics and representatives of Diverse Church, a group supporting young people who

identify as queer and Christian (see twitter feed: @Diverse_Church), he spoke openly about the role of the Church in reflecting on, and welcoming, young people who identify as queer. As with this event, it is hoped that further discussions with 'older' and 'younger' generations of LGBT religious people are widely facilitated, so that young people feel their experiences are not missing from consideration of key issues, campaigns, and general visibility and representation.

Indeed, participants called for a *mix* of the traditional and modern in churches to make them more relevant and engaging to young people, 'to just think outside the box a little bit', to communicate 'that God isn't boring'. But whilst some interviewees looked to the Church to 'mix it up' and attract a new generation of congregants many feared that the heteronormative leadership structure of many churches already makes these irrelevant and outmoded spaces in young peoples' lives (Aune, 2008). Understanding such gendered and heteronormative inequalities – and their resistance *within* church space – complicates reports such as the UK NatCen Social Research Report on British Social Attitudes (2011–2012) and the binary equation of increasing secularity with 'liberal' attitudes to (homo)sexuality, revealing instead complicated (dis)investments across religious-sexual spaces and subjectivities.

For queer youth, the doctrines and practices of some religious institutions and traditions can seem alienating and disjointed from their lived experiences, but they can also feel 'fabulous and beautiful', to quote the slogan of the Newcastle Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), often repeated by interviewees and visually depicted in diagrams. This should be of interest to inclusive Churches, such as the MCC, and organisations such as the Evangelical Alliance, UK (eauk.org), which has conducted studies into what it is about church that 'puts off' young people. An understanding of how these identities can fit with – and against – one another constitutes an urgent response to contemporary social policy and campaigns that address equalities and human rights for LGBT people and aim to provide social, cultural, and educational information and resources. Such understanding could greatly enhance the lives of young people living with both religious and queer identities, and could shape the policy and practice of multiple groups and individuals, including:

‣ School teachers
‣ Inclusive churches (for example, Metropolitan Community Church, Diverse Church)

‣ Traditional churches
‣ Equality organisations (Commission for Equality and Human Rights)
‣ Inter-faith dialogues/forums
‣ Gender and leadership organisations
‣ LGBT organisations and activist groups (Stonewall, Queer Youth Network, Equality Network)
‣ Specific campaign issues (No Outsiders, Stonewall's Gay By Degree poll, Schools OUT)
‣ Universities

Queering 'Tradition' and 'Liberal' practices and institutions

One issue that marked out the Church as 'backwards' or 'irrelevant' to the lives of young queer people was the long-standing question of the role of women in religious institutions. In July 2014, the Church of England's governing body, the General Synod, voted to allow women to become bishops for the first time in history, prompting the media to reflect on decades of coverage about this high profile debate. At the time of the project research, the decision to allow women bishops had been rejected and, as highlighted in Chapter 5, the young women participating in the project were deeply upset. They expressed strong views about the traditional gender and religious roles (and 'role models'), whereby leadership and public presences were overwhelmingly male. This also questions the 'coming forward' of young lesbian Christians in making religious space relevant to their lives. The passing of a law to allow women bishops should have an impact on the lives of young people, through the increase in positive gender 'role models' (Taylor and Snowdon, 2014). Such 'progressive' moves also help represent religion to peers as an institution which is moving forward rather than remaining 'backward'. That said, participants voiced frustration at a lack not only of women, but also of non-heterosexual role models in the Church, which is a crucial symbolic and substantive factor in public debates about the role of gender and sexuality within religion more broadly. The place of gender equality and recognition of sexual diversity in the Church remains an ongoing concern.

In addition to the historical change of governing legislation allowing women bishops, the first same-sex marriages in England and Wales were celebrated on Saturday the 29th March 2014 after new legislation passed through parliament in July 2013 which allowed same-sex couples to marry or 'upgrade' from civil partnerships to the same legally recognised marriage rights as heterosexual couples. This followed high profile equality campaigns such as Equal Marriage Scotland (established 2008), alongside conservative opposition such as the Coalition for Marriage (England and Wales 2012), with the Conservative-Liberal coalition government endorsing same-sex marriage as creating a fairer and more equal society. However, despite this profound shift in the law demonstrating increased acceptability of gendered and LGBT equal rights and citizenship, there are enduring questions around how such macro-social policies work out at the everyday micro-level (Richardson and Monro, 2013). Such new legislative frames sit within the awareness that the new policies – such as same-sex marriage provision – do not, in themselves, introduce new practices, such as civil and religious ceremonies, which have long been practiced and endorsed, including by MCC (Taylor, 2009). Legal provisions bring a new legitimacy, albeit interfacing with religious (de)legitimacy, as witnessed in the reported significance of 'doing it in the eyes of God' (Chapter 5). UK law makes it clear that individuals and religious organisations are not compelled to conduct religious marriage ceremonies of same-sex couples, and can refuse to allow same-sex marriages in churches without breaching the Equality Act 2010. This has significant implications for queer religious youth who may wish to marry in traditional churches.

High profile media coverage of religious opposition to same-sex marriage can have a damaging effect on public perceptions of religion, and many complained that the voices of young, queer Christians were underrepresented in the debates:

> I think they've done themselves no favours at all with this equal marriage thing. Because the people who are getting publicity are the people saying, 'No, this will be the worst thing, this will tear the Church apart. It will be the death of society.' No it won't. I think there are things going on in the world that the Church should be far more bothered about putting their energies into, more than harping on about a few people getting married. Even for people who aren't gay, aren't involved in the Church, I think the image it puts out about the Church is just ridiculous. There are so many more important things going

on, if people in the Church are getting het up about people getting married (Evelyn, 26).

Even with the widespread winning of same-sex marriage rights (Weeks, 2007), the doing of such practices – at the level of everyday practices, celebrations, congregations, and churches, will continue to shape the presents and futures of those who identify as young, religious, and queer, both subjectively and materially.

The NatCen Social Research Report on British Social Attitudes (2011–12) claims that the decline of religion is inherently connected with the rise of 'liberal' attitudes and generations, though I argue that this is not so clear cut, with many young, queer participants finding comfort, safety, and reassurance in religious traditions. One way in which these feelings were conveyed in the project was through the role of congregational music participation in the lives of many participants. 'Traditional' congregational music could be perceived as a sound failing to resonate or emotionally involve and affect those identifying as queer religious youth. These assumptions are based on age, and ideas of what it means to 'come of age' or 'come out' particularly for young queers within LGBTQ scene space (Sai-Chun Lau, 2006; J. Taylor, 2010; Taylor and Falconer, 2014).

However, in contrast to these assumptions, the relationship with 'tradition' emerged in complex ways for participants, including via musical enjoyment. The notion that both young and queer identities would reject 'stuffy' congregational music in favour of a fun, contemporary, dynamic, and youthful culture is not always the case, and some participants preferred traditional hymns and quiet music. In rejecting some of the social scenes of their young peers, such as pubs and clubs, some participants felt closer to traditional forms of congregational music, preferring traditional hymns and quiet spaces. It is important to continue to explore the role tradition plays in young people's worship, their attitudes to 'progressive' and 'traditional' styles, and the approach taken by inclusive churches, such as the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), to speak to the different identities of its members. In contrast to the assumption that young queers feel ill at ease with 'tradition', many felt pulled towards traditional religious practices despite their young and queer identities. Young adults' life experiences and priorities are not always at odds with the structures, or sounds, that religion seems to impose and echo, and religious faith and connections do matter for many young queer adults.

Equality campaigns, activist groups, and governmental policy can arguably do more to ensure that promoting 'progressive' ideas of equal rights for LGBT youth does not fall into representing religious traditions as backwards and against the progression of a more equal society. An understanding of queer, religious issues for young people could help mediate what have been inadequate policy positions and theoretically account for complex manifestations of religion and liberalism, avoiding the 'set of interrelated juridical and ideological moves in which religion and culture are privatised and the cultural and religious dimensions of liberalism are disavowed' (Brown, 2006: 169).

Educational contexts

In 2004, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published updated guidelines on tackling bullying within schools. Unfortunately, the publication, known as 'Bullying: Don't suffer in silence', did not include homophobia and transphobia. Guidelines for tackling the homophobic bullying of young people within schools were published later in 2004 in a document entitled 'Stand up for us'. In 2008, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (formerly DfES) released 'Safe to Learn', a set of guidelines on how teachers in the UK should tackle homophobic bullying within schools. According to Stonewall, the British charity campaigning for equality and justice for lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, in a survey of 1,614 lesbian, gay, and bisexual young people aged 11–19 years, 55 per cent of respondents reported experiencing direct bullying and 99 per cent reported hearing the phrases 'that's so gay' or 'you're so gay' in school.

Targeting homophobia in schools has become a major issue for policy makers and campaigners for LGBT equal rights. Stonewall, one of the UK's leading LGBT charities, provides educational resources, events, and teacher training in issues of sexuality in order to tackle homophobic bullying in schools and 'celebrate difference'. Schools OUT, a UK membership based organisation, aims to make schools and other educational institutions safer spaces for all LGBT staff and students. As well as providing classroom resources and curriculum development with the purpose of being more inclusive of non-heterosexuality, Schools OUT also works with the Department for Education, OFSTED, the UK's independent

Office for Standards in Education, The Equality and Human Rights Commission, and local authorities.

> Stonewall's Train the Trainer courses provide pastoral, PSHE (Personal, Social and Health education) and antibullying leads with all the tools and techniques needed to train other staff on tackling homophobic bullying and celebrating difference. **Stonewall Train the Trainer Series**
>
> Religious education (RE) makes a significant contribution to pupils' academic and personal development. It also plays a key role in promoting social cohesion and the virtues of respect and empathy, which are important in our diverse society. **OFSTED.GOV.UK**

OFSTED's *Children's Services and Skills* report highlighted the importance of Religious Education (RE) in schools for 'releasing the potential' of students.

However, there is currently a lack of educational resources that address issues of both religion and sexuality for young people in schools, and once again this runs the risk of emphasising the idea of oppositional differences (Rasmussen, 2010). Recent research suggests that sex education centres on normative subjects, treating categories of difference, including religious or cultural diversity, as 'added on' and deviant from the unchallenged norm. Relatedly, religious perspectives on sexuality may be seen as unscientific and superfluous to 'scientific' medical concerns (Rasmussen, 2010). The priorities and concerns of religious, cultural, and ethnic minority youth are not reflected within sex and relationships education across a range of contexts. Further, faith-based schools are free to exempt their pupils from Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) and this has attracted much public attention, whereas such focal points can, and arguably should, be situated more generally across educational provisions.

Claire and Sandra, both 24, spoke of a lack or absence of educational resources on non-heterosexual relationships and a reliance on RE textbooks for information in their respective Catholic schools. Similar comments were made referring to 'a rubbish educational film and a paragraph in biology textbook on homosexuality'. In contrast, where school experiences focused positively on LGBTQ experiences of coming out, through, for example, putting up Stonewall posters declaring the

acceptability of LGBTQ identities, several participants felt as though this wasn't meeting their identities as both queer *and* religious, representing instead quite a tokenistic and partial gesture. John spoke of being taught Religious Studies at his Catholic secondary school. When debating homosexuality, a topic on the syllabus, a supportive teacher referred to the commandment 'love your neighbour as yourself', but to John this didn't go far enough, as it didn't say that homosexuality is 'right', just that it's not that bad:

> [T]hey never once did a pro view on it and it's actually the subtleties of it that make you … They didn't preach in that class about gay being wrong but they didn't even introduce the idea for a second that it might actually be just completely fine … And subtleties like that really got to me … I was like, 'This is clearly what people think' because all my friends were in that class, mindlessly taking it in "This is what people think about gays", all my friends were being indoctrinated … and then therefore all my friends, I sort of presumed, had got a high chance of potentially being homophobic because of the institutionalised way they've been taught and so it felt harder to tell them. (John, 21)

In June 2013, MPs (Labour and Green parties) tabled an amendment – New Clause 20 – to the Children and Families Bill 2013 to make Personal, Social, and Health Education (PSHE), and in particular SRE, compulsory in all state-maintained schools. This would have included making information about same-sex relationships, sexual violence, domestic violence, and sexual consent part of the national curriculum. New Clause 20 was defeated in the House of Commons. Conservative MP Edward Timpson responded for the government:

> The expectation that all schools should teach PSHE is outlined in the introduction to the framework of the proposed new national curriculum. It is not a statutory requirement, however, as we strongly believe that teachers need the flexibility to use their professional judgment to decide when and how best to provide PSHE in their local circumstances. (Timpson, 2013)

In the UK, most teachers are nonetheless expected to deliver *some* aspect of sex and relationships education. Sex and relationships education is not currently statutory, nor are the subjects within which it might most frequently be taught, such as Personal, Social and Health Education,

Personal Development, or Life Education. Teacher training programmes do not systematically include training around sex education and existing research suggests that teachers lack the confidence to teach about these issues. The lack of time given to SRE within school timetables and confusion about what should be taught further compounds this (Sex Education Forum, 2008). Knowledge about teachers' feelings towards delivering SRE remains limited, but teachers, like pupils, can interrupt the heteronormative discursive milieu of the school (Harris and Gray, 2014; Henderson, 2015). Project participants themselves had offered valuable points of interruption to the sex and gender regimes present within their school and were sometimes conscious of the awkwardness of individual, and even sympathetic, teachers. It is also important to consider the role of LGBTQ teachers' experiences as educators and employees, where many have suggested that the collective spaces of schools are often difficult sites for queer teachers because of the way in which heteronormativity dominates them.

In 2014, The Department for Education agreed to promote supplementary advice to the SRE Guidance of 2000: *Sex and Relationships Education for the 21st Century*. Discussing inclusive SRE, the advice states that schools have a duty to ensure that 'teaching is accessible to all children and young people, including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT). Inclusive SRE will foster good relations between pupils, tackle all types of prejudice – including homophobia – and promote understanding and respect'. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) now provides a *Good Practice Resource* (Ofsted, 2012). on its website, based on a programme entitled *Educate and Celebrate* (London, 2005), which 'gives teachers the confidence and resources to challenge homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia by engaging students and staff in an inclusive LGBT curriculum' (www.ellybarnes.com). An awareness of the issues affecting young people who identify as both queer and religious would be particularly beneficial to educational resource development both in school classrooms and curricula, as well as in institutions of Higher Education (Sharma and Guest, 2013).

Relationships, health and emotional wellbeing

Alongside legal-socio-cultural changes sit those medical provisions variously recognising – and regulating – sexual subjects. These provisions are brought into sharp focus through the publication of a range of reports

from partnerships between voluntary, statutory, and academic bodies that explore sexual and gender experiences in relation to emotional and mental health in various ways (Browne and Lim, 2008a, 2008b). In these reports, representations of distress are set out in stark life and death proportions, which consistently demonstrate alarmingly high rates of suicide attempts, self-harming episodes and experiences of depression and anxiety amongst LGBTQ populations (Taylor, 2011). While stark and serious, these medicalised 'truths' need to be treated with some caution in order to avoid setting up sexual subjects as automatically in need, as, as Davy (2011) has explored in some detail, the conceptualisation of gender and sexuality within the medical field can be seen to be reinforcing the same kind of tension between recognition and regulation (Weeks, 1998) that has run through similar LGBT civil rights issues.

A further step towards a government concern to specifically provide for citizens' emotional wellbeing was seen in the launch of the UK national 'Wellbeing Index'. David Cameron (2010) remarked in his speech launching the 'index' that:

> I do believe that government has the power to help improve wellbeing … of course you cannot capture happiness on a spreadsheet any more than you can bottle it … [but] this will give us a useful indication of where we're heading … [and] help government work out with evidence, the best ways of trying to improve people's wellbeing.

This emergence of 'emotional wellbeing' appears as a distinct health concern positing a range of optimal emotional feelings, including 'confidence', 'positivity', and 'happiness'. Such optimistic aims play into what Ahmed has described as the 'happiness turn' in contemporary society, where happiness and feeling good become expected, even demanded, by citizens and come to represent the 'ultimate performance indicator' (Ahmed, 2010: 4) for government. The emergence of this 'happiness turn' extends beyond the preserve of mental health (Giddens, 1991; Illouz, 2008) and is an area where scepticism should be exercised. Like feminist critiques of therapy, 'happiness' discourses may medicalise those who are structurally disadvantaged and thus maintain the status quo. With such scepticism in mind, it is still necessary to consider the health and emotional wellbeing of specific populations and the material and emotional impact of failed and lacking provision.

Every Child Matters (ECM) is a UK government initiative that was introduced in 2003 and applied to England and Wales. ECM concerns

the wellbeing of children and young people from birth to 19, with the aim that every child (http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/aims/), whatever their background or their circumstances, is to have the support they need to:

▸ Be healthy
▸ Stay safe
▸ Enjoy and achieve
▸ Make a positive contribution
▸ Achieve economic wellbeing

> The idea of having an LGBT child is no longer a horrifying possibility for many parents, and many educated young parents in particular would not dream of shaming their male child for liking dresses or their girl for refusing to wear them. This trend will only continue and grow stronger. You can help in your personal life by educating those around you. Although some parental rejection comes from strict religious beliefs, much also is predicated on the belief that the child has chosen to be gay or transgender, and that they can change (GoodTherapy.org http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/LGBT-youth-suicide-as-serious-as-it-is-preventable-0916134, emphasis added).

Religious communities and religious professionals may be poorly equipped and generally ineffective to work with young people, often failing to create safe enough spaces to debate sexuality and gender issues. This leads to many religious young people feeling alienated and unsupported, which is turn impacts on their spiritual, emotional, and sexual health, and on their level of engagement with religious communities (Yip and Page, 2013). The impact of living with both queer and religious identities can be of critical importance to properly situating and understanding young people's personal life, relationships, and wellbeing.

GoodTherapy.org reports that suicide is the leading cause of death among young people, and that LGBT and gender-nonconforming teens and young people (15–24) are two to five times more likely than their peers to attempt suicide or self-harm. A survey on homophobic hate crime and violent incidents towards LGBT people, conducted by the LGBT Charity Stonewall, found that three in five LGBT people have been victims of homophobic hate crimes in the last three years (*The Gay British Crime Survey 2008 on Homophobic Hate Crime*, Stonewall.org: 3).

These figures have resulted in high profile policy interventions and activist campaigns to support for young people adversely affected by issues of gender and sexuality, school bullying, societal harassment, and psychological wellbeing. Examples include:

▸ IT GETS BETTER PROJECT (http://www.itgetsbetter.org/): An online project aimed at communicating to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth around the world who may be experiencing bullying, harassment, violence, or psychological torment that 'it gets better'. Online media and resource material includes the voices of celebrities, religious leaders, politicians, parents, educators and youth just out of high school. Diverse Church have made a Christian Version of 'It Gets better' in their own YouTube documentary.

▸ Pink Therapy and services such as Relate (www.relate.org.uk): Relationship and counselling advice that address issues within LGBTQ relationships, and offer Children's and Young People's counselling services in schools. This service provides support for young people experiencing a range of emotional and mental health problems in adolescence, which has been directly linked with levels of educational achievement. (Relate report: *Class of 2011 Yearbook: How happy are young people and why does it matter?*)

These campaigns are crucial for improving the health, safety, and wellbeing of queer youth, yet there is room for a more thorough understanding of how religious identities may fit with these provisions. There is currently very little mention of religious identity in these reports and policy documents, thus running the risk of further effacing the relevance of religion in the lives of queer youth, either directly or indirectly. Where religion is mentioned, this is still often assumed to be in opposition to the sexual identities of LGBT people, and is positioned as a cause of alienation and harm for queer youth (see below extracts).

> The local police are extremely poor on homophobia, perpetrators are excused because of their 'culture' or their 'religion'. **Ciarán, 35, West Midlands, in Stonewall; Homophobic Hate crime: The Gay British Crime Survey (2008: 23)**
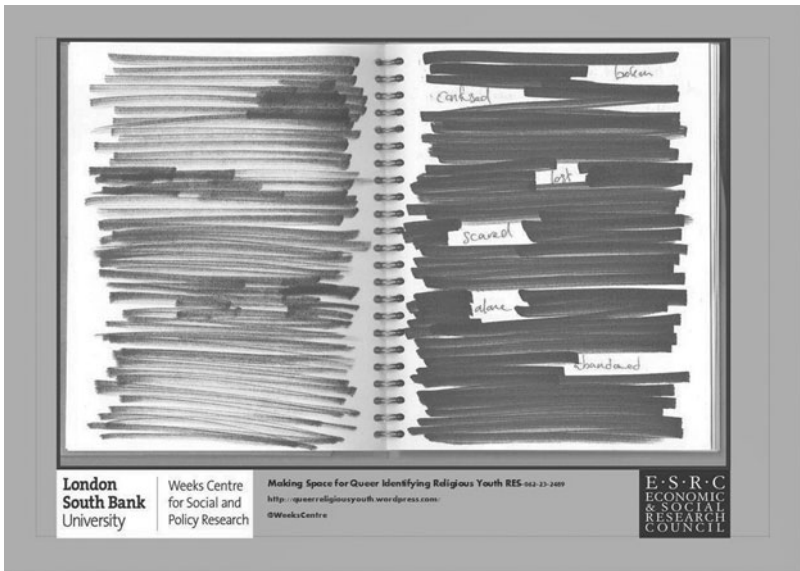
FIGURE 6.1   Exhibition: *Nicola (21) blanks out a page on her diary, leaving the words: Confused, Broken, Lost, Scared, Alone, Abandoned.*

Overall, the conduct of this research over time, which has involved direct engagement and conversation with organisations, institutions, and campaigns working with queer youth, suggests that many such actors could usefully broaden their attentions to consider how religious *and* sexual identities may impact upon young people. Whilst the findings of *Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Youth* highlight many positive strategies used by young people to reconcile and negotiate at times conflicting identities of queerness and religion, less positive stories also emerged. Some participants struggled with self-harm, trauma, depression, and attempted suicide, and described experiences with counselling services:

> I told my counsellor when I got to University, the first thing I did was book a counselling appointment; normally you find out where the pubs are, well, I booked a counselling appointment and it was like, 'If I can't come and see you I'm going to kill myself' and so yeah, I went to talk to a counsellor and I was like, 'Every time I go to Church I just cut myself' and she was like, 'Okay. Now I know this probably isn't what you want to hear but try not going to Church for a bit and see if that helps' and it did and I was relived. I still cut myself and was still an emotional wreck but it wasn't religiously every Sunday

that I'd cut myself, it was just occasionally. But it did take some of the stress away because I didn't have that feeling of guilt'. (Nicola, 21)

> Young people should have awareness about the public services that can help them with the various issues that they have to deal with. Young people should have more access to resources, information and perhaps through the internet and social media. GPs. Hospitals and health staff have to be more inclusive and non-judgemental achieved through training and seminars. **Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Youth exhibition feedback**

Chapter 3 showed that congregational participation –through music in particular – was important to interviewees, yet many mentioned 'shame' about being Christian and, for example, part of a Christian choir, thereby highlighting some of the difficulties encountered in living within both queer social scenes and those of the church. Other young participants, such as John (21), described being in a church choir as a 'social taboo' in their circles. Susan is adamant that she is 'not ashamed' of being part of the choir, yet omits information about the Christian nature of this involvement to friends who may be part of her emerging queer social circles. This also indicates that, at times, within the queer community, involvement with the Church may indeed be something hidden or at least partially cordoned off.

Important measures need to be undertaken in order to address the health and wellbeing of young people who identify as religious and queer, and a greater understanding of how multiple and co-existing identities impact on young people and the services they access is needed. This could influence organisations that work specifically with young people, such as youth counselling services, teachers, and youth workers, as well as wider LGBT campaigns and charities that advise public sectors workers, the police, and general practitioners. It is also important to remember that identifying as religious can impact on feelings of belonging and emotional wellbeing in the LGBT and queer youth communities, which are often integral to people's lives, friend-ships, connections and sense of self. Many participants felt 'out of place' in spaces and during activities enjoyed by their queer non-religious peers (Chapter 3).

Online usage and social networking

There is growing sociological and social policy interest in the use of digital technologies in the lives of young people, with social media sites and online networking such as Facebook and Twitter becoming central to identities and everyday connections. Growing up with new media technology, young people are often competent navigators of diverse online spaces, which inform the construction of their religious views and practices. Chapter 4 examined how religious young people mobilise themselves online, and the implications of this in their management of sexuality and faith in the online-offline world.

For youth-centered research projects to be relevant, digital methodologies are often integral but these engagements also bring new ethical dilemmas regarding entry into – and exit from – online spaces. Religion itself is stretching beyond physical offline space and is mediated via, for example, religiously-themed iPhone and Android applications which are becoming increasingly popular amongst the young and IT savvy, as are digital Bibles, such as the Carry Your Faith app which re-broadcasts morning services throughout the day.

The rapid pace of digital developments has lead to many policies that aim to safeguard young people from online harm, cyber abuse, and associated risks, with organisations such as Safe Network and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) producing reports identifying the risks and solutions for protecting children and young people. But the existence of religious spaces online troubles such a focus on risk, and problematises the sole placement of young people as (overly) sexual subjects (Chapter 4). A consideration of the impacts of online technology thus needs to take into account the crucial importance of online forums in their more positive role of 'showing' how queer and religious identities can co-exist, actively performed by young people in, for example, the use of Facebook profiles. In contrast with online technologies creating difficulties and unwelcome exposure, many of the participants herein worked with these new spaces in order to produce opportunities for reconciliation between their religious and queer identities. Online technologies are a crucial tool through which young people may regain control over their identity profiling, providing a 'virtual space' to be both religious and queer where other spaces seem restrictive.

Conclusion

This chapter highlights some key issues that need to be addressed in order to tackle the adverse public, private, and institutional experiences of young people who identify as religious and queer. It calls for a greater understanding of how multiple and co-existing identities have an impact on young people and the services they access. Such understandings can usefully inform and influence individuals, institutions, and organisations working specifically with young people, such as student counselling services, teachers and youth workers, as well as more general practitioners. There are further policy implications that reach beyond the scope of this book and the impact of sexuality and religion can also shape:

▸ Gaining entry to employment and workplace experiences
▸ Access to housing
▸ Social support
▸ Political participation
▸ Inter-faith dialogues

Discourses that construct religion as inherently negative towards gender and sexuality continue to underpin research and practice in academia and civil society. This often leads to unwillingness to engage with religious matters, or an engagement underpinned by misunderstanding and suspicion (Rasmussen, 2010). This 'religious illiteracy' often has a direct impact on young people (for example, 'secular' sexual health providers being insensitive to the needs of religious young people, or academic research neglecting the prominence of religious faith in some young people's management of their sexual and gender identities). The future of whether to assign, act on, and choose queer *or* religious identities, in practical service provisions, policy formation, educational delivery, and, importantly, for young people themselves, may no longer need to be such a turbulent and divisive dilemma. Perhaps another effective way to disrupt and further queer theses dilemmas is to broaden future research to include other majority and minority religious identities.

While the three categories – 'youth', 'religious', 'queer' – do not always sit comfortably with one another, they clearly have policy, disciplinary, and empirical relevance, suggesting a need to more deeply consider their intersections, as identities, practices, and categories of rights-based demands and citizenship. It is important to consider 'religious LGBT

youth' from international and multi-faith perspectives, beyond the examples of Christian LGBT youth provided here.

Several lines of inquiry have appeared in previous studies on religion and non-heteronormativity, particularly in the Christian context, and it is worth reiterating these here:

▸ the impact of the LGBT political discourse on LGBT activism within religious groups

▸ efforts to ingrate the religious and the sexual dimensions of one's identity at the personal level

▸ the intersectional reading of issues related to religion and non-heteronormativity, and in particular, the intersectional reading of experiences by queer believers.

Religion and non-normative sexuality can be harmoniously combined and lived, while the secular LGBT emancipatory discourse is often seen as the main driver for increasing acceptance of LGBT people within churches, just as it is seen as the main source of empowerment for people who seek to integrate their religiosity with non-normative sexuality. It is not my intention to deny the productive nature of the secular LGBT emancipatory discourse and its positive influence on gay-friendly organising within churches. The problem seems to be that studies too often focus on this positive impact and overlook the ambivalent outcomes that this discourse brings to non-heterosexual believers themselves.

In exploring church-based activism, Karen Macke (2014) challenges the idea that the LGBT emancipatory discourse unambiguously contributes to the gay-friendly change in Christian communities. She presents results from ethnographic research within two Unitarian Universalist churches in the US, known for its positive attitude towards LGBT political campaigning. In doing so, she complicates the relationship between LGBT emancipatory discourse and activist mobilisation, demonstrating that in these two churches the declared openness to queer issues does not translate into vibrant work in breaking heteronormative structures.

Previous studies have tended to see religious tradition as the main source of homophobia that a queer believer struggles with (Jaspal, 2014; Meek, 2014). As a result, issues of religion and sexuality have been isolated from a broader discursive context that embraces, for instance, medical or psychological discourses, and from a broader societal context that points to power unevenly distributed across various categories of social stratification. Yet sociological interpretations which attribute

agency to individuals who manage their sexual and religious identities, may still exclude consideration of the various limitations imposed on individuals, including via socio-economic position. On the other hand, there are research examples that go beyond the static vision of identities, and in many different ways challenge the dichotomy between oppressive religious traditions and non-heteronormative sexuality, the dichotomy that religious queers navigate throughout their lives.

For example, Wetzel's (2014) auto-ethnography, of a queer man raised by conservative Catholics in the US, shows the dynamics of Catholic teachings on homosexuality, how these teachings changed over time, and how the change affected non-heterosexual Catholics of various generations. His focus on fluid cultural, affective and practice-based dimensions of experiencing religiosity and non-normative sexuality also overcomes the dominant sociological line of inquiry that relies on an emphasis on static identities. Likewise, in exploring queer youth in highly conservative Christian families, Ingman (2014) impressively challenges the one-sided reading of religious traditions as homophobic and oppressive.

Such studies continue to raise the possibility of intersectionality. Arguably, studies on religion and sexuality are intersectional by nature, since they look at how religious and sexual identities interact with each other, and how both identities are negotiated, or mutually contested in various geopolitical contexts. Yet, it very rarely happens that the studies incorporate other categories of social stratification apart from those pertaining to religion and sexuality. Sometimes they add gender to the analysis and sometimes they add ethnicity, and often they neglect class.

Here, I must confess to a research failure: my expectations as to the application of an intersectional approach to studies on religion and non-heteronormativity were high, given my own intersectional engagements and analysis. Within this short book, the reader will note that there are very few references to social class, which perhaps represents a kind of lost opportunity to re-engage with and extend the issue of class, in the context of sexuality studies, to the research on sexuality and religion. The intersection of class and religious subjectivities remains largely unfamiliar territory despite the insights of 'the new class paradigm' (Savage, 2003). One notable exception is Mellor's (2010) study of the impact of religious faith upon Muslim working-class women's educational pathways. Mellor points to the significance of 'bonding' rather than 'bridging capital' as a key facilitator for social mobility in the women's' lives due to

the interconnections between faith, class, and ethnicity which produce 'tight-knit' networks. Her work is suggestive of the salience of religious subjectivity to their upward movement in social space: 'the women's religious obligations ensured that they made optimum use of these networks as a way to move ahead for the sake of themselves and their families and communities' (2010: 88). Other recent studies suggest that affective aspects of class shape religious beliefs and practice in significant ways (Sharma and Guest, 2013). Dinham (2012) argues that faith communities in contemporary Britain tend to be diverse in relation to class, providing spaces in society where there is sustained cross-class interaction while other sociologists of religion have, for example, noted the predominantly middle-class nature of many British evangelical networks and congregations (Guest, 2007; Warner, 2007; Strhan, 2012).

As Strathern (2004: x) reminds us, 'there is nothing straightforward about "bringing together organisations with different aims and objectives and diverse cultures"', and all actors, including sociologists, are 'situated subjects' (Santos, 2014: 13). In some ways, this returns me to intersectional 'complexities and complications' (Taylor, 2009, 2010) as reproducing certain research-researched-researcher subjects and subjectivities. Enduring questions arise about what research matters, what counts, and who matters, where to find 'them', as privileged and/or disadvantaged 'harder to reach' groups. Ultimately, 'who will do the work' in 'reaching out', 'feeding back' and staying on the page, intersectionally?

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