Title: Best for Society?: Transnational Opposition to Sexual and Gender Equalities in Canada and Great Britain

Abstract:

Whilst much has been written about the limitations of new legislative equalities, there is a silence in geographies of sexualities regarding the backlash to these changes and the reiteration of particular heteronormativity. In working across Great Britain and Canada, we argue that these resistances are trans-scalar, operating transnationally as well as evoking nation, classroom, home and body. Arguments at the local level are embedded in and draw on the broader 'natural family' arguments circulating at local/regional, national and transnational levels. Drawing on the literature on transnationalism that understands these processes as (re)forming values and practices, this paper explores the discourses that reiterate the naturalness and centrality of particular forms of heterosexuality as key for a healthy society and the protection of children. The latter works on three levels, firstly the child cannot be 'naturally' produced outside of heterosexual sexual relations. Secondly, the raising of these children appropriately and healthily redefines 'family' within heteronormative structures. Thirdly, comments that might be termed 'homophobic' are reframed as merely free speech as a way to counter LGBT recognition. We finish the paper by arguing for explorations of heterosexuality within transnational networks to resistances to LGBT equalities.

Key words: Heterosexuality, heteronormativity, homonormativity, queer, Christian Right, Transnationalism

Introduction:

Gay and lesbian international rights activism has achieved a global reach through international networks of activists, scholars, non-profit corporations and institutions (e.g. Stychin and Herman 2000; Buss and Herman 2003; Graupner and Tahmindjis 2005; Corrêa et al. 2008). Many of these increasingly professionalized organizations are linked into more wide ranging human rights networks including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. At the same time, scholarship has been critical of the globalization of western-centric understandings of sexuality and gender, arguing these various conceptualisations do not translate easily (if at all) into more local and specific embodiments, understandings and practices (Adam et al.

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1992; Plummer 1992; Altman 1996, 1997a and b, 2001; Brown et al. 2010; Grewal and Kaplan 2001; Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan 2002). Considerably less attention has been paid to the increasingly transnational character of oppositional and resistive discourses to LGBT human rights (e.g. Neale 1998; Friedman 1999; Bayes and Tohidi 2001; Chappell 2006). While work by Buss and Herman (2003) has examined the influence of the U.S. – based Christian Right, scholarship has not considered possible linkages amongst and between other conservative or secular organisations working in opposition to LGBT human rights claims across global, transnational or local networks (but see Smith 2008).

This paper seeks to contribute to scholarship in geographies of sexualities by exploring opposition to LGBT human rights gains in locations where those rights have supposedly been 'won', such as in Canada and the Great Britain (GB) (Weeks 2007). In scholarly and popular imagination, Canada and GB are often cast as 'inclusive' of sexual and gendered difference – frequently and problematically in contrast to orientalist views of 'other' places almost exclusively in the Global South. But resistances to LGBT inclusion are growing in both contexts and in urgent need of interrogation. Canada and GB are important sites for consideration as both have a similar trajectory in terms of legislative and social change and have enacted various forms of equities legislation including human rights protections for gays and lesbians, partner recognition and open participation in the institutions of citizenship including military service. Same sex marriage has been in place in Canada since 2005 while GB[i] instituted same sex marriage in 2013. Canada and GB are also celebrated by many as 'liberal', 'open' and 'tolerant' in relation to LGBT lives.

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We draw particularly on notions of transnationalism to argue for an analysis of the overlapping and networked flows of discourses, norms, values and ideas that shape the forms that oppositions to LGBT equalities take. We assert that these cannot be fully understood by restricting research to within national borders. In order to pull apart these multi-directional networks of flows of information, ideologies and knowledges in Canada and GB, we undertook a case study of the opposition arrayed against proposed anti-bullying policies and legislation in Ontario, Canada beginning in 2009 and the resistance to the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill in the United Kingdom in 2012/13. Through an examination of these debates, we illustrate the networked connections and spatial specificities of these resistive discourses. We use a thematic focus on four key intertwined spaces — the nation, the classroom, the home and the body — to illustrate the ways in which these transnational discourses are materializing in Canadian and GB contexts.

This paper begins by outlining current trends in geographies of sexualities scholarship, which has focused almost exclusively on forms of inclusion and exclusion grounded in questions about homonormativities and homonationalisms. We then discuss how a transnationalist approach will assist in understanding how resistances and oppositions are working beyond national boundaries. Following an outline of the context and methods used, the empirical section presents our analysis through a case study of anti-bullying legislation in Ontario Canada and the debates on marriage equality in GB. We conclude with a discussion of three possible future research directions, firstly an examination of geographies of heteronormativities in light of the important work on homonormativities and secondly, the importance of

transnational flows and networks to examining not only LGBT equalities but also those that resist LGBT equalities.

Geographies of sexualities: Reconsidering heteronormativities.

With the advent of inclusive legislation regarding sexuality (and to an extent gender difference), recent scholarship in geographies of sexualities in the Global North has focused on the limits of these 'advances' for gender and sexual citizenship. (Browne and Lim 2010; Doan 2008, 2010; Nash 2010, 2013; Puar 2007; Richardson 2004, 2005). Particular normativities now include certain gay men and lesbians and scholarship has turned to examine these so-called homonormativity. Homonormativity refers to the ways in which certain identities and subjectivities that were once deviant have been brought into acceptable forms of neo-liberal normalization and, as a conceptual framework, has served as a key critique of the politics of seeking same sex marriage (see for example, Duggan 2002; Richardson 2004; Warner 2002). As Lisa Duggan (2002, 23) argues, a sexual politics of neoliberalism 'privileges those gays and lesbians operating within gender normative, middle class, monogamous and consuming coupledom' and has resulted in the 'homonormalization' of certain forms of gay and lesbian identities. Some argue that same sex marriage has become a key focal point for powerful gay rights organisations, rendering other sites of LGBT social struggle invisible (see for example Warner 1993; Halberstam 2005). In some contexts, the homonormativities privileged through marriage equality has also excluded other *heterosexual* forms of familial relationships, intimacies and desires in its celebration of the (monogamous) couple over all other forms of intimate bonds (Wilkinson 2013). Critiques of the

supposedly wholesale adoption of homonormative ways of being recognizes the varied complicities of gays and lesbians in neoliberal consumerist cultures that are exclusionary of some and welcoming of others (Brown 2008; Oswin 2005, 2008). Participation in neoliberal consumerism and institutions such as same sex marriage does not mean full inclusion or acceptance for all nor does it mean that those participating do so without exercising forms of partial resistance. What is important to note is the complicated and unstable ways in which LGBT people engage in mainstream institutions (Brown 2008; Oswin 2005).

While scholarship critiquing homonormativity remains important in the contemporary moment, we would argue that it is increasingly important to examine how various types of *heteronormativity* are now being asserted in resistance to LGBT rights gains (Bell and Binnie 2000; Chasin 2000; Nast 2002; Rushbrook 2002; Binnie 2006) We argue that the backlash to LGBT equalities needs to be conceptualised within interconnected understandings of space, sexualities and identities such that how resistances to LGBT equalities emerge is related to where these resistances are taking place. Understanding place as a node of interconnections between local, national and transnational, we examine how alliances and organisations operate through multi-scalar networks to resist LGBT equalities. We turn now to offer some insights into the transnational lens that we are deploying to this end.

Transnational resistances: Beyond the nation state.

While some might argue that there is a 'globalising resistance' to LGBT equalities grounded in the activities of the USA Christian right, we are arguing that

resistances in Canada and GB cannot be fully (or even partially) understood from that perspective. A sole focus on the activities of the USA Christian right renders invisible the distinctive and unique resistances specific to a Canadian and GB contexts. For this reason, we find the notion of 'transnationalism' a useful one for developing a more complex and nuanced perspective.

Valentine et al. (2012a) argues that accelerated flows of people, goods and knowledges, are intensifying linkages and relationships between disparate places, making the notion of 'transnationalism' an increasingly important concept within geography (51). To date, much of the transnational scholarship (both within and beyond geography) focuses largely on transnational flows of migrants, labour, diaspora communities, commodities and cultural products (Crang et al. 2003; Mitchell 2003). Various strands of queer scholarship have taken up a transnational perspective as well, examining queer immigration (Manalansan 2003; Luibhéid and Cantú 2005) and the global circulation of LGBT political activism and their import in Central and Eastern Europe (Kulpa and Mizielinska 2011).

However, we are particularly interested in a definition of transnationalism that considers how 'dynamic networks that exchange ideas, values, cultural practices and information cross national borders' (Valentine et al. 2012a, 51). The study of these transnational flows allows for a consideration of how a multi-layered and intertwined series of material and imagined spaces are maintained and reworked through the everyday activities and practices (Olsen and Silvery 2006. See also Massey 1994).

While we might imagine LGBT inclusion in the material and social institutions of the nation state as solely determined by the legislative and policy

initiatives within state borders, a transnational perspective asks us to consider the importance of multiple and varying supportive and oppositional discourses. These circulate across and through transnational circuits recreating places, identities and bodies. Developing transnational accounts allows us to trace a new form of 'social space' best described as 'transnational circuits' that constitute new forms of spatial relations that are never fixed (Rouse 1991, in Crang et al. 2003, 441). As Valentine et al. (2012b: 2) argue, this approach breaks away from a more traditional, binary focus of national and/or domestic 'by highlighting the significance of the transnational realm as a site of contestation of moral values' (2). A transnational frame does not mean the production of homogeneity or uniformity, rather these flows are diversely constituted and remade as they 'touch down' and 'take off' from various sites (and in these processes the places themselves are reformed).

While research has begun to trace the global flows of people, money, resources and ideologies acting against LGBT rights (Buss and Herman 2003; Chappell 2006), in this paper we are interested in resistances formulated within the particular historical and cultural specificities of place. We seek to demonstrate how discourses that resist LGBT rights are embedded in dynamic, and unstable networks, marking the exchange and transmutation of contested knowledges, norms and values that defy a straightforward and unified depiction of resistances such as those that focus solely on the activities of the USA Christian Right. For example, in the Canadian context, attempts to develop alliances amongst and between Protestant Evangelical groups or amongst Christian and non-Christian groups, key in the USA, has been largely unsuccessful (Langstaff 2011; Reimer 2003).

In this paper we are interested in contexts where LGBT rights have been 'gained' and how place and space play a crucial role in the ideologies and values that are publically presented. Massey (1993, 62-63) argues social groups, ideas and knowledges are 'positioned in distinctive ways in relation to these flows and interconnections' and we are interested in thinking about how the distinctive knowledges 'are being circulated, mobilized and/or transformed within' multiple contexts (Valentine et al. 2012a, 51). After outlining our context and methods, we focus on the themes of religious freedom, parental rights, the nation, domestic space and the family underpinning Canadian and GB debates over the last 2 years. Here, we map the array of discursive proscriptions raised in opposition against LGBT rights.

Contexts

In developing this analysis, we undertook a website review of currently active self-styled pro-family sites actively engaged in working for 'traditional' marriage and/or having an expressly anti-LGBT equalities message. Early on it became clear that there were overlapping discourses used by organisations in Canada and GB and we use these findings to discuss the recuperation of forms of heterosexual privilege that have a transnational reach in contexts where LGBT human rights are supposedly won.[ii]

In Canada, some 41 organizations are actively engaged in resisting LGBT initiatives, and constitute a complex and multi-layered network of conservative and/or largely Christian organizations, some with close ties to the current conservative government (Macdonald 2010). Their internal organizational structures take many

forms, from charitable organizations to legal defence funds, religious youth organizations and research-based think tanks and policy institutes. These organisations are loosely linked through commitments to a variety of causes under the so-called culture of life banner that draws into its orbit groups that are some combination of anti-abortion, anti-euthanasia, anti-gay marriage, pro-traditional family, and strong proponents of religious freedom, free speech and parental rights with respect to education.

A similar review indicates there are some 49 organisations in GB indicating resistance to LGBT equalities is entrenched, and indeed developing and galvanising. This takes at least three forms. Firstly, religious organisations in this vein can utilize what they perceive to be 'traditional' Biblical opposition to homosexuality and same sex marriage. Secondly, other groups, often with a religious foundation, attempt to frame what they regard as a more compassionate, and arguably subtler, rationalisation in an appeal to a larger secular following. Finally groups, such as the British National Party, are secular but are not 'compassionate' in their opposition to LGBT equalities and same sex marriage. These groups often share leaders or other links with more extreme religious groups. [iii] Within these debates, key themes regarding the focus of the opposition for GB groups were identified including the plight of children (parenting, education and family structure), tensions between religious and LGBT equalities and the need to change or address 'same-sex attraction'. The most prominent contemporary opposition is mobilisations around consultation on the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill.

From this analysis we choose to examine two particular issues that had particular prominence in Canada and GB respectively. In Canada, the province of Ontario introduced the *Accepting Schools Act* (so called anti-bullying legislation) bringing LGBT equalities directly into the province's classrooms (Schneider et al. 2013, Taylor 2008). [iv] While the *Act* and its related policies were developed at the provincial level, local school boards are required to develop implementation strategies for the schools in their jurisdiction. In response, several parents groups were formed at the local school board level to oppose the implementation of the *Safer Schools Act.* In GB, the debates over the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill, serve to highlight a range of oppositional discourses. Although different legislative processes operated in England and Wales, and in Scotland, similar arguments were put forward in resisting LGBT equalities. [v]

Despite the locational specificity of the *Accepting Schools Act* and *Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill* debates, analysis reveals multi-scalar circulations of particular discursive engagements with the question of same sex marriage as it related to a range of issues. The 'protection of children' arguments shelter under the broader 'natural family' discourses visible in transnational circulation (Herman 1994; Buss and Herman 2003; Chappell 2006). For the purposes of this paper, we will focus the next two sections on claims about the constitution of society and the importance children. We explore these oppositional discourses as they are intertwined cross the nation, the classroom, home and bodies. These highlight multiple, intertwined constellations of heteronormative arguments that travel transnationally and are (re)created locally.

The 'natural' family in the 'best interests of society'

In the Canadian and GB national contexts, legislative and social initiatives have worked to increasingly incorporate LGBT people into the institutions of the state, constituting a key national narrative about Canadian and GB citizenship both internally and internationally. In these contexts, groups opposing LGBT inclusions find themselves needing to address this national narrative as it plays out across a variety of locations including deflection of accusations of homophobia. Oppositional discourses have shifted over the last decade from claims that homosexuals are immoral, deviant, pedophiles and sinners (see for example Bell and Binnie 2000; Richardson 1998) to arguments reframing these debates around the best interests of children and thus, Canadian and British society as a whole.

In the broadest sense, those opposed to LGBT equalities in GB and Canada position their opposition within larger debates about the importance of the role of the 'natural family' and of the institution of marriage between two people of the opposite sex for the purposes of procreation as both the foundational unit for a stable and prosperous society and the proper place for raising children. REAL Women of Canada (REAL Women), a conservative women's group, largely Christian-based and in existence since the early 1980s, virulently oppose LGBT rights and marriage equality, arguing:

> We believe that the family, based on the one man and one woman model of marriage is central to a healthy, stable society (REAL Women 2013, Canada).

In GB, for example, the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) has also been in existence for over 30 years and has recently been revitalized through its opposition to lesbian and gay equalities (having been involved in the promotion of section 28 in the 1980s and 1990s).

> Marriage- the permanent, exclusive union of one man and one woman – is the basis of the family, the fundamental group unit of society. Upholding marriage is therefore in everyone's interest (Society for the Protection of Unborn Children 2012, GB).

Similar to REAL Women, the SPUC focuses its arguments on asserting a definition of 'family' as only created through the marriage of one man and one woman. Further, this sort of 'family' is valuable to the so-called national interest in creating 'social stability' and economic prosperity. This is apparently to be achieved through longitudinal heterosexual commitments are in the interests of 'everyone'. This particular formulation of 'family' is asserted as morally superior and ahistorical, and as superseding any contemporary ideals or possibilities.

In support of this position, organisations and think tanks produce studies demonstrating how the so-called decline of heterosexual marriage is the explanation for many of the ills perceived to be operating (or about to come about) in Canadian and British society. In Canada, this includes claims that child poverty, boys' declining academic performance, the coming 'demographic winter' and a declining labour force are to due a decline in long-term, heterosexual marriages. In GB, the Christian Medical Fellowship argues:

Protecting traditional marriage is good for children and society. Stable marriages and families headed by a mother and a father are the bedrock of society and the state has a duty to protect the uniqueness of these key institutions. There is considerable evidence to show that marriage leads to better family relationships, less economic dependence, better physical health and longevity, improved mental health and emotional well-being, and reduced crime and domestic violence. Same-sex marriage, in comparison with marriage, is an unproven and experimental social model.

(Christian Medical Fellowship 2013, GB)

The claim that the 'people of Britain' have 'enjoyed' the 'vital role' of marriage is supplemented by a growing store of 'studies' and reports produced by pro-family think tanks and policy institutes claiming nonpartisanship but with clear ties to conservative, pro-family and/or religious (largely Christian) organisations. While not directly attacking same sex marriage, these groups are building a case for the privileging of heterosexual marriage over all other forms of state sanctioned relationships. In this way, research and studies are utilized to support a claim for 'special privileges' to be given to those who are married in ways that are celebrated by the nation and recognized by the state:

…there are some commitments which are so crucial to the common good that everyone is obliged to recognise and celebrate them. Heterosexual marriage is the most important of these. Without it, none of us would even exist to begin with, and there would truly be no such

thing as society, because there would be no human beings on the planet, no families to form the basis of wider society. Such a commitment, therefore, has special privileges (such as the right to share a double room in a hotel[vi]) (Thomas Moore Institute 2013, GB)

In arguing against marriage equalities in GB, same sex relationships are positioned as 'different.' Opponents argue that marriage equality is not possible because heterosexual marriage has distinctive purposes and responsibilities grounded in historical 'fact.' Given this, same sex relationships do not deserve the 'privileges afforded within marriage' because of the ability for properly married opposite sex spouses to procreate and the centrality of heterosexual marriage to the good of society as a whole. If heterosexuals and homosexuals can marry, then participation in marriage as an institution renders same sex marriage (and homosexuality more generally) normative. In this way, it is impossible to suggest that heterosexual married relationships are 'better than' other relationship forms. Further, this special role justifies discrimination against others including non-married heterosexual couples, an argument that is seen as protection from accusations of direct homophobia given it affects non-married heterosexuals as well.

In Canada, some 7 years after the passing of legislation legalizing same-sex marriage in 2005, opponents find themselves making arguments about the centrality of hetero-marriage to Canadian society. Conservative and religious groups claim that speaking out in support of heterosexual marriage, either as sound social policy or grounded in the tenets of religious faith, can label the speaker a 'bigot' or 'homophobic.' Reframing homophobic comments as 'free speech' or a matter of

religious freedom is a central plank on oppositional organisations' approaches. During the public debates over the *Accepting Schools Act*, opponents raised this as a central problem with implementation of the anti-bullying legislation. As the Campaign for Life Coalition argues:

> … the definition of homophobia put forward by Premier McGuinty can label all Christians and people of faith as suffering from a phony, psychological illness called "homophobia" which, manifests itself in the form of "hostility" and "negative bias" towards those who experience same-sex attraction. Nothing could be farther from the truth. This propaganda term is discriminatory towards people with traditional Judeo-Christian beliefs. Bill 13 will put this anti-Christian slur on the lips of every schoolteacher in Ontario. Those who object will themselves be labeled "homophobic" (Campaign for Life Coalition 2012, Canada).

Here 'all Christians and people of faith' are homogenized as all opposing 'same sex attraction'. This claiming of universal exclusions enables the assumption that the 'majority' of the nation's population holds 'traditional Judeo-Christian' beliefs. Being labeled 'homophobic' then becomes an 'anti-Christian slur', and one that could not be 'farther from the truth', as in this narrative Christians are not hostile nor do they have a 'negative bias'.

Similar discourses can be seen in GB, where some took offense to the labeling of those espousing arguments in favour of 'real' marriage as homophobic. As the Coalition for Marriage argues:

Calling opponents "bigots" is meant to shut down debate and stop people thinking for themselves. … there's no doubt that many who support this radical agenda think anyone who disagrees is not worthy of respect. However, support for traditional marriage has come from many respected academics, lawyers, politicians of all parties, and religious leaders. They all know that redefining marriage would have a profound impact (Coalition for Marriage 2013, GB).

Calling it an offense to be labeled 'discriminatory', 'homophobic' or 'bigots' operates to rename the possibilities of being offended. These counter-attacks rework the concept of discrimination (as well as 'family') such that same sex relationships can be reframed as inferior, 'unreal' and 'non-traditional', but this position is not bigoted.[vii] The defense to charges of homophobia deployed by the Coalition for Marriage also addresses the framing of 'bigots' as ignorant and unrespectable. In challenging the lack of respect afforded to 'bigots', there is a link to socio-economic class whereby 'academics, lawyers, politicians of all parties, and religious leaders' are evoked as offering the appropriate respectability. Homophobia then is unworthy of respect in GB (and Canadian) contexts, but contesting the accusations of homophobia is made on the grounds that one is arguing for the good of society, which cannot therefore be understood as bigoted.

The contexts of GB and Canada in the 21st Century are crucial in shifting the terms of the debates away from the morality of homosexuality and towards more broadly based arguments about the heterosexual married family as the foundation of society. This marks attempts to rework the power relations at play through framing claims against LGBT equalities including same sex marriage as a matter of freedom of speech and religious freedom. By contending that accusations of homophobia and bigotry close down debates, organisations are able to recreate themselves within discourses of 'respectability.' The transnational flows of values and ideals are clear here, even where the emphasis is on appropriate launch pads for defending not only the nation but also the figure of the child that should be proactively protected by the state, including in the spaces of the classroom, a site that has long been contested representing as it does the control of children and thus 'future generations'.

Classroom and nation

Geographical scholarship notes the centrality of state institutions in the formation of the (sexual) 'citizen', a process that is 'shifting, contested and profoundly spatial' (Mitchell 2003b, 388; see also Brown 2000; Bell and Binnie 2000; Richardson 2004). The education system and the spaces of the classroom are an important school-society nexus, clearly implicated 'in the creation of a particular kind of subject – one schooled in the norms and proper codes of behaviour related to national citizenship' (Mitchell 2003b, 390; See also Stychin 2003). Given this, classrooms are contentious locations where disputes over the nature of citizenship and national values are contested through the figure of the child. In Ontario, the *Accepting Schools Act*, with its protections for LGBT students and its positive recognition of same sex families,

has drawn fire from parents' groups claiming the state is engaged in the 'indoctrination' for children, in ways that may be against their parents' 'values.'

> To manipulate a child's mind and coerce them into believing that it is permissible and acceptable to do something which is against their parent's beliefs is reprehensible. [The school board's equity policy represents] sexual abuse in the first degree. (Klaas Detmar, public school trustee candidate, Hamilton-Wentworth School Board in *Life Site News* 2012, Canada)

In these understandings, children are purportedly being manipulated in what is framed as the supposedly safe and 'neutral' places of the classroom. Where the Canadian state once promoted 'traditional marriage', it now acts to 'undermine' it through the passage of same sex marriage, placing such unions on the same footing as heterosexual marriage. As the Coalition for Parental Rights in Education argues, parental views at odds with this result need to be protected from being undermined through the public school system. Parents need to fight back, in the courts, against what the Coalition calls a 'belligerent government ideology' bent on 'indoctrinating children in the classroom with philosophies that undermine the religious beliefs of their parents'. Linking the 'fight back' to the (in this case, Canadian) national government's so-called 'sexual ideology', challenges both the presumed asexual state and classroom. As has long been contended, the nation by default, is heterosexual (see Warner 1993; Duggan 1994; Richardson 1998; Bell and Binnie 2000). Such a positioning has been supported though state policies including the denigration of other relationship forms and the banning of lesbians and gay men from aspects of

nationhood such as the military. With the advent of equalities legislation granting rights to same-sex couples, challenges to the privileging of heterosexual marriage are regarded as creating a 'sexual ideology'. Parents' groups are claiming the contested notion of supposed state 'neutrality' around children's sexuality.

As Edelman (2004) argues, the figure of the child is and remains a key trope in resistances to LGBT equalities and is distinctly deployed in particular historical and geographical circumstances. The figure (and future) of the 'child' and what that means for the family and the nation has resurfaced as a pivotal rallying point for the opposition to LGBT equalities. The need to centre the child in the married, heterosexual family and as needing protection becomes visible in two main ways. First, resistant groups find it troubling that all family forms, including homosexual and single parent, are presented as equally valued and deserving of respect. Second, the families of school children are having their 'right' to teach their own values to their children (including anti-gay values) undermined by such positive teaching[viii]. This is clearly problematic within public education systems that operate there are protections for LGBT people including anti-discrimination initiatives and the legalization of same-sex marriage

The border between the classroom and the domestic and private spaces of the home is portrayed as perilously permeable where what happens in the classroom might lead to the promotion of the homosexual agenda into homes (and places of worship):

It ['homosexualist movement] is an aggressive, radical propagandist machine ... that is forcing its agenda into the sanctity of everyone's home, into the youngest of children's classrooms and now even into your Church, Synagogue and Mosque (*LifeSite News* editorial 2010, Canada).

The spectre of the so-called radical 'homosexual agenda' is still regarded as a reasonable framing of LGBT equalities claims for some more virulent anti-gay groups that regard the presence of LGBT bullying protections and positive representations of LGBT people in the curriculum as the promotion and celebration of the gay lifestyle. This notion of 'promotion' is suggestive of the longstanding argument that LGBT people seek to 'convert' youth into the homosexual 'lifestyle'. The negative connotation attached to the notion of 'celebration' is to suggest that the debate is no longer about tolerance or even acceptance but about the positive representation of LGBT lives, something these groups regard as totally unacceptable. In GB, the Anglican Mainstream argues that 'homosexual activity is intrinsically unhealthy' and would have to be taught if same sex marriage were to be introduced, for 'fear of causing offence' (Anglican Mainstream 2102, GB). The intimacy/closeness of the threat risks the 'sanctity of everyone's home' as well as the intimate space of worship. This desire for control and protection of the more domestic and intimate is in the face of the 'aggressive… machine', in contradistinction to the innocent naturalness of children in the home and threatening the sanctity of the natural family and the rights of parents to instill in their children their own beliefs and values.

Key to these discourses is the construction of children as innocent absorbers of knowledge. They require unified information and moral guidance, particularly in relation to religion and sex, lest they become 'confused' or come to reject parental values. These same arguments surface in GB debates about the potential impact of same sex marriage on the schools system:

> What will happen if the parents of any child have religious, cultural or moral objections to gay adoption? Will they be prosecuted, re-educated or just banned from the school alongside their child? Is a child capable of understanding the implications of such an arrangement as gay adoption? (British National Party 2012, GB)

What is at stake in both countries is the ability of parents to protect their children in a public school system which will teach that hetero and homo marriages and families are 'normal', a position opposition groups argue will subvert parental rights, particularly with respect to freedom of religion and expressing the central tenets of one's faith and may cause children to perceive their parents as 'bigots' or 'homophobes'. In the private domestic spaces of the home, the last place left, in contexts where public acceptance of LGBT equalities is seemingly ubiquitous, to live in keeping with one's values.

> Is it possible that after being bombarded with pro-gay messages in school, your son or daughter will some day come home and call you a 'bigotted (sic) homophobe'? Let's take the question further - is that the policy's goal? (Coalition for Life Canada 2012, Canada)

In other contexts, most recently Russia, homosexuals were/are linked with children through discourses of pedophilia and perversion with the risk of contact. These fears are in part realized in places where LGBT lives are treated as normative through state and institutional approvals (See also Stockton 2010). Space plays an important role in these fears, in the transgression of state sexual ideologies into the home. Not only might your child be 'indoctrinated', but this indoctrination is designed to cause a rift with parents. As we will see: firstly home spaces are best produced through the trope of the child as 'naturally' created in procreative marriage, and secondly children should be nurtured through appropriate dichotomously gendered parents.

The best interests of the child?: Nurturing children, creating ideal families

The figure of the child operates as a key trope to the 'natural family' in ways that centralize the child as the desired product of marriage and procreation. In this way, the 'private' domestic life of home and family is pulled into the public (state) sphere for scrutiny and support. The key distinction in 'traditional marriage' that warrants special consideration for groups opposing LGBT equalities is the natural possibility of procreation, that is, the ability to beget children naturally. The difference between the heterosexual and homosexual other, once again comes down to sex, although not in these contexts around the immoral sexual acts but rather the essentialised 'natural' and 'fruitful' sexual acts of heterosexual coupling, that which '3rd parties' have a vested interest in supporting (Thomas Moore Institute 2012, GB).

In GB, procreative heterosexual sex is positioned as a key argument for retaining marriage only for heterosexual couples. Marriage then is 'primarily about the generation of children and is not just about the couple themselves' (Evangelical Alliance 2013, GB):

Traditional marriage recognises the fact that a man and a woman in a sexual relationship are highly likely to produce children. This is why society has traditionally privileged the family in legal recognition. Only a man and a woman are 'apt' for procreation and it should not be the interest of the state to be concerned with questions of willingness or age when the presence or absence of children is concerned. There is a very strong public interest in encouraging the best possible arrangements for raising children. It is an inescapable fact that a redefinition of marriage that is at heart unnatural and counter intuitive will inevitably weaken the place of the family in society.

It is logical and reasonable to have separate legal arrangements for same-sex couples because they can never produce a baby – a fundamental fact not altered by the possibility of adoption or artificial insemination for which special legal rules apply. Consequently, unavoidable dissimilarity based on fundamental biological/natural reality justifies differentiation in social and legal institutions. (Evangelical Alliance 2013, GB)

The 'unnaturalness' in this quote that side steps arguments about the supposed unnaturalness of same sex relationships and the naturalness of opposite sex procreation is counterposed against the legal rules that structure same sex 'procreation.' Here formulations about biology and nature—as understood by the groups under scrutiny here—are relied on as the basis for the 'social and legal institutions' of the national project. As such, society and the reproduction of family is firmly embedded in heterosexuality and is justified as being in the 'best interests' not only of the nation as we have seen above, but also of 'the child'. These groups assert that 'society' is negatively affected through the creation and raising of children in ways that privilege adult (non-heterosexual) desires over those of the 'rights' of children:

> In short, in fertility and child bearing, intentional parenting advocates will claim that we must make available the option of children to absolutely everyone, regardless of gender or marital status. The question is, is this in the best interests of the child? Marquardt makes clear it is not. She shows that intentional parenthood is really about the desire of an adult to have a child. She asks whether children are a commodity bought and sold to appease adults? Or are they instead individual human beings worthy of dignity and protection? This is a question the fertility industry ignores as it charges on to see how it can satisfy the desires of adults for children assuming all along that a planned birth automatically means a healthy childhood (Miedema, 2011, Canada).

Assumptions regarding the protection of the figure of the child relates not only to their conception, but also to the place of nurture. Given this, particular formulations of what are called 'children's rights' are said to supersede adult rights in order to be a 'civilised society':

> We have a duty of care for our children. Their rights must come before the claimed rights of adults. A civilised society makes a priority of caring for the weak and vulnerable, therefore, we assert that the rights of children should take precedence over the rights of adults. Children need a mother and a father. This is vital to their wellbeing and development … (Marantha 2012, GB)

Whilst adult heterosexual desires are clearly to be encouraged in marriage, other forms of sexual desire are selfish and fail to make children a 'priority'. The dyad of mother/father pertains directly to the 'traditional definition of marriage' and the maintenance of 'civilised society'. Again note the emphasis is not on deviancy but on the 'good of society' indicating not only national resistances to LGBT equalities, but also their similarities across Canada and GB. The focus on biological procreation does more than simply elevate opposite sex marriage by placing it within the realm of the 'natural', it also enables a protective stance to be adopted. We now turn to examine how the discourse of the 'natural' supports arguments around the proper 'nurture' of children and the dangers of same sex 'experiments'.

Sexing/Sexualising Children: The need for 'complementary couples'

Although much of the argument presented around the figure of the child focuses on parental rights, societal well-being and the future of Canadian and GB society, children's gendered (and implicitly sexual) wellbeing moves discussions to the importance of the 'natural family' for a child's 'proper' development, linked to a child's malleable sex and gendered nature. Perhaps the most powerful fear is for those children who need to be 'saved' from same sex parents, not because of fear of pedophilia (Rosky, 2012), but because of the need to ensure 'appropriate' gender and sexual development. This trains discourses on the embodied nature of the child and the risks that 'genderless' and unnatural relationships pose to proper childhood development.

In both Canada and GB, organisations argue that the 'complementary sexual difference' underpinning traditional heterosexual marriage not only supports the essentialist biology of procreation, but also ensures 'healthy upbringing' which includes learning 'proper' (essentialist and biologically based) gender and sex roles:

Society has a vital stake in child rearing, and children thrive best in an opposite-sex environment where they learn their gender identity and sex-role expectations (REAL Women 2013, Canada).

No matter how good they may be as individual parents nor how worthy they may be as people, no woman can be a father and no man can be a mother. As family law recognises, the interests of children should be paramount. Those interests require the traditional definition of marriage to be kept as it is (Marantha 2012, GB).

Heterosexual marriage centered on procreation is a 'protector', and the private, properly constituted space of the private domestic space of the heterosexual married couple is the incubator for not only individual children, but collectively the health and good of society as a whole. The 'fact' of procreation and the 'proven' benefits of heterosexual marriage, as established through a body of 'global' 'research', is contrasted with the 'experiment' of same-sex marriage. These discourses stop short of suggesting that same sex parenting is 'wrong' or immoral, focusing instead on the ideals of heterosexual coupling in marriage.

The concept of 'sexual complementarity' functions to also ensure children learn their proper sex and gender roles. Same sex marriage is framed as a 'genderless marriage', unable to ensure children learn 'proper' sex roles and gender identity. 'Society', therefore has a 'vital stake' in perpetuating certain heterosexual gendered, sex and biological norms. It is presumed that sexual difference is linked closely to gender appropriate roles, where nurture follows 'nature':

Children need male and female role models for their nurture. It is in

the order of nature that the ideal has been defined.

(Christian Institute 2012, GB)

Opposite-sex marriage is the ideal environment for the rearing of

children, since it provides children with both a mother and a father.

(REAL Women 2013, Canada).

The notion of nurture, utilizing the 'sexual complementarity argument' is carefully framed around an 'ideal', such that other forms of relationships are possible but not 'ideal'. In this way these relationships (and alternative parenting forms) can be blamed not only for individual problems, but also societal ills. The demonization of anything other than normative heterosexual marriage again is context specific and not located in what could be termed discriminatory or abusive language. This reflects a fundamental shift in how discriminatory language is produced and disseminated.[ix]

When considering the sexing/sexualisation of children, bodies are a key site of contestation given the association made between the natural family and 'proper' sex roles and gender identities. This is linked to claims about avoiding 'gender identity confusion.' Lurking below the surface are older arguments about 'gender inversion' and links to homosexuality if children are not raised in 'appropriate' environments (Rosky 2012).[x] One 'mom' claims:

> As a mom I do not want my children taught that there are seven different genders. As a mom, I do not want my young children taught the disputed theory that a person's gender is not connected to their physical anatomy. (Baklinski 2012, Canada).

Using the positionality of 'mom', the speaker is able to make certain assertions regarding appropriate control, care and protection of children. She privileges particular (heterosexual) parents and assumes that the dichotomous gendering of her 'young children' should not be brought into question. The latter is associated with the dangers of delinking of anatomy and gender, a 'disputed theory' that might wreak

havoc. The fear of reinterpreting sexed bodies is particularly dangerous for 'young' children, those who are most likely to experiment and play with gender, and in this way makes classic linkages between age and vulnerability. What is new, however, is the careful way in which these arguments are framed, not as 'homophobic', but instead as 'disputed theory'.

Conclusion

In this paper, we argue that in Great Britain and Canada, resistances to LGBT equalities and same sex marriage continue to exist even in places where we might assume the battle has been 'won.' Using a transnational framework, we examined how oppositions at the local level are embedded in and draw on the broader 'natural family' arguments circulating at local/regional, national and transnational levels. In place of the overt threat of homosexuality, most organisations sought a secular or 'natural' justification for the difference of same sex and heterosexual relationships that did not directly reference God or religion.

Particular forms of heterosexuality are positioned as needing to be privileged for a healthy society rooted in the protection of children. The requirement for state protection, asserted through the figure of the child, are constituted within the national imaginary, the classroom and the private domestic sphere. More than this, the 'best interests of children and society' are framed in similar ways in Canada and GB where oppositional discourses seek to recuperate the privileged status of heteronormativity.

We propose three future directions for research. Firstly, we want to encourage a consideration of the recuperation of heteronormativity alongside discussions of homonormativity. Secondly, a focus on transnational networks is key in fleshing out the uneven complexities and nuances of these resistances without seeing them

subsumed in references to some globalising US Christian Right. Clearly, resistances to LGBT equalities morph and adapt to specific contexts and we have shown the significant overlaps between discourses in Canada and GB that move beyond the demonization of homosexuality as immoral towards the celebration and privileging of heterosexual relationships. Finally, further work is needed to explore how transnational networks inform local resistances to LGBT rights and equalities gains in both the Global North and South.

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[i] Northern Ireland was included in the Civil Partnership Act and so this legislation applies to the whole of the UK.

[ii] The primary methodology was an online search to identify key organisations in Canada and the UK involved specifically in opposition to same sex marriage and LGBT equalities. Over 100 websites were examined together with news sites, blogs and organisational newsletters. Once the core (and active) organisations were identified (49 in Canada, and 41 in the UK), each site was analyzed to map out thematically, their key aims, arguments and foci as well as to identify any links or connections amongst groups (e.g. conference attendance). Finally, analysis identified key themes across groups two to three were examined in depth utilising textual and discourse analysis (see Hines 2013; Tonkiss, 2012 for discussions of internet based research and discourse analysis).

[iii] Organisations are at times single issue (such as reparative therapies), but more often operate across multiple issues and seek to connect with each other through organisations such as the Coalition for Marriage.

[iv] Schooling in Ontario is divided between public schools and separate or Catholic schools. For the purposes of this paper, we not delve into the distinctive arguments developed specifically in opposition for those participating in the Catholic education system.

[v] We do not refer to Northern Ireland as Northern Ireland was not included in the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill and this context differs significantly (see Richardson and Monro 2012).

[vi] This references a legal case whereby hotel owners were found to be in breach of equalities legislation because they refused a gay male couple accommodation in a double room, because they were not married.

[vii] It is important to note that, in the GB context, civil partnerships are 'supported' in order to counter accusations of homophobia (and eight organizations argued that they do not contest civil partnerships and that these should be sufficient). This is possible in GB because of the existence of civil partnerships.

[ix] We thank one of the reviewers for this very helpful observation.