Mediating Aspirant Religious-Sexual Futures: In God's Hands?

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Abstract

Religion and sexuality frequently collide in legislative and popular imaginations and realisations of citizenship status negotiated in an increasingly secular UK context. The supposed decline of religion may be conflated with an increased entitlement to sexual citizenship for LGBTQ groups. Such a conflation sidelines the citizenship possibilities and realities negotiated by queer religious youth in imagining future forms of employment and family formations. This chapter explores the construction of vocational and familial futures amongst queer identifying religious youth.

Introduction: Youth Futures, Queer Precarity and Religions (Un) Certainty

This chapter explores the construction of vocational and familial futures in times of aspiring, post-welfare, or crisis youth transitions, as mediated by sexual-religious identification. It draws on findings from a recent study, *Making Space for Queer Identifying Religious Youth,* which considers LGBT young people's constructions and experiences of religious-sexual fields, as typically separated and oppositional in everyday cultural imaginaries and socio-legal policy framings. By considering the intersectional relations of both sexuality and religion, the chapter highlights pragmatic and caring orientations including a 'calling' to religion as a site of present-future vocational and familial investment. I challenge the separation of religion and sexuality in youth transitions, and in notions of the 'times we're in' as compelling certain kinds of future-orientated aspirant (and secular) selves. The chapter hopes to

contribute to theorising the intersection sexuality and religion in further understanding the subversive – and conservative – potential of religious-sexual values and futures. Such orientations interface with aspects of 'getting by' and 'getting on' and at once re-inscribe and stretch normative vocational and familial choices. Citizenship claims centre around full recognition and legitimation in different social spheres, including, for example the right to employment and social welfare protections, the right to family life and the right to religion. These citizenship protections are increasingly recognized in international 'Equalities' legislation, promising protection on key characteristics such as gender, sexuality, race, religion and age. Yet, religion and sexuality still collide in legislative and popular imaginations and realisations of citizenship status negotiated in an increasingly secular UK context, where the supposed decline of religion may be conflated with an increased entitlement to sexual citizenship for LGBTQ groups. Such a conflation sidelines the citizenship possibilities and realities negotiated and imagined by queer religious youth in imagining future forms of employment and family formations.

Generally, both religion and sexuality are under-investigated as influencing young peoples' vocational and familial futures. In terms of sexuality, young people find themselves awkwardly navigating a youth-at-risk discourse as well as a youth-as-sexually-liberated-and-free discourse (Rasmussen 2010, Yip and Page 2013, Taylor and Snowdon 2014a, Taylor *et al*. 2014). Ideas of risk pervade the category of youth more generally, witnessed in recent policy and political discourses (Allen and Taylor 2013). The discourse of 'aspiration' as a self-motivational tool that can propel young people into secure employment positions is increasingly promoted as policy and cultural cure for social-ills. Indeed being 'someone' who aspires in particular ways is becoming something of an imperative cutting across political discourse and tropes of aspiration and social mobility in modern day societies (Evans 2010). This becoming 'someone' as a self-actualised and entitled subject is also apparent within celebrations of the 'world we've won' as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) groups realise sexual citizenship in the realms of family and working lives (Weeks 2007, McDermott 2011). Young people are increasingly positioned as now accessing a future, denied to previous LGBT generations. But the (secular) language of 'becoming' and 'citizenship' also centres an older LGBT 'sexual citizen' (as consumer, citizen, resident) and once again 'youth' slip out of this frame, constituting

another intersectional gap in thinking about sexual citizenship. In 'arriving' in places of sexual citizenship, young people are often seen as the beneficiaries of previous generations' struggles but are simultaneously invisibilised as 'not yet' fully in the worlds of family and employment.

Within the field of youth studies, young people are often positioned as inhabiting a transitional stage, 'neither the first nor the last', in the life course, existing 'in transition' and 'as transition' (Jones 2009, p. 84). Within sexuality studies, work on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) populations often disregards the religious aspects of LGBTQ lives or refers to religious associations as negative, harmful or superficial (Yip 1997, Gross and Yip 2010). Yet various religious institutions and stances have articulated enormously complicated and contrary perspectives (Taylor and Snowdon, 2014a). Locating young people in specific, changing times means being attentive to how they construct their personal and social identities, and possible futures.

Rather than viewing religion as another matter of individualised choice and lifestyle, which citizens are increasingly opting out of, Modood (2015) argues against secularism and for a positive role for religion in contemporary society, and for thinking about religion as a public, not just a private good. Indeed, in 'post-welfare' times of economic crisis, austerity and cutbacks, religious bodies and individuals have been asked to 'stand-in' and care for congregations and communities, arguably extending their collective and social capacities as key organisers of public good. Religion – both formal and otherwise – has also been considered as a site of social investment and return, as a buffer against isolation and risk and as a space for capital accumulation of both a social and material nature (Mellor 2010). The long-standing reality of religious spaces that 'provide' and 'care' for communities and congregants is arguably heightened in contemporary post-welfare times. This practice may increase the visibility and desirability of religious orientations, specifically for young people, as counter-normative, even activist and 'anti-capitalist'.

A sense of queer precarity – of not necessarily having access to the 'right kind' of normative future, as well as a sense of religious (un)certainty – of religious commitment potentially in doubt, mediated young people's becoming otherwise. This

chapter aims to contribute to theorising the intersection of sexuality and religion, and to further understanding of the subversive and conservative potential of religious-sexual values and futures. There is scope to consider collective orientations and religious vocations, alongside a turn to individualisation and de-traditionalisation, whereby a 'calling' to religion as a site of present-future vocational investment may weave in alternative and conservative possibilities for young lives. Young people may actively conceive of alternatives to dominant exchange value relationships and structures of chrono-normative temporalities, as upwardly mobile, aspirant and becoming (Edelman 2004, Halberstam 2005, Love 2007). Here, both a sense of queer precarity – of not necessarily having access to the 'right kind' of normative futures – as well as a sense of religious (un)certainty – of religious commitment potentially in doubt – mediated young people's becoming otherwise.

The chapter is based on fieldwork with 38 respondents recruited across 3 UK sites: Newcastle, Manchester, and London, liaising with key gatekeepers and using a snowballing method, for what might be considered a 'hard to reach' group. The project adopted a mixed-method research design, consisting of individual face-to-face interviews, diaries, and a mapping exercise (see Taylor 2015 for a fuller methods discussion). For the purposes of the study, young people were 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). Overall the project recruited a very middle-class sample, typical of sexualities research generally and often seen as symptomatic of 'hard to reach' groups (Taylor 2007). Most of the participants considered themselves to be white British, with only a few identifying as white Other, such as Greek Cypriot (1 interviewee), Spanish (1), and Italian (1). In terms of sex and gender identity 19 participants identified as female, 15 as male, 2 as gender-queer, 1 as gender-queer and transgender, and 1 as transsexual female-to-male. According to self-ascription, the sexual identity of participants can be broadly categorised as gay (15 respondents), lesbian (13), bisexual (5), queer (4), and asexual (1).

Most participants self-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.

This chapter considers religious-sexual futures in precarious times, and the pragmatic, alternative and conservative responses to these through imagined and intersecting 'work', 'church' and 'family' futures. It asks, how and in what ways are respondents' religious-sexual futures placed 'In God's hands'. The next section explores such uncertainty as part of the 'times we're in', and as a means of re-orientating youthful selves in compliant and resistant ways.

(Not)Living by Bread Alone: Optimism and (Un)certainty

> Romans Chapter teaches that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces suffering … 'Worry about nothing, but pray about everything'. It's about being able to ground ourselves in the scripture, all of our hopes and fears, for me as a Christian can be understood and comprehended better through contemplation. Ultimately, we have got God so what more should I really have to want. Jesus Christ teaches that we live by bread alone, that's how our life is. We shouldn't fear too much for worldly things but concentrate on God through Christ.
> (Andrew, 24)

The conditions of contemporary neo-liberalism arguably demand and shape a future-oriented, enterprising, capital accruing subject (Skeggs 2004), where capital is accrued in the person, and generative of future value (Adkins 2012). The 'enterprising subject' compelled by competition, inequality and rational self-interest, is a particular kind of middle-class subject who can generate value by accruing more capital through their already normative biographies and trajectories, secured through existing social, cultural and economic resources (Taylor and Scurry 2011, Falconer and Taylor 2016).

Such a mode of being is also governed by a temporality that values reproductive maturity and wealth accumulation, setting up the 'future' as a particular achievement, a realisation of the right 'aspirations' at the right time. The linking of economic and reproductive worth compels some researchers to ask how non-normative identities might relate to alternative values and temporalities.

Studies of working-class groups highlight differences in 'becoming' otherwise, which are often mis-recognised as deficits, as not arriving in proper familial or vocational positions. Rather than displaying proprietorial orientations towards the future, working-class personhood can be viewed as protectionist rather than proprietorial (Skeggs 1997, Skeggs and Loveday 2012). Living in the here and now is manifest in a more pragmatic concern for 'getting by' and managing precarity rather than futurity, or 'getting on' (Taylor 2012, Mckenzie 2015). While *class* has been a dominant feature in the re-consideration of value, religion and sexuality can further unsettle conceptualisations of value-aspiration among queer religious youth, whereby a 'calling' may be seen as a form of religious-vocational 'care', mediated too by sexuality.

Researchers of gender and sexuality have theorised non-normative gender and sexual identities as subverting the normative life-course. 'Queer temporality' includes and arguably extends beyond gender and sexuality to articulate alternative ways of life, which do not conform to pressures to reproduce, and accumulate wealth. Queer theory, in troubling the reification of innate gender categories and the imperative of reproduction, aims to 'articulate an alternative vision of life, love and labour' (Halberstam 2005, p. 6), a different way of organising human sociality and a different orientation to futurity. In the 'clock time' of capitalism (Adkins 2009) certain time cycles (leisure, recreation, work, family, domesticity), and life stages (growing up, partnering, parenting, careers) are naturalised and internalised reproducing heteronormative 'chrononormativity'. In questioning linear and homogenous time, room is arguably made for the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; for 'strange' temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and even eccentric economic practices (Halberstam 2005).

Such alternative temporalities conjure different futures, where chance or untimeliness are key elements in a political effort to 'bring into existence futures that dislocate themselves from the dominant tendencies and forces of the present' (Grosz, 2004, p. 14). Edelman (2004), and Halberstam (2005) for example assert that queer subjects should embrace non-productivity and resist narratives of futurity explicitly bound in capitalist accumulation. However, this side-lines practical and pragmatic (im)possibilities, and the likely intersection of alternative *and* conservative possibilities in the same time and space, as subjects navigate broader social contexts. Specifically 'queer' times, prioritises and isolates 'queerness' above other locations, such as class (Taylor 2007, 2012, McDermott 2011). With this in mind, Renold (2008) argues that the emancipatory potential of such alternative narratives are at risk of being overstated with 'queer subversions' only sustainable from places of power, suggesting limited possibilities for the relatively powerless to subvert.

Conceptualisations of queer times risk reinforcing similar assumptions to those often evident in conceptualisations of religious identities, i.e. that their presumed status as exceptions to the mainstream exempts them from the social structural factors that constrain the lives of everybody else. Even so, religious institutions and practices also structure time, at micro and macro levels, from Weberian 'protestant ethics' and deferred gratification, through to Wilcox's (2009) consideration of religious lesbians and how straight-religious time impacts upon them. Mapping religion and sexuality together potentially avoids the prioritisation of any one of these differences, focusing instead on the situational specifics by which certain elements of one's identity becomes muted, and at another time, becomes heightened.

Many interviewees in this study spoke of the need to be flexible and adaptable to be securely placed in the job-market, to be at-the-ready; while for some this was articulated as a freeing of possibilities ('I am pretty flexible when it comes to the future, I am willing to let it take me where it wants', Julian, 20), others spoke more of this as a compulsory orientation, where 'today is today' and everyday immediacy replaces planning, accumulation and future-thinking:

> To be adaptable. The only chance is to be adaptable. I would like to have a bit

more quietness and tranquillity and settled plans but how things are right now, be adaptable; be ready for whatever is coming … today is today. I've been worrying about the future hundreds of hours, what's going to happen with the cuts, what is happening with the job, are they going to keep me here or not; the future is not in my hands any more.

(Jacob, 30)

Neoliberal demands contrast with what can be considered value activity in Christian terms, such as, e.g. prayer, contemplations and silence. The peculiarly neo-liberal challenges and conflicts, whereby life experience is imbued with the expectation of individual empowerment and adaptability but is actually characterised by powerlessness in the face of a future that seems pre-determined by external factors, was repeated across accounts of 'getting-on' and 'getting by'.

Some interviewees' aspirations were constructed against 'big business', corporate greed, or against some unspecific notion of capitalism in general, and routine and day-to-day work specifically. In articulating against-the-grain options, others described pivotal moments and 'heart' changes in deciding what was important to them in life, re-orientating their future employment expectations. John discusses this below in terms of his sexual orientation facilitating a re-thinking of normative success, graduate trajectories and vocational orientations. There is some ambivalence and hesitation here as John moves between what was once desired, to a conflicting present balancing 'social roles', materiality, and 'feeling better'.

My friend has started a graduate job … and is doing 8 to 8 and works Saturdays and it's a three year graduate training programme, and I consider her very successful because that's what I used to view successful as, very professional, it gives you status, it used to be a safe thing. And then all of a sudden I got really emotional and sort of, after I came out at 16, and reinterpreted what my view of success was, and for me it would be some role that provided me with an outlet to sort of express or help, like it became a very 'heart' decision as a career, and now I would pick something very vocational as opposed to before where I'd just pick something about money really, about

status, but now I actually want to pick something that expresses or contributes to something. But I've got this conflicting, because I still would like to have a disposable income…

(John, 21)

Like John, other interviewees situated their commitment to caring professions as important for their own sense of worth and social contribution, at the same time as being financially desirable. This was done by imagining themselves one day inhabiting the more 'senior positions' (George, 23) in caring professions and by casting caring professions rather widely to include, for example, scientists, solicitors, counsellors, doctors, peacekeepers and ambassadors as those actively 'caring' for and contributing to society.

For example, Adrian (29) wanted to run his own charity and hoped 'to be a force for change really'. While imagining himself within the field of science, and pursing a PhD, Lesley (21) also spoke of the appeal to be active in politics, to do research, act as a human rights layer or have a future in ministry ('I want to change the world, I really do'). Rather than dismissing such ambitions as naïve youthful hopes, it is important to situate these as connecting sexuality and religion, where both these orientations create a space for collective change as desired. Such desires interface aspects of 'getting by' and 'getting on' and are at once alternative and conservative, re-inscribing and stretching normative vocational choices. Attending to these expressions means stretching ideas of sexual citizenship, whereby sexuality may not always be the primary motivation for queer religious youth in imagining their public-private futures.

Thomas (34) felt his future involved 'social work type stuff' at the interface of queer-religion 'around Christian LGBT type stuff':

> … *I can speak as a Quaker and a gay man*, I've got these two experiences: I've got this experience of what it's like to have had all this prejudice, but I've survived it, and also being someone with faith in an increasingly secularizing world, and just show to people that it's normal.
>
> (Thomas, 34)

It is not necessarily the case that a religious identity includes a critique of capitalism, or any re-situating of value, nonetheless respondents made explicit connections between dissatisfaction with the lack of collective welfare, re-orientations towards these caring logics, and critique of 'clock time', ('...8 until 10 sort of thing…'), and salary/status accumulation ('…to pick something that expresses…'). Perhaps unsurprisingly, participants wanted to help the 'weak, needy and poor', rather than *being* 'weak, needy and poor' themselves. The balance between alternative and normative narratives and choices, involves aligning with recognisable neoliberal identities for *themselves* whilst concurrently tackling the negative outcomes of neoliberal capitalism for *others*. Such desires interface aspects of 'getting by' and 'getting on' and are at once alternative and conservative, re-inscribing and stretching normative vocational choices. This forces a challenge to the normative boundaries of citizenship, as involving a claim to recognition through distinct and still separated categories (as a sexual or religious subject, for example), and it stretches the ways these are (de)legitimized whereby queer religious youth may not always welcome inclusion within normative citizenship frames.

Church Futures: Religious Optimism and (Un)Becoming

Many, if not all, interviewees had considered vocational roles within (various) Churches, as sites of collective care and familial-type identities, whereby Church community was seen – and questioned – as 'family'. These vocational desires were somewhat queer in themselves, stretching the language and usage of 'vocation' in most mainstream Christian circles, as typically reserved for ordained ministry. Stretched possibilities of 'vocational roles' included a much wider range of responsibilities in church, including 'ministerial roles' (as assumed to include both lay and ordained people) and non-stipendiary service. That these desires exist within marginalised gendered-queer presences within Church vocations, and that young participants were framing these as wide and possible is significant (see Taylor and Snowdon 2014b) in relation to sexual citizenship, as mediated by rather than automatically opposed to religiosity.

Such considerations are also of interest in highlighting the intersection of the vocational and the familial in (queer) re-shapings of 'getting on' and 'getting by'. Many of young participants had religious vocations in mind and were considering their possible future place in these fields, with and against a sense of inclusive practices and possibilities. Many participants considered if, for example, inclusive churches, such as the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) founded in, by, and for, LGBT community, would represent more pragmatic and comfortable locations, while also being cautious that vocations within somewhat peripheral Churches could render them economically precarious by virtue of being unattached to traditional established Churches. The viability of sexuality citizenship mediated by economic precarity, felt here is relation to religious spaces and institutional existences.

Nonetheless many respondents frequently expressed future religious vocation as a 'calling'. The idea of a 'calling', as a specifically *religious* drive into the future does itself subvert some of the linear logics of educational attainment followed by employability, and the separation of the emotional private self, from a public rational and working self. But such 'callings' were also deflected and silenced in the context of hostile and emotive views regarding the public place of LGBT visibility in religious contexts. For example, Estelle (25) had initially planned a certain kind of religious future, going to university to study Theology but her feelings of disconnect meant that she changed course after just two weeks (see Falconer and Taylor 2016). Imaginings of citizenship within church communities may be constrained by such disconnection and so the aspirations and enactment for one form of religious belonging is at odds. Often religious orientations, possibilities and practicalities were in motion and were seen to be sites of future reconciliation, even when definite 'callings' and actualised pursuits of that future (such as in studying Theology) were interrupted and uncertain:

> Obviously I'm going to continue pursuing ordination … I feel like I'm called to do. It's a very unfashionable term outside the Church to talk about 'calling' but 'vocation' is a much more socially acceptable term. Because a lot of MCC priests are non-stipendiary I will probably consider a chaplaincy career alongside that. I'm looking for a placement in higher education chaplaincy at the moment … I do worry about not being able to find work, not just in the

short term but actually even post ordination, will there be work in the Church for me? Will it be funded? Will I have to move, potentially move countries? But I think despite that I plan to continue working with MCC.

(Kelly, 26)

I'm currently undergoing a process with the local diocese and that is to discern my vocation as I feel drawn to the Priesthood. That's where I see myself heading and so far that is where I feel God is pointing me and really I have understood that sense of calling over a period of two and a half years. So I am on a journey of exploration and growth in order to take me to the next step.

(Andrew, 24)

Such pursuits, situated within a complex matrix of aspiration ('I think that is really what I want to do'), compulsion ('calling') and pragmatics ('Will it be funded?') are not likely to be recognised as 'queer'. Taking these accounts seriously means stretching the go-to parameters in describing LGBT youth trajectories as secular (Yip and Page 2013, Taylor and Snowdon 2014a):

My plans for the near future are to continue coming to the church, to this church, for worship, and to continue studying…I'm looking at doing Theology, so a completely pretty different direction from what I've been doing, but I'd like to, maybe at some point in the future, go and do a course on that. I'm not achieving spiritually what I need to achieve, not being able to give it the dedication and the commitment. That's my biggest fear, my dedication to my spiritual growth.

(Valerie, 28)

Below, both Andrew and Claire express quite a paternalistic and potentially somewhat patronising version of religious reach and relevance, as 'challenging', 'gritty', and even comedic places are invoked as sites of need, care and investment. Andrew situates such cares locally within a 'return to nature' religious narrative, where investment is seen to reap the most benefits – for himself as a future minister, and a larger disadvantaged community:

> There is a TV series on at the moment, called Rev, with Tom Hollander. It's a
> comedy, but it is a very gritty comedy and that highlights, very accurately I
> would say, the Church's current role and experience from the perspective of a
> Parish Priest in a very challenging Parish … I can see the challenges there and
> I can actually see the benefits that you could reap from that, being in a very
> rural environment looking at how we can preserve God's creation and how we
> can nurture it, as we were commanded to in the book of Genesis...
> (Andrew 24)

Like Andrew, Claire located her religious growth and belonging, alongside a collective community development, yet the language of 'planting a Church' in a rural location arguably conveys potentially troubling links between self-change and community change echoing traditional 'mission' dimensions of religion. That said, Claire is specifically dwelling on the possibility of fostering a Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), in, for and by LGBT groups, potentially stretching 'conservative' dimensions of religion, towards an alternative imagination, potentially allowing for a more expansive understanding of sexual citizenship as also related to vocation and pastoral care within LGBT communities:

> We have talked about moving to – this is going to sound a bit crazy – but
> moving to [X]! Just because it's somewhere that we've found that we really
> like and we've been talking about how there needs to be more MCC churches
> in the UK. And we've been wondering, [partner] and I, if we could start a
> church somewhere, which is a really big thing. But we're just taking it one
> step at a time … I think everything we've learned from MCC, we can carry to
> the church. (Claire 24)

Overall, and in the accounts provided above, religious hopes intersect aspects of 'getting by', where sexual-religious identities and presences sometimes do not easily sit together, felt as hostility, not belonging and as 'heart changes' compelling (future) reconciliation. Both Andrew and Claire, identify the 'challenges' and 'benefits' of religious investment where, these combine resourced hopes to 'get on', to attain vocational roles within Churches, and to imagine an inclusive elsewhere to be filled

with queer religiosity. In turn, the narrative of easily 'getting on' is interrupted by queer precarity and religious uncertainty and by, for example, the routinised practice of dedication, abiding by scripture, spiritual growth and doubt – unhurried practices which arguably slow down the acceleration of neo-liberal times and forward motion of youthful 'becomings'. In current times of 'aspiring', 'post-welfare' or 'crisis' youth transitions, sexual-religious identification mediates the construction of vocational and familial futures, complicating private-public divides, where Church may be cast as family and vice versa. Rethinking such public-private intersections, allows a more nuanced negotiation of subversive and conservative futures, stepping away from the separation of religion and sexuality in legislative and popular imaginations and realisations of citizenship status.

Family Futures: Publics-Privates

The right to a 'family life' has been a contested and celebrated point in sexualities research, with some scholars noting the 'world we've won' in securing LGBT sexual citizenship, including the right to same-sex marriage in many parts of the world (Weeks 2007). In some ways, this is seen to constitute a freedom and access to the future, withheld from previous LGBT generations. Such framing centres an older LGBT 'sexual citizen' (as consumer, citizen, resident) and once again 'youth' slip out of the frame, constituting another intersectional gap in thinking about family futures. The 'calling' to religion as a site of present-future vocational investment, highlights pragmatic and caring orientations, as well as deference to an ultimate authority ('…what God wanted me to do…'). These stretches and balances are also played out in respondents' articulations of family futures, as a site of contested, classed, and gendered reproductions (Taylor 2009, Mckenzie 2015).

In the accounts they provided, participants often highlighted supportive connectivities (Weeks *et al*. 2001), describing the potential of (religious) vocations and family lives, echoing research on class and gender relations (Mellor 2010). In different configurations of being, relating and valuing, caring has been seen an essential way in which working-class groups – and particularly working-class mothers – live with others, often outside the norms of respectable heteronormativity (Skeggs 1997, Taylor 2009). Orientations towards immediacy rather than futurity can involve efforts to

have a good time in bleak conditions, to make the best of limited circumstances, and to rely on 'supportive connectivities' rather than 'self accumulation' (Skeggs 2004). Familial socialities, can also involve the gift of attention over time as a distinct value (Skeggs and Loveday 2012), stretching heteronormative 'spacetimes' (Halberstam 2005, Love 2007).

However, many interviewees did hope for normative lives ('the suburban life'), situated alongside rather than departing from broader social expectations and pressures, so while Julian states that '.. I am pretty flexible when it comes to the future, I am willing to let it take me where it wants…', he nonetheless frames this flexibility via certain (homo)normativities:

> In my dad's last letter, his main worry has been that being gay has therefore voided my chance of a normal future and that is precisely the opposite of how I feel. I don't know whether it's optimistic to hope this but I have always been hoping for just a normal, have a relationship, maybe adopt a kid, own my own house, have a good job; it's always been fairly normal in my mind, in terms of the future. At the moment, in terms of the here and now, I am trying to work on my dad and trying to get him to see that this is what I want and hopefully that is possible.
> (Julian, 20)

Within the context of historical non-recognition, and continued social injustice, it is feasible to re-think these everyday familial hopes as alternative (Weeks *et al*. 2001, Taylor 2009), in the way that feminist authors have sought to imbue working-class hopes with value. Stephen's account highlights the desirability of 'honesty' as a practice, place and identity ('a priest that is openly gay') where times and spaces do not collide:

> My plan for the future is I hope to get married, I hope to have that union blessed, I hope to become a priest but I hope to become a priest that is openly gay and can be honest about my relationship; it brings me nothing but love and support and I just want to be open about that, really. I don't want to have to lie, or have my boyfriend at the back of the rectory somewhere, only

allowed out on week-ends kind of thing. I think that's a real part of what I've been doing with 'Inclusive Church' and everything, is actually honesty.

(Stephen, 22)

In imaging family futures, respondents often made reference to the place of religion in their family lives, including, for example, via same-sex marriages and ceremonies ('I would like to do the boring settle down, kids possibly, that sort of settled life. And if the church could be involved in that, then great', Evelyn, 26):

I'd like a house, a car, children, I'd like to be able to provide for my children and I'd like to live forever with my wife. I'd like to be married. I'd like a nice job, I'd like to go on holidays once a year, and I'd like my children to be able to talk to me about anything and it would be nice if they could experience the same sort of religious experience as I have, but I wouldn't be fussed if they didn't. If they turned round to me and said, 'I'm straight and not a Christian' then I'd be like, 'That's fine. Do you love me? Excellent, that's good.'

(Nicola, 21)

Nicola's question seems to echo a central consideration in this chapter: on the one hand this centralisation of family-child-love may be seen as a particular refraction of the ethos of liberal acceptance, while on the other can be understood as subversive and unsettling and intersecting religious-sexual identities in publics-private spheres, and the forging of pragmatic *and* aspirant futures.

Conclusion

In this study, intersectional relations of sexuality and religion actively lead young people's aspirations towards pragmatic and caring orientations, and away from a self-accumulating subject able to 'get on' and 'get ahead'. This includes a 'calling' to religion as a site of present-future vocational investment, even as the gendering of these investments – and material realisations – remains a powerful constraint (Taylor and Snowdon 2014a). Here, religion can be queered as an inclusive practice and one which young LGBT people are not automatically excluded from in their future-orientations and pragmatic aspirations in 'getting-by'. Young people may actively

conceive of alternatives to dominant exchange value relationships and structures of chrono-normative temporalities, as upwardly mobile, aspirant and becoming. Here, both a sense of queer precarity – of not necessarily having access to the 'right kind' of normative futures – as well as a sense of religious (un)certainty – of religious commitment potentially in doubt – mediates young people's becoming otherwise.

Religion and sexuality constitute significant fields of existence potentially challenging, resisting and responding to heteronormative neoliberal capitalist forms of selfhood and futurity, interfacing 'getting by' and 'getting on' in vocational and familial choices. Queer theorisations on alternative values centre 'strange' temporalities and futurities: ways of relating to people that are not orientated around exchange and accumulation and imaginative uses of time that are not oriented around reproduction or productivity (Halberstam 2005). This represents a useful shattering of chrono-normative and 'clock time' logic (Adkins 2009) but it is also necessary to take account of the material contexts of such stretches and subversions. Overall, the chapter hopes to contribute to theorising the intersection of sexuality and religion, and to further understanding of the subversive potential of alternative values and 'futures'. This contribution may also work against the disciplinary division witnessed in the separation of 'youth studies', 'sexuality studies' and 'religious studies'.

In negotiating citizenship status within a UK context increasingly framed as secular, with the 'secular' often framed as positive and enabling to the realisation of sexual citizenship, this chapter challenges the separation and isolation of 'sexual citizenship' from other religion life experiences, practices and identities. That sexuality and religion *relate* in the negotiation of employment and family futures, as the often primary areas of citizenship inclusion, challenges this separation, stretching thinking beyond a simple normative/subversive binary in relating (non)normative lives and the inclusion into workplace and family as citizens.

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