

Pride and Progress: Gender Expression as a Factor in Career Progression

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Abstract

The challenges of traversing professional life appear to be magnified when the professional involved also happens to be from the LGBTQ community. The initial motivations of the study were to confirm the plausibility of this notion and to add to the limited literature on the career progression of LGBTQ professionals. Through snowball sampling, seven gay and lesbian organizational members (four from the academe and four from the creative industries, with one of the seven representing both organizational settings) were interviewed to determine other factors that may have impacted on their identity formation and, in turn, gender identity, as well as how they perceive their career progression. The qualitative measurement of these interviewees' gender identity was buttressed quantitatively through the Revised Masculine and Feminine Self-Disclosure Scale. The interviews with gay and lesbian organizational members resulted in the conclusion of generally stable career progression, with gender as its preeminent factor. These findings, however, do not mean that the workplace has become ideal for the LGBTQ community and society in general. Findings peripheral to the study suggest that ambiguity is still rampant among both LGBTQ and heterosexual worlds, and is identified as one of the root causes of marginalization, subtle though it may be. Continued diversity management, then, is in order.

Keywords: gender, gender expression, non-normativity, workplace perception, career progression

Gender, as well as marginalization, remains as one of the most divisive issues of our time. Both concepts had taken on various guises throughout time and across media, and the best approaches, actions, and policies towards both had instigated debate, movements, and so-called revolutions. Through the pages of history, one can see just how much the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) community has blossomed into the Pride March-ing, gender-bending, empowering-all-they-can-empower subculture as decades had come and gone.

Changes in the workplace, albeit incremental ones, could be considered a testament to how far the LGBTQ movement had come. We are said to be moving forward as a society and as a species, in that we have generally become more accepting, embracing even, of the changes and uncertainties that those before us had a hard time to even come to terms with. The LGBTQ community, its members, and its ever-changing definitions are examples of these uncertainties.

While there had been legislative effort against discrimination in the workplace, such as Executive Order No. 13,672 (2014) which expands the definition of anti-discrimination in employment such that it will also prohibit discrimination against sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and national origin in terms of employment, there is clearly much to be done. The researcher had also observed that laws regarding workplace discrimination center almost solely on organizational entry. There is yet to be a clear picture provided of the LGBTQ professional's organizational life. Muñoz and Thomas (2006) identified "egalitarian and emerging norms for equal rights for sexual minorities" (p. 85) as the best possible line of defense of the LGBTQ community once inside the workplace. These "norms", while mitigating overt acts of violence and intimidation in the workplace, still need to be made more concrete in the form of legislation and other such forms of policy to truly protect the marginalized from hostility. This hostility, then, as Muñoz and Thomas (2006) pointed out, could be rooted in the privilege that the dominant, heterosexual classes have access to.

Privilege has many definitions but can be best described as those everyday activities, rules, laws, and situations that create

opportunities or advantages for those who fit the characteristics of the defined norm or status quo and disadvantages for those who lack those characteristics and do not conform to society's expectations. (p. 86)

It is possible, then, that the LGBTQ professional encounters more uncertainty in the workplace than their straight counterparts. This study attempted to discover how ambiguous one's professional life is, among others. There is a wealth of motivations for this study. The researcher, for one, aimed to produce unbiased and comprehensive research on gender and the workplace, a topic that merits much expansion. Another motivation was to provide recommendations towards minimizing the ambiguity that an LGBTQ professional in the workforce possibly experiences, especially in terms of their career, albeit in varying degrees.

Supplementing and updating queer literature was another aim of the study, as the dynamism of the discipline makes it possible for what is considered queer today to be vastly different from what was considered queer five years ago. Specifically, the researcher had the following objectives in mind: (1) to examine and describe the dynamics of gender expression in the workplace and (2) to determine if gender expression is a preeminent factor in an LGBTQ community member's career progression.

The study does not claim holism; it focused mainly on the sociocultural factors relevant to gender and gender expression, de-emphasizing biological and environmental factors, despite the abundance and existence of literature on the latter two. Furthermore, gender and gender expression were studied within the organizational setting and context. There was an effort to include factors outside the workplace, specifically relational factors. The data in the study of such factors were presented as peripheral information. The respondents are gays with feminine gender expression and lesbians with masculine gender expression. All respondents are from the academe or creative industries. The researcher acknowledges that the categories that the respondents fall under are but part and parcel of the broad scope of gender and identity. The conclusions drawn in this study are deemed

applicable only to these settings considered in the study and are not to be generalized or universalized.

The terms “heterosexuality” and “homosexuality”, and “gender” will be used interchangeably throughout the study, as informed by the literature on the concept of identity in the local context. However, the performativity of gender and normativity and non-normativity will be the main themes of the analyses. The term “LGBTQ community” will also be the term used to represent the non-heterosexual community, despite an ongoing expansion of the spectrum of gender identities and expressions as of this writing.

Queer Theory: The Philippines and the Heterosexual Matrix

The turn of the century has seen an unprecedented pace in which the perception of various concepts changed. Gender is among these concepts, and primarily responsible for the revolution, or more precisely, “troubling”, of this societal construct are Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick. Deutscher (1997), in her deconstructive feminist reading of Butler’s and Sedgwick’s works, narrowed the destabilizing aspect of gender to “subversion” and “parody”. She further argued that instead of yet another binary opposition involving these two clusters, gender identity is both parodying and subversive. Another reading of the theorists’ works revealed that gender identity, with everything taken into account, is inherently a form of upholding the status quo (Deutscher, 1997).

Although counterintuitive, the status quo-upholding function of performativity contributes to the assertion of Butler (1990) that gender is internally unstable, thus explaining its ever-changing nature. Deutscher (1997) explicated that Butler, through a reading of Monique Wittig, asserted that one cannot analyze gender from outside the binary opposition of male-female; hence, the preeminence of the labels “masculine” and “feminine” in the taxonomy of the gender system. Deutscher (1997) added that Sedgwick and Butler share the conclusion that deconstruction of gender does not render it irrelevant, but rather fluid. Put another way, while gender is indeed in trouble, it only means that it can only disrupt but not totally eliminate gender normativity.

Deutscher's reading is consistent with that of Garcia's (2000), who emphasized that "an allowance for gender diversity does not necessarily amount to an escape from heteronormativity, at least on the cross-culturally recognizable level of genital 'sex'. It may even function to reinforce and stabilize it all the more" (p. 270).

Garcia (2000) explained that the heterosexual matrix is more explicit in the Philippine context than its Western counterpart. This could be seen in how the lines between gender and sexuality are blurred once placed in the local setting. While in the Western context, drag or cross-dressing is strictly performance and therefore ambiguous as far as determining the gender of the cross-dresser is concerned, it is common practice among those who identify as gays and lesbians in the Philippines to perform their gender through, among others, manner of dress (by lesbians incorporating menswear in their daily outfits, for instance) and even choice of partners (with gays, particularly the *bakla* in the Philippine context, preferring heterosexual romantic partners).

Nencel (2010), in consideration of the theoretical framework defined by Ortner as practice theory, defined sexuality as

...a multilayered analytical construct constituted by interrelated processes. It includes the analysis of sexual meanings and discourses produced by different actors such as religious or state institutions. These institutions contribute to reproducing the gender and sexual order of a particular society. (p. 72)

As was touched upon earlier, gender and sexuality are taken to mean the same in the Philippine context. The ambiguity can be traced in counselling psychology, where Milton (2014) pointed out that "it assumes terms such as 'man' and 'woman' were clear, understandable and captured everyone's experience of gender" (p. 18).

This is expounded on by Garcia (2000) by describing the Philippines as "a highly oral--as opposed to textual--society" (p. 269), meaning the internalization of gender is also an internalization of all that is associated with the sex they identify with. Simply put, there is a strong tendency for Philippine culture to take gender quite literally.

Besides successfully establishing the clear difference between sex (that which is determined by biology) and gender (that which is constructed by society), Butler also defined the performative aspect of gender, stating that it is characterized by re-enactment, repetition, and performance (Deutscher, 1997). Another binary, conformity and deviance, was taken into consideration in the development of this study. In terms of gender expression, this binary was examined in the contexts of manner of dress and language.

Crawford (2009) cites Deleuze in the discussion of the transformative power of fashion:

Deleuze considers a Baroque mode—to fold ourselves into “the thousand folds of garments that tend to become one with their respective wearers, to exceed their attitudes, to overcome their bodily contradictions, and to make their heads look like those of swimmers bobbing in the waves” (121)—to provide texture, depth, and infinite folds to our unfortunately flat designs and interpretation of bodies. (p. 18)

A manner of dress conforming to or deviating from the norm of one’s sex could be considered indicative of the wearer’s gender expression. Especially coupled with the element of repetition of performativity, and the context within which the study is placed (where, in said context, it has been discussed that sexuality and gender are interrelated to the point that their differences are blurred), one’s manner of dress is an integral consideration in one’s gender expression.

In Western contexts, dressing in clothes typical of the opposite sex is called “drag”, especially when it serves entertainment purposes. However, in the local setting, a deviant manner of dress goes beyond just drag and becomes a crucial part of one’s identity. “Drag” is still the term used for dressing for entertainment purposes. However, in the local setting, cross-dressing in the Philippines has become a reliable signifier of gender expression; a deviant manner of dress goes beyond just drag and becomes a crucial part of one’s identity.

Another factor of note in terms of gender expression is language and the manner in which it is used. It has been posited and widely accepted that there is a certain set of characteristics that makes language and, in effect, the person using it masculine or feminine. Griffin (2009) wrote of Deborah Tannen's work on *genderlect*, the difference in the ways in which males and females communicate. Competitive, status-oriented, and problem-solving communication is considered masculine, while nurturing and networking communication is considered feminine.

Career Progression

Especially in the modern workplace and its wealth of generational mindsets, it is imperative to examine career progression through several lenses. Where a Gen X member prioritizes financial gain both as motivation and measure of career success, the millennial might have good work-life balance and participatory leadership in mind when asked for her picture of success.

Career progression or success has been defined by Arthur, Khapova, and Wilderom (2005) as 'the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time.' However, as Gunz and Heslin (2005) argue, career success can be judged from an objective and/or subjective perspective. Society frequently judges career success using objective criteria (salary, role responsibilities, position, etc.) but success can also be measured from a subjective perspective. Subjective criteria, which relate to the individual's preferences and current life situation, may take into account reduced working hours and personal fulfillment (Gunz & Heslin, 2005; Heslin, 2005). (Moran, Duffield, Donoghue, Stasa, & Blay, 2011, p. 46)

Moran et al. (2011) identified factors affecting career progression, and categorized them as "professional", "personal", or "work-related" factors. They then named educational attainment or the most advanced degree that an organizational member has upon entry into the workplace and mentorship, a mutually beneficial relationship between superior and subordinate, where the former has the opportunity to hone skills in

leadership and coaching, while the latter has access to the expertise and experience of his mentor, as professional factors. Moran et al. (2011) then cited Estryn-Behar, van der Heijden, Fry, & Hasselhorn (2010) in naming marital status, family responsibilities, health and age as personal factors. Personal factors, in effect, imply that a thorough analysis of an organization's demographics will lay the foundation for an accurate analysis of the pace of its organizational member's career progression. Finally, work-related factors include "work patterns, career interruptions, diversity of experience, location, and professional experience" (Moran et al., 2011, p. 50). While work-related factors might potentially function as intervening variables, the study explored in detail only the professional and personal factors contributing to career progression, as these two are most consistent with the context within which the study attempted to place itself in.

Methodology

Gender expression and career progression were measured using the Revised Masculine and Feminine Self-Disclosure Scale (MFSDS). An interview schedule aimed to complete the picture of gender expression and career progression.

Butler (1990) pointed out that discrimination against homosexuals may be premised on their failure to comply with gender norms. This assertion and those of the luminaries in the study of queer theory, on top of other aforementioned factors motivated the choice of respondents—gays performing a feminine gender and lesbians performing a masculine gender—specifically those within the academe and the creative industries (that include but are not limited to beauty, fashion, and entertainment). Seven respondents were chosen, comprising four gays performing a feminine gender and three lesbians performing a masculine gender. The former group comprised two gays from each organizational setting, while the latter comprised one from the academe and two from the creative industries. One of the lesbian respondents is also a part-time lecturer however, so she could also be considered to represent the academe. They were chosen through snowball sampling, particularly through referrals and the researcher's personal network of

contacts. All participants, interviewees and survey respondents alike, were assured of confidentiality.

Gender expression was measured first through the Revised Masculine and Feminine Self-Disclosure Scale (MFSDS), which initially provided both willingness and likelihood of a respondent to disclose masculine and feminine aspects of one's gender. Scoring resulted in either "masculine" or "feminine" in the "trait", "behavior", and "globality" dimensions.

The qualitative measure of gender was then buttressed qualitatively through an interview schedule. Through observations by the researcher and another rater, the other factors considered relevant to gender expression (manner of dress and language) were also analyzed. The participants were also asked about how they thought they were perceived in the organization, as well as their concept of career progression. They were also asked if they believed that their career progression was stable, and if they believed that their gender and performance are factors in their career progression.

Gender expression as a factor in career progression was analyzed qualitatively, with the interview schedule being used in gleaning the latter in view of the former. The researcher analyzed patterns in the answers of the respondents and pointed out recurring themes (as well as outliers) to provide a general picture of career success, as envisioned by gay and lesbian professionals in the academe and creative industries.

Results and Discussion

The researcher interviewed a total of seven respondents, coming from different departments of the academe (visual arts, biological sciences, communication, and multimedia arts) and sectors of the creative industries (fashion, beauty, digital art, and entertainment). R4 doubled as a respondent in both fields, as she is a part-time member of the faculty of a Manila-based university and a graphic designer in various organizations. Table 1 summarizes their profiles.

TABLE 1. Respondent profiles

Respondent	Field	Position	Years in the Organization
1	Academe – Visual Arts	Assistant Professor	2
2	Academe – Biological Sciences	Senior Lecturer	3
3	Academe – Communication	Associate Professor	8
4	Academe – Digital Media/Creative – Digital Art	Part-time faculty member /Graphic Designer	4.5/25
5	Creative – Fashion	Product Development Coordinator	2
6	Creative – Entertainment	Showgirl	30
7	Creative – Beauty	Senior Stylist	2

The interviews were conducted in their respective workplaces. Before the face-to-face interview, they were asked to fill out the Revised MFSDS, which aimed to quantify gender expression. In all interviews, a rater was present so as to validate the researcher’s categorization of the interviewees’ manner of dress and language as either masculine or feminine. All indicators of gender identity and their corresponding results per interviewee are consolidated in Table 2.

Identity Formation

All the respondents have been out since they could remember, and are generally supported by their family. The “most recently” out is R5, who came out in high school. He has done so because among the seven respondents, his decision to come to terms with his gender was the most affected by the possibility of being stigmatized. Besides R5, all of

the respondents did not seem to care at all about being stigmatized for their gender. All of them, however, had experienced different forms of bullying because of their gender. R1, for instance, only had a word for what he was when classmates and cousins started calling him names. R3, while supported by her immediate family, recounted her gender being a cause of worry for her mother's friends. Said worry materialized when she was denied an apartment to rent because the landlord did not want to have anything to do with her potential relationships (with the landlord justifying such because where lesbians and relationships are involved, it is, apparently, automatically complicated). R2, who remembers having been out since he was six years old (he was 50 years old at the time of the interview), described his family's being supportive of his gender as characterized by openness and acceptance. R4, on being out, said that the duration she has been out depends on the reference group ("To my friends, it's been a long time."). R4's selectiveness carried over to her family, as she said that her mother seemed to think that the "girls" she had brought home were just "best friends".

R3 and R6 stated that they did not have a formal coming out. The former attributed it to her parents' instincts and the way she has always presented herself (masculine manner of dress and haircut). The latter shared that he has been accepted even before he was born, with the clothes his parents had at the ready being that of a baby girl's. He explained that during his time, there had been no way to determine the unborn child's sex (as sonograms were largely unavailable at that time) and that his parents could only rely on superstition (e.g., stomach shape during pregnancy). When asked if he thinks that could have been a factor in the formation of his identity, he said he did not think so, and that he is the fourth homosexual on both sides of the family, thus generating no palpable surprise.

Generally, the respondents, as of the interview, have validated that they do not believe their gender is just a phase. Only R1 and R4 entertained the notion that their gender just might be a phase. R1 realized it was not, in comparison to his "normal" classmates who did not have to undergo what he thought only he was undergoing. R4 admitted to being wrong in thinking that her gender was a phase, citing

a realization that she is not infatuated with boys, the same way her reference group of straight girls is. R7 credited having a twin sister (who identifies as straight) as key in determining how she would identify and present herself. Where R7 would prefer masculine styles and clothing, her twin sister was a direct and feminine counterpart. R3 was the only one among the respondents who is aware of the premise of fluidity of gender, being in the field of communication, but even she had to yield that her gender is somewhat “fixed”, that she as well never did entertain the notion that her gender just might be a phase. All of the respondents have also engaged in same-sex relations, with R6 emphasizing that he prefers “straight guys” when it came to relationships.

Their respective identities concretized and spilled over into their environments other than home, for instance, in the case of this study, in the workplace. “Openly and fabulously”, answered R1, when asked how he expresses his gender in the workplace, and the other six respondents’ answers were of the same mold.

TABLE 2. Qualitative and quantitative measurements of gender expression

Legend:

A=academe C=creative f=feminine m=masculine M=Male F=female

Respondent	Manner of Dress	Language	Trait	Behavior	Globality
1 - AM ₁	f	F	M	m	f
2 - AM ₂	f	F			f
3 - AF ₁	m	M	M	f	m
4 - ACF ₂	m	M	M	m	M
5 - CM ₁	f	F	M	m	F
6 - CM ₂	f	F	M	f	F
7 - CF ₁	m	M	M	m	M

Career Progression

The respondents have learned to work their way around the system. This could be seen in how they have used marginalization to their advantage, successfully navigating through economic and social hurdles. While pressure varies per gender, as articulated by R1, the pressure on the LGBTQ community is internal versus external. There have also been instances where the respondents classify their non-normativity as an advantage. R2 cited the “creativity, drive, and passion” of the community as a key component to steady career progression. This is reinforced by the citation of R4 of the LGBTQ professionals in the creative industries coming up “with the best idea, the best sales”. Likewise, R7 saw her gender as placing her in a “best of all worlds” situation, specifically in having it easy with communication situations with either sexuality. She also cited public relations as understood and used colloquially (“*ma-PR*”) as being second nature to the LGBTQ community.

Respondents 1 and 3 emphasized “capability” as one that should be the basis of evaluation, both by themselves and by superiors and colleagues. They said, in so many words, that capability could be the one thing that could make society look beyond one’s gender.

The presence of mentorship in the workplace was confirmed by all respondents (with R3 as the only one who has a mentor elsewhere). Their respective mentors had a hand in facilitating their transition into the workplace, and impacted their professional lives significantly. In general, the respondents attribute guidance and advice, career-wise, to their mentors. R5 and R7 shared receiving encouragement from their respective mentors to better their careers by seeking and carrying out responsibilities outside the job description and aiming for higher positions.

Definitions of “career success” (as both key to the assessment of and interchangeable with career progression) varied, as predicted by the literature. R1, for instance, instantly expressed that he preferred the term “substance” to “success”. Another definition of “career success” that R1 provided, “I’m happy when I know at least I’m contributing something

to society, or at least I'm helping out another person", tallies with that of R7, "*...umaangat nga ako, pero may natutulungan pa rin akong iba*" ("...I do go up the ladder, but at the same time I am able to help others"). R5 defined "career success" as the moment when he could also say that he has achieved work-life balance, indicating "personal life" and "social life", alongside his professional life, as the other aspects of life he wants to achieve balance in. R1 and R3 also initially thought of the "traditional" metrics of success, namely, money and position in the hierarchy. R3 was quick to claim that she had "a very different definition of 'career success'". She went on to say that career success for her is when she finds "a career that satisfies [her] holistically". R2 said that "career success" is characterized by acceptance not only from family and the workplace, but also from society. From someone who considered himself as having started from scratch after a successful first career, R6 associated consistency with "career success".

Respondents 5 and 6 were the only ones who asserted that gender should not be (versus "is not") a factor in terms of progress in one's career. When asked for the converse, however, they both offered positive insights. R5, being in a "fashion-related" industry, sees his gender as an advantage in terms of interaction within that world, given that he sees the fashion industry the way it is seen in general, that is, dominated by the LGBTQ community. R6, in seeming agreement with R1, saw the stereotype that gays are skilled with makeup as positive. Because R7 is open with his expression of gender (as with all the interviewees in this study), people who interact with him in the workplace and on side jobs ascribe high initial credibility in terms of skill in view of his gender. Table 3 summarizes the factors considered in and deemed relevant to the study and the corresponding observations of the researcher and the rater.

TABLE 3. Career progression of gay and lesbian academics and creative industry professionals

Legend:

A=academe C=creative f=feminine m=masculine M=Male F=female
 a=affirmative n=negative s=stable u=unstable

Respondent	Professional Factor – Presence of a Mentor in the Workplace	Personal Factor – Gender as a Factor Positively Impacting on their Career	Achievement of Career Success, Per Respondent’s Definition	Judgment of Career Progression, as Agreed Upon by Researcher and Rater
1 - AM ₁	a	a	a	s
2 - AM ₂	a	a	a	s
3 - AF ₁	n	a	a	s
4 - ACF ₂	a	a	a	s
5 - CM ₁	a	a	a	s
6 - CM ₂	a	a	n	s
7 - CF ₁	a	a	n	s

Conclusion

Beyond the study findings’ verification of the fluidity of gender, the researcher also concludes that gender is a complex plane; it is and will never be in a silo. Fluidity, as traditionally defined by queer theory, was not seen in the results of the study. The idea of seamlessly transitioning through genders did not seem rooted in the reality of the respondents. However, the fact that a gay participant, for instance, dresses and speaks in a feminine manner but has masculine traits and behaviors, provides a new dimension to queer theory’s premise of gender fluidity.

The interviews can also confirm the blurred lines between concepts of gender and sexuality once contextualized into the Philippine setting. R6 verbalized this in declaring his preference for heterosexual

men (being in a relationship with a “straight guy” as of the interview), rationalizing this preference by saying that since he feels like a proverbial woman trapped in a man’s body, but not necessarily identifying as trans, he would naturally go for men (“men” in this context being heterosexual males). He did not seem to see sense in gays being in a relationship with each other. The male-female binary enters the mix, as the usual internalization of gender in the Philippines tends to do. This is supported by various expressions and tones of disgust of Respondents 1, 3, and 7 when they talked about possibilities of romantic relationships with the opposite sex. Gender, as a primary identifier of the LGBTQ community both by themselves and those outside their worlds, is indeed a preeminent factor in a gay’s and lesbian’s career progression. More than any of the personal factors that could have otherwise been considered as well in the study, gender is the foremost personal factor that enables LGBTQ organizational members to navigate their careers in the way that only they can.

Manner of dress, language, and self-concept have also been most useful as indicators of gender expression. Respondents 3 and 4 have directly addressed their manner of dress as masculine. Respondents 1 and 5 have expressly stated that they do not cross-dress, yet the researcher and his rater qualified their respective manners of dress as feminine, given other predominant elements in their clothing (feminine styles and designs as well as accessories). This is also why the researcher has been careful not to operationalize masculine and feminine manners of dress as necessarily cross-dressing—the Philippine context, its conception of cross-dressing and oft-negative connotations of it, and it being somehow restricted to the transgender community (as explicitly stated by R5). The analysis of language, initially delimited to genderlect, oftentimes crossed over, once again, to the male-female binary. Feminine language comprised pitch and inflections characteristic of a biological female, as did masculine language with a biological male. R1 spoke in a generally high pitch, while Respondents 2, 5, and 6 drew out certain word endings, versus an absolute, defined stop. R1 also referred to himself at various points in the interview with the words “*kandidata*” (female candidate), “*diva*”, and “*beauty queen*”. R6 called himself “*maldita*” (a feisty female) and indicated “*Showgirl*” as his position in his

organization. Respondents 1, 2, 5, and 6 also generally resorted to network and rapport communication.

In the study, self-concept, as measured quantitatively by the Revised MFSDS, helped integrate the aspect of gender expression. Were gender expression measured entirely on the qualitative level, the researcher would not have had data to suggest that hegemonic masculinity is very much intact. For instance, the gay respondents, while still predominantly feminine (in terms of manner of dress, language, and globality), all had masculine traits, as did all lesbian respondents. Three out of four gay respondents also had higher scores in the masculine category of the “behavior” dimension. The same is true for two of the three respondents, in terms of the “behavior” dimension.

While R1 described the internal pressure on the LGBTQ community as the driving force derived from being automatically disliked for one’s deviant identity, the researcher also takes this to mean that the conflict is also, and more so, internal, in the sense that there is in-fighting among the community. The extent to whether it approaches hostility, the researcher has yet to qualify (and possibly quantify), and is outside the scope of the study (the dynamics to be studied being that of the gay and lesbian worlds and the professional world). R6, however, hinted on this with his use of “decent” to be synonymous to “professional” and antonymous to *bakla* behavior. R6 has also made use of the term “*silahis*”, which is the rough equivalent of “bisexual”. While there was nothing explicitly negative about his tone and usage, he did keep apologizing whenever he used the term during the interview.

Open and deviant gender expression and heteronormativity, per the findings of the study, are not mutually exclusive. This could be seen in the respondents’ semantics of the words “normal”, “decent”, and “typical”. In their predominantly heteronormative environment, they have been socialized into conceptualizing their gender as deviance and therefore inherently wrong. Despite general confidence and openness with their gender, the need to work twice as hard as the “normal” ones in order to be considered just as good (if not ideally better) and as if in compensation for being different, is very telling. The overt distancing of themselves from their counterparts by way of gender identity and

pursuit and preference of relationships, among others, reinforces the heterosexual matrix and its binaries.

Another way the researcher sees open and deviant gender expression is articulated by R1: "Visibility is a powerful thing". Power relations is inevitable in talks of gender, sexuality, and/or marginalization. The way the respondents express their gender openly, both within and outside the workplace, is seen by the researcher as a political statement. Heteronormative though the society they are in may be, and whether or not they are aware that they are upholding the status quo with their reliance on binaries in their gender identity, a foremost motivation for such gender identity is to establish that they identify in a way that society does not assign to their sex, and that despite that, coexistence is still very much possible.

Summing Up

Generally, gays, as it turns out, are not isolated—at least not in the academic and creative settings. Quite the contrary, they are celebrated for the entirely new dimension that they provide to the industry and workplace they enter. The same is true for the academic and creative lesbians. Both of them are valued for their creativity and willingness to work twice as hard, and are admired for their being open about their gender, deviant from the heteronormativity that their heterosexual colleagues are accustomed to. The researcher, however, is careful not to see this as anything close to equality.

Another approach to the LGBTQ community is self-acceptance. This could be seen in how they embrace their identity, in their usage of the coping strategies for anticipated stigma – nihilation, in how the male respondents refer to themselves in female terms, for instance, and humor, as seen in many instances of self-deprecation and how lightly they talk about stigmatization.

Despite the several interpretations provided thus far, one theme recurs: ambiguity. There is much to explore about the nature and cultures within the LGBTQ community, where the professional world is concerned. The interaction of the professional and LGBTQ worlds,

following the findings of this study, helps the new world they share in the workplace arrive at a common understanding. Proximity, indeed, is key.

In view of the recurring ambiguity, and in the context of organization, there is a lot to gain with continued diversity management. While the findings of the study point to stable career progression, this does not entail a sudden de-emphasis of the policies surrounding the marginalized sectors in the workplace. It was found that besides gender, there were other important factors that influence not just career progression, but the dynamics in the workplace in general. These factors also guided the researcher in formulating recommendations for the career of gay and lesbian organizational members.

The importance of a mentor in the workplace, for instance, has been among the most significant findings in the study. In light of the importance of proximity in addressing ambiguity, having a long-term organizational member ease one's transition in the workplace, as well as vouch for the mentee, is a must in any workplace. It would be impossible for any professional to thrive in a hostile workplace, especially considering the power imbalance that is skewed against marginalized sectors. An important aspect of diversity management is diversity training, where the organization can "legitimize the concerns of the LGBT community in organizations, sensitize the organization to these issues, and provide all workers with the skills to collaborate successfully in a diverse and inclusive work environment" (Muñoz & Thomas, 2006, p. 91).

Recommendation for Future Research

The researcher suggests that further studies take into account the social, economic, and (if applicable) political capital of the respondents. Gender is becoming a more elusive concept to pin down by the day, and the researcher has reason to believe that the aforementioned factors just might be what would draw the line between accommodating and ostracizing, between positive and negative perception.

Another recommendation for future study is focusing on perception within the LGBTQ community, of its different clusters (lesbians, gays, transgenders, and queers) toward each other. It has been mentioned that bisexuals are outsiders of sorts in the community which they are members of, as their ambivalence in terms of sexual orientation is generally considered a betrayal of sorts to the LGBTQ community.

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