

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

<p><b>Institution:</b> Canterbury Christ Church University</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> Theology and Religious Studies (33)</p>
<p><b>Title of case study:</b> Improving Social Justice in LGBTIQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans*, Intersex and Queer/Querying) Communities: The Impact of the Queering Paradigms Project</p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>The LGBTIQ Social Justice project <i>Queering Paradigms</i> (QP) grew out of the research theme on Sexuality, Gender and the Body. Driven by the UoA member, Prof. Scherer, QP is a global and local academic-cum-activist network with international reach to Germany, Nepal, Australia, US, Ghana, Argentina, Ecuador and Brazil. QP has informed and improved LGBTIQ Social Justice, it has led to policy changes at HEIs (UK, US); sustained engagement with and support of local activists; improved awareness and changed attitudes; informed policy debates inspiring further activism for social change; and changed of religious attitudes (Nepal).</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The impact case study integrates different streams of research in the UoA: Sexuality, Gender and the Body and Social Justice and Religion. Most members of the UoA have published on some aspects from their specific discipline, including Robert Beckford (Reader 2011 – present, on social justice and political activism from the perspective of Black Theology), Brian Capper (1993 – present on social justice in the context of the early Church) and Maria Diemling (2006 – present, on the body in Jewish-Christian relations). Gareth Jones (Professor of Christian Theology, 2001-2011) critically reflected on the workings and problems of episcopal authority and the question of human sexuality in the Church of England and found that it is the theological possibility and prerogative to fully reconcile LGBT identities with communicant Anglican identity (ref. i). Ralph Norman (at CCCU in academic posts since 2000, since 2011 as <i>Principle Lecturer in Theology</i>) has published on sexual symbolism in Christian theology and has demonstrated how the current ideas of sexuality in theological discourse have been historically shaped and normalised (ref. ii, iii). B. Scherer (at CCCU in academic posts since 2003; since 2012 as <i>Professor in Comparative Religion, Gender and Sexuality</i>) has developed research interests in Gender and Sexuality into a global network, the Queering Paradigms network (QP) which is the main focus of this Impact Case Study. Scherer’s research in 2003-2006 focused on LGB and Transgender expressions in Early Buddhist narratives to argue for the possibility of trans-inclusivity in contemporary Buddhism (ref. iv). These insights led to further research (from 2006 onwards) on Gender and Sexuality in which Scherer analysed the relationship and tension between Buddhist ‘Theology’ and homo-/transphobic realities in a neo-orthodox modern Buddhist movement. Scherer’s Queer Buddhist ‘Theology’ challenges the prevalence of some anti-LGBT attitudes in contemporary Buddhist movements, while Queer Buddhist voices struggle to assert themselves (ref. v). In addition, Scherer developed a distinct approach to Queer Theory as Applied Queer Studies. This is an interdisciplinary, social activism-centred approach presented in the introductions to the first two Queering Paradigm books Scherer edited. It introduced the notion of ‘queerness’ as ‘ricochets’ (<i>Querschläger</i>, here: resistant and defying subjectivities that leave the expected trajectory) of heteronormativities, suggesting that queering a paradigm means challenging the hetero-/homonormative and gender binarist assumptions of any given academic discourse. As queer subjects defy the ‘seduction of identity by exclusion’ and celebrate ‘the whole potential of sexuality and gender fluidity and diversity’, they explode the limits of normative discourses and break new ground in research and activism for social change (ref. vi). The established QP project is the expression of Scherer’s scholar-cum-activist applied Queer Studies approach.</p>
<p><b>2. References to the research</b></p> <p>i. Gareth Jones (2005) ‘Thy Grace Shall Always Prevent...’, in: Andrew Linzey &amp; Richard Kirker (eds), <i>Gays and the Future of Anglicanism</i>, Winchester (O Books) 2005, pp.116-137 (ISBN 1-</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

905047-38-X). (submitted to the RAE 2008)

ii. Ralph Norman (2008), 'Jouissance, Generation and the Coming of God' in *Theology and Sexuality*, Vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 153-80 (submitted to REF 2014).

iii. Ralph Norman (2007), 'Sexual Symbolism, Religious Language, and the Ambiguity of the Spirit: Associative Themes in Anglican Poetry and Philosophy' in *Theology and Sexuality*, Vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 233-56. (submitted to the RAE 2008)

iv. B. Scherer (2006), "Gender transformed and meta-gendered enlightenment: Reading Buddhist narratives as paradigms of inclusiveness", *Revista de Estudos da Religião*, 6 (3), pp. 65-76. ISSN 1677-1222 (submitted to RAE 2008).

v. B. Scherer (2011), "Macho Buddhism: gender and sexualities in the Diamond Way", *Religion and Gender*, 1 (1), pp. 85-103 (submitted to REF 2014).

vi. The edited book series *Queering Paradigms* (Oxford: Peter Lang), which includes programmatic introductions in vols. 1-2 and one peer reviewed chapter in vol. 3). In particular,

B. Scherer, ed. (2010) *Queering Paradigms*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010. ISBN 978-3-03911-970-7)

[Introduction (1-7)] and B. Scherer and Matthew Ball, eds. (2011). *Queering Paradigms II: Interrogating Agendas*. Oxford: Peter Lang (ISBN 978-3-0343-0295-1) [Introduction (1-10)] and a

case study flowing on from ref. v: B Scherer, B. (2013) "Queer Voices, Social Media and Neo-orthodox Dharma: A Case Study" in O'Mara, Kathleen and Morrish, Liz (eds.) *Queering Paradigms, Vol. 3: Bio-Politics, Place, and Representations*. Oxford: Peter Lang. (November 2012), pp. 145-155.

Quality indicators include the reviews by Anja Finger (*Electronic Journal of Human Sexuality* 2011) and Anneli Strutt (*Limina*, 18, 2012). After the success of the first two volumes, Professor Scherer was asked to oversee a formally established QP series for Peter Lang (Vol. 3 published 2013 edited by K. O'Mara and L. Morrish)

#### 4. Details of the impact

Local, national and global LGBTIQ Social Justice impact derives from our UoA's research; it manifests itself in the creation of the **Queering Paradigms (QP) network** and its subsequent impact through conferences, publications and activism.

The establishment of the network is underpinned by the research insights and arguments of (ref. i-iii) in relation to Anglican theological LGBT inclusiveness and, more generally by Scherer's research (ref. iv-vi), demonstrating the possibility for LGBT Human Rights advancements within religious contexts. The QP network is an on-going research and activism project that started in 2008 in response to debates over Civil Partnership ceremonies at the University's licensed wedding venue. The crucial aspect of the QP network is its commitment to linking queer insights to specific political struggles **(A, B)**.

The QP network through Scherer's activism at CCCU has contributed to progressive LGBTIQ related policies and practices which has inspired more progressive policies at other HEIs in the UK and US **(C)**.

Global impact has been achieved through the organisation of three further international QP conferences, all mentored and co-organised by Scherer (Brisbane 2010; New York 2011; and Rio de Janeiro 2012; and one regionally affiliated event in Quito 2012). The QP network has demonstrated a sustained and ongoing engagement with a group of scholars and activists that has led to a significant increase in participation in the QP conferences, from 30 participants at the first QP conference held in Canterbury in 2008 to 500 registered participants in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The QP conferences are explicitly open to the general public and in particular welcome the presence of local activists and artists, and organisers actively engage with media (interviews, social media such Facebook and Twitter). Importantly, the network is committed to including perspectives from outside the 'Global North'.

QP research outputs present challenging and innovative developments of *queering* from across a variety of academic disciplines and political spheres and move from Queer Theory to Applied Queer Studies (ref. vi), As one reviewer puts it, QP is "... not only saying, but doing language, in order to give queers around the globe voices of their own." **(D)**. An example of the impact of QP in changing awareness, underpinned by (ref. vi), is demonstrated by the direct challenge to complacent homonormativities – LGBT assimilationist tendencies. In Germany, Scherer published

## Impact case study (REF3b)

a provocative QP essay on Queer in the mainstream Gay magazine *Männer* (issue January 2012). It received within 3 days 73 comments from gay men, many of them assimilationists and hostile to the queer project (E); the ensuing discussions clearly evidence awareness change and challenge to established patterns of thought (F).

The main beneficiaries of Scherer's QP activities are global and local LGBTIQ communities. Since the beginning of the impact period Scherer has been invited worldwide to give over 30 public lectures in different forums on gender and sexuality.

The QP project has led to changes in societal awareness and contributed to policy debates. It has also had an impact on policy making by informing and influencing policy debate on the nature of sexual discrimination. For example, the former Australian High Court Judge Michael Kirby, an influential public voice on social justice, noted in his keynote address at the second QP conference in Brisbane, Australia, the importance of policy changes to ensure full equality of citizenship. He pointed out that despite abolishing laws from Australia's colonial past, it still had some way to go, stressing that 'Legislation that does not allow gay marriage is unacceptable'. The comments were reported in the Australian national and local media, including the Brisbane Times and ABC (Brisbane) and The Australian and The Age (national). (A) Scherer consciously chose to develop the QP conference series on different continents so that participants can be exposed to and impact on new contexts and cultural conditions. Importantly, every conference is organized by local academics and activists, leading to a sense of local ownership without an imposed agenda. The strong support for and presence of activists (B; C; H), artists and politicians from High Court Judges (Australia; A), African and South American LGBT leaders and artists (USA, Brazil B, I), and government ministers (Quito) further exemplifies QPs impact on societal and policy debates. For example, in 2011, QP3 empowered African activists (including funding) in their work (G); the associated 2012 Quito colloquium was opened by both Scherer and the Ecuadorian Health Minister Carina Vance Mafla; after attending QP4, Argentinean Anarcho-queer activist Pao Lin organized a QP empowering workshop in August 2012 for the local activists in Buenos Aires (H); Scherer's key note at QP4 inspired young Brazilian LGBT activists to fight against homo- and transphobia at universities in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. She writes (translated from the Portuguese):

*[At QP IV,] I met B] and we had a conversation, from which I left with a different worldview. A conversation of hope that I regard as a "politico- philosophical "salvation, because I could finally see the horizon from my own life experience . B] spoke about the challenges of gender transition , said how important it was for us to stand on issues that are dear to many people and how important it was to participate in conferences that allow these issues to be discussed and addressed from the perspective not only of academia but of different social fields. [...] In that conversation I had with B] I was able to see [...] a way through education and activism! Three months after QP IV I [...] organized a major meeting at my university to discuss the problems and potential of trans identities , the name of the event was "For the UFRJ for everyone: LGBT identities in HE." From there I went to [...] social activism for many trans people! We formed a sort of collective that seeks to combat homophobia , transphobia and lesbophobia in various spaces of UFRJ. I used the knowledge acquired in the QP to organize various round tables and debates on the subject of transsexuality. I was invited to give lectures to raise awareness [.]. I started to feel like a human being, a true citizen of otherness whose displacement is very powerful! (I).*

An example of a **major impact on religious attitudes** can be seen in Scherer's challenge to Newari Buddhist leaders in the Kathmandu valley (Nepal) on their restrictive perspectives on sexualities in a public address January 2013 underpinned by (ref. iv-vi), which provoked a thoughtful debate and awareness change as evidenced by its coverage in the national Nepali newspaper and by Nepali NGOs (Mitini and Green Tara Trust Nepal) testimonies about Scherer's QP activities in January and June in Kathmandu 2013. The LBT women NGO Mitini writes: "Thank you so much for making the time on your second visit to Nepal this year in June for intense talks and plannings with and in support of Mitini. Your Lecture at Patan Archeological museum on Buddhism and Sexuality, 2 January 2013, has created a wonderful opportunity of dialogue and openness to discuss, and change awareness and behaviour in Buddhist communities (in particular the strongly represented Newari Buddhist community) towards gender equality and acceptance of LGBT Buddhists. The senior reform priest Naresh Bajracharya has in June already promised to you and us to give LGBT persons his spiritual support, protection and guidance. We understand that your activities are linked to the broader Queering Paradigms project and we feel very excited about this; hopefully we can hold a Queering conference in Nepal in the future and build on that to

## Impact case study (REF3b)

create more social justice change. Your triangle talks –Queering Paradigms, Green Tara Trust and Mitini has initiated our collaborative shelter project for the well-being of LBT women for which we are now started to collect funds. Thank you so much for all your hard work for the queer community in Nepal!” Hence, the tangible change of religious attitudes manifests in the fact one of the most senior Newari priest has in June 2012 given his pastoral protection to LGBTIQ Newaris and that to equality focused local NGOs have started formal social justice cooperations **(J)**.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (All links correct at time of submission to REF 2014)

**A.** Wikipedia entry (including further sources and references):

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queering\\_paradigms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queering_paradigms)

**B.** Brazilian Association of Applied Linguistics, (June 2012)

[http://www.alab.org.br/images/stories/alab/alab%20interview%20b%20scherer\\_final.pdf](http://www.alab.org.br/images/stories/alab/alab%20interview%20b%20scherer_final.pdf)

**C.** Statement provided by LGBTIQ activist and scholar 20 June 2012, corroborating impact of the university’s LGBTIQ policies on other HEIs. **(contact ID. 1)**

**D.** Anneli Strutt, review of Queering Paradigms II, in *Limina*, 18, 2012

<http://www.limina.arts.uwa.edu.au/volumes/18/scherer-ball>

**E.** Queer by B Scherer (Jan 2012; abridged web version with web user comments)

[http://www.queer.de/detail.php?article\\_id=18227](http://www.queer.de/detail.php?article_id=18227)

**F.** Activist blog in response to ‘Queer’ by B Scherer and its comments (E.).

<http://rosarotermaulwurf.blogspot.co.uk/2013/01/heit-konstruiert-denn-inexistent.html>

**G.** Statement provided by CEO of BBUD, Accra, Ghana [Brother to Brother in Unity & Diversity], 23 June 2012, corroborating impact on human rights NGO in Ghana. **(contact ID 2)**

**H.** Mitini Post Queering, Buenos Aires, 28 August 2012, event page with participants’ impact statements <https://www.facebook.com/events/428279273885489/>

**I.** Statement provided by LGBTIQ activist, August 2012, corroborating impact of QP and B Scherer 2012 on her continuing trans\* rights’ activism in Brazil. **(contact ID 3)**

**J.** Statement provided by activist of *Mitini*, Nepali NGO for Lesbian, Bi and Trans\* women, corroborating impact on change of awareness of religious leadership in Nepal. **(contact ID 4)**