

Short Paper*

Attitudes towards Homosexuality of Teachers and Administrators in Naga City, Camarines Sur, Philippines

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Abstract

Findings from attitudes towards homosexuality and approaches to addressing gender and sexual diversity through their pedagogical decision-making in Naga City public schools are reported in this paper. This pragmatic-parallel mixed-method study used two processes in obtaining data. Using a questionnaire, a sample of 334 teachers and 37 administrators participated in a survey study in Naga City, Camarines Sur, to examine their attitudes towards homosexuality. Results showed that both groups of respondents posted for a moderate level of positive attitudes and a high level of negative attitudes while in, subjective norm, teachers posted moderate level while administrators were high level. No significant differences were posted among the groups of respondents, and none of the predictors are associated. For the qualitative part, this study drew on empirical data from semi-structured interviews with 9 teachers and 4 administrators, which helped to develop an understanding of their approaches in addressing gender and sexual diversity in their classroom and school. The complex theoretical approach of queer, culture, and transformative learning was employed to investigate the extent to which respondents address the acceptance of homosexuality in schools. Further results are discussed in this paper.

Keywords – homosexuality, attitudes, teachers, administrators, gender diversity



INTRODUCTION

Homosexuality has been a great of a study of experts worldwide. From the ancient civilization to the new decade, these issues had been a debatable topic. While nations of the west had been successfully championing homosexuality, many nations, including the Philippines have yet to understand the colorful spectra of human sexuality fully. Although the Philippines is a staunch supporter of international and national laws to integrate gender equality into the principles, goals, and processes of Philippine education, and homosexuality in the Philippines is decriminalized, mapping LGBT acceptance in the Philippines is still yet to be realized. In a report about global opinions of the LGBT community, almost 70 percent of Filipinos are accepting of homosexuality, thus making the Philippines the most "tolerant" nation surveyed in the Asia-Pacific region (Pew Research Center, as mentioned by Humans Rights Watch, 2017). A separate survey accounts for 85% of Filipinos support the right of gays and lesbians to be protected against discrimination (Sabillo, 2013). However, LGBTQ socio-civic groups disagree with these results. Acceptability of homosexuality is difficult when it collides with the teachings of religion and what is perceived as a social norm for genders as pointed out by Manalastas et al. (2017), Kwin, Xinyi, and Ting (2016), Moral and Valle (2014), Dizon (2016), and Aldave and Licudine (2014), and UNDP (2014). Also, Bernal (2015) elucidated the fact that although the country showed positive trends as to other countries in ending LGBT discrimination, much work is needed to accept diverse sexuality in the Philippine culture. For one, the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) Equality Bill is still in Congress for seventeen (17) years, and while its passage is long overdue, some legislators are adamant on some of the provisions in the bill meant for LGBTs.

In educational institutions, particularly teachers and administrators are still struggling to accept homosexuality. In a report published by United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2014), LGBT people are subject to discrimination using "academic freedom" as a disguise, which allows educational institutions to create their policies. Also, LGBT individuals face adversities in employment that are often ignored, attributed to the weak social status and position of the individuals involved. Adding to these concerns are the robust discussions on family affairs and religious beliefs that homosexuality is considered deviant and, worse, a mortal sin. In response to transitioning into a more accepting institution, the Department of Education (DepEd) recently released D.O No. 32, s. 2017 or the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy (Department of Education, 2017). It outlined guidelines on how DepEd employees promote and uphold the rights of children, regardless of sexual orientation, and foster a nurturing learning environment for all. Though the policy is promising, mainstreaming sound practices on handling students' and teachers' sexual orientation and addressing homophobia is yet to be established. As a response to this gap, the study intends to measure the acceptance of public-school teachers and administrators of homosexuality in the school district where the researcher belongs at Naga City, Camarines Sur, Philippines. Specifically, it measured the level of attitude towards homosexuality and contextualized how school teachers and administrators promote gender and sexuality in their classrooms and

schools. It also exposes the assumptions of teachers and administrators on the preconceived stereotypes of homosexuality in the country. The researcher used a synthesis of three theoretical frames, transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997; Freire, 1976), queer (Butler, 2006), and cultural theory (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001) to design the study.

In a queering approach, identity is not fixed and stable but inherently fluid, and it permits the presence of multi-dimensional gender identities and performances in environments that customarily have only tolerated “normal” identities and traditional behaviors (Goodhand, 2014). Students explore their selves through interactions and relationships with peers and adults. Using queer theory to teach educators that children’s identities are interrelated performances will allow teachers to transform the school culture into an accepting inclusive environment while confronting and interrupting heteronormative discourse and patterns (Loutzenheiser & Macintosh, 2004; Meyer, 2010). Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2003) further suggested that understanding culture, pedagogy, hegemony, and power individually and in interactions with others is essential to developing a culturally responsive climate in schools. These theories provide the framework for considering pedagogies that promote equity and social justice within all classrooms, thereby transforming the culture of the classroom. This new approach is not about teaching sex or same-sex relationships but, rather, challenging the accepted norms and practices of heterosexist patterns and discourse (Goodhand, 2014; Schein, 2004).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study followed a pragmatic-parallel mixed-method design and using Slovin sampling, the survey consisted of three hundred thirty-four (334) teachers and thirty-seven (37) administrators from twenty-nine (29) elementary schools, eight (8) secondary school teachers, and administrators of the Department of Education, Naga City, Philippines, as of the academic year 2017-2018, with a 99% response rate (only two survey forms were left unfinished). The district was chosen since it has the biggest number of teachers and administrators in the Bicol Region and the researcher currently belongs to the said district. The quantitative approach employs a descriptive-relational study that engaged a cross-sectional survey design that sought to describe the level of attitudes towards homosexuality. With permission from the district office, the researcher looked for voluntary respondents and coded survey design was practiced. The survey was accomplished by paper. Consent and briefing were conducted before the respondents answered the questions.

The researcher constructed a survey questionnaire based on the study of Boxill et al. (2011), and Bracamonte-Duon and Palma (2014) to measure the attitude towards homosexuality. The questionnaire consists of three parts: personal data and attitude toward homosexuality measuring three attitudinal factors: positive attitude, negative attitude, and subjective norms. For personal data includes questions on gender, years in service, age, highest educational attainment, school level, family structure, and religiosity.

These data were used as predictors for homosexuality attitudes in the analysis. For attitude questions, each sub-scale consists of ten (10) questions using a 5-point Likert Scale (5 - strongly agree, 3 - moderate, and 1 - strongly disagree). Following Pallant's (2007) standards, overall, the test has good internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = 0.86) and adequate test-retest reliability (0.51). Mean scores were obtained for each construct and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 25.0 (IBM, 2017).

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha and Internal Consistency of Survey Questionnaire

Scale	Cronbach's α N=371	Rate of internal consistency (r_{it})
Positive Attitudes	0.89	0.50
Negative Attitudes	0.88	0.48
Subjective Norm	0.82	0.54

As for the qualitative data, it elicited responses to open-ended questions about awareness, engagement level, and practices on addressing gender and sexual diversity in schools. In this part, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews. The researchers pooled from the same teachers and administrators who answered the survey sheet who expresses their desire to be interviewed. Out of 334 teachers and 37 administrators, nine (9) teachers and four (4) administrators agreed to be interviewed. Using semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher and participant to control the direction of the interview jointly. Using the interview guide approach (Patton, 2002), the researcher explored, probed, and inquired about in outline form drawing from the theories of queer, cultural, and transformative learning, which offered a framework with topics or subject areas.

RESULTS

Examining the individual items, Table 2 reveals varying levels of positive acceptance. Most of the items are interpreted as fairly acceptable or moderately acceptable positive attitudes both for teachers and administrators. These items are mostly related to romantic attractions and family relationships. It is also noteworthy that some items have high positive attitudes. For teachers, it is the item about comfortability on homosexual friends (Item 4), while for administrators, it is about comfortability on communicating and social functions (Items 2, 5, and 10).

Table 2. Positive Attitudes Towards Homosexuality

Items	Teachers n=334			Administrators n=37		
	Mean	SD	Int.	Mean	SD	Int.
1. I would feel comfortable working closely with a homosexual.	3.36	1.28	MP	3.40	1.22	MP
2. I would feel at ease talking to a homosexual person at a party.	3.11	1.09	MP	3.57	1.37	P
3. I would feel comfortable knowing that I am attractive to members of my sex.	1.95	0.86	FP	1.67	0.95	FP
4. I would feel comfortable if I learn that the best friend of my sex is homosexual.	3.56	1.08	P	3.41	1.11	MP
5. I would enjoy attending social functions at which homosexuals are present.	3.40	1.08	MP	3.57	0.72	P
6. I would feel comfortable if I learn that my son's/daughter's teacher is a homosexual.	2.05	1.08	FP	1.62	0.75	FP
7. If a member of my sex makes an advance attempt towards me, I would feel flattered.	1.95	0.86	FP	2.30	0.83	FP
8. I would feel comfortable if a member of my sex makes an advance attempt towards me.	1.38	0.79	NP	2.30	0.83	FP
9. I would feel comfortable if I find myself attracted to a member of my sex.	1.95	0.86	FP	2.29	0.83	FP
10. I would feel comfortable communicating closely with a homosexual.	1.95	1.09	FP	3.56	1.37	P
Total	2.69	1.28	MP	2.76	1.29	MA

Legend:

4.50-5.00 Highly Positive (HP)

3.50-4.49 Positive (P)

2.50-3.49 Moderately Positive (MP)

1.50-2.49 Fairly Positive (FP)

1.00-1.49 Not Positive (NP)

Inspecting the individual items in Table 3, it was revealed parallel results with positive attitudes. Both teachers and administrators rated 7 out of 10 items to have high negative attitudes. Both groups seem to have a high aversion to homosexuality when it touches topics of romantic love (Item 1), sexual relationship (Item 2), and children's sexuality (Item 7 and 8), a similar inference that can be drawn from the earlier results.

Table 3. Negative Attitudes Towards Homosexuality

Items	Teachers n=334			Administrators n=37		
	Mean	SD	Int.	Mean	SD	Int.
1. A spouse or partner attracted to any member of his or her sex would make me feel uncomfortable.	3.56	1.09	N	3.84	1.23	N
2. If a member of sex makes an advance attempt towards me, I would feel offended and angry.	3.75	1.13	N	3.76	0.91	N
3. I would feel uncomfortable if I learn that my boss is homosexual.	3.64	1.00	N	3.59	1.26	N
4. I would feel uncomfortable if I learn that my neighbor is a homosexual.	3.93	1.50	N	3.81	0.41	N
5. I would feel uncomfortable if I learn that my son's/daughter's teacher is a homosexual.	3.39	1.47	MN	3.47	1.52	MN
6. I would be upset if I learn that my brother or sister is homosexual.	3.03	0.96	MN	3.76	0.97	N
7. I would feel that I have failed as a parent if I learn that my child is a homosexual.	3.68	1.07	N	3.86	0.81	N
8. I would feel disappointed if I learn that my child is homosexual	3.97	1.09	N	3.87	1.21	N
9. I would feel nervous being in a group of homosexuals.	3.49	1.24	MN	3.16	1.02	MN
10. It would disturb me to find out that my doctor is homosexual.	3.77	1.45	N	3.21	1.34	MN
Total	3.56	1.26	N	3.63	1.94	N

Legend:

- 4.50-5.00 Highly Negative (HN)
- 3.50-4.49 Negative (N)
- 2.50-3.49 Moderately Negative (MN)
- 1.50-2.49 Fairly Negative (FN)
- 1.00-1.49 Not Negative (NN)

Interestingly, teachers and administrators are divided on the subjective norm. Table 4 shows that administrators rated higher, with 7 out of 10 items rated high subjective norm compared to 2 out of 10 items posted by the teachers. Also, it is noteworthy that both groups rated the item classifying homosexuals as psychologically ill the lowest, a positive takeaway on these swarm of negative results.

Table 4. Subjective Norm Towards Homosexuality

Items	Teachers n=334			Administrators n=37		
	Mean	SD	Int.	Mean	SD	Int.
1. Society should recognize homosexuality as normal.	2.93	1.22	MS	3.54	1.55	S
2. Organizations which promote homosexual rights are necessary.	2.53	1.28	MS	3.95	1.11	S
3. Homosexuals are psychologically normal people.	2.05	1.29	FS	2.11	1.00	FS
4. There is no conflict between homosexuality and family values.	3.05	1.29	MS	3.65	0.93	S
5. I feel that I can trust a person who is homosexual.	3.20	1.19	MS	3.57	0.97	S
6. Marriage between homosexual individuals must be acceptable.	3.32	1.12	MS	3.76	1.21	S
7. Homosexuality is immorality and sin.	3.79	0.97	S	4.08	0.81	S
8. Homosexuality contradicts the morals of the community.	3.67	1.39	S	3.81	1.00	S
9. I think homosexuals should not work with children.	2.40	1.21	FS	3.35	1.01	MS
10. Homosexual behavior should be against the law.	3.11	0.98	MS	3.43	1.12	MS
Total	3.09	1.30	MS	3.53	1.21	S

Legend:

4.50-5.00 High Subjective Norm (HS)

3.50-4.49 Acceptable Subjective Norm (S)

2.50-3.49 Moderate Subjective Norm (MS)

1.50-2.49 Fair Subjective Norm (FS)

1.00-1.49 Low Subjective Norm (LS)

Table 5 shows the multiple regression of the attitudes and subjective norm toward homosexuality. None of the predicted variables explain a significant amount of variance on positive attitude ($F(7,325) = 1.45, p > .05, R^2 = .03, R^2_{Adjusted} = .01$), negative attitudes ($F(7,325) = 1.05, p > .05, R^2 = .082, R^2_{Adjusted} = .00$) and subjective norm ($F(7,325) = 3.19, p < .05, R^2 = .06, R^2_{Adjusted} = .04$).

Table 5. Results of Multiple Regression of Attitudes and Subjective Norms Towards Homosexuality

Level of Restriction	t	p	β	F	df	p	Adj R ²
Positive Attitudes Towards Homosexuality							
Gender	0.29	0.77	0.22	1.46	7,325	0.18	0.03
Years in Teaching	-2.01	0.05	-0.04				
Age	0.19	0.84	0.006				
Education	-1.04	0.30	-0.05				
School Level	1.30	0.19	0.06				
Family Structure	-0.16	0.87	-0.01				
Religion	0.52	0.60	0.01				
Negative Attitudes Towards Homosexuality							
Gender	0.22	0.82	0.02	1.05	7,325	0.39	0.02
Years in Teaching	-0.80	0.42	-0.02				
Age	-0.33	0.72	-0.02				
Education	-1.03	0.29	-0.06				
School Level	1.87	0.06	0.11				
Family Structure	-0.15	0.88	-0.01				
Religion	0.67	0.51	-0.02				
Subjective Norm on Homosexuality							
Gender	0.84	0.39	0.07	3.18	7,325	0.002	0.06
Years in Teaching	1.49	0.13	0.03				
Age	0.20	0.83	0.008				
Education	0.41	0.67	0.02				
School Level	-3.57	0.00	-0.19				
Family Structure	0.72	0.47	0.06				
Religion	-0.81	0.37	-0.03				

DISCUSSIONS

The survey results show that teachers and administrators have issues with homosexuality acceptance. It reflects that acceptance of homosexuality is still dichotomized in two binaries of gender. This inference can be a further stretch from the transcripts of the interviews. When asked about how participants conceptualize gender and sexual diversity, some were reluctant to answer. Many teachers and administrators attributed their hesitation to a lack of confidence in their knowledge about the expansiveness and complexities that these identities have to offer. It serves as a problem

as teachers play an active role in cultivating a learning environment that allows for queer pedagogy and anti-oppressive education, requiring a need for reflexivity about their practices, opinions, and values, which may hold heteronormative bias. Culture theory argues that as a society we have to shift from gender binaries to normalizing the gaze to sexual diversity. The interviews revealed that teachers and administrators are aware of how sexual diversity defies the essentialist understanding of heterosexuality. The interview revealed that gender and sexual diversity fundamentally challenge the assumption of naturalness related to biological sex and gender. As queer theory proposed, those who do not abide by the assumptions of naturalness related to biological sex and gender, it can be "devastating" due to the displacing and subordination of those who do not conform (UNDP, 2014; Goodhand, 2014; Anderson, 2014; Loutsenheisen & MacIntosh, 2004). McCabe, Rubinson, Dragowski, and Elizalde-Utnick (2013) postulate that providing the opportunity for teachers and administrators to examine their thinking concerning diverse gender and sexual identities can help to question the multifaceted processes in which power and privilege circulate through knowledge. Among the sample, gender and sexuality were believed to be permanent rather than flexible, not recognizing the fluidity of these identities and how these identities defy the overarching homonormative framework.

Homophobic thinking is often a reflection of its community's belief system, as well as a reflection of the more extensive, more unconscious heteronormative belief system that shapes school, rather than the measured predictors. Focusing on teachers' and administrators' notion of homosexuality, and the impact of their understanding on their teaching practice makes it possible to interrupt the cycle of reproduction of cisnormative practices, and the need for new and critical pedagogies. Accurately, when teachers and administrators asked how they conceptualized gender and sexual diversity, the response they gave reflected an understanding of these identity categories being on a continuum rather than restricted to a binary (Kosciw & Diaz, 2008). Teachers and administrators acknowledged that we need labels for purposes of identification because of "heteronormative and cisnormative" notions, which guarantee compulsory heterosexuality (Chamberlain & Kothlow, 2012). Because specific identities do not follow these established set of rules dictated by heterosexuality, they are labeled abject beings, as the theory describes, which exist in locations that are "unlivable" and "uninhabitable" (Greytalk, Kosciw & Jerman, 2008). Manalastas et al. (2017) further convey that due to this abjection, a representation of these identities is constructed as illegitimate and unintelligible through dominant discourses. There is a need to further understand these dominant discourses to broaden understandings of identities and to remove binaries to allow for different ways of being that go beyond male and female. These results are congruent with the findings of Kwin, Xinyi, and Ting (2016), Walzer (2015), Bracamonte-Duon and Palma (2014), and Alicar-Cadorna and Mata (2014), Bernardo (2013), and Testor et al. (2010). All these researches argue that acceptance of homosexuality is highly associated with gender role belief or the purported qualities of masculinity and femininity. Bernardo (2013) pointed out that the gender role belief system is associated

with the endorsement of values that emphasize equal and fair treatment (egalitarianism) and openness to alternative cultural worldviews (i.e., polyculturalism).

Based on the results, the attitudes of teachers and administrators lean their responses to negative attitudes. As observed, questions about family relations, morality, and love seemed to have a strong aversion for both groups of respondents. Acceptability of homosexuality is a difficulty when it collides with the teachings of religion and what is perceived as a social norm for genders. Scholars pointed out this as an ambiguity-rejection towards homosexuality. It explains that this rejection is the desire to maintain a positive relationship with the normative belief systems that espouse some abstract communitarian social values. Manalastas et al. (2017), Kwin, Xinyi, and Ting (2016), Moral and Valle (2014), Dizon (2016), Aldave and Licudine (2014), and UNDP (2014) elucidated on their researchers this further by exploring the stereotyping. Acceptance is conditional as long as homosexuals remain confined to particular occupational niches and fulfill certain stereotypes.

There is a social will to accept homosexuality as a valid lifestyle choice but only based on the perception of conventional stereotypes of homosexuality. Moreover, when working to create safe spaces that may provide spaces for dialogue that questions myths and stereotypes surrounding LGBTQ people, it is essential for teachers and administrators not to fall victim to such stereotypical thinking (Kolbert et al., 2015). Most interview participants in this study referred to creating safe spaces in their schools as a measure of being inclusive of gender and sexual diversity; however, a few seem to have reinforced heteronormativity while simultaneously talking about defying it. Butler (2006) suggests that when teachers and administrators engage in gender-stereotyped education and leave the gender oppression matrix intact as internalized notions of gender roles go uninterrupted, they allow the essentialist understandings related to how to speak, behave, and think in a way that aligns with normative expectations. There is a need for schools to have a gender-complex education that reflects a more nuanced way of looking at gender in a way that refuses to stabilize gender identities and recognizes gender diversity. It includes a student who does not subscribe to hegemonic masculine norms and avoiding labels of stereotyping because of it. For teachers and administrators to support enacting a gender-complex education, interrogating their line of thinking about gender is a necessary step (Valocchi, 2005; Blasius, 2001).

Teachers and administrators who engage with such stereotypical thinking only serve to reinforce the gender order and circumscribe what it means to fall on the continuum beyond what is confined to masculine/feminine, homosexual/heterosexual. They need to engage with anti-oppressive education. Mezirow and Taylor (2009) require that teachers and administrators reflect on their own "assumptions, identities, theoretical groundings, as well as educational practices" (p. 25) and put whatever insights are gained to use. Paying attention to the prevailing, competing, and challenging norms that pervade our line of thinking is essential in moving forward with equitable educational opportunities (Schien, 2004). It requires challenging taken-for-granted notions of

sexuality and gender (Stevens-Long, Schapiro, & McClintock, 2012), which can give rise to systems of privilege, binaries, hierarchies, and practices of marginalization (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006). Commonsense knowledge regarding sexualities and genders tends to be naturalized, and if left unruffled, untouched, and untroubled produces damaging schooling experiences for those who do not conform (Kim, Sheridan, & Holcomb, 2009; UNESCO, 2016). It reminds us that our experiences and understandings are contextual and partial and that by acknowledging our lenses and interpretive labors, we can begin to challenge: oppression, desire for normalcy, contradictions, as well as work through resistances. Testor et al. (2010), Levy and Johnson (2011), and Ward and Schneider (2009) suggest that for these prejudices to be corrected, it would be advisable to expand specific teacher training in the subject of sexual diversity to reduce prejudicial attitudes, thus fostering non-stereotyped knowledge of homosexuality.

Predictability of acceptance and attitudes towards LGBT is difficult since everyone may have different sets of personal experiences. These findings are parallel with the results of the national studies of UNDP (2014), Aldave and Licudine (2014), Bernal (2015), and Human Rights Watch Philippines (2017), which highlighted that although LGBTQ is considered as a valid choice, there is a need for schools to "clarify" this choice. This situation means instilling genderism. As pointed out by Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001), Schien (2004) and Arias (2009) on culture theory and Valocchi (2005) and Jagose (1996) on queer theory, for those gender-nonconforming youth or those questioning their gender and sexual orientation, a homophobic culture can be detrimental. To disrupt this belief system, schools are instrumental. Cited works of Gentile (2017), Dizon (2016), Goodhand (2014), Anderson (2014), Bernardo (2013), and Marco and Pascua (2012) corroborated that schools can be an avenue for accepting gender and diversities in communities as these studies reporting more accepting groups of respondents, particularly the teachers. Arias (2009) posits that schools have the power to influence people to combat sexism, heterosexism, genderism, ableism, classism, religious oppression, and many other forms of oppression. Schools that embrace a queer curriculum can establish an inclusive culture where young people are validated as they explore their own gender identities (Meyer, 2010; Mc Cabe, Rubinson, Dragowski, & Elizader-Utnick (2013). Schools are major organizational structures responsible for fostering a culture that confronts and eliminates the discriminatory behavior of individuals within and outside the school (Greytak, Kosciw, & Jerman, 2007).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers and administrators should be more informed on what different gender and sexual stereotypes they commit to building a safe space for people with non-binary gender preferences. These can be done through re-educating themselves and get acquainted with the experiences of LGBTQ people in general through different learning platforms and training. Acceptance is conditional as homosexuals remain confined to particular occupational niches and fulfill certain stereotypes. There is a social will to accept homosexuality as a valid lifestyle choice but only based on the perception of

conventional stereotypes of homosexuality. Also, schools should create a safe space for LGBTQ students and teachers, where they can share their experiences and process these experiences for these students and teachers to adapt to societal norms and changes better. Further research is still needed to address how intersectional issues are implicated in and complicate issues related to addressing gender and sexuality diversity in schools. It is crucial to examine schools from rural and suburban settings, as well as teachers with different identity categories, to generate further knowledge about this topic that takes into consideration a more intersectional analysis. Expanding the participant pool could give increasing depth to the research and allow opportunities for the intersection of other markers of difference in conjunction with gender and sexual identity. The absence of diverse teacher voices limits the scope of the research study and does not accentuate the struggles of these historically marginalized groups of people.

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