

Bromances flourish thanks to changing anti-gay sentiments

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A decline in homophobia is allowing young men to embrace the benefits of a non-sexual bromance with close male friends. According to Stefan Robinson of the University of Winchester in the UK, young men nowadays are socially encouraged to enjoy deep, emotional and physically intimate friendships. The so-called "bromance" allows them to achieve the kind of closeness that is deeper than in other times, adds Robinson, lead author of an article in Springer's journal *Sex Roles*.

Young straight men's same-sex relationships are becoming more emotionally nuanced and intimate thanks to a shift in the acceptance of homosexuality. To investigate this, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 undergraduate heterosexual men studying sport-degree programs at a British university. The study aimed to thoroughly examine what the men understood bromances to be, to what extent they privileged the relationship, and how they were enacted. They were specifically asked about their involvement in and openness to secret sharing, emotional intimacy, bed sharing, nudity and kissing other men.

Each of the 30 men had had at least one bromantic friend at some time or other. They were unanimous in describing what a bromance entailed, and how it positively impacted their lives. They agreed that deep emotional disclosure is essential in bromances. Many, for instance, noted that they could only fully discuss matters such as their health issues or sexual desires in complete confidence with their bromantic friends, and not with family or girlfriends.

"They were clear that a bromance offers a deep sense of unburdened disclosure and emotionality based on trust and love," says Robinson. Robinson and his coauthors, Eric Anderson and Adam White, conclude that the permissibility of bromances, and the extent to which they are intimate, is highly contingent on cultural attitudes towards homosexuality. The research highlights that the expansion of social freedoms and masculine boundaries, as illustrated through bromances, are undoubtedly productive towards fostering a more emotive, expressive and healthy masculine culture.

Robinson however adds: "The absence of sexual attraction distinguishes these men as heterosexual to both themselves and others, and shows that the men share a progressive understanding that love can exist between two people without the need or requirement for sex with each other."

The results indicate that bromances have achieved a deep resonance in UK university culture and that men interpret these relationships as real, important and legitimate, and not a fantasy as is depicted in many popular television programs or films. Bromances allow them to push the cultural margins of traditional masculinity towards more intimate and expressive behaviours.

The research team urges scholars to recognize that bromances can play an important role in the everyday lives of [young men](#). "For those dealing with depressive symptoms or social anxieties, bromances may offer a way forward and a coping strategy," says Robinson.

More information: Stefan Robinson et al, The Bromance: Undergraduate Male Friendships and the Expansion of Contemporary Homosocial Boundaries, *Sex Roles* (2017). [DOI: 10.1007/s11199-017-0768-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0768-5)

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