

# **Gender and Engineering**

## **Assignment 4 - Reflection Paper on Navigating the Heteronormativity of the Engineering Workplace**

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Based on the lecture series, the readings, and experiences that were shared during the class, few things I learned are - the experiences of women and racial/ethnic minorities in male-dominated fields, also the experience of LGBTQ identifying individuals. Plus I learned about the additional work burdens that are often accompanied by academic and social isolation, making engineering school a hostile place for many LGBTQ identifying students. Also, got insights about the biological basis of gender. Discoveries at the front edge of science are shedding light on the biomarkers that define gender. Read about the studies of the experience of LGBTQ students in engineering. It mentioned there were interviews carried out by a couple of universities where they interviewed around 16 undergraduate students. Few points that came up during the reading, engineering is heteronormative, forgotten by LGBTQ community, exclusionary. The lack of support and engagement between engineering and the LGBTQ community leaves students in academic and social stress. Engineering is very work-oriented, one doesn't talk about feeling. It's just about doing technical stuff. There's no cultural exchange.

But just on the idea of coming out, I think it's interesting, depending on where you're from in the world and what your culture dictates, and what protocol works there, that this idea of coming outcomes from, I think in having gone to college in America and heard a bunch of coming out stories, I don't think I have one that I can relate to that experience. Both bisexual people and gay people are unfairly stereotyped by straight folks as hypersexual, perverted, unsafe for children to be around, and incapable of monogamy or raising 'traditional' families. The same way that receiving sexism from a woman can be especially wounding, receiving biphobia from another queer person can sting ten times worse than garden-variety straight ignorance.

While visibility has played a vital role in enabling contemporary LGBTQ+ people to find one another and share resources, we should reject the premise that it automatically fosters acceptance. I routinely come across people in the straight mainstream who believe that this visibility signaled that transgender people are now fully accepted by society when nothing could be further from the truth. The problem is, this strategy only works for LGBTQ+ people who come across as "normal" in most other respects. In

other words, when we invoke “respectability politics,” we are insinuating or conceding that some LGBTQ+ people — those who are multiply marginalized, and those who offend or confuse straight sensibilities — are “unrespectable,” and thus undeserving of legitimacy.