

The hate that dare not speak its name?

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This paper uses corpus-based methods to explore how British Parliamentary arguments against LGBT equality have changed in response to decreasing social acceptability of discriminatory language against minority groups. A comparison of the language of opposition to the equalisation of the age of consent for anal sex (1998–2000) is made to the oppositional language in debates to allow same-sex marriage (2013). Keyword, collocation and concordance analyses were used to identify differences in overall argumentation strategies, assessing the extent to which previously *explicit* homophobic speech (e.g. homosexuality as *unnatural*) has been replaced by more indirect strategies (e.g. less use of personalised argumentation via the pronoun *I*). We argue that while homophobic language appears to be on the decrease in such contexts, there is a mismatch between words and acts, requiring analysts to acknowledge the presence of more subtle indications of homophobic discourse in the future.

Keywords: homophobia, parliament, debate, corpus, keywords

1. Introduction

In 1894, Oscar Wilde's lover Lord Alfred "Boysey" Douglas published the poem "Two Loves", which referred to homosexuality as "the love that dare not speak its name". The poem was mentioned at one of Wilde's trials for "gross indecency" after which he was imprisoned for two years. Along with Wilde's incarceration, the poem indicates how during Victorian times, homosexuality in Britain was seen as a criminal offence. Such thinking continued for much of the twentieth century, with medical discourses viewing it as a sickness, newspapers linking it to shame, scandal, deviancy, paedophilia and communism, while religious discourse widely held it to be a sin. However, gradually at first, people began to speak up on behalf of the love that dare not speak its name: homosexuality was decriminalised to an extent in 1967 and despite a backlash in 1988 which forbade its "promotion" by

education authorities, since the 21st century much of the earlier discriminatory legalisation has been overturned.

This paper is concerned with the language around the legal processes involved in two (successful) attempts to award equality to gay men and women in the UK. The first took place in a series of political debates between 1998–2000 which resulted in equalising the age of consent for sexual intercourse for gay men at 16 (it had previously been 18 while the age of consent for heterosexual people was 16). The second set of debates occurred in 2013 and involved allowing same-sex partnerships to be legally recognised as marriages (an earlier Bill had defined such relationships as civil partnerships since 2005, but this was felt to be a compromise by some people).

The sets of debates occurred in both the lower (House of Commons) and upper (House of Lords) chambers of the British government, and had several readings each. In the case of the age of consent (AOC) debate, the Lords rejected the proposed Bill three times, causing the lower house to use the Parliament Act to pass the Bill.¹ The same-sex marriage (SSM) Bill was twice rejected by the Lords but passed on its third reading.

These two sets of debates are a rich source of data for the analysis of discourse and argumentation around homosexuality and equality. While public attitudes have become more liberal towards homosexuality,² in both debates a substantial number of Members of Parliament and Lords voted against equality, being willing to go “on-record” about their decision, and sometimes speaking at length about why they wished to do so. Considering the shift in public opinion it is pertinent to consider whether and how anti-equality speakers differed over the two time periods in the ways they constructed their anti-equality arguments and attendant representations of gay people.

This paper examines the extent and ways in which such arguments and representations differ between the two sets of debates. We aim to assess the extent to which previously *explicit* homophobic speech (e.g. constructions of homosexuality as *unnatural*) has undergone replacement with *implicit* or indirect homophobia (i.e. by accessing discourses that are harder to interpret as homophobic on the surface level, but, nonetheless, very clear in their opposition to LGBT equality). Just as Mills (1998, 247–8) points to more subtle and indirect manifestations of sexist discourse, we aim to show how homophobic discourse “responds” to pres-

1. Since 1949 only four Acts have been passed by the government without consent of the Lords.

2. In 1983 62% of people believed sexual relations between two adults of the same sex was almost always or mostly wrong, while this figure was 28% in 2012 (British Social Attitudes Survey 2013 Edition Report).

sure by transforming its nature. Such discourse can be more difficult to identify and challenge, however, requiring a more in-depth and critical form of analysis.

We use a range of approaches from corpus linguistics in order to examine and compare the anti-equality speech from the two sets of debates. Corpus approaches are well-placed to handle large amounts of data. As discussed in Baker (2006, 10–7) such approaches can reduce researcher bias, act as a form of triangulation and aid the identification of minority positions. We have combined corpus-driven and corpus-based methods (Tognini-Bonelli 2001), the former involving using statistical tests to identify words with comparatively high frequencies in texts, while the latter involves the analysis of a pre-selected set of terms that are felt to be relevant “sites” for discussion of argumentation and representation (in this case words directly relating to homosexual identity and homophobia).

After positioning this research in relation to other relevant studies, we discuss how we built and analysed our corpora. This is followed by four results sections after which we conclude with a section which summarises and reflects on the study.

2. Literature review

In this section we focus on a small number of key studies that have examined negative representations of gay people via the use of language. Many studies have identified how gay identities are problematized: for example, Kitzinger (2005) used techniques from Conversation Analysis to show how people oriented to references to sexual orientation (either heterosexual or gay) during spoken interactions. In the transcripts she examined, heterosexuality was a taken-for-granted disclosure and did not result in any marked orientation from listeners. On the other hand, during one conversation disclosure of a gay identity became the focus of the conversation while in another it acted as a conversation killer.

The genre of newspaper discourse is perhaps one of the largest areas of analysis of homophobia. For example, Henley et al. (2002) in their study of stories about violent attacks found that the *Washington Post* used fewer, and less specific nominals when referring to anti-gay violence than to violence against heterosexual people. Chirrey (2003) studied a series of newspaper articles regarding the public “coming out” of a pop star, noting how a liberal newspaper used the verb *disclosed* to frame the act in a relatively neutral non-judgemental way, while tabloids used more sensational language such as *admits*, *frank admission*, *secret* and *in hiding*. Morrish (2002) has noted how broadsheet newspapers have used coded references to negatively represent gay men, indicating that coverage of the government minister Peter Mandelson included references to homosexual acts e.g. “What Peter Mandelson did was the political equivalent of bare-backing”, while he

was described as camp, hedonistic and narcissistic. Further to that, Baker's (2005) corpus-based study of two newspapers indicated a number of frequently cited discourse prosodies around the words *gay* and *homosexual*, including representations of homosexuality as a behaviour rather than an identity, gay relationships as transient, and gay men as promiscuous, involved in crime, shameless or shameful, politically militant, and proselytising children.

Baker (2005) also used corpus-driven techniques to examine the Age of Consent debate, focussing only on the House of Lords but comparing the argumentation of those who were for vs. those who were against equalisation. Using a procedure called a keyword analysis (described in the following section) he found that those who argued for equalisation were more likely to construct gay people in terms of their identity rather than their behaviour, and argued that it was wrong to criminalise 16 and 17 year olds for having consensual sex. Also (perhaps strategically), they made reference to the fact that the UK would be forced to pass legislation eventually due to the European Convention of Human Rights. Those who argued against equalisation made more use of historic legal terminology like *gross indecency* as well as indicating concern for the health and reputations of boys while claiming that the Bill was not needed because the age of consent for anal sex was already equal for boys and girls at 18. They also expressed concern that equality would be the "thin end of the wedge", leading to demands for further changes to the law (a point which is discussed in more detail in our analysis).

Following Baker (2005), Bachmann (2011) examined transcripts of UK parliamentary debates over the Civil Partnership Act which took place in 2004. Having identified five different standpoints regarding the Act, it was less easy to split the corpus into "for" and "against" camps so instead Bachmann compared the debates as a whole to a 4 million word reference corpus of general English. His analysis of the debate keywords led him to identify discourses of same-sex relationships as being fundamentally different to or the same as opposite-sex ones, or as one type of many relationships that were seen as disadvantaged in British society (along with unmarried heterosexual couples or cohabiting spinsters). Another dichotomy involved arguments that same-sex relationships would be detrimental to society if legally recognised, while others viewed them as beneficial to society. Finally, Bachman also found evidence of the "thin end of the wedge" discourse mentioned above.

Our study differs from Baker (2005) and Bachmann (2011) in that, in keeping with our research question, we are only examining the speech of people who voted against changes to the law. Such people wanted to maintain the status quo which arguably disadvantaged gay people. Our focus in this paper is on how speakers who voted to keep the status quo have altered their language use when the two

debates are compared. The following section describes our data, analysis tool and procedures used.

3. Method

3.1 Data

The data used in this analysis come from a selection of House of Commons and House of Lords debates from the late 1990s/early 2000s and from the year 2013. The former set concerns the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill, and the latter set the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill. Selecting only the language of those in opposition to these Bills, and making this data available for comparative corpus-based analysis, required a manual process of removing everything that was not relevant to this study. Firstly, we retrieved electronic transcripts of all of the debates from the government Hansard documents, located online.³ These then had to be “cleaned” to exclude “parts of the transcript which did not directly refer to speech” (Bachmann 2011, 84), including:

- time stamps (e.g. “3.16 pm”),
- date and column stamps (e.g. “15 July 2013 : Column 534”),
- non-linguistic descriptions (e.g. “Stephen McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak, Labour) rose”), and
- meta-discussion of general procedural matters (e.g. “That the Bill be now read the Third time”).

We then annotated the transcripts according to the stance of each speaker, in order to isolate the speech of those in opposition to the Bill being discussed. In most cases, this was done by matching the names of the speakers on the transcripts to lists of how they actually voted immediately after the debates (see Baker 2005). In debates that were not resolved by a vote (for example the Third Reading of the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill in the House of Lords), the stance of the speaker was obtained by a manual, qualitative analysis of the content of the individual speeches.

Once each contribution to the debates was identified for the stance of each speaker, we removed all speech by those who did not vote (the Speaker, Deputy Speaker(s) and those who abstained) as well as those who voted in favour of the Bills (or otherwise indicated their support for the Bill in instances where there was

3. www.parliament.uk/business/publications/hansard/

no vote). For example, the following by the Speaker of the House of Commons was omitted:

There is a four-minute limit on Back-Bench speeches, and 71 Members want to speak. (John Bercow, Speaker, 5 February 2013)

We then removed all prefacing names (e.g. “Maria Miller (Basingstoke, Conservative)”, see Baker 2006, 128) in both corpora, leaving only the speech of those who voted against the Bills. Despite removing everything that did not directly represent oppositional speech, we did keep original copies of the transcripts in order to search for entire quotes (and the identities of the debaters who spoke them) to use as examples in this paper.

The resulting corpus of oppositional language against both Bills contains a total of 188,025 tokens, which we deemed large enough to require corpus-driven and corpus-based techniques of analysis. This is split between the *Age of Consent corpus* (AOC corpus) (124,042 tokens) and the *Same-Sex Marriage corpus* (SSM corpus) (63,983 tokens). The difference in size between these two corpora (the AOC corpus contains almost twice as many tokens as the SSM corpus) is important to consider due to the comparative nature of this diachronic analysis. To account for this, we worked to ensure that all quantitative comparisons between the AOC and SSM corpora were calculated relative to the total size of each of the corpora.

The corpora of oppositional language used in this analysis, the debates they were collected from, and their size, are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Debates in the Age of Consent and Same-Sex Marriage corpora.

	Topic	Date	Length in tokens
Age of Consent (AOC) corpus (1998–2000) ⁴			
House of Commons	1st attempt: Second Reading ⁵	22nd June 1998	6,673
	2nd attempt: Second Reading ⁶	25th January 1999	13,950
	2nd attempt: consideration of clause 1	10th February 1999	14,224
	2nd attempt: Third Reading	1st March 1999	5,102
	3rd attempt: Second Reading	10th February 2000	12,094
House of Lords	1st attempt: rejection	22nd July 1998	12,063
	2nd attempt: Second Reading (rejection)	13th April 1999	28,156
	3rd attempt: Second Reading (rejection)	11th April 2000	18,449
	3rd attempt: Resolution to Committee ⁷	13th November 2000	13,331
TOTAL			124,042
Same-Sex Marriage (SSM) corpus (2013)⁸			
House of Commons	Second Reading	5th February 2013	22,331
	Third Reading	21st May 2013	2,750
House of Lords	Second Reading	3rd–4th June 2013	37,539
	Third Reading	15th July 2013	1,363
TOTAL			63,983

4. In the collection of both the AOC and SSM corpus, the First Readings in both Houses of Commons and Lords were omitted because they contained no debate and therefore no oppositional speech. Second Readings are treated as the first opportunity for a proposed change to legislation to be debated in the Houses.

5. The first attempt to introduce this legislation was the insertion of a clause into the Crime and Disorder Bill. This was blocked by the Lords (22nd July 1998). See Public Whip: <http://www.publicwhip.org.uk/division.php?date=1998-06-22&number=311>

6. The second attempt was debated and amended in the Commons three times (25th January, 10th February, 1st March 1999) before being blocked again by the Lords (13th April 1999).

7. After the 3rd attempt was blocked again by the Lords, the Parliament Act was used to pass the Bill. See <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/44/notes/division/9>

8. This Bill passed through to legislation on its first attempt; therefore there were fewer debates about this issue than AOC.

3.2 Tools and procedures

The two corpora, saved as separate .txt files, were uploaded to the corpus analysis tool AntConc (Anthony 2011) for the subsequent corpus-driven and corpus-based analysis. This is a freely available piece of software that allows, among other features, the automatic generation of concordances, collocations and keywords, each of which were necessitated by our analysis.

Our initial approach is corpus-driven in that we have used keywords as a way of identifying salient lexical items in the debates, which can act as signposts to discourses. Keywords are words which occur frequently in one corpus when compared against a second corpus and are identified via statistical tests which take into account both word frequency and the overall sizes of both corpora (Baker 2006, 125). We have used AntConc's default settings which carry out log-likelihood tests for keyness. Keywords are analysed via concordance analyses which involve viewing all the citations of a particular word in a corpus within its immediate context.

Following the keyword analysis, we have supplemented our approach with a corpus-based focus by examining a number of words that were chosen by us because they directly relate to homosexuality. These words are analysed by comparing their frequencies within the two debates and then by studying their collocates. Collocates are words which occur next to or near each other, either frequently and/or more often than would be expected if all the words in a text were randomly ordered. Again, we use AntConc's default method of calculating collocation, the mutual information test, which measures strength of collocation (rather than certainty) and gives a score for each pair of words under consideration. Hunston (2002, 71) notes that any score of 3 or above "can be taken to be significant". As with the keyword analyses, collocates are subjected to concordance analyses in order to identify why they occur together.

We argue that such a combination of analytical foci (keywords plus a predetermined list of relevant terms) will result in a more thorough analysis, enabling us both to focus on the terminology we hypothesised to be of relevance to the construction of gay identity, as well as to identify areas of interest that we may not have otherwise considered.

4. Analysis

4.1 Keywords

Our analysis begins with a corpus-driven approach, deriving keyword lists in order to identify the most salient lexical differences between the two debates. Table 2

indicates the strongest 40 keywords for both corpora when the relative word frequencies in each were compared against the other (using the log-likelihood measure). The table is ordered via keyness score. With many keywords to choose from, we focus below on the analysis of those which reveal something about representations of homosexuality or/and the ways in which anti-equality arguments were presented by speakers.

Table 2. Keywords from a comparison of the Age of Consent and Same Sex Marriage debates.

Rank	AOC keywords	Freq. AOC	Freq. SSM	SSM keywords	Freq. AOC	Freq. SSM
1	age	685	14	marriage	39	664
2	young	484	10	civil	4	136
3	consent	361	9	same	99	267
4	homosexual	387	30	partnerships	2	96
5	boys	130	0	institution	3	74
6	girls	140	0	couples	21	100
7	anal	122	0	union	7	54
8	Member ⁹	221	18	woman	18	92
9	year	185	13	Bill	581 ¹⁰	556
10	men	195	18	Marriage	0	44
11	intercourse	118	4	married	9	60
12	activity	86	0	Dear	0	38
13	he	409	85	faith	7	55
14	buggery	81	0	sex	199	240
15	AIDS	77	0	traditional	9	57
16	olds	71	0	partnership	1	39
17	I	2786	1101	this	736	613
18	Young	69	0	change	64	116
19	health	77	1	love	14	59
20	But	140	13	commitment	12	56

9. By default AntConc treats initial capital words separately from lower-case words when calculating keywords. We have retained this feature as it was useful for distinguishing surnames of politicians who were mentioned in the debate e.g. *Young* and *Dear*.

10. Despite that the word *Bill* is more frequent in the AOC debate it is actually a SSM debate keyword due to the fact that the AOC debate contains much more text than the SSM debate, so proportionally, it is still more frequent in the SSM debate. The same applies for the keywords *this*, *and*, *has* and *been*.

Table 2. (continued)

Rank	AOC keywords	Freq. AOC	Freq. SSM	SSM keywords	Freq. AOC	Freq. SSM
21	abuse	117	8	church	0	31
22	acts	79	2	legislation	60	109
23	lowering	61	0	definition	10	51
24	report	84	3	marriages	11	52
25	people	663	200	meaning	6	42
26	older	74	2	religious	22	64
27	trust	90	5	and	2667	1740
28	homosexuality	108	9	consultation	7	41
29	hon	441	118	has	459	393
30	advice	75	3	consummation	0	23
31	boy	59	1	redefinition	0	21
32	protection	161	25	process	10	34
33	clause	70	3	state	20	52
34	moral	70	3	create	5	31
35	adults	54	1	society	91	116
36	HIV	44	0	Church	28	58
37	under	159	27	been	361	304
38	medical	58	2	redefine	0	38
39	old	82	7	man	84	106
40	vulnerable	55	2	forced	3	25

To a large extent, the top keywords reflect specific aspects of changes to the law. The AOC debate was concerned with allowing males aged 16 and 17 to engage in same-sex sexual behaviour. It is not surprising to see AOC keywords like *lowering*, *age* and *consent* then. Although potentially this could have included a range of different sexual behaviours, it is notable to see keywords like *anal*, *intercourse*, *buggery* and *activity* in the AOC corpus. The first three indicate the emphasis on anal sex in the debate. Anal sex/intercourse is characterised as a *practice* (5 times), associated with *dangers* (6 times) and even an indulgence (the word *indulge* occurs 16 times in the corpus and always refers to anal sex):

There is not such a product as a safe condom for those who indulge in **anal** sex.

(Baroness Seccombe, 13 November, 2000)

Buggery is variously described as “an unnatural, unsanitary, and dangerous act”, “pathological”, “the abominable crime”, and a “dangerous practice”, while it is also

equated with *sodomy*. The word *buggery* also occurs seven times with the verb lemma COMMIT as in “buggery committed on a girl aged over 18” or “heterosexuals can commit sexual acts at 16 but must wait until they are 18 to commit buggery.” Collectively, homosexuality or sexual acts associated with it are referred to as *unnatural* 38 times in the AOC corpus (the word *unnatural* never occurs in the SSM corpus).

AOC keywords like *AIDS* and *health* acted tangentially, as a way of discussing health risks associated with this practice.

as time passes we learn more and more about the frightening **health** risks of anal intercourse and the widespread abuse to which young people are subjected.

(Lord Davies of Coity, 13 November, 2000)

Both teenage boys and girls will now be exposed to all the risks of anal intercourse; they will be far more likely to run the risk of **AIDS**.

(Baroness Young, 13 April, 1999)

As indicated in Baker (2005, 51), there were many references to *girls* in the AOC debate as those against equalisation argued that the change to the law would affect girls as well as boys (which could be interpreted as a way of legitimating against accusations of homophobia) but also that girls were seen as more mature than boys, so boys were particularly at risk.

There is no doubt that **girls** mature much earlier than boys. Boys very often are only just coming to terms with their sexuality at 16. Consequently, I accept that there is more of a case for the age of consent for **girls** to be lower than for boys.

(Baroness Seccombe, 13 April, 1999)

Similarly, the keyword *boy* is used to argue that there is gender difference between boys and girls:

...there is a great difference between a young girl of 16 and a young **boy** of 16. If a young girl of 16 is seduced, it may do her a great deal of harm. If a young man of 16 is seduced, he may be turned into a rent **boy**, possibly ruining him for life.

(The Earl of Longford, 13 November, 2000)

if I were the parent of a **boy** who had been seduced by some middle-aged gentleman, I should feel that his life had been taken a long way towards ultimate ruin. It would not be quite certain, but the chances are that if he was installed in life as a homosexual, he would never marry. He would probably in the end become promiscuous. A lonely old homosexual is one of the most pathetic sights that I know.

(The Earl of Longford, 13 April, 1999)

A related AOC keyword is *protection*, also used as part of the argument that young people (especially boys) require protection from older men.

It is in my view wrong — I stand by that position — that a young person of 16 should be free in law to embark on a course of action that might lead to a life style that would separate him, perhaps permanently, from the mainstream life of marriage and family. In particular, I believe that such a person needs **protection** from older men. (Miss Widdecombe, 10 February, 2000)

Similarly, boys are also characterised with the keyword *vulnerable*.

I am convinced that to allow the age of consent to be lowered to 16 could be seen as a form of cruelty as legally it could expose **vulnerable** adolescent boys to predatory older or indeed younger men. (Baroness Seccombe, 13 April, 1999)

The AOC debate is also characterised by moral arguments, with the keyword *moral* appearing 70 times. Debaters make reference to moral principles and the idea that there is no moral equivalence between heterosexual and homosexual relationships. Homosexuality is viewed as a violation of a moral code, and it is argued that there is a moral case against homosexuality. In the SSM debate, *moral* only occurs three times and is used less explicitly to refer to homosexuality e.g. it is argued that “our country has lost its moral compass”, while the Bill is described as a “moral mess” and a “moral minefield”.

One “unexpected” keyword in the AOC debate is the pronoun *I*, which occurs 2786 times in that debate. This word can potentially occur in many contexts but verb collocates of *I* (occurring over 10 times and having an MI score of above 3) are *agree, believe, conclude, hope, intend, oppose, quote, regret, remember, remind, repeat, think, say, suggest, support, suppose, suspect, understand, welcome* and *wonder* which concordance analyses identified as being generally used to indicate cognitive stance or to mark arguments. An analysis of 100 random AOC concordance lines revealed that in all cases the word *I* was used to refer to the speaker rather than the speaker quoting someone else (the same result was found for the SSM corpus).

The word *I* is notable because it occurred as a keyword in another UK parliamentary debate (Baker 2006, 126) involving banning fox hunting, which took place in 2002–3. MPs who wanted to ban hunting used *I* much more than those who wanted to keep hunting (to the extent that *I* was the third strongest keyword used by anti-hunting MPs). The anti-hunting stance had more public support during the debate, with an IPSOS Mori poll of 1000 people in 2003 finding that 69% of respondents thought fox hunting should be illegal, 28% thought it should be legal and 3% were undecided.¹¹ The bill to ban fox hunting was eventually enforced from 2005.

11. <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/796/Most-Say-Hunting-Should-Not-Be-Legal.aspx>

Looking at the contexts of *I* across these parliamentary debates, one way the word could be interpreted is in directly associating the speaker with the argument; the word *I* could be seen as personalising an argument. Therefore, one conclusion could be that the more frequent use of *I* in the AOC debate indicates that the anti-equality speakers were more confident about indicating ownership of their positions than those in the SSM debate. The reduction of *I* thus represents a subtle shift in discourse style.

Let us turn to the keywords for the SSM debate. As with the AOC debate, most of these keywords represent what the Bill was actually about — a change to the law to allow gay partnerships to be recognised as marriages, updating earlier legislation which called such relationships civil partnerships. Therefore, it is not surprising to see keywords like *marriage*, *civil*, *partnerships*, *couples*, *union*, *married* and *partnership*. The keyword *sex* is somewhat surprising although in fact this word never refers to sex as an act but instead is used in contexts like *same-sex couples* or *opposite-sex marriage*.

One less expected keyword is *consultation*, occurring 41 times. This word refers to the government's consultation on changing the law, where members of the public were invited to submit their opinions regarding the change. A report published in 2012 indicated that 228,000 opinions had been received, along with 19 petitions, the largest ever response to a consultation of this nature. The report concluded that "the majority of responses to the consultation (not including petitions) supported opening up marriage to same-sex couples." (HM Government 2012, 6).

How was *consultation* used by the anti-equality debaters in the SSM corpus? Scrutiny of concordance lines reveals that it was criticised in general terms:

I believe that this Bill is wrong and that the **consultation** process was a complete sham.
(Gerald Howarth, 5 February, 2013)

Regardless of our views on same-sex marriage, I think that we would all agree that the **consultation** on the introduction of same-sex marriage has been seriously deficient.
(Lord Browne of Belmont, 3 June, 2013)

More specific criticisms were aimed at the consultation, including the accusation that it avoided certain groups, that it focussed on how to change the law and not whether the law should be changed (so it was "rigged"), and that the pro-equality comments were of "dubious origin" while those which were against equality were all from "uniquely identified individuals".

Thus, one aspect of the criticism of the SSM Bill was to do with the procedure rather than the content of the Bill. This was also noted through examination of the keyword *process* which was a collocate of *consultation*. There were references

to a flawed process, abuse of process, doubts about the process, and the Bill being without proper process.

There seems to be, if not general agreement, certainly some agreement that the Bill is in a mess, ill thought through and without proper **process** or popular mandate.

(Lord Dear, 4 2 June013)

As suggested above, another procedural criticism of the SSM Bill was that the government had no mandate to introduce the Bill, with *mandate* occurring in the SSM corpus 29 times. Another criticism was that the Bill was trying to redefine the concept of marriage (via keywords like *redefine*, *redefinition*, *meaning*, *definition* and *change*).

It is not possible to **redefine** marriage. Marriage is the union between a man and a woman. It has been that historically and it remains so.

(Sir Roger Gale, 5 2 February013)

A final SSM keyword worth referring to is *religious*, along with related keywords *faith* and *church*. While the AOC debaters referred more to moral arguments, in the SSM debate, there is more mention of religion, and it is particularly argued that the Bill contravenes religious freedoms and churches will ultimately be *forced* (another keyword) to perform same sex marriages.

It will be impossible to guarantee that **religious** freedom will not be compromised.

(Graham Brady, 5 2 February013)

If the Government really respected the **faith** community, as they say they do, then this Bill would not be here today.

(Lord Mawhinney, 3 June, 2013)

Does he share my view that the reason the Government have had to put quadruple locks into the Bill to make sure that no **Church** will be **forced** into performing single-sex marriages is because they are worried that the locks will be broken, that cases will be taken to the Strasbourg Court and that Churches will then be forced to perform single-sex marriages against their will?

(Neil Parish, 5 2 February013)

To conclude this section, one way that the anti-equality debate around the two Bills differs is in the type of arguments that are presented. The anti-equality debaters in the AOC debate use moral arguments which are linked to the protection of children (especially young boys who are constructed as more at risk than girls) from the dangers of disease and predatory older men. Homosexuality is strongly linked to crime and danger. On the other hand, the SSM marriage debate focuses more on matters of procedure (there was no mandate, the consultation was flawed), that marriage has always meant the same thing and cannot be redefined, and that the Bill is an attack on religious freedom.

We now move on to the corpus-based forms of analysis, which are centred around frequencies and collocates of a small set of preselected words which relate specifically to homosexuality and homophobia.

4.2 Gay* and homosexual*

To tap into the ways that discourses and argumentation strategies around homosexuality and equality have changed between the two sets of debates, we next compared the forms of the lemmas *gay** and *homosexual** (the * symbol acts as a wildcard for any series of letters, ostensibly meaning that we searched on all forms that contain these words as the “head”, including *gays*, *homosexuality* etc.). Intuitively, it seems appropriate to consider these terms, not only because they were also addressed by Baker (2005) and Bachmann (2011), but because these concepts are salient to the topics of both sets of debates and therefore act as good points of comparison between the two. In Table 3, log-likelihood comparisons¹² of the frequency of these terms (relative to the total number of tokens in the corpora) reveal a statistically significant ($p < 0.0001$) difference in the occurrence of *homosexual** between the AOC corpus and the SSM corpus, whereas the relative frequency of *gay** has remained almost unchanged.

Table 3. Frequency of *gay** and *homosexual**.

	AOC corpus (1998–2000)		SSM corpus (2013)		% change	LL of change between whole corpora
	raw	%	raw	%		
<i>gay*</i>	110	0.09	65	0.10	+0.01	0.75
<i>homosexual*</i>	604	0.49	52	0.08	-0.41	251.18**

** = $p < 0.0001$

Figure 1 shows the difference between the two sets of debates more clearly.

Even without considering the uses of these forms in the contexts of the debates, the figure indicates a radical decline in preference for the use of *homosexual** between the AOC and SSM anti-equality language. *Homosexual** has declined to the extent that, despite barely increasing in relative frequency, *gay** is the more frequent term in the SSM corpus. What is it about the contexts in which these terms were spoken that lends evidence to a shift in anti-equality argumentation? A qualitative disambiguation of these words helps us to interpret the nature of this shift in preference (Tables 4 and 5).

12. Using an online log-likelihood calculator (UCREL 2013).

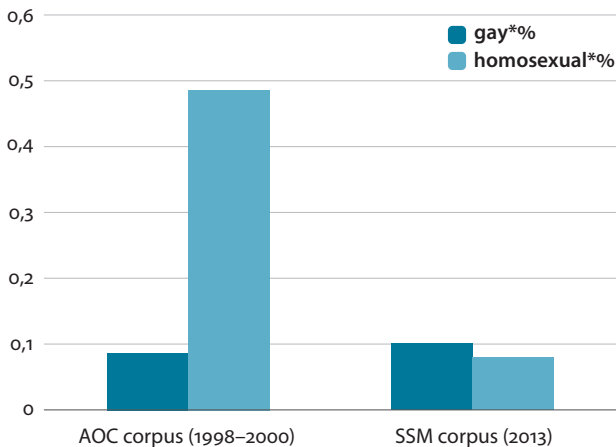


Figure 1. Relative frequency comparison of *homosexual** and *gay** between the two debate corpora.

Table 4. Frequencies of the disambiguated forms of lemma *homosexual**.

		AOC corpus (1998–2000)		SSM corpus (2013)			LL of change between whole corpora
		raw	%	Raw	%	% change	
adjective	homosexual	377	0.30	29	0.05	-0.26	167.21**
noun	homosexuality	116	0.09	9	0.01	-0.08	51.21**
noun	homosexuals	89	0.07	13	0.02	-0.05	24.24**
noun	homosexual	12	0.01	1	0.00	-0.01	5.09*
noun	homosexualism	5	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	4.16*
adverb	homosexually	4	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	3.33
adjective	homosexualist	1	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0.83

* = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.0001$

In the AOC corpus, the lemma *homosexual** is realised by all 7 forms listed in Table 4. *Gay** is realised by all 4 forms in Table 5 (which contains no statistically significant differences). The noun form *homosexualism*, which occurs 5 times in the AOC corpus, characterises homosexuality as an illness that is “lifelong” and yet potentially curable.

Of course I have seen people recover from **homosexualism**. A boy at Eton assaulted my elder brother in the bath there and was later expelled for repeating the offence on another boy. Later he became a pillar of county society and captained the county cricket team.

(The Earl of Longford, 13 1 April 1999)

First, I regard **homosexualism**, certainly lifelong **homosexualism**, as a sad disorder and handicap. (The Earl of Longford, 13 2 November000)

Homosexually (occurring 4 times) is used to distinguish homosexual and heterosexual people in terms of how they are “inclined” to behave sexually, while the adjective *homosexualist* occurs once, constructing gay people as a dangerous group attempting to convert others to homosexuality.

There is another motive, however. There is a **homosexualist** agenda. The homosexual community, by its nature, is sterile, and it can survive and grow only by proselytising. (Mr. Swayne, 1 1 March999)

A notable feature of the observed decline in the frequency of *homosexual** in the SSM corpus is that these 3 low frequency variants do not occur in the 2013 data. Likewise, for *gay** there has been the elimination of “nouncing” forms *gayness* and singular *gay*. Marshall (2004, 8) describes the use of *gay* as a noun as “central to the process of adverse discrimination” by “defining people by a single element of who they are”. One *could* argue that these changes relate simply to the difference in the legislative changes being debated in the two corpora. However, as shown, several of these forms are used not to discuss the age of consent but, in several cases, to make discriminatory and homophobic statements about the nature of homosexuality. These are, in a sense, and at least within the context of these debates, “homophobic words”, used to express distaste for homosexuality.

What remains are the forms that are present in both corpora. In the SSM data, *homosexual** is realised only by *homosexual* (adjective), *homosexuality*, *homosexuals*, and *homosexual* (noun). *Gay** is realised by *gay* (adjective) and *gays*. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most common forms of both lemmas, in both corpora, are the adjectives *homosexual* and *gay*. The adjective *homosexual* has decreased in frequency significantly, whereas the proportion of *gay* as an adjective has increased slightly. It is worth considering the types of nouns that these adjectives modify in

Table 5. Frequencies of the disambiguated forms of lemma *gay**.

		AOC corpus (1998–2000)		SSM corpus (2013)			LL of change between whole corpora
		raw	%	raw	%	% change	
adjective	<i>gay</i>	101	0.08	61	0.10	0.01	0.93
noun	<i>gays</i>	6	0.00	4	0.01	0.00	0.15
noun	<i>gayness</i>	2	0.00		0.00	0.00	1.66
noun	<i>gay</i>	1	0.00		0.00	0.00	0.83

the debates. What, exactly, is described as *gay* or *homosexual*, and (how) has this changed over time? Based on Bachmann (2011, 91), we categorised *gay* and *homosexual* according to whether they describe the *identity* of one or more human referents, or some sort of related behaviour with no direct human referent. Examples of *identities* include *community*, *couple*, *men*, *people*, and *women* while examples of *behaviours* include *act*, *activity*, *desire*, *intercourse*, *lifestyle*, *marriage*, *relationship*, *sex*, and *suffering*. Table 6 shows the proportion of nouns modified by *gay* or *homosexual* in terms of their qualitative classification as either *identity* or *behaviour*.

Table 6. Combined frequencies of *homosexual* and *gay* used as adjectives to signal *identity* and *behaviour*.

	AOC corpus (1998–2000)		SSM corpus (2013)			LL of change between whole corpora
	raw	%	raw	%	% change	
homosexual/gay as identity	169	0.14	49	0.08	−0.06	13.90*
homosexual/gay as behaviour	309	0.25	41	0.06	−0.19	92.62**

* = $p < 0.001$; ** = $p < 0.0001$

In the AOC corpus, homosexuality is associated with behaviour almost twice as much as it is viewed as an identity. However, in the SSM corpus the view of homosexuality as a behaviour has diminished, becoming less frequent than the “identity” representation. This indicates a shift in understanding of homosexuality, even within people who voted against equalisation of laws. Furthermore, looking at concordance lines which feature *homosexual* as a behaviour, it seems that a reduction of range of behaviours in use has co-occurred with a drastic change in the nature of such behaviours (Table 7).

As anticipated, some of the nouns that are no longer described as *homosexual* in the SSM corpus include concepts specific to the topic of the AOC debate (*age*, *consent*, *intercourse*, *orgy*, *sex*, and *sexual activities*). However, some of the other nouns imply that homosexuality is bad or problematic (*conduct*, *disease*, *issue*, *gross indecency*, *offence*, *propaganda*) or some kind of optional or temporary phenomenon (*attitudes*, *behaviour*, *desires*, *experience*, *leanings*, *persuasion*, *phase*, *stance*, *tendencies*, *way of life*), and do not necessarily relate directly to the topic of the age of consent. Since such “homosexual behaviours” are not discussed by the SSM opposition debaters, we argue, then, that their absence in the SSM debate (along with the “homophobic words” above) is not topic-specific but indicative of societal change. Similar uses of such forms in the 2013 Same-Sex Marriage debates would likely be interpreted as explicit realisations of homophobic discourse,

Table 7. All nouns modified by *homosexual* categorised as *behaviours* in the AOC and SSM corpora. Those in bold occur in both lists.

Behaviours described as <i>homosexual</i> in the AOC corpus (bold are shared with SSM):	<i>act, activity, activities, acts, age, attitudes, behaviour, case, conduct, consent, debates, desires, disease, disposition, equality, experience, experiences, gene, gross indecency, intercourse, issue, leanings, lifestyle(s), literature, lobby, marriage, object, offences, organisations, orgy, orientation, partnerships, persuasion, phase, practice, propaganda, relations, relationship, relationships, sex, sex outside marriage, sexual activities, side, stance, sub-culture, tendencies, vote, way of life</i>
Behaviours described as <i>homosexual</i> in the SSM corpus (bold are shared with AOC):	<i>civil partnership, equality, lobby, marriage, lifestyles, rights, suffering, union, wish</i>

and viewed as no longer acceptable in Parliamentary debate. We argue that anti-equality language has eliminated such controversial forms “in response” to societal pressure to no longer be viewed as holding homophobic views.

4.3 Collocates

In this section we take a closer look at the contexts within which the lemmas *homosexual** and *gay** occur, by focussing on their *collocates*. Specifically, we consider how the collocates of these lemmas have changed between the AOC and SSM debates. As described in the Method, collocates are calculated by Mutual Information score, which measures the strength of the “collocational bond” between words (Mautner 2007, 57). We calculate collocates within a range of four words to the left and four words to the right of the nodes *homosexual** and *gay**, and exclude pairs with a combined raw frequency of lower than 5. The top 10 most significant collocates of *homosexual** in the AOC and SSM corpora are shown in Table 8 and those of *gay** in Table 9.

In the AOC debate data, *homosexual** tends to co-occur with words related to sexual behaviour (*acts, consenting, homosexuality, activity*), which seems to correspond with such uses as described in the previous section.

If, on the other hand, the origins of homosexuality are more complex, we may be right to see **homosexual activity** and acts of buggery as pathological.

(Lord Ashbourne, 13 April 1999)

In contrast, the word *activity*, and therefore the phrase *homosexual activity*, does not occur at all in the SSM corpus. This is likely to be related to the topic of the debates; however the presence of collocate *marriages* in the AOC list, despite the

Table 8. The top 10 collocates of *homosexual** in the AOC and SSM corpora.

	AOC corpus (1998–2000)	Freq. as col- locate	MI	SSM corpus (2013)	Freq. as collocate	MI
1	adoption	5	7.83885	rights	5	8.49807
2	acts	46	7.54406	people	7	7.42711
3	heterosexuality	8	7.41739	about	6	7.02202
4	heterosexuals	10	7.32428	was	5	6.44088
5	marriages	5	7.18678	marriage	9	6.05849
6	lobby	9	7.17228	are	5	5.85762
7	consenting	6	7.10189	and	20	5.82066
8	heterosexual	46	7.07966	a	13	5.53883
9	homosexuality	7	7.00235	not	7	5.49921
10	activity	34	6.98548	of	19	5.41878

Table 9. The top 10 collocates of *gay** in the AOC and SSM corpora.

	AOC corpus (1998–2000)	Freq.	MI	SSM corpus (2013)	Freq.	MI
1	clubs	5	10.26226	community	9	8.39588
2	lesbian	5	9.58419	said	6	5.5959
3	community	13	8.79277	would	6	5.15884
4	rights	7	7.4549	marriage	22	5.1177
5	gay	114	7.30449	gay	63	5.10257
6	men	9	5.82485	people	6	4.97442
7	against	6	5.62805	who	7	4.81276
8	young	19	5.59132	or	6	4.61265
9	people	25	5.53325	The	5	4.07447
10	sex	7	5.43299	in	14	3.65208

debate being about age of consent, suggests further that the language of the debaters is not necessarily contained within the particular topic of the Bill in question. The use of the collocate *marriages* expresses a fear that if one piece of equality is granted to LGBT people (equal age of consent), then other, apparently worse changes (same-sex marriage) will be demanded next:

...those who support the reduction of the age of consent would lay themselves open to the argument...that there should be equality in everything else. Should

there be equality in pensions? Should there be equality in terms of marriage, so that there could be **homosexual marriages**? That will be the next thing.

(Gerald Howarth, 10 February 1999)

Similarly, despite the topic of the debate being age of consent, the top collocates of *homosexual** in the AOC debate data is *adoption*. All of these refer to adoption (of children) “by homosexual couples”, of which the debaters appear to strongly disapprove. Discussion of adoption is used to place the equalisation of age of consent within a category of other gay rights issues (including marriage) which are construed as even less desirable.

Does he recall the letter that he wrote to me over the summer in which he gave a firm and clear statement of Government policy — that there would be no reduction in the age of consent to 14 for homosexual acts in our country, that no legalisation of homosexual marriages would be proposed by the Government, and that there would be no legal adoption of children by homosexual couples?

(Stuart Bell, 25 January 1999)

The collocates in the AOC debate also indicate that *homosexual** is often compared to concepts of heterosexuality (*heterosexuality*, *heterosexuals*, *heterosexual*). These are used in similar ways, mostly to reinforce a difference between the sexual activities of heterosexual and homosexual people. Of the 38 comparisons made between homosexual and heterosexual sex, 25 (65.8%) state explicitly that there is not or should not be equality between the two.

Those who support the amendment say that they demand equality before the law for homosexual acts. But there is no equality between **heterosexual** and **homosexual** behaviour. One is the natural order of things; the other is not. Indeed, if nature had intended otherwise, it would undoubtedly have constructed the human body differently.

(Lord Stoddard of Swindon, 22 June 1998)

But, in terms of sexual activity, boys and girls, and **homosexuals** and **heterosexuals** are not equal. That is the whole point. They are different. To treat them as though they were equal is, I believe, to open a door to changes further down the line which could be highly undesirable.

(Lord Habgood, 22 July 1998)

These sorts of coordination appear to characterise homosexual people as identifiably different to heterosexual people, and this is realised mostly through descriptions of the differences between their sexual behaviours.

Turning to the SSM collocates of *homosexual**, it is clear that the situation has changed with regards to the use of this lemma. Perhaps surprisingly, there is a strong emergence of grammatical words (*was*, *are*, *and*, *a*, *not*, *of*) that now frequently co-occur with the node. However, this may relate to the smaller size of the SSM corpus, or perhaps the low frequency (52) of *homosexual** in the SSM corpus.

The collocate *are* is brought to our attention: the one occurrence of the phrase *homosexuals are* is shown below:

This Bill ignores a fact well understood for centuries: marriage is not about just love. Of course, **homosexuals are** often very delightful, artistic and loving people. No one doubts that for one single moment. However, marriage is not about just love. It is about a man and a woman, themselves created to produce children, producing children. (Baroness Knight, 3 June 2013)

In contrast to the oppositional collocates of the AOC debate, Baroness Knight appears to *compliment* gay people (by characterising them as “delightful”, “artistic” and “loving”) while expressing her defence of opposite-sex marriage. This type of argument poses gay people as able in almost every way (including emotionally) to maintain marriage, but excluded because they do not qualify physically to carry out what is construed as the defining purpose of marriage (to reproduce biologically). This signals a departure from the fearful expressions of opposition to same-sex marriage in the AOC corpus, but at the same time very much speaks of homosexual couples in a different way to heterosexual couples. Baroness Knight’s comment also articulates a somewhat narrow stereotype of gay people as associated with the arts, while the term *delightful* could be interpreted as patronising.

Moving on, we want to consider the collocate *not* and what it is used to negate. It seems that *not* is used to describe how some features of opposite-sex marriage (rules surrounding *adultery* and *consummation*) would not be able to apply to same-sex marriage in the new Bill. Therefore, same-sex marriage is construed as not a way of creating equality for same-sex couples but a way of creating discrimination against opposite-sex couples.

I understand that there is no definition of how a same-sex marriage would be consummated, or of what would be regarded as adultery in a same-sex marriage. Therefore, a heterosexual marriage would stand liable to annulment because of non-consummation but a **homosexual** marriage would **not**. Similarly, a heterosexual husband or wife might be found to have committed adultery, whereas a **homosexual** could **not** be found to have committed adultery. That is real discrimination. (Lord Tebbit, 3 June 2013)

It appears that oppositional language has shifted its focus away from explicit negative discrimination against LGBT people. This has been replaced by considerations of the effect on the majority. In the SSM data, there is a fear expressed that, by creating equality for a minority, discrimination will be created for the majority.

Looking at the collocates of *gay**, several of the AOC debate collocates appear to collectivise gay people in some way (*clubs, community, men, people, and lesbian,*

from the phrase “gay and/or lesbian”, occurring 5 times). Three out of the 5 hits for the collocate *clubs* occur within the same sentence.

However, in the gay community sexuality seems to matter almost totally. There are **gay clubs**, **gay bars**, the **gay press**, **gay this** and **gay that**, and it is not healthy.

(Jamie Cann, 25 January 1999)

This is because each of the instances of *gay* occurs within 4 words either side of *clubs*. In the AOC debate gay clubs are negatively implied to be “not healthy” in the case above, while they are described as “less desirable surroundings” and linked to “God knows what” in other speeches. The use of vague terms like “gay this and gay that” and “God knows what” imbue homosexuality with a sense of the unknown, helping to make it appear unspeakably strange and worrying.

The collocate *men* appears to co-occur with *gay** in discussions around research on HIV, AIDS and sexual health (7 times, 77.8%), whereby gay men, particularly *young* gay men, are construed as the carriers of a dangerous disease. Some debaters present research as evidence of “the prevalence of HIV among gay men” (Julian Lewis, 25th January 1999), a point echoed in the example below:

People need not listen to me, but they should listen to the Terence Higgins Trust, a body trusted by the homosexual lobby, which says that one in five **gay men** in London is HIV positive.

(Mr Leigh, 25 January 1999)

Another way the AOC debaters characterise gay people is to use the collocate *community*, which is also a collocate of *gay** in the SSM corpus. Their use in the two sets of debates, however, is indicative of yet another change in argumentation structure. In the AOC data, the *gay community* is characterised as the victim of *prejudice*, *hostility*, and *antagonism* (by people other than the debaters); but it is also described as being inherently involved with promiscuous sexual behaviour because it is “an overt community defined by gayness” (The Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells, 13th April 1999). There is also evidence of what appears to be tautological double-marking of sexuality adjectives:

I hope that although many of us may disagree with the Government’s proposal, we shall not be regarded as antagonistic to the homosexual **gay community**, because that is not our intention.

(Sir Normal Fowler, 10 February 1999)

This contrasts with a very different characterisation in the SSM data. Here, the *gay community* is most often (6 times, 66.7%) described as, contrary to popular opinion, viewing same-sex marriage as unnecessary. Debaters take it upon themselves to speak on behalf of the *gay community* by expressing their satisfaction with the current levels of equality.

Where has all this come from? The impetus for redefining the meaning of marriage is not largely from the **gay community**, many of whom are perfectly happy with civil partnership as crafted a few years ago. (Lord Flight, 3 June 2013)

Many MPs were quick to praise the civil partnerships legislation as being everything that the **gay community** wanted — that it created the equality for which they had fought for so long. (Robert Ffello, 5 February 2013)

The Labour MP Ben Bradshaw, who was the first Cabinet Minister to enter into a civil partnership, has openly criticised the idea of gay marriage, saying that the move to smash centuries of church teaching is “pure politics” and not wanted by the **gay community**, which has already won equality through civil partnerships. (Lord Singh of Wimbledon, 3 June 2013)

Surprisingly, one instance of *gay community* is preceded by the plural possessive pronoun *our*, implying a form of shared ownership.

The equality that it purports to seek is a cheapened version of spurious uniformity in glaring defiance of reality. Our **gay community**, talented and caring, deserves better and can have it. (Lord Quirk, 3 June 2013)

Similar to Baroness Knight, Quirk employs a strategy of overtly marking gay people by their (apparently unique) positive attributes while expressing his opposition to same-sex marriage. In this case, he criticises the “linguistic acrobatics” of the bill and claims that it is badly written; therefore requiring a “root-and-branch rethink”.

People, the only other collocate shared with the AOC debate, is also used differently in the SSM data. Here, *gay* is listed with *lesbian* (3 times) and once with “gender-transmuted” to describe different kinds of *people*.

My Lords, we have just had a telling and detailed explanation of the road that we have travelled in getting equality for lesbian, **gay** and gender-transmuted **people**. (The Duke of Montrose, 4th June 2013)

This use could be interpreted as discriminatory against transgendered people, as it brings about connotations of *mutation*. It appears to be particularly rare — a Google search for the term “gender-transmuted” retrieves only 19 results; 6 of which refer to its single use in this debate.

To conclude this section, we have shown that the contexts in which the concept of *homosexuality* is used have changed in several ways between the AOC and SSM debates. The contexts of *homosexual** originally comprised of negative constructions of sexual activity and reiterations of the differences between homosexuality and heterosexuality. In the SSM debates, these have been replaced by arguments that attempt to portray LGBT people in a positive light, as well as shifting the focus from the minority under consideration to the effects on the wider

heterosexual society. The use of *gay** has changed from concerns over health to the collectivisation of an LGBT community that is described as not actually wanting gay marriage and requires to be spoken for by the debaters themselves. In general, there does appear to have been a movement away from characterisations of homosexuality that could be interpreted as explicitly homophobic; however, some of the discriminatory arguments that remain contain complimenting strategies which appear intended to diminish the perception of discrimination and could thus be viewed as insincere.

4.4 Terms relating to homophobia

In this section, we examine terms specifically relating to homophobia in order to focus on how anti-equality debaters addressed accusations that their position might be seen as homophobic. Table 10 shows the frequencies of these words across the two debates. Apart from *prejudice** and *intoleran** these terms are proportionally higher in the anti-equality speech in the SSM corpus, suggesting that such speakers felt required to comment more on issues surrounding homophobia, prejudice and discrimination in the later debate.

Table 10. Frequencies of terms relating to homophobia and prejudice.

	Freq. AOC	% AOC	Freq. SSM	% SSM	% change	LL of change between corpora
homophob*	20	0.02	32	0.05	+0.03	16.33*
bigot*	13	0.01	25	0.04	+0.03	15.89*
intoleran*	10	0.01	9	0.01	0	1.44
prejudice*	24	0.02	9	0.01	-0.01	0.70
discriminat*	60	0.05	41	0.06	+0.01	1.89
Total	127	0.10	116	0.18	+0.08	19.37*

* $p < 0.0001$

In the AOC debate, there are four occurrences of anti-equality voters referring to *homophobic ranting(s)* by other debaters, suggesting dissent (at least on style and argument type) within the anti-equality camp.

Other AOC debaters argue that their opposition to the Bill does not make them homophobic.

I am not **homophobic** in any way. I do not dislike or hate people of a different sexual orientation from the normal, so long as they are adult and know what they are doing. It is not a question of **homophobia**; it is a question of people having a differing view.

(Lord Stoddart of Swindon, July 22, 1998)

I am a practising Christian. Christians are not **homophobic** — along with most genuine religions — but we are against homosexual practices. That is our genuine belief. (Lord Stallard, 13 April 1999)

One speaker is critical of the concept of homophobia:

“**Homophobe**” must be one of the most contrived words to have entered our language recently. (Mr Robathan, 25 January 1999)

In the SSM debate, anti-equality debaters tend to mount a defence of their stance which goes beyond arguing that they are not homophobic for various reasons. Instead, they express concern that they or people who hold similar views to them will be attacked for perceived homophobia.

It is intolerable, however, that as soon as Members of Parliament put their heads above the parapet and speak to the media, they are called a homophobe, a Nazi — I have been called that a **bigot**, and many other expletives that I would not dare to read out. I have been told to be ashamed of myself, and to die: I have received specific death threats relating to my travel plans. I have been told that I am a disgrace, and that I have no right to express my opinion on this subject. My children have been told that their dad is a **bigot** and a **homophobe**.

(Mr Burrowes, 5 February 2013)

Ordinary people with deep feelings about the sanctity of marriage will also be demonised as **homophobic** and will be very lucky if they do not finish up accused of hate crime. (Lord Waddington, 3 June 2013)

I never imagined that I would be put in a position where I have, by virtue of standing up for marriage, been characterised variously as a **homophobic bigot**, a religious nutter, a product of the dark ages, or, as I see in this weekend’s press, on the brink of making a tragic mistake that I will have many years to regret.

(John Glen, 5 February 2013)

Thus, the anti-equality SSM debaters engage in re-appropriation of an oppositional argument, representing themselves as the true victims, who are threatened and bullied for simply stating their opinions.

5. Conclusion

The AOC debate contains more openly homophobic discourse than the SSM debate, framing gay sex as criminal and dangerous, implying that older gay men are sexual predators, and they can transmit “homosexuality” to boys, ruining them for life by making them promiscuous. Homosexuality is framed as temporary and optional, as well as unnatural and immoral. Links are often made between the

perceived promiscuous sexual lifestyle of gay men and the proliferation of dangerous sexually transmitted diseases. There is maintenance of a distinction between both the sexual activities and (therefore) the prescribed rights of gay people and heterosexual people. As a result, the language of opposition to equalising the age of consent (accurately, in fact) expresses fear that allowing one piece of equality for LGBT people will pave the way for further changes for gay people in the future, including “homosexual marriages”. However, even in the AOC debate, there are signs that some participants wish to distance themselves from other speakers, referring to the speech of some of their peers as “homophobic rantings”, and using a “strategic” equality argument which claims that the status quo is good because it equally protects boys and girls from anal sex (although this is somewhat diminished by the other argument that boys are different from girls).

On the other hand, the SSM debaters are much more cautious in condemnation of homosexuality. A radical decline in the use of *homosexual* corresponds with the elimination of the controversial terms (e.g. *homosexuality*) found in the older debates. Furthermore, *gay* and *homosexual* are much less likely to be associated with *behaviours* and more likely to describe the *identities* of the people concerned. The behaviours that do persist no longer refer to sexual activities or the apparently transient nature of homosexuality. The less frequent use of the use of *I* in the SSM debates (in relation to the AOC debaters) is perhaps indicative of a reluctance among SSM “no” debaters to personally identify with their positions. And argumentation has changed in several ways: there are criticisms of procedure, rather than making attacks on gay people there is an attempt to mitigate opposition by *complimenting* gay people (as “artistic” or “talented”), as well as a focus not on the benefits of the legislation but on the apparently discriminatory effects on heterosexuals and religious people. Even gay people themselves are described as not wanting the change. And, perhaps ironically, the debaters appropriate the discourse of gay liberation by positioning themselves as victims of intolerance, complaining that they have been attacked for their stance.

Overall, what differentiates the same-sex marriage opposition from the previous data is that the debaters of 2013 realise their oppositional stance in almost any way other than one that is *explicitly* homophobic. Since society has changed to the extent that it is no longer acceptable to be seen to publically discriminate against social minority groups, the debates were a chance for those who oppose same-sex marriage to refute accusations that simply voting against LGBT equality is a homophobic act in and of itself. And though, on the surface, they appear to have done just that through careful avoidance of explicit homophobic language, we believe that at least in some cases there now exists a *hate that dare not speak its name*. The *act* of voting against equality for gay people could be interpreted as homophobic, although in the SSM debate it is less easy to level that accusation at

the *discourse* of the people who voted that way. The analysis drives home a key point about discourse analysis — that the linguistic analysis must always be considered alongside social context. Knowing that the speakers in the SSM debate voted against gay marriage, and that public attitudes towards homosexuality had altered enables a fuller interpretation and explanation of their language.

This paper has indicated numerous strategies that may be transferable to other contexts where people hold negative attitudes about a social group that they are reluctant to own up to. We would hope that by outlining such strategies, these more subtle discourses are easier to identify and challenge. We acknowledge a potential limitation of this study in that as Sunderland (2004) notes “discourse identification is...always *interpretive*” (p.3, cited in Bachmann 2011, 81). Because of this, Bachmann (2011, 81) acknowledges that his “perspective as a gay man...plays a significant role” in his interpretation of discourses. Therefore our own perspectives as gay men may be said to bias our analysis; however, like Bachmann (2011, 81), we aimed to ensure that the discourses we identified are “recognisable to other language users” and were based upon frequent and salient patterns found via corpus analysis tools rather than simply picking stretches of text that we thought were interesting.

Future research projects could examine similar debates around LGBT equality as they occur in other countries, in order to identify additional strategies or to indicate commonalities. We are also mindful that the process of obtaining equality for minority groups should never be taken for granted. As indicated by recent events in countries like Russia and Uganda, moves towards equality can be reversed under certain circumstances. And as this paper has shown, homophobic acts and attitudes are not necessarily always reflected by equally strong accompanying discourses. Vigilance, rather than complacency is recommended, to ensure that such hard-won rights remain in existence.

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