

# INTRODUCTION

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This issue of the *Review of Women's Studies* continues the aim of the journal to share scholarship on women and gender in the Philippines and to highlight work on women and gender of Filipino artists.

The scholarly work in this issue focuses on documenting and studying the lived experiences of women and LGBTQI+ individuals and examines how gender intersects with social class, disability, ethnicity, and other marginalized identities. This scrutiny highlights how people's intersecting identities affect work, health-seeking behavior, economic participation, and well-being.

People of non-heteronormative identities continue to be marginalized in most sectors of society. Documenting and examining the lives of LGBTQI+ individuals in remote areas is Jennifer Josef's exploration of the health situation and health-seeking behavior of tomboys, *bakla*, and *minamagkit* from Mountain Province—one of the first research studies on the health of indigenous peoples with non-heteronormative gender and sexual identities. Josef concludes that the poor health situation and health seeking behavior of her participants were due to marginalized identities relating to social class, indigeneity, and gender and sexual identity compounded by the generally weak health infrastructure in the Philippines and in the Cordillera region. One of the aims of the study is to highlight the specific needs of a community in order for the government to design health programs that are intersectional, and culturally and gender sensitive.

The alignment of laws with the needs of people with non-heteronormative identities continues to be an uphill battle, however. Charles Erize Ladia states how “advocacy for sexual citizenship in the

Philippines has been arduous,” as exemplified by the decades-long fight for the passage of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity or Expression (SOGIE) Equality Bill. His study on LGBTQI+ Movement Organizations illustrates how these organizations serve to bridge the knowledge and advocacy gap between communities and the government through a process of “strategic brokering.” Ladia’s article articulates the process of “queering local governments” for the creation of civic spaces of inclusion, equality, and sexual rights, especially in the area of national policy.

The lives of Deaf gay workers in the private sector is documented and studied in Jan Erron Celebrado’s article to analyze how gender and disability converge in experiences of discrimination of Deaf gay employees. In spite of a National Disability Prevalence Survey from 10,240 completed interviews of sample individuals from Philippine households that show only 19% of the respondents report not having a disability and a few laws to promote inclusion of people with disabilities, people with disabilities in the Philippines tend to be underrepresented—and when they are represented, especially in media, they tend to be cast in roles that are stereotypical or even offensive. This research describes the “ableist and heteronormative workplace practices and the unequal power relations between Deaf gay men workers and their hearing heterosexual colleagues” as a means of urging the private sector to craft and implement more inclusive workplace policies and practices.

Increased vulnerabilities experienced by marginalized identities are also discussed by Cabotaje, Sumalabe, Escoto, Laddaran, and Manglicmot in their investigation of the impacts of the pandemic on women in the informal economy. Their study reveals how the public health crisis exacerbated issues on these women’s economic security, their families’ living conditions, and their health and overall well-being. Although women asserted their agency and displayed resilience and innovation during times of disaster such as the pandemic, the study also reveals how disaster responses are gender-blind. This needs to be addressed to properly support women in their response and recovery in the face of disasters.

This continued exploration of how women grapple with death, displacement, diaspora, and the aftermath of love is also explored in the poetry of Vyxz Vasquez. Her work draws us into the inner world of a woman and her internal conversations with herself. This same inspection is echoed in the visual art of Liz Rañola, whose work is used in this issue's cover.

The *Review of Women's Studies* vol. 32, no. 1 reveals identities—their sameness and differences—and how they relate to power. The works in this issue, however, are not content to just reveal unequal and oppressive systems of power. They seek to challenge and dismantle inequality and, in the end, work toward our transformation into a more just society for all.