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Los Angeles

Ideologies of Sexuality and Socio-Semiotic Processes of Representation
in LGBT Political Interactions

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Anthropology

by

Elizabeth Louise Thorne

2013

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Ideologies of Sexuality and Socio-Semiotic Processes of Representation in LGBT Political Interactions

by

Elizabeth Louise Thorne

Master of Arts in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Marjorie Harness Goodwin, Chair

Using videorecorded data from canvassing interviews between activists and voters in Los Angeles, this thesis examines the ideologies of sexuality that emerge in conversation through the interactive construction of argumentative reasoning and socio-semiotic processes of ideological representation. Analysis focuses on the discursive connections canvassers and voters draw between attitudes toward LGBT politics and beliefs about what causes a person to be gay or bisexual. In contrast to ideologies circulated by the mass media, the data demonstrate broad variation in how voters' stances on politics and morality are tied to their own presentations of self and whether they believe homosexuality is something people *choose*, are *influenced* toward, or are *born* with. Nonetheless, canvassers misrecognize this variation and generate restrictive ideological representations through processes of *iconization*, *erasure*, and *dichotomic replication*. In order to better promote LGBT political causes, I call on activists to rethink their persuasive strategies in light of these findings.

The thesis of Elizabeth Louise Thorne is approved.

Elinor Ochs

Jennifer Lynn Jackson

Marjorie Harness Goodwin, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2013

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my professors and peers who provided critical feedback when it was needed most: H. Clark Barrett, Christopher Dykas, Edwin Everhart, Rachel George, Charles Goodwin, Marjorie Harness Goodwin, Jennifer Jackson, Paul Kroskrity, Teruko Mitsuahara, Elinor Ochs, R. Lila Steinberg, and Christopher Stephan. My gratitude also goes to the organizers of the 2013 Language, Interaction, and Social Organization Conference for providing a venue to present an earlier draft of this thesis and to the audience members at the conference for contributing useful comments and criticisms. The responsibility for any remaining weaknesses or errors is my own. Finally, I am eternally grateful to the staff members of Vote for Equality for their help and encouragement throughout the writing process and to the participants examined herein for lending me their voices.

1. Introduction

Contemporary activist organizations in the United States that work to promote the acceptance of sexual and gender minorities focus on issues that affect the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Activists who campaign for LGBT political causes (e.g., marriage equality, employment non-discrimination, education about the history of LGBT people) primarily aim to change voters' ideologies of sexuality. These ideologies include beliefs about the etiology of non-heterosexuality (hereafter, LGB sexuality), judgments on the moral acceptability of LGB sexuality, and attitudes toward LGBT political causes.¹ Drawing on data collected during fieldwork with an LGBT activist organization, I analyze the ideologies of sexuality (hereafter, sexual ideologies) that emerge in social interaction between campaigning activists and target voters. These discussions often reference beliefs about the origin or cause of LGB sexuality, such as whether people *choose* to be LGB, whether people are *influenced* to be LGB, or whether people are *born* LGB. In examining these interactions, I focus on the productive sign relationships that canvassers and voters negotiate between the different constituents of these ideologies, particularly the semiotic connection between etiological belief and political attitude. The primary data for this thesis come from videorecorded interactions between activists and voters in Los Angeles County during face-to-face canvassing interviews. Over the course of these interactions, canvassers engage voters in a discussion of their political attitudes (i.e., how politically supportive or unsupportive they are) toward an LGBT-related education law and then attempt to persuade unsupportive voters to change their stance on the law.

Campaign advertisements and other forms of mass media provide the public with naturalized representational language and ideological frames for understanding and orienting to

political issues (Silverstein 2011). While mass media circulates fixed understandings of how sexual ideologies link etiological belief and political attitude, the social field of voters' sexual ideologies demonstrates variation in the ways that belief on the etiology of LGB sexuality may indirectly index different attitudes toward LGBT political causes. Through the analysis of voters' displays of sexual ideology as well as their interactionally-situated presentations of self, this thesis identifies the avenues through which activists may realign voters toward political support of LGBT people. An examination of the semiotic processes of ideological representation that emerge in these interactions also reveals how canvassers may misrecognize voter ideology and replicate ideological representations that demarcate how people can connect discourse, causal beliefs, and political attitudes. By analyzing interactions that discursively bridge the space between individual opinions and governmental policies, I argue that current activist strategies for voter persuasion need to be rethought in light of the variation in voters' sexual ideologies, the political implications of different stances on non-interference and social tolerance, and the inadvertent promotion by canvassers of restrictive ideologies through processes of iconization, erasure, and dichotomic replication.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Discourse in social interaction

In this thesis, the unmodified term *discourse* is used to refer to the linguistic concept of conversation as social practice (cf. Wood and Kroger, 2000), while modified uses of the word (e.g., "sexual choice discourse") identify a "group of statements that belong to a single system of formation...[e.g.] clinical discourse, economic discourse, the discourse of natural history, psychiatric discourse" (Foucault, 1972: 107-108). McHoul (1998) differentiates a definition of

"discourse" as language use at the level above single utterances from a definition that incorporates the Foucauldian sense of "a relatively discrete subset of whole language, used for specific social or institutional purposes" (225). The dual meaning of discourse as the act of speaking and as a specific institutional framework for speaking thus foregrounds the aim of this thesis to connect an analysis of talk-in-interaction with the operation of ideological structures in society.

The academic endeavor to connect macrolevel ideology to microlevel manifestations in social intercourse was highlighted by Bakhtin and Medvedev (1978) as the foremost goal of the study of ideology. The authors criticized the tendency for research to either focus too narrowly on a particular phenomenon (i.e., to the point of triviality) or to reduce the specificity of ideological phenomena in favor of an analysis of philosophical superstructures that is entirely detached from materiality and historicity. In pointing out the flaws of this latter approach to ideology, Bakhtin and Medvedev argued that ideology must be understood as concrete and fundamentally social:

"all the products of ideological creation...are material things, part of the practical reality that surrounds man [*sic*]...ideological creation and its comprehension only take place in the process of social intercourse. Each individual act in the creation of ideology is an inseparable part of social intercourse, one of its dependent components, and therefore cannot be studied apart from the whole social process that gives it its meaning" (1978: 7).

Accordingly, this thesis aims to ground the study of sexual ideology in the intersubjective and sequentially organized interaction of individuals while still connecting these findings back to a larger sociocultural structure of ideologies on LGB sexuality.

The analysis of ideology in interaction that is presented in this thesis likewise builds on a tradition of theorizing how productive social relationships are mediated based on face-to-face conversation. In his seminal work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) presents an analogy between the portrayals made by characters in a performance and the images

that we display in our daily interactions. Goffman emphasizes that these everyday *presentations of self* are not simply translations of our internal nature but are rather performances constructed around the unfolding conversational exchange between interactional partners. People necessarily adjust and realign their presentations throughout the interaction in response to the ongoing talk and the displays made by other parties. Accordingly, Goffman defines the term *interaction* as "the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another's actions when in one another's immediate physical presence" (1959: 26). This thesis examines the intersubjective displays made by voters and canvassers in the interview conversations, from actions that are structured as socially-salient conversational moves to presentations of self constructed through the accumulation of stances on the issues being discussed. This study therefore aligns theoretically with work by Goffman on performance and self-presentation while also aligning with the foundational premise of work in conversation analysis that speakers design their utterances as organized, socially-recognizable displays to be interpreted by their recipients within ongoing talk (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973).

In the canvassing interviews examined in this thesis, voters are asked to take stances on LGBT political issues in the context of an interaction with a canvasser whom they have never met, hence requiring both argumentative logic and interactional presentations of self to be built moment-by-moment from the ground up. The structure of these interactions thereby positions sexual ideology as both a presupposed context (i.e., the pre-existing basis for an initial political stance) and as a product of the current, local context that is created within the interview as an interactional text (Silverstein, 1992) or focal event (Goodwin and Duranti, 1992). An emic examination of the ways in which voters connect ideology to their self-displays can thus reveal how large-scale public opinion emerges through acts of political reasoning tailored to

individuals' conceptions of their own role in societal policy making.

Recent research on stance has also turned toward interactional discourse in an attempt to understand the social meaning behind acts of stancetaking (Englebretson, 2007; Goodwin et al., 2012; Jaffe, 2009b; Ochs, 1996). Scholars have likewise highlighted the connection between ideology and stancetaking, as when Jaffe (2009a) notes in her overview of research on sociolinguistic stance that "cultural [Foucauldian] Discourses also have implications for stance in that they can serve as ready-made (ideological) scripts that can themselves be stance objects, activated by individual speakers/writers through the use of some subset of their elements" (22). Of particular relevance to the analysis presented in this thesis is Du Bois' (2007) theory of stance, which he defines as "a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field" (163). This definition outlines three components of stance: characterizing a stance object (*evaluation*), situating yourself in relation to that stance object (*positioning*), and coordinating, or not coordinating, to some degree with the evaluations and positions of others (*alignment*). Drawing on Bakhtin's (1981) concept of dialogicality, Du Bois argues that stancetaking is an action that requires an attention toward context and history as it engages with the preceding discourse. Under Du Bois' framework, stancetaking in interaction is also inherently intersubjective since alignment involves an acknowledgement of and calibration with others' stances. The beliefs and attitudes that emerge in the data examined in this thesis can accordingly be understood as stance objects: 1) about which the speakers produce evaluations, 2) toward which the speakers position themselves, and 3) over which the speakers express levels of convergent or divergent alignment with each other. In other words, while participants maintain

and transform cultural value and create ideological representations, they are also dialogically navigating actions of stancetaking that have intersubjective consequences. The stances they take on sexuality are therefore socially-situated and relevant to the unfolding interaction between voter and canvasser.

2.2 Ideological processes

The analysis of voters' and canvassers' discourse in this thesis draws on theory on semiotic processes of ideological representation. These processes were first outlined in relation to language ideology (i.e., "beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use" [Kroskrity, 2010: 192]), which has been the paradigmatic focus of researchers interested in language, culture, and society (cf. Errington, 2001). Anthropologists have, however, used theoretical understandings of semiotic processes developed by language ideology scholars to examine the parallel nature of other kinds of ideology (e.g., ideologies of class, race, ethnicity, and geopolitical identity). In this thesis, I illustrate how theories on language ideology (Irvine and Gal, 2000) can be applied to and enriched by the study of sexual ideology. Moreover, by examining talk-in-interaction, I demonstrate how processes of ideological representation emerge as *socio-semiotic* phenomena, that is, through the dialogicality of social relations situated in sequential conversational turns that intersubjectively link communicative action to social value.

Analyses of polling data from the United States have identified correlations between LGB etioloical belief and LGBT-related political attitudes (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008). These studies describe two statistical tendencies: the belief that people are born LGB predicts support of LGBT political causes, and the belief that LGB sexuality originates in upbringing, environment, or preference predicts opposition to LGBT political causes. As outlined by Peirce

(1955), an index is a kind of sign that comes to represent an object because of its association with that object. In other words, a probable correlation between two things establishes a connection that allows the occurrence of one to point to the likely presence of the other, as in the classic example of smoke indexing fire. Because of the statistical link between LGB etiological beliefs and specific LGBT-related political attitudes, it follows from Peircean semiotics that, for example, stating that you believe people choose or are influenced to be LGB could be interpreted as indexing that you oppose LGBT political causes, and vice versa. The same relationship could likewise be constructed between believing that people are born LGB and supporting LGBT political causes (see Figures 1 and 2). From such indexical relationships, further ideological connections may be built (Irvine and Gal, 2000: 37).

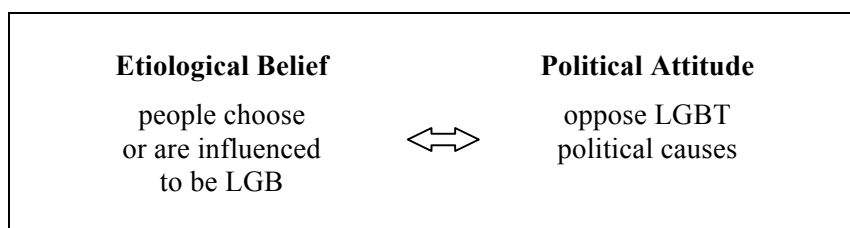


Figure 1: Indexical link between etiological belief and anti-LGBT political attitude

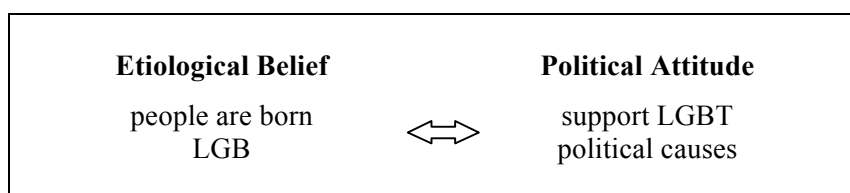


Figure 2: Indexical link between etiological belief and pro-LGBT political attitude

The analysis of ideological connections between etiological belief and political attitude presented in this thesis builds on work in language ideology on semiotic processes of representation and differentiation. In particular, Irvine and Gal (2000) provide a useful model for analyzing the ways in which ideologies function to assume or create representations of difference. The authors describe what they term "iconization" and "erasure" as semiotic

processes that operate to simplify reality and reinforce hegemonic ideologies. Iconization builds on a general association between objects (i.e., an indexical relationship) to generate a link between the objects that is seen as inherent (i.e., an iconic relationship). In the case of language ideologies, a language may appear to be iconic of the social groups and activities to which they are linked. For example, Irvine and Gal analyze how, in 19th century colonial Senegal, a one-to-one correspondence was constructed between language, tribe, and region. As a result, when cartographers discovered speakers of Wolof in a territory outside of the region with which they were associated, this was interpreted as evidence that the area had been invaded by Wolof people and that the true language of the region was the one associated with the Sereer people still residing there. Complementarily, the process of erasure ignores or explains away factors that do not fit an ideological representation, thereby reducing complexity in a social field. Linguistic erasure may, for example, render distinct languages invisible by ideologically transforming them into varieties of a single language. In relation to the same Senegal mapping project, Irvine and Gal describe how languages belonging to the Cangin group of the Niger-Congo language family were subsumed under the label of "Sereer" within the Senegal group, despite the distant relatedness and mutual unintelligibility of the languages. Iconization and erasure may also operate in tandem, as when cartographers supported their iconic representations of language, tribe, and region by erasing Sereer people's diglossic use of Wolof as the language of political life and Sereer as the language of home life.

In addition to the processes described by Irvine and Gal (2000), I propose another semiotic process of ideological representation: the replication of dichotomies. Dichotomic replication is the process in which two-sided oppositional contrasts in one domain are mapped onto contrasts in some other domain. Unlike Irvine and Gal's concept of "fractal recursivity,"

these oppositions are not projected onto supercategories and subcategories but are instead reproduced onto separate fields that are constructed as being part of the same ideological sphere. In this way, dichotomic replication is not a matter of fractally aligning nested levels but is rather a matter of congruently matching independent domains within the same sphere. As with other binary oppositions, one side of a dichotomy is often valued over another, and this valuation may likewise be carried over to corresponding elements through the replication process. The nature of dichotomic replication, as well as its coordination with iconization and erasure, will be illustrated in this thesis using the data from political interactions between voters and LGBT rights activists.

2.3 Mass media ideology circulation

Because the political interactions examined in this thesis begin with activists showing the voters campaign advertisements, the interviews are initially framed by the mass-mediated circulation of sexual ideologies. Following a recent trend in anthropology toward investigating audience reception of the mass media (Spitulnik 1993), I focus my analysis on the portions of the canvassing interviews during which voters and canvassers discursively negotiate their political stances in response to the campaign advertisements they have just seen. As Habermas (1974) argues, the public sphere of political opinion is enacted and reenacted not only in the mass media but also in everyday conversations about political issues. The mass media thus provide a backdrop for these conversations and are furthermore implicated in the same socio-semiotic processes of ideological representation that operate on different scales and within various participation frameworks, from dyadic conversations to society-wide mass-mediated encounters with political opinion (Agha, 2007, 2011).

A decade ago, Wilcox (2003) examined news media references to scientific research of

biology and sexuality. After comparing the summaries and social commentaries on research studies and investigating the disproportionate coverage of some studies, Wilcox argues that these media representations were framed by existing cultural ideologies of sexuality. These ideologies include the false assumptions that research results on biology and sexuality have been conclusive and that evidence supported an interpretation that biology rigidly determines sexuality.

Discussions of scientific studies likewise situated the research findings within a "born gay" versus "choose to be gay" dichotomy and positioned science as the final judge of LGB people's claims about their own sexuality. Because the born/choice dichotomy is so central to political debates about LGBT civil rights, scientific research that fits most easily into this dichotomy received higher levels of media coverage and was presented as being likely to influence political debate. In other words, the use of scientific evidence that supports biological explanations for sexuality validates and is iconic of a pro-LGBT political attitude precisely because, as Wilcox argues, "the born/choice dichotomy provides ready-made stances to be taken up in debates over sexuality" (2003: 233).

More recent examples from entertainment and news media demonstrate the continued circulation of these ideologies. For example, the popular 2011 single "Born this Way" by Lady Gaga contains the following lyrics:

I'm beautiful in my way,
'Cause God makes no mistakes.
I'm on the right track, baby,
I was born this way.
...
A different lover is not a sin.
...
No matter gay, straight, or bi,
Lesbian, transgendered life,
I'm on the right track, baby,
I was born to survive.

Immediately after its release, the song was touted as a pro-LGBT anthem because of its

enthusiastic promotion of embracing the "way" one is "born" (Vena, 2011).

Outside of entertainment, statements from political figures reinforce the association between etiological belief and political attitude. In a March 2013 newspaper editorial, Republican Senator Rob Portman explained how the revelation that his son is gay caused him to reconsider and ultimately change his stance on the legalization of same-sex marriage. Portman described the moment when his son came out to him and reports his son as saying that "he'd known for some time, and that his sexual orientation wasn't something he chose; it was simply a part of who he is" (Portman, 2013). This knowledge ultimately resulted in Portman's shift from believing "that marriage is a sacred bond between a man and a woman" to supporting marriage equality for all Americans, including his gay son (Portman, 2013).

In contrast, when Republican presidential candidate Herman Cain appeared on the show *The View* on October 4, 2011, he confirmed that he believed being gay is a choice and that he would like to reinstate the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy on LGBT people serving in the military. R. Clarke Cooper, the executive director of the LGBT advocate organization Log Cabin Republicans, responded to these statements in a press release the next day, saying that "[a]n individual's orientation is no more a choice than the color of his skin or whether he is right-handed" (Log Cabin Republicans, 2011). Reporting on this series of events in the October 5, 2011 episode of *The Colbert Report*, Stephen Colbert countered Cooper's statement with the claim "I happen to remember the exact moment I chose to be a straight, right-handed, Caucasian male." In such parodies of conservative punditry, Colbert satirizes the belief that people choose to be gay while implicitly connecting the belief to his character's anti-LGBT political attitude. The recognizability of using a belief that people choose to be LBG as part of an anti-LGBT ideology thus enables such mockery to hold social meaning.

3. Background

The Vote for Equality (VFE) program was established as part of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center's Leadership LAB in January 2009 in the wake of California Proposition 8. This ballot referendum amended the state constitution to strictly define marriage as between one man and one woman, thereby outlawing marriage equality for same-sex couples in the state (California Secretary of State, 2008). Over the next two and a half years, VFE developed a research method that involved organizing and training volunteers to go house-to-house in Los Angeles County neighborhoods and collect data on voter opinion. VFE specifically targeted districts where between forty-five and fifty-five percent of voters voted for Proposition 8 in order to better understand the variations in voter opinion in these politically contested areas. Using public records of the voters registered in these districts, VFE compiles lists of names and addresses for volunteers to reference while knocking on the front doors of houses in these neighborhoods. During one-on-one canvassing interviews, the volunteer canvassers proceed through five stages: initial political attitude, anti-LGBT advertisement, pro-LGBT advertisement, persuasion, and final political attitude. Voters are first asked how they would vote on the legalization of same-sex marriage and how they would rate their level of support on a scale from zero (one hundred percent unsupportive) to ten (one hundred percent supportive). Next, canvassers use portable video devices (e.g., iPhones) to show interviewees two political advertisements about same-sex marriage, the first one arguing against legalizing same-sex marriage and the second one arguing for marriage equality.² The first advertisement that was shown was an actual advertisement from the pro-Proposition 8 campaign which depicted a young girl showing her mother a children's book called *King and King* and telling her mother that in school that day "I learned a prince can marry a prince, and I can marry a princess." According to

a report produced by a staff member at VFE (Fleischer, 2010), polling conducted during the last six weeks before the vote on Proposition 8 suggests that over half a million voters who went from opposing the ban on same-sex marriage to supporting the definition of marriage as "between a man and a woman" were parents with children under eighteen years old. The 500,000-vote impact of this shift toward banning same-sex marriage exceeded the margin by which the referendum passed (Fleischer, 2010). The report argues that "it's highly probable that the voters who moved were the most vulnerable to the kids issue" as highlighted in pro-Proposition 8 campaign messaging (Fleischer, 2010: 31). The second advertisement shown during the canvassing interviews was an advertisement created by VFE that was intended to counteract the effect that the first advertisement had on voters, with different advertisements and messages being tested on different canvassing days. The canvassers were also trained to use follow-up questions to investigate the voters' underlying concerns as they reacted to each advertisement. Throughout these initial stages of the interview, VFE's canvassing method was to remain as neutral as possible in order not to bias their data collection.

In the subsequent Persuasion Stage of the interview, canvassers were allowed to depart from their initial neutrality and attempt to convince voters to be more supportive of LGBT political causes. VFE canvasser trainings emphasized the importance of "Real Lived Experience" (i.e., the canvassers' personal stories and the voters' own experiences with marriage and with LGBT people) as the foundation on which to build their persuasive arguments. Additionally, if the voter at any point expressed anxieties about the negative impact that legalizing same-sex marriage could have on children, which VFE canvass organizers referred to as the "harms kids" argument, canvassers were to delve into these concerns and explore the reasons behind them. This kind of voter research was thereby positioned as an intervention on the translation of mass-

mediated ideologies into anti-LGBT voting behavior (see the discussion of investigating audience reception of mass media in Section 2.3). Finally, at the end of the conversation, interviewees were again asked to state their voting stance on legalizing same-sex marriage and canvassers were to thank them for their time and, when appropriate, their support of LGBT political causes.

In July 2011 the California State Senate passed a bill called the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful Education Act, also known as the FAIR Act. The act, which was to go into effect on January 1, 2012, stated that it "would require instruction in social sciences to include a study of the role and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans, persons with disabilities, and members of other cultural groups, to the development of California and the United States" (California State Senate, 2011: 96). These requirements were added as an amendment to an existing law that similarly requires instruction in the contributions of other historically underrepresented groups, including women, Native Americans, and African Americans. Less than two weeks after the bill was signed into law, a group opposed to the FAIR Act was cleared by the California Secretary of State to start collecting signatures for a ballot referendum that would repeal the "lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender" part of the law (Lin, 2011).

Having found that many voters had underlying concerns about the negative impact that legalizing same-sex marriage might have on children, the organizers at VFE decided to start canvassing on the FAIR Act in order to prepare for a possible campaign to repeal it and also to take advantage of the opportunity to more directly explore voters' fears related to the "harms kids" argument. From September 2011 through March 2012, VFE organized canvasses once or twice each month that focused on researching voter opinion on the FAIR Act.

Interview Stage & Example Question(s)	Goal	Strategy
<u>Initial Political Attitude</u>		
<i>How would you vote on this new law that includes gay and transgender people in social studies lessons? On this zero to ten scale, what number best represents your level of support?</i>	Assess voter's hypothetical voting behavior and level of support before commercials and persuasion	Neutrality
<u>Anti-FAIR Act Commercial</u>		
<i>After seeing this ad, what number, zero to ten, best represents your level of support of the new law?</i>	Research the impact of campaign advertisements that negatively present the "harms kids" argument	Neutrality, asking follow-up questions
<u>Pro-FAIR Act Commercial</u>		
<i>After seeing this ad, what number, zero to ten, best represents your level of support of the new law?</i>	Research the impact of campaign advertisements that positively address the "harms kids" argument	Neutrality, asking follow-up questions
<u>Persuasion</u>		
<i>Do you have any concerns with students learning about gay and transgender people in social studies lessons? Do you know any gay or transgender people? When you learned history, what did you learn about people who are different from you? What are you worried schools will teach that you would rather teach yourself?</i>	Uncover/address concerns, misconceptions, and prejudices	Asking questions about voter's "Real Lived Experience," paraphrasing and requesting confirmations of the voter's argument, presenting your own "Real Lived Experiences"
<u>Final Political Attitude</u>		
<i>If it appears on the ballot, will you vote in favor of this new law? What number now best represents your level of support of the new law? What made you change your rating/vote?</i>	Assess voter's hypothetical voting behavior and level of support after commercials and persuasion, encourage support of the law	Asking follow-up questions, thanking supportive voters

Table 1: Interview stages, goals, and strategies, as outlined in canvassing scripts and training sessions

The script for these canvassing interviews followed the same structure as the same-sex marriage canvasses: 1) gauging the voter's initial political attitude, 2) showing the voter an anti-LGBT advertisement and gauging its effect, 3) showing the voter a pro-LGBT advertisement and again gauging the effect, 4) attempting to persuade the voter to support the law, and 5) gauging the voter's final political attitude (see Table 1). The first advertisement shown in these interviews was the same pro-Proposition 8 advertisement shown in previous canvasses, with the narration

and closing screen image edited to refer to the FAIR Act instead of Proposition 8. Likewise, the second advertisement would alternate between different videos created by VFE that were meant to address voters' concerns and make them more supportive of the FAIR Act. Because many voters had not heard of the FAIR Act, the canvasser would begin the interview with a short description and/or informational video about the law before asking for the voter's stance.

4. Data Collection

The data examined in this thesis come from videorecordings of VFE FAIR Act canvassing interviews conducted on the doorsteps and driveways of Los Angeles voters' residences. During the six months that VFE canvassed voters on the FAIR Act, I videorecorded their training and debrief sessions for the volunteer canvassers at the bimonthly canvassing events, videorecorded dozens of conversations between canvassers and Los Angeles County voters, conducted interviews with VFE staff members and canvassing volunteers, and, for the last month of FAIR Act canvassing, participated as a canvasser myself. Since VFE first started canvassing voters, volunteer videographers have also accompanied several of the experienced canvassers and recorded their interviews with voters. In addition to the data I personally collected, I was permitted access to VFE's corpus of over one hundred and fifty videorecorded interviews from the FAIR Act canvasses as well as the notes that canvassers wrote on their scripts during and after the interviews, records on voter and canvasser demographic information, and statistics compiled by VFE on the data collected during the interviews.

After reviewing over twenty hours of video from FAIR Act canvassing interviews and choosing a research topic, I decided to focus on the canvasses that occurred before the FAIR Act went into effect (i.e., canvasses from September 2011 through December 2011). I transcribed all

four recorded canvassing interviews from the first canvass and chose seven canvassing interviews to transcribe from each of the other four canvasses in this time period.³ In order to collect a broad sample and avoid bias toward any one canvasser's style, these interviews were chosen so as to include at least one but no more than two interviews conducted by any single canvasser who was recorded in this time period. The resulting set of thirty-two interview transcriptions was then coded for discussions of the etiology of LGB sexuality, producing the fourteen focal interviews to be examined in the following analysis.

Focal Interview	Canvasser Information				Voter Information				
	Name ¹	Age ²	Gender ²	Ethnicity ²	Name ¹	Age ³	Sex ³	Political Party ³	Ethnicity ⁴
1	Amy	25	W	White	Barbara	49	F	D	Black
2	Chris	29	M	White	Dominic	37	M	R	Black
3	Erica	25	W	White	Fay	73	F	R	Black
4	Erica	25	W	White	Francisco	29	M	D	Hispanic
5	Gabriel	19	M	Multiracial	Harris	29	M	R	White
6	Isabel	23	W	Hispanic	Julie	44	F	D	White
7	Kenneth	18	M	Asian	Lorraine	64	F	D	Black
8	Mariana	19	W	Multiracial	Nicole	28	F	R	Hispanic
9	Olivia	20	W	Asian	Paul	62	M	D	White
10	Quinn	50	W	White	Robert	58	M	D	Hispanic
11	Samantha	41	W	White	Timoteo	47	M	D	Hispanic
12	Eugene	41	M	White	Vincent	78	M	D	White
13	Wendy	20	W	Black	Roxanne	28	F	R	White
14	Yasmin	24	W	Black	Zavier	24	M	R	Hispanic

Table 2: Canvasser and voter demographic information for focal interviews

¹ all participant names are pseudonyms

² data from Vote for Equality volunteer information records; for gender, W stands for cisgender woman and M stands for cisgender man (none of the focal canvassers self-identified as transgender or genderqueer at the time of these recordings); canvasser ethnicity is coded as Black (Black, African American), White (White, Caucasian), Hispanic, Asian, and Multiracial

³ data from voter registry; for sex, F stands for female and M stands for male; for political party, D stands for Democratic Party and R stands for Republican Party

⁴ response to the interview question "What ethnicity do you identify as?"; voter ethnicity is coded as Black (Black, African American, Afro American, Black American), White (White, Caucasian, Anglo, Euro Mutt), and Hispanic (Hispanic, Mexican)

The frequency with which etiology appears (i.e., fourteen out of thirty-two interviews) is representative of its occurrence in canvassing interviews in general, even though canvassers were

not specifically trained to ask voters about their etiological beliefs or to build their attempts at persuasion around their own etiological beliefs. Table 2 displays demographic information on the canvasser and voter in each focal interview as well as the pseudonym for each participant. (Note that the same canvasser appears in Interviews 3 and 4.)

The primary aim of my analysis is to produce findings on the interactive processes through which sexual ideology emerges and is represented in LGBT canvassing interviews. In Section 5, I focus on analyzing how voters construct associations between etiological belief, moral judgment, and political attitude as they present images of themselves in relation to the canvasser and to LGBT people in general. An examination of social acts of evaluation, positioning, and alignment by voters as interviewees may thus be used to comment on the social field of public opinion available in this interview-based research context (Baynham, 2011; Speer, 2002). I do not intend to claim that the interactional strategies through which voters represent their sexual ideologies in interviews are identical to the strategies used in discussions with friends and family. Likewise, the analysis in this thesis is not intended to imply that the displays made by voters in these interactions are a direct window into the cognitive processes through which they develop sexual ideologies and apply their ideologies to particular cases. However, while maintaining a focus on what these interview data can tell us about ideological representations in the genre of political interviews, I align with the theoretical argument that we "can treat the interactional texts of interviews as valuable information about the habitual interactional and evaluative positioning done by interview subjects" because "interviews are embedded in and continuous with habitual discursive action" (Wortham et al., 42-43).⁴ The connections that voters make between their stances on the etiology, morality, and political protection of LGB sexuality not only point to how these stances are displayed in interview

interactions but also indicate the possibilities that exist for the felicitous ideological co-existence of, for example, a belief that people choose to be LGB and a political attitude supporting LGBT causes. In Section 6, I turn to examining the actions of the canvassers themselves in shaping the ideological representations that are generated in the canvassing interviews. As Rapley (2001) noted, interviewers are always implicated in the production of the form and content of the interview as a fundamentally social and dynamic interaction. The analysis presented in this thesis capitalizes on the active nature of the canvasser role to produce findings that can be used to revise activist interview methodologies in order to be more effective at achieving political goals.

5. Discourse, Ideology, and the Presentation of Self

Three categories of etiological belief on LGB sexuality emerged from the canvassing interview data: 1) the belief that people choose to be LGB (*sexual choice belief*), 2) the belief that people are born LGB (*sexual biology belief*), and 3) the belief that people are influenced to be LGB (*sexual influence belief*). Although these beliefs are not mutually exclusive (e.g., a voter may believe that some people choose to be LGB while other people are influenced to be LGB or are influenced and then choose to be LGB), each etiological belief patterned differently in discourse (i.e., though different key words, grammatical constructions, rhetorical tropes, etc.) and had distinct implications for the conversational negotiation of political attitude. Based on the analysis of data from the focal canvassing interviews, this section outlines the unique discursive features associated with voters' and canvassers' talk about each of these etiological beliefs. Case studies of specific voters are then drawn on to examine the various sexual ideologies through which a given etiological belief is connected to a particular political attitude, highlighting the role of moral judgment and other intermediary steps in these indexical chains. The analysis also

considers the ways in which voters position themselves toward these ideologies to reveal general patterns for how voters present their images of self in relation to LGBT people. I argue that the sexual ideologies circulated by the mass media (as described in Section 2.3) belie the variation in the social field of voter ideology and misrepresent the political implications that these ideologies can hold for public policy and for the sociopolitical relationship between the general population and coalitions of LGBT political supporters.

5.1 Sexual choice

Voters who claimed a belief that people may choose to be LGB used verbs such as *choose*, *decide*, and *prefer* within their explanations. The laminating verb *feel* was often used by these voters when describing sexuality, thereby positioning LGB people's claims about their sexuality as being affective stances (Ochs, 1996). These voters discursively framed LGB people as active agents in choosing their sexuality, using verbs such as *want* and *make* in the sense of "to carry out or perform." Responsibility for one's sexual choice was also indexed through the occurrence of possessive determiners with the nouns *choice*, *decision*, and *preference*. In contrast, when canvassers paraphrased voters' words or negated sexual choice belief, they did not modify these nouns with possessive determiners but instead marked possession (or lack of possession) with the verb *have*, saying, for example, "I feel like I didn't have a choice in it, it was something I was born with." Rhetorically, voters who believed in sexual choice would compare their own sexual choices and behaviors with those of other people, drawing a contrast between their heterosexuality and others' LGB sexuality. Comparisons were also made between being LGB and other "choices" through the use of similes. Another striking feature of sexual choice discourse was the use of logical tautologies as a marker of emphasis. Finally, references to

Christian doctrine on homosexuality often co-occurred with these other features. Examples of each of these sexual choice belief discourse features are listed in Table 3.

Discourse feature	Example(s)
"choose", "choice"	<i>It's just something that you choose to be. You had the choice of going either or, you chose.</i>
"decide", "decision"	<i>That's something that you would have to decide for yourself. If that's your decision that's your decision, it's not mine.</i>
"prefer", "preference"	<i>Let's say if he [my son] would come to us today telling me "oh," you know, "I prefer to be with a man," it's your life. I'm just saying it's a person's preference.</i>
"feel"	<i>You have to right to feel and be with whomever you want to be with.</i>
"want"	<i>They can be whatever they want to be.</i>
"make" (to carry out, perform)	<i>I think that this is a choice that you made.</i>
possessive determiners	<i>I'm not going to knock you because that's your choice. That's just your preference.</i>
comparisons of self with other	<i>It's not my preference, but it's yours.</i>
simile	<i>That's what they chose to be, that's just like a drunk, a drunk chooses to drink.</i>
tautology	<i>You made a choice that you want somebody of the same sex, and that's your choice. If that's what you want to be, that's what you want to be.</i>
Christian Doctrine	<i>I figure when God made you He don't make mistakes.</i>

Table 3: Discourse features used by voters who claimed a belief in sexual choice and excerpts from these voters' discourse

5.1.1 Sexual choice belief and opposition to the FAIR Act

Voters in the canvassing interviews who believed in sexual choice would likewise connect this belief to their political attitude in opposition to the FAIR Act, thereby matching the mass-mediated ideology that belief in sexual choice indexes an opposition to LGBT political

causes (Wilcox 2003). For example, in Interview 7, voter Lorraine draws on sexual choice belief, and its associated discourse features, while explaining her stance against the FAIR Act.

(1)

*I think people set their own purpose. I don't think there's really any gay-gay people, it's something you **choose** to be. So if that's what you **want** to be, that's what you **want** to be, but I don't think it should be taught.*

Lorraine maintains her belief in sexual choice throughout the interview, even after canvasser Kenneth comes out to Lorraine and says that he did not choose to be gay. When Kenneth attempts to problematize her belief by asking why someone would choose to be gay when it "comes with a lot of discrimination," Lorraine replies that "some people want attention." Similar attempts by Kenneth to disprove the logic of Lorraine's belief are also countered, despite Kenneth's insistence that he didn't choose to be gay, isn't looking for attention, etc.

While Lorraine's ideology matches the mass-mediation representation of sexual choice as an index of anti-LGBT political attitude, her discourse also reveals the relevance of moral judgment within this ideological connection.⁵

(2)

*I just don't think it was meant to be, because I'm Christian and **I believe what the Bible says**, and if he destroyed a whole city for homosexuality, why would you think it's alright to be homosexuality [sic]? So **I just don't think it's right**.*

Lorraine describes how she is opposed to the FAIR Act not just because she believes LGB sexuality is a choice but also because she believes that this choice is immoral. Figure 3 provides a diagram for how Lorraine's sexual ideology links etiological belief to political attitude *through* moral judgment. Just as linguistic forms may *indirectly* index gender through intermediate associations with social constructs (Ochs, 1992), sexual choice belief can directly index a judgment of morally acceptability and then indirectly index unsupportive political attitude.

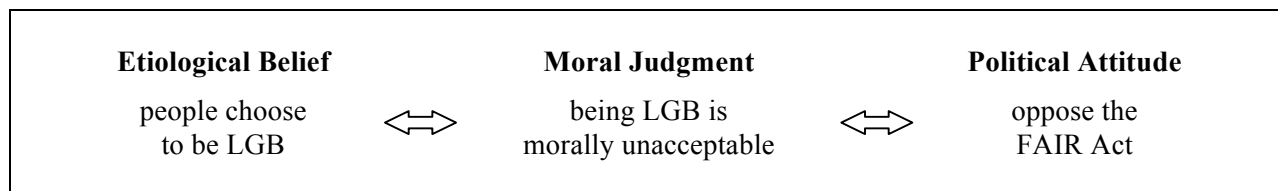


Figure 3: Indexical chain between sexual choice belief, judgment of moral unacceptability, and FAIR Act opposition

However, even as Lorraine takes a stance against the FAIR Act and disaligns from Kenneth's stance as a gay person, Lorraine positions herself as tolerant of LGB people.

(3)

I'm not upset with you, and I don't dislike you.** And if I saw you again on the street I'd speak to you, I'd talk to you, and I'd treat you just like I would the person that wasn't gay. I'm not saying, "Oh, kill him," or whatever. But I just feel like that's something that you would have to decide for yourself, and that's something that- it's really kind of personal. **It's not anybody else's business.

(4)

*If you say you are, **I'll accept you for what you are.** That's just like about- they saying about Christians, you know? They say, "Well Christians, they funny, this-" But why down me because I want to be a Christian? I'm letting you be a sinner. To me. You know what I'm saying? That's to me. So if you want to be a sinner and I want to be a Christian, **how come we still can't get along and be friends regardless of what your preference choose to be** [sic]?*

Lorraine claims that her belief that people choose to be LGB, her negative moral judgment of LGB sexuality, and her attitude that lessons on LGBT historical figures should not be taught in school does not mean that she would interfere in the lives of LGB people. Using Garfinkel's theory of descriptions as indexical actions that must be understood in reference to the context of their occurrence (Heritage, 1984), Lorraine's emphasis on her "live and let live" attitude toward LGBT people can be analyzed as an account provided to the canvasser to mitigate the negative interactional interpretation of her anti-LGBT stance. Lorraine's presentation of self in the interaction is therefore that of someone who does not interfere in others' lives, regardless of her moral judgment of their sexuality.

5.1.2 Sexual choice belief and support of the FAIR Act

In contrast to Lorraine's sexual ideology linking sexual choice belief to opposition of the FAIR Act, other voters claimed the belief that people choose to be gay but expressed a political attitude supporting the FAIR Act. Moreover, they did not represent their etiological belief as standing in contradiction to their political attitude but rather used a positive valuation of choice to justify their supportive attitude. The discourse of voter Timoteo in Interview 7 provides a representative example of this kind of ideology.

(5)

*Everybody can **decide** whatever they **wanted** to be, and **I can't decide** for other persons.*

(6)

*I'd **prefer** for my kids to, you know, like my son to marry a woman than to marry a man, but that's pretty much **up to them**, you know? They'll **decide** whatever they're going to be. They can marry whatever they **want** to marry.*

Timoteo uses sexual choice discourse (e.g., "decide," "want," comparisons of self with other) to explain his positive evaluation of LGBT political causes, connecting his support of the FAIR Act to his support of marriage equality. The presentation of self that Timoteo displays is strikingly similar to Lorraine's in that he emphasizes non-interference in the lives of LGB people. The overall frequency of this "stance of non-interference" in the data is reflected in the examples in Table 3 (e.g., "You have the right to feel and be with whomever you want to be with," "I'm not going to knock you because that's your choice," etc.), some of which come from politically supportive voters and some of which come from unsupportive voters. However, unlike Lorraine, supportive voters like Timoteo extend this non-interference to progressive education and civil rights. Notably, Timoteo does not take the stance that LGB sexuality is moral but rather claims a more neutral stance that being LGB is morally acceptable.⁶ When canvasser Samantha asks him "what's the most important thing you want for your children, Timoteo answers "to be happy, that's all...they can be whatever, if they're happy with the person." Figure 4 provides a more

representative diagram of the range of indexical links voters make between sexual choice belief and political attitude.

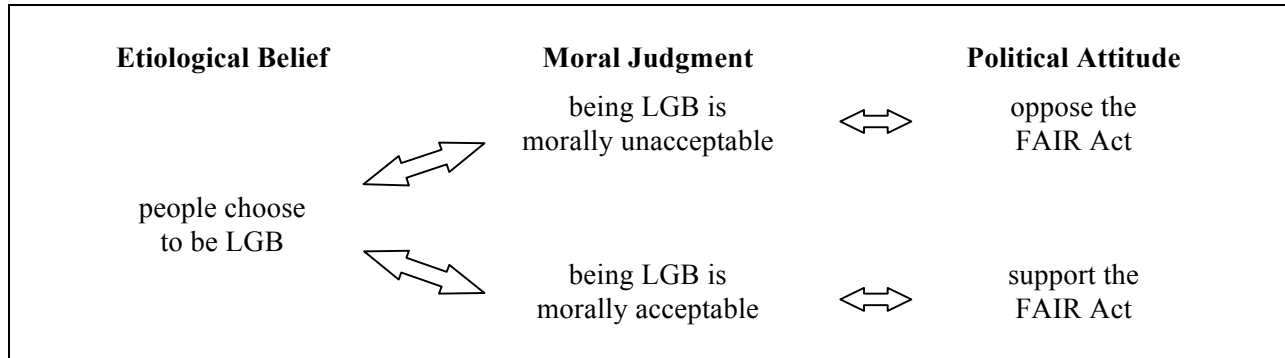


Figure 4: Bifurcated indexical chain between sexual choice belief, moral judgment, and political attitude

In sum, the data from VFE canvassing interviews demonstrate that voters who believe in sexual choice may be either supportive or unsupportive of LGBT political causes depending on the stance they take on the moral acceptability of LGBT sexuality. Importantly, the voters in the data who held this belief expressed open-mindedness about people's choice to be LGB, regardless of their political stance for or against LGBT causes. In my own experience as a VFE canvasser, I have likewise rarely come across voters who are aggressively anti-LGBT to the point of animosity, thereby signaling the distance that American society has come in promoting sexual tolerance and the potential for future movement toward greater acceptance and equality for LGBT people.

5.2 Sexual biology

Canvassers who talked about the origin of their own sexuality would claim that they were born LGB and describe their experiences as an LGB person as evidence for the legitimacy of this belief. Besides using the passive form *copula + born*, these canvassers would metaphorically construct LGB sexuality as a discovery through the use of the verbs *realize* and *figure out*. In

contrast to the voters who framed LGB sexuality as something one affectively "feels," canvassers who believed in the biological origin of LGB sexuality claimed an epistemic stance (Ochs, 1996) on their sexuality through the use of the laminating verb *know* and constructed LGB sexuality as authentic by using the phrase *who + personal pronoun + copula* (e.g., "who you are").

Discourse feature	Example(s)
"born"	<i>It was something I was born with. I was born this way.</i>
"realize"	<i>I was maybe twenty when I first started realizing I was gay.</i>
"figure out"	<i>I figured out pretty quickly I was gay.</i>
"know"	<i>I know I am gay, so it's not a choice. I've always known I was a lesbian.</i>
"who you are", etc.	<i>They had to kind of admit that this is just who you are.</i>
Scientific Evidence	<i>There's a science that explains everything.</i>
Early Occurrence	<i>I knew starting when I was eleven.</i>
Internal Struggle	<i>A lot of people struggled, I know I struggled with it in the beginning. It took me so many years for me to be okay with it, even to be able to say that I'm gay.</i>
Attempts to be Straight	<i>I tried to be straight for awhile, and I was so much more depressed like that. I think just about every gay person out there tried to be straight for awhile.</i>
Wouldn't Choose	<i>I'm not going to choose to be ridiculed.</i>

Table 4: Discourse features used by canvassers who claimed a belief in biological causes of sexuality and excerpts from these canvassers' discourse

These features are likewise present in Senator Portman's report of what his son said when he came out (see Section 2.3). While voters who believed in sexual choice referenced Christian doctrine, canvassers asserted claims of scientific evidence that LGB sexuality has a biological basis.⁶ Additionally, canvassers who claimed a belief in biological causes of LGB sexuality and

related this to their own sexuality drew on a range of rhetorical tropes to support this belief, including narratives of experiencing same-sex attraction at a young age (Early Occurrence trope), silently struggling with their sexuality for years (Internal Struggle trope), and trying to have opposite-sex romantic and sexual partners (Attempts to Be Straight trope). These canvassers also argued that people would not logically choose to be LGB (Wouldn't Choose trope), thus legitimating sexual biology belief by othering sexual choice belief.

5.2.1 Sexual biology belief and support of the FAIR Act

The examples of sexual biology belief discourse features listed in Table 4 come from canvasser discourse in the interview data. In cases where canvassers did not initially claim a specific etiological belief, some voters would independently use discourse features associated with this belief when explaining their support of the FAIR Act and align with canvassers' subsequent claims that they were born LGB. In Interview 6, after taking a stance in support of the FAIR Act, voter Julie tells canvasser Isabel about the experiences of her brother and cousin, both of whom are gay.

(7)

*My brother pro- you know, he still remembers being like **three or four years old** having a crush on a boy. And my cousin says now, he said the same thing, he was probably **six** and went to my uncle and said something about liking a boy and my uncle **shut him down**. And then he **had a girlfriend**, he **got married**, and they never had kids, and I always kind of wondered, like, what was going on there. And then after my uncle died, he came out of the cl- he was **having**, like, **night terrors**, he went to therapy and **realized**, like, I'm gay and I've been **repressing it** for forty some years.*

Julie makes relevant several features of her relatives' LGB sexuality that echo the rhetoric used by canvassers who believe in biological causes of LGB sexuality, including the verb *realize* and tropes of Early Occurrence, Internal Struggle, and Attempts to be Straight. Although she does not express a specific moral judgment of LGB sexuality, Julie disaligns from a negative moral judgment that she connects to the opposition of LGBT political causes. She further hypothesizes

that people's judgments that LGB is morally unacceptable "all comes down to, it's religion based." Extrapolating from these stances and contrasting them with those taken by voters like Lorraine, the diagram in Figure 5 displays the indexical chain that Julie forms between etiological belief and political attitude.

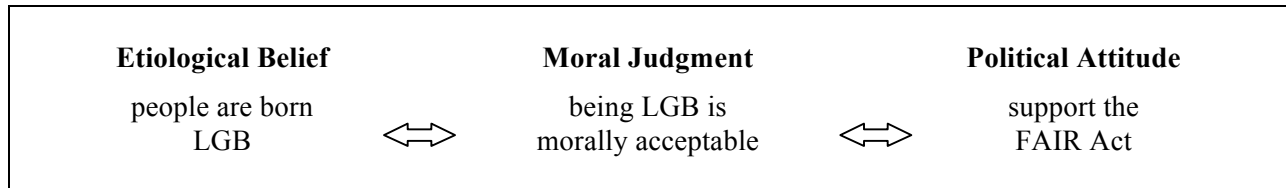


Figure 5: Indexical chain between sexual biology belief, judgment of moral acceptability, and FAIR Act support

Throughout the interview, Julie's evaluation of the FAIR Act is decidedly positive. Whereas the supportive voters who believe in sexual choice present an image of being concerned with non-interference, Julie argues that schools have an obligation to educate children about LGBT people.

(8)
*I think **it should be in schools**. It should definitely be there.*

(9)
*I think that **helps prevent bullying too**, to have education in school, because they may not get it in the home and they may not get it in the community, so they need to have that openness somewhere.*

These utterances come from Stage 1 of the interview, that is, before Isabel has shown Julie any of the campaign advertisements. Without any prompting from the canvasser, Julie has already taken the same stance that canvassers typically advocate and even preemptively uses the canvassers' talking point that education about LGBT people reduces bullying in schools.

Julie further connects her endorsement of LGBT history education with the problems her relatives experienced in the absence of such education.

(10)

*I've had a lot of relatives who've been, you know, **pushed in the closet** because they **didn't feel the support** somewhere.*

(11)

***They didn't have any role models** or anybody in the school talking about it or anybody else who they identified with.*

Julie evaluates the FAIR Act as a necessary intervention on public education, thereby presenting herself as someone concerned with promoting the well being of LGBT people.

5.2.2 Sexual biology belief and opposition to the FAIR Act

Most of the voters who used sexual biology belief discourse and/or claimed a belief that people are born LGB expressed a political attitude in support of the FAIR Act, thus corroborating the ideological connection between sexual biology belief and pro-LGBT attitude that is circulated in the American mass media (Wilcox, 2003). However, one case study from the data demonstrates that belief in biological causes of LGB sexuality does not always index political support of LGBT people. In Interview 13, voter Roxanne contrasts her beliefs about LGB sexuality with her religious beliefs.

(12)

*I'm Christian and **I believe that God has a different plan for us**, but I don't believe that it keeps us from him. I mean I think there's a million and one things that I do that are no different than any other thing in the world, you know, that are just choices that we- **I know people don't believe it's a choice. And it's not**, because I have so many things going on in my life that are difficult. I know that people wouldn't want to say it's difficult. **I just think that there's a grand plan.***

Like other canvassers and voters who believe in biological causes of LGB sexuality, Roxanne explicitly states that she does not think that being LGB is a choice. Nonetheless, she believes that one's LGB sexuality should be denied in favor of a morality dictated by God. In effect, Roxanne connects her beliefs about LGB sexuality to the "belief in the fallen nature of humans, their propensity to sin if left to their own desires, and the corruptible influence and dire consequences

of sinful elements in society" (Sherkat and Ellison 1997: 963). In other words, sexuality may be biological but is still not immutable or uncontrollable (cf. Greenberg and Bailey, 1993) and, like other sins, a predisposition to be LGB should be denied and overcome.

When Wendy paraphrases Roxanne as saying that she thinks "people are born gay," Roxanne confirms this as her etiological belief. Notably, in the subsequent explanation of her etiological belief in sexual biology, Roxanne uses discourse features associated with sexual choice belief.

(13)

*I believe that they really do **feel** that way, and I believe that that's how they identify. I truly think that they are attracted to same sex. And I'm- I totally believe that that's how they **feel**, but I think that if they were to go with what God wants- like if I were to do it my way, **like I have eating disorders** and, like, all these crazy things, and if I were to do things my way, I would be off in some other crazy land. You know, not that that way is crazy, but I would be doing things a different way. But I think that God has a divine plan for me that's different from my natural nature. And I think that that's how it is. And it's not that I don't believe in their authenticity, **I just think that it's- that there's something- that God has a loving plan that's just a little bit greater.***

(14)

*Sometimes God has a plan, I think, that's- if you rise outside of what **feels** right for you, **I think that God has something greater for you.***

Roxanne carefully describes how she believes in the "authenticity" of LGB sexuality but positions claims to same-sex attraction as affective stances through her repeated use of the verb *feel*. She likewise draws an analogy between being LGB and having an eating disorder as representing elements of one's "natural nature" that should be risen above in order to fulfill God's plan.

When Wendy asks Roxanne what she would want her future children to know about the word *gay*, Roxanne again references the veracity of other people's experience of LGB sexuality.

(15)

*I would want them to know the truth, that- what it means to be gay or transgendered, and the truth about what those people feel, and that **they were feeling authentically about their truth** just the way that we feel authentically about our truth, you know, as straight.*

Roxanne thus claims to promote a message of social empathy but then proceeds to re-emphasize

her belief that LGB sexuality is immoral, saying "I have to go back to the fact that I'm a Christian and I don't feel like that's- that's God's ultimate plan." After Wendy asks whether Roxanne's use of the indexical pronoun *that* refers to LGB sexuality (i.e., being LGB is not God's ultimate plan) or to the FAIR Act (i.e., teaching about LGB people is not God's ultimate plan), Roxanne connects her moral judgment to her opposition of the FAIR Act.

(16)

I don't believe that it's going to be taught in a way that's honoring to God. I think that if it was taught in a way that's honoring to God by saying that this is- if it was taught in a way that's- that was just honestly like, "Here's a gay person or a transgendered person, this is something that they did and some great, amazing, wonderful work that they did in the world," super, that's wonderful. I would love for our children to learn about everybody, no matter what their background is...but I feel like things are taken, like, out of context.

(17)

I think that that is a topic that should come up at another time. A tolerance topic, not a history topic.

Like Julie, Roxanne presents herself as concerned with teaching children to be tolerant of LGBT people. However, she maintains that the moral danger of teaching children about LGBT people takes precedence over its potential social benefits. Figure 6 presents a diagram encompassing Julie and Roxanne's disparate indexical links between sexual biology belief and political attitude.

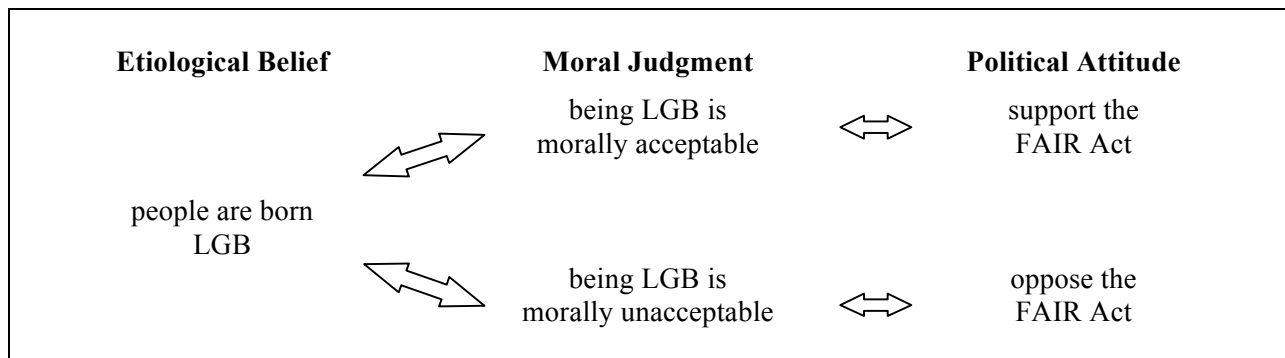


Figure 6: Bifurcated indexical chain between sexual biology belief, moral judgment, and political attitude

While most voters who index an etiological belief in sexual biology are supportive of LGBT political causes like the FAIR Act, voters with this belief may also stand in opposition to these causes when they judge LGB sexuality to be morally unacceptable and believe that the law

being proposed will contradict this moral judgment. What all of these voters hold in common, however, is a concern for teaching children not to bully or disparage LGB people, thereby representing a stance that moves beyond the neutral stance taken by voters who believe in sexual choice. In other words, even voters who think that being LGB is immoral can align with a progressive vision of sexual tolerance.

5.3 *Sexual influence*

Although it is often minimized in media coverage and polling research in favor of sexual choice belief (e.g., Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2008), the belief that people are *influenced* to be LGB emerged in the interview data as especially relevant in voters' discursive justifications of their opposition to the FAIR Act. The prevalence of this belief in the canvassing discussions supports VFE's claim that the "harms kids" argument is a prominent aspect of voters' negative attitude toward LGBT political causes (Fleischer, 2010). While sexual influence belief often appeared alongside sexual choice belief in voter discourse, some voters positioned the belief that children could be influenced to be LGB as the locus of their opposition to children learning about LGBT historic figures. Likewise, unlike voters who focused on a belief in sexual choice, voters who described their belief in sexual influence deemphasized people's agency in becoming LGB by using the verb *make* in the sense of "to compel" as well as passive voice, stating, for example, that people *are affected* by seeing LGB people in the media. Table 5 lists examples of these sexual influence belief discourse features.

Discourse feature	Example(s)
"influence"	<i>It would influence people that maybe don't know.</i>
"make" (to compel)	<i>To me that helps make the child more interested in it.</i>
passive voice	<i>It's just I don't want them to be exposed. They're opened up to this idea.</i>

Table 5: Discourse features used by voters who claimed a belief in sexual influence and excerpts from these voters' discourse

5.3.1 Sexual influence belief and opposition to the FAIR Act

Sexual influence belief figures prominently in Interview 14. When canvasser Yasmin explains the FAIR Act, voter Xavier expresses concern with younger children being taught about LGBT historic figures.

(18)
*I don't think it's a right time for them to be learning about it...[when they're older] they have more knowledge of what's right and what's wrong, like I mean, they- a little kid doesn't know anything. You know what I mean? They don't know what's right or what's wrong. They don't have that- I don't know how to explain it. That mentality? To say I'm gay or I'm straight, or I'm not- I don't like boys or I like boys. **You can't teach a little kid that because then he's going to grow up thinking he likes boys.***

Xavier subsequently confirms Yasmin's paraphrase that he thinks the FAIR Act will influence children to be gay. Unlike the ideologies connected with sexual choice belief and sexual biology belief, voters in the data who claimed that people are influenced to be LGB never judged LGB sexuality as morally acceptable (see Figure 7).

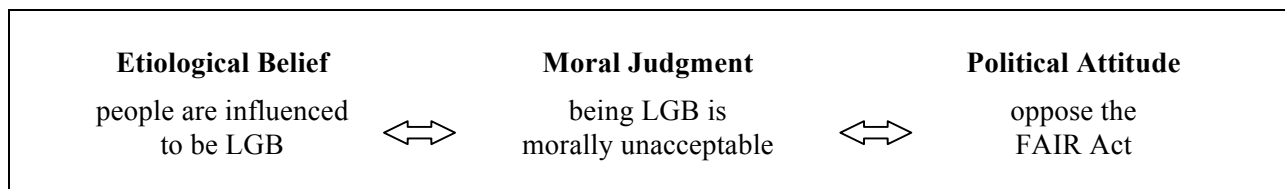


Figure 7: Indexical chain between sexual influence belief, judgment of moral unacceptability, and FAIR Act opposition

Voters who believed in sexual influence did, however, distinguish between different

sources of influence, each of which had its own implications for the flexibility of their political attitude on the FAIR Act. While explaining their concerns about influences to be LGB, voters identified three potential causes of LGB sexuality: 1) that people have a traumatic sexual experience with the opposite-sex, 2) that people find out that LGB sexuality exists and want to experiment out of curiosity, and 3) that people are told that it's alright to be LGB and experiment because it is popular. Table 6 provides examples for each of these sources of influence.

Source of influence	Example(s)
traumatic experience	<i>To me a lot of people it's more being hurt and they turn.</i>
knowledge/curiosity	<i>If you're looking for something, you'll find it, and if you're taught to look for it, you're going to find it. What they see is what they're going to try and do.</i>
acceptance/popularity	<i>They're opened up to this idea of it just being okay. It's kind of a cool thing, if "hell, wow, hey, everybody's being accepted, so I can go to that, I can give that a try."</i>

Table 6: Sources of influence for LGB sexuality identified by voters and excerpts from voters' discourse

Zavier highlights this third source of influence as relevant to his opposition of the FAIR Act.

(19)

*If you teach them at an early age that it's okay, and then, next thing- **next thing you know they're going to be liking boys.** Or- you know? It's going to be okay for them. It's not going to feel weird or different for them to like boys or girls.*

When Yasmin subsequently asks "is that bad? is that a problem?", Zavier explains that he does not have a problem with adults who are LGB.

(20)

*I don't really care, you know, to me. **Everybody can live their own life**, I- I don't really care.*

(21)

*I think **everybody has their own right** and should be able to do whatever the hell they want.*

Zavier thus claims an approach of non-interference, much like the voters who believe in sexual

choice, and aligns this presentation of self with his stance that young children should not be influenced to be LGB.

5.3.2 Sexual influence belief and support of the FAIR Act

In other interviews, voters divided their political attitude toward the FAIR Act based on which kind of influence they believed it would have. For example, after canvasser Mariana plays the anti-FAIR Act advertisement in Interview 8, voter Nicole maintains her unsupportive political attitude but begins to reference a concern with promoting tolerance.

(22)

*I just think they should kind of more point out that regardless of what you are **you can still make a difference regardless**, and they shouldn't have to point out the fact that a person is straight, gay, bi.*

In response to the pro-FAIR Act advertisement and its assertion that such education would teach "that we have to respect people," Nicole distinguishes between two different assessments of the FAIR Act's potential content.

(23)

*It would depend on how far they are to teach the kids, because- I mean I have two kids of my own. So I think **it would depend if you were to teach to respect** and not to mistreat them and I guess that would make a difference than if they would try to say that- you know, like **trying to influence instead of just trying to teach to respect**.*

(24)

*As long as it doesn't **cross that line** to where- for them to kind of, "Yeah, well, you know, let's be-" you know?*

Nicole thus positions her political attitude either in favor of or against the FAIR Act as contingent on whether teaching about LGBT people will focus on influencing children (i.e., to be LGB) or on promoting tolerance. When Mariana affirms that the FAIR Act "is about respect, it's not about influence," Nicole continues to indicate a possible supportive attitude toward the act.

(25)

*So I think **there is that line**. As long as **they don't cross it**, I think parents will be okay with it. I mean, they should be okay with it. But **I think I'd be fine**.*

(26)

*I mean, I was brought up that it's a sin. You know, this and that. And I teach my kids the same, but I do teach them as well that they have to respect. **They don't have to be it, but they have to respect it.** And don't look down, they're the same as you. You know, they're not any- it's kind of like they're still human beings, they still feel, they still- you know. And I mean, if that's taught in school, I'm fine with it. **I'm perfectly fine with it, as long as they don't cross that line to where they're kind of pushing it.***

By the end of the interview, Nicole's support rating has changed from unsupportive to undecided. Moreover, she claims that she would hypothetically vote in favor of the act if she could review what the history lessons would include and confirm that teachers would not be endorsing a specific stance on the morality of LGB sexuality. Unlike Zavier, who emphasized non-interference, Nicole highlights a concern with promoting tolerance that is similar to the presentation of self displayed by voters who indexed a belief in biological causes of LGB sexuality. By inserting the intermediate step of assessing the content of the FAIR Act, Figure 8 shows how the belief that people are influenced to be LGB can be connected to either a positive or negative political attitude toward the act.

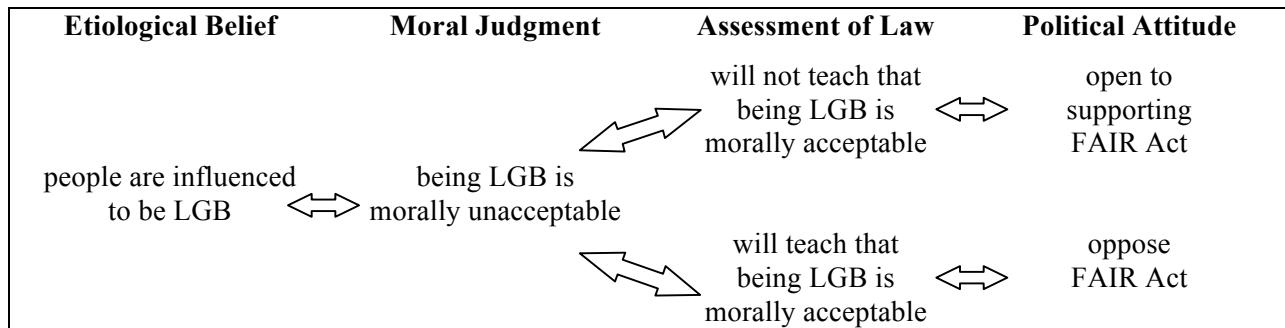


Figure 8: Bifurcated indexical chain between sexual influence belief, moral judgment, issue assessment, and political attitude

In interviews with voters who claimed a sexual influence belief, canvassers were most successful at convincing them to be more supportive of LGBT political causes when they delineated between people being told that LGB people exist and being told that it's alright to be LGB. That is, voters rarely believed that simply "finding out" about LGB people would "turn

them gay" but were instead concerned with LGB sexuality being condoned or even promoted. Furthermore, for voters who displayed a presentation of self that centered on a concern for teaching children to be tolerant and respectful toward LGB people, canvassers could persuade them to positively assess the effect of an LGBT political cause like the FAIR Act. This finding points to the potential for voters who believe in sexual influence to not only be open to LGBT political causes but to actively support these causes through their voting behavior if they believe it will not contradict their moral judgment of LGB sexuality. In other words, LGBT rights activists do not necessarily need to change voters' etiological belief in sexual influence in order to win these voters' support.

6. Socio-Semiotic Processes of Ideological Representation

As the above analysis has demonstrated, the social field of voters' sexual ideologies is more complex than the representations circulated in the American mass media. However, during my fieldwork with VFE, the range of possible connections between etiological belief, moral judgment, and political attitude was never mentioned in the group debrief sessions following the canvasses. Although first-time canvassers would regularly comment on how surprised they were that most of the people they talked to who were against the FAIR Act were friendly toward the canvassers and relatively tolerant of their LGB sexuality, they did not signal any recognition of the ideological commonalities between supportive and unsupportive voters. Moreover, lacking an awareness of the variation in sexual ideologies, the experienced canvassers in the data actively misrecognized voters' ideologies during the canvassing interviews and, through semiotic processes of iconization, erasure, and dichotomic replication, interactionally reinforced their own ideological representations of the connections between discourse, etiological belief, and political

attitude. Over the course of these conversations, voters' individual acts of stancetaking in relation to LGB sexuality (e.g., what the cause of LGB sexuality is, whether or not LGB sexuality is morally acceptable) build upon one another to construct sets of beliefs, judgments, and attitudes that constitute their sexual ideologies. When the canvassers simplify and transform these ideologies to match their own ideological representations, they reinforce rather than disrupt social opinions that work against LGBT people and reduce the potential for activist intervention in the public sphere of political opinion.

6.1 Iconization of discourse as political attitude

One way in which canvassers misrecognized voters' ideologies was by interpreting and positioning discourse as iconic of political attitude. That is, canvassers oriented to certain ways of speaking about LGB sexuality as directly communicating a particular political attitude either in favor of or against the FAIR Act, even in the absence of (or in explicit contradiction to) connections that the voters made between their words and their claimed stance toward LGB people and the FAIR Act. These moments of iconization are triggered in the interaction through the use of discourse features that typically co-occur with a specific etiological belief, as outlined in the preceding section (see Tables 3, 4, and 5). By iconizing the voters' discourse in these interactions, the canvasser supports an ideological representation that simplifies the social field of voter ideologies.

An example of discourse iconization occurs in Interview 4 between canvasser Erica and voter Francisco. At the beginning of the interview, Francisco says he is in favor of the FAIR Act but rates himself as a five (i.e., fifty percent supportive, fifty percent unsupportive), explaining "I'm not fully convinced, but I'm not also against it." Even as he voices concern over the age at

which children will be taught LGBT history, Francisco maintains this neutral support rating after being shown the campaign advertisements. During the first part of the Persuasion Stage of the interview, Erica has primarily been reading questions directly from the survey sheet and Francisco has been responding with short answers lacking detail. In other words, Erica has not initially been successful at negotiating discussion into an in-depth examination of Francisco's reasons for being politically undecided. This interview stands in contrast to most of the other interviews conducted by Erica in which she is highly skilled at engaging voters in a discussion of underlying concerns and "Real Lived Experience."



Image 6.1: Francisco (left) and Erica (right) during Interview 4

After a series of these short question-answer sequences, Erica quotes statistics on suicide rates among LGBT youth, a trend that has been largely attributed to the bullying of LGBT students, and claims that teaching about LGBT people in school will reduce the occurrence of bullying. In his response, Francisco first says that he does not know the statistics firsthand and then restates the reasons for his ambivalent stance, saying, "I'm not against it" and adding, "I have friends who are gay." This information preemptively answers one of the suggested questions on the survey sheet that Erica has not yet asked: *Do you know any gay or transgender*

people? Next to this survey question are two other associated questions: *How well do you know them?* and *How were you influenced the first time you learned about a gay person?* Shortly after Francisco reveals that he has gay friends, Erica looks at her survey sheet and asks who these friends are and what his relationship is like with them (i.e., *How well do you know them?*). Francisco again provides a short, unspecific answer, saying, "We go out and have lunch and that kind of thing." Example 6.1 comes from the portion of the interview immediately following this exchange. (See Appendix for transcription conventions and for more detailed transcriptions of prosody and gesture for the following excerpts).

Example 6.1

- 1 Erica; and, (0.3) um. (1.1) how, like, (1.0) your exposure, to, gay people, like how di-
 2 how, did that change your opinion at all, on,
 3 (0.8)
 4 Francisco; uh, I don't really like to judge people, by, you know? by what they do, or who they,
 5 (0.3) you know, what they choose to be. that's, that's, to me that's,
 6 pretty much your decision.
 7 Erica; okay.
 8 Francisco; I've chosen who I want to be? you can choose who you want to be.
 9 (0.3)
 10 Erica; okay.

At the beginning of the excerpt, Erica looks at her survey sheet and utters several one-word intonation phrases interspersed with lengthy pauses, typifying the kind of delays and hesitations that have consistently marked the beginning of her turns during the Persuasion Stage of this interview. Finally, Erica shifts her gaze to Francisco as she asks, "Your exposure to gay people...did that that change your opinion at all?" (lines 1-2). This question is similar to one listed on the survey sheet (i.e., *How were you influenced the first time you learned about a gay person?*), which appears next to the last question that Erica referenced. Instead of directly responding to the question about his change (or lack of change) in opinion, Francisco claims a neutral stance toward gay people. Erica nods as Francisco describes this stance, saying "I don't

really like to judge people...by what they do...or what they choose to be" (lines 4-5). The use of the verb *choose* here, as well as the noun phrase *your decision* (line 6) and the statement "I've chosen who I want to be, you can choose who you want to be" (line 8), mirror the discourse features associated with voters' descriptions of the belief that people choose to be LGB (i.e., keywords "choose" and "decision", possessive forms, and comparisons of self with other).⁸

Example 6.1 continues as Erica asks Francisco another question.

Example 6.1 (continued)

- 11 Erica; (H) do you, um. do you think, that, (0.4) being, that there is a choice involved,
12 in being gay?
13 (0.6)
14 Francisco; that there's a choice? .. no? I don't think so.
15 Erica; .. no?
16 Francisco; I think it's, already, .. been, decided for you if, you know if you're, (0.6)
17 going to be gay or not.
18 Erica; .. [yeah.]
19 Francisco; [I don't] think, you should, (1.0) I don't think, you make a choice. .. you know?
20 .. it's,
21 (0.2)
22 Erica; (H) .. so, .. so you, (0.7) that you know, that there, there really is no choice to
23 make. right? is that the point, .. that [you're,] making?
24 Francisco; [yeah.]
25 (0.4)
26 Erica; I mean yeah. I agree, I definitely, (0.3) I'm gay, and I, um, (1.1) I don't really feel
27 like I had an- .. a choice, (0.7) in it, (0.2) um,

Although she is looking at the survey sheet at the time, the question that Erica asks (lines 11-12) does not resemble any of the questions listed on the sheet, nor is it a question that canvassers are trained to ask. Instead, this question is generated from the dialogical interaction between the voter and the canvasser, tying Francisco's use of the word *choose* to an inquiry about his stance on the role of choice in being gay. The transition from the verb *choose* to the noun *choice* thus connects Francisco's discourse to a specific etiological belief on LGB sexuality. The pragmatic meaning behind this utterance is therefore that using choice-associated discourse, even as part of reasoning that supports LGB people's freedom to choose, indexes the belief that people

choose to be LGB.

The structure of Francisco's response displays a careful negotiation of his stance. For the sake of space, however, I will highlight only the aspects of Francisco's discourse that are relevant to the analysis of the semiotic process through which Erica orients to discourse as iconic of political attitude. Francisco takes the stance that there isn't a choice involved in being gay, explaining his belief that "it's already been decided for you" and "you know if you're going to be gay or not" (lines 16-17). His characterization of sexuality for LGB people shifts from present tense active voice (e.g., *what they choose to be*, line 5) to past tense passive voice (e.g., *it's already been decided for you*, line 16). LGB people are thus grammatically positioned as not being in agentive control of their sexuality (cf. "nonagentive roles" in Capps and Ochs, 1995: 67-69). When he describes sexuality in the present tense, Francisco uses the verb *know* followed by the future tense conditional clause *if you're going to be gay or not*. His discourse thereby transforms from features associated with the belief that people choose to be LGB to features associated with the belief that people are born LGB.

Erica nods throughout this response and voices verbal alignment (line 18) as Francisco reiterates his stance that people don't make a choice to be gay. Canvassers are explicitly trained by VFE to first paraphrase a voter's statements and request a confirmation of the accuracy of this paraphrase before launching into an attempt at persuasion. In her paraphrase of Francisco's belief, Erica upgrades his laminating verb *think* (line 14, line 19) to *know* when she requests confirmation for the statement *you know that there really is no choice to make* (lines 22-23). Likewise, her use of the adverb *really* polysemously indicates both emphasis of the lack of choice and factual validity (i.e., there is in actuality no choice to make). After Francisco confirms

this interpretation, Erica launches into an account of her stance on her own sexuality, first coming out to Francisco as gay and then claiming phenomenological evidence in the statement *I don't really feel like I had...a choice in it*" (lines 26-27). Erica thereby positions etiological belief in choice as antithetical to supporting gay people's experiences. Even Francisco's use of the verb *choose* is problematized by this frame as Erica pragmatically connects this word to an etiological belief that denies her personal experience. The semiotic association that is built during this excerpt thus allows Erica to interactively generate an iconic relationship between discourse associated with a belief in sexual choice and an unsupportive attitude toward LGB people. This socio-semiotic process of iconization shapes Francisco's discourse to match Erica's ideological representation and ignores other potential indexical relationships between discourse, etiological belief, and political attitude that exist in other voters' ideologies (cf. Timoteo in Section 5.1.2).

6.2 Erasure of sexual influence belief

In addition to erasing the full range of indexical relationships that exist within voters' ideologies, canvassers also discursively transform the belief that people are influenced to be LGB and render it invisible within their simplified ideological representations. In spite of VFE's emphasis on the importance of the "harm kids" argument in swaying voter opinion, this belief is often subsumed under the monolithic belief that people choose to be LGB. This erasure parallels the consolidation of belief in sexual choice and belief in sexual influence that characterizes the analysis of polling research on LGB etiological belief (cf. Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008).

6.2.1 Interview 9

Interview 9 contains a representative example of a canvasser attempting to erase a voter's belief in sexual influence. Voter Phil has taken a strong stance against the FAIR Act, stating that he is a zero on the scale of support (i.e., one hundred percent unsupportive) and that he would "definitely vote against it." He maintains this stance after seeing each campaign advertisement and, when canvasser Olivia asks him to explain his concerns about the law, Phil immediately references his belief in sexual influence, saying that he is opposed "because it would influence people that maybe don't know." In his description of the potential consequences of teaching children about LGBT historical figures, Phil points both to the effect that knowledge has in triggering experimentation (e.g., "They [children] see something, they want to try it, they want to do it.") and to the implicit message of approval that such lessons would convey (e.g., "Present it in school, it must be okay."). Phil further highlights the role that acceptance plays in creating social trends, saying that LGB sexuality becomes "kind of a cool thing if 'hell, wow, hey, everybody's being accepted, so I can go to that, I can give that a try.'"

At several points in his explanation, Phil claims first-hand knowledge of the operation of sexual influence, vaguely asserting, for example, "I have seen that [influence] happen more than once." When Olivia asks whether he knows any gay or transgender people and how well he knows them, Phil says that his son is gay. After this revelation, Olivia asks Phil to confirm the statement "you think people are influenced into being gay." While aligning with this paraphrased stance, Phil again emphasizes the effect that he believes social acceptance and popularity have on children's sexuality. In her next turn at the beginning of Example 6.2.1, Olivia asks Phil to take a stance on the connection between sexual influence and his own son's homosexuality.⁹

Example 6.2.1

- 1 Olivia; um, so like. (0.4) do you feel that your son, has been influenced? into, in society?
2 to actually, be gay?
3 (0.7)
4 Phil; when he was younger? yes.
5 Olivia; mhm? (7.3) and how do you feel about, like this, (0.5) um, .. influence? that you're
6 talking about, so, (H) .. um, from, your perspective, again, so, (0.3) is that, influence?
7 and, is, .. like, .. kind of like, a choice? for them to be gay? (0.4) to be, like, .. cool,
8 because, they're [gay?]
9 Phil; [there's] some, people, who do that? there's always some that, (0.9) have a tendency,
10 to go towards that, always have, history has been, filled with them?
11 (0.7)
12 Olivia; mm.
13 (0.4)
14 Phil; but that doesn't have to be made, (0.7) something, (0.4) that's, (0.6) desirable.

Olivia uses the laminating verb *feel* in her question about Phil's stance on his son's sexuality (line 1), framing it as an affective stance that conjectures about the experiences of another person. Additionally, her use of the adverb *actually* (line 2) lends skepticism to this potential stance. Phil, however, unequivocally confirms this stance, highlighting its relevance to his discussion of the FAIR Act's influence on children by temporally framing this influence as something that occurred when his son "was younger" (line 4).

In her next turn, Olivia moves toward the erasure of Phil's belief in sexual influence. Again positioning her inquiry as focusing on Phil's emotional stance, Olivia asks *how do you feel about...this...influence?* (line 5). Her subsequent elaboration first frames Phil's stance as being a subjective attitude (i.e., *from your perspective*, line 6) and then indicates that she is concerned with how he believes influence is related to choice (lines 6-7). Specifically, Olivia asks for a comparison between sexual influence and sexual choice through her yes/no question *is that influence...kind of like a choice*. After a 0.4 second pause during which Phil does not respond, Olivia modifies her question by identifying a hypothetical desire "to be...cool...because they're gay" (lines 7-8), thereby generating a connection between sexual choice and Phil's past

utterances by referencing his use of the word *cool* in describing the effect of promoting LGBT acceptance. Olivia thus reframes Phil's previous description of the nature of sexual influence as providing a motive for volitional (i.e., chosen) action. Through the use the positive polarity construction *is that +noun phrase*, Olivia grammatically designs her question as a yes-preferred interrogative (Raymond, 2003). With this structure, Olivia constructs an interactional expectation that Phil will agree that he believes that the kind of sexual influence he has been discussing is "like a choice."



Image 6.2.1: Phil's facial expression at the end of line 14

Phil's response, however, resists this semiotic process of erasure and creates room for the relevance of both sexual choice and sexual influence. Instead of answering with an explicit "yes" or "no," Phil launches a pre-disagreement acknowledging the "tendency to go towards that" (lines 9-10) that implicitly exists independent of sexual influence. After conceding that "history has been filled" with LGB people (line 10), a situation toward which he displays disapproval by simultaneously shaking his head, Phil signals a nonconforming response to Olivia's yes-preferred question with the conjunction *but* and then takes the stance that "that doesn't have to be made something that's desirable."¹⁰ At the same time that he describe his stance verbally, Phil displays

an emotional stance through his facial expression (Goodwin et al., 2012), namely, his exaggerated frown after completing his turn (see Image 6.2.1). While navigating around an explicit disalignment with Olivia, Phil nonetheless maintains his stance that the popularity of LGB sexuality has an effect on children and, by asserting that being gay "doesn't have to" have a positive valence, evaluates this influence as something negative that can and should be avoided. As a whole, this excerpt illustrates Olivia's attempt to reduce a belief in sexual influence to a belief in sexual choice that, although it fails, demonstrates the socio-semiotic process of erasure in canvassers' representations of voter ideology.

6.2.2 Interview 2

The interaction between canvasser Chris and voter Dominic in Interview 2 presents another case of a canvasser replacing sexual influence belief with sexual choice belief, this time through the canvasser's own stancetaking actions. Dominic is initially a two on the zero to ten scale (i.e., on the unsupportive end of the scale) and then moves to a one after the anti-FAIR Act campaign advertisement. He maintains this unsupportive rating after the pro-FAIR Act advertisement and reiterates his negative evaluation of the FAIR Act as Chris moves into the Persuasion Stage of the interview. Within his canvasser-elicited explanations of the reasons behind his political attitude, Dominic uses the choice-associated word *want* but primarily focuses on his concern that schools will be teaching children that "it's alright to be gay." This potential message of acceptance is contrasted with "learning about gays' accomplishments," which Dominic says he is not concerned with "if it can stay in that particular box." In foregrounding his personal objection to sexual acceptance, Dominic says, "I don't want my daughter to be confused" and describes hypothetical scenarios in which his daughter is or is not influenced to be

LGB. The stories that he narrates are built around a contrast between Dominic's daughter telling him that she has "come" to the "realization" that she is attracted to another girl, which he concludes with the statement "then we talk," versus his daughter being told "it's okay to like another young lady." Although he does not describe the outcome of this second scenario, he orients to an undesired consequence by saying that this scenario is something "I don't want." In Chris' conversations with voters as well as VFE staff members and volunteers, explicit challenges and criticisms are notably absent from his interactional style. However, in the following excerpt, Chris disaligns with the voter and presents his own divergent etiological belief. Like the canvassers examined above, Chris begins his turn in Example 6.2.2 by paraphrasing the voters' words.

Example 6.2.2

- 1 Chris; so you feel like, it could, potentially influence, .. a child, t- (0.3) to be gay?
- 2 Dominic; [sure.]
- 3 Chris; [or lesbian?] who might not [[otherwise?]]
- 4 Dominic; [[or,]] to at least, .. uh, experience it. (0.2) or want to experience it? (0.7)
- 5 see what it's like.
- 6 Chris; .. okay. (0.7) yeah, I mean, (0.2) it's, um, (1.8) I- .. I don't, (0.2) personally believe
- 7 that that's, possible? (0.4)

Like Olivia, Chris frames his confirmation request around the voter's emotional stance by using the word *feel* in the question *so you feel like it could potentially influence a child to be gay or lesbian?* (lines 1, 3). His use of the verb *influence* marks the first time that etiological belief has been explicitly identified by either participant in the interview and is indexically tied to the FAIR Act itself (i.e., the *it* in line 1). After Dominic provides a confirmation that overlaps with Chris' speech (line 2), Chris modifies the phrase *to be gay* with the subordinate clause *who might not otherwise* (line 3), thereby specifying the nature of sexual influence as a singularly sufficient force in changing one's sexuality. Dominic's response again overlaps with the end of Chris' turn, producing a qualification that references an influence toward sexual experimentation (lines 4-5).

In this statement, Dominic reuses the verb *want* in describing the effect of children wanting "to experience it [i.e., being gay or lesbian]."



Image 6.2.2: Chris' facial expression during the 1.8 second pause in line 6

After a barely audible token of *okay*, Chris utters several short intonation phrases before displaying non-verbal signs of pre-disagreement (Pomerantz 1984) during a 1.8 second pause (line 6), namely, closing his eyes, raising his eyebrows, and holding his mouth wide open (Image 6.2.2). Chris thereby orients to the interactional preference for agreement and, by not providing an immediate and unqualified response, foreshadows his upcoming divergent stance (Sacks, 1987). These initial false starts are followed by the statement *I don't personally believe that that's possible* (lines 6-7). Although he hedges his oppositional stance by framing it as a personal belief and by using rising intonation, Chris' disagreement is uncharacteristically direct. In this unusual display of divergent alignment, Chris evaluates the stance object *that* as not possible. Here, "that" indexes the previous discussion of influence and experimentation. However, as the excerpt continues, the state of impossibility is discursively tied to Chris' description of, and stance on, the issue of sexual choice.

Example 6.2.2 (continued)

- 8 um, you know, (0.6) how people become, gay or lesbian, is still, (0.8)
9 not something science, has fully wrapped it's head around? (0.2) [you know?]
10 Dominic; [mhm.]
11 Chris; like, there are no, definitive answers there, and I can't pretend that there are? (0.6)
12 but I know that, for me, i- it wasn't really, a choice? (0.5) um, (0.7) you know.
13 it wasn- I knew, at a very young age, (0.4) you know, (0.4) basically, .. sixth grade,
14 (0.4) um, (0.2) that I was gay.

Chris describes the current inconclusive state of scientific knowledge on the etiology of sexuality (lines 8-9, 11). This statement has several pragmatic functions. First, it acts to mitigate the force of Chris' preceding divergent stance by admitting that science, as an authoritative source of truth in the world, cannot support any specific claims on sexual etiology. The adverb *still* also marks the pursuit of this knowledge as ongoing. Simultaneously, this move positions Chris' subsequent turn toward personal evidence as epistemologically relevant, since there are "no definitive answers" that have been concluded through scientific investigation. This disclaimer thus facilitates Chris' change in footing from animating what he, as opposed to Dominic, feels or believes about a hypothetical person's sexuality to what he knows from personal experience as a gay person, embodying the very figure that they have been discussing (Goffman, 1981).

Situated as an already completed past action, Chris claims that his sexuality "wasn't really a choice" (line 12). In addition to his reference to science, Chris uses other discourse features associated with sexual biology belief, specifically, the use of the laminating verb *know* (line 13) and a description of the Early Occurrence of his sexuality (lines 13-14). His epistemic stance on his own sexuality follows the canvasser strategy to steer discussion away from hypotheticals and toward "Real Lived Experience," resulting in the type of anti-choice but pro-biology stance that canvassers commonly take. The trajectory of Chris' stancetaking thereby moves from a negative evaluation of sexual influence to a negative evaluation of sexual choice and a positive evaluation

of sexual biology. In other words, Chris' counterstance does not actually address sexual influence and instead only provides evidence to disprove belief in sexual choice, a belief which Dominic has not claimed even though he repeatedly has used choice-associated discourse features such as the verb *want*. In the end, belief in sexual influence is sealed off and semiotically erased in favor of a sexual choice versus sexual biology dichotomy.

6.3 Dichotomic replication of political attitude

I defined "dichotomic replication" in Section 2 as the process in which two-sided oppositional contrasts in one domain are mapped onto contrasts in some other domain, thereby differentiating this concept from the semiotic process of "fractal recursivity" (Irvine and Gal, 2000). The structure of the canvassing interviews enables oppositions in political attitude to be replicated onto matching oppositions in etiological belief. That is, because voters are first asked to take a stance either in support of or against the FAIR Act, they are taking a specific position within a dichotomy. Within their ideological representations of sexual ideology, canvassers can subsequently match these supportive or unsupportive political attitudes to oppositions in believing in sexual biology versus believing in sexual choice. Previous scholars have noted how practices that emphasize another groups' "otherness" reinforce language ideologies (Stasch, 2007). Similarly, in their interactions with voters, canvassers discursively position a belief in biological causes of LGB sexuality as ideologically valued in contrast to a belief in sexual choice. As the following analysis demonstrates, the coherent representation of the ideology that sexual choice belief means anti-LGBT attitude and sexual biology belief means pro-LGBT attitude likewise depends on the concurrent operation of discourse iconization and the erasure of sexual influence belief.

6.3.1 Interview 1

In Interview 1, canvasser Amy maps the voter's political attitude against the FAIR Act onto an ideologically-corresponding belief in sexual choice. When Amy begins the interview by describing the FAIR Act and asking "would you vote in favor of including gay and transgender people into social studies lessons?," voter Barbara interrupts Amy before she can complete the question and takes the opposing stance, stating "no, I would vote against it." Barbara proceeds to give an unelicited explanation that "that's something I would teach my child," with prosodic emphasis on the personal pronoun *I*. Barbara says that she is "totally unsupportive," rates herself as a zero on the zero to ten scale, and maintains this rating after Amy shows her the anti- and pro-FAIR Act campaign advertisements. Immediately before Example 6.3.1, Amy has just finished asking the last question in Stage 3 of the interview (i.e., as she transitions into the Persuasion Stage).

Example 6.3.1

- 1 Amy; so. (0.3) what would you say, is your main, I know you said a little bit about it. you
2 thought that, it should be taught, y- you should teach? (0.3) your children about it?
3 [# # #?]
4 Barbara; [well it's totally] against my religion.
5 Amy; it's against your religion? okay, (0.5) [[got it.]]
6 Barbara; [[and,]] (0.5) I just don't believe in that. I'm, people say people are born that way.
7 I don't believe in that.
8 (0.3)
9 Amy; you think,
10 Barbara; G- God don't make mistakes.
11 (0.2)
12 Amy; okay.
13 (0.4)
14 Barbara; so,
15 (0.2)
16 Amy; so you think it's a choice, people are making, [as, as opposed] to,
17 Barbara; [it is a choice,] (0.3) no, it's not "I think," I know for a fact, it's a choice. so,
18 Amy; .. okay.

Amy begins to construct a *wh*-question that resembles one listed on the survey sheet (i.e.,

What are your biggest reasons for being for or against?) but then switches to a paraphrase of Barbara's previous explanation of her stance (lines 1-2). Barbara's response, however, marks her answer as non-straightforward with the prefacing word *well* (Schegloff and Lerner, 2009) and orients to the abandoned question, saying that "it's totally against my religion" (line 4).¹¹ Amy repeats this response and then uses continuers in the form of verbal actions (i.e., "okay" and "got it" in line 5) and non-verbal actions (i.e., shifting her gaze to the survey sheet and flipping it over), thereby displaying movement toward a new unit in the interaction (Goodwin, 1986). Again flouting the interactional expectations conveyed through Amy's actions, Barbara continues with an unelicited elaboration of her stance. Bookended by two tokens of the statement "I (just) don't believe in that," Barbara introduces the stance object of sexual biology belief (lines 6-7). Her use of the laminating construction *people say* further distances Barbara from the belief in sexuality as being set from birth while expressing a refusal to be persuaded by what "people say" through her use of the dependent preposition *in* with the verb *believe*. After Amy begins to offer a paraphrase of what Amy has said (line 9), Barbara again draws on religious doctrine to provide evidence that supports her stance (line 10).

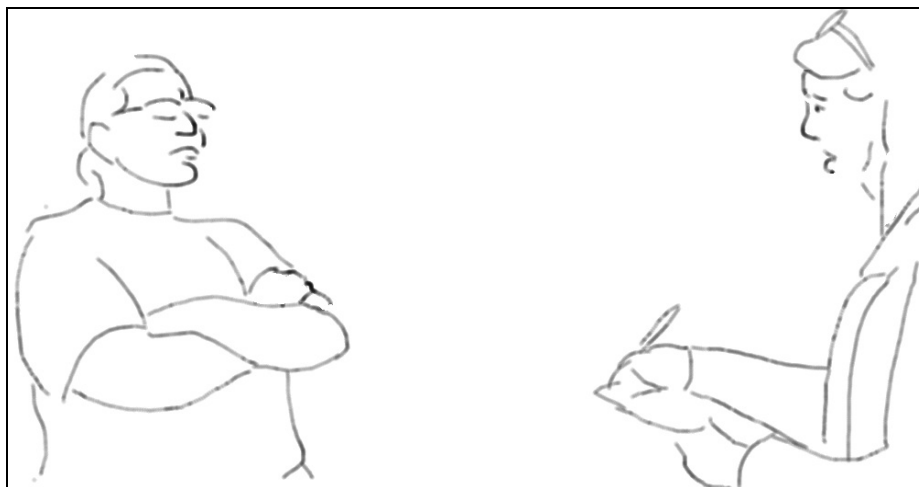


Image 6.3.1: Barbara (left) and Amy (right) during Example 6.3.1, line 17

Amy's next utterance generates the semiotic replication of a dichotomy in political attitude onto a dichotomy in etiological belief. Previously in the interview, Barbara has taken an unsupportive stance on the FAIR Act and explicitly opposed its application to public education. Likewise, within this excerpt, Barbara has potentially indexed a belief in sexual choice through her references to religion. Nevertheless, Barbara has not claimed a specific etiological belief, only indicating that she does not believe people are born LGB. Echoing Barbara's use of the discourse marker *so* at the end of her turn (line 14), Amy offers a completion of the absent conclusion introduced by "so" (Bolden, 2009) that posits Barbara's belief in sexual choice as the missing opposing element to her lack of belief in biological causes of LGB sexuality (line 16). This action thus interprets Barbara's discourse (i.e., her references to Christian affiliation and beliefs) as iconic of a belief in sexual choice. Although Barbara's response of epistemic upgrading (line 17) appears to confirm Amy's speculation, the ideological representation in Amy's inferential statement is also fundamentally dependent on semiotic associations that generate a dichotomic congruency between being against versus being in favor of the FAIR Act and believing in sexual choice versus believing in sexual biology.

6.3.2 Interview 3

A more complex case of dichotomic replication occurs in Interview 3. In her interaction with Erica (i.e., the same canvasser from Interview 4), voter Fay consistently takes a stance in support of the FAIR Act, rating herself as a ten (one hundred percent supportive) and stating at the beginning of the interview "I'd vote in favor because they [i.e., children] need that knowledge." After being shown the anti-FAIR Act advertisement, Fay reinforces her supportive stance and explains, "We have to be more open-minded...I'm a Christian, but then I have to

consider their train of thoughts." Fay both references her religious affiliation and, with the conjunction *but*, acknowledges that her approach stands in contrast to this affiliation. She then offers a self versus other comparison, saying, "I'm married to a man, but I don't go against my friend who's married to a woman," adding "that's their choice, we are in America." While not explicitly claiming a specific belief on the etiology of LGB sexuality, Fay's discourse resembles that of other voters who believe in sexual choice but take a "freedom of choice" stance on sexuality (cf. Timoteo in Section 5.1.2).

After completing Stage 3 of the interview, Erica asks Fay "have you ever changed your mind on your opinion of the rights of gay people." In response, Fay says that she used to be "totally against it" because of what her religion taught her but that "we have so many open minded churches now." She also repeats the phrases "we're in America" and "we have to be more open-minded" at the end of her explanation of why she changed her mind to be more supportive of LGBT political causes.¹² Example 6.3.2 begins as Fay is finishing another statement that emphasizes an American ideal of freedom and rights when it comes to LGBT people's lives.

Example 6.3.2

- | | | |
|----|--------|---|
| 1 | Fay; | so [they] have that right. |
| 2 | Erica; | [an-] (0.3) yeah. .. I mean I, .. I agree. I'm, (0.6) I'm gay. |
| 3 | | (0.2) |
| 4 | Fay; | [uh huh.] |
| 5 | Erica; | [actually,] (0.5) and. (0.6) you know. .. I, (0.3) do you, (1.4) do you think that, |
| 6 | | people are born gay? or do you think, it's a choice? what do you think. (1.4) |
| 7 | | to be gay. |
| 8 | | (1.6) |
| 9 | Fay; | yeah, I, I uh, I don't believe they're, .. born. .. I used to think that, but I don't think |
| 10 | | that [anymore.] |
| 11 | Erica; | [you] don't think they're born? (0.6) |

Erica responds to Fay's utterance by aligning with her stance and then coming out to Fay as being gay (line 2), foregrounding her personal investment in the implications of Fay's stance.¹³

After several false starts and pauses, Erica asks Fay to take a stance on the etiology of LGB

sexuality, which Erica has already separated into two options: "people are born gay" and "it's a choice" (lines 5-6). Erica's non-verbal behavior (e.g., shifting her gaze from Fay and licking her lips), her hesitations and repairs, and the position of the question immediately after she has come out as gay provide Fay with interactional cues of the pragmatic importance of the question. During the long periods of silence surrounding Erica's final phrase in this turn (lines 6-8), Fay frowns and shifts her gaze away from Erica (see Image 6.3.2).



Image 6.3.2: Erica (left) and Fay (right) during Example 6.3.2, line 7

When she answers, Fay pauses before and after uttering the keyword *born* in her statement *I don't believe they're born* (line 9). Fay's careful construction of her response is thereby signaled through her non-verbal and prosodic behavior. Fay then returns her gaze to Erica, raises her eyebrows, and points toward Erica as she explains that she "used to think that" but provides the account "I don't think that anymore (lines 9-10). This reference to the earlier discussion of Fay's past opinion on LGBT rights thus connects a political attitude *against* LGBT political causes with a belief in *biological* causes of LGB sexuality. Overlapping with the last word in Fay's turn, Erica asks, eyebrows raised, "You don't think they're born?" (line 11). The high tone pitch accent on "don't" followed by an accented low tone rising to a high tone on

"born" creates a pitch contour that conveys contrast and surprise and positions Erica's question as a challenge to Fay's stance.¹⁴ As the excerpt continues, Fay responds by modifying her stance.

Example 6.3.2 (continued)

12 Erica; you [think,]
13 Fay; [uh,]
14 Erica; you think, (0.3) that, .. [[th-]]
15 Fay; [[n-]] no, I used to think, no, wait, I used to think that they uh, (0.5)
16 that there's something #they, (0.2) the environment that, .. [#env-]
17 Erica; [okay.] (0.3) [[and now,]]
18 Fay; [[#environment that made,]]
19 Erica; what [[[do you think.]]]
20 Fay; [[[but after]]] a- looking at uh, (0.3) Cha- and these people, are really so serious. (0.5)
21 I look at them, and they say they, tried to, (0.3) to uh, go the other way, but,
22 that's when they were, three or four years old. .. they realized that, and that, (0.4)
23 and I had to have, compassion. (0.8) [uh,]
24 Erica; [I] agree.

As Erica begins to formulate a statement on what Fay thinks, Fay orients to Erica's problematization by framing her new description of sexual etiology as a repair on earlier talk, saying "no, wait" before changing her description of what she "used to think" to a belief in sexual influence (lines 15-16). Fay's modification thus highlights the erasure of sexual influence within Erica's etiological question and simultaneously distances herself from this belief. Erica marks Fay's reformulation as appropriate by nodding and uttering the continuer *okay* before she refocuses discussion on what Fay currently thinks (lines 17, 19). Notably, Fay does not take a stance on what her current etiological belief is. Instead, she launches into a description of her experiences with gay people, referencing the tropes of Attempts to Be Straight (line 21) and Early Occurrence (line 22) before concluding that she "had to have compassion" (line 23). Erica's nods during Fay's turn from lines 20 through 23 are qualitatively larger (i.e., her head is lifted higher and dropped lower) than her nods earlier in the excerpt, providing non-verbal emphasis for her subsequent verbal alignment with Fay (line 24). Having already established that Fay is strongly supportive of LGBT people and their political causes, Erica's etiological question,

interactive challenge, and final approval of a modified stance together semiotically position belief in biological causes of LGB sexuality (or, at the very least, rejection of sexual influence belief and use of discourse associated with sexual biology belief) as a shibboleth for pro-LGBT political attitude. The congruency of being in favor of the FAIR Act and believing in biological causes of LGB sexuality is likewise framed as oppositional to being against the FAIR Act and its matching etiological belief in sexual choice. In other words, although Fay never wavers from her current supportive position in the interaction, the canvasser's ideological representation of the semiotic connection between discourse, etiological belief, and political attitude requires the voter's explanations to fit a simplified frame in order to hold logical coherence.

7. Discussion

As language ideology scholars have noted, ideologies narrowly promote the interests of certain groups (Friedrich, 1989; Kroskrity, 2010). In the case of sexual ideologies, researchers have argued that a belief in sexual choice legitimates evaluations made by Christian religious groups that LGB sexuality *can* be controlled and, because it is a sin, *should* be avoided (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008). Moral judgment and political attitude are thus linked to negative valuations of the "choice" to be LGB. Wilcox (2003) likewise observes that, in the early 2000s, a belief in sexual choice as opposed to a belief in sexual biology was central to the anti-LGBT discourse of politically and religiously conservative groups. As the LGBT rights movement has gained political momentum in recent years, sexual choice belief has maintained this prominence in the face of challenges from those who believe in biological causes of LGB sexuality. Paradoxically, the insistence that people are born LGB may even reinforce the dichotomous polarity of the two beliefs (Wilcox, 2003).

While the interests of some political and religious groups are supported by the ideology that sexual choice equals moral unacceptability equals political opposition, LGBT people and their allies subscribe to an ideology that links a biological basis for sexuality to its moral acceptability and the political support of LGBT causes. This indexical chain is, however, reliant on three problematic assumptions: 1) that biology determines behavior, 2) that behavior originating from natural causes is automatically moral, and 3) that scientific evidence indicating biological causes of LGB sexuality will have a social and political impact that will benefit LGBT people.

Despite the lack of conclusive evidence of biological factors that predispose one to homosexuality and bisexuality, media reports of scientific studies on sexuality position science as the final authority on the etiology of LGB sexuality (Wilcox, 2003). Moreover, as mentioned in Section 2.3, Wilcox found that research findings indicating potential genetic and neuroanatomical factors in the formation of sexuality were framed as demonstrating that biology is the sole determinant of a person's sexuality. This biological determinism implicitly absolves LGB people of all responsibility for their sexuality and provides a justification for their social and political equality.

Simultaneously, evidence of biological sources for sexual behavior is implicitly constructed as supporting a positive moral judgment of LGB sexuality through what is called the *naturalistic fallacy*. The naturalistic fallacy can be said to operate whenever the supposed innateness of a behavior is held up as proof that it should be universally regarded as culturally and socially acceptable.¹⁵ For example, men accused of raping women may attempt to defend their actions by claiming that males are more psychologically- and hormonally-geared toward sexual activity than women are and thus are not responsible for their actions (Denno 1999).

Denno argues against this kind of moral logic, urging courts to instead endorse the view that "the supposed 'natural' or 'evolutionary' unpinnings of male sexual aggression do not justify, or render acceptable, such behavior" (251). Analogously, by relying on the logical fallacy that biological causes of LGB sexuality condone its existence, the ideology that sexual biology belief indexes acceptance of LGB sexuality problematically promotes the naturalistic fallacy.

Deference to scientific authority on LGB sexuality is also predicated on the assumption that, once people are convinced that sexuality is *caused* by biology, American society will promote unconditional tolerance of LGBT people. However, considering the Western history of movements toward eugenics (Kevles, 1985) as well as the contemporary psychologically-based sexual conversion treatments being conducted throughout the country,¹⁶ it is not certain that definitive evidence of biological bases for LGB sexuality will be used to promote acceptance instead of further attempts to prevent or change biological effects and, as a result, eliminate LGB sexuality altogether (Greenberg and Bailey, 1993; Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008; Sheldon et al., 2007). Likewise, in the absence of the naturalistic fallacy, belief in sexuality as "natural" does not always result in the judgment that LGB sexuality is morally acceptable (cf. Roxanne in Section 5.2.2).

By presenting these critiques, I do not intend to deny the role that biology plays in constituting sexuality, nor do I mean to undermine the legitimacy of LGB people's claims that they were born LGB, that they know this is who they are, etc. Instead, I aim only to suggest that belief in LGB sexuality as deterministically biological is not the sole premise on which activists can justify support of LGB people's rights. Furthermore, this premise is fundamentally flawed if it is intended to promote acceptance rather than produce exclusion. As discussed in this thesis, the belief in sexuality's biological causes is positioned in the media and in conversational

interactions as the pro-LGBT counterpart to a belief in sexual choice. Supporters of LGBT political causes thus build their arguments for sexual equality around the ideology that LGB sexuality has a biological origin that *cannot* be changed and, because it is innate, *should* be considered to be moral. Sexual biology belief is particularly compatible with the experiences of LGB people who can draw on its associated discourse features when describing their experiences with their own sexuality (see Table 4). For example, in both Interview 3 and Interview 4, Erica describes how she "struggled" with her sexuality and "tried to be straight" before coming to the "realization" that this is "who she is." Likewise, in Interview 2, Chris draws on the tropes of Early Occurrence and Internal Struggle when describing the process through which he "figured out" his sexuality.

Although the strict ideological connection between sexual biology, moral acceptability, and political supports promotes the interests of people like Erica and Chris, the centrality of this ideology to the LGBT rights movement excludes other LGBT people whose experiences do not fit this discourse. After coming out to the voter as a lesbian in Interview 11, Samantha describes how she "always knew" she was a lesbian but "waited a long time" to pursue same-sex relationships, thereby positioning the absence of an Early Occurrence of same-sex activity as something to be accounted for (cf. accounting for sexual inexperience in Thorne 2013).

Similarly, as a bisexual person, I have not been able to justify my decision to date women by claiming that I tried but failed to have successful relationships with men. When I shared my findings with a VFE staff member who is transgender, he also echoed this discomfort with the emphasis placed on sexual biology over sexual choice, describing how he feels that the fervent disavowal of conscious identity choices undermines the legitimacy of his decision to pursue hormone therapy. While he respects that his co-workers and other activists feel strongly that their

sexuality has a biological basis, he observed that the othering of sexual choice belief problematically implies that non-normativity is only acceptable if it cannot be avoided. In light of these drawbacks to positioning a belief that people are "born gay" using a restrictive set of discourse features to support this belief, I suggest that LGBT activists may build more inclusion within their communities by endorsing an stance on etiological belief in alignment with the statement that "regardless of what causes homosexuals [or bisexuals] to be homosexuals [or bisexuals] and regardless of whether they are born, choose to be, can be made not to be or can control their behavior as homosexuals [or bisexuals], homosexual conduct out not to be condemned morally or proscribed legally" (Greenberg and Bailey, 1993: 251).

A more inclusive approach to discussing etiological belief would not undermine political efforts but would rather expand the potential for innovative activist strategies. As an example, the analysis in this thesis provides findings that complicate existing persuasion techniques used by VFE canvassers as they position themselves in the intersubjective negotiation of political attitude in face-to-face, sequentially organized interactions contextualized within debates relevant to the public sphere at large. LGBT activist organizations such as VFE can consider these processes when designing their discursive approach to political persuasion to match their political goals. In the context of canvassing conversations, arguing for a belief in biological causes of LGB sexuality was not effective at changing voters' own etiological beliefs, moral judgments, or political attitudes. Rather, activists were more successful at convincing voters to be more supportive of LGBT political causes when they worked within the frame of voters' pre-existing sexual ideologies and persuaded the voters that the law they were promoting would not undermine the voters' moral judgment or result in harm coming to their children (see Section 5.3). Even if activists were somehow able to persuade voters to adopt a belief in biological

causes of LGB sexuality, this might not necessarily lead voters to have a positive moral judgment of LGB sexuality (cf. Roxanne in Section 5.2.2). Although sexual biology belief is *correlated with* support of LGBT political causes (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008), it is not clear that this belief itself *causes* this support. Instead, the findings in this thesis indicate that any specific etiological belief in sexual choice, sexual biology, or sexual influence does not constrain the potential political stances a voter can take, although processes of iconization, erasure, and dichotomic replication act to generate and reinforce a simplified representation of this social field. In other words, when it comes to rallying voter support, the belief that people are born gay is not required from voters nor is it enough to single-handedly ensure they are pro-LGBT. Furthermore, different presentations of self, as either primarily concerned with non-interference or with promoting tolerance, may combine in complex ways with voters' etiological beliefs and moral judgments in their interpretations of an LGBT political issue and the constructions of their political attitudes. I suggest that activists who wish to promote an inclusive and effective persuasion strategy take these findings into account when determining the role that etiological belief will play in their political conversations with voters.

8. Conclusion

As demonstrated in this thesis, while some voters connect a belief in sexual choice to their opposition of an LGBT political cause, other voters who also believe that people choose to be gay and present themselves as concerned with not interfering in the lives of others claim a pro-LGBT political attitude. Likewise, belief that people are born LGB can be connected to either supporting or opposing an LGBT political cause. Both supportive and unsupportive voters who believe in biological causes of LGB sexuality may orient toward teaching children to be

more tolerant of LGB people even as they differ on how they believe an LGBT-related law will address this goal. In relation to each of these beliefs, the key difference between supportive and unsupportive voters is their judgment on the moral acceptability of LGB sexuality. That is, a belief in either sexual choice or sexual biology indirectly indexes political attitude depending on whether the voter believes LGB sexuality is or is not morally acceptable. For voters who believe that people may be influenced to be LGB and also display concern for promoting tolerance, the difference between supportive and unsupportive voters hinges on whether they believe that the LGBT political cause in question will promote tolerance (which they support) but may also advocate for embracing personal LGB sexuality (which they oppose).

In spite of the variety in the social field of voters' sexual ideologies, activists who engage voters in political discussions in an attempt to gain support for LGBT political causes nonetheless restrictively interpret voters' ideologies as they shape voter discourse to match their ideological representations of the semiotic connections between etiological belief and political attitude. Specifically, these activists will treat voter discourse as iconic of political attitude, erase the belief in sexual influence, and replicate an opposition between supportive and unsupportive political attitudes onto a born/choice dichotomy. While anti-LGBT groups may promote their own agenda through an ideological connection between a belief in sexual choice and being against LGBT political causes, a response by LGBT activists that denies sexual choice belief and endorses only a belief in the biological origin of LGB sexuality is based on problematic assumptions about scientific evidence and narrowly represents the interests of some LGBT people while leading to the delegitimation of other LGBT people's identities. The unquestioned promulgation of a born/choice dichotomy thus ignores potential avenues for changing voter attitudes toward LGBT political causes while it simultaneously excludes the experiences of

LGBT people who don't fit its mold.

The Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful Education Act went into effect on January 1, 2012, making California the first state to require education on LGBT people and their history. Although five initiatives have been filed to eliminate this requirement (Rios 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Sheldon, 2011; Song et al., 2011), no initiative has received enough signatures to appear as a referendum on the state election ballot in California. While the analysis in this paper may never need to be applied to designing a campaign to defend the FAIR Act, the findings presented in this thesis have implications both for the academic study of ideology and for politically engaged research on ideological phenomena. First, this thesis has demonstrated how linguistic anthropological theory on semiotic processes of ideological representation may be utilized in the examination of sexual ideology. Having shown how processes of iconization and erasure appear in representations of sexual ideology, I propose that the semiotic process I call dichotomic replication may also operate in the formation and circulation of language ideologies as well as other kinds of ideologies. The methodological approach of this thesis has likewise confirmed the necessity of studying interactional data in order to produce accurate findings on how social meaning is constructed (Bucholtz and Hall 2005; Goodwin 1990). Finally, I align with other work in anthropology in calling for scholars to use their research to actively promote social justice (Bucholtz and Hall, 2008; Low, 2011; Sanford and Angel-Anjani, 2006; Zentella, 1996; for a review of recent engaged research in linguistic anthropology, see Black, in press). The feedback I provide to Vote for Equality on voters' reasoning and on activists' interpretations of this reasoning will be used to reflect on their approach to voter persuasion and rethink how they should train canvassers to conduct interviews with voters. Based on the findings in this thesis, I call on LGBT people and their allies to likewise reassess their own sexual ideologies and the

ideologies they project onto others in order to more effectively and inclusively promote social tolerance of LGB sexuality.

Notes

¹ Although the political causes discussed in the interactions relate to transgender people as much as to lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, gender ideologies did not appear often enough in the data to allow for an adequate analysis of how they pattern along with (or separate from) sexual ideologies.

² For an examination of the use of "gay marriage" versus "marriage equality," see Deeb (2013).

³ Verbal consent to be videorecorded was requested by canvassers at the beginning of the interviews and written consent was collected at the end of the interviews. Interviews for which the voter did not sign a release form or during which the canvasser inaccurately represented the potential use of the videos for research were automatically excluded.

⁴ It should be noted that the presence of a videographer with a video camera in the interviews that were recorded complicates the participation framework of the interview with the addition of a third contemporaneous interactant as well as a potential future audience. However, based on my experiences as both a videographer and as a solo canvasser, I affirm that the behavior of voters in recorded and unrecorded interviews did not noticeably differ.

⁵ Other intermediary steps between etiological belief and political attitude were not consistently emphasized by voters but are nonetheless implied in these indexical chains (e.g., that you will support civil rights laws that represent identities you think are moral).

⁶ Lorraine and Timoteo also differ in how they frame sexuality as centered on identity (Lorraine) or behavior (Timoteo). Other voters also focused on one or another aspect of sexuality at different moments in the interactions. An analysis of how voters connect sexuality as identity, behavior, or desire to their political attitudes is beyond the scope of this paper. It can be noted, however, that canvassers' attempts to emphasize the importance of identity in relation to the public lives of LGBT historic figures was often met with objections by voters who framed sexuality as only concerning one's private sexual behavior or desires.

⁷ This practice is reminiscent of media coverage of scientific studies on sexuality (Wilcox 2003) and recalls Foucault's (1990) discussion of a *scientia sexualis*: "our society...has pursued the task of producing true discourses concerning sex, and this by adapting – not without difficulty – the ancient procedure of confession to the rules of scientific discourse" (67-68).

⁸ It can be noted that the qualitative contrast between these two tokens signal different displays of Erica's internal state as she prepares to ask another question. With the first token, which is spoken as Erica shifts her gaze from Francisco and back to the survey sheet, the pitch height on the initial /o/ vowel only rises slightly from an initial 201 Hertz to 208 Hertz before falling to a lower pitch on the second syllable (Figure 9). In contrast, the pitch height on the /o/ in the second token begins at 215 Hertz and then rises to 239 Hertz. Likewise, the obstruent /k/ is less than half as long in this second token (approximately 26 milliseconds) than in the previous token (approximately 55 milliseconds), which

allows for a more continuous transition from high pitch to low pitch (Figure 10). While both tokens act as continuers (Goodwin, 1986), the contrasting intonation on the *okay* spoken in line 10 (i.e., after Francisco has compared what he has chosen to what others can choose) marks it as a response cry (Goffman, 1978) that, along with Erica's raised eyebrows, foreshadow the pragmatic meaning of her upcoming speech.

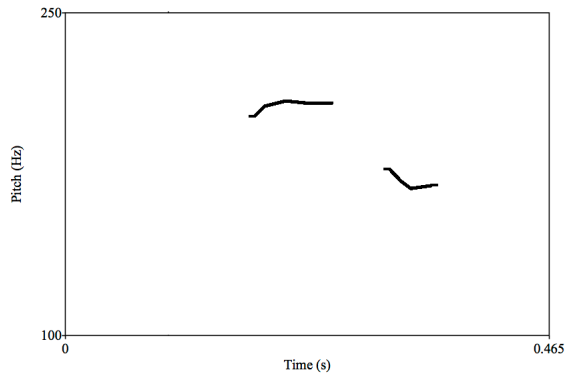


Figure 9: Pitch track of "okay," line 7

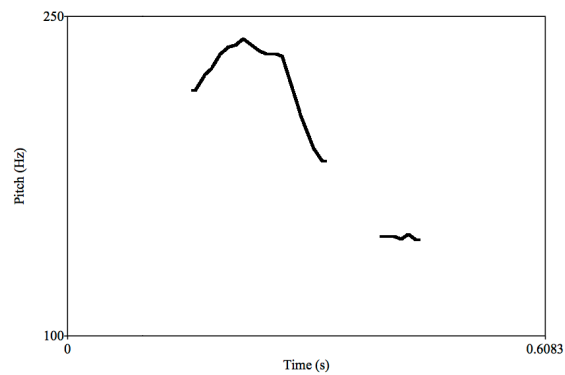


Figure 10: Pitch track of "okay," line 10

- ⁹ Some of the unconventional linguistic and paralinguistic features of Olivia's speech may be attributable to the fact that she is a non-native (but fluent) English speaker. Aspects of Phil's speech (e.g., prosody) may likewise have been designed with this kind of audience in mind.
- ¹⁰ I am interpreting the *that* in both "tendency to go towards that" and "that doesn't have to be made..." as indexing LGB sexuality. Both supportive and unsupportive voters often used deictic phrases such as "that" and "that way," as well as other ambiguous uses of pronouns like "it," when discussing homosexuality and bisexuality.
- ¹¹ Thorne (2012) provides an analysis of the referential ambiguity of the pronoun *it* as either representing LGB sexuality (i.e., "being gay is against my religion) or the FAIR Act itself (e.g., "teaching about gay people is against my religion").
- ¹² Interestingly, when Erica asks Fay "what made you change your mind," Fay points to her admiration of Ellen DeGeneres and fact that Ellen "loves God also, so that doesn't mean that they're atheist" as influential in changing her attitude toward LGBT people.
- ¹³ In its position following a pause during which Fay has given no visible or audible reaction to Erica's revelation, the adverb *actually* in line 2 may be functioning to reconstruct Erica's identity claim as an aside, similar to the way that Goodwin (1979) observes that "actually" can change the meaning of a sentence for different recipients over the course of its utterance.
- ¹⁴ Background noise during this utterance corrupted the audio to the point that the digital pitch track is analytically unusable.
- ¹⁶ Dismissing a behavior as "innate" also problematically erases the significant impact that social and environmental forces have on shaping human development.
- ¹⁶ For descriptions of current legal battles to outlaw such conversion therapies for minors, see Shapiro (2012, 2013).

Appendix: Transcription Conventions (based on Du Bois, in progress)

In-Text Excerpts

.	plateau low tone intonation phrase accent and boundary
?	high tone intonation phrase accent and boundary
,	intermediate phrase accent or rising low tone intonation phrase accent and boundary
-	cutoff word
(1.3)	timed pause, in seconds
..	micropause (shorter than 0.18 seconds)
[]	simultaneous speech
#	uncertain word/unhearable syllable
(H)	audible inhalation

Extended Excerpts (see Appendix below)

<u>underline</u>	pitch-accented syllable
LINE BREAK	intonation phrase accent and boundary
.	plateau low tone
,	rising low tone
?	high tone
NO LINE BREAK	
,	intermediate phrase accent (low or high tone)
> <	rapid rate of speech
-	cutoff word
:	elongated/hyperaspirated sound
(1.3)	timed pause, in seconds
..	micropause (shorter than 0.18 seconds)
[]	simultaneous speech
~	phonological contraction
#	uncertain word/unhearable syllable
◦ ◦	quiet speech
" "	reported/hypothetical speech or thought
(H)	audible inhalation
<i>{{italics}}</i>	description of non-verbal behavior or other transcription comments
{ }	timing of gesture (when necessary)

Appendix: Prosodic and Gestural Transcription of Extended Excerpts

Example 6.1

Interview 4, 09:44-10:37

- 1 Erica; an:d, *{{Erica is looking at survey sheet}}*
(0.3) *{{Francisco looks to camera}}*
u:m. *{{Francisco looks to survey sheet}}*
(1.1) *{{Erica looks toward doorframe}}*
ho:w, *{{Francisco looks to Erica, Erica gestures toward Francisco}}*
like,

(1.0)
 your expo:sur:e, *{{looks to Francisco, gestures toward left}}*
 >to, gay people,< *{{shakes head}}*
 like how di- *{{gestures toward Francisco}}*
 2 how, did that change your opinion at all, *{{shakes head, gestures toward left}}*
 on:
 3 (0.8) *{{Francisco looks downward}}*
 4 Francisco; uh,
 I don't really like to judge people,
 by:
 you know? *{{Erica nods}}*
 by what they do, or who they, *{{Francisco looks to camera, Erica nods}}*
 5 (0.3)
 you know, *{{Francisco looks to Erica, Erica nods continuously}}*
 what they choose to be.
 that's, that's,
 to me that's,
 6 pretty much {your} decision. *{{gestures forward}}*
 7 Erica; okay. *{{nods, looks to survey sheet}}*
 8 Francisco; I've chosen who {I} want~to be? *{{gestures toward self}}*
 you can {choose} who you want~to be. *{{gestures forward, looks to camera}}*
 9 (0.3) *{{Francisco looks to survey sheet}}*
 10 Erica; okay. *{{lifts head, still looking at survey sheet}}*
 11 (H) do you, u:m:. *{{Francisco looks to Erica}}*
 do you think, tha:t, *{{lifts hand and rotates wrist}}*
 (0.4) *{{looks to Francisco}}*
being, *{{rotates wrist}}*
 12 that there is a {choice} involved, in being gay? *{{gestures toward left}}*
 13 (0.6)
 14 Francisco; that there's a choic:e? *{{Erica nods}}*
 .. °no?°
 °I don't think so.° *{{shakes head}}*
 15 Erica; .. no? *{{shakes head}}*
 16 Francisco; I think it's, alrea:dy., *{{looks downward}}*
 .. been;
 decided for you if,
you know if you're, *{{looks to Erica, gestures toward right}}*
 (0.6) *{{gestures toward Erica, Erica nods}}*
 17 going~to be gay or not. *{{Erica nods}}*
 18 Erica; .. [yeah.] *{{flashes eyebrows}}*
 19 Francisco; [I don't] think, you should, *{{glances at camera, looks downward}}*
 (1.0)
 I don't think, you {make a choice.} *{{gestures forward, then toward right,*
looks to Erica}}
 .. you know? *{{Erica nods}}*
 20 .. °it's;°
 21 (0.2)
 22 Erica; (H) .. s:o., *{{lifts hand, looks toward doorframe}}*
 .. so you., *{{points toward Francisco, looks downward}}*
 (0.7)
 that you know, *{{looks to Francisco, waves hand in air, tilts head back}}*

23 >that there, there really is no choice to make.< *{{lowers head, gestures toward Francisco}}*
 >right?<
 >is that the point,<
 .. that [you'r:e,] makin:g? *{{gestures toward Francisco}}*
 24 Francisco; [yeah.] *{{glances downward, nods}}*
 25 (0.4) *{{Erica raises eyebrows}}*
 26 Erica; I mean yeah. *{{looks toward doorframe, places hand on chest}}*
 I agree:, *{{lowers eyebrows}}*
 I definitely, *{{looks to Francisco, lifts hand then places on chest again}}*
 (0.3)
 >I'm gay,< *{{raises eyebrows, shakes head}}*
 >and I, um,< *{{smiles}}*
 (1.1) *{{looks toward doorframe, lowers eyebrows}}*
 27 >I don't really feel like I had an-< *{{looks to Francisco}}*
 .. a choic:e,
 (0.7)
in it, *{{looks to doorframe}}*
 (0.2)
u:m., *{{looks to survey sheet}}*

Example 6.2.1

Interview 9, 10:58-11:43

{{Olivia is off-camera when excerpt begins}}
 1 Olivia; um.,
 s:o like.
 (0.4)
 do you feel that your son, has been influenced? *{{Phil lifts chin, raises eyebrows}}*
in:to.,
 in society? *{{camera shifts to Olivia; Phil off-camera}}*
 2 to actually.,
be gay?
 3 (0.7)
 4 Phil; when he was younger?
yes:. *{{Olivia looks to survey sheet}}*
 5 Olivia; mhm? *{{camera shifts to Phil; Olivia off-camera}}*
 (7.3)
 and how do you feel about,
 like this,
 (0.5)
um.,
 .. influence? *{{Phil lifts chin, raises eyebrows}}*
 6 >that you're talking about,<
 >so,<
 (H) .. um., *{{Phil lowers chin, furrows brow}}*
f:rom., your perspective, again,
 >so,< *{{Phil cocks head to side}}*
 (0.3)
is that,

7 influence?
 and, is,
 .. like,
 .. kind of like, a choice?
 for them to be gay?
 (0.4)
 to be:,
 like,
 8 .. coo:l:,
 becaus:e,
 they're [gay?]
 9 Phil; [th]ere's som:e, *{{lifts chin, raises eyebrows}}*
 people,
 °who do that?° *{{lowers eyebrows}}*
 there's always some that, *{{nods}}*
 (0.9) *{{lowers chin}}*
 10 have a tendency, to go towards that, *{{raises chin}}*
 always have, *{{shakes head}}*
 history has been, filled with them? *{{lowers chin}}*
 (0.7)
 11 mm:.
 12 Olivia;
 13 (0.4)
 14 Phil; but that doesn't have to be ma:d:e, *{{lifts chin}}*
 (0.7)
 somethin:g, *{{holds arms out to side}}*
 (0.4)
 that's: *{{gestures to side, drops arms}}*
 (0.6)
 desi:rabl:e. *{{frowns}}*

Example 6.2.2

Interview 2, 28:27-29:07

{{Dominic is off-camera}}
 1 Chris; so you feel like, *{{looks to left}}*
 it could, potentially influenc:e, *{{raises eyebrows, looks to Dominic}}*
 .. a child,
 t-
 (0.3)
 to be gay?
 2 Dominic; s[ure.]
 3 Chris; [or lesbi]an?
 who might not other[wise?]
 4 Dominic; [or,] to at least,
 .. uh, expe:rience it.
 (0.2) *{{Chris nods}}*
 or want to expe:rience it? *{{Chris bobs head continuously}}*
 (0.7)
 5 see what it's like.
 6 Chris; .. °okay.°

(0.7)
 yea:h, *{{looks down}}*
 >I mean,<
 (0.2)
 it's, um,
 (1.8) *{{raises eyebrows, holds mouth open, closes eyes}}*
 I- .. I don't, *{{looks to Dominic}}*
 (0.2)
 7 personally believe that that's, *{possible?}* *{{tilts head to right}}*
 (0.4)
 8 u:m,
 you know,
 (0.6)
 how people become, *{{raises eyebrows}}*
{gay} or *lesbian*, *{{shrugs}}*
 is still,
 (0.8) *{{frowns}}*
 9 not something science, has fully wrapped it's head around?
 (0.2)
 [you know?]
 10 Dominic; [mhm.]
 11 Chris; >like, there are no, definitive answers there,<
 and I can't pretend that there are?
 (0.6)
 12 but I know that,
 f:or me,
 i- it wasn't really,
 a choic:e? *{{scratches chin}}*
 (0.5)
 u:m,
 (0.7) *{{raises eyebrows}}*
 you know.
 13 it wasn-
 I knew, at a very young a:g:e, *{{shakes head}}*
 (0.4)
 you know,
 (0.4)
 basically,
 .. s:ixth grade, *{{throws head back, looks upward, then back to Dominic}}*
 14 (0.4)
 u:m,
 (0.2)
 that I was gay. *{{raises eyebrows, shrugs}}*

Example 6.3.1

Interview 1, 04:08-04:33

1 Amy; so: *{{Barbara is standing with hands on hips, looking to right}}*
 (0.3) *{{Barbara looks to Laura}}*
what would you say, *{{looks up from survey sheet to Barbara}}*

- is your main, *{{waves hand in air}}*
 >I know you said a {little} bit about it.< *{{looks to survey sheet}}*
- 2 you thought that, it should be taught, *{{looks to and gestures toward Barbara}}*
 y- you should teach? *{{gestures to right}}*
 (0.3)
 your children about it?
- 3 [# # #?]
- 4 Barbara; [well it's totally] against my religion.
 5 Amy; it's against your religion? *{{nods}}*
 okay, *{{looks to survey sheet, flips survey sheet over}}*
 (0.5)
 [got it.]
- 6 Barbara; [an:d.]
 (0.5) *{{Barbara shakes head, looks to right}}*
 I just don't believe in that. *{{continuously shifts weight from leg to leg}}*
 I'm, *{{Amy looks to Barbara}}*
people say people are born that way. *{{rattles and looks down at keys in hand}}*
- 7 I don't believe in that.
 8 (0.3) *{{Barbara looks to Amy}}*
- 9 Amy; you think,
 10 Barbara; G- God don't make mistakes. *{{shakes head}}*
 11 (0.2)
- 12 Amy; okay. *{{nods}}*
 13 (0.4)
- 14 Barbara; so:, *{{stops shifting weight}}*
 15 (0.2)
- 16 Amy; so you think it's a choic:e, *{{Amy gestures to left, Barbara crosses her arms, raises chin}}*
people are making,
 [as, as opposed] to:, *{{gestures back and forth from left to right}}*
- 17 Barbara; [it is a choice.] *{{nods}}*
 (0.3) *{{Amy nods}}*
no, it's not I think, *{{shakes head}}*
 I know for a fact, it's a choice. *{{nods}}*
so,
- 18 Amy; .. o:kay:. *{{nods}}*

Example 6.3.2

Interview 3, 04:33-05:27

- 1 Fay; so [they] have that right. *{{Erica nods}}*
 2 Erica; [an-]
 (0.3)
yeah. *{{nods}}*
 .. I mean I, *{{looks downwards}}*
 .. I agree.
 I'm:, *{{looks to Fay, puts hand on chest}}*
 (0.6)
 I'm: ga:y. *{{lifts hand then places on chest again}}*
 (0.2)

4 Fay; [uh huh.] *{{nods}}*
5 Erica; [actually,]
(0.5) *{{Erica looks to right}}*
a:n:d.
(0.6)
you kno:w.
.. I:
(0.3)
do: you:,
(1.4) *{{Erica licks her lips}}*
6 do you think that, people are born gay? *{{looks to Fay, gestures forward}}*
or do you think, it's a choice?
what~do you think.
(1.4) *{{Fay opens mouth, frowns}}*
7 to be gay. *{{Fay looks to and turns head to left}}*
8 (1.6) *{{Fay turns head and looks forward but not toward Erica}}*
9 Fay; yeah, I, *{{Erica lifts sunglasses}}*
I uh,
>I don't believe they're,<
.. born.
.. I used to think that, *{{raises eyebrows, looks to and points toward Erica}}*
10 but I don't think that any[more.]
11 Erica; [you] don't think they're born? *{{raises eyebrows, shakes head}}*
(0.6) *{{Fay rubs her eye, raises eyebrows}}*
12 you [think,]
13 Fay; [uh,]
14 Erica; you think,
(0.3)
tha:t, *{{furrows brow}}*
.. [th-]
15 Fay; [n-] *{{gestures toward Erica}}*
no, I used to think,
no, wait,
I used to think that they uh:, *{{looks upward, holds hand in air pointing up}}*
(0.5) *{{Fay looks to Erica}}*
16 that there's something #they, *{{gestures toward left}}*
(0.2)
the environment that, *{{Erica nods}}*
.. [#env-]
17 Erica; [o:]kay.
(0.3)
[and no:w,]
18 Fay; [>#environment that made,<]
19 Erica; what [[do you think.]]
20 Fay; [[but af]]ter a- *{{holds hand in air pointing up}}*
looking at uh:,
(0.3)
Cha- and these people, are really so serious. *{{points toward Erica, shakes head}}*
(0.5) *{{Erica nods}}*
21 >I look at them,<

- and they say they,
tried to, {{gestures toward left}}
(0.3)
to uh,
22 >go the other way, but,< {{Erica nods}}
>that's when they were,<
three or four years old.
.. they realized that,
and that,
(0.4) {{Erica nods}}
23 and I had to have, compassion.
(0.8) {{Erica nods}}
[u.h:]
24 Erica; [I] agree.

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