

M4C Collaborative Doctoral Award

Project Title			
Contested sexualities: love, desire and the institution of Parliament in the long nineteenth century			
LEAD INSTITUTION			
Name of HEI institution	University of Warwick		
Lead regional city	Birmingham <input type="checkbox"/>	Coventry <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Leicester <input type="checkbox"/> Nottingham <input type="checkbox"/>
PARTNER ORGANISATION			
Name of organisation	Parliamentary Archives		
Website URL	https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/parliamentary-archives/		
THE RESEARCH PROJECT			
<p>Parliament is considered masculine, elite and white; focused on legislation and matters of state. What place has it afforded to individual encounters, non-normative identities and the experience of minority groups? This project disrupts conventional narratives by considering Parliament's impact on constructions of sexuality and gender identity in the long C19th.</p> <p>The legislative context of Parliament's activity is, of course, important but it is the impact of laws on individuals and minority groups which has been of key significance. Using approaches and insights developed in histories of sexuality, this doctoral project will focus on individuals' interactions with the institution. The emphasis will be where dominant forms of sexuality and gender identity are contested, for example by exploring where same-sex (both female and male) relationships or practises such as cross-dressing intersect with the institution. Parliament in the long nineteenth century was the supreme legislative body not just for Britain but also for the Empire and thus the project will consider sexuality, gender identity and the 'colonised body' providing a significant transnational, and as yet, unresearched dimension.</p> <p>Given the need for Parliament to be seen as a more inclusive body this is an important moment to consider the topic of sexuality, gender identity and the institution of Parliament. Whilst there are important social and cultural studies of sexuality, political histories tend to centre on key legislative turning points such as the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 which criminalised acts of gross indecency by a man on another male. In turn, it is rare for the staple sources of the Parliamentary Archives: debates, private bills, petitions and appeal cases to be used to study the political history of gender identity and emotions such as love and desire.</p> <p>Key research questions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does an institutional study of sexuality gender identity and the emotions of love and desire complicate the ways in which nineteenth-century identities are constructed, perceived and understood? • Does a 'queering' of parliamentary space (both physical and metaphorical) change the way in which the institution of Parliament is perceived? How do we uncover the voices of minorities in the Parliamentary Archives? • How is gender identity, sexuality and sexual behaviour contested in the Parliamentary space? 			

The methodological approach will be to take a holistic view of where sexuality, gender identity and emotions such as love and desire appear in the Parliamentary Archives' collections. There is no one key set of sources and it is likely that accounts will be hidden, ambiguous and contested. This is one reason why the topic of the project has rarely been previously researched. Nonetheless, records such as private bills for divorce or the settlement of estates, petitions and appeals to the House of Lords provide a rich seam for uncovering case studies where the public realm of Parliament and the private lives of its subjects intersected. The PhD researcher will be supported by their supervisors in selecting individual case studies and in supplementing close reading of the archival sources with scrutiny of other public records such as newspapers and private memoirs, letters and papers. The project will therefore demand a significant amount of archival work in the Parliamentary archives, the National Archives and on private papers in a range of other repositories. Training and guidance on this archival work will be tailored to the successful candidate's experience and needs.

The collaboration with the Parliamentary Archives is crucial to this project which will interrogate well-known records in new and exciting ways. Cataloguing protocols have not hitherto categorised records under headings such as same-sex relationships or cross-dressing, thus the expert knowledge and guidance provided by the archivists and partner supervisors will be essential in opening up the sources to be navigated in novel directions. The project will also support current initiatives to re-interpret Parliament's heritage collections and make them more accessible. The academic supervisors, Sarah Richardson and Laura Schwartz, are leading scholars on gender and political history and will provide expert advice on theoretical, methodological and historiographical perspectives as well as pertinent sources outside the archives.

In addition to monthly supervision meetings at Warwick and sometimes in London, the successful candidate will spend approximately three months per year based in London undertaking research at the Archives, with support provided to obtain the full access allowed by a Parliamentary pass. They will also gain experience and training in contributing to outreach activities, public engagement and diversity work for the Parliamentary Archives in London and in the Midlands, disseminating their research findings and the diversity of the records.

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE

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