

Media Representations of Gay and Lesbian Couples with Families:
A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Proposition 8 Advertisements

by

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BA, University of Colorado, 2011

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Abstract

While the inclusion of gay and lesbian individuals in the media is not a recent phenomenon, the increased representation of families headed by gay and lesbian couples is somewhat new. Research has shown that mediatized representations of gay and lesbian individuals and couples more often than not adhere to stereotypes and perpetuate ideas that the constructors of these representations want their audiences to consume. Research has also focused on audiences' reception and processing of the messages that these representations may carry. This study, instead, focuses on the construction of representations of gay and lesbian couples and their families, bringing to the forefront the importance of discursive practices that are used to construct visual, linguistic, and aural elements of the media consumed by audiences. Looking specifically at advertisements (both for and against) concerning California's Proposition 8, a ballot measure proposing to ban same-sex marriages, this study shows how elements of the composition of the advertisements coalesce and mutually enhance each other to create particular understandings of gay and lesbian families. Using Critical Discourse Analysis and Social Semiotics, this study uncovers the underlying ideologies that inform the discursive and semiotic choices that have been made. Together, the music, the visuals, and the language are formed into a coherent whole, the advertisement. This thesis argues that *how* gay and lesbian people are represented is equally as important as the overt messages that are being disseminated to the audiences. By studying the discursive practices utilized by these advertisements, we are able to see that ideologies of idealistic family life and heterosexual relationships influence both advertisements in their characterisation of gay and lesbian couples and their respective families.

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Chapter One: Introduction

California: A Locus for Lesbian Women's and Gay Men's Rights

Recent developments in the social battlefield regarding same-sex marriages have led to the circulation of advertisements in support of marriage equality in nations such as the United States, Australia, and Ireland, to name a few (GetUp! Action for Australia; Marriage Equality USA). The contentious issue of same-sex marriage stems from a history of moral values, political beliefs, and legal restrictions regarding who has the right to marry (Lannutti 2005). The ads disseminated in past years serve essential functions in the campaigns supporting marriage equality, as well as those denouncing it. These advertisements supporting marriage equality depict same-sex couples in specific ways in order to provide audiences with a persuasive and compelling portrait of gay and lesbian relationships and family life.

In the United States, the topic of marriage equality remains contentious. The platforms of both Presidential candidates in the November 2016 elections included stances on marriage equality and lesbian and gay rights—an indication that there is much life left in the battle to obtain equal treatment and maintain the right to marry for lesbian and gay couples. Across the country, this fight has been relatively uneven. In 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that it was unconstitutional to deny same-sex couples the right to marry (Taylor et al. 2009), and following this ruling, on May 17 2004, Massachusetts became the first state in the United States to legalize same-sex marriages (Avery et. al 2007). As of today, marriage equality is now a reality for all gay and lesbian Americans given the ruling of the Supreme Court on June 27, 2015 declaring states unable to ban same-sex marriages. The Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, declared that it was unconstitutional for states to deny the right to marriage based on the sexual orientation of the individuals. Despite this action by the highest court in the nation, the discussion to overturn this decision is one that appeared in the most

recent US Presidential election. Throughout the election, both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump voiced support for the LGBT community. Trump even became the first GOP candidate to include in his nomination speech pledged support to protect the LGBT community from terrorist attacks after the shooting that killed many at a gay nightclub in Orlando (Sanders 2016). Trump has, in recent interviews, stated that same-sex marriage is a now settled law and is fine with the decision (Stokols 2016). However, his party, along with the those in his administration, have a history that says otherwise. Trump's Vice President, former Congressman Mike Pence, has even stated that gay couples were an indication of societal collapse (Drabold 2016). Regardless of the advances made for marriage equality in previous years and the strong support shown for maintaining this right, the current political climate shows that a more conservative America still exists, especially with the election of a Republican President.

Prior to the recent Supreme Court decision, however, some states that did not allow same-sex marriages, did allow or acknowledge some form of civil union or domestic partnership, conferring upon same-sex couples a limited amount of legal rights and protections (ProCon.org 2012). While civil unions and partnerships have been touted as being the equivalent of marriage, they in fact are not the same (Avery et al. 2007), expressing a 'separate but equal' tactic reminiscent of the Civil Rights era where segregation was legal and preferred by the majority. Civil unions recognize gay men and lesbian women as a separate category of people, necessitating a separate category of legal relationship recognition, saving 'traditional' marriage, with its procreative premises and seemingly ahistorical origins, for heterosexual couples (Thomas 2005). States that once recognized civil unions operated a two-tiered system of relationships, claiming progress in granting legal legitimacy to gay and lesbian couples when in fact this 'compromise' masks unequal treatment still occurring and a failed attempt at equality.

Even though marriage equality has been deemed a given right for lesbian and gay Americans, the dissent and disagreement continues. A few months after the Supreme Court Ruling, a clerk in

Rowan County, Kentucky refused to provide a marriage license to a gay couple igniting furor once again between lesbian and gay Americans and their allies and those still opposed to same-sex marriages (Castillo and Conlon 2015).

California presents a unique case in the history of the fight for marriage equality in the United States, thus making it a prime case study. During the Bush administration, the former President proposed an amendment that would ultimately ban same-sex marriage on a national level (Taylor et al. 2009). As a reaction to this suggestion, Gavin Newsom, the former Democratic mayor of San Francisco, CA ordered the issuing of marriage licenses to gay and lesbian couples on February 15 2004 (ProCon.org 2012). This was a striking move given that the licenses were issued on the day after Valentine's Day, traditionally a day on which heterosexual couples celebrate their relationships. However, this decision incited much dissent across the nation, and on March 11, 2004, the California Supreme Court ordered that the city cease these same-sex weddings. Later that same year on August 12, those marriages that were performed were voided.

While this seemed discouraging, Californians continued efforts to achieve equality and on May 15, 2008, four years after the first attempt in California to defy marriage traditions, the California Supreme Court overturned state laws banning same-sex marriages, deeming it unconstitutional to exclude same-sex couples from marriage (ProCon.org 2012; Taylor et al. 2009). This sparked an immense wave of marriages from May 2008 to November 4 2008, during which time almost 18,000 same-sex couples married in California. However, this period of matrimony was short-lived as Proposition 8, a ballot measure that banned same-sex marriage, was passed by the California voters with 53% of voters approving the measure. This, of course, shocked many Californians, as well as the nation, given that California is considered “one of the nation's 'bluest,' 'gayest,' most racially diverse states” (Wadsworth 2011: 200-201). Also significant in this decision was that many liberal, left-leaning people of color voted more conservatively regarding the issue of same-sex marriages, indicating a more complex decision-making process that sparked many questions. The jump to the right by California's

people of color, while surprising to some, stems from a complex relationship between racial, ethnic, and religious identities, where religion and its connection to ethnic and racial groups created a more socially conservative reaction by the communities of color in California (Wadsworth 2011).

The battle, however, was far from finished. On August 4, 2010, U.S. District Judge Vaughn R. Walker deemed Proposition 8 unconstitutional. The amendment itself states that “Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid in California” which the judge ruled to be in direct violation of the fourteenth amendment of the US Constitution (ProCon.org 2012). Two years later, on February 7 2012, a panel composed of three judges of the US 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Judge Walker's ruling leaving the issue of same-sex marriage an ongoing battle in the state. In this ongoing fight for marriage equality in the state of California, various organizations supporting same-sex marriage had created campaigns to garner support for equal marriage rights for lesbian women and gay men.

The Supreme Court of the United States then ruled on the case *Hollingsworth v. Perry* which was specific to California's Proposition 8. The case brought to the highest court in the United States the issue of whether the equal protection clause in the US Constitution prevented states from defining marriage so as to exclude same-sex couples. Also being contested was whether a state could revoke same-sex marriage through referendum after having previously recognized its legality. However, the majority of the Justices decided not to rule on those issues, but instead opted to rule on what is referred to as 'standing'—whether or not those who brought the suit to court had the right to do so (Mears 2013). It was therefore ruled that the previous ruling of Proposition 8 being unconstitutional would be upheld on the basis that those who opposed this ruling did not have the proper 'standing' to represent the interests of the state when state officials themselves chose not to oppose the ruling. In California, as of July 1, 2013, same-sex marriage was considered legal once again. Regardless of this ruling, the Supreme Court avoided having to decide on the legality of same-sex marriage on a national level, and the issue has remained contentious.

The complex history of marriage-equality in California that prompted the creation of campaigns

both for and against Proposition 8 has ultimately ended in what many consider to be a victory for the lesbian and gay communities within the state. However, what is left in the wake of this battle has yet to be analyzed, including the campaign content in the video advertisements used by both sides of the debate. Having utilized the power of advertisements and the media, campaigns by organizations such as Marriage Equality California and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints have mobilized voters during this debate. While it can be considered laudable for pro-marriage-equality ads to be used in favor of achieving equal status, as well as an attempt at promoting social acceptance and equality, it is important to critically examine the advertisements—both for and against marriage-equality—for their semiotic and linguistic content and the ways that gay and lesbian family life are constructed in the context of political persuasion. This thesis will argue that *how* gay men and lesbian women are represented is equally as important as the message that is being disseminated to the audiences. By studying the discursive practices utilized by these advertisements, we are able to see that ideologies of idealistic family life and heterosexual relationships influence both advertisements for and against Proposition 8 in their characterisations of gay and lesbian couples and their respective families.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

1.1 Overview

The following section provides a summary of the literature that exists regarding the inclusion, and at times exclusion, of gays and lesbians in various forms of media. I will discuss the laudable, yet problematic integration of gays and lesbians into mainstream media and how the representations of gay and lesbian individuals in media informs the representations of lesbian and gay couples and families. The first section elaborates on the relevant studies of media inclusiveness in regards to gay men and lesbian women as individuals and how these representations potentially uphold stereotypes. The following sections focus on representations of lesbian and gay couples and families that are emerging as part of a growing body of mediatized images. These discussions are important to this study as they provide foundational insight into the current research on gay and lesbian representations. These representations are then shown to be a useful tool in gauging current understandings of gay and lesbian couples and families, as well as the function that these serve in reinforcing or dismantling stereotypes and (mis)understandings.

1.2 Gay Men and Lesbian Women in the Media

“Today, gays and lesbians are no longer in the media closet...” (Fejes and Petrich 1993). Although Fejes and Petrich made this assertion in 1993, gays and lesbians in recent media outlets have all but destroyed the media closet in which they were once forced to reside. Recent television shows have expanded their inclusion of lesbian and gay characters in recurring roles and in various capacities. The hit show *Empire* on *Fox* features a young, gay, African-American son of a music mogul who faces challenges with his father's, and the public's, acceptance of his sexuality (advocate.com) The superhero television show *The Flash* also features a recurring gay character as the police chief is set to marry his

fiance on the show. *Orange is the New Black*, a popular Netflix original production, features a range of lesbian characters, aiming at representing the diversity within the lesbian community (pride.com). Regardless of the light in which they are shown, gay and lesbian characters have been featured in hit television shows, drawing acclaim from supporters, while simultaneously drawing criticism from those opposed to homosexuality. *The New Normal*, a show featuring a gay couple attempting to start their own family through the use of a surrogate mother, attempts to redefine the standard of 'normalcy' in terms of family structure (NBC 2013). Although a mere sitcom, the show was canceled amid controversy along with a handful of other Primetime shows that included gay and lesbian story lines (Thomas 2013). Great strides in media inclusion have been made in terms of visibility and slightly more nuanced portrayals of gay and lesbian life, but all is not well in the world of gay and lesbian representation.

While research into media representations has recently begun to include the depiction of gay men and lesbian women, the presence of gay and lesbian individuals on television and other media platforms is not a recent phenomenon. The complex relationship existing between gays and lesbians in cinema dates back to as early as 1895 with William Dickson's short film *The Gay Brothers* which featured two men dancing together (Fejes and Petrich 1993). Gay men and lesbian women often found themselves portrayed negatively in the homosexual subtexts presented in the films; homosexuality was sometimes used as a tool to accentuate the evilness or sinisterness of a character (Fejes and Petrich 1993).

Much of the research has concluded that television is a site of achievement and contestation, a site where gays and lesbians once faced exclusion and, more recently, have been represented by stereotypically negative portrayals that have been shown to significantly effect viewers' perceptions of homosexuality (Avila-Saavedra 2009; Calzo and Ward 2009). "Before 1970, almost no gay characters could be found on television, and their relative absence from the screen continued until the 1990s" (Fisher et al. 2007: 169), a decade in which lesbian and gay characters emerged as members of the

televisual world. Greater media exposure, according to Calzo and Ward (2009), has been proven to have a slight mainstreaming effect on audiences: Increased exposure to media may then influence groups with disparate perspectives to have a more similar attitude toward homosexuality. Hart (2000) also concludes that negative portrayals of gay men (and lesbian women) influence viewers' beliefs about gay men (and lesbian women). Additionally, those with limited firsthand experience with gay men and lesbian women in their own daily lives are most likely to be susceptible to the messages being disseminated by these mediated representations of gay men and lesbian women and their lifestyles (Hart 2000).

As previously mentioned, the proliferation of gay men and lesbian women as recurring and permanent television characters has greatly increased the visibility of the gay and lesbian communities, giving image and voice to these historically marginalized groups. Raley and Lucas (2006), in a content analysis of fall 2001 Primetime network television, reported that 7.5% of the dramas and comedies in the fall television schedule included gay and lesbian characters. Another study of the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 television seasons indicates that, out of 2,700 analyzed episodes, 15% of these episodes contain at least one instance of non-heterosexual sexual behavior or discussion of sex relating to gay men and lesbian women (Fisher et al. 2007). The gay and lesbian representations are by no means equally presented in comparison to their heterosexual counterparts, but the increased visibility and inclusion of gay and lesbian characters can itself be seen as an improvement from previous years.

However, the unequal frequency of representation evinced in these studies is indicative of the predominance of heterosexuality: It is a heterosexual world and gay men and lesbian women are allotted limited spaces and frequencies of representation. According to Avila-Saavedra (2009), “homosexual images are presented in ways deemed acceptable for heterosexual audiences by reinforcing traditional values like family, monogamy, and stability” (8). Gay and lesbian representations are thus being shaped by heterosexuality, assuming forms understood by largely heterosexual audiences regardless of the representational inaccuracy. In terms of the representations of

diverse forms of masculinity, Avila-Saavedra (2009) provides insight in his discourse analysis of television programs with leading gay male characters in 2004. He concludes that the representations of gay male characters and identities in the television shows adhere to heteronormative standards of masculinity and fail to challenge patriarchal notions of masculinity and femininity (19). Regardless of mediatized inclusion, the portrayals still, more often than not, allude to stereotypes and negative perspectives about gay men and lesbian women, the dissemination of which contributes to misguided and uneducated understandings of gay men and lesbian women (Fisher et al. 2007; Fejes & Petrich 1993; Calzo & Ward 2009; Holz Ivory, Gibson, and Ivory 2009).

A specific example of controversial portrayals of gay men can be found in *Will and Grace*, a formerly popular American sitcom that has drawn attention for its inclusion of two gay males as main characters (Linneman 2008). Although the show is considered progressive for this inclusion, it has also drawn attention for its feminization of gay, male characters (Linneman 2008). One of the main characters on the show—Will Truman—serves as a “poster boy for hegemonic masculinity” given Will's position as a white, male, corporate attorney, who wears suits and ties and generally displays emotional restraint and logical judgment (Linneman 2008: 586). These characteristics are stereotypically more associated with straight men. Even Will's last name 'Truman' ('true man') alludes to a masculine, gay man, as Linneman points out. Will's masculinity is further emphasized by the presence of his effeminate friend Jack, acting as the counterpart to the more masculine Will. However, Will is subjected to more verbal feminization than his overtly more feminine, gay friend on the show (Linneman 2008: 586-587). These feminine references include, but are not limited to, Will being directly referred to as a woman, comments on his clothing being feminine, or Will engaging in maternal activities (591-592). The feminization of Will, the “straight gay archetype,” precludes the possibility of gay masculinities, and regardless of the stereotypically masculine traits he displays, he is ascribed a feminine identity because of his sexuality (599). Representations of gay men in sitcoms such as *Will and Grace* and other television shows can be seen to engage in the feminization of gay characters,

perpetuating the idea that gay men are womanly, and feminine men are gay (599). Representational accuracy of gay and lesbian characters is thus an issue given the implications of the meanings and messages the images and characters contain.

In a study by Raley and Lucas (2006), the researchers questioned whether or not the inclusion of gay and lesbian characters on television contributes to the reduction of negative stereotypes about gay and lesbian individuals and communities. Evidence of improvement in the image of gay men and lesbian women includes the finding that “stereotypical images of Gay males and Lesbians as child molesters, not to be trusted in the company of children” (Raley and Lucas 2006: 31), are being supplanted by the increased portrayal of interaction between gay men and lesbian women with heterosexual individuals on television. These advancements reflect only a small amount of movement in the positive direction, as most representations of gay men and lesbian women in the media continue to perpetuate stereotypes (Calzo and Ward 2009; Raley and Lucas 2006). If the representations of gay and lesbian characters on television constitutes what viewers know about gay and lesbian people, then the characters should be analyzed critically for what messages they are conveying to perceptive viewers. How people come to understand the lives of lesbian women and gay men can be shaped by the types of images and representations they see on television shows and various media outlets, especially for those unfamiliar with the actual lives of gay and lesbian people (Calzo and Ward 2009; Raley and Lucas 2006; Holz Ivory, Gibson, and Ivory 2009). Although it is posited that media representations of gay men and lesbian women affect all audience members in some way, the influence of these representations is considered more extreme in audience members who have little to no interaction with gay or lesbian individuals in their everyday lives (Hart 2004; Holz Ivory et al. 2009). The few positive and accurate representations in various media outlets necessitates a critical analysis of these images and what messages they contain for audience members.

Another study conducted by Holz Ivory, Gibson, and Ivory (2009) researches the gendered homosexual relationships of couples from shows on Primetime television from 2001 to 2004. The

results indicate that, much like heterosexual couples, gay and lesbian couples on the television shows are portrayed as gendered (Holz Ivory et al. 2009). These fictional characters were placed in gendered relationships which means that lesbian and gay viewers “searching for cues regarding their identities, may vicariously learn attitudes and behaviors consistent with gendered notions” (179). As a matter of deciding the power dynamics within their households, it is possible that gay and lesbian couples may adhere to a division of labour that is based on the gendered power relations that often are found in heterosexual relationships (Oerton 1997). It is not necessarily problematic that gay and lesbians couples organize themselves in ways that mirror heterosexual relationships and that gendered roles and divisions of labour help them to organize and characterise their relationships. It is important to understand how heterosexuality and its connection to gendered roles has influenced the landscape of understanding sexuality and gay and lesbian relationships. There is the possibility that within gay and lesbian relationships, couples may subvert typical gendered roles and create for themselves roles that are more complex than gendered divisions can explain. The representations thus hold the potential for influencing the ways that gay men and lesbian women understand themselves within their own relationships and may serve as a revelatory tool to see how gender plays a part in structuring their relationships and household roles.

In a similar way, this study addresses specific lesbian and gay representations, and examines the potential for shaping the landscape of people's perceptions of gay and lesbian couples, families, and parents. The potential effects on self-worth and the internalization of standards represented in the televised or printed imagery and texts are reasons enough to analyze the representations themselves. Although this study will not endeavor to research those effects, the images available are what help to shape perceptions. While visibility in itself can be touted as inclusiveness and acceptance of the lesbian and gay communities, research has proven that the media content itself reflects only slight improvements in gay and lesbian media portrayals.

1.3 Gay and Lesbian Couples

As noted in analyses of television sitcoms and other programs, gay and lesbian characters are generally presented as non-sexual (Fouts and Inch 2005; Raley and Lucas 2006; Avila-Saavedra 2009). The studies report that gay and lesbian characters are hardly ever shown in any sexual capacity, romantic or otherwise, and note that bisexual characters are absent almost entirely. Raley and Lucas (2006) report that the affectionate displays in the Primetime television programs they studied show no significant difference in the mean number of affectionate displays of lesbian and gay characters in comparison to the heterosexual characters. The fact gay and lesbian characters had relatively the same amount of affectionate displays as heterosexual characters indicates that gay men and lesbian women are increasingly more capable of expressing sexuality on television. However, the affectionate displays for both lesbian women and gay men were limited to non-sexual actions, like hand-holding or hugging, never implying any sexual activity between gay men and lesbian women and their respective partners. Such exclusion indicates a denial of gay and lesbian sexual and intimate relationships. While the heterosexual characters on the show actively pursued their sexual desires and displayed their heterosexual orientation through overt actions and verbal comments, the gay and lesbian characters in relationships remained seemingly celibate, with a limited range for their relationships encompassing interactions that were little more than platonic. Such imagery thus denies the intimate relations that exist between lesbian women and gay men and their respective partners, and precludes the idea of a full and complex gay and lesbian relationship—sexual, intimate, etc.

The little research that examines the content of same-sex marriage debates focuses specifically on legislative aspects—how legislation influences same-sex relationships and the level of importance afforded to legislative changes by same-sex couples are two main foci of current research (Rolfe and Peel 2011). One study in particular shifts attention away from legislation and addresses media accounts of same-sex marriage debates, analyzing pictures of same-sex couples in a local Irish newspaper (Reynolds 2007). The study focuses its attention on images of gay couples in an Irish

context, noting the reactions of various readers through letters they sent to the Irish newspaper's editor. The photos act not only as a catalyst for discussion, indicating a cultural transformation of definitions and images of intimate relationships, but also solidify gay and lesbian couples within a context of cultural tensions regarding marriage-equality (Reynolds 2007). What this then means is that images are taken and chosen in specific contexts and are meant to portray specific meanings that essentially embody the various cultural perspectives of what gay and lesbian relationships are and what people think they should, or shouldn't, be.

Moscowitz (2010) notes that the visual narratives of gay and lesbian couples are largely normalized and often times are produced according to acceptable heteronormative standards. Moscovitz analysed the evening editions of network television news from NBC, ABC, and CBS from a twenty-month period in which the issue of marriage equality was pushed to the top of the media and public agendas. The study reports that gay men and lesbian women are portrayed as couples 85% of the time, as the focal point of the show 68.8% of the time, and as a mass group of couples 16.1% of the time (Moscowitz 2010). This information indicates a shift from previous depictions of the gay and lesbian communities as crowds of picketers or victims of AIDS, to depictions of couples in marital, political, and domestic contexts. These shifting images fit with the research of Osterlund (2009) which focuses on the shift to a discourse of love within same-sex marriage politics, noting that love is not only a romantic sentiment binding same-sex couples, but also constitutes a moral and motivational discourse encouraging care giving in private contractual relationships. Given that much of the legislative and political discussions have relied on this discourse of love, the ads used by campaigns have used love as the central tenet because love remains an unchallenged human experience (Osterlund 2009).

1.4 A Focus on the Family

While same-sex couples are illuminated by political and social arguments via the news spotlight, as well as through television shows and their respective characters, it is also important to critically analyse the increasing media coverage of same-sex couples as they grow into families with children. Ellis (2001) notes that while there is increasing support for the extension of rights to individual lesbian women and gay men, few people remain willing to recognise or support gay and lesbian families. It has been noted that there has been an increase in the recognition of same-sex couples, but the recognition of lesbian and gay families does not have the same progressive momentum (Clarke 2008). Certain countries that recognise the legality of same-sex marriage explicitly disallow any form of adoption, fostering, or parenting rights, thereby limiting the extension of full rights to gay and lesbian couples (Clarke 2008: 123).

One study of 226 undergraduate students attending psychology classes in three different United Kingdom universities found that less than half (43.4%) agreed with the statement “lesbian and gay couples should have all the same parenting rights as heterosexual couples” (Ellis, Kitzinger, and Wilkinson 2002:129). The traditional, nuclear family, along with its ties to the institutions of marriage, heterosexuality, and biological parenthood, is an ideal to which many still cling (Clarke 2001). Despite the governing ideal of the nuclear family and the dissent that ensues when deviating from that ideal, lesbian women and gay men continue to become parents and build their families. Given the focus of this study on representations of gay and lesbian families, it is important to discuss existing research on gay and lesbian families to inform the current research.

Family studies have barely begun to scratch the surface when it comes to researching families headed by same-sex couples. What exists thus far in terms of research on homosexuality and its relation to families can be categorized into three distinct, yet inextricably interconnected, areas: 1) same-sex partnerships and relationships; 2) lesbian mothers; and 3) the psychological and social adjustment of children with same-sex parents (Allen and Demo 1995).

The research on same-sex couples adds to the general body of work on gays and lesbians by recounting some of the difficulties same-sex couples face from a largely heteronormative society. Research on gay and lesbian couples provides insight into the development of relationships and their progression into marriage and families. One study in particular compares gay and lesbian relationships with heterosexual relationships, working against the premise that if marriage is a union reserved for heterosexual couples, then the assumption is that there exists radical differences in how homosexual and heterosexual couples work (Kurdek 2004). As Kurdek's study finds, however, the relationships of lesbian and gay cohabiting couples exhibit few differences in comparison to heterosexual couples with children. This lack of differences builds the premise of many arguments supporting same-sex marriage.

Kurdek (2005) concisely summarizes research on gay and lesbian couples noting the topics most relevant to gay and lesbian couples: division of household labor; conflict resolution; perceived external relationship support; relationship stability; and relationship satisfaction. The research to which Kurdek refers points out the various similarities between heterosexual couples and gay and lesbian couples. Relationship quality is a particularly prominent method of determining the similar functionality of gay and lesbian relations in comparison to heterosexual relationships. The common predictors of relationship quality for heterosexual couples—characteristics each partner brings to the relationship, how each partner views the relationship, partners' behaviour toward each other, and perceived levels of support for the relationship—are the same factors that predict the quality of gay and lesbian relationships. Gay and lesbian relationships work in much the same way as heterosexual relationships, and as Kurdek points out, institutional support for same-sex unions would be beneficial to gay and lesbian relationships offering a stability to the relationship that heterosexual couples enjoy. The focus thus far has been on the functionality of same-sex relationships and the quality attributed to these relationships by the involved individuals. What seems to be missing is the integration of family-building as part of the equation for the quality and functionality of same-sex relationships.

The research on lesbian mothers has given much insight into the inner functions of family life and their family experiences, expanding on the research of same-sex couples with the inclusion of the dimension of family. The increasing tolerance for and growing acceptance of the lesbian and gay communities has allowed for an increase in the number of lesbian women who are becoming mothers (Bos, van Balen, and van den Boom 2005). According to O'Connell and Feliz (2011), the US Census 2010 revealed that the total number of same-sex households was 901,977 which represented less than one percent of all households in the United States. Data from Census 2000 tabulated 594,391 same-sex households. From 2000 to 2010 there was a 52 percent increase of same-sex households during the ten year span.

It is obvious that there has been a significant rise in the sheer number of same-sex households, and thus it is safe to say there has also been an increase in the number of families being established by lesbian women and gay men. The connection of marriage to family-building has been established as a culturally and socially understood life trajectory, especially for heterosexual couples (Eskridge 1993; Laszloffy 2002). Family studies utilize theories of family development that include stages that assume marriage leads to children and family formation. Yet, these theories rely on an assumption of heterosexuality that serves as the foundation of the traditional, nuclear, and intact families (Allen and Demo 1995). While other theories have been developed to account for family pluralism and development, these differences tend to focus on heterosexual couples and deviance from the heterosexually headed family household (Laszloffy 2002). The essential role of procreation within marriage has restricted the definitions and forms of family to different-sex couples thus denying same-sex couples the legitimacy of their respective families (Eskridge 1993). As mentioned earlier, family, in its nuclear form, is deeply linked with the institutions of marriage, heterosexuality, and procreation and consequently prevents same-sex couples and their respective families from being a part of the institution of the family.

While traditional definitions of family have been utilized for family studies, the lesbian family indicates the growing diversity of family types and the necessity of studying families of lesbian women and gay men (Clarke 2008). Despite the increasing visibility of lesbian (and gay) families, these families continue to experience disconfirmation from family, friends, and various institutions (Suter, Daas, and Bergen 2007). Negotiating what constitutes family identity for lesbian and gay families is an important area of research given the inhibiting and debilitating effects of a largely heterosexist political and social atmosphere.

Suter et al. (2007) interview 16 mothers of two-parent lesbian families with children in their study regarding the negotiation of lesbian family identity. In this study, the mothers indicate that the decisions they make are reflective of their attempts at affirming their lesbian family, indicating a unique and complex set of experiences particular to the formation and maintenance of lesbian family identity. Communicating choices of last names is one method mothers find useful in lesbian family affirmation. Not only does selecting one last name of one of the two mothers, or combining last names of the two mothers, have symbolic purposes, but it also serves a practical purpose such as obtaining insurance coverage for the children. However, indicating relational ties using last names creates issues with families of origin who display little support for these mothers and their children (Suter et al. 2007). The development of family identity is a long and engaging process necessitating much work on the part of the parents and their respective social circles.

In addition to elucidating some of the complexities of family life in lesbian-headed households, the finding in this study most pertinent to the current research is the idea of 'doing family.' Doing family involves engaging in what is considered to be mundane, patterned family interactions of which the most important aspect is that doing family is “recognized by others as ordinary, patterned family interactions” (Suter et al. 2007: 38). External approval and recognition are important for the formation and stability of family identity. Activities such as nightly walks, grocery shopping, and attending church allow for public visibility and provide validity for these mothers and their respective families.

Something as simple as displaying a photo of the family or of the child/children at one's workplace holds significant symbolic potential for authenticating the lesbian family identity. Doing family is an idea that requires more study, especially in the area of representation. How is doing family presented in ads and campaigns regarding marriage equality? What do these representations 'say' about the cultural understandings of gay and lesbian parent households and how are these messages conveyed?

As indicated, doing family often involves raising children, most often children with biological ties to both parents. The hegemonic Standard North American Family (SNAF) exists as a privileged model for families and creates an ideological code which families attempt to follow (Ryan and Berkowitz 2009). A major dimension of the Standard North American Family code is the preference for biological relatedness of the parents with their child/children that feeds into the privileging of heterosexuality and heterosexual couples' procreative capabilities (Ryan and Berkowitz 2009). Thus, same-sex couples seeking to start families in these 'non-traditional' ways, defy the code of the SNAF and must find ways to work against the hegemonic code governing and impeding family-building (Murphy 2013).

Studies on lesbian and gay families tend to focus on the potential psychological ramifications on children that are being raised in these 'nontraditional' households (Bos et al. 2005; Oerton 1997; Clarke 2008; Clarke 2001). As mentioned above, marriage and family are linked and understood as part of the expected progression for most couples, including gay and lesbian couples. Of course, for many years, researchers in child development have been operating within a heterosexual paradigm, assuming that favourable conditions for child-rearing include two heterosexual parents that are biologically related to the child (Patterson 2000). 'Lesbian motherhood' was therefore considered contradictory (Clarke 2008); a gay identity and fatherhood were considered to be incommensurate and mutually exclusive (Murphy 2013). These circulating ideas regarding the incompatibility of gay and lesbian identities and parenthood emerged as part of the discourse on parenting practices and family

relations, thus contributing to a social atmosphere that denied the legitimacy of gay and lesbian families.

1.5 Gay and Lesbian Families in the Media

In recent years, however, what was considered incommensurable has found its way into multiple mediatized forms, establishing itself as a real part of everyday gay and lesbian life. Little research has been conducted on the relatively new representations of gay and lesbian households in these different mediatized forms. What exists are studies on images of lesbian women and gay men as individuals, or as couples, but not as married heads of a family unit that includes the married couple and their respective children. One such study that attempts to account for images and textual representations of gay and lesbian families is Landau's 2009 study on US print news stories and photographs. This case study finds that many of the print stories and photographs feature the children of gay and lesbian parents as the focal point. Featuring gay and lesbian couples with their respective children indicates a vast improvement in the depiction of the gay and lesbian communities given that the mass media has generally omitted such images and rarely featured gays and lesbians in the familial context. The strict focus on the children, however, further marginalizes homosexuality in that same-sex parenting is relevant insofar as it is related to the well being of children. Rather than exploring the complexity of same-sex parenting, familial life, and its intersection with being gay or lesbian, the child-centered photographs and stories use children as the yardstick by which gay men and lesbian women, as parents, are evaluated. This falls in line with previous research (mentioned above) and its strict focus on gay men and lesbian women and their impact on their children's psychological stability.

Landau (2009) explicates four discursive themes: children coming out about having gay or lesbian parents; children as social-scientific experiments; children's compulsory heterosexuality; and children's (proper) gender performances. Each of these discursive themes is indicative of a heterosexist framework governing the images and stories. The children of gay and lesbian parents are considered

different from children of different-sex parents because they are social-scientific experiments—these children are born outside of what is considered 'normal' means of procreation. The articles Landau (2009) studies depict children of gays and lesbians as “bio-products of mysterious new social scientific experiments,” relegating them to a position outside the acceptable social order in which children are born through 'normal' heterosexual acts of procreation (90). The articles and images position being gay or lesbian and having gay or lesbian parents as something about which to be ashamed and ultimately position this coming out as a personal problem rather than a social issue of heterosexual dominance and homophobia. Additionally, these articles and images indicate that successful gay parents raise their children to adhere to gender conforming standards and heterosexuality (Landau 2009). It is important to observe whether the heterosexuality of the children of gay and lesbian parents plays a role in adding to the legitimacy of gay and lesbian familial life.

While Landau's 2009 study offers insight into the discursive themes of gay and lesbian familial life within print images and stories, the study does not offer insight into how images and texts work in tandem to create these discursive themes in terms of the modes utilized. The study relies on seemingly two dimensional portrayals of gay and lesbian families via text and pictures. One study seeks to incorporate a multimodal approach to analyzing the covers of children's picture books featuring same-sex couples and the ways that the titles and pictures mutually enhance the depiction of gay and lesbian identities (Sunderland and Mcglashan 2013). This study illustrates that pictures and text, when considered separately, have limitations in what each mode attempts to portray, show, or tell. The illustrated pictures on each of the children's picture books consist of two adults of the same sex and a child or children in various situations that indicate a closeness between the characters on the cover. These pictures alone, however, do not, and cannot, fully indicate a gay or lesbian identity or family. The titles of each children's book (Mom and Mum are Getting Married; Mommy, Mama, and Me; Daddy, Papa, and Me) are used, in conjunction with the pictures, to illustrate and present a gay and lesbian identity. While the titles and images are not explicit in terms of suggesting gay or lesbian

identity, the mutual enhancement of image and text create a more robust reading of same-sex co-parents in these children's picture books.

The research conducted by Sunderland and Mcglashan (2013) provides much needed insight into a fairly recent phenomenon: the gay and lesbian family and the increased representations that now exist. Using a multimodal analytical framework allows these researchers to see how it is that text and image can be used to construct gay and lesbian family identity. However, modes are not just limited to text and image and include colour, sound, vocal intonation, etc. especially when considering video as the medium to be analyzed. The current study seeks to analyze same-sex marriage ads from campaigns in California regarding Proposition 8. Using a multimodal approach similar to that of Sunderland and Mcglashan, this study will analyze text and image, which includes spoken words, and the ways that these modes work in tandem in order to construct a gay and lesbian family identity in these ads.

1.6 A Movement Towards Normal Family Lives

An additional dimension of this study is to examine the possible normalization of gay and lesbian families as these modes coalesce into a single image of gay and lesbian family life in the ads being examined. Normalization, in the context of human sexuality, is a strategy that often nullifies key components of the lesbian and gay movement by rendering sexual difference as a relatively irrelevant component of self-identity and instead, highlights ways that lesbian and gay individuals comply with all other 'normal' facets of life (Seidman 2002). The mainstream lesbian and gay movement has immersed itself in a fight towards normalization—towards what Seidman calls a “life beyond the closet” (8). This life beyond the closet often involves an almost seamless integration of one's sexuality into everyday life, giving sexuality a more secondary or 'casual' position. However, while normalization allows access to certain rights and privileges for lesbian women and gay men, and seemingly indicates progress towards living a life outside of the closet, normalization also holds in place the repressive forces and dominance of heterosexuality.

An example of the preservation of heterosexuality is the LGBT campaign in Portugal that worked towards achieving marriage equality for Portuguese LGBT citizens. The centrality of marriage equality to the campaign for LGBT rights in Portugal sparked dissent within the movement because of the overarching necessity to foster consensus to achieve any political advancement (Santos 2013). By focusing on social consensus, the LGBT campaign to achieve marriage equality forgoes any actual, radical change and instead complies with heteronormative behaviours and standards. In the United States, the responsibility of a state's citizens to dictate the legality of same-sex marriage exemplifies this need to appeal to the majority of the population. Support is garnered by using arguments that suggest gay and lesbian marriages and their respective families are comparable to, and no different from, heterosexual ones (van Eeden-Moorefield et al. 2011).

The reference to being 'mainstream' and 'just like heterosexual families' is frequent in the research regarding same-sex parents and their navigation of family life. In one study, forty lesbian mothers divulge methods they use in order to legitimize their family life in lieu of their incomplete institutionalized status (Hequembourg 2004). Lack of legal recognition for their families and unsupportive families of origin are two reasons why lesbian and gay families face a continuous disenfranchised existence (Hequembourg 2004). One way to combat the lack of institutionalized status is to emphasize the mainstream quality of their families—by focusing specifically on similarities, the lesbian mothers are able to focus on the positive attributes of their motherhood, and obscure aspects of their identity related to their lesbianism (Hequembourg 2004). Ultimately, the goal is to relay the message to others, and to themselves, that they are, by heterosexual standards, just like all other families. The downplaying of difference, however, indicates the preference for assimilation into the institutions that provide support and validation for their heterosexual counterparts, leaving heterosexual ideologies of parenting and families intact in the process.

Issues regarding the production of 'the normal gay' or 'the normal gay and lesbian family' by LGBT movements seeking marriage equality are relevant to the current study given that the campaigns

construct the images that may be seen as constituting everyday gay and lesbian family life through specific images and representations. It remains important to question how these images are constructed and the ways in which heteronormative compliance may be inadvertently supported and integrated in advertisements supporting marriage equality. The movement to achieve marriage equality is often seen as participating in the process of the normalization of sexualities which is problematic in its upholding of previously inscribed heterosexual ideologies of family, parenting, and relationships.

The studies mentioned above have endeavored to elucidate the existence of gay and lesbian characters in television shows and various forms of print media, indicating the relative increase of gay and lesbian representations. These representations have been proven to be controversial in that they rely too heavily on stereotypes and often perpetuate negative and incorrect ideas of the gay and lesbian communities. Given the existence of seemingly positive representations of families headed by gay and lesbian couples, is it then acceptable to let these representations slip by without critical analysis? This study seeks to contribute to the extensive literature on representations of the gay and lesbian communities by including the fairly modern unit of the gay and lesbian family. How are families being constructed and what modes are being used to build these representations? What sociological and cultural significance can be attributed to these representations, and what discourses about family life are being disseminated via these ads?

The lack of research on representations of gay and lesbian families leaves many questions unanswered, including how it is that doing family in gay and lesbian households can be seen through the eyes of those outside gay and lesbian families. Research on gay and lesbian families focuses on child-rearing issues, the problems associated with accessing pathways to parenthood, and how gender plays into familial roles (Clarke 2001; Peplau and Fingerhut 2007). While these issues have been extensively researched and are important in understanding the functioning of gay and lesbian family life, researching how public campaigns, whether for political or commercial purposes, construct representations of lesbian and gay families in spite of these barriers is also essential.

Representations of gay and lesbian family life, much like the representations of gays and lesbians as individuals, may be used as cultural barometers. Within these images are specific ideas and positions that are used by the creators in order to convey a specific message about gay and lesbian family life. The idea that 'love makes a family' is one that echoes in current understandings of gay and lesbian families as well as the research regarding these particular families (Clarke 2008). As noted above, love remains an important aspect of conjugal life. In the context of the Proposition 8 debates in California, the family lives of gays and lesbians in campaign videos are public images that contain general, cultural understandings of what constitutes gay and lesbian family life, or what viewers should understand as what constitutes that family life. Given that research on mediatized images of gay men and lesbian women continues to find the utilization of stereotypes as a main method of portrayal, it is of interest to see how advertisements for and against Proposition 8 may rely on the same techniques, if at all. Additionally, because gay and lesbian families are largely absent from the media, these advertisements present themselves as prime examples of how gay and lesbian families may be represented in other forms of media, including commercials and print ads for various products. Given what the research has shown on gay and lesbian couples and their families in real life – that they attempt to normalize themselves in their everyday lives – it is of interest to see how this gets portrayed in the advertisements, and see how the ads supporting Proposition 8 attempt to portray gay and lesbian couples in comparison.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

1.1 Overview

What follows in this section is the merging of the theoretical foundations that underlie this study. I begin by discussing the proliferation of sexual discourse and how this leads to the proliferation of discourses on same-sex couples. The production of sexual discourses is essential in understanding how the proliferation of discourses on same-sex couples and same-sex marriage are produced by the very people who seek to repress it. I then move on to discuss how Stuart Hall and his theories on ideology inform the media analysis portion of this study in that ideologies are embedded within the images being disseminated by various media outlets. To conclude this section, I merge Hall's theories on ideology and Foucault's perspective on discourse to explain how ideology informs, and is informed by, discourse and vice versa.

1.2 Michel Foucault and Sexual Discourse

Sexuality, in the context of marriage equality debates, can be seen as something being repressed by the opposition given the firm stances that reject efforts to allow same-sex marriage and family formation. Homosexuality is being represented as something which must be kept at bay to preserve the seemingly natural institution of heterosexual marriage. As the repressive tactics and messages of anti-marriage equality activists increases, it is easy to buy into the notion that sexuality, in general, is something that has been, and may always be, repressed. However, Michel Foucault (1987) offers a different perspective: sexuality has experienced a discursive proliferation rather than just repression. This perspective can be used to understand the reasons behind the expedited proliferation of images and stories supporting marriage-equality. Instead, same-sex couples and their lives have experienced increased inclusion in mediatized images and advertisements in the pro-marriage equality sector.

Western society's fascination with sexuality has focused on the idea that sexuality is something

that has been, and continues to be, repressed by various institutions using a variety of repressive methods (Foucault 1978). Foucault explains that this conception of a repressed sexuality is a misunderstanding of the history of sexuality. Instead, he argues that sexuality has experienced a discursive explosion—a “steady proliferation of discourses concerned with sex” has emerged despite the repressive practices of various controlling institutions (18). What has occurred is an increase in the ways in which people discuss and understand sexuality, an increase in the discourses that deal with sexual desires, actions, and capabilities. Applying this theory to marriage equality debates, we can then see that the efforts to control marriage have sparked an increase in representations of gay and lesbian family life providing yet another way to understand sexuality in the context of families and marriage.

Discourses impose frameworks for how people experience the world, and thus delineate the boundaries of what can be experienced and the meanings these experiences may have (Purvis and Hunt 1993). To summarize, “discourse is about the production of language and practices by particular systems that produce existential meanings which then shape [...] individual lives” (Drazenovich 2012, 261). In terms of sexuality, the sexual discourses that have emerged provide just that—ways to talk about and understand sexual experiences, giving sexuality a place in society, although its place has been limited to its comparison to a heterosexual standard. Foucault (1978), in *The History of Sexuality*, seeks to account for the fact that sexuality is spoken about. Foucault aims to elucidate who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which these speakers speak, and the institutions that prompt people to speak about sexuality. Discourses, and the practices that are associated with them, are situated in specific historical and social contexts which must be taken into account when understanding them. Thus, in order to understand the proliferation of discourses in the age of marriage-equality, one must also understand the historical and social contexts from which these discourses emerge and the role that power plays in knowledge production and dissemination.

To begin, it is important to establish that sexuality should not be classified as a drive that must be controlled, but instead should be considered a vehicle for the implementation of knowledge and

power, and the base for continued ventures of knowledge and power. Sexuality should be considered a construction with cultural and social origins, a concept that runs counter to an essentialist perspective of sexuality which deems it to be an inherent, biological phenomenon. Although Foucault agrees there exists a biological side to sexuality, that biological understanding is shaped by various institutions and discursive strategies perpetuated by various institutions and points of power. Understanding sexuality as a cultural and social production allows one to dismiss the simplified repressive perspective discussed above, and allows for the perspective that Foucault puts forth: That sexuality has been incited into discourse. Incitements into discourse refer to the “myriad of heterogenous social, political, and cultural forces that agitated for increased knowledge” regarding sex and sexuality (Drazenovich 2012, 263).

The dismissal of a repressive hypothesis regarding sexual discourse allows one to postulate the nature of power: That power is not a top-down force; that it is not something which can be taken hold of and wielded at will; that it is not found in a single origin, but instead emanates from multiple points (Foucault 1978). Power is both dispersed and pervasive because it comes from everywhere, not because it takes hold of everything. And, power according to Foucault is the name given to a “complex strategical situation in a particular society,” which means there are various strategies at work as points of power converge on a single, general line of force.

Sexuality has been constructed as a result of the act of confession, and it is in this act of confessing, and its subsequent transformations, that one can see that sex is entangled in a web of multiple power loci. Sexuality and its link to confession consequently links sexuality to discourse which, as mentioned above, then constitutes social realities of phenomena that are never fully stable or fixed. Discourse is inextricably linked with power in that it is defined as being a producer or shaper of knowledge, and knowledge, according to Foucault, is connected to power. The ritual of confession is tied to the revelation of sexual truth, with sexual veracity tied to an act of penance where the confessor speaks of sexual desire to a person in authority who requires the confession. It is in confession where power and pleasure find themselves linked, and it is through discourse where one may see power and

knowledge linked with sexuality. This confessional ritual of discourse serves as the vehicle for power and knowledge (Foucault 103). In order to decipher the 'truth' of sexuality, people had to discuss it and had to give it a place within language, within our own capacities to understand it. Thus the church, in what appears to be its attempts to stifle aberrant sexualities, utilized the act of confession as a way to tell the truth of sex. However, buying into the simplified repressive hypothesis regarding sexuality is limiting in that the church's exploration into sexual desires actually aided in a proliferation of sexual discourse. The church actually produced a 'true' discourse on sex, inciting sex into discourse.

Discourses are not simply divided into acceptable and unacceptable; there is no dichotomous division to classify discourses. There is a multiplicity of discourses that coalesce in various strategies of knowledge and power. Discourse is both an instrument and an effect of power. Scientific and religious discourses, through the act of confession, have aided in the production of particular forms of knowledge about sexuality, and power has brought forth and allowed the constitution of so-called 'truths' about sexuality.

The 'truth' produced in the act of confession, and later in the incitement of sexuality into scientific discourses, serves as a crossroads for knowledge and power, an intersection from which various strategies draw their support. This 'truth' of sexual practices and conduct catalyzed the emergence of the ontological marker of identity that is sexuality, pressing sexual practices onto bodies. Scientific discourse attempted to

...set itself up as the supreme authority in matters of hygienic necessity; [...] it claimed to ensure the physical vigor and the moral cleanliness of the social body; it promised to eliminate defective individuals, degenerate and bastardized populations. In the name of a biological and historical urgency, it justified the racisms of the state, which at the time were on the horizon. It grounded them in truth (Foucault 1978, 54).

And thus the racisms of the state bled onto the bodies of those considered to be sexual aberrations as power worked its way through discourse and knowledge production regarding sexuality. As evidence of this identity construction based on sexuality, homosexuality, and consequently the homosexual, “became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology” (43). The homosexual existed prior to the 18th and 19th centuries, however, the specific characteristics of what comprises the homosexual of the 19th centuries and today are socially constructed identity markers.

According to Foucault, (1987) institutions like the government, began to realize that they were dealing with populations rather than just subjects or people, and these populations had various characteristics, including characteristics regarding sexuality. As Rose (1994) notes, the segregation and classification of people and groups is integral to the advancement of social science knowledge given that the truth arises out of the institutional and organizational conditions that bring humans together to achieve a certain end. Thus, the homosexual became the homosexual population and emerged as a categorized group based on sexuality. By classifying the homosexual into a species, and implanting homosexuality in specific bodies, homosexuality has become visible as an anomaly, one that is analyzable and more easily distinguishable by various institutions for various purposes.

Developments in the discursive practices of medicine, psychiatry, and law regarding sexuality changed the way in which individuals were led to assign meaning to their conduct. It caused individuals to see themselves as subjects of a sexuality which was accessible to diverse fields of knowledge and linked to a system of rules and constraints [...] 'The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us.' (Drazenovich 2012, 265-266)

Heterosexual monogamy transitioned from being a topic of scrutiny and discussion to being a more discretionary topic functioning as more of a silent norm for 'regular sexuality' (Foucault 1978, 38).

Foucault's postulations on the roles of discourse and power in the construction of sexuality, homosexuality, and homosexual populations are necessary to establish the theoretical foundation of this study. To understand the discursive practices of same-sex marriage ad campaigns, we begin with the confession, in which people in these ads are divulging sexual identities to a wide audience. In this confession of sexual preferences and identities, the question to be asked is what has sexuality created or brought about in this specific time and in this particular context? The emergence of science and medicine as authorities on sex prompted the construction of a series of discourses that aimed to elucidate the “species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and 'psychic hermaphroditism’” in order to exert some form of social control. This discursive proliferation drew homosexuality out from the secrecy in which it hid and into the open so as to be analysed, scrutinized, and further studied because of its 'perverse nature' (Foucault 1978).

While discourses can be an instrument of power, they can also be a site of resistance. As previously mentioned, discourses cannot be dichotomously categorized—there is not a discourse of power and a discourse that runs counter to it, its direct opposite. Instead, there are numerous discourses of resistance, and in a single strategy there can be different and even contradictory discourses. In terms of homosexuality and its pathologized and perverted existence, a 'reverse' discourse has been formed allowing homosexuality “to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturalness' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary” (Foucault 1987, 101). The growth of the LGBT community speaking on behalf of itself, and LGBT individuals speaking on their own behalf, reflects this 'reverse discourse.' As is expected of ever-changing discourses, homosexuality has spoken of itself as the gay and lesbian family in the context of marriage-equality. Discourses on the family and homosexuality have converged in a way where same-sex couples are demanding equal rights in the

eyes of the law and the general population.

Given that family is considered to be an anchor for sexuality, the family's ever changing role of being a conduit for sexual conversations and discourses is an important area of inquiry given the recent shift of family structures to include same-sex couples. In its contemporary form, the family serves as a site where polymorphous techniques of power ensure a sexuality that combines what Foucault refers to as deployments of alliance and sexuality (Foucault 1987). The deployment of alliance conveyed a structured approach to sexuality; it abides by and upholds the laws that distinguish between the licit and illicit—the acceptable and the unacceptable—forms of sexuality that deviated from sexual futurity, marriage, and the transmission of names and property. The influx of sexual discourse has prompted the emergence of the deployment of sexuality, a system which offers a more fluid and expanding approach to power mechanisms and pleasure. The distinguishing characteristics are important to note in this study because of the combination of both the systems of alliance and sexuality in gay and lesbian families. The aim of this study is to analyze the ways that both the systems of alliance and sexuality are conveyed and in turn, elucidate the power and discourses being reproduced and upheld in ads pertaining to marriage equality in California. By utilizing Foucault's theories of discourse and its expansive capabilities, we can easily see that ads for and against marriage-equality encompass the discursive qualities mentioned above.

Although Foucault dismisses the necessity of illuminating the ideologies behind the discursive practices, and has altogether dismissed ideology for various reasons, this study seeks to place ideology as a central tenet of analysis, and find ways that discourse aids in the proliferation of certain ideologies regarding homosexuality and more specifically, marriage-equality and gay and lesbian families. The importance of ideology in terms of media analysis cannot be understated in that ideology is deeply embedded within the images being presented to audiences and itself has transformative capabilities in terms of *how* people think about specific subjects. Stuart Hall offers a prominent perspective on ideology and the media and therefore serves as a major theoretical anchor to this study.

1.3 Stuart Hall and the Media

According to Hall (1980b), media is considered to be a major influence on culture and ideology, often times defining, (re)producing, and transforming major ideologies of audiences. The media, being a relatively diverse and vague term, refers to channels of communication through which people may receive and send messages (Livesey 2011). As a product of mass media, marriage equality ads have been constructed for the purpose of being distributed and consumed in large numbers by various groups and individuals. Once the messages are in their discursive form and have been consumed by audiences, the received message must be transformed into social practice in order for the communicative circuit to be considered complete. The completion of the communicative circuit is highly dependent on the reception and implementation of the message into social practice, making the construction of the messages all the more important. Given that these messages are thoughtfully and meticulously put together, Hall's theory of encoding/decoding proves particularly useful in assessing audio-visual products in this context.

The audiences toward which the content of media is directed are not composed of passive individuals merely receiving the political and cultural messages. The audiences consist of various individuals in varied social locations, who, instead of merely consuming media messages, actually read media messages, engaging in what Hall refers to as the decoding process of media messages. Analyses of the media and these various messages have more recently focused on the social locations of audience members and their orientations towards forms of media, including how audience members decode certain programs and media content (Hall 1980b). Media studies have also invested more attention towards the role of television, instead of just headline news and current affairs programs, indicating a broader range of media outlets that have potential effects on ideologies and common senses of audience members.

The linearity of the traditional communication model—where the message simply travels from

sender to receiver—simplifies an incredibly complex circuit of communication. Hall (1980b) more accurately conceptualizes the discursive circulation of meanings and messages via sign-vehicles by offering this more complex system of communication. The television communicative process begins with production where the message is constructed. The production process itself, according to Hall, is framed by meanings and ideas that then influence and potentially govern the productive process of message construction. The production and construction of televised imagery is more complex because the audience acts as both the source for the constructed message and the receivers and interpreters of the message (Hall 1980a). Audiences influence the production of the very messages that are created for them to receive and interpret. Therefore, because of the diversity of the audience's interpretations, producers of audio-visual media content must put forth a product that can increase the certainty of their specific message being received as intended.

In the context of this study, the production of marriage-equality ads, both for and against, are subject to the 'rules' of discourse, meaning that the production process is influenced by particular frameworks on discursive and ideological levels. While this study may not be able to testify as to the technical knowledge behind the productive processes and routines, what this study can do, and seeks to accomplish, is analyze other potential influences on productive processes. In particular, assumptions about the audiences, knowledge of existing institutions, and the knowledge and assumptions of existing social and historical conditions are but some influential aspects of the production process that can be observed in marriage-equality ads. The ideological aspects of production, are equally as important as the technical aspects and as such, require a careful and detailed analysis.

The encoded messages—messages that have been specifically produced with an intended message to be interpreted—must then be disseminated via a meaningful discourse in order to be meaningfully decoded (Hall 1980a). The discourses through which meanings are disseminated must be meaningful in that the audience must have some shared understanding of the discourse being used or the meanings and nuances can potentially be lost. The broadcasting structures, in a determinate

moment, use already existing codes that then yield a message for the audience if decoded 'correctly'. Codes represent a framework of understanding and interpretation; they consist of systems of carefully constructed signs that together promote a particular way of understanding and processing the televisual representations of reality. The intelligibility of discourse is contingent upon the codes being used—without the codes, communication would be difficult given that there would be no shared understanding or assumed way of knowing and interpreting the world.

At another determinate moment, the message, the decoded meanings, are then incorporated into the structure of social practices of the receivers. In order for the audience to interpret televisual content and decipher its meanings, members draw upon already situated and seemingly natural repertoires of codes (Hall 1980). Codes, as mentioned above, are situated historically and culturally, and while they differ from one social group to another, they often times are familiar, and in most cases seemingly natural, to those within the group which makes communication easier. When reading a text, the audience uses codes that seem appropriate in order to interpret the signs. However, it is important to note that this is not a simple interpretive process, as the receivers exist within their own frameworks, in specific social, economic, and political locations that may shape how they interpret and use the messages at the end of the communication circuit. In these moments of the encoding/decoding circuit, the text is itself different in terms of the way that the audience interprets the signs and the intended interpretation constructed by the creators (Davis 2004).

During the decoding process, the audience often does not consider the ideological aspects of production when interacting with the text (Davis 2004). Nor do audience members realize that they are utilizing codes that seem natural but are, in actuality, constructed interpretive tools that play certain roles in limiting, or shaping, our understanding of the world. The creators of audio-visual texts are primarily concerned with whether or not the audience has grasped the intended meaning, aiming to achieve “transparent communication” (Hall [1980] 2005, 125). The concern with intended reception is indicative of the chance that “viewers [are] not operating within the dominant or preferred code” (Hall

[1980] 2005, 125). There is a dominant cultural order in which people share meanings of signs, terms, images and sounds, enabling communication to occur. This dominant cultural order “imposes an established dominant view of how things are, and by inference, how things should be” (Davis 2004, 64). Viewers remain relatively oblivious to the existence of this dominant cultural order being imposed on their perception of the world, and as such are more attentive to the content, the emotion, or the life of the characters or people being portrayed.

While marriage equality ads can be accepted at face-value for some, it is important to note the codified elements that presently inform and limit understandings of homosexuality, marriage equality, and family. It is safe to assume that the ads in their political context, have been constructed with specific codes in mind, and specific ideologies to uphold and/or deconstruct. By carefully analyzing the codes in these ads, it is possible to discern the dominant codes of the current social and historical terrain and how these ads work to promote or reject and reconstruct already existing codes.

Hall rejects textual determinism, noting that there is no linear or guaranteed relation between the encoding and decoding processes. A linear, direct relationship between encoding and decoding would result in a perfect circuit of communication where the encoder (those in charge of the media outlets) can be assured that the message will be decoded in the way intended and the audience is acting within the dominant code. Because this is not the case, for Hall, the decoder plays a significantly more active role in the communicative process making the job of the encoder that much more critical in tailoring the televisual products to the audience members. While ads supporting marriage equality focus on securing marriage rights for LGBT people, these messages, in audio-visual format, are informed by ideologies which are then reflected in the finished product. The message may in fact be clear: Give same-sex couples the right to marry or keep marriage between men and women. However, that cannot be assumed to be the only message taken from these ads because there are multiple ways audience members may perceive and understand these ads as a result of people's different social positions. Equally as important, there are layers of meaning to be encoded on the production end of the

communication process as multiple elements of the advertisements are pieced together. How the message is being conveyed is an important part of the communicative process. This study will analyse ads for and against marriage equality to see what ideologies influence how these messages are constructed and what this construction 'says' about the meaningful discourses layered within these ads.

1.4 Bridging Ideology and Discourse

The definition of ideology that Stuart Hall espouses is the one that will be used in this study. Hall defines ideology as “the mental frameworks—the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation—which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out, and render intelligible, the way society works” (Hall 1986b, 29).

What best summarizes Hall's approach to ideology is that ideological categories (e.g. consumer, producer, freedom) are not determined in a single line of cause and effect. Certain interpretations of Marxism classify ideology as the manifestation of bourgeoisie thoughts, reflective of an economic determinism at the heart of their thinking. The rigidity characteristic of these conceptions of ideology is contested largely by the fact that language and discourse, mediums through which ideologies are expressed, are themselves not fixed and belong to a chain of meanings that is fluid and adaptive to change. There is no security or certainty, no economic omnipotence to which ideology is inextricably hinged, but only a relative openness and relative indeterminacy that renders ideological development possible.

Although Hall resists economic determinacy, he believes that ideas may emerge from and reflect the material conditions in which social groups exist (Hall 1986b). By material conditions, Hall refers to the 'tendential' historical relations and the social terrain that may influence which ideologies a specific social group espouses. The historical terrain of a given context, say California's history of rejecting marriage equality initiatives, its diverse, deeply religious populations, or its history as a largely progressive and democratic state, may dictate or influence the ideological terrain—the

particular history of the state is indicative of and perpetuates specific ideologies, and shifts in ideologies, about the propriety and acceptability of same-sex marriages and family building. Hall also discusses how the term 'democracy' in different contexts assumes different meanings. And in a similar line of thought, the term family also takes on different meanings in different contexts. The discourses through which we come to understand family, and the codes utilized in constructing the images and sign systems used to portray family are thus susceptible to ideological restructuring.

Hall (1986a) relies on Gramsci to further explain the way that ideology reaches masses of people in everyday life. Organic ideologies are ideologies that infiltrate the masses of people and influence their everyday lives, including what Gramsci refers to as common sense—the everyday thoughts and ideas of the masses. Hall notes that an ideology's organic historical effectivity is the point at which the philosophical elaborations of ideology seep into these everyday thoughts and ideas of the masses. Common sense is not a coherent and unified system, but instead consists of traces of more coherent philosophical systems sedimented over time (Hall 1986a). New conceptions of the world must contend with common sense in order to reshape and transform already existing conceptions of the masses. What remains salient in people's common senses over time is what we can consider to be historically effective because those conceptions have withstood change and have adapted to evolutions of understanding. Every philosophical current that is historically effective leaves behind a trace within the layers of common sense (Hall 1986b).

Having briefly defined Hall's use of ideology, it is important to reconcile the seemingly oppositional stance Foucault displays towards ideology as a useful concept. To begin, Foucault has displayed three main concerns with ideology and its use in characterizing knowledge formation and power in social relations. Firstly, Foucault finds that ideology poses a distinction of truth and non-truth, that ideology stands in opposition to something else that counts as truth (Howarth 2002). Secondly, Foucault finds that ideology presupposes a unified and single subject that can either remain deceived by ideology or break free from ideological constraints to reach enlightenment and find the

'truth' previously mentioned (Howarth 2002). And lastly, Foucault finds it objectionable that ideology is highly reductionist, allowing the economic sphere to dictate all aspects of social relations (Howarth 2002). Each of these proposed objections to ideology can be ameliorated using Hall's concepts of ideology allowing the two theorists to function in unison for the purpose of this study.

To address Foucault's first objection, one can use Hall's (1986a) discussion of 'the market' and the 'distortions' that Marx pointed out. The market as it exists and the market as it exists in an ideological framework are not together fixed in an unalterable understanding (Hall 1986a). What this means is that there is no affirmed and immovable link between the two. Additionally, the distortions that Marx posited regarding the "bourgeoisie political economy" (36-37) are not just false or untrue. Instead, Hall characterizes 'the market' as a circuit, and at any particular moment on that circuit, a person living within 'the market' experiences and has knowledge of that particular moment. What this means is that there is no true or untrue 'market' of which to know, but there is a partial truth, a partial understanding that one can understand given that individual's relation to the capitalist system as a whole. Knowing this, the use of ideology in this study does not seek to discover a truth about gay and lesbian families, or a truth about families in general, but to uncover the partial truths, the multitude of positions that exist when examining the many moments of family-building in the lesbian and gay context.

Foucault's second objection can be appeased given that according to Hall (1986a), a unified, single ideology never actually pervades the entirety of the people it seeks to affect. Hall notes that the current era in which we live has witnessed a breakdown of once stable political identities—the singular subject is necessarily divided, comprised of several different historical prejudices and future intuitions (Hall 1987). The diversity of human beings and the pluralisation of modern cultural identities calls for new political forms to address the heterogeneity that impedes the development of a hegemonic cultural order. Foucault dismisses ideology because of the idea that it holds at its center a single, unified subject whose identity is fixed by ideology. However, "there is no unitary subject of history" (Hall

1987, 6) and instead “the subject is necessarily divided, an ensemble” (6). This diversified subject is a more complex target for political and ideological convincing and influence, making it difficult for any particular political party or collectivity to entirely appeal to everyone (Hall 1986a). With this in mind, no subject is fixed in their identity and political ads aiming to influence the common senses of the general public must be tailored in specific ways so that their messages will hopefully resonate with the greatest number of people.

Hall believes the transference of messages from encoder to decoders is done so via discursive vehicles and codes within them. Foucault considers discourse to be a system of representations that “defines and produces the objects of our knowledge” (Wetherell, Taylor, and Yates 2001, 73). For example, sexual desires have always been in existence, however, sexuality—the discourse that allows us to talk about sexual desires—is a fairly recent construction tied to certain historical periods. Foucault focuses on the ways that relations of power and knowledge, through discourse, work in tandem to regulate social behaviour within various institutional settings and during specific historical blocs (Wetherell, Taylor and Yates 2001). While this seems relatively similar to ideology, Foucault points out that the class determinism associated with Marxist ideological conceptions is a reductionistic approach to understanding power and knowledge.

In the same manner, while Foucault objects to class power and class interests being the sole arbitrator of knowledge, Hall too, as has been previously mentioned, objects to a single line of determination between knowledge and class. The privileging of the economic realm as the structurer of class divisions and knowledge is much too secure and rigid for both Foucault and Hall given their beliefs in a relational characterization of knowledge and power. Neither theorist truly disagrees with the idea that “no social practice or set of relations floats free of the determinate effects of the concrete relations in which they are located” (Hall 1986a). Foucault believes in historical formations of understanding as evidenced in his discussion of the transformation of sexual discourse and knowledge over time and during specific time periods. Reconciling these two theorists allows for the use of both

discourse and ideology in this study in a way that compliments each other. Discourse and ideology, both concepts now freed from rigidity and a fixed understanding, are now more relational in how they operate in the construction and dissemination of knowledge and the dispersion of multiple loci of power.

Hall's use of Gramsci's concepts of hegemonic processes also shows similarities to Foucault's conception of power. Hall notes that ideological struggle is itself a struggle for hegemony—hegemony being defined as “the process by which a historical bloc of social forces is constructed and the ascendancy of that bloc secured” (Hall 1986a, 42). The process consists of effectively coupling dominant ideas with the historical bloc that is ascending to hegemonic power in its particular historical moment. Similarly, “Foucault focused on power relations, noting that within such contexts, the discourses and signifiers of some interpretative communities are privileged and dominant whilst others are marginalized” (Chandler 2014). Using these understandings of ideology, discourse, codes, and hegemony, this study ventures to bring together an analysis of political ads regarding marriage equality to understand how these four concepts relate to each other in the restructuring and/or reconstituting of power.

Chapter Four: Methods

1.1 Overview

Marriage-equality campaigns have utilized advertising as a means to disseminate their messages and stances on the issue in relation to LGBT equality. Of particular interest are the video advertisements that have been created by both sides that combine both linguistic and visual elements that are used in conjunction to construct a specific meaning and message. In this political context, it is safe to say that these advertisements are not arbitrarily pieced together.

With the aim of analyzing the discursive elements that have been utilized to highlight and conceal certain ideologies, this study uses the analytical tools of multimodal critical discourse analysis (Machin and Mayr 2012) in conjunction with multi-modal social semiotics (Kress 2010). According to multi-modal social semiotics, “in communication, several modes are always used together, in modal ensembles, designed so that each mode has a specific task and function” (Kress 2010, 28). A mode is defined as “a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning” which includes speech, image, and language, all of which are present in the advertisements being analysed (79). Modes have certain affordances that allow for the production of certain signs which then effects meaning-making and interpretation. Signs are an essential part of communication because they are socially derived and motivated; they are the 'objects' of sign-making in which meaning takes on/is given a form (Kress 2010). As I noted above, Stuart Hall offers a communication model in which codes are systems of signs that are essential for making discourse(s) intelligible. Multimodal social semiotics is interested in denoting not only the available choices and constructions of signs, but also the means by which these signs are presented. When authors and other rhetors (sign-makers) choose and/or construct signs and select the means of presenting signs, they also encourage readers and interpreters to place events into discourses that provide a means for structuring understandings of the

world. Critical discourse analysis allows for a way to document and describe the various semiotic choices being made in these advertisements and the discourses, and ideologies that are being challenged, reconstructed, or upheld (Machin and Mayr 2012). To reiterate, this study aims to analyse the advertisements themselves, looking critically at their construction and potential meaning-making affordances. This study will not include the audience's actual interpretation of the advertisements as part of the meaning-making and communication processes. What follows are detailed descriptions of the methods for advertisement selection, data collection, and data analysis.

1.2 Selection of Advertisements

Conducting Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) involves the selection and analysis of a small number of texts, even just one or two texts, images, etc. (Machin and Mayr 2012, 207). The interests of the analyst are what guide this selection, often times being drawn by their detection of certain ideologies at work in a given text or image. Accordingly, the selection of the advertisements supporting marriage equality will be supplemented by also selecting opposing advertisements for a well-rounded analysis.

Selection of analysable media is difficult given the wide array of material for researchers (Krippendorff 2004). Therefore, in the selection of the marriage equality ads to be used, relevance sampling was used (Krippendorff 2004). Relevance sampling, in its application to textual media in newspapers, magazines, etc., entails the use of specifically relevant texts—in this case, marriage equality ads—that “contribute to answering given research questions” making the resulting sample dependent upon the analytical problem being studied (Krippendorff 2004:119). Given that the research questions ask about what and how discourses are implemented to conceal and support ideologies, the polarized advertisements displaying the viewpoints on marriage-equality will help answer these questions. Relevance sampling, also referred to as purposive sampling (Krippendorff 2004:119), will provide the correct sampling strategy given the vast amounts of video media surrounding the same-sex marriage debates (Reynolds 2007). To contextualize marriage equality, ads specifically about

California marriage equality will be used, given the vast amount of research conducted on same-sex marriage debates in the region and the previously noted complex history of the debate within the state (See Lannutti 2005; Valverde 2006). Ads from online media will be used mainly for reasons of accessibility. As California has now legalized same-sex marriage because of a recent Supreme Court decision, advertisements generating support are no longer as relevant in the state and therefore are not aired on the radio and television at the present time. However, the online content of marriage equality campaigns in California is still available and shall be used for this research. Ten ads were used, representing both sides of the debates in order to allow textual comparison and wider array of analysable data.

Ads were selected according to whether they support marriage equality in California, and whether they are against same-sex marriage legalization. The use of ads from both sides of the argument helps create an informed and more complete sample from which to collect data. The analysis of positively reinforcing ads problematizes the naïve acceptance of these ads simply because they support a tenet of equality. While serving a cause seen as just and right, it is important to recognize the potentially problematic, seemingly natural, and unopposed acceptance of these advertisements as some form of social 'truth.' Ads that support marriage equality may utilize certain modes, discourses, codes, and language to represent same-sex couples and families; the same can be said of opposing ads and their characterisation of same-sex couples. "Often times the relevance of a particular text analysed in CDA is made implicitly by researchers by considering them politically interesting enough to be analysed," which is the case in the selection of these particular advertisements (Machin and Mayr, 2012, 207).

The ads themselves had to be very specific to the California marriage-equality debates and were chosen based on their relevance to the issue itself. Researching Proposition 8 using available online search engines (Google) revealed the two major players in in the generators of political advertisements during the 2008 voting season. Key words in Google's search engine included: "Proposition 8";

“California”; “Marriage equality”; “advertisements”; “ads”; “Prop 8”. Having used this combination of key words, the search engine listed as one of the results preservingmarriage.org which led to the website of The Church of Latter Day Saints. Accordingly, research has shown that the Mormon Church provided funds to support Proposition 8 (Youn 2013) and thus delving further in this direction I was able to find advertisements produced and endorsed by preservingmarriage.org that supported Proposition 8. In the same fashion, and utilizing the same key words, the search engine provided links to Equality California (eqca.org) which then led to the organization's website where I was able to find advertisements featuring anti-Proposition 8 sentiments. In selecting which advertisements to use, I kept in mind the purpose of this study: To see how families were portrayed on either side of the argument. The advertisements against Proposition 8 featured actual families which pertained directly to the study and thus those three advertisements were included as part of the sample of advertisements being analysed. For the advertisements supporting Proposition 8, five advertisements from preservingmarriage.org were used for analysis bringing the total number of advertisements to eight. Advertisements from both sides were selected in order to explore the range of discourses produced regarding same-sex marriage pertaining to California's Proposition 8.

1.3 Linguistic Analysis

The advertisements collected were transcribed verbatim and analyzed for linguistic content and were treated as part of a multimodal text. The process of doing CDA involves looking at choices of words and grammar in order to reveal the underlying discourse(s) and ideologies (Machin and Mayr 2012). Because the advertisements involve speech and the telling of life stories, and can be considered 'political' in context (though to differing degrees), a choice of words may suggest certain identities, values, activities, discourses, and ideologies. The power of language and its ability to stir up certain associations necessitates a lexical analysis in which word choices will be analyzed in the texts. For the purposes of this study, the texts are the advertisements themselves given that they can be understood

linguistically by the dialogue, as well as read for the visual representations of people and situations.

Word connotation is an important facet of language use that has implications for discourse signification. Connotation, put simply, refers to the “sociocultural and 'personal' associations” of the words used in a given text (Chandler 2014). As Saussure has pointed out, meaning can be considered, in our terms, relational, in that word meanings are understood in relation to other words (Barry 2002). This is an important distinction of language for this study because certain word choices will connote certain feelings, ideologies, etc., and this study will inquire as to why one word was chosen instead of another with a similar definition. For example, a 'home' connotes a sense of belonging, safety, and something cherished while a 'building' may not have those same culturally conventional associations.

Overlexicalisation in these ads is also considered as it involves the overuse of seemingly synonymous terms that results in a sense of “over-persuasion and is normally evidence that something is problematic or ideological” (Machin and Mayr 2012, 37). Patterns of overlexicalisation are determined by observing the recurrence of specific words in each advertisement. Additionally, structural oppositions, which consist of using seemingly oppositional concepts, such as good and bad or young and old, have been noted in terms of 'ideological squaring.' Ideological squaring is best described as the development of opposing classes of concepts that are constructed around the participants in a given text (Machin and Mayr 2012). Lexical choices that indicate levels of authority in language are also determined in the analysis of the ads. Levels of authority can potentially influence the reception of the ads whether through the use of what is considered to be colloquial terms versus scientific or official-sounding language.

The use of quoting verbs in both texts and speech are also relevant as they may reveal the roles of participants or events, characterising the actors and situations in ways that may influence reception by readers/watchers (Machin and Mayr 2012). The quoting verbs are categorized according to Caldas Coulthard's (1994, 305-306) systematic breakdown:

Neutral structuring verbs	Saying without evaluating	Say, tell, ask, inquire, answer
Metapropositional verbs	Author's interpretation of speaker	Declare, urge, grumble
Metalinguistic verbs	Kind of language speaker uses specified	Narrate, quote, recount
Descriptive verbs	Categorise interactions	Whisper, cry, laugh
Transcript verbs	Mark development of discourse	Add, repeat, amend

Table 1: Types of quoting verbs, their meanings, and examples.

The representational strategies of these advertisements will also be analyzed. “These choices allow us to place people in the social world and to highlight certain aspects of identity [that authors/ad producers] wish to draw attention to or omit” (Machin and Mayr 2012, 77). Van Leeuwen (1996) offers ways of classifying social actors/people and the ideological effects of these classifications:

Personalisation and impersonalisation	Responsibility specific to one person versus larger entity
Individualisation versus collectivisation	Individuals versus collectivity with effect of humanizing
Nomination or functionalism	Who a participant is or what participant does
Specification and genericisation	Naming a person or identifying as a type
Use of honorifics	Titles that convey seniority or authority
Objectivation	Participants reduced to a feature
Anonymisation	Avoiding specification
Aggregation	Participants quantified and treated as a statistic
Pronoun vs. noun	Creating a collective other; 'us' and 'them' division
Suppression	Absent from text

Table 2: Methods of classifying social actors and people.

There are also multiple ways of representing what people are depicted as doing (or not doing), known as transitivity (Machin and Mayr 2012). Analysis of transitivity consists of analysing for agency (who does what to whom) and action (what is being done). Three aspects of meaning are clearly defined by Machin and Mayr (2012, 105) in transitivity analysis. There are participants who are actively doing, but also those to which something is done. There are processes which are signified by verbs and verbal groups, and there are circumstances that provide extra detail about where, when, and how something has occurred. Six process types (Machin and Mayr 2012, 106-111) allow for the analysis of what exactly is being done in a given text.

Material processes	Processes of doing, usually concrete actions with material result or consequence. Consists of actor and goal.
Mental processes	Processes of sensing: cognition, affection, and perception in order to gain insight into feelings of participants.
Behavioural Processes	Cross between material and mental processes, but characterized by lack of agency in participant.
Verbal Processes	Expressed by verb 'to say' and synonyms. Consists of sayer, receiver, and verbiage.
Relational Processes	Processes that encode meanings about states of being in relation to other things. Expressed by verb 'to be' and synonyms.
Existential Processes	Something exists or happens. Only has one participant and usually involves nominalisation.

Table 3: Six process types of transitivity.

Additionally, the analysis of adjuncts will help provide information on actors' social statuses as social agents. Adjuncts are defined as “lexical items that can be used to modify circumstances” (Machin and Mayr 2012, 113). Prepositional phrases and subordinate clauses are both grammatical choices that can be used to provide context for dominant clauses that, when used, can have the effect of reducing or minimizing responsibility for certain actions from certain actors (Richardson 2007, 207). Actions were also analysed for levels of abstraction in which actions become generalised and non-specific with the intended effect of obscuring what is actually being done. This again can be considered to be a method of concealment, reducing the responsibility for particular actions and the commitment to actions not necessarily specified.

Nominalisation and presupposition are also of importance in analysing the linguistic aspect of these advertisements. Nominalisation involves the transformation of a verb process into a noun construction which is meant to augment ambiguity. There are eight important effects of nominalisation (Machin and Mayr 2012, 139-144):

- 1) Removal of people and thus responsibility.
- 2) Hiding of agent and affected due to narrowed perspective.
- 3) Removal of sense of time.
- 4) Actions as nouns can be given traits, making causality a secondary concern.
- 5) Nominalisations can become participants.

- 6) Nominalisations can become stable entities.
- 7) Action is accentuated at the expense of avoiding agents, times, and specificity.
- 8) Compressed and dense text means minimal event details.

Presuppositions are the assumed meanings in a text. Presuppositions are often shared, and because what is presented is taken as implicitly definitive, there is the possibility that there is ideological influence as meanings understood relatively seamlessly are given a 'naturalness' to them (Machin and Mayr 2012). Presuppositions are important to understand because they are indicative of the social reality in which the sign makers live, or the social reality they are attempting to construct. This is important in this study given that gay and lesbian families are a relatively unseen and unheard niche of the LGBT community and thus the ideas that are understood implicitly are how we unconsciously see this group of people.

Rhetorical tropes in the advertisements are also analysed. Metaphors, hyperbole, personification/objectification, metonymy, and synecdoche are the rhetorical tropes of interest. Rhetorical devices are useful for abstraction, diverting attention from a particular process or an issue. By finding the rhetorical tropes one may then point out the discourses communicated by them.

Lastly, modality, is a linguistic way of expressing certainty and commitment to what is being said by a social actor (Machin and Mayr 2012). Modals have many functions, including concealing power relations, revealing an author's identity and power over others and knowledge, and convincing people. Hedging is related to modality in that it is a technique used to mitigate the impact or commitment by distancing speakers from their statements. There are multiple ways of hedging:

-Long noun phrases.
-Modal verbs and adverbs.
-Approximators.
-Non-factive verbs.
-Comparative adverbs.
-Specific times.
-Reference to official source

Table 4: Methods of hedging.

1.4 Visual Analysis

The aforementioned linguistic aspects of texts work in conjunction with not only each other, but also function in conjunction with visual representations to provide an enhanced and more detailed experience of the world through media. Given that the method to this study is guided by multimodal social semiotics, it is essential to consider the additional mode of images in which discourse is communicated and ideology reproduced, upheld, and/or deconstructed. Communication as a social act is the main focus of this study, and as Kress (2010) has pointed out, communication is multimodal and is powered by the social.

The study of visual culture plays an important role in understanding culture as “the explosion of imaging and visualizing technologies [...] in everyday life” (van Leeuwen & Jewitt 2001: 62). The analytical framework for tele-filmic analysis employs strategies of social semiotics which are “concerned with the political understandings, the reading positions and the practical possibilities which analysis makes available” (van Leeuwen & Jewitt 2001: 186). Multimodal social semiotics also focuses on how the possible audience interpretation factors greatly into the making of a sign and sign-complexes (van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001). The rhetor must take into consideration the entirety of a communicational situation in order to produce any messages. Social semiotics also deals with the “re-

presentations” on television or film of what would otherwise be considered actions in everyday life (van Leeuwen & Jewitt 2001) and in the analysis of the ads regarding marriage equality, representations of same-sex relationships reveal, produce, and reinforce specific meanings and discourses.

Multimodal social-semiotics is preferred in this study given the limitations of a strictly linguistic approach to assessing the ads. The ads themselves are multimodal, combining speech, images, colours, actions, proximity, etc. in a way that cannot be fully analysed using just a linguistic approach. According to Kress (2010) a linguistic approach to speech is always partial given that linguistics tends to ignore and exclude the potential meaning in other modes. Social-semiotics can “elucidate a syntax of [...] visual representation,” allowing one to 'say' something about the visual representations in these ads and how the combination of both the visual and linguistic aspects contribute to the sign-complexes of gay and lesbian relationships (Kress 2010: 59).

Machin and Mayr (2012) provide useful interpretive tools for this study with regards to analysing non-linguistic features in these advertisements. Similar to linguistics, denotative and connotative aspects of imagery are considered. The denotation of an image consists of who and/or what is depicted while connotation consists of the ideas and values communicated or associated with these images. Objects in images and the settings will also be analysed as these too may communicate ideas, discourses, values, and identities.

Saliency will also be considered in each advertisement. Saliency “is where certain features in compositions are made to stand out, to draw [the audience's] attention to foreground certain meanings [and will have] central symbolic value in the composition” (Machin and Mayr 2012, 54). Saliency can be achieved in several ways:

Potent cultural symbols	Elements carrying much cultural symbolism
Size	Ranking importance, largest to smallest
Colour	Striking, saturated colours versus muted
Tone	Brighter or darker to attract the eye
Focus	Heightened to exaggerate details, or reduced
Foregrounding	Elements closer or further back in frame
Overlapping	Elements placed in levels relative to each other

Table 5: Methods of salience indication.

Those speaking in the advertisements can also be characterized by gaze and pose. In terms of gaze, when a speaker looks directly at the viewers it is called a demand image, and the viewer is directly acknowledged and prompted for a response. The offer image, where the person does not look out at the viewer, is an image that the viewer can then use as information and contemplate. Looking off frame, and looking up or down also have varying effects on the viewers' perception of the person's character or identity in an image.

Poses can connote broader ideas and assist in the characterisation of identities of a person(s) within a composition. Machin and Mayr (2012, 75-76) offer specific questions to ask when looking at poses and their significance in a given composition:

- To what extent does the person take up space or not?
- Do they perform for the viewer or are they self-contained?
- Is there an emphasis on relaxation or intensity?
- Does the pose suggest openness or closedness?
- If there is more than one person, to what extent do they mirror each other or strike different postures?
- To what extent are they depicted as being intimate, in close proximity, or is there some indication of distance?

Table 6: Questions to ask when considering pose as characterisation of social actors.

There are also visual representational strategies which are used to signify social relations and identities of those in the composition (Machin and Mayr 2012). Distance and what can be considered to be a close, medium, or long shot has certain effects on the characterisation of participants. Angle

(viewing from behind, side-on, looking up or looking down, eye-level) allow viewers to interact with participants in ways similar to their everyday lives. Also important in representing people in images are whether participants are portrayed as individuals or groups, if there are generic or specific representations, and who is not being pictured in the composition. Visual representations of transitivity are analysed similarly to the linguistic representation of action. What participants are doing, the omission of participating agents, and the levels of abstraction are all considered when analysing transitivity in images (Machin and Mayr 2012, 131).

Modality in visual communication determines whether an image or composition seems real or is meant to be more symbolic or more conceptual. The following are indicative of modality in all forms of visual communication (Machin and Mayr 2012, 202-205):

Degrees of the articulation of detail	Ranges from simplistic imagery to more finely detailed ones
Degrees of articulation of the background	Ranging from blank, lightly sketched, blurred backgrounds to sharp and detailed ones
Degrees of depth articulation	Ranging from absence of depth to maximum deep perspective
Degrees of articulation of light and shadow	Ranges from zero articulation to maximum shade with in-between measures
Degrees of articulation of tone	Ranges from two shades of tonal gradation (black and white) to maximum tonal gradation
Degrees of colour modulation	Ranging from flat, unmodulated colour to all nuances of given colour
Degrees of colour saturation	Ranges from black and white to maximum saturation

Table 7: Different measurements of modality.

1.5 Aural Analysis

The dimension of sound, and in particular, background music, is one that does not appear in the multimodal analyses of both Machin and Mayr (2012) and van Leeuwen & Jewitt (2001). Although the visual and linguistic aspects of the media are covered, it is important to understand how background music enhances a specific message. Background music impacts consumer's memories inasmuch as the music 'fits' with the message. The congruity of music and message helps to focus the audience's

attention on the message being presented (Guido et al. 2015). The degree to which the audience perceives that the background music is appropriate or in-line with the message of the advertisement will determine audience attention to the message itself. Incongruence of the music and the message will result in ineffective consumption of the message being presented. Although congruity is often measured by inquiring about people's perceptions of the ads themselves (Macinnis and Park 1991), this study is not looking at how the audience actually perceives the messages, but how the messages are constructed and the ways that different modes of discourse coalesce to create an understanding that the audience is able to perceive. Congruence of music with the message is determined based on fit (Macinnis and Park 1991) which is assessed based on the music being played in the background of the advertisements.

Accordingly, the fit is a subjective determination of the consumer of the advertisement. As this study does not aim to research the actual perception of the audience, the fit of the music is assumed to fit the advertisement as they have been constructed for the purpose of disseminating a specific message. We are assuming that the construction of these ads is deliberate and thoughtful and thus congruence of music with the message is something that should be included. Establishing characteristics of the music and how these characteristics contribute to the advertisements' messages are a key part to understanding how the different modes come together to represent gay and lesbian couples and their families. Characteristics of the music include whether or not the piece itself has a truncated, regular, or fading-out ending which impacts consumer memory (Guido et al. 2015). As for the structural characteristics of the music, elements like tempo (the speed of music), timbre (the variety of sounds produced by various instruments in the piece), and harmony (the use of notes with different key modulations) are examined to determine *how* they fit into the advertisements as opposed to whether or not they *do* fit the advertisements. This is done in an attempt to account for the audience subjectivity on which this study does not focus.

Guided by multimodal social-semiotics, and utilizing methods drawn from Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, this study inspects the semiotic choices used to construct and characterise the participants and the issue of marriage equality, and dissect these advertisements into their semiotic parts. Although not all modes are discussed as significant to this study, patterns in the data are highlighted and elucidated for their importance to the construction and characterisation of same-sex couples and their respective families. I will then look at how these main parts work individually and together to signify and/or suppress discourses on same-sex families. These discourses will then help to identify the underlying ideologies that are naturalizing these ways of conceiving marriage, family, and relationships. How gay and lesbian families and couples are being represented by the opposition, how they are themselves being represented by their communities, and how the opposition is being represented in ads supporting Proposition 8, sheds light on underlying ideological forces influencing the knowledge formation and discourses of LGBT relationships and family.

Chapter Five: Data and Findings

1.1 Overview

What follows is a discussion of the collected data and the analysis of the prominent patterns observed in the advertisements. To begin, I will provide an overview of the advertisements supporting and opposing Proposition 8.

1.2 Advertisement Overviews

Proposition 8 was a ballot measure that banned same-sex marriage, passed by California voters with 53% of all voters approving the measure in 2008. The measure itself was used to ban same-sex marriages in the state after just a few months earlier, the California Supreme Court overturned the State's laws that banned same-sex marriage. The period between the overturning of the current laws and the voting into law of Proposition 8 experienced a proliferation of political campaigns by opposing groups in their attempt to sway the voting population. These advertisements, while not necessarily useful given the United States Supreme Court ruling that same-sex marriages are constitutional, are cultural artifacts that provide insight into the production of discourses regarding same-sex marriages. The ads themselves are structured differently and present their positions on the issue in ways that are more useful to their cause.

The advertisements supporting Proposition 8 each begin with an image of typewriter font displaying a question or comment regarding Proposition 8. Specifically, what is shown are opinions or points being used by the opposition or those who are uncertain of how they will vote on the issue. Each ad uses their specific opening statements as a theme for the entire advertisement, addressing the particular comment or question shown at the opening of the ad. Each pro-Proposition 8 advertisement features people shown individually and in separate scenes talking to the audience about the issue in

relation to the opening statement or question promoting their reasoning to vote yes on Proposition 8. Each advertisement ends with individuals asking the audience to “Join us” and they each vary in length.

In contrast, the advertisements against Proposition 8 advertisements feature a less structured format. The individuals in the advertisement speak and interact with each other as well as the audience. They are shown in situations where they are engaging in different activities (i.e. playing on a playground) and these advertisements feature children in addition to adults. In terms of dialogue, the individuals are not always shown to be speaking, but have voice-over sections where their speech is played over a different scene. Each of the three ads follow this format and end with the Equality California logo and the phrase 'No on 8'.

As previously noted, the data collection and analysis follows the analytical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and multi-modal social semiotics. The content of the eight advertisements chosen for this study have been carefully and meticulously studied for semiotic choices. Discursive choices are important for advertisements, and the spoken portions of the advertisements have been transcribed and analyzed using methods borrowed from Critical Discourse Analysis. For visual analysis, van Leuween's Visual Representation of Social Actors framework along with the Representation and Viewer Network are used to understand how these advertisements visually convey messages about gay and lesbian couples and families.

Although visual text is limited in most of the advertisements, the people, henceforth referred to as 'social actors' use language as spoken words which can be analyzed linguistically utilizing analytical frameworks from Machin and Mayr (2012) and van Leuween's system network of representing social actors linguistically. In conjunction with the visual aspects of the advertisements, both utilize similar discursive practices to represent the gay and lesbian families in different ways.

In addition to the advertisements' visual and linguistic aspects, the aural dimension of the advertisements was considered as a mode that works to shape the representations of gay and lesbian

couples and families. Advertisements often feature background music and when congruence exists between the music and what is being shown and said in these ads, the audience may be better able to focus their attention on the messages of these ads (Guido, et al. 2014). Together, the music, the visuals, and the language coalesce into a coherent whole and it is the goal of this study to see *how* this happens and what these convey about the characterization of gay and lesbian families.

The data analysis is divided into three main sections detailing the most common discursive practices found in all advertisements about Proposition 8, regardless of the stance on the issue:

- 1) Representations of a collective and individuals
- 2) Establishing Context as a Framework
- 3) Upfront and Backgrounded Gayness/Lesbian-ness

As discussed in the Literature Review, the representations of gay men and lesbian women in the media have been both laudable and problematic. While the inclusion of gay and lesbian characters in television and other forms of media is something of an achievement, the representations themselves rely on stereotypes and misconceptions that are then perpetuated further in a medium that is disseminated to masses of people. These representations often focused on individuals, and these representations more often than not perpetuated feminine men and masculine women. While mainstreaming gay and lesbian individuals is important in giving exposure to the unexposed audience, it is inherently damaging to allow the mainstreaming of negative stereotypes. It has been noted that there has been an increase in the recognition of same-sex couples, but the recognition of lesbian and gay families does not have the same progressive momentum (Clarke 2008). Additionally, while individual portrayals are often the standard, the proliferation of collective representation is something that needs to be studied. Seldom have gay and lesbian individuals been portrayed in sexual contexts in mainstream media. Although this landscape of portrayal is always changing and now includes gay and

lesbian couples, these ads have portrayed them as individual units that are not sectioned off from the collective LGBT community and its political underpinnings.

The second theme, context as framework, refers to the contextual development of these ads as altogether political, but different in their contextualization of gay and lesbian couples and gay and lesbian families. Both the categories of the ads develop different contexts by utilizing different modes to construct and represent the current social context in which lesbian and gay couples and families exist. The context of the current mediatized representations places gay and lesbian couples in 'straight' dominated settings, set against a backdrop of heterosexuality that highlights their differences from 'normal' couples (Avila-Saavedra 2009). The heterosexual context includes the fact that many people still cling to the idea of the nuclear family, traditional marriage, and biological parenthood which are thought to be rooted in heterosexuality (Clarke 2001). This framework is further analysed as being the lens through which we understand gay and lesbian couples and families, and thus colours the portrayals by grounding them in a reality that the audience will understand.

The final theme consists of upfront or backgrounded gayness and lesbian-ness. This theme is in itself the most significant finding given that most often it is researched as a method that depicts gay and lesbian people in positive instances. The representation of gay and lesbian people on television and other forms of media focuses primarily on individuals, and the inclusion of couples and families is somewhat of a new phenomena. Much of the research on gay and lesbian couples and families has been centered on family dynamics and child-rearing especially, ignoring a niche of study that includes their representation on major television shows and advertisements. Research also includes, most importantly, the methods of 'doing family' (Suter et al. 2007) that entail the mundane, everyday activities that comprise family life. By representing the acts of 'doing family,' these subtle representations of gayness and lesbian-ness become the standard of family that the audience *should* understand, and the standard of family that these ads *want* the audience to understand. By examining just *how* gay men and lesbian women are being presented, either directly or indirectly, offers insight as

to the intentions and goals of each ad and the ways that they understand, or wish to shape the understanding of, gay and lesbian couples and families.

These three themes are organized based on what the discursive practices and modes aim to do. These categories are not mutually exclusive and together, in different instances, reveal current ideological foundations that underlie perspectives of gay and lesbian families and couples expressed in each ad. Discussion of these three themes provides insight as to the semiotic choices the creators of these ads may have had to make in order to convey their messages to the audience. The division into three themes is simply for the ease of discussion regarding the discursive practices being utilized in these particular advertisements. The discussion of each ultimately sheds light on *how* gay and lesbian couples are being framed and represented by the underlying ideologies of the people for whom they are made.

Pro-Proposition 8 Advertisements

To begin, I will discuss each ad analyzed in greater detail. Altogether there are five separate advertisements that are supportive of Proposition 8. Although each ad features different arguments, each ad is structured very similarly and entails the same type of presentation of information. To view the advertisement, click on the advertisement title.

[Maintains Rights](#): The ad opens up with the statement “If Proposition 8 passes, won't it take existing rights away from gay couples?” being read by someone not included in the scene. The ad then proceeds to a young man named 'Cade', standing and talking to the audience. In the background there are boats and piers, along with water which makes the environment appear to be a bay or a marina. The young man discusses more in depth the fact that Proposition 8 will not take away rights from gay couples and that their rights are still intact despite what the opposition states. The advertisement switches to a young woman named Melissa from La Mesa, CA. Her environment consists of a hill with green grass and, in the background, it is blurred but you can make out trees and some people sitting in

the grass behind her. She discusses California law and explains that domestic partners enjoy the same rights as married spouses and then should Proposition 8 pass, none of their rights will be taken away. This advertisement then ends with a series of people encouraging the audience to join them, to be “wise and informed” and to “vote yes on Proposition 8.”

'Protect Marriage' : This ad opens up with the statement “I'm sick and tired of the intolerance and bigotry of religious people. That's why I'm voting against Proposition 8” being dictated by David from San Francisco, CA. The next scene features a middle-aged man named Ariel from Tustin, CA discussing that the opposition has characterized supporters of Proposition 8 as hateful, and he characterizes the opposition as being bullies. He also shifts the argument towards protecting marriage, away from the argument of hating gay men and lesbian women which is what the opposition believes they are doing. In the background, you can see a city street with people and cars parked and passing by. There are buildings in the background as well as trees in the middle of the street making it bidirectional. Ariel is facing forward and wearing a black shirt as he talks. The scene then shifts to a woman named Katie from Fullerton, CA who appears to be leaning on a table, and possibly sitting in a park given the green hills and the trees in the background. She is wearing a black long-sleeved top and is also facing the audience directly. Katie discusses the opposition as having these double-standards saying that they are quick to criticize the supporters using labels like “intolerant” and “homophobic” characterizing the opposition and defending the supporters. The scene then shifts to a young man named McKay from Sacramento, CA who is standing with the ocean in the background and a mountain in the background and some land jutting into what looks like a bay. He is wearing a white collared shirt underneath a black sweatshirt and facing the audience as well when talking. He discusses Jesus Christ and disagreements on morality and the fact that Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of love and respect, highlighting that people on both sides should be following his example. The next scene features a woman named Sara from Newport Beach, CA wearing a purple shirt. She is leaning against a pillar as she is standing beneath a pier and you can see the ocean and waves crashing against the other pillars in

the background. Sara discusses again the “Saviour” and emphasizes forgiveness and love as the guiding principles and the tolerating “transgressions” is not something for which people should stand. This advertisement then ends with a series of people encouraging the audience to join them, to be “wise and informed” and to “vote yes on Proposition 8.”

'Protects Marriage' : This ad begins with the statement “Don't gay and lesbian couples deserve the same amount of happiness as other couples?” attributed to Lindsay from San Diego, CA. The ad then shifts to Jessica, a student from Stanford University who is standing on a hill of green grass with blurry trees in the background. She is wearing a black shirt with a white shirt underneath and a white necklace and is facing forward as she talks to the audience. She discusses that the argument of happiness is merely a “diversion” from the actual point of the argument which is to protect traditional marriage and defend religious freedoms. This advertisement then ends with a series of people encouraging the audience to join them, to be “wise and informed” and to “vote yes on Proposition 8.”

'We Support' : This ad begins with the statement “I don't know many people who actually support Proposition 8. I mean, I'm sure they're out there but I don't think there are many” attributed to Mary from San Jose, CA. The ad then shifts to a man named Cordy from Corona, CA who discusses that there are many supporters of Proposition 8 both locally and nationally. He is facing the audience directly, and is wearing a blue collared long-sleeved top with a darker vest over it. In the background, you can see trees and a building, along with some parked cars. The advertisement then shifts to a man named Lance from Huntington Beach, CA who is standing and facing the direction of the audience. In the background you can see the blue sky as well as a blurred building and some tall palm trees. He states that both the Presidential candidates of that time frame support traditional marriages and that internationally, very few countries support same-sex marriage. Lance is wearing a black collared shirt. The ad then shifts to a man named Mike from Fountain Valley, CA who is wearing a red-coloured long-sleeved collared shirt. In the background you can see a street with cars passing by and trees and buildings as well. Mike discusses the fact that research from France studied the countries that supported

same-sex marriage and rejected it on the basis that gay marriage prioritized adult desires over the wellbeing of children. This advertisement then ends with a series of people encouraging the audience to join them, to be “wise and informed” and to “vote yes on Proposition 8.” Additionally, they say that it's ours and your children's future as encouragement to vote yes on Proposition 8.

'Your Rights' : This ad opens with the statement “I don't see how same-sex marriage really hurts anyone else. Wha...what's the harm?” attributed to RJ from Huntington Beach, CA. It then shifts to a woman named Gar Wai from San Francisco, CA. She is wearing a black top with sunglasses on her head and she is also facing directly toward the audience. In the background you can see homes in a row along with some grass and a street, depicting a possible neighborhood. She discusses one of the consequences of Proposition 8 failing to pass which is the forcing of churches to allow same-sex marriages on their property. The ad then shifts to Daniel from Covina, CA who is wearing shorts and a white shirt. He is shown sitting down next to a tree on the grass with more trees in the background. He discusses the Supreme Court decision that gay-marriage is a fundamental right and how it infringes on religious arguments. The advertisement shifts to Suubi from Rancho Santa Margarita, CA who is facing the audience and wearing a bright purple or pink top. In the background you can see trees and what appears to be a white building in the background. Suubi discusses one of the consequences from the failure of passing Proposition 8. She talks about how religious adoption agencies may be forced to adopt out to same-sex couples or cease their adoption practices altogether and cites an instance from Massachusetts. The advertisement then moves to a man named Geoff from Brentwood, CA who is facing the audience directly and is wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt. He is leaning on a car and in the background you can see another, some people walking, and a glimpse of what looks like the ocean and the blue sky. He discusses that supporters of Proposition 8 will be labeled as intolerant and that those who support it will be targeted and their jobs will be at risk. He also states that California's decision will have political influence across the United States. The ad then shifts to Jenny Lynne from Santa Monica, CA who is facing the audience directly and is wearing a blue and black coloured dress

or top. In the background you can see tall buildings and tall palm trees as well as the sky. Jenny Lynne discusses that if Prop 8 fails, then public schools will have to teach about same-sex marriages. The advertisement shifts to Barbara from San Jose, CA who is sitting atop a grassy hill with homes and buildings in the background, a possible cityscape. Barbara is sitting wearing pants and a floral top. Barbara emphasizes that there will be serious clashes between the teachings on equal marriage from public schools and the personal teachings of parents who are not supportive of it. The advertisement then shifts to Adam, a student at UCLA School of Law who is standing and facing the audience. He is wearing a white collared shirt with another shirt underneath. In the background you can see a street with parked cars and small buildings and trees. He discusses the loss of civil liberties in terms of the scope of practice of certain business who do not support same-sex marriages. The advertisement then shifts to Alissa, a photographer from Palmdale, CA who is leaning against a table top outside. There are trees in the background which makes it look like she is at a park. Alissa faces the audience directly, and discusses that equal rights and happiness are not the main arguments and that the arguments are really about the freedom of speech and religion. This advertisement then ends with a series of people encouraging the audience to join them, to be “wise and informed” and to vote yes on Proposition. Additionally, they say that it's ours and our children's future as encouragement to vote yes on Proposition 8.

Anti-Proposition 8 Advertisements

The three advertisements against Proposition 8 share many similarities in terms of their structure and what they portray. In this next section I will discuss these ads in greater detail. To view the advertisement, click on the advertisement title.

['Ruben and Hector'](#) : This ad begins with one of the dads stating that he would give one of his sons, Andrew, the world. This voiceover plays over a scene with two of the children swinging on a playground set. It then cuts over to one of the dads, wearing a brown shirt smiling and looking off the

screen. This then cuts over to the older of the two children getting ready to slide down a slide on the same playground set with one of the dads in a brown shirt watching over him and reaching up to almost protect him as he begins to slide down. The first voiceover ends with the dad in the brown shirt sitting on a couch with the older of the two children, wearing a red shirt, sitting in the dad's lap as he is shown speaking and finishing the voiceover statement. The next voiceover statement is spoken by the other dad, wearing a light blue long-sleeve collared shirt, stating that when they met Anthony, their youngest child, they were going to be a family. The scenes associated with this specific voiceover feature the second dad (in the light blue long sleeved shirt) helping the youngest child slide down the slide on the playground and it looks like there is a house in the background. The child then slides all the way down into the arms of the first dad in the brown shirt, and the dad then picks him up and lifts him into the air as the child smiles. The voiceover ends with the second dad in the blue shirt talking, looking almost off screen, with the younger child, also in a red shirt, sitting on his lap. The next voiceover statement is voiced by who I assume is the dad in the brown shirt, stating that when Proposition 8 passed it was a very sad day for them. This statement is overlaid on a scene featuring the entire family, both dads at either end of a brown couch in what appears to be their living room, and the two children between them. One child with the dad in blue is playing with a car, and the younger child with the dad in brown is reading a book. The next statement, given by the dad in blue, describes that the passing of Proposition 8 made them feel awful. This voiceover is overlaid on a scene with the dad in blue speaking that statement, looking off screen. The last statement is given by the dad in brown, stating that they are a family and that they deserve to be married like everyone else. This statement is given over a scene with the two children sitting on the lap of the dad in blue with the dad in brown looking over at them. The ad ends with the dad in brown finishing his last statement and the camera zooming in on him.

'Frances and Cynthia' : This ad begins with the conversation between the two moms and the daughter discussing how they eat at Denny's and then shifting over to a conversation about prom dress

shopping. This conversation is played over multiple scenes. The first couple scenes involve close-ups of one of the mothers, with the shorter hair, and the daughter, smiling and looking at each other and off camera. They are then shown sitting outside at a table. In the background there are trees, and the table has food and drinks on it, with a fruit centerpiece. The two moms are sitting on the left side of the screen, and the daughter is sitting on the right. They are shown to be interacting with each other, looking at each other, looking down, and looking off to the side. The next statement is given by the daughter; she discusses how the description of her mother's relationship from being married to being partners changed with Proposition 8. This statement is given over multiple scenes, with a close-up of the daughter talking and, a scene with the two moms standing together, gardening and working on some flowers outside of what we can assume is their house. The statement is finished with a scene showing a close-up a picture of both the moms on their wedding day in wedding dress and suit. This is the only thing in this scene that is in focus, and everything else is it out of focus. The daughter is then shown speaking towards the camera stating that she did not want to get married if her mothers could not get married. This statement is delivered by the daughter in a close-up shot as she tugs at her ear and is sitting. We can assume that she is still giving this statement in the same environment. The daughter continues the dialogue, describing her mother's relationship and the unfairness of the situation. This statement is given over a scene with the two mothers standing and laughing together, shown in front of what we assume is their house. The moms glance at each other, and the taller mom has her arm around the shorter mom. The voice-over plays over a scene with the daughter and mom sitting in the same chairs, and reaching over to hug and kiss each other on the cheek. The advertisement ends with the daughter stating that it is love either way in a close-up shot. She is not smiling and seems to have a serious tone to her voice. The environment and background hardly changes, and switches between the outside table where it appears that the family was eating breakfast, and the front portion of their home in their front yard.

'Michael and Xavier': This ad begins with one of the two dads asking if anyone at the table

would like to say grace. The shot moves from a side-view close-up shot of one of the children and pans out to reveal a young girl raising her hand, and then a medium shot of one of the dads, dressed in a red, long-sleeved, collared shirt. The shot then switches to a wide shot with the young boy and young girl on the left side of a long table, the dad in red at the left head of the table, the dad in white at the right head of the table, and a young man sitting on the right side of the table by himself. The two dads are looking at the young girl raise her hand, volunteering to say grace as the two younger boys look towards her as well. The first set of dialogue then ends with a close up of the younger boy who turns to look at the camera and smiles. The next set of dialogue is from both dads, stating that they have five children. As they say this, this shot shows them sitting in the same positions as the scene with the table, and behind them you can see pictures and other memorabilia. The next voiceover features one of the dads talking about how they had been planning their wedding for a significant amount of time and being in disbelief that that opportunity is going to be taken away. This plays over a scene that features what appears to be the front page of a wedding album which then cuts to the dad in red speaking the dialogue. This then cuts to an image of one of the memorabilia showing the name “Michael and Xavier Established 2008.” The dialogue then ends with both the dads sitting together again in front of the shelf of pictures and memorabilia saying that they are free to love who they love. The last set of voiceover has the other dad in white talking about the unfairness of taking away rights from anyone and his confidence in the fact that Proposition 8 will be overturned. This plays over scenes where the dad in white is shown talking directly in close-up shots of his upper body. The scenes of the dad talking are cut by clips of the family hugging in what appears to be their kitchen which ends the advertisement.

1.3 Representations of Individuals and Collectives

Pro-Proposition 8

Based on the collected qualitative data, there appears to be movement between being presented as part of a collective, and being presented visually as an individual. The function of these representations

contribute to the display of characteristics regarding the gay and lesbian families and couples as being both a part of, and also separate from, both the LGBT community and society in general.

In the advertisements supporting Proposition 8, there are no visual elements available to determine the sexualities of the social actors involved, and given the purpose of the advertisement, it is highly unlikely for any of them to identify openly as gay or lesbian. Those given visual space in the advertisements and who are directly involved are represented as individuals as evidenced in Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3. Each figure is representative of the general appearances of each of the speakers. Each is wearing different clothing, and each person appears to be of different ethnic and/or racial background if based solely on outward appearance. The supporters are shown individually, each with a different background. They are set to be understood as individuals given that they are individually named and attributed to a specific geographic location. Even though each is shown individually, they are shown in relatively the same pose: They are shown to be in medium-shot because we can mostly see their upper bodies, and they are facing forward toward the audience in a mostly didactic manner demanding attention of the audience.



Figure 1: Gar Wai from 'Your Rights' pro-Proposition 8 advertisement.

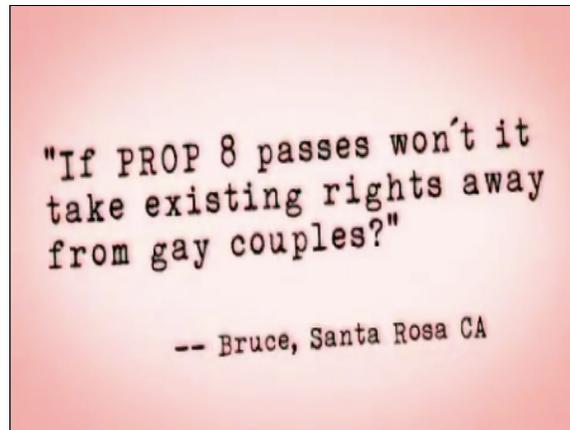


Figure 2: Cordy from 'We Support' pro-Proposition 8 advertisement.



Figure 3: Katie from 'Protect Marriage' pro-Proposition 8 advertisement.

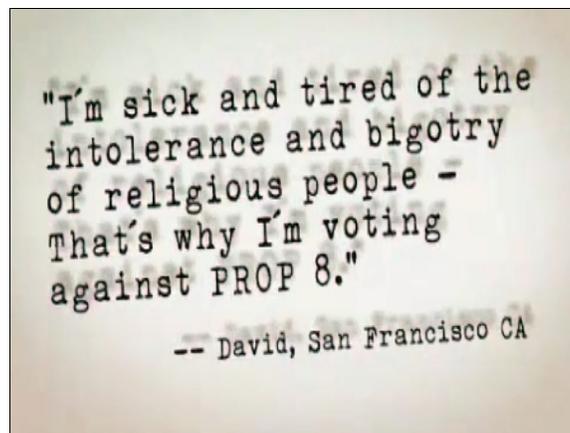
While the supporters are shown as individuals, the visual the audience receives of any dissent or opposition to Proposition 8 in these ads appears at the beginning of each ad as a statement or a question written in type-font.



"If PROP 8 passes won't it
take existing rights away
from gay couples?"

-- Bruce, Santa Rosa CA

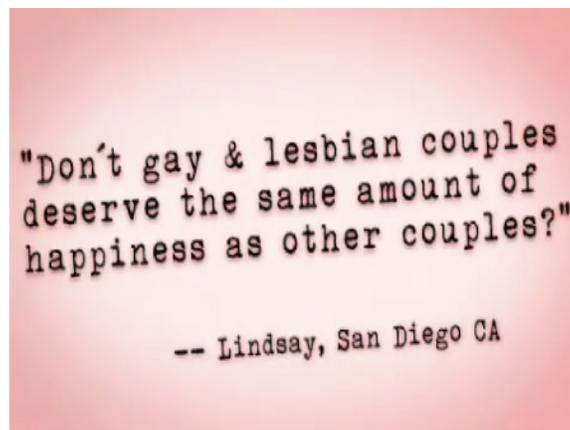
Figure 4: Opening question in 'Maintains Rights' pro-Proposition 8 advertisement.



"I'm sick and tired of the
intolerance and bigotry
of religious people -
That's why I'm voting
against PROP 8."

-- David, San Francisco CA

Figure 5: Opening statement in 'Protect Marriage' pro-Proposition 8 advertisement.



"Don't gay & lesbian couples
deserve the same amount of
happiness as other couples?"

-- Lindsay, San Diego CA

Figure 6: Opening statement in 'Protects Marriage' pro-Proposition 8 advertisement.

Figures 4, 5, and 6 are representative of opening scenes of each pro-Proposition 8 advertisement. The advertisements all open with a statement or question from what the audience can assume is a potential voter, a skeptic, or individual opposed to Proposition 8 based on the content of the

statement. The statement, in quotes, is followed by a name and a place, providing some attribution to a specific person having said or asked it. However, the attribution is non-specific and appears to be generic given that there is no last name, nor any image of an individual who actually asked the question or made the statement. Although a geographic California city is given to provide context, the individual is represented minimally with just first name and a quote indicating some potential political view the person has on the issue.

In Figure 4, Bruce from San Diego queries whether letting Proposition 8 pass will take existing rights away from gay and lesbian couples. To the viewer it appears that Bruce is an individual, a specific person questioning the political legitimacy of Proposition 8. However, given the manner in which the remainder of the advertisement proceeds, Bruce can be said to be a metonymic individual: one part of the whole of those with the same or similar query regarding the legitimacy of Proposition 8. After this scene, the social actors involved in the ad address the *audience* by answering Bruce's question. They are possibly operating under the assumption that other viewers may be asking the same question as well and thus they provide an answer dismantling the premise that Proposition 8 takes away rights. Although Bruce is presented as an individual, the ambiguity and the lack of additional context (i.e. a concrete image of him) indicates his standing in as a representative of potential voters with the same question. He is an individual set as part of a collective.

Similarly, Figure 5 shows the quote is attributed to David from San Francisco but instead of a question, it is a declarative statement of his opinion and course of action. In this quote, David is characterized as an individual given that he is given the action of 'voting' as well as given attributes of being 'sick and tired'. The declarative statement asks nothing of the audience and characterizes David as someone who provides information as well, giving him the appearance of slightly more autonomy. The remainder of the ad proceeds similarly as the previous ad by refuting the statement, as if addressing a general audience and not just David. While David is characterized as possessing some individual traits, the audience does not see David as a person, but instead David can be understood as a member of a

collective or a stand-in for the collective.

Linguistically, the ads supporting Proposition 8 seem to characterize the opposition by representing them as a collective rather than as individuals. The visual absence of identifiable gay and lesbian individuals, as well as the visual absence of people in opposition to Proposition 8, is bolstered by the fact that linguistic representation is limited to references that lack specificity or descriptive individual characteristics. In the ad entitled 'Maintains Rights', the individual Cade speaks of “some opponents of Proposition 8” and states that “gays and lesbians” still enjoy the same rights being in civil unions. The wording itself appears to reduce the personalization of these invisible social actors, and although they are given linguistic space in this ad, they are lumped into a collective. The collectivisation of gay men and lesbian women, their families, and their allies has a dehumanizing effect, an effect that appears in all five of the Proposition 8 ads analyzed.

Additional references to the opposing side include calling the opposition 'people' or simply 'activists' rather than referencing or speaking about specific individuals. By referring to the opposition as 'people,' the ads continue to collectivise the individuals. Specific references to lesbian and gay individuals lumps them into 'gays' and 'lesbians' and sometimes just 'gays' as an overarching social actor descriptor that erases lesbian identity. The people in the ads also refer to gay and lesbian couples as 'domestic partners' or 'same-sex partners' which again suffices as a generic way of referencing actual people and couples that identify as gay and lesbian in the community. The terms themselves set up a structural opposition, positioning gay and lesbian couples as this other type of couple that exists oppositionally to opposite-sex couples thus necessitating the qualifier of 'same-sex' or 'domestic'. They are not just 'partners' or 'couples' but are instead given qualifiers that denote the specific type of couple in a generic and deliberate way that works to diminish their autonomy and relatability with the audience.

By referencing the opposition as “gays”, “lesbians”, “activists”, “opponents”, these descriptors act as nominalisations of the social actors which then reduces them to their occupations or single traits

ignoring their other, possibly more salient attributes as people (Machin and Mayr 2012). This dehumanizing method serves to alienate the audience from the LGBT community by denying lesbian and gay people the individual aspects that gives them relatability. Minimizing the human aspects of the people being portrayed thus minimizes their subjectivity and reduces them to a single aspect which the audience may latch onto and then reject. This method works to reconfigure how lesbian and gay people are seen by the audience and simplifies them for the sake of the advertisement, reducing them to their sexuality and indicating that their sexuality is the defining characteristic of their personhood.

As I discussed, the social actors supporting Proposition 8 in the ad are depicted alone and talking to the audience. Their individuality lends to the dissemination of their message on Proposition 8 given that they are not seen as just an overarching collective; it is possible that this portrayal of individuals works towards a more personable approach to delivering a political message. By giving a face to their messages, this provides the personability that the opponents of Proposition 8 were not given in these ads and thus enhances the intended effectiveness of the pro-Proposition 8 message. To be clear, the messages are not necessarily steeped in anti-gay sentiment, but instead work to provide a semblance of tolerance on the part of the Prop 8 supporters while offering limited subjectivity to gay and lesbian couples via mere verbal acknowledgment. The ads do not express a message that indicates being gay or lesbian is inherently incorrect, but focuses on the victimization of those opposed to same-sex marriage and the rights being taken away because of its legalization being forced upon those opposed to it. The shift of focus works as a buffer against criticisms of being anti-gay and anti-lesbian by characterizing the supporters as the victims and minimizing the personalization of those opposed to Proposition 8 and thus characterising them as the perpetrators.

In terms of the depictions of gay and lesbian families in these ads, there is no visual aspect of the ad that serves as representation of the gay and lesbian community, let alone gay and lesbian families. Even the quotes presented at the beginning of the ad seem to come from people who are allies, and not people who identify as gay or lesbian as evidenced by the fact that none of them use the

personal collective pronoun 'we'. Despite the fact that they are a central focus of the advertisement, gay and lesbian families are excluded and not afforded any visual representation. This absence should not go unnoticed because although the families and couples of the LGBT communities are given linguistic representation, the lack of visual inclusion allows the supporters of Proposition 8 to disassociate the issues of marriage equality from the very people it affects. Anchoring marriage equality to the image of gay and lesbian couples would then represent the issue differently than what this ad seems to intend.

Anti-Proposition 8

The ads against Proposition 8 visually appear more focused on the individual, and at the very least provide a clearer representation of an individual rather than the collective in terms of their representation of gay and lesbian couples and their respective families. The ads featuring the families affected by Proposition 8 depict the couples and their children as *individual members* of a family unit in using multiple tools of representation. Their individuality is indicated by their dress, actions, and speech, and unlike the advertisements supporting Proposition 8, there is little ambiguity about who these individuals are because that information is provided to the viewers in a fairly straightforward manner (Machin and Mayr 2012).



Figure 7: Hector or Ruben with Andrew in playground for Anti-Proposition 8 advertisement.

In Figure 7, the man (either Hector or Ruben) is shown wearing a brown shirt, is smiling, and is angled toward the playground slide where a young boy, wearing a red shirt and dark pants, is crouching

and getting ready to go down the slide. The individuals in this scene are shown to be in different poses, and do not appear to adhere to the standards of collective representation (Machin and Mayr 2012). Their poses indicate neither rigidity nor regimentation, and thus more freedom to move about the yard and playground setting. They each engage in different activities and orient themselves differently to the audience providing the audience with varied experiences and interpretations of each social actor.



Figure 8: Frances and Cynthia sitting with their daughter in anti-Proposition 8 advertisement.

According to Machin and Mayr (2012), people can be depicted as homogenised, in which the represented individuals act similarly to each other, creating the understanding that everyone being presented is essentially the same or acts in a collectivised manner (101). The ads depicting these families do not adhere to such uniformity. Although they are depicted as a small collective of family members, each member exhibits individual characteristics. These factors contribute to the individualistic portrayal of the family members. Figure 8 shows Frances and Cynthia sitting with their daughter and although they are all sitting, they each are sitting differently. The woman on the far left sits upright; the woman in the middle is slouched to her left as she looks over at the woman on the right; the daughter is slouched to her right towards the woman in the middle. The scene appears casual as they all talk and laugh. However, it should be noted that the individuals, while exhibiting their own characteristics, cannot be separated from the larger, LGBT community of which they are a part given the political purpose of the advertisement. While it is important to understand they are part of the

LGBT community as framed by the advertisement and its general purpose, it is equally important to understand that these social actors are also individual members with specific, defining traits.

The ads against Proposition 8 operate differently in terms of the linguistic characterisation of the social actors as individuals. In the ads, the adults seem to be individualized given that the audience is made aware of their names. Cynthia and Frances; Hector and Ruben; Michael and Xavier: The audience is provided with the first names of all the adults in just the titles of each of the advertisements. However, only in the advertisement with Michael and Xavier is the audience aware of specifically which person is which, allowing the audience to put a name to a face. The audience is given this information in dialogue between Michael and Xavier as they mention each others' names, facilitating the inference. The other two advertisements do not indicate which person is which, but still present the two adults as individuals that the audience can then relate to just by knowing their names irrespective of to whom the name belongs. Names themselves present information on the individual because naming practices are often long and belabored, and are almost never arbitrary. Names are often influenced by various factors such as race, ethnicity, and religious background and thus naming offers some insight into the individual (Edwards and Caballero, 2008).

While the adults are given names and their individuality conveyed more obviously, the children are not afforded the same individual characterisations. Only one of the advertisements – the ad featuring Hector and Ruben – provides the names of the children (Anthony and Andrew) and in the remaining two ads, the children are unnamed. As mentioned, names are often reflective of racial, ethnic, or faith backgrounds (Edwards and Caballero, 2008) and may also indicate sex and gender norms established in the social practice of naming (Ridgeway, 2009). If the audience knows all the names of the children, it is possible that the audience may also understand the children as individuals with specific characteristics particular to them. However, naming is not as prevalent as with the adults when it comes to the children. In the advertisement featuring Cynthia and Frances, their daughter's name is not revealed. Instead, their daughter assumes a primary speaking role, which translates to

more involvement and authority in the ad. The daughter of Cynthia and Frances is afforded much speaking time in the advertisement, taking up approximately twenty-three seconds of speaking time in the thirty second advertisement. Her primary dialogue revolves around describing her home life as well as defending her moms and their love for each other. Her role is not to simply be a child, but to enhance the scene and lend to the autonomy and individuality of her parents. The children in the other two advertisements do not have speaking roles, but instead are presented as being more active with their roles as children, engaging in various activities with their parents. This lack of speaking could possibly be due to their age (some of the children appear very young). The advertisement for Hector and Ruben features Anthony and Andrew playing on a backyard playground, and the advertisement with Xavier and Michael features their children engaging in various family activities like saying grace before a meal, and a group hug (Figures 9 and 10).



Figure 9: Michael and Xavier sitting with their children in anti-Proposition 8 advertisement.



Figure 10: Close-up of one of Michael and Xavier's male children in anti-Proposition 8 advertisement.



Figure 11: Michael, Xavier, and family hugging in anti-Proposition 8 advertisement.

Figures 9, 10, and 11 display the interaction between Michael and Xavier and their three children. In the first scene, Xavier, Michael, and their three featured children are sitting at their dining table and, according to the context, it appears they are preparing to eat. The older male in the red shirt at the head of the table asks if anyone would like to say grace and the young girl raises her hand to volunteer. The action of raising her hand to volunteer is a display of a material process giving the young girl a more active role in the scene. What is clear is that in all the ads, the children are shown as active participants.

The role of young children in these ads is discussed in the context of present research indicating that the wellbeing of children is a primary concern of those opposed to same-sex marriage. The arguments used in the advertisements supporting Proposition 8 suggest the inappropriateness of teaching children, in public schools, that all marriages are equal, regardless of gender. This is bolstered

by the fact that research has shown that many print and ad stories featuring gay and lesbian couples with their families pin the child as the focal point. This again indicates that same-sex couples and their relationship and familial success is largely determined by their child-rearing capabilities (Landau 2009). Studies on lesbian and gay families mostly focus on potential psychological ramifications on children being raised in these particular 'nontraditional' households (Bos et al. 2005; Oerton 1997; Clarke 2008; Clarke 2001) and thus having children in the advertisement, shown to be mostly outside the political fervor, indicates that they are living as children should, non-autonomous and semi-dependent on the parents as being the ones with authority.

As described, the children are mostly nameless, drawing the attention away from them individually, but rather highlighting their role as contributing to the family as a whole. The children are shown to be engaging in everyday activities, like playing on the playground, and eating dinner, all of which are supervised by the parents and are essentially elements used to augment that familial feeling and appearance. The children are shown with the parents in each advertisement, and while the parents often make the children the focal point of the advertisement, the children work to make the family and their parents the main focus of the ads. There are many scenes in which a child is shown in a close-up shot, either smiling, playing, laughing, or some other everyday activity. The close-up shots of the children give the audience some insight into the children's lives, and it brings the audience closer to the children with regards to familiarity and informality. It appears almost as if the children are embellishments on the familial life rather than the focus of scrutiny of child-rearing practices of gay and lesbian couples and the well-being of children. Instead of looking like "social-scientific experiments" and being scrutinized for their adherence to gender norms, the children act according to their family practices (Landau 2009) and are shown as individuals through their actions and interactions.

The ads against Proposition 8 appear to rely on both visual and linguistic characterizations that mutually reinforce the individuality of the ads' participants and characterize the social actors as a

collective of individuals. Based on the data analysis, these ads featuring the families tend to oscillate between a collective and an individual, rather than considering them mutually exclusive categories. The context of the advertisements themselves pertains to rights of lesbian and gay couples that are not only members of their own family units, but also members of the larger LGBT community. While there is clear representation of the social actors as individuals, it is evident in the data presented that these ads also rely on differing methods of characterization in order to use individuals and collectives to deliver their messages.

Considered together, both sides seem to utilize different strategies of characterization and achieve these characterizations in very different ways. Advertisements supporting Proposition 8 appear to rely on the downplaying of the individuality of gay and lesbian individuals and instead display this recurrent practice of highlighting them as a group. The ads supporting Proposition 8 provide no visual representation of gay or lesbian individuals, couples, or families, an absence that lends to the ad's focus on logical rhetoric and reason. Linguistic references to gay and lesbian individuals is limited to their representation as a group or collective, and in contrast with the individuals being portrayed in the Pro-Proposition 8 ads, the group/collective of gays and lesbians appear to be more overpowering. The overall effect of the generic references, and the collective representation is a dehumanization of the gay and lesbian individuals, an attempt to reduce the apprehensiveness of those on the fence about Proposition 8.

The advertisements against Proposition 8 present gay and lesbian couples as individuals, as well as individual units that are more than just part of a faceless collective as the Pro-Prop 8 ads have shown. The adult social actors are named, and are shown interacting with each other and with the children. It is not didactic, nor are the shots with individuals featuring them standing and talking. These people seem more approachable, more conversational, rather than confrontational aggressive as the Pro-Proposition 8 ads made them out to be. The relevance of these characterizations leads back to the conversations regarding the autonomy and individuality of gay men and lesbian women and whether or

not their representations were capable of expanding beyond the stereotypical representations that already existed in the media. Instead, the pro-Proposition 8 ads generated a new conversation about gay men and lesbian women, branding them as disruptions to the 'normalized' structure of family and marriage, while the anti-Proposition 8 ads work to generate new visual and verbal understandings of the emerging gay and lesbian family unit.

1.4 Establishing Context as Framework

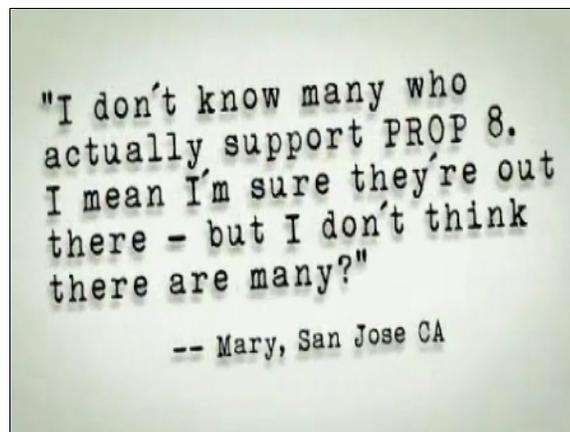


Figure 12: Opening statement in 'We Support' pro-Proposition 8 advertisement.

Figure 12 is another example of an opening scene from each pro-Proposition 8 advertisement. The advertisement opens with a statement of what we can assume is a potential voter, skeptic, or individual opposed to Proposition 8. The statement, in quotes, is followed by a name and a place, providing some attribution to a specific person. However, the attribution is non-specific and appears to be generic given that there is no last name or image of a person who actually asked the question. It is laid against a background that has a white 'halo' around the quote and offers the first name along with a city in California that we can assume this person is from. The quote itself is a question, asking of the audience some participation in attempting to answer what has been asked. Questions generally set up an interrogative mood which then asks the audience to answer, or attempt to find an answer. The ad itself is structured around providing an answer to the question thereby providing the audience with

what is deemed an adequate and reasonable answer to the generic query. There is no specific person visually associated with the quote, but simply a name and a place. There is a lack of representation of opposition or skeptics of Proposition 8.

The representation in most of these quotes is generally of a silent majority characterized by skepticism, uncertainty, and sometimes what appears to be hostility or aggression. The quotes are representative of the opposition to Proposition 8 and often are criticizing those who support Proposition 8. The particular quote above has the effect of making it appear that there are many people who support Proposition 8 but have not spoken up about it or are not engaging in practices to ensure the Proposition's upholding and passing. The silent majority in this quote decontextualizes and recontextualizes themselves as helpless, without support and in need of allies. The gay men and lesbian women are then lumped into this group that reflects ignorance and a disconnect from 'actual' happenings.

Many of the ads for or against Proposition 8 feature these visually decontextualized scenes where the background is either blurred or non-specific in some instances, but clear in others. The ads against Proposition 8 feature backgrounds that are specific to the families or specific to family life, while the ads supporting Proposition 8 feature a decontextualized background that offers little sense of connection to a particular time or place. Each of these modes of representation of the setting work in different ways to provide different contexts in which the audience can understand and make sense of the issue of marriage equality.



Figure 13: Jessica in 'Protects Marriage' in pro-Proposition 8 advertisement.

In Figure 13, the background is slightly out of focus and the person, 'Jessica', is in focus along with her name, occupation, and city of representation. There are trees and grass in the background, along with sunlight coming through the trees and bathing the grassy hill behind. While we can distinguish the general features of the background, they are still slightly out of focus. Additionally, this background is highly non-specific. Is Jessica on the campus of Stanford University? Where is this grassy hill? Is it part of a park, or in a particular neighborhood? Such a non-specific background warrants many questions given that it decontextualizes her from the scene. The focus then is on Jessica and what she is saying to the audience, thereby minimizing distraction and adding a generic setting that make Jessica seem more like an everyday Californian in an everyday setting. She is more salient in the scene given that the background is out of focus, thereby increasing her importance to the audience and drawing their attention.

What Jessica is discussing is unrelated to the scene in the background:

To use the argument of happiness, though an effective diversion, misses the point. Proposition 8 is about protecting the legal definition of marriage and religious freedoms on which this country was founded. If Proposition 8 fails then there will be a number of consequences which will further erode the traditional family, religious freedoms, freedom of speech, as well as the long-standing, successful

institution of marriage.

Jessica discusses the “argument of happiness” and “protecting the legal definition of marriage and religious freedoms on which this country was founded” all while in front of a background of trees, grass, and sunlight. Considering possibilities of other backgrounds, and given the content of her speech, how much more effective would this argument be had she stated this in front of the California Capitol Building, or even in front of a court house? According to Machin and Mayr (2012), scenes often times are more symbolic rather than actually documenting any particular activity in real life, especially when scenes are rendered as nonspecific. Given what Jessica discusses with the audience, and the talk of “tradition”, “protection”, “founding” there is a message of preservation of some idealism with regard to same-sex marriages. The idealism seems to be enhanced by the background, a representation of some part of “this country” about which Jessica speaks, tying her to some generic geographic representation that makes her a Californian. It is a generic, almost idyllic representation of time and place that plays into the idealistic discussions of traditional marriages that they are attempting to preserve. By contextualizing the social actors in this ad, they are then simultaneously contextualizing the opposition to Proposition 8 as being unrelatable and a threat to tradition. The background gives the audience an idea that Jessica is a 'real' Californian speaking about traditions of marriage and religious freedoms, all while she discusses the opposition as using diversion tactics and being responsible for eroding foundational principles of this country.

Not every scene is out of focus as there are some with backgrounds that are completely in focus and clear enough to distinguish some finer details. However, these scenes again are non-specific with location and do not necessarily provide much more specific context for place and time. They again appear as stock settings that characterize the speakers in the scenes as being everyday, real Californians speaking to an uncertain voting demographic. By appearing relatable, and giving the social actors the context of being just like the them, the audience may be able to see the message from their point of

view and thus also adopt the characterisations of the opposition to Proposition 8 in the process.



Figure 14: Cade from 'Maintains Rights' pro-Proposition 8 advertisement.

'Cade' is shown to be in a marina or wharf of some unknown location. Is it safe to assume that this is in California given that Proposition 8 is specific to Californians? Also, where in California is this? Is this in Lafayette given that Cade is shown to be a representative resident from that area? Again, non-specific representations of the background contextualize the individual in the scene, offering a generic representation of location with a similar effect as Figure 13. Many scenes like this are presented in the ads supporting Proposition 8 where the speaker is shown with a background that appears non-specific and is seemingly detached from the political context. Again, how would the reception be different had these same people been delivering their speeches in front of a government building or court house? Similar scenes, as in Figure 15 below, are representative of these highly decontextualized scenes that then aid in actually contextualizing the people speaking. The generic representations of background exemplify a broad representation of the California community by using geographic signifiers to show the various groups and areas where people share their viewpoints on Proposition 8. The community being represented appears to exclude LGBT members of California given their obvious visual absence from the ads. Although we cannot say for certain that the people in the advertisement do not identify as gay or lesbian, no stereotypical markers present themselves in the ad signifying LGBT involvement in supporting Proposition 8. The generic backgrounds do not necessarily imply that there

are not gay or lesbian Californians, but instead play on the idea of the average, everyday Californian on the street and how gay and lesbian Californians are not part of that average, everyday demographic.



Figure 15: Mike from 'We Support' pro-Proposition 8 advertisement.

In this scene (Figure 14) Cade also states that “Proposition 8 is about preserving the legal definition of marriage as between a man and a woman” which presupposes that there is a legal definition and an illegal definition, a type of marriage that falls beyond lawfulness. The presupposition of legal marriages as being the only legitimate type of marriages assumes that laws dictate marriages, and that there are rules which need to be followed in order to be considered legitimate. The denial of marriages to lesbian women and gay men is considered to be the basis of formation for 'alternative' relationships, which according to these ads, includes same sex relationships (Osterlund 2009). Cade also states that “all the rights that gays and lesbians enjoy in civil unions are still in full force” despite not being able to legally marry. Civil unions are thus posed as an alternative union to marriages, a structural opposition, and these presupposed 'rights' that are afforded in civil unions are seen as a promising alternative to what is reserved for those in the norm, in this case, the average, everyday Californian.

Linguistically, the ads supporting Proposition 8 also rely on fairly vague language when establishing the context in which these advertisements are presented. The Proposition 8 advertisements show a clear reliance on the presupposition of marriage as a long-standing institution that is understood

in the same way by all Californians. As previously mentioned, rather than attacking gay and lesbian individuals and couples for their sexuality, they instead focus on the destruction of a “successful institution” and the rejection of “same-sex marriage” as if these concepts are understood by the audience already. Given the success of the institution of marriage, making gay men and lesbian women responsible for its disruption characterises them as the active antagonists, thus characterising the Proposition 8 individuals as the victims. The meanings assumed as given in the text acts as the common sense (Hall 1980b) of the audience given that there is a shared meaning that is not overtly discussed or established (Machin and Mayr, 2012). That which is presented as given is often, more than not, ideological and in need of scrutiny as they reveal what is foregrounded and what is backgrounded in terms of establishing meaning of certain concepts.

In terms of the advertisements supporting Proposition 8, there are many presupposed concepts and definitions, especially regarding the characterisation of “traditional marriage.” Traditional marriage is mentioned in all the advertisements analyzed, and it is often juxtaposed with “same-sex marriage” which is set up as its opposition. In using the term traditional marriage, there is the presupposition that the audience understands what traditional marriages entail and thus, by inference, what non-traditional marriages also consist of. In another advertisement, there is an explicit definition of “legal marriage” as being between a man and woman along with the contextualisation of opposition to Proposition 8 as being based on an attack of “lifestyle.” Again, the presupposition here is that there is legal marriage, and also illegal marriage, along with the assumption there is a lifestyle specific to gay people.

These presuppositions provide a base for their ideological contextualization and the assumptions about society that are made in their decision to utilize some of these terms and concepts. Fairclough (1995) discusses how language can reconstitute the social world and thus by having the audience engage with terms like “traditional marriage” and “legal marriage” both of these are then accepted as given and contestation of them is set aside. Terms like “traditional family” also have the same effect of establishing itself as a familiar given to the audience and one that does not require

contestation. And if all three exist as givens, then it becomes easier to establish traditional/legal marriage and traditional family as something that must be protected.

The ads against Proposition 8 that include families do not necessarily feature decontextualized scenes, but they do use out-of-focus scenes that work to highlight the social actors at specific times in the advertisements. Although many scenes take place in what we can assume are the homes of the families, there are scenes in these ads that have blurry, out-of-focus backgrounds and different levels of focus can be used to give salience to certain elements in a scene (Machin and Mayr, 2012).



Figure 16: Michael or Xavier in anti-Proposition 8 advertisement.

In this scene, the man, either Xavier or Michael, is shown to be in the context of what can be assumed is his home given the previous scenes that established the setting. The background is out of focus and does not show clear details of the objects present in the background. There is a picture frame, and some flowers, along with other nondescript items probably specific to the couple and family. However, the background is, for the most part, out of focus and therefore brings attention to the speaker and what is being said and done by the social actor. In this case, it is probably not a technique of decontextualizing, but more so a technique of focusing attention by unfocusing the background.

The ads featuring families have scenes similar to this one, where they are shown in a home setting and the background is in focus in one scene, and then out of focus in another. Moving between

focused and unfocused scenes facilitates the focal transition from establishing setting and context for the audience to see, to what the people in the advertisement are saying. Additionally, once the setting has been shown, it may not necessarily need to be shown again to re-establish the context. Regardless of whether the background in some of these scenes are blurry or out of focus, it is evident that these settings are likely the homes of the families given the interactions that occur within them. What is important to note is that the visual and verbal elements are used in tandem to bring salience to specific portions of the advertisements featuring the families.



Figure 17: Picture of Frances and Cynthia in anti-Proposition 8 advertisement.

In the screenshot above, this scene in particular features many out-of-focus items in the foreground, and a fairly clear image of a photograph of Cynthia and Frances in the background. They are shown to be wearing white, formal clothing, and one of the women is holding a bouquet, and the other a boutonniere. The salient part of this scene is the photograph which helps to further establish the context for who Cynthia and Frances are and the relationship they share with each other. Unlike the ads supporting Proposition 8, the out-of-focus foregrounded items are not meant to decontextualize or remove from space or time, but instead, are used to focus on a specific time, revisiting that time through a photograph and highlighting a salient part of the advertisement and the lives of the couple.

The ads against Proposition 8 do not rely on visual contextualisation of the family in a political environment and instead the visual aspects remain fairly apolitical or at least may have the intention of

being apolitical as they capture the everyday lives of gay and lesbian couples with children. What is spoken, however, is then laden with political sentiments as evidenced by the following common statements in each of these ads:

-“We are family like everyone else, and we deserve to be married like everyone else”

-“I'm free to love who I love”

-“At its core level it's just totally unfair to actually take away anyone's right.”

-“You know I turned to my mom and said if you can't get legally married bu...by the state I don't wanna be married.”

-“It's love either way”

Setting up the context linguistically, these statements follow a similar pattern of presupposition, assuming a context of mutual understanding regarding concepts like 'family', 'love' and 'legal marriage'. Family itself may have multiple meanings and structures that are understood differently by different people. The variation that exists in what constitutes traditional families is indicative of the fact that most Western families do not adhere to the strict pattern of what is largely considered the norm (Patterson 2000). In the case of these advertisements, non-traditional family may also consist of same-sex couples and their children in addition to the many deviations from the standard family characteristics. More generically, the underlying understanding of family in this case, derived from the advertisements' visual elements, is understood as being parents and children, regardless of the sexual identities of the parents involved. Thus when family is mentioned in the advertisements, there is already an understood structure and acceptable characteristics that constitute the stereotypical family that then assist in placing the social actors into their expected roles within the traditional structure. In addition to the presumed meaning of family, there is also the presupposition that family necessitates marriage, or vice versa. “We are family like everyone else” precedes the statement “and we deserve to be married like everyone else” which seems to imply that family and marriage are linked providing

more context for how the audience is to perceive this advertisement and the people involved in it.

Along the same line of thought, 'love' also consists of multiple understandings and definitions, being platonic, familial, intimate, etc. In this way, by using these mutually understood definitions, this generates a reflection of the type of social environment in which the audience and social actors appear to live in. There is an assumption that love is the grounding force of the movement, and that it is the love between two parties involved that defines contemporary marriages (Osterlund 2009). "I'm free to love who I love" begins with a preposition that highlights freedom first and foremost, and the act of loving someone as part of that freedom. The presupposition that freedom also entails the freedom to love whomever one desires is, according to the advertisement, part of the presupposition of love being a universal facet of marriage (Osterlund 2009).

The quoted dialogue above are all given in medium and close shots of the people saying them and the backgrounds are fairly blurry or out-of-focus. The image below is an example of the way that these scenes are structured in which the presupposed concepts are verbalized. Blurring the background has the effect of making more salient what is being said by each of the people and thus the presupposed concepts are given the most salience. The positions of the individuals closer to the audience provide the opportunity to imagine the young girl's thoughts and feelings being expressed in the dialogue (Machin and Mayr, 2012). She appears unhappy or uneasy about the topic which she is discussing, and bringing us close to her in this shot allows the audience to experience the thoughts with her, especially in regards to what she is saying.



Figure 18: Daughter of Frances and Cynthia in anti-Proposition 8 advertisement.

The visual and verbal representations together coalesce in a way that develops and displays the mundane and everyday lives of gay and lesbian couples with children, while simultaneously reinforcing a political message that espouses fairness, happiness, and love. The decontextualised scenes of the advertisements supporting Proposition 8 serve as a way to characterize the people in the ads, while simultaneously removing lesbian and gay people from these non-specific settings. The presuppositions of the verbalized portions of the ads are then made more salient by bringing the focus to what is being said by taking focus off of the background. Presenting the speakers in these highly nonspecific scenes adds a sense of familiarity, but also a genericism that makes the speakers more relatable to the audience while setting up a context in which the opposition to Proposition 8 are not.

Developing a context for discussing gay and lesbian families and couples is essential to grounding the representations in a shared understanding of reality. In the case of the Pro-Proposition 8 advertisements, the context is developed around an everyday Californian in its most generic sense. The backgrounds of those speaking in the pro-Prop 8 advertisements are either blurry or non-specific and although the genericism could be considered disingenuous, it is in fact an enhancer of their relatability given that the context has become the everyday life of the typical Californian. Visually, these contexts develop the opposition to Proposition 8, which includes many gay and lesbian individuals, couples, and families, as separate from the average, everyday Californian.

Mentioned earlier, research has shown that some lesbian mothers attempt to mainstream themselves by focusing on a context that makes them appear to be one of the regulars (Hequemberg 2004). It is a method of gay and lesbian parents to ground themselves in a context that offers the audience an opportunity to see them as being just like everyone else. However, the pro-Prop 8 ads counter this process of finding similarities by offering generic portrayals of a wide range of supportive individuals spanning the California landscape. The political context is then curbed and overtaken by a context of everyday Californians talking politics, dismissing the opportunity for lesbian women and gay men from being a part of that context. These contexts, of course, are driven by ideologies that position gay and lesbian individuals, their relationships, and their families, outside of the norm. Ideologies of gender appropriateness and sexuality being reserved for procreative purposes all paint a picture of what the pro-Prop 8 people consider to be a typical Californian in the typical, generic, Californian context. By giving their social actors an everyday, familiar quality, it then positions the anti-Prop 8 people as being outside the norm.

1.5 Upfront and Backgrounded Gayness and Lesbianness

According to McGlashan and Sunderland (2011) their research on children's stories revealed that authors utilized three strategies to represent parents' gayness: different, backgrounding, and upfront. McGlashan and Sunderland state that these methods are used for positive representation, but it can be argued that the ads supporting Proposition 8 also utilize these methods to characterise the opposition in a different light.

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Each of the ads excluded social actors both visually and linguistically in what was being said by the people in the advertisements. As previously mentioned, “sign makers use the forms they consider apt for the expression of their meaning” and in that meaning there are meanings often excluded with a

certain intent. Both advertisements use exclusion and inclusion to represent gay and lesbian couples and their families, along with opposition to Proposition 8, in very specific ways.



Figure 19: Hector, Ruben, Andrew, and Anthony in anti-Proposition 8 advertisement.

As mentioned previously, all the advertisements supporting Proposition 8 visually exclude gay and lesbian couples for the purpose of not allotting them any authority or legitimacy given that the ad seems to seek the delegitimization of same-sex unions and relationships. What has been noted from the analysis of the advertisements is that the omission of vital players from the advertisements necessitates the upfront explanation of gay and lesbian individuals and couples in the ads given that there are no visual cues of people 'doing' gay or lesbian things. Instead, the social actors delivering the dialogue are in charge of shaping the audience's image of gay and lesbian couples verbally, and are simultaneously reinforcing the current discourses on same-sex marriage and couples. In the advertisements, “same-sex marriage” is used to signify the specific types of marriages and is a fairly upfront description of 'gayness'. Additionally, they use descriptors such as “domestic partners” and “gay” and “lesbian” explicitly in order to designate and give some presence to gay men, lesbian women, and their supporters some air time. However, instead of presenting them in a positive manner, the context discussed previously frames same-sex couples as presented in these ads in a way that seems to oppose the norm. They are framed as non-traditional and it is therefore an upfront and deliberate way of explaining gayness as something contrary to the norm.

In the advertisements against Proposition 8, there are more backgrounded presentations of parents' sexuality, especially given how those involved 'do family' in stereotypical ways instead of explicitly explaining them as being gay or lesbian (McGlashan and Sunderland 2011). The picture above is just one of several scenes in the advertisements opposing Proposition 8 in which the specific family members are portrayed engaging each other in some stereotypical family activity. Here we see Hector and Ruben sitting with Anthony and Andrew. The above screen capture from the advertisement about Hector and Ruben features the two adults sitting on a couch with the two younger boys in the advertisement. The man on the right has his arm around one of the young boys while they both look at and play with a toy car. The man on the right is reading a book to the younger of the two boys, a book that says "Family Book" on the cover further characterizing the relation between the four individuals in this advertisement. They are sitting on a couch, and it appears that the youngest boy on the right is sitting on the other man's lap.

Given the context of the advertisement, it is apparent that this structured scene is a snapshot of the lives of these gay parents and their children. The man on the left is playing with a police car with one son, and the father on the right is reading a book entitled "Family Book". This scene almost appears as a snapshot of family life which then can be seen as a construction of how the audience views family life in their own lives (Chalfen 1998). The scene shows all four family members looking downward, gazing away from the audience thus removing the audience from involvement. This is what Machin and Mayr (2011) refer to as an offer image in which the audience is called to evaluate the scene without becoming directly involved. This offer image then serves as a method of display for the audience to evaluate and interpret the actions of these four people as that which falls under the category of typical family life. These offer scenes occur in each of the three advertisements against Proposition 8 and share the same purpose of offering the audience a moment in the family's life where they view how they 'do family' in a same-sex household without explicitly stating that they are gay or lesbian couples with children.

The linguistic presentation of gayness combines both upfront and backgrounded presentations of 'gayness' in the advertisements against Proposition 8. In the advertisement featuring Frances, Cynthia, and their daughter, the ad involves the discussion of all three of them going to Denny's every Saturday morning, and discussing prom dress shopping. This is verbal backgrounding of her moms' lesbian-ness given that there is no explicit information that the two women are lesbian and her mothers, but instead the daughter is explaining some way that they do family together. However, to bolster this, in the event that somehow Frances and Cynthia are still not understood as a couple with a daughter, the daughter then engages in upfront explanations by referring to them as “my moms” and referencing them as mom throughout the remainder of the advertisement. The combination of upfront and backgrounded lesbian-ness in this case is beneficial in establishing these individuals, as well as those in the other family ads opposing Proposition 8, as a family unit.

In each of the ads the social actors involved have different ways of looking at the audience which then affect the reception of the advertisement by the audience. The gaze and angle at which they are looking at the audience characterizes the speakers in ways that the audience can understand and interpret.



Figure 20: Katie from 'Protect Marriage' pro-Proposition 8 advertisement.

All the people in the ads supporting Proposition 8 are gazing directly at the audience. The speakers are facing the audience face-on and are placed in a medium to close distance in almost every

instance of each advertisement. The image above depicts one such instance where the woman is facing forward and her gaze is aimed directly at the viewer. This face on view of the woman is almost confrontational, and is classified as a demand image (Machin and Mayr, 2012, 71). The viewer's presence is acknowledged and the speaker asks something of the audience establishing this imaginary relationship that requires some response from the viewer. Of course, the mood of the address is influenced by the look on the face of the speaker, and the context as well. In this particular scene, and like many other scenes, the speaker's eyebrows are raised, but not in a menacing way. Additionally, the facial features seem to present a speaker who is presenting an argument, trying to convince someone. The looks on the faces of most of the speakers are open, and at times inviting. The participants all smile at the end of the advertisements, particularly when they are encouraging the audience to 'Join us' in their cause, still maintaining the same eye contact and body position to the audience. This direct acknowledgment of the audience lends to the advertisements' appeal and characterizes these social actors as people who are friendly and knowledgeable, as well as trustworthy in regards to their message. Additionally, the direct gaze contributes to the upfront characterisation of gays and lesbians in their less than positive light. Upfront explanations are more direct, and a direct gaze from the speakers discussing same-sex couples seems to enhance the more straightforward explanations.



Figure 21: Suubi from 'Your Rights' pro-Proposition 8 advertisement.

Figure 21 is yet another example of the direct, straight forward gaze of the social actors that

engage the audience in a more demanding way. As the woman in this ad smiles at the audience, she is looking directly at audience members, and her body stance indicates she is facing forward. Combined with the close-up shot, this creates a more intimate relationship, bringing the audience even closer to the person in the shot. Additionally, the gaze is level with the audience, treating them as equals rather than talking at them or down to them. It is a leveling tool given the gaze does not appear from above or below which can be said to imply an equality between the speaker and the audience (Machin and Mayr 2012).

In some of the advertisements, word connotations often work alongside the visual portrayals to characterise not only the speakers, but also those not doing any speaking in the ads, specifically gay and lesbian couples. Words and phrases like “consequences” “forced” “imposed” “serious clashes” “labeled as intolerant” “subjected to legal penalties and social ridicule” “careers threatened” “narrow personal liberties” “gaining control” “forcing all of us to give up” are scattered throughout the ads. These words connote a sense of control, a loss of freedom, and a sense of being persecuted which frames the argument against same-sex marriages as a loss of rights and privileges from their perspective. Same-sex marriage, from this perspective, is perceived to be imposed on them as they characterise the opposition as infringing on *their* religious freedoms. Coupled with the smiling and straight-on speakers in the ads, they appear much more approachable in comparison to gay and lesbian couples fighting against Proposition 8.

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For the ads against Proposition 8, there are a variety of gazes in the ads that involve the family members. The variety of gazes, with mixed distances and poses, seem to be more realistic and provide more variation that could be said to mimic a normal interaction and provides a more complex interaction with the audience.



Figure 22: Daughter of Frances and Cynthia.

In Figure 22, the young girl from the advertisement entitled 'Frances and Cynthia' is featured in a close-up shot with her gaze directed downwards. This downward gaze is metaphorically associated with feelings of being down or disappointed. She is discussing something troubling or unpleasant, something more serious given her downward look. The close-up makes this a more intimate scene by bringing the audience closer. There is no demand from the audience, and thus no response expected. Instead, this is an offer image (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996) given that the scene itself is offered for contemplation and consideration by the audience rather than expecting some direct response from the viewer. Additionally, because she is looking off screen, we are invited to imagine what she is thinking and feeling giving the audience some freedom in interpreting the emotions meant to be felt.



Figure 23: Frances and Cynthia in anti-Proposition 8 advertisement.

The young girl is discussing the fact that if her mothers cannot get married, then she should

refrain from marriage as well due to the unfairness. The topic of discussion is much less positive than what was previously being discussed at the beginning of the ad. Instead, the upfront portrayal of same-sex couples takes on a more serious tone as the daughter discusses the inequality of her mothers being unable to marry. As mentioned above, these mixtures of upfront and backgrounded presentations of gay and lesbian couples serves a more well-rounded and complete purpose than if they were utilized separately.

Many of the scenes in the family ads depict more than one person at a given time and thus there are several gazes, poses, and proximities to consider. In this particular scene, Frances and Cynthia are shown to be gazing in different directions. The woman on the left is gazing down at the woman on the right; the woman on the right is gazing upwards. Both women are smiling setting the mood for the gaze which appears to be uplifting and happy. As the one woman gazes upwards and off the screen, viewers are invited to speculate about her thoughts as it is an offer image. The woman on the left is also not making eye contact with the audience and therefore serves as an offer image as well. Viewers therefore must consider the thoughts and feelings of the two women. They are seen in a medium shot, allowing for some of the background as well as providing more details about how close the women are to each other along with their poses.

Accordingly, the poses of these two women exemplify a common representation of interactions between the couples shown in the family-oriented ads. Spatial proximity between the people in the advertisements is important in characterizing the relationships between the people being presented (Sunderland and McGlashan 2013). Each advertisement features an older duo together, side-by-side, with little to no space in between. They are often shown embracing (as in Figure 9) or are shown to be sitting beside the other adult very closely. The close proximity of the two adults and the potential/actual contact between them indexes the nature of their relationship and also characterizes the relationship for the audience in an easily understandable and relatively recognizable way. Had the two adults been positioned further apart, and facing straight towards the audience, the effect and understanding may

have been changed.

The same proximal closeness can be said to characterize the relationships between the adults and younger people in the advertisements. In these ads, the people are shown to be in constant contact or in close proximity with each other, indexing a certain closeness that can be attributed to having a strong relationship with each other. This closeness again indicates a backgrounded portrayal of what it means to be a lesbian and gay couple simply by showing rather than explicitly telling or discussing.



Figure 24: Hector or Ruben with Anthony in anti-Proposition 8 advertisement.

Figure 24 represents one of the images that emphasizes this closeness. Proximity between the people in the three ads featuring 'real' gay and lesbian couples with children, plays a major role in establishing the relationship dynamic between not only the members of the family, but also the relation between the family and the viewers. The image itself is not shocking, nor does it seem to be positioned for shock value given the already established context of love and harmony being espoused by these advertisements. Instead, these scenes, especially with the family as a collective unit engaging with each other, portray a meaningful and recognizable ritual that is possibly presupposed to be a stereotypical family norm (Reynolds 2007). According to Chalfen (1998) these home scenes index what it means to be in the everyday, normal lives of gay and lesbian couples with families. In this way, there is a certain familiarity of the mundane that the audience may relate to, especially with how closely these ads are made to reflect reality.



Figure 25: Frances, Cynthia, and daughter sitting at table.

The scenes maintain a naturalness based on the high modality presented to the audience, specifically the high modality afforded to the individuals in the ads with families. In these ads, the individuals are presented in ways that tether them to what may be considered real life situations. The image above depicts Frances, Cynthia, and their daughter sitting at a table outside and talking to both the audience and whomever is behind the camera. Out of the thirty-three analyzed scenes, especially scenes that do not have the family sitting and talking, most tend to have higher modalities with respect to detail, tone, colour modulation and saturation.

The above scene represents one of the scenes with higher modality in detail, colour modulation, and colour saturation, despite the family being seated and talking. Although the individuals appear to be more staged given the interview-like interaction, the degree of detail articulation is high giving this scene, and others similar to it, the same fairly high modality. In terms of detail, you can see the different clothing each of them are wearing. You can see their hair colour, as well as facial expressions and even jewelry and various other accessories. They are seated in various positions that do not mimic one another, and seem to display different aspects of themselves in terms of body movements and facial expressions. Additionally, the scene itself is set with multiple details like the reflection in the glass of the table of the background. The high degree of detail that is in this scene gives indicates its nearness to replicating the reality of this family and thus make more real the people in it.

In terms of colour modulation, the colours here are not flat and unmodulated. The colours are not showing the grittiness of the scene in that extreme, but are modulated enough to not appear simplified. Additionally, the tonal gradation appears to be maximized given the abundance of colour variation and thus this also contributes to the scene's high modality. Lastly, the colours do not appear to be overly saturated. While some of the bright colours, like white and blue, appear to be brighter than normal, this is perhaps an effect of the daylight given its brightness in the background. So while the colour saturation appears intentional, it could also equally result from the time of day this scene was shot and the natural lighting. The higher modality of certain scenes, especially those where the family is portrayed as 'doing family' coupled with backgrounded gayness and lesbianness work in tandem to develop a subtle realness and naturalness which the anti-Prop 8 ads potentially seek to do. The ads in support of gay and lesbian marriages are produced as discourses that give the audience a way to understand and visualize and verbalize gayness and lesbianness.

The backgrounded and upfront presentations of lesbian and gay couples as discussed in each set of advertisements relies on specific elements of the advertisements to convey their respective characterisations. Using *both* upfront and backgrounded gayness and lesbianness utilizes visual and linguistic elements differently to construct a coherent and understandable social reality that vibes well with how people already see their world. It is important to understand these backgrounded and upfront forms of gayness and lesbianness because they are tied to the discursive practices in place that give people a way to talk about and thus understand sexuality and its relation to discourse and ideology. While characterization of individuals and collectives and the setting-up of context are both essential elements in these ads, they both contribute to the subtle and overt portrayals of gayness and lesbianness that work in different ways to get their respective messages to the audience.

Pro-Proposition 8 ads feature upfront gayness and lesbianness which aids in message dissemination, but also reveals information about the audience they are potentially reaching. Each of these ads characterizes their social actors as individuals, existing in what are high modality scenes that

are made to appear more realistic and in line with the realities of the social actors and the audience.

Backgrounded gayness or lesbianness allows the focus to be on the normalcy of the scene rather on the gayness or lesbianness of the individuals. It is not explicit and needs no justification or explanation and relies on a seamless integration of that which is considered outside the norm and the norm itself. In contrast with the pro-Proposition 8 advertisements which are more overt in their characterisations, the anti-Proposition 8 ads work towards a discourse of everyday, mundane gayness and lesbianness that is a part of the everyday and not some spectacle or anomaly in need of explanation or specification.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This study elucidates on the fairly recent emergence of the gay and lesbian family in the context of the political turmoil that ensued in California during the Proposition 8 debates. Not only did this issue spark vigorous political debate, it unintentionally contributed to the development of a discourse on family and brought to the forefront the changing discourses and ideologies surrounding understandings of what constitutes legitimate relationships and families. The analysis of political advertisements using multimodal discourse analysis serves as a basis for understanding these cultural artifacts as being constructed with the intention of delivering a specific message from each side of the debate. Although the Proposition has since been deemed null and void given the national level victory set forth by the Supreme Court, the advertisements still remain as evidence of the discursive proliferation of how we talk about family in relation to sex and sexuality.

This research is meant to shift the focus from how people perceive these advertisements, to how these ads are able to convey intended messages about same-sex couples using specific elements of discourse. Although the merit and usefulness of examining the reception of these ads is not in question, this research merely points to the importance of the construction of messages and the generation and characterisation of a symbol that once had not existed in the public and political arena. This is, of course, in reference to the emergence of the family headed by same-sex couples, an image not necessarily afforded much attention or legitimacy. While the anti-Proposition 8 ads offer a platform from which discourses about gay and lesbian families may proliferate, pro-Proposition 8 advertisements work to construct their own discourse that informs the populace about gay and lesbian couples. Both discourses are informed by an ideology that is grounded in traditional marriage for procreative purposes and the upholding of the nuclear family and although the anti-Proposition 8 advertisements work against that ideology, they seem to also adhere to parts of it as well, reinforcing

the ideas of the nuclear family by superimposing images of same-sex couples and their families.

There has been increased inclusion of gay and lesbian characters on television, and increased visibility in the media often times translates to success or a step in the right direction in terms of acceptance (Fejes and Petrich 1993; Fischer et al. 2007; Raley and Lucas 2006). However, the political ads constructed in response to the debate on the legality of same-sex marriages indicate that there is much to be learned and understood about the lives of gay and lesbian couples. The potential audiences reached by these ads vary in their levels of exposure to gay and lesbian people. For the ads supporting Proposition 8, the potential audience informs the choices made in *how* they talk about the issue of same-sex marriage. They take a more didactic approach, as shown through the social actors' body positioning straight towards the audience and the constant eye contact they make with the audience. While seemingly conversational, it also seems more scripted given its more informative structure. The ads list reasons why allowing same-marriage would be detrimental to not only religious rights and freedom of speech, but also to the very foundation the nation. These arguments are then presented in a way that is tailored toward the worldview of those who made the ad and those who they wish to influence. The way they discuss same-sex marriages and gay and lesbian couples is also a reflection of the way they want the audience to see same-sex marriage. At the root of this debate are ideologies of dominant heterosexual standards and a traditional marriage couched in religion and procreation which stand, according to them, in stark contrast to same-sex marriages.

The advertisements supporting Proposition 8 characterised gay and lesbian couples as structurally opposed to heterosexual couples. Marriages for same-sex couples were designated as 'same-sex' and couples were also designated as being either gay or lesbian. Although there is linguistic representation of gay and lesbian couples, there is a complete absence of any mention of families for gay men and lesbian women. The advertisements do not confer that right to family through marriage and seemingly deny the existence of these types of families by their visible omission from the ads both linguistically and visually. Instead, the opposition is characterised as being a collective, diminishing

any individuality, and focusing on how this collective is working to strip those supporting Proposition 8 of their own rights to religious freedom.

That which is assumed or considered as given often times reveals what is understood to be a regular part of the world in which the ad constructors live. The advertisements are filled with cultural artifacts that may indicate the belief system under which the constructors of these signs operate. Presuppositions such as 'love' and 'family' are found in the advertisements against Proposition 8, while presuppositions regarding 'traditional marriage' are found in those supporting Proposition 8. These assumed concepts are revealing in that they indicate already existing associations that the audience can potentially make. Thus, the ads make good use of the strata of common sense that has already been laid down given the experiences of the audience (Hall 1986a). These assumptions are indicative of these underlying ideologies because these major concepts are given without further explanation. When the advertisements talk about family and children, there are assumptions at work, guided by current ideologies, that inform the thinking of the audience. By referencing 'being a family', and other presumed concepts as well, the ad-makers are relying on already understood concepts of what family is, who children are, and what each stand for and the meanings they hold for each individual.

In the instance of love and family, for anti-Proposition 8 ads, there is a presupposed definition of family that possibly includes non-traditional family structures given the political context as well as visual and linguistic elements that have been analyzed. In terms of love, it appears that love is assumed to be connected to freedom and that love transcends gender and sexual norms. In terms of pro-Proposition 8 ads, there are assumptions of a traditional family existing that rely on strict ideologies that influence understandings of proper gender roles and preservation of a 'natural' social order in terms of relationships.

The overt and more subtle presentations of being gay or lesbian, or being in a same-sex relationship, revealed a particular discursive method that these advertisements used to further characterize gay men and lesbian women. Advertisements against Proposition 8 utilized more

backgrounded presentations of gay and lesbian family life by relying on 'doing family' which includes observing the closeness (proximity) of the people in the ads relative to each other, along with the modality of the ads for degrees of realness and believability (Sunderland and Mcglashan 2013). Ads supporting Proposition 8 relied on more overt, or upfront, methods of presentation given that the ads do not offer any opportunity for visual representation of same-sex couples and families. These differences in representation are indicative of the differences in perspective of the varying audience members and the different goals and beliefs that the constructors of these advertisements hold to be true. The families and gay and lesbian couples are being characterised in the context of the politics of Proposition 8 and, given this context, the characterisations are going to be made in favour of the arguments that each ad makes.

Pro-Proposition 8 advertisements present gay and lesbian people in a way that incites the least offense or overt disparagement, but ultimately formulates a discourse of bullying and unfairness imposed by the opposition onto their supporters. Gay and lesbian people are presented as disruptive and detrimental to already existing structures of traditional marriage and family; gays and lesbians are forcibly indoctrinating the unwilling with their discussions of fairness and inclusiveness with respect to marriage rights and the social actors involved in these ads are attempting to set the record straight by engaging in a more didactic, logical presentation of their argument. Thus it is in the best interest of the pro-Proposition 8 advertisements to limit the inclusion of gay and lesbian people in their ads, as well as present them in a way that dehumanizes them rather than grants them legitimacy in their existence and arguments in support of same-sex marriage.

Gay and lesbian families are still largely absent from mainstream media, and their limited inclusion, much like gay and lesbian individuals and gay and lesbian couples, may be marked by stereotypical attributes and over-generalized (mis)understandings. The presence of gay and lesbian people on television is not a new phenomenon, but what is fairly new is the slow increase of families headed by gay and lesbian couples being presented in mediatized forms. While some of these

portrayals are laughable and comedic, and some exposure is considered better than none, these seemingly harmless portrayals become what audiences understand as normal behaviours and characteristics of gay and lesbian people and their families (Avila-Saavedra 2009; Calzo and Ward 2009). As Calzo and Ward pointed out, exposure to gay and lesbian characters has a mainstreaming effect on those with disparate views. Given the recent increase of gay and lesbian headed families in the media, there is the potential for mainstreaming these families as well, or at least mainstreaming specific perspectives on gay and lesbian families. These understandings then translate to people's lives in how the audience members treat gay and lesbian couples in their everyday lives as they integrate the representational ideas into their common senses.

While both advertisements seek different ends, it is important to note the underlying assumption that being a family entails having children. The ads against Proposition 8 featured gay and lesbian couples with children, and the ads supporting Proposition 8 mentioned that adoption agencies would be forced to allow adoption by same-sex couples. As previously mentioned, the common understanding and purpose of marriage is to procreate and thus become a family indicating the centrality of children to the constitution of a family (Eskridge 1993). While the ads against Proposition 8 work against the procreative premise of marriage and family, they also work within and reinforce this assumption that family means having children. This study does not address the problematic assumption that without children, a married couple, or even an unwed couple, does not constitute the basis of a family unit. It is important that these ads against Proposition 8 display a certain defiance to the restrictions that the linkage between procreation and marriage impose. However, it is equally important to state that families do not exist in one legitimate form and that a multiplicity of family forms exist outside of the restricted definition of family being used in this study.

Along with the above limitation of the restricted definition of family, several other limitations are present in this study. Firstly, there is a severe lack of exploration on the representation of bisexual and transgender individuals in the media. The advertisements were centered around gay and lesbian

couples, and did not address transgender or bisexual individuals in relationships or in families.

Although the content of the advertisements focused on lesbian and gay couples, recent media has shown an increase in the representation of transgender and bisexual characters (advocate.com). This omission is one that warrants further attention to the ways in which they are represented in mediatized forms.

Additionally, this research does not address intersectionality in the advertisements and the ways this plays a part in shaping how certain identities are portrayed. The analysis lacks an intersectional dimension of the varying identities, leaving unaddressed how race, gender, class, and religion intersect with gay and lesbian identities in the advertisements. Intersectionality is a set of methodological and theoretical tools that would allow for the study of existing identities which overlap and sometimes cause tension (Wadsworth 2011). In relation to social semiotics, the use and creation of signs and sign ensembles in these ads has the potential of reinforcing and reshaping oppression by highlighting certain identities while leaving out others. Future research should investigate how semiotic choices can be complicit in upholding the power of hegemonic ideologies as this power takes hold of knowledge making through incitements into discourse.

The political advertisements present themselves as prime examples of *how* gay and lesbian families may be represented in the media. Given what the research has shown on gay and lesbian couples and their families in real life – that they attempt to normalize themselves in their everyday lives – it is of interest to continue this research to see how they get portrayed in other forms of mainstream media. The normalization of perspectives on gay and lesbian couples via mediatized imagery is an essential area of research given the influence of media on audiences. This research has shown that how these ads are pieced together conveys a certain perspective on the social realities of their audience members. Gay men and lesbian women are being portrayed in ways that appear natural, and backgrounded gayness in these ads indicates just that. On the other hand, there are still perspectives that offer little room for the proliferation of discourses on acceptance and normalcy as indicated by the

relative absence of any visual indicators of gay men and lesbian women in the ads supporting

Proposition 8. Message construction and the elements that make these mediatized images and videos are key factors in identifying the discourses and ideologies that inform them.

This research is in no way comprehensive and only touches on several elements of multimodal discourse analysis. Many aspects of these ads have yet to be analyzed, including facial expression, colour symbolism, and intonation of what is being said, all of which contribute to this construction of signs that are representative of the world in which we live. In analysing the advertisements themselves, this research aimed to elucidate on the means of expression and the ways in which that which is constructed reflects the already existing signs that rhetors rely on. Turning a critical eye towards the making of signs and symbols reveals the biases and assumptions we hold when it comes to reconstructing the world we see into media. It is important to understand both how an image is perceived, as well as how it is constructed and the methods being used to convey such a message.

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