Ako (I)-Ikaw (You) Voices as Counternarrative Structure in Negrense Queer Panalaysayon

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Abstract

This paper explores panalaysayon—a Hiligaynon word meaning "account" or "narrative"—as an evolving oral form that attempts to queerize panaysayon, the more established term for storytelling in the Western Visayas Region of the Philippines. In this study, panalaysayon specifically refers to the oral autobiographical narratives of five self-identified queer individuals from the province of Negros Occidental (formerly part of Western Visayas and now under the newly established Negros Island Region). These stories were collected using the life story approach and analyzed through the lens of queer formalism. As a potential literary text, the Negrense queer panalaysayon centers the narrator's voice and the way their stories are told. A defining feature is the alternating use of ako (I) and ikaw (you) voices, allowing storytellers to express both their internal reflections and how others perceive them. This structure enables them to reclaim agency within narratives where they are often rendered passive or backgrounded. Instead of following conventional narrative arcs with fixed beginning, middle, and end, the panalaysayon reflects an emergent structure. It aligns with the Self-Narrative Model, where narrators select life events and frame them in ways that capture both personal affirmation and struggle. What emerges is a hybrid form—oral, autobiographical, and potentially counternarrative—that demonstrates how queer stories can be told outside dominant, mainstream frameworks. This study does not oppose conventional narrative models but offers panalaysayon as an alternative path within queer storytelling.

Keywords: life story approach, panalaysayon, queer formalism, narrative voice, Negros Occidental, Hiligaynon

Introduction

The power of the oral narrative lies in the storyteller's ability to verbalize the past experiences that comprise their own story vividly. Personal narrative, a commonly used mode in oral storytelling, positions the "self" as

both narrator and subject in the articulation of lived experience. This suggests that the self as narrator is part of the "overarching themes that an individual uses to make sense of [their] experiences" (Hawkins & Saleem, 2012, p. 9). Since the "emergence of life stories" is tied to the "construction of notions of selfhood," the stories of our life are therefore "intimately connected to cultural locations, to social position and even social privilege as well as to historical periods, which provide different opportunities for the construction and expression of selfhood" (Goodson, 2012, p. 25). The idea of the construction of selfhood in oral personal narratives, therefore, may be juxtaposed to how Yudice views a narrator as a witness who represents their personal experience as part of "collective memory and identity" (cited in Walker, 2011). For example, in testimonial literature, the narrators as witness recounts the plot and characters of their own story, and in bearing witness to their life, the narrator's voice becomes central because, as Torchin suggests, testimony through this voice can spark collective "witnessing,' which emerges from personal testimonies of social struggle and may become a revolutionary collective that can bring about change in the face of social adversities (cited in Whitlock, 2015, p. 8). This resonates with Labov's view that narrative arises when a person is "impelled to tell" their story, often by internal or external stimuli, thereby grounding the narrative in lived, reportable experience. According to Labov, effective storytelling requires not only the tellability of events but also the narrator's ability to recursively structure these events based on access to biographical memory (1-13). In this way, personal narratives—as with other forms of self-narration—emerge from the convergence of urgency, memory, and voice. As Menary (2008) explains, "we become fully fledged narrative selves" because of the narrative point of view that we employ in telling our "embodied experiences" (p. 63).

In this paper, I situate oral personal narratives within the context of panalaysayon, a term in Hiligaynon—a language spoken primarily in the Western Visayas Region of the Philippines, including Capiz, Iloilo, and Guimaras, as well as Negros Occidental (formerly part of Western Visayas but now under the newly established Negros Island Region), and certain areas in Mindanao—which means narrative or story. While some may argue that the more familiar term "panaysayon" is more appropriate, the term "panalaysayon" has evolved over the years in the context of popular culture. Thus, the use of the term panalaysayon in this paper does not mean to question its significant place in the regional literary tradition, but rather to allow new perspectives on panalaysayon as a nuanced term (and as a queerized term, which I will discuss further in the next section). The

rootedness of panalaysayon is integral to the Hiligaynon oral tradition of self-witnessing, capturing events from an individual's life, the lives of others, or the experiences of a community. These narratives contribute to shaping both personal stories and the collective narrative of the nation. Specifically, I examine panalaysayon as an oral autobiographical form or life story that presents the experiences of Negrense LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) individuals (henceforth referred to as queer individuals) as acts of self-witnessing within their community and the broader world. As such, panalaysayon functions as a means of witnessing the self (or oral autobiographical narrative). To shed light on how queer storytelling unfolds in these panalaysayon, this study addresses two questions: (1) What is the emergent narrative voice in the collected panalaysayon? Moreover, (2) How does this narrative voice contribute to the storytelling form of the panalaysayon?

To contextualize the worldview of life-story-as-text among the Negrense queer community stems from two salient reasons. First, while queer narratives have gained visibility in national literary publications, their representation remains limited in the provincial context, especially in Negros Occidental. Though there are local efforts—such as independent literary journals and community initiatives—these remain few and unsustained, prompting the need for mainstream platforms dedicated to queer storytelling. Second, the collection of panalaysayon, which encompasses the oral autobiographical narrative of queer individuals, provides a more inclusive approach to producing provincial queer texts. As a marginalized group, queer individuals carry vibrant life experiences and rich narratives that extend beyond themes of coming-out and hardship, encompassing resilience, triumph, and authenticity (Watson & Johnson, 2013). However, without sustainable avenues for sharing queer experiences, these stories risk being overlooked.

It is in this context that the study seeks to contribute to the appreciation and understanding of provincial queer texts by collecting and analyzing the panalaysayon of the queer individuals in Negros Occidental, as these narratives embody their lived experiences. Specifically, the collection and analysis of the panalaysayon of Negrense queer individuals through the lens of queer formalism and the life story approach as the methodological framework seeks to examine how these oral autobiographical narratives (also referred to here as autobionarratives) are structured through the voices of narrators who have directly experienced the socio-cultural and religio-political conditions of their time. In turn, it examines how these oral autobionarratives contribute to shaping the Negrense queer self, both as

individuals and as members of a broader Negrense queer community.

This position draws from the observation that narratives not only "bring order and meaning" to life, but also help us establish a "sense of selfhood" as manifested in the life stories that we narrate to "ourselves and to others" (Murray, 2003). In other words, narratives and stories are personal, social, and cultural experiences that contribute to the formation of identity. Bearing witness to our own individual life experience through oral narratives, it is important to examine how the "emergence of life stories" is tied to the "construction of notions of selfhood" or how our life stories are "intimately connected" to the larger social historical, and cultural narratives that shape the "construction and expression of selfhood" (Goodsoon, 2012, p. 25). This connection between individual life stories and larger narrative can be extended into the discussion on the question of belonging and ownership in our own stories. Robyn Fivush explains that "we are the stories we tell ourselves [and as] we narrate experienced events to ourselves, we simultaneously create structure and meaning in our lives" (cited in Shuman, 2015, p. 49). This means that our identities are shaped by narratives that emerge from our experiences. By sharing our stories, we become our own stories, creating meaning and a sense of belonging. Our personal stories and our sense of self are closely connected because our narratives come from our experiences and help us understand them (Ochs & Capps, 1996). Telling our stories is a way to find order and meaning in life, creating a sense of who we are as we share these stories with ourselves and others (Murray, 2003). Oral narratives, therefore, function as a medium through which we gain a better understanding of our lives. They allow us (the storyteller/narrator) to construct our sense of 'self,' making narratives or stories a potential space where our identities can be shaped and formed. This is so because "our experiences belong to us [and] storytelling can be a tool to articulate this belonging" (Shuman, 2015, p. 49).

Specifically, this paper attempts to view the Negrense queer individuals' panalaysayon as a potential literary text, as well as to explore the emergent structure of such panalaysayon as shaped through the narrator's voice. The study participants were five Negrense who self-identified as being part of the LGBTQ+ spectrum and were willing to share their panalaysayon with me, a queer insider-researcher. Their narratives were collected through Orteza's pakikipagkuwentuhan, a researcher-participant interview/ conversation method. Given the limited number of participants, the study does not aim to generalize findings to the entire LGBTQ+ community of Negros Occidental or beyond. As a delimitation, it does not seek to define a collective Negrense LGBTQ+ identity. Instead, it focuses on the emergent narrative voice within

panalaysayon and examines how this voice shapes queer storytelling through the lens of queer formalism.

Queer Formalism, Life Story Approach, and Negrense Queer Panalaysayon

Queer formalism is deployed to underpin this study's queries on how the narrative voice of the narrator/s could shape the narrative structure (form) of the panalaysayon as a potential oral literary text. As the focus of formalist approaches, form in its aesthetic sense is defined by Pettersson as "those non-presentational properties of a text's sign sequence and of its communicative content which are significant from a literary point of view." Meanwhile, form as structure can be dissected based on the distinction made by Pettersson between "communicative content and sign sequence: (1) 'form(s) of content' includes 'characters, locations and themes or ideas,' and (2) 'form(s) of expression or of language,' which is present in the styles and utterances occurring in a work and in their interrelations" (cited in Herman et al., 2010, p. 181).

However, this strict formalist approach of studying form has been challenged by queer formalism. In the article entitled Queer Formalism: Jennifer Doyle and David Getsy in Conversation, Doyle and Getsy (2023) talk about their interest in the "valence of sexuality in artworks and performance," specifically "how desire, the sexual, and the gendered operate beyond their straightforward depictions." This means that artistic forms are not intrinsically queer. However, there is a possibility of queerizing formalism by "reading into" or "activating the relationships between and among forms, which potentially activate 'queer capacities'" (p. 59).

In other words, form can be an immediate site where unconventional and unnatural "forms of living as queer […] take relationality as the matrix in which difference and defiance become manifest." He calls this as the "intercourse of forms" (Getsy, 2017, p. 254), an engendering of queer formalism, which aims "not to abjure or ignore ostensible 'content' [but] allows us to investigate how form can be mobilized in relation to content as a way of fostering such queer tactics as subversion, infiltration, refusal, or the declaration of unethical allegiance" (Getsy, 2017, p. 255). When queer formalism is applied to the analysis of literary texts, it offers an alternative lens for engaging with form—not only as an aesthetic element but also as a site where experiences, perspectives, and social dynamics can unfold subtly. This way, Getsy (2017) asserts that formalism does not depart from "content and context" but becomes co-present with queer materiality. Therefore,

queer formalism "attends to how insubordinate relations can be proposed through form's dynamics, and it strives to identify those configurations from which queer defiance can be cultivated" (p. 257). A similar impulse can be seen in Cruz's (2022) "Lesbian-Essaying through Textual In(ter)ventions in Memoir," where she explores how her use of textual strategies, or "textual in(ter)ventions," in memoir writing surfaces and asserts her lesbian identity (p. 27). Cruz (2022) demonstrates how formal experimentation becomes a tool for narrating queer subjectivity, further reinforcing how form can operate as both an expressive and resistive strategy within queer life writing.

To support the queer formalist reading of the panalaysayon, the life story approach is employed to collect oral autobionarratives and to foreground the lived experiences that inform their narrative voice and form. Atkinson (2007) explains that by listening to human life stories, we are also stepping into the core of the "personal world of the storyteller and discover larger worlds" (p. 224). Here, the panalaysayon is viewed as both personal to the individual narrator and as a collective or social experience that binds the storytellers of the panalaysayon. The "inquiry in the life story approach," then, as Atkinson (2022) explains, allows the researcher to read into the meanings expressed in the narrated story of the narrators through a potential theoretical lens as deemed by the researcher. This means that the life story approach brings out the subjective meaning of the story and identifies themes, issues, or connections within it objectively. Moreover, the "inquiry in the life story approach" does two salient things: helps the storyteller to construct the subjective meaning of their own story through open-ended or reflective questions, and guide the researcher to identify objectively the "themes, issues, or connections across the story that may be inherent to the lived experiences of the story itself or based on an existing or preferred theory of inquiry, interpretation, or analysis that may also be based on the research questions used, if any" (Atkinson, 2022, pp. 234-235).

The theoretical and methodological lenses discussed above underpin this study on the Negrense queer panalaysayon, which is approached as "text" and analyzed for its literary qualities, particularly its narrative structure. To clarify the central concept of this study, it is important to define panalaysayon. The term is derived from panaysayon, meaning "narrative" or, more specifically, "oral narrative." Related Hiligaynon terms include isaysay (to narrate), pagsaysay (narration), and igasaysay (to be narrated). The use of panalaysayon instead of panaysayon in this paper—the latter already established in the literary oral tradition of the Hiligaynon region—is an attempt to queerize this tradition by contextualizing it within contemporary

queer oral storytelling. In Acevedo's (2019) Panaysayon: Tales from Panay Island, the term refers to the folk narratives and oral storytelling traditions indigenous to Panay Island (Western Visayas Region)—comprising the provinces of Aklan, Capiz, and Iloilo. As Acevedo notes, these narratives, often passed down orally across generations, are not fixed but are "recreated with each telling," shaped by the individual storyteller and negotiated with the community (Acevedo, Introduction). Rooted in both communal memory and personal voice, panaysayon encompasses a range of prose forms—myths, legends, folktales—that reflect cultural values, historical consciousness, and contemporary concerns.

In this study, panalaysayon is used as a conceptual extension that evolves from the rich oral tradition of panaysayon, expanding its scope to refer to the oral autobionarratives of queer individuals in Negros Occidental. As a local oral storytelling practice, it retains its roots in everyday recollection and community-based witnessing. This is evident, for example, in local news reporting—where panalaysayon (a becoming commonly used term) appears in phrases such as "Suno sa panalaysayon sang biktima" [according to the victim's account] or "Suno sa panalaysayon sang nakakita" [according to the witness's account]. These expressions illustrate how panalaysayon serves as a culturally recognized way of recounting lived experience within the community.

When situated in the life stories of Negrense LGBTQ+ individuals, panalaysayon functions as an act of self-witnessing—giving voice to both significant and everyday events in their queer lives. Thus, it is used here both as a mode of oral autobiographical storytelling and as a form of testimonial narrative. To place the term more precisely within the framework of this study, panalaysayon becomes a localized expression of "oral autobionarratives" rooted in queer lived experience. In the succeeding sections, the terms life story, life narrative, life history, oral autobionarrative, and queer narrative are also used interchangeably with panalaysayon, depending on context.
Another important term used in this study that needs clarification is Negrense. Sa-onoy (2003), a local historian of Negros Occidental, notes that the people of Negros Island were originally called Negrosanon, especially in relation to the province's strong sense of place and historical identity. Over time, however, the term "Negrense" has become increasingly commonplace in popular culture and media, reflecting its widespread use in both everyday discourse and local reporting. Pacete (2020) further argues that whether one uses Negrosanon, taga-Negros (literally, from Negros), or Negrense depends on personal perception and choice. He emphasizes that these labels are all culturally valid and continue to evolve in tandem with shifting social

consciousness. While the use of the term Negrense may have initially gained traction among the elite in the 1980s, Pacete explains that it has since been gradually embraced by a broader segment of the population, including both popular culture and the general public.

While Negrosanon remains interwoven into the island's historical and cultural fabric, Negrense signals an emergent cultural subjectivity shaped by the influence of popular culture and changing modes of identification. This study adopts Negrense as a deliberate move to reinterpret the term through a queer lens—creating space for queer texts and alternative expressions within provincial discourse. In this study, Negrense queers specifically refers to LGBTQ+ individuals from Negros Occidental, where Hiligaynon is predominantly spoken (though some areas speak Cebuano) and where the tradition of panalaysayon is culturally embedded. This linguistic and cultural context is shaped by the province's historical inclusion in the Western Visayas Region (though it is now part of the newly established Negros Island Region).

Lastly, the term LGBTQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. According to the definitions provided by the Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE), a lesbian is a woman attracted to women, while a gay man is attracted to men. A bisexual person is someone who is attracted to both their own gender and other genders. The term transgender, or trans, is an umbrella term used to refer to individuals who challenge traditional notions of gender, including those who identify as such. Queer is also an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of sexual preferences, gender expressions, and identities that do not conform to the heterosexual, heteronormative, or gender-binary majority. In this context, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer refer to sexual orientations, while transgender and/or trans relate to gender identity and expression.

Panalaysayon through Life Story Approach: Method, Analysis, and Discussion

The oral autobionarratives of the participants (hereafter referred to as narrators or storytellers) were collected through participant interviews or Orteza's concept of pakikipagkuwentuhan, which is a spontaneous conversational act where both the researcher and the participants engage in storytelling about life (cited in Evangelista et al., 2016), using open-ended questions as prompts. The duration of each participant interview ranged from one to two hours, including pre-interview and post-interview conversations, as I followed Giorgi's suggestion that "interviews can take

one to two hours with each participant" (cited in Englander, 2012, p. 19). In conducting a life story approach interview, I adapted the following recommendations from Creswell: conduct non-structured, open-ended interviews; take detailed notes; record the interview on audiotape; and transcribe the interview. Throughout the process of recording and handling the data, Creswell's (2019) suggestion on using a protocol or a predesigned form to record information gathered during the interview was helpful. I also recorded my interviews using an audio recorder, with the participants' consent, to capture the entire observation and interview process. I made field notes and journal entries to record my initial impressions and reflections on each individual interview. The collected data were kept with utmost confidentiality and anonymity.

Textual analysis through thematization was employed to analyze the transcribed oral autobionarratives of the participants and to answer the research question on the typical narrative structure of the panalaysayon as revealed through the narrator's voice. Helpful in the coding process were the assignment of names to the meaningful motifs deduced from the data and the combination of these codes/names into broader motifs using a matrix to display and facilitate comparisons with the data (Creswell, 2019).

Choosing not to establish thematic reliability and validity through a second reader or inter-rater intervention is a delimitation of this study, given that it is not a necessary process in a literary-humanistic study. Although this study appears interdisciplinary because it partly explores the politics of queers, as well as their relation to and position in society, it, however, remains loyal to the typical literary-humanistic methodologies in its approach to the narrative as a subject of interpretation. In other words, the analyzed and interpreted narratives were no longer attached to the corporeality of their narrators but instead treated as literary texts. By orientation, the humanistic approach to literary studies "establishes the' validity of its claims in ways quite different from those of a scientific approach" (Jackson, 2003, p. 191). However, scientific validity is not necessarily antithetical to literary studies. This study, therefore, employs the literary-humanistic approach to interpreting text (particularly textual analysis based on literary elements of voice) wherein validity resides in the written interpretation, which "must be the strongest realization of literary meaningfulness" (Jackson, 2003, p. 200). In this case, my interpretation of the panalaysayon's emergent structure is not meant "to carry the kind of truth value that a scientific explanation expects" (Jackson, 2003, p. 201); instead, it is plainly suggestive based on the panalaysayon's own temporality and subjectivity as a potential literary text.

Negrense Queer Panalaysayon's Ako - Ikaw Narrative Voices

The interspersing of two or more narrative voices in a single text is not a rare occurrence in literature, whether in fiction, nonfiction, or poetry. In fact, the deployment of multiple pronouns signifying the narrative voice(s) has evolved as a radical storytelling technique among some writers, challenging the notions and conventions of traditional forms. For example, Koss (2009) examined a corpus of contemporary Young Adult (YA) novels and found that most of them are told through multiple narrative voices that "often present information from a variety of narrators and perspectives" (p. 79).

The presence of the "we" voice as a 'collective narrator' along with other pronouns has also been evident in fiction. Maxey (2015) reflects on the power of the first-person plural "we" as a collective narrator, a radical literary technique considered by some critics to be a significant literary device. Maxey (2015) suggests that the "rise of the we voice" could be the result of writers' experimentation, reinvention, and reimagination of forms, and their continued search for "fresh voice." Thus, in a fast-changing era where "moral questions are raised by both individualism and public memory," writing in the collective voice has become a tool for some American novelists to "communicate hidden and forgotten histories."

The use of multiple narrative voices may likewise signify a 'hybrid style.' In a close stylistic analysis of the narrative voice in Burgundian Chivalric Biography known as Livre des faits de messire Jacques de Lalaing, Brown-Grant (2011) discussed the function of the "relative frequencies of the first-person singular and plural voice and of second-person plural voice" in the construction of the biographer's voice as author and at the same time a "trustworthy informant."

For Sinclair, 'textual voices' is a continuum where the 'voice' is in constant interplay with the speaking subject that may take up the role of the author, narrator, and protagonist, as in the case of Jean Froissart's dits amoureux (Sinclair, 2011). The idea of multiple narrative voices as a continuum resembles what Buchholz (2009) calls "morphing metaphor," a term she borrowed from Ryan's essay "Cyberage Narratology," which proposes "morphing" as a metaphor that allows for flexibility. Buchholz extends Ryan's morphing metaphor further in her work by using it as a method to explain the "process of shifting textual voices within third-person narratives" (Buchholz, 2009, p. 200). Reflecting on 'voice within a morphing metaphor,' Buchholz explains how morphing allows "narrators an infinite fluidity, whether it is to become the voice of their character, to appear as

the authors endowed with creative authority, to maintain distance and
invisibility, or any combination in between" (Buchholz, 2009, p. 217).

Although these observations emerge from the analysis of Western-
based perspectives, they offer a useful framework for examining voice in
Negrense queer panalaysayon. While panalaysayon is an oral and localized
form, it similarly demonstrates layered and shifting voices. A close reading
of the narratives, following structural cues (Riessman, 2005, p. 3) of the
panalaysayon, reveals the presence of more than one voice, shifting from
time to time throughout the text – most notably in the narrators' use of
"ako (I)" and "ikaw (you)" voices. However, my analysis focuses only on
the narrators' authorial self, or what Genette (1988) calls 'narrative person,'
examining how the use of ako-ikaw narration contributes to shin building
up the narrative structure of the queer panalaysayon as its own dominant
narrative identity. Here, 'authorial self' is understood as 'narrator-as-author,'
whose narrative presence is contained within the panalaysayon itself. Both
the ako and ikaw voices are direct and indirect references to the 'authorial
self' or 'narrative person.' Viewed from the perspective of queer formalism,
the ako-ikaw voice suggests "queer capacities" which do not necessarily
"abjure or ignore" (Getsy, 2017, p. 254) form and content in the tradition
of formalism and structuralism, but rather redirect the interest in looking
at the Negrense queer panalaysayon toward discovering new dynamics in
structure that might help examine ways in which the ako-ikaw narrative
voice might take queer forms. In short, these queer capacities are alternative
pathways of interpretation; thus, challenging the formal reading of text
by "locat[ing] the suspensions and incoherences of gender-and sexual-
identities in the problematics of formal elements […]" (Savoy, 2003, p. 9).

Specifically, when examining the ako-ikaw narration as a potential
rendition of the queer structure of the panalaysayon, I focus my analysis
of the ako-ikaw voice in two parts: the "ako" voice, which represents the
visible self, and the "ikaw" voice, which represents the alter ego. This dual
voice—interpreted here as a form of 'queer capacity'—is not positioned in
opposition to other frameworks of multiple-voice narratives, such as the
collective narrator, hybrid style, continuum, or morphing metaphor, which
are often framed outside queer paradigms. Instead, the study offers an
alternative, suggestive (but not prescriptive) reading of the ako-ikaw voice
through the lens of queer formalism. As Rohy and Garrett (2018) argue,
"queerness is excluded from or denigrated by conventional narrative forms"
(p. 169). In this context, the Negrense queer panalaysayon is approached
as a narrative text that asserts space for queer storytelling. The ako-ikaw
voice is thus explored, how it embodies queer capacities—those that refuse
conformity, blur boundaries,

subvert narrative intention, and disrupt the supposed meaning of form (Getsy, 2017).

Ako (I) as the Visible Self

In locating these queer capacities in the ako-ikaw narration, the study first closely examined the ako voice and the meanings it generated when framed within queer formalism. After going through all the panalaysayon as shared by the participants, I noticed that all the autobionarratives seemed to fit a common pattern: these followed a chronological narration, which often began with the account of the narrators' earliest life experiences (childhood/ teenage years) then moved on chronologically to the most recent pertinent memory of their lived realities that they could retrieve and include in the spontaneous telling of their respective life stories. Moreover, the pattern includes the participant narrators recounting their panalaysayon using the first-person point of view, which is an essential and conventional element of 'oral narratives of personal experiences' (Riessman, 2005, p. 2). Such centering on the ako voice emphasizes the 'self' as the narrators who account for events in their lives, thereby making the ako an 'embodied' voice that echoes the lived experiences available for narration and narrative themselves (Menary, 2008).

At the introductory portion of all the panalaysayon presented in this study, I also noted that each narrator's use of the ako voice compellingly illustrates authorial ownership of one's lived experiences. The panalaysayon being a narrative of ownership or "belonging" then demonstrates this ako voice as an act of direct self-presenting to establish a sense of 'selfhood' through which the narrators can better see themselves as participants in and bearers of their own story. Here, each narrator directly presents themselves in the narrative as the first-person voice, acting as the visible self. In the following excerpts from the shared panalaysayon, it is easily observable how the narrators open their stories with the ako (or its shortened variant 'ko) voice as a tool to "articulate [and] demonstrate this belonging" (Shuman, 2015) or ownership of the narrative.

In Blue's panalaysayon, the use of the 'ko voice implies the narrator's embrace of his own childhood experiences. His prevailing use of 'ko transports Blue back to that point in his life where he clearly relives a personal and shared experience of economic struggle. The use of first-person plural nominative kami (we) and of possessive namon (our) further suggests these 'experiences of belonging,' indicating that Blue himself was a participant in such experiences that are both his own alone and those of his family, as

could be gleaned from an excerpt in his own recollection:

> Well, nang syempre ginbata ko sa typical nga pigado nga pamilya ang struggle ara gid na ya. Ang challenge dira kon paano ko mabuhi halin sa isa ka adlaw nga ma-survive ko subong, tomorrow lain naman nga challenge. So, amo na sya ang cycle sang life namon. The time nga naga-eskwela kami high school kag naga… naga-start kami mag-dream nga tani makalab-ot kami sa handom nga malab-ot sa ulihi […] [Well, of course, I was born and raised in a typical Filipino family that struggled to cope with life financially. The challenge was to figure out how I could survive on a daily basis. This was our reality as a family. We mostly experienced this kind of life when we reached high school, around the time when we started to build our dreams.] (Blue)

This sense of 'belonging' is also evident in Green's panalaysayon, wherein a strong connection between the narrator and his own early life experiences is indicated by the sole use of the 'ako' voice, suggesting that the story is truly his and he, in turn, belongs to that window of experience. Green's meaningful use of ako evokes a relatively positive teenage experience in a familial space where his sexual identity was acknowledged, despite him not coming out to his family:

> Masiling ko nga indi gid ako out gid sa akon family, before, kay wala gid siling nga naghambal ko sa ila nga amo ko ni, nga amo ni akon nga identity, nga amo ni gusto ko. Wala. Pero sila ya kabalo na kon ano ko … daw ka balo na kon sin-o ko […] [I can say that I never came out to my family because I cannot recall a time that I directly told them I was gay or that it was my sexual identity, or that it was what I really wanted for myself. There was never really an instance. But I know that my family already had an idea about my sexuality.] (Green)

Similarly, in Indigo's panalaysayon, the narrator's use of ako, 'ko, akon (possessive my/mine) in his introduction reveals the presence of the embodied self as a lived experience. The use of first-person narrative further reinforces Indigo's light-hearted but significant telling of her childhood experience, a part of her upbringing wherein she had already clearly recognized her identity:

> "Ako gamay palang gid ko ya kabalo na gid ko ya, siguro indi ko maintyendihan nga amo na kona pero sa parents ko nakita na nila…

elementary pa lang […]" (Indigo) [I already knew my sexual preference while I was still young. Perhaps being young then, I couldn't think of a word to describe who I was, but my parents already had an inkling of my [sexual] identity. My own discovery started as early as when I was still in the elementary grades.] (Indigo)

In Roy's panalaysayon, the narrator's use of the 'ko, ako, akon (mine) voice as first-person narration at the start verbalizes his authentic presence in that particular segment of his life story being recounted. The 'ko/akon voice in the introduction expresses Roy's unforgettable childhood experience in which his sexual identity was suppressed by his parents, especially his father, who redirected his attention away from his personal interests in their attempt to "repair" his identity:

Elementary to high school nag sakristan ko kay syempre ang gina-inculcate sang parents ko sa mind ko nga sala ang amo ni, sala ang amo na. So dapat ma-serve ko sa church para maluwas ko kuno sa kasal-anan… Then sang gaamat-amat na tubo akon panimuot […] sang nakapaminsar na ko bala nga daw gina kuha sa akon ang akon gusto sang nag-decide ko nga maghalin sa church […]" (Roy) [I served as an acolyte in the church from elementary to high school because my parents inculcated in me that it's wrong to be gay. So, to correct myself, I heeded their advice to serve in the church to gain salvation. But as I grew mature and realized that what I wanted for myself was being taken away, I decided to quit serving the church as an altar boy.] (Roy)

On the other hand, the 'ko voice in Violet's panalaysayon demonstrates the narrator's experience of belonging in her own childhood, which she vividly describes as a defining moment in her life and her identity:

Feel ko babaye na gid ko ya kay sang time nga bata pa lang ko ara ko sa balay daw mga gamit bala sang utod ko nga babaye gina gamit-gamit ko like mga dress, mga lipstick, amo na bala para nga mangin babaye lang. Tapos nga amo ng nag eskwela ko sang elementary tapos inang may na amo na may na ano ko […] (Violet) [I knew I was a girl while still at a very young age. As a child I wore my sisters' dresses and used their lipsticks so I would look like them. This started when I was in the elementary grades.] (Violet)

Each of the textual segments presented above seems to suggest that

the ako voice does more than comply with the conventional element of oral autobiographical narratives, where the "I" assumes the role of the witness. The possibility of the ako voice taking on another role – that of being a "visible self" – alongside being a self-witness is compelled by the narrators' sense of 'belonging' in their own story, which is palpable in each of the illustrative excerpts. Atkins suggests that being visible means the narrator, as the protagonist/central character in the panalaysayon, "should be understood in terms of embodied consciousness and selfhood" (cited in Menary, 2008, p. 76). The idea here is that when the narrators become visible in their own lived experiences, the storytelling likewise becomes a spontaneous "act of freedom," which cannot be said when one is simply self-witnessing. Such personal liberation manifests itself as the narrators recount their life story unrehearsed or in an event called the "phenomenon of extempore storytelling" (Domecka et al., 2012, p. 23). In conveying their respective life narratives without preparation, narrators rely heavily on the self as a compass that directs the ako voice where to begin or to end the narratives and how to tell them. In short, the ako voice needs to be "visible" in order to give the 'narrator as central figure' (Menary, 2008) the authority to "access freely to a store of event representation in his or her biographical memory" (Labov, 2006, p. 3). This implies that by being visible in their lived experiences, the narrators skew the common notion of the narrative voice as a mere self-witness. Instead, they present a fresh take on the narrative voice as an embodied visible self.

My stance regarding the ako voice as a visible self is grounded on the notion that queer protagonists should not only be self-witnesses but also be visible in their own stories. There is a plethora of literary narratives featuring queer characters, but just because these queer characters adopt a particular narrative voice in those stories does not mean they are already visible in the narratives themselves. They might assume the voice of a self-witness, but not automatically that of a visible self. For example, in their queer reading of Will & Grace, a popular U.S. sitcom, Battles and Hilton-Morrow (2002) examine a particular coming-out episode in which Grace discovers Will's sexuality. This creates tension between the two protagonists, resulting in Grace's breakdown and estrangement from Will.' For Battles and Hilton-Morrow, the episode places too much emphasis on Grace's dilemma in dealing with the situation, stealing Will's moment to confront his own sexuality. This is a totally sensible reading given that queerness is a subject that "is excluded from or denigrated by conventional narrative forms," or in other words, queer people "struggle to appropriate narrative for their own ends" (Rohy & Garett, 2018, p. 169) in their own who are not only present

narrative. Such problematization of queer presence in queer narratives allows for the exteriorization of the unseen "forms of hostile narrativization" of queer characters, where they are stereotypically relegated to demoralizing and unfair portrayals (p. 171). This unfair treatment of the queer subject necessitates the production of more queer texts featuring queer characters observers but also present and visible in their own stories.

To further illustrate the distinction between "I" as self-witness (present-observer) and "I" as visible-self (present-participant), I will discuss narrative voice in relation to queer portrayals. Most queer narratives tend to portray queer protagonists or characters through the normative heterosexual gaze; thus, they are mostly confined to gendered stereotypes and sexual depiction (Seif, 2017) or characterizations that do not speak of their own truths due to the influence of "old, harmful tropes" that fail to reflect "the diversity of the community" (Cook, 2008, p. 38). Despite the "I" narration that should have given queer protagonists/characters a voice of their own, these narratives have instead narrowed their role to that of mere observers/ witnesses in their own story, subtly stripping them of their visibility in a narrative space that is supposedly theirs. The "I" as witness/observer therefore blurs its self-referentiality because, although it implies " presence' in the narrative, it does not embody a closer-to-life rendition of the narrated queer subject. This is so because, as a witness/observer, a narrator only "recounts what [she] or he observes, believes, or knows" (Marsen, 2004, p. 226). In other words, the "I" as observer, then, lacks "active subjectivity" and "intentionalities" (Martinez, 2011, p. 228) which are necessary "in narrating the muted sociality of queerness or in making visible the shared quality of queer experience [and] convey[ing] an intimate sense of interiority of [queer] characters" (p. 229).

Meanwhile, the "I" as the visible-self (present-participant), as Butler explains, "acts precisely to the extent that the [queer narrator] is constituted as an actor" (cited in Magnus, 2006, p. 87). The "I' as present-participant becomes the performative representation of queer lived experience in their own narrative, turning their experience to be more tangible as they, as Foucault puts it, "step forward and speak, [and] make the difficult confession of what they were" (cited in Stephenson, 2000, p. 5). As participant in their own narrative, an actor narrator must be self-aware of who is "personally accountable for the [narrative's] truth value (Marsen, 2004, p. 226). In this context, the queer narrators as present-participants not only narrate their life, but also become the embodied narrative themselves, which "makes more sense of the [queerselves] as complex biological, historical, and social beings whose experiences and actions are ready for narration" (Menary,

2008, pp. 63-64).

The fact that the Negrense queer participants "spoke their own truths" regarding their individual sexual orientations in the excerpts quoted above and chose to share with honesty and conviction private details connected to their moments of realization indicated their ownership of that experience. For instance:

> *Feel ko babaye na gid ko ya kay sang time nga bata pa lang ko ara ko sa balay daw mga gamit bala sang utod ko nga babaye gina gamit-gamit ko like mga dress, mga lipstick, amo na bala para nga mangin babaye lang.* [I knew I was a girl while still at a very young age. As a child I wore my sisters' dresses and used their lipsticks so I would look like them.] (Violet)

> *Then sang gaamat-amat na tubo akon panimuot* […] sang nakapaminsar na ko bala nga daw gina kuha sa akon ang akon gusto sang nag-decide ko nga maghalin sa church […] [But as I grew more mature and realized that what I wanted for myself was being taken away, I decided to quit serving the church as an altar boy.] (Roy)

It can not be discounted, however, that the narrators' awareness of my shared identity as a member of the queer community may have influenced the way their stories were told. This shared positionality likely encouraged them to be more than self-witnesses or present observers of their own narratives; instead, they became present-visible or present-participants—speaking not only for themselves but also to me—as someone who could carry their stories forward.

Ikaw (You) as the Alter Self

The noticeable shift in the narrative voice from ako to ikaw point of view cannot be ignored in the shared panalaysayon. Its recurring presence in the texts invites new ways of looking at the function(s) of the you voice in the Negrense queer panalaysayon, in addition to its traditional narrative role.

The use of the 'you' voice in the narratives manifests shifts that occur in random fragments throughout the panalaysayon, disrupting the spontaneous flow of the 'ako' voice. Scholarship on narrative studies reveals that the use of you mainly suggests an invitation to the reader/listener "to place [herself or] himself in the position of the writer [or narrator]" implying that "anyone who who places [herself or] himself [in such position] will

witness the identical scene or perform the same action" (Morrissette, 1965, p. 2). Likewise, the multiple-role perspective proposed by Koven (2002) involves the speaker in narratives of personal experience as someone who can tell their story spontaneously, and in doing so, they tend to simultaneously shift between or among multiple perspectives. One of these perspectives is Labov's (2006) idea of the "self" as a generalized other, which is typically narrated using the "you" point of view.

In the Negrense queer panalaysayon, however, the presence of the ikaw voice seems to suggest an alter self that might be interpreted as the 'gaze' the narrators direct upon the 'self' but only through an alternative medium. As established from the gathered texts, the enunciatory manifestation of this shift from the ako voice typically occurs when narrators recount a negative experience in their lives. The narrative shift recurrences in the panalaysayon, therefore, further seemingly indicate that the use of the ikaw voice as an alter self reinforces the ako voice as the visible self to express points in the narrators' past that were deeply emotional or life circumstances that rendered them vulnerable, confused, or suppressed. In this sense, by invoking the ikaw voice, the narrators become 'active agents who recall those events that others have suppressed. 'The following textual segments from the participants' panalaysayon articulate these experiences of vulnerability, confusion, or suppression through the intermittent occurrences of the ikaw voice as an alternative subject-narrator.

In a segment of Blue's panel discussion, the narrator resorted to a noticeable shift in the narrative voice as he recalled a negative experience from his past. He seemed to rely on his alter self through the 'ka/'mo voice to tell this experience. Being independent from his family for the first time, Blue navigated his sexuality via virtual spaces afforded by different gay dating applications (apps) that provided him the opportunity to hook up with various men. However, his fear of contracting HIV and worry that his family might discover his identity made him cautious about going out on dates with just anyone. His desire to explore his sexuality, contending with his fear of social stigma, apparently suppressed his sexual freedom. Blue articulated this distressing experience by deploying the 'ka/'mo/imo voice in his narration:

> *Nang, may mga preference ka na, may mga standard ka na nga okay lang ko makipag-mingle sa iya pero indi gid ko magkwan especially kon makita mo nga indi sya bala kaaya-aya, nga indi sya pasok sa imo nga criteria.* [You tend to stick to a certain preference or standard when dating a guy. I'm okay to socialize with a guy, but I won't go out with him especially when you don't feel safe with him; that he is someone who doesn't meet your criteria.] (Blue)

This shift in the 'ka/'mo/imo voice is also evident in Roy's panalaysayon when he shared a particular moment in his past involving his father forcing him to join in male stereotypical activities in his attempt to 'repair' Roy's identity. Such an act robbed Roy of his sexual freedom. The verbalization of this negative experience causes the shift of the personal narrative voice to an alter self:

> *Galing kay daw ginakontrol pa sang parents ko kay syempre paintrahon ka nila sa mga panglalaki nga hampang, like paintrahon ka nila sa taekwondo para mag straight ka. Kag sa amo man nga rason kon ngaa ginpasakristan man ko nila kay basi palang ma ano, madula ang pagkaagi ko* […] [The controlling home environment created by my parents, especially my father, like making you join in taekwondo [typical male sports] to make you straight. That was also their reason why they forced me to become an altar boy.] (Roy)

This alter self-narrative voice can also be heard in Green's panalaysayon, particularly when the narrator brings a previous affective experience back to the present. The apparent shift in the narrative voice portrays a vulnerable image of a person veiled in self-denial as he stood face-to-face with HIV. In here, the 'ka/'mo voice shows the presence of an alternative subject-narrator's voice:

> *Tapos duman ko okay lang. Kay damo man ga support sa akon, pero ti syempre deep inside may ara gid ya eh. May gina batyag gid ka ya. Syempre indi KA pagid maka-ako sa self mo nga amo na* […] [Then I thought I was okay because many were showing me their concern. But deep inside there was still sadness because you were ill (have HIV). You still couldn't totally accept the fact that you're going through all this.] (Green)

The alternative subject-narrator is likewise present in Indigo's panalaysaon as she recalls her struggle in trying to reconcile the contradictory perceptions between those of her accepting parents and those of other people toward her as a lesbian. Indigo's tendency to take an alter self when reliving this experience is shown through her use of the 'ka voice:

> *Gusto ko maghibi sa ila ni mama. Daw gapraning ka bala haw nga basi bala ginamayumayuhan lang ka nila. Kay nagtatak ang hambal sang mama sang miga ko mo. Kay halin sang una wala gid ka kabatyag nga naghambal sila nga lain na, nga gin-stop ko nila, nga matadlong ko. Wala ko na na-experience. Pero sa to nga time nag-doubt ka sa ila. Sakit, sakit gid ya.* (Indigo) [I wanted to cry to them, especially to my mother. As if [you're] getting paranoid, thinking that what my girlfriend's mother said might be

true. But, at the same time, I was fighting against such emotion because there never was an instance in my life when my family said anything against my sexuality. However, at that time you doubted your family. It was really a painful experience.] (Indigo)

In Violet's panalaysayon, the narrator invoked the alter self to give voice to her feeling of utter vulnerability at the time when her body was undergoing physiological changes due to her hormonal therapy. Through the imo/'mo voice, Violet expresses this feeling of vulnerability:

> *Pero sang ga hormones ko wala na ko ya gakagwaan. Wala na ko gaka-utgan. Syempre guro kay ang imo nga hormones ginahimo na nga iya ka babaye... Wala na erection, wala na gakagwaan. Syempre ang lalaki mo nga hormones, ginahimo nya pa nga babaye mo…Bi mag lantaw ko sang mga scandal-scandal, wala na ko na ya gaka-utgan.* [When I started taking hormonal pills, I was no longer ejaculating, neither did I get an erection. Perhaps your male hormones were reacting to the pills. There's no more erection because your maleness was blocked by the hormonal pill. Even when I watched porn, I no longer had an erection/arousal.] (Violet)

To exteriorize the negative experiences that caused friction in their relationship with the world, the five narrators of the Negrense queer panalaysayon resorted to a (re)imagined self or the alter ego through the "ikaw" voice. In the process of divulging 'affective experiences,' including what Campbell describes as "all ascriptions of pain" (cited in Menary, 2008, p. 169), into the narrative surface, the narrators invoked the presence of the ikaw voice not to detach the self from such experience, but to stand as the ako voice's reimagined stronger alter self that is more able to verbalize painful experiences. Affective experiences such as 'emotional pains' afflict queer individuals, especially the queer youths, when they are 'silenced or denied' (Asakura, 2017, p. 6) a chance to express themselves. Their use of the ikaw voice, thus, enables the Negrense queer to relive their negative or painful experiences in their own terms. How the 'ikaw' voice emerges as an alter ego could be better explained in the context of queer formalism. Consistent with the ako voice's opening up a space for 'queer capacities,' the ikaw voice should neither be viewed as "generalized other," nor simply an invitation for "empathic response." Instead, it should also be understood from queer formalist view as the indirect self-presentation triggered by what Sedgwick describes as the "suspensions and incoherencies" that tilt the ako voice "from its possible definitional role,"

thus shifting the said voice's intended function (cited in Anderson, 2000). The visible self, being the possible definitional role of the ako voice, feels the tension every time there is an urge, opportunity, or reason to bring painful experiences to the surface of the narrative. The second-person 'ikaw' voice, then, becomes helpful in verbalizing such affective experiences, offering an alternative space for self-expression, since the 'ako-ikaw' voice emanates from a singular self, albeit with dual roles—visible and alter. This is so because the visible self as the "personal identity" (Hongladarom, 2011) cannot be taken as a separate subject from its alter self.

Ako–Ikaw Voice Shaping the Panalaysayon's Queer Counternarrative Structure

The narrators' nonconventional use of the ako-ikaw voice, which enabled them to foreground their visible self and alter self alternately as they recounted their queer experiences, could be considered as "queer counternarrative," providing the Negrense queer panalaysayon its structure in the process. The narrative structure in this study refers to how the panalaysayon is told, given that it is an oral autobiography or self-narrative. The employment of the ako-ikaw voice is a "queer counternarrative," according to Getsy (2017), as it is "relational, particular, and contingent" (p. 255) in relation to the Negrense queer panalaysayon. Thus, the panalaysayon's counternarrative structure has emerged from the intercourse of voices: ako, which stays loyal to the traditional narrative norm, and ikaw, which is seen as a queerization of such tradition. This means that the panalaysayon conforms to the traditional narrative at first, with all five narrators choosing to recall their growing awareness of their sexual identity as the starting point (Exposition) of their narrative. Using the ako voice, they all claimed to have become aware of their sexual orientation/identity (identity-affirming experience) during their elementary grade years, and the few events they recounted afterwards were how they navigated their awareness of such identity. At this point, their narrative conforms to Aristotle's and Freytag's plot frameworks, as could be gleaned in the following excerpts:

> *Ako gamay palang gid ko ya kabalo na gid ko ya, siguro indi ko maintyendihan nga amo na ko na pero sa parents ko nakita na nila… elementary pa lang* […] [I knew my sexual preference while I was still young. Perhaps being young, I couldn't think of a word to describe who I was, but my parents already had an inkling of my sexual identity. My own discovery started as early as when I was

still in the elementary grades.] (Indigo)

Feel ko babaye na gid ko ya kay sang time nga bata pa lang ko ara ko sa balay daw mga gamit bala sang utod ko nga babaye gina gamit-gamit ko like mga dress, mga lipstick, amo na bala para nga mangin babaye lang. Tapos nga amo ng nag eskwela ko sang elementary tapos ng may na amo na may na ano ko […]. [I knew I was a girld while still at a very young age. As a child I wore my sisters' dresses and used their lipsticks so I would look like them. This started when I was in the elementary grades.] (Violet)

Elementary to high school nag sakristan ko kay syempre ang gina-inculcate sang parents ko sa mind ko nga sala ang amo ni, sala ang amo na. So dapat ma-serve ko sa church para maluwas ko kuno sa kasal-anan… Then sang gaamat-amat na tubo akon panimuot […] *sang nakapaminsar na ko bala nga daw gina kuha sa akon ang akon gusto sang nag-decide ko nga maghalin sa church* […]. [I served as an acolyte in the church from elementary to high school because my parents inculcated in me that it's wrong to be gay. So, to correct myself, I heeded their advice to serve in the church to gain salvation. But as I grew more mature and realized that what I wanted for myself was being taken away, I decided to quit serving the church as an altar boy.] (Roy)

It is, however, worth noting that the Exposition for the participants' narratives is already the introduction of the main Complication in their life stories, as well, since their awareness of their sexual orientation would prove to be the main issue they needed to grapple with in their daily realities, constantly. This merging of the Exposition and the Complication diverges from the traditional plot structure, which stipulates that the Rising Action that follows the Exposition should be the point where the story's complication emerges. This means that the panalaysayon narrative conflates the beginning and the middle parts of the narrative, going against Aristotle's requirement that the two parts should be separate from each other. It is instead the shift in the narrators' voice (initial employment of the ikaw/ka voice) that signals the intensification of the complication as the narrators recounted distressing or identity-negating experiences related to their queerness (non-acceptance by family members, discrimination by others):

Galing kay daw ginakontrol pa sang parents ko kay syempre paintrahon ka nila sa mga panglalaki nga hampang, like paintrahon

ko nila sa taekwondo para mag straight ka. Kag sa amo man nga
rason kon ngaa ginpasakristan man ko nila kay basi palang ma ano,
madula ang pagkaagi ko […]. [The controlling home environment
created by my parents, especially my father, like making you join in
taekwondo (typical male sports) to make you straight. That was also
their reason they forced me to become an altar boy.] (Roy)

*Gusto ko maghibi sa ila ni mama. Daw gapraning ka bala haw
nga basi bala ginamayumayuhan lang ka nila. Kay nagtatak ang
hambal sang mama sang miga ko mo. Kay halin sang una wala gid
ko kabatyag nga naghambal sila nga lain na, nga gin-stop ko nila,
nga matadlong ko. Wala ko na na-experience. Pero sa to nga time
nag-doubt ka sa ila. Sakit, sakit gid ya.* [I wanted to cry to them,
especially to my mother. As if you're getting paranoid, thinking that
what my girlfriend's mother said might be true. But, at the same
time, I was fighting against such emotion because there never was
an instance in my life when my family said anything against my
sexuality. However, at that time you doubted your family. It was
really a painful experience.] (Indigo)

Throughout each participant's panalaysayon, the shifting of the
narrative voice from the ako voice to the ikaw voice is, thus, a distinguishable
pattern indicating the type of event being recalled: the ako voice for identity-
affirming experiences, and the ikaw voice for identity-negating situations.
Like the excerpts from Roy's and Indigo's narrations above, the following
excerpt from Green's narration further illustrates this pattern shift in the
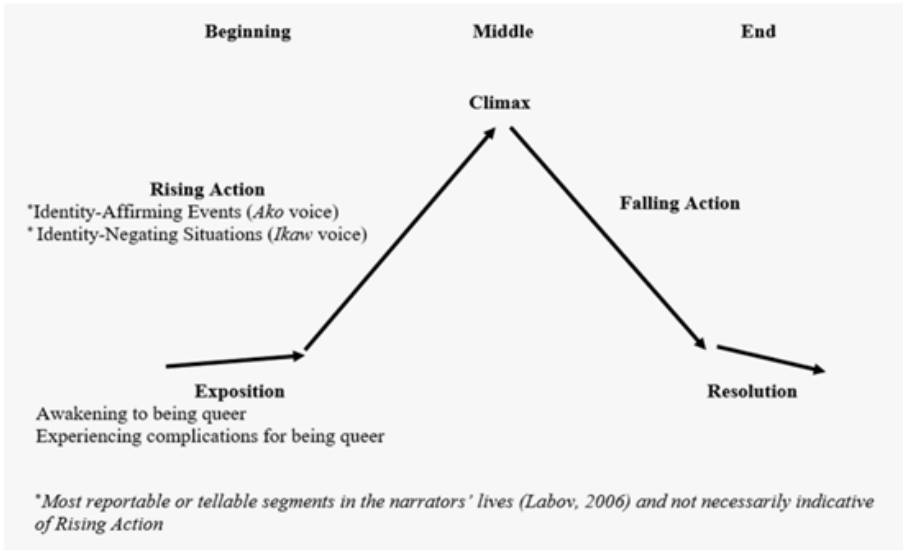narrative voice, juxtaposing the positive and negative life events:

*Tapos duman ko okay lang. Kay damo man ga support sa akon, pero
ti syempre deep inside may ara gid ya eh. May gina batyag gid ka
ya. Syempre indi ka pagid maka-ako sa self mo nga amo na* […].
[Then I thought I was okay because many were showing me their
concern. But deep inside there was still sadness because you were ill
(have HIV). You still couldn't totally accept the fact that you're going
through all this.] (Green)

The tendency to resort to nonconventional narrative voice(s) by the
narrators in their individual panalaysayon seems to suggest queering of
form – the tendency to go beyond the "straightforward depictions" or the
conventions of traditional forms (Doyle & Getsy, 2013), hence, becoming a
queer counternarrative. This veering away from the norm, however, should
not be viewed as a total departure from "content and context," (p. 255)

but rather as an "intercourse of forms" wherein the unconventional and unnatural "forms of living as queer […] take relationality as the matrix in which difference and defiance become manifest" (p. 254). Thus, the attempt to trace the queer panalaysayon's narrative structure at this juncture presents a plot that seems to be at a standstill, with no sign of the events moving on to the next stage (Climax; Middle) based on the traditional narrative structure. It is obvious then that the Negrense queer panalaysayon structure does not fit the traditional narrative framework. This is, however, understandable given that the narrators' life stories are still ongoing (hence the emergent structure), so the participants are unable to reflect whether they have already experienced their peak in terms of their queerness or are already nearing the end of their own life story (Resolution; End). For comparative purposes, below is an attempt to plot the Negrense queer narrative using the traditional narrative structure, which is obviously not the right model to employ.

Figure 1

Negrense Queer Panalaysayon Narrative Structure (Framework based on Aristotle's Basic Plot Structure and Freytag's Triangle

Beginning   *Middle*   *End*

Climax

Rising Action
*Identity-Affirming Events (*Ako* voice)
* Identity-Negating Situations (*Ikaw* voice)

Falling Action

Exposition
Awakening to being queer
Experiencing complications for being queer

Resolution

*Most reportable or tellable segments in the narrators' lives (Labov, 2006) and not necessarily indicative of Rising Action

In explaining how the ako-ikaw voice shapes the panalaysayon's structure, Goodson's (2012) view proves useful: he explains that a narrative draws from the structural contexts of the narrator's life, which contributes to the "understanding of the social construction of each person's subjectivity" (p. 30).

The poetics of voice in the Negrense queer panalaysayon, therefore, manifests this subjectivity in relation to structure. The emergent narrative

structure of the panalaysayon is grounded on the narrative voice itself—shaped by the narrators' lived experience and at the same time embodying those experiences. In other words, it is through the narrators' life's contexts (e.g., struggles tied to being queer) that they come to experience what Lanser calls the "urgency of coming to voice," such as the use of the ikaw voice, which allows their once-silenced self to challenge the dominant narrative norms and transform the voice of the panalaysayon into an image of "identity and power" (Lanser, 1992, p. 3).

Lastly, the ako-ikaw voice as queer counternarrative might be seen as an action, an activity, or an event that is contingent upon the context in which the individual panalaysayon was built upon – fractions of lives of the Negrense queers. In this sense, the panalaysayon's voice, as an action or activity, attempts to capture the most 'reportable or tellable' (Labov, 2006) segments in the narrators' lives by sequencing them into a coherent whole. This narrative sequence, which contributes to the panalaysayon's structure, is glued together through the "voice of the speaker conveying the story" (Edwards, 2019, p. 270). In voicing events, Edwards (2019) mentioned that a narrative must contain at least "a sequence of events and a speaker or voice" (p. 269). In the panalaysayon, the dynamics of these narrative features are evident in the shifting of the ako-ikaw voices to contrast one narrative episode from another.

Despite the counternarrative structure of the Negrense queer panalaysayon, characterized by its layered use of the ako-ikaw voices within the narrative itself, it does not completely depart from the core elements of self-narrative. As Kind (cited in Heersmink, 2018) outlines, these include the chronological stream of life events, selective inclusion of relevant experiences at the time of narration, the consistent use of the first-person "I" voice, and the connection between events and the narrator's subjective experience. Although the counternarrative may be seen as queer form, the panalaysayon remains a "sustainable self-narrative" that echoes "relevant facts about the [narrators'] subjective experience, such as one's emotions, thoughts, or intentions" (Leuenberger, 2020, p. 5). Moreover, such counternarrative structure of the panalaysayon is a process of "sense making" which is crucial in the narrators' self-narrativization of "memories" that when narrated turn into "a vehicle to radically reimagine [queer narrators'] limited situations as a source of hope and possibilities, and [their] subjugation and marginalization as a path to freedom" (Rojas & Liou, 2023).

Considering the above discussion, the following is a more appropriate diagrammatic rendering – instead of the traditional narrative structure as shown in Figure 1 – of the emergent (still developing since the life stories are

not yet completed) Negrense queer panalaysayon structure based on the participants' self-narratives:

Figure 2

Negrense Queer Panalaysayon Counternarrative Structure (Based on Self-Narrative Model)
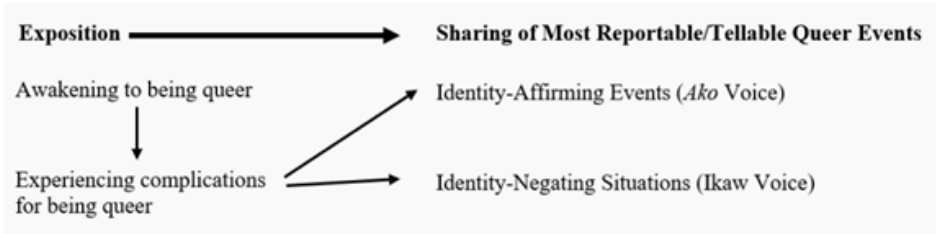
The Negrense queer panalaysayon is contextualized in this study to refer to an oral life narrative or lived experience shared by five self-identified queer individuals from different parts of Negros Occidental. These oral autobionarratives were gathered through a life story approach, employing pakikipagkuwentuhan (conversational storytelling), and were analyzed using queer theory—specifically queer formalism—to explore their emergent structure.

As a potential literary text, the Negrense queer panalaysayon foregrounds narrative voice as central to the construction of counternarrative structure—one that offers an alternative route to dominant, heteronormative storytelling. A defining feature of this counternarrative is its form, structured around the narrators' nonconventional use of the ako-ikaw voice to alternately foreground their visible self and alter self. Structuring their narrative this way allows the narrators to (re)claim visibility within their own stories. In this narrative space, they have often been rendered as passive observers rather than active participants. Such positioning typically results from "straightforward depictions" that follow conventional forms, in which queer lives are simplified, backgrounded, or framed through heteronormative lenses.

In contrast, the panalaysayon makes visible the narrative agency of queer narrators, particularly through its emergent structure. Given that these are unfinished life stories, the Negrense queer panalaysayon departs from traditional narrative arcs, which typically have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Instead, it presents only a beginning, with the rest of the story still unfolding. Rather than conforming to fixed plotlines, the panalaysayon aligns more closely with the Self-Narrative Model, which emphasizes the narrators' agency in selecting life events to be narrated and shaping how

those are conveyed through either the ako voice or the ikaw voice. It unfolds in two stages: first, an exposition revealing the narrator's awakening to being queer (ako voice) and, shortly afterwards, their experiencing complications for being queer (ikaw voice); second, the sharing of most tellable queer experiences, marked by both affirming (ako) and negating (ikaw) moments. What emerges, then, is not simply a collection of queer lived experiences, but a hybrid form—oral, autobiographical, and potentially counternarrative that gestures toward new ways of understanding queer storytelling within provincial and oral traditions. This study does not seek to challenge or oppose traditional narrative models; instead, it offers an alternative approach to queer narratives through the lens of panalaysayon. In this context, queer formalism proves especially useful, as it draws attention to how narrative form—particularly the shifting use of ako and ikaw voices—reveals the dynamic relationship between queer subjectivity and storytelling structure. The Negrense queer panalaysayon, then, suggests a form of narrative authorship where queer storytellers/narrators claim control over how their stories are structured, told, and made meaningful within their own terms.

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