Work Experiences of Successful Men with Same Sex Attraction[*]

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Abstract

This exploratory qualitative study examined the attitude of the workplace towards Filipino homosexual men and how such affected their behavior at work. Fifteen homosexual men occupying supervisorial to top management positions were interviewed. To validate their responses, two HR practitioners were interviewed while five key informants were tapped for a focus group discussion. Results showed that there were distinct and defined unwritten rules of acceptable behavior of Filipino homosexual men in the workplace. Disclosed homosexual men were confined to several negative stereotypes. Non-disclosed ones, on the other hand, usually became the subject of talk and gossip. As a response, Filipino homosexual men had to either conform to the rules or battle out the negative perceptions of them such as taking advantage of their positive traits such as being a hard worker, being flexible and reliable, and their going for the extra mile in order to gain respect and achieve success in their careers.

Introduction

The growing awareness in today's society of homosexuality, which used to be talked about privately and in whispers, has unveiled several opportunities and hurdles for the members of this community. The emphasis on such issues has been challenging the current topography of the workplace as gender roles are being brought up once again.

The existence of homosexuality, although restricted to males, has been approved by 69 percent of the 294 socio-cultural studies conducted on societies around the world. In the Philippine setting, homosexual males who are being called bakla (effeminate male) and silahis (bisexual), among others, are known to perform tasks which are usually associated with the female gender (Garcia, 1998). According to Hart (1992) in his study during the fifties and sixties, Filipino homosexual men working as dressmakers and beauticians were the ones tolerated by most of the town residents. That being said, it can be inferred that the Filipino culture is relatively more tolerant of homosexuals compared to other cultures.

Discourse on the Filipino Homosexual

The dominant context of homosexuality in the Philippines, as stated earlier, is about effeminacy and transvestism (Whitam, as cited in Baytan, 2008), and they, more often than not, take the jobs that are strongly associated with females as depicted in early Philippine cinema (Baytan, 2008; Hart, 1992).

Although Filipino homosexuals are known to be more tolerated than their American counterparts (Sechrest & Flores, as cited in Hart, 1992), Tan (1995) observed that they are still confined within perceived norms, to which they must act accordingly. One manifestation of such is the persistence of fear in expressing affection between two Filipino homosexuals when being portrayed in the Philippine cinema (Baytan, 2008).

Meanwhile, the notion of effeminacy and transvestism has become a means of stratification among economic classes. The effeminate bakla is now more associated with low-income homosexuals (Tan, as cited in Baytan, 2008) while those in the middle to high-income groups remain discreet (Tan, 1995). This particular aversion towards transvestism was noted by Hart (1992) when he observed that the most prosperous beautician in Dumaguete was not a cross-dresser. That being said, the political economy of effeminacy and transvestism remained one of the major factors separating the Filipino gay men with the transvestites.

Manalansan (2008) and Garcia (2008) concluded that the Filipino culture and attitude toward homosexuality resulted from the convergence and hybridization of colonial and indigenous ideologies. This is further stratified based on the socioeconomic status of the homosexuals, which explains why they have a subculture within a culture.

Issues on Gender and Work

Male dominance in the workplace has long existed as larger companies and organizations are mostly run by males (Connel, as cited in West and Zimmerman, 1998). Because of this, obviously, the workplace in general has been saturated in masculine values (Burton, as cited in Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Collinson & Hearn, 1996) and principles (Kanter, as cited in West & Zimmerman, 1998). With homosexuality stepping into the limelight, the male identity in the workplace has been threatened (Collinson & Hearn, 1996). This challenged the traditional gender roles in the workplace and created role conflicts (West & Zimmerman, 1998).

One of the challenges brought about by the growing emphasis on homosexuality nowadays is the disclosure of their gender in the workplace. Escoffier (as cited in Badgett, 1996) categorized the workplace into conservative, liberal, and ghetto occupations, with the last two being more accommodating on homosexuality and hence, more open to disclosures of sexual orientation.

Homosexuals have been observed to exhibit certain patterns of disclosure in the workplace. There is non-disclosure, which is largely due to internalized homophobia or the fear of the repercussions of coming out (Gonsiorek, as cited in Ellis, 1996). According to Beals and

Peplau (2006), the concealment of sexual orientation translates to at least a likelihood of experiencing discrimination. However , as a result, homosexuals tend to have a high level of life dissatisfaction when they decide for non-disclosure.

On the other hand, there is also a partial disclosure wherein a homosexual can opt to disclose his sexual orientation to a certain social group or location (Plummer, 1992). This particular option is called compartmentalization, and is usually accessible to the middle-class homosexuals. Another option for partial disclosure is collusion. In this option, the homosexual will disclose his sexual orientation to a confidante, who can act as a diversion mechanism to turn away attention and suspicion (Plummer, 1992).

Lastly, full disclosure has been found to boost the psychological well-being of the homosexual (Rstotosky & Riggle, as cited in Creed, 2006). Ellis and Riggle (as cited in Ellis, 1996) furthermore stated that there is higher satisfaction in relationships due to being out in the office.

Studies on disclosure and acceptance, according to Beals and Peplau (2006), found that homosexuals have a higher tendency to reveal their sexual orientation in the workplace. This tendency toward disclosure was higher compared with opening up to parents. Schneider supported this claim with a 61.6-percent respondents' disclosure in the office (Smith, 2011).

Interplay of Culture on Interaction, Roles, and Behavior

The personality of an individual is brought about by several factors that shape the person's actions. Self-disclosure, as one of these factors, primarily depends on the reciprocity between an individual and another party (Chapman, as cited in Masaviru, 2016). As the individual opens up to others, the hidden areas of his personality decrease, thus creating better avenues to understand him as a person.

Another factor to consider is motivation. This is said to shape the person's pattern of behavior and conduct depending on how he wishes to be perceived (Makin, Cooper, & Cox, 1996). As a result, an individual will be able to control his interactions with other individuals to promote positive impressions.

An individual's personality can also be affected by the society's culture. One variation of culture is collectivism, which is particularly

strong in the Filipino society (Hofstede, as cited in Franco, 2014). It is notable in a collectivist culture that individuals need to be assimilated in groups (Gudykunst, 1998) as it has viewed "difference as dangerous" (Hofstede, as cited in Gudykunst, 1998, p. 59). Because of this conviction, the members of a certain social group need to pledge their loyalty in exchange of the group's protection and accommodation (Hofstede & Bond, as cited in Gudykunst, 1998).

Evidently, according to Lynch (as cited by Andres, 1981, p. 16), social acceptance stands as one of the "three basic aims motivating and controlling the behavior of the Filipinos." From this, it can be said that the Filipino value of self relies heavily on group cohesion. True enough, notion of "marunong makisama" or having smooth relationships with others has been embedded in the Filipino culture for a very long time now.

Since collectivism requires the individuals to conform and maintain the traditions of their respective social groups for the advancement of collective interest (Schwartz, as cited in Gudykunst, 1998), the concept of self, therefore, is interdependent with their groups. A certain member tends to shape his perception against what is observed by the other members.

While there has been a preference for integration, an individual can still aspire for his independence by "his ability to express himself and the validation of his internal attributes by other members" as long as he still promotes the collective goals (Markus & Kitayama, as cited in Gudykunst, 1998, pp. 53-54). The obedience and conformity to rules and norms have been deeply ingrained to avoid "major personal disasters" (Zimbardo & Lieppe, 1991, p. 64).

These norms have led to a greater integration among the members of the group (Makin, Cooper, & Cox, 1996), and were often said to give rise to stereotypes. These stereotypes were usually used to immediately define the characteristics of an individual, which will then shape the initial impression to him at a given time and situation (Verkuyten & Hagendoorn, as cited in Gudykunst, 1998). They were often due to a "pre-existing belief system" (Hamilton et al., as cited in Gudykunst, 1998, p. 126), and were habitually used because information is immediately accessible (Makin, Cooper, & Cox, 1996).

Stereotyping uses classification of people based on their characteristics (Makin, Cooper, & Cox, 1996) like gender, race, religion, among others. Its main objective is to compartmentalize people within the usual and applicable attributions. They will then be generalized

based on their common characteristics (Hewstone & Brown, as cited in Gudykunst, 1998).

These stereotypes will not be executed properly if language is not involved. Language serves as an instrument to reinforce stereotyping and to assign descriptions to the social groups (Maas & Arcuci, as cited in Gudykunst, 1998). These factors intrinsic to culture—collectivism, conformity, roles and norms, and stereotypes—influence the manner of interaction between individuals. They create the unwritten mandates that every individual must observe and abide by during the process of communication and interaction within the society.

Sexual Orientation, Decent Work, and the Philippine Situation

Equal opportunity and treatment, according to the International Labor Organization, is one of the key elements for a decent work. This means that any form of discrimination against any aspect and process of employment and occupation should be eliminated, and proper remuneration to the work done should be provided. However, the ILO reported in its 100th session 2011 Global Report that "discrimination accounts for a 3 percent to 30 percent gap in wages between a gay and a non-gay employee."

Thirteen countries, with Israel being the first in 1993, have enacted legislative treaties to fight workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation. In 2009, the European Union approved the Lisbon Treaty, which strengthened the non-discriminatory provisions of the Employment Equality Directive of 200. The Philippines, meanwhile, has yet to approve the Anti-Discrimination Bill, which aims to protect the homosexuals in the country.

Emmanuel Parreno, in his thesis entitled Equality and Decent Work: Achieving a Gay Work Life in a Straight Workplace (2012) using the HRC (Human Rights Campaign) Equality Index, found that his survey respondents have taken a middling view regarding gender equality at work. Similarly, his research revealed that employees from private companies with foreign equity were more homophobic than those from a giant fast food chain. Also , the unionized workplace was also seen less tolerant to homosexuals than non-unionized ones.

Research Questions and Methods

This paper seeks to answer the following questions: 1) How does the Filipino workplace respond and interact with Filipino homosexual men? 2) How do Filipino homosexual men respond to such interactions? And 3) what traits of Filipino homosexual men contribute to their career success?

This Metro Manila-based exploratory qualitative study has three sets of primary sources of data. First is the fifteen homosexual men who were lengthily and privately interviewed one on one. Occupying supervisorial to top management positions, they all have experienced career promotions in their stint with their respective employers. In particular, James, Rye, and Charles are all executives in their respective companies. The managers, on the other hand, are Joshua, Boy, Lee, Edgar, Kenneth, Ricky, Gary, and Joseph. Lastly, Nathan, Harry, Richard, and Rommel are all supervisors. As such, they all have direct reports in their assigned departments.

The second primary source is the two HR managers, Violy and Moca, who were interviewed to validate the answers of the homosexual men key informants. And the third source is the five participants in the focus group discussion (FGD) who were chosen based on their established relations with the homosexual men. They are Deena, Natallie, Eileen, John, and Jennelyn. Due to the sensitivity of the information provided by the key informants, their real names are replaced with pseudonyms.

Seventy-five open-ended questions grouped into three themes were listed for the interview. These themes are first, the culture and attitude of Filipinos and homosexuals in the workplace; second, homosexual men's coming out in the office and their differences with their closeted counterparts; and third, the efforts made by the key informants to get promoted at work. Lastly, themes and patterns were discerned from the data that were generated.

Framework

As illustrated in the figure below, two actors are presented—the workplace and the Filipino homosexual. Given the fact that the emergence of the latter has created role conflicts in the former, it shall then be determined in this paper what actions each actor will execute

and how they will accordingly react. Similarly, the collectivist culture of Filipinos will be considered between these actors, given that culture creates social structures and norms among individuals, giving rise to unwritten mandates that every individual must observe and abide. This way, a harmonious relationship will be ensured between the workplace and the Filipino homosexual men.

Figure 1. Action-Reaction Cycle between the Workplace and the Filipino Homosexual
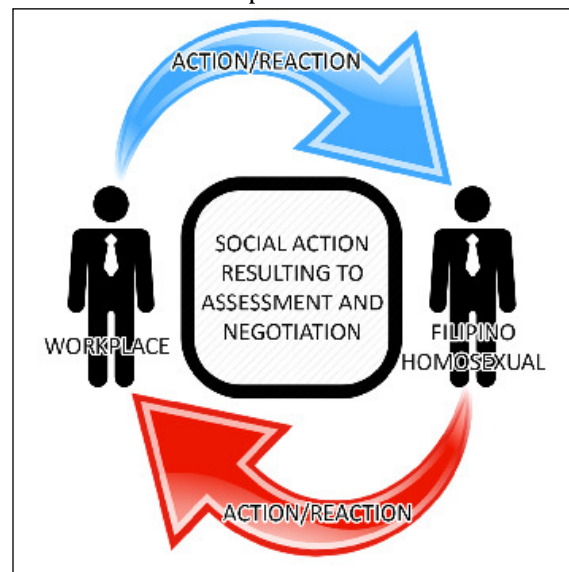
Findings and Discussion

Homosexual Men's Behaviors Deemed Negative in the Workplace

The corporate workplace is said to have an aversion towards cross-dressing or transvestism. In the office setting, respect is said to be gained if a homosexual is not a cross-dresser. This attitude reflected Tan's (as cited in Baytan, 2008) observation on the separation of the effeminate and cross-dressing homosexual, who usually work as a beautician, and the middle to high-income Filipino gay men (Hart, 1992). According to the inference of one of the homosexual key informants, Gary, to be professional has meant not dressing up as a woman:

"It depends on your work or on your personality. For example, I think those gays who work in the office, they are more respected because they know they are professionals. Unlike, excuse me for this, those who work at the parlor because they know the impression is different. So I think that is the difference."

In the same manner, having a man-to-man relationship is another homosexual behavior or tendency that is deemed negative in the workplace. Filipinos, in contemporary times, continue to believe Manalansan's (2008) view that a Filipino homosexual should suffer to work and pay in order to have a "straight" macho man. This is what Violy, one of the two HR managers, have observed in her subordinates:

"From my experience, most of the time, it is about money and being in the relationship. Not the relationship per se, but what happens to the homosexual after a relationship. More often than not, homosexual issues revolve around their lovers. Sometimes, gays are compelled to do things because of them."

This also reflects the experience of two of the homosexual key informants namely, Joshua and Richard. Their statements, respectively, are as follows:

"I was nineteen when I first came out. That time, I did not have a family member who was not against it [coming out]. They thought that my life would become a mess, like, 'I will pay for men and your money will run out.' So I am very conscious about people not seeing me in that plot because I am not like that."

"...Like when you are in a relationship. People will still judge you because of that. Things like, 'Oh, he will just milk you for your cash,' 'Oh, he just need something from you.'"

Another negative characteristic seen among Filipino homosexuals is being loud and flamboyant. Deena, one of the FGD participants, stated that this demeanor is indeed intrinsic with the Filipino homosexual but it should not be taken against all of them:

"I feel that you cannot generalize because it depends on how he acts. Respect exists, right? I can respect a person because of who he/she is. But screaming faggots are completely a different story."

The same goes for Edgar, one of the homosexual key informants. He cited one situation in which people in the workplace react and the Filipino homosexual makes adjustments:

"If you are loud, be loud in proper venues like company events. But if it's regular days, they are fine. They act proper. If there is break time, like between 10 AM or 3 PM, they start chatting which even I get involved in."

Given all these negative attitudes toward Filipino homosexuals, responses from the homosexual key informants have revealed a low self-perception due to their experiences. The following statements of Gary and Rye, two of the homosexual key informants, confirmed this, respectively:

Maybe because, let us say it this way, since you are already gay and as they say, 'let us just say that I am gay, will I let myself be stupid? Will I let myself be pulled down?' Of course not. This is the opportunity to do our best so that people will not look down to us."

"I experienced being bullied by my father. He had somewhat a different perception about gays. Several times I experienced him telling me that gay men would amount to nothing, that you will get derided [by people] at work. Those were the terms."

Masculine identities are still perpetuated in and dominate the work place (Burton, as cited in Mac an Ghaill, 1996). As a result, certain homosexual behaviors and actions are still perceived to be negative. According to Frosh (1995), the exposition of these homosexual characteristics resulted in role conflicts with the prevailing office masculinity.

Because of these negative perceptions, the Filipino homosexuals are left with only two options. The first is to conform to the office protocols and conduct themselves accordingly. The second is to battle out these negative insights and prove their worth. Rommel

and Edgar, both among the homosexual key informants, stated that they would rather choose the latter to gain workplace respect. Their responses, respectively, are as follows:

> "Since you are aware that as a gay man, you are already being discriminated against, would you not do something just to prove yourself?"

> "For me, I have to be competitive to prove to myself that I am not just another gay guy. I was bullied when I was young. I was already feminine then but I did not know what I was. It was those bullies who called me out for being gay."

Results from the FGD also pointed to the same observation, confirmed by one of its participants, Natallie:

> "Or maybe because they have a feeling that since they are gays, people think lowly of them. So they want to achieve more in order to prove that they can do a lot of things even if they are gay."

> "...That is why I feel in general, companies are okay with gay employees as long as they are able to prove themselves, to present themselves properly, and to show that they are capable. It would not matter what gender you have because that is you."

On the other hand, there are also others who believe that homosexuals who know how to conform to the rules and norms and adjust accordingly will eventually gain respect from their workmates. Six out of 15 homosexual key informants, including Boy and Rye, emphasized the need for knowing how to properly carry oneself. Here are their statements, respectively:

> "Know how to carry yourself. I have not seen someone that flamboyant; they still dress as male. You will still be respected, even if you wave your hands in a gay manner. A certain respect should still be there. How you carry yourself."

> "Often I tell them, 'You are gay, I am gay. Can you conduct yourself in a manner that you will not be disrespected inside

and outside the office?' Since gay men sometimes create situations to get disrespected."

Both HR practitioners, similarly, have acknowledged the importance of conducting oneself appropriately. As confirmed by Violy:

"Respect is when you know how to carry yourself in such a manner that you comply with company rules without compromising your personality. It is not two opposing factors."

Moca, the other HR manager, also observed this behavior in her two homosexual subordinates, namely, Edgar and Charles:

"Maybe it is also based on how they [Edgar and Charles] project themselves. There is respect. How they carry themselves. That is one of the distinguishing traits of those two from others. They know how to befit themselves according to the situation they are in."

The key informants' and FGD participants' responses about the issue of acceptance complemented Tan's (1995) observation that the homosexual man inside the office is often bound by negotiated rules and norms, restricting his actions inside the workplace. These constraints on the Filipino homosexual's conduct set the boundaries between what is acceptable and what is not (Franco, 2008). Once these protocols are broken, the Filipino homosexual will suffer the negative feedback against him.

Whether they conform to the protocols or battle out the negative perceptions, the primary goal of a Filipino homosexual is to improve his image inside the workplace and to earn respect given his sexual orientation.

On Coming Out, Being Closeted and Differing Treatment

As stated earlier, Franco (2008) has observed the existence of uncertainty avoidance in the Filipino culture. One of the homosexual

key informants under the pseudonym Joshua confirmed this in relation to disclosed and non-disclosed homosexuals:

> "With closeted [men], people are careful with the way they talk around them because they are uncertain [about their gender]. They are not sure, for example, if you think that the person is [gay] and he is not confirming, you cannot really tread on that, and to talk about whether he will marry or if he has a girlfriend or boyfriend because you are not sure, unlike openly gay people who you can freely talk with about anything."

Referring to this, the talk and gossip directed towards the closeted homosexual aim to make him reveal his sexual orientation in order to avoid uncertainty. This was observed by one of the homosexual key informants, Gary, and his HR manager, Violy. Their responses, respectively, are as follows:

> "Of course, people will not lose the idea that you are gay. But since you would not admit, it will be the subject of tattles. [People would ask] the reason why you do not want to admit when in fact, it is obvious. Unlike for those who are out, people might wonder still."

> "Yes. Most of the time, those who are not out are subject to 'verification' among other gay people and from other employees. It is not because people are rumor-mongers. I think people would just like to know how to treat them better."

According to Beals and Peplau (2006), homosexuals have a higher tendency to disclose in the workplace. That being said, the office is generally viewed by homosexuals as a safe place to reveal their sexual orientation. The inviting atmosphere for disclosure can be attributed to the Filipino workplace culture of informality as well as the liberality of the office workplace (Escoffer, as cited in Badgett, 1996). However, as observed, there is a big difference in work relations between disclosed and non-disclosed homosexuals.

Moving Up the Corporate Ladder

Filipino homosexuals are not innocent of the gendered division of labor in the workplace. As a matter of fact, one of the homosexual key informants, Edgar, and Violy, one of the HR practitioners, identified the tasks that are often seen as inherently for homosexuals. Here are their statements, respectively:

> "They do not have anything against me. Actually, they are fond of me because I was open, but not in an over-the-the top kind of way. So they always have me on certain events like hosting. Because of those kinds of activities, I got recognized. We can do innocent jokes, which are still comedic."

> "Because they are creative, homosexuals often are tapped for anything that requires arts and crafts, not to mention becoming hosts to parties. It is not stereotyping. But it is tapping talents that are significantly better than anyone else's."

They may be confined to the aforementioned stereotypes, but given their skills and the roles attributed to them, these stereotypes greatly helped the Filipino homosexual to be recognized in the workplace.

As for the work ethic of the Filipino homosexual, they are known to have an admirable drive to deal with the workloads they have. This drive, as described respectively by the HR practitioners, Violy and Moca, manifests in their being industrious and dependable, and in their willingness to go the extra mile:

> "They are career driven. They always go the extra mile with everything. They have the potential and accomplishments, too. I feel they go the extra mile to finish their work. Gays are often very driven. Perhaps because they want to prove themselves. I feel that attitude most of the time."

> "Edgar and Charles can keep up with others. Or better, they can exceed the work of others. I think it all boils down to what I have said, they cut across genders. They can exceed the limitations of a male or female. That is the difference that I can see with those two. Knowing them, they have drive. They are really very good—they are very intelligent and creative. And

there is a huge difference in them. Even in other gays. People have high respect for those two."

Also, Edgar and Gary, two of the homosexual key informants, described themselves as flexible—from being diligent and rendering extra hours of work to being able to perform and think like a combination of a man and a woman. Their statements, respectively, are as follows:

"My diligence with my work; how I focus; my willingness to accomplish things and prove my worth. Aside from knowledge and experience from previous work, I think it was the willingness—the 'will do' factor."

"[But] perhaps I can do what women can do and what men [can do] as well."

The subjects also revealed that, aside from the positive traits of the Filipino homosexual mentioned above, knowing how to carry one's self and act accordingly is also a crucial factor for him to be successful. Moca, one of the HR managers, and Natallie, one of the FGD participants, shared the same opinion regarding this, respectively:

"They [Charles and Edgar] know themselves. Maybe that is one. Again, those two are gays but they are not loud. They are also serious. They do not hide, but people still have a high respect for them. Maybe it is also based on how they project themselves. That is one of the distinguishing traits of those two from others. They know how to be fit themselves according to the situation they are in."

"…That is why I feel in general, companies are okay with gay employees as long as they are able to prove themselves, to present themselves properly, and to show that they are capable. It would not matter what gender you have because that is you."

The workplace holds an important role as well in ensuring the success of a homosexual. This manifests in the presence of a performance-based employee assessment in order to invalidate any form of personalism in the office. As stated respectively by Boy, one of

the homosexual key informants, and Violy, one of the HR managers, it is very important that in the workplace, the performance of an individual should be the one being measured and not his/her identity:

> "Well, definitely still due to my performance. Everything is still performance-based. We do not base it on what the person is. Whenever I talk with friends, being gay is never an issue. The issue still relies on performance. There is comparison between two gays [about performance]. "Results-driven most of the time, since we have KPIs [Key Performance Indicators] and KRAs [Ker Result Areas]…"

> "They stand out because of their performance. As far as I am concerned, they are treated the same as anyone. In fact, perhaps better since a lot are being promoted. I think the general trend is that these people often work harder than other people, perhaps because they have time."

There was a divergence among the answers from the key informants and FGD participants, as their responses generally described an office with contrasting cultural characteristics. Even so, they revealed two important traits in the workplace namely, personalism and professionalism (Franco, 2014).

Personalism, being an aspect of the collectivist nature of the Filipino workplace (Franco, 2014), manifested when the key informants described the workplace as collaborative, workable, and coordinated. This only shows that in this particular setting alone, group cohesiveness is greatly valued. The inference to teams as families furthermore supported this inference, as this demonstrates an intimate relationship among the individuals (Lynch, as cited in Andres, 1981).

In contrast, professionalism indicated the necessity of observing office decorum in order to provide a condition of order. This demonstration of formality in the workplace boils down to the Filipino cultural norm of having respect for authority and providing order (Franco, 2014). Moreover, professionalism also manifests in the acceptance of homosexuality in the workplace, as there seems to be a negotiation towards an agreed norm between the office workers and the Filipino homosexual.

These two seemingly contrasting traits in the Filipino workplace brought to the front the attitude of "pakikisama" or establishing

good interpersonal relationships to ensure a smooth rapport among employees inside the office. In the context of a Filipino homosexual, this attitude translates to conflict avoidance and preservation of the status quo (Franco, 2014) in exchange for acceptance. In other words, the preference of the Filipinos for group cohesion, as strongly reflected in the workplace, is the primary reason for the tolerance towards homosexuality.

Themes and Patterns

Filipino Workplace Response and Interaction with Filipino Homosexual Men

The reaction of the workplace towards the presence of homosexuals in the office is heavily influenced by two factors—the Filipino culture on collectivism and personalism, and masculinity in the office. These factors have created unwritten rules and protocols and, in turn, homosexuals must submit to these regulations. Tolerance and acceptance is limited only to what the workplace deemed as acceptable.

The Filipino homosexual is usually categorized as a crossdresser, loud and flamboyant, and someone who needs to pay for a heterosexual man just to have a relationship. Should he act out these stereotypes, he will either be ridiculed or be seen as someone who will amount to nothing. Opting not to disclose his sexual orientation, on the other hand, will not yield a better and fairer treatment as he will then become the subject of talk and gossip.

Filipino Homosexual Men's Reactions to These Interactions

Because of the negative perceptions taken against him, the Filipino homosexual was left with only two options: first, to conform to the office protocols and conduct himself accordingly; and second, battle out these negative insights and prove his worth.

To conform means that he must overturn the negative perceptions of him. He needs to dress properly and carry out his self accordingly when interacting with other individuals. To prove himself, on the other hand, means that he needs to show the workplace his

capabilities, and make them realize that he is not the typical Filipino homosexual caged within negative stereotypes.

When the Filipino homosexual finally finds his proper place in the workplace, he is then awarded respect—a respect that earns him his acceptance. Only when this happens does his interaction with the workplace become significant. He does not only become part of the Filipino collective culture, he has also exceeded the expectations of others on him.

### *Traits of Filipino Homosexual Men that Contribute to Their Career Success*

To prove that he does not deserve being discriminated against because of his sexual identity, the Filipino homosexual often takes advantage of the positive traits identified with him. One of these is his flexibility in using both his feminine and masculine sides to cut across genders. The homosexual key informants' promotion to higher ranks is a proof that Filipino homosexuals are capable of performing better than their heterosexual colleagues.

Aside from that, going the extra mile to finish the task at hand is another positive characteristic seen in him. He is known to be reliable and very hardworking, taking on additional work loads and extending his working hours. The aforementioned traits, likewise, are being utilized by the Filipino homosexual to combat the negative perceptions of him. This only proves that he is, indeed, determined to prove his worth at the office.

Along with these positive factors is the existence of a performance-based appraisal system that can measure accomplishments rather than identity. All of these emphasized factors will prove that a Filipino homosexual, regardless of his sexual orientation, is worthy of promotion and is capable of achieving success just like anyone else.

Figure 2 sums up all the critical factors contributing to the success of the Filipino homosexual. First is the homosexual's move to assimilate and conform to the existing workplace culture. Second is the workplace culture's reception towards accepting the homosexual culture. Third is the objectivity and fairness of performance assessment.

Figure 2. Interplay between Three Factors Affecting the Filipino Homosexual's Promotion at the Workplace
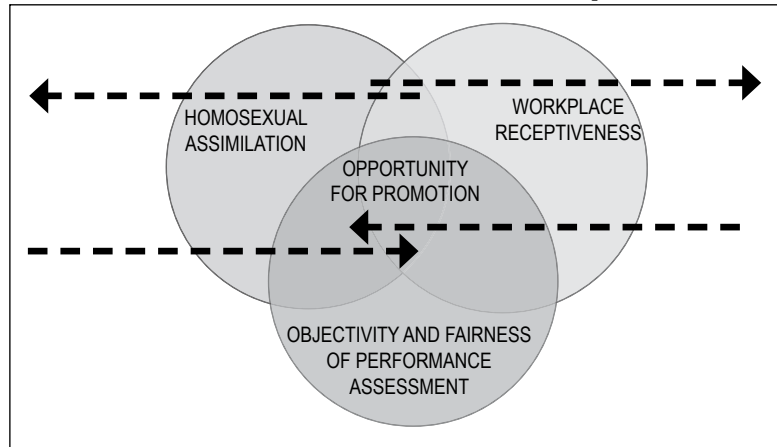
The intersection of the three factors signifies the Filipino homosexual's opportunity for job promotion. For this area to increase, the three factors must be brought closer to one another (convergence), either by moving one of them or all of them. Meaning to say, there is a need for these factors to draw out a common ground and define an objective policy for each factor. Should there be no common ground for the three factors, they will move away from each other (divergence), and the opportunity for promotion will diminish.

Moving Forward

It is recommended that the Philippine government should institute a policy not just on anti-discrimination in general but also specific policies that will promote workplace diversity and respect. It should come up with concrete actions toward fighting workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation, such as what Israel and twelve other countries did. That way, there will be equal opportunity and treatment for anyone inside the workplace, and discrimination based on any aspect and process of employment will be eliminated.

It is also recommended that every employer must project an image of a workplace respecting differences. In his article, "Attracting and Retaining Top Talent in Today's Competitive Market:

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An Introduction to the Employee Value Proposition," Binghay (2016) emphasized the need for companies to go beyond the traditional compensation and benefit system in order to attract, motivate and retain talents. Companies should strategize actions and programs that would create the overall positive and healthy work experience that includes, among others, respect for gender differences.

Consequently, the employee's behavior and attitude reflects the culture of the company as a whole (Michington, as cited in Binghay, 2016). A frustrated employee will most likely project a negative image of the company. In this era where everything is almost within the reach of the cyberspace, negative traits about company culture can now be easily exposed over social media networks.

The application of a sound, performance-based appraisal system is recommended in every office to properly measure the accomplishments of a Filipino homosexual rather than judging him based on his sexual identity. This should be done to remind him that sexual orientation and preference does not matter so long as he is consistently performing superbly his duties and responsibilities and by meeting his work goals.

A sound performance appraisal system must be valid, reliable, responsive, flexible and equitable. It is valid if the instrument covers and considers various factors that affect employee's performance at work. It is reliable if the evaluation is done accurately. For instance, it involves multiple sources of performance feedback, aside from the immediate superior's perspective. It is responsive if the employee being evaluated is given the opportunity to likewise assess his/her work performance and overall output. It is flexible when the system has the capacity to still measure employee performance despite environmental changes and requirements that may come along the way. Lastly, it is equitable if it strictly follows the practices of fair evaluation for all pre-set and fully communicated and agreed upon performance standards and measures.

Lastly, it is recommended that future related studies should be done to validate the findings of this study . Said research should include more key informants, preferably across sector and industries. The qualitative study should be triangulated with quantitative approaches that would correlate multiple variables to make the analysis more in-depth. Lastly, these studies should dwell more on homosexual men that occupy positions of power such as Chairman and CEO, President and COO, and Senior Vice Presidents, as it would be interesting to find more

common ground on how they moved up in the corporate ladder and became successful in the workplace despite their being homosexual.

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