



LGBTQ Women, Appearance Negotiations, and Workplace Dress Codes

Kelly L. Reddy-Best

To cite this article: Kelly L. Reddy-Best (2018) LGBTQ Women, Appearance Negotiations, and Workplace Dress Codes, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 65:5, 615-639, DOI: [10.1080/00918369.2017.1328225](https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2017.1328225)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2017.1328225>



Published online: 30 Jun 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 4923



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 8 View citing articles [↗](#)



LGBTQ Women, Appearance Negotiations, and Workplace Dress Codes

Kelly L. Reddy-Best, PhD

Department of Apparel, Events, and Hospitality Management, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, USA

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore LGBTQ women's experiences with unwritten or formal dress codes at work. I asked: What are LGBTQ women's experiences in the workplace with appearance management, and what are LGBTQ women's experiences navigating the written and unwritten dress codes in the workplace? To answer the research question, interviews were conducted with 24 self-identifying LGBTQ women. Six key themes emerged from the data. Themes included (1) expressed sexual identity in appearance, (2) unwritten dress codes in work environments did not always allow for expression of sexual identity in appearance, (3) motivations for pressure or desire to conceal expression of sexual identity in appearance at work, (4) negotiations of revealing or concealing sexual identity in appearance in the workplace impacted levels of comfort and confidence, (5) verbal and nonverbal negative experiences related to appearance at work, and (6) received compliments about appearance at work.

KEYWORDS

Appearance; dress codes; identity; LGBTQ; women; workplace

Appearance and clothing serve as a visual metaphor for identity, and they are major indicators or tools to display or perform gender (Davis, 1992). Performing gender for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning) women is interrelated to sexuality or the expression of sexual identity (Reddy-Best & Pedersen, 2015). Over time, there have been myriad ways LGBTQ women express their sexual identity through appearance and clothing. Some women in the LGBTQ community push gender boundaries by adopting masculine garments or behaviors to express their sexual identity (Geczy & Karaminas, 2013). Within lesbian communities, female masculinities often referred to as butch have a long history of disapproval (Queen, 1994) and do not fit within the existing gender discourse or institutions (Halberstam, 2005). These rejections of female masculinities are situated within the expectation of female femininities that are upheld within our patriarchal society (Bordo, 1993). One place where this hierarchy of gender and sexuality norms is maintained is in the workplace (Skidmore, 1999), and it is these hierarchies that are the focus of this study. In this

CONTACT Kelly L. Reddy-Best  klrb@iastate.edu  Department of Apparel, Events, and Hospitality Management, Iowa State University, 1058 Lebaron 626 Morrill Rd., Ames, IA 50011, USA.

article, I sought to explore the workplace by critically examining LGBTQ women's experiences with workplace attire and dress codes for individuals who work in areas requiring business or business-casual clothing at work, and how their bodies are regulated by formal and informal dress codes in these spaces. The purpose was to explore if workplace dress codes inhibit LGBTQ women's abilities to express themselves and whether or not these outcomes negatively impact them or the organization at large or result in stigma management. Implications from this research could reveal the need for employers to more carefully consider their written dress codes and also their organizational culture that allows or does not allow for negotiation of gender and sexuality through appearance in the workspace.

Literature review

Fashion, dress, and identity

Kaiser (2012) asserted that fashion is “a social process of negotiation and navigation” (p. 1). She continued, “styling, dressing, adorning, or fashioning the body is a fundamental part of subject formation (shaping, sustaining, and shifting): an ongoing sense of self and identity in a changing world” (Kaiser, 2012, p. 30). Therefore, fashioning or styling the body involves a complex process that intersects and overlaps the simultaneous embodiment of these subject positions, including “gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, national identity, age/generation, [and] place” (Kaiser, 2012, p. 1). These processes related to the continual shaping, sustaining, and shifting of identity are often referred to as appearance management (Kaiser, 1990). During appearance management, or the “attention, decisions, and acts related to one's personal appearance,” individuals use clothing or the “tangible or material objects” to cover or uncover parts of the body (Kaiser, 1990, p. 5).

Fashion studies scholars will also often use the term *dress* when referencing appearance management. For the purpose of this study, Eicher and Roach-Higgins's (1992) definition of dress was used, which includes any outward modification and/or any supplements on or around the body. The information communicated via dress and other corresponding symbols influences how individuals are perceived (Damhorst, 1990) and also influences how an individual evaluates and perceives the self (Blumer, 1969).

LGBTQ women and dress

Scholars described a variety of ways women in the LGBTQ community fashion their bodies with signs or symbols that communicate their sexual identity. Both Karaminas (2013) and Wilson (2013) examined lesbian women's styles from a historical perspective. Wilson (2013) found evidence

dating back to the 19th century that women who loved women adopted masculine styles, while cultural shifts in the 1960s led to expressions of butch and femme identities; she concluded that the 21st century allows for a countless number of expressions for LGBTQ women. Karaminas (2013) further highlighted the myriad ways LGBTQ women in the latter part of the 20th century fashioned their bodies, such as the androgynous look of the 1980s and the lipstick lesbian or lesbian chic style of the 1990s. Geczy and Karaminas (2013) described that later styles were overall more “blurred and watered down,” which contrasts with the binary femme and butch aesthetics of the 1950s (p. 48).

Other scholars used qualitative methods to understand how LGBTQ women negotiate sexual identity through appearance. Ponse (1978) interviewed 75 White, middle-class, lesbian women. Her participants stated, “Some butches adopt male clothing, wear close-cropped hair, and approximate a male physique by such measures as binding their breasts and padding the genital area” (p. 116). Some femme-identifying lesbians reported wearing makeup and frilly clothes. Levitt, Gerrish, and Hiestand (2003) interviewed 12 self-identified femmes to understand how they negotiated their gender. The femme-identifying participants dressed sexier and wore makeup. In a more recent study, Reddy-Best and Pedersen (2015) reported LGBTQ women frequently shifted and negotiated the expression of their sexual identity in appearance from androgynous to feminine or masculine, yet masculine signifiers were frequently adopted when wanting to show their sexuality. One theme throughout the works relates to these women pushing gender boundaries by adopting masculine signifiers to negotiate their sexual identity through appearance.

Organizational culture, dress codes, gender, and sexuality

One space where bodies and dress practices are carefully regulated is the workplace. Organizational culture refers to the values, beliefs, and norms put forth by an organization to guide its members (Rousseau, 1990). Human resource professionals influence the visual aspects of the organizational culture by establishing and implementing dress codes (Peluchette & Karl, 2007). Workplace dress codes regulate “everything from dress and grooming habits to personal hygiene” (Zalesne, 2007, p. 535). Some literature has suggested that adoption of workplace dress codes can foster a positive organizational culture by inspiring confidence, optimism, and collaboration in the work environment (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2006; Woodard, 1999).

However, many dress code norms are grounded in stereotypical gender assumptions (Brower, 2013; Cruz, 2004; Skidmore, 1999; Zalesne, 2007). The regulations that may seem insignificant to some are “reinforcing hidden prejudices embedded in social norms” and can prohibit some individuals

from comfortably expressing their gender identity (Zalesne, 2007, p. 2007). Skidmore (1999) examined several legal cases that “contribute to the dominance of heterosexuality” in the workplace through “legal backing” (Skidmore, 1999, p. 523). One case they referenced was the UK case *Schmidt v. Austick’s Bookshops* (1977), where the court ruled that employers were not discriminating based on sex when allowing only men to wear pants. Cruz (2004) reported these stereotypes were reinforced at a casino where female employees were required to wear makeup and feminine hair styling. A recent report out of the UK on inequalities in workplace dress was created in response to a woman being sent home from work because she refused to wear high heels (Parliamentary Petitions Committee and Women and Equalities Committee, 2017). Based on these findings, it is clear that dress code implementation can impact the overall climate and reinforce gender norms in the workplace, both of which are still current issues.

In addition to the study of legal discourse on dress code, gender, and sexuality, a few scholars have analyzed the lived experiences of LGBTQ individuals in the workplace related to appearance and dress codes. Bowring and Brewis (2009) analyzed gay and lesbian identity management in the workplace in Canada. One theme in their findings related to appearance and the “importance of being appropriate” (p. 371). The authors described the experience of only one lesbian who worked in a male-dominated field (information technology) and stated that she felt more accepted in the workplace when appearing more masculine. The authors did not report if the other six lesbians interviewed for the study had similar experiences. Wright (2013) also examined lesbian experiences in male-dominated workspaces—construction and transportation. One lesbian in this study expressed that the dress codes required her to modify her appearance so that her sexuality was less visible (by wearing long hair), and all the participants, both heterosexual and lesbian, carefully considered how masculine or feminine they were presenting in the majority-male space. The author reported disclosure of lesbian identities to coworkers usually centered on discussions of partners.

Workplace dress

Scholars further examined how workplace dress impacts an employee’s self-perception in the work environment. For example, several researchers have found that employees’ appearance and workplace attire can impact performance and psychological wellbeing at work (Kwon, 1994a, 1994b; Peluchette & Karl, 2007; Rafaeli, Dutton, Harquail, & Mackie-Lewis, 1997). Kwon (1994a) suggested that employees’ appearance and clothing at work can influence the perception of their competency, knowledge, and efficiency. Kwon (1994b) found similar results in that employees who felt positively about their clothing increased their self-perception of competency at work. In another study, scholars

found that workplace dress perceived as inappropriate by the employee led to psychological discomfort, and dress that was perceived as appropriate increased self-confidence (Rafaeli et al., 1997). Wearing formal business attire has been shown to increase self-perceptions of competence, trustworthiness, and leadership authority (Peluchette & Karl, 2007). Yet differences in perceptions have been revealed based on the job type, where employees in creative positions felt restrained in formal clothes and those in more business-related positions perceived themselves to be more professional (Dellinger, 2002).

Workplace dress also impacts how others perceive an individual. Scholars reported that women who appeared more masculine by wearing a necktie as opposed to a scarf were perceived as “more likely to be promoted” (Johnson, Crutsinger, & Workman, 1994, p. 27). Spivack (1989) found women who were labeled as aggressive were told to appear more feminine in their appearance and overall mannerisms. Several scholars found that employees took an active role in managing their appearance in the workplace to influence or manage the perceptions of others (Kang, Sklar, & Johnson, 2011; Peluchette & Karl, 2007; Rafaeli et al., 1997; Rucker, Anderson, & Kangas, 1999). For instance, young male professionals bought specific garments they felt signified their profession’s look (Kang et al., 2011). This summary of literature highlights the integral part that dress can play in the workplace in influencing both the self and others.

Theoretical framework: Stigma management communication

Many communities including the LGBTQ community experience stigmatization. Stigma refers to an identity mark that discredits an individual or causes them to be undesirable or rejected (Goffman, 1963). When stigma is experienced in the workplace, it can result in reduced commitment to their job or negative performance (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Meisenbach (2010) developed the theory of stigma management communication, which outlines six strategies: accept, avoid, evade responsibility, reduce offensiveness, deny, and ignore/display. In the acceptance strategy, individuals “accept public expectations regarding the stigma and its applicability to themselves” (p. 278). They accept that the “stigmatized aspect is part of their identity” (p. 278). In the second strategy, avoiding, individuals might work to hide the “stigma attribute,” avoid the “stigmatizing situations,” distance “self from the stigma,” or eliminate “the stigma behavior or attribute” (p. 280). The third strategy, evading responsibility, referred to individuals seeking to change public opinion of stigma by “deferring agency or control away from the stigmatized individual” (p. 282). Reducing offensiveness referred to when the individual accepted the stigma but sought to change how others viewed the stigma. Last, some individuals actively denied or ignored the stigma’s existence. The

results of the current study will be discussed in relation to the strategies outlined in the theory of stigma management communication.

Justification and purpose of the study

There is significant research on the impact of dress codes on cultural climate, how workplace dress impacts perception of the self, and how workplace dress impacts the perceptions of others. However, these studies have focused mainly on heterosexual individuals. The studies that did address dress code workplace inequalities for the LGBTQ community are limited to findings based on court cases or LGBTQ women's experiences in male-dominated fields. Although these findings are extremely valuable and offer insight into the experiences for LGBTQ individuals, it is also important to understand the current cultural climate at work for women in the LGBTQ community in various fields. Many companies have employee handbooks that outline procedures or regulations, including dress code, which must be followed; however, companies often have unwritten or implicit rules, which impact the cultural environment and productivity (Duncan, 2014). No studies have asked LGBTQ women about their experiences with unwritten or formal dress codes in fields requiring business or business casual dress codes that are not primarily male-dominated. To fill this gap in the literature, this study is guided by the following research question: (1) What are LGBTQ women's experiences in the workplace with appearance management, and (2) What are LGBTQ women's experiences navigating the written and unwritten dress codes in the workplace?

Method

Data collection

To answer the research questions, I conducted in-depth, semistructured interviews. All the described procedures were approved by the institutional review board. I conducted interviews between March and June of 2016, which lasted between 42 and 103 minutes. To gain rapport with the interviewee, I first asked about their day and made other conversation. I used an interview guide with 35 questions, yet allowed flexibility in the interview. I also asked 10 demographic questions. During the interview, participants were asked about their appearance and sexual identity, work history, workplace clothing, dress codes in the workplace, and their experiences with workplace dress.¹ Probes were used to gain a deeper insight. If the participant got too far off track, I brought them back on topic. I also continually summarized the participants' responses during the interview to ensure the meaning of the response was understood. Interviews were conducted in person, via video chat, or over the phone, depending on the location and preference of the participant.

Participant recruitment

I used purposive sampling, and I recruited by posting flyers on social media sites. To be eligible to participate in the study, participants needed to self-identify as a queer, bisexual, lesbian, or gay woman; identify anywhere on the gender spectrum (genderqueer, agender, woman, androgynous, transgender, genderfluid, etc.); be out or readily sharing their sexual identity with friends, family, or employer; work in one of the following areas: business, finance, education, community and social service, legal, office or administrative support, sales, marketing, or management; and be age 23 or higher. Participants were recruited from these fields in order to explore experiences in professions that did not have a uniform and where business or business casual dress might be expected. This study purposefully recruited individuals who were 23 years or older to gain an understanding of LGBTQ women with professional or career-related experiences. When potential participants contacted me via e-mail, the informed consent form was provided, which outlined the details of the study. Once the participant confirmed that they met the eligibility and understood and agreed to the information on the informed consent document, they scheduled the interview time at the participant's convenience. Before the interview began, I reviewed the informed consent document in detail with the participant again to ensure they understood the information and that they could withdraw at any time. Following each interview, I asked participants if they had any questions about the study and confirmed that I could use their de-identified data in the study.

Data analysis

Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. After transcription, I reviewed the transcript and removed any identifying information. Analysis began during the interview as I made short notes about possible themes. I typed words or phrases such as “testing the water,” “positive complement,” “weary of complements,” or “need to be taken more seriously” into a Word document. I began a list of possible themes after the first interview and continued revising the themes until the end of data collection. Each interview was coded using open, axial, and selective coding (Creswell, 2014). During the first stage of coding, I reviewed the transcripts and notes for preliminary coding categories, and a codebook with code definitions was developed. Passages, sentences, or short phrases for each transcript were assigned an initial code. These initial codes were very specific, such as “felt uncomfortable wearing a tie in the workplace.” Codes were continually refined as the analysis process unfolded. I continually re-compared the data to the codebook as codes were redefined. After I coded the interviews during the first pass, the initial codebook was solidified.

Then I had a research assistant check intercoder reliability by first carefully reviewing the codebook with them. We analyzed part of one transcript together. After the assistant independently coded a sample of transcripts, agreement was calculated by dividing the total number of agreements by total number of passages coded, resulting in 96.5% agreement, thus establishing reliability in the coding (Neuman, 2011). The disagreements in coding were discussed, and I refined the codebook. The data were reviewed again in their entirety with the newly defined codebook after the intercoder reliability check. Then all of the data were input into Nvivo 11 and coded in the program with the previously assigned codes. I reviewed all data coded to each category after all data were input and coded in Nvivo.

In the second stage, axial coding, I began organizing and linking the codes into larger themes and categories. Nvivo was used in this stage and in all remaining data analysis stages. Hierarchies were created in the codebook, and I continually reviewed the transcripts, codes, and codebook. For example, I identified that the codes related to confidence and comfort were related to the idea of revealing or concealing signifiers of sexuality through their appearance. Last, during the selective coding process, I examined the refined codebook and identified categories in addition to data supporting the larger themes that emerged. In this last stage, I solidified the six themes that emerged. The entire analysis process was cyclical, and I continued reviewing the transcriptions and codebook until six larger themes were defined and supported by the data. In addition to some of the previously mentioned techniques, I also addressed the validity of the study by providing a “rich, thick description” of the findings and presenting the “negative or discrepant information” (Creswell, 2014, p. 202).

Participant demographic information

I completed 24 semistructured, in-depth interviews for the study with participants whose ages ranged from 23 to 61 (average age 32). [Table 1](#) highlights participants’ demographic information. All participants were assigned a number to ensure anonymity for anyone reading the article. When asked about their sexual identity, 10 participants answered without hesitation and provided one term. Of those participants, four identified as bisexual, two as gay, three as lesbian, and one as queer. Fourteen of the participants used multiple descriptors or said they changed the term depending on who they were talking to; for example, Participant 14 said, “I either, I would say queer or bisexual depending on who asks. I like queer better, I like the vagueness and implications but bisexual is a word people know. I’m attracted to people of all genders.” Participant 4 thought about it for a few seconds and then stated, “I say fluid because technically I’m demi-sexual. I’m pretty much asexual. . .But, by default it

Table 1. Participant summary.

Participant #	Age	Location	Location Population	Occupation/ Occupation Area	Race	Highest Level of Education	Preferred Gender Pronouns
1	30	California	Urbanized area	Business Consultant	White	Masters	She/her
2	23	Oregon	Urbanized area	Apparel Designer	White	Bachelors	She/her
3	25	California	Urbanized area	Administrative staff at LGBTQ non-profit	White	Bachelors	She/her
4	30	California	Urbanized area	Dietician	Pilipino	Masters	She/her
5	33	California	Urbanized area	Banking	Asian American	Masters	She/her
6	29	New Mexico	Urbanized area	Lawyer	White	Doctor of Law	She/her
7	31	California	Urbanized area	Banking	White	Masters	She/her
8	29	Pennsylvania	Urbanized area	High school counselor	White	Bachelors	She/her
9	29	Pennsylvania	Urbanized area	Medical case manager	White	Bachelors	She/her
10	61	California	Urbanized area	Counselor	White	Masters	She/her
11	29	Pennsylvania	Urbanized area	Customer Service	White	Some college	They/them
12	31	California	Urbanized area	Education	White	Doctorate	She/her
13	31	Pennsylvania	Urbanized area	Retail Manager	Mixed	Some college	She/her
14	33	Texas	Urbanized area	Lawyer	White/ Jewish	Doctor of Law	They/them
15	38	Nebraska	Urbanized area	Insurance agent	Mexican/ Latina	Masters	She/her
16	26	California	Urbanized area	Project Manager	White	Bachelors	She/her
17	31	Washington	Urbanized area	Program Manager; Women's sports college coach	White	Masters	She/her
18	33	Connecticut	Urbanized area	Business	White	Masters	She/her
19	25	California	Urbanized area	Project Manager in Tech	White	Bachelors	She/her
20	28	Maryland	Urbanized area	Academic Advisor	Black American	Bachelors	She/her
21	26	Minnesota	Urbanized area	Computer programmer	White	Masters	She/her
22	39	Connecticut	Urbanized area	Audiologist	White	Doctorate	She/her
23	36	Texas	Urbanized area	Geoscientist	White	Doctorate	She/her
24	59	Indiana	Urban cluster	Business owner	White	Masters	She/her

Note. According to the United States Census Bureau, urbanized areas refer to areas with 50,000 or more people and urban clusters have populations between 2,500 and 50,000 people. To preserve anonymity, specific cities were not provided for each participant.

would be lesbian.” All participants were assigned female at birth, and all had been readily sharing their sexual identity for at least 5 years with family, friends, or at work.

Results

Overview of themes

Six key themes with varying numbers of subthemes emerged from the data based on participants’ descriptions of their experiences with appearance and workplace dress codes. Themes included (1) expressed sexual identity in appearance, (2) unwritten dress codes in work environments did not always allow for expression of sexual identity in appearance, (3) motivations for pressure or desire to conceal expression of sexual identity in appearance at work, (4) negotiations of revealing or concealing sexual identity in appearance in the workplace impacted levels of comfort and confidence, (5) verbal and nonverbal negative experiences related to appearance at work, and (6) received compliments about appearance at work. The subthemes are outlined in each theme below. When asked about their experiences, participants described experiences related to their current and past positions; therefore, their responses may relate to their currently held position or more recent past positions.

Theme one: Expressed sexual identity in appearance

Since there are myriad ways LGBTQ women fashion their bodies, I first engaged participants in conversations about their appearance in general (outside of work), and if they felt they expressed their sexuality in their appearance; when asked, 22 said yes, and two said no. Participant 11 explained, “Yes, I think that I potentially try to use a lower tone speaking voice to sound a little more masculine, I dress like I said androgynous or butch, which I think reads very queer.” Another participant responded immediately with: “Oh absolutely, I think I always have” (Participant 12). Then Participant 19 said, “Yes. I think I do a decent job of that. Based on like the kinds of shoes, shirts, and accessories I select.” One of the participants (number 10) who did not feel others could “read” their sexuality through their appearance said, “Let me just say...that there is nobody in the world that would guess that I am a gay woman. I’ve passed in every setting that I’ve ever had to be in. I wear women’s clothing.” While Participant 10 responded that she also did not feel her appearance signified her sexuality, she related that when in LGBTQ-focused spaces she would be “assumed to be a long-haired lesbian, or a ‘femmi’ lesbian.” Both of the women who felt they did not signify their sexuality expressed that their feminine presentation, which

felt most natural to them, contributed to this outcome of being read as “straight” in most situations.

Of the 22 participants who felt they expressed their sexual identity through their appearance in general, 19 indicated a masculine aesthetic or behaviors were signifiers of their sexuality. Participant 13 explained that even if she wore a feminine garment, she would style it in a masculine way: “I would even wear sweaters with the zipper off the shoulder, I would take their clothes and try to make it more masculine, I wouldn’t wear any of the pink stuff.” Another participant said that specific accessories signified her sexuality, such as leather wristwatches or bands. Even though they were feminine accessories, she said she “puts them on with that kind of coding in mind” since they are “more masculine in style” (Participant 19). Other signifiers mentioned by participants included an undercut (shaved at the neck sometimes with a unique design) or asymmetric hairstyle ($n = 3$), flannel shirts ($n = 2$), or other blatant images or symbols such as rainbows or Pride shirts ($n = 5$). When I asked Participant 3, the participant stopped and thought for a moment and then reflected on the process she navigated when wearing flannels: “Flannels are often associated [with the queer identity], and sometimes I think to myself do I want to look ‘extra queer’ if I put on my flannel?” Hair was often mentioned as an important component of many of the women’s appearances. In addition to several of the participants who felt their short, masculine style signified their sexuality to others, an undercut or asymmetric style was also mentioned. For example, Participant 2 stated, “Especially women, lesbian women and bisexual women, either have a side cut or an undercut or just something that’s going on with their hair, so when I did that I definitely felt like that was more visibly ‘not straight.’”

In these conversations about looking “queer” or reading as a “lesbian,” many ($n = 14$, out of the 22 who felt they expressed their sexuality in their appearance) of the participants explained that they often thought about how much they signified their sexuality in the workplace. Although it was not a constant thought, there was some extra processing happening while they managed their appearance before or during their work day. Participant 12, who was in education, said she was part of the LGBTQ group at work, and she explained that this space made her think about her appearance and how much or if she was (or was not) presenting enough. She said:

I think around my LGBTQ colleagues. I feel less confident in those meetings when I felt I didn’t look as ‘gay’ as them. I really wish I could look gay-er, but I don’t feel as comfortable doing so. I am really comfortable in my current aesthetic, but I also feel it doesn’t quite express who I am.

Another participant explained that she thought about how she appeared while at work functions and especially when paired next to her wife. She said:

It can be really stressful going to a holiday party, a company holiday party. My wife always wants to wear a dress, and then I always wear pretty much what I wore to work. And now we look like a stereotypical couple [lesbian couple—one masculine and one feminine partner]. I don't want to look like stereotypes. Because I don't want people to only see that about us. (Participant 23)

This process of negotiation related to revealing or concealing sexuality through appearance in the workplace will be more fully explored and disentangled in themes two and three.

Theme two: Unwritten dress codes in work environments did not always allow for expression of sexual identity in appearance at work

All of the participants were asked if they were provided a dress code at their various jobs. Most of the participants ($n = 22$) said that every job they have held provided them a dress code that was either written or verbally explained from someone in an authority position. Of these 22 participants, 19 explained that they felt the formally provided dress code did not explicitly prohibit expression of sexual identity or varying gender identities. For example, Participant 11 said, “It’s just blanket statements, but business casual.” Another participant had a similar experience: “When I asked sort of informally I was told basically nothing with writing on it, and jeans on Fridays. That’s it. But, otherwise just business casual I think was the idea” (Participant 6). However, five of the participants did remember that the dress code was separated by gender and outlined rules such as “no spaghetti straps” for women or “skirts must be a certain length.” All five of these participants reiterated that despite their dress code being separated by gender, the rules did not explicitly prohibit pushing gender boundaries such as “men cannot wear skirts.” Although, one of the five remembered when she was in law school that the career services advice heavily emphasized a dress code that supported stereotypical gender norms. This participant said:

Their advice was very gendered. I remember we were told, “wear skirt suits with skirts” you know, “wear panty hose,” that kind of thing. The implication was given that if you are a woman you should present in a very traditionally feminine way. (Participant 14)

After asking about the formal dress codes, I asked about any unwritten dress codes they thought they might need to follow, which might be communicated by subtle cues or the norms of what others wore. Many of the participants ($n = 19$) responded that the unwritten dress codes in the work environment did not always allow for expression of sexual identity in appearance. When asked about any unwritten dress codes, Participant 16 related, “I have a couple of plaid shirts where I’m like, this might be too immediately queer. This might be a little overboard.”

Participant 9 explained a similar feeling about signifying their sexuality in appearance: “There certainly is an unspoken pressure to be sort of conventional to be professional.” This sentiment of conforming to traditional gender norms based on the perceived unwritten dress code policy was true for all of the 19 participants. Participant 22, who lived and worked in Connecticut as an audiologist, was familiar with the labor laws that protected expression of gender identity in her state, but still felt expressing her sexuality (which she connected to pushing gender norms) might not be appropriate:

I would love to wear ties to work, I don't feel that that would necessarily go over well. Perhaps my boss would be fine with it, we have certain laws that are fine with it, but I think that because of my clientele most of them are on the geriatric side of things. Because they come from a different era. And so, for some people that's a little confusing for them. And, for some people, they are just not accepting of that kind of thing. So it's kind of one of those fine lines I kind of have to dance along in order to be me.

Participant 1 was also concerned about how others might respond in the workplace if she wore more of a masculine aesthetic, which she felt signified her sexuality:

I don't know. I have been thinking about trying to sort of wear, put more men's wear into my clothing, maybe wear some ties and some vests. I really like that. I used to wear a lot of ties. I really like those with like button-down shirts. That was if I wanted to dress up in my social life, not so much at work. I don't think I've ever done that at work. But I feel like people would think it was weird. Women wear dresses or they wear blazers that are tailored to a woman's figure. So, it is something, but not really sure if I would like to try to look a little more androgynous, which isn't the same as looking queer but it's an analogue for it. But, I don't know how comfortable I feel people will feel with it.

In contrast, five participants felt the workplace and unwritten dress code fully allowed expression of sexuality and gender identity at all times. These participants explained that they or their coworkers presented their sexuality in their appearance and that this assured them that appearing in this fashion was acceptable. Participant 3 was the only individual who worked in an LGBTQ-focused workplace, a nonprofit community space specifically for LGBTQ events and programs. Not surprisingly, she stated that her work environment encouraged representing employees' whole selves through appearance:

Maybe it's just because it's a safe and accepting place to wear something that might be more signifying yourself in a queer way. I think that has a lot to do with it. I don't know. But, I think it encourages signifiers.

One reason participants felt the unwritten dress code did not allow for expression of sexual identity in appearance was the noticeable observation of

the difference between participants and how other women appeared in the workplace ($n = 15$). All of these comments centered on coworkers appearing traditionally feminine, whereas the participants felt they were slightly more masculine-appearing. However, none of the participants readily adopted the “butch” identity. Participant 10 stated, “Everybody gets their nails done. I don’t. And they have pretty, colorful nail polish. Everybody wears shoes like this. With heels. Everybody wears mostly skirts.” Participant 16 related, “Definitely my style is more masculine than a lot of my co-workers.”

Theme three: Motivations for pressure or desire to conceal expression of sexual identity in appearance at work

Participants ($n = 16$) expressed various motivations related to the pressure or desire to conceal sexual identity at work, which often led participants to use strategies of concealing sexual identity expression through their appearance. Within this theme, seven subthemes were identified as to what motivated participants to conceal their sexual identity in their appearance: (1) did not want family to find out, (2) fear of impacting job performance or advancement, (3) fear of others’ perceptions, (4) felt unsafe, (5) interactions with conservative individuals, (6) to look more normal, and (7) unsure of company culture or acceptance.

One participant said they were fine to be out to their coworkers, but they were not completely out to their family. Fear of her family finding out through a possible connection at work motivated her to hide her sexuality through appearance. She explained, “If there is a link or traces that could go back to my family or my cousin could find out, then I would be a little more cautious and a little more aware but overall I am getting to be pretty comfortable” (Participant 5). Although this participant lived in a major metropolitan area, this fear still caused her to take precautions at work.

Four participants felt pressure to conceal their sexual identity at work because they felt it might affect their job performance or advancement. At the time, all of these participants lived in states that had nondiscrimination laws covering sexual orientation and gender identity. Participant 4 feared her bosses finding out and felt her appearance might provide hints to them about her sexuality. She worked to hide her sexuality and explained, “I’d rather not have that conversation. Just because, even though it’s unethical, what if they had some hatred towards them.” Participant 17, who was a women’s college sports coach, explained that she very carefully hid her sexuality in her appearance as it would not be acceptable for others to know, in particular the parents of the athletes. She shared the following story highlighting how this could impact her job performance:

I would say in coaching yes. I would say that was a big thing. Cause I wasn’t out to anybody in that world. I was out in my person life, but it has to be completely separate in that world. I would definitely try to hide it. Especially, I mean for

practices and, just regular day activities. We were in athletic clothes. So it's not a big deal, but when you are dressing up for games, I would dress more feminine during that period because, there's a lot of inferences that can be made, and you want to avoid those things. If you dress a certain way as a head coach, say a woman she wore a suit and tie, if she dressed that way. She would potentially be discouraging other recruits from coming. Cause their parents influence that decision, their friends influence that decision where they go and everything. And they are like, "You are going to go play for a coach that [is gay]." It's still a thing.

Therefore, she felt that dressing in a way that signaled her sexuality to others would absolutely impact her job as a college coach in that parents would not want their daughter to play for someone who might be a lesbian. She explained that she might lose potential players because the parents would have fears and worries about their daughter interacting and possibly being influenced by a lesbian. Participant 19 also alluded to the fact that the parents might assume that she might engage romantically with their daughter, relegating her to a position where she was not able to control her romantic impulses. Participant 8 was the only other person to work with children. Yet, in contrast to participant 19, she did not feel pressure to conceal her sexuality through her appearance in the workplace. As a high school counselor she worked closely with the kids, yet she did not relate to this theme.

Fear of others' perceptions also motivated participants to conceal their sexuality in their appearance ($n = 7$). These participants explained that they worked to minimize any potential judgments by others. When asked why she tried to conceal her sexuality, Participant 7 said, "Partially probably because I do have conscious and unconscious fears. And so about being judged. Or standing out. I try to minimize the potential for that." Participant 16 shared, "I definitely wanted to soft coat, because I wasn't sure how it would be received."

Fear of an unsafe environment motivated three participants to hide their sexuality through their appearance. Participant 21, who worked in tech in Minnesota, said she was out to her peers, but "I would not have been out to my boss of the whole company. It just wasn't a fully safe environment." She has since changed jobs to a company where she can more fully express her sexuality. Participant 16 said that sharing the following experience was one of the reasons she wanted to participate in the study. She explained:

My first job was one of those where I was putting in those small efforts to be a little bit more feminine, and I think I continued that level of effort for about 2 weeks while I was there, before I decided that it was probably safe to not do that anymore. It was more [of a] casual work environment than I currently have. But, I kept a lot of the same styles that I do now. I since have edited out some of the more feminine pieces that I wore early on in that job that in retrospect I didn't really like that much. So they were lost.

Four of the participants said that what motivated them to conceal their sexuality was that they might interact with conservative clients. They each worked in positions where they felt comfortable around their coworkers, but they had “client-facing” positions, which led to some unknown interactions. Participant 20, who was an academic advisor, explained that her management would sometimes give the cue that they might be interacting with individuals on the more conservative side. She said, “Yes, I would tailor my clothes, but that’s out of respect of my management.” Participant 5, who was in banking, said at one of the branches a lot of the clientele were conservative, and she would “try to not dress or come across I guess too butch.”

Two participants indicated they wanted to look more normal. For example, when I asked Participant 5 why she wanted to conceal her sexuality, she said, “I tried to blend in.” When discussing her appearance in the workplace, Participant 1 explained, “It was another one of those things I thought I should probably try and look a little more normal.”

A few of the participants ($n = 4$) attributed curbing their appearance to not fully understanding the culture or acceptance in the workplace. Participant 20 wanted to “assess the environment” before she felt she could express her sexuality in her workplace appearance. Participant 23 remembered that when she first started her job, she would “hide it from people, in part because [she] didn’t know what the environment was like.” Participant 6 took a job as a lawyer in New Mexico and said she “wasn’t sure how Catholic everyone was going to be down there.”

When examining all of the participants that related to this theme (1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, and 24), it is important to note that they come from a variety of fields. They are not necessarily only centered in fields where you might expect more conservative appearances such as banking or only those that interact with the public. Those individuals who also worked in tech, higher education, and retail felt pressure to conceal their sexuality through their appearance, while participant 15, who worked in an insurance agency in Nebraska, did not feel any pressure. Therefore, it did not seem as though one job type or geographic location were influencing this outcome of concealing sexuality. Additionally, they were not centered on the younger or older ages of the participants. There was a complex mix of motivations for the desire to conceal sexuality through appearance in the workplace.

Theme four: Negotiations of revealing or concealing sexual identity in appearance in the workplace impacted levels of comfort and confidence

Comfort

As participants were revealing or concealing their sexuality through their appearance, they identified various levels of comfort. Most of the discomfort participants described was in regard to appearing too feminine or feminine at

all ($n = 14$) as this was not part of their everyday aesthetic, because they did not normally present in a predominantly feminine aesthetic outside of work. Eleven of the 14 participants who felt this way also reported that they felt pressure to appear more feminine due to the unwritten dress codes. Participant 10 compared her experience of wearing feminine garments at work to being in drag. She said:

I feel like I'm in drag. I really feel like I'm walking around in drag if I wear a dress. I hate the feeling. I just hate the feeling. I'll still do it. I think I'm supposed to be dressed up, and I feel uncomfortable.

When asked if she ever feels uncomfortable at work, Participant 14 said, "More feminine clothes make me feel so uncomfortable."

Participants also described discomfort in the workplace related to appearing too masculine or pushing gender boundaries ($n = 8$). These eight participants were part of the 19 who indicated that they felt masculine aesthetics signified their sexuality to others in general outside of work. Yet this is not to say that the other 11 of the 19 felt completely comfortable in a masculine aesthetic at work—it is just that these eight participants felt they if they went too far masculine, they would definitely not feel comfortable, whereas they would feel comfortable expressing a masculine aesthetic outside of work. Four of these eight participants described experiences of feeling discomfort in both masculine and feminine aesthetics. Participant 22 explained that it took her quite a while to ascertain the workplace environment before she felt comfortable incorporating masculine signifiers into her wardrobe. She said, "I was very careful with going through an entire year's worth with this company to make sure that I felt comfortable really kind of expressing certain aspects of myself. Including dressing a little more androgynously if you will. A little more genderqueer." This practice of "testing the water" as described by Participant 22 was adopted by several participants ($n = 7$) before they fully began incorporating masculine signifiers into their appearance on a regular basis.

Confidence

In addition to comfort, participants also discussed varying levels of confidence when navigating their appearances at work. When asked if any type of outfit or aesthetic made them feel more confident, participants most frequently mentioned outfits expressing their sexual identity ($n = 11$), and in particular aesthetics that were masculine as opposed to other signifiers for their sexuality. Participant 14 said that when she began embracing her identity in her clothing at work, she felt most confident:

When I started dressing in [a] more masculine professional attire, I felt really confident and not awkward at all. I used to have things that I'd have to get dressed up for, professional things or occasions, that I would put on, I'd try to look put

together [in] a feminine, semi-professional outfit or formal outfit, and I would have a weird freak-out and start crying, and losing it, and feeling incredibly bad.

Similar to Participant 14, Participant 6 was also a lawyer and described the importance of being confident in the courtroom. Despite original discussions of feeling pressure to conform to gender norms, Participant 6 said:

A lot of lawyering is sort of “fake it till you make it.” You have to be sort of confident in what you’re saying and you have to, I have to be able to speak with conviction. And if I’m wearing clothes that I’m not confident in, which is essentially like girly things, I tend to not feel [confident]. I tend to feel very, very uncomfortable. And I want it to be more about what I’m saying, and that’s helpful.

It is possible that the two lawyers felt more confident in the courtroom when presenting a more masculine style due to the gender hierarchies of the male-dominated courtroom as opposed to the relationship of heightened confidence and expressing sexuality through masculine signifiers. Yet the other nine (of 11) participants who were in a variety of fields (counselor, audiology, technology, education, retail manager, geoscientist, banking, social service) also related that they felt more confident when expressing their sexuality with masculine aesthetics in the workplace.

In contrast, some of the participants highlighted that the pressure in the work environment to adopt traditional gender expressions made them more confident in gender-conforming outfits because they felt that was what was expected of them ($n = 4$). Participant 21 described this experience: “So if I am presenting and I chose an outfit that I know I look awesome in, and I know it conforms to everyone’s ideas of what I should be wearing like, yeah that’s confidence boosting.”

Theme five: Verbal and nonverbal negative experiences related to appearance at work

Those participants who did present their sexual identity in their appearance at work related various verbal and nonverbal experiences, which were sometimes negative and other times empowering or positive.² The most commonly reported experiences were negative nonverbal experiences such as stares, double-takes, or not being approached as much as others ($n = 15$). Participant 14 explained that she had worn both feminine- and masculine-style garments at work and said, “With the prior stuff, the feminine clothes, it’s kind [of] like I wore that and I [was] treated better.” Participant 15 explained that she often appeared in a feminine fashion but had a few memorable experiences when dressing slightly more masculine:

I think I can only remember maybe once or twice and that was because I was wearing a sweater or something that maybe looked a little too masculine. But that was probably, that’s the only thing that I can think of, that I recall off the

top of my head. One or two negative glances. Just wearing, which it was a men's sweater. But darn-it, I liked it. I think that only in those cases when it was something that might have been overtly masculine in appearance. And my hair is still down flowing, curly, long, whatever. I'm still wearing women's jeans or whatever. I might have been even wearing women's boots. But, just the top being so obviously male I think I can remember maybe one or two times seeing some sort of negative face.

Participant 17 remembered when she specifically interacted with women who she perceived to be straight that they "would do the 'double-take' or like glances, and that was kind of strange." Participant 22 explained that people did not stare or have negative faces but seemed confused or did not "know what to make of it [her masculine aesthetic]."

Some of these negative nonverbal experiences were described as initial reactions when meeting people, which then faded over time ($n = 3$). Participant 17 explained a situation when she had been emailing a colleague "and I meet them for the first time, and I look different than they expect." Another participant said, "It's always new clients I'm just meeting. Because I feel like I'm a bit younger and a bit gayer than probably what they are expecting" (Participant 19). Last, Participant 20 related a similar story: "I can perceive that if people didn't know me in different departments or only knew me by a phone call or see my name, which is very feminine, and then see a different package that comes with that I can see that they don't necessarily know how to handle me."

None of the participants indicated that they experienced overt negative comments, but 12 participants said they experienced verbal microaggressions or feared they might happen. One of the participants explained:

I did have a really weird compliment once from one of the guys I'm actually in our LGBT group with. And, he's one of those, he's one of those guys that's like, "I'm gay I can say whatever I like." You know? And he'd be like, "Look at you not being the stereotype." He's like, "Well done, you are proof that lesbians can have style." I'm like, interesting? Like that's so offensive.

Another participant who typically dressed in a masculine aesthetic (both inside and outside of work) said that she worked with all straight women, and they often made comments about her appearance such as, "How come you don't dress girlier?" or "You're never going to find a husband if you don't dress nicely" (Participant 4). Participant 6, who was an attorney, said she was often told she was "too aggressive." She continued that while women (both heterosexual and homosexual) were often told that they were too aggressive in some situations, she felt that "gay women get told all the time" and that this was "the coding for homophobia."

Theme six: Received compliments about appearance

Despite some negative experiences, participants ($n = 12$) highlighted that they did receive compliments about their appearance at work. Some of these compliments were on styles that the participants felt expressed their sexuality ($n = 3$). For example, Participant 18 said, “Once in a while, someone will say, ‘Cool tie!’ Or, sometimes women will, heterosexual women will say, ‘I love your tie, I could never pull that off.’ All three of these participants stated these comments made them feel positive about their appearance and confirmed the acceptance of their style in the workplace.

Other compliments were not received as well by participants. Again, none of these participants readily identified as a “butch lesbian,” and they explained that they incorporated both masculine and feminine signifiers in their appearance. Some participants ($n = 9$) noticed that they received compliments only when they appeared more feminine. For example, Participant 9 said, “I think the more, if I ever [wear] make up, and once in a while I do, [I get the] ‘ohhhh’ [in a high-pitched voice indicating her colleagues do this when seeing her in makeup]. I get a lot of compliments and it kind of makes me not want to do it.” Two of these nine participants further explained that they did not think these compliments were genuine. Participant 9 explained in detail how this made her feel:

I’ve had people say backhanded insults, compliments where they’ll say, “Oh you look so good in those girl pants. You can actually see your body.” And not in a sexual way, that they meant that, but in this way that kind of says, “oh you should just maybe just wear girl clothes all the time, cause I don’t like your guy clothes as much.” There’s been a few, just a little bit of that kind of situation where people will be, “Oh, you should definitely wear a dress one day.” Which I have not worn a dress, not to work ever in my whole life. Not since I’ve been of working age have I worn dresses. But, it’s sort of insinuation that I should try and wear more girl clothes or something. It feels more like a critique of what I’m wearing.

Discussion and conclusion

As participants discussed how they managed their appearances (Kaiser, 1990), they confirmed much of the previous work, which highlighted that LGBTQ women have a myriad of ways they present themselves and express their sexuality in appearance (Karaminas, 2013; Ponse, 1978; Reddy-Best & Pedersen, 2015; Wilson, 2013). While these findings do not directly answer the research questions, I felt it was important to ground the data in the participants’ experiences with their appearance and the expression of gender and sexual identity in order to disentangle their experiences in the workplace. In this study, the participants did not readily identify as butch or femme, as reported in some of the previous studies (Levitt et al., 2003), but many did state that masculine aesthetics or garments signified their sexual identity,

similar to Reddy-Best and Pedersen's (2015) study. The display of LGBTQ signifiers in their appearance highlights these participants' participation in the acceptance strategy of the stigma management communication theory (Meisenbach, 2010). They described that they openly displayed their stigmatized attributes both in general and in the workplace to varying degrees, despite sometimes having verbal and nonverbal negative experiences.

In this research, participants described negotiation of these gendered expressions in the workplace, which required business or business-casual dress codes. Previous researchers indicated that dress codes can impact the organizational culture (Peluchette & Karl, 2007). These dress codes can regulate all parts of appearance (Zalesne, 2007). In this study, while most participants indicated that there was a dress code provided, they continued to explain that the dress codes did not explicitly prohibit pushing gender boundaries, as was found in many previous studies (Cruz, 2004; Skidmore, 1999; Zalesne, 2007). It was the unwritten dress codes that participants felt prohibited expression of sexual identity in the workplace, which previous scholars had not fully explored for LGBTQ women who worked in areas requiring business or business casual dress codes that are not primarily dominated by males. These pressures from the unwritten dress codes that are informed by heteronormative perspectives caused some participants to conceal their sexual identity for various reasons, such as impacting job advancement, feeling unsafe, and several other reasons as described in theme three. In this sense, dress was used as a "coming out" tool in the workplace. Using dress or appearance was not necessarily described as an intentional tool, but all of the participants did recognize and accept (Meisenbach, 2010) that their appearance was a signifier of their sexuality to others. While this study focused on dress and appearance, there are several other studies that have highlighted that members of the LGBTQ community use other techniques to come out, such as mentioning the gender of their partner or in discussions of partner benefits (Wright, 2013). These findings highlight the continued disapproval of female masculinities within institutions (Halberstam, 2005; Queen, 1994) even when the written dress codes have shifted away from traditional gender expectations.

How individuals navigate appearances in the workplace can impact their psychological wellbeing (Kwon, 1994a, 1994b; Peluchette & Karl, 2007; Rafaeli et al., 1997). All of these previous studies focused on psychological wellbeing looked at heterosexual individuals' experiences. This study expands the previous literature and highlights that when LGBTQ women express their sexual identity through appearance in the workplace, they can have varying levels of comfort and confidence. Most of the discomfort participants described was related to appearing feminine, due to pressures from unwritten dress codes and observing how other women appeared. They similarly explained that they often felt less confident when not expressing their true

self, which often meant incorporating masculine signifiers. Those participants who expressed their sexual identity in their appearance and felt safe doing so related that they felt more confident. In contrast, some participants who felt discomfort in feminine garments, yet perceived this aesthetic as more appropriate, felt more confident, because this was what was expected of them; this was similar to Rafaeli, Dutton, Harquail, and Marckie-Lewis's (1997) results, where dress perceived as appropriate increased self-confidence in the workplace.

While workplace appearance can impact the individual, these negotiations can also impact how individuals are perceived. Similar to Kang et al. (2011) and Peluchette and Karl (2007), participants in the current study related several experiences of managing their appearance in the workplace to influence others' perceptions. In most cases, participants actively worked to conceal the expression of their sexual identity in their appearance for various reasons, such as interacting with conservative individuals or the fear of others' perceptions. In this sense, the participants accepted that the stigma existed but actively avoided the stigma (Meisenbach, 2010) through appearance negotiations by hiding their identity through the presentation of heteronormative appearance expectations of others.

The findings from this study highlight the importance of “styling, dressing, [or] adorning” (Kaiser, 2012, p. 1) the body in the workplace for LGBTQ women, and how these processes can impact both the individual's perception and the perceptions of others in both positive and negative ways. Bodies are regulated by both formal and informal dress codes; while heterosexual and gender-conforming women may think through their appearance choices and the perceptions of others for a variety of reasons, for some LGBTQ women there is additional labor in this process. Stigma related to sexual identity was actively managed and negotiated with clothing, appearance, and style. While most of the participants accepted and recognized the stigmas related to their sexual identity, some engaged in avoidance strategies (Meisenbach, 2010) by actively removing or not adopting clothing or styles that might signify their sexuality to others. Employers or human resource professionals can use these insights to inform their formal written dress codes by developing inclusive statements about gender and sexual identity expression in appearance in the workplace. Additionally, human resource professionals could offer cultural competence training related to appearances for diverse individuals to promote diversity and inclusion of a variety of aesthetic expressions.

Limitations and future research

While the study provided a rich description of the experiences of the participants who represent a portion of the LGBTQ community, there are several limitations that can be considered for future research. The

study was limited to LGBTQ women who readily share their sexuality with friends, families, or employers; a few geographic regions that were mostly urbanized areas; and participants who had a higher education with social mobility and were primarily White. Exploring experiences of those individuals who do not readily share their sexuality, live in rural areas, and are of diverse racial and educational backgrounds should be considered for future research.

Notes

1. Participants were also asked about their experiences interviewing and looking for employment. Due to the richness of the data, a second paper will be developed around these topics.
2. The positive experiences are examined in theme six.

References

- Ashforth, B. E., & Kreiner, G. E. (1999). "How can you do it?": Dirty work and the challenge of constructing a positive identity. *Academy of Management Review*, 24, 413–434.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspectives and method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Bordo, S. (1993). *Unbearable weight: Feminism, western culture, and the body*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Bowring, M. A., & Brewis, J. (2009). Truth and consequences: Managing lesbian and gay identity in the Canadian workplace. *Equal Opportunities International*, 28(5), 361–377.
- Brower, T. (2013). What's in the closet: Dress and appearance codes and lessons from sexual orientation. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, 32, 491–502. doi:10.1108/EDI-02-2013-0006
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Cruz, D. (2004). Making up women: Casinos, cosmetics, and title VII. *Nevada Law Journal*, 5, 240–259.
- Damhorst, M. L. (1990). In search of a common thread: Classification of information communicated through dress. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 8(2), 1–12. doi:10.1177/0887302X9000800201
- Davis, F. (1992). *Fashion, culture, and identity*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Dellinger, K. (2002). Wearing gender and sexuality "on your sleeve": Dress norms and the importance of occupational and organizational culture at work. *Gender Issues*, 20(3), 3–25. doi:10.1007/s12147-002-0005-5
- Duncan, R. D. (2014, February 13). *Culture at work: The tyranny of "unwritten rules*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/rogerdeanduncan/2014/02/13/culture-at-work-the-tyranny-of-unwritten-rules/>
- Eicher, J. B., & Roach-Higgins, M. E. (1992). Definition and classification of dress: Implications for analysis of gender roles. In R. Barnes & J. B. Eicher (Eds.), *Dress and gender: Making and meaning in cultural context* (pp. 8–28). Oxford, UK: Berg.
- Geczy, A., & Karaminas, V. (2013). *Queer style*. London, UK: Bloomsbury.

- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Halberstam, J. (2005). *In a queer time and place: Transgender bodies, subcultural lives*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Johnson, K. K. P., Crutsinger, C., & Workman, J. E. (1994). Can professional women appear too masculine? The case of the necktie. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 12(2), 27–31. doi:10.1177/0887302X9401200204
- Kaiser, S. (1990). *The social psychology of dress: Symbolic appearances in context*. New York, NY: Fairchild.
- Kaiser, S. (2012). *Fashion and cultural studies*. New York, NY: Fairchild.
- Kang, M., Sklar, M., & Johnson, K. K. P. (2011). Men at work: Using dress to create and communicate identities. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 15, 412–427. doi:10.1108/13612021111169924
- Karaminas, V. (2013). Born this way: Lesbian style since the eighties. In V. Steele (Ed.), *A queer history of fashion: From the closet to the catwalk* (pp. 193–217). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Kwon, Y. (1994a). The influence of appropriateness of dress and gender on the self-perception of occupational attributes. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 12(3), 33–37. doi:10.1177/0887302X9401200305
- Kwon, Y. (1994b). Feeling toward one's clothing and self-perception of emotion, sociability, and work competency. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 9, 129–139.
- Levitt, H. M., Gerrish, E. A., & Hiestand, K. R. (2003). The misunderstood gender: A modern femme identity. *Sex Roles*, 48, 99–113. doi:10.1023/A:1022453304384
- Luthans, F., Youssef, C., & Avolio, B. (2006). *Psychological capital: Developing the human competitive edge*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Meisenbach, R. J. (2010). Stigma management communication: A theory and agenda for applied research on how individuals manage moments of stigmatized identity. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 38(3), 268–292.
- Neuman, W. L. (2011). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Peluchette, J. V., & Karl, K. (2007). The impact of workplace attire on employee self-perceptions. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 18, 345–360. doi:10.1002/(ISSN)1532-1096
- Ponse, B. (1978). *Identities in the lesbian world: The social construction of self*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Queen, C. (1994). Why I love butch women. In R. L. Burana & L. Due (Eds.), *Dagger: On butch women* (pp. 15–23). San Francisco, CA: Cleis Press.
- Rafaeli, A., Dutton, J., Harquail, C., & Mackie-Lewis, S. (1997). Navigating by attire: The use of dress by administrative employees. *Academy of Management Journal*, 40, 19–45. doi:10.2307/257019
- Reddy-Best, K. L., & Pedersen, E. (2015). The relationship of gender expression, sexual identity, distress, appearance, and clothing choices for queer women. *International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education*, 8, 54–65. doi:10.1080/17543266.2014.958576
- Rousseau, D. M. (1990). Assessing organizational culture: The case for multiple methods. In B. Schneider (Ed.), *Organizational climate and culture* (pp. 153–192). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Rucker, M., Anderson, E., & Kangas, A. (1999). Clothing, power and the workplace. In K. Johnson & S. Lennon (Eds.), *Appearance and power: Dress, body, culture* (pp. 59–77). New York, NY: Berg.

- Schmidt v. Austick's Bookshops*, IRLR 7, EAT (1977).
- Skidmore, P. (1999). Dress to impress: Employer regulation of gay and lesbian appearance. *Social & Legal Studies*, 8, 509–529. doi:10.1177/a010360
- Spivack, M. (1989, January/February). Smile when you say that, partner. *Ms.*, pp. 137–138.
- The Petitions Committee & Women and Equalities Committee. (2017, January 25). *High heels and workplace dress codes: Urgent action needed*. Retrieved from <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/petitions-committee/news-parliament-2015/high-heels-and-workplace-dress-codes-report-published-16-17/>
- Wilson, E. (2013). What does a lesbian look like? In V. Steele (Ed.), *A queer history of fashion: From the closet to the catwalk* (pp. 166–191). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Woodard, G. (1999). Academic papers: Casual apparel in the workplace. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management*, 4, 301–310. doi:10.1108/eb022567
- Wright, T. (2013). Uncovering sexuality and gender: An intersectional examination of women's experiences in UK construction. *Construction Management and Economics*, 31, 832–844. doi:10.1080/01446193.2013.794297
- Zalesne, D. (2007). Lessons from equal opportunity harasser doctrine: Challenging sex-specific appearance and dress codes. *Duke Journal of Gender Law & Policy*, 14, 535–560.