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Filipino LGBT Psychology: Moving Beyond “Homosexual” Street Corners to Advancing Contemporary Visions

The earliest published references to same-sex sexualities in Philippine psychology are two descriptive field studies from more than three decades ago. One was an unobtrusive study of attitudes toward being gay using graffiti in public toilets (Sechrest & Flores, 1969). The other was an ethnographic inquiry into “male homosexual” sex work (Nery, 1979). Both papers were highly exploratory, took place in the street corners of the city of Manila, and as one author wrote, were “necessarily incomplete” (Nery, 1979, p. 32).

The time has come for Filipino LGBT psychology research to move from these dark confined margins to the bright center, with rigor and rainbows in tow.

This special issue of the Philippine Journal of Psychology aims to highlight scholarly contributions that further our understanding of Filipino LGBT lives and experiences. It gathers nine original articles — including one review essay, three full-length papers, and five short reports — that delve into a range of topics, from promoting LGBT-inclusiveness in academic research, to the experiences of coming out to one's parents and to oneself, to anti-gay prejudice and transphobia, to sexual roles like *top*, *bottom*, and *versatile*, to friendships and *babaeng bakla* women. The articles in this issue take us on a journey to diverse locations — from contexts like family spaces in Tacloban, Leyte and bedrooms in Iloilo City, to a rehabilitation center for children in conflict with the law, to the warm intimacy of Filipino gay and lesbian romantic relationships, to the potentially emancipatory airwaves of broadcast media. And these articles do so using multiple

and diverse methodologies, including life story interviews, focus groups, personality trait inventories, a quasi-experiment, an in-depth case study, and correlational and comparative analyses.

In many ways, this special issue is a historic one, which all Filipino psychologists, LGBT and non-LGBT, can take pride in. It is the first time a local research journal has put forth an issue solely dedicated to the psychology of LGBT lives. Indeed, it is a first, not just in the Philippines but in Southeast Asia, where being LGBT is still considered by some to be a blight or misfortune, a diagnosis or counseling concern, an immorality best kept private, or even a criminal offense punishable by law.

This issue also establishes a standard for LGBT psychology research in the Philippines — scientific knowledge that is both relevant and interesting, constructed and written using non-heterosexist and non-transphobic language, attuned to cultural contexts and realities, and true to the very spirit of LGBT psychology — defined as the subfield of contemporary psychology that investigates the lives, experiences, and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals, families, and communities in positive, affirming, and non-stigmatizing ways (Goldfried, 2001; Hancock & Greenspan, 2010; Sandfort, 2000).

Four decades ago in 1973, the American Psychiatric Association delisted “homosexuality” from its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. And in 2011, the Psychological Association of the Philippines joined the global mental health community when it called upon all Filipino psychologists, through its LGBT-affirmative policy, to recognize the dignity and rights of all human beings. This includes the right to be free from harm and discrimination, toward a society where each person is born equal, and where everyone lives — and loves — freely.

This issue is our out, proud, and happy nerdy academic contribution toward that vision.

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