

## Accepted or Not: Homosexuality, Media, and the Culture of Silence in the Philippine Society

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### ABSTRACT

The presence of homosexuals in mainstream media is widespread in the Philippines. Case in point are the images of homosexuals depicted in a popular Philippine noontime variety show. As an observer, it gives an outright impression that there seems to be an acceptance of homosexuality among the Filipinos as manifested by how they are being patronized through these sketches. The aim of the paper is to investigate how Filipinos seem to have a culture of silence in terms of accepting same sex marriage despite the presence and seemingly acceptance of homosexuals in mainstream media. Through qualitative audience analysis, audience reactions were observed while watching segments of the noontime shows which depict homosexual roles. This paper argues that Filipinos seem to lose acceptance of homosexuality on the matter of basic human right such as the right to marriage and legal union due to being considered as a predominant Catholic country with its long colonial history with the Spaniards. Furthermore, the paper argues that colonial and postcolonial perspectives play a bigger role on same-sex marriage discourses. The researchers posited that there seems to be a culture of silence in Philippine society in terms of same-sex marriage because of this colonial and postcolonial ideologies. This implies a continuing cycle of cultural and ideological reproduction on matters concerning homosexuality. The kind of mindset passed through culture and social institutions, like the church, sustains this culture of silence. Likewise, the culture of silence reinforces the colonial and postcolonial perspectives on same-sex marriage and homosexuality.

**Keywords:** *Colonialism, culture of silence, homosexuality, mainstream media, postcolonialism .*

### INTRODUCTION

The notion of same sex marriage in the Philippines is a complicated discourse due to its predominantly catholic and philosophical views. The plight of the LGBT community to have the acceptance of the public has been denied in the last decade. Despite the visibility of homosexuals at all levels of the society (UNDP & USAID, 2014), there is still a culture of silence regarding acceptability.

The study aims to investigate how Filipinos seem to have a culture of silence on the issue of homosexuality despite their presence in mainstream media. Specifically, this paper argues that Filipinos seem to lose this acceptance of homosexuality on the matter of basic human right such as the right to marriage and legal union due to the lack of empowerment by the government in its legalization and being a predominantly catholic country with its long colonial history with the Spaniards. Furthermore, the paper argues that colonial and postcolonial perspectives play a bigger role on same-sex marriage discourse. Hence, the researchers posited that there is a culture of silence in Philippine society in terms of homosexuality because of these colonial and postcolonial ideologies.

As the community of homosexuals continues to grow in all aspects of the society, they are now able to assert themselves in their respective disciplines, and even holding higher positions in both private and the public sector. It is important to investigate homosexuality, the media and the culture of silence to enable a better understanding on the causes, implications, and hindrances to social change, truthful idea expression, and information gathering – processes that are essential in the learning process and different segments and institutions of the society.

The researchers included review of related studies that discusses the history of homosexuality in the Philippines, homosexual gender-stereotyping, same-sex marriage, and the role of media in the discussion of issues concerning homosexuality. A qualitative design was used by the researchers in the development of the paper. Out of the thousands of videos in YouTube that showed homosexual content, only nine were chosen because of the limited space. The audience reactions were examined and analysed to develop themes that were used in the discussion of the problem. The themes identified analysed the audience reaction to homosexuals and their behavior towards same sex marriage and live-in partnerships. Homosexual content as a form of entertainment and individual and collective reaction of the audience to this content were also examined.

Our experiences from the field of education and language studies lead us to work on a research that would aim to investigate the acceptability of homosexuality on the aforementioned fields. We situate ourselves on our understanding of what acceptability is in the context of media in the Philippine society. Furthermore, we believe that a person's acceptance or non-acceptance to ideas and concrete things is deeply rooted to one's culture, customs, values, and ideals and these factors influence the way a person thinks and the way this thinking is actualized. As young educators, thinking critically and being reflexive is a significant process that would lead to a just social acceptance and would therefore challenge the dominant voice.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Homosexuality in the Philippines*

Homosexuality in the Philippines is not a new phenomenon. Before, homosexuality is a feature of the pre-colonial era. According to Garcia (2004), homosexuals enjoyed a relatively high status in the community as they are thought to exhibit magical functionalities. They have the same status as women, with having rights to have their own family, and even have the right to divorce their own partners if deemed unfit for their own liking. For men, even those who are tagged as soldiers in the community, often wore the clothes of women and act as ladies as they believed that having doing such acts, the gods will bring prosperity to their community. During the Spanish Era, the fulfillment homosexuals have during the pre-colonial era have drastically changed. Over the next 300 years, as the role of the women in the society deteriorated, homosexuals are subjected various ridicule and scorn as they thought it is a violation of the teachings of Catholicism. Nonetheless, despite the erosion of its status as the "destined" during the pre-colonial era, Garcia (2004) emphasized that the scope of homosexuality during the Spanish era has an effect up to this day. The rise of the American colonization saw the increased awareness of the Filipinos in the notion of Gay Marriage and homosexuality, in general. The Americans, through colonialism, imported the

psychosexual logic that has grown within the culture and has been entrenched since then. (Manalastas, 1996).

As the voice of the homosexuals in the country continues to evolve, their roles in the society continue to evolve as well. Homosexual men in the Philippines seem to have a negative connotation in the society. For example, the terms “bakla”, “parlorista”, “call boy” do not have a negative connotation in the realm of the homosexual people. However, these terms connote a different definition that relates to sexual acts when used by non-homosexuals. It is perceived by many that when you are one of those, you are probably connected to selling your sexuality as a means to obtain monetary funds, not for “sexual enjoyment” (Nadal & Corpus, 2013). In a similar vein, Tan (2001) mentioned that the “bakla” are normally associated with low income members of the society and are generally depicted as entertainers. One way to address this problem is through education. However, *Human Rights Watch* (2017) noted that “positive information and resources are rare in secondary schools. When students learn about homosexuality, it is usually negative (p.3). Regardless of the seemingly negative connotation that is attached to homosexuality in the Philippines, they are still freely embraced by the society by way of Pride Events and civil societies pushing for LGBT rights (Manalastas & Torre, 2016)

#### *Homosexuality, Gender Stereotyping, and Same-sex Marriage*

Homosexual Filipinos still struggle for equal rights and protection as they still experience discrimination and inequality from different institutions of the society. In schools, “students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) too often find that their schooling experience is marred by bullying, discrimination, lack of access to LGBT-related information, and in some cases, physical or sexual assault” (Human Rights Watch, 2017, p.1). On the other hand, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (2011) reported that:

While Filipinos are generally comfortable with gay persons, this tolerance is conditioned on LGBT individuals fitting certain stereotypes and behaving according to accepted, non-threatening norms. Effeminate gay men are seen in places like theatres or beauty parlors, lesbians and masculine women as security guards and transgender women as celebrity impersonators but not as doctors or teachers (p.4).

This kind of gender stereotyping may restrict life opportunities (Eisend, 2010) and reinforce existing stereotypes (Lee, 2004) (as cited in Prieler & Centeno, 2013). Although there are some groups that aimed to champion the rights of the gay community, these attempts normally fail as their presence in both politics and the societal scene is not unified to establish equality that is aimed. For example, the anti-discrimination bill (ADB) was introduced to protect the people from discrimination. With the inclusion of homosexuals, it was passed out from the congress and never received second reading. Despite this, cities such as Quezon City have passed ordinances that implement rules and regulations that are closely related to the Anti-Discrimination Bill. Albeit the passing of rules and ordinances in a

major Philippine city represents a continued progression, better implication could have been achieved if the bill has been passed.

In the struggle of homosexuals for equal rights and opportunities, perhaps one of the most debatable issue is about same-sex marriage. Aside from the explicit statement in the Philippine Family Code that marriage is between a man and woman, the view of the Church and some fundamentalist Christian groups of homosexual relations as something that is immoral and lessen the value of life and the Filipino family along with divorce, euthanasia, abortion, and total contraception, has made it difficult for same-sex marriage to progress into its legalization (Lim, 2011). This puts into question of what human rights really mean. If marriage is a human right (United nations, 2015) and not a privilege, what makes same-sex marriage immoral and therefore unlawful in the context of the Philippine society?

Despite the efforts of the LGBT community to push forth equal rights, the resistance of the Catholic church has been an immovable force that inhibits any movement from the group. Further, they sought amendments that would prohibit same-sex marriages in the country. Moreover, they resisted the idea of having sex education and teaching safer-sex in schools {Formatting Citation}. The catholic church indeed has an influence in the society as they continually shape the attitudes of Filipinos towards homosexuals, through catholic teachings, and holy masses, that it is unnatural or immoral to be such (Conde, 2017).

Outside of the Philippines, there has been a global movement to permit same sex couples to legally marry (Chamie & Mirkin, 2011). European countries such as Denmark, France, Iceland, and Norway have officially recognized same sex couples as registered partnerships (Gallagher & Baker, 2004). Spain and Mexico, which are predominantly catholic, have a court ruling that favors the union between gay couples (Bagas, 2017). As of mid-2011, ten countries, that comprise 5% of the world's population have set-up a law that enables same sex marriage. In the United States, the policies and laws regulating marriage vary from region, state, city, and by religion (Lawton & Morgan, 2007). Although the statistics show that several countries that allow same-sex marriage has increased over the years, only 100,000 legal same sex marriage unions have only been accounted (Andersson, Noack, Seierstad, & Weedon-Fekjaer, 2006). The need for the legalization of same sex marriage, for the proponents, is supported by the argument that homosexuals should be allowed to exercise their right to marry the person they want. The denial of such activity is a representation of refusal of the basic human right. In support, one of the laws that the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (2011) posited that "(1) Men and Women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to have a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage, and at its dissolution". In the Philippines, 23% of Filipinos support the legal recognition of same-sex marriages based on a Social Weather Station survey (Chamie & Mirkin, 2011). Although this statistic would mean that there is still a majority that opposes it, this exemplifies the gradual progression of the legalization of same-sex marriages and the continuing awareness of Filipinos into the possibility of its legalization.

### *Homosexuality and Media*

Media has an important role in promoting the homosexual's rights and protection and discussion of issues like same-sex marriage. According to UNDP and USAID (2014), "dialogue participants see LGBT-run media as important and that Internet media have the strong

potential to promote LGBT rights” (p.9). Furthermore, “LGB experts feel that television has a key role to play in the portrayal of LGB people, particularly in news and current affairs, drama series and factual programming” (BBC, 2012, p.4). This implies that media has the capacity to affect its audience towards views like of those concerned about homosexuality. Though media can be used to redirect one’s view on homosexuality and same-sex marriage, it cannot be denied that it can also be used to perpetuate the dominant view about it. As mentioned by Tagudina (2012):

We see gay men on television, and once we see similarities of that character in real life, we are quick to label that person as gay. Lesbian and transvestite characters in films are often feared, or ridiculed, almost always negatively portrayed, and so at the instant we see a person that much looks like that character, we label her without hesitation. (p.2)

Furthermore, “mainstream media are criticized in the way that it stereotypes gay men and limits representation of lesbians and transgender people; demonstrates transphobia and homophobia; and sensationalizes coverage of LGBT-related events” (UNDP & USAID, 2014, p.9). This seems to imply that there is still prejudice and bias against LGBTs even in terms of taking issues presented by the media.

Despite the criticism to media on how it depicts homosexuality, there is still a rise in the use and representation of homosexuals in Philippine media. Examples of these are various Filipino films that portray gays during the last decades. Such were the subjects of Payuyo (2012) who concluded “that despite the change in the portrayal of gays, institutions that sponsor heteronormativity will continue to prevent homosexuality from being seen as a naturally occurring form of sexuality” (p.291). He saw that the way media represent homosexuality is positively changing towards LGBTs but he also viewed family, mass media, and the Catholic Church as institutions whose dominant views would hinder homosexuality to flourish as a form of sexuality.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research Design*

The study is descriptive qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is one which the use of statistics is practically nil. Through analysis of audience reaction in video segments of two Philippine noon time shows, the researchers were able to support the claim that there is seemingly a culture of silence in the notion of homosexuality that is present in the society outside the realm of media.

### *Sources of Data*

Nine YouTube videos on noon time shows were used in this study. The videos were downloaded from [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). For the purposes of this study, the videos from noon time shows, Showtime and Eat Bulaga, were chosen because of its popularity in mainstream media and two of the longest running shows in the Philippines. In the essence of homosexuality, the hosts of both noon time shows are homosexual artists, or appear to be heterosexual men that act as homosexuals for entertainment. These videos were chosen as

there are segments in both noon time shows that has a prominent homosexual presence that involves the hosts, the contestants in the programs, and the reactions of the audience (for the analysis). Another reason is that the time slot of both noon time shows is similar to each other; Showtime, which starts at 12:15pm and ends at 3:00, and Eat Bulaga, 12:00 and ends at 2:30. For confidentiality purposes, the researchers removed the names of the contestants in the title of the video. Table 1 shows the videos selected as sources of data in the study.

Table 1: Video Segments (VS) in YouTube of noon time shows showtime and eat bulaga.

Video Segments	Length in Mintues
VS1. It's Showtime: Host jokes about his nativity	2:40
VS2. It's Showtime: I am PoGay	11:08
VS3. It's Showtime: I am PoGay	11:16
VS4. It's Showtime: I am PoGay	8:33
VS5. Host, Kinilig sa magjowang beki (Eat Bulaga)	35:33
VS6. Sugod Bahay, One for all, all for one (Eat Bulaga)	64:25
VS7 Tomboy na tricycle driver... (Eat Bulaga)	42:25
VS8. Pambihira! Matinik na Tomboy... (Eat Bulaga)	31:16
VS9. Loko talaga si (Host), Gusto pang awayin... (Eat Bulaga)	42:24

### Data Gathering Procedure

Nine videos of It's Showtime and Eat Bulaga were collected from [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com). The researchers divided the nine videos into two parts. Four of the videos from It's Showtime were given to the first researcher, and the other five were given to the other researcher. The researchers then watched, identified and transcribed the segments from the videos where there are parts that the hosts, contestants mentioned words or did actions relating to homosexuality. The researchers looked into the transcription done by each other for the purpose of cross validation of content. Audience reaction to these content was then noted and has been described. The audience reactions were the basis for supporting the claim of the researchers. Themes were developed based on the noted reaction of the audience. Table 2 shows the themes developed and their corresponding description.

Table 2: Themes of audience reaction to homosexuality.

Themes	Description
Audience reaction to Homosexuals	The audience has a happy and accommodating reaction whenever homosexuals are introduced in the show.
Audience Reaction to Homosexual's Practices (Same sex marriage/live in partnership)	Audience of the show seem to have a positive reaction towards the actions/performance of homosexuals.
Audience Entertainment and Homosexuals	Audience seems to be entertained whenever the hosts make use of the situation of homosexuals as jokes.
Collective and Individual Reaction to Homosexual	There is both a general (collective audience) and differentiated (individual audience) reaction towards homosexuals.

### Video Analysis

In this study, nine YouTube videos from noon time shows It's Showtime and Eat Bulaga were chosen as subjects for analysis in this study. The researchers watched the videos and chose the segments where the hosts mentioned homosexual related words and the audience reacted, or where the homosexual contestants performed on the stage and the audience

reacted. Furthermore, the data that was collected was used to prove the argument by the researchers.

The analysis of the results of the study, the arguments about the culture of silence in the Philippine society, and the contribution of the researchers on the continuing discourse about homosexuality, is presented in the Results and Discussion section of the study.

## RESULTS

This section contains the results of the study and the analysis of data gathered with the use of audience analysis. The presentation includes analysis of the audience reaction to homosexuals as depicted in the mainstream media. Additionally, all the words are translated (by the researchers) based on the context of the videos because if the researchers translated it to its grammatically acceptable term, it would change the meaning of the statement into which would affect the result of the analysis.

### *Audience Reaction to Homosexuals*

**VS1 Duration** : 9:30 - 9:32

Vice Ganda (Host) : Salakot sa kabundukan (Hat of mountains) \*Audience smiles  
Salakot sa kabaklaan (Hat of gays) \*Audience laughs

In this video clip, the host asked the contestant to guess what object is inside the covered cloth. The contestant answered “salakot” or a Filipino traditional hat. The host answered hat of mountains and hat of gays. The audience laughed and seemed to appreciate the joke. The audience seemed to laugh because of the way the host delivered the joke. Also, the audience laughed when they heard the word “kabaklaan” or gayish. The joke was delivered using words with rhyme: kabundukan (mountains) and kabaklaan (gays).

**VS5 Duration** : 12:55–13:55

Jose (Host) : Sino kasama mo dito? (Whom do you live with?)

Contestant : Yung boyfriend ko po. (My boyfriend.)

Wally (Host) : Huh!!? (What!!?)

Allan (Host) : Dyandyadyaran.... (An expression of being surprised)

\*Audience was smiling. One was covering half of her face while laughing then whispered something on the other audience.

Audience smiled upon knowing that the contestant is living with his boyfriend. Based on this reaction, the audience seems to have a light and accommodating reception on the contestant’s situation. One of the audience who was whispering to her seatmate has a feedback on the situation. The light and seemingly happy atmosphere among the audience was reinforced when the hosts made an expression of being surprised (Dyandyadyaran...). Furthermore, another host added on the jokes being made by saying that the boyfriend of the contestant is a shi tzu. This shows that the hosts seem to use the situation of the contestant to entertain the audience.

*Audience Reaction to Homosexual's Behavior and Actions*

**VS3 Duration : 00:01-1 1:16**

Contestant : Singing

\*The contestant sat on the lap of one the male hosts, dragged him to the stage and sang while holding his hand. The audience is laughing, screaming for approval.

Most of the audience enjoyed what they were seeing. The audience was entertained seeing how the contestant interact with the male host. The audience was at an intense level of enjoyment to the point that some were screaming, and some are even standing up just to express their enjoyment of the acts.

**VS5 Duration : 19:52-20:00**

Joey (Host) : Ano tawagan niyo? (What do you call him?)

Contestant : Babe po (Babe is a shortcut for baby)

\*Audience said "ohhh..." then smiles.

The audience expressed giddiness after learning how the contestant and his partner call each other. The audience knows that the term "Babe" is a common word used to address your loved ones. The audience shows a positive reaction to the relationship of the contestant and his boyfriend. They exhibit giddiness whenever they call each other babe.

**VS5 Duration : 21:32–21:50**

Jose (Host) :Tapos? Nagdecide na kayo? Kelan kayo nagdesisyon na sasama na ko? Live in na? (Then? Both of you decided already? When did you made the decision to live with him?)

Boyfriend of the contestant : Nung time na yun, nawalan po sya ng trabaho. Tapos sinabe niya sa akin na... (During that time, he lost his job. Then he said to me...)

\*Audience were attentively listening to the story of how the contestant and his boyfriend met.

The audience were attentively listening to the story of how the contestant and his boyfriend met. The audience showed interest in the love story of the two. Possibly, the audience could have a familiarity of the situation or they have related it on their own experiences.

**VS5 Duration : 22:38–22:44**

Jose : Pero ngayon, mahal mo siya? (But now, you love him?)

Boyfriend of the contestant: Mahal po. Mahal na mahal. (Yes, I love him. I love him very much)

\* Audience smiled. Some said "ahhh..."



When asked if the boyfriend of the contestant love his partner, the audience again smiled and said “ahhh”. The audience again expresses giddiness towards the relationship of the contestant and his boyfriend. This seems to indicate that the audience accepts their relationship.

**VS5 Duration : 31:14-31:40**

Jose : Ano yung nakita mo sa kanya na nakapagdesisyon ka ng ganyan? (What did you saw to him that made you decide to be like that?)

Boyfriend of the contestant : Kasi yung time na naospital ako siya nag alaga sa akin. (He was the one who took care of me when I was hospitalized?)(Boyfriend cries)

\*Audience again said “woohh..” then gave applause.

Aside from expressing giddiness, the audience gave applause to the contestant and his boyfriend. The audience may have felt the emotion of the boyfriend of the contestant and have related to it.

**VS6 Duration : 14:32–14: 37**

Wally (Host) : Gaano mo kamahal si Jane? (How much do you Jane?)

Contestant : Mahal na mahal po (I love her very much)

\*Audience shouted “eehhhhh” as an expression of giddiness.

The audience shouted “eehhhhh” as an expression of giddiness. This expression is common as a reaction to all lovers saying, “I love you”. The audience seems to possess automaticity on things like this regardless of the gender of the one saying, “I love you”.

**VS6 Duration : 26:15-26:23**

Jose : Wala ka ba mensahe kay “baby love” mo?  
(Do you have a message to your “baby love”?)

Contestant : Mi...

Jose (Host) : Ano tawag mo? (What did you call her?)

Contestant : Mi po (Mi is a shortcut for Mommy).

\*Audience again shouted “eehhhh” as a form of giddiness.

The audience got excited and giddy when the contestant was asked to give a message to her live-in partner. This the kind of behavior of teasing lovers and expressing excitement towards romance is common among Filipinos.

**VS8 Duration : 19:36-19:43**

Allan (Host) : Ikaw nga magsundo Rene. (Fetch your girlfriend Rene) (Rene stands up and take the stairs).

Ruby (Host) : Rene sunduin mo, sunduin mo... (Rene, fetch her, fetch her...)  
\*Audience shouted “ehhh...” with giddiness and many gave applause to Rene. Many of the audience were smiling.

The audience seemed to be teasing at the same time persuading the contestant to make a giddy gesture to her girlfriend by fetching her. The audience seemed interested on the girlfriend of the contestant, so they were reinforcing the suggestion of the host for the contestant to fetch her. Possibly, they want to see what the girlfriend looks like or they want to know some information from and about the girlfriend.

#### *Audience Entertainment and Homosexuals*

**VS2 Duration : 9:03–9:10**

Billy Crawford (Host) : That’s my man yo! That’s my man! \*Audience nods and smiles

Vice Ganda(Host) : My Man!

Billy Crawford : That’s my Maaaaan!

Vice Ganda : That’s my gay \*Audience laughs hysterically.

The audience seemed to anticipate the flow of the sketch having the first host (Billy) lead the second host (Vice) to replacing man with gay. By replacing man with gay and as the word man is being stressed by the first host, the audience had confirmed their anticipation and laugh. The audience seemed to laugh even in just hearing and using the word gay regardless if it made sense.

**VS4 Duration : 0:25-0:38**

\*Contestant emerges from the back of the stage, removes his sunglasses and the crowd erupts in enjoyment.

\*Every entrance of the gays was appreciated by the crowd. Whenever they do something that is considered manly, the crowd reacts in a positive manner.

\*Every time the gay contestant sang in front of the crowd, they normally approach women as if they are straight males. The reaction of the crowd is excited.

The audience were very entertained having seen a gay courting female by approaching female audience while delivering a song. Also, the audience were amazed seeing gays dressed-well like males.

**VS5 Duration : 15:14–15:33**

Allan (Host) : Sabihen mo nga, “lalaki ako!”. (Could you say this, “I am a boy!”)

Paolo (Host) : Sabihen mo daw, “lalaki ako!”. (He is asking you to say, “I am a boy!”.)

Boyfriend of the Contestant : Lalaki ako! (I am a boy!)

Allan : Ganyan din ang sabe namen ni Paolo dati. (That was also what I and Paolo thought to ourselves.)

\*Audience laughed hard

Audience laughs hard when the host made the contestant say, “I am a boy” and adding a remark that this also what he and the other host thought of themselves. The audience laugh because the remark said by the host is a familiar joke for those whose gender identity is being put into question. The audience laugh not on the contestant but on the two hosts who are also gays.

**VS5 Duration : 33:17–33:26**

Jose (Host) : Malamang makasal na kayong dalawa. Oo.  
(It seems that you will get married to one another. Yes.)  
Contestant : Sana Sir. (I’m hoping Sir.)  
Jose : Kung nandyan lang si Tito Sen nakasal na kayo. Eh wala eh. (If Tito Sen ((A co-host which is also a senator)) is here, you already got married, but he was not.) \*Audience laughed.

The audience laughed after one of the host remarked that the contestant and the winner could have been married on that day if one of his co-host, which is a senator, was around. Possibly, the audience laughed at the idea of the senator officiating the marriage of the gay and his boyfriend.

**VS6 Duration : 8:23–8:30**

Jose : Nasaan yung kalive in mo? (Where is your live-in partner?)  
Contestant : (Says the name of her live-in partner)  
Jose : Ay mabenta to... (She is marketable) \*Audience laughed.

The audience was kept attentive and entertained by using jokes relating to the contestant. In this case, making use of the name of the live-in partner of the contestant to make jokes.

**VS6 Duration : 26:15-26:23**

Jose :Wala ka ba mensahe kay “baby love” mo?  
(Do you have a message to your “baby love”?)  
Contestant : Mi...  
Jose : Ano tawag mo? (What did you call her?)  
Contestant : Mi po (Mi is a shortcut for Mommy).  
\*Audience again shouted “eehhhh” as a form of giddiness.  
Allan : Short for meow (sound produced by cats). \*Audience laughed.

The audience expressed excitability and giddiness when the contestant was asked to give a message to her live-in partner. One of the hosts made a joke out of the way the lovers address one another.

**VS9 Duration : 27:30–27:56**

Vic (Host) :Wala ba siyang planong lumipat? (Does she have a plan to move?)

- Jose (Host) : Wala ka bang planong lumipat? (Do you have plan of moving?)
- Wally (Host) : Ano naman lilipatan? (To whom will you move in?)
- Jose : Hindi, sila, bahay na maluwag... (No, not them separating, I'm referring to moving to a new house...)
- Contestant's Live-in Partner : Lipat ng ibang...? (Move to another...?) (Partner)
- Jose : Hindi... (Hosts laughed). Iiyak na oh. Joke lang yun... (No...she is already crying. It is just a joke.) \*Audience laughed hard.

The audience were laughing hard because the contestant was being teased by the hosts. The audience subscribed to the joke made by the host which was derived from the contestant's own experience.

**VS8 Duration : 18:56–19:07**

- Ruby (Host) : Ano ba tawagan niyo? (What do you call her?)
- Contestant : Beh... (Beh is a shortcut for baby)
- \*Audience said and repeated the word "beh" with giddiness. Some audience clapped their hand and some says "Ohhh...".
- Ruby : Kasi pag lalaki nga naman bae. (Because if it is a boy, it is called bae (bae is a shortcut for baby)) \*Audience again said "Ehhh..." with giddiness.

The audience seemed to be entertained by the idea that the contestant addresses her partner as "beh". The audience seemed to be amazed of the relationship as evident on them giving applause to the couple.

*Collective and Individual Reaction to Homosexuals*

**VS7 Duration : 37:48–39:00**

- Jose : Ano type mo sa babae? (What type of girl do you like? (as a lover))
- Contestant : Simple lang, mabait. (Simple, I want her to be kind.)
- Jose : Simple lang, Yung walang butas ang ilong, Simple lang yung. (Simple only. The one with no holes in the nose. That is being simple.) (Hosts laughs).

(Female audience were shown in the screen one at a time)

- Jose : Yan, yan, yan... (That is it.that is it...)
- \*The first female audience flashed in the screen was laughing but a little shocked when she saw herself on the screen. Then, she smiled.
- \*The second female audience was also shocked when she saw herself in screen. She covered her face with her hand and bow her head to hide herself. Then she lifted her head and laughed.
- \*The third female audience just smile when she was flash in the screen.
- \*The fourth female audience was waving her and smiling. It seemed she ride with the idea of having a relationship with the contestant.

The contestant (lesbian) was asked the type of girl she wants as a lover. The individual audience shown as the options have different reactions. The first one seems to be shocked and might have wondered why she was being shown in the screen. The second audience was also shocked but tried to compose herself and conform to the situation wherein everyone in the audience was having fun and entertained. The third audience just smiled after being flashed on the screen which seem to also indicate conformation to the situation she was into. The fourth audience showed willingness and accommodation towards the idea of her being a partner with another woman. Audience, in general, may have a consensus of how to react towards homosexuals but individually, they have different ways of reacting to the issue.

## DISCUSSION

### *Homosexuality, Media, and the Culture of Silence in the Philippines*

Filipinos seem to accept the notion of homosexuality within the realm of media. The audience has an accommodating, appreciative, and a joyful reaction whenever a homosexual or homosexuality is introduced and used in the segments of media shows. As observed in Video Segment 1 (VS1), where the word “gay” was used to perform a sketch, and Video Segment 5 (VS5), where the audience learned that the contestant is gay by revealing that he has a boyfriend, the audience seemed to appreciate homosexuality as part of media as evident in the way they behave. The audience smiles when they learned that the person is homosexual. This is a sign that the audience seems to have no resistance towards homosexuals on mainstream media outlets. The audience also laughed if homosexuals or things associated with it was used in making comedy sketches. An example of this is shown in Video Segment 2 (VS2) where the hosts made use of the word gay to replace the word boy on the famous Filipino line “That’s my boy” and making it “That’s my gay”. This behavior is acceptable in the context of entertainment in the Philippines, specifically in making comedy routines and sketches. People seem to be entertained whenever the hosts make use of the situation of homosexuals as jokes.

The audience seems to tolerate issues like homosexuals pretending to be straight males (VS4), getting married with the same sex (VS5), living-in partnership (VS6), and addressing loved ones in a giddy manner. These issues on homosexuality seem to be so light, tolerable, and acceptable in the context of one of the media’s purpose which is to provide entertainment. This maybe because of the situational context where media productions and hosts, like of those of variety noon-time shows, are situated to use issues not to discuss but to entertain their audience. Therefore, the audiences of these variety shows appear to have a positive reaction towards homosexuals and their behaviors and practices because they feel entertained which serves the purpose of why they decided to watch and subscribe to the show.

Also, there is both a general (collective audience) and differentiated (individual audience) reaction towards homosexuals in the media. Collectively, the audience reacts through smiling, laughing, applauding, and making giddy remarks about homosexual related issues as presented in most of the segment videos. Individually, audience reaction is differentiated. For example, in video segment 5 (VS5), one of the audience was whispering to her seatmate after learning that the contestant has a boyfriend living with him. This

differentiated reaction was more emphasized in video segment 7 (VS7). Wherein, four (4) audience was framed on the screen one by one which encapsulates their reaction on the idea of having a relationship with a person of the same sex. Two of them were a little surprised, one just smiled, and the last one waved to the contestant and smiled at the screen. Though differentiated, there is no immediate negativity that can be attached to the individual reaction. Individual reaction also seems to accept or tolerate homosexuality in the media.

Despite these findings, it is important to recognize that people observed as the audience in the variety shows do not reflect the entirety of how Filipinos would react to homosexuality outside of the entertainment media. When people assume the role of audience in a variety show, the reaction expected from them is to project an expression of tolerance towards an entertaining matter. Filipinos are known for turning serious matter, like political, environmental, and moral issues, into lighter ones by making jokes out of it. Thus, homosexuality in the media seems to be tolerated as it is an issue used as material for entertainment but may not really reflect the sentiment of the people in the society.

On a wider sense, Filipinos do not seem to accept homosexuality. There are negativities attached not only to the homosexuals, but also on their practices and behavior. The pre-conceived judgment of the perceived practices of homosexuals contributes to the non-acceptance of society to it. In terms of homosexual practices on the issue of same-sex marriage, the Philippine Family Code specifically cited that marriage is allowed only between a man and a woman. Furthermore, according to Family code, the notion of homosexuality and lesbianism is a deviance from heterosexuality, thus making it one of the grounds for annulment. This suggests negativity not only on the practice but on the homosexuals themselves and further perpetuates non-acceptance. There is a means to at least reduce such kind negativity among homosexuals through legislation. Unfortunately, the LGBT party LADLAD has never won a seat in the congress. Presently, Philippines only have one (1) transgender who won a seat in congress. This could mean that homosexuals seem to be under-represented in the house of congress and senate. There are of course laws that cover LGBTQ rights like the Anti-Discrimination Law. However, whether it is really being implemented is a question since discriminatory acts like name-calling and cat-calling against homosexuals is a common sight in the society.

This negative view of homosexuality can be traced back to the time of being a Spanish colony. During that time, the islands were put into an inquisition, most of the gay men were executed for not following the Christian standards of a man and a woman. For 300 years, homosexuals were persecuted for being different in the eyes of the dominant catholic church. After the Spaniards have left, the stigma about homosexuality and its negative effects in the society continued and spread across the political, economic, religious sectors of the society.

The interplay between religion and homosexuality is a difficult discourse. According to Joaquin (2014), religion plays a big role in understanding the society's way of life. The majority of the Filipinos, although the Philippines have a minority Muslim community, are Catholics. Uy (2013) mentioned that among the 96.8 million Filipinos, 76.18 million of those are catholic. Although the catholic church continues to present love and acceptance among its believers, they also acknowledge it as "sinful" and immoral (Joaquin, 2014, p. 18). This authoritative nature of Catholic teachings in the society affects the decision making of the

public in its acceptance. Furthermore, they may exhibit a silent obedience in the conversation of homosexuality, if they consider themselves as faithful Catholics (Jung, 2007, pp. 191-192).

The influence of religion extends up to the principles of basic human right. The homosexual community with regards to legal union still lingers on the possibility of its legalization in the Philippine government. The media, with its outright power in establishing the presence of same sex marriage in its arsenal, is still a minor player in terms convincing the government to legalize such union. While the 1987 constitution guarantees the separation of church and state, the effects of religion still have a presence in any attempt to legalize such union. They mentioned that even though they fully embrace gays and lesbians, same sex union and relationships are unacceptable (UNDP & USAID, 2014). Furthermore, this notion ultimately influenced the decision of government officials to even consider the legalization of unions between homosexuals in such that religion is mentioned in the drafting of laws and policies. In sum, the colonial and postcolonial mindset that the Filipinos have with the notion of homosexuality and the implicit and explicit power of the Catholic church in mobilizing the public in defiance of such laws are prevalent in the Philippines. Thus, a culture of silence amongst the Filipinos in its acceptance of homosexuality and same sex marriage arises. Homosexuals and their rights to legal union are important to them. As human beings, they are entitled to choose whoever they want to marry, regardless of race, gender, and nationality. Although this discourse is an uphill battle, there is still a possibility for Filipinos, regardless of religion and social constructs, to embrace its legalization to promote equality among the nation.

The difference in the acceptance of homosexuality between mainstream media and the Philippine society as a whole shows that there is still oppression to LGBTQs in terms of their basic human rights like of legal union and marriage. As mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, the colonial and postcolonial mindset along with religion greatly influence the way homosexuality is viewed on the society. As a result, this influence stems to the political and moral standards of the society. Thus, a culture of silence arises outside of the confines of mainstream media. Homosexual rights policy such as same-sex marriage is subject to deliberation by congress and that, regardless of the growing pursuit of legal and religious equality to heterosexual couples, the lawmakers seem to exhibit this culture of silence amongst themselves because they are wary of the implications of their actions in their pursuit of power in the government. As the literature suggests, the public unconsciously imbibe such culture the impact of religion in the decision making of such laws, and the implicit power of the catholic church in influencing its constituents about the implications of legalizing such laws that for them is a violation of sacred rules.

#### CONCLUSION

Acceptance of homosexuality in the Philippine context seems to be superficial. Homosexuality is tolerated in the media but it seems to be not accepted in a wider sense of the society. Social constructs brought by religion, colonial and postcolonial mindset widely affect how the society views homosexuality, thus affecting its acceptance. Filipinos seem to tolerate the idea of homosexuality in mainstream media but not necessarily accept it as evidence on how they treat issues like same-sex marriage. The researchers believe that it is

hard for Filipinos to embrace homosexuality and same sex marriage because of the colonial and postcolonial mindset that is perhaps connected to religion. There is a culture of silence on the acceptance of homosexuality and same-sex marriage outside the realm of media in the Philippines as there is a silent obedience to the doctrines set by the church as well as there is still prevalence of the colonial and postcolonial mindset. This implies a continuing cultural and ideological reproduction on the views and practices towards homosexuality. The culture of silence on issues surrounding homosexuality reinforces the reproduction of ideas on how homosexuals and same-sex marriage are viewed in the Philippine society. Moreover, the kind of mindset that is passed through societal institutions, like the church, contributes further in sustaining this culture of silence. Hence, the colonial and postcolonial mindset and the culture of silence cyles in reproducing one another when it comes to matters concerning homosexuality. Aside from the media and the church, an investigation of how other social institutions contribute to this socio-cultural and ideological reproduction can be further explored in future research. This paper hopefully adds to the continuous discourse in this topic to have a better understanding of homosexuality, as well as social acceptance.

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