This interdisciplinary symposium will bring together work on the history of childhood, medicine, gender, emotion, sex, and sexuality to question what it is that has given some sex disruptive or normative power from the 19th to the 21st century. The aim of the conference will be to question the assumptions we have about what disruptive and non-disruptive sex is, what contexts move sex from one category to another, and how these categories have changed over time and place.

The hashtag is #DisruptiveSex, but each panel will indicate if they consent to be tweeted and photographed. The symposium twitter is @DisruptiveSex19.

This event is kindly sponsored by the Wellcome Trust and the Royal Historical Society.

The event will be located in the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine Keppel Street Building. Papers will be given in John Snow Lecture Theatre B, lunch and refreshments will be provided in Keppel Street Building the café South Courtyard area.
Monday 15th April 2019

09:00-09:45: Registration

09:45-10:00: Introduction

10:00-11:30 Panel 1 ‘Contagious Sex/ Criminalised Sex’ [Preformed panel]
Andrea Ros: Reconsidering Fin-de-Siècle Contagious Sexuality and the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1885); Jaime García-Iglesias: Seeking HIV Through the Ages: Exploring Narratives of HIV and Desire; Patrick Baxter: Chemsex: Politics of the Body and Space in the City
Chair: Maurice Nagington

11:30-11:45 Break

11:45-13:15 Panel 2 ‘Rethinking the Relationship between Sex and Sex Work’
Rina Budnitsky Pikkel: From Sexual Services to Sexual Rights: Severing the Tie between Sexuality Disability and Prostitution; Monique Huysamen: Queering the ‘Straight’ Line: Men’s Talk on Paying for Sex; Yvonne Pitts: Transforming Criminal Sexuality: Sex Work and Military Regulation during the American Civil War, 1861-1866
Chair: Sarah Kenny

13:15-14:15 Lunch

14:15-15:45 Panel 3 ‘Rethinking Disruptive ‘Sex’ in the 21st Century’
Tanya Serisier: Affirmative and Enthusiastic Consent: From Oppositional to Normative Sex?; Siyang Wei: Sexual Disorientations: Asexuality, Identity, and LGBT Community in the Digital Age Georgia; A. G. Williams: Gender Anarchists, Gender Imposters: Thematic Parallels between Transphobia, Gender-Based Queerphobia and Anti-Feminist Discourse [Note: this presentation comes with a content warning. Short clips of footage will be screened including anti-LGBT language and physical violence]
Chair: Hannah J. Elizabeth

15:45-16:00 Break

16:00-17:30 Panel 4 ‘Sex and Sexuality in Changing Times’
David Griffiths: Georgina Somerset and the Entangled History of Intersex; Blanche Plaquevent: Students, Sex and Politics around May ‘68: Performing Subversion; David A. Valone: ‘F#ck You!’ Punk, Porn, and the Transformation of American Sexuality in the 1970s
Chair: Andrew Burchell

17:30-18:00 Break
18:00-19:00 Keynote Lecture: *Sex History, Ethics, and Activism Lecture*
Kate Lister, Leeds Trinity University

**Abstract:**
It is over ten years since British researcher and disability activist Mike Oliver coined the term 'emancipatory disability research’ to refer to a radical new approach to researching disability (Oliver, 1992). Can we apply the same considerations to academics who write about sex work; specifically, researchers in historical studies? What does ethical sex work history research look like? Is traditional historical research in danger of mirroring and perpetuating the power relationships experienced by oppressed people in their day-to-day lives? This paper asks if researchers in the history of sex lag behind researchers in the social sciences when it comes to understanding how work serves to perpetuate stigma and damaging narratives.

Much historical research around sex work continues to locate the ‘problem’ within the impaired individual. Sex workers often report that research is an alienating experience for them – it is something that is done to them over which they have little or no control. How can historians construct an emancipatory sex work research model that does justice to their subject while supporting marginalised communities today? In short, how can those researching the past support those in the present?

19:00-20:00 Drinks Reception
Tuesday 16th April 2019

09:00-09:30 Registration

09:30-11:30 Panel 5 ‘Renegotiating Sites of Education’
Andrew Burchell: A ‘weird little perversion’: the masochistic pupil, the sadistic teacher, and STOPP’s campaign to abolish corporal punishment in English schools, c.1968-1986; Ellie Simpson: The Representation of Sex and the Body in the Formal Teaching of British Sex Education; Elizabeth Lovegrove: How did Portrayals of ‘Disruptive Sex’ Change for Teenage Girls in the Magazines of 1950-2000?; Hannah Charnock: Shifting Sexual Values and the Creation of the ‘Generation Gap’ in post-war Britain
Chair: Ben Mechen

11:30-11:45 Break

11:45-13:15 Panel 6 ‘Down the Worm Hole: Revisiting 80s “Heterosex”’ [Preformed panel]
Niamh Moore and Sharon Webb: Retroactive Ethics: Going Back in Order to go Forwards; Rachel Thomson and Alison Ronan: Rematriation: Putting Place Back Intro the Patriarchy; Ester McGeeney and Rachel Thomson: Reanimating Heterosex: Experiments with People, Archives and Imaginations
Chair: Hannah Charnock

13:15-14:15 Lunch

14:15-15:45 Panel 7 Spaces of Sex and Sexuality
Chair: Sarah Kenny

15:45-16:00 Conclusions and closing comments
ABSTRACTS

DAY 1

PANEL 1: Contagious Sex / Criminalized Sex

This interdisciplinary panel brings together papers which explore the relationship between contagiousness and disruptive sex. In the context of increased concerns about new and re-emerging sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV/AIDS, antibiotic resistant gonorrhoea and mycoplasma genitalium), the discourses and embodied experiences of contagion have become intensely debated sites of knowledge-making which categorise specific sexual practices as disruptive and normative. Through a focus on different historical periods and diverse methodologies, the panel aims to explore how contagiousness becomes mobilized as a means of inflecting sex with varied meanings pleasurable, intimate, dangerous, normative, disruptive etc). The three papers examine medical and popular discourses of sex as contentious site of contagion, analyse literary and cultural representations of contagious diseases influencing sexual behaviour and explore how efforts to criminalize forms of stigmatized sex have weaponized contagion as a public health issue. Andreea Ros’s paper analyses how popular vampire fiction written in the 1890s responded to the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts (the first piece of English legislation to criminalize contagion in relation to sex). Jamie Garcia Iglesias’s paper explores bugchasing, the fetish of seeking HIV. His paper challenges assumptions of bugchasing and HIV as intrinsically disruptive of sex and presents an evidence-based exploration of bugchasers’ meaning making processes and the influence of generational belonging on these. Patrick Baxter’s paper uses artistic research methodologies to comment on how health and wellbeing service based approach to the Chemsex Others and stigmatizes people who engage in the practice. He argues that Chemsex is seen by certain institutions as a problem to be solved rather than a gay culture phenomenon which should be understood as a practice which can be linked to the changing face of the city.

Andreea Ros, Manchester Metropolitan University
Reconsidering Fin-de-Siècle Contagious Sexuality and the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1885)

This paper revisits fin-de-siècle fictional representations of contagious sex in order to explore how the shift towards increased criminalization of sex work through the Contagious Diseases Acts (passed in 1864 and repealed in 1884) and the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1885) had its origins in associations between contagion, impurity and non-normative sex. The sudden surge in popularity of violent, contagious vampire fictions in the 1890s has been read as an anti-woman backlash against the allegedly feminist victory of the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts (which allowed the police to arrest and subject to medical examination suspected prostitutes and detain those found to be contagious). This paper argues against this reading by analysing representations of sex work in Gothic fiction before and after the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Act. This fiction-driven
historical analysis shows that Gothicized representations of sex work as pollution and contagion were popularised by the opponents of the Contagious Diseases Acts in the 1880s and only later spread to social purity campaigns and Gothic fiction. By tracing the transformation in discourses and legislation around sex work through Gothic fiction, I aim to chart both the processes through which sex takes on different meanings as disruptive or normative.

Jaime García-Iglesias, The University of Manchester

Seeking HIV through the ages: exploring narratives of HIV and desire

Bugchasing, the fetishisation of HIV, has received scholarly attention as a sex practice that disrupts traditional paradigms of self-preservation, healthy living and safer-sex. Scholars analysing the pornographic manifestations of this practice have considered bugchasing as a form of new intimacy, kinship and masculinity (Dean 2009, Lee 2014, Joao 2018). However, little research exists that ethnographically engages with bugchasers and explores their personal opinions and experiences, and the degree to which bugchasers themselves perceive their practices to be queer, disruptive or revolutionary.

Over the past year, I have in-depth interviewed more than 20 self-proclaimed bugchasers, ranging in ages from 23 to 84, in the UK, US, Australia, Mexico and France. This paper is the product of those interviews and explores how bugchasers make meaning of/through their own practices and how they negotiate mainstream discourses of health, safety and disease. In this presentation, I analyse the significance that bugchasing desires and practices have for these men: from thrill-seeking to actively challenging scientific knowledge on HIV/AIDS. These meanings are contextualised chronologically: belonging to different generations and having experienced different stages of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, participants establish unique relationships to HIV and its disruption or normalcy in relation to sex. Overall this paper challenges assumptions of bugchasing and HIV as intrinsically disruptive and presents an evidence-based exploration of bugchasers’ own meaning making processes and the influence of generational belonging on these.

Patrick Baxter, LGBT Foundation

Chemsex: politics of the Body and Space in the City

Chemsex has become a site of contestation in the fields of social research and healthcare service provision where body, identity, and sexual politics are play out. It is increasingly difficult for those engaging in Chemsex to speak openly about personal experiences due to stigma created by popular exposés (Wharton 2017, Chemsex 2015 dir Gogerty & Fairman), and, more significantly, health services contributing to Othering the sex many gay men enjoy.

Although important to acknowledge the risks and darker aspects of Chemsex, problems persist in the overwhelming view of Chemsex as a problem to be solved rather than a cultural phenomenon to unpack. Understanding of Chemsex culture will support, rather than further marginalise, men who engage in this practice. Can Chemsex be described as a Gay
cultural practice, and if so, what is its relationship to the changing face of the city? Most research acknowledges that Chemsex has reached under 10% of the gay population (Bourne et al, 2014). Despite increasing prevalence and expanding beyond major capitals cities, what is fascinating is not the numbers engaging in Chemsex, but the number of men still unaware of it. Furthermore, the tendency for chemsex ‘chillouts’ to occur in the private sphere could be viewed as a Queer community rejection of the gentrified and sanitised landscape of public LGBT spaces. This paper uses artistic research methodologies and experiential ethnography to explore complex narratives of body and space, rendering Chemsex a distinct Gay cultural practice.

PANEL 2: ‘Rethinking the Relationship between Sex and Sex Work’

Rina Budnitsky Pikkel, Faculty of Law, University of Haifa
From Sexual Services to Sexual Rights: Severing the Tie between Sexuality, Disability and Prostitution

It is commonly believed that purchasing sexual services is the only available option for disabled persons to realize their sexuality. This belief is a part of existing misconception and stigma on sexuality and disability, portraying disabled persons as asexual and un-attractive and disability as contradictory to fulfilling consensual sexual relationships. The necessity of prostitution is so imbedded within the social construction of sexuality and disability that the use of sexual services by people with disabilities is often tolerated and accepted even in societies objecting prostitution.

The rising discourse regarding the legality and legitimacy of prostitution brought the seemingly obvious tie between prostitution and disability to the central stage. Those advocating for decriminalizing of sexual services support their claim not only with arguments about freedom of choice and occupation, but also on the need to protect disability sexual rights. It is claimed that opposing prostitution means opposing the only possibility persons with disabilities have to exercise their sexual rights. Not only such arguments do not promote sexual rights or disability rights, they perpetuate existing misconceptions and stigma on disabled sexuality.

This paper will discuss the importance of severing the tie between sexuality, disability and prostitution and separating the socio-legal discourse of prostitution from disability advocacy. The paper will also offer a notion of independent universal sexual rights as a starting point for discussing sexuality and disability and establishing a rights-based approach to sexuality.

Monique Huysamen, Department of Psychology, University of Bath
Queering the ‘straight’ line: men’s talk on paying for sex

This paper presents a qualitative analysis of interviews conducted with eight South African men who identified as clients of women sex workers, but who also spoke about paying to secretly explore their sexual desires for trans women and men. I draw on queer theory to
approach the question of how, and to what extent, men’s paid sexual encounters functioned as sites where they could resist the constraints of compulsory heterosexuality and navigate more fluid sexual identities. Highlighting the complex nature and meanings of paying for sex, I argue that the secrecy of the paid sexual encounter provided a space for ‘breaking out’ of the confines of heterosexuality whilst simultaneously being the very thing that allowed men to stay ‘in line’ with what was expected of them within the heteronormative realities of their everyday lives.

Yvonne Pitts, Associate Professor of History, Purdue University
Transforming Criminal Sexuality: Sex Work and Military Regulation during the American Civil War, 1861 - 1866

This paper explores how women’s paid sex work transformed from criminal activity to a system of pragmatic military regulation during the American Civil War (1861-1866) in the occupied Confederate city of Nashville, Tennessee. When the U.S. Army established a garrison outside of Nashville, Army surgeons quickly alerted commanders to an emerging venereal disease epidemic among soldiers. After a chaotic and unsuccessful attempt to round up and transport female sex workers to other cities, Army commanders ordered military surgeons to inspect and license them. A complex, contested, and often haphazard system of regulation evolved in response to public sexual disorder and threats to soldiers’ sexual health. This instance is the first time the U.S. military sought to officially regulate sex work in what would become efforts to do so in almost every major military conflict afterward. The hastily implemented system of regulation disrupted the disciplinary regimes that morally condemned and legally punished female sex work. The new system generated spaces in which sex workers and military authorities renegotiated ideas about sexual danger, contagion, and the proper targets of surveillance and legal discipline. As sex work became quasi-legal, disorderly soldiers rather than licensed prostitutes became the subjects of regulation. Local civilian police, Army surgeons, and provost marshals (the Army’s law enforcement arm) clashed with each other and with sex workers and ordinary soldiers as they challenged the meanings of sex work and contagion. Nashville offers the opportunity to explore sexual regulation during a transformative renegotiation of military, medical, and legal cultures.

PANEL 3: ‘Rethinking Disruptive ‘Sex’ in the 21st Century’

Tanya Serisier, Department of Crimonomology, Birkbeck, University of London
Affirmative and Enthusiastic Consent: From Oppositional to Normative Sex?

The notion of ‘positive verbal consent’ first came to prominence in popular culture in 1992 when Antioch, a small US liberal arts college, adopted a Sexual Offences Policy that consent for sexual activity on campus must be ‘verbal, mutual and reiterated for every new
level of sexual activity’. The policy received international criticism and was widely mocked, including in a sketch on influential US comedy show, Saturday Night Live. By 2015, however, almost every American campus and three state legislatures had adopted the affirmative consent standard. Articles affirming the ‘common sense’ morality and ethics of this standard now appear regularly in mainstream media publications.

Over the same period, I will argue, feminist arguments in support of affirmative and/or enthusiastic consent shifted markedly in tone, from arguing that the adoption of these standards was important because they would radically overhaul existing (hetero)sexual norms to arguments that sex that does not meet this standard lies outside of these norms. In this paper I explore consequences of discourses of positive and enthusiastic consent shifting from an oppositional register to one that is presented as sexually normative. I suggest that these changes do not simply reflect progress in dominant sexual ethics but rather that these new forms of normativity that may work to occlude power differentials and ethical problems inherent in normative heterosexuality. In short, there is, I argue, something lost when dominant feminist politics no longer sees mainstream heterosex as something requiring disruption.

Siyang Wei [Independent scholar]
Sexual Disorientations: Asexuality, Identity, and LGBT Community in the Digital Age

This paper explores the overlooked normative potential of asexuality, which has become increasingly prominent as a sexual identity since the turn of the 21st century. When it was founded in 2001, the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN) was unique in defining asexuality as an orientation based on a lack of sexual attraction, analogous to and aligned with LGB identities; other asexual websites focused on particular desires or behaviour. AVEN has since emerged as a focal hub for an online asexual community. Both mainstream media coverage and academic scholarship have failed to question this definition. Social research into asexuality has been limited to a largely descriptive capacity, assuming an underlying shared reality of not experiencing sexual attraction that expresses in different ways – despite there being no real consensus as to what sexual attraction actually entails. Existing scholarship has therefore neglected the crucial role of AVEN’s asexual discourses in identity-building.

Drawing on 18 in-depth interviews, this paper asks what is at stake in the construction of asexuality as a minority sexual orientation. I locate asexuality as emerging from new Western discourses of sexual choice and diversity, and argue that the construction of a marginalised ‘disruptive’ asexual identity against a hegemonically ‘sexual world’ works to obscure the enduring racial and heteropatriarchal structuration of sex. I further argue that the current identitarian framework is enabled by a lack of historical attentiveness in conceptions of asexuality. Finally, I propose a focus on changing notions of sexual agency as a new paradigm for studying asexuality.

Georgia A.G Williams
Gender Anarchists, Gender Impostors: Thematic Parallels between Transphobia, Gender-Based Queerphobia and Anti-Feminist Discourse
With increasing media attention, the visibility of transgender, genderqueer and non-binary individuals has risen significantly throughout the UK and US. Non-cisgender individuals often experience incidences of violence, discrimination and prejudice which parallel the histories of women involved in feminist rights movements. This research is a thematic analysis of four videos displaying discriminatory behaviour towards transgender, genderqueer and non-binary individuals, which were compared to feminist literature concerning the approaches through which feminist rights movements have been resisted. These videos include both footage of and/or recollections of incidences of discriminatory behaviour. I argue in this research that non-cisgender individuals are often perceived as being ‘gender anarchists’ or ‘gender impostors’, deliberately disrupting gendered expectations, and the uncovered themes are used to support this conviction. The themes which emerged were as follows: ‘Proximity and Segregation’; ‘Paedophilia, Mothers and Children’; ‘Regulation and Legislation’. I will discuss how these arguments and behaviours may be indicative of a defensive response to a disruption of/threat to patriarchal power; where cisnormativity is a prerequisite of heteronormativity, and heteronormativity is the backbone of patriarchal symbiosis- the presumption that true masculinity exists as an inversion of heterosexual femininity. As a non-cisgender, non-heterosexual researcher, I hope to comment on my own reflexivity, and how my own gendered experience may have influenced the themes I did- and did not- uncover in this study. In addressing the affective elements of this behaviour and its origins, the intention is to begin to disentangle the continually interrelated nature of transphobic, queerphobic and anti-feminist violence. This presentation comes with a trigger warning: Short clips of footage screened will include incidences of anti-LGBT language and physical violence.
PANEL 4: Sex and Sexuality in Changing Times

David Griffiths, University of Surrey
Georgina Somerset and the entangled history of intersex and homosexuality

In the 1950s and 1960s in Britain, medical professionals with knowledge of intersex were stressing that the law did not have a definition of sex, which was problematic given the discussions about legalising homosexuality. In 1969, two women would appear in court to “prove” their sex. April Ashley was unsuccessful, being deemed “not a woman for the purposes of marriage”. Georgina Somerset, however, was able to prove her sex through a chromosome test that revealed an intersex variation. In this paper I will explore the significance of “proving” sex in court, interrogating how sex, gender and sexuality shift between medical, legal and more popular discourses. Scholarship on intersex has long recognised links and tensions between intersex and LGBT histories and politics. Similarly, a history of intersex activism has overlapped, bumped up against, and shared resources with activism from the LGBT community. However, while some groups champion the adding of I to LGBT, others are more critical. Intersex complicates conceptions of homosexuality, and homosexuality haunts intersex classifications and treatments. In this paper, I will explore Georgina Somerset’s story, and consider the relevance to contemporary intersex activism of this history, contextualising a complex and ongoing debate.

Blanche Plaquevent, University of Bristol
Students, sex and politics around May 68: performing subversion

Around May 68 in France, students politicised sexuality in a specific way. Through various channels, students were put in contact with intellectuals’ writings on the sexual revolution, which associated the liberation of sexual desire with the destruction of capitalism (Wilhelm Reich, Herbert Marcuse, and many less famous French intellectuals of the fifties and sixties like Boris Fraenkel, Jean-Marie Brohm, Kostas Axelos, situationist intellectuals, etc.). Their ideas met students’ preoccupations as a large movement of protest emerged against the strict rules applied in university accommodation halls and the separation of women and men in these dormitories. Between 1965 and May 1968, many demonstrations and occupations occurred across France, fuelled by intellectual references, conferences on the sexual repression, publication of pamphlets on the sexual liberation, etc. Therefore, sexuality was a political concern and students’ campaigns for sexuality enacted their political claims. But when we look more closely at how students formulated their claims for sexuality, the form of these claims reveals a quest for subversion. Beyond their political claims, references to sex were used by students to perform a form of subversion. Through the study of graffiti, student newspapers, billboards, and testimonies, I will show how students thought to disrupt the social order through mentions of sex and I will discuss to what extent they questioned the norms of their time. I will especially analyse their discussion of homosexuality, female sexuality, rape and incest and show how their ideas of what is disruptive shaped their discourses on sex and created a male and heterosexual idea of the sexual revolution, based on an idea of sexual performance linked to political activism.
David A. Valone, Professor of History, Quinnipiac University
“F#ck You!": Punk, Porn, and the Transformation of American Sexuality in 1970s

During the 1970s, a new, aggressive, and transgressive public sexuality emerged in the United States. While the dynamics of this transformation are complex, encompassing a wide variety of cultural forms, this paper will examine this shift through the lens of the newly emergent pornography industry and the phenomenon of punk music. I will argue that these movements, while emerging from an existing ‘underground’ of the prior two decades, gained prominence though their rejection of the entrenched Victorian traditions of American culture (and its repressive sexual régime) in favor of transgressive and non-conforming sexualities and practices.

This paper will use two lenses to examine this transformation: music of two iconic American punk bands, The Avengers (fl. 1977-1979) and The Cramps (fl. 1976-1981), and the popular pornographic films Sex Freaks (1974) and The Devil in Miss Jones (1973). In examining these cultural products, this paper will argue that both the form and the content of these artifacts, as well as the reception and public reaction them as art, helped to push along the rejection of older sexual norms in favor of new, transgressive ones. In particular, the punk and porn of the 1970s furthered the emergence of a female sexuality that emphasize the power of women’s sexual choices and their independence as sexual actors.
A ‘weird little perversion’: the masochistic pupil, the sadistic teacher, and STOPP’s campaign to abolish corporal punishment in English schools, c.1968-1986

Founded in 1968, the Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment (STOPP) made prominent use of psychosexual theory in its increasingly vociferous campaign against corporal punishment in schools (abolished in 1986). Caning, they claimed, opened the door to ‘perverted’ adults – looking for a job which allowed them to act out their darkest fantasies – and threatened vulnerable children, whose future sexual lives and practices may in turn be permanently disrupted by sado-masochistic desires. Although few school-punishment-related scandals at this time had a directly sexual undertone, the sado-masochistic trope’s durability in STOPP propaganda provides a space in which to think about the histories of sexuality, childhood, and their dually ‘disruptive/disrupting’ nature. Using STOPP publicity material and engaging with contemporary psycho-sexual theory, this paper analyses how discourses of sadism and popularised psychoanalysis were used to ‘disrupt’ what had hitherto been an everyday practice of discipline in state education. I will also ask how the ‘sado-masochisation’ of the caning teacher interacted with the emergence of child sexual abuse and paedophilia as ‘disruptive’ sexual practices in a mid-century permissive society in which many hitherto marginalised sexual practices were increasingly visible. This ultimately facilitates a tracing of one part of sado-masochism’s evolution in public discourse, and its socio-cultural-political contentiousness, in a long durée and through the unlikely site of the school.

Ellie Simpson, University of Winchester
The representation of sex and the body in the formal teaching of British sex education

This paper seeks to explore representations of sex in British sex educational materials of the post-war period. In doing so, this paper will investigate how the sexual body is positioned within teacher sex education manuals and student textbooks. Although, these manuals and textbooks can not reveal how they were used by teachers and pupils; what they do reveal is how the sexual body was represented to adolescents and their teachers in the post-war years. Despite a vast array of scholarship dedicated to the informal sex education of teenage girls in the early to mid-twentieth century; little attention has been paid to the formal avenues of sex education at this time, with many studies assuming that sex education was not formally taught in schools. However, a study of teaching materials reveals that the topic was discussed, albeit often through indirect, ‘non-disruptive’ methods. In particular, this paper will explore how the body was represented within the non-disruptive framework of the natural world, using natural world examples. This paper will illustrate how the human sexual body
and sexual pleasure is neglected within formal sex education literature of the time and replaced with the less disruptive animal body. However, this paper will question the extent to which natural world examples can be described as ‘non-disruptive’ to the normative or dominant conception that sex belonged within a heterosexual marriage. The focus on the sexual body, both animal and human, in formal sex education literature is significant because it reveals how issues around the sexual body were translated for an intended formal school environment and how sex could be made appropriate for children.

Elizabeth Lovegrove, Oxford Brookes University
How did portrayals of ‘disruptive sex’ change for teenage girls in the magazines of 1950–2000?

In 1950, magazines targeted at teenage girls included no acknowledgement that they might be sexually active: any sex at all was disruptive and dangerous. By the end of the twentieth century, even though teen magazines were full of sex, fuelling moral panics about girls’ sexuality, there were still rigid expectations about the contexts in which it was acceptable for girls to be doing it.

This paper will explore the ways that teen magazines discussed sex, advised their readers about it, and how they portrayed those girls who engaged in sexual activity outside the currently-accepted limits of appropriate behaviour. Drawing particularly on magazine problem pages, this paper will analyse the ways that both teenage girls themselves, and their magazine advisers, engaged with these changing boundaries, how the discussion of disruptive sex was used in the magazines to enforce the acceptable practice of teenage sexuality, and how girls writing letters to the magazines both challenged and enforced the magazine definitions of acceptable sex. The paper will also make use of the experiences of adults looking back at their own magazines-reading teens, and their experiences of learning about sex from the magazines.

I will argue that girls related the content in the magazines to their own lived experiences of sex and sexuality, and I will draw connections between how they experienced their own sexuality, and how ideal or normative sexuality, and disruptive sexuality, are presented by the magazines.

Hannah Charnock, University of Bristol
Shifting sexual values and the creation of the ‘generation gap’ in post-war Britain

Historians have long acknowledged that the decades after the Second World War witnessed profound changes both in how young people were viewed in Britain and in sexual mores, yet, little research has explored how these changes interacted. This paper brings these two narratives into conversation to ask, ‘How important were different sexual values in creating the so-called ‘generation gap’ in post-war Britain?’

The paper will examine the experiences of teenagers growing up in England between 1950 and 1980 to explore how heterosexuality emerged as a key concern for young people during adolescence. As the paper will demonstrate, this process of ‘becoming sexual’ was particularly turbulent for the post-war generation who were ‘coming of age’ at a period when
sexual values were in flux. While ‘traditional’ sexual values continued to be articulated by their parents and teachers, new codes of sexual morality were increasingly prominent in popular culture and these were often enacted teenagers themselves. Teenagers of this era thus had to carefully ‘mind the gap’ in sexual culture and develop their own strategies for negotiating this in their own relationships.

Bringing together reflective testimonies from an original oral history project and the post-1981 Mass Observation Project, this paper considers the ways in which sex could be a disruptive force within individual lives and how, multiplied thousands of times over, this created a sense of broader social disruption.

PANEL 6: Down the wormhole: revisiting 80s ‘Heterosex’

This panel brings together three papers from a newly funded project that revisits a landmark feminist study of young women’s sexual cultures and practice conducted in Manchester and London between 1988-90 (forming part of an ESRC programme into the social aspects of HIV/AIDS). The WRAP study can be understood as capturing an important moment in which heterosexuality was named, denaturalised and broken down into component parts: practices, silences, asymmetries of desire and anatomy. What happens then when this body of 150 interviews are revisited by a team interested in thinking about the study as an event, a set of encounters, methodologies and objects that enable feminist time travels. Funded by the ESRC as part of a programme of ‘transforming social science’ the team brings together a community archive (Feminist Webs) and sexuality researchers around a shared conviction that the boundaries between social science and social history can be disrupted by feminist approaches to archival practice. In this panel we report from the first stages of the project, reflecting on three key concepts: ‘retroactivity’ – how we might use the past to authorise the present when working with elastic ideas of time, technology and consent; ‘rematriation’ – how reverse engineering the archive might direct value and knowledge from the abstract to the particular; and ‘reanimation’ - how new analyses of old data can become our methods of time travel, helping us find and fall through worm holes.

Niamh Moore & Sharon Webb
Retroactive ethics: going back in order to go forwards

In this paper we reflect on the experience of negotiating ethical and IP review for a research project based on archiving and reanimating a feminist-sociological study conducted 30 years ago. Bringing 1988 and 2018 into conversation is productive: revealing how ideas concerning what it means to conduct ethical research have changed over time, and the emergence of new preoccupations with intellectual property that are outwith a formal process of ethical review. UK research has been at the forefront internationally of moves towards the archiving of data and open access publication. It also has a well-developed tradition of feminist methodology involving an expanded lexicon of ethical labour that does not align neatly with the more contractual focus on consent and risk management associated with institutional ethics review. By going back to a study and data set generated before the various data protection acts (yet deeply engaged with questions of power in the research
process and the ethical violence of interpretation) we illuminate and question the contemporary framing of ‘ethical governance’, expose lacunae in the past where important issues were neither named nor recognised and retrieve lines of ethical enquiry that deserve to be expanded in a data landscape where access, ownership and coproduction are transformed by the affordances of the digital.

Rachel Thomson & Alison Ronan
Rematriation: putting place back into the patriarchy

In this paper we consider tensions between decontextualisation and recontextualisation in (feminist) sexual health discourse as revealed by the experience of revisiting a ‘classic’ study within British sex research the Women Risk and AIDS project. Conducted in Manchester and London in the late 1980s the study developed an influential account of gendered power relations, nuanced by social class, age and ethnicity but paying little attention to the specificities of place. Revisiting these interviews provides an opportunity to explore why and how place was obscured in the original analysis and how this material might be read again to privilege the locatedness of sexual cultures. Focussing on the Manchester interviews we attempt to imagine some of the sexual subcultures of Manchester in the 1980’s, feeling back in time social history accounts including Langhamers discussion of women’s leisure in the North West and Glucksman’s distinction between the lives of the cottons and the casuals. Examples explored will include being ‘in the pubs’ and ‘becoming trendy’ as constituting different stages within one city for sexual experiments and the making and managing of sexual reputations.

Ester McGeeney & Rachel Thomson
Reanimating heterosex: experiments with people, archives and imaginations

The WRAP project can be situated at a particular conjuncture – a paradoxical moment of conservatism and resistance in which change and experimentation were in the air. In this paper we report on series of experiments with archived data in which creative methods are used to stage encounters between contemporary preoccupations and documents that connect us with the sex of the past. These experiments include inviting contemporary sociologists to reanalyse interviews conducted in the 1980s, but also working with youth workers and young women to explore the ways that the past can provoke the present. The aim of these experiments is to find ways that these materials can be put to work as a form of education, where the archive gives rise to critical sexual pedagogies. The paper draws on a body of work exploring practices of reanimating as a tool of sex education.

PANEL 7: Spaces of sex and sexuality

Kathy J. Cooke, Founding Dean, Honors College and Professor of History, University of South Alabama
American Protestants and “Indecent Raptures”: Orgasmic Conversion Experiences in the Formation of National Identity
In the nineteenth century, American religious revivals—often called “camp meetings”—were frequently sites of ecstatic public conversions. According to novelist Frances Trollope, these were “served up to a mass audience which behaves with indecent sexually suggestive raptures.” Earlier Puritans had also endorsed sexualized metaphors as part of religious experience. As Protestant camp meetings covered the expanding United States, orgasmic conversion and revival sex inspired Victoria Woodhull to claim that she had been conceived at an ecstatic revival. In this paper, I argue that orgasmic conversions, and subsequent births, contributed to the development of a shared sense of American national identity. Camp meetings were open-air affairs, and, as Trollope pointed out, participants often expected public conversions with sexualized “bodily effects.” I propose that such conversions also had reproductive meanings that sanctioned not only ecstatic displays, but also the children that arrived after revivals. As sexual experiences, these revivals and conversions also may have been one disruptive means to American identity. I explore contemporary interpretations of these “indecent” and “suggestive raptures,” as well as the status of women and men who experienced them. I also consider the status of children who were born in the months after a revival, presumably conceived in the throes of religious ecstasy. After Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 proclamation that the frontier no longer existed in the United States, conversion became increasingly private, and reproductive implications shifted to the more controlled eugenic visions that characterized the progressive era of early twentieth century America.

Daphné Budasz, European University Institute, Florence
Colonial space and sexual regulation: Hijras under the worried gaze of the British Raj

Hijra is a Hindi term, which refers to a specific group of ‘transgender’ people in South Asia. They are usually male-born persons who are emasculated; dress in female clothes; and live off ritual singing and dancing performances. Following the 1857 Indian Rebellion, accompanied by bureaucratization of public health in Britain and the empire, hijras suddenly become a serious concern for the colonial rule. The British moral panic regarding eunuchs in the second half of the nineteenth century gives rise to the enactment in 1871 of the Criminal Tribes Act (CTA). Part II of this legislation provides for the registration of all eunuchs “who are reasonably suspected of kidnapping or castrating children, or of committing offences under section three hundred and seventy-seven of the Indian Penal Code [about unnatural offences, namely sodomy], or abetting the commission of any of the said offences”. Drawing from concepts of moral contagion and social contamination, the criminalisation of eunuchs reflects a growing fear of social disorder and belief in rising debauchery. However, the analysis of colonial records brings to light a manifest confusion about the supposed criminal nature of hijras. Although transvestism is not forbidden by colonial law, the ideological link between non-gender-conforming apparel and sexual deviancy seems to progressively gain ground.

This paper will argue that the CTA provision on the registration of eunuchs responds to the need to spatially confine the visual disturbance presented by hijras’ physical features. This reflects the rise of the British view on transvestism as a signifier of moral perversion. It
Rubber Gloves and Liquid Gold: Poppers and the Policing of London’s Queer Nightlife in the 1980s

In January 1987, thirty-five Metropolitan Police officers in rubber gloves raided the Royal Vauxhall Tavern, one of the city’s most famous gay pubs, claiming it to be a den of drugs, drunkenness and prostitution. The pub’s landlord, suppliers and staff were soon charged, under an obscure clause of a Victorian law, with offences relating to the sale of poppers (amyl nitrate, “Liquid Gold”), an inhalant popular in London’s gay subculture for its muscle relaxant properties and its instant rush of euphoria. With public anxieties about AIDS reaching fever pitch, the Met’s rubber-gloved raid on the RVT was quickly held up by gay activists as one of the most egregious examples yet of the institutional homophobia of the police and, through its harassment of queer nightlife, the force’s determination to quarantine the city from what The Sun had famously dubbed “the gay plague”. Utilising the gay press, ephemera and the records of the Gay and Lesbian Police Monitoring Group, this paper will examine the entangled history of drugs, policing, and sexual politics in modern London, arguing that the raid on the RVT confirmed the power of queer pleasures to unsettle heteronormative conceptualisations of sex and sociality, and in turn helped pave the way for the closure of countless gay venues during the city’s rapid gentrification from the 1990s.