

CONCEPTUALIZING FRIENDSHIP THROUGH AMERICAN GAY TELEVISION SERIES IN 2000S

Rudy
Prima Indonesia University, Indonesia
rudolphlim@yahoo.com

Abstract

Gay culture has been one of the most phenomenal issues in the world, particularly in the United States. As this culture has become pro and contra over American regarding their point of view, ethically or unethically, thus, it has been spread all over the world through media, particularly television, which makes it unique and essential to observe through the television series, gay characters appear with certain features attached to them. This study concentrates on the depiction of gay shown through American gay television series in 2000s. As gay culture is strongly connected to the collectivity, the friendship among minority groups like gay people has become fascinating to identify. By focusing on how and why the friendship is portrayed through the gay television series, this study incorporates semiotic approach to identify the friendship among gay shown by the American gay television series in 2000s. The observation of the gay television series have revealed that friendship among gay people plays a significant role in gay culture. The research findings show that the depiction of friendship through the gay TV series symbolizes similar values and vision shared among gay people in order to reach solidarity. Additionally, strong friendship as a binding value is always the feature shown by oppressed minority groups in a society.

Keywords: Gay, Television Series, 2000s, Friendship, America Culture

Introduction

The world has recently witnessed various incidents and changes in people's lives. These are seen through mass media which have a great contribution in reporting the changes in many different aspects of humans' lives, particularly the social life. One of the phenomenal social issues is the movement by gay people in fighting for their civil rights. American gay movement, for instance, has become a fundamental incident for the current social changes in the United States. As a part of society, gay people in The United States have been striving for the equality. The demonstrations conducted by them have brought impacts to the world. Apart from the pros and cons about gay culture in the world, America as a liberal country seems to be an open place for LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,

and Transgender) to gain more opportunities to come out. Thus, gay phenomena in the United States have become argumentative issues among American people.

For this reason, the issue on gay people is interesting to be observed. As a minority group in sexual orientation, there are certainly some values shared among gay people. In other words, minority groups in a society believe that there must be certain values that they can be counted on can count on since they have similarities. This condition can also be seen in gay community. One of the most fascinating parts in gay relationship is the friendship. This can tell that friendship plays an important role in gay culture. The 21st century has brought many changes in American society, including the gay community. Consequently, this has

influenced American television, particularly television series.

Methodology

Thus, the study uses gay television series as the primary data to identify friendship in gay culture. They are for example, the Emmy Award-winning sitcom *Will & Grace* produced broadcast by NBC from 1998 until 2006; *Queer as Folk* (2000) broadcast by Showtime Network; *Some of My Best Friends* (2001) by CBS and *Six Feet Under* (2001) broadcast by HBO; and *Dante's Cove* (2005), *DL Chronicles* and *The Lair* (2007) by American gay television channel, Here TV.

From the observation through some of the American gay television series, it frequently portrays gay friendship scenes. Therefore, the objectives of the study is to figure out how gay friendship is commonly shown in American gay television series in 2000s and to identify the reason it is depicted. The analysis of the study is conducted by applying semiotic approach to show the symbol of friendship portrayed in American gay television series through the concept of 'sign-signified-signifier.' The techniques are used repeatedly to decipher the signs in order to explain the meaning and messages behind the sign observed through the TV series.

Findings

Perceiving Friendship in Gay Culture

One of the most important depictions which has frequently appeared on American gay-themed television series since 2000s is friendship. It shows the importance of having friends. In other words, from the data acquired, it can signify that friendship is necessarily essential in

gay culture. From the gay-themed television series observed, friendship among gay friends has become one of the central issues in American gay culture. To pave a way to understand a broader concept of gay friendship, it is firstly started from the mainstream perception of friendship. America is a country with multi culture and ethnics. Consequently, the concept of friendship seems to be essential in this liberally multicultural country.

Everyone is born as a social individual. As the most important part in the society, people need to interact with others for different kinds of purposes. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2000) defined friendships as "a relationship between friends" and "the feeling or relationship that friends have; the state of being friends". From the definition above, it can tell that there is a kind of feeling, which determines whether it is called friendship or not (p. 516). In addition to that, Thomas II said (2008), "friendships are like ideas. They come, they go, rising and falling, side by side. You get a new idea, you spend time and energy thinking about it, you adapt to it. Then it may start to wane or even die altogether" (p. 91). Making friends involves more than one individual. Since it is built by including more than a person, it demands some processes to make it work. Once it does not work properly, the friendship will end. In order to prolong the friendship, there must be some particular requirements to fulfill.

The social interaction which creates the so-called small kind of organization, friendship has certain types of forms and values in it. Regarding to this, Healy (2011) described, "at a basic level, friendship demands that some are excluded from the relationship and it cannot include everyone. Friendship, by its very nature, indicates those who may be outside of

family bonds (although family members can also be friends) but not strangers” (p. 232). Thus, the kind of friendship that people generally perceived is the kind relationship among people outside of family members such as neighbors or people at schools, work places, markets etc. This social contact shapes a kind of good relationship among the people called “friendship” which is based on certain virtues. And the values contained in friendship can determine whether or not the friendship can continue.

It is important to note that the concept of friendship is not easily defined. Some may simply misunderstand the term friendship. For this reason, Healy (2011) tried to explain, “I can be friendly without being friends: civic friendliness is a very different concept to civic friendship. Before dismissing the concept entirely, it is necessary to consider the alternative form of friendship, that of virtue” (p. 232).

It can be understood here that not all kind of friendliness is called friendship. But in friendship, there should be friendliness. In relation to this, friendship described in mainstream culture is usually perceived as the relation among friends. However, friendship does not seem that simple. In this part of the study, various perceptions of friendship and its characteristics are discussed.

Forming friendship with some people we know one another and share thoughts and life experience can satisfy people because it makes people recognized, without it people barely express their satisfaction (Korab-Karpowicz, 2010, p. 309). In order to reach the satisfaction, people believe that there are some basic values necessarily needed in friendship. Regarding to this, Kaye (2005) revealed, “trust is widely

regarded as a virtue among friends, and being trustworthy sometimes requires keeping secrets. But keeping secrets sometimes requires telling lies. We may ask if true friendship justifies lying” (p. 475). Thus, when somebody begins to trust a person, that can be said to be the time, he or she starts building friendship with the person. Hence, trust can be the key to select friends and build good friendship (Martin and Biello, 2008, p. 155). Tracing back to the history of the United States, friendship has been very important since the coming of Europeans to The land of America. The same thought is also expressed by Healy (2011):

Trust undoubtedly transcends the personal relationship, and as such looks on the surface as the most likely candidate to transpose neatly from the personal virtue to the public. Just as we need to be able to trust our friends, so we need to be able to trust beyond particular individuals. When ill, I need to be able to trust that the doctor is truly trying to make me better, without continually asking to see her qualifications and chasing up references. (p. 475)

Friendship based on trust has become one of the most fundamental characteristics in friendship. As the point described above, the satisfaction acquired from having friends can be related to happiness. Therefore, it can tell that one can express his satisfaction for getting good friendship and at the same time, the satisfaction can bring happiness. This idea is supported by Demir, et al., (2013) arguing, “the findings suggest that one reason why the quality of friendships is related to happiness is because friendship experiences promote individuals’ feelings of uniqueness” (p. 1201). The notion of friendship explained by Demir, et al. concentrates the happy feeling that someone has when having close friends because friendship is

unique. It is unique because of its complexity too. Thus, friendship is not a simple thing to describe. Friendship does not seem to be something fixed. It can change, degrade or fade faded due to many factors. For this reason, Quinn (2008) has argued:

To come up with a coherent, thoughtful discussion of friendship proved to be more difficult than I imagined. For me, contemplating the constellation of people in my life whom I could describe as friends was as difficult to explain as the infinity of space or the subquark level of existence. People are simultaneously simple and complex and what makes them attractive or interesting to me is as nearly inexplicable. Friends simply are. They exist as anomalies in the course of all of my human reactions. To think about why some people are differentiated as friends as opposed to simply interchangeable humanoids is to try and grasp at a knowledge of myself as much as it is to understand why those friends like me in return. (p. 105)

Since friendship is based on trust which can give the sense of satisfaction and happiness, there are some processes explained by Adam and Ueno (2007), "Friendship process is another component of friendship patterns and includes behavioral processes (what people do with their friends), affective processes (what people feel about their friends), and cognitive process (what people think about their friends)" (p. 199). In other words, friendship is strengthened by these three processes. When people enjoy doing something with other, they share the similar interests.

From the sharing, the feeling of affection appears caring, protecting, and finally, affection

that may lead people to see how their friends respond toward their affection and kindness. In this stage, it is normally examined and evaluated. Therefore, when their friends do not treat them the same way as their expectations, it can simply end the friendship. For this reason, it can be said that friendship is a reciprocal relationship or mutualism (Hostetler and Choler, 1997, p. 204; Adam and Ueno, 2007, pp. 199-200; Healy, 2011, p. 232). From the points above, it can be inferred that being kind to each other is a fundamental key to reach good friendship with mutualism as one of the characteristics. For instance, Cureton (2012) explained:

Similarly in the case of friendship, what is most essential about the value of friendship is the set of reasons we have to be a good friend (i.e. to be loyal to the other person, visit her in the hospital, do these things out of our concern for her, etc.), although we may also have some reasons to bring about more and better instances of friendship in the future. (p. 704)

From the features such as satisfaction, trust, happiness, and uniqueness, friendship can promote solidarity. In other words, the strength of solidarity needs friendship. A nation without solidarity of its people means nothing.

The mainstream perception of friendship seems to be essential to understand the significance of friendship among gay people. The depiction of friendship on gay-themed television series is the relationship among gay friends. Almost of all the television series observed in the study portrays the importance of having and keeping friends. *Queer as Folk* (2000), for example, pictures some of gay friends (Brian, Michael, Emmett and Ted) who really are dedicated to their friendship. Many episodes depict the

importance of gay friendship in the series. One of them is in the second season when one of the friends, Ted has a problem about the friendship.

Ted : So, what's up?
Emmett : You, Teddy. You have a problem. That's why I brought Michael and Brian. We're friends. We care about you. We're here to help you.

The meaning of friendship in gay culture has played a more significant role because gay men are marginalized in the society. Many gay men feel the necessity of having friends who share similar sexual orientations, and know precisely how hard their life is. By friendship, the life they live will seem more pleasant, meaningful and powerful which can lead to strong solidarity. Gay people realize that mainstream culture in a society have excluded gay culture and for that reason, there is something they share among them such as sexual orientation and life experience in the heterosexual-dominated society in order to reinforce the gay culture.

Empowering Solidarity through Friendship

According to Korab-Karpowicz (2010) expressed the idea relating to solidarity, "Let us find a common ground. Let us ask if there is anything that we all share. This is life itself. Global Solidarity depends on the recognition of life as the common platform on which all human beings, despite their cultural differences" (p. 309). This context seems to be applied in gay culture. It is obvious that they are united because of their sexual orientation. Therefore, they are solidified in order to gain motivation and support among them. Gottlieb (2008) expressed, "For gay men, however,

friendship has *never* been thought of as secondary. Rather, those relationships have always been safe havens, places where we can be understood, feel valued, and experience acceptance and love" (p. 4). This can show that gay people gather with their gay friends because they can understand one another and share the same painful life experience, and obtain life spirit to continue living together with their gay friends.

In addition, Roden (2008) inferred, "In places where gay male community is necessary for combating social or personal oppression, that community must be valued and strengthened for its ability to help the individual and group to grow in healthy ways" (p. 16). Friendship in gay men seems to play a very important role because besides being friends for sharing ideas, life experience, and gaining support, it also functions as a second family for many gay men since they have been abandoned by their blood family members for their sexual orientation. In addition, Robinson (2008) in his research has figured out, "More recently, the definition of gay family has expanded to include person who are neither kith nor kin" (p. 136). This can be inferred that gay people have another version of friendship, which they call family. So, their good gay friends who spend more time talking, sharing, playing, and doing routines with them can be said as family members, particularly the gay men who have been neglected or hated by their own blood family. For this reason, having good friends is essential to gay men (Preston, 1995, pp. 7-8; Robinson, 2008, pp. 117-178).

From the observation through gay TV series, it shows that when gay people gather with their friends, they feel the importance of sharing things that their straight friends do not seem to understand, especially about being gay. Regarding to that, Marcus (2005) described:

In addition to talking about all the things that heterosexual people talk about, many gay and lesbian people talk about being gay and about the latest news on gays and lesbian rights issues – although how much gay people discuss these issues depends upon their stage in life. If you're in the process of getting coupled or you're working on having children, you're likely to discuss gay issues, legal issues in particular, far more than the average single gay person. (p. 161)

The idea above can show that the talks, ideas, and moments shared among gay friends have made them feel the need of having the so-called “new family” besides their blood family. This importance of friendship is also shown on *Will and Grace*, in the episode “Moveable Feast” of the fourth season:

- Paul: It's a huge difference between my obligation to my family and your obligation to your friends.
Will: My friends are my family.
Paul: Your situation is completely different and you know it. You made that choice...
Will: My being gay is no more choice.

Therefore, the example above can show that it is common to see gay characters on American gay-themed television series having a best gay friend or some close friends. This is clearly shown in the gay-themed series discussed in the study such as Will and Jack, Larry and Joe on *Will and Grace* (1998); Brian, Michael, Ted and Emmett on *Queer as Folk* (2000); Warren and Vern on *Some of My Best Friends* (2001); and Toby and his lesbian best friend, Van on *Dante's Cove* (2005).

There is an episode entitled “Nobody Sleeps” in the third season in *Six Feet Under* (2001) also

portrays a gay man, where Bob dies in his partner's arm surrounded by his friends. His partner explains that Bob's family cannot accept his homosexuality:

- Bob's partner : We buried our friends. We thought we'd been spared and we'd grow old together. Such hubris.
Nate : I'm so sorry.
Bob's partner : It was cardiomyopathy. Enlarged heart. His heart was too big. We used to joke about it. It was caused by severely leaking heart valve. We used to joke about that, too. Bleeding heart.
Nate : Have any of his family been contacted?
Bob's partner : I called his sister in Phoenix, but she's not coming. His family was never very accepting of things. Bob and I were together for 22 years. So, I'm his family.

The depiction shows that the primary (blood) family of the poor dead gay man does not seem to care about his death. The sentence “So, I'm his family.” can show that the poor dead gay man is not accepted by his blood family. On the day he dies, he is only accompanied by his partner and his gay friends. This can indicate that in gay culture, friends are important because they can replace the position of blood family members. This can also reveal that friendship in gay culture can have some functions in gay men's life. This is also described by Roden (2008):

‘Gay male friendship’ per se has two primary values—one public and one private. In community, wherever two or more are gathered, there is strength: for a voice to speak out against oppression, to

support (in a healthy rather than damaging way) self-definition, and thus to serve a marginalized population. Individually, gay male friendship can play a similar function: the communication of self with the other who shares some common category of identity supports the growth and development of the persons involved. The difficulty here is what is shared. (p. 12)

Regarding the idea above, friendship has a role as a family as well as a source of spirit for gaining supports as power to survive in a hetero-normative society. Those gay men who share the same thoughts and come out to live as gay men tend to have stronger friendship than those who choose to hide his gay side (Roden, 2008, p. 14). It can reveal that gay people who befriend with other gay friends who have honestly live their lives as gay men can share the same vision and mission in terms of getting motivations as well as solutions in handling discrimination problems they face in the society. By this way, the friendship will lead to solidarity as described previously. Friends involved in the so-called friendship that empower the solidarity must realize that the purpose of their friends is indeed different than the other kinds of mediocre friend relationships. In addition, Derpmann (2009) revealed, “When we speak of solidarity, members of a group are, or they at least feel obliged to promote the well-being of other members, even incurring significant sacrifices for themselves. Further, they might be sanctioned, if they forego obligations of solidarity” (p. 305). Therefore, friends who are united based on particular conditions to create solidarity are supposed to grow the sense of belonging. This can make the people involved in friendship feel the importance of preserving and reinforcing their friendship for the sake of solidarity. In addition

to this Cureton (2012) explained about solidarity in this way:

Solidarity, in general, is a matter of a group of people being united or at one with regard to something (sympathies, interests, values, etc.), having genuine concern for each other’s welfare, respecting others as group members, trusting one another not to intentionally undermine or free ride on the group, taking pride in the group as a whole, being ashamed of its failures and suffering loss or betrayal if members of the group do not live up to the requirements that the group places on itself, and perhaps having certain other affections for one’s compatriots. (p. 696)

Gay-themed television series present a funny, smart and talkative gay character to befriend with the main gay character. Jack, on *Will and Grace*, for example, is depicted as Will’s best gay friend who has been with him almost every day. Emmett in the second season of *Queer as Folk*, for instance, seems to be disappointed when he knows that Ted hides something from him: “Teddy, since when do we keep secrets? And since when do we share things with Brian that we do not share with me?” This can tell that the friendship based on care, understanding, support and motivation in gay culture is also illustrated in the friendship between Warren and Vern on *Some of My Best Friends*,

Vern: What? No no no, you have to go.
Warren: Forget it. I’m not facing Terry and the gorgeous Paulo, it’s too humiliating. You go with Meryl.
Vern: Wrong. If you’re not going, I’m not going. I’m not gonna face those people by myself.
Warren: Just go with Meryl...
Meryl: By the way Warren, I want you to meet Mason. He’s best for your team and he’s totally gorgeous.

Looking back at the gay rights movement took that place in 1970s; the friendship has played an important role in actualizing the solidarity. Groups of friends at the gay bars shared the same mission to claim their rights and later it was followed by more and more groups of friends. That can signify that friendship in gay culture has a fundamental role in shaping solidarity.

The way television series picture gay characters with their gay friends can reflect that gay men respect and appreciate friendship because constructing friendship is not an easy thing to do in gay community. For many gay people, friendship is indescribably deep as mentioned by Martin and Biello (2008):

I like your description of our friendship as 'deep'. I wonder if it feels this way because of all the other aspects of relationship that we share and perhaps the friendship part underlies everything else—like a foundation or a root. Or maybe the deepness of our friendship was instant and became the reason we were able to build so much upon it. (p. 153)

This can indicate that gay friendship means a lot to gay people because by gathering or being around with friends who share the same sexual orientation, life experience as well as hard times may be one of the best things in their life – the life they hardly get when they are with their straight friends or family members. This is similar to the point expressed by Quinn (2008):

Many gay people experience a sense of isolation and alienation by way of being ostracized and excluded from others beginning as far back as childhood, but there is a huge gay community out there with everything from Web sites to potluck

suppers to encourage a shared common identity and to provide opportunities for human interaction and intimacy. (p. 107)

The condition explained by Quinn can reveal that gay men need friends to shape solidarity to show their existence in the society. Therefore, the presence of gay friends creating friendship is essential to gay men in expressing their sense of liveliness and to gain sense of belong as a social and cultural individual (Aoki, 2008, p. 125). By having the strong friendship, a gay man can live his life happily. If it is related to the previous explanation, having good friendship seems to make gay men feel confident as well as unique, as Demir *et al* (2013) pointed out, “Thus, individuals who accept their special characteristics, fostered by their interactions with significant others, and feel unique are more likely to feel happy in their lives” (p. 1205). From this point of view, it can tell that gay men will be happier if they have gay friends and build good gay friendship.

The friendship that gay men create does not only involve gay men but it also includes their lesbian friends. In fact, both gay men and lesbian women are bonded. They belong to gay culture. This sort of condition is often depicted in American gay-themed television series since 2000s. It is obviously pictured in *Queer as Folk* (2000) and *Dante's Cove* (2005). The presence of lesbian characters such as Lindsay and Melanie is to befriend with the gay characters. Their friendship portrayed on the series is strong. It seems that those gay and lesbian friends are not only ordinary friends, but it turns out to be the so-called 'gay family'. The lesbian couple Lindsay and Melanie has used the sperm of their best gay friends, Brian and Michael for the artificial insemination. This can indicate that they believe that their gay friends have a set of talents to be inherited to their babies. It is

‘trust’ that plays an important role in their friendship.

Melanie who is pictured as a lesbian lawyer on the third season of *Queer as Folk* puts more efforts to help her gay friend Ted Schmidt when he has a problem with his pornography website:

The prosecuting attorney: If you call an unsavoury homosexual pornographic website a legitimate business...

Mel: Your honour, Mr. Schmidt was extremely diligent in keeping his business strictly up to code. He had no idea that his employee, Edward Steward Malone was a minor.

The relationship between gay men and lesbian women has been based on the similar life experience that both of them have. Another illustration showing a gay man and a lesbian woman who trusts each other can be seen on *Will and Grace* in the seventh season when Ro can trust Jack by revealing her true sexual preference:

Jack: Are you nervous about your wedding? Kind of, cause I’m a lesbian. (Jack is a bit surprised.)

Ro: What am I gonna do? I can’t get married. The thought of my fiancé’s touch sickens me. I’m a lesbian. I’m a lesbian! Oh, my God. It feels so good to say it out loud.

Jack: It seems to me, perhaps you should not marry him.

Ro: But I have to. My parents have been dreaming about my wedding forever. It’ll kill them to know that their only girl loves only girls.

Jack: Whoa. What are you talking about? Your parents have done everything right. They raised all

their kids gay. Why would they not accept you?

Ro: It’s different with Vince. He’s a guy. We’re Italian and all Italian guys are gay...

Ro: Look, you’re the only person who knows so please don’t tell anyone.

Jack: Well, I won’t. But you have to, Ro. And this is the perfect opportunity.

In the conversation above when Ro tells Jack that the lesbian character Ro feels a relief when she opens up her homosexuality to the gay character, Jack. In *Dante’s Cove*, the lesbian character Van is depicted to be the gay character’s best friend Toby. The main gay character Toby can share his love problems with the lesbian character Van such as exemplified below where both talked about separation:

Van: Toby, I was just thinking about you.

Toby: How’s everything in the Dante?

Van: Thing’s fine. I miss you so much. How’s everything with you and Kevin?

Toby: Not so good.

Van: What’s wrong?

Toby: We broke up.

Van: No! What happened?

Toby: We got a huge argument. He doesn’t want to come live with me in Dante’s Cove. ...

Toby: His parents don’t approve...They think that I’m corrupting him.

The way they take care each of others reflects that friendship that the homosexual people share can be deeper especially those who are not wanted by their own blood family members. The closeness between gay men and lesbian women picture on the gay-themed television series can indicate that their relationship is actually similar to any ordinary friendship perceived in mainstream culture. However, then, their sexual orientation experience in the

society has made them be more selective in choosing friends based on convenience, freedom, self-identity and satisfaction. Again in the second season of the series *Dante's Cove* shows that the gay character and the lesbian character need each other to form a family:

- Kevin: Nice. You still got Vanin here.
Toby: Why wouldn't I?
Kevin: Well, the fight.
Toby: She's still my family. You don't throw away your family no matter what.
Kevin: Maybe not where you came from.
Toby: Right. I know it was different for you, but the good thing is we get to pick our own families.

Thus, lesbian characters in the series are depicted to get along well with the gay characters. At least, they appear to complete the gay character's life.

In relation to the friendship, gay and lesbian people are also frequently portrayed to be together at some public places. It seems that many gay men gather with their friends in public places such as bars, fitness centers, cafés, etc. can prove that they can still socialize with one another in the hetero-normative mainstream culture. Most gay people prefer the places dominated or owned by gay people such as gay bars, gay cafés, etc. or gay-friendly places to gather. This is explained by Edwards (1994),

The gay community has creatively and positively developed a vast array of meeting places, venues and groups which offer the chance to meet people of the same sexual preference. This usually only extends to the level of café, clubs and bars and the odd bookshop that one generally has to find out about first. (p. 110)

Tracing back to the gay liberation period, gay bar has been an important venue for the history of gay rights movement in the United States. There are many activities that gay men can do when they gather with their friends including the rebellious kind of activity such as gay protest or demonstration. The solidarity created by friendship has changed the gay culture in the United States. By putting a lot of efforts in protesting and fighting to win their civil rights such as getting marriage and adoption, gay people can eventually show that gay power is through the friendship which grows to form a strong solidarity. In addition, there have been many gay places found in big cities. The gay bar phenomena has been increasing since 1970s. This has seemed to give opportunities to gay people to enjoy their urban lifestyles as pointed out by Harry (1974):

The differentiation of gay bars which occurs with increases in city size probably provides a more satisfying life for gays in the larger cities. The variety of available gay life-styles permits a closer fit between the sexual, social, and cultural tastes of the individual gay and the opportunities for expression of those tastes. Not only does the large city offer opportunities for finding friends with similar tastes, the size of the sexual market makes sexual contacts more readily available. (pp. 245-246)

The gay bar or club phenomena have been used by many gay friends to socialize with the other gay friends for many different purposes such as getting friends, love or sex partners, and many more. Such a condition can be seen from the gay club "Babylon" depicted on the television series *Queer as Folk*. The gay club can symbolize the freedom that gay people have always wanted. It seems that, the gay characters depicted in that gay club feel the great

excitement and pleasure to express themselves by dancing, cuddling, kissing and having sex.

Besides, by gathering at some public places especially for gay men such as gay bars, gay gym, etc. can show the importance of shaping their identity. Further, Marcus (2005) mentioned,

When you step into a gay or lesbian bar or play on an all gay softball team, you're not an outsider. You can be yourself, which include being physically affectionate in public in ways that heterosexual people take for granted (and get upset about when they see gay people doing the same things.) There's no fear of being judged or discriminated against for being gay. At its best, the experience offers the sense of being with 'family', in the most positive sense of the world. (p. 165)

Being with their own gay friends make them feel that they can grow older in a better way with the affection of friends. By this way, their life seems to be more meaningful. In addition, Robinson (2008) has emphasized, "Friends are without doubt the central feature of the affective life of the gay men" (p. 137). Thus, many gay men are willing to move or find a place where they can get more gay friends. By this way, they can improve their creativity in dealing with many social and cultural activities. This seems to lead a way to gay people to show their identity.

Conclusion

From all the points discussed above, it can be concluded that in American mainstream culture, the concept of friendship is actually broad because it can be perceived through different perspectives. It is normally seen as a unique and mutual relationship that involves more than one person generating the sense of satisfaction and

happiness reinforced by trust in order to grow the solidarity. From the signs acquired through observing American gay-themed television series, friendship in gay culture has frequently appeared. Additionally, the friendship portrayed in gay television series can be a means of showing confidence and identity in gay community.

Friendship is important to gay people because it can also function as a "family" for them since many of gay men are rejected or abandoned by their blood family members. By this way, they can live their gay life confidently, freely and happily. The presence of lesbian characters in gay-themed television series can indicate that both lesbian women and gay men share the similar life experience regarding to their sexual orientation. Thus, many of them can get along well by gathering at some public places such as gay bars or clubs to display their existence in the hetero-normative society. Besides, from the good friendship, it helps create solidarity among homosexual people to fight for their rights. And it seems that the depiction of gay friendship has often been significant in the representation of gay on American television series.

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