

Language of sexuality of gay men in pursuing hookups through online dating applications

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Abstract

This paper looks at the language of sexuality among gay men discussing sensitive and intimate topic of hooking up. The study adopts a qualitative research framework that particularly explores gender and sexuality expressions. Three self-identified gay men participated in a focus group interview session. A focus group interview was performed with a prepared set of questions and some follow-up discussion questions. The interview was recorded and transcribed and analyzed thematically. The results showed that even though there were general differences between how they pursued hookups, there were more determinants other than gender expression, such as role, tribe, and nature. More masculine presenting gays are likely to be more direct, while more feminine presenting ones are more likely to be less direct. Additionally, certain phrases are used to specify the directness of their intentions in pursuing hookups. The results indicated that issues in the community are often a complex mix of factors beyond masculinity and femininity and are still closely tied to heteronormative and patriarchal values.

Keywords: online language use, language and sexualities, masculine and feminine representation.

Introduction

Most people are aware that there is usually a specific sociolect or set of languages in the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning Plus) that is different from the more common way of communication. This is especially so in Indonesia, where people are aware of this to the point that it is often easily stereotyped and displayed on mainstream media, often as a joke with exaggerated mannerisms and expressions of specific figures, usually feminine gay men. As it was in the Indonesian film *Pretty Boys*, the mannerisms and expressions that actually take place among the Indonesian LGBTQ+ community is more than just a humorous bait for show business, but it is a real language developed to strengthen the bonds within the community.

Boelstorff (2004), for example, coined *bahasa gay* (the gay language) in Indonesia, not as a register that wishes to express hierarchy or distance, but one of belonging. This gay language is often tied to the 1990s 'hip' way of talking by comedienne Debby Sahertian (Sahertian, 2008), with camp expressions, slangs, and abbreviations such as *akika* (*aku*, 'me'), *pelangi pelangi* (*pelan pelan*, 'slowly'), and *Susi Susanti* (*susah*, 'difficult'). This was a way of establishing repertoire among the (usually feminine-leaning side of the) community in a sociolect that can properly accommodate their flamboyant expressions and strengthen their bonds.

Now that this generation of gays has largely passed into an older demographic, a shift occurs in the gay community in terms of language, with the younger generation favoring a more global (albeit arguably Western) sociolect. The notion of tops and bottoms and how they are tied with masculine or feminine expressions, for example, may have existed in Indonesia since time immemorial, but the terminology is arguably of Western origin. Also, the focus of the past sociolect too, for example, was more on feminine-expressing gay men. What about masculine-expressing gay men? Do they also acquire a sociolect with this shift in gender expressions?

With said shift occurring in the community, one might ponder on whether or not the practiced gay language is still a register of belonging. Though it may have been one in the past among the community, what about now, since our values of gender expressions have shifted as well? Indeed, what was preferable among the gay community in 1995 might not be so in 2015. As an illustration, the cruising culture of the past is now replaced by the hookup culture (Miller, 2015), with notions of partner preferences that have arguably grown more complex with the usage of dating apps (for example, from the categorization of people based on their preferences, to apps that cater to certain types only as a whole), which, ironically, is supposed to make things easier (Shield, 2018).

With that in mind and going back to the notion of language as a register of belonging, there has been very little research done on current notions of gender and sexuality expressions among the gay community in the Indonesian context. Therefore, this paper aims to find out how gay men express their sexuality in dating apps when pursuing hookups.

Literature Review

Ideologies of language, gender, and sexuality

Cameron (2003) distinguishes the concepts of *sex* (biological), *gender* (socially constructed), and *sexuality*. The word *sex* carries two meanings –

biological phenomenon of dimorphism and erotic desire/practice, while gender is a social construct of roles (2003, p. 4). From the perspective of essentialism, gender role distribution has been grounded based on the sexed anatomy in which “from birth, humans are categorized as male versus female based on their external genitalia” (Nagoshi, Nagoshi, & Brzuzy, 2014, p. 16). Gender, from this perspective, is only limited to two categories, male and female, and their role is “to procreate”. Gender roles are constructed based on the biological aspects of men and women. Therefore, due to their physical superiority, men's role is to be the breadwinner while women's role is to give birth and take care of the children (Nagoshi, et.al., 2014). The construction of gender roles is reinforced in the society “using multiple methods of positive and negative reinforcement, including legal, religious, and cultural practices to enforce adherence to these gender roles” (2014, p. 16). However, this conceptualization of *sex* and its gender role construction, leaves out the second meaning of the word – i.e. erotic desire/practice – from identity category (Cameron, 2003). Therefore, the discussion on language and identity, in the past, considers gender as part of identity category but not the concept of desire.

The concept of *sexuality*, then, was coined to include the expression of erotic desire. However, a common generalization of sexuality has often been reduced to mere sexual orientation (Cameron, 2003). Its use has been commonly understood as a term for “being either ‘homosexual’ or ‘heterosexual’ – that is, it denotes a stable erotic preference for people of the same / the other sex, and the social identities which are based on such a preference (e.g. ‘lesbian’, ‘gay’)” (2003, p. 3). The essentialist idea on gender identity has again created another polarized perspective on one's identity construction (male/female, homosexual/heterosexual) and excluded the issue of erotic desire as part of identity nor it touched upon how individuals understand and experience embodied gender and sexuality that intersects with other elements of subjectivity.

Feminism perspective challenges the essentialist view of grounding gender identity on biological facts that position male as the superior sex due to their assumed physical superiority. Gender, as Cameron (2003) explains, is viewed as a social construct and its socialization of roles are acquired very early in life. Studies on language and gender identity, then, focus on male domination and female subordination as gender inequality (dominance approach) and how gender differences resulted from the social arrangements that separate genders from their early years (cultural difference). However, this concept of hegemonic masculinity was criticized for essentializing male-female differences and focus on dominance and submission power relations (Nagoshi, et.al., 2014). The discussion on gender and sexual

identities were still working within gender binary thinking and the dominant heteronormative structure.

Queer theory, developed from feminist perspective, challenges the thinking of tying sexuality to gender identity (a restrictive view on identity) and the heteronormative status quo. Queer theory is a critical approach to heteronormativity (Canakis, 2015). Scholars (like Foucault, Butler, Sedgwick) turn their attention to “how the production of gendered/sexual identities occurs in historical, cultural, discursive and relational locations” (Watson, 2005, p. 74). Queer theory challenges any attempt to reduce identity as singular, fixed, or normal. Sedgwick (1998) maintains that people’s experiences (of desire, sex and sexuality) are complex and different and not monolithic (in Watson, 2005). Identity, from this perspective, is therefore viewed as fluid and complex.

Previous studies on gay language in Indonesian context

There is very little research done on the gay culture of Indonesia because of its complex history as a colonized nation. One of the more well-known in history was the *zedenschandaal* of 1938, where several gays (and gay pedophiles) of the Dutch East Indies were persecuted by the colonial government (Bloembergen, 2011). A more significant movement in the community was only possible in the late twentieth century, when Indonesia was still trying to establish itself as a postcolonial nation (Blackwood, 2005). No doubt, however, that when it comes to gender expressions, Indonesia is not free from its religious or cultural constraints. Sloomaecker’s (2019) research on the relationship between nationalism and the othering of homosexuals highlights that this is possible “in a heteronormative, homophobic and patriarchal framework” (Sloomaeckers, 2019, p.260), and much of Indonesia’s cultures and religions come from a more or less patriarchal framework, thus putting masculinity at the forefront of nationalism.

Islam, the majority religion of Indonesia, is perhaps one of the more significant institutions that enable this othering, since homosexuality is seen as a sin. An ethnographic study on gay Muslims by Boelstorff (2005) shows that there is incommensurability—the absence of a concrete basis of comparison in what can usually be compared—in what gay Muslims feel. Though some of them felt that being gay is a sin in Islam, they viewed that being gay itself is not. There is a seemingly constant conflict in being both Muslim and gay, with some of them possessing doubts on their expressions and on their worth as people if they do not conform to certain expectations of a heteronormative man—such as marriage to a woman, being masculine in behavior, and being direct (Bowles & Flynn, 2010; Eguchi, 2009; Grainger & Mills, 2016; Ravenhill & de Visser, 2017; Vicary, 2007).

This means that anything that is related to heteronormativity (with masculinity as a virtue or a default) effectively views everything else as subordinate or deviant. One way of dealing with this issue was through language or expressions. The gay language that existed in Indonesia before the shift of discourse (see following subsection) was not something seen as emerging from a specific ethnic culture in Indonesia, but arising out of a need to be understood in 'normal' terms as a whole. Using *bahasa gay* (gay language) 'leaks their subjectivities' (Boellstorff, 2004, p.18) to go beyond the limitations of one's localities and existing traditions to connect to each other.

This becomes an issue when gay individuals who wish to be seen as 'normal' or heteronormative do not want to prescribe to such ideals because that meant exposing themselves to being 'othered', hence why *bahasa gay* seemed to be associated with mostly feminine gay men or *waria* (transwomen). Masculine men would be more likely to desire to be seen as just like any other heteronormative man, when basically the community wants to be treated the same as the heteronormative people all the while being free to be themselves.

This 'othering' of feminine expressions can thus be seen as a byproduct of patriarchal misogyny, applied to men. Femininity is seen as a negative trait to be possessed in men (Schippers, 2007) and is thus discouraged. The following subsection will discuss this notion in the context of dating applications, taking into account the hookup culture that enables the notions of roles and tribes, ideas that are closely tied to expressions of masculinity and femininity.

Hookup culture and the roles and tribes in dating applications

One of the more apparent growths in the practice of dating is the continual compartmentalization of gay individuals according to their defining traits, and this is often magnified in online dating applications. Indeed, members of the LGBTQ+ community are found to be more likely to use dating apps, because they are an easier way of finding members of the same community (Johnson, Vilceanu, & Pontes, 2017). In Shield's (2018) study on Grindr (an application meant for gay men to interact with other gay men for various purposes) users in Copenhagen, Denmark, they found that the drop-down menu of these applications that provide information on the users' height, weight, ethnicity, and body type is often the source of many discriminative issues in the application. The intersection that occurs with gender happens when trans individuals or when feminine-expressing gay men receive discrimination because there is an idealization of masculinity and how it is treated as a natural or essential idea as opposed to a 'social construction' (Shield, 2018, p.8).

Miller (2015) also found similar results, with the users of Jack'd (another dating application) valuing masculinity, fitness, and being semi-clothed (which may denote both their masculinity and fitness). This is further proven with faceless profiles in such applications, which are found to maintain their anonymity to be more vocal about their desires and preferences. Indeed, they were found to be strongly correlated with self-descriptions pertaining to masculinity and preferences to that, because not using a profile picture suggests that they are more invested in the maintenance of a masculine ideal, which may be the result of internalized homophobia and issues of self-esteem.

With these dating apps, the notions of roles and tribes are effectively socialized as well. Sexual roles, such as being a top (doing the anal penetration), bottom (receiving the anal penetration), or versatile, or tribes based on body types, such as twinks (skinny, hairless men), bears (big, hairy men), or hunks (muscular men), are seen as more apparent and concrete, further compartmentalized with existing notions of masculinity or femininity. Indeed, bottoms, who are receivers of penetration, are often considered to be feminine in nature, while the tops the reverse. The same is often applicable to how hairy one is. An additional, but perhaps not very significant factor along with roles and tribes, are notions of dominance, submission, or flexibility. They reflect the nature of the roles and tribes in the relationship and the sexual activities. These multiple layers of notions in categorizing the gay community has often been criticized because of how complicated they become in practice. (Ravenhill & de Visser, 2017)

This immediate and accessible nature can thus be correlated with how limited and discriminative the preferences of the users could be since they don't need to create deep emotional bonds or agree on some sort of attaching commitment (Rivière, Licoppe, & Morel, 2015). This effectively privatizes what used to be a rather public/semi-public (albeit secretive) activity, by centralizing the focus on homes rather than well-known cruising spots in the past before the dawn of dating apps, giving more freedom to hold private notions on preferences with the large availability of choices that may end up being discriminative.

Research Methodology

This study adopts qualitative research that seeks to explore how gay men use language to describe their sexuality and sexual preference pursuing hookups. Qualitative approach is adopted due to its characteristics that allow the investigation of the “everyday events and/or the everyday knowledge of those under investigation” and the “subject constructions” of the research participants (Lick, von Kardorff, & Steike, 2004, p. 8). This study looks at

the everyday knowledge and the subject constructions of the participants to understand their language of sexuality. It seeks to gain information and knowledge on how the participants use language in expressing sexuality when pursuing hookups. Based on the aim, the study is guided by these three research questions:

1. How do gay men express their sexuality in dating apps when pursuing hookups?
2. How do notions of tribes/roles/expressions affect the language used in pursuing hookups?

Three self-identified gay men (identified as AS, BW, and TM) participated in this study. The participants were chosen randomly based on availability. A broadcast of research participants invitation was done through the social media of the researcher (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) and these three men responded expressing interest in participating in this small-scale study.

For the backgrounds of the participants, AS is an out, 24-year-old gay man in an open relationship, who identifies as being more feminine, is flexible (in terms of dominance or submission), and is coming from a Sulawesi-Javanese Muslim family background. BW is a mostly out 27-year-old gay man in a monogamous relationship, who identifies as being somewhere in-between masculine and feminine. He comes from a Javanese Catholic family background. TM is a closeted, 24-year-old gay man who is a single, masculine, and who comes from a Chinese-Protestant family background.

Data collection was conducted through qualitative interviewing. Qualitative interviews are used to “delve into important personal issues.” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 3). Rubin & Rubin (2005) views interviewing as conversations between researchers and participants (as conversational partners) in an extended discussion. They further explain that in qualitative interviewing researcher “elicits depth and detail about the research topic by following up on answers given by the interviewee during the discussion” (p.4). Therefore, this study treats the focus group interview in the manner of a conversation on the topic of language and sexuality.

More than 10 questions were devised as an instrument for a focus-group interview based on the three research questions with several follow-ups and clarifying questions. A focus group interview was conducted in English (with a little mixture of Indonesian) with three of the participants engaging with each other face-to-face. Their answers were recorded and transcribed from a recording to written transcription and with the personal notes that the researcher used during the data collection. The focus-group

discussion's recording lasted for one hour, 25 minutes, and 38 seconds long and was transcribed into 22-page transcription. The answers from the transcription were then highlighted for interesting data that are both relevant to the research questions and the previous studies established in the theoretical review and additional data that might not be relevant to the research questions are also collected, along with the notes that the researcher made during the focus group discussion, such as on certain gestures or expressions used by the participants that might be relevant to the research. These findings are then categorized mainly through their relevance to the focus-group discussion questions and the research questions and are then discussed by relating them to the previous studies in the following section(s).

Findings and discussions

From the focus group interview data, the participants express that there is a difference between the kind of language that masculine and feminine-presenting gays produce in dating applications when pursuing hookups, but the determinants are more than just expressions of gender. Based on the initial questions of the discussion, each of the three participants represented different identifications of expressions, paired with differing levels of being out, and also with their relationship statuses.

On the other hand, they also had several similarities. Most of them are not religious (though all of them came from different religious backgrounds). They started being romantically and/or sexually active a bit later after they came out or started identifying with being gay (mostly through the use of dating applications). They all have families that didn't/wouldn't respond well to them being gay, and on roles, later on, mostly identified as being dominant sides (AS identified more with being a flexible versatile).

The respondents, who were all in their twenties, did not seem to reflect a similar conflict of gay men older than them, such as the ones in Boelstroff's research on being a gay and a Muslim (2005). Though the TM and BW are Christians, like AS, they are all not religious. Perhaps the closest one to show a similar condition would be TM, who came from a very conservative Protestant family. Though that might inhibit him from being out to the public, he does not naturally mention religion as a personal hindrance to accepting himself in his answers, while those in Boellstorff's study may struggle to accept themselves.

Masculine – Feminine indexicality

The participants discuss how they differentiate between masculine or feminine-presenting gays. One of the first answers was behavioral cues such as gestures, with AS specifically mentioning 'limp wrists' and acknowledging his own use of hand movements to make points and BW coining it as 'theatrical hand gestures' as things that denote femininity. Clothing was the second answer, with more feminine men opting for brighter, more colorful, or varied types of clothing according to AS. Words and expressions came up as a third answer, with BW saying that feminine men are more likely to use phrases like, 'yass', 'cin', and 'cuss', which he notes are markers of femininity. TM then gives a fourth answer which relates to power dynamics as cues (Bornstein, 1994), saying that feminine men are likely to be more submissive in their behavior compared to the more masculine ones who are deemed as being more dominant.

However, TM notes that this might depend on their environments, and these four answers might not always denote femininity (or lack thereof, ergo, masculinity), but instead are simply adjustments to the behavior of their surroundings. Though agreeing with TM, BW then counters this by saying that masculine men are still less likely to use those words and expressions and adapt because they may receive societal pressures from using them. This is in line with the findings in Boellstorff (2004), which states that more masculine gay men may wish to not identify with being known as gay by not using the *bahasa gay*.

TM's attempts at trying to explain the environmental reasoning might reflect his lack of objective perception towards the masculine-expressing gays from the outside since he states that he has rarely met feminine-expressing gays. When the gays compartmentalize and categorize themselves, they may isolate their perspective on things on their own turfs only because they are used to a generally homogenous environment (Ravenhill & de Visser, 2017). In this case, though he was right that these determinants may not immediately denote femininity, that still does not erase the fact that masculine gay men are less likely to show those features.

Interests also became an interesting fifth answer, with AS and BW noting that activities like sports, gaming, and traveling being more related to masculinity, while activities that involve the arts might be more related to femininity. This rings true in previous studies as well (Blackwood, 2005; Kiesling, 2007; Ravenhill & de Visser, 2017; Spiller, 2012), as masculine gay men may wish to acquire a 'masculine capital' by taking part in activities that show their athleticism as some sort of compensation for being gay. Below is an excerpt from AS' answer:

I don't know about other than what's on the surface and what's apparent. We also have some kind of different interest I guess? There are some gays who do like stereotypically masculine stuff like sports and games, generally as to reason why I connect to more of the feminine side of the dichotomy if we must is that I don't identify a lot with things like sport and I don't know, plumbing [others laugh]. Interestingly some gays do love this thing and sometimes it's not always necessarily all about the environment? Their family could be supportive, loving, openly liberal family but they like sports, like watching soccer and it doesn't resonate with me. That's why I stand on the feminine side if we must use the dichotomy between.

Though AS is aware that interests may not immediately denote femininity or masculinity, there does exist a sort of dichotomy in the practice of these interests. Though to immediately accept them as truths would make them stereotypes, denying that there is any truth to that at all might be ignorant.

Moving onto the dating applications that they use, most of them have/are currently using Tinder, Grindr, Blued, Hornet, Jack'd, Badoo, Growlr, and Scruff. Applications like Growlr and Scruff seem to be comprised of mostly older men and men of stockier and hairier builds, while the others, though having a more varied demographic, are mostly comprised of generally younger men.

An issue that was raised here by BW and TM was how polite/nice the men were, with the respondents agreeing that the bigger and/or older ones tend to be politer than the skinnier or muscular and/or younger ones. They discussed that this was because the bigger and older men tend to be discriminated against and that is why there are applications that cater to them specifically. AS, who notes that since he does not have strong preferences in the dating applications (unlike BW and TM, who are specifically looking for usually older, bigger, hairier men), he is generally dissatisfied with the existing culture in dating applications, because of how rude or superficial certain people could be.

Indeed, though the more masculine gay men might operate in a homogenous environment of other masculine gay men (Miller, 2015; Ravenhill & de Visser, 2017; Shield, 2018), this does not necessarily mean that they will be impolite, because evidently, in a heterogeneous environment, discrimination is quite rife. Perhaps this can be attributed to the lack of conflicting values in homogenous environments, while in heterogeneous environments, one can be discriminative whether one is masculine, feminine, or in-between. As for the feminine-expressing gay men, their discriminative actions might be explained as an internalization of

the same homophobic values that masculine-expressing gay men may hold (Allen & Oleson, 1999; Eguchi, 2009; Warriner, Nagoshi, & Nagoshi, 2013), similar to how some women internalize misogynistic values in a patriarchal society (Schippers, 2007; Szymanski, Gupta, Carr, & Stewart, 2009). Preferences, thus, are not just a matter of being free to hold them but are also subject to criticism since they carry socio-political connotations.

When asked about which types are more likely to be associated with being masculine or being feminine, most of them associated that with being the skinny twinks, while others are mostly associated with masculinity, especially with bears. TM, BW, and AS reasoned with the fact by saying the following:

TM: The older people like for example when going into dating app tend to be more masculine. Um it may because um in their days back then they've already set their mind straight, or I don't know. But it may also because of their appearance – people tend to judge on someone's appearance – whether they're muscly or big, facial hairs, and things like that. People always tend to judge them as more masculine sometimes it's however people view you, that's also how you'll act. And that makes them to be more masculine it may also being their appearance. Maybe because of their masculine appearance, they feel the need to act masculine. They will be considered masculine.

BW: I think for the case of older people, they're basically tired because they're old. I mean being feminine requires a lot of energy, like also for young people, we're expressing ourselves, exploring ourselves. And for uh, older people, they're already did that so like 'okay I'm done with this, so I'm gonna take a break, more calm. so they're less feminine than the younger people.

AS: I think most of what they said is mostly true. I've found generally slender body twinks tend to stick to the feminine side and the bigger uh, usually the bears are uh, tend to flock to the masculine stuff. To be honest I've noticed variation of – not the hairy bears – but uh chubby people, chubby guys, they tend to be less rigidly split into femininity or masculinity. In my experience they seem to be more fluid. I don't know how to make sense of It either, but to me twinks is heavily feminized place for a social circle to be. And then we have bears which are a more masculinize tribe social circle to be. And I—I find

the chubs, the chubby gays, they tend to be more versatile on the whole masculine and feminine, not just 'top' or 'bottom' or something else.

TM's claims that older gay men felt the need to act masculine because of their masculine appearance. This may be another example of how gay men try to acquire a 'masculine capital' and why they may be driven to act like heterosexual men, do heteronormative activities, or say heteronormative things—like a self-fulfilled prophecy, where a person is only like that not because of pre-existing conditions in the person, but because of the values that they believed in and the society that created those values (Bowles & Flynn, 2010; Rosenthal, 1994; Word, Zanna, & Cooper, 1974).

Language expressions of hooking up in dating apps

When asked whether or not masculine-presenting gays are more likely to initiate conversations about hookups, the participants' answer is 'not always', even though they may be more direct. For the respondents, AS states that there is a fair share of initiative between him and the other men and he usually initiates by complimenting and starting small talk. BW also states there is a fair share in his case, even though most of the time the conversations do not go on either way, and when he initiates it is usually straight to the point, especially when it is 'after midnight'. TM states that he is more on the receiving end, and though he is usually polite, he does not want small talk, preferring to neither prolong the conversations or to make them too brusque.

Based on TM's explanation, less polite or more direct expressions (such as '*fun yuk*' ('let's have sex') or 'I'm fine', or even 'Y' ('yes') instead of full words/sentences) are usually needed because of how busy some people are. So, more assertiveness is needed instead of taking the time to personalize messages (such as using one's own words to express interest in sex or to answer how one is after some time of talking). This seems to reflect the common associations of directness with masculinity (Grainger & Mills, 2016; Kiesling, 2007; Vicary, 2007), with little attention or sensitivity to conversations that do not get right to the point, that is, small talk to maintain relational practice (Bayles, 2009; Holmes & Marra, 2004), something more commonly associated with femininity. BW notes that other factors determine this as well, such as how interesting their profile pictures and bios are. TM adds that to explain his dislike for small talk, he felt that most of what they wanted to know is usually already on the bio.

Power dynamics as cues are also found in expressions like 'T/B' ('Top or bottom?') and 'host' which emphasize a focus on the importance of

roles, thus taking into account also one's tribe and nature. This is difficult for people who neither identify as a top or a bottom and instead identify with being a versatile or a side because it seems like the existing practice insists on a dichotomy. All of the respondents note that this is a tendency for the hookup culture to focus on roles.

These expressions are often labeled to be negative in the gay community despite being practiced almost all of the time, because, for example, BW states that he might not do anal sex right away even if he was interested. Therefore, these expressions are often considered to be rude or even intrusive, especially when the person's answer does not conform to the expected answers to the dichotomous question. In general, they dealt with these expressions by either going with the sociolect and giving them the expected or at least necessary answers or they ignore them completely. Some of them reason that they may be politer in real life, so it is about giving others a fair chance.

Most of the respondents agree that this issue is caused by an incongruence of how we talk in real life and how we talk online because one would not be able to inquire about someone's sexual role or willingness to have sex with most people in real life. When meeting the people that they met online in real life, they would try to initiate conversations to give them a fair chance and try to apply the same approach that they did in the chat, with the exception of immediately going into talking about sex (unless it was what was intended in the first place), making it relatively easier to be polite. When sex is at the forefront of their intentions, however, the respondents note that they would likely bring the subject up sooner and meet at a residential place or at least end up there if they meet at a public place. Most of the respondents have generally similar templates for different situations, understanding that if their initial inquires in the chat were about roles or hooking up or they might have even sent explicit pictures, then they know where it is heading; the same also goes for the reverse.

They note, however, that people may be politer in real life because they are afraid of being recognized as gay (for example, using '*itu*' or '*begitu*' ('this', 'that', 'you know what', 'like that') to replace the words 'gay' or 'sex'). Being online, and especially being anonymous, affords them a great deal of freedom to do as they please (Miller, 2015). In a public place, they are usually subject to common norms. This can be tied back to why more masculine men may not use *bahasa gay* or at least more explicit language, because they are afraid that this might 'out' them involuntarily.

Expressions of erotic desire in dating apps

On being asked about their own preferences in hooking up in terms of masculinity or femininity and whether or not it would matter, AS said that

it would not matter to him even though looking back he states that he has had more 'success' with the more feminine ones because he feels like they are more accessible and easier to communicate with. BW said that he preferred someone in-between and just wants a balance between the two, with him preferring someone more on the feminine side since he is often skeptical of masculine men. TM states he prefers masculine men, mostly because he has rarely met feminine men and is looking for something equal in terms of how they treat each other, as he states that masculine-feminine pairs may be 'unequal', in his view.

Again, this strengthens the previous mentions on how fewer conflicts may occur in a homogenous environment compared to a more heterogeneous environment. It can be argued that the fact the respondents sought partners or had more success with partners who were more like themselves showed a sense of self-projection in dating preferences (Lee, Loewenstein, Ariely, Hong, & Young, 2008). Even when power plays still exist that make things unequal (such as the desire to find someone more masculine/feminine and so on), there is still a tendency for self-projection onto others. For example, gay men who express dislike for feminine-expressing gay men may be reflecting their insecurities about their own femininity (or lack of masculinity). Therefore, they would seek for partners who are more masculine, or they may indeed seek partners who are less masculine to demonstrate their own masculinity (Ravenhill & de Visser, 2017).

However, TM follows up by saying that, since he is not looking for anal sex either, it rarely matters whether or not someone is a top or a bottom and therefore whether someone is masculine or feminine. He does state that these roles, tribes, and natures all affect gender expressions. AS adds that whenever he meets someone who does not understand the concept of gay relationships, upon understanding the top-bottom dichotomy, immediately assigns notions of gender expressions or natures unto them in the language of their discourse.

BW notes that this is because in places where homosexuality is a taboo, the gays 'import' the dynamics of common heterosexual couples where the men are more dominant and the women are more submissive. There is a sense of giving and taking that TM notes could be more equal in an interaction between sides since there is an absence of the top-bottom dichotomy. AS adds the example that one country even punishes those who bottom for anal but not those who top for anal when they are caught having sex because it is deemed illegal, noting that it seems like there's inequality between being a top or bottom. Indeed, as it was stated in Ravenhill and de Visser (2017), 'being anally receptive was positioned in opposition to masculinity owing to its symbolic resemblance to the receptivity of a woman

in heterosexual vaginal intercourse' (p.20), therefore challenging notions of masculinity.

This hegemony of the heteronormative society is something that is central to the issues of the LGBTQ+ community. In the absence of our own notions of practice because of how 'othered' we are, the discourse thus imports the 'common' practice. Therefore, the heteronormative practices that are rife with patriarchal values that are problematic in their own contexts. The notion of roles, for example, is tied firmly with anal sex, which is penetrative sex, which may see sex as only penetrative (Olmstead, Pasley, & Fincham, 2013; Suschinsky, Bossio, & Chivers, 2014), as if a replication of heterosexual sex which requires a penis and an orifice located in the lower region of a person. As was the example in AS' answer, many gays often immediately use a heteronormative lens once they have understood the concept of roles in gay sex, suggesting that perhaps the very concept of those roles are indeed borne from a heteronormative source of framework (Henderson, 2018; Kiguwa, 2015; Lau, 2005; Reilly, 2016).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the gay community alone is rife with complex issues in terms of relations because of how still closely tied our cultures and our practices are with heteronormative notions. This can be reflected in the language that we use, especially in discourses related to sexual activities within dating applications, something that is inherent to the modern relational practices of the gay community. The gay community has grown to be a very complex community since the dawn of *bahasa gay* in our sociolect.

Firstly, though there is a difference between the languages used by masculine and feminine-expressing gays in pursuing hookups through online dating applications. The differences are not caused by the differing gender expressions alone, but by a complex nuance of other aspects—they are compounded by notions of roles, nature, and tribes, as well as the heteronormative society as a whole. Accepting the determinants as fixed might lead to stereotyping, but there is a need to acknowledge some truth in how there are essential differences between masculine and feminine-expressing gay men in such a discourse.

Secondly, though more masculine gay men may be more direct in initiating conversations, it may reflect their own intentions on immediately going after what they want (in this case, sex), while more feminine gay men may engage in small talk as a form of relational practice before reaching the ultimate goal of sex. This thus affects the sense of politeness in the conversations, thought to be related to the fact that speaking online may not be the same as speaking face to face. In the end, it is not about initiating the

conversations (even though therein exists an expectation, for example, for more masculine men as the 'dominant' ones to start things first), but about the maintenance of the conversation in relation to the intentions and goals of the conversation.

Thirdly and lastly, the effects of the notions of tribes/roles/expressions and such on the language used in pursuing hookups are apparent through the preferences of the respondents or the gay men that they have encountered in the dating applications. Fewer conflicts occur in environments where the members mostly share similar values or characteristics because of self-projection, and even when these individuals desire for people that have other characteristics, they may seek to project themselves in the power play of the possible relationship. This is something that indicates a hegemony of heteronormative values in gay relationships, which is a major issue in the community because of how divisive it could be.

Since this small study is limited to notions of language expressions of sexuality in pursuing hookups on dating applications, further studies may want to expand beyond this territory. A bigger scale field research can be conducted to study the responses that gay men have received in dating apps when pursuing hookups or perhaps even from other members of the LGBTQ+ community, by collecting samples of the ubiquity of certain expressions. Future studies may also want to investigate specifically about the notions (such as the gender expressions, roles, tribes, and nature) to properly address their origins and the effects that they have on society, or about how exactly heteronormativity is a major issue in the gay community.

In the field of teaching and learning, it is suggested that more similar topics like this need to be included in the curriculum of college courses, so that the education of both members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies do not fall in the LGBTQ+ community only, but also the community as a whole. Learners may benefit from being represented in the learning of this topic and may receive the opportunity to engage with the issues in academic discourse, not only as a matter of scholastic achievements, but also in how sensitive and informed they would be about themselves and the community as a whole.

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