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‘I need to confess something’: Coming out on national television

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Abstract

This article takes a (discourse) critical look at the television show ‘Uit de Kast’ (‘Out of the closet’) that has been broadcast on Dutch public television for the past three years. In this program, young male and female lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) participants, who have not come out yet for various reasons, reveal their homosexuality to their family, peers, and colleagues while being documented on camera. We problematize the compatibility of the genre ‘reality television’, which by definition focuses on personal emotions and conflict, with subjects that have emancipatory goals, such as the creation of more awareness for and acceptance of homosexuality. The data reveal that in the show LGB emancipation is framed as a personal problem and not as a socio-political issue with moral and ideological dimensions. In the end, we argue, the effect could very well be that the show does not promote but rather – ironically – hinders LGB emancipation.

Keywords

Coming out, critical discourse analysis, difference discourse, discursivity, ethnography of communication, face, gender, heteronormativity, homosexuality, media, privacy discourse, reality TV, social practices, stigma

Introduction

This article takes a (discourse) critical look at the reality TV show ‘Uit de Kast’¹ that has been broadcast on Dutch public television for the past three years. In this program, young

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male and female lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) participants, who have not come out yet for various reasons, reveal their homosexuality to their family, peers, and colleagues while being documented on camera. The show testifies to the fact that homosexuality is still problematized, even in a liberal country such as The Netherlands that is widely seen as embracing LGB rights and lifestyles (cf. Chirrey, 2011).

On the website accompanying the show, it is explicitly stated that the program aims to educate the audience on gender equality and the emancipation of homosexuals, especially in social circles where homosexuality is seen as problematic. In this study, we will compare the avowed aims of the producers of the show and the actual discourses as they feature in the program as it is aired. The question we will try to answer in this article is whether the reality TV show indeed benefits the cause the producers' claim to champion and whether it empowers the participants who tell their stories. We will first investigate the genres and speech events involved; identify the theoretical concepts needed to analyze the interactions among the host of the show, the participants, and their environments; and subsequently analyze one episode in detail.

Both the TV show and the ritual of 'coming out' will be analyzed as speech events: socially recognizable occasions in which participants interact via language in some conventional way to arrive at a particular outcome (cf. Hymes, 1964). In the program under investigation, the speech event 'coming out' is embedded in the speech event 'reality TV show' ('recursive embedding'; Polanyi and Scha, 1983). This entails that the embedded speech event inherits the constraints and affordances of the one in which it is embedded. We will argue that this results in paradoxes and dilemmas that prevent the makers from achieving their emancipatory aims.

The theoretical orientation of our investigation is interdisciplinary. Starting from Fairclough's (1989) position that social practices, as well as their subsequent effects, are discursively shaped, we draw on insights from conversation analysis, discourse analysis, pragmatics, and the ethnography of communication for the investigation of our data (Austin, 1962; Brown and Levinson, [1978] 1987; Hymes, 1964, 1972; Sacks et al., 1974). Goffman's seminal insights in self-presentation in face-to-face interactions (1956) and 'spoiled' identities (1963) inform our analyses of participant roles and identities.

Social practices: Speech events

Speech event 1: The television show

The turn of the century saw the introduction of a new type of television program: the factual entertainment show that features ordinary people engaged in unscripted actions (Nabi, 2007). The genre was labeled 'reality TV' and has proved to be quite dynamic. Since its appearance, it has branched out into a number of sub-genres, which range from classic reality shows depicting people's daily lives (e.g. *The Osbournes*) to reality game shows (e.g. *Big Brother*), makeover programs (e.g. *What Not to Wear*), and casting shows (e.g. *The X-factor*). 'Uit de Kast' belongs to the more recently developed sub-genre of the 'coaching' show (Beck et al., 2012), in which an 'expert' (often a celebrity) helps a guest/participant overcome a personal problem or take a life-transforming decision. Other examples of this category include *Supernanny* and *Obese*.

The label 'reality TV' is a contradiction in terms (cf. Hill, 2005). Reality TV shows are not live registrations of actual events as they take place in the world, but carefully edited selections of social situations and as such they represent a distorted view of 'reality'. As the situations presented are mostly staged, the participants know they are being filmed, and the footage is carefully edited into a compelling narrative, the actions and interactions of those involved cannot be claimed to be 'authentic'. First and foremost, the programs aim to entertain their audience (Beck et al., 2012; Dover and Hill, 2007; Kilborn, 2003; Nabi, 2007) and both creators and editors are primarily led by this goal in the production, filming, and editing processes. In order to keep viewers from reaching for their remote control and switching over to another channel, their interest needs to be raised through controversies, 'dramatization, stereotyping, focus on emotions, and intimate details' (Beck et al., 2012: 6). And since the laws of television in the 21st century dictate that the number of viewers a program attracts is the main yardstick for its success, audience interest needs to be secured not only for the length of the individual episode but also across episodes. In more practical terms, the success of reality TV shows crucially depends on their narrative force: the beginning of each episode needs to set up expectations of conflict and drama, but the end needs to be happy – that is, problem solved – to make sure viewers return to see the next one.

'Uit de Kast': Background and objectives. 'Uit de Kast' is broadcast on Dutch television by the *Katholieke Radio Omroep* or *KRO* (Catholic Radio Broadcasting Organization). The KRO was established in 1925. Its Catholic identity has become less prominent since the 1950s but has not disappeared altogether. Ethical and religious topics still feature regularly in the programs that are produced. The host of 'Uit de Kast', Arie Boomsma, is a well-known presenter of reality TV shows on taboo-breaking topics, such as homosexuality and transgenderism. He has also written (non-)fiction books about poetry and religion. He presents himself as a religious, heterosexual person, but he has also been the object of some controversy: in 2009, he was suspended by the broadcast organization he worked for, due to appearing scantily dressed in a photo series for the first issue of the glossy magazine 'L'HOMO'.

'Uit de Kast' features homosexual boys and girls who have trouble coming out in social circles with a reputation of hostility toward homosexuality, such as youth clubs with a religious signature, sports clubs, and school. During the show, the participants come out to their peers in these surroundings and to family members.

The website of the show recruits potential future participants with the following statement:

More acceptance for homosexuality

We aim to inform [the audience] about the personal perspective of gay youngsters and about the hurdles they face. We also hope to contribute to the acceptance of homosexuality (especially in social circles where it is still difficult to discuss).

This text shows that the makers explicitly claim that the show has pedagogical as well as emancipatory objectives and is made with clear ideological objectives in mind. The choice for a reality show format is remarkable in this respect, although it is in line with recent developments in media culture: there is a general shift from documentaries and docudramas, which were often political in focus, to 'narrative-fueled entertainment'

(Biressi and Nunn, 2005: 84), where subjective experience has primacy and the boundaries between public and private have become blurred.

'Uit de Kast': Format and script. All episodes of 'Uit de Kast' follow the same script:

Trailer: a compilation of short clips which sets the scene for what is to follow by showing the most important and dramatic parts of the events to come.

Introduction of the participant-guest: the participant's identity, the people that he² will come out to, and the particulars of the situation are discussed in more detail, either by the guest himself or the host in a voice-over.

First meeting of the host and the participant in a place where they can talk in secret about the events to come. The participant is invited to relate his personal journey: how he found out he is homosexual, why he wants to come out and to whom, and what the obstacles are.

Introduction of coming-out 1 in voice-over comments and/or interviews with some of the people involved. This segment introduces a complication: since the crew does not want to *out* the guest before his coming out, they pretend that they are shooting a different kind of show and that they do not know the participant at all or follow him for different reasons.

Pre-coming-out talk: a short conversation between the participant and the host – and occasionally sympathetic third parties – right before the coming out.

Coming-out 1, usually to peers in a particular social context (e.g. sports club, youth club).

Evaluation of coming-out 1 by the host and the participant or by the participant alone with a webcam.

Introduction of coming-out 2 in voice-over comments and/or interviews with some of the people involved.

Pre-coming-out talk: a short conversation between the participant and the host – and occasionally sympathetic third parties – right before the coming out.

Coming-out 2, usually to the parents.

Evaluation of coming-out 2, together with the parents and/or others, and/or just between the presenter and the participant; or the participant alone with the webcam.

Retrospect: host and participant look back, often during a visit a few weeks later.

'Uit de Kast': The roles of the host. In *The presentation of self in everyday life*, Erving Goffman (1956) proposes that social interaction, just as theatrical performance, consists of a front and a back region. Performers appear in both; the audience only in the front region. The actor's front is the part of the individual's performance that functions to define the situation for the audience. During the performance, the audience only sees what it is allowed to see and this creates the impression that there is congruence between function, information, and place. The performers, however, are also aware of what is going on backstage and may therefore fulfill discrepant roles. If we apply Goffman's metaphors to 'Uit de Kast', the host of the show can be said to play several roles simultaneously. First, he fulfills the role of *service specialist*, a person 'who specialize[s] in the construction, repair and maintenance of the show their clients maintain before other people' (Goffman,

1956: 96). To be able to play this role, the host needs detailed information about the backstage of the participant's performance, and this knowledge makes him almost a member of the participant's team without sharing the same risks and without disclosing any information about himself. Service specialists are in a position 'to exploit their knowledge in order to gain concessions from the performer whose secrets they possess' (Goffman, 1956: 100). In the TV show, the participant 'gives' his secret to the presenter to be disclosed on television, and this allows the presenter to demand concessions. He might tempt the participant to reveal more than he originally had intended. The presenter can, therefore, be seen as a sort of 'service specialist of questionable repute' (Goffman, 1956: 99), someone participants do not want to be seen with at first, for this would 'out' them before the actual coming out. But the host also presents himself as a 'wise' person: 'before whom the individual with a fault need feel no shame nor exert self-control, knowing that in spite of his failing he will be seen as an ordinary other' (Goffman, 1956: 101). He is a *confidant* to whom the participant 'confesses his sins, freely, detailing the sense in which the impression given during a performance was merely an impression' (Goffman, 1956: 101). Finally, the host also fulfills the role of *go-between* or *mediator* who makes 'an effort to translate the differences between speaker and listeners into a view that is more acceptable collectively than the original projection' (Goffman, 1956: 94).

We may conclude that the part of the host is highly complex. His job is to support and help the participants on the way to their coming out, but at the same time, he has to deliver the raw material the editors need to produce a television program that satisfies the needs and expectations of the audience. In the analysis of the data, we will see how the juggling of these – sometimes contradictory – roles and responsibilities affects the aims the show is attempting to achieve.

Speech event 2: Coming out

The fact that coming out is the crucial rite of passage in LGBs' lives shows that heterosexuality is still the default sexual orientation in our society. If an individual wants to express and/or emphasize a deviating sexuality, this has to be performed and repeatedly and interactionally achieved (Coates, 2013). And although the act could be constructed as 'a rational, routine response to acknowledging that one is LBG' (Chirrey, 2011: 284), people may have reason to hide their true sexual orientation. They may, for example, believe that homosexuality is a discreditable identity, a *stigma* (Goffman, 1963). For the stigmatized, there is a difference between virtual identity – expected and projected by others – and actual social identity. This difference can be so substantial that it overshadows all other characteristics of the individual: the stigma becomes the centralized part of the social identity of the person. Homosexuality is a stigma that can be hidden. Homosexuals may choose to *pass* as heterosexual, but in doing so, they always have to be careful not to disclose behavior that 'outs' them. As Goffman argues, 'the person with the secret failing, then, must be alive to the social situation as a scanner of possibilities, and is therefore likely to be alienated from the simpler world in which those around him apparently dwell' (1963: 110). He may also find himself in situations where homosexuality is made fun of in which he is not able to stand up for himself, which may lead to feelings of disloyalty and self-contempt. It is therefore almost inevitable that there comes a point

that pretending is no longer an option. That moment has come when the closet LGB feels that close relations, 'ratified in our society by mutual confession of invisible failings, cause him either to admit his situation to the intimate or feel guilty for not doing so' (Goffman, 1963: 94).

There is no central definition of coming out. According to Liang, the question 'How out are you?' implies that coming out is 'a matter of degree rather than a binary position' (1997: 291). The first step in the gradual process of self-acceptance is recognition by the LGB of a gay self. The actual coming out to others, which is the focus of this study, may take different forms. It may be done nonverbally, through a shift in behavior or presentation. It may be scripted as a non-event (Chirrey, 2012), as a 'conversational aside, as a list item, or as a passing instance or illustration of some other point altogether' (Kitzinger, 2000: 187). Or it may be framed as a news announcement, as a speech event consisting of three units:

- *A pre-announcement* (Levinson, 1983);
- *A performative* (Austin, 1962; cf. Chirrey, 2003);
- *A hearer response*.

The pre-announcement creates relevance (Sperber and Wilson, 1986) for the speech act to come (e.g. 'I want/need to tell you something') and secures the hearer's cooperation. The locution of coming out, the performative, can be a declaration of identity such as 'I am homosexual/gay', or a more ambiguous declaration of desire 'I'm attracted to guys/girls' (cf. Herman, 2005). Connotations and collocations, and indirectness strategies may be used to mitigate the performative and to try to evoke a more preferable response. The performative itself creates a turn transition relevance point (Sacks et al., 1974): once it is completed, a hearer response is structurally required. Hearers may react in different ways ('perlocutionary force'; Austin, 1962): they may take the coming out as a 'disclosure' and frame the action 'in terms of a neutral act or revelation of information that is viewed in a non-judgmental way' (Chirrey, 2003: 32): 'Okay'/'Thanks for letting me know'/'I thought so'/'and so on. But they may also respond to the coming out as if it were a 'confession' or 'admission', notions that 'resonate[s] with a sense of acknowledging criminality, sinfulness and blame, while phrases such as "his secret" and "in hiding" suggest that being gay is characterized by clandestine activity, presumably due to its supposedly shameful nature' (Chirrey, 2003: 32). Those hearers are more likely to respond with homophobia.

According to Gough (2002), homophobic comments are used to regulate 'hegemonic masculinities', dominant forms of masculinity which derive from and serve to reinforce divisions between men and between men and women to the benefit of privileged groups. Gough (2002) lists the following most common homophobic discourses:

- 'Tolerance': The speaker professes a liberal attitude to homosexuality while also producing statements that could be regarded as homophobic (as in 'I've always tolerated it but ...'). In the 'tolerance' discourse, much effort is devoted to mitigating homophobic comments by adding a disclaimer which needs to emphasize that the speaker is concerned that he might be perceived as homophobic.

- ‘Privacy’: The speaker expresses disapproval of public displays of (homo)sexuality. Public display of homosexuality is often condemned because it is feared that homosexuals might corrupt heterosexuals, especially children, or emasculate other men by the threat of sexual harassment.
- ‘Difference’: The speaker draws clear distinctions between lesbian and gay persons and sexual acts, gay men and lesbian women, homosociality and homosexuality.
- ‘Individualism’: The speaker construes sexuality as a personal choice, unconnected to ideology and power relations.

This shows that ‘coming out’ is deemed a speech event that is potentially fraught with risks. It may severely threaten the face of both speaker and hearer. So what could induce LGBs to decide to perform the act on prime-time television? All but one of the participants in our corpus indicate during the show that their main reason for participating is that it makes it impossible for them to back out of it: once the camera crew has arrived, they are put on the spot and are committed to do the deed. One participant adds that he wants to take part ‘to show ... to the rest that [being gay] sucks – pardon the expression’. The internalized homophobia that sounds through in this comment is not unique to this participant, as we will see in the discussion of the data.

The data

Data collection and selection

For this study, we investigated a corpus of six episodes of the show, all from the second series. Two episodes have been left out. The episode that took place on the Caribbean island of Bonaire (a municipality of the Netherlands) has been omitted to avoid cross-cultural issues (cf. Liang, 1997). The only episode in the series that featured a female participant has also been excluded from analysis to avoid speculations on the origin of projected differences and similarities between her narrative (cf. Cameron and Kulick, 2003; Coates, 2013) and those of the male participants.

The episodes in our corpus are as follows:

1. Male (20): strict Calvinist background; comes out to his Christian student society and to his grandparents;
2. Male (21): strict Calvinist background; comes out to his siblings and parents;
3. Male (20): comes out to his parents and a group of close friends;
4. Male (15): already out to his parents; has boyfriend; comes out to his sports team and to his high-school peers;
5. Male (19): comes out to the orchestra he plays in; comes out to his mother and father, who are divorced;
6. Male (19): comes out to his sister, parents, and two groups of friends from his soccer club.

In this article, we will present data from episode 1. We decided early on to focus on one of the episodes with explicit religious overtones since the show is broadcast by a

company with a religious signature, and we envisaged that this could introduce specific complications. This limited our options to episodes 1 and 2. We decided on episode 1 because the participant comes out to peers as well as family, which provided us with a rich data set that we expected would clearly illustrate the paradoxes and dilemmas discussed earlier. Occasionally, data from the other episodes will be used to corroborate our findings.

In the episode selected, we see Jan (pseudonym), a 20-year-old student. He is out to his parents and his brother, but not to his grandparents, who are very important to him since his parents have lived abroad as missionaries for long periods of time. Jan also wants to come out to the religious student society he belongs to. We first see him come out during a meeting of the student society. Jan's brother will support him during the final coming out to his grandparents. Initially, the grandparents invite the camera crew in, but they withdraw their permission later. This coming out is, therefore, not actually shown: we only see what is said in writing on the screen. After a few weeks, the host meets up with Jan to look back.

Analysis of the data

We will analyze data from all segments of the episode in chronological order to see how the narrative that is told in and by the show unfolds.

Trailer. The program starts with a trailer: a short compilation of clips of what will follow:

Data 1³

Host	who are all those people you're going to tell?
Jan	I'm going to tell the entire Christian student association
...	
Host	but where then is the fear?
Jan	the worst thing that can happen is that they don't want to see me anymore
...	
Jan	((addressing his peers)) I need to tell you something – and it's quite important to me
...	
Boy	((to host)) I don't believe God has meant this in creation – that man lies with man – or woman with woman
...	
Host	it's okay to have these feelings – but no relationship or things like that?
Brother	yes – and at the same time I know that that's really hypocritical
...	
Host	your grandparents – what do they think?
Brother	ehh – I don't know
...	
Jan	((to webcam)) tomorrow is the day – eh – then – eh – grandma and grandpa are going to find out – I'm trying to keep busy at the moment from fear – to distract myself – why – because I'm still nervous about how they will react
...	
Jan	((addressing his peers)) what I discovered about myself six months ago - - I fancy boys.

Traditionally, a trailer is a commercial for a feature film. It serves to raise the interest of the audience and to entice them to watch the film. It consists of a selection of clips editors have selected for this particular purpose. The trailer at the beginning of this episode of the show (data 1) shows a selection of cliffhangers: the clips leave the viewers with the promise of drama (cf. Beck et al., 2012) and make them curious to know how this will be resolved. We will analyze the individual segments in their contexts in the appropriate sections.

Introduction. Immediately after the trailer, the host introduces Jan as being ‘*a student, a Christian, AND gay*’. We then see Jan talking to a webcam. He more or less repeats the presenter’s words:

Data 2

13 Jan ((webcam)) hi - my name is Jan - I am a Christian - I’m twenty years old
14 – AND I am attracted to boys

With their emphasis on the word ‘and’, both host and guest implicitly introduce the conflict that will be the central theme of the episode: the incompatibility of two parts of Jan’s identity, of being a homosexual and a religious person.

Jan uses the phrase ‘*I am attracted to boys*’ for his coming out to the audience, as did the other participants in all but one (episode 4) of the coming outs featured in the shows in our corpus (see the ‘Speech event 2: coming out’ sub-section earlier).

First meeting of host and participant. When the host and Jan meet face-to-face for the first time, Jan shows him the student lodgings where he lives. Next, the topic of coming out is introduced:

Data 3

65 Jan this is a photograph of me with my family – I didn’t even know myself that I eh
66 am attracted to boys - - this photo was taken last summer when
67 we were on holiday – they all knew by then – they do accept –
68 the situation but they are not altogether happy about it
...
71 Host ((voice-over)) his faith is important to Jan - as a child of
72 missionaries he’s travelled the whole world with his family and
73 he was raised in a religious environment – no problem
74 you’d say - but one and a half years ago Jan found out
75 that he’s attracted - to boys
76 Host ((to Jan)) what happened then?
77 Jan and then I got depressed
78 Host wow – and he said this with a smile
79 Jan yes – I smile because I have overcome it - eh – so yes – I can
80 say it because I survived that depressing time but that’s
81 of course – well not happy about but yes - I was so shocked
82 that I thought yes but it is not possible - it is not permissible –
83 it is not as it should be - that – yes- the stories I had heard
84 I thought - yes it is bad- it isn’t proper - before I

- 85 also [was against it
 86 Host [bu:t looking back there must have been
 87 a moment that you thought - ye::s
 88 I am attracted to boys
 89 Jan I'd had amorous feelings for boys but I
 90 never admitted it.

In these data, the host focuses on intimate details (cf. Beck et al., 2012) in order to draw Jan out on the subject of his private acknowledgment of his sexual orientation. Jan responds to this prompt to share his coming-out-to-self story (Liang, 1997) with an evaluation-type move (Labov and Waletzky, 1967): he got depressed. When the presenter shows surprise at this, he continues with an account for this event: he had discovered something about himself that he considered 'bad', but he has 'survived'. When referring to his homosexuality, Jan's use of the impersonal pronoun 'it' (lines 82–84) emphasizes the distance with which he refers to his emotions (cf. Liang, 1997). His extensive use of repetition in his qualification of homosexuality as negative in the same lines (*not possible, not permissible, not as it should be, bad, isn't proper*) bears witness to his internalized homophobia. And his observation that 'before' he was also against 'it' is a clear indication of the cognitive dissonance he experienced that led to his depression. The presenter does not respond in any way to Jan's narrative: he abruptly changes the subject and steers the conversation to the first time Jan felt attracted to a same-sex person. Jan's internalized homophobia is not topicalized, let alone challenged by the presenter and it does not become clear whether Jan has distanced himself from these thoughts and feelings.

Internalized homophobia is a common feature in all but one episode of our corpus. With the exception of participant 4, all boys profess a sense of self-loathing during their first meeting with the host:

- (2) when I look in the mirror – I think – look at yourself – damn it – you filthy faggot.
 (3) I'm afraid I will become a drama queen – or get beaten up after a night out – scared that I'll die of aids – eh – in other words – that I'll never be happy again.
 (6) I am not happy to be this way - I'd rather not be gay.
 (5) I think homosexual is a word of abuse.

None of these expressions of internalized homophobia is challenged by the host of the show.

Pre-coming-out-talk. In the next segment, Jan announces that he wants to come out to his grandparents and the Christian student society he belongs to. Before his first coming out – to the society – the presenter and Jan talk outside the building where the members meet:

- Data 4
 131 Host are you nervous?
 132 Jan yes - - terribly.
 133 Host yes?
 134 Jan yes - afraid - curious also - about some reactions - and of others

- 135 I am a bit afraid of too - yes.
 136 Host but - what is that fear then?
 137 Jan - - eh:: pff – yes - that fear is partially because I am af-
 138 afraid there will be very negative reactions
 139 Host and what could they be?
 140 Jan - - eh: pff – em - the worst that could happen is that they do no longer
 141 want to interact with me -interact with me - but also very negative
 142 comments generally
 143 Host like?
 144 Jan - hh eh - that it is: wrong, that it actually isn't allo:wed -- but
 145 [that (.) that they
 146 Host [are you afraid they will kick you out of the group?
 147 Jan - - that won't happen I think because I know there are enough
 148 people in the group that really totally support me.
 149 Host but it is not nice when you are in a group where
 150 some people are in conflict with you
 151 [and say what you are doing is not right
 152 Jan [no – right --
 153 right that is true-
 154 Host and then what?
 155 Jan and y-yes - and then I wouldn't know what would happen

The host starts the conversation by topicalizing Jan's emotions (cf. Beck et al., 2012): he asks him whether he is feeling nervous – the question itself implying that he has reason to do so. When Jan answers in the affirmative, he encourages him to elaborate on the reasons. Jan explains that he is afraid, which prompts the presenter to invite him, through a sequence of questions (lines 136, 139, 143,) to explore his anxieties. His strategy resembles therapy talk: 'an invitation to express one's feelings and self-interpretations ... [that] encourage[s] the patient to "treat" himself or herself' (Ten Have, 1989: 125). When Jan explains that he is afraid that *some* of the people in the society will no longer want to interact with him when he tells them that he is gay, the host responds by hypothesizing the worst-case scenario: the possibility that he will be cast out completely (cf. 'coming out is risky'; Chirrey, 2012). Jan refutes this suggestion. In lines 147–148, after a short pause, the audience learns that he has already come out to some of his close friends in the society and that they are supportive. His fear only pertains to *some* who may act differently. This seems to cut off this line of speculation, but the presenter continues to focus on the members who might object to Jan's homosexuality and introduces the possibility of a personal *conflict*. Jan's response that this would make him unhappy leads the presenter to invite him once again to speculate about the consequences of this hypothetical development. Jan says he does not know. This response acts as a cliffhanger: the segment ends and all the audience can do is wait and see what will happen (line 155) – the probability of drama planted firmly in their minds.

Introduction of coming-out 1. Data 4 is immediately followed by an interview with some members of the Christian student society Jan will come out to. Jan himself is not present at this occasion and the host informs the viewers that the interviewees have been told by the producers that they are interested in their ideas on homosexuality in general:

Data 5

- 157 Host ((addressing the audience)) Jan has told the members of the society
 158 that there will be a film crew present tonight to make a program
 159 about religious young people – and we would obviously also
 160 ask them about their thoughts on homosexuality
 161 A I don't say homosexual feelings are wrong - hh -
 162 but I don't believe that God that originally meant that - has put
 163 in creation that man - - lies with man or woman with
 164 woman -
 165 B I am also religious and I am radical in this respect and maybe
 166 and that - but I don't know - I do have problems with it because
 167 of the Bible -
 168 C gays that have a real relationship that - I just find that quite
 169 difficult. - hh because I - eh: have - always been taught at home
 170 that it isn't as it should be - isn't right -

At this moment in the show, right before Jan's first coming out, the audience is presented with quotes from three fellow members who all express a negative attitude toward homosexuality. All three refer to their faith and religious upbringing as the defining factor for their position. A does not believe homosexual *feelings* are wrong, *but* he does think homosexual *relations* are wrong (cf. 'difference discourse'; Gough, 2002). To account for this stance, he invokes God as the higher moral authority: he has not meant homosexual relations to be a part of creation. B joins A in this line of thought (lines 165–167) and appeals to the Bible to support his view. C refers to her upbringing to justify her position: she grew up learning that is 'not right' (lines 168–170). Their words echo Jan's own in data 3: homosexual relations are not acceptable, not permissible, not right.⁴

In data 4, we have seen that Jan has come out to some of his peers at the society before and that they support him. Note that the producers of the TV show do not show any of *these* members at this point of the program: they have chosen to focus on those who express homophobic views, increasing the suspense.

Next, we see the host and Jan walk down the dark and rainy street toward the building where the society meets:

Data 6

- 172 Host it is to the left – down here -
 173 Jan yes -
 174 Host you go in -
 175 Jan yes -
 176 Host I stay here and hang around
 177 Jan n-yes - eh -
 178 Host eh: and then what?
 179 Jan - hh eh:m then later there's a round of announcements
 180 and the idea is that I then as the final announcement – I
 181 come up s- p- on stage and then – tell my story
 182 Host hm

183 Jan ff::
 184 Host yea::h
 185 Jan yea::h
 186 Host you go for it
 187 Jan yeah- thanks ((walks to the entrance of the building))

At the supreme moment Jan is on his own. The host keeps his distance – literally. He offers no more support than a verbal encouragement to ‘go for it’.

Coming-out 1. The previous segments have left the viewers expecting the worst for the actual coming out. They are now transported to the society meeting and hear the chairman announce that Jan will round off the evening by explaining the presence of the television crew. Jan is handed a microphone and addresses the crowd:

Data 7
 199 Jan I have to tell you something- an:d it is quite important to me
 200 ehm: - one and a half years a:go I had - - an - - identity crisis as
 201 it were - I discovered something about myself that really
 202 put my world upside down - hh meanwhi:le I have learned to deal
 203 with tha:t -hh eh:m I have learned to accept it for myself-
 204 but it IS a part of me an:d to really -
 205 be able to be myself within this society - hh m- must I do think
 206 that - eh - you actually deserve to know what it is -
 207 I would appreciate to really fully be able to be-
 208 myself at this society-
 209 hh WHAT I discove:red about myself one and a half years ago - - was
 210 that I was attracted to boys.
 ((8-second silence; cut to audience and back to Jan))
 211 hm hm – this is quite hard for me to say – cause I had great trouble
 212 accepting it in the beginning – I was depressed because of
 213 – huh – and that makes it extremely hard – I do hope you can accept it
 214 – I say it for a good reason – and it has had a lot of consequences
 215 for my life – I would really appreciate it
 216 if you show some understanding –
 217 and if eh there are questions – I am open to them –
 218 it is not the easiest thing –
 219 eh that’s what I wanted to tell you=
 220 = I would appreciate it if you aren’t going to put it on facebook
 221 – or twitter – or whatever - - there some people
 222 I haven’t told yet [and eh
 223 ((audience laughter))
 224 there are a few people
 225 I’d like to tell personally
 226 ((3-second pause; Jan hands microphone to peer))
 227 ((applause; Jan returns to his seat; the meeting continues))

We saw in the ‘Speech event 2: coming out’ section that the canonical speech event ‘coming out’ structurally consists of a pre-announcement, a performative, and a hearer response. In these data, Jan indeed opens with a pre-sequence (‘*I have to tell you something*’), which he subsequently qualifies as ‘*quite important*’, framing what is to come as a ‘tellable’ (Norrick, 2005). He has now effectively created relevance (Sperber and Wilson, 1986) for the performative that is sequentially due. What follows, however, is not a performative but a coming-out story,⁵ which is ‘in a sense, one step removed from the action of coming out’ (Chirrey, 2012: 36). In terms of Labov and Waletzky’s (1967) framework for conversational storytelling, Jan starts his narrative with an extended *Orientation* before he reports the *Complication* (‘*WHAT I discovered about myself one and a half years ago (.) was that I was attracted to boys*’). At this point, he pauses. What follows is an eight-second silence. It is difficult to say who ‘owns’ (cf. McHoul, 1979) this silence: the speaker (who seems to expect an audience response to his revelation) or the audience (whose non-response indicates that it experiences Jan’s story as incomplete). Finally, Jan resumes his narrative with a lengthy *Evaluation* sequence. The prolonged silence of the hearers seems to have caused a shift of power, however, for the sequence comprises extensive (corrective) facework. Did he focus before the event on his desire to be fully himself within the company of his fellow members after the silence he literally pleads for understanding and acceptance.

Jan rounds off with a *Coda* (‘*that’s what I wanted to tell you*’) in line 219, but he immediately adds an afterthought, a request to keep his words a secret for now, which is met with laughter from the audience.⁶ This is followed by a nonverbal turn completion signal (Sacks et al., 1974): Jan hands the microphone back to the person standing behind him. The audience acts on this cue and bursts into applause – the ritual response to a stage performance (cf. ‘podium occasion’; Goffman, 1981).

Evaluation of coming-out 1. Immediately after his coming out, Jan returns to his seat and is welcomed by a sympathetic peer. After a few moments, he goes outside to meet the presenter and informs him that he is happy with the response he has received. They both go back inside and join the informal part of the get-together. We hear the host:

Data 8

262	Host	((voice-over)) during drinks Jan receives a lot of positive feedback
263		((Jan is embraced by B))
264	E	it is absolutely not an issue for me - I think that ye:s he eh:
265		deserves to be happy I mea:n eh:: just
266		like s- I would be happy with eh:: my true love - a man
268		yes he should be able to be that too -

The voice-over informs the audience that Jan’s news has been well received. By way of illustration, the viewers see B – one of the people who expressed homophobic views in data 5 – hug Jan. And E testifies that she wants the same for Jan as she wants for herself: a happy relation with a significant other. At this moment, however, when all seems well, there is sudden change of perspective:

Data 9

- 269 Host ((voice-over)) but a lot of members still have reservations
 270 A if you have homosexual feelings – that does not make me disapprove of you -
 271 bu:t I would have my my doubts - if you
 272 were to actively engage in a relationship [and (.) and besides that - - are active in a
 273 Jan [OK - yes
 274 A local congregation - hh e::h -hh with certain: certain tasks-
 275 I say like OK (.) that I do just have my -
 276 opinion [that I say OK - - I would (0:02) – well - that I [would=
 277 Jan [OK [yes
 278 A = not support that as it were
 279 Jan so simply put you would not support me if I had a boyfriend
 280 and would be a youth worker?
 281 A - - exactly -
 282 Jan OK – yes -
 283 A yes
 284 Host what do you think about that?
 285 Jan hh I understand your m- point of view - there is an:d f- I appreciate it
 286 actually that he: - in spite of his point of view still - eh -
 287 accepts me as I am - hh bu:t yes it is difficult
 288 - - because ((change in facial expression: smile)) I believe that I should be allowed to
 289 have a relationship - and be - [yes
 290 A [mm

Disapproving and disagreeing are dispreferred speech acts because they threaten the face of both speaker and hearer (Brown and Levinson, [1978] 1987). If a speaker feels the need to express these sentiments and has an interest in maintaining or creating a positive social relation with the hearer, appropriate politeness strategies are required. This is evident in these data. Just as in data 5, A is given the floor to speak, but the social interactional configuration is very different this time. A is not being interviewed by a stranger about his position on a particular disembodied social issue; he is invited to respond to the words of a friend in a face-to-face conversational exchange. A modifies his original stance: it is not that he disapproves of homosexual relationships as such, he only objects to them if they are combined with performing *'certain tasks'*. He mitigates his words, using an extensive repertoire of indirectness strategies (Brown and Levinson, [1978] 1987): he frames them as his personal opinion (he does not refer to God as in data 5) and as a hypothetical situation ('If'); he uses a number of qualifiers ('well', 'like'); and his words are dotted with hesitation markers ('hh') and pauses. He remains vague about the nature of the tasks he is referring to, but Jan offers a specification – the irreconcilability of being a youth worker and having a boyfriend – again in hypothetical form. After a short hesitation, A wholeheartedly agrees: this is exactly what he means (cf. 'privacy discourse' and 'difference discourse'; Gough, 2002). When Jan appears to accept this outcome of the conversation without further questions, the host steps in and asks him to respond. Jan, in his turn, does his utmost to protect A's face: he professes his understanding for A's point of view and expresses his gratitude for the fact that he, despite it, still accepts him 'as I am', although this apparently does not entail him approving Jan

'actively engag[ing] in a relationship'. Only after this groundwork does he come forward with his answer to the host's question – he disagrees with A. He nonverbally mitigates his reply with a smile. The minimal response A offers in return to his words is non-committal in itself and open to various interpretations.⁷

The neutral position the host retains throughout the interaction between Jan and A – he remains silent, makes no attempts to mediate between the two nor does he unpack the latter's point of view – appears to be his default attitude when guests voice homophobic sentiments in other episodes:

- (5) ((father during coming out)) I hope you won't become a complete poofter now ((host does not respond))
- (2) ((brother during coming out) well I accept your choice – but then I think - aren't you too rash (.....)) you might say later I haven't really thought about it ((host does not respond))

Introduction coming-out 2 and pre-coming-out talk. In anticipation of the second coming out, the audience sees the presenter meet with Jan and his brother at a local café. As before, the first topic of conversation is Jan's emotional state:

Data 10

- 306 Host how are you Jan?
- 307 Jan - - nervous, terribly nervous for their reaction

When they have sat down in the café, the presenter turns to Jan's brother to ask him what his response was to his brother's coming out:

- 316 Host how did you react?
- 317 - I suddenly wonder -
- 318 Brother - - hh I always was like n- yes - it's a disease - - it is something - -
- 319 ah that: -people could be cured from - that eeh e:h e:hm with - -
- 320 prayer - and eventually - therapy people can change
- 321 a:nd - - now I do not know anymore - - I still do not
- 322 agree with - I am [honest about
- 323 Host [with what - with what?
- 324 Brother with - - e::h - - being an active homosexual - hh
- 325 Host because you think that that - -
- 326 it's okay to have feelings but no relationship or something?
- 327 Brother yes - - at the same time I realize that I'm a hypocrite

The difference discourse (Gough, 2002), which has been the 'leitmotiv' of the episode so far, crops up once again in these data, but Jan's brother is the first to actually reflect on it out loud: he says he is aware of the fact that his point of view is hypocritical and unfair. Compared to the situation in data 9, it is now far less face threatening for the host to try and unpack this stance, but there is no evidence that he attempts to do so. The motivation could be that, in a show broadcast by a company with a religious signature,

the producers do not want to run the risk of alienating the part of the audience that potentially agrees with the difference discourse (cf. Goffman, 1981). In view of the avowed emancipatory aims of the show, however, it could have been a pivotal moment and a unique opportunity for the host to fulfill his role of mediator: since the lack of congruence between the two parts of the position has been topicalized by a third party, a simple invitation to this party to unpack the observation would have sufficed to foster reflection on its nature.

At the end of the conversation, Jan's brother summarizes his attitude with a meta-comment:

Data 11

352	Brother	((3-second pause)) who are we to ju- judge- someone because they
353		are different from [us?
354	Jan	[hmm
355		[yes
356	Host	[yes
357		- gonna be ok?
358	Jan	I do hope so -

The rhetorical question in lines 352 and 353 strongly resonates with the biblical adage 'let him that is without sin, cast the first stone' and frames homosexuality as a sin in the context of the Bible. This leaves the audience with the impression that the brothers will never be on the same page about Jan's sexual orientation. Jan's brother is presented as his ally, but he is a reluctant ally. The presenter seems to be determined to round off this part of the talk on a positive note, however. Together with Jan, the audience can only hope things will turn out to be okay.

Coming-out 2. This segment – once again – starts with the presenter inquiring after Jan's feelings: the audience learns – once again – that he is nervous. Next, Jan and his brother are shown entering their grandparents' house. The presenter informs the audience in a voice-over that the grandparents have withdrawn their initial permission to film inside their home. Therefore, the viewers will not be able to witness the coming out. Instead, they are presented with a transcript of what is being said on the screen, accompanied by new age synthesizer music.

Data 12

398	Jan	I have to confess something just now - yes, I actually have wanted to tell
399		you something for a while - something has been bothering me for a year
400		now - but due to circumstances I've been postponing it -
401		It is something very important to me - now we've pinned a date
402		for me to tell - the reason that I didn't want to postpone it
403		any longer is because I didn't think it was fair of me
404		if I hadn't told before - you are a
405		very important part of my life - you are not just
406		my grandparents but in addition I visit a lot in the

- 407 weekends - that is why you have become a sort of
 408 stand-in parents
 409 Grandpa well, come on – let's have it -
 410 Jan no well – yes - how shall I put I - what I actually want to say
 411 is that I am attracted to boys -
 412 Grandma to come out of the closet -
 413 Jan I do not know what you think of it - but I hope that you do not mind
 414 too much – yes - that you still accept me - and that I am still
 415 welcome to visit -
 416 Grandpa well – to start with the last bit – accepting and visiting -
 417 that you don't have to worry about
 418 - but we do find it hard -
 419 you've guessed this –
 420 that is probably why it took so long before
 421 you came forward - I think you can
 422 understand that we find it very difficult
 423 Jan yes - I understand that
 424 Grandpa but at the same time we know that there are a lot like that and they all
 425 need a place - right?
 426 Jan yes
 427 Grandpa no - I think we've been through worse
 428 than this - in any case we think you are still a very nice
 429 boy
 430 Jan yes
 431 Grandpa nothing is going to change that -

In his pre-announcement Jan opts for the word 'confess', which has of course strong connotations with the notions of sin and crime - yet another sign of his internalized homophobia. And as Foucault ([1976] 1998) reminds us:

the confession is [also] a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile ... (pp. 61–62)

Jan's confession seems to lead to a ritually appropriate response: his grandfather assures him that he remains welcome in his grandparents'⁸ home. But his absolution turns out to be conditional:

- 432 Grandpa - the way that you are going to deal with it
 433 is a different issue - that surely is a question for us

And so the segment ends with an implicit reference to the 'difference' discourse we have encountered throughout the episode.

Evaluation of coming-out 2. Next, we see Jan go outside and meet the presenter who has been waiting for him. Jan tells him how the event unfolded:

Data 13

- 437 Jan [things went] much better than I expected – I don't know exactly
 438 what I expected but it was really very positive – hh –
 439 Host - - - because?
 440 Jan yeah – well – similar to the others – they eh just
 441 we love you the way you are - -
 442 even stronger though they said well you can't –
 443 hold anything against a child or grandchild – the love remains
 444 whatever happens - - that was really beautiful
 445 and very good to hear

But then the host asks Jan whether he can go and meet the grandparents and they both go inside:

- 468 Host ((voice-over)) inside a long conversation follows
 469 bu:t then it turns out that for grandpa and grandma
 470 a future relationship for Jan is a sensitive issue
 471 - - Jan's relief soon disappears - a homosexual relationship
 472 is according to grandpa not an option for a Christian

It turns out that the 'difference discourse' – implicit in lines 432 and 433 – once again dominated the conversation. The only conclusion the audience can draw is that Jan is left with a double bind: the people around him accept him as he is only if he does not act as he is.

Retrospect. In the final segment, the audience sees Jan and the presenter meet again five weeks after the events. As before the presenter kicks off the conversation by asking Jan how he feels:

Data 14

- 490 Host are you - hh ha:: relieved?
 491 Jan - hh well:: I don't know
 492 Host no?
 493 Jan no: it's a bit ambiguous
 ...
 495 Jan e:h pff, I thought about it again, about all those reactions
 496 I get - - tho:se ambiguous reactions like we accept you alright
 497 bu:t - - a relationship that - - a bit more difficult - - because - - looking
 498 Host [yes
 499 Jan back t- I've heard much mo:re about yes: how people really
 500 think about it because of this, and that is how I
 501 have noticed that a la::rge part of - - the people around me - -

- 502 actually f- don't think I can have a relationship
 503 Host but it is still on your mind, you're still ju:st
 504 planning - - am out of the closet and a relationship, that's the future
 505 Jan I don't know -
 506 Host no?
 507 Jan no
 508 Host WOW hey – ((2-second silence)) and what are your doubts?

To the ritual enquiry after his emotional state, Jan replies he does not know what to feel. The consequences of the double bind his peers and family have burdened him with have now fully sunk in: he will only be accepted as a gay person if he does not act like one and abstains from homosexual relationships. This has left him in great doubt about the future. To the host, his uncertainty seems to come as a complete surprise ('*WOW hey*'). He asks him what is holding him back:

- Data 15
 509 Jan there are so many people around me -
 510 to - - be honest there are so many people around me against it
 511 and then you start thinking ye:s - - am I wrong then?
 512 Host but that's what I think is so:: special about you that you like - - hh on the one
 513 hand it's beautiful that you want to be a part of something and a-
 514 it's [sort of a community right [where you where you're from and=
 515 Jan [mm [yes
 516 Host = are a part of - hh but on the other hand I sometimes think
 517 MAN why do you let OTHER people decide what YOU're gonna do?
 518 Jan - hh ((3-second silence)) it's my surrou:ndings - - it's the people I kinda really do
 519 care about - and - - then you don't want to hurt them in
 520 any way -
 521 Host actually the important question is like ho:w are you: moving on - what
 522 will happen tomo:row and the day after in your life?
 523 Jan mm - - er:: I keep on doing what I did - just
 524 - - continuing with my pleasant life – my studies - friends and such
 525 things - hh bu:t meanwhile I do think that - - I - - now I
 526 have been o:pen about it - I will also do try to get in touch with peop-
 527 with other gays - - that are in the same boat
 528 so christian gays to see how they're dealing with
 529 it - and try to find support there -
 530 Host but are you confident it will be ok?
 531 Jan ((5-second silence)) I am confident that it is going to be ok - - somehow
 532 ((5-second silence)) yes hhh.

When Jan expresses self-doubt and even raises the possibility that he could be 'wrong', there is a sudden change of footing (Goffman, 1981) on the part of the presenter. For the first time, he allows his own voice to come through. He mitigates the critical observation he is about to make by first complimenting Jan on his loyalty to the people around him. Quoting himself ('*I sometimes think*'), he then asks a (rhetorical?) question: '*why do you let OTHER people decide what YOU are gonna do?*'

This question puts the ownership for the situation Jan finds himself in firmly in his own hands; apparently, it is his personal problem: he does not show the courage to defy the people around him.

When Jan simply repeats that he does not want to hurt the people he cares about, the host abruptly drops the subject and steers the conversation to Jan's plans for the future, framing this as the most important question that needs to be answered at this moment. Jan says he wants to go back to his 'pleasant' life, but at the same time will try and find religious people in the same position: in those circles, he hopes to find the support he needs – and that he has not been given in the show.

Although there is no evidence of a positive outcome for Jan, the host seems adamant to end on a happy note. Jan's response is reluctantly (pauses, hesitation markers) positive and with this the episode ends.

Conclusion and wider implications

The homophobic stance of a considerable number of Jan's peers and family members which surfaces in the difference discourse that permeates the episode investigated is not unpacked, let alone challenged in the context of the show. By allowing and not contesting the 'difference' discourse, the notion of 'acceptance' loses its meaning and becomes an *empty signifier* (Montesano Montessori et al., 2012), open to any explanation that suits the speaker.

The data show that the makers of 'Uit de Kast' succeed in producing a show that obeys the laws of the reality TV genre (cf. Beck et al., 2012): the focus throughout the episode is on drama and conflict and on the personal feelings of the guest. The audience is taken on a rollercoaster of emotions: hope and fear alternate in rapid succession. And although the outcome of the enterprise leaves the guest confused and insecure about the future, the presenter forces a verbal happy end. The same pattern can be observed in the other episodes in the corpus.

The producers do not, however, achieve the emancipatory aims they have set themselves. In order '*to contribute to the acceptance of homosexuality (especially in social circles where it is still difficult to discuss)*', the homophobic and heteronormative positions of the guests themselves and their peers and family should have been put up for discussion and framed not as a personal problem of the guest, but as an issue that has repercussions in wider society – without this the show simply provides a platform for homophobic voices. We did not find any evidence of opposition in the episodes in our corpus. The producers' concern with the sensitivities of their viewers seems to prevent any room for meta-communication, a necessary step to allow those who watch the show to reach some distance and start to reflect on what they hear and see.

This puts the host of the show in an impossible position. The show allows him to fulfill his roles of confidant and service specialist, but the format sabotages the role of mediator. As mediator and a member of the guest's team, the host is supposed to be instrumental in bridging the differences between the guest and the people he comes out to. But as a member of the production team of the show, he is expected to stick to the conventions of the reality television genre and to take heed of the (projected) sensitivities of the viewers. As a result, he resembles, in Goffman's words, 'a man desperately playing tennis with himself' (1956: 93). Data 15 offers a clear illustration of his predicament.

Our findings raise serious questions about the compatibility of reality television formats with the topicalization of morally controversial issues. The constraints and affordances of the genre lead to specific viewer expectations that need to be honored in the commercial world of 21st-century television. Reality shows – per definition – focus on personal problems of individuals, whereas LGB emancipation should not be framed as a personal problem but as a socio-political issue with moral and ideological dimensions.

Language does not only reflect the world, it also creates the world. By allowing the voices of homophobia to be heard on prime-time television and by not challenging them, homophobic views are in fact legitimized. In the end, the result could very well be that, despite the good intentions of the producers, the show does not promote but – ironically – hinders LGB emancipation.

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Notes

1. Literal translation: 'Out of the closet' (cf. Herman, 2005).
2. Only one episode of the series we have investigated concerns a female participant; since we have not included this episode in our corpus (see section 'Data collection and selection'), we will refer to the participants as males.
3. Transcription conventions. For easier reading, we have added only minimal transcription conventions:

(())	contextual information, meta-comments
BROTHER	emphasis through pitch, tone or volume
–	short pause
– –	marked pause
: (:)	lengthening of preceding sound
?	rising intonation, indicating question
┐	overlapping utterances
=	immediately adjacent utterances

4. The difference discourse also features prominently in episode 2, which again focuses on a participant with a strict Calvinist background. When he comes out to his family, both his parents and his brother profess that they accept his sexual orientation (*You are just as welcome in this house as ever*), as long as he refrains from homosexual relationships (*If you really get in a relation with a man – that I couldn't accept*).
5. The participant in episode 3 recites a note he has written that contains his coming-out story:

I have to tell you something.. I've written a note – and uh – well this is what I have to say and uh – well – I'd better do this first – and uh – take things from there – Dear Mum

and Dad, G., L. A, R, and C – I have been wrestling with this for years – and I’ve always known that I differed from my peers – and I have never been able to accept this – but now the time has come to be honest towards myself and towards you all – because only then I will be able to live a happy life – what I need to tell you is that I fancy boys.

He later uses the same note to come out to his friends.

6. We can only speculate about the cause for the audience laughter, but it could very well be that they realize the absurdity of Jan’s request: he wants to keep his words a secret for now, but allows them to be aired on national television.
7. The privacy discourse also features in episode 6. One of the participant’s friends states in a pre-coming-out session with the host:

(6) Homosexuality when I see it I think it’s filthy – I won’t say anything (...) but personally I think it is filthy to look at – because well – man woman – that’s normal – that’s something that is – yeah – okay – it’s fine with me if they do it – but if I see it in public – then I walk – I look the other way – well – as long as they don’t fondle me – it’s okay with me.

8. Jan’s grandmother – apart from her formulation in line 412 – does not contribute to the conversation. The use of the pronomina ‘we’ and ‘us’ makes it clear that grandfather apparently also speaks for his wife.

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