

**Západočeská univerzita v Plzni**  
**Fakulta filozofická**

**Bakalářská práce**

**Gay and Lesbian Issues in Britain and Their  
Depiction in the British Press**

**Veronika Faltejsková**

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**Bakalářská práce**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracoval(a) samostatně a použil(a) jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

*Plzeň, duben 2014* .....

*I would like to thank PhDr. Alice Tihelková, PhD. for her invaluable advice on the content and style of the thesis, in particular on the selection of the adequate newspapers and magazines.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.1 Medieval Britain and Early Modern Period.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2.2 Late Modern Period.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.3 20<sup>th</sup> century .....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.3.1 First half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century .....	5
2.3.2 1950s.....	6
2.3.3 1960s.....	7
2.3.4 1970s.....	8
2.3.5 1980s.....	9
<b>2.4 Development of the age of consent for male homosexual acts in     1990s and in the 21st century .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3 DEPICTION OF SELECTED GAY AND LESBIAN ISSUES IN THE BRITISH PRESS .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3.1 Same-sex marriage .....</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1.1 Spiked .....	13
3.1.2 The Guardian.....	17
3.1.3 The Telegraph .....	19
3.1.4 The Spectator .....	22
3.1.5 The Independent .....	25
<b>3.2 Homosexual adoption.....</b>	<b>27</b>
3.2.1 Spiked .....	28
3.2.2 The Guardian.....	29
3.2.3 The Telegraph .....	31
3.2.4 The Spectator .....	33
3.2.5 The Independent .....	34
<b>4 CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>36</b>

<b>5 ENDNOTES</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<b>6 BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>7 ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>49</b>
<b>8 RESUME</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>9 APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>51</b>

# 1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this Bachelor Thesis is the portrayal of the current gay and lesbian issues in the British press, presented against their historical background. After a brief introduction of the most significant events in the history of homosexuality in Britain with focus on the twentieth century which played an important role in improvement of the situation of homosexuals, the thesis focuses on determining the attitudes of various British newspapers and magazines towards selected gay and lesbian issues. Due to the extensiveness of the matter, two representative issues were chosen, namely same-sex marriage and adoption by homosexuals. The issue of same-sex marriage is the most current homosexual issue that is being dealt with in Britain, and the issue of homosexual adoption, although not so topical, represents an important change in the legislative, giving same-sex couples more rights and recognition for their relationships. The subject of the thesis was selected with respect to its topicality, as same-sex marriage has recently been legalized, and because of personal interest in the topic of homosexuality.

The thesis is a contribution to the field of Cultural Studies, which contains a wide range of specializations and deals with different social, political or cultural issues.

The thesis is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter deals with the historical events connected to homosexuality with emphasis on the events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second chapter comprises the main body of the thesis and is focused on the analysis of various newspaper and magazine articles dealing with selected gay and lesbian issues in Britain. This chapter is divided into two subchapters; one dealing with the topic of same-sex marriage and one with the topic of homosexual adoption. The most important part is the subchapter on same-sex marriage as it is a current important British issue.

In the historical part, mostly printed sources were used, providing a theoretical background for the thesis. For instance, one could mention the work by Neil Miller – *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the present* or three books by Dominic Sandbrook dealing with 1950s, 1960s and 1970s in Britain. Apart from the books stated in Bibliography, two more were intended to be used, and namely *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics* by Barry D. Adam et al. and *The Unfinished Revolution - Social Movement Theory and the Gay and Lesbian Movement* by Stephen M. Engel. However, due to their poor availability and sufficiency of other sources, the books were eventually left out.

The research part is based on primary sources – newspaper and magazine articles. The particular media were selected with respect to their political focus in order to include newspapers and magazines across the political spectrum. The corpus of the articles contained around 150 articles. Most of them were neutral articles dealing with either of the issues being analysed in this work; a great part comprised subjective articles that helped to form an opinion on the attitude of the individual papers or magazines towards a particular topic; the other articles are being specifically dealt with in the thesis and are stated in Bibliography.



## **2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Medieval Britain and Early Modern Period**

In the feudal times, homosexuals faced considerably difficult circumstances. A number of anti-homosexual laws and acts were introduced during the period. Already in the year 1102 the Council of London pronounced that sodomy was a sin and clergymen who would be accused of committing sodomy would be excommunicated. [1] Sodomy was a term denoting homosexuality because in those times, the term homosexuality did not yet exist. Sodomy covered anal or oral intercourse, as well as sexual relations with animals. [2] For the purposes of this thesis, sodomy will be used as a historical denomination for homosexuality and homosexual acts. In 1290, a punishment for sodomy was mentioned in the English common law for the first time; this contained burying and later burning alive. [3]

The 1533 Buggery Act (buggery was a term referring mostly to anal intercourse between males) was the first law that specified that sodomy (which, as mentioned previously, included homosexuality) was criminal and one could be punished by hanging. However, homosexual prostitution was quite common in those times and also in some environments, homosexuality was tolerated, like e.g. in educational institutions. [4] Homosexuality was more or less tolerated in the world of art as well, and also in the upper circles; many sovereigns are considered to be gay or to have inclined to homosexuality.

In those times, only male homosexual acts were considered inappropriate and sinful; the situation of lesbians was rather easier. Until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women's relationships were not considered to be able to have a sexual aspect.

## 2.2 Late Modern Period

In the late seventeenth and in the eighteenth century, it was fairly common for two women to get married while one of them would assume the role of a man and act as one in public; the public therefore mostly did not know that the husband was in reality a woman. Lesbians in England were only seldom prosecuted because it was unimaginable to the British courts that women could have sexual relationships with each other. The cases of female prosecutions were rare. [5] The society started to regard lesbianism as deviant only at the end of the nineteenth century, when women were able to retain some financial independence by starting to work, and thus openly choosing female life partners. They also started entering universities and became even more independent at the beginning of the twentieth century. [6]

Where gay men are concerned, in 1885, the Labouchere Amendment outlawed not only sodomy, which already had been an offense punishable by the law, even by death, but it also specified oral sex as an individual category. One could be sentenced to two-year imprisonment for committing such a crime. [7] However, Norton observes that the acts of indecency specified in the Labouchere Amendment had already been punished before its issue; the behaviour only had not been specifically named or had been called differently. [8] Quite a number of men were blackmailed on the basis of this Amendment and that is why it is sometimes called the Blackmailer's Charter. As Miller states, "[...] prosecutions of men arrested for consensual homosexual offenses averaged about 500 a year in England and Wales." These numbers climbed during the years afterwards and in 1955, 2,504 prosecutions occurred. [9]

At the end of the nineteenth century, the trials of Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), who was charged with being gay, occurred as an important chapter in the history of homosexuality. The trials resulted in Wilde's two-year imprisonment and also in a sentence to hard labour. [10] These trials gave gays a new identity but also raised anti-gay moods in Britain.

## **2.3 20<sup>th</sup> century**

### ***2.3.1 First half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century***

Before the World War I, there were antigay attitudes in England and it was broadly hoped that the war would suppress homosexual feelings or behaviour. On the front, however, such feelings were widespread. This is, for instance, reflected in the works of war poets. Nevertheless, the relationships between the men on the front were largely not physical and were similar to those that arose between young men at schools like Oxford or Cambridge. Homosexual intercourse (sodomy) in military was still punished by minimum ten years and maximum life in prison, and oral sex (gross indecency) with two years in prison. Only a small percentage of soldiers and officers were accused of such behaviour. [11]

Since the relationships at Cambridge and Oxford were mentioned here, it may be appropriate to add that these universities were rather secretive and isolated and homosexual relationships were not uncommon in those institutions. [12]

As for lesbianism, it was the first time in history that it caused alarm to those in authority, as women were beginning to openly co-habit and dress like men. As lesbianism became feared in Britain, the MPs proposed criminalisation of female sexual acts. The House of Lords, however, did not pass the bill for fear of making lesbianism attractive for young women who might want to start experimenting with it. [13]

Noel Pemberton Billing was a Member of Parliament and was, according to his claim, in possession of a book that labelled 47,000 prominent English citizens as homosexuals or involved in some kind of a homosexual behaviour. As an indirect consequence, a trial similar to that of Oscar Wilde commenced when a dancer and actress Maud Allen sued Billing for libel after he implied in his article that she herself belonged to the group of people whose names appeared in the book. The trial began on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1918 and lasted for six days. The verdict

on Noel Pemberton Billing was *not guilty* and met with considerable enthusiasm in the courtroom. This trial only supported the view that homosexuality equalled having bad characteristics at that time. [14]

### **2.3.2 1950s**

In the early 1950s, public opinion changed to some extent after the trial of Lord Montagu, Michael Pitt-Rivers and a journalist Peter Wildeblood who were accused of improper behaviour toward two airmen. They were imprisoned. Subsequently, the opinions started to emerge that what happened between adults in privacy was not to be punished by law. In 1954, Sir John Wolfenden established a committee to bring a verdict on the issues of homosexuality. In 1957, a conclusion was announced: "We accordingly recommend that homosexual behavior between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offense." [15] It recommended the age of consent for male homosexuals as well, namely twenty-one. However, homosexuals in military could still be punished by law. The committee also agreed on severer punishments of underage sexual intercourse. [16]

However, the public opinion changed gradually from the somewhat loosened atmosphere after the trial of Lord Montagu, Michael Pitt-Rivers and Peter Wildeblood to a renewed open hatred. It was a result of a growing conviction that homosexuality was associated with communist espionage. An example stated by historian Dominic Sandbrook is one of two former schoolfellows and lovers from Cambridge, Donald Maclean and Roger Stiles (real name Guy Burgess). They were both spies for the Soviet NKVD (the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) which recruited them at Cambridge. In 1951, they defected to Moscow together. The public, however, did not find out until 1955. [17] Due to the fact that homosexuals used their own terminology and language (e.g. a slang called *polari* will be mentioned in the chapter about the 1960s when it was widely used among homosexuals in London), to the heterosexual public they could appear similar to spies, using code words etc. [18]

In the middle of the 1950s, homosexuals increasingly started to be prosecuted again; in the post-war atmosphere, marriage was emphasised and homosexuality was blamed for “[...] national decline and political subversion”. [19] The government did not, therefore, act on the Wolfenden recommendations due to the inimical atmosphere in the society.

Despite all that, many changes occurred outside the law as such. Homosexual topics were allowed to appear in Lord Chamberlain’s theatre’s plays. In the film area, works about Oscar Wilde were released, as well as other films with gay theme. In 1959, the Obscene Publications Act was approved which loosened the rules in the area of approving books for publishing. By the middle of the 1960s in England there almost did not exist censorship in arts. [20] In 1958, with the purpose to push through the reform based on the Wolfenden recommendations, the foundation of the Homosexual Law Reform Society and its “charity arm,” the Albany Trust, occurred. [21]

### **2.3.3 1960s**

The life of homosexuals in Britain did not change immediately with the arrival of the 1960s. This decade is nevertheless of crucial importance to gay men and lesbians due to a relative liberalisation and, most importantly, decriminalisation of male homosexual acts.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the public still regarded homosexuality as something unnatural and even abhorrent. Only the younger generation were slightly more tolerant of homosexuality; however, even among young people a large number of them were strictly opposing homosexuality. [22] The Wolfenden recommendations were still not implemented in the early 1960s and it was only after Lord Arran “[...] introduced a private member’s bill – that is, legislation not officially backed by the government – in the House of Lords to enact the Wolfenden recommendations” that the law reform bill passed the House of Lords in May 1965. [23] There were of course many opponents; however, the bill passed

the House of Commons in July 1967 and is known as the *Sexual Offences Act*. Homosexuality was decriminalised in England and Wales and the age of consent for male sexual acts was set at twenty-one. [24] In the 1970s, the Committee (later Campaign) for Homosexual Equality (earlier The North-West Committee of the Homosexual Law Reform Society) demanded that homosexuality in military, Scotland and Northern Ireland be decriminalised as well and the age of consent be equalised at sixteen (i.e. at the age of consent for heterosexual and female homosexual acts). [25] In Scotland, homosexuality was decriminalised in 1980. Eventually, in October 1982 the law was extended to Northern Ireland. This happened, however, only after a political activist Jeff Dudgeon made a complaint by the European Court of Human Rights, accusing the British government “[...] of violating Articles 8 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights,” and the European Committee voted in his favour in “[...] the first gay rights case ever decided by the European Court.” [26]

In the 1960s, London gay men used for conversation among themselves their own language, a slang called *polari* (for examples see Appendix I). Rictor Norton notes that *polari* was not actually meant to be a secret language; on the contrary, it intended to draw attention to itself. Polari was not the first slang of homosexuals. In the late eighteenth century, for example, there existed a language of the molly subculture (gay subculture of the eighteenth-century London). Norton gives some examples, amongst them e.g. *to indorse* meant anal intercourse or *backgammon players* and *gentlemen of the back* were used as denominations for sodomites, *to make a bargain* was a term for agreeing to have sex etc. [27]

### **2.3.4 1970s**

In the 1970s, gay liberation movement which originated in the USA came to England. The Gay Liberation Front (group of liberationists campaigning for more tolerance towards homosexuals) was established in London and in November 1970 it held a meeting at the London School of Economics. The meetings then

became more frequent, gay people were encouraged to come out (i.e. openly admit to their homosexuality); the Gay Liberation Front held dances as well, took part in demonstrations etc. It organised workshops, trying to confront public with homosexuality and anti-homosexual practices that made the life of homosexuals difficult. In June 1972, a great gay march took place in Oxford Street, attended by around two thousand gay people. Then, the Gay Liberation Front started to disintegrate and new organizations and groups emerged. In June 1972, the homosexual newspaper *Gay News* was established. For lesbians there existed a magazine called *Sappho*. [28]

As far as lesbianism is concerned, it was rather connected to the feminist movement in 1970s. Women campaigned for equality between genders and for lesbians this was an opportunity to obtain more rights and recognition. Nevertheless, not all feminist groups were willing to promote lesbian orientation. At the 1971 National Women's Conference in Britain, for example, lesbian issues were deliberately not discussed at all. [29]

In 1976, a poem was published in *Gay News* describing the dishonour of Christ's dead body by a Roman centurion who had homosexual intercourse with the body. Mary Whitehouse, social activist and morality campaigner, was outraged and attempted to charge the newspaper with blasphemy. Nevertheless, she was not supported by the church to the extent she would have wanted. However, the magazine was convicted in 1977 and fined £1000. Its editor, Denis Lemon, was fined £500. The trial did not stop *Gay News* from publishing, though; on the contrary, the trial helped the magazine to gain publicity and many people campaigned for homosexual rights as well. [30]

### **2.3.5 1980s**

The 1980s were quite a favourable time for gays and lesbians in the United States and Europe; not, however, in England. Since the end of the 1970s, gays and lesbians had created an advanced subculture which continued to develop

in the 1980s. In London, Soho was an example of a gay quarter, with many shops, clubs, cafés etc. [31] Despite all that, the age of consent for male homosexual acts was set at twenty-one, whereas for heterosexual and female homosexual acts it was sixteen. Furthermore, the 1980s are connected with the origin of AIDS epidemic. The newspapers encouraged anti-gay mood by accusing homosexuals of spreading the illness. The solution of the British press to stop spreading the infection was to recriminalise homosexuality. [32] In addition, the Conservative Party lead by Margaret Thatcher was rather anti-homosexual. The mood in Britain altogether was very hostile towards homosexuals.

The Labour Party, however, was trying to promote homosexuality and stop the discrimination against them. This turned against them in 1987 elections won by the Conservative Party, when the Tories based their campaign on showing the Labour Party's pro-gay attitude and the consequences it would have for example on the state budget (according to them, the Labour would unnecessarily waste money on gay people). [33] In October 1987, Margaret Thatcher assumed a rather anti-gay attitude. She delivered a speech in which she said: "Children who need to be taught to respect traditional moral values are being taught that they have an inalienable right to be gay. [...] All of those children are being cheated of a sound start in life. Yes, cheated." [34]

In December 1987 the Clause 28 was proposed by the parliamentarians of Margaret Thatcher's government to illegalize the promotion of homosexuality. [35] Gays and lesbians feared the bill and demonstrated against it. Neil Kinnock, leader of the Labour Party, stood publicly against the bill and Lord Rea revealed in support of homosexual rights that he had been brought up by two mothers. The House of Lords passed the bill 202 against 122 votes and after the voting, three lesbians lowered themselves inside from the top of the room and caused quite a commotion. On 9<sup>th</sup> March 1988, the bill was passed by the House of Commons 254 to 201 votes. As a result, the three lesbians who had caused the commotion during the House of Lords voting invaded BBC during the Six O'clock News, chaining themselves to the equipment. The fears of the bill, however, turned out to be pointless because gay bars and bookstores were



not closed down, donations from towns or cities to gay and lesbian centres remained legal etc. [36] Homosexuals found their identity and not even this clause could have taken it from them. After the bill had been passed, the annual Gay Pride march was attended by a larger number of people than in the previous years. Many groups originated as well, e. g. *Stonewall* or *Act Up (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power)* etc. Gay people became altogether rather active. [37]

Some of the politicians started to come out as well – either voluntarily or not – and at first, their fate was not very encouraging for others. Maureen Colquhoun was a British Labour Member of Parliament whose lesbian relationship was publicly exposed in the press and in 1979 she lost her seat in the Parliament. In 1984, Chris Smith's coming out ended his political career as a Labour Member of Parliament. Nevertheless, in 1985 the city of Manchester was led by a lesbian mayor which was quite a breakthrough. However, when we consider Britain as a whole, male homosexual intercourse still remained an offense until 1980 when, as mentioned before, homosexuality was decriminalised in Scotland, and 1982 when it was decriminalised in Northern Ireland as well. The police raids continued even after the decriminalisation, though, and it was impossible for openly homosexual men and women to serve in the military. [38]

## **2.4 Development of the age of consent for male homosexual acts in 1990s and in the 21st century**

In February 1994, the age of consent for male homosexual acts was lowered to eighteen; nevertheless, the military made it clear that homosexuals would still not be accepted to serve in the British armed forces. [39]

On the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2000 the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act reduced the age of consent for male homosexual acts to sixteen, equalizing it with heterosexual acts. In Northern Ireland the age of consent was lowered to seventeen. The reduction of the age of consent for homosexuals had been passed twice in

the House of Commons; however, the House of Lords had dismissed it. The House of Commons then applied the Parliament Act which entitled them to pass the proposition without the consent of the Lords. [40] In 2008, the age of consent was lowered to sixteen in Northern Ireland as well. [41]

## **3 DEPICTION OF SELECTED GAY AND LESBIAN ISSUES IN THE BRITISH PRESS**

### **3.1 Same-sex marriage**

In July 2013, same-sex marriage became legal in England and Wales and the first weddings can take place from the end of March 2014. A similarity can be found here with the decriminalisation of homosexuality, which first occurred in England and Wales as well, followed by Scotland thirteen years later and Northern Ireland two years after that. The future will show whether these two countries will need a similarly long period of time to legalise same-sex marriages. It seems, however, that in case of Scotland the time period will be rather shorter because it is preparing a bill concerning same-sex marriage.

The issue naturally raised a discussion among the public and also in the press, which started already in 2012 when the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill was proposed, continuing into 2013 when the vote on the bill took place, and 2014 when the first same-sex marriages are to take place. Media such as *BBC News* or, partially, *The Guardian*, stay politically correct and only inform about the events neutrally, free from subjective bias, and quote the statements of both supporters and opponents of gay marriage. In certain newspapers or magazines, however, a number of opinions can be found which are not so politically correct and which express the newspaper's or magazine's particular view of gay people.

#### **3.1.1 *Spiked***

One of the media that do not appear in favour of gay marriages is the humanist and libertarian online magazine *Spiked*. Although it is not a regular newspaper, the magazine was chosen as the first one for the analysis because it contained a number of articles on the topic of same-sex marriage, all of which were only

subjective. Therefore, *Spiked* does not strive to inform about every event and every problem connected with the legalization of gay marriage as the other newspapers and magazines chosen for analysis do, but it seems to want to reveal its own opinion and even to persuade the readers that same-sex couples should not be given the right to get married.

The magazine may not be anti-homosexual as such but it objects to gay marriage and to putting gay rights before those of all other groups. For instance, Neil Davenport in his article about faith schools defends the right of these schools to ban their teachers from promoting same-sex relationships and homosexuality as such. Davenport claims that it is not right to put forward the interests of homosexual children in the faith schools over the values and opinions of their families and religion. He argues that parents who wish to pass certain beliefs and values on to their children should be allowed to do so and the school should not undermine their way of raising their children. Parents trust the faith schools to have the same values and the same opinions about traditional marriage as they do and Davenport criticises the fact that the state would interfere in these matters. Davenport's opinion on homosexuality can clearly be seen in his statement:

*Is the gay-rights lobby now so fearful of minority old-fashioned views that it must demand measures to censor them – the same kind of measures that were once employed against its own members? At a time when traditional views are less influential than ever, and when acceptance of gay equality is thoroughly mainstream, it seems odd that campaigners cannot abide any expression whatsoever of disapproval of homosexuality. [42]*

A conclusion can be drawn from this that Neil Davenport considers gay rights to receive too much attention at the expense of the freedom of speech and that homosexuals and pro-homosexual people should consider accepting the opinions of different-minded individuals.

Craig Fairington deals in an article with whether homosexuality is natural. He rejects the claim that homosexuality is natural only because it exists in nature among animals. He argues whether homosexuality is innate or whether it is

a personal choice. He does not accept the theory of biological determinism of homosexuality as the only reason for being gay. He does not sound anti-homosexual, he only defends free will to choose one's partner. His suggestion is for the public to stop creating "more boxes in which to place people, to define their roles" and instead accept that being gay could be one's choice and that there is nothing wrong with that: "To point at a 'gay' animal as proof that being gay is okay is demeaning. It takes a whole gamut of profoundly human emotion and experience, it takes the love one can have for another person of the same sex, and reduces it to the level of a rutting beast. What's positive about that?" [43]

The same question is being dealt with in the article by Frank Furedi from February 2011. He reacts to the release of Lady Gaga's single *Born This Way* in which she claims that a person's identity is innate and biologically determined and that people cannot change it by choice. Furedi is rather critical of that claim. He writes about the gay movement at the beginning of the 1970s when homosexuality was considered a matter of choice. In the 1990s, the theory of biological determinism started to expand, scientists started looking for the "gay gene" and the belief was that homosexuals would be better accepted if their homosexuality was something that could not be changed. However, Furedi's theory is that people can choose their identity and the genes are only a part of what forms people's behaviour. [44]

Considering the gay marriage as such, *Spiked* seems to oppose it. In many articles the slang phrase *get hitched* is used instead of *get married*. This sounds rather sarcastic and indicates the position that *Spiked* takes – that gay marriage should not be legal. *Spiked* actually states that "[...] there are actually some sensible reasons to criticise the government's plans to implement gay marriage [...]" [45] Patrick Hayes criticises the fact that gay marriage defenders label people who have different views than them as bigots but themselves do not accept those different views. This opinion appears in *Spiked* in several articles. A conclusion can be drawn from this that *Spiked* considers gay marriage supporters and supporters of homosexuality in general hypocritical – not allowing

any discussion on the matter, stating the only right opinion and being intolerant of any different ones. The magazine also objects to the state interfering in private lives by changing the traditional meaning of marriage and its role – procreation. Two people of the same sex cannot fulfil this task and therefore, according to *Spiked's* attitude, gay marriage should not be implemented and should not be equated with heterosexual marriage.

The magazine comments on the fact that the number of supporters of same-sex marriage grew rather quickly and the support for gay marriage is now considered normal. Those who oppose it are today seen as “peculiar”. Brendan O’Neill observes that people sometimes express their support for gay marriage only to not to be criticised for their true opinion. He also remarks that people do not believe in the values of traditional marriage and that gave the politicians space to enforce same-sex marriage. [46] Most of the articles in *Spiked*, including Brendan O’Neill’s *Gay marriage: a case study in conformism*, share the same topic – the freedom of speech denied to those in opposition of gay marriage because of the prevailed opinion in the society that it is normal to support same-sex marriage and because of the gay-marriage supporters condemning any opinion that does not comply with their views.

Another aspect of the campaign for same-sex marriage is, according to *Spiked*, the effort of the campaigners to remove differences. Allegedly in their fight for equality they do not leave space for being different. Jon Holbrook in his article called *Gay marriage and the tyranny of sameness* claims that no oppression of homosexuals exists these days anymore and, therefore, there is no reason for a massive campaign for gay marriage. Earlier, the oppression existed and gays and lesbians did not have equal rights with heterosexuals. In those times, the campaign for equality was justifiable. Today, however, the word *equality* is being overused as something that needs to be achieved in a situation where in fact there is no inequality anymore. Another point is made that civil partnership only slightly differs from marriage (in terms of legislative) and therefore there is no reason for allowing homosexuals to enter into a traditional marriage when they already have basically the same rights. They can also adopt children,

which, according to *Spiked*, is another evidence of the non-existence of inequality. [47]

The magazine's attitude towards the issue of same-sex marriage is rather surprising, considering its effort to present itself as a very liberal medium. The assumption would be that *Spiked* would support tolerance in any aspect of human life; however, this did not prove right.

### **3.1.2 The Guardian**

*The Guardian* writes about homosexuals and gay marriage rather neutrally; in some articles, however, a subjective opinion can be found. *The Guardian* seems to be pro-homosexual, defending gay and lesbian rights, which can be seen in their statement from an article *Gay marriage: beyond argument*: "Fortunately, we are now at a point where homosexuals do – for virtually all practical purposes – enjoy equal treatment under the law." Further in the article the newspaper names the Conservative politicians John Major, David Cameron and Boris Johnson as once taking a critical stand on homosexual rights, each of them in a different way. Today, however, they are all promoting gay marriage. [48] *The Guardian* welcomes this fact. If this topic were to appear for example in *Spiked*, one can assume that their attitude would be rather different, namely critical of this sudden change (although the change occurred within several years). The magazine would attach the change only to the prevailing public opinion that supporting gay marriage is normal. They would claim that the change in the opinion of these men is not sincere and is only a pose to satisfy voters and the public.

Dean Burnett deals in his article with some arguments the opponents of gay marriage often put forward for not legalizing the same-sex marriage. His article is entirely pro-homosexual and Burnett disproves all these arguments as not scientifically based. The first part of the article covers the question of whether homosexuality is natural – the same topic as the one of Craig Fairington's arti-

cle in *Spiked*. Burnett takes a different view of the matter and deals mostly with gay marriage as such, while Fairnington deals mainly with homosexuality and the question of whether it is innate or a personal choice. Burnett's claim is that marriage cannot be found in nature and therefore is not natural – neither heterosexual nor homosexual. [49] His article as a whole is approached with humour, trying to lighten the seriousness of the matter and show to the opponents of gay marriage that their attitude has no reasonable foundation.

Peter Tatchell, a political campaigner for LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) rights, defends in his article from May 2013 the right of same-sex couples to get married. His claim is that all people, regardless of their sex, should be able to receive equal treatment before the law. Although he personally does not favour marriage as such, he supports the equality of all people and their being free to choose whether they want to get married or not. Nevertheless, he also mentions that heterosexual and homosexual marriages are not legally equal. Legally, heterosexual and homosexual married couples would not have the same conditions regarding e.g. the annulment of marriage which with heterosexual couples can be annulled on the grounds of non-consummation or adultery whereas these cannot be reasons for annulment of homosexual marriage. [50]

Another question often discussed in Britain around the time of legalisation of same-sex marriage was the question of whether churches and religious organizations should be forced to carry out gay weddings or not. *The Guardian* informs about this issue in many articles; mostly, however, they do not reveal their own opinion on the matter and in most cases publish the opinions of many different individuals. Nevertheless, Katharine Whitehorn wrote a short article on this issue for *The Observer* (Sunday version of *The Guardian*), where she suggested that the Church of England should be separated from the state. According to her, this would solve all the problems with gay marriage because there would only be one contract on marriage issued by the state, not differentiating between heterosexual or homosexual couples. The Church could then decide their own terms on who they would marry and under what conditions. [51]



*The Guardian*'s friendly attitude towards homosexuals is also reflected in the fact that a number of gays and lesbians contribute to the newspaper with their articles, such as Patrick Flanery, Julie Bindel or Helen Ball who after being a lesbian for several years eventually married a man. They, naturally, take an attitude favourable of gay marriage, in some cases comparing being in a civil partnership with the institution of marriage. In those cases, they feel civil partnership does not offer them the same treatment as marriage. An opinion of these gays and lesbians is also that even though gay marriage has been legalized, the society is still treating homosexuals differently and is in many cases even homophobic. *The Guardian* criticises such behaviour and overall takes a positive stand on homosexuals and homosexual issues. The tone of the above mentioned articles corresponds with the bias of *The Guardian* as a newspaper with a liberal left orientation.

### **3.1.3 *The Telegraph***

The conservative newspaper *The Telegraph* depicts the issue of gay marriage rather confusingly. One cannot say that the articles are only negative; nevertheless, they are not neutral either in the sense of e. g. the *BBC News* articles. While the *BBC* strives to deliver information as neutrally as possible, the style of *The Telegraph* is rather different and more subjective; the authors often put their personal views into the articles. Some positive articles about gay marriage can be found as well, mostly at *The Telegraph*'s *Blogs* where the journalists tend to write more informally and, it seems, reveal their views that may not fully correspond with the traditionally conservative orientation of the newspaper. Some homosexual journalists contribute to the newspaper as well, e.g. Graeme Archer or Alice Arnold.

Of course, not all the articles at the *Blogs* are positive. For example, the articles by Cristina Odone written before February 10th 2014 are directed against same-sex marriage. Although the columnist has never taken a stand against homosexuals as such (on the contrary, she allegedly has many gay friends),

she did not originally approve of gay marriage. As a conservative by persuasion, she believed in marriage as a pillar of the society and in religious freedom.

She expressed her concerns in the following manner:

*The moment the vicar or priest refuses to celebrate a gay marriage in their church, the aggrieved couple will see them in court — in Strasbourg. Here, at the European Court of Human Rights, Christians will once again be thrown to the lions as their opponents will strive to set a precedent: equal rights means equal access to religious marriage ceremony. [52]*

Judging from her reaction, Odone appears concerned that the enforcement of gay marriage will endanger the freedom of Churches to decide whether or not they want to conduct same-sex marriages, diminish tolerance and freedom of conscience of those holding opposing views, and thus making British society less free. In 2014, however, Odone changed her opinion because of the introduction of anti-gay laws in Russia. To her, opposing gay marriage equals tolerating the procedures in Russia directed against homosexuals, which was the impulse for her to start approving of same-sex marriage.

*The Telegraph* comments on the political situation around gay marriage more than on the gay marriage itself. David Cameron assisted in passing the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill, which is rather unusual as he is the leader of the Conservative party that generally votes for traditional family values and only heterosexual marriage. The newspaper comments on the situation in the Tory party, which is rather split over the gay marriage issue. Supporters of David Cameron can be found among the journalists of *The Telegraph*. For example, Matthew d'Ancona stands for David Cameron's fight for gay marriage and for gay marriage itself, labelling it as a conservative issue. He argues that since marriage is the fundamental value and the pillar of the society for the Conservative party, the Conservatives should not oppose to the extension to gay and lesbian couples; on the contrary, they should welcome such stabilization of society. [53]

Nevertheless, not everyone in *The Telegraph* favours same-sex marriage. One reason for criticism lies in the non-consummation of marriage and adultery as reasons for annulment of marriage that, on the principle of their definition, cannot apply to same-sex couples. Another, rather interesting argument is that historically, all social changes came out of a massive social movement carried out by the ordinary people while the upper classes and the establishment opposed them at the beginning. Now, however, the case is different. The idea of legalizing gay marriage came out of the establishment. The outcome of Brendan O'Neill's article *Congratulations, gay marriage campaigners – you have completely destroyed the meaning of social progress* is precisely the content of this headline – the change in the proceedings of how new measures and laws are applied; namely, the imposition of such decisions on ordinary people without real demand for them. Brendan O'Neill also contributes to the magazine *Spiked* and some of his articles are described in the section of this thesis on *Spiked*. All of them take a negative stand towards same-sex marriage. [54]

The journalists of both *Spiked* and *The Guardian* dealt with the issue of whether homosexuality is innate and to what extent it is a personal choice. Sean Thomas in *The Telegraph* approached the subject somewhat differently and discusses the question of the naturalness of homophobia. Although he denies being homophobic, he admits that he has objections e. g. to two men kissing. His exact words are: “[...] when I see gay men kissing, I get a brief twinge of ewww – until my better liberal self takes over.” That leads him to consider the fact that homophobia could be as natural as homosexuality itself and that it could be “unconscious”. [55]

The articles in *The Telegraph* on the gay marriage issue seem to reflect the disunity in the Tory party. The party is split over this issue; some of its members supported David Cameron's fight for gay marriage, some of them opposed it. The articles in this newspaper are similar. Some of them are in favour of gay marriage, while others are against it, and some are not clear in their stance. Nevertheless, *The Telegraph* does not seem to oppose the same-sex marriage as strongly as, given their political bias, could be expected.

### **3.1.4 *The Spectator***

The magazine *The Spectator*, although conservative, appears to partly support same-sex marriage. Currently, however, this is not a very surprising fact given that the legalisation of gay marriage was a result of David Cameron's efforts to pass the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill. As the leader of the Conservative party, this could be seen as an atypical step, considering the common view of the Conservatives as traditional family-based.

A number of articles opposing gay marriage can also be found in *The Spectator*, and thus, like in *The Telegraph*, a mixture of views corresponding with the situation in the Conservative party characterises *The Spectator* as well, although the style of the articles in *The Spectator* appears to be more accessible to readers than in *The Telegraph*; the opinions of *The Spectator* are easier to recognise, it is clearer on which side of the debate about gay marriage the writer is. Some of the journalists of *The Spectator* do not favour same-sex marriage. For instance, the opponents of same-sex marriage are depicted as a minority that cannot express their opinions freely, and their present situation is compared to the situation of homosexuals about 40 years ago when they still could not express their true orientation.

Another conviction appears in the headline of Roger Scruton's and Phillip Blond's article – *Same-sex marriage is homophobic*. Roger Scruton is a British conservative philosopher; his focus therefore corresponds with the conservative focus of the magazine. The authors of the article point out that true equality lies in maintaining the differences. They, however, use the word "equality" in a negative sense. According to them, it is undesirable and "erasing all differences". The authors claim that the different individuals and groups should fight for acceptance and recognition of their difference – in Scruton's and Blond's words, for "equity for their distinction" – and by allowing homosexuals to get married, the state is acting homophobic, trying to blend homosexuals with heterosexuals. They also argue that marriage is an institution that needs to be preserved for

heterosexuals, as to not to deprive them of an institution that only belongs to them. [56]

Political issues connected with gay marriage are discussed in the magazine. David Cameron is being criticised in some articles, e. g. for not discussing the matter of same-sex marriage at a particular Tory meeting. Melanie McDonagh deals with the proceedings of the vote on Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill, where different parties planned to proceed differently concerning the allowance of a free vote, which she favours. In the article, McDonagh also takes a negative stand to same-sex marriage, as she does in her other article as well (as mentioned below). Another political or legal aspect of same-sex marriage is the debate over adultery as a reason for divorce which cannot be applied to homosexual marriages, as it applies to adultery with the opposite sex.

In his article, Douglas Murray defends gay marriage and gives his opinion on some of the arguments stated by the opponents of same-sex marriage. He dismisses the argument about gay marriage undermining heterosexual marriage as illogical, stating that no heterosexual marriage has been divorced because of same-sex marriage. Murray also does not agree with the argument that having children is the aim of marriage and therefore, because procreation is not possible for homosexuals, gay marriage should not be legal. He gives examples of heterosexuals who do not enter into marriage for the purpose of procreation, like e. g. older people or celebrities seeking fame. According to Murray, gay marriage should also be supported by people who claim that homosexuals are promiscuous because entering a life-long commitment recognised by the law could decrease the number of cases of promiscuous behaviour. As regards religious reasons for opposing same-sex marriage, Murray's conviction appears to be that no religious institution should be forced to conduct same-sex marriages; those institutions should not, however, force their opinions on others as well. [57]

Murray's article is not the only one in *The Spectator* claiming that gay marriage is in fact a conservative matter that the Conservatives should support, not oppose. The argument about religious institutions that should be allowed to decide

whether or not to conduct same-sex marriages appears in another *Spectator* article as well.

Melanie McDonagh reacts to Douglas Murray's article, which is called *The conservative case for equal marriage*, with her own article titled *The case against gay marriage*. She focuses solely on the aim of marriage to procreate, to raise children in a natural environment, which to McDonagh means a man and a woman. She favours civil partnerships, she only defends "[...] the nature of marriage. And that is, a natural institution providing the optimal situation for raising children." She argues that children need to learn the traditional roles of men and women in marriage. And even though some marriages are "involuntarily childless," it does not diminish the purpose of marriage to raise children. [58]

Alex Massie reacts to Cristina Odone's article in *The Telegraph* (discussed above) and to her fear of the European Court of Human Rights forcing religious institutions to conduct same-sex marriages. Massie argues that until now, no one has complained about the fact that "[...] the churches already impose restrictions upon whose marriages they will recognise." [59]

Matthew Parris, an ex-politician, who is also openly gay, deals in his article with what could be done to legalize gay marriage more easily. He refers to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967 when, as mentioned in the historical part of this thesis, a private member's bill was used to decriminalise homosexuality. Parris states that because of that, the bill could not be connected to any party or to the government, and thus, no one could criticise the government for not focusing on more important issues. He then discusses the meaning of the word *marriage*, which has changed naturally over time; today, however, the government is changing the meaning of the word and both supporters and opponents of gay marriage do not favour that. Parris suggests following the model of South Africa which changed the previous denominations and created a new term – "civil union," whereas churches are separated from the state and allowed to define their own terms and conditions. [60]

*The Spectator* seems to be giving the contributors freedom to express their own opinion on the issue of gay marriage, and therefore, the articles appearing in the magazine are partly in favour, partly against same-sex marriage. Opinions characteristic for the debate on same-sex marriage appear in the articles, such as e.g. the idea that the main purpose of marriage is procreation or that religious institutions will be forced to conclude homosexual marriages once they are legalized. The supporters of same-sex marriage, on the other hand, disprove these views and give their own counter-opinions.

### **3.1.5 *The Independent***

The left-leaning newspaper *The Independent* tends to inform about the issue of same-sex marriage mainly neutrally, stating the facts about the events connected with gay marriage. Overall, one could say that the paper mostly writes about political issues connected with gay marriage, providing information about the voting on the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill, and about the churches and their right to choose whether or not to conclude same-sex weddings. The religious aspect of the debate is depicted quite often in the newspaper; *The Independent* does not, however, provide any opinion on the matter and only quotes statements of other people.

In accordance with their political bias, the newspaper favours same-sex marriage and, although the majority of the articles are not subjective, a number of articles giving personal opinions appear in *The Independent*. One article was negative as well, revealing an opinion of Deborah Ross, who argued that same-sex marriage could in fact affect heterosexual marriages in a negative way, giving an example of her own feelings about her marriage which seemed worthless after introducing the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill. However, this article is most likely a sarcastic comment to those who indeed believe that gay marriage could diminish the value of heterosexual marriages. This conclusion can be drawn already from the headline of the article – *OMG! Marriage is now worth-*

*less!* and particularly from the exclamation mark. The tone of the whole article is rather ironic, which can be demonstrated with the following excerpt where the author also uses exclamation marks and a non-existent situation, trying to have her marriage appraised:

*And then it struck me: now that same-sex marriages are to become legal, my marriage had suddenly devalued! Overnight, it had plummeted from being worth something to being worth nothing, and this is why I felt so queasy! I confirmed this was so by calling in at one of those CashForMarriages businesses that pop up in empty shops, and as they told me: 'Yesterday, we'd have given you quite a substantial sum for your traditional marriage, but today it's not worth anything, I'm afraid.'* [61]

An interesting article is one by Andy West, a homosexual who claims to have chosen to be gay. Thematically, this article could be placed among the articles in *Spiked* and *The Guardian* which deal with the innateness of homosexuality, and thus it does not discuss gay marriage as such. Andy West's own experience is that he allegedly decided to be a homosexual to make his life more interesting or exciting. However, this article is a satire, in fact probably trying to show the opposite – that no one can choose their sexuality. [62]

Some of the articles are focused on the fact that despite legal same-sex marriage, equality still does not exist and a great number of countries around the world still violate the rights of homosexuals. This only represents the positive stand of the journalists on the issue of homosexual equality and homosexual marriage. The other articles are overall in favour of gay marriage as well. A number of homosexual journalists contribute to *The Independent*, and sometimes reveal their own views favouring same-sex marriage and giving their own experiences with dealing with being gay at a young age, as does e. g. Patrick Strudwick. An article written by a Catholic, Peter Stanford, also appears in the paper dealing with the stance of the Catholic Church and why there was no reason for them not to conduct same-sex weddings.

Owen Jones discusses in his article *Equal marriage: As we celebrate, let's not forget those who fought to get us here* the fact that the development over the last 40 years since 1967 (decriminalisation of homosexuality) contributed to the



legalisation of same-sex marriage in 2013. He argues that the achievement was not only a result of the legal steps taken by the establishment “[...] but rather [of] the struggle and sacrifice of countless LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] people who were spat at, ridiculed, demonised, beaten and imprisoned.” [63] Nevertheless, he predicts that homophobia will not disappear only due to the legalisation of same-sex marriage and at the end of the article, he once again reminds of the LGBT people, thanks to whom the change could have happened.

*The Independent* also ran a campaign for legalizing same-sex marriage. Among those who spoke in favour of gay marriage were the businessman Richard Branson, the journalist and model Peaches Geldof, the actress Anna Friel or the musician Elton John; each of them presented their own ideas and opinions on the matter and gave reasons for why they thought marriage should be an institution open to everyone. The campaign demonstrates the attitude of the whole newspaper and their active involvement in the fight for equal marriage.

### **3.2 Homosexual adoption**

In accordance with the Adoption and Children Act 2002, same-sex and heterosexual unmarried couples are allowed to jointly adopt children. The law came into force in 2005. Until then, only single people or married couples were allowed to adopt children. [64] That applied to homosexual individuals as well, meaning that before the act was passed, homosexuals were not prevented from adopting children, they only could not do so jointly as a couple; only one partner could be an adoptive parent.

Given the fact that the issue is not recent, the media do not provide a great amount of coverage of it. Nevertheless, a number of articles can be found in the archives of the newspapers and magazines; however, the number of the articles is not as extensive as of the articles about same-sex marriage. Judging from that, one could assume that the topic of homosexual adoption was not as con-

troversial as marriage. However, this conclusion could be inaccurate as well, given that all articles dealing with the topic of adoption may have not been kept in the archives, and therefore at the time when the topic was current, the number of articles may have been higher.

### **3.2.1 Spiked**

In the humanist and libertarian online magazine *Spiked* there do not appear many articles commenting on the issue of adoption of children by same-sex couples. Only two articles deal directly with this matter, and namely one by Ken McLaughlin, which discusses adoption more generally, and one by Kathleen Richardson, who focuses on homosexual adoption; in others, the same-sex adoption is only briefly mentioned. Mostly, however, no subjective assessment of the same-sex adoption is explicitly given. In one article, a brief opinion in favour of adoption by same-sex couples appears, as well as in the article by Ken McLaughlin, where she explicitly states her support for same-sex adoption, criticising, however, the practices of the state when considering whether people are suitable for adoption or not; nevertheless, she does not discuss the unsuitability on the grounds of sexual orientation, and thus, in conclusion, she appears to consider discrimination in the field of adoption because of sexual orientation as non-existent.

In another article, a different view is revealed in an article dealing with the extreme right-wing political party BNP (British National Party). The author argues in a part dedicated to equality and discrimination that different-funded adoption agencies should have different rights in relation to whether they should be allowed to refuse the adoption by certain groups of people. His claim is:

*If a state-funded adoption agency were to deny a couple the right to adopt on the basis that they are poor, that would be deeply problematic; it would send a signal to the public that poor people are worse parents and have fewer rights than wealthy people. However, if a Catholic adoption agency refuses to allow gay couples to adopt its*

*children, that is in order, since it is a non-public organization that has freely devised its own rules of association and belief system. [65]*

In the article written by Kathleen Richardson, homosexual adoption is depicted as a rather positive issue, and she focuses more on other aspects of placing the child in an adoptive family and the restrictions accompanying the adoption. In the end, she speaks out in favour of fewer restrictions, in order to more people being able to adopt a child. Richardson seems in favour of adoption in general and, thus, homosexual adoption as well.

In conclusion, *Spiked* does not provide an extensive coverage of the issue of homosexual adoption. However, the few articles in which an opinion on the issue can be found appear mostly in favour of same-sex adoption and thus, *Spiked* was probably more liberal in relation to adoption by homosexual couples than it has been now on the issue of same-sex marriage.

### **3.2.2 *The Guardian***

The leftist newspaper *The Guardian* contains more articles on the issue of homosexual adoption than *Spiked*. Most of them are rather neutral and deal predominantly with the question of whether the churches should get an exception from the law that forbids discrimination against same-sex couples while applying for adoption. Naturally, the churches do not agree with religious adoption agencies placing children in homosexual families, as they mostly consider only heterosexual marriage as an appropriate environment for raising children.

No negative articles revealing opinions of journalists that oppose same-sex adoption appear in the newspaper. On the contrary, most of the articles containing subjective opinions are positive and in favour of homosexual adoption. Two articles show stories of successful child adoptions by homosexuals; one is focused only on gay men, containing also a story of a single father, the other discusses the situation in Britain as well as in the USA, also bringing stories of lesbian mothers.

The opinion of Anisa de Jong can be observed already in the headline of her quite recent article from 2013: *Why fostering and adoption should not be exclusive to the straight world*. Here she reveals her conviction that homosexuals should be allowed to adopt children in the same way as heterosexuals. Further in the article, she states some general facts about the legislation on homosexual adoption and gives figures of how many same-sex couples have adopted children. She then remarks that “[a]n important new research study is also being published by the association this week – the first of its kind in the UK – examining the experiences of adoptive families headed by same-sex couples.” The study labels same-sex parents as no less capable of raising children as heterosexual couples. [66]

Other articles also take a stand in favour of homosexual adoption. One article encourages gay men to adopt, while another deals with what names do the children give their homosexual parents and how they call them. An article also appears in *The Guardian* giving advice to same-sex parents on legal issues, namely on the different types of leave entitlements.

Martin Narey’s opinion is that it is important what kind of a parent a person is, their sexual orientation being an unimportant factor. He discusses adoption more in general; he, however, dedicates a paragraph to same-sex adoption, supporting it but also remarking:

*When I recently spoke out in favour of gay adoption I was congratulated for being "gay friendly". I was being nothing of the sort. I was simply responding to the reality that gay couples and gay individuals are every bit as successful in adoption, even though they may often take on older and more challenging children. What seems to matter in adoptive parenting is not the sort of people adopters are but the quality of their parenting. [67]*

In his statement, one can observe that his main concern is the well-being of the children to be adopted, and not the parents’ sexual orientation.

*The Guardian* appears to generally favour same-sex adoption, trying to encourage homosexuals to adopt, and also bringing advice regarding their legal rights in relation to their employers. Although most of the articles are neutral and deal

with the question of religious adoption agencies, the subjective articles depict the issue of adoption by homosexuals as suitable for the children.

### **3.2.3 *The Telegraph***

*The Telegraph's* views in its articles dating back to 2007 and 2002 correspond, unlike today, with the traditional conservative bias of the newspaper. As mentioned in the subchapter dealing with same-sex marriage, today the newspaper does not seem to be as conservative and the opinions correspond with the current situation in the Conservative party. In the first and at the beginning of the second half of the 2010s, however, the paper appears to object to homosexual relations and same-sex adoption. Although *The Telegraph* probably does not oppose to homosexuality in its nature, it assumes a negative attitude to legal recognition of same-sex relationships and adoption of children by homosexual couples. Nevertheless, it does not object to adoption by single homosexual persons.

The majority of the articles appearing in the paper are neutral; however, there are also some subjective ones. What most of the articles containing personal opinions of the writers have in common is the claim that adoption should be about what is best for the child and not about the fight for homosexual rights. It is often subject to criticism that the interests of children are considered less important by the government than the rights of gays and lesbians, and that the permission for homosexual couples to adopt is not the best option for the child but for the gay rights campaigners. The journalists argue that marriage is the only proper milieu for raising children. This can be supported with the statement from an article from *The Telegraph*: "In general, we believe that children benefit from having two people in parental roles, one from each sex." [68]

Another statement can be mentioned here because it reveals the indignation of most of *The Telegraph's* contributors about the fact that, according to them, the debate over gay adoption is more about homosexual rights than about the in-

terests of the children (as mentioned above). It also shows the stance of the paper towards gay partnerships in 2002:

*In the same way, the gay lobby has supported the Bill not because it is concerned about the plight of children awaiting adoption, but because it wants to make a point about the legal status of homosexuals. Above all, it wants a stable gay partnership to be seen as equivalent in every way to a heterosexual marriage. Although we disagree with it, this is a case that may be argued. But a Commons debate on adoption and children is not the forum in which to do so. [69]*

Another article contains evidence of the above mentioned opinion that the newspaper does not object to adoption by homosexual individuals, only to joint adoption by homosexual couples. The article specifically states that homosexuals should not be prevented from adopting as individuals. Nevertheless, if same-sex couples were to be allowed to adopt, it would, according to the article, diminish “the legal definition of marriage”. [70]

An article is dedicated to the stand of the Churches towards same-sex adoption. The author, Robert Whelan, explains his views on why the Churches should not be forced to let gay and lesbian couples adopt a child and defends the Churches’ opinions on the matter. He deals with the fact that the Churches only do not want to let homosexual couples adopt; they are, however, comfortable with single gay people. Again, the argument about marriage being the most favourable milieu for children emerges. [71]

Altogether, *The Telegraph* in 2002 and 2007 was fairly conservative, defending traditional, heterosexual marriage. One article favouring same-sex adoption also appears, though. David Self, himself a homosexual, was allowed in 2007 to write an article supporting the right of same-sex couples to jointly adopt children. This article is, nevertheless, an exception. Homosexual adoption is depicted as an issue not favouring children but being an instrument of the campaign for gay and lesbian rights.

### **3.2.4 *The Spectator***

The attitude of the conservative magazine *The Spectator* to same-sex adoption cannot be identified due to the lack of articles in the online archives dealing with the issue. Homosexual adoption is only mentioned in a small number of articles, from which two would be appropriate to be mentioned in this thesis. One, by Fraser Nelson, primarily discusses gay marriage and describes adoption by same-sex couples as follows: “Gay couples can adopt children in Britain (a bigger deal than marriage) and the main opposition to that was on the (intolerant) decision to close down Catholic adoption agencies who disagreed with the principle.” [72] He, apparently, considers the right of same-sex couples to adopt children as more important to them than the right to get married because civil partnerships already provide them with nearly the same rights and benefits as marriage. Nelson also points out that the public was not discontented with homosexual couples having been given the right to jointly adopt children but more with the fact that the religious adoption agencies were not allowed an exception from the law forbidding discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

The other article that mentions homosexual adoption is written by Matthew Parris. He expresses his incertitude about the issue of gay adoption. He was brought up by a mother and a father and, although himself a homosexual, considers such an arrangement ideal. He is also not certain about whether heterosexual adoptive parents should be given priority to homosexual couples. Overall, he appears to be somewhat undecided on what the best option is. [73]

Nevertheless, one cannot determine the stand of the whole magazine on the grounds of only brief remarks in two articles. Both articles also come from 2011/2012, and do not therefore reflect the magazine’s attitude at the time when same-sex adoption was legalized.

### **3.2.5 *The Independent***

The online archives of the leftist paper *The Independent* do not contain articles older than from 2010. Its attitude towards adoption by same-sex couples at the time of its legalization can therefore not be determined. However, several of the archived articles, mostly from 2013, are supportive of gay adoption. The newspaper brings examples of homosexual couples who adopted children or informs about a girl with lesbian mothers who wrote a letter to a member of the parliament who spoke against gay parenting. In some articles, surveys are quoted revealing that homosexuals are as successful parents as heterosexuals or that the lives of children being raised by same-sex parents are no worse than that of children living with heterosexuals. Neutral articles in *The Independent* also often discuss the situation of Catholic adoption agency and its fight for the exception from the bill forbidding discrimination against same-sex couples applying for adoption.

Two articles containing subjective opinions of their authors will be discussed here. One of the articles, written by Virginia Ironside, deals with the issue of a Catholic adoption agency in Leeds wishing to be able to choose only heterosexuals as prospective adoptive parents. The article's tone is favourable towards homosexual adoption and disapproving of the churches. Ironside clearly defines herself against the church, claiming: "Because the more the fuss the Church makes about gayness, a subject we should all be able to take for granted in an equal society, the more outdated, muddled and arcane the church appears." [74]

The other article that should be mentioned here is one by Ruth Stivey titled *All prospective parents should consider adoption - but especially gay people*. As the headline indicates, Stivey supports and promotes adoption of children by homosexuals. She herself would rather adopt a child than give birth. She discusses the issue of IVF (in vitro fertilization) as well, stating the low percentage



of successful fertilizations and high costs of this method, and “urge[s] everyone, especially LGBT couples with or without ovaries, to look at the alternatives.” [75]

Overall, the newspaper, in compliance with its political bias, depicts the issue of adoption by same-sex couples as a positive matter, even actively encouraging them to apply for adoption. It also discusses the problem of religious adoption agencies and charities quite frequently, both neutrally and subjectively.

## 4 CONCLUSION

The key objective of the thesis was, as stated in the introduction, to analyse the coverage of the current gay and lesbian issues in Britain in the British press. First, the most significant historical facts and events in the history of homosexuality in Britain were introduced. Overall, homosexual acts between males in Britain were punished since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, whereas lesbian relations were not considered sexual until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The course of events changed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when homosexuality was decriminalized in 1967 in England and Wales and the public opinion has gradually been changing throughout the 1970s, 1980s and until the present.

The main part of the thesis consists of the analysis of the depiction of two selected gay and lesbian issues in Britain in the British press, namely same-sex marriage and homosexual adoption. The aim was to determine the stance of various British newspapers and magazines towards these issues and the way in which they are depicted in them.

Generally, all the media apart from *Spiked* support homosexual marriages and adoptions to some extent. The leftist newspapers (*The Guardian*, *The Independent*) comply with their political bias and same-sex marriages and adoption by homosexual couples are depicted positively; the authors favour giving gays and lesbians the same rights as heterosexuals have. As far as the conservative newspapers and magazines (*The Spectator*, *The Telegraph*) are concerned, a mixture of opinions appears in them in the present. As in the Conservative party itself, which is currently split over the issue of same-sex marriage with some members supporting it and some members in opposition to it, the papers appear to portray gay marriage fairly confusingly – both the articles in favour and against the matter are equally represented in the media. Therefore, one could assume that the papers are trying to be seen as more liberal, providing their journalists space to express their own individual ideas, whether they are in

accordance with the traditional view of the paper or not. Nevertheless, the online archives of *The Telegraph* contain the articles on same-sex adoption dating back to 2002 when the course of the newspaper was rather different. In compliance with its conservative bias, the paper appears to have opposed the matter.

In conclusion, the issues of homosexuals in Britain represent a fairly extensive area. Therefore, only two issues were chosen for the purpose of this thesis. However, the subject could be further elaborated and other areas could be analysed as well, for instance the depiction of homosexuality in British films and TV series, such as e.g. in the 1999 series *Queer as Folk*, the new British series *Looking* or the 2000 film *Billy Elliot*, which does not deal with homosexuality directly but depicts the struggle of a young boy to dance ballet at a time when it was considered to be performed only by homosexuals; in addition, Billy Elliot's friend in the movie turns out to be gay. Such an analysis could bring a new perspective of the British perception of homosexuality in different times (depending on when the film was made), although the world of art used to depict same-sex relationships even before they gained recognition and acceptance of the general public.

## 5 ENDNOTES

- 1 Greenberg, D. *The Construction of Homosexuality*, p. 270
- 2 *The Free Dictionary* [online]
- 3 St John-Stevas, N. *Life, Death and the Law: Law and Christian Morals in England and the United States*, p. 207
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## **7 ABSTRACT**

The key objective of the thesis is to reflect the depiction of same-sex marriage and homosexual adoption in selected British newspapers and magazines with different political focuses. The thesis is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter deals with the historical events connected to homosexuality with emphasis on the events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which played an important role in improvement of the lives of homosexuals. The second chapter comprises a major part of the thesis and is focused on the analysis of various newspaper and magazine articles dealing with selected gay and lesbian issues in Britain. This chapter is divided into two subchapters; one dealing with the topic of same-sex marriage and one with the topic of homosexual adoption. Both issues are discussed in a number of articles which were analysed to determine the stance of the individual media towards the particular issue. The most important part is, however, the one dealing with same-sex marriage as it is an important current British issue.

## 8 RESUME

Hlavním cílem práce je reflektovat obraz adopce dětí homosexuály a manželství osob stejného pohlaví ve vybraných britských novinách a časopisech s odlišným politickým zaměřením. Práce je rozdělena do dvou hlavních kapitol. První kapitola se zabývá historickými událostmi spojenými s homosexualitou s důrazem na události 20. století, které hrály důležitou roli ve zlepšování života homosexuálů. Druhá kapitola tvoří větší část práce a je zaměřena na analýzu různých článků z novin a časopisů, které se zabývají vybranou problematikou gayů a lesbiček v Británii. Tato kapitola je rozdělena do dvou podkapitol; jedna kapitola se zabývá otázkou manželství osob stejného pohlaví, druhá tématem adopce dětí homosexuály. Obě témata jsou diskutována v mnoha člancích, které byly analyzovány za účelem zjištění postoje jednotlivých médií ke konkrétní problematice. Nejdůležitější je však část zabývající se manželstvím osob stejného pohlaví, jelikož je to aktuální, důležitá britská problematika.



## 9 APPENDICES

### Appendix I

A brief lexicon of gay slang *polari* used in the 1960s in London.

In: NORTON, Rictor. *Thy Myth of the Modern Homosexual: Queer history and the Search for Cultural Unity*. London and Washington: Cassell, 1997. 310 p. ISBN 0-304-33892-3, p. 116

### Appendix II

An article comparing the social changes that had happened in the past and had come out of a massive social movement with the legalisation of gay marriage now.

In: O'NEILL, Brendan. Congratulations, gay marriage campaigners – you have completely destroyed the meaning of social progress. In: *The Telegraph* [online]. 22 May 2013 [Retrieved 16 February 2014]. Available from: [http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/brendanoneill2/100218031/congratulations-gay-marriage-campaigners-you-have-completely-destroyed-the-meaning-of-social-progress/#disqus\\_thread](http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/brendanoneill2/100218031/congratulations-gay-marriage-campaigners-you-have-completely-destroyed-the-meaning-of-social-progress/#disqus_thread)

### Appendix III

An article discussing same-sex marriage as being a conservative issue.

In: MURRAY, Douglas. The conservative case for equal marriage. In: *The Spectator* [online]. 5 March 2012 [Retrieved 2 March 2014]. Available from: <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/coffeehouse/2012/03/the-conservative-case-for-equal-marriage/>

## **Appendix IV**

A picture of people protesting in favour of same-sex marriage.

In: WAGSTAFF, Keith. 13 countries where gay marriage is legal [Updated]. In: *The Week* [online]. 17 July 2013 [Retrieved 11 March 2014]. Available from: <http://theweek.com/article/index/242703/11-countries-where-gay-marriage-is-legal>

## **Appendix V**

A picture of people protesting against same-sex marriage.

In: PITEL, Laura, WATSON, Roland. Gay marriage revolt drives Cameron into Labour arms. In: *The Times* [online]. 21 May 2013 [Retrieved 11 March 2014]. Available from: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/politics/article3770252.ece>

## Appendix I

### THE MYTH OF THE MODERN HOMOSEXUAL

#### Polari: A brief lexicon

<i>acqua</i>	water
<i>ajax</i>	adjacent
<i>batts</i>	shoes
<i>bijou</i>	small
<i>blocked</i>	get high on pills ('Purple Hearts')
<i>bold</i>	darling
<i>bona</i>	very good, splendid
<i>brandy</i>	bum ('brandy and rum')
<i>butch</i>	masculine
<i>cartsl/cartes/cartso</i>	crotch, cock, penis
<i>cod</i>	awful
<i>dolly</i>	nice, pleasant
<i>drag</i>	clothes
<i>dubes</i>	pills
<i>duckie</i>	mate
<i>EEK</i>	face
<i>esong</i>	nose
<i>feely/feele</i>	young
<i>fruit</i>	queen
<i>hommel/omi, homies</i>	man, men
<i>lallies</i>	legs
<i>lilly</i>	police (Lilly Law)
<i>measures</i>	money
<i>nantilnante</i>	not, no/nothing
<i>ogle riah</i>	eye-lashes
<i>omi-polone</i>	effeminate man, gay
<i>on the team</i>	gay
<i>park</i>	give
<i>piece</i>	he/she
<i>polari</i>	homosexual slang
<i>polone</i>	woman
<i>riah</i>	hair
<i>screech</i>	mouth, throat
<i>shush</i>	bag, holdall
<i>sister</i>	close friend
<i>slap</i>	make up
<i>trade</i>	sexual partner
<i>troll</i>	walk, look for trade
<i>vardal/vada</i>	look (at), see
<i>vogue</i>	cigarette
<i>zhoosh</i>	comb, fix (also shoplift)
<i>zhoosh off</i>	go away
<i>zhooshed up</i>	dressed up

## Appendix II

# Congratulations, gay marriage campaigners – you have completely destroyed the meaning of social progress

By Brendan O'Neill Politics Last updated: May 22nd, 2013

654 Comments [Comment on this article](#)



This is how social progress used to happen

I know the only thing you're allowed to say about gay marriage is "Yay!" and that if you say anything else you're a weirdo hateful bigot. But permit to make just one non-yay-based observation about it. Which is this: gay marriage has utterly transformed, for the worse, the meaning of social progress.

Throughout modern history, big, democratic, civil rightsy leaps forward have had two things in common. First, they were demanded by very large and often very angry sections of the public; and second, it took ages and ages for the political classes to concede to them. And when they did eventually cave in and legislate for the new liberty or opportunity being demanded by the hordes, they tended to do so begrudgingly, often while wearing a sneer.

Born from mass, passionate demands from below and later instituted very reluctantly by those up above – that is the history of socially progressive developments. From the mass gatherings of hundreds of thousands of working men demanding the right to vote in the 1800s, to the long marches and harebrained stunts of the Suffragette movement in the early 20th century, to the painful and violent slog for equality by black civil rights activists in 1950s America, social progress was for generations understood as something demanded by the little people in the face of stubborn, fearful, unenlightened elites.

The gay marriage campaign absolutely eviscerates that view of social progress. It turns it completely on its head. It redefines social progress to mean the polar opposite of what it meant for most of the modern period: no longer the struggle of the man in the street against illiberal officialdom, but rather the struggle of right-on officials against the prejudices and idiocy of the man in the street.

It is remarkable how lacking in mass action the gay marriage campaign has been. There have been no public demonstrations at all: no gatherings in Hyde Park, no marches on parliament, no handcuffing to railings. The push for gay marriage has taken place entirely at the level of respectable society, being spearheaded by tiny handfuls of sharp-suited gay lobbyists, lawyers, celebrities, commentators and the Notting Hill/Hampstead sections of the political class.

And what have these brave warriors for justice spent their time and spilled their macchiatos raging against? Primarily, public ignorance, old-fashioned attitudes, the bigotry, as they see it, of the more unenlightened, possibly even religious (eurgh) sections of society. Indeed, backers of gay marriage explicitly counsel the upper echelons of society not to be swayed by the uninformed views of the masses. They say it is the mark of true statesmanship to ignore “majoritarian opinion” and forge ahead with “civilising measures” like gay marriage, because they are “the right thing to do”.

Gay marriage campaigners frequently fret about the allegedly tyrannical views of the populace. John D’Emilio, a former director of America’s National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, has written about gay marriage campaigners’ obsession with protecting themselves and their rights against what they look upon as “the tyranny of the majority”. Convinced that the public consists of lots of boneheaded bigots, gay marriage activists have become convinced that “[the law] is the way to change the world”, says D’Emilio, even though such a belief “would have been considered unusual for much of American history”, when it was mass action, not lawyerly diktat, that truly transformed society.

Campaigners’ fears of the public explain why they’re so averse to holding referendums on gay marriage. In the words of one activist, referendums allow “the majority [to become] the arbitrator for what is just”, when “that is the court’s role”. In short, it’s the job of the allegedly enlightened sections of society – judges, politicians, commentators – to decide what is right and to force it through in the face of possible public backwardness.

In essence, gay marriage has redefined “social progress” to mean imposing an elite block on tyrannical public passions, to mean having the right-minded rulers of society keep in check the wrongheadedness of society’s inhabitants. This echoes the social en-

gineering disguised as social progress that was promoted by Fabian types in the early 20th century far more than it does the true social progress pursued by the Suffragettes or Rosa Parks. It is not social progress at all, really – it is social demarcation, a way for the great and the good to distinguish themselves from the thick and the old.

## Appendix III

# The conservative case for equal marriage

[67 comments](#) 5 March 2012 19:44 [Douglas Murray](#)



*With some right-wing voices — including Catholic Cardinal Keith O'Brien, Tory MP Peter Bone and the Daily Telegraph — speaking out against same-sex marriage, here's a piece Douglas Murray wrote for The Spectator in October arguing that conservatives should instead be welcoming it:*

In America a new generation of Republicans is challenging the traditional consensus of their party on gay marriage. They — as well as some of the GOP old guard like Dick Cheney — are coming out in favour. In Britain the subject is also back on the agenda with the coalition government, at the insistence of the Prime Minister apparently, planning a 'public consultation' on the matter.

Though not exactly political leadership, this nevertheless constitutes a change — not least in stealing the mantle of gay equality from the left. For decades it was presumed that

conservatives could only oppose such moves. But as young Republicans like Margaret Hoover (author of *American Individualism*) are showing, that needn't be the case. Indeed the best arguments for gay marriage are conservative ones.

But first there are the non-arguments. Among them are those claiming that giving gays the right to marry somehow destabilises heterosexual marriage. But divorce and adultery are the biggest

underminers of marriage. Has any man abandoned his wife because of gay marriage?

Then there is the slippery-slope argument. Tory MP Edward Leigh worries that if gays are allowed to marry,

'There is no logical reason why the new alternative institution should be limited to two people. Why not three?' he asks. 'Or 33?' All of which tells us more about his imagination than his logic.

Few sights in politics are quite as risible as the male politician in full, puffing flight from an issue of basic gay equality. As the campaigning lawyer Elizabeth Birch said when arguing with the

three-times-married conservative representative Bob Barr in 1990, 'Which marriage are you defending? Your first, your second or your third?'

The idea that marriage is solely for the procreation of children is equally dismissable. Plenty of straight couples, particularly older ones, do not marry to have children. They marry to form a

deep, committed and publicly respected bond. In any case, if protecting the special nature of marriage were the true drive of anti-equality activists, then they might focus instead on those

celebrity and 'reality' stars who transparently marry for the publicity. Perhaps campaigners should picket Katie Price's weddings?

But true conservatives should welcome gay marriage. For its increasing acceptance across civilised countries represents not the making gay of marriage but the making conservative of gays. The

desire of an increasing number of gay men and women to have their stable and lifelong relationships recognised equally by family, friends and society as a whole demonstrates the respect of

individuals within, and towards, an important institution.

Those who fear or dislike perceived aspects of gay life should particularly welcome gay acceptance into the marital fold. An aspect of male 'gay life' some heterosexuals claim to have a

problem with is the perceived promiscuity. Whether this is in reality any more distinctive than among straight people, gay marriage offers a remedy, giving gays, like straights, a public and

private path towards commitment. At a time when many heterosexuals are spurning the idea of marriage, here is a section of society positively lobbying for the right to respect

and continue the institution. Perhaps gay marriage will encourage more straight people back on to the marital path?

Of course the argument most commonly made against gay marriage is the worst of all: the religious argument. Ignoring for a moment whether anyone really wishes to reinstate the practice of consulting 'holy books' for the specifics of law-making, the lack of consistency is extraordinary. A few months back I found myself debating a lady from the General Synod. The presence of a verse in the book of Leviticus was her justification for arguing against any rights for gays. 'What about the imprecations against all sorts of dietary laws in the same book?' I asked her. 'What of the warning against the mixing of fabrics? What about that verse in Exodus, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live?"' 'Well, I don't know anything about that,' she said. Citing scriptural authority raises not only problems of source, but problems with the reading of a verse.

Nonetheless, if gays are allowed to marry there should be give and take. Marriage equality should not be forced on religious institutions. Religious people of all denominations might keep making the argument within their faiths. But there is no more justification in the religious being forced to accept things they claim to be against their beliefs than there is in the religious forcing their beliefs on everyone else. That should be the quid pro quo. If the religious want to enjoy freedom from the secular, then the secular should be able to enjoy freedom from the religious. But the reasons for denying basic equality on religious grounds is not only inconsistent, it has become desperate. Some people will seize any boomerang they can to resist the case.

For instance, in 2004 the former Conservative MP Paul Goodman voted against the introduction even of the halfway house of civil partnerships, fearing their introduction would 'compromise an institution which is an integral feature of our social ecology'. Mr Goodman, now executive editor of ConservativeHome, is a married convert to Catholicism. Six years on from the Civil Partnerships Act becoming law, there is no word on whether it has compromised the 'social ecology' of his own marriage. But like so many other opponents of equal rights, he has now shifted his case. This time around, in opposing the government's equal-marriage proposals, he cites among other things the importance of canvassing Muslim opinion in any plan for equality. To call this disingenuous is to state the situation too generously.

The religious case against equal rights can — and probably will — be argued till the end of time. But the effort to deny equality to members of society on shifting religious grounds and nonexistent practical ones is a war on decency as well as on conservative sense. The



government should lead the way against this, not with a drawn-out consultation but a clear demonstration of what belongs to the secular state and what belongs to the religious conscience. Future generations of married people, straight and gay, will thank them for it.

## Appendix IV



## Appendix V

