UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Faculty of Humanities, Social sciences, and Education

Intersectional identities and spaces: Queer T'boli and Maranao narratives

Patricia Aida Linao

Master's thesis in Indigenous studies IND-3904-123H May 2024

UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Intersectional identities and spaces: Queer T'boli and Maranao narratives

A master thesis submitted by

Patricia Aida Linao

Master of Philosophy in Indigenous studies

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

UiT – The Arctic University of Norway

May 2024

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This thesis contributes to our understanding of queer lived experiences by exploring identity constraints influence on the creation and maintenance of safe and brave spaces of queer Indigenous Filipinos. The study investigates their complex relationship with ambivalence towards and their survivance with the spaces they create within themselves, their familial, Indigenous community, cultural and religious spaces. Utilizing Filipino – based research methods -pakikipagkwentuhan and ginabayang talakayan- empirical data was collected from thirteen participants with diverse queer identities. These methods facilitated a safe and brave space to share and narrate their past and present life stories, as well as their hope for a queer inclusive space in the future.

The findings are presented as interconnected narratives of their emic identities, while navigating the macho spaces of familial, cultural, religious, and societal spaces. Additionally, the study examines nuanced relationship with education, class, and their community development efforts. Despite encountering various forms of identity constraints, many participants have adopted survival strategies of negotiation, that involve working within the system that marginalizes them. This approach serves as both self-protection and a means to seek visibility, acceptance, and safety within their Indigenous communities. By the end of this research, queer T'boli and Maranao are seen as chameleons – adapting, reforming, and reworking their sense of self and the spaces they inhabit through ambivalence and relationality.

Keywords: Queer, queer of color critique, T'boli, Maranao, safe and brave spaces, intersectionality, survivance, disidentification

1 Introduction

The Philippine society follow traditional values deeply rooted in religious beliefs and cultural norms, which in consequence, impacted the lives of queer individuals, leading to homophobia, discrimination, and prejudice (OHCHR, 2012). The 2013 research of Filipino acceptance of homosexuality in the Philippines, suggested 78% of young Filipinos and 73% of older Filipino demographic advocates for LGBTQ+ societal acceptance (USAID, 2014). A recent survey documents 79% of Filipinos agreed that lesbians and gays are trustworthy and their contribution adds to society's progress (Westerman, 2023). However, this research on queer Indigenous Filipinos, may reveal a disconnect with the surveys aforementioned, as it may have overlooked aspects of social constructs, religion, cultural norms, and other LGBTQ+ identities which in turn offers a potentially reductive view of queer lived experiences. A sine qua non is needed for comprehensive research to bridge the lacuna and consider the multifaceted impact of the intersection of social structures.

The idea of safe and brave spaces came from a statement by one of my participants that said, "there are no safe spaces for someone like me". Regardless of our different histories of marginalization and prejudice, as human beings, we desired to be free while being safe, a desire not to be restrained by danger and bring risk to ourselves. However, these two desires are utopian dreams. We live in a society where social structures have challenged, discriminated, and marginalized our spaces and boundaries. These spaces can either be physical/material and metaphysical/abstract. According to Allen (1997) since space is part of our human life, one cannot live with the other, meaning our memories, our mobility, our ways of communication, how our senses move, and how we behave are all about spatial access – about moving in, within, and around the spaces we inhabit. In other words, spaces are within us; therefore, spaces are us.

Safe spaces described by educators, are environments where challenging topics are engaged with honesty, respect, and sensitivity (Arao & Clemens, 2013). Either material or abstract in form, safe spaces strives to make individuals feel unjudged, comfortable, and secured (Vivienne, 2023). Brave spaces, on the other, encourage discussions with difficult issues, where it involves risk and a potential for conflict as individuals confront issues of injustice and unpack painful memories (Arao & Clemens, 2013; Shelton, Kroehle, & Andia, 2019).

These concepts are well known and researched within the field of pedagogy, where they concentrate on classroom or academic settings for queer and other marginalized students. This research on queer Indigenous Filipinos, would like to extend these concepts to lived experiences. My aim in identifying their identity constraints was not to valorize the constraints that enclosed their queer identities, but to understand how these identity constraints influenced or shaped their creation and maintenance of safe and brave spaces. The research, then, is a space where it acknowledges the uncomfortable and uncovers past wounds. It is within these spaces that the stories of queer Indigenous Filipinos are held with care and seen without judgment, where the research itself becomes a confluence of courage and sanctuary, intertwined with the self and the material world.

1.1   Research questions

Based on the introduction, I sought to illuminate the lived experiences of queer Indigenous Filipinos and the intersection of multiple forms of oppression around and within their social structures. My research questions are:

R1 – What are queer Indigenous identity constraints?

R2 – How has these constraints shaped the creation and maintenance of safe and brave spaces?

R3 – How has the value of Kapwa utilized in the creation and maintenance of safe and brave spaces?

R4 – How were survival and resistance manifested in their queer lived spaces?

1.2   Thesis structure

In the introduction chapter, I outline the context of my research on queer identities and spaces, presenting my research questions. The background chapter provides a historical overview of pre-colonial Philippines, Indigenous backgrounds, and introducing the terms of bakla, agen, tomboy, silahis, and trans, and queer Indigenous Filipino identity. Chapter 3 delves into the theory, elucidating queer of color critique and intersectionality, addressing the constraints in safe/brave creation, highlighting resistance and resilience while working with ambivalence in queer communities.

Chapter four focuses on my feminist decolonial standpoint and queer of color methodology. I discuss my epistemological beliefs, followed by methodological inspirations from feminist, queer, and Indigenous perspectives. Lastly, I detailed my reflexivity and ethical consideration

Chapters five and six details my data collection background and Filipino- based research method, introduced reflexive thematic analysis, and present participant information through tabular form and research drawings. Chapter seven reflects on my findings and illustrating the complex intersectional "mess" of queer color critique. The penultimate chapter eight discusses and connects these findings to the theoretical discussion. Finally, chapter nine, summarizes my key theoretical findings, my research contributions, and my future research.

2 Background

In this section, I will be narrating how the colonial past has shaped the present-day representations of queer identities in the Philippines, while being mindful of the diverse conceptions of gender, gender expressions, and sexualities from the northern and southern parts of the archipelago. This research focuses on Mindanao, the southernmost and second-largest island, where Muslims and Christians coexist and collectively shape the Mindanao of today.

The term "queer" is used in this research to encompass a wide range of gender identities, expressions, and sexualities, as well as the various factors that have influenced their reclaimed identities.

2.1 Precolonial Philippines

The Philippine archipelago is a tapestry of diverse cultures, religions, and traditions. Its history is characterized by waves of colonialism, resistance, and the struggle to forge a unified nation (Abinales & Amoroso, 2017). Queer Filipino narratives have been profoundly altered by Spanish colonization, which introduced Catholicism and displaced indigenous beliefs, significantly altering gender identity, expression, and sexuality (Brewer, 2001; Ildefonso, 2022). This section explores the precolonial gender diversity in the Philippines to understand contemporary queer identities.

In precolonial times, gender and sexual fluidity were recognized and documented by Spanish explorers. The *Babaylans* were spiritual leaders who defied gender norms and were integral to social and political life (Ildefonso, 2022; Quintos, 2012). They, along with male shamans known as *Asog* or *Binabae*, were not merely cross-dressers, a more accurate reference is gender crossers, as they were more than their effeminate features and expressions, rather it is part of a larger transformation which redefined the "female gender" (Neil & Garcia, 2004). They are socially and symbolically recognized as "somewhat women" –comparable to a woman in every way, except in procreation aspects - they can marry men or can be treated as concubines by their male partners, they were respected for their spiritual roles, were granted privileges equal to women in their communities and held high social statuses (Garcia, 2008a). Therefore, these somewhat women were considered a threat by the conquistadors due to their influence, challenging their Christian-Western standards of masculinity (Neil & Garcia, 2004).

Imposition of Christianity redefined the societal roles of women and somewhat women, leading to their oppression and demonization (Torres, 2022). Their forced conversion to Christianity, relinquishing their beliefs and practices and prosecution was the beginning of the erasure of queer identities in the Philippines (Alegre, 2022; Brewer, 1999). As the Philippines transformed what was deemed a "civilized" society by adopting Christianity, the country experienced an irreversible shift in both mindset and cultural identity that continues to resonate today.

2.1.1 T'boli and Maranao

Mindanao known as "the land of promise" is home to diverse Indigenous groups, including the T'boli's and the Maranao's. Known as "the people of the hills", the T'boli's maintain a patriarchal community where men hold the governing role and allows polygamy among wealthy male members of the community (Cudera, Razon, & Millondaga, 2020), thus reflecting a cultural belief that places high value on masculine virtues (Casinto, 2022; Hernani, Hernani, & Dulay, 2021), while T'boli women engage in domestic task such as caring for the children, cleaning, and cooking. Despite such, customs as divorce, polygamy, and women remarrying are still practiced until today, contrasting with the Filipino Christian law that prohibits such, highlighting the dynamic integration of T'boli cultural practices with Christianity.

Within this cultural context women are revered as they become cultural bearers. I was introduced to T'boli women who are bearers of cultural heritage through the art of T'nalak weaving. The T'boli's are renowned for their intricate T'nalak weaving – a craft of textile made from abaca fibers. The T'nalak are weaved by Dreamweaver's, women who create patterns as testament to the belief that their intricate and elaborate patterns were inspired by the visions seen in their dreams.

Their deities encompass a spectrum of genders, suggesting a non-hierarchical gender ideology, detailing that these entities, visible or invisible, are characterized by gender: *libun* for feminine, *logi* for masculine, and *boyos* for those embodying both feminine and masculine qualities (Nono, 2021). Through the collected stories of Nono (2021) presents the T'boli sacred deities as almost equally represented, reflecting a non-hierarchical and pluralistic gender ideology that includes feminine, masculine, and multi-gendered divine beings, suggesting a form of gender equality. However, the narratives I collected during my fieldwork revealed a different reality for queer individuals within the T'boli communities, where this

ideal of gender equality appears to be absent. Possibly exacerbated by the influence of Christianity, which has introduced cisnormativity and altered indigenous gender concepts (Lugones, 2010).

Similarly, the Maranao, residing along the shores of Lake Lanao, is one of the largest ethnolinguistic groups in Mindanao (Velasco, 2017). Known for their adherence to Islam, retain a patriarchal structure with a sultanate system. The Maranao are known as one of the most conservative Muslim groups, adhering to the practices and beliefs of Islam (Macalandong, Masangkay, Consolacion, & Guthrie, 1978; Milligan, 2020; Velasco, 2017) and based on the teachings of the Qur'an ,queer identities are considered haram in the Maranao and Muslim communities (Bahar, 2020). The queer T'boli and Maranao face challenges with societal norms and religious beliefs often marginalizing them. Nonetheless, community leaders especially T'boli's have a desire to understand and create more inclusive societies for their queer members. Whereas the conservative Islamic views of the Maranao community pose significant challenges to achieving inclusivity. This highlights the importance of advocating for policy change in local and national level to support Indigenous queer identities across Mindanao.

2.2   Filipino queer identities

This section aims to delineate and explore the terms Bakla, Tomboy, Trans and Silahis understood in the Filipino context. By doing so, I aspire to provide clarity but also perhaps shed light on how my participants understand and embody their queer identities. Is there a difference between the terms bakla and gay? lesbian and tomboy? Bisexual and Silahis? What is trans? These questions arose when I had a conversation with my trans woman friend; as she explained the nuances of the terms, I realized that I had confused bakla and gay as being the same when they are not. So, the question is, who/what are bakla, tomboy, trans, and silahis in Filipino?

The Filipino language, we don't distinguish, or our language does not identify gender through pronouns. In Filipino, there is no grammatical equivalent for the English gendered pronouns "she" or "him"; instead, we use "siya" for he/she and niya for his/her in the third person (Himmelmann, 2005). In the Philippines, the local terms that describe homosexuals or queer [but are not limited to] are bakla, tomboy, bantut, agi, or silahis, while Western counter parts are gay, lesbian, bisexuals. In the earlier section of this chapter, I spoke of the precolonial Philippines, which was accepting of and mostly revered for diverse genders and sexualities.

As the Philippines suffered mostly at the colonized hands of Spanish and Americans, they brought with them their Western-Catholic-heteronormative notions of gender and sexuality. The American period cemented the notions of gender and sexuality through the expansion of the middle class, the gradual separation of religion in education, the academic means of instruction in English, and the Americanization of mass media (Garcia, 2008a; Manalansan IV, 2003). This cultural hegemony, the imposition of American culture, has changed how we Filipinos use and understand the semantics of local queer identities.

2.2.1   The Bakla

The term "bakla" is commonly perceived by most Filipinos as a person who is male assigned at birth who demonstrates a feminine expression; this includes but is not limited to transgender women (Yarcia, de Vela, & Tan, 2019). Due to centuries of Spanish colonization, the status of women and the tradition of gender crossing not only became difficult to perform but also exposed them to ridicule and persecution (Garcia, 2008a). According to Garcia (2008), bakla was initially a genderless term that meant being confused and cowardly, which represents its effeminate nature. Terms synonymous with bakla are Bayot [Cebuano], Agi [Hiligaynon], Bantut [Tausug], is also a local term for effeminate, transvestite, and impotent (Johnson, 1998) and considered deviants of Spanish Catholic machismo and an act of immorality. Therefore, Catholicism declared homosexuality a sin creating a binary framework in which only legalized and recognized men and women as natural beings of creation (Yarcia et al., 2019).

The majority of my participants are "gay" T'boli's, and I have noticed that they all represent a sort of balance between feminine and masculine expression. Some of them wear women's clothes, but only during beauty pageants. On a regular basis, they wear "male" clothes. I asked my participants their gender identity and expression, those who expressed as gay, all said "We are a woman inside a man's body". According to Johnson (1998), this response is a complex illustration of the effects of globalized discourses that surround the gay identity. To Yarcia et al. (2019) the expression of being a woman inside a man's body also explains trans women being categorized under bakla. Further down to the present, effeminate bakla has transformed into a homosexual, derived from a Western gender medical term whose identity is defined and synchronous to their sexual desire for other men (Baytan, 2008; Garcia, 2008b). Bakla is then a hybrid term that can now mean effeminate bakla who seeks "real"

[masculine, straight] men, a bakla who seeks other bakla, and a bakla who is masculine (Baytan, 2008).

Tan (2008) explained how social structure, such as class, has a direct impact on the usage of the terms gay and bakla—the emergence of middle-class Filipinos, which adds another layer to the already complex identity. According to Tan (2008), middle-class Filipino men may want to be identified as gay because of their association with the elite, western, and European-educated gay man and not bakla, as the latter correlates to low-income, *parlorista*, or beautician effeminate men. In the context of class distinction, my queer T'boli participants, who achieved educational and professional success, shared that their success has led to a change of attitude towards them by other T'boli people. This change led them to be treated with respect and tolerance for their reclaimed T'boli bakla identity.

2.2.2 The Tomboy, Trans and Silahis

My research on queer identities includes more than just bakla identities. I have interviewed people who are female at birth, who self-identify as trans men and have a lesbian sexual orientation, have a masculine expression in their manner of wearing clothes, and express a male demeanor in their social interaction and projection. I have also interviewed a person who is male at birth, self-identifies as a trans woman with a sexual orientation as gay, has a feminine expression in their manner of dressing, wears cosmetics, and expresses a feminine demeanor in their social projection and interaction. All of them socially transitioned, except for one who socially and medically transitioned from woman to man through gender-affirming surgery.

To Taqueban (2018) the term "lesbian" has no Filipino term, and in contrast, Ceperiano, Santos Jr, Alonzo and Ofreneo (2016 cited in Josef, 1997, 1999) referred to a term commonly used for tomboy. Tomboy is not only a gendered term, but also a class stratification, similar to bakla and gay men. The tomboy is the low-income masculine version of the femininely gendered expressive lesbians (Ceperiano et al., 2016 2016 cited in Josef, 1997, 1999). In this study, the tomboy relates to Fajardo (2008) interpretation of how the tomboy signifies female and male transgender identities. In local terms, the term tomboy is equivalent to lesbian, butch lesbian, or trans men. The term tomboy, which refers to a woman assigned at birth and embodies masculine expressions, is an indication that a tomboy like bakla has fused gender and sexuality (Ceperiano et al., 2016). Moreover, the Filipino tomboy is a form of female masculinity that embodies female manhood. My fieldwork data mirror's this understanding,

as my T'boli participants, who are female at birth, identify themselves as trans men and sexually identify as lesbians.

A contested and nuanced identity silahis, which mainly refers to bisexual men, who is a masculine, expressive male and is attracted to both men and women (Johnson, 1998; Yarcia et al., 2019). Silahis, a Tagalog term for "rays of the sun" has a loose equivalent for the English term bisexual, a person who is attracted to both men and women, and is used as slang for someone "who is not sure" of their sexual partners (Tan, 2020). However, the term doesn't have to always refer to a bisexual male; rather, bisexual females also engage in and identify with it. For instance, I have two participants who sexually identify as bisexual but have different gender identities. Ulan is a T'boli cisgender female who is bisexual, and Alab is a trans man who sexually identifies as bisexual. Their reclaimed identities show that bisexuality is not limited to a single gender or sexual identity. Therefore, bisexual individuals capture the complexity of attraction, as they are attracted towards their own or towards other genders.

Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose assigned sex at birth does not match their gender identity or sexual orientation. In the Philippines, bakla has become the term that encompass someone who identifies as gay men, cross dressing men, with non-binary, bisexual, trans and tomboy its opposite (Alegre, 2022). Today, as more academic literature on lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people has been published, there is more clarity about how she/her, he/him or they/them wanted to be addressed. In the Philippines for example, transgender people now claim the term transpinay or transpinoy to differentiate themselves from bakla (Alegre, 2022). Therefore, the universality of bakla reinforces normative and binary conceptions of gender and sexuality, thus constituting a form of misgendering and misrepresentation of their queerness.

2.2.3 Queer Indigenous Filipino

During my fieldwork, I realized two important insights. Firstly, the term bakla is a locally used term in T'boli community, especially in Lake Sebu. My participants explained that *agen* serves dual purpose: it describes an effeminate male assigned at birth and is also the name of the first known bakla within the T'boli community. Furthermore, the term *boyos,* as aforementioned in the T'boli section, refers to intersex individuals used to label LGBTQ+ individuals and employed to insult effeminate men and masculine women.

Secondly, "coming out" foregrounded in Western society as pivotal moment of self-expression, held less significance for my queer Indigenous participants. When I asked about how and when their self-awareness as bakla, tomboy, silahis, or trans manifested, a T'boli gay expressed that coming out was unnecessary since their identities were evident through their actions. As I look back to our pakikipagkwentuhan confirmed this sentiment; my participants' gender identities naturally manifested through repetitive actions or performances at an early age. Despite the absence of coming out, they still face discrimination and prejudice, where social stigma, exclusion and faith-based attacks among others were experienced by them (Espiritu, Baay, Arevalo, Jimenez, Capuno, & Pusta, 2022).

The concept of coming out brings to mind the research of Manalansan IV (2003) on diasporic Filipino gay men and Presto (2020) narratives of poor rural bakla which suggests that "coming out" is an American/Western construct and behavior, pivotal moment of self-acceptance and representation, confirming that Filipino queer individuals often expressed their identities through gender and sexual performance from an early age. Their claiming and understanding of their gender and sexual orientation within their self is and can be a process of coming out (Presto, 2020). Garcia (2000) further supports this idea, suggesting the act of inversion [of being and becoming bakla] has been repeatedly internalized and rehearsed from inside the heart.

Conversations with Datus and the cultural masters revealed "*Walang bakla o tomboy sa T'boli noon*" [There are no bakla and tomboy in T'boli before], as being one was unheard of. The terms gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender are etic terms from Western constructs (Yarcia et al., 2019), while agen and boyos are emic terms defined by local and social contexts. These terms exemplify the diversity of gay slang and its variations across cultures, and possibly from one class to another, a reincarnation of bakla in various forms (Tan, 2008). Thus, bakla can be interpreted through both emic and etic perspectives, revealing the complexity, versatility, and fluidity of its identity. This entails that it has evolved into a hybrid, influenced by both American cultural hegemony and localized forms of oppression and resistance.

Reflecting on this discourse, I find myself in partial agreement with Garcia (2008, p. 177) and Baytan (2008, p. 189) that the bakla differs from the Western notions of homosexuality shaped by a unique interplay of forces—a push and pull that creates a paradox within the bakla or "gay" identity. This identity is a product of colonial past, the neocolonial present, and Western conception of a "gay" identity, as well as Indigenous traditions like the Babaylan

and the Asog. My partial agreement stems not only from the implied homogeneity of bakla and gay, but also from the silence of transpinay, transpinoy, tomboy, and silahis, as they are also an outcome of the colonial past and the neocolonial present. In this research on Indigenous LGBTQ+ individuals in the Philippines, I advocate using "queer Indigenous Filipino" to assert a sense of community and embrace inclusivity, not universality, in recognizing their diverse identities and sexual orientations.

3   Theory

This research was inspired by the experiences of queer Indigenous Filipinos. In this chapter, an overview of queer Indigenous individuality will be elucidated in connection with the intersectional framework. Second, the identity constraints and their relationship with creating and maintaining brave and safe spaces will be identified. Lastly, I will highlight their resistance and ambivalence as they work together with their individualism and love of community.

3.1   Queer of color critique and Intersectionality

The research of queer Indigenous Filipinos through the optics of queer of color critique and intersectionality reveal the complex and nuance ways their identities are shaped by the convergence of historical forces, social and cultural structures of society. Grounded in the pioneering work of anti-racist and critical race studies, feminist theory as discussed by Collins (1990); Anzaldúa (1990) and Mohanty (2005); queer theory as outlined by Sullivan (2003); queer of color critique of Ferguson (2004) and the concept of intersectionality introduced by Crenshaw (1989) - these movements were all bound by a common thread: a call for acknowledgment and respecting diversity and equality while addressing the relational nature of race, gender, sexuality, race, and class, which have all played a role in queer of color critique employed in this research of queer Indigenous Filipino.

Queer of color critique according to Ferguson (2004) and as supported by Manalansan IV (2018) and Moussawi and Vidal-Ortiz (2020), emerged as a challenge to queer theory's tendency to favor predominantly the experiences of white, middle-class gay or lesbian identities, which in turn overlook the importance on understanding the nuances of marginalized identities and its intersection with other social formations. This critique parallels with feminist works such as black feminist scholar Collins (1990), who challenges the homogenous categorization of women, failing to recognize race, ethnicity, or class, in reflecting on the lived experiences of black women and other women of color. The concept of intersectionality, popularized by Crenshaw (1989) is a framework that examines and understands the lived experiences of marginalized groups within multiple axes of social systems – not only gender. Intersectionality is how multiple forms of oppression and inequality converge, intersects, and create barriers that are not understood or decisively overlooked (Crenshaw, 1989; Valentine, 2007). Intersectionality became the catalyst in the

formation of queer of color critique (Lakhani, 2020) and together as a critical framework help illustrate the lived experiences of queer Indigenous Filipinos.

Both frameworks not only seek to unravel the intricate web that ties together the structures of queer of color social lives with the cultural ideologies (Ferguson, 2004) that shape them in an attempt to disrupt the subjugation of oppressed peoples (Brockenbrough, 2013) but also a form of survival guide - that deals [without a minus of difficulty] through neoliberal capitalist mess (Manalansan IV, 2018). Therefore, queer identities move not against but together with the "mess", with the embodied knowledge and attention to the uneven terrain carved by structural inequalities that emanate and exists (Manalansan IV, 2018). Intersections of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class sheds light on how power subjugates and operates inequalities within social forms and spaces. Therefore, intersectionality is not merely about identifying different social categories, it is about theorizing the relationships among these identities and understanding how they intersect within the various space's individuals inhabit (Valentine, 2007).

Employing intersectionality and queer of color critique as analytical frameworks, this research aims to elucidate the often-obscured oppressions that reinforce damaging power relations (Valentine, 2007), while reminding researchers who employ intersectionality to avoid placing research participants into a binary context between oppressed and oppressor, victim, and victimizer – a simplistic way of understanding and viewing identity relationships within society (Fernandes, 2003). Similarly, Mohanty (2005) explication on the plurality of consciousness and identity coincide with these frameworks, which elucidates the unrooting of dualistic thinking suggests a conceptualization of consciousness, power, authority, that is anchored on knowledges that are often contradictory. This approach reinforces the importance on understanding the nuances of identities and its intersection with other social formations. In other words, intersectionality with queer of color, offers a landscape where strategies of resistance are rooted in queer of color lived experiences (Haritaworn, 2008). In this study of queer Indigenous Filipinos treats their identities as fluid, relational, and often fragmented because individuals experience and express their identities differently, which may reveal the ambivalent and relational strategies through which they construct and reconstruct their identities and the "spaces" they inhabit.

3.1.1 Queer Indigenous people of color identity constraints

There is a wealth of academic literature exploring contemporary queer identities in the Filipino context. These includes analysis of the emerging gay community in the Philippines (Tan, 2008); Philippine Gay culture (Garcia, 2008a); the history of transpinay (Alegre, 2022) and Diaspora and Migration of Filipino gay men in New York city (Manalansan IV, 2003). Other research have examined the complex interplay between gender roles, religion, and societal attitudes towards LGBTQ individuals (Reyes, Ballesteros, Bandol, Jimenez, & Malangen, 2019; Thoreson, 2011); experiences of lipstick lesbians in southern Philippines (Taqueban, 2018); and the portrayal of gay men in Philippine cinema (Baytan, 2008). The understanding of silahis and the Filipino bisexual man (Tan, 2020) has also been explored. These bodies of work have explored in various ways queer identities and their constraints.

Following these research trajectories, this research aims to delve into the creation and maintenance of safe and brave spaces for queer Indigenous Filipinos. It is imperative to examine the constraints they face, including their experiences of violence, and the intersections of their religion, ethnicity, culture, and class. The lexicon "constraints" is used deliberately signaling a shift away from the binary dynamics of suppressor and suppressed or victim and victimizer cautioned by Fernandes (2003). Instead, it recognizes that these constraints are actively worked on and against with, reflecting a form of ambivalent and relational adaptation. In spite the substantial body of work on queer identities, research that specifically focuses on Indigenous gender and sexuality in the Philippines is limited. To the best of my knowledge, Johnson's (1998, 2005) ethnographic research on the tomboi relationship and transgender love in southern Philippines, which explore same-sex sexualities and gender relationships between bakla/gay/bantut men, and tomboi, Calabias (2022) research on relationship formations of Igorot lesbians in Hongkong, and Josef (2020) *minamagkit* lived experiences and sexual relations of soldiers in the Mountain province of Cordillera region, provided valuable insights on the Indigenous queer identities, yet their studies highlight a broader need for a more research. In the next section, the intersection of class, ethnicity, and their queer Indigeneity with the different forms of violence and multiple discrimination will be explored in detail.

3.1.2 Personal – Structural violence

In the Philippines, recognized in Southeast Asia as one of the most tolerant countries towards queer identities, where tolerance is often mistaken for acceptance (Neil & Garcia, 2004). This

illusion conceals the harsh reality that the queer community in the Philippines face, including stereotyping, various forms of discrimination, harassment, and even sexual assaults that can lead to death (Philippines, 2018). Homophobia is the stigmatization of individuals who deviate from the heterosexual normative (Dreyer, 2007). They manifest in settings such as homes and various public places, often leading to violence and sexual abuse under the pretense of "reformation," to alter and "correct" their sexual orientation and gender identity (Reyes, Davis, Salonga, Cheng, Vasquez, Cruz, Muslim, Medriano, & McCutcheon, 2021).

According to Galtung (1969, p. 168), violence is as a condition that hinders an individual's potential, causing harm to their physical, emotional, mental, or economic well-being. He categorizes violence into three types - personal, structural, and cultural, which can also be identified as direct, indirect, and symbolic violence (Galtung, 1969, 1990). In this triangulation of violence, personal/direct violence, includes acts such as bullying, physical or sexual assault committed by individuals. The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (2014) reported details of personal violence which can be articulated as physical, verbal and emotional abuse within the family, inflicted by male relatives such as fathers, brothers, uncles and/or stepfathers, often after the discovery of a family member's sexual orientation or gender identity (Ceperiano et al., 2016).

Physical and emotional abuse are often inflicted within families which involves pressure to conform to societal norms such as demanding that their queer child "act normal" or "dress decently and respectfully", these demands may stem from a desire to protect the child from public ridicule or to shield the family's reputation (Ceperiano et al., 2016; Umbac, 2005) while public spaces like schools and workplaces are rife with SOGIE-based discrimination (Commission, 2014). For Presto (2020) violence towards LGBTQ+ is dominant among individuals that exudes macho identities where hegemonic masculinity is desired and preferred. Therefore, queer Filipinos encountered elevated sexual violence and harassment, as they performed their gender and sexuality, posing a challenge towards the traditional belief of masculinity and a constant reminder that hypermasculinity, heteronormativity continue to hold power (Reyes, Cabanilla, Gavino, Gonzaga, Hojilla, Isidro, Mesina, Tan, & Konopka, 2023; Umbac, 2005).

Unlike personal violence where actors are present to inflict abuse, structural violence is an invisible kind, where individuals felt it restrictive hand through embedded social structures of society, breeding unequal power dynamics, resulting to uneven life opportunities (Galtung,

1969). One of the structural violence identified in this research is the ongoing presence of poverty affecting approximately 22.4% or 25 million Filipinos where income does not meet their basic needs (PSA, 2023). This socioeconomic status constraint is aggravated for queer individuals who face marginalization due to nonconformity to heteronormative economic (Amoroto, 2016). This intersectionality affects their access to job opportunities, as noted by Ceperiano et al. (2016) and Thoreson (2011), with queer individuals often relegated to roles that align with gender stereotypes but fail to provide sufficient access to income and work opportunities and create a cascading effect on their educational attainment and better life chances. Filipino queer individuals are often subjected into material and symbolic roles that aligns with societal expectations. Bakla is often associated with beauty and transformation, commonly known as beauticians, designers, entertainers or event coordinators (Thoreson, 2011), while tomboys are steered towards jobs deemed masculine such as security guards or drivers (Ceperiano et al., 2016). These roles, while skilled, do not provide sufficient income to support their families and partners. Additionally, the level of "acceptance" or tolerance from their families often hinges on their ability or inability to contribute financially (Ceperiano et al., 2016; Thoreson, 2011).

Presto (2020) research on rural poor young bakla introduces the concept of conditional acceptance were tolerance and acceptance experienced by queer individuals within their familial unit, romantic relationships, and school activities correlates upon their financial contribution and the ability to perform androgynous tasks, placing importance to other peoples need first before themselves. Example can also be found in Johnson (1995) research, examining the monetary dynamics of transgender love and relationship amongst Tausug bakla/bantut where revealing relationships with "real men" can be possible when financial assistance is involved as a form of exchange. The bakla in his study are not merely tragic and powerless figures, instead they recognized and utilized their own ability to influence men in meeting both their needs (Johnson, 1995). Therefore, providing financial assistance and performing masculine and feminine tasks is a form of trade off – where acceptance of identity is negotiated externally, rather than being a fundamental individual right. In sum, socioeconomic status and queer identities intersect in both social and materials ways. This highlights that their marginalization due to social class does not only affect them economically but also in a sociocultural sense (Fajardo, 2008; Thoreson, 2011).

Ethnicity adds another layer of intersectional challenges. For example, a middle-class gay man who is masculine expressive might be able to "blend in" and enjoy certain privileges that

are not available to other queer individuals. In contrast, a T'boli tomboy/lesbian must navigate compounded biases related to ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and sexuality. These interactions of social formations can lead to microaggressions or micro assaults (Herrmann, 2017). The violence that queer indigenous people of color endure is often linked to community prejudices against their Sexual orientation, Gender identity and expression or SOGIE. Additionally, the intersection of ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality exacerbates personal and structural violence against queer Indigenous people of color and highlighting the lack of local, regional, and national laws in the Philippines that explicitly protects their SOGIE. As the previous chapter aforementioned, this research will try to fill the lacuna of research on Filipino Indigenous queer identities by exploring how social structures impact the creation and maintenance of safe and brave spaces.

3.1.3 Cultural violence

Cultural violence combines personal and cultural violence which means it perpetuates direct and indirect violence as justifiable, looks and feels right and is accepted by society which can be exemplified through religion, ideology, language, empirical or formal science which are symbolic representation of human existence (Amoroto, 2016; Galtung, 1990). To explain cultural violence against queer Indigenous people of color, this research has elaborated on the elements of religion and the ideology of their Indigenous culture. Both the cultures of T'boli and Maranao are steeped in patriarchy, both in their religion and in their indigenousness. Patriarchal ideology, a dominant and predefined concept, refers to the subjugation of the female gender and the feminine, thus creating a hierarchal structure of sexes where men are dominant (Nash, 2020). Within Filipino society, patriarchal beliefs are intertwined with cultural practices, constituting a form of systemic violence, therefore, Filipino LGBTQ+ experiences are not only subjected to direct or indirect violence but also to systemic or cultural violence (Amoroto, 2016).

Historically, Spanish, and American colonialization have brought in their Western-European heteronormative ideologies of gender and sexuality to the Philippines. Spanish machismo and misogyny are introduced through the implementation [mostly forced] of Christian faith, forever changing the thriving society where women and somewhat women played important roles in social, economic, and political spheres (Neil & Garcia, 2004). This research concurs with Amoroto (2016) in the logical connection between religion, heteronormativity and cultural violence, where it was explained that Philippine society, with Christianity and Islam

faith imbedded within our society, follows heteronormativity. Heteronormativity follows a system of normalizing behaviors and societal expectations that treads with heterosexuality, leading to homophobic and heterosexist beliefs (Worthen, 2016). Filipinos are collectively religious, dominated by Catholicism and Islam's dogmas. In the Philippines, religious freedom has been weaponized by traditional dogmatist groups against LGBTQ+, arguing to protect the historical importance of their religion (Cornelio & Dagle, 2022). This is significant because most of my participants are believers in Christianity, which has played an important role in the creation of their collective selves.

Violence based on religion towards queer Filipinos do not only happen within the familial and public spaces but also within their own local religious communities (Cornelio & Dagle, 2022). Consequently, the rigid and binary beliefs about gender and sexuality, which enclose and categorize identities as only men and women (Lugones, 2010) leave little to no room for any unorthodox interpretations or beliefs. The heteronormativity and cisnormativity frameworks expel the notion that gender and sexuality can exist beyond the binary. Therefore, the stigma against queer Indigenous people of color is deeply rooted in Filipino society's religious beliefs.

A study of religious non-LGBTQ+ people by Reyes et al. (2019) revealed that religiosity plays an important role in an individual's way of life, which may dictate their thoughts, feelings, and thoughts towards non-normative gender and sexuality. If a person is more religious, they are more likely to reject the lifestyle and behaviors of queer identities, while less religious individuals exhibit more acceptance or tolerance towards queer people of color identities (Reyes et al., 2019). Prejudice against queer identities is closely linked to the level of religiosity in individuals and societies. This adherence to heterosexual purity in both Christian/Catholic and Muslim communities has resulted in the marginalization and invisibility of homosexual and queer identities across economic, political, social, and cultural spheres (Ramirez & Munar, 2022).

This silencing can be clearly heard in the non-implementation of a national anti-discrimination bill, also known as the SOGIE equality bill, which aims to protect queer people of color rights and has remained unimplemented despite its introduction to Congress 24 years ago. The House of Representatives from Cong. Villanueva, sent a press release discussing the SOGIE bill towards LGBTQ+ should not be forced, and thus its implementation should depend on the opinion of the Filipino people, and the values, cultural

and religious beliefs derived from the bible (Bureau, 2019). This stance exemplifies cultural violence towards queer identities. Although there are no rules in the Philippines that persecute same-sex relationships, some laws have been misused to persecute queer Indigenous people of color. For example, activists in Mindanao have reported the Marawi city government criminalizing transgender individual for "cross-dressing" (OHCHR, 2017). There have been local reports of sexual and physical violence towards LGBTQ+ individuals from their families in an attempt to convert them back to the "normal" gender or a perceived authority in molesting them (Commission, 2014). Some local governments have implemented anti-discrimination ordinance within their municipality; however, these small wins are limited within their geographical jurisdiction (OHCHR, 2017).

The non-implementation of the anti-discrimination bill is steeped in historical, societal, and cultural authority, which is why the bill is still being discussed and debated in Congress (OHCHR, 2017). These statements concur and validate that heteronormativity and homophobia are present; however, hidden behind the curtains of tolerance, cultural violence persists and legitimizes the direct and indirect violence towards Filipino Indigenous queer people of color. In sum, the conception of violence has elucidated the intersectional relationships of ethnicity, indigeneity, class, and religion that subjugate queer Indigenous people of color (Galtung, 1969, 1990). This intersection allows us to reflect on how these social structures not only subjugate them due to their reclaimed identities but also impede one's ability to achieve their potential. Therefore, I argue that the spaces they navigate within themselves, their family, their religion, social formations, and the physical/material spaces are continuously negotiated and contested.

3.2 Queer spaces

It was three in the morning in Manila time when my last interview ended. My mind was still awake, haunted by what my participant had said: "Pia, there are no safe spaces". My initial conclusion, closely aligned with his perspective, was that creating safe spaces in a society that merely tolerates deviant or reclaimed identities is not only difficult but might seem impossible. As the streets of Manila began to stir, I pondered whether there might be another way to conceptualize spaces beyond their material or physical aspects.

I found insight on the interview of Edward Soja and Sara Ahmed work on spaces. Soja's concept of Third space offers a different lens through which to view and interpret socially produced space—a way of thinking that acknowledges the spatiality of life as having equal

significance to the historical and social dimensions of our existence (Borch, 2002, p. 113). This symbolizes that spaces are more than their relational position within social and historical contexts; instead, spaces are lived. Spaces are an embodied realm, where all forms of spatial knowledge congregate to be simultaneously understood and experienced. Our relation to spaces is formed together through our actions and interactions within the spaces we inhabit, influenced by social structures that exists within them which shapes our behaviors and experiences (Löw, 2016).

Soja's Third space perspectives came from the works of Lefebvre and Foucault which argues that perceived [a person's perception and reality shaped by their environment] and conceived spaces [are imagined representations of space, a third person view where hegemony can persists] (Allen, 1997) are insufficient in understanding our lived experiences where we create our self/identity with our interaction and relationship with others and institutions (Borch, 2002). Third space is about a holistic understanding of space that is neither perceived nor conceived; rather, it's an interaction of both, creating a space that is embodied. Lived spaces, or third spaces, as explained by Soja (cited by Allen, 1997) are spaces of representation and resistance. Resistance, in the sense that lived spaces are dominated by conceived spaces that can be culturally different from one's lived experience or perceived space, produces moments of social space that disavow hegemony (Allen, 1997).

In connection with queer Indigenous people of color, they inhabit and describe lived spaces that are different from what is described as "normal". Thus, their lived spaces, which are considered "other" deconstruct the binary conception of spaces, saying that it is more than material and relational; rather, it is an interrelation of both – where an opening of different ways of understanding spaces and lived experiences. The concept of space in this research is used to form an argument that the third space concept can be used in explaining that safe and brave spaces can be created and maintained within the self – where they move beyond the geographical and social spatiality rather than creating spaces internally within us where respect, resilience, and self-affirmation exist. The internalization of space can be further elucidated by Sara Ahmed's interpretation of the relationship between bodies and spaces.

To Ahmed (2006) the body and space are inextricably linked, with spaces being more than external settings—they are akin to a "second skin" that wraps around the body. Spaces in this context are actively shaped by our embodied experienced and interactions. Therefore, the body is not just a physical entity, but an embodied being that serves as the origin of our

experiences and the site to which spaces are continuously made and remade (Ahmed, 2006). Our identities then are the product of the spaces we inhabit with "lifelines" carved into our skin by repeated actions as highlighted by Ahmed (2006). I interpret this as our embodied experiences carving our identities, or "lines" where both external and internal spaces can see who we are as individuals. The "lines" we have are a product of our past, present, and future, and these "lines" are a representation of resistance that has been carved into ourselves to create a hybrid self that both resists and conforms.

Building on this idea, I am reminded of the concept of hybridity and mimicry by Bhabha (1994) which resonate with the experiences of queer Indigenous people of color. Bhabha (2004) explains that mimicry and hybridity are the desire to become a reformed, recognizable "Other"- a subject that is nearly identical to the original yet not quite. In other words, the colonized subject imitates the colonizers culture, not replicating, but rather engaging in a form of repetition that carries difference (Bhabha, 2004). To mimic is to be ambivalent, as ambivalence is a form of strategy that queer people of color navigate, where they balance respect for their Indigenous culture and the need to engage with their queer self. Further, the concepts speak of the creation of multifaceted identities that are created from the "in between's" which challenges the binarity of ideologies imposed by neocolonialism (Bhabha, 1994). Therefore, hybridity as a form of agency is more than colonizer and colonized, or as a form of survival.

Hybridity is about the love of oneself as well as others; it speaks of kindness and empathy, where a divergent kind of love and care for people can flourish and live (Bhabha, 2004; Ramirez & Munar, 2022). It is about becoming a space where resilience, strategic resistance and adaptation (Muñoz, 1999) is navigated with ambivalence and relationality. According to Ahmed (2006), as queer body deviates from the heterosexual shape of the world, inhabiting such requires a new shape. Therefore, the body/self can be viewed as a metaphor for creating spaces that are inclusive. As bodies are influenced by the spaces we inhabit, bodies have the agency to adapt, to resist, and reshape these spaces. Queer bodies do not conform and thus their process of being, becoming, and of reclaiming identities is a testament of deconstructing binary definitions of gender and sexuality, while navigating within their social structures. Therefore, the body can be interpreted as internalized spaces, where it embodies a dynamic interaction of personal and collective agency, creating an inclusive environment where diversity and openness are actively fostered through interactions and spaces we inhabit.

3.2.1 Disidentificatory spaces

Disidentification was conceived to offer minority subjects, such as queer people of color, survival strategies in negotiating homophobic and Western ideologies that continuously subjugate and punish the existence of non-normative subjects who do not conform to the fantasy of normativity (Muñoz, 1999). The "survival strategies of negotiation" do not mean rebelling against the grain of these dominant ideologies (Medina, 2003). Instead, disidentification teaches and guides minority subjects such as queer people of color—as the third subject or the unnamed disidentified subject—that they neither adopt nor oppose the dominant ideologies directly, but rather work on and against them within the system of assimilation (Muñoz, 1999).

The safe and brave spaces discourse has mostly been associated within the pedagogical field with student-faculty relationships (Cook-Sather, 2016); offering diversity and social justice in learning activities (Arao & Clemens, 2013) to name a few. In recent years, this discourse has become more prominent in public spaces, health centers, and social service centers (Vivienne, 2023). In the discourse of queer Indigenous people of color's lived experiences, the concept of safe and brave space is used to highlight the importance of taking up spaces where respect, self-affirmation, resistance, and resilience persist. A synchronic process is at work in creating and maintaining safe and brave spaces. However, it is essential to clarify their meaning. A safe space focuses on nurturing trust, safety and visibility for marginalized individuals or groups, creating environments where expressing freely oneself is met without judgement, where respect and honesty is honored (Ali, 2017). A brave space on the other hand, promotes courage, fostering an environment with open dialogue, where individuals are encouraged to speak their truth while respectfully challenge differing perspectives, widening other minds to other viewpoints (Arao & Clemens, 2013).

Both in theory and embodied form, safe spaces aspire to make an individual feel safe from any form of danger, confident and comfortable to move, and express themselves within those "spaces" (Arao & Clemens, 2013). The queering of safe spaces by Vivienne (2023), speaks of the difficulties of offering an inclusive safe space for all people. Similarly, Arao and Clemens (2013) case study on promoting a genuine dialogue on diversity and social justice issues has seen the impossibility of incorporating the idea of safe spaces without confronting controversial issues. The transition in advocacy from the concept of "safe spaces" to "brave spaces" is an acknowledgment of the inherent challenges in fostering truly safe environments.

It reflects the recognition that to establish and preserve these "safe spaces," one must also be willing to address and embrace sensitive, challenging, and deeply personal topics (Arao & Clemens, 2013).

Therefore, the "transition in advocacy" performs a dichotomy between safe and brave spaces that both Herrmann (2017) and Vivienne (2023) critiqued and proposes a reworking of the binarity. Vivienne (2023) shifts perspectives to realistic and flexible boundaries that can negotiate the boundaries between comfort and harm, while Herrmann (2017) advocates the need for writing centers to provide both safe and brave spaces to support minority students. Both advocacies speak of a physical and metaphorical reworking and adaptation of the treatment of safe and brave spaces – in fact, both spaces can't succeed without each other. In other words, safe spaces are not guaranteed, as seen in the case study of Arao and Clemens (2013), as there is always a risk that danger, fear, and harm might enter. Thus, the binarity of approach to safe and brave spaces acknowledges the limitations and dead ends of such discourse. Through this dead end, we are invited to rework and adapt, which allows an opportunity for change and growth. The reworking and adapting of both safe and brave spaces therefore mirrors disidentification theory.

To disidentify, as I understand from José Esteban Muñoz (1999) concept, is to operate from within the system, utilizing its very norms and structures, rather than strictly opposing or working against them. In the discourse surrounding safe and brave spaces, the deliberate transition from prioritizing safety to embracing bravery does more than just challenge a binary way of thinking; it highlights a "blindness" obscuring the intricate and nuanced interplay between similarities and differences. This "blindness" was used by Jose Medina (2003) as a metaphor of family to analyze various identity categories such as gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. Medina (2003 suggests that identity, much like family, should not be confined to a purely biological understanding but rather seen as a complex fusion of social, political, and biological factors. Therefore, Medina (2003) metaphor of family and identity mirrors the concept of safe/brave spaces adapted in this research where it posits these entities as dynamic and fluid, where individuals are free to enter, interact and transform the space in continous process of adaptation.

Disidentification theory in the discussion of creating and maintaining safe and brave spaces is bringing together what Medina (2003) elucidated as gathering similarities and differences that can affect one's identities. However, bringing together similarities and differences is not a

walk in the clouds where everything will move in linearly arranged ways; rather, the establishment of repeating to disidentify is and can be "messy", as to disidentify is to disrupt and subvert established relationships and the united and divisive nature it creates (Medina, 2003). Like queer color critique, "messiness" is about confronting the uneven terrain on which structural inequalities egress and emanate and how queer identities move and find ways within these dead ends for survival and social justice (Manalansan IV, 2018). Therefore, disidentification theory within the discourse of queer Indigenous Filipinos creating and maintaining safe and brave spaces is an approach that prompts us to reflect not only how individuals come to understand and accept their queer identities, particularly in contexts that extend beyond Western paradigms, but also how they move within and together with the intricate web of social forces, creating spaces that both constrain and advance their identity formation and acceptance.

3.3 Survivance and masks

I remember speaking with a friend on issues of discrimination, oppression, and violence towards queer identities and it brought back somewhat heated discussions on its activist importance. We both agreed that themes of discrimination, oppression, and violence are important in understanding their lived experience, but we disagreed on not only the level of their eminence but also strategies to battle their subjugation. As my friend emphasized the need for direct action, I, on the other hand, argued for a more relational approach and one that rejects the narratives of helplessness or victimhood that are imposed on queer and Indigenous identities by neocolonial powers.

Queer people of color topics, much like those of Indigenous peoples, are often narrated through experiences of violence, discrimination, and the convergence of various forms of oppression within societal structures. Changing these narratives necessitates moving beyond survival stories and towards stories with an active presence. Vizenor (2008) defines survivance as a form of active resistance against domination, tragedy, nihilism, and victimization, a concept born from the lived realities and stories of Native Americans, enriched by metaphors from their natural world experiences. For Indigenous queer people of color, survivance means rejecting the common narrative that their stories are defined by their suffering or marginalization (Vizenor, 2008). Their narratives should foreground the reclamation of their identities, their creation of inclusive spaces for both Indigenous and non-

Indigenous LGBTQ+ communities, and their reverence for their Indigenous and queer identities.

Indigenous queer people of color survivance can also be interpreted and seen from the analogy of Anzaldúa (1990) *Las mascaras*. Queer Filipinos often find themselves in a society where they are merely tolerated, thus the strategic use of different masks according to Anzaldúa (1990) becomes essential—not only for self-protection but also as a means to negotiate their visibility, acceptance, and safety within their Indigenous communities. The concept of "las mascaras" was drawn from the experiences of Chicana women and proposes that a person's image is influenced by societal structures defined by social class and ethnicity, thus making it ripped for oppression (Anzaldúa, 1990). Further this concept explains that when our "image" is not good enough or considered deviant by our families or communities, and once we ostracize our own individuality our own "skin", our environment starts to alienate, shame and isolate us (Anzaldúa, 1990).

Therefore, a change is needed to preserve our individuality and our own skin, and to be less vulnerable to oppression. As an active presence of survivance, the mask/image has to change like a "chameleon", changing color and altering its appearance to fit the environment, thus serving as a form of resistance while safeguarding Indigenous queer identities and agency (p. xv). The mask is not merely for concealment or survival; in a queer-of-color context, it represents the complex layers of identities. These "masks" or interfaces become sites of active reconstruction and assertion of complex identities, a declaration of existence where the self-engages with society (Anzaldúa, 1990). Consequently, the identities concealed within the mask represent a reconstituted, identifiable "other" — an entity that is similar yet distinct, familiar yet not entirely the same.

3.4 Summary

The journey of queer Indigenous people of color is often fraught with obstacles and turbulence. Yet, this research aims to reframe that path, leveraging it to our advantage. The participants and I reject a narrative of victimhood and mere survival. Exploring the concepts above positions this research to not only disrupt the binary constructs of gender, sexuality, and spaces but also to challenge the pressing dichotomy of victim and victimizer. Therefore, this study proposes a relational and ambivalent approach, echoing the theories that engage with and resist oppressive structures, fostering and sustaining spaces of transformation. These theories of resistance, resilience, and survivance provide a nuanced understanding of the

diverse strategies queer Indigenous people of color employ to assert their agency and create and maintain spaces that are both safe and brave in a spatial society that often attempts to erase or marginalize their identities.

4   Methodology

The aim of this research is to illuminate how identity constraints shape the creation and maintenance of brave and safe spaces for queer individuals within T'boli and Maranao communities. In this section, I will outline the foundational principles that have guided this research, the analytical approaches I have taken to analyze the data, and the methodologies that have grounded my work. I will begin with an introduction to my epistemological beliefs, followed by a discussion of my methodological inspirations from feminist, queer, and Indigenous perspectives. Lastly, I will be addressing reflexivity and ethical considerations.

4.1   Feminist Queer and Indigenous research: Epistemology, Methodology, Method

Undertaking a study of the lived experiences of queer Indigenous peoples has not only reaffirmed my belief in the value of every person's story as a source of knowledge but has also reshaped my understanding of how social relations and structures perpetuate privilege and power. As a queer feminist, my inherent belief situates in challenging and rejecting the grand narratives that often define the societal positions of women and marginalized groups(Weedon, 1997). This research aims to uncover the rich diversity and uniqueness of individual experiences, shedding light on the unequal power dynamics and social mechanisms that contribute to the marginalization and oppression of queer individuals (Weedon, 1997). Furthermore, situated knowledge remains the central axis of this research which in turn addresses all knowledge is socially situated, meaning that societies that are stratified by gender, race, sexuality, class, or ethnicity [to say the least] shape and reflect what we know and how we know (Anderson, 2020). My goal in integrating these frameworks is to bring to light queer voices and how aspects of their ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality intersect.

4.1.1   Feminism: A decolonial standpoint

Feminist epistemology's main tenet is to challenge the marginalization of women, critiques dominant and traditional theories that favors masculine perspectives in understanding social relations and systems of knowledge (Rine, 2010). The critique has been instrumental in shaping research that are liberatory and inclusive, recognizing the significant contributions of feminist research to knowledge production and the influence it brought on policies and social behaviors (Letherby, 2003). This research on Indigenous gender and sexuality adopts a decolonial feminist epistemology. This epistemological approach emphasizes situated knowledge, that challenges dualistic Eurocentric traditions and the binarity framework of

heterosexuality and cis normativity (Collins, 1990; Jagger, 2008) within the Indigenous queer context.

Standpoint theory posits that knowledge is socially situated and emphasized that individuals social positions, perspectives and experiences are sources of knowledge informing their understanding of the world (Anderson, 2020; Harding, 2013). Thus, standpoint theory is the key component of the decolonial feminist epistemology employed in this research. Decolonial feminist epistemology, assumes that queer Indigenous Filipino experiences offer different perspectives based on their positions and the social structures that bind them. Haraway (1988) describes this as "embodied objectivity," a means to access and interpret the experiences of those whose voices are less heard. Feminist standpoint acknowledges that individuals from marginalized communities offering unique insights into their lived experiences (Anderson, 2020).

Echoing Collins (1990), black feminist thought underscores the necessity of consciousness-raising and the transformation of political and economic institutions to instigate social change suggesting that "new" knowledge can then be seen as vital for enabling such change. Harding (2013) and Haraway (1988) further suggest that those from marginalized backgrounds hold an epistemic advantage in comprehending issues that are politically, socially, or culturally contested. This research posits that the marginalized experiences of queer Indigenous Filipinos have the potential to enrich the discourse in gender and sexuality studies. By integrating queer Indigenous groups' perspectives into our analysis of patriarchy and cis heteronormativity and recognizing these perspectives as a form of epistemic privilege (Anderson, 2020; Fricker, 2007), we gain a more nuanced understanding of how they navigate the intersectionality of social constructs with ambivalence, resilience, and relational nature. This approach challenges the assumptions of existing paradigms and epistemologies, advocating for new knowledge that reflects on the complexities of lived experiences (Collins, 1990). The goal of adopting this viewpoint is to represent and give voice to the unique perspectives of Indigenous queer individuals, thereby offering new insights and raising critical questions that expand our understanding of their intricate experiences.

4.1.2 Decolonized identity: Intersecting queer and Indigenous standpoints

In this research, the term "queer" is employed as an inclusive representation of the diverse spectrum of identities and sexualities within Filipino Indigenous peoples, challenging the binary view of gender and the normativity of heterosexuality and cisgender experiences

(Robinson, 2016). These social constructs are hegemonic, marginalizing, and discriminative, highlighting power imbalances based on social structures such as gender, sexuality, class, or race, impacting individuals considered a deviant from the normative heterosexual axis (Watney, 1994).

The rigid dichotomy of homo/heterosexual in the late twentieth century was scrutinized due to its failure to accommodate the vast spectrum of sexual orientations and behaviors that exist (Watney, 1994). Queer theory's aligning with poststructuralism suggests that our sense of self is constructed through interactions with others and is influenced by our specific social location (Sullivan, 2003), embraces identity fluidity, and defying conventional binary gender classifications and frames our investigations within the broader contexts of race, colonialism, and ethnicity, as well as gender and sexuality (Smith, 2011; Sullivan, 2003; Worthen, 2023). Through a queer lens, this research on Indigenous queer Filipinos will incorporate class and ethnicity which can potentially reveal the enduring echoes and impacts of colonialism and how they ambivalently navigate these constructs. The inclusion of queer standpoint actively exposes the restrictive and divisive social hierarchies in our society, echoing feminism's emphasis on the importance of women and other marginalized groups perspectives in uncovering and understanding power dynamics (Collins, 1990; Hall, 2017). Standpoint feminism and queer theory argues that the experiences of women, queer people of color and other marginalized groups can reveal the limitations of rigid identity categories and offer crucial insights on the social structures that works within the society (Anderson, 2020; Harding, 2013). Both standpoints are interconnected and overlapping, embodying the concept of situated knowledge, which recognizes the influence of social positions and contexts on our understanding of the world (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; Haraway, 2020).

Supporting such approach is Indigenous standpoint theory, where it is guided by an epistemic belief that there are more than just one worldview or interpretation of reality (Foley, 2003). Liberatory and critical epistemologies, including feminist poststructuralism, queer theory, stand in opposition to positivist traditions, which often assert the possibility of objective knowledge detached from social and political contexts (Green, 2007). Positivist traditions maintains that knowledge arises from neutral and, at times, quantifiable and measurable observations and understandings of the world, but contested by our perception of reality is influenced by our position within the world, leading to the conclusion that all knowledge is, to some extent, biased (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Smith, 2021). Therefore, critical or liberatory frameworks, strive to create a world founded on justice and aims to dismantle the oppressive

and unequal power structures which curtails the self-determination and agency of marginalized individuals, communities, and societies (Smith, 2006) further advocating their empowerment and governance over their own lives (Rigney, 1999).

Feminist standpoint theory which respects diverse experiences and differences among people, recognizing different insights of historically marginalized individuals possess powerful position as knowers, informed by their lived experiences (Hartsock, 1998). Indigenous feminist research, according to Foley (2003) is a derivative of feminist standpoints; however, such associations are rather simplistic and quite linear. Indigenous feminist authors, such as Andrea Smith (2006) *Indigenous women and violence*; Audra Simpson (2016) *Gender of Settler Sovereignty*; and Joyce Green (2007) *Aboriginal feminism*, to name a few, have incorporated Indigenous feminism into different political, cultural, and historical contexts with their own ideologies of feminism, transcending the scope of gender to address the interconnected oppressions of race, class, and sexuality while also grappling with the enduring impacts of colonialism and patriarchy. The unifying thread in their activism is the intricate link between Indigenous women's experiences and colonial forces.

Echoing Jodi Byrd (2020) sentiment that Indigenous lands as territories represent more than just physical spaces—they embody identity, subject-less or not—and serve as a cornerstone for decolonization, one might argue that "the self" is akin to land, having been stripped away and subjected to colonization. Thus, when studying gender and sexuality of Indigenous peoples in the Philippines, the concept of Indigenous land, I believe transcends mere geography—the land symbolizes the self, an element that has been scarred, pillaged, shaped, and reshaped by colonial and patriarchal influence. Following an integration of different standpoints across academic frameworks laying a groundwork that follows an inclusive research framework. Adopting a reflective approach to research (Kwame, 2017) and following Ahmed (2017) on creating a feminist dwelling – we must deconstruct existing structures - this research aims to integrate feminist, queer, and Indigenous frameworks, moving beyond the disagreements over their differences and focus on what we are working against and what we hope to achieve. The perspective of Indigenous queer feminism can be compared to shattering the glass ceiling, adopting a decolonized stance that confronts and dismantles binary, cis heteronormative ideologies. In doing so, we may pave the way for a broader and more inclusive foundation in our research.

4.2 Decolonized methodology: Queer of Color critique

The decolonial methodology in this research has employed queer of color critique. Coined by Ferguson (2004), queer of color critique is an interdisciplinary way of knowing, a political perspective, or a theoretical framework that interrogates social formations based on the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class, which builds on the question of how these formations interact and converge with nationalist ideals and practices. Furthermore, queer of color critique, along with Indigenous queer studies (Driskill, 2011), anti-racist feminism (Collins, 1990; Mohanty, 2005) and other standpoints that expose the oppression of marginalized communities, are instrumental as they not only shed light on the material, cultural, historical factors and lived experiences that contribute to subjugation of identities but also serves as a foundation for identifying methods of resistance and formulating strategies (Brockenbrough, 2013).

In a similar vein, Manalansan IV (2014) enriches and perhaps complicates the already fluid concept of 'queer' by suggesting that queer theory extends beyond the materialities and desires of daily life; rather, it could be related to behaviors, situations, and processes – the realities of our complex lived experiences. Drawing on my fieldwork, reflecting on the acceptance of my own gendered, racial identity and integration liberatory standpoints, I formed an interpretation of queer people of color critiqued that is based on convergences and divergences. This approach to my methodology prompted me to revisit a fundamental inquiry: as a Filipino bisexual feminist, what is my personal definition of queer?

I encountered Haritaworn (2008) insights on queer and trans people of color methodology, which are rooted in anti-racist feminist principles and echo the social justice orientation and epistemological underpinnings that shape my own research. This led me to ponder how to infuse methodology and methods with a distinctly "queer" essence. What is it that makes this study queer, aside from its focus on the issues faced by Indigenous queer communities, what makes this study queer? In seeking answers, I found Manalansan IV (2018) interpretation of queer color critique to align with my perspective. It suggests that our positionalities are in constant flux, never fixed, and always interact with the norms that surround us. As our society tends to focus on the differences among individuals, academic epistemologies, or methodologies, which often leads to opposition towards those who deviate from what is normative and leads us to this conundrum of uniformity.

The idea of convergence and divergence as queer methodological positioning is another way of looking at Manalansan IV (2018, p. 2) queer as a "mess" – "it is a figure that messes up the pristine homo/hetero normative social order of things". He further explained that it is not about distancing or removing oneself from the normative, but rather surviving and living through the mess of our intersecting social systems. According to Haritaworn (2008), a queer of color methodology could be a way of examining and redefining social relations, an emancipatory sense of reframing differences that urges us to reflect on where we stand, define our speaking positions, and how we relate to others, which can help us avoid colonizing the people we claim to speak for. Queer methodology in this research is then about recognizing and working within the space of convergence and divergence, explored from a Filipino-based interview method accounts of queer people of T'boli and Maranao descent where the "messiness" of social orders and identities is acknowledged, engaged with, and celebrated as a site of survival and life (Manalansan IV, 2018), and a changing perspective of a researcher who is deeply invested in these social systems and processes.

In this research, queer color methodology is about a continuous being and becoming of letting go – of control and borders (Heckert, 2016). By employing feminist conception of situated knowledge, queer and Indigenous perspectives, we can draw attention to how the social categories and lived experiences of queer Indigenous individuals are established and portrayed within their cultural, traditional, and socioeconomic context (Nash, 2016). Through a reflexive approach this methodology interweaves theory and data and moves beyond the boundaries between researcher and its participants, exposing possibilities for outcomes that are beyond the expected and brings marginalized spaces and voices to light (Muñoz, 2016).

4.3 Summary

Culling different standpoints was pivotal [for me] in becoming queer in an academic space. The influence of queer color methodology can be seen in the research design, which ensures intersectionality as central to my investigation of their lived experiences. The path of this research has not only been shaped by academic theories but also by the stories my participants have shared and the experiences I've had while out in the field. Thus, embracing queer of color methodology is not only a tool for conducting research beyond traditional epistemological beliefs but also a way to deconstruct and transform the subjects involved, critical in creating a more comprehensive and impactful understanding of their lived experiences (Lakhani, 2020).

4.4 Reflexivity

My goal for this research is to elucidate, capture, and respectfully narrate the lived experiences of queer Indigenous Filipinos and validate that their voices are considered sources of knowledge (Chilisa, 2019). As I pen this segment, I am both deeply unsettled by the shifting sands of my own positionality. Reflecting on my time on and off the field, I find a tapestry of emotions interwoven within my experiences. Threads of anxiety, fear, shame, and self-doubt are entangled with strands of serenity and fortitude, each one a stark reminder of the complex, often contradictory, inner landscape that accompanied my research journey. This focus on personal reflexivity transcends the common approach for a scholar to locate and position oneself (Olsen, 2018). These emotions are not just personal reactions; they mirror self-reflexive anxiety Tietjen (2020, p. 297) speaks of where we evaluate ourselves, a passive and indifferent stance about who we might be, might have been, or might become. My insider/outsider status as a bisexual researcher studying Indigenous queer experiences has highlighted both shared understanding and the power imbalances inherent in my work.

Investigating Indigenous bakla, tomboy, silahis, and trans lived experiences, here I possess a similarity—a resemblance that would qualify me to have a shared understanding with my participants (Nash, 2016). However, my being an international student, my own Filipino background, my being non-Indigenous, and my *lingua franca* created that instability, the unsureness of my position as an insider also brings to light my privilege and the power imbalance in this research. As explained by Nash (2016) while seeking understanding of our research subjects lived experiences, the distance/difference between researcher and researchee often has the potential to reinforce exclusion and social marginalization that we try to dismantle. This realization has been pivotal, reminding me that while I strive to connect with my participants' experiences, my different perspectives mean I can never fully grasp their reality.

The importance of these reflections involve becoming constantly aware that, as researcher/researchee move together in unison towards the goal of social change, we also have to be mindful of our difference/ and distances so as not to create uniform, normative reflexive research (Heckert, 2016; Nash, 2016). Margaret Kovach (2021) advocates for an Indigenous research approach that allows the unexpected; a philosophy that has guided me to embrace the unexpected—of change—made me release that control, that tight grip on uniformity. Out in the field, there came a moment when I found myself questioning the

purpose behind my inquiries and wondering why the responses weren't aligning with my expectations. This self-reflection led me to an uneasy realization that I had unconsciously brought along my own pre-set ideas about queer identities. Rooted in binary and heteronormative views, these notions painted my early perceptions of how Filipino queer individuals see themselves, their relationships with cultural or religious backgrounds and with others.

Mirroring this satori, Muñoz (2016) and Torres and Nyaga (2021) critical reflexive research explains a process of liberating oneself from fixed positions while acknowledging the agency of research participants. Realizing such led to the understanding of power dynamics in research, that neither are static nor straightforward, that we researchers navigate a complex interplay of privilege, whilst being mindful of social structures, cultural and material realities, and the inherent responsibility of authentic representation of the voices of those we study (Gore, 2018). This requires an acceptance of our imperfections and humility towards recognizing that we cannot fully comprehend but only see a glimpse of the lived experiences of others (Muñoz, 2016; Nash, 2016). Therefore, my role in this research is to recognize, envision, honor, and respect the experiences they shared (Torres & Nyaga, 2021).

4.5   Ethical consideration

The research fieldwork began from October 1 to October 10, 2023. My research was registered and approved by SIKT, the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research, in the spring of 2023 and I followed the guidelines for recording the interviews. As the interview covered sensitive information, the research followed SIKT (2024) legal basis for personal data processing in research, which entails guidelines for consent, ensuring the anonymity of my participants, and storing data. First, a tabular form was created to broadly categorize the personal data that is non-identifiable (Table 1). Second, all the participant names, organizations, affiliated universities, and other activities that may relate to their identity were not disclosed in this research. Lastly, the recorded interviews are all stored in Microsoft Teams, accessible only by the researcher, and encrypted with a password.

Conducting research on Indigenous peoples in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato requires approval from the National commission on Indigenous peoples (NCIP) Region XII. Before my fieldwork started, I reached out to the NCIP director via email, outlining the purpose of my study, the duration of the fieldwork and thesis work and the rights of my participants. The NCIP coordinator, Ms. Hermelyn Weaver Jabagat sent via email and Facebook messenger the

Affidavit of Undertaking and an application form for IKSP and customary laws research and documentation for myself and UiT to sign as formal acknowledgement and legalizing my research activities. Before starting the interviews, a meeting together with the Datus and Cultural masters was held at the Gono Sbung, a house of worship and one of the cultural centers of the T'boli's in Lake Sebu. I was provided a space to speak about my research and its importance for the queer community as a whole. They gave the research and myself the blessing to start the interviews and later signed a memorandum of agreement by the primary party, led by Datu Mama Balicocos, NCIP Regional Director Ms. Jeanne Anne Moendeg-Zoilo, and myself.

The memorandum served as a legal instrument which elaborated the duties and responsibilities of all parties involved, with the overarching aim of protecting, promoting the interests and well-being of Indigenous peoples. In consonance with the memorandum, a portion of my thesis have been submitted for approval and monitoring to the NCIP, ensuring that the research adhered to the terms of the signed agreement. The foundation of this research extended beyond the epistemological and methodological frameworks. Anchored in the commitment to respect, sense of accountable responsibility, reciprocity, and thorough adherence to the rights and ethical considerations concerning my participants and their culture (Chilisa, 2019). These became the guiding principles of this research, ensuring that it upholds moral respect and responsibility towards their communities and the individuals involved, Indigenous or otherwise.

5 Data collection: Background

Writing this section, I associate my research experience to the winding and treacherous roads of Lake Sebu. Remembering the warm breeze on my face, while being on the back of a motor bike, driving through small barangays, where some roads are uneven, unpaved, and bumpy, making it challenging to maintain balance. We swerved to avoid significant water holes, which can damage the vehicle and soak you in dirt. Other roads we traveled appeared to stretch endlessly, some featuring steep inclines, with beautiful mountain sights, but with hazardous posts that lurked in every blind curve. You could drive off the road and into a cliff if you turn wrong. Similarly, navigating my methodology and methods can be equally challenging; where I constantly find myself on endless, steep roads of confusion and traversing unpaved roads of "new" methods.

This research was made possible through my partnership with Kei Bughaw and Dee Delfin, NGO's with whom I had a pleasure of collaborating during my fieldwork. Kei is a humanitarian worker who is currently on fieldwork for adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues, while Dee is a community advocate promoting Indigenous people's rights, environmental protection, food security through sustainable agriculture, and a LGBTQI2A+ supporter. They have been instrumental at identifying and connecting with participants who are open to discussing the topic with me, ensuring the success of my fieldwork. Fieldworks were facilitated in Lake Sebu and Manila, employing a snowball sampling method, which is a valuable technique especially for locating inaccessible, hard to find groups (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Woodley & Lockard, 2016). Kei and Dee are what Woodley and Lockard (2016) called gate keepers as they facilitated contact between myself and my respondents. A qualitative snow ball method allowed researchers to study marginalized groups through social networking and personal connections, offering new insights and perspectives (Woodley & Lockard, 2016). They have introduced me to diverse identities with similar yet different experiences of being both queer and Indigenous.

I was informed I would be introduced to the participants the day I would be interviewing them, as they had to work or travel from another city to Lake Sebu or Manila and had no available time. Contrasting with my initial expectation of pre-interview rapport-building as advocated by Kovach (2021), thus my only recourse is to adapt. I decided to cultivate interactions through sharing meals with my participants. Offering and sharing a meal, spoke similarly to Kovach (2021) practice of offering tobacco – a gesture of respect and reciprocity.

In the Filipino context, sitting down to eat together goes beyond mere socializing; it is an opportunity for meaningful exchange, a chance to gain insights into each other's lives (Negrillo, 2019). In my view, the act of sharing a meal carries a respect that can be compared to the warmth of welcoming a family member into one's home. I intended to cultivate an atmosphere where trust and respect is fostered, recognizing them as individuals beyond their role in the research but as friends where openness between myself and the participants is nurtured.

The set of thirteen interviews took place in several locations – mostly in Lake Sebu, and one in Manila. Half of these interviews were conducted and hosted at a learning center established by an esteemed cultural leader of the T'boli community. This center, chosen by both Dee and the participants, seemed to function as a central meeting place for the T'boli's and a safe space for discussions on sexuality and gender. For the rest of interviews, I invited my respondents to suggest locations where they felt most comfortable, leading to a variety of settings such as restaurants and coffee shops. Each session, I not only reintroduced myself, but topics of discussions where re-outlined. I also reaffirmed their agency that these practices adhere to the ethical research standards which demonstrates respect and care towards my research participants (Chilisa, 2019; Kovach, 2021; Woodley & Lockard, 2016).

5.1 Philippine indigenous research method

It is important for a researcher to understand and clarify the usage and inception of methods and methodologies. Methodology refers to the theories that are used in research practices to help analyze and discuss the methods (Letherby, 2003). Methods, on the other hand, are techniques or tools used to answer research questions. As there are multiple tools and ways of collecting data, it is essential for researchers to be culturally appropriate while doing so. One of the council leaders requested that this research be mindful of the terminology and theories I use, as they want me to (if possible) use our own (Filipino). But as I look back on our conversations, I realize that the essence of his request was a deeper call for this research to embrace and make room for Filipino ways of doing research. The council leader's petition served both as an encouragement and a challenge to re-engage with research practices that resonate with the Indigenous context of the study.

Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino Psychology) was anchored on Filipino experiences and thoughts as understood from a Filipino perspective (Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000), which aim to develop a deeper understanding of the Filipino psyche by rediscovering the

different dimensions of the Filipino character (Pe-Pua, 2006). Sikolohiyang Pilipino was based on indigenization, meaning transforming interactions, processes, or methods that express authentic Filipino psychology/culture (Pe-Pua, 2006; Pe‑Pua & Protacio‑Marcelino, 2000) . The term "indigenous" was chosen as an alternative to the use of Western psychology ideology and traditions in understanding and explaining the Filipino psyche (Pe-Pua, 2006; Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). This decision was made due to the belief that Western psychology may not accurately capture the unique cultural and historical experiences of Filipinos, and the results can be deemed insignificant, inappropriate, and colonial in nature (Pe-Pua, 2006). Furthermore, using a Filipino indigenous method is to unravel relevant and complex Filipino characteristics and explain them through the native Filipino lens (Pe-Pua, 2006). Our Filipino method is a form of decolonization, making and taking space for our own language and culture to be at the center of understanding our core Filipino values. This effort produced a body of knowledge that is inclusive and embraces indigenous concepts and methods.

5.1.1 Kapwa

The core Filipino value "kapwa" is the foundation of Sikolohiyang Pilipino. A value that symbolizes a shared identity and termed as an indigenous understanding of reciprocal being, sharing oneself to others (Mendoza & Perkinson, 2003; Pe-Pua & Protacio-Marcelino, 2000). Kapwa is evident across various ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines, whether animist, Catholic, Muslim, or others. Therefore, kapwa represents a shared or collectivist identity of Filipinos, emphasizing the community over the individual (Desai, 2016). Interpreting kapwa as more than smooth interpersonal relationships or collective agreements to avoid conflicts, allow this research to delve into the understanding that kapwa is a reciprocal being, neither prioritizing the self or the community, but a deepened understanding of the individual and community relationship.

The concept has faced criticism from feminist scholar Remoquillo (2023), arguing that kapwa's essence may homogenize Filipino culture, identity, and behaviors and have a gendered approach while defining social constructs such as race and ethnicity. In essence, I concur with Remoquillo (2023) that the construction of "kapwa" indeed adopts a homogenized gendered approach, where its spirit resonates with a collectivist nature, foregoing the inclusion of social constructs, such as one's gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or class and the colonial values it carries. However, reflecting on my field work, I have come to the

understanding that kapwa is more than a homogenized gendered approach, shared identity, and finding balance between collective identity and individuality; kapwa represents a dynamic interplay of relationships that are continuously negotiated and lived by individuals within their communities.

Given that this research focuses on queer gender and sexuality, the question arises: where do we position kapwa within this context? I aim to position "kapwa" within the critical kapwa framework of Desai (2016), which advocates for a revolutionary approach to unpacking the layers and nuances of the value of kapwa. Desai (2016) approach speaks of resistance to the remnants of colonialization while adapting to the current of modernization. In this research, kapwa is not only an important part of data collection, but also employed as a subject for analysis, enriching our understanding of gender and sexuality in the queer Indigenous Filipino context. Through the indigenous methods of pakikipagkwentuhan and ginabayang talakayan, my aim was to create a space that captures another face of kapwa, moving beyond as smooth interpersonal relationship but rather a kapwa that embraces both individual and collective identity. Therefore, kapwa is a complex interplay of coexistence of having a collective identity and while claiming their identities, shaped by their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and class.

5.1.2 Pakikipagkwentuhan and Ginabayang talakayan method

In this research, I have used Filipino-oriented methods that center on the value of "Kapwa". Pe-Pua (2006 quoted from Enriquez) explained that the research methods are considered indigenous because they based on existing patterns of behavior discovered and developed into research methods rather being imported or invented. Employing the indigenous variant of the interview called *pakikipagkwentuhan* (storytelling) (Orteza, 1997) and *ginabayang talaka*yan (collective indigenous discussion) (Pe-Pua, 2006), I embraced a hybrid method between an interview and a focus group discussion. These methods were particularly useful for dealing with topics that are sensitive such as the gender and sexual identity of an Indigenous person (Pe-Pua, 2006).

Pakikipagkwentuhan drew similarities from interview method, the difference is the active roles of the researcher and participant and the way the data is harbored (Garcia & de Guzman, 2020; Pe-Pua, 2006). The characteristics of pakikipagkwentuhan such as equality between researcher and the participants, participatory nature and being sensitive to Filipino norms differentiate from its Western counterpart (Pe-Pua, 2006). Before the fieldwork, I prepared

interview questions that would help me with my research question, but once there, I used them merely as a guide to improve the informal exchange of information, allowing the pakikipagkwentuhan to unfold naturally, adapted flexibility in the questions asked and interviews became informal which paved to dialogues akin with a newfound friend (Garcia & de Guzman, 2020).

In contrast, ginabayang talakayan similar to focus group discussion differs mainly as it can involve either individual or group settings but captures the essence of a focus group discussion Pe-Pua (2006, p. cited from Galvez and Enriquez). I chose this method to complement the pakikipagkwentuhan because of its fundamental element being the collective decision of the discussion's flow and the topics by researcher and participant (Pe-Pua, 2006). While in the field, I was aware of nonverbal cues and navigated sensitive questions by ensuring participants are comfortable to refrain from answering them. This approach is guided by respect, infused as an element of ginabayang talakayan into our pakikipagkwentuhan.

Our pakikipagkwentuhan sessions authored stories that were deeply moving, and some laced with laughter and playful banters. They were shared in a natural way, sometimes even spontaneously that made me realized that they embraced the spaces we shared with agency, and trust while asserting their presence. Our interactions are woven like a mosaic of stories and experiences, delicate and transcendent as a lotus flower in bloom in serene waters of Lake Sebu. I brought back with me, not only their experiences but solidifying my belief system that welcoming different culturally enriching viewpoints, even just seeing a glimpse of their reality is not only deeply enlightening but transformative, leading this research as a first step to achieving social change.

5.2 Analyzing the data

Going through the series of recorded notes and interview, it wasn't the volume of data that struck me but rather the intricacy of their different and similar experiences. As this research on Indigenous Filipino gender and sexuality, I decided to employ thematic analysis as my navigational tool for identifying patterns and themes within my gathered data. Clarke and Braun (2014) introduced reflexive thematic analysis which they argued as an essential method for detecting and interpreting patterns in a qualitative data. This analytic method involves a meticulous examination of the data's most minute but significant elements, which can serve as the foundational components for constructing meaning and concepts (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Terry, Hayfield, Clarke and Braun (2017) suggests that coding is about uncovering

evidence, and themes often emerge early in the analysis, shaped by theoretical frameworks and research questions. Moreover, the coding in this research is open and organic; the themes are considered the final outcome of the coding, and the repeated theme development and analysis is situated in an interpretative reflexive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2021). In other words, reflexive thematic analysis is an analytic process where reflecting, immersing on the data, questioning, and rethinking is involved, moving beyond its mechanical interpretation, but adapting a mental space for where imagination and fluidity to flourish (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Queer of color methodology has guided this research and has aligned with Braun and Clarke (2021) reflexive thematic analysis - arguing that the six stage process was created not to be applied with rigidity but rather with a flexibility allowing researcher subjectivity as analytic resource and an engagement with theory, data and interpretation with reflexivity.

Therefore, the process of identifying codes and selecting themes was an exercise in reflection (Braun & Clarke, 2021)—questioning the research's aims, my purpose as a researcher, and seeking to comprehend not only the stark realities but also the subtle nuances within the participants lived experiences. The data collection used a Filipino-based method that is both discovered and developed into research methods through extant patterns of behavior. Thematic analysis was employed within the queer of color methodology framework was adapted to accommodate the fluid and overlapping nature of the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Instead of confining the data to discrete thematic "boxes", the analysis recognized that themes could intersect and "bleed" into one another, reflecting the complex realities of the participants' experiences.

6 Field work information

Between October 1st and October 10th, I conducted interviews with thirteen Indigenous queer Filipinos, each bringing their unique narrative and history to the study. Prior to the interviews, conducted in person, participants were extensively briefed on the research aims and their rights. Anonymity consent was obtained from all participants. I have employed a T'boli translator and spoke of confidentiality as the most important part of the research.

The participants included people from two Indigenous groups, with the majority being from Lake Sebu, T'boli, and Blaan. The other participant, who is of Maranao descent and lives in Manila. To respect their stories and ensure anonymity, participants were assigned Filipino pseudonyms reflecting their personalities and chosen pronouns, though two participants' pronouns were inferred from their gender identity and expression during the interviews.

In order to present the findings of the research, a participant demographic table was created that showcases their pseudonyms, ethnicity, sexual identity, and gender. Participants were between the ages of 19 – 50 years old, with varying educational backgrounds and professions, highlighting contrast of gendered professions, as indicated by Thoreson (2011) and Ceperiano et al. (2016). All of my participants socially transitioned, yet some T'boli Trans men pronouns did not align with their gender identity, reflecting Fajardo (2008) interpretation of tomboy identity, which not only signifies female to male transgender identities but also denotes a localized interpretation of being trans men, bakla, tomboy, and silahis. This means that queer identities are understood and used differently in every culture.

As I was consolidating their identities into a tabular form, a realization dawn on me that I have unintentionally assimilated their diverse identities into a collective box. Therefore, it came evident that within an academic setting being fluid could lead to being perceived as ambiguous, although my efforts were aimed at embracing the queer notion of fluidity. I decided adding my own field work drawings, not only to justify my methodology, but also to transform the data collection process into one that describing identities without boundaries.

Table 1: Participant information

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Profession	Gender Identity	Sexual orientation	Pronouns
Liwanag	50	T'boli	Beautician	(Trans) woman	Gay	She/Her
Diwa	43	T'boli	Farmer	Male	Gay	He/him
Ulan	23	T'boli and Blaan	Farmer	Female	Bisexual	She/her
Lakan	26	T'boli	Fish vendor	(Trans) man	Lesbian	He/Him
Dakila	25	T'boli	Hospital registry/cashier	(Trans) man	Lesbian	He/Him
Dalisay	19	T'boli	Student/Bakery	(Trans) man	Lesbian	She/Her
Makisig	20	T'boli	Unemployed	(Trans) man	Lesbian	She/Her
Bituin	36	T'boli	Teacher	Male	Gay	He/Him
Ligaya	35	T'boli	Teacher	Male	Gay	He/Him
Malaya	35	T'boli	Teacher	Male	Gay	He/Him
Hiraya	36	T'boli	Teacher	Male	Gay	He/Him
Ilog	28	T'boli	Waiter	Male	Gay	He/Him
Alab	38	Maranao	Human rights educator	(Trans) man	Bisexual	He/Him

6.1 Reflective fieldwork drawings

In this section, I shared how my perception of my informants, was shaped by my visual documentation of my fieldwork, a process influenced by Causey (2017) *Drawn to See*, which invites researchers to delve into the visual aspects of their work and offers diverse methods for gathering, displaying, and documenting data. Initially I intended to request my participants to document their lives through series of photos, however, due to challenges with participant recruitment, time constraints, and limited access to technology, I adapted by taking detailed notes instead. I documented their facial expressions, mannerisms, posture, hair color, clothing, and any other memorable details about them, our interaction and experiences that left a significant impression on me. These notes were transformed into sketches, a practice that echoes Adjepong (2019) invasion ethnography, where researchers incorporate their own embodiment into their research field notes and that all data and knowledge are derived from the body, that could reveal insights about our society.

As my sketches were elementary at best, I decided to employ my artist friend Hakky Son. She polished and enhanced the drawing lines to make the sketches presentable for my readers. Combining my sketches with Pakikipagkwentuhan and ginabayang talakayan methods, aligns with Guillemin (2004) approach, which explains that visual representation in research offers a nuanced perspectives on the experiences of others. This research on queer Indigenous Filipinos is situated by an epistemology that viewed knowledge as co-created and dynamic, valuing the complex paradoxical nature of human experiences, resonating with a methodology that embraces decolonization where respect is engaged in convergence and divergence. The drawings are not fixed entities but rather representations that can be used to gain different perspectives and insights (Guillemin, 2004). The theme of each picture arises from our pakikipagkwetuhan sessions– which relate to either their personal beliefs and attributes or their chosen platforms. These themes also became the blocks that supported my analysis. Each of the themes is incorporated into the findings section – where each theme supports and intersects with each other, which builds a complex picture of their identities and experiences.

Figure 1: Reflective Sketches
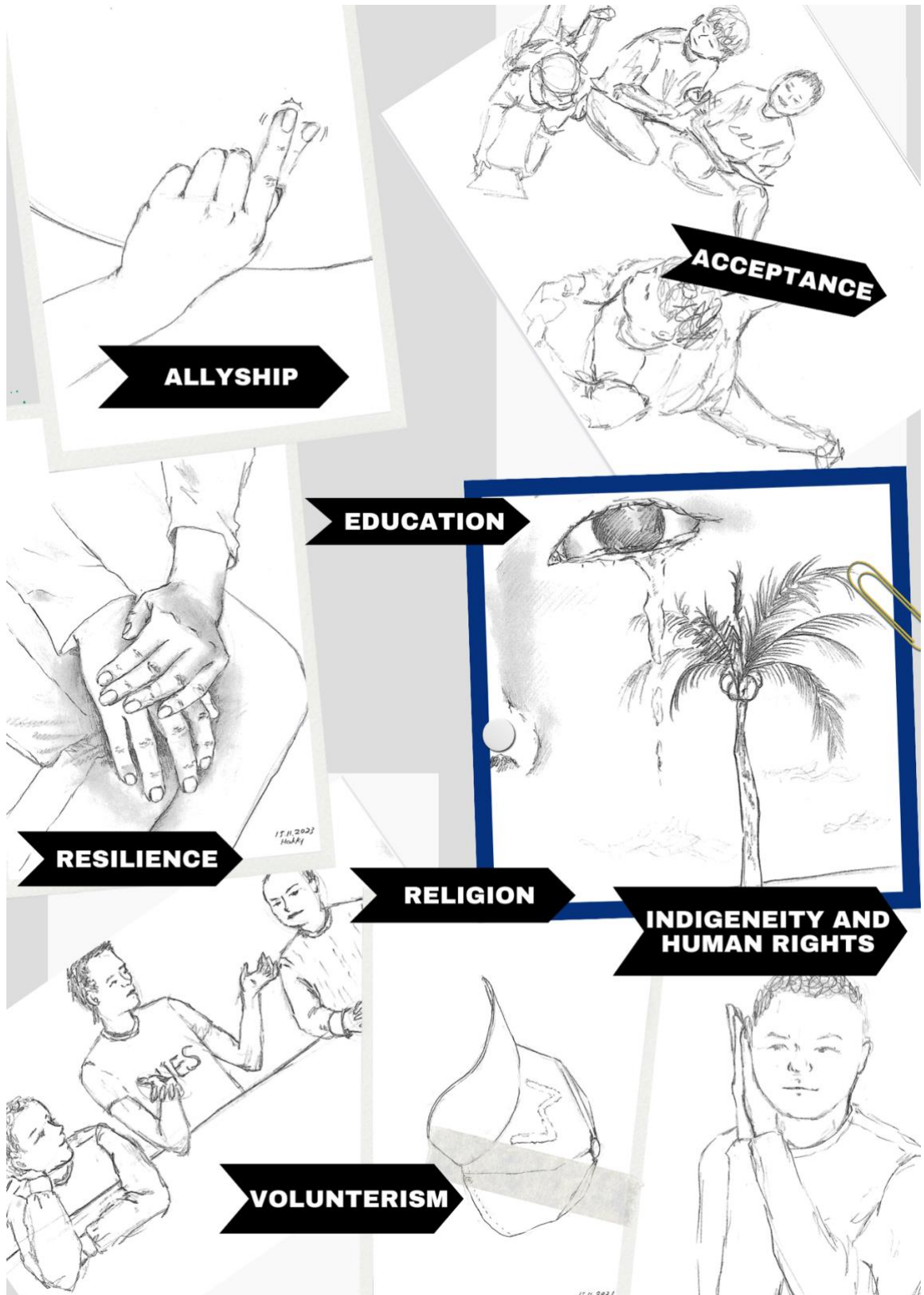
ALLYSHIP

ACCEPTANCE

EDUCATION

RESILIENCE

RELIGION

INDIGENEITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

VOLUNTERISM

7 Findings

The goal of this chapter is to highlight the lived experiences of queer T'boli and Maranao Indigenous peoples in the Philippines as they create safe and brave spaces within a society that invariably marginalizes them. Their complex realities include stories of their reclaimed identities, strategies of resistance, and tales of ambivalence. This section aims to provide a better understanding of their intricate and complex ambivalent relational experiences, as well as their courageous reclaiming of themselves.

7.1 Understanding bakla, tomboy, silahis, and trans identities

As I go through my recorded sessions, one thing strikes me: my participants never really came out to their families, friends, or community; rather, their queer identities have manifested through their performance of masculinity and femininity through their daily practices. At the start of all my pakikipagkwentuhan sessions, I was greeted with a reserved but polite smile when I was introduced to them. However, when we were alone, the reserved persona cracked, and the conversation flowed like water going down the stream.

"Actually, there is no such thing as coming out. We don't trust others about who we are because we get bullied", exclaimed Bituin with his hands flying about while telling us a story about how his twin bakla brother and him used to talk about their crushes and their plans. They started having crushes in fourth grade. But Bituin also added, "Since I know the world, I knew I was bakla, but I think it was not how I understand myself; I thought I was normal." Malaya, who was sitting next to Bituin, also revealed that bakla was in born. "I really feel like a woman, I know I am biologically male, but I feel I am a woman inside." When I met Liwanag, she was sporting a black wig, subtle make-up, and pink lipstick. When I asked how and when she knew her bakla identity, she said with a reserved smile, "Since grade one ma'am, since 1979, I knew through my feelings that I am a woman". All of my participants have these stories of claiming their gender at an early age through performance.

Hiraya used to play games or toys intended for girls rather than for boys. Ligaya performed his identity through his closeness to his mother and the household chores he enjoyed doing. He shared, "I would rather do laundry and wash dishes than help my father on the farm or chop wood." Moreover, Alab claimed that he was a boy when he was between four and five years old; like Bituin, he just can't explain it. He was female at birth and recently underwent

gender-affirming surgery and gender-affirming hormone therapy. Alab grew up in a genderless household wherein boys and girls did the same chores but had different schedules, and thus they were treated equally. He explained "Genderless in a sense that we all have the same clothes, just different colors. Household chores have no gender roles, unlike any households."

Having crushes on people of similar sex was also evident in their formative years. Ilog recalled, with fluttery romantic excitement, his first crush. He shared, "I was in grade five where it all started, when I started to have feelings with a boy in grade 4." Dakila, who socially transitioned as a trans man and a lesbian, bravely said, "I was in the fourth grade. I was attracted to a woman, and that's when I knew I was a lesbian." Dalisay, who also socially transitioned as a trans man, recalled that she doesn't feel any attraction to boys, only to girls. As a result, their tales of claiming their bakla, tomboy, silahis, and trans identities can be framed as a form of self-representation in both gender performance and sexual orientation. As I reflect on their bakla, tomboy, silahis, and transgender performances of coming out – it was not a coming out comparable to Western queer society. Rather, there is a quiet acceptance, unbeknownst resistance, and resilience in claiming their identities. I remembered Alab's reflective advice on queer people within different Indigenous groups – he said acceptance needs to begin on a personal level. Reflecting on their experiences of quiet awakening, I perceive a profound passion for self-acceptance and self-respect. However, it left me wondering about how their self-accepted identities are being received by their families, culture, and Indigenous community.

7.2   Navigating the macho space

The theme of macho space came about when most of my participants encountered violence in spaces where men exercise dominance, where patriarchy and cis heteronormativity are present–in familial, cultural, and societal spaces. However, it left me wondering how their self-accepted queer Indigenous identity are received in these gendered and sexually imbued spaces of interaction.

7.2.1   Familial space

Alab comes from a family with diverse sexual orientations, so his identity was not alien to them; they were open and supportive of his changes. He shared that he grew up with queer family members: "Growing up, I have a first cousin who is gay. When we were kids, he was feminine boy, and had a feminine expression.". He recalled how his cousin would start

dancing and shaking his hips when they were playing, and how this led to a series of experiences that greatly impacted his identity while he was growing up. Alab's masculinity was celebrated, especially by his uncle. He recalled how his uncle almost every day physically abused his effeminate cousin while saying, *"Pa bakla bakla ka!"* (You are acting gay!) At a very young age, Alab was exposed to toxic masculinity. Alab shared

> My uncle taught me - I'm sorry if this is a trigger warning - but he taught me how to use a gun. As young as six years old, he taught me how to use an Armalite or .45 caliber. As young as six, I was already trained to be very masculine and to have toxic masculine activities. He taught me all the activities he was doing that he associated with the role of a man. He had no problem with me growing up masculine, even though he knew I was female assigned by birth. But his son being a gay man, it was a big issue for him.

Growing up as a T'boli bakla man, Ilog's relationship with his father was tumultuous, to say the least. His father demanded that Ilog pursue a degree in criminology to follow in his footsteps as a soldier, but he rebelled against it. He said, "My father wanted me to take up criminology, but I decided against it because that is not what I wanted, so I moved out." When I asked how his relationship with his late father was, Ilog took a moment to speak. He not only recalled their turbulent relationship but also how his father's declining health became the catalyst for accepting his identity.

> To be honest, the first person who did not agree about my gender identity was my father. We always argued and fought, and he used to physically abuse me and punch me in the face; he really doesn't like my being *bakla* because of what other people are saying; he hears what other people are saying about me and he thought that I brought disgrace and shame to our family. Before I graduated college is when my father accepted my identity. My father got sick, and I became his caretaker. His *bakla* son was the one that was always by his side and caring for him. He asked for my forgiveness before he died.

With his father, Malaya had faced a similar fate with Ilog. Malaya's story casts a gentle yet poignant veil of solemnity and sadness over the group. His father was disappointed in him as an only son, and he shared his experience of verbal and physical abuse from his father. He recalled that his mother was the only person in his family who accepted and understood him.

However, his mother doesn't want him to be friends with other baklas because "She thinks I will be influenced." As a consequence, Malaya resolved to avoid returning to his parents' home, opting instead to migrate between the homes of various relatives where he sought refuge.

> Every time my father laid eyes on me, he lashed out with his fists, striking me wherever he can... As his only son, he harbors a dream and a desire for me to embody masculinity. He forced me to work as a young laborer, carrying almost 100 sacks of gravel a day. It was one of the ways my father thought he could turn me into a real man. Every night, I cried, wondering why I am liked this and why I was gay. The question that struck me was, "Why was my father doing this to me?". The day he saw me participating in pageants, donning heels, and under the influence of alcohol, he broke down in tears, unable to come to terms with my identity. He angrily rejected me as a bakla, declaring that I couldn't possibly be his child, but rather the child of a another, because I didn't mirror his own image

Ligaya was the eldest of his siblings. Being the eldest, he is expected to behave according to certain expectations of masculinity. He said, "It is not allowed that your gestures are different from what boys should have. We are expected to be masculine and do manly housework like lifting firewood or help take care with the farm animals" When his family knew he was bakla, they were disappointed and didn't accept him at first. He also said that his younger brother is also bakla, and both were prohibited by their father from applying any make-up or cosmetics to their faces. However, both always find ways to look pretty and presentable while in school. Lastly, Ligaya said, "as long as we don't do anything that would disgrace our family, they are OK with us being bakla." Liwanag, an only son, was told not to be gay by her family, especially her parents. She recalled, "My father and mother don't want me to be gay ... because that will be an embarrassment to my family ... but when I had a boyfriend, his family accepted and loved me." Hiraya's experience with his family was full of contrast. Before, it was difficult for his parents to accept him, but slowly, with time, they were able to embrace his identity. However, he shared how his father wanted him to hide his identity outside their house.

> My father always said that I have to do what a "real man" should do, like plow the fields, because I think my father wants to let people know that his son is a "real man", but deep inside, he knows I am bakla, and he accepts me. He just forces to do

activities for "real men" so our neighbors and other village members will think that his son is a "real" man.

Lakan, who socially transitioned as a trans man and lesbian, shared that he comes from a broken family, and when they knew that he was a lesbian, "I became distant with my mother and became closer with my father, as he was the first person who accepted me." In 2021 Makisig decided to introduce her girlfriend to her family. She recalled, "I was interrogated by my parents, and I was asked to explain why I am like this." They were never accepted as a couple, and that deeply hurt them. Ulan's family knew of her bisexuality and had tried to convert her. She recalled an incident when her relatives made sexist comments "They told me if I ever have a girlfriend, I wouldn't be able to satisfy her and give it all." She shared that she gets hurt and cries in silence because she couldn't stop people from making rude comments. The important part, according to Ulan, is to be true to yourself despite these experiences.

Their experiences served to emphasize the intersectional bias they faced, highlighting the familial challenges erected against their identities. Most of my participants' families view their queer identities as embarrassing, deviant, and sinful. However, what is surprising is how my participants said that they still value and respect their family, never leaving them but also never forgetting their claimed identities.

7.2.2 Cultural, religious, and societal spaces

There are no gay and tomboys in T'boli before– this statement keeps coming back to every conversation I had with my participants, the cultural masters, Datu, and town folks I met. When I asked, "Why could that be?" There were always no clear answers.

Tales of personal, structural, and cultural violence in cultural, societal, and religious spaces were endemic in our conversations. For example, Ligaya was harassed and assaulted by a T'boli man when she refused to give him money. She also mentioned that her being "too friendly" with men caused her to be raped. When I asked the trans men focus group about any challenges, they faced being trans indigenous people, they all said in chorus, "Ma'am there are so many!" To live together in peace and acceptance, Dakila was coerced by his girlfriend's father to finance his daughter's education. Makisig and her girlfriend decided to elope but were chased by her girlfriend's brothers and father wielding machetes. Despite the violence of these incidents, they were recounted with a mix of sadness and, at times, humor. This group faced their challenges with a combination of resilience and compassion towards

others, according to my observations. Lakan bravely shared that his girlfriend's father threatened to kill Lakan and his daughter. Lakan recalled:

> Her father was almost put in jail, but I didn't sign the papers because I felt pity and mercy to the man. Plus, he is the father of my girlfriend ... I want to take the high road ... I respected myself even if I am like this. It never entered my mind to take up revenge and put that man to jail.

Alab, reflecting on his days as a student activist at the university, recounted a harrowing experience when he was abducted by a Muslim rebel group. His activism, particularly his role in organizing a private LGBTQ+ -focused human rights session at his university, had made him a target. He was kidnapped solely because of his involvement in advocating for LGBTQ rights. Alab was motivated to conduct these sessions because of the vivid memories he had of trans women being subjected to public harassment in his childhood. I noticed his casualness when sharing that he grew up in a community where violence has become the norm. He recalled, "Since I was a kid, I have been witnessing trans women being openly and publicly harassed; some were even shot to death just because they were feminine. I grew up where feminine gay men and trans women were being violently treated." These early observations ignited his passion for championing LGBTQ+ rights through education and awareness.

"I never denied my *T'boli* identity even if some of them talked bad about me, because people are not perfect." said Diwa when I asked how his *T'boli* community addressed his being *bakla*. Similarly, Bituin had questioned himself why he is what he is – *bakla* and *T'boli*, but later realized that being a queer *T'boli* is his edge. "My being *bakla* and *T'boli* is a good profile. I attended seminars and conferences because I am *T'boli*, and if I was not one, I will never be invited. I treated those things as a good opportunity rather than treating it negatively." For Liwanag, she explained that one of the community council members said to her, "As long as you love, respect and have a good relationship with others, then we approve of your identity." However, approval does not always correlate with respect. For Liwanag, respect was not shown towards her identity. Bullying and discrimination were constants. Comments such as "What is that?! He is *bakla*! So ugly." were common. Her community also didn't believe her at first and was told she was a fake and that her *bakla* identity is just for show as her *T'boli* community had never encountered anyone like her before. Feelings of hurt and exclusion were what Liwanag felt, and that made her initially decide to become a real man, but she could never do it.

The T'boli people are known for their bravery and strength, and thus, they consider anything other than the normative gender of masculinity and femininity as a deviation that goes against their cultural values. Ilog, Ligaya, and Bituin remembered how their Indigenous community handled their gender identity. Ilog, who is a community youth organizer, arranged a local gay beauty pageant and has received mixed reactions from his community. "Beauty pageants help people like me who are doing this for the money to help our family. People see it as a bad influence on children. We don't allow swimwear, only casual and evening gowns. Ligaya also shared how issues are based on gossip and other people's imaginations without a speck of truth. He believed that educating the communities would slowly eliminate false narratives and harmful beliefs.

> The elders and leaders, especially when someone is sick, blame us like we're the ones carrying the virus or transmitting the disease. And because people don't know what's the real cause of the sickness, they just believe what others report to them.

For Bituin, being or becoming a member of the LGBTQ+ community has received no support from their community. In terms of the elders, he believes that there is no movement or assistance in putting a stop to bullying and harassment; either the elders don't care or because being bakla is still taboo for them. He then shared, "They always think that we are the ones violating civil law." He used evolution as a metaphor, emphasizing that as society progresses into the deeper realms of the 21st century, T'boli culture should evolve in tandem. He further explained that he holds the T'boli culture in high regard, acknowledging its presence long before he came into being. Similarly, for Ligaya, navigating his T'boli and bakla identities leads to being overlooked and neglected. He explained that in the T'boli community, there is a strong emphasis on traditional masculinity, and as a result, being gay is staunchly condemned and strictly taboo. Ligaya added, "Sometimes when we put on our traditional clothing, we may notice that people treat us differently based on their perception of us, which can be hurtful and make us feel unwelcomed."

It was enlightening when Ligaya shared an anecdote regarding the use of traditional garments, prompting an engaging dialogue among our group. He recounted a particular exchange he had with the cultural elders about wearing traditional women's clothing. Ligaya, who works part-time as a blogger, reasoned with his community leaders and cultural masters, suggesting that by creating these videos, there's a chance someone might discover him for work and choose him to represent their culture and clarifying that his intentions are for content and T'boli

traditional clothing is not used for lewdness or to be disrespected. But despite his explanations, "they still view the use of our T'boli clothing in association with my identity as taboo." Bituin commented on Ligaya's experience that "it is disheartening and discriminative and that it can stifle the ability to outwardly manifest one's true inner identity." Bituin believes that culture should evolve like people do and believes it's time for change. Especially on T'boli rules that prohibit bakla from wearing traditional attire. He believes that "the situation is discriminatory, as everyone should possess the liberty to make choices that align with their personal happiness and well-being. It's saddening for bakla individuals or those within the LGBTQ spectrum, whose freedoms are dimmed by their gender identities."

As most of my participants grew up in a religious [Christian or Muslim] community, their indigeneity is already a fusion of their religious beliefs and culture. The T'bolis according to Bituin, are Christians; therefore, being bakla and having a relationship with another man is still taboo. He also added that "people cursed us ... tagged us as the work of Satan ... there are so many barriers for us" for involving ourselves in such relationships, as the T'boli culture doesn't allow homosexuality. Growing up in a Muslim dogmatist and patriarchal community, masculine women are preferred over feminine men, according to Alab. Realizing this binary perspective has shaped and reshaped Alab's identity and sense of belonging. He honestly shared that in his early formative years, the effect on his identity was that he saw his masculinity as empowering.

> "There are points in my life when I was there that it felt empowering because I thought they accepted me, and I was very young and stupid and didn't see the issues then ... So, growing up I was a bully, I grew up fighting people, I was a troublemaker, because that was how I was trained ... I remembered the exact words from my relative, if you want to be a boy or a man, you have to be strong, and this is how it like to be strong."

Ulan, who is an active member of her church, shared her experiences living as a Catholic bisexual T'boli. Her fellow churchmates asked her, "You go to church but can't change back to being a woman?". Ligaya, Hiraya, and Malaya are devout Catholics and Christians. They all agreed when Ligaya explained that they still honor their T'boli beliefs and their gods and goddesses for healing and rejuvenation. Until now, they still respect and preserve them, believing in their existence through offerings before fiestas and gatherings. I gathered that in our conversation, their different devotions to Christianity were not a hindrance to their

friendship and love for their community. However, these may not be effective for others outside their circle. Ligaya heard his fellow church members say Bakla should be crucified. He admitted that those statements hurt him as a T'boli, a bakla, and a Christian. "Churchgoers usually say to us, "Why do you go to church? Is it because you are bakla and need to repent? We also hear, why are you like this? There are no gays, only men and women!" Malaya retorted to this stigma and discrimination by referring to them and all their actions towards the Bible. Despite their judgments, he decided to remain a good person and hoped they would change.

> "When other people say bakla can't enter heaven, I know I haven't read anything in the bible that says such; there was no specification in the verses that bakla and tomboys in the verses will not be welcomed in heaven. For me, it is really about faith; faith without work is dead. If you don't do it in action, your faith is nothing; this is not about gender identity but how you understand your faith."

The term "double discrimination" was also discussed during our pakikipagkwentuhan. Embracing their queer identities is often liberating, yet it also proves challenging in many aspects. Bituin shared that, being T'boli and queer, they encounter layers of barriers in expressing themselves. He remembered an incident in which he confronted a rather well-known student who had been publicly verbally harassing him, shouting bakla in a derogatory way. As a proud T'boli, and member of the LGBTQ community, he shared that growing up knowing his gender identity and being a T'boli meant double layers of discrimination; a term he used is "double killed."

> "Being part of a minority group often leads to being despised, especially when people learn that I am T'boli. Additionally, I sense a different attitude towards me from others because of my gay identity. It's a double layer of discrimination that I face"

Similarly, Dakila also shared with the group an incident where he experienced a profound sense of exclusion and embarrassment tied to his gender identity and indigenous roots. Whispered comments intended to ostracize floated to his ears:

> Avoid speaking and sharing a table with that girl; she's a lesbian and a T'boli, but I spoke back to the person in their dialect and said I don't have a disease that could contaminate you! I left the party soon after.

Malaya shared his experience working in the city of General Santos with the group. He said it was quite amusing how some people in the city treated him when they found out he was a T'boli. Despite living in modern times, they still held the belief that T'boli people practiced witchcraft and were primitive, which in turn fostered a sense of fear. He added that he was discriminated against at his workplace because he was T'boli. He was not allowed to speak in his T'boli language because the mayor decreed it. He questioned the person and said, "We didn't do anything to this person. Why can't I not speak my native language? I know my rights, and I have freedom of speech. I am allowed to speak my language because that is my identity." Before Ilog became famous on social media, he faced discrimination from his work colleagues, who claimed he lacked talent because he was gay and T'boli. However, he rose above the negative comments, and by staying focused and true to his T'boli and bakla identities, he caught the attention of a blogger who recognized his talents—and the rest is history.

One significant source of distress for Alab stemmed from the persistent microinvalidations, micro assaults, and microinsults that he, along with other LGBTQ peers, endured within communities characterized by their staunchly conservative and traditional cultural and religious values. He recalled cisgender male "friends" giving sexist comments and feeling excluded. But despite the feeling of exclusion, Alab continues to confront these sexist comments, questions, and debates with them.

> I usually experience sexism on a micro level, in the sense that people will make you feel that they are accepting of your gender identity or sexual orientation, and they are mansplaining you, or they indirectly undermine your "ability" to be a man ... I have particular friends who are cisgender male that sometimes when we talk, they will invoke or insert of phallus or penis as a symbol of masculinity ... I asked them if they were suggesting that individuals who are assigned male at birth but do not have penises, or those who are castrated, might not be considered men simply because they lack the traditional physical symbol of manhood? If you are saying that the symbol of manhood is the penis, you will only become a man if you have a penis, right?

Alab's narratives expose not only the binary belief that gender is only man and woman but also highlight that heterosexuality is deeply felt and acted upon within Philippine society. Ilog, who began his work at the farm in the third grade, fondly recalled his younger self, describing himself as slim and lanky, with a deep tan from being out in the sun all day. He

shared his experiences of micro-assaults and insults while working at a young age, not only because of his identity, being T'boli, but also because of the effect of his socioeconomic status on his physical appearance. He said, "People called me *"Taong iwas,"* or Monkey man, because at that time, I had a really dark complexion, you can only see my teeth, and I was really skinny, and my weight was not normal." Dakila, being a trans man and tomboy, hoped for his community to respect them "as individuals, as humans and that we are all equal." For my participants, this is their hope – a community where respect and acceptance of queer identities flourish.

The experiences above explain how the T'boli and Maranao indigenous communities treat gender and sexuality in a way that is not of norm – they are seen as deviant from the socially constructed norm where masculinity, patriarchy, and cis heteronormativity exist. For my participants, embracing their queer identity involves a complex relationship with their community. Their lives are not only laced with constraints towards their identity but also with a realization of an evolving understanding of kapwa, – that values both individuality and collective identity. Navigating the intersections of their culture, religion, and indigenous community spaces, they encounter multifaceted challenges. Their stories emphasize their ongoing negotiation for recognition and acceptance within their own cultural community and the broader society, which may not fully embrace them. They face complex interplay of identities and spaces, often marred by discrimination and prejudice. Despite these obstacles, they draw strength from their cultural roots and claim identities, revealing dynamic negotiation with their queer identities, cultural norms, religion, and societal spaces.

7.3   Relationship of education and class

The previous section of familial, cultural, religious, and societal spaces and their influence on T'boli and Maranao queer identities creates a picture of how their ethnicity, gender, and sexuality intersect. In this section, we add the variable class to the mix. Many of my participants highlighted the crucial role of education in combating discrimination and achieving acceptance and respect. While socioeconomic status posed a constraint, my participants were able to find ways to move forward in any situation and finance their education. This section will focus on their resourcefulness and perseverance as they pursue and attain higher education, which is fraught with challenges. However, their resilient pursuit of education played a crucial role not only in identity development but also in forging within themselves a better, more inclusive community.

Bituin statement, *"Ma'am we are all working students"* encapsulates their shared experience. He recalled cleaning other people's houses since he was in high school, found ways to keep funding his education, and finally graduated.

> I was in the city and I had to find houses where I could stay and work. I washed and ironed clothes, scrubbed floors, and bathrooms, and maybe the only thing I didn't do was scrub the butt of my boss. I mean, I did everything in the house. Through hard work, I graduated. When I was in college, I didn't have time to relax. I had a major in work and a minor in political science.

Malaya, Hiraya, Ligaya, and Ilog represent community members who, from a young age, have had to take on the responsibility of earning an income to support not only their educational aspirations, their families, but also their basic daily needs. As early as the third grade, Ilog started working on a farm to earn money for his family and buy school supplies for himself. When he moved out of his parents' house, he didn't want to pay rent, so he looked for work in other people's homes where he could stay. He also participated in gay beauty pageants and worked as a freelance make-up artist to pay for his school fees.

> During my first year, I became a working student for a year. After that, I looked for a kind of job that would allow me to work and study simultaneously. I continued working for three years, where I would attend school in the morning and work during the night.

Ligaya reminisced about his university days, when his allowance was not enough to cover his scholastic fees and basic needs. He recalled that he didn't care what kind of work he had as long as it brought money so he could stock up on food. Diwa, who is currently starting senior high school, recalled the stark reality of being an Indigent who had no education. He shared that he fled from his job on a farm, hopeful for better opportunities in the city to help his family. However, the harsh reality quickly dawned on him: without an education, progress was nearly impossible. "If you don't have an education, you won't get anywhere," he realized with sad clarity. Looking back on their experiences, I realized that they didn't enjoy their young and adult formative years as some people have in the Philippines. In relation to violence, I argue that their low economic status is a form of structural violence, as poverty is a social condition that physically, emotionally, mentally, and economically hinders their potential. In accordance with Amoroto's (2016) research, participants in this research,

especially T'boli's socioeconomic status, have indicated low income, and scarcity of resources that can lead a modest life result in poverty.

Ilog and Bituin gave importance to education because it is the "It is the key to get the people in our community to accept us, when we are able to finish school and become a professional, the people around us treat us differently." He recalled an incident when he realized that "being T'boli and bakla there is still discrimination but having an education and becoming a professional played a big role to earn their respect and acceptance", when he visited his parents' house, people in his barrio saw him wearing a uniform looking like a professional, which was when he felt the community and his family started to accept him. One of their neighbors said to Ilog that they wish they had a son like him, who is gay, hardworking, and helps his family. Similarly, Bituin and Hiraya felt that their community changed their attitude towards them when they knew they had graduated and acquired work. To Bituin, "they have become cautious, because they know I am already an earner." Hiraya said, "People sneer at us, saying, Here come the bakla boys again! When I became a professional, those people are now feeling ashamed and have said nothing negative to us."

For Bituin, pursuing education became a means to combat homophobia and discrimination. He honestly said that he has a lot of fear and trauma from people calling him derogatory names, but he held his chin high and decided to embrace it with dignity. He holds a firm conviction that homophobic comments will eventually give way to commendations and acceptance. Bituin's compassion for fellow LGBTQ+ individuals and his Indigenous community inspires him to remain steadfast and resilient while maintaining a hopeful perspective on life, drawing strength from the discrimination and homophobia he faced.

> I experienced multiple forms of discrimination because I am a bakla/gay man, I am Indigent, and because of my economic status... It urged me to finish my education and become well educated so I could stand up against these people, and through my education, I was able to stand and fight. I continuously learn and believe that with greater knowledge, I'll be equipped to re-educate others and share the insights I've gained.

Bituin continued to share that his experiences made him a stronger person in facing challenges and a springboard to elevate and change his living situation. He added, "If I remain stagnant when will the discriminations stop?" For Malaya, those bullies have unwittingly

served as a reflection of who he doesn't want to be. It became a constant reminder that motivated him to strive to be a better individual, finish his education, and, in a sense, inadvertently become the wellspring of his strength. He saw his education as a way to not only elevate his status within society but also use it as an instrument to help others in his community.

> "Gaining an education can change how the community views you; it's like you've reached a significant milestone in your life. Education holds immense value, no matter who you are or where you come from. It's all about how you use that knowledge. Instead of using it to overshadow or belittle others, use it to enlighten and uplift those around you. Teach and share with others – that's the true power of education."

The stigma that perpetuates the life of being an Indigent and having a queer identity is that they will never graduate and will never be successful. According to Ilog, this message was instilled by other T'boli bakla who have attained success amidst being T'boli, bakla, and having low economic status. He expressed gratitude for their guidance and encouraged him to pursue his education and strive for a professional career. He said, "We've managed to overturn that notion and disprove such claims." With pride in his voice, I remembered what Bituin said when we were ready to end our pakikipagkwentuhan.

> I will not learn how to stand and fight if not for my education. I continuously learn, the more I became knowledgeable, I can reeducate people. The more I am discriminated the more it fuels me to be strong and brave ...I know my rights and that I have the right and freedom to express who I am

Looking back on their narratives, their experiences show that, despite facing socioeconomic challenges associated with their queer identities and their path to academic success, they have become the people whom they both respect and admire. The social structure of class was considered a constraint, but never a barrier to scholastic success. Their stories paint a complex picture of an ambivalent relationality between education, their queer identity, their ethnicity, and class that reveals a mosaic of struggle, success, and resilience. Their stories are a collective milestone that can inspire others for a vision of a society where education is a catalyst for breaking the barrier towards acceptance and respect regardless of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity.

7.4 Community development

In this section, my aim is to emphasize their active involvement in the community. They have used education as a catalyst for impactful initiatives, extending their efforts beyond their personal interests. Their work isn't just about dreaming of an inclusive and safe community; it's about actively contributing to the upliftment of the entire community – through creating their own brave spaces.

"What I want our community to understand that us being a trans men/lesbian also deserved to be accepted and not to be judged based on our claimed identity", Dakila said with conviction. He continued by sharing that to achieve that, there should be a forum or discussion amongst community leaders, townspeople, and LGBTQ+ members. This conviction is what Bituin is trying to push within the T'boli community – a Focus group discussion from different sectors of society [local government, Indigenous people's leaders, the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples, LBTQ members, and community members]. According to him, "an FGD shows a collective effort from all the members of society and a chance for LGBTQ members to speak about their experiences and the leaders could create laws to make their lives peaceful."

For Lakan, being an LGBTQ+ youth mentor is a dream he wants to pursue. He shared that "I want to share my experiences, so that they don't have to feel or experience the things that happened to my life." Similarly, Alab believes that empowering and mobilizing communities will help them inspire and encourage others to claim their rights and demand respect, protection, and fulfillment of their basic human rights "so that we can live a better life, a decent life and co create solutions with other communities including the government."

Malaya is a community organizer who engages and educates his community on how to live a good life. Hiraya, as one of the members of an Indigenous youth organization, aims to educate the youth. He shared, "We always talk to the youth, especially the out of school youth, and advise them that we should always love our culture, how to care for our environment, family planning for couples and parents." Ligaya, who stands among the dedicated community leaders and organizers in his area, has accumulated monetary donations and some of his hard-earned money for the betterment of his community. He organizes seminars and health education initiatives, driven by a desire to give back. His goal in doing so is to demonstrate to the village elders and his fellow villagers that their contributions stem from a genuine wish to enhance community life. Ligaya hopes that through his actions, people will look past gender

identity and instead recognize the true measure of a person: their character, commitment, and courage. He said,

> "In our efforts toward community development, we've brought essential items like shampoo, soap, and various juices to the locals. However, some were hesitant to accept these goods due to misconceptions—like fears that the shampoo might cause hair loss or worries about getting intoxicated from the juice. It's clear from these interactions that there's a deficiency in basic hygiene knowledge. We've also handed out condoms, taking the time to explain their proper use, and have conducted health education sessions, particularly for teenagers and women. Our approach is to always share the knowledge we acquire through seminars, ensuring that we pass on valuable information back to our community."

For Bituin and Alab, the education of communities on human rights is a cornerstone of their mission to create safe environments for Indigenous LGBTQ+ individuals. They believe that raising awareness and understanding of these fundamental rights is crucial for fostering inclusive spaces where everyone is respected and protected. Bituin shared in the group that the challenges of discrimination pushed him to achieve something more; until such time he became head of a school, he created an organization that centers on LGBTQ+ issues. "I am pursuing an LGBTQ+ caravan to help enlighten other LGBTQ+ individuals about their rights because if they know their rights, they will know how to defend themselves." Bituin and Malaya emphasized the importance of including parents in their children's human rights, as well as how to care for, support, and respect their self-expression. "Their participation in conversations about their children's human rights is essential, it fosters a supportive family environment that is crucial for the well-being and advocacy of LGBTQ+ individuals." Malaya added, "It's essential that we also reach out to parents and help them comprehend that being gay isn't an illness or a malady. There's a real gap in understanding and dialogue that, if bridged, could significantly reduce, or even eliminate stereotypes." However, due to a lack of support from their local government, monetary issues have plagued the organization.

Alab's journey toward social empowerment is deeply rooted in his journey of self-acceptance and the peace he's found in embracing his true self. It's this personal contentment that has empowered him to share his life experiences with others, fostering a spirit of allyship. For Alab, allyship extends beyond the transgender community advocating for its own rights; it's about inspiring solidarity from others—people from different backgrounds and

communities—encouraging them to stand alongside the trans community in their quest for equality and recognition of their rights. Through this, he created a community-based organization led by transgender men. Alab explained that his organization is composed of diverse members such as students, teachers, or professionals who were discriminated by their manner of dressing, by not using lead names or right pronouns which led to the restriction of their identities.

> I write to schools, or I write to their employers explaining their context ... So far, the schools that I have written all have positive feedback ... our members after the letters were received, they are thankful because they are now allowed to express themselves freely and their work environment and schools are accepting or if not totally accepting, but they are now tolerant and no longer restricting. For me it is clear impact on the result of empowerment, for me that's how empowerment means.

On a political level, Bituin and Alab are creating waves to push local ordinances and legal name transitions. Bituin is a big supporter of the SOGIE bill. He believes that if LGBTQ+ T'boli's know and understand the SOGIE bill or even their basic human rights, they can freely express themselves. He said, "SOGIE is the element of each individual ... if people know this, they will know how to defend themselves legally and know their place and rights within the society." He was able to conduct a SOGIE session where he discussed the anti-discrimination law. Bituin's motivation to push the anti-discrimination ordinance is based on his experiences of discrimination. He expressed that the acceptance of their identities within the community is a struggle, particularly with the elders, and believed that conducting focus group discussions with different sectors of society would provide valuable information. Bituin was passionate when he spoke about the role of their elders and why they should be given time to speak with LGBTQ members about why being such should not be viewed as a cultural deviant.

> "It seems there's a lack of understanding or perhaps a reluctance to address the issue—being gay is still seen as taboo by many. To my knowledge, there hasn't been any formal support or initiatives aimed at tackling and preventing bullying. This lack of intervention is one of the driving forces behind my advocacy for the Anti-Discrimination Ordinance (ADO). I'm motivated by the hope that other LGBTQ members won't have to endure the bullying, harassment, and discrimination that I've

faced in the past ... It is also about a collaborative effort from all the members of society to listen to everyone and create laws that would make people's lives peaceful.

On the other hand, Alab is working on a legal policy that will support trans men and women with their legal transition – which includes having the freedom to change their names legally. He shared a story about trans women during the height of the pandemic, as well as the distribution of relief goods. IDs weren't initially required, but when a trans woman joined the line, the person was singled out by an official who demanded her ID. Uncomfortable and fearing ridicule for the masculine name on her ID, she ultimately left without aid. The next week, with the situation more desperate, she complied. Upon presenting her ID, she faced public humiliation as the crowd mocked her, contrasting her feminine appearance with her legal name, "Roberto" was told, "Your name is Roberto such a macho name and here you are looking like a barbie. "According to Alab, these are one of many stories of humiliation and stereotypes against transgender members.

> "In the Philippines, if you marry a man legally, you can change your last name and adopt your husband's last name. For me that is a significant name change, and why is it restricted to trans people? This is because of prejudice ...Our organization in collaboration with other community-based organizations are working on a draft to propose a gender recognition bill, so what we are putting on the proposal is based on the principles of human rights in the Philippines."

As I reflect on the different narratives of my respondents, I believe this is not solely a story of anguish and sadness. Despite their experiences of discrimination, stereotypes, bullying, stigma, and mere tolerance, they have managed to rise above adversity, much like the lotus flower that emerges pristine and beautiful in the morning light. Therefore, acceptance of their queer selves creates a sense of safety within themselves and has been used to create brave and safe spaces for other queer identities. Their resilience and love for the community are a testament to their commitment to fostering an Indigenous and non-Indigenous society where equality and acceptance exist.

7.5 Summary

My participants experience not only enrich their different narratives by contemplating the subtle, yet pervasive instances of violence encountered in the intimate spaces of their family, culture, religion, and the broader scope of their community, but they also offer an in-depth

discussion of how safe and brave spaces were created and maintained. Based on my findings, safe and brave spaces can be created in both personal and material spaces. Brave spaces can be associated with the self when the self- claims their queer Indigenous identities and is therefore considered safe, as the body is a place where acceptance and respect for the self-exist and thrive. At the end of our conversations, all of my participants emphasized the importance of expressing oneself without fear and maintaining respect for oneself and others. It may sound cliché, but I argue that their experiences are more than just stories of discrimination and violence—they are not merely surviving amidst these challenges and barriers; they are their own heroes.

8 Discussion

8.1 Moving in spaces: The reclaimed self

The focus of this research is to explore and understand how identity constraints on queer indigenous Filipinos influence the creation and maintenance of safe and brave spaces. In this section, I will theoretically discuss their relationship with, ambivalence toward, and survivance with the spaces they create within themselves, as well as in relation to their family, Indigenous community, and culture.

Many factors influence queer indigenous Filipinos' creation and maintenance of their safe/brave spaces. However, before I highlight the external factors, I would like to start with the body – the self. I believe starting with the body/self will allow us to paint a background of how claiming their queer identities as a pillar of strength resonates with the building of their survival, resistance, and their love for their community. My findings indicate an interesting contradiction to the Western concept of "coming out "which can help explain how queer identities are formed, understood, and received locally and culturally. Coming out in western society is a defining moment for reclaiming queer identities (Manalansan IV, 2003). My findings indicate a similarity to the narratives of queer Filipinos in Presto (2020) and Manalansan IV (2003) research, where "coming out "was unnecessary because their queer identities were manifested through their actions – through performance. However, my participants indicated that performing their gender was not only an indication of their queer identities.

Their sexual orientations were also present during their formative years. Their romantic feelings and attraction to the gender they desired were explained in harmony with their gender identity. Therefore, the "coming out" of queer Indigenous Filipinos in this research was both a performance of their gender and sexuality. Mirroring and adding to Garcia (2000) explanation of gender performance, their gender and sexuality performance of being and becoming bakla, tomboy, silahis, or trans have been internalized and rehearsed in their body/self in a continuous, repetitive manner. The internalization and rehearsal of their queer Indigenous Filipino identities gives this research a boon to understand what these terms mean in a local indigenous context. It is an impossibility to have a universal definition of these terms because the Filipino contemporary culture was made and remade by external and internal colonialization in different ways. Therefore, in this research, the bakla, tomboy, silahis, and trans lead us to the hybrid identity identified by Garcia (2008b) and Baytan

(2008). In this note, as their queer Indigenous identity is an outcome of the colonial past, the neocolonial present, and the hegemonic Western conception of a gay identity, I am reminded of Bhabha (2004) theory of hybridity and mimicry.

However, while I partially agree with Bhabha's theory, I believe it overlooks the complexity of the Filipino queer Indigenous identities. By integrating the Filipino concept of kapwa into our understanding of emic terms such as bakla, agen, boyos, tomboys, silahis, and trans, we recognize that these identities transcend the mere mimicry and hybridity of Western queer identities. In this research, kapwa does not only imply homogeneity, gendered context, or balancing collective identity and individuality. Rather, kapwa represents a dynamic interplay between individuality and collective identity that is continuously negotiated and lived by my participants. Therefore, Indigenous Filipino queer localized identities are simply not just reformed versions of the "other," or a simple hybrid of Bhabha (2004). They are the revolutionized expression of the "other" - cultivated through a collective sense of self that is deeply embedded in the shared experiences and cultural bonds of the community.

Connecting our findings and discussion above to the research on safe and brave spaces extends the discussion and highlights Ahmed and Soja's work on the relationality of body and space. Ahmed's body and space and Soja's third space concept speak of spaces that are lived in more than their material and physical settings. My findings suggest that my participants quiet acceptance, unbeknownst resistance, and resilience in claiming their identities can be and – indeed cultivated within themselves. Soja's third space, or lived spaces, offers a holistic understanding of space that is neither perceived nor conceived, but a dynamic interaction of both fostering a space that cultivates representation and resistance. Similarly, Ahmed's body and spaces align with Soja's lived space, in the sense that the body and space are inextricably linked. As my findings imply, the queer Indigenous bodies of my participants are active sites that are shaped by their lived spaces and that are themselves a product of the precolonial and colonial past as well as the neocolonial present. Therefore, their queer indigenous bodies with the value of kapwa are not merely at their core but actively moving in between and around their bodies and spaces, constitutively creating spaces within the self that are both safe and brave – where love of self and for others flourishes and lives.

8.1.1 Navigating the familial space

In this research, my participants performed their gender identity and sexual expression at an early age and thus encountered violence primarily within their familial space. The T'boli's

and Maranao's societies are patriarchal in nature, where masculinity is privileged. My findings relate to previous reports by the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (2014); Ceperiano et al. (2016) and Presto (2020) where personal violence was identified within familial spaces by male relatives and typically occurred after family members learned about their sexual orientation or gender identity. Most of the participants were subjected to the personal or direct violence identified by Galtung (1969). My findings indicated different forms of personal violence, such as being exposed to toxic masculine actions or physically abused by their father, as they were considered an embarrassment as their effeminate nature does not reflect masculinity. Some participants detailed their family members and relatives attempted to coerce them into going back to their "real gender" to act on traditional male/female gender roles, and continually challenged their claimed identities. Some were prohibited from having queer friendships out of fear of being further "influenced".

In addition to instances of personal violence, my participants' narratives also revealed the presence of structural violence. According to Galtung (1969) this type of violence is invisible, where harm is not acted upon and caused by an actor, but instead this type of violence is built into and imbedded into social structures. In a generalized sense, structural violence worsens personal violence related to gender and sexuality. When cultural norms and customs are deeply rooted in patriarchy and cis heteronormativity, they structurally and systematically harm individuals who do not conform to gender and sexual normativity, such as my queer participants. As a result, my participants are forced and coerced into performing and acting according to male and female gender norms so as not to cause their families more embarrassment and ridicule in public. Their stories reflect Umbac (2005) and Ceperiano et al. (2016) research on family members who seemed to exert discriminatory actions, demanding their queer children act decently to protect the family from embarrassment and ridicule. After discussing their stories of personal and structural violence, I realized that they did not see themselves as victims, as they continuously and actively negotiate their queer identities within their familial spaces.

In light of these realizations, their stories of violence are imbued with resilience and survival techniques. The navigating in between stories of violence and resilience, or grey lines, can be associated with Muñoz (1999) disidentification, which is described as a form of survival strategies of negotiation. In their narratives, my participants did not outright rebel against their family's expectations or fully conform to them. Instead, they found ways to navigate the in-betweens of familial expectations and queer identities. Hiraya, Malaya, and Ligaya stories

are an example of disidentification in action. Their father's pressure forced them to perform masculinity in public spaces to avoid further family embarrassment and public ridicule. However, they did not fully adapt to such demands. Their gender performance was deeply ingrained in themselves; unable to mask it, despite their father's efforts to present a masculine and traditional male posterior, people still noticed their bakla identity. In performing masculine identities in public and staying authentic to their queer identities highlights the disidentification in practice of Muñoz (1999) – performing masculine identities is not seen as conforming to cultural norms of gender and sexuality but rather as a form of strategic negotiation in asserting their authentic selves.

8.1.2 Navigating religiosity and queer

All of my participants grew up in communities where religion and their indigenous culture merged, resulting in nuanced experiences and relationships between their indigeneity, queer identity, and religion. Their experiences can be equated to religion-based abuse and discrimination towards queer indigenous Filipinos outside their familial spaces. In the context of violence, religion-based abuse can then be associated with cultural violence. Cultural violence, according to Galtung (1990) can be compared to an invisible force that shapes individuals or entities justification for their deeds. It persists because of societal structures such as religion, ideologies, language, and empirical or formal science, all of which can be used to legitimize and justify the continued use of personal and structural violence. As Filipinos, specifically in this research, T'boli and Maranao, are governed and guided by their Christian or Islam faith, perpetuators used religion to justify or legitimize their acts of abuse. T'boli and Maranao cultures are guided and governed by the essence of patriarchy. Patriarchal ideology refers to the subjugation of the female gender and the feminine, thus creating a hierarchal structure of sexes where men are dominant. Any deviation from these ideologies, such as claiming their queer identity, is then subjected to either or both justified personal and structural abuse.

Despite facing violence in religious spaces, many participants remain active in their churches, and their experiences have not weakened their faith but rather deepened it. This paradoxical relationship with their faith also exemplifies Muñoz (1999) disidentification. The intersection of religion and queer Indigenous identities can be seen as survival strategies. In this context, religion has consistently subjugated and punished the existence of non-normative identities that do not conform to normativity. Their deep connection to their faith is already a powerful

form of disidentification. By living out their faith authentically, they challenge the notion that religiosity necessitates the exclusion of queer identities. Through their actions, they teach others that faith without work is dead. This means that religiosity is demonstrated through actions and not judged by one's gender identity. Their stance asserts a challenge and contests the message from some church members that their queer identities require repentance and a return to normative gender roles. Instead, being queer is not opposed to being a person of faith; indeed, one's faith and spiritual practice can surpass the violence and constraints imposed by gender identity. Their being queer, indigenous, and devout Catholics showcased how they work within the norms and structures and how they move together with the intricate web of social forces, creating spaces that both constrain and advance their identity formation and acceptance.

8.1.3 Navigating being Indigenous and queer

The most common stories of my participants have indicated various forms of bullying that led to harassment, physical assault, illegal abduction, and attempted murder perpetuated by other T'boli's and Maranao's. My participants, who decided to venture to bigger cities in hopes of better work opportunities and education, have also experienced what one T'boli coined "doubled killed" or double discrimination. Here we see intersectionality and queer of color critique in practice as most of my participants narrated stories of non-indigenous individuals, whether from work, school, or public social spaces, who have acted on both preconceived and conceived opinions that are mentally, emotionally, and often physically harmful due to their Indigenous, queer, and socioeconomic status. Their experiences are in direct correlation with Presto's (2020) argument that violence towards LGBTQ+ individuals and communities that exudes macho identities is desired and preferred. This phenomenon also aligns with Galtung's (1990) concept of cultural violence, where personal and structural violence against marginalized groups is justified and legitimized by elements of culture, such as Indigenous norms, religious beliefs, and social status. Moreover, the Philippine's slogan as most tolerant country in Southeast Asia to queer identities is being further demystified with the support of my participant stories.

Looking back on our pakikipagkwentuhan, most of my participants shared that they never denounced their queer identity, despite the challenges posed by their Indigenous culture and religious beliefs. Here we are witnessing disidentification in practice, and how my participants navigate the spaces between their Indigenous culture and their queer identities.

By turning constraints into opportunities, such as being invited to speak in conferences and seminars is an example of working within the system, by utilizing the norms and structures they are boxed in to their advantage. Aside from being active members of the church, most of my T'boli participants uphold their Indigeneity with high regard. T'boli bakla in particular has shown that being Indigenous and queer is something to be proud of –through showcasing their traditional clothing for both men and women in gay beauty pageants and on social media. However, some actions were deemed a form of disrespect to their traditions and norms, and they were prohibited from being used on those platforms. According to Muñoz (1999) disidentification is a form of ambivalent negotiation, despite the fact that community leaders view this as disrespectful and prohibit such expressions, participants continue to negotiate and assert their right to represent their dual identities.

Through their stories, being and becoming queer Indigenous opens up the harsh reality that a safe space where one can freely express themselves without prejudice is not guaranteed, as explained by the case study of Arao and Clemens (2013). Their claimed identity constantly posed a risk, and therefore we can suggest that the concept of safe spaces offers only dead ends. When I reflect on my participants' lives, safe and brave spaces are interconnected. My participants navigate their familial, religious, and societal spaces in ambivalence—working with and not fully against them. Thus, the lived spaces of queer Indigenous identities delineate both representation and resistance. Meaning their body/self, embody a constant negotiation of violence – where they must be brave amidst discrimination and prejudice and safe, where they find survival techniques to authentically express themselves. Disidentification in safe and brave spaces is always an ambivalent negotiation. Queer Indigenous identities are more than just stories of resistance or assimilation; they are stories of adaptation, reformation, and reworking within the system that continuously marginalizes them.

8.1.4 Navigating education, class, and queer Indigenous identities

Most of my participants, particularly the T'boli's are from societies with low economic status. The current statistics in the Philippines show that approximately 25 million Filipinos are below the poverty line. Their stories were not only about performing their gender identity and sexual orientation while navigating the violence they experienced, but they were also stories of navigating economic occupation while pursuing education. "We are all working students" – this statement opened the conversation on their dedication to achieving high educational

attainment despite their economic situations. Especially the bakla T'boli's, they all shared their experiences of cleaning other people's houses and working at farms in the wee hours of the morning, took any labor work available to support not only their educational aspirations but also their basic daily needs. Furthermore, while navigating the precarious nature of education and class, they shared instances of prejudice and discrimination based on being queer and Indigenous, adding more barriers. Many of my participants highlighted the crucial role of education in combating discrimination and achieving acceptance and respect. Therefore, they have persevered regardless of their economic constraints, gender, or sexual violence.

Several important realizations appeared in our analysis of education and class intersecting with their queer indigenous identity. First, queer T'boli's are often confronted with prejudice that paints them as individuals who will never achieve anything in life. Defying such stereotypes, my participants shared stories of success, which can be linked to the practice of disidentification. While carving their paths to success through tales of working students, they refused to conform to the restrictive social structures and views that seek to confine them. Moreover, this led us to the concept of survivance – where my participants are not merely surviving; instead, they actively reject the common narrative that their stories are only defined by their suffering or marginalization (Vizenor, 2008). Instead, they are rewriting their narratives, this time through education, while actively preserving and affirming their cultural identity.

In most of our pakikipagkwentuhan, themes of acceptance came up. Understanding how class and education intersect with their queer Indigenous identities can lead to acceptance of their identities, if a queer T'boli finishes their education and becomes a professional, people will look and treat them with respect. Investigating the concept of acceptance led us to revisit Presto's research, where queer identities are "accepted" only when individuals can financially support their family. In this framework, acceptance is not rooted in an understanding that queer identities are "normal" or "legitimate" but rather because there is a financial transaction involved. Thus, queer identities are merely tolerated in exchange for economic contributions. The findings do not dispute the fact that they contribute financially to their families. Here, the Filipino value kapwa is highlighted, which refers to a sense of collective social conformity, with the aim of having smooth interpersonal relationships to avoid conflicts.

However, I believe that my findings show that it is more than achieving smooth interpersonal relationships; it is a form of strategic negotiation performance. Previous research on conditional acceptance and kapwa do not completely align with my findings. Instead, I am viewing this act as a form of disidentification, survivance, and a reformed version of the value of kapwa. This is evident, especially when looking at their act of financial assistance as conditional acceptance. I would like to argue respectfully with Presto's analysis for the conditional acceptance, to her defense the research is limited only to queer youth. In my research, my participants' financial help is a form of strategic performance, or a mask. Taking inspiration from Anzaldúa (1990) Las mascaras, my participants are then using financial assistance not just for social self-protection but as a means of negotiation for their visibility, acceptance, and safety within the spaces they inhabit. Therefore, the financial contribution in this research is not merely conditional acceptance but a form of strategy for their queer identities to be visible and accepted despite the norms.

Financial contributions are a complex form of disidentification. As mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, family space is not considered a safe space for most of my participants. However, this did not deter my participants from helping their families, extended families, improve their economic situation. Therefore, disidentification in this context is not about turning against their family because they did not accept or even tolerate their queer identities. Instead, my participants learned to deal with the cards they were given. Being academically educated, becoming a professional is leveraged to provide not only financial assistance that leads to acceptance but also a means of reworking and reforming from within. Furthermore, my participants financial contribution, through the lens of kapwa and disidentification, is also a form of survivance. Why survivance? – My participants are not passively enduring their experiences of violence; rather, they are actively engaging with these challenges to transform themselves, their families, and society through their academic success, becoming professionals in their field, and securing financial means to elevate their families' living conditions. As a result, understanding the concept of acceptance through my participants stories not only adds complexity to the concept, but also reaffirms their agency and presence within their lived spaces.

8.2   Queer inclusive spaces and violence

In this research, queer identity constraints focus on the different forms of violence. Violence towards queer individuals is abundant in the LGBTQ+ literature in the Philippines (Amoroto,

2016; Ceperiano et al., 2016; Commission, 2014), and my research also supports such narratives. According to Galtung (1969) violence occurs when queer indigenous individuals are subjected to not only physical assault but also situations where social formations are involved and/or institutional entities that could impede them from achieving or realizing their potential. The types of violence that are found in my participants narratives are personal/direct, structural/indirect, and cultural (symbolic) in form. Therefore, this research adopts the triangulation of violence, similar to Amoroto (2016) where personal/direct, indirect/structural and cultural/symbolic are interconnected and can be exemplified within the familial, Indigenous culture, societal, and religious spaces. Through this adaption, we witness double and/or multiple discrimination faced by my participants, where the intersection of their ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality affects the spaces they inhabit.

This research explains safe and brave spaces in light of how my participants navigate their identity constraints. The narratives of violence allowed this research to identify not only the challenges they faced with their claimed identities but also highlighted their ambivalent, resilient, and relational nature. While elucidating the experiences of violence is important to understand their queer Indigenous lived experiences, I argue that it is equally significant to highlight how they create and maintain safe and brave spaces despite the violence that surrounds them. It was explicitly said by my participants that there are no safe spaces, only brave ones– however, I would like to invite my participants and readers to view spaces as more than the physical and material. In this research, with the support of their narratives, that both safe and brave spaces can be created within the self, as they are interconnected with the physical and can therefore move outside the body and create inclusive spaces.

Navigating queer spaces and violence, I realized that their community development efforts are a testament to their dedication to creating physical spaces that are both safe and brave. Their dedication to improving their communities physical, mental, and emotional health was inspired by their desire to give back. I believe that my participant's interwoven experiences of violence have led them to start creating inclusive spaces. Being Indigenous community development leaders can be viewed as a mask they have embodied. Here, the mask is used for visibility, acceptance, and safety, not only for themselves but also for the advocacies they are promoting. As a result, their mask as community development leaders is the practical application of disidentification and survivance. Through their experiences, I argue that navigating queer violence and being community developers represent not only a practical extension of disidentification and survivance, but also a tangible product of these processes

that actively shape the society around them by creating and maintaining safe and brave spaces. Being active members of their society is having an active presence, a revision of stories of victimry, tragedy, and dominance. Their active participation in community development is a subtle way of reducing the power of homophobia and gender inequality. Queer T'boli and Maranao participants are likened to being a chameleon – serving a form of resistance while preserving their Indigenous queer identities and agency – neither adopting nor opposing; rather, they work on and against, with ambivalence and relationality, toward social systems that continuously marginalize them.

9 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to highlight the lived experiences of queer T'boli and Maranao peoples in the Philippines as they navigate and create safe and brave spaces. Thirteen diverse queer identities have shared and narrated their past and present life stories, as well as their hope for a queer inclusive space in the future. The study employed intersectionality as a framework for understanding how social structures of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and class shaped the creation and maintenance of their lived spaces. The study explored queer identity constraints, and these shaped the creation and maintenance of safe and brave spaces. I have also investigated their survival and resistance strategies for navigating their identity constraints. The study has also identified the value of kapwa and how it was utilized in creating, making, and taking spaces.

My first question was: What are the queer Indigenous Filipino identity constraints? I have discussed the intersecting constraints of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and class through the concept of violence. Queer Indigenous identities are subjected to different kinds of violence. These forms of violence were identified in parallel with Galtung (1969) concept of violence, which highlighted that they are not only experiencing physical assault/abuse as a type of violence, but also situations where social formations are involved, and/or institutional entities that could impede them from achieving or realizing their potential. Therefore, their identity constraints are driven by the triangulation of personal, structural, and cultural violence.

To identify the relationship between these acts of violence, I have highlighted the spaces where this triangulation of violence was enacted. First, I have highlighted that my participants performed their gender identity and sexual expression at an early age and therefore first encountered violence within their familial space. I've stated that familial spaces are also macho spaces. As a result of these macho spaces, most of my participants were being forced and coerced into performing and acting according to male and female gender norms so as not to cause their families more embarrassment and ridicule in public. However, as I analyzed further their stories, my participants did not see themselves as victims; rather, they actively and continuously negotiate their queer identities with ambivalent relationality. Second, I have analyzed the relationship between their queer identities and religion, and I have highlighted that my participants experiences can be equated to religion-based abuse and discrimination, which is powered by cultural violence. Cultural violence is the justification and legitimization of personal and structural violence, and it persists due to societal structures such as religion.

Through analyzing the intersection of their gender, sexuality, and religion, I can say that religion-based abuse is not caused by choosing Christianity or Islam per se; rather, it is how religion is understood and lived. This realization is evident, as most of my participants are active church members.

I have analyzed the relationship between their queer identities and their Indigenous culture. The intersection of gender, sexuality, class, and ethnicity was highlighted through their experiences of being "double killed" or experiencing double discrimination. Most of my participants have narrated stories of different forms of discrimination perpetuated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals. I have also associated the continuance of this violence with the deliberate silence of both the local and national governments in approving the SOGIE, or anti-discrimination bill. Connecting to Galtung's (1990) cultural violence, the Philippine local and national governments are governed by historical, societal, and cultural authority. Therefore, the deliberate silencing and non-implementation of the bill into law is a deliberate act of cultural violence. Lastly, I have indicated the intersecting constraints of their queer identities, ethnicity, and class through their experiences of attaining education. This was an important section because not only do they confront prejudice and discrimination from their family, religion, and indigenous and non-indigenous communities, but also from their social status. Most of my participants came from low-income families and can therefore say they belonged among the 25 million Filipinos who live below the poverty line. This means that their income is not sufficient for their basic needs. Therefore, poverty is a type of structural violence that impedes individuals from attaining their mental, physical, and emotional potential.

The second research question was: how have these constraints shaped the creation and maintenance of safe and brave spaces? Their stories of violence are imbued with resilience and survival techniques; thus, the influence of constraints in creating and maintaining safe/brave spaces is ambivalent. My research has identified that my participants did not outright rebel against their families' expectations or fully conform to their families/societies/religion normative beliefs. Instead, they found ways to navigate the in-betweens of familial, societal, cultural, and religious expectations and queer identities. I have elucidated this ambivalence through the use of disidentification in practice. Disidentification in practice, highlighted when they are performing masculine identities to appease their family, is not recognized as a form of conforming to their cultural norms of gender and sexuality, but rather as a technique of negotiation in asserting their authentic selves. As most of my

participants are active members of the church, despite facing religion-based abuse, they are living out their faith authentically, further challenging the notion that religiosity necessitates the exclusion of queer identities. Furthering my example of disidentification, the research aimed to investigate the relationship between their queer identities and Indigenous culture. I have indicated that disidentification is a form of ambivalent negotiation. Despite their community elders and cultural masters prohibiting their queer Indigenous expression through gay beauty pageants and social media, they continue to negotiate and assert their right to represent their dual identities.

My findings also indicated that being and becoming queer Indigenous opens to a harsh reality that a safe space- where one can freely express themselves without prejudice is not guaranteed, and in part, I do concur. Their claimed identities are always at risk, which suggests that concentrating on creating and maintaining safe spaces is a dead end. The research then proposes that safe and brave spaces are interconnected, and therefore, the lived spaces of queer Indigenous Filipino's are spaces of representation, resistance, and ambivalence. This means their body/self-embodies a constant negotiation of violence – where they must be brave amidst discrimination and prejudice and safe where they find survival techniques to authentically express themselves. Disidentification in practice, from the perspective of creating and maintaining safe and brave spaces, is always an ambivalent negotiation. Queer Indigenous identities are more than just stories of resistance or assimilation; they are stories of adaptation, reformation, and reworking within the system that continuously marginalizes them. This led to the realization that my participants have never seen themselves as victims; rather, they see themselves as their own heroes.

To my participants, education plays a crucial role in combating discrimination and thus can lead to acceptance of their identities by their families and community spaces. Several important realizations appeared in our analysis of education and class intersecting with their queer indigenous identity. As my participants defy stereotypes, I have linked this practice to not only disidentification in practice but also an act of survivance. Their stories as working students are an example of a refusal to conform to the narrative that being Indigenous and queer, can never attain success in life– a baseless and prejudicial narrative. My participants are then actively rejecting homophobic and cis heteronormative narratives by attaining higher education while actively preserving and affirming their cultural identity.

An interesting phenomenon called conditional acceptance, as coined by Presto, was evident in this research. Understanding the intersection of class and education with their queer Indigenous identities can lead to acceptance of their identities. Therefore, investigating the concept of acceptance led us to conditional acceptance, where queer identities are "accepted" only when individuals can financially or otherwise support their families. In this context, acceptance is not rooted in an understanding that queer identities are "normal" or "legitimate" but because there is a form of financial exchange, illuminating that queer identities are merely tolerated, never fully accepted.

In this research, I argued that it is more than having a smooth interpersonal relationship or enacting the value of kapwa; rather, it is a form of strategic negotiation performance. I have respectfully argued that conditional acceptance and kapwa, as understood by previous research, do not completely encapsulate their stories. I viewed this act as a form of disidentification, survivance, and a reformed version of the kapwa. This realization has also taken inspiration from Anzaldúa (1990) Las mascaras. Their masks as financial contributors are not just for protecting their queer selves but also a form of negotiation for their visibility, acceptance, and safety. Their stories are rich in contexts on how helping their families, extended families, and even their communities change their perspectives towards their queer identities. Their masks are not only a form of disidentification in practice, but also a form of survivance. They are not passively enduring their experiences of violence; rather, they actively engage in changing their narratives while working within the system that marginalizes them. Understanding the concept of acceptance through my participants stories not only adds complexity to the concept but also reaffirms their agency and presence within their lived spaces.

The third question is: how is the value of kapwa being utilized in the creation and maintenance of safe and brave spaces? As the research concentrated on the external constraints that influence the creation and maintenance of their safe/brave spaces, I don't want to overlook the importance of looking into the body/self as it created a picture of how claiming their identities is and can be considered a safe and brave space. In explaining this, I have incorporated Ahmed and Soja's work on the relationality of bodies and spaces. Ahmed's body and space and Soja's third space are concepts that underscore spaces as lived and more than material settings. My findings suggest that my participants quiet acceptance, unbeknownst resistance, and resilience in claiming their identities can be and – indeed cultivated within themselves. Through my investigation of their coming-out stories, – they did

not believe in coming out externally. Therefore, "coming out" of queer Indigenous Filipinos in this research mirrors and extends Garcia (2000) explanation of gender performance, as their gender and sexuality performance of being and becoming bakla, tomboy, silahis, or trans have been internalized and rehearsed in their body/self in a continuous, repetitive manner. The internalization and rehearsal of their emic queer identities allowed us to first understand that the terms bakla, tomboy, silahis, and trans in a local indigenous context are more than a hybrid identity. Looking at queer Indigenous identities as mere hybrids or a mimic of the western conception of a gay identity overlooks their complexity.

The emic meaning of bakla, agen, tomboy, silahis, or trans, with the value of kapwa, extends its being homogenous, gendered and a collective sense of social conformity. Rather, representing a dynamic interplay between individuality and collective identity that is continuously negotiated and lived by my participants. Therefore, bakla, agen, boyos, tomboys, silahis, and trans localized identities are simply not just reformed versions of the "other," or a simple hybrid of Bhabha (2004). They are the revolutionized expression of the "other" - cultivated through a collective sense of self that is deeply embedded in the shared experiences and cultural bonds of their Indigenous community. Their queer indigenous bodies have the value of kapwa not merely at their core but actively moving in between and around their bodies and spaces, constitutively creating spaces within the self that are both safe and brave – where love of self and for others flourishes and lives.

The fourth question is: how have survival and resistance been manifested in their queer lived spaces? My participants stories of resistance and survival culminated in them becoming community development leaders, setting an example for other queer individuals in and outside their communities, and their dedication to creating physical spaces that are both safe and brave. They have used their education and experience as a springboard for their advocacies. Their being community development leaders, I argued, is another mask they wear. The mask is used for visibility, acceptance, and safety, not only for themselves but also for the advocacies they are promoting. As a result, the mask of community development leaders and volunteer workers is the practical application of disidentification and survivance. Through my participant experiences, I also argued that their community development efforts represent not only an outward extension of disidentification and survivance but also a tangible product of these processes that actively shape the society around them in creating and maintaining safe and brave spaces.

Therefore, survivance in this research emerges in the context of creating and maintaining safe and brave spaces, which involves a dynamic presence and redefinition of their narratives – of victimhood, misfortune, and subjugation. My participants active involvement in the betterment of their community represents a quite powerful form of reducing the power of homophobia and gender inequality. They navigate the systems that continuously marginalize them with a strategy that is neither fully assimilating nor opposing, but they navigate within and while challenging them.

The theories I have employed in explaining how safe and brave spaces are created and maintained relate to the intersectionality framework employed in this research. Intersectionality in this research is used as an analytical framework where it describes multiple, often obscured oppressions that reinforce damaging power relations and reminds us researchers to avoid placing experiences and situations, in this case, understanding spaces into binary contexts between safe and brave spaces, oppressed and oppressor. This is a simplistic and often reductive way of analyzing how diverse identity relationships work within our society. Therefore, intersectionality in this research embraces the "mess" queer of color critique intended for us to follow. As this research embraced queer color critique within theory, methodology and analysis, it not only reinforced the importance on understanding the nuances of identities and its intersection with other social formations but also revealing their chameleon skin and masks, where ambivalent and relational strategies are constructed and reconstructed their identities and the "spaces" they inhabit.

10 Future research

For my future research, I would like to follow the lives of my participants, especially the T'boli trans men. Amongst my participants they are the youngest and my curious mind want to know more about them. I would like to follow more specifically how they navigate romantic relationships determining how queer love is formed. The decision to do so was based on their elevated interest on the topic and the depth of interaction I had during our pakikipagkwentuhan. This research would extend the studies of trans men in the Philippines and further bridge the lacuna of Philippine queer and Indigenous studies.

11 References

Abinales, P. N., & Amoroso, D. J. (2017). *State and society in the Philippines*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Adjepong, A. (2019). Invading ethnography: A queer of color reflexive practice. *Ethnography*, *20*(1), 27-46. https://doi.org/**10.1177/1466138117741502**

Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer phenomenology: Orientations, objects, others*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822388074

Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a feminist life*. Duke University Press.

Alegre, B. R. (2022). From asog to bakla to transpinay:Weaving a complex history of transness and decolonizing the future. *Alon: Journal for Filipinx American and Diasporic Studies*, *2*(1), 51–64. https://doi.org/10.5070/LN42156404

Ali, D. (2017). Safe spaces and brave spaces. In *NASPA Research and Policy Institute* (Vol. 2, pp. 1-13). https://www.naspa.org/images/uploads/main/Policy_and_Practice_No_2_Safe_Brave_Spaces_DOWNLOAD.pdf

Allen, R. (1997). *What space makes of us: Thirdspace, identity politics, and multiculturalism*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED409409

Amoroto, B. (2016). Structural-systemic-cultural violence against LGBTQs in the Philippines. *Journal of Human Rights and Peace Studies*, *2*(1), 67–102. https://so03.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/HRPS/article/view/163851

Anderson, E. (2020, February 13). Feminist epistemology and philosophy of science. In *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/feminism-epistemology/

Anzaldúa, G. (1990). *Making face, making soul: Haciendo caras: Creative and critical perspectives by feminists of color*.

Arao, B., & Clemens, K. (2013). From safe spaces to brave spaces: A new way to frame dialogue around diversity and social justice. In L. M. Landreman (Ed.), *The art of effective facilitation: Reflections From Social Justice Educators* (pp. 135-150). Routledge. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003447580

Atkinson, R., & Flint, J. (2001). Accessing hidden and hard-to-reach populations: Snowball research strategies. *Social research update*, *33*(1), 1–4. https://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU33.html

Bahar, M. (2020). Islamic law review analysis on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT). *Endless: Journal of futures studies*, *3*(2), 139-151. https://scholar.uinib.ac.id/id/eprint/33/1/Islamic_Law_Review_Analysis_on_Lesbian,%20Gay,%20Bisexual,%20and.pdf

Baytan, R. (2008). Bading na bading: Evolving identities in Philippine cinema. In F. Martin, P. A. Jackson, M. McLelland & A. Yue (Eds.), *AsiaPacifiQueer: Rethinking genders and sexualities* (pp. 181-196).

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). Signs taken for wonders: Questions of ambivalence and authority under a tree outside Delhi, May 1817. In *The location of Culture* (pp. 145-165). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.1086/448325

Bhabha, H. K. (2004). *The location of culture* (2nd ed.). routledge. https://doi.org/**https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203820551**

Borch, C. (2002). Interview with Edward W. Soja: Thirdspace, postmetropolis, and social theory. *Distinktion: Scandinavian journal of social theory*, *3*(1), 113-120. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/1600910X.2002.9672816

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative research in psychology*, *18*(3), 328-352. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238

Brewer, C. (1999). Baylan, asog, transvestism, and sodomy: gender, sexuality, and the sacred in early colonial Philippines. *Intersections: Gender, history and culture in the Asian context*, *2*, 1–5. https://web.archive.org/web/20200212210957/http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue2/carolyn2.html

Brewer, C. (2001). *Holy confrontation: Religion, gender, and sexuality in the philippines, 1521-1685*. C. Brewer and the Institute of Women's Studies, St. Scholastica's College.

Brockenbrough, E. (2013). Introduction to the special issue: Queers of color and anti‐oppressive knowledge production. *43*(4), 426-440. https://doi.org/10.1111/curi.12023

Bureau, P. a. P. A. (2019). *Cong. Villanueva: discuss SOGIE but remember women's rights*. R. o. t. P. H. o. R. t. congress. Republic of the Philippiines House of Representatives 19th congress. https://congress.gov.ph/press/details.php?pressid=11697&key=sogie

Byrd, J. A. (2020). What's normative got to do with it? Toward indigenous queer relationality. *Social Text*, *38*(4), 105-123. https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-8680466

Calabias, J. K. C. B. (2022). Queer (ing) indigeneity and the Igorot lesbians of Hong Kong. In *Queer Southeast Asia* (pp. 117–137). Routledge.

Casinto, C. D. (2022). Looking From a Window: A Critical Analysis of the T'boli's Worldview Through their Oral Traditions. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, *4*(1), 282-303. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v4i1.842

Causey, A. (2017). *Drawn to see: Drawing as an ethnographic method*. University of Toronto Press.

Ceperiano, A. M., Santos Jr, E. C., Alonzo, D. C. P., & Ofreneo, M. A. P. (2016). Girl, bi, bakla, tomboy": The intersectionality of sexuality, gender, and class in urban poor contexts. *Philippine Journal of Psychology*, *49*(2), 5-34. https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:167216176

Chilisa, B. (2019). *Indigenous research methodologies*. Sage publications.

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2014). Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *12*(3), 297–298. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613

Collins, P. H. (1990). Black feminist thought in the matrix of domination. *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*, *138*(1990), 221-238.

Commission, T. I. G. a. L. H. R. (2014). *Violence: Through the lens of lesbians, bisexual women and trans people in asia* (Kwentong Bebot: Lived experiences of Lesbians, Bisexual and Transgender Women in the Philippines, Issue. T. I. G. a. L. H. R. Commission. https://www.svri.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2016-07-15/LBT_ForUpload0614.pdf

Cook-Sather, A. (2016). Creating brave spaces within and through student-faculty pedagogical partnerships. *Teaching and learning together in higher education*, *1*(18), 1. https://repository.brynmawr.edu/tlthe/vol1/iss18/1

Cornelio, J., & Dagle, R. (2022). Contesting unfreedom: To be queer and christian in the philippines. *The review of faith & international affairs*, *20*(2), 27–39. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2022.2065804

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics.

University of Chicago Legal Forum, 139 – 167.
https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/3007

Cudera, R., Razon, B., & Millondaga, K. J. (2020). Cultural and ecological significance of Odonata (Insecta) to the T'boli of Lake Sebu, Mindanao, Philippines. *Biodiversitas Journal of Biological diversity*, *21*(6). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.13057/biodiv/d210627

Desai, M. (2016). Critical" kapwa": Possibilities of collective healing from colonial trauma. In S. J. Twomey & L. Ward (Eds.), *Educational Perspectives* (Vol. 48, pp. 34-40).

Dreyer, Y. (2007). Hegemony and the internalisation of homophobia caused by heteronormativity. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, *63*(1), 1-18. https://doi.org/ http://hdl.handle.net/2263/2741

Driskill, Q.-L. (2011). *Queer Indigenous studies: Critical interventions in theory, politics, and literature*. University of Arizona Press.

Espiritu, E. J. P., Baay, E. P., Arevalo, D. M., Jimenez, C. C., Capuno, M. J., & Pusta, R. M. (2022). *Raise your flags: Exploring the coming out process of identified lgbtq in davao del norte, philippines*. 5th International congress

on empirical social sciences, economy, management and education researches,

Fajardo, K. B. (2008). Transportation: Translating Filipino and Filipino American tomboy masculinities through global migration and seafaring. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, *14*(2-3), 403-424. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2007-039

Ferguson, R. A. (2004). *Aberrations in black: Toward a queer of color critique*. University of Minnesota Press.

Fernandes, F. (2003). A response to Erica Burman. *European Journal of Psychotherapy & Counselling*, *6*(4), 309-316. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/1364253042000281351

Foley, D. (2003). Indigenous epistemology and Indigenous standpoint theory. *Social alternatives*, *22*(1), 44-52. https://doi.org/10.3316/ielapa.200305132

Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of peace research*, *6*(3), 167-191. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301

Galtung, J. (1990). Cultural violence. *Journal of peace research*, *27*(3), 291-305. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343390027003005

Garcia, A. S., & de Guzman, M. R. T. (2020). The meanings and ways of parental involvement among low-income Filipinos. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *53*, 343-354. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.05.013

Garcia, J. N. C. (2000). Performativity, the bakla and the orientalizing gaze. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, *1*(2), 265-281. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/14649370050141140

Garcia, J. N. C. (2008a). *Philippine gay culture: Binabae to bakla, silahis to MSM* (Vol. 1). UP Press.

Garcia, J. N. C. (2008b). Villa, Montano, Perez: Postcoloniality and gay liberation. In F. Martin, P. A. Jackson, M. McLelland & A. Yue (Eds.), *AsiaPacifiQueer: Rethinking genders and sexualities* (pp. 163-180). University of Illinois Press.

Gore, E. (2018). Reflexivity and queer embodiment: Some reflections on sexualities research in Ghana. *feminist review*, *120*(1), 101-119. https://doi.org/0.1057/s41305-018-0135-6

Green, J. (2007). Taking account of Aboriginal feminism. *Making space for Indigenous feminism*, 20–32.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In *Handbook of qualitative research* (Vol. 2, pp. 105).

Guillemin, M. (2004). Understanding illness: Using drawings as a research method. *Qualitative health research*, *14*(2), 272-289. https://doi.org/10.1177/10497323032604

Hall, K. Q. (2017). Queer epistemology and epistemic injustice. In *The Routledge handbook of epistemic injustice* (pp. 158-166). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315212043

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *The feminist standpoint theory reader: Intellectual and political controversies*, *1*. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066

Haraway, D. (2020). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. In *Feminist theory reader* (pp. 303–310). Routledge.

Harding, S. (2013). Rethinking standpoint epistemology: What is "strong objectivity"? In A. Cudd & R. Andreasen (Eds.), *Feminist theory: A philosophical anthology* (pp. 218-236). Blackwell Publishing.

Haritaworn, J. (2008). Shifting positionalities: Empirical reflections on a queer/trans of colour methodology. *Sociological research online*, *13*(1), 162-173. https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.1631

Hartsock, N. C. (1998). *The Feminist rtandpoint Revisited and other essays*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429310881

Heckert, J. (2016). Intimacy with strangers/intimacy with self: Queer experiences of social research 1. In *Queer methods and methodologies* (pp. 41-54). Routledge.

Hernani, E. V., Hernani, M. R. A., & Dulay, D. A. (2021). Dancing With the Dreamweavers: A Narrative Discourse of the T'bolis of the Southern Philippines. In R. Throne (Ed.), *Indigenous Research of Land, Self, and Spirit* (pp. 200-214). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-3729-9.ch013

Herrmann, J. (2017). Brave/r spaces vs. safe spaces for LGBTQ+ in the writing center: Theory and practice at the University of Kansas. *The Peer Review*, *1*(2), 1-16. https://thepeerreview-iwca.org/issues/braver-spaces/braver-spaces-vs-safe-spaces-for-lgbtq-in-the-writing-center-theory-and-practice-at-the-university-of-kansas/

Himmelmann, N. P. (2005). The Austronesian languages of Asia and Madagascar: typological characteristics. In N. P. Himmelmann & A. Adelaar (Eds.), *The Austronesian languages of Asia and Madagascar* (Vol. 110, pp. 110-181). Routledge.

Ildefonso, T. M. (2022). From Asog to Bakla: Genealogical Analysis of the Philippine History to Diagnose the Roots of Homophobia. *Humanities Bulletin*, *5*(2), 213-238. http://journals.lapub.co.uk/index.php/HB/article/view/2472

Jagger, G. (2008). *Judith Butler: Sexual politics, social change and the power of the performative*. Routledge.

Johnson, M. (1995). Transgender men and homosexuality in the Southern Philippines: Ethnicity, political violence and the protocols of engendered sexualities amongst the Muslim Tausug and Sama. *South East Asia Research*, *3*(1), 46-66. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23746898

Johnson, M. (1998). Global desirings and translocal loves: Transgendering and same‐sex sexualities in the southern philippines. *American ethnologist*, *25*(4), 695-711. https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1998.25.4.695

Johnson, M. (2005). Living like men, loving like women: Tomboi in the Southern Philippines. In A. Shaw & S. Ardener (Eds.), *Changing Sex and Bending Gender* (Vol. 1, pp. 85-102) (Berghahn Series). Berghahn Books.

Josef, J. (2020). Vernacular self-representation in Filipino gender identities: the Bontoc minamagkit. *South East Asia Research*, *28*(4), 445-464. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/0967828X.2020.1858150

Kovach, M. (2021). *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*. University of Toronto press.

Kwame, A. (2017). Reflexivity and the insider/outsider discourse in indigenous research: My personal experiences. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, *13*(4), 218-225. https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180117729851

Lakhani, S. (2020). Queer of color critique. *Lambda nordica*, *25*(1), 127-132. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.34041/ln.v25.625

Letherby, G. (2003). *Feminist research in theory and practice*. McGraw-Hill Education.

Löw, M. (2016). *The sociology of space: Materiality, social structures, and action*. Springer.

Lugones, M. (2010). Toward a decolonial feminism. In *Hypatia* (Vol. 25, pp. 742-759). https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2010.01137.x

Macalandong, R. M., Masangkay, Z. S., Consolacion, M. I., & Guthrie, G. M. (1978). Protection and pride in Maranao childhood. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, *105*(1), 85-97. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1978.9924094

Manalansan IV, M. F. (2003). *Global divas: Filipino gay men in the diaspora*. Duke University Press.

Manalansan IV, M. F. (2014). The "stuff" of archives: Mess, migration, and queer lives. *Radical History Review*, *2014*(120), 94-107. https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-2703742

Manalansan IV, M. F. (2018). Messing up sex: The promises and possibilities of queer of color critique. *Sexualities*, *21*(8), 1287-1290. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460718794646

Medina, J. (2003). Identity trouble: Disidentification and the problem of difference. *Philosophy & social criticism*, *29*(6), 655-680. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453703296002

Mendoza, S. L., & Perkinson, J. (2003). Filipino" kapwa" in global dialogue: A different politics of being-with the" other". *Intercultural Communication Studies*, *12*(4), 177-194. https://www-s3-live.kent.edu/s3fs-root/s3fs-public/file/10-S.-Lily-Mendoza-Jim-Perkinson.pdf

Milligan, J. A. (2020). Precolonial culture and education in the Southern Philippines. In *Islamic identity, postcoloniality, and educational policy: Schooling and ethno-religious conflict in the Southern Philippines* (pp. 23-54) (Islam in Southeast Asia). https://doi.org/ https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-1228-5_2

Mohanty, C. T. (2005). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Duke University press.

Moussawi, G., & Vidal‐Ortiz, S. (2020). A queer sociology: On power, race, and decentering whiteness. *Sociological Forum*, *35*(4), 1272-1289. https://doi.org/ https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12647

Muñoz, J. E. (1999). *Disidentifications: Queers of color and the performance of politics* (Vol. 2). University of Minnesota Press.

Muñoz, L. (2016). Brown, queer and gendered: Queering the latina/o 'street-scapes' in los angeles. In *Queer methods and methodologies* (pp. 55-68). Routledge.

Nash, C. (2020). Patriarchy. International encyclopedia of human geography, 10, 43-47. In A. Kobayashi (Ed.). Oliver Walter.

Nash, C. J. (2016). Queer conversations: Old-time lesbians, transmen and the politics of queer research. In *Queer Methods and Methodologies* (pp. 129-142). Routledge.

Negrillo, A. (2019). *Kumain na tayo! Exploring the role of food in communicating tradition and instilling familial values* [Southern Adventist University]. **https://knowledge.e.southern.edu/jour_studentresearch/1**

Neil, J. C., & Garcia, C. (2004). Male homosexuality in the Philippines: A short history. *IIAS newsletter*, pp. 13. https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:141119860

Nono, G. (2021). *Babaylan Sing Back: Philippine Shamans on Voice, Gender, and Transnationalism*. Cornell University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctv1gbrwww

OHCHR. (2012). *The status of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights in the philippines: Submission to the human rights council for universal periodic review 13th session*. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/session13/PH/JS1_UPR_PHL_S13_2012_JointSubmission1_E.pdf

OHCHR. (2017). *Universal periodic review joint submission of the civil society organisations (csos) on the situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (lgbtiq) persons in the philippines (3rd cycle, 2017)*. https://uprdoc.ohchr.org/uprweb/downloadfile.aspx?filename=3617&file=EnglishTranslation

Olsen, T. A. (2018). Privilege, decentring and the challenge of being (non-) Indigenous in the study of Indigenous issues. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, *47*(2), 206-215. https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2017.16

Orteza, G. O. (1997). Pakikipagkwentuhan: Isang Pamamaraan Sa Sama-samang Pananaliksik, Pagpapatotoo, at Pagtulong Sa Sikolohiyang Pilipino. In. Philippine Psychology Research and Training House.

Pe-Pua, R. (2006). From decolonizing psychology to the development of a cross-indigenous perspective in methodology: The Philippine experience. In *Indigenous and cultural psychology: Understanding people in context* (pp. 109-137). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-28662-4_5

Pe‐Pua, R., & Protacio‐Marcelino, E. A. (2000). Sikolohiyang pilipino (Filipino psychology): A legacy of Virgilio G. Enriquez. *Asian journal of social psychology*, *3*(1), 49-71. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-839X.00054

Philippines, U. N. D. P. C. o. H. R. o. t. (2018). *Legal gender recognition in the philippines: A legal and policy review*. UNDP. https://www.undp.org/philippines/publications/legal-gender-recognition-philippines-legal-and-policy-review

Presto, A. C. R. (2020). Revisiting intersectional identities: Voices of poor bakla youth in rural Philippines. *Review of Women's Studies*, *29*(2), 113-146. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343944505_Revisiting_Intersectional_Identities_Voices_of_Poor_Bakla_Youth_in_Rural_Philippines

PSA. (2023). *Poverty Statistics: Preliminary 2023 First Semester Official Poverty Statistics*. https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/poverty

Quintos, J. J. (2012). A glimpse into the Asog experience: A historical study on the homosexual experience in the Philippines. *Trans. Philip Y. Kimpo, Jr. Plaridel*, *9*, 155-169. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.52518/2013.9.2-09qntskmp

Ramirez, J., & Munar, A. M. (2022). Hybrid gender colonization: The case of muxes. *Gender, Work & Organization*, *29*(6), 1868-1889. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12884

Remoquillo, A. T. (2023). The problem with kapwa: Challenging assumptions of community, sameness, and unity in filipina american feminist fieldwork. *Alon: Journal for Filipinx American and Diasporic Studies*, *3*(1). https://doi.org/10.5070/LN43161818

Reyes, M. E. S., Ballesteros, K. C. A., Bandol, P. A. A., Jimenez, K. A. H., & Malangen, S. D. R. (2019). Religiosity, gender role beliefs, and attitudes toward lesbians and gays in the philippines. *North American Journal of Psychology*, *21*(3).

https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A603152531/HRCA?u=anon~7e5a4ce6&sid=googleScholar&xid=e5d11b99

Reyes, M. E. S., Cabanilla, V. F. C., Gavino, A. J. S., Gonzaga, R. I. S., Hojilla, M. L. H., Isidro, M. K. R., Mesina, D. M. C., Tan, A. C. C., & Konopka, K. (2023). Trans Visibility: A Look into Filipinos' Attitudes Toward Transgender Individuals. *Sexuality & Culture*, 1-25. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-023-10130-x

Reyes, M. E. S., Davis, R. D., Salonga, B. M., Cheng, H. A. T., Vasquez, A. N. V., Cruz, G. J. S., Muslim, N. M., Medriano, K. K. S., & McCutcheon, L. E. (2021). Sexual prejudice: Filipinos' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. *North American Journal of Psychology*, *23*(4), 617-617. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A688214324/AONE?u=anon~f46cf229&sid=googleScholar&xid=d934c252

Rigney, L.-I. (1999). Internationalization of an indigenous anticolonial cultural critique of research methodologies: A guide to indigenist research methodology and its principles. *Wicazo sa review*, *14*(2), 109-121. https://doi.org/10.2307/1409555

Rine, A. (2010). Phallus/Phallocentrism. In. https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/eng_fac/76

Robinson, B. A. (2016). Heteronormativity and homonormativity. *The Wiley Blackwell encyclopedia of gender and sexuality studies*, 1-3. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118663219.wbegss013

Shelton, J., Kroehle, K., & Andia, M. M. (2019). The trans person is not the problem: Brave spaces and structural competence as educative tools for trans justice in social work. *Journal of Socilogy & Social Welfare*, *46*, 97. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15453/0191-5096.4351

SIKT. (2024). *Legal bases for personal data processing in research*. https://sikt.no/en/tjenester/personverntjenester-forskning/personvernhandbok-forskning/legal-bases-personal-data-processing-research

Simpson, A. (2016). The state is a man: Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders and the gender of settler sovereignty. *Theory & Event*, *19*(4). ttps://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/633280.

Smith, A. (2006). Indigenous feminism without apology. In *Unsettling Ourselves: Reflections and Resources for Deconstructing Colonial Mentality* (Vol. 58, pp. 16-17). University of Minnesota. https://unsettlingminnesota.wordpress.com/

Smith, A. (2011). Queer theory and native studies: The heteronormativity of settler colonialism. In Q.-L. Driskill, C. Finley, B. J. Gilley & S. L. Morgensen (Eds.), *Queer Indigenous studies: Critical Interventions in Theoru, Politics and Literature* (Vol. 16, pp. 41-68).

Smith, L. T. (2021). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Sullivan, N. (2003). *A critical introduction to queer theory*. NYU Press.

Tan, M. L. (2008). Survival through pluralism: Emerging gay communities in the Philippines. *Gay and Lesbian Asia*, 117-142. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v40n03_07

Tan, M. L. (2020). Silahis: Looking for the missing Filipino bisexual male. In P. Aggleton (Ed.), *Bisexualities and AIDS* (pp. 207-225). Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003071235

Taqueban, E. (2018). *Lipstick tales: Beauty and precarity in a southern Philippine boomtown* [PhD, Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research]. https://hdl.handle.net/11245.1/d21c374b-f1f5-459d-a883-5c3e62330a99

Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. In C. Willig & W. S. Rogers (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 17-37). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5251-4_103

Thoreson, R. (2011). Capably queer: Exploring the intersections of queerness and poverty in the urban Philippines. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, *12*(4), 493-510. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2011.610783

Tietjen, R. R. (2020). The emotion of self-reflexive anxiety. *Journal of the American philosophical association*, *6*(3), 297-315. https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2020.10

Torres, F. L. M. (2022). Locating the asog: A historical account of philippine gay identity in the spanish colonial period. *Humanities Diliman*, *19*(1). https://universitycollections.upd.edu.ph.

Torres, R. A., & Nyaga, D. (2021). Using critical research methodologies: The significance of reflexivity, resistance and response. In R. A. Torres & D. Nyaga (Eds.), *Critical Research Methodologies* (Vol. 181). Brill.

Umbac, A. S. (2005). *Putting You in Your Place: Culture and the Filipino Lesbian*. Isis International. https://feministarchives.isiswomen.org/categories/39-women-in-action/women-in-action-2005-3/598-putting-you-in-your-place-culture-and-the-filipino-lesbian

USAID. (2014). *Being LGBT in Asia: the Philippines country report*. UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre Bangkok. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PBAAA888.pdf

Valentine, G. (2007). Theorizing and researching intersectionality: A challenge for feminist geography. *The professional geographer*, *59*(1), 10–21. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9272.2007.00587.x

Velasco, E. A. (2017, September 21-22). Maranao folksongs: Their dominant themes and implications to Maranao culture and identity. International Conference on Arts, Literature, Humanities and Social Sciences, Cebu, Philippines.

Vivienne, S. (2023). *Queering Safe Spaces: Being Brave Beyond Binaries*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Vizenor, G. (2008). *Survivance: Narratives of native presence*. University of Nebraska Press.

Watney, S. (1994). Queer epistemology: Activism,'outing', and the politics of sexual identities. *Critical Quarterly*, *36*(1), 13-27. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8705.1994.tb01006.x

Weedon, C. (1997). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*.

Westerman, A. (2023). In the Philippines, a survey shows growing support for gays and lesbians. *NPR* https://www.npr.org/2023/06/28/1184968364/in-the-philippines-a-survey-shows-growing-support-for-gays-and-lesbians

Woodley, X. M., & Lockard, M. (2016). Womanism and snowball sampling: Engaging marginalized populations in holistic research. *The Qualitative Report*, *21*(2), 321-329. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2016.2198

Worthen, M. G. (2016). Hetero-cis–normativity and the gendering of transphobia. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, *17*(1), 31-57. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2016.1149538

Worthen, M. G. (2023). Queer identities in the 21st century: Reclamation and stigma. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *49*, 101512. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2022.101512

Yarcia, L., de Vela, T., & Tan, M. (2019). Queer identity and gender-related rights in post-colonial Philippines. *Australian Journal of Asian Law*, *20*, 265 -275. https://doi.org/10.3316/informit.20211005054468

Appendix

Appendix A: SIKT Information letter and Consent form

Consent form

Are you interested in taking part in the research project?
"Babaylan/decolonization of Sexuality"

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to know the experiences of constraints, risks, and empowerment of gender/sexuality diverse Indigenous peoples in the Philippines. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

To explore the experiences of indigenous LGBTQ2+ individuals within contemporary Filipino society and illuminate how they understand and express their identities as gender/sexually diverse. The study aims to shed light on the challenges and risks faced by this marginalized community, as well as their journey of self-discovery and acceptance.

Objectives:
1. To explore gender/sexually diverse Indigenous peoples lived experiences.
2. To critically examine Feminist and queer theory through the lens of Babaylan research
3. To explore and understand Indigenous identity development within contemporary Philippine society.

Who is responsible for the research project?
UiT The Arctic University of Norway is the institution responsible for the subject.

Why are you being asked to participate?
Informant is selected through selection criteria. Through this process, individuals who will participate can provide information necessary in addressing the research question.
What does participation involve for you?

- If you chose to take part in the project, this will involve that you will take part on a semi-structured interview. It will take approx. 45 minutes. The interview which includes questions about constraints, risks, and empowerment of Indigenous LGBTQ2+ individuals. The interview session will be held in the Philippines and the researcher will send a secure MS teams link. Your answers will be recorded electronically and will be stored in a secured university data space.

Participation is voluntary
Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data
We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- I will replace your name and contact details with a code. The list of names, contact details and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data, I will store the data on a research server, locked away/encrypted, etc.

The participants will be anonymous in the publications (name and age, for the occupation a generic position name will be used however, the company name will be anonymous)

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?
The project is scheduled to end 30th of June 2024. The personal data will be removed including the digital recordings at the end of the project.

Your rights
So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:
- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified

- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with *UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Patricia Aida Linao*, SIKT – The Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- *UiT The Arctic University of Norway* via *Patricia Aida Linao;* Pli019@uit.no Supervisor: Kjersti Fjørtoft; kjersti.fjortoft@uit.no
- Our Data Protection Officer: Joachim Bakkevold (personvernombud@uit.no)
- SIKT – Personverntjenester by email (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 73 98 40 40.

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader	Student
Kjersti Fjørtoft	Patricia Aida Linao

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project *Babaylan Decolonization of Sexuality* and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

☐ to participate in *online* interview
☐ *for information about me/myself to be published in a way that I cannot be recognised*

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. *30ᵗʰ of June 2024*

(Signed by participant, date)

Appendix B: Pre-Interview information

Pre- Interview information

Name	
Age	
Profession / Employment status	
Indigenous group/Ethnicity	
Educational level and degree	
Gender	☐ Transgender (male > female) ☐ Transgender (female > male) ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Nonbinary ☐ Gender fluid ☐ Additional gender category/ Identity not listed _____
Sexual orientation	☐ Bisexual ☐ Gay ☐ Lesbian ☐ Pansexual ☐ Questioning ☐ Intersex ☐ Asexual ☐ Straight ☐ Fluid ☐ Additional category/ Identity not listed _____
Partner status	☐ Single ☐ Dating ☐ Domestic/life partner

Appendix C: Certificate of Validation

Republic of the Philippines
Province of South Cotabato
Municipality of Lake Sebu

OFFICE OF THE INDIGENOUS POLITICAL STRUCTURE
Ground floor, Rm. 1, Tribal Mediation Center/Bldg., Poblacion, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato

CERTIFICATE OF VALIDATION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY OF PATRICIA AIDA LINAO ENTITLED "BABAYLAN: DECOLONIZATION OF SEXUALITY"
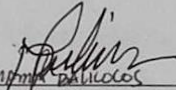
THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:

A. The research study of Ms. Patricia Aida Linao with the principal address at Kautokeienoveien 66, 9518, Alta Norge, Norway has obtained our consent of the Tboli and Ubo Indigenous Cultural Communities of Lake Sebu, South Cotabato to conduct a study entitled "Babaylan: Decolonization of Sexuality" in accordance to Administrative Order No. 1 Series of 2012.
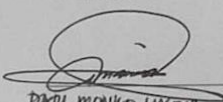
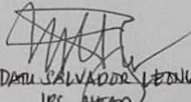B. That after the validation of the research study of Ms. Patricia Aida Linao, she committed to the following;

1. Respected the rights of the Tboli and Ubo ICCs in preserving and developing the culture and tradition.
2. Adhered to the policy and respected the culture, tradition and institutions and does not tolerate or permit anything that will offend or insult the identity of her respondent, the identity, customary laws, traditions and practices of the Tboli and Ubo ICCs/IPs.
3. The Tboli and Ubo ICCs/IPs and the resources of her research study was given due recognition on all materials to be published.
4. Guaranteed that the Tboli and Ubo ICC shall have the sole and exclusive right to determine the extent, content or manner of presentation of the information or knowledge that may be published or communicated.
5. The Indigenous Political structure of Lake Sebu, reviewed and evaluated the content and corrected any factual data related to tour traditional knowledge.
6. Created MOA Monitoring Team (MMT) of NCIP, IPS and the proponent that will help to monitor that she will comply faithfully with the provision of MOA.
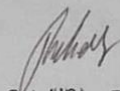
Given this 6th day of March 2024, at IPS Tribal House, Barangay Poblacion, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato.

DATU mamma palilolos
Municipal IPS of Lake Sebu

Witnesses:

DATU MONICO LUKOMI
IRS HEAD

DATU SALVADOR LEONG
IRS HEAD

BOI NIDA BACALING
IRS HEAD