The History of Bromance, the Rise of its Popularity, and the Divergences between Bromance and Homosexuality in the Human Mindset

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Since the beginning of time, man has needed man—a friend, a teacher, a confidant, or even something more. As time has gone on, this idea has continued to evolve up until the 1990s when Dave Carnie coined the term “Bromance” in the skateboard magazine *Big Brother* (Thomas, 38).

Bromance is much more than just two men who enjoy spending time with each other. To be deemed a bromance, there needs to be a powerful psycho-emotional bond that makes two peoples relationship resemble a heterosexual marriage or romance, that fulfills them profoundly, that supersedes (or possibly conflicts with) all other relationships in their lives—including those with women.

Television shows where bromance is a driving force in the plot generally do very well, whether it is shows for adults or children (anywhere from the popular ’90s sitcom *Friends* or the children’s cartoon *Spongebob Squarepants*). Amusingly enough, the term bromance did not grow in popularity until it was used in an episode in the seventh season of the popular television reality competition, given the same name as the magazine that began the term bromance, *Big Brother*. Contestants Will Kirby and Mike Malin referred to their relationship as a bromance, and it quickly became a household term (Season 2). This is also a common occurrence seen in movies, where the “good guys” are often two men who choose their heroic relationship over the women in their lives (Lavigne). Examples of this can be seen between Butch Cassidy and The
A bromance is a relationship that one can argue mimics that of a heterosexual romance or marriage. Many times this relationship becomes a driving force in the participating parties lives, sometimes even conflicting with other relationships, often times even those with women.

-- These relationships are powerful forces in culture today. Since the creation of the term, and the success of examples such as these, society has seen an ever-increasing number of bromances in popular culture and media including television, children’s shows, music, and everyday life. Many who do not know what a bromance is have still been exposed to them, as they span all genres of culture. A simple google search of the word bromance offers 10,100,100 results. Articles arrive in seconds, not only from pop culture magazines, but from news articles, books, and even scholarly articles. It is because of these intrusions of bromances into everyday life that this is affecting how society views masculinity, intimacy, and even homosexual relationships and how bromance can bridge the gap between the two.

To understand the importance of bromance, it is first to understand the societal complexities of intimacy, homosociality, and the dialogue that is still being written on homosexuality. This acceptance between two men is an incredibly important occurrence in society. Bromances create a safe space for relationships between two men without the stigma that is commonly correlated with homosexuality. Bromances create a more fluid relationship between two men that can be perceived as, or can actually become, a sexual relationship or a romantic relationship by taking away the fear of discrimination that comes with being in a close or intimate relationship with another male.
Intimacy theory extenuates this idea of closeness as a paramount factor in relationships. In her article “The Psychology of Intimacy,” Karen J. Prager offers a look into the difference between friendships and relationships that include some level of intimacy; “Intimate relationships are often differentiated from other personal relationships by the presence of confiding interactions between the partners” (1). The confession of personal information from one male to another in a bromance allows for that intimate bond. Bromances are overtly manifested social constructions of intimacy with “explicit” boundaries; however, it is possible for men to have intimate relationships with one another without the social stigma of people wondering if the parties are “gay” or not (Ward). In a society in which men feel that they need to keep their innermost, intimate thoughts secret, it becomes even more difficult to express non-heteronormative thoughts without fear. In *The Secrets Men Keep*, authors Ken Druck and James Simmons suggest that men lead “secret emotional lives, often hiding [their] deepest fears and insecurities” (13). However, when these feelings remain hidden, bromances cannot bloom into more personal or intimate relationships.

Ironically though, America has created a homosocial environment where men would rather hang out with men than women, which would lead one to believe that these male-to-male relationships would be more common. Men at a young age undergo a “prolonged adolescence”—preferring partying, drinking, porn, sports, video games, and hanging with the guys to getting serious about work, making long-term commitments to women and children, and settling down (Kimmel). "Male homosocial desire" refers to all male bonds, including, potentially, everyone from overt heterosexuals to overt homosexuals. This desire has been around since biblical times, and can be seen in popular nineteenth-century literature (Sedgwick). It was this around this time that bromance in literature became more prominent as society witnessed a variety of
countercultural groups in the form of political activists, sexual rebels, and avant-garde artists. The most commonly noted bromance of this era of literature being the relationship between Sherlock Holmes and Watson. As literature and pop culture references to close male bonds became more prominent and more acceptable, these kinds of relationships in society grew in number. For a good number more, these kinds of bromances were there version of a societal safe-house, where they could be themselves without worry. This provides some possible insight into why men might prefer emotional bonds with other men over women.

One reason why gay or questioning men are afraid to admit their intimate feelings for other men, despite the fact that society is primarily homosocial, is because of the intense fear of the homosexual male. People generally fear the things that they do not understand, and when people are afraid, they often lash out in anger. “One of the strongest and deepest anxieties of most American men is their fear of homosexuality” (Franklin 71). This fear and this level of homophobia directly relate to the many injustices that gay, lesbian, and bisexual person’s experience. This is a debilitating restriction for heterosexual men, and causes them to second-guess every relationship they have with other men. This is why the homosocial environment is so important.

The homosocial environment is found in every portion of people’s lives—including music, movies, and literature. In fact, the concept of bromance is very deeply imbedded in popular culture. With that in mind, it is prudent to look at prevalent areas of pop culture that either bromance is an important aspect of, or in the case of this many situations, is the entire storyline. One example of this is the movie *I Love You, Man.* Friendless Peter Klaven (Paul Rudd) proposes to his girlfriend (Rashida Jones), but quickly realizes that he has no best man because he has no male friends. With permission from his fiancé, he begins to go on a series of
“man-dates” to find a best man. These dates, which mimic those that a heterosexual couple
would go on, are a clear representation of the homosocial environment that society has created.
After many failed attempts, he finds that he has an instant bond with a man named Sydney Fife
(Jason Segal). He begins to spend so much time with his new best friend that his relationship
with Sydney puts a strain on his relationship with his wife, definitively covering all three areas of
the working definition of bromance.

A user review on the film directory website IMDB depicts a great representation of these
ideals in society, where the homosocial aspect of the film is great, but the moment that there
seems to be a homosexual plot twist, he becomes upset. This user states, “When I first heard
about this movie, I became a little irritated. The premise seemed to me like a ‘romantic comedy
for gays’ except with a few lines to make it a ‘bromance.’” His tone is obviously negative, and
he continues that if the movie was supposed to be about a gay couple, [the writers] should not
have “wimped out” (Anonymous). Oddly enough though, he finishes his review, giving the
movie nine out of ten stars, positively. Once he mentioned, made fun of, and moved past the idea
that this movie was about homosexuality, he began to enjoy the movie. This insinuates that
homosocial behavior is acceptable, but homosexual behavior is not.

In music, bromances have even begun to even span musical genres. Such bromances
include Adam Levine and Blake Shelton as well as Eminem and Dr. Dre. This outpouring of love
between two men in the music industry has even been paramount in changing the beliefs on
homosexuality in the hip-hop world. The most prevalent and openly supportive people for this
cause have been hip-hop duo Macklemore and Ryan Lewis in their 2012 pro-same-sex marriage
song “Same Love”. The controversial lyrics of the lines, “I can’t change even if I tried, even if I
wanted to” and called out America society saying, “America the brave still fears what we don’t
know” (Macklemore and Lewis). The duo even speaks about hip-hop relations with homosexuals, stating, “[I]f I were gay, I would think hip-hop hates me” (Ibid). Clearly, these kinds of thoughts are changing due to increased acceptance of the bromance ideal, allowing for people to see more clearly the nature of homosexual relationships as not so different as homosocial bromances.

Besides defining bromance by gender, sexuality, and intimacy, Elizabeth Chen in her article “Caught in a Bad Bromance” delves deeply into masculinity studies, and uses current societal context to explain the constructions of homosocial relationships. This can be used as a parallel study of marriage. This article argues both sides of the spectrum: what bromance can offer to future society and how non-heteronormative groups can benefit from them and also how bromances can negatively affect them as well.

Hailed by the New York Times as “one of the most influential texts in gender studies, men’s studies and gay studies,” Eve Sedgwick’s Between Men, uncovers the homosocial desire between men, from Restoration comedies to Tennyson’s Princess. When studying homosocial theory, this is considered a primary work. Between Men demonstrates “the immanence of men’s same-sex bonds, and their prohibitive structuration, to male-female bonds in nineteenth-century English literature…” Sedgwick’s “male homosocial desire” referred to all male bonds, including, potentially, everyone from overt heterosexuals to overt homosexuals.

Jane Ward’s “Dude-Sex: White Masculinities and ‘Authentic’ Heterosexuality Among Dudes Who Have Sex With Dudes” powerfully asserts the fear of the gay man in today’s society. This piece asserts that men who have deep down, hidden sexual desire for other men use bromance as an excuse to portray these feelings without harboring the stigma of homosexuality while gaining from homosocial societal settings. While the assertion sounds a bit far-fetched, it is
easily believable when you think about particular bromances, the stigma that homosexuality has, and the self-hatred and loathing that many gay men and lesbian women feel. This article demonstrates the parallels between actual relationships and bromances.

There is also quite a bit of literature on hip-hop and popular music. John Weiner’s “Does this Purple Mink Make me Look Gay? The Rise of No Homo and the Changing Face of Hip-Hop Homophobia” asserts that there are still lots of homosexual hate in the hip-hop world; however, he does see it getting potentially better. Using this in conjunction with recent music trends, one can notice that this hope extends from the idea of bromance in music. Better yet, these bromances allowed for the discourse on homosexuality in hip-hop to occur. Kanye states, “And you know what? That’s when I was ignorant to gays”. One can tangibly realize by the interview with Kanye West that many stars are quickly changing their minds.

Despite this recent popularity of the bromance idea, the close but platonic relationships between two men, relationships derived from two men in romantic relationships is still met with negative feelings. Ironically, the relationships that American society laughs at, appreciates, and enjoys are not so different from the relationships that they despise so much. In the end, it boils down to the queasy feeling that people get when they talk about sex. For some reason heteronormative sex is natural yet homosexual acts are considered taboo (Ward). As hard as it is for people to discuss their sexual preferences to their heterosexual friends or partners, it is even more difficult for homosexual men, even in a homosocial environment.

Interestingly enough, while bromance culture has become more acceptable and therefore more popular in most media culture, the acceptance of homosexuality has not. Movies such as I Love You, Man and I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry highlight bromance, and both movies were very successful. Even still, actors such as Charlie Sheen whose character lives with
another man and is considered a bromance in his show *Two and a Half Men*, still is known to
tweet or say homophobic thoughts often. Furthermore, while hip-hop artists such as Macklemore
and Kanye West have spoken their favor for homosexuality, 50 cent still tweets about shooting
up homosexual weddings for fun.

Even Blake Shelton, who is now in a bromance with co-host Adam Levine, still harbors
homophobic sentiment. It is clear that these two coaches from *The Voice* are in a bromance.
From openly teasing each other to joking kisses even, they show closeness beyond those of
normal friendships. Thus, his homophobic slurs came to be even more of a surprise. His post that
ignited twitter frenzy stated, “Re-writing my favorite Shania Twain song… Any man that tries
touching my behind, he’s gonna be a beaten, bleedin’, heaving kind of guy…” (Shelton). Despite
Shelton’s apology, people have angrily stated that his homophobic tweets “advocated violence
against gays” (Huffington Post).

It is confusing that some people have made such powerful strides towards accepting
homosexuality and some have not, while people on both sides adhere to the homosocial
environments and intimacy theories of their society. The disconnect in the American psyche
between romantic or sexual relationships between two males and this kind of friendship, given
the working definition of bromance used, makes no sense. This kind of homosocial relationship
between two men is not so different than an actual homosexual relationship. The main difference
is arguably the physical action of sex.

It is clear that sex is still an incredibly taboo topic in American society. For most,
growing up is a time for parents, teachers, and other mentors to help children learn and discover
many things—just as long as those things have nothing to do with sex. Even until their child’s
adulthood, some parents do not find the bravery to broach the subject of sex. Still for many
Sex is a taboo subject in which most people fear a frank and open discussion, especially about their sexual preferences, even to the point of hiding their inclinations from partners. Deep into adulthood, these fears continue to escalate, on the parts of the LGBT community and those who oppose them.

Moreover, there is a clear and evident fear of the homosexual man. Dana M. Britton defines homosociality as the social preference for members of one's own gender, but does not necessarily imply erotic attraction (424). George Weinberg coined the term homophobia in 1967, deeming it the “irrational condemnation of homosexuals” (Ibid). Although homosexuality is no longer considered a disease in the context of the DSM, homophobia is still prevalent.

It is also clear that the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) population is subject to hate and hate crimes, mostly the LGBT section, due to this homophobia. Much of this has to do with pre-determined gender stereotypes. The majority of the American population immediately assigns gender, and allows others to conform to gender stereotypes. Jobs such as policemen, firemen, plumbers, construction workers, and many more are generally considered jobs strictly for men, while nurses, teachers, primary caretakers, fashion designers and hairdressers are generally considered professions for women. And if there is any cross-over, then people become highly uncomfortable. A male hairdresser must be gay, and a female firewoman must be a butch lesbian. With this ridiculous dual-gender society, it is no wonder that those who are non-heteronormative have a hard time coming out and being respected in their fields. This is just one form of discrimination.

Another form of hate is seen from the justice side of things, where non-heteronormative men and women are targeted based on their sexualities. While many law-enforcement agencies
have technical policies in place to prohibit this kind of behavior, in truth, it rarely works. The most striking sentiment that the FBI mentions is that if they could, they would gladly extend benefits to gay and lesbian agent’s life partners. To enforce this equal opportunity mindset, there is a team of dedicated members that sit on an LGBT Advisory Committee. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is very similar in all of these aspects, and the DHS allowed Stacy Shultz, who is the vice president of DHS Pride to make an “It Gets Better” video and begin a blog for LGBT service members in their agency (FBI.Gov). This shows that the FBI and the DHS are both progressive, but this progressiveness does not create equality.

Sadly though, the Federal Bureau of Investigation was not always so supportive, and years of negative reinforcement are hard to overcome. Less than twenty years ago, an anonymous tip that an agent was gay could cause him/her to be fired. In 1992, in Buttino v. Federal Bureau of Investigation, the plaintiff who had twenty years of service under his belt was terminated from an anonymous tip of his homosexuality (Lewis). However, the research on other law enforcement agencies on a smaller scale is even less positive. Studies show that many officers would turn their head if a perpetrator was harming someone of homosexual orientation; “officers will not intervene on the behalf of lesbian and gay claimants and do not protect victims or apprehend perpetrators” (Bernstein 304).

The way in which law enforcement personnel target the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, and asexual population forces this group of people to reconsider their actions in public. They cannot expect help from law enforcement, therefore holding hands, kissing, and many other actions that heteronormative couples can do, potentially is cause enough for the LGBTQIA community to fear for their lives.
Besides the criminal justice system creating problems for the LGBTQIA community, there are also educational disparities to be accounted for as well. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students are twice as likely to be physically and verbally abused at school, creating a terrible environment for learning. Teachers are in constant fear of offending lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students and facing consequences from their superiors, and therefore feel that they are unable to help. This shows that there is a great lack of training for teachers and administrators in how to address the needs of these students (Lipken).

There are also many health disparities in the queer community, due to the fear of homophobia. Many health professionals are homophobic, causing individuals in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, and asexual community to reconsider seeking medical assistance or they put it off until more damage has been done. Also, twenty-six percent of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth report being kicked out of their house after coming out to their parents, and without guidance these youth are statistically more likely to turn to the abuse of drugs to deal with their problems. This leads to a variety of health problems. Forty percent of these young people have attempted or contemplated suicide (Groze, Proctor).

Homophobia is also apparent by employment discrimination and the socio-economic status of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, and asexual population. Due to the fear of homosexuality, qualified and hardworking Americans are sometimes overlooked and denied jobs. Many times, if they are lucky enough to be placed in a job, they face serious discrimination by their employers and coworkers. These experiences include being fired unfairly, being denied a deserved promotion, and facing harassment on the job. Gay men earn up to thirty-two percent less than similarly qualified heterosexual men, and up to sixty-four percent of transgender people report incomes below 25,000 dollars. Furthermore, lesbian and gay
individuals are denied the economic advantages to marriage. Without any form of social support, more than help who are discriminated against will continue to remain in a lower socioeconomic status. (Ibid.)

Consequently, when a gay couple introduces one another to strangers or to distance acquaintances, they sometimes feel pressured to tell others that their partner is a “friend.” Homophobia is a cause for the increase of bromances that we have seen. This is because two men spending a great amount of time together as friends is perceived as acceptable in society, but the very moment that a label is introduced, it becomes offensive. American society is homosocial, but has a fear of the homosexual man.

Despite furthering societal acceptance of homosexuality, homophobia persists. The main arguments against homosexuality rely on religious and moral beliefs. However, it can be argued that there is another reason all together. Men and women are afraid that challenging gender norms will change society completely, and people fear change. However, the homosexual male has it even worse. While women can play and explore their sexuality without much chagrin (mostly because society has a hard time believing in lesbian sex at all), but if a man even jokingly kisses another man, he is immediately deemed a homosexual. Zach Howe claims that “The result of all this is that men are not allowed ‘complex’ sexualities; once the presumption of straightness has been shattered, a dude is automatically gay” (1). This allows little to no freedom to explore a non-heteronormative relationship. There is an absolute zero-policy towards gayness for many. This policy, for some, can erase an entire lifetime of either straightness for the men who experiment or of homosexuality for the gay man who allows himself to hide from his sexuality.
The furthering acceptance of homosexuality is a slow battle. While naysayers insinuate that the consistent chuckling that occurs when two characters in pop culture act out on their feelings towards one another is indicative of awkwardness, great bounds are being made. It will only require a small jump to bridge the gap between homosexuality and bromances. A large portion of this jump requires the knowledge that bromances have been around since the beginning of time, and that people throughout time could then use bromance to bridge their own gap between homosexuality and bromance.

Despite the fact that bromances are a recent societal invention, recent popularity of the bromance idea—the close but platonic relationships between two men have been around since biblical times. David and Jonathon were both figures of the kingdom of Israel, and were written about favorably in the Bible, regardless of their closeness. Though the Bible never explicitly depicts their relationship in a sexual manner, they seem to be closer than friends (a psycho-emotional bond), and many scholars argue that they were the first homosexual couple in the Bible to be clearly written about (Horner 20). However, as there is no definitive proof of this, it can be just as easily asserted that their relationship was that of a bromance. In the Bible it states, “As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 2 And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father’s house. 3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. 4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David” (First Samuel 18: 1-5). In opposition to Saul’s jealousy over their relationship, Jonathon created a promise to David, or a solemn oath, of which is never clearly specified, though many scholars have speculated. Either way, this oath is rooted in similarity to the kinds of vows that those
proposing marriage would make. Later, in Second Samuel, there is another allusion to their relationship. “Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women.” This insinuation at the very least fulfills the third parameter of the working history of bromance, where relationships with women are pushed away.

Fast forward to Roman times, A short while later in history, found in The Iliad, Achilles and Patroclus make quite the scene as one of the most sacrificial bromance pair. One of history’s earliest recorded bromances is the story of Achilles and when Achilles went to battle against the forces of Troy, he was accompanied by Patroclus, one of his closest friends. When the heroic warrior, Achilles, refused to fight the Trojans, Patroclus donned his friend’s armor and fought in his stead, being struck down by the Trojan King Hector. This willingness to die for his companion shows that a psycho-emotional bond had been formed. Just as those becoming married, these two had vowed by action the words, “until death do us part.” When Achilles heard about his fallen comrade, he went into such a rage that he offended the river god Scamander, because he was clogging his rivers with dead bodies (Iliad, books 15-18).

Before his rage, “Achilles wept warm tears” before praying on behalf of his best friend (Iliad, book 18). Achilles mourned alone, spurning the care or love of women. This kind of dedication between two men goes far beyond a normal relationship.

Even the Founding Fathers of America consisted of a bromance. Bromances can even be discovered amongst the Founding Fathers of America or two. When John Adams and Thomas Jefferson first met at the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, they were honestly quite different, but their dedication to the founding of a new republic brought them together as close friends with an inseparable bond. This relationship would span decades, until
they had a disagreement that tore them apart. However, in the nature of true bromance, they came together as friends again, showing incredible dedication to one another, and showing that their bond would overcome any obstacle. In the ultimate act of patriotic bromance devotion, Adams and Jefferson died within hours of each other on July 4, 1826. Merrill D. Peterson wrote, ‘The friendship between Adams and Jefferson was a triumph of will over seeming incompatibilities of personal temperament and intellectual style’ (112).

These are perfect examples of what a true bromance is, proving that the idea of bromance is actually not a modern concept, but that its growth in popular culture has begun only in recent years, and bridges the zero-policy gap. Television shows where bromance is a driving force in the plot generally do very well, whether it be shows for adults or children (anywhere from the popular 90s show sitcom Friends or the children’s cartoon Spongebob Squarepants). Ironically enough, the term bromance did not grow in popularity until it was used in an episode in the seventh season of the popular television reality competition show Big Brother. Contestants Will Kirby and Mike Malin referred to their relationship as a bromance, and it quickly became a household term (INSERT CITATION HERE). This is also a phenomenon seen in movies, where the “good guys” are often two men who choose their heroic relationship over the women in their lives (Lavigne). Examples of this can be seen between Chewbacca and Han Solo in the popular Star Wars franchise and Patrick and Charlie from Perks of Being a Wallflower.

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Ironically though, America has created a homosocial environment where men would
rather hang out with men than women, which would lead one to believe that these male-to-male
relationships would be more common. Men at a young age undergo a “prolonged
adolescence”—preferring partying, drinking, porn, sports, video games, and hanging with the
guys to getting serious about work, making long-term commitments to women and children, and
settling down (Kimmel). “Male homosocial desire” refers to all male bonds, including,
potentially, everyone from overt heterosexuals to overt homosexuals. This desire has been around since biblical times, and can be seen in popular nineteenth-century literature (Sedgewick). Michael Kimmel’s *Guyland* examines the problematic “prolonged adolescence” that young men (say, ages 16–30) are going through today—preferring partying, drinking, porn, sports, video games, and hanging with the guys to getting serious about work, making long-term commitments to women and children, and settling down. This provides some possible insight into why men might prefer emotional bonds with other men over women.

It can be argued that the reason why gay or questioning men are afraid to admit their intimate feelings for other men, despite the fact that society is primarily homosocial, is because of the intense fear of the homosexual male. People generally fear the things that they do not understand, and when people are afraid, they often lash out in anger. “One of the strongest and deepest anxieties of most American men is their fear of homosexuality” (Franklin 71). This fear and this level of homophobia directly relate to the many injustices that gay, lesbian, and bisexual person’s experience. This is of course a debilitating restriction for heterosexual men, and causes them to second-guess every relationship they have with other men. This is why the homosocial environment is so important.

The homosocial environment is found in every portion of people’s lives—including music, movies, and literature. In fact, the concept of bromance is very deeply imbedded in popular culture. With that in mind, it is prudent to look at prevalent areas of pop culture that either bromance is an important aspect of, or in the case of this many situations, is the entire storyline. One example of this is the movie “I Love You, Man.” Friendless Peter Klaven (Paul Rudd) proposes to his girlfriend (Rashida Jones), but quickly discovers realizes that he has no best man because he has no male friends, so therefore does not have a best man. With
permission from his fiancé, he begins to go on a series of “man-dates” to find a best man. These dates are a clear representation of the homosocial environment that society has created. After many failed attempts, he finds that he has an instant bond with a man named Sydney Fife (Jason Segal). Ironically, he begins to spend so much time with his new best friend that his relationship with this new man puts a strain on his relationship with his wife. (I Love You, Man 2009). Herein, we find the exact definition of bromance, as earlier defined.

A user review on the film directory website IMDb depicts a great representation of these ideals in society. This user states, “When I first heard about this movie, I became a little irritated. The premise seemed to me like a ‘romantic comedy for gays’ except with a few lines to make it a ‘bromance’.” His tone is obviously negative, and he furthermore states that if the movie was supposed to be about a gay couple, they should not have “wimped out” (Anonymous). Oddly enough though, he finishes his review, giving the movie nine out of ten stars, positively. Once he mentioned, made fun of, and moved past the idea that this movie was about homosexuality, he began to enjoy the movie.” This insinuates that homosocial behavior is acceptable, but homosexual behavior is not.

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The duo even speaks about hip-hop relations with homosexuals, stating, "If I were gay, I would think hip-hop hates me" (Ibid.). Clearly, these kinds of thoughts are changing due to increased acceptance of the bromance ideal, allowing for people to see more clearly the nature of homosexual relationships as not so different as homosocial bromances.

Besides defining bromance by gender, sexuality, and intimacy, Elizabeth Chen in her article "Caught In a Bad Bromance," delves deeply into masculinity studies, and uses current societal context to explain the constructions of homosocial relationships. This can be used as a parallel study of marriage. This article argues both sides of the spectrum: what bromance can offer to future society and how non-heteronormative groups can benefit from them and also how bromances can negatively affect them as well.

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Thesis

This article demonstrates the parallels between actual relationships and bromances. There is also quite a bit of literature on hip-hop and popular music. Johna Weiner's "Does this Purple Mink Make me Look Gay? The Rise of No Homo and the Changing Face of Hip-Hop Homophobia" by Johna Weiner, he asserts that there are still lots of homosexual hate in the hip-hop world. However, he does see it getting potentially better. Using this in conjunction with recent music trends, one can see that this hope extends from the idea of bromance in music. Also, you can see in an interview by Kanye West that many stars are quickly changing their minds.

Despite this recent popularity of the bromance idea, the close but platonic relationships between two men, relationships derived from two men in romantic relationships is still met with negative feelings. Ironically, the relationships that American society laughs at, appreciates, and enjoys are not so different from the relationships that they despise so much. In the end, it boils down to the queasy feeling that people get when they talk about sex. For some reason heteronormative sex is natural yet homosexual acts are considered taboo (Ward).

Interestingly enough, while bromance culture has gone up in most media culture, the acceptance of homosexuality has not. Movies such as "I Love You, Man" and "I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry" both highlight bromances and both movies were very successful. Even still, actors such as Charlie Sheen whose character lives with another man and is considered a bromance in his show 2 ½Two and a Half Men, still is known to tweet or say homophobic thoughts often. Furthermore, while hip-hop artists such as Macklemore and Kanye West have spoken their favor for homosexuality, 50 cent still tweets about shooting up homosexual weddings for fun.
Even Blake Shelton, who is now in a bromance with co-host Adam Levine, still harbors homophobic sentiment. It is clear that these two coaches from ‘The Voice’ coaches are in a bromance. From openly teasing each other to joking kisses even, they show closeness beyond those of normal friendships. Thus, his homophobic slurs came to be even more of a surprise. His post that ignited twitter frenzy stated, “Re-writing my favorite Shania Twain song.... Any man that tries touching my behind, he’s gonna be a beaten, bleedin’, heaving kind of guy...” (Shelton). Despite Shelton’s apology, people have angrily stated that his homophobic tweets “advocated violence against gays.” (Huffington Post).

It is confusing that some people have made such powerful strides towards accepting homosexuality and some have not, while people on both sides adhere to the homosocial environments and intimacy theories of their society. The disconnect in the American psyche between romantic or sexual relationships between two males and this kind of friendship, given the fact that it’s not enough merely to be two male partners/friends who work together and/or enjoy spending time together makes no sense. To be deemed a bromance, there needs to be a powerful psycho-emotional bond that makes their relationship resemble a heterosexual marriage or romance, that fulfills them profoundly, that supersedes (or possibly conflicts with) all other relationships in their lives—including those with women. This kind of homosocial relationship between two men is not so different than an actual homosexual relationship. The main difference is arguably the physical action of sex. (NEEDS CITATION)

It is clear that sex is still an incredibly taboo topic in American society. For most, growing up is a time for parents, teachers, and other mentors to help children learn and discover many things—just as long as those things have nothing to do with sex. Even until their child’s adulthood, some parents do not find the bravery to broach the subject of sex. Still for many
others, when the topic does come up, they can’t bring themselves to actually say the word sex (however the majority of American citizens do know the story of the birds and the bees). No matter how old a person becomes, sex is a taboo subject in which most people fear a frank and open discussion, especially about their sexual preferences, even to the point of hiding their inclinations from partners. Deep into adulthood, these fears continue to escalate, on the parts of the LGBT community and those who oppose them.

Beyond that: Moreover, there is a clear and evident fear of the homosexual man. Dana M. Britton defines homosociality as the social preference for members of one’s own gender, but does not necessarily imply erotic attraction (424). George Weinberg coined the term homophobia in 1967, deeming it the “irrational condemnation of homosexuals” (Ibid). Although homosexuality is no longer considered a disease in the context of the DSM, homophobia is still prevalent.

It is also clear that the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) population is subject to hate and hate crimes, mostly the LGBT section, due to this homophobia. Much of this has to do with pre-determined gender stereotypes. The majority of the American population immediately assigns gender, and allows others to conform to gender stereotypes. Jobs such as policemen, firemen, plumbers, construction workers, and many more are generally considered jobs strictly for men, while nurses, teachers, primary care takers, fashion designers and hairdressers are generally considered professions for women. And if there is any cross-over, then people become highly uncomfortable. A male hairdresser must be gay, and a female firewoman must be a butch lesbian. With this ridiculous dual-gender society, it is no wonder that those who are non-heteronormative have a hard time coming out and being respected in their fields. This is just one form of discrimination.
Another form of hate is seen from the justice side of things, where non-heteronormative men and women are targeted based on their sexualities. While many law enforcement agencies have technical policies in place to prohibit this kind of behavior, in truth, it rarely works. The most striking sentiment that the FBI mentions is that if they could, they would gladly extend benefits to gay and lesbian agent’s life partners. To enforce this equal opportunity mindset, there is a team of dedicated members that sit on an LGBT Advisory Committee. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is very similar in all of these aspects, and the DHS allowed Stacy Shultz, who is the vice president of DHS Pride to make an “It Gets Better” video and begin a blog for LGBT service members in their agency (FBI.Gov). This shows that the FBI and the DHS are both progressive, but this progressiveness does not create equality.

Sadly though, the Federal Bureau of Investigation was not always so supportive, and years of negative reinforcement are hard to overcome. Less than twenty years ago, an anonymous tip that an agent was gay could cause them to be fired. In 1992, in Buttrino v. Federal Bureau of Investigation, the plaintiff who had twenty years of service under his belt was terminated from an anonymous tip of his homosexuality (CITATION?). However, the research on other law enforcement agencies on a smaller scale is even less positive. Studies show that many officers would turn their head if a perpetrator was harming someone of homosexual orientation; “officers will not intervene on the behalf of lesbian and gay claimants and do not protect victims or apprehend perpetrators” (Bernstein 304).

The way in which law enforcement personnel target the LGBTQIA population forces this group of people to reconsider their actions in public. They cannot expect help from law enforcement, therefore holding hands, kissing, and many other actions that heteronormative couples can do, potentially is cause enough for the LGBTQIA community to fear for their lives.
Besides the criminal justice system creating problems for the LGBTQIA community, there are also educational disparities to be accounted for as well. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students are twice as likely to be physically and verbally abused at school, creating a terrible environment for learning. Teachers are in constant fear of offending LGBTQA students and facing consequences from their superiors, and therefore feel that they are unable to help. This shows that there is a great lack of training for teachers and administrators in how to address the needs of these students. (CITATIONS NEEDED)

There are also many health disparities in the queer community, due to the fear of homophobia. Many health professionals are homophobic, causing individuals in the LGBTQIA community to reconsider seeking medical assistance or they put it off until more damage has been done. Also, twenty-six percent of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth report being kicked out of their house after coming out to their parents, and without guidance these youth are statistically more likely to turn to the abuse of drugs to deal with their problems. This leads to a variety of health problems. Forty percent of these young people have attempted or contemplated suicide. (CITATIONS NEEDED)

Homophobia is also apparent by employment discrimination and the socio-economic status of the LGBTQIA population. Due to the fear of homosexuality, qualified and hardworking Americans are sometimes overlooked and denied jobs. Many times, if they are lucky enough to be placed in a job, they face serious discrimination by their employers and coworkers. These experiences include being fired unfairly, being denied a deserved promotion, and facing harassment on the job. Gay men earn up to thirty-two percent less than similarly qualified heterosexual men, and up to sixty-four percent of transgender people report incomes below 25,000 dollars. Furthermore, lesbian and gay individuals are denied the economic

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advantages to marriage... Without any form of social support, more than help who are 
discriminated against will continue to remain in a lower socioeconomic status... (CITATIONS 
NEEDED)

Consequently, when a gay couple introduces one another to strangers or to distance 
aquaintances, they sometimes feel pressured to tell others that their partner is a “friend.”
Homophobia is a cause for the increase of bromances that we have seen... This is because two 
men spending a great amount of time together as friends is perceived as acceptable in society, 
but the very moment that a label is introduced, it becomes offensive... American society is 
homosexual, but has a fear of the homosexual man.

Despite furthering societal acceptance of homosexuality, homophobia persists... The 
main arguments against homosexuality rely on religious and moral beliefs... However, it can be 
argued that there is another reason all together... Men and women are afraid that challenging 
gender norms will change society completely, and people fear change... However, the 
homosexual male has it even worse... While women can play and explore their sexuality without 
much chagrin (mostly because society has a hard time believing in lesbian sex at all), but if a 
man even jokingly kisses another man, he is immediately deemed a homosexual... Zach Howe 
claims that “The result of all this is that men are not allowed “complex” sexualities: once the 
presumption of straightness has been shattered a dude is automatically gay... This allows 
little to no freedom to explore a non-heteronormative relationship... This policy, for some, can 
erase an entire lifetime of either straightness for the men who experiment or of homosexuality 
for the gay man who allows himself to hide from his sexuality.

This zero-tolerance policy does not apply to bromances at all, which is why the appeal is 
so high... Even to heterosexual men and women, the idea of bromance would be intriguing even
if homosexuality is not. Think of the many homoerotic games that children throughout their school years. "Fag-tag", sometimes going by a different name, is a game where straight men would go up to another man and tap his penis with the back of his hand with the charge to do so to someone else. Even "gay chicken", where men will slowly graze their hands against another man's thigh and the first one to stop the action wins, or loses rather. These games play directly into the zero-tolerance policy where one wrong move can label you for life. However, these games are acceptable in the homosocial environment that we have created.

Despite these facts—while bromances and support for homosocial environments, movies, music, and media, homosexuality still comes with these dangers. Arguably, there is little to no difference between the two kinds of relationships. If two men in a bromance added a label to their relationship (such as dating), then it becomes unacceptable. This is the first reason that makes bromances important. The gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and asexual community that are not yet ready to come to full terms with their sexuality have a safe way to express themselves in society. Eventually, they can use these bromances to ease their way into expressing their sexuality. Furthermore, bromances cause us to take an in-depth look at how we define masculinity in our culture. The era of a new kind of man is on the brink of society. With a little push from bromances, men may soon be able to be themselves around all men and women. This also allows for the reduction of typical stereotypes. Studies reveal that there are changing conceptions of masculinity and sociologist Mark McCormack of Durham University says. Straight men are behaving in “much softer” ways than in the past. Perhaps the best thing about a bromance is that the men involved tend to be very secure with themselves, and in touch with their emotions. This helps them have more complete friendships with other guys, and also helps them relate to the women in their life. Not only that, but with the acceptance of
same-male bonds and higher levels of friendship available to this community, the suicide rate is likely to be dramatically decreased around the time that they hit puberty. Additionally, the more prominent bromances become, the less amount of awkwardness is associated with them. Though there has already been a large amount of growth in this realm, the continuation will bridge the gap between homosocial bromances and homosexuality. A step further, society will realize that the types of relationships that they praise and enjoy in pop culture are not so different than homosexual practices. Of course, as society evolves the younger generations care less and less about how others see them. Finally, relationships based on homosociality, that is to say, friendships, will always be there even when relationships fail.


