

My Rainbow Bestie: Formation and Dissolution of Straight-Gay Friendship among Ilocano Men

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ABSTRACT. In straight-gay friendship, diversity is recognized, respected, and celebrated. It is an unorthodox connection between heterosexual and gay men. The alliance is affected by the facilitating or constraining social forces of affectional orientation and traditional masculinity. The qualitative study sought to explore and analyze the formation and dissolution of straight-gay friendships among 13 Ilocano men recruited through snowball and purposive sampling. *Pagtatanong-tanong*, an indigenous method of data gathering, was employed. Thematic analysis and investigator triangulation were performed for analysis and validation. Results revealed that for the formation phase, Ilocano men portrayed active and passive roles that shared interest, nourishing personality, and open-mindedness were strong social motivators. Likewise, the causes of possible dissolution were growing intimacy and physical distance. Termination can be either a direct or indirect approach. The understanding of this unorthodox alliance provided communal empathy and acceptance, and carried the mission to educate about the interaction of both communities. It is suggested that positive portrayals lessen stigma and discrimination.

1.0. Introduction

Cultures have colored the people across the globe, political stands have built walls between and among people, technology has created generation gaps, and personal aspirations have pushed individuals to change. The diversity in many facets of human existence has become more apparent and pivotal to human relations. With the passage of time, interpersonal relationships have evolved and involved reciprocity of attraction, knowledge, communication, discourse, and the opportunity for collaboration or cooperation (Melé & Cantón, 2014). The individuals have to gamble on creating various harmonious interpersonal relations, one of which is friendship. It is a unique mutual alliance that demands pleasure, reciprocity, commitment, and genuineness (Degges-White, 2018).

In recent years, friendship endured the process of social change. Society's prejudices, stereotypes, and stigma have highlighted this phenomenon and catapulted it into the interest of various fields. It became more vibrant and colorful as the LGBT community, a community with stigmatized sexual identities, has created cross-gender and cross-sexual orientation friendships. Torre and Manalastas (2013) have characterized cross-category friendships between LGBT and non-LGBT individuals as a relatively unusual and complex interaction. This spectacle built more walls against this sexual minority group and created peeping holes for the growing curiosity of a few discerning people.

With the emergence of gender fluidity and the creation of the relatively unfamiliar and multifarious mutual alliances, it created taxonomy and labels of friendship. One of the nomenclatures of friendship spawned is bromosexual companionship or straight-gay friendship. At length, friendships between gay and straight men or bromosexual friendships were rare because of the magnified homophobia that has been enduringly circulating in the larger social structure (Russell et al., 2016). Several heterosexual men wavered from forging non-sexual ties with gay men, dreading harassment and rejection from straight friends, or being labeled gay. Even before, straight men had been hesitant to befriend gay men. In a survey, only 12% of the heterosexual male adolescents felt secure that they could establish friendships with gay men. Traditional masculine norms and roles predicted homophobic views among the surveyed adolescents (Marsiglio, 1993). Social scientists proposed that gay-straight male friendships are possible and can grow to be highly worthwhile. Mahalik et al. (2003) identified disdain for homosexuality, emotional control, and self-reliance



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as were few of the 11 masculine norms. Conformity to masculine norms, specifically, disdain for homosexuality, was significantly correlated with undesirable treatment of gay men (Keiller, 2010). The finding solidifies that beliefs constrain LGBT-affirmative behaviors. Likewise, attitude to queerness is dictated or influenced by traditional masculinity (Travers et al., 2018). The masculine norm of disdaining homosexuality is reinforced by the pressure from significant others and the environs (Fields et al., 2015). The anti-homosexual outlooks could propel isolation and eventually bruise the relational bond needed in a specific developmental stage. The conclusion signifies the significance of cultivating friendship amidst social stigma and prejudices.

Consequently, this friendship has gained momentum and received more attention, recognition, and curiosity. It has been explored and portrayed in books, movies, magazines, and blogs (Russell et al., 2016). The effort to normalize the phenomenon is a sign of society's growing tolerance toward unconventionality. The unconventional alliance works as an aid in recalibrating ideas of masculinity and defying homonegativity (Gorman-Murray, 2013). Affective orientation strongly impacts the gender structure of companionship (Cui et al., 2020). In a similar finding, sexual orientation has a pivotal role in the experience of friendship with heterosexual male alliances (Davis & Mehta, 2021). Specifically, on a positive note, acceptance is experienced by gay friends. However, others encountered undesirable treatments instigated by homophobia.

Conformity to Western masculine norms may inhibit men's psychological development and result in further stress (Pleck, 1995, cited in Englar-Carlson & Kiselica, 2013). Befriending gay men is a stereotypical counter behavior among heterosexual men. However, a lower level of traditional masculinity reshapes the discomfort felt among heterosexual men in performing feminine behaviors such as being emotional (Borinca et al., 2021). Russell et al. (2016) have listed a few reasons for establishing bromosexual friendships. Based on their survey investigation, gay men who disclosed earlier in life their affectional orientation to their heterosexual male friends will likely establish unrestrained and authentic companionships in adulthood with them. Likewise, sharing impartial advice between gay and straight men may also nurture and strengthen friendships. The unorthodox alliance is also formed because of the need for a truthful comrade that would aid in romantic pursuits. And lastly, the emotional bonding that transpires between the sexual categories. Straight men believe they are less judged when expressing deeply held feelings. Straight-gay friendship symbolizes equality and inclusive masculinity (Rumens, 2018). However, the immediate work environment limits affect expression and physical tactility. In a different route, Gillig and Bighash (2019) concluded the significance of a gender-inclusive space in cultivating friendships. And gender identity and birth sex do not significantly influence patterns of mutual alliances.

Filipino psychologists recognized the importance of interaction as an aspect of social life in the country. Analysis of Filipino social interaction, as codified in the language, revealed the character of Filipinos (Enriquez, 1978). The phenomenon could be understood through the concept of *kapwa* or *pakikipagkapwa*. In addition, Filipino friendship could be fathomed in the light of this core value because it motivates an individual to strive for harmony, upholds the worth of others, and demands altruism (Mercado, 1994). It is a Filipino value that is much more profound in its implications. Contentment is experienced in established relationships with others. The different levels of interpersonal relations like friendship are not just conceptually but behaviorally different. Filipino friendship may be established because of the concept of *kapwa*. It is fundamentally a theory regarding social interaction, the obligation the Filipinos have towards fellowmen; it is a shared identity, equality, and being with others.

With the complexity of cross-gender and cross-category relationships, the Filipino value, as a positive force, propels the Filipinos to accept and deal with another person as an equal. The value enables the Filipinos to regard the dignity and being of others, both members of social and sexual majority and minority groups. Aside from the socio-psychological dimension of the value, it has a moral and normative aspect as a Filipino value. This concept in Filipino psychology paves the understanding of unorthodox relationships or friendships. The formation echoes a more profound abstraction that straight-gay friendship reflects the morals of straight friends. It is also one way for straight friends to rally the restoration of the moral identity of their gay friends (Ueno & Gentile, 2015). It also propels personal enlightenment and political engagement among straight friends.

Despite the noise they have been creating for decades, the number of works of literature that focus on the lives, experiences, aspirations, struggles, and well-being of gender and sexual minorities in the Philippines has been dearth. It was more on anti-LGBT prejudice and coming out research

(Torre & Manalastas, 2013). With the current literature on straight-gay friendships in the Philippines, the researcher intended to investigate the perception of straight Ilocano men on bromosexual companies. It specifically addressed the question of the phenomenon's formation and possible dissolution under the cohort's lens. In addition, the study sought to provide an understanding of close relationships between LGBT and non-LGBT individuals. This scholarly endeavor was to bridge the gap in society's knowledge between heteronormative culture and community and LGBT psychology. The understanding could result in a more caring, compassionate, and empathetic community.

2.0. Framework of the Study

This study was directed conceptually and theoretically by Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (McLeod, 2022) and William K. Rawlins' 6 Stage Model of Friendship (Marlin, 2002).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory comprising a five-tier model of human necessities (McLeod, 2022). Maslow had placed love and belongingness needs at a third of the hierarchy, which is social in nature. The need for interpersonal relationships directs the behavior of individuals across sexual identities. It includes a need for friendship, intimacy, acceptance, affection, trust, and affiliation.

Analogous to the contention of Maslow on love and belongingness as human needs, Rawlins also recognized the common condition of individuals to feel connected with others despite individual differences and the importance of information and trust in strengthening friendships. People experience positive feelings and thoughts through the interactions made with others (Cable et al., 2013). Moreover, developing friendship is an ongoing process, and he suggested six (6) steps (Marlin, 2002). The first step in building friendships occurs through role-limited interaction. Communication is characterized by focusing on superficial topics, limited self-disclosure, and relying on scripts. The second step is called friendly relations; the individuals interact to evaluate common interests and prolong familiarization.

The third step is moving toward friendship; the friendship is more personal through increasing self-disclosure. The fourth step is called nascent friendship, where individuals spend more time together and may start using the term "friend" to refer to each other. The fifth step is stabilized friendship, described as solid, and individuals assume each other will be in their lives. The final step in friendship development is waning friendship. Rawlins recognized that friendships do not always have a happy ending. Friendship may not thrive because of difficulty sustaining, geographic distances, people change and grow in different directions, and trust rules are violated.

3.0. Methodology

The researcher employed a qualitative research methodology; it is primarily exploratory research. It provides insights into the problem or helps to develop ideas or hypotheses. It was used to understand Ilocano men's underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations in establishing straight-gay friendships.

Participants. The study participants were 13 straight Ilocano men involved in straight-gay or bromosexual friendships. The age range of the participants was 22 to 32 years of age, with bromosexual friendships ranging from 4 to 14 years. They were recruited through snowball and purposive sampling. Potential participants had to meet the following inclusion criteria: a) self-identified as a straight or heterosexual male, b) nomination by others or friends as a straight or heterosexual male, and c) with bromosexual friendship for at least three years). The participants were anonymized by creating pseudonyms. Likewise, details such as a person, time, and place, which are sensitive and may potentially expose the identity of the participants, were excluded from the transcription.

Instrumentation. The researcher employed *pagtatanong-tanong*, an indigenous research method, to explore the perception of straight Ilocano men on straight-gay friendships. The indigenous method was appropriate for the study because of the four (4) major characteristics of this method, specifically: (a) it is participatory, (b) the researcher and the informant are of equal status, (c) it is appropriate and adaptive to the conditions and norms of the group, and (d) it is integrated with other indigenous research methods (Pe-pua, 1989). The indigenous method allowed the participants the freedom to express their ideas and to become more comfortable during the *pagtatanong-tanong*.

A tentative outline of topics was created to open up a new and richer perspective from the participants. Interview schedule or questionnaires was discouraged because they elicited participants'

insecurity (Pe-pua, 1989). Topics along with the straight-gay friendships formation and possible dissolution were the guiding route of exploration. Open-ended questions were used to obtain data and expound on the two (2) main aspects of the phenomenon.

Data gathering procedure. The researcher must be familiar and immersed with the nature and dynamics of the phenomenon under study. Background information about bromosexual friendship and the group were obtained and studied. After the orientation, the study's participants were determined through the set inclusion criteria. A consent form was given to the participants, covering essential details of the study such as privacy, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and well-being. After the selection of participants, the process of *pagtatanong-tanong* was facilitated. The initial phase of *pagtatanong-tanong* revolved around getting to know to reach and strengthen *pakikipagpalagayang-loob* or rapport building. Specifically, the credentials of the researcher, the study's purpose, and the expected length of the data collection were introduced. Pe-pua and Protacio-Marcelino (2000) suggested that in dealing with research participants, *pakikipagpalagayang-loob* must be established to assure authentic qualitative data and representation. Easy to answer rapport-building questions were asked to further improve connection. During the *pagtatanong-tanong*, the outline of topics was considered in the direction of the interaction. However, the participants' responses were also utilized as a springboard for exploration and probing. Throughout the *pagtatanong-tanong*, participants were given the freedom to express themselves, and role reversal was also observed to establish an unruffled atmosphere and closeness. Moreover, examples were given, and rephrasing of questions was done to attain clarity. English and Filipino languages were used in data gathering. The concluding part was steered through asking the participants to check and review the obtained data so that they have an opportunity to correct inaccuracies of facts and to challenge interpretations that seem incorrect.

Data analysis. The experiences and narrations of the participants were obtained in the year 2019. They were transcribed and tabulated. Significant parts or details of the responses were drawn out from the transcribed interviews. Thematic analysis was facilitated as the primary method for analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). It is a six-phase guide that involves familiarizing qualitative data, generating initial codes, searching, reviewing, defining emerging themes, and writing the report. The validity of the initial findings was established through investigator triangulation. Two subject-matter experts in Psychology and Guidance and Counseling evaluated the initial analysis.

Data trustworthiness. To increase rigor, the researcher employed investigator triangulation to guard against being suspected that the discoveries resulted from a single method, a solitary source, or the sole researcher's personal bias (Bhandari, 2022). Moreover, a detailed study protocol was prepared. More than six participants were interviewed for transferability to provide a clearer picture of the friendship under study (Morse, 2000).

4.0. Results and Discussion

Friendship is essential to humans' way of living and mental health. Likewise, it demands emotional investment and discernment because of the dynamics and expectations from the relationship itself and the allied individuals. The current exploration of the formation and dissolution phases brings understanding and grounding to the individuals involved and the community.

Roles in forming a straight-gay friendship

Under exploration, the formation phase of the bromosexual friendship generated four (4) distinct roles portrayed by the participants and three (3) reasons or motivations for establishing bromosexual friendships. The roles depended on the individuals involved, circumstances, and activities, whereas the reasons or motivations were drawn or projected from the participants themselves and their gay friends.

Tag team player: It is a role portrayed by the participants at the initial stage of forming the bromosexual friendship. Participants may potentially establish friendships when they are frequently grouped or paired with other people to work on a specific goal. The following comments solidified the emerging theme:

...we have the same college course. Because we have the same course and only a few enrollees of [college course], we were classmates for almost all the subjects. And then we are both student leaders at that time...now we are co-teachers... (Roku, personal communication, October 21, 2019)

...we were classmates in high school and were teammates in group activities and both leaders... (Robin, personal communication, October 21, 2019).

The frequency of being grouped and the posted goal propel participants to discern the circumstance as an opportunity for the formation of the phenomenon under study or an agent for its formation.

New kid on the block. Participants may form a friendship when introduced to an existing circle or group. Rhio and Peter had a shared experience and verbalized that being introduced to an established group of friends with queer identity may mold the straight-gay friendship because of the existing dynamics and members of the group.

...I am a member of a circle of friends, and I was introduced to him... (Rhio, personal communication, October 20, 2019)

...in my case, he was my colleague in the church. We met in the choir and through a circle of friends.... (Peter, personal communication, October 21, 2019)

Onlooker. A role portrayed by the participants is described to be a passive stand. The participants may form a friendship when they can intently observe others from their environment. Philipe shared (Philipe, personal communication, October 21, 2019), "...he was my first year [college] classmate and he was humorous...I was first observing him. If he makes us laugh, I just go with it.". The impartial observation of the participants of the potential gay friend allows them to evaluate the person and for the potential formation of bromosexual friendship.

Parallel player. This role shares a joint characterization with the onlooker. Both roles were described to be passive. However, participants acting as parallel players may form a friendship when gay men in the same environment and doing the same task with the participants initiate the formation of the bromosexual company.

...it started with the training at work...while on training, he was approaching me and looked like he wanted to talk to me... (Khol, personal communication, October 23, 2019).

It all started when I was working in a fast-food chain. He approached me, and I was a bit shy because people might misinterpret our conversation. (Job, personal communication, October 23, 2019)

Being in the same environment or circumstance and performing the same chore with other people but not intending to initiate friendship is the complete picture of this role. Initially, the participants did not intend to establish friendships and focused on the undertakings. The participants portray the role as the recipient of the invite or relational intention for forming bromosexual friendship.

Following the same vein, the four roles spring from a face-to-face encounter and immediate environment. The results validate the significance and facilitative force of shared space that does not only cultivate healthy interactions but also well-being (Easterbrook & Vignoles, 2015). Even the presence and absence of intention or motive to build alliances are evident in passive roles, which are constructively allied with friendship (Huelsenitz et al., 2020). The motive of the Ilocano male participants or gay friends instigated the formation phase. Moreover, tasks and goals were captured in the roles of tag team and parallel players, and they have a positive valence where individuals prefer comrades who can aid toward goal attainment (Slotter & Gardner, 2011).

The generated roles from the obtained data validated the nature and dynamics of the Rawlins' first stage of the formation of friendship. Specifically, the initial phase of the straight-gay company had role-limited interactions. The framework of civility governed the social interactions. This may imply that the course of this stage is generally on getting to know process and initiating small talk. The participants played a specific role and were cautious not to reveal personal experiences (Marlin, 2002). The results strengthen the idea that straight-gay or cross-orientation friendship is a mechanism for progression and social cohesion (Johnston et al., 2021). Likewise, the formation is a posted challenge in reinventing a new form of masculinity and identity (Klatran, 2007).

Reasons for establishing a straight-gay friendship

The participants had various reasons and motivations for establishing bromosexual friendships. They developed this friendship through social or school clubs or groups that commonly share activities or values. Interests in a particular activity, advocacy, political view, and characteristics may elucidate the motivations of the straight Ilocano men to venture into an unorthodox mutual alliance.

Common interest. Commonality plays a vital role in the formation of bromosexual friendship. It refers to the shared ideas, activities, likes, and goals between the participants and their gay friends. Participants placed value on the projected and manifested similarities. The following revelations anchored the emerging theme:

...because they were there for me, we also share the same interest. They stimulate me intellectually...we almost have the same interest, and that was the beginning. The profession and what we do in the profession itself. (Ghram, personal communication, October 19, 2019)

...presence of similar interests...that is the basic of any other friendships that need a sense of similarities... (Peter, personal communication, October 21, 2019).

The result of the study on common interest does not align with the findings of Baumgarte and Nelson (2009); they reported that individuals who preferred opposite-sex friends rated closeness, trust, caring, having common interests, and providing narcissistic benefits higher than those who preferred same-sex friends. Roberts-Griffin (2011) highlighted an analogous finding that common interest or similarity was not the most frequently mentioned quality of the desired friend, along with proximity and attractiveness. The dissonance between the research finding of the study and the results of the previous research may imply that these factors can also influence undesirable ways. Individuals can come to dislike a person or be uncomfortable in the presence of these factors.

On the other hand, in a more recent study, Johnston et al. (2021) found that all forms of friendships were associated with an individual and shared interest. Even among young adolescents, similarities or common grounds paved the formation of friendship (Wicaksono & Adiyanti, 2019; Zhou & Dresler-Hawke, 2014). From this preliminary point, it grows to understanding and talking. It forms a sense of togetherness. In a nutshell, a common interest is significant in selecting a friend in bromosexual friendship. Still, some literature would elucidate that other factors, such as trust, honesty, and supportiveness, account for more.

Nourishing personality. It covers the individual's thoughts, behavior patterns, values, and social attitudes. The participants priced this factor in the formation of the bromosexual friendship. The attractiveness of the personality of their gay friends was one of the primary and influential reasons for the establishment of the cross-identities company.

...because first, he is intelligent. He does not neglect his studies...He has discipline too, very kind. He does not deceive others, and he is not disrespectful... (Rhio, personal communication, October 20, 2019).

...he is very approachable. If I have a problem and I confide it to him, he will be more likely to give you an advice compared with straight males. They will just laugh at you. (Clint, personal communication, October 24, 2019)

The participants' responses emphasized the significance of queer friends' positive traits that facilitated the attraction and the formation of the friendship. The study's finding corroborates Festa et al. (2012) on the quality of same-sex friendships. The researchers had concluded that personality traits extraversion and agreeableness were considerably connected with alliance quality. These traits are considered to be positive and nourishing. Extraversion tends to be exhibited in outgoing, talkative, and energetic behaviors, whereas agreeableness is manifested as compassionate and cooperative actuations. The participants validated manifestations of positive traits that were observable from their gay friends.

The friendship between LGBT men and non-LGBT women is unorthodox, like bromosexual friendship. Goodwin (2003) articulated that attractive qualities were developing elements in establishing such unusual friendships. Heterosexual women describe gay men as open, trusting, and

authentic. These qualities were reflected in the responses of the current study's participants. This may imply that an attractive or nourishing personality is a positive force in forming bromosexual friendships. In addition, the advice-giving noted by one of the participants validated one of the findings from the survey investigation conducted by Russell et al. (2016). The trait of gay male friends of offering impartial advice exponentially nurtures and strengthens friendship. The rarity of the friendship in the eyes of the collective structure is balanced or even outweighed by the personality of the queer friends.

Open-mindedness. Society has long-standing prejudices against the members of the sexual minority group; thus, relating to them could result in being ridiculed, ostracized, or discriminated. However, being open-minded, which pertains to the non-judgmental attitude of an individual towards a person, social group, sexual orientation, and mutual alliance, is a contributory factor or a reason for forming a straight-gay friendship. The trait of the Ilocano male participants was evident in the response of one of the participants; he revealed that he was more open to having new friends regardless of affectional orientation. Supporting comments were expressed by Third and Rhio:

...for me, there is nothing wrong with having a gay friend. Others may call them bisexual or lesbian, for me everyone is equal as human beings... (Third, personal communication, October 24, 2019).

...for me, everyone could be a friend...I do not mind who they are. I accept them for who really they are... (Rhio, personal communication, October 20, 2019)

The formation of straight-gay friendships and affectional orientation as a non-constraining factor (Johnston et al., 2021) proves the growing acceptance of the LGBT community. Society is slowly realizing the vision of change along this relational facet. The result of the study supports the finding of Morimoto and Yang (2013) that adults tend to have lower gender homophily in their friendships. Following the same contention, heterosexual males exhibit a higher tolerance threshold for genetically unrelated same-sex individuals than heterosexual females. Tolerance was defined as acceptance and recognition of the stresses and strains within relationships (Benenson et al., 2009). The trait encapsulates the manifestation of valuing diversity and the reduction of stigma and homophobia (Johnston et al., 2021). Open-mindedness is more than just a trait but reflects a social paradigm shift. It manifests the understanding of the positive close relationship between LGBT and non-LGBT individuals. Likewise, the finding provided a social lens for the exploration and analysis of the experiences both within and across sexual molds.

Causes of dissolution of a straight-gay friendship

Bromosexual friendship, a complex cross-identities alliance (Torre & Manalastas, 2013), is not an exception to relational struggles and challenges; it has its highs and lows and possible termination. With its nature as deviant and the prejudices from society, it takes a ton of commitment to wheel it. There are several reasons for the possible dissolution or termination, either internal or external.

Long-distance friendship. It refers to the geographic separation and lack of face-to-face contact that significantly affect the friendship, such as reduction of emotional commitment and familiarity and magnification of gap. One of the participants shared:

...some friendships are put to an end not because both have decided or they have done something to each other...if we were not able to maintain or we have changed workplace that is a possible reason. I think we work on it because of proximity... (Roku, personal communication, October 21, 2019)

Proximity is a crucial factor in the strengthening and weakening of friendship. It significantly hinders social interaction because friendship becomes less probable with the increment of distance (Patachinni et al., 2015; Preciado et al., 2012). This may imply that close physical contact with their friends is very significant. The study's finding validates the contention by Cohen (2016) that physical separation or moving to a new house or city may put the participants in a problematic situation for they need to face the challenges of maintaining a long-distance friendship. The difficulties in communication, new colleagues, separation anxiety, and adjustment are a few issues that both parties

must resolve. Unsuccessful adjustment to the separation may eventually result in the dissolution or termination of the friendship.

Blossoming intimacy. It captures the feeling of fear from the participants that their gay friends may develop an emotional and sexual attraction to them and their inability to reciprocate such desires. It also pertains to the possibility of non-recognition of gay friends to the set rules and boundaries on attraction and friendship. The majority of the participants expressed their concern about their gay friends potentially crossing the brotherhood boundary.

...he is starting to show or express his sexual intention to me through physical or verbal manifestations. And if there is no longer respect on the friendship's boundaries. (Bron, personal communication, October 22, 2019)

...maybe in such cases...for me, the demonstration of intimacy. He demands more than friendship. Going beyond friendship... (Lee, personal communication, October 23, 2019)

The responses reflect the presence of an unwritten rule or boundary and differences in expectations between the LGBT and non-LGBT individuals. Blossoming intimacy as a reason for possible dissolution or termination is grounded in the non-reciprocity of the participants to their gay friends' growing desire. Likewise, for the participants, it is a display of disrespecting the limit of the friendship. However, confusion about the nature of the relationship was more evident in opposite companies than in same-sex friendships (Hand & Furman, 2009). This may imply that setting the boundary regardless of sex may encounter a certain degree of confusion on the nature of friendship.

Moreover, crossing the brotherhood boundary could be both a decision and action that the participants perceived as undesirable. Disliking or non-approval of the behavior may cause or a ground for the termination of the friendship (Cohen, 2016). Aside from perceiving it as an undesirable decision and action, it can be seen under the frame of conflict of expectations. It is when the participants and their gay friends have different beliefs and anticipations from each other. The sudden emotional label and investment switch may negatively change the bromosexual friendship. The cited reason affirms that traditional masculinity reshapes connections or interactions (Keiller, 2010) and LGBT-affirmative attitude toward peculiarity (Travers et al., 2018). For example, an intimate same-sex relationship that reflects homosexuality may result in the unwanted treatment of gay men.

On the side of Filipino gay comrades, unrequited love is a meaningful encounter filled with insecurity, deleterious emotions, and declining self-esteem (Manalastas, 2011). The rejection or non-reciprocity from straight friends is anchored in the difference in affectional orientation and relational goals. It concludes that straight-gay or bromosexual friendships may have difficulty transitioning into an intimate or romantic relationship. Moreover, reactions to a confession of attraction involved negative emotions and reduced closeness (Hu & Kong, 2022). The findings are in congruence with the postulation of Cohen and the waning stage of Rawlins.

Dissolution of the bromosexual company is Rawlins' waning friendship stage or phase. He recognized that in the terminal stage, there is a tendency for the friendship not to thrive because of difficulty in sustaining, geographic distances, people change and grow in different directions, and rules of trust are violated.

Approaches to straight-gay friendship dissolution

Dissolving or terminating a friendship is less given research attention than a romantic relationship, much more with the dissolution of a bromosexual alliance. Individuals may terminate their friendships using avoidance, direct, or third-party methods. Participants may demonstrate two (2) approaches to concluding a mutual alliance.

Direct confrontative approach. It is a dissolution or termination approach that is both direct and active. It involves confrontation and the explicit manifestation of strong negative emotions. Moreover, being frank is also reflected in this approach.

...I will directly tell it to him that I no longer want to be his friend (Rhio, personal communication, October 20, 2019)

...I will get mad at him...of all the pieces of advice, he will become foolish or dumb again...
(Lee, personal communication, October 23, 2019)

...I have to be frank with him. And tell him about how I feel... (Roku, personal communication,
October 21, 2019)

The participants' approach validates using a direct method in dissolving a friendship. Flannery (2017) investigated the dissolution strategies among adolescents. The direct strategy was the second most commonly used method. It is frequently employed in friendship dissolution because it would provide gay friends with more information and certainty, resulting in a better outcome (Yildirim & Demir, 2015). Direct methods of ending the friendship may be perceived as emotionally evocative but also transitory because they afford more certainty about why the friendship has terminated.

Indirect confrontative approach. It is a dissolution or termination approach that is both indirect and passive. It involves silent treatment and giving hints. The hints call for the gay friend's sensitivity and interpretation. The participants are taking a passive stand in the termination process; however, they may employ or give indications for its dissolution. One of the participants shared,

"...one is through silence...I want him to acknowledge first that there is something wrong. It is very difficult to confront if the person is unaware. Thus, you have to give him hint..."
(Ghran, personal communication, October 19, 2019).

The indirect approach is in accordance with the findings of Flannery (2017) as the most common dissolution methodology. Avoidance is being less responsive or simply avoiding the other person until they get the message that the friendship is over. Being non-responsive or silent hints or indicates that the bromosexual friendship is terminated. Likewise, verbal indirectness, such as sharing less personal information during conversations, is a strong indicator of the possible dissolution. The result or emerging theme corroborates with the distancing and compartmentalizing as approaches to ending friendship (Khullar et al., 2021). The former encapsulates the quantitative nature of termination, whereas the latter covers the qualitative core. Both approaches use changes in the frequency of contact and limited discussion topics. Adults engaged more with downgrade strategies rather than direct and complete termination.

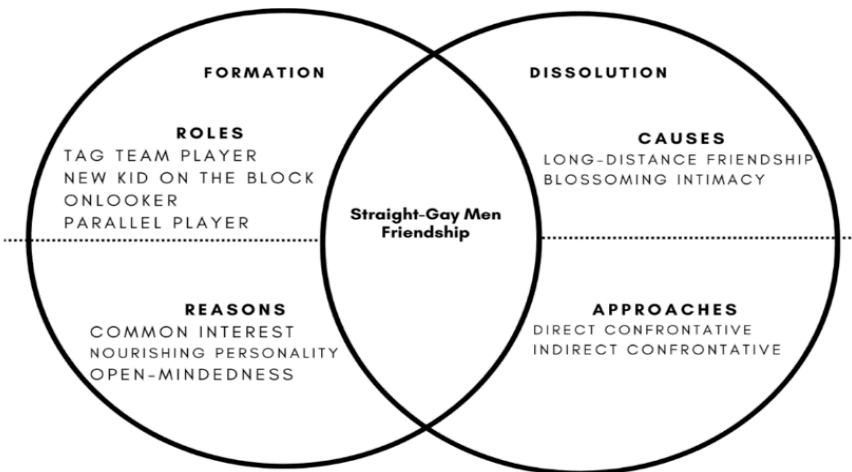


Figure 2. Emanating Frame of Straight-Gay Friendship among Ilocano Men

Dissolution or termination of straight-gay friendships may come in different molds and approaches. Ilocano male participants from the study may utilize a more direct route, while others may perform a passive approach. Some would like to address the problem directly, while others would still consider the friend's feelings before jumping into the issue or concern, thus, fading away.

Reasons and approaches to dissolution potentially exist because of the complexity that heterosexual males developed fewer cross-orientation friendships than gay men (Galupo, 2009). It affirms that gay men are less rigid in forming unorthodox coalitions than heterosexual males. The latter were found to have fewer cross-orientation best friends than gay men (Baiocco et al., 2014). However, in a different study, individuals with cross-orientation friendships valued differences and practiced being non-judgmental (Galupo & Gonzales, 2013). Indeed, friendship is a diplomacy of variances; if these differences were unsettled and disrespected, it might lead to termination.

Figure 2 presents the emerging themes obtained from the analysis and validation. The diagram reflects the nature of formation and dissolution as intrinsically enveloped in a straight and gay men friendship. Both phases in the unorthodox alliance projected triggers or instigating forces. The formation is also about role-playing in a given social sphere, whereas dissolution is either an overt or covert route. Moreover, just like any other connections or relationships, straight-gay friendship meaningfully becomes a pivotal piece of the individual's core.

5.0. Conclusion

The Ilocano male participants portrayed various roles in the initial formation stage of the straight-gay friendship. The initial stage is marked by role-playing and courtesy. Likewise, it is described by script performing. Moreover, the establishment of cross-orientation friendship springs from a solitary or mutual standpoint. These reasons revolve around the ideas of equality, respect, and resolution. The termination of the unorthodox friendship is inevitable because of growing intimacy and distance. As the friendship proceeds to possible termination, an exhibition of strong emotions, confrontation, silence, and avoidance are evident. Establishing straight-gay friendship is a substantial contribution to the advocacy of providing a safe, caring, and compassionate environment for everyone. It is one way of presenting to society that LGBT and non-LGBT individuals could establish a relationship that is healthy, positive, and non-discriminating.

It is recommended for future researchers to explore the reasons and ways of maintenance, challenges in the three (3) phases, and pieces of advice that heterosexual males could share with the community. They could potentially employ a mixed research design and integrate other indigenous research methods such as *pakikipagkwentuhan* and *ginabayang talakayan*. Lastly, the perspective of the gay comrade about this friendship could be considered.

6.0. Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The author reported no potential conflict of interest.

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