Description: Given dense historic entanglements among race, empire and sexuality, I consider the question of how sexuality becomes constituted as a category distinct from the racial and the imperial. In particular, I consider the discursive production of the category of sexuality through the production of the category of the non-normative sexual subject, or “the homosexual,” by canonical sexology. Canonical sexology considered such questions when formal European colonialisms were at their height. I argue that the discursive constitution of this subject (and relatedly of sexuality itself) as a distinct domain of identity, knowledge, and politics, thus, was produced within particular racial-imperial exigencies.

Vrushali Patil is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Her latest book is Webbed Connectivities: The Imperial Sociology of Sex, Gender, and Sexuality (U of Minnesota Press). She currently co-edits the journal Sociological Theory.