

COMING OUT OF MILLENNIAL FILIPINO GAY MEN

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AB in Communication

Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the coming out of millennial Filipino gay men. Data were gathered from the 5 colleges of Lyceum of the Philippines-Laguna, one student each (LPU-L). The research instrument used is a researcher-made interview guide along with the demographic profile form. Results of the study show that millennial Filipino gay men still usually use the traditional means of disclosing their sexual orientation rather than using the other available digital means such as social media and the like.

Keywords: *coming out, millennial, Filipino, gay men, Philippines.*

INTRODUCTION

Gay men are becoming more visible in the society nowadays. This piqued the attention of the researchers in terms of finding out the process it takes for a person to come out as gay, especially taking into consideration the presence of the old ways to communicate and new modified ones which are product of technological advances. As the generations change from one to another, gay men might have the same or different ways to disclose their sexual orientation in one way or another. They may come out verbally by saying that they are gay, or nonverbally through various indications such as clothing, gestures and the like.

Given the technologies today, millennial gay men can now come out through various technologies. They can use the social media in order to come out not only to their family and friends but also to the society or their online audience. They can use Social Network Sites (SNS) like social media to come out although they are not being seen physically by the receiver of the disclosure. Despite the available medium, some might find disclosing or coming out as difficult, but others may find coming out easier now than before; especially, when one can create anonymous accounts.

Research framework

The conceptual framework of the study in figure 1 shows the coming out process of Filipino millennial gay men. It was derived from the results of the study after the data were coded and interpreted.

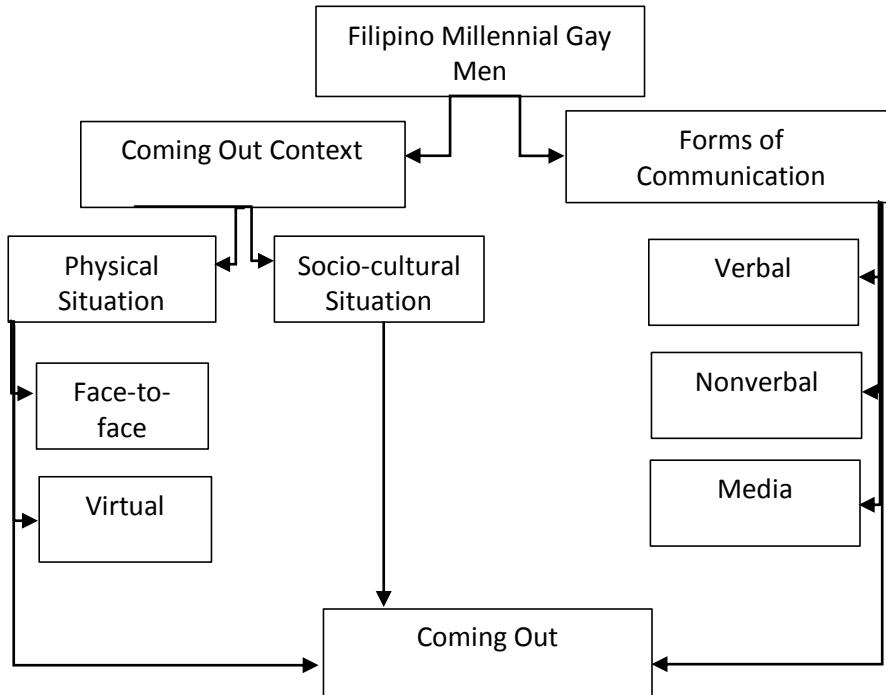


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

Figure 1 shows the coming out process of the Filipino millennial gay men. When the sexual orientation is natural, the participants knew they were gay. They need not disclose it to themselves unlike those who realized their sexual orientation. For those who realized their sexual orientation, the factors for their realization are either because they are influenced by their environment (relatives), they feel attracted to the same sex, and they themselves feel that they are gay. This is where disclosure to other people comes in. It can be face-to-face or virtual. Like the physical situation, the socio-cultural situation can also affect the communication between the people involved and the person who is disclosing that he is gay.

The coming out process may differ, especially the situation wherein it involves other people. The person may or may not know that he is gay when millennial gay men disclose their sexual orientation. In some cases of those who naturally knew they were gay, the people they were supposed to disclose to, already knew that they are gay. Their disclosure becomes a confirmation of their sexual orientation rather than their sexual orientation. There can also be instances wherein the disclosure is unplanned wherein the disclosure was done unconsciously. Language is commonly used to confirm the participants' sexual orientation.

Nonverbal cues can be misinterpreted or not noticed. It is the same with the use of media. Hence, this is where the verbal communication comes in. It is in the form of confirmation. In the study, the most obvious nonverbal communication is the clothing and the tone of voice. There are also instances when Filipino millennial gay people use media to disclose their sexual orientation to others. The most common means is the social media. It becomes a computer mediated communication wherein the message is sent through a medium like being computer mediated. In the study, the participants' sexual orientation is evident through their pictures in Facebook. However, they still use either verbal, nonverbal or both to disclose their sexual orientation. There was one instance wherein the medium used to disclose his sexual orientation to other people is the television. Although, it can be considered as a rare chance since not everyone can have the opportunity to appear in the television.

Objectives of the study

This study aims to analyze the coming out of millennial Filipino gay men. Specifically, it sought to address the following:

1. to analyze the context how millennial Filipino gay men communicate their coming out in terms of:
 - a. physical situation, and
 - b. socio-cultural situation
2. to identify the forms of communication used by millennial Filipino gay men to come out; and
3. to identify the role of language as used in the coming out process of millennial Filipino gay men

METHOD

In conducting the data gathering, the researchers first identified the methods to be used. The researchers used the descriptive research design to seek familiarity with the coming out of millennial Filipino gay men. The study is a qualitative research wherein the participants who fit the standards required by the nature of the study are interviewed to gain in-depth understanding about them. The researchers conducted interviews in Lyceum of the Philippines-Laguna (LPL) to show the Lycean experience; they interviewed one (1) participant each, who fits the criteria for the participants of the study from five (5) different colleges in the said school.

Data were gathered from the 5 colleges of LPL. The 5 collages are College of Arts and Sciences, College of Allied Medicine, College of Engineering and Computer Studies, College of Business and Accountancy, and College of International Tourism and Hotel Management. The participants were identified through the snowballing method wherein the researchers asked for a referral regarding the Filipino millennial gay men in LPL who already came out to their family, friends, others or all of the above. They were chosen based on the standard criteria: (1) millennials (born between the years 1980 and 2000), (2) should have already come out, may it be verbally, nonverbally or through social media (Facebook and Twitter), (3) should be attracted to the same sex—in this study: males, (4) being gay should be apparent through nonverbal communications like posture, tone of voice, and gestures—excluding their clothes (5) should also be apparent through their verbal communication or the way they speak. The basis for the participants' coming out is their self-identification.

The research instrument used is a researcher-made interview guide along with the demographic profile form. They were asked questions that are answered by life narrative responses to understand their coming out. The interview guide contains questions such as why do you come out as gay, what are your experiences in coming out, what is/are your means of coming out, and other follow up questions such as the realization of their sexual orientation, when did they come out, whether they have to tell others that they are gay and other questions that may give the researchers a deeper understanding of the coming out of Filipino millennial gay men.

Data were coded and interpreted by the researchers with the use of the theoretical framework and the related review of literature as a guide in order to create a conceptual framework.

Profile of the respondents

The researchers interviewed the following respondents; pseudonyms were used. First, Corey from the College of Arts and Sciences, 17 years old, Catholic, came from a family with 5 members. During the interview, he was wearing a red turban, wearing a uniform assigned for female, and had light make-up on his face consisting of face powder, eyebrow liner, and lipstick. Second, Glenn, 18 years old from the College of Engineering and Computer Studies, Catholic, came from a family with 5 members. He needed to be excused during his dance troupe practice when he was interviewed and he was wearing a light blue fitted shirt with jersey shorts. Third, Taylor, 18, from the College of International Tourism and Hotel Management, Born-Again Christian, came from a family with 6 members. He was interviewed in a café where he was hanging out with his friends consisting of 4 girls and 2 gays. He was wearing an above the knee denim shorts, V-neck shirt, and his hair was long enough to reach his neck. Fourth, Jamie, 19 years old from the College of Business and Accountancy, came from a Catholic family with 6 members. During the interview he was wearing his uniform consisting of slacks, coat, polo, and tie. He also had a shoulder bag which is mostly used by girls and his eyebrows were arched and styled. Lastly, Frances, 19 years old from College of Allied Medicine, came from a Catholic family with 4 members. During the interview he was wearing his all white uniform with a striking gold watch.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results were gained by identifying the similar concepts given by the interviewees. In terms of their being gay, some participants said that their sexual orientation is natural for them when they are still children or even since birth; however, others came to a realization that they are gay. Three out of five participants identified themselves as gay during their childhood. Instead of disclosing that they are gay, they and the people around them knew it already. However, for those who came to a realization, they still had to disclose their sexual orientation to themselves before they come out to others. Another result that the researchers drew from the data is that even if there are new ways of communication through the use of technology and Internet, most of the participants still disclosed verbally and non-verbally. Verbal in a sense that they say that they are gay face-to-face with their parents or their friends and non-verbally in terms of wearing girls' clothing, having a soft voice, mimicking the opposite sex's movement, and wearing make-up. Another remarkable

result shows that the socio-cultural situation that one belongs to plays a vital role in terms of coming out as gay for it affects his communication in such a way that he could either be more open to coming out to his family rather than friends, vice-versa or both, depending on the social situation. Findings show that the role of language in the process of disclosure is to confirm their sexual orientation to others.

Today's generation of gay men are given the advantage to come out through the social media. According to Bazarova and Choi (2014), through social media technologies, millions self-disclose personal information on SNS routinely and these technologies give the people a new possibility on how they can share their personal information. However, study shows that millennial Filipino gay men still prefer disclosing their sexual orientation through the traditional means which are the verbal and nonverbal communication rather than the use of the social media and the like.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In the physical situation of the millennial Filipino gay men, they usually prefer face-to-face disclosure of their sexual orientation rather than that of the use of media. If they do disclose through social media, they are the ones who choose what to use to satisfy their needs. Millennial Filipino gay men had different socio-cultural situations. However, disclosure is still possible and it still occurs, although the process is different. The role of language in the coming out of Filipino millennial gay men is the confirmation that they are gay. Despite being millennials, Filipino gay men are more likely to disclose their sexual orientation in a traditional way through verbal (gay language) and nonverbal (tone of voice and clothing) communication rather than using social media. They come out verbally to confirm that they are gay while they come out nonverbally which shows their sexual orientation.

It is recommended to millennial Filipino gay men to maximize the use of the modern technologies, especially the social media in disclosing their sexual orientation. It does not only limit to social media, but it also includes using other media such as messaging, video calls and the like. However, they should be able to clearly convey what they want when using media since the symbols they use, and the meanings they intend to tell the other person have the possibility of being misinterpreted because of the lack of verbal and nonverbal communications. The efficiency of the media they chose to use to disclose their sexual orientation depends on the way they send their message (emoticons, acronyms, etc.) so that the other person they want to disclose to will interpret and grasp the intended meaning of the message. Millennial Filipino gay men use social media

more to express themselves and disclose their sexual orientation. They can disclose through written and visual means when using the social media since millennials live in a generation where technology, especially social media, is developed and is still developing.

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