NEW FOUNDATIONS:

SCHOOL ‘ETHOS’ AND LGBT SEXUALITIES

The Pavilion, University of Limerick, Friday 17th May 2013

This event is funded by the Irish Research Council ‘New Foundations’ Scheme and supported by:

Gender Culture & Society @UL

BERA
BRITISH EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

PE PAYS
Physical Education, Physical Activity and Youth Sport

Gender ARC

glen gay + lesbian equality network

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New Foundations: School ‘Ethos’ and LGBT Sexualities

Overview

This conference is funded by the Irish Research Council and is in association with the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Sexualities Special Interest Group. It will be joint-hosted by Gender, Culture & Society @ UL in the Department of Sociology and the Physical Education, Physical Activity and Youth Sport (PEPAYS) Research Centre.

This conference explores the concept of ‘ethos’ and its relationship with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) sexualities in schools. It brings together national and international researchers in LGBT Sexualities in Education, representatives from religious organisations, NGOs, the Department of Education and Skills, school management bodies, unions, parents’ associations, guidance associations, principals, teachers, key players in education policy and curriculum development as well as Initial Teacher Education (ITE) practitioners in Ireland. It provides an opportunity for dialogue, the sharing of current research and ideas and the development of links for future research and collaborations.

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Partners/Organisations

The Irish Research Council is a sub-board of the Higher Education Authority. It delivers enhanced opportunities and benefits to Irish-based researchers and enables the Irish research community to contribute to the body of global knowledge across a range of disciplines, recognising the importance of research and scholarship for all aspects of social, cultural and economic development. [www.research.ie](http://www.research.ie)

The BERA Sexualities SIG provides a forum for educators and researchers with interest in sexualities in the context of education to discuss theory, policy and practice issues. Dr. Fin Cullen and Dr. Pam Allred are the convenors of the BERA Sexualities SIG and will chair Session 1 and Session 2. [www.bera.ac.uk/sigs/info/sexualities](http://www.bera.ac.uk/sigs/info/sexualities)

Gender Culture & Society @ UL is an interdisciplinary field of study and at UL we offer challenging courses addressing the intersections of gender, ‘race’, class, age, ability and sexuality in society, popular culture, literature, history and politics. [www3.ul.ie/gcs/](http://www3.ul.ie/gcs/)

The Physical Education, Physical Activity and Youth Sport (PEPAYS) Research Centre is committed to the advancement of the physical and social wellbeing of Irish children and youth through the creation and dissemination of knowledge on physical education, physical activity, and youth sport that informs policy and practice. [www.ul.ie/pepays](http://www.ul.ie/pepays)

Gender ARC (Advanced Research Consortium on Gender, Culture and the Knowledge Society) is a research network linking more than fifty academics at the National University of Ireland, Galway and the University of Limerick who are engaged in gender-focused research. [www.genderarc.org](http://www.genderarc.org)

GLEN is a Policy and Strategy focused NGO which aims to deliver ambitious and positive change for lesbian, gay and bisexual people (LGB) in Ireland, ensuring full equality, inclusion and protection from all forms of discrimination. [www.glen.ie](http://www.glen.ie)

BeLonGTo is an organisation that provides safe and fun services for LGBT young people aged between 14 and 23 across Ireland. It provides advocacy and a campaigning voice so that society respects LGBT young people as full and valued members of society. [www.belongto.org](http://www.belongto.org)
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<td>9.00 – 9.15</td>
<td>GEMS 0029</td>
<td><strong>Welcome:</strong> Dr. Breda Gray, University of Limerick&lt;br&gt;<strong>Introduction:</strong> Dr. Pam Alldred Convertor of British Educational Research Association Sexualities SIG</td>
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| 9.15 – 11.15| GEMS 0029 (1 minute walk from The Pavilion) | **Session 1: School ‘Ethos’ and LGBT Sexualities: The Irish Context**  
Chair: Dr. Pam Alldred  
- *Valuing Visibility? An exploration of the construction of school ethos to enable or prevent recognition of sexual identities*  
  Dr. Anne Lodge, Church of Ireland College of Education  
- *Secular Imaginings and the future of Relationships and Sexuality Education*  
  Dr. Mary Lou Rasmussen, Monash University, Australia (via video-conference)  
- *Homophobia and Heterosexism in Schools in Ireland*  
  Dr. Stephen Minton, Trinity College Dublin  
- *Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in Primary and Post Primary Schools*  
  Frances Shearer, SPHE Support Service  
- *LGBT Teachers’ Negotiations of Schools in Ireland*  
  Aoife Neary, University of Limerick  
- *Ethos and Schooling: A Religious Perspective*  
  Michael Redmond, Joint Managerial Body of Voluntary Secondary Schools |
| 11.15 – 11.45| The Pavilion | Tea/Coffee/Refreshments                                                                 |
| 11.45 – 1.15| The Pavilion     | **Session 2: What insights can research in other contexts offer to this topic?**  
Chair: TBC  
- *Claiming a space for LGBT within a social justice agenda for schools*  
  Dr. Renée DePalma, University of A Coruña, Spain  
- *Equality Now? “Post-Homophobia” and its Discontents*  
  Professor Debbie Epstein, Cardiff University, Wales |
| 1.15 – 2.15| The Pavilion     | Lunch                                                                                   |
| 2.15 – 4.15| The Pavilion     | **Session 3: World Café (20 minute conversations on each topic—facilitators will rotate)**  
Topic 1: LGBT students and students of same-sex families  
Group Facilitator: Carol-Anne O’ Brien, BeLonGTo  
Topic 2: LGBT Teachers  
Group Facilitator: Sandra Irwin-Gowran, Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN)  
Topic 3: School Policy and Management  
Group Facilitator: Padraig Flanagan, Principal of Castletroy College, Limerick and VP of NAPD  
Topic 4: Curriculum and Teaching Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)  
Group Facilitator: Martha Sweeney, SPHE Support Service  
Topic 5: Teacher Education and Pre-service Teachers  
Group Facilitator: Dr. Patricia Mannix McNamara, Education and Professional Studies, UL |
| 4.15 – 4.30| The Pavilion     | Tea/Coffee/Refreshments                                                                 |
| 4.30 – 5.30| The Pavilion     | **Session 4: Key Insights and Future Directions**  
Chair: Professor Mary O’ Sullivan  
This summary discussion will be structured by feedback from the World Café Group Facilitators |
| 5.30       | The Pavilion     | Closing  
Aoife Neary |
Valuing Visibility? An exploration of the construction of school ethos to enable or prevent recognition of sexual identities

Dr. Anne Lodge

The Valuing Visibility study was an action research project that set out to identify inclusive, positive practice in Irish post-primary schools recognising the diversity of sexual identities and relationships that exist within the school community as well as examining perceived barriers to such practices. This paper explores the nature of the partnership relationships established between an academic institution, an advocacy agency, a funding body, post-primary schools and key education stakeholders which enabled this project. It considers the limited willingness expressed by the majority of education stakeholders to take a leadership role in this issue and the particular challenges posed by a minority of negative voices. The Valuing Visibility project found that most participating schools were struggling to positively address the misrecognition of sexual identities in their institutions and that ‘ethos’ was perceived as being at the centre of such contestation. ‘Ethos’ at its simplest is habitat and offers shape to the life of a school formed and sustained by specific values which provide opportunities to proof how people behave towards one another, how they exercise responsibility in community and form opinion with integrity. This paper explores understandings of ethos and how different understandings of school habitat can be utilised to silence difference or facilitate dialogue and recognition of sexual identities.

Dr. Anne Lodge is Principal of the Church of Ireland College of Education. She writes and researches on a range of equality issues in education and on religious identities and institutional ethos. She co-authored a study on recognition of sexual orientation in Irish post-primary schools with Sandra Irwin-Gowran and Karen O’Shea.

Secular Imaginings and the future of Relationships and Sexuality Education

Dr. Mary Lou Rasmussen

Elizabeth Kiely (2005) draws on the early work of Michelle Fine to argue for a greater emphasis on pleasure and desire in the Irish context. The absence of pleasure and desire in the Irish RSE curriculum documents is attributed by Kiely (2005) as an accommodation to Irish Catholics who strongly opposed a movement away from the “strict Catholic moral teaching on right and wrong, which dominated the Irish sex education discourse in times past” (261) (My emphasis). Kiely contracts this vision of RSE with an “RSE programme [that] does not aggressively impose moral precepts on students. It seeks instead to make up subjects capable of exercising responsibility and self-care broadly in keeping with the kind of liberal, individualist, lifestyle project advocated in RSE”. (261) In Kiely’s analysis it is possible to see the production of a particular narrative within sexuality education whereby secular discourses are constructed as temporally in advance of religious discourse. Kiely’s forward looking RSE program is briefly analyzed through the frame of secularism (Taylor; Butler, Scott). I turn to a consideration of how REENA (Religious, Ethics and Education Network, Australia) endeavours to construct a space for religion in public schools in Australia that “develop[s] a critical approach to ... philosophical, religious, social, political and cultural concepts”. This seems to provide a something of a compromise for the future of RSE because it contains a religious element but is not didactic and may assuage some of Kiely’s concerns (or not). I close with some imaginations of a different future for RSE that might embrace “liberal” and “critical” approaches alongside more didactic approaches.

Dr Mary Lou Rasmussen is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Monash University, Victoria, Australia. Her principal research is in the area of sexualities, gender and education. She is the author of Becoming Subjects (Routledge, 2006) and co-editor, with Talburt and Rofes, of Youth and Sexualities (Palgrave, 2004). A monograph Progressive Sexuality Education: The Conceits of Secularism is also forthcoming (Routledge, 2013). Rasmussen was Chief Investigator of an Australian ARC project Sexuality Education in Australia and New Zealand: Responding to cultural and religious difference (with Louisa Allen, Clive Aspin, Kathleen Quinlivan and Fida Sanjakdar), and she is a Partner Investigator on a Canadian SSHRC grant Affective Beginnings: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues in teacher education (with Jen Gilbert, Jessica Fields and Nancy Lesko).
Previous research has shown that homophobia and heterosexism are in evidence in schools in Ireland, largely via studies of how these are manifested in the phenomenon of homophobic bullying. It is argued that the distinction between ‘heteronormative’ bullying and ‘(presumed) sexual orientation-based’ bullying should be borne in mind. This paper draws from two recent surveys on the relationship between sexual orientation and bullying behaviour, and homophobic bullying. In order to investigate the influence of the factors of age and gender in homophobic bullying behaviour, 475 fifth-year and 561 second-year students at six schools in the Republic of Ireland completed a study-specific questionnaire. No evidence of ‘age-related declines’ were found in reports of either bullying or homophobic bullying. Males were significantly more likely than females to report involvement (as both perpetrators and targets) in bullying in general, and homophobic bullying. Participants were more likely to report being perpetrators rather than targets of homophobic bullying. It is concluded from the data that senior cycle students, as well as junior cycle students, should be involved in anti-bullying interventions; that males should be especially focussed upon; and that programmes specific to anti-homophobic bullying, targeting pre-adolescent students, should be supported.

Dr Stephen James Minton CPsychol AFBPsS is a chartered psychologist and a full-time lecturer in the psychology of education at the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin. He is the author of Using Psychology in the Classroom (Sage, 2012), the co-author of Dealing with Bullying in Schools: A Training Manual for Teachers, Parents and Other Professionals (Sage, 2004) and Cyber-Bullying: The Irish Experience (Nova Science, 2011). Since 2000, Dr Minton has been active in the prevention of bullying at the school, organisational, local, regional, national and international levels.

This brief presentation will outline the work of the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Support Service in the design and delivery of continuous professional development for teachers on the subject of sexual orientation and homophobia. It will seek to reflect the experience and views of teachers. Both topics will be considered within the context of guidelines for schools developed by the Department of Education and Skills in partnership with Glen and BeLonGTo and other partners.

Frances Shearer was a guidance counsellor and teacher of English before becoming National Co-ordinator for Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in 2001. Since 2010 she has been National Co-ordinator for the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Support Service. The role of the support service is to provide continuous professional development for teachers on health related topics. The support service works in partnership with a wide range of organisations.
LGBT Teachers’ Negotiations of Schools in Ireland

Aoife Neary

In negotiating their everyday lives in schools in Ireland, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) teachers experience deep identity conflicts and struggles with school culture that involve continuous self-censorship and emotional investment (Neary 2012; Gowran 2004). Given the deep silences that have surrounded LGBT sexualities in Irish schools, initiatives that have raised awareness among education partners, school leaders and guidance counsellors about the importance of explicit mentioning of homophobic bullying and sexual orientation in school policies (GLEN 2012) and the recent action plan for tackling homophobic bullying has been welcome progress (Department of Education and Skills 2013). However, it is clear that a gap exists between policy and its implementation in schools where teachers’ struggles with normative and cultural practices are evidence of the working of heteronormativity in Irish schools. In this paper, I will present an overview of research with LGBT primary and second-level teachers in Ireland and highlight some central issues and complexities in relation to the conference theme School ‘Ethos’ and LGBT sexualities.

Aoife Neary is an Irish Research Council Doctoral Scholar in the Department of Sociology, University of Limerick (UL). Her doctoral research concerns how primary and second-level teachers negotiate their school contexts while entering into civil partnership. She is currently Chairperson of the National Board of Sibéal Postgraduate Gender and Feminist Studies Network and Convenor of the Gender, Culture & Society Postgraduate Forum at UL. She was a second-level teacher of Physical Education and English for eight years and has an MA in Gender, Culture & Society from UL.

Ethos and Schooling: A Religious Perspective

Michael Redmond

Mission statements, displayed in the lobbies of the majority of post-primary schools in Ireland, represent a synthesis of the core values of the organisation – their espoused theory. Their theory-in-use however, requires to be continually brought into closer coherence with their vision and leading this ongoing task, in large measure, is the responsibility of the principal. This presentation outlines the challenges facing the school leader as he or she negotiates the day-to-day living-out of their school’s ethos. Voluntary secondary schools in Ireland live-out an ethos founded on the values of Jesus Christ who rejoiced in diversity and who castigated the stone throwers. Mission statements of faith-schools don’t articulate dogma, they articulate a shared journey towards authentic holism (which includes the sacred) and authentic community (which, to us, is sacred). Of course nobody reads their school mission statement every day – hopefully because they’re too busy living it! This brief sharing of the principal’s perspective around faith-in-action explores what ethos means to school leader practitioners and how these internal values integrate with external policy and societal expectations.

Michael Redmond is Research and Development Officer of the Joint Managerial Body. He is a former principal of two Dublin secondary schools and was appointed to his present position in September 2009. The role of RDO encompasses a range of functions: conducting educational and management research, presenting reports and position papers on key issues, advising boards of management and school management, attending meetings with the education partners and providing information and reports for Council and for the General Secretary. Michael also works on behalf of JMB in a wide variety of educational areas including special educational needs, curriculum development, intercultural education, inclusion, disadvantage initiatives and ICT in schools. He is also a current Deputy Chairperson of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).
The No Outsiders Project, an initiative designed to address LGBT equalities as part of a broader equalities agenda, ran in the UK from 2006-2008. A team of 26 teachers throughout England worked together with university researchers from three universities to “undo homophobia” in primary schools, working with children from preschool to age 11. The notion of “undoing” homophobia focuses first on the ways in which it has been socially constructed over time and has become part of a heteronormative institutional culture. Teachers examined the ways in which homophobia was supported by conscious and unconscious acts, unexplored assumptions, silences, and tacit exclusions. Teachers used literature and the arts to explore themes such as family diversity and gender non-conformity in ways that were relevant and accessible to children. In this presentation I will describe and analysis some teachers’ experiences.

Renée DePalma received her PhD in 2003 from the University of Delaware (USA). Her research and teaching has focused on equalities and social justice in terms of race, ethnicity, language, sexuality and gender. She worked as a researcher at the University of Sunderland in the UK from 2004 to 2006, investigating homophobia in school contexts and focusing on the primary level. From 2006-2009 she was Senior Researcher on the UK-based No Outsiders project, an action research project investigating approaches to address lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality in primary schools. The project yielded two books: Undoing homophobia in primary schools (2010) and Interrogating heteronormativity in primary schools: The work of the No Outsiders Project (2009), both published by Trentham books. She currently teaches at the University of A Coruña (Spain).
Jeffrey Weeks has argued persuasively in *The World We have Won* (2009) that times have changed in the UK for LGBT people. The passing of equality legislation applying to sexuality, the repeal of Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988, the equalising of the age of consent and the introduction of civil partnerships (and, in 2013, against the wishes of the majority of the Conservative Party, marriage) for same sex couples are all indicative of cultural changes around sexuality. These have, as Weeks shows, shaped and been shaped by more liberal attitudes to sex and sexuality more generally, resulting in a qualitative change in people’s lived experiences since the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967. There are now government guidelines for schools on the prevention of homophobic bullying and, it has been argued, young men in schools no longer turn to homophobia as a way of proving their masculinity (McCormack 2012). In this paper, I ask whether all these factors should lead us to the conclusion that all is now well in the world in relation to questions of sexuality. Are we now 'post' the need for activism, has equality been achieved and is it time to turn from this struggle to other, more relevant ones still to be won? Starting from these questions, I argue that 'post' homophobia is far from where we are either in the UK or internationally, that there is a schizoid quality to many equality policies which seek simultaneously to reduce homophobia and promote heteronormativity (Renold and Epstein 2010) and that policies do not necessarily result in the practices they describe. To do so I draw on my own work and that of others, including my doctoral students, to survey briefly the situation with regards to sexuality in the UK, sub-Saharan Africa (South Africa and Uganda in particular), Latin America (especially Chile) and the fractured picture in the US.

**Debbie Epstein** is Professor of Education at Cardiff University. She is interested in understanding ‘differences that make a difference’ in people’s lives (*Schooling Sexualities*, p4) and how the dominant is held in place. She has published extensively on sexuality and gender in education and was one of the editors of *Gender and Education* for six years until May 2013. Originally from South Africa, she has been involved in significant work there, co-authoring *Towards Gender Equality: Gender and Sexuality in South African Schools during the HIV and AIDS Epidemic*. She and Robert Morrell brought together the special issue of *Gender and Education: Thinking South, Thinking South African Education*. Her current collaborative research (with Jane Kenway and others) is on *Elite Independent Schools in Globalising Circumstances: A Multi-Sited Ethnography*: [http://education.monash.edu.au/research/eliteschools](http://education.monash.edu.au/research/eliteschools)
## Topic 1: LGBT Students and Students of Same-Sex Parented Families

Carol-Anne O’Brien is the Advocacy Coordinator of BeLonG To, Ireland’s national organisation for LGBT young people. Carol-Anne has a PhD in social work, and joined BeLonG To in 2009, after many years of work on LGBT youth issues in Toronto.

## Topic 2: LGBT Teachers

Sandra Irwin-Gowran has been Director of Education Policy with GLEN (Gay and Lesbian Equality Network) since 2006. Sandra’s role involves strategic engagement with all the education partners, Government; senior civil servants; and Education agencies. She has developed a number of guides for the education sector in supporting LGBT students in schools. Sandra has a background in curriculum development and as a second level teacher.

## Topic 3: School Policy and Management

Padraig Flanagan is Principal of Castletroy College a co-educational secondary school of almost 1200 students under the auspices of Co. Limerick VEC. He has worked over many years to promote inclusive education and equality of opportunity for all young people. Padraig is currently Vice President of the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD).

## Topic 4: Curriculum and Teaching Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Martha Sweeney has over twenty years experience of teaching at Post Primary level. She is seconded since 2000 to the SPHE Support Service and works as Regional Manager with responsibility for delivering in-service to teachers, school management and whole staffs. She has also worked nationally as a trainer of teachers in Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) both at Primary and Post Primary levels. She also delivers Child Protection Training nationally to School personnel and Boards of Management. Martha is a graduate of Mater Dei has a Masters from NUIG in Health Promotion and a Post Graduate Diploma in Guidance Counselling from UL.

## Topic 5: Teacher Education and Pre-service Teachers

Dr. Patricia Mannix McNamara is a lecturer in the Department of Education and Professional Studies and co-director for the Research Centre in Education and Professional Practice (RECEPP), in the University of Limerick. In addition to her course directorships of the Graduate Diploma in Health Education and Promotion and the Diploma in Drug and Alcohol Studies, she pursues a lively research agenda that includes teacher professionalism and identity; school policy and practice; bullying (both workplace and school based), and health promotion.
Conference Delegates
Directions, transport links and details of the region can be found on our conference website [www3.ul.ie/gcs/conf2013/](http://www3.ul.ie/gcs/conf2013/)

### Campus Map

#### Hotels

- **Carlton Castletroy Park Hotel**
  - Dublin Road, Limerick
  - Tel: +353 61 335566
  - Email: reservations.castletroy@carlton.ie
  - [www.castletroy-park.ie/](http://www.castletroy-park.ie/)

- **Kilmurry Lodge Hotel**
  - Castletroy, Limerick
  - Tel: +353 (0)61 331133
  - Email: info@kilmurrylodge.com
  - [www.kilmurrylodge.com/](http://www.kilmurrylodge.com/)

- **Travel Lodge Hotel**
  - Park Point, Castletroy, Dublin Rd., Limerick
  - Tel: +353 6 160 3500
  - [www.travelodge.ie/hotels/406/Limerick-Castletroy-hotel](http://www.travelodge.ie/hotels/406/Limerick-Castletroy-hotel)

#### B&Bs

- **Annnville Bed & Breakfast**
  - Newtown, Castletroy, Limerick
  - Tel: +353 61 330023
  - Email: annville@hotmail.com

- **Castlemoor B&B**
  - Castletroy, Limerick
  - Tel: +353 61 330789

- **Cregan’s Bed & Breakfast**
  - Dublin Road, Castletroy, Limerick
  - Tel: +353 61 331347
  - Email: cregansbandb@eircom.net

- **Twin Oaks Bed & Breakfast**
  - Dublin Road, Castletroy, Limerick
  - Tel: +353 61 311663