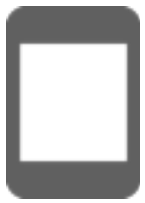


Reporting on LGBTs in Community Newspapers in the Northern Philippines



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ABSTRACT

In the Philippines, members of the LGBT community face struggles, discrimination, and underrepresentation, among other issues, in educational institutions, religious institutions, the government, and even the media. In the realm of print news publication, their battles include garnering publication space, media portrayal, and representation. These determine whether there is fair, accurate, and ethical reportage of the LGBT community. This paper looks into how local newspapers in Baguio City in the northern Philippines reported on the LGBT community. Employing a qualitative news frame analysis of *Baguio Midland Courier*, *Northern Dispatch*, and the *Northern Philippine Times*, it has been found that there was underreporting of topics related to the LGBT community. An improvement in LGBT news coverage would give news readers more opportunity to learn about sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression and the LGBT+ community as a whole. A style guide such as the *Outrage Media and Rainbow Rights Project Media Reference Guide* should be a necessary reference in every newsroom so mistakes such as the improper inclusion of sexual orientation and improper use of terminology can be avoided.

Keywords: LGBT, sexual orientation, SOGIE, community newspapers, news reporting, Philippines, Baguio

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INTRODUCTION

Baguio City, a bustling city nestled in the Cordillera Mountains in the Northern Philippines, is home to a thriving group of community journalists covering news for local print and broadcast outfits. It is also home to a growing community of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transgenders (LGBT).

In the Philippines, where sexual orientation has become a moral, political, and social issue of acceptability, members of the LGBT community have become victims of condemnation in school, at the workplace, in church, and/or elsewhere. Casabal (2008) describes these places as “daily battlegrounds” for LGBT people (p.74). The battle can be attributed to a society that perpetuates heteronormativity. In its 2011 coalition report, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) states:

“The [Philippine] State has perpetuated gender-defined social norms that promote stereotypes, prejudice and the stigmatization of LGBT persons. Tolerance of sexual and gender diversity is tempered by the strong influence of the Catholic Church and a macho culture to which many within the general population subscribe. 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” (IGLHRC, 2011, p.4).

The media can be added in the list of battlegrounds for members of the LGBT community. In this arena, garnering publication space is only part of the battle, the content and context of the story, its meaning, its treatment, and the frames used in writing the story are bigger factors that affect how LGBT people are portrayed or represented in media reportage. All these determine whether there is fair, accurate, and ethical reportage on them. Like the State, the media also operates to perpetuate heteronormativity, which Robinson (2016) defines as “a hegemonic system of norms, discourses, and practices that constructs heterosexuality as natural and superior to all other expressions of sexuality” (p.1). He adds, “heteronormativity legitimates homophobia—the irrational fear of gay and lesbian people—and heterosexism—the discrimination of sexual minorities within social relations and structures” (Robinson, 2016, p.1).

The media uses heteronormative standards and discourses that legitimate the discrimination of sexual minorities and this manifests in many ways from coverage to actual reportage. The media admittedly works with a bias and such bias negates the values of objectivity and neutrality in journalism. This bias that is innate in the journalism practice, is the same bias that favors heteronormativity. The truth is, there is no objectivity in any state of the news production process. A journalist is subjective during the identification of a news topic, gathering data, interviewing, writing, and editing. At most, the stories published tend to project a semblance of neutrality by presenting both sides or all sides of a story. Israel (2006) writes “As is well known, not all make it to the news, and news are just that: what a newspaper or reporter decides what should be news. Once the media reports a story or event—and usually it does not make this story or event happen—it becomes the media’s event or story” (p.78).

A manifestation of such heteronormative standard can be seen in the coverage of stories about LGBT members that include their gender identity in the news report even if it is not pertinent to the story. This is why we see stories with titles such as “Gay doc aims for circumcision record worldwide” (Padilla, 2008); “Pusher, gay partner get life terms for shabu” (2011); or “Lesbian mauled for love affair” (2016). The last two examples even promote stereotypes for LGBT individuals such that the subjects of the news reports are demonized because of their gender identity. Under dominant heteronormative standards, heterosexuality and homosexuality are binary opposites, hence the gender roles of masculine men and feminine women are naturalized and non-heterosexuality is often considered abnormal—a bad form of sexual expression (Robinson, 2016, p.1).

Let us also look at how news reporters are called under this heteronormative setup. While majority use and prefer the term “journalists” as the gender-neutral term, gendered terminology still persists for journalists in the community. It would not be uncommon to refer to a lady reporter as a “newshen,” a pejorative term, which is a combination of the words “news” and “hen.” A male reporter is called a newsman but never a newscock. Yet the word newswoman is used rarely. There is likewise no specific term for a news reporter who is a member of the LGBT community.

For most media outfits, coverage of the LGBT community in Baguio City is not considered a regular news beat. Journalists are not able to produce stories on the LGBT every week unlike the police, politics, business, environment, and health beats, because there seems to be a limited opportunity for coverage. By observation, journalists mostly cover the LGBT community only during Pride Week celebrations in June and during events and updates related to Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The Pride Week, which includes an LGBT parade, is deemed newsworthy for the conflict it poses against heteronormativity. Israel (2006) describes the role of such as:

“a public assertion of Gay Power, which has been calculated to provoke and goad the public from seeing what it would rather not see. It has become a force that is both epistemologically and visually arresting. Visually and spectacularly transgressive, images and ideas displayed during the Gay Pride March are also indicative of the contradictions, exclusions, and marginalization apparent within and outside the [LGBT] movement” (p.76).

The LGBT parade is also valued for its novelty. On an ordinary news day, a colorful display of LGBT people in makeup and outlandish costumes would definitely catch the eye of photojournalists. Israel (2006) observes that this media focus happens not only locally but also in other countries. She says the media tend to focus only on the flamboyant costumes and makeup of the Gay Pride participants but not on the underlying causes being fought for in the march. She adds:

“Such depiction, apparently true to the colors and carnivalesque ambience of the Gay Pride March, serves the double purpose of stimulating the senses while freezing reason in linking the March with social changes. What is thereby highlighted is the notion of self-gratification (flamboyant costumes of a crowd in a party mood) rather than self-determination. In the present social order, individu-

alistic tendencies (like self-gratification) are privileged over assertion of autonomy and personal agency (like self-determination). This is not news but promotion of normal and acceptable ways of behaving publicly—packaged as news” (Israel, 2006, p.79).

Israel’s article looks at LGBT portrayal in media as a whole but the focus of her article was to point out how skewed media reportage is, even if it is about the LGBT community, by only focusing on the male gays. Lesbians, even bisexuals and transgender men, have disappeared in the news even if they are also part of the Gay Pride march. Meanwhile, stories on HIV and AIDS infections are covered by the media due to the impact they have on public health and safety. The stories are written as informative and educational pieces but many of these reports come with a warning for men having sex with men (MSM). This is a form of stereotyping to single out those who engage in MSM.

Apart from the news topics mentioned above, rarely is the LGBT community in Baguio placed under media spotlight. The June 2011 coverage of the first mass same-sex unification rites conducted by the Metropolitan Community Church of Metro Baguio, is a noteworthy exception (Ramo, 2011; Catajan, 2011). Dubbed and portrayed in the media as “same-sex marriage,” the event which saw the union of eight LGBT couples garnered a barrage of reactions both positive and negative. The event even catapulted the local LGBT community to the national and international consciousness. The event was considered newsworthy because of the novelty of the concept of same sex marriage and the conflict it poses against the country’s heteronormative religious beliefs in marriage and family relations. The *Family Code of the Philippines* (1987) states that marriage is a special contract of permanent union entered into by legally capacitated “contracting parties who must be a male and a female” (E.O. 209, Art.2, par. 2).

Many news outlets stopped at just reporting the celebration of the same-sex union. This form of agenda-setting, which features incomplete information for the public by not doing follow up stories, framed the LGBT community in a negative light. Only a few news outlets that initially reported the event went on to report the clarification made by Rev. Myke Sotero, one of the pastors who conducted the unification rights. Sotero says their congregation has been conducting same-sex unions annually since 2003. He clarifies that they never claimed the validity of the celebration as a marriage recognized under Philippine laws but only as a celebration and confirmation of the relationship between same sex partners. It provides LGBT members of their church the chance to express their vows in front of their friends and family much like heterosexual couples also do.

Veteran journalist and journalism professor Luis Teodoro (2002) in his redefinition of “news” highlights the crucial role journalists play beyond just presenting information. He writes:

“News is first of all an account of something recent (timeliness). It is also a report that is of interest to readers, and third, significant to them not only because it can affect their lives, but also because it happened in their immediate community (proximity and relevance). Even more critically, news must be accurate, and not only in the sense that it gets the names, dates and places right, but also in terms

of presenting “the larger truths” in a given issue and in society in general” (Teodoro, 2002).

Unfamiliar Terminology

While many journalists would want to cover subjects and topics on the LGBT community, they face a lot of potential problems, foremost of which are pertinent terminologies. This problem was further elucidated following the death of transgender woman Jennifer Laude in 2014. Many newspapers initially reported her as Jeffrey Laude contrary to her choice of name. Among the mistakes in LGBT reportage noted by Samantha Allen (2015) include the unnecessary inclusion of her birth name and reference to her as “a transgender,” which is just as unacceptable as calling someone “a gay.”

LGBT terminologies and the fluidity of its definitions may be confusing. However, if we look at social media language or “millennial language,” we can see these are also fluid and confusing. The difference is that when journalists report on social media and millennials, they take the effort to learn the language. The same observation cannot be said of LGBT reportage. This language deficit and the lack of conscious effort to learn the language are additional manifestations of heteronormativity.

If a journalist is not familiar with terminologies, they have a tendency to self-censor or to forego writing stories involving the LGBT community to avoid offending readers or committing infractions of law should they make a mistake in writing about an unfamiliar subject. Such form of self-censorship may not be far-fetched with the passage of the *Anti-Discrimination Law* in Baguio City (Ordinance 13 series of 2017) in 2017. The ordinance penalizes, among other things, violations of civil and political rights through discrimination in educational materials, advertisements, mass media; engaging in profiling; discrimination through speeches, utterances, acts of hatred, and similar acts (Refuerzo, 2017). Discrimination, as defined in the ordinance, refers to:

“a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference made on the basis of disability, age, health status, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity and religion which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing of the human rights and fundamental freedoms in the civil, political, economic, social, cultural, or any other field of public life of a person” (Refuerzo, 2017).

However, while discrimination is clearly defined in the ordinance, what is deemed discriminatory in news writing in relation to the members of the LGBT community is not. This leads us to another problem: a locally-adapted style guide on LGBT reporting.

LGBT Media Reference Guides

In the interviews I conducted with local Baguio journalists, members of the Baguio Correspondents and Broadcasters Club, and the city’s members of the Philippine Press Institute, I observed that most of them do not use a specific style guide or have not even taken a step to familiarize themselves with

LGBT terminologies. For those who said they refer to a style guide occasionally, two mentioned the *American Copy Editors Society Handout on LGBT Language* (2015). Karl Lapniten of the Baguio-based news weekly *Baguio Chronicle* claimed he uses the latest edition of the *GLAAD Style Guide* (2016). Another referred me to the provisions of the Associated Press and Reuters on LGBT reporting, which are also included in the *GLAAD Media Reference Guide*. Kimberly Quitasol of the *Northern Dispatch*, another weekly newspaper in Baguio City, said that in the absence of a style guide, a SOGIE (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression) seminar has helped improve their paper's reportage on the LGBTs. She clarified that they have become more circumspect in writing on the LGBTs due to the orientation.

In 2016, the Outrage Magazine and Rainbow Rights Project Inc. published a stylebook on LGBT terminologies titled *The Outrage Magazine and Rainbow Rights Project Inc. Media Reference Guide*. The stylebook was developed after consultations and focus group discussions (FGDs) with various LGBT leaders and organizations in key cities in the Philippines, which include Metro Manila, Baguio City, Zamboanga City, Davao City, and Cebu City. This stylebook supplement on *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Terminology* is the first of its kind in the Philippines. It also incorporates part of the *Associated Press Stylebook*, *The New York Times Manual of Style and Usage*, and the 2015 GLAAD's media reference guide in its content.

Newspaper Stylebooks

Cameron (1996) describes the importance of stylebooks, saying:

“Rules about usage are commonly codified in a ‘style sheet’ or ‘style book’ whose prescriptions journalists are expected to observe and editors to enforce, and there is also a more general notion of what constitutes ‘good style’, which is meant to inform reporting and editing practice. Becoming familiar with the principles of journalistic style, and with the specific rules that follow them, is part of the socialization of professional journalists” (p.315).

She also summarizes the functions of a newspaper stylebook. She writes that stylebooks do not concern themselves with every aspect of language. Instead, they aim to (1) maintain the consistency of usage for the correct terminology from different variants; (2) “list exceptions” to the use of terminology; (3) “deal with questions of usage that are not settled by a general work of reference since they are specific in the context of the newspaper or of particular importance there,” as well as deal with accuracy of technical information; (4) “draw attention to common errors that must be avoided, and to ban particular expressions, even though these may be common usage, and accepted by other newspapers;” and (5) offer “entries which refer to more general stylistic precepts” for the newspaper (Cameron, 1996, pp.318-319).

This paper will focus on the fourth function of the style guide as listed by Cameron (1996), which is “to draw attention to common errors that must be avoided, and to ban particular expressions even though these may be common usage and accepted by other newspapers” (p.319). Having a locally-

adaptable and available style guide would be a large help to reporters to cover LGBT stories more ethically, appropriately, and accurately.

News Framing

Elliot (2015), in his study on the LGBT movement and the discourse that followed news coverage, states:

“[the] news media is the main source of frame packages around an issue that get deployed in public conversations and when formulating public opinion. Studying newspaper coverage of homosexuality can serve as a proxy for the larger public discussion over time, giving insight into how the general public understood homosexuality and how this changed over time” (p.2).

Studying newspaper coverage of the LGBT, as Elliot (2015) suggests, can help us trace what news stories have been fed to the readers. This is important because it could provide answers to understanding what the readers know about the LGBTs. In addition, Cameron (1996) says that “[the] language of the media, and, in particular, of news reporting, has inspired a body of critical discourse analysis suggesting there are characteristic patterns of linguistic choice in news discourse, whose effect is to reproduce particular ideological propositions” (p.315). Studying the particular words and patterns in news articles gives us an idea on how the LGBT community is portrayed in the news. In fact, Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards, and Rucht (as cited in Elliot, 2015) infers “[t]he media arena is the primary site for contests over meaning. How homosexuality is portrayed in the news media will have a powerful impact on the larger public discussion of homosexuality” (p.2). The same can be said of studying newspaper coverage of the LGBT community in general.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Answering the question “How have local newspapers of Baguio City reported on the LGBT community?,” this article elaborates on the interlacing relationship between the media and the LGBT community in the context of the Baguio-based local newspapers’ coverage of the LGBT community—its members, their issues, and concerns in a decade.

METHODOLOGY

This paper uses the Qualitative News Frame Analysis of Margaret Linström and Willemien Marais (2012), which entails selecting the medium/topic, determining a time-frame, drawing a sample, identifying a unit of analysis, selecting a frame typology, setting operational definitions, and identifying news frames.

Three local newspapers published in the City of Baguio were selected for this study. These are the *Baguio Midland Courier*, which at 71 years old is the oldest and longest running paper in the Northern Philippines; the *Northern Dispatch* that is also called *NorDis*, which started out as a news information agency and began publishing its own weekly paper in 2012; and the *Northern Philippine Times*, a community newspaper which publishes stories not only about the Cordilleras but also about North and Central Luzon. All three papers have online archives.¹

The stories were culled from issues published from January 2007 until December 2016. The ten-year time frame would have been long enough to see if there were significant changes in the frequency and manner of reportage on the LGBT community. A total of 520 issues per newspaper or an overall number of 1,560 newspaper issues were included in the study. Since the study entailed going over the online archives, LGBT related stories were handpicked based on the title and the recurring themes. To ensure that stories with no reference to LGBT in the title were not missed out, the search function in the newspapers' archives was used as this would allow the computer to scan the entire article for keywords. The search strings used were the following: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Homosexual, and Men Having Sex with Men.

The unit of analysis is the entire article with its headline. According to Barrie Gunter (2000), the unit of analysis is crucial. In written content, according to these authors, "the unit of analysis might be a single word or symbol, a theme, or an entire article or story" (Gunter, 2000, p.65). The unit of analysis in frame analysis often is individual news articles which appeared in the selected newspaper during the selected study period.

In selecting a frame typology and operational definitions, the generic news frames created by Semetko and Valkenburgh (2000) were used to categorize the stories collected. They are the following:

1. Conflict Frame: This frame emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, and institutions as a means of capturing audience interest;
2. Human Interest Frame: This frame brings a human face or emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem;
3. Economic Consequences Frame: This frame reports an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, group, institution, region, or country;
4. Morality Frame: This frame puts the event, problem, or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions;
5. Responsibility Frame: This frame presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group.

The dominant frame and, if present, a secondary frame were sought in each of the news articles. The dominant frame is the main theme of the news article, while the secondary frame is a supplementary idea that supports the main theme. Dominant frames appear in the lead of the story and the bulk of the paragraphs of a story. A secondary frame can be found as supporting theme or at the bottom part of the article.

All stories were read multiple times and notes were taken about their content, frames and topics. Technical devices posited by Gamson, Lasch, and Tankard (in Linström and Marais, 2012) were examined to identify what news frame each story would fall. These technical devices include treatment (straight or feature), arrangement of facts, sources, and angle (positive, negative, or neutral).

The methodology employed by Capuzza (2016) who looked at the number of stylebook guideline violations for each news outlet and overall was also used in this study. The content category was extracted directly from *The Outrage Magazine and Rainbow Rights Project Inc. Media Reference Guide* (2016). The inductive approach was used in developing the content categories for style guide violations based on the two general areas of LGBT reporting found in aforementioned reference guide. These are: Developing SOGIE Sensitive Stories and Covering the Trans Community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Newspaper Coverage of the LGBT Community

In looking at the amount of coverage devoted to the LGBT community, story frequency and word count were tabulated. Of the 1,560 issues of the three newspapers published from 2007 to 2016, only 81 stories pertained to the Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transgender community.

Year	<i>Northern Dispatch</i>	<i>Baguio Midland Courier</i>	<i>Northern Philippine Times</i>	Total
2007	2	0	0	2
2008	4	0	1	5
2009	5	4	2	11
2010	7	2	1	10
2011	5	5	4	14
2012	3	2	1	6
2013	6	2	1	9
2014	3	0	0	3
2015	5	1	3	9
2016	1	8	3	12
TOTAL	41	24	16	81

Table 1. Number of published articles on the LGBT (n=81)

Table 1 shows that the *Northern Dispatch* has published the most stories with 41 articles total. It had seven stories in the year 2010. Meanwhile, the *Baguio Midland Courier* published 24 stories with eight

articles in 2016 but having zero LGBT-related articles for three different years. The *Northern Philippine Times* only published 16 of such stories, four of which were posted in 2011.

Overall, 2011 saw the highest number of published stories. This was due to the highly-publicized mass unification rites of same sex couples conducted in Baguio City by the Metropolitan Community Church-Metro Baguio in June 2011. This generated a series of articles featuring reactions from various groups and institutions and brought to fore renewed interest on LGBT rights (See Table 1).

If we measure these stories by the number of words, the *Northern Dispatch* published 19,196 words in its 41 articles or an average of 468 words per article—longer than the average article published by the other publications. The longest article at 838 words did not entirely focus on LGBTs but on women's rights with a subsection on lesbian rights. The shortest article is 266 words long and focused on an LGBT group asking for the passage of a local anti-discrimination law.

The *Baguio Midland Courier* published 8,899 words in its 24 articles or an average of 370 words per article. The longest article is 581 words long and focused on the 3rd Pride March in the locality. The shortest is at 198 words and focused on the Pope and his statement regarding AIDs and condom use. Meanwhile, the *Northern Philippine Times* published 5,969 words in 16 stories with an average length of 373 words per story, which is slightly higher than that of the *Baguio Midland Courier*. The longest articles it published have 692 words each and are focused on the same sex unification rites in the city. The shortest article is at 157 words and covered a story of physical injuries sustained by a lesbian.

The very low number of stories on the LGBT community in a span of a decade can lead one to conclude that the sector is underreported. There is also episodic reporting in that news on the LGBT peaks only during Pride Week celebrations. An improvement in LGBT coverage would give news readers more opportunity to learn about sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression and the LGBT community as a whole. The underreporting means that the heteronormative practice of not seeing LGBTs as a generally newsworthy subject remains present in the media community.

Types of Stories about the LGBT Community

In describing what types of news stories are told about the LGBT community, topic or story genre and treatment were examined. Ten classifications for story genre or topic were developed from the stories collected (see Table 2).

Most stories published were about talks, development, or passage of non-discrimination laws. This was followed by stories on life, culture, and the arts including Pride March and related activities. Stories on health, particularly on HIV and AIDS, are also covered often in relation to men having sex with men, noted in the locality as a particular risk factor in the increase of HIV-AIDS cases. Classified under “General topics” are stories that focus on women's rights, human rights, or indigenous people's rights in relation to LGBT rights. Least focus is given to business and environment-related stories.

Story Genre or Topic	<i>Northern Dispatch</i>	<i>Baguio Midland Courier</i>	<i>Northern Philippine Times</i>	Total
Non-discrimination laws	10	7	2	19
Life, culture, and the arts	9	5	2	16
Health / HIV and AIDS	4	5	6	15
Marriage / Same Sex Union	3	1	2	6
Crime	2	0	3	5
Religion	1	0	1	2
Sports	0	2	0	2
Business	1	0	0	1
Environment	1	0	0	1
General	10	4	0	14
	41	24	16	81

Table 2. Published stories categorized by story genre/topic (n=81)

As to treatment, 68 of the stories were written in the straight/hard news format following the inverted pyramid structure or the structure where information is arranged in descending order of importance. Ten stories were written as feature stories, which are usually longer, contain more facts or explanations, and written in a manner that appeals to the reader's emotions. Meanwhile three were written as news features, a sub category of feature stories but on a highly popular news topic.

Framing of LGBT News Stories

Five news frames were used in the study: Conflict, Human Interest, Economic Consequences, Morality, and Responsibility. The same frames were considered in determining the dominant or primary frame and, if present, a secondary frame.

The most common frame used in the local newspapers in this study is the "Responsibility Frame" which accounted for 35 stories. It is dominant in stories that present an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to the government or to an individual or group (Semetko and Valkenburgh, 2000).

This is evident in stories that call for equality through the passage of laws or stories that ask for accountability from those at risk of HIV-AIDS. Examples of the "Responsibility Frame" are the following news articles:

111 of 248 HIV/AIDS cases spread by MSM

August 7 2016

by Jane B. Cadalig

Advocates for the prevention of Human Immune Deficiency-Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) are calling on more groups of men having sex with men (MSM) to be involved in the campaign.

Ifugao solon pushes 'legal union' of same-sex couples

>> THURSDAY, JULY 9, 2015

By Aiza Liza Namingit

Ifugao Rep. Teddy Brawner Baguilat pushed for “legal union of whatever gender or sexual orientation” like gays in the country. This, after the US Supreme Court recently affirmed in a landmark decision the Constitutional right of same-sex couples in the United States to be legally married in all 50 states, a decision that shines the light on the urgent need to provide equal treatment to lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders, including those in the Philippines.

Cordi gays, lesbians welcome Pope's condom remarks

November 28, 2010 [Baguio City](#)

www.nordis.net

PROGAY/LESBOND Release

BAGUIO CITY — The Progressive Organization of Gays in Baguio (ProGay Baguio) and Lesbian for National Democracy (Lesbond) welcomed the pronouncement of Pope Benedict XVI that allows use of condoms to prevent HIV transmission. However, the two groups called for major change in church policies condemning gays and lesbians.

The “Responsibility Frame” is the most commonly used because news reporters often find stories from conflict situations. Literature teaches us about the various forms of conflict such as that between human beings, between human and God/nature, or between human and himself. Conflicts often cause the break in the ordinary flow of events, hence they are newsworthy.

However, journalists do not stop at identifying the conflict, they must be able to identify the actors or parties to that conflict and attribute responsibility for the conflict or issue to them. This is differentiated from the “Conflict Frame” because it starts the story with an attribution of the responsibility instead of a description or identification of the conflict itself.

The “Human Interest Frame” ranks next after the dominant frame. This frame is evident in stories that include a human face or emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem. Most of the stories that fall under this frame starts with direct quotes from people involved in the issue, event, or problem. This covers not only life, arts, and culture stories but even the stories that dealt with crimes. Some examples of the Human Interest Frame are the following:

Experts trace origins and evolution of gay language

February 26, 2012

by Rimaliza Opiña

Believe it or not, gay lingo or swardspeak traces its roots not only to a combination of words but also from foreign languages such as French, Chinese, and German.

Shi shi la, is from the French word “sashay” or leave secretly or glide. Bongga came from the word “bong” or to make a loud sound, which explains why gays refer to a significant event as “bongga.”

LGBT Cordillera holds first Arts Festival

[patnugutan](#) August 16, 2015 [Baguio City](#), [people](#)

By LGBT (PR)

BAGUIO CITY — Artists and writers from the local Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) community and their allies recently concluded the 1st Cordillera LGBT Arts Festival with a series of trainings and workshops.

Participants underwent an extensive four-day workshop on human rights, culture, sexuality, spirituality and HIV AIDS and were mentored in the fields of theater, poetry writing and visual arts, from July 24-25 and August 1-2 respectively at the Highland Villa.

Gay doc aims for circumcision record worldwide

April 27 2008

By Jerry Padilla

SAN FERNANDO, La Union – A gay doctor here is aiming for a slot a the Guinness Book of World Records as the world’s fastest circumciser of the most number of patients in an hour.

Dr. Jessie Miranda, a law graduate who was once president of the La Union Gay Society, is confident of setting the record after taking only five seconds to circumcise an eight-year-old boy from Barangay San Agustin here and 66 patients in one hour.

The “Conflict Frame” comes in third place. Conflicts between individuals, groups, and institutions are emphasized as a lure to the readers. The stories most often revolve around the battle for the recognition of LGBT rights and fight for equality and non-discrimination. The “Conflict Frame” is used in stories such as the following:

Pro, anti gay marriage advocates trade barbs in city council hearing

>> **MONDAY, JULY 11, 2011**

By Isagani S. Liporada

BAGUIO CITY – The city council last week transformed itself into a ‘grievance committee’ tasked to weigh arguments for or against rites purporting to be a ‘joining together’ of members of the same sex ‘in aid of legislation’.

On one side arguing the merits of same-sex monogamy were members of the local Metropolitan Community Church whose members are composed mostly of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgenders.

On the other side of the invisible ‘morality line’ were leaders and members of the Baguio-Benguet Ecumenical Group.

These, in the heels of the media-covered ‘same-sex unions’ administered by the MCC, June 25 in a temporary chapel which regularly functions as the Ayuyang Bar along Gov. Pack Road.

Baguio's Gays and Lesbians Slam Comelec

[emendator](#) November 23, 2009 [Baguio City](#), [Featured](#)

By MANNY A. LOSTE

www.nordis.net

Baguio City. – They were not members of the Ang Ladlad partylist, but when the COMELEC trashed Ang Ladlad's second attempt at accreditation, Baguio's Pride Network (BPN) condemned this latest display of bigotry on the part of some commissioners of the poll body. Even the local chapter of the Gabriela Women's Partylist took up the cudgels for their potential rival and joined the protest against the COMELEC.

In their statement of condemnation, BPN denounced the homophobia underlying the poll body's decision on Ang Ladlad's petition. This "irrational and baseless fear and discrimination against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders (LGBT)" all the more calls for their representation most especially in politics and governance, BPN claims.

Int'l rights confab backs LGBT battle

Cye Reyes

City, 7/17/2011

MANILA – The beleaguered lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) community in Baguio City got a moral boost when 350 international delegates from 40 countries gathered in the Philippines and came out to support equal rights and fight homophobia.

The Fourth International Assembly of the International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) accepted an appeal from the Baguio Pride Network (BPN) for help in fighting off an assault from religious fundamentalists and anti-gay politicians who wanted to outlaw LGBT equality and punish gay and lesbian couples.

The "Morality Frame" covers stories which are written in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions. Unlike the "Conflict Frame," there might not be clear cut groups or individuals battling on either side. Stories on same sex relations, equality, and community acceptance fall under this frame. Examples are the following:

City dad supports gays', lesbians' fight for seat

November 29, 2009

by Liza Agoot

"I strongly condemn gay slurs and hope our commissioners would soon open their eyes to parity among contributing sectors in the community."

This is part of mayor Reinaldo Bautista Jr.'s statement in relation to the Commission on Election's dumping of the application for registration of the Ang Ladlad partylist representing those who belong to the homosexuals.

LGBT community advances fight vs. discrimination

[emendator](#) July 5, 2009 [Baguio City](#)

By CLAIRE MAE TUAZON

www.nordis.net

BAGUIO CITY — "Would Jesus discriminate?" This is just one of the meaningful statements whom Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgenders (LGBTs) are showing to the people around Baguio City.

The Baguio Pride Network (BPN) organized a ~~grandmarch~~ grand march which aims to fight against discrimination among LGBTs held at People's Park, June 28.

Meanwhile, the "Economic Consequences Frame" was used only once in this case of a published business story in the *Northern Dispatch*:

Progay opens Pride month with free haircut

[emendator](#) June 12, 2011 [Baguio City](#)

By KIMBERLIE OLMAYA NGABIT-QUITASOL

[www.nordis.net](#)

BAGUIO CITY — Proving that they are productive, responsible and concerned citizens, gays and lesbians under the banner of Progay-Metro Baguio kicked off their 2011 month long Pride activities with free haircut services.

It is worth noting that all three local newspapers used the “Responsibility Frame” most often. The *Baguio Midland Courier*’s third and fourth most often used news frames are “Morality” and “Conflict” Frames, respectively. While “Conflict Frame” ranks higher than “Human Interest” in the *Northern Philippine Times* (See Table 3).

News Frame	<i>Northern Dispatch</i>	<i>Baguio Midland Courier</i>	<i>Northern Philippine Times</i>	Total
Responsibility Frame	17	10	8	35
Human Interest Frame	11	7	3	21
Conflict Frame	6	2	5	13
Morality Frame	6	5	0	11
Economic Consequences Frame	1	0	0	1
	41	24	16	81

Table 3. Dominant News Frames used by the Community Newspapers (n=81)

Only 26 of the 81 stories had secondary news frames. This could partly be due to the relatively short length of the stories published. “Morality,” “Responsibility,” and “Human Interest” are the most common secondary frames used (See Table 4).

News Frame	<i>Northern Dispatch</i>	<i>Baguio Midland Courier</i>	<i>Northern Philippine Times</i>	Total
Responsibility Frame	5	1	1	7
Human Interest Frame	5	1	0	6
Conflict Frame	5	1	0	6
Morality Frame	2	2	0	4
Economic Consequences Frame	2	1	0	3
	19	6	1	26

Table 4. Secondary News Frames used by the Community Papers (n=26)

Having “Responsibility Frames” for LGBT stories is good because it pinpoints the author of a conflict or issue. This type of story also most often includes a call for action or making the responsible party account for the issue.

LGBT Stylebook Violations of Community Newspapers

Each newspaper is expected to follow a certain style guide or stylebook. Cameron (1996) states that generally a stylebook is intended to achieve two main goals: Conformity to a set of values that are held to define what is ‘good writing’ on newspapers in general and to produce a distinctive ‘institutional voice’ for a particular paper. The three community newspapers in this study have developed their own ‘institutional voice’ in the course of publication. But there is no newspaper style guide to speak of. Instead, a general concession among the members of the editorial staff on how to write or how to edit news stories define the style of the newspaper.

	<i>Northern Dispatch</i>	<i>Baguio Midland Courier</i>	<i>Northern Philippine Times</i>	Total
Number of Stories	4	5	6	15
SOGIE-Related				
Improper inclusion of sexual orientation	0	3	4	7
Offensive use of “homosexual”	0	1	0	1
Offensive use of “third sex”	0	2	0	2
Stereotyping	0	2	4	6
Sources uses incorrect names/pronouns	0	1	0	1
Wrong words for acronym	1	0	0	1
Transgender coverage-related				
Improper use of the term transgender	3	0	1	4
Total Violations	4	9	9	

Table 5. Violations of the LGBT Style Guide (n=15)

As for LGBT stories, Kimberly Quitasol of *Nordis* claims they underwent a Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) seminar to familiarize themselves of the proper use of terminology. Members of the editorial staff of the *Baguio Midland Courier* do not follow a certain style guide on LGBT reporting. However, Jane Cadalig, the associate editor, said that when in doubt they ask LGBT friends and sources about terminologies.

The *Outrage Magazine and Rainbow Rights Project Inc. Media Reference Guide* (2016) is a stylebook supplement on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender terminology. The first of its kind in the country, it is aimed at “providing guidance in upholding the dignity of LGBT people; introducing language that can be aptly used when addressing the LGBT community in media; and standardizing strategies to increase LGBT voices and visibility in the media,” among other things (p.6). The authors of the *Outrage Magazine and Rainbow Right Project Inc. Media Reference Guide* (2016) states that “[n]ot surprisingly most media outlets have their own guidelines that dictate their content and/or programming styles. Unfortunately, these guidelines do not necessarily deal with issues related to SOGIE” (p.13).

The stylebook has three key parts: a guide in developing SOGIE sensitive stories; LGBT-related terminology in media; and a guide in covering the transgender community. It includes a glossary of terms in English and their Filipino/local counterpart as well as a list of terms to avoid.

For the last research question the most common LGBT stylebook violations committed by the community newspapers are studied in relation to the *Outrage Magazine and Rainbow Right Project Inc. Media Reference Guide*. The stories have been published prior to the dissemination of the style guide itself giving us a better look of the actual state of LGBT news reporting.

Two general types of violations can be deduced from the articles: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) related violations and Transgender Reportage related violations. Out of the 81 stories, only 15 stories contained significant violations of the reference guide.

Among the SOGIE-related violations the improper inclusion of sexual orientation is the most common. This comes out in stories where the subject’s sexual orientation or being gay is mentioned although it doesn’t have a bearing on the article or topic. The reference guide advises journalists to “include sexual orientation only when it is pertinent to a story” (p.15).

Stereotyping is another violation as it is offensive to associate LGBT people with crimes or other dastardly acts. One significant stereotype mentioned in one story on HIV-AIDS is the advise for LGBT individuals to “change their sexual orientation as they are prone to acquiring not only HIV but also sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)” (*Northern Philippine Times*, 2009). The reference guide advises journalists to avoid offensive word associations, but if this cannot be avoided then use them only when quoted directly from a source. Other SOGIE-related violations include the use of offensive terms like homosexual and third sex. The word homosexual according to the reference guide is offensive so they advise journalists to avoid using the term. The words gay or lesbian, where appropriate, can be used instead. By way of exception, the word homosexual can be used in the context of sexual activity or clinical orientation (i.e., citations) on the increase of HIV-AIDS cases, which usually involves those involved in homosexual relations.

According to the media reference guide, the words ‘third sex’ refer to the old term of referring to members of the LGBT community. It is deemed an offensive term because it places the LGBT individual only in third place after the first sex and second sex. The stylebook states, “It is offensive because of the assumptions of superiority of heterosexual men” (*Outrage Magazine and Rainbow Rights Project Inc. Media Reference Guide*, 2016, p.24).

If a source uses incorrect names or pronouns, even facts, when pertaining to LGBT individuals, the media reference guide advises the journalist to paraphrase the quote when possible. This avoids perpetration of wrong facts and practices against the LGBT community.

Meanwhile, only one Transgender Coverage related violation has been committed by two of the three community papers. The term transgender must be used as an adjective instead of a noun. Such that it is more proper to say “She is a transgender woman” instead of “She is a transgender.”

CONCLUSION

Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgenders remain underreported in community newspapers in the Northern Philippines. News reports published in three community papers over a span of ten years were few, episodic, and are given limited space. This situation lends nothing more than what Liebler (2009) calls as “a feel-good veneer, or a symbolic representation of LGBTs” (p.656).

Newspaper reporters should start veering away from heteronormativity and start engaging the LGBT community in the course of their reportage. This should be the new norm because an improvement in LGBT coverage would give news readers more opportunities to learn about sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, as well as about the LGBT community as a whole. Among the key issues the media can help focus on for the LGBT community are equal rights, HIV-AIDS, and hate crimes (Dela Cruz, 2009).

Beyond politically correct terminology is the respect for diversity of beliefs and practices by individuals or a community of individuals such as the LGBTs. Newspapers play a big role in educating the general public and ensuring the LGBT community is represented in the best possible way. This means that the stories that get published should be free from mistakes, it must be fair, accurate and ethical. A style guide such as the *Outrage Media and Rainbow Rights Project Media Reference Guide* is indeed a necessary reference in every newsroom so mistakes such as the improper inclusion of sexual orientation as well as improper use of terminology can be avoided. Journalists should also undergo Sexual Orientation and Gender and Identity Expression seminars as well as LGBT awareness activities in order to improve the state of LGBT reportage in Philippines newspapers.

Notes

1. These can be found in <http://www.baguiomidlandcourier.com.ph>, <http://www.nordis.net>, and <http://northphiltimes.blogspot.com/>.

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