

Not All Deep Friendships Are 'Gay'

Not every deep, loving relationship between people of the same sex is "gay."

Last week, in an essay for *The Federalist*, D.C. McAllister offered this valuable and timely reminder to a society that has largely forgotten what true friendship looks like.

Drawing heavily on C.S. Lewis' *The Four Loves*, McAllister references the traditional Greek distinction between *eros* and *philia*. *Eros* refers to the more passionate, exclusive form of love that occasionally manifests itself in sexual activity, whereas *philia* refers to intimacy (which can also be passionate) proper to friendship.

The big problem is that modern society has conflated the two, instinctively characterizing any deep affection shown between people of the same sex as *eros*. According to McAllister, a perfect illustration of this conflation is the invention of the term "bromance":

"We're so uncomfortable with the expression of intimate, familiar feelings among men that we've given it its own name—bromance. David and Jonathan. Lewis and Clark. Clooney and Pitt. Bromances. Not friendships.

I wish 'bromance' would disappear from the American lexicon forever. That's because it represents everything that's wrong with our culture when it comes to friendship. Instead of friendship being noble, nonromantic, and normal, it has become the exception, romanticized to the point that we're uncomfortable describing it and experiencing it for what it is. Even as we try to distinguish it from homosexuality, we are corrupting real friendship by placing it in the context

of romance.”

McAllister traces the deterioration of close friendships back to Puritanism and Victorian sensibilities:

“Puritanism put a damper on passions as if they are the seat of evil within the soul. Passionate friendships between opposite sexes weren’t allowed... Showing feeling—especially in a physical way—even in same-sex friendships was discouraged... This tight control on feelings seeped into our culture, worsened by Victorian aloofness.”

Eventually came the sexual revolution, which was a perhaps predictable reaction against Puritanism. Unfortunately, it was an excessive reaction: it saw everything and wanted to paint it “sex.” And the tug of war between Puritanism and sexual “freedom” that ensued left little room in our culture for appreciating deep friendship. As a result, many today are caught in a dissatisfying either-or: either they “fail to engage in meaningful friendships,” or they confuse strong feelings for another as necessarily indicative of homosexual tendencies.

As McAllister notes in her title, if our society is to once again appreciate deep friendships, it will need “to stop sexualizing everything.”

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