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Jeffrey P. Acaba
Action for Health Initiative, Inc.

Meanings, Preferences, and Power among Men Having Sex with Men in Manila

Abstract This study explores the meanings, preferences, and power relations ascribed to sexual roles. One hundred and seventy-eight men having sex with men (MSM) participated in an online survey in 2010, seven of whom participated in a face-to-face in-depth interview in order describe the scripts attached to sexual roles, preferences for sexual partners, and perceptions of HIV risks. Sexual identities do not dictate sexual roles, which depends on choice based on experience, negotiation, emotional attachment, and power relations. No significant difference was found between sexual roles and physical traits, which suggest that physical characteristics are not a gauge in looking for a potential sexual partner. Power dynamics between men also implicate reciprocity. There is a need to integrated masculinity, power dynamics, and sex in HIV education programs toward the demystification of misconceptions about sex roles and risks to HIV.

Keywords men having sex with men, sexual identity, sexual role, sexual preference, masculinity, heteronormativity



Jeffrey P. Acaba works for Action for Health Initiative (ACHIEVE), Inc. He has a BA in Behavioural Science from UP Manila, and is currently pursuing an MA in Anthropology in UP Diliman.

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Introduction



Data from the Philippines show that more and more MSM are exposed to HIV (Solares, 2012). This foregrounds the interest that epidemiological researchers give to the prevalence of HIV among MSM. Since 2007, eight in every 10 new cases of HIV involved MSM. HIV prevalence among MSM had increased from less than 1 to 1.7% in less than three years, while the prevalence of syphilis was 1.6%. Knowledge of safe sex through condom use was relatively high (35%) but access to HIV testing was only 5%, both figures, though, were lower than the figures from the United Nations (Solares, 2012).

Farr and Wilson (2010) show that unsafe anal sex account for the spread of HIV in the MSM community. However, a recent study on HIV shows the contrary: the MSM community is heterogeneous and fluid, and economic and cultural factors influence sexual behaviour (HAIN, 2012). Notwithstanding this, program implementors tend to conflate MSM with LGBT, which presumes that MSM is identity-free (Young and Meyer, 2005). The conflation perpetuates the mistaken relationships between sexual practices and sexual orientations (Pathela et al, 2006; Yarhouse et al, 2011). It also purveys heteronormativity that aligns biological sex with sexuality, gender identity, and gender roles (Lovaas and Jenkins, 2006). Heteronormativity dichotomizes sexual roles into “Top”

(inserter) and “Bottom” (receiver). By framing MSM sex as such, the inserter in anal sex is the masculine Top and the receiver of the act, the insertee, the effeminate Bottom.

Sexual script theory situates these labels within a social context that explains how culturally constructed meanings and messages shape sexual identity and sexuality (Frith and Kitzinger, 2001). Sexual scripts make possible the understanding of reference to predictable stages, reference to common knowledge, and the use of hypothetical and general instances (Frith & Kitzinger, 2001). They include also sexual preferences and behaviors in sex.

Knowledge of sexual roles and the rules ascribed are important in understanding how MSM become at risk to HIV. This paper contributes to the growing body of literatures that (1) probe into the links between sex identities, sex roles, and vulnerabilities to HIV in MSM and GLBT communities (HAIN, 2012), (2) delineate sex identity from sex roles, and (3) consider sexual roles fluid and varied as sexual identities.

Some studies explore how sexual roles contribute toward understanding HIV risks in MSM communities (Stall et al, 2000). Society ascribes sexual roles and positions in anal sex. MSM identify three roles: “Top”, as insertive; “Bottom”, as receptive; and “Versatile”, as insertive or receptive (Underwood, 2003). Public health research that explores meanings and preferences attached to these roles stresses that “the study of self-labels has considerable applied value, such as its possible predictive capacity in tracking risky behaviors and safe sex practices” (Bering, 2009, p. 1).

In 2010, Grov, Pason, and Bimbi correlated sexual roles with penis size, sexual health, and self-identified roles. Employing a cross-sectional street-intercepted method among 1,065 gay and bisexual men in gay, bisexual, and transgender (GBT) community events in New York City in 2006, Grov and his team found that

penis size was related to sexual identities. Men with below average penises were more likely “Bottoms” (anal receptive), men with average penises more likely “Versatiles” (receptive or insertive), and men with above average penises more likely “Tops” (insertive). These support views about the penetrative role of well-hung men. Drummond and Filiault argued that penis size

May be of increased importance to some gay men due to the erotic nature of the body in many gay cultures and the ‘double presence’ of the penis in a gay relationship or sexual encounter..., exacerbated by the overall importance of the body in dominant gay male culture (2007, p. 122).

Hart, Wolitski, and Purcell (2003) analyzed meanings attached to sexual roles. They found relationships between sex roles and psychological states such as internalized homophobia, sensation-seeking compulsivity, anxiety, and gay self-identification. Eighty-eight percent of 205 participants disclosed their preferred sex roles; Tops had higher internalized homophobia; Tops did not consider themselves homosexual because they had female sexual partners; and Versatiles had relatively higher sexual sensation-seeking behaviors.

Over the years, however, researchers gave little attention to cultural and class-based notions and meanings attached to sexual role preference despite its significance. Citing Carrier (1977), Hart (2003) argued that the notion that sexual roles are fluid maybe specific to middle- and upper-class non-Latino Caucasian Americans only. Mexicans and Mexican-Americans could not choose to perform both Top and Bottom roles. In many countries, the “homosexual” label was associated with Bottoms. HIV-related information addressing MSM issues are limited to generic preventive strategies, i.e., ABCs of HIV, and messages that cater to the general population. There is a need to explore the associations between sex identities and sex roles because of their implications to messaging aimed at MSM communities toward correcting the mistaken notion that Bottoms have higher risks of

acquiring HIV than Tops (Groves, Parsons, and Bimbi, 2007; Hart et al., 2003).

Power figures in sexual role preference. In a cross-sectional study involving 396 online respondents, Yee (2002) showed that sex role preferences formed a continuum and that MSM used physical traits such as age, weight, and hairiness to mark masculinity and dominance. Bottoms preferred masculine qualities, i.e., older, hairier, and taller partners, and were willing to experience “rough” sex. Tops preferred less masculine traits and wanted to dominate their sexual partners (Damon, 2001).

This paper is based on a research that I did in 2010. I explore the meanings, preferences, and power relations ascribed to sexual roles among MSM. Specifically, I describe the rules attached to different sexual roles and the differences in perceptions of HIV risk among these sexual roles. This may contribute to designing interventions that target MSM and understanding how cultural and social factors influence sexual role formation.

I purposively recruited 178 respondents from various online sites. These sites are: *Planetromeo* (www.planetromeo.com); *MiRC*, a chat room; *Facebook* (www.facebook.com), a social networking site; and online and text-based “clans”. The last are bisexual and gay groups who communicate and converge through their websites and text messages. Online recruitment made possible the representation of the entire MSM community, which is difficult to achieve in face-to-face recruitment. The strategy though, had its own limitations, i.e., distribution in terms of location, age, and sex roles were difficult to control. I utilized a mixed-method research design by combining online survey with in-depth interview in order to explore themes toward theory-building (Wilde et al., 1994).

For the survey, I designed a 20-item multiple-choice questionnaire. It contained introductory questions about the

profile of the respondents and questions on sexual orientation, sexual behaviors, sexual roles, and preferences for sexual partners. The respondents had the option to indicate their names and email addresses and mobile numbers for possible interview or not. The self-administered questionnaire was posted on *SurveyMonkey* (www.surveymonkey.com), an online survey-hosting site. Clan administrators helped forward the links to their members. Survey forms were coded and the responses were encoded in SPSS Version 12. Statistical significance between variables was calculated using T-test at 95% confidence level.

For the qualitative component of the methodology, I prepared a 10-item interview guide. The guide questions touched on sexual identity, sexual practices, and role preferences. I purposively identified respondents based on their reported sexual roles, and I invited them to one on one interview through SMS and e-mail. A mutually agreed schedule was set for the interview. Prior to the actual interview, I briefed the participants about the objectives of the research, confidentiality, and anonymity. Those who wanted to participate in the research signed a consent form prior to the start of the interview. From the pool of survey respondents who provided their e-mails and mobile numbers, I chose seven (7) participants for the one-on-one face-to-face interview based on self-identified sex roles that they indicated in the survey. I transcribed the interviews and coded the transcripts for categories and themes based on the topics discussed.

I tried to observe the strictest ethical considerations during the entire research process. Information on the objectives of the research formed part of the introduction script of the online survey. I reminded the participants that the information that they would provide will be used solely for the study. During the interview, I addressed them using their pseudonyms. The data were disposed three (3) months after the results were analyzed.

This research was limited to MSM who had access to the Internet and accomplished the online survey according to schedule.

Profiles

Figure 1 shows that 178 respondents participated in the online survey, of which almost half (46%) were aged 18 - 24 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Percentage, by Age, 2010, (N=178)

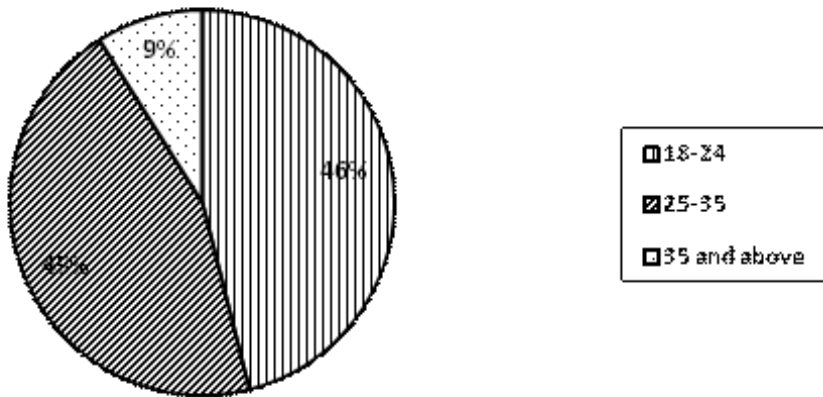


Figure 2 shows that most respondents live in Quezon City (24.7%), Manila (23.6%), and Makati City (19.1).

Figure 3 shows that 114 respondents (64%) identify themselves as bisexual but more than half of them (62 or 54%) prefer men as sexual partners, while six claim to be bisexual but prefer women.

The data support Tan's finding (2002) that in Philippine context the term "self-identified bisexual" means "straight-acting", although both terms refer to MSM. Fifty two respondents (29%) self-identify as gay and 12 (6.7%) as "straight trippers" or self-

Figure 2. Percentage, by Location, 2010, (N=178)

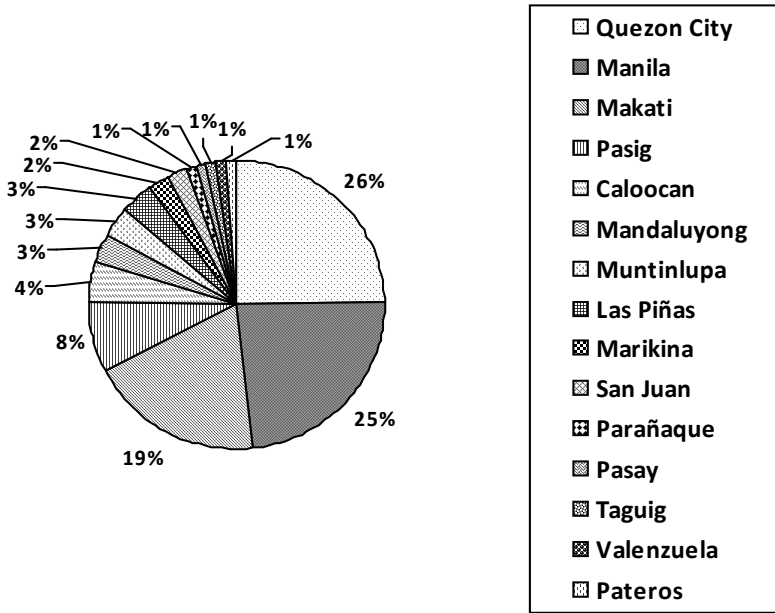
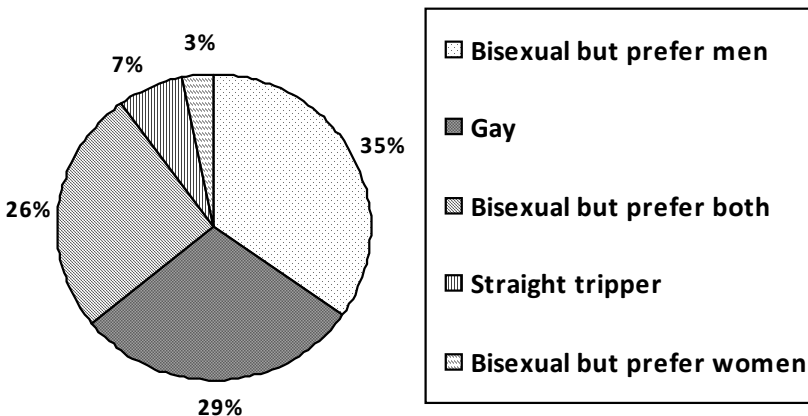


Figure 3. Percentage, Sexual Preference, 2010, (N=178)



identified heterosexual who have sex with men. Only two (2) of every 10 respondents (24%) disclose their sexuality to others, including their friends and families.

Defining Sexual Roles

The survey respondents identify seven (7) roles. These roles are (1) Power Bottom, (2) Bottom, (3) Versatile Bottom, (4) Versatile, (5) Versatile Top, (6) Top, and (7) Pure Top.

The respondents define sexual roles based on preferred sexual acts. Table 1 shows that self-identified sexual roles determine roles in anal sex and fellatio. Pure Tops and Tops are insertors, Tops are receivers of pleasure, Bottoms and Power Bottoms are receptors, but Bottoms can also be insertors in fellatio. Versatiles can be Tops and/or Bottoms, hence the label. Mood and level of attraction toward sexual partners influence the choice of sexual roles.

Survey results reveal that more than half of the respondents (67%) play Versatile roles, 40 (23%) exclusively Top roles, and 18 (10%) exclusively Bottom roles. The interviewees identify four MSM acts, namely, mutual masturbation, rimming or anilingus, blowjob or fellatio, and anal sex. Sexual roles determine fellatio and anal penetration not masturbation and rimming.

The findings support Yee's (2002) sexual role categorization of Tops, Versatiles, and Bottoms. The data also show that 70% of MSM seldom engage in anal sex, which contradicts Yee's finding, but supports the findings from the *2009 Integrated HIV Behavioral and Serologic Surveillance (IHBSS)*. In addition, only around half of the respondents experienced anal sex (53.8%), and less than half (47.2%) never performed insertor roles in anal sex (Pedroso, Sasota, and Tacardon, 2010). In the opinion of a Versatile, anal sex depends on sexual mood. There are exceptions, however: Pure Tops always opt for anal sex.

Table 1. Sexual Acts vis-à-vis Sexual Roleⁱⁱ

Sexual act	Sexual role						
	Pure Top	Top	Versa Top	Versa equal	Versa Bottom	Bottom	Power Bottom
Blowjob (fellatio)	I	I/R	I/R	I/R	I/R	I/R	R
Anal penetration	I	I	I/R	I/R	I/R	R	R

ⁱⁱLegend: I – insertive, R – receptive

MSM prescribe characteristics to and expectations from sexual roles. Pure Tops have to be more masculine, straight-acting, the dominant partners, the insertors in anal sex, and the receivers of pleasure in fellatio. A Pure Top says that,

As pure Top, dapat astig ako. Hanap ko magaling mag-suck dahil magaling ako mag-fuck. People expect us to know the positions. I always make the orders, kahit hindi ako passive. Expected yun from my partner to give me pleasure (Pure Top, 23, Quezon City).

[As pure Top, I should be dominant type. I look for partners who suck well because I can give a good fuck. People expect me to know the positions. I always make the orders, not the one performing. It’s expected of me.]

Bottoms and Power Bottoms have to be submissive, the pleasure givers, who also find pleasure as receivers in anal sex. However, Power Bottoms prefer Tops or Pure Tops for extreme anal sexual pleasure. Versatiles can be Tops and/or Bottoms. This, however, depends on sexual mood, negotiation, and the kind of dominance/submission roles at play. MSM who consider sexual roles irrelevant find Versatile roles most pleasurable because the possibilities are limitless. A Versatile says that,

Wala kaming problema sa sex role. Depende sa mood at kung ano ang trip ko, yun ang gagawin ko... yun din ang maganda pag versa[tile] ka, pwede mo gawin lahat. Depende rin sa partner, syempre (Versatile, 30, Makati City).

[I don't have any problem with sexual roles. What I do in bed depends on my mood. That's what's good with Versa(tile), you can do everything, depending on your partner.]

This echoes the findings of Hart et al. (2003) that Versatiles score higher in sexual sensation seeking compared to Tops and Bottoms.

Shifting Sexual Roles

MSM learn about sexual roles through exploration, experience, and reading and watching pornography on the Internet. They are willing to try anything once, and they prefer the most satisfying roles in sex. A Versatile Bottom says that,

Pag nagpa-anal ka na, at nagustuhan mo, Bottom ka na. Pag hindi mo nagustuhan, Top ka. Pag trip-trip lang, versa[tile] ka (Versatile Bottom, 28, Pasay City).

[If you liked being Bottomed, then you are Bottom. If you did not like it, you're Top. If you like it depending on your mood, you're Versatile.]

However, negotiations and emotional attachments with partners can alter sexual roles. Coercion also plays a role, which may alter pre-identified sexual role at times. A Versatile Top says that,

Minsan nag-inuman kami tapos nag-sex kami ng barkada ko. Habang nagsi-sex na kami, bigla niya akong pinatihaya. Sabi ko Top ako, pero pinilit niya ako. Kaya ayun, nagpaubaya na lang ako. Crush ko rin naman siya e. Pero once lang nangyari yun. Oo, Top pa rin ako. Masakit magpaBottom, (Top, 26, Marikina City).

[We had a drinking session with my peers. When we got drunk, one of my friends invited me for sex. During foreplay, he asked me to turn around. I said I was Top, but he forced me. Since I like him, I eventually agreed to. But that won't happen again. It's painful to be a Bottom.]

Social expectations of effeminacy among gays dictate sexual roles. A Pure Bottom says that,

Pag effem[inate] ka, ikaw lagi yung receiver. Ikaw yung laging lumuluhod (laughs) (Power Bottom, 29, Quezon City).

[If you're effeminate, you should always be the receiver. You are always expected to kneel.]

This agrees with Yee's (2002) findings that there is a fairly broad spectrum of sexual roles. An MSM may play different roles at different times. This variability of roles show that sexual identity is divorced from sexual roles.

Preferences

Compatibility is important to MSM to avoid disappointments and inhibitions in bed. Consider, for example, the following statements:

(1)

Ang awkward naman nun kung pareho kayong Bottom diba. Someone must be on Top if someone is at the Bottom. Being a versa Bottom, I don't want to get fucked by a versa as well. I want to get fucked by someone who's exclusively Top (Versatile Bottom, 28, Pasay City).

[It's awkward if you're both Bottom. Someone must be on Top if someone is at the Bottom. Being a Versa Bottom, I don't want to get fucked by a Versa as well. I want to get fucked by someone who's exclusively Top.]

(2)

Prior to meet up, dapat alam nyo na kung Top siya o Bottom. Paano na lang pag sabay kayong tumuwad? (Bottom, 27, Caloocan City).

[Prior to meet up, one should know who's Top or Bottom. What would it feels like if both you suddenly bend on your knees waiting for a thrust?]

Compatibility enables partners to assume sexual roles and expect gratification.

Pag alam ko kung Top ba siya o Bottom, alam ko na kung anong dapat gawin. Knowing his role makes me psych up kung ano ang dapat gawin in bed. For total sex satisfaction (Top, 23, Quezon City).

[If I know if he's Top or Bottom, I'll know what to do. Knowing his role makes me psych up on what to do in bed. For total sex satisfaction.]

Some MSM claim that sexual roles are irrelevant; rather, performing what are expected from each other are important.

(1)

Para sa akin kasi, hindi siya importante. Ako kasi, bilang Top, mas masarap yung kung ang fina-fuck mo ay Top rin. Mas nakakalibog (Top, 26, Marikina City).

[For me it's not important. As a Top, I also like fucking someone who's [also] Top. The surprise is pleasurable to me.]

(2)

Versa[tile] ako e kaya wala akong pakialam. Mas gusto ko less talk, more action (Versatile, 30, Makati City).

[I'm a Versa[tile] so it doesn't matter what his sexual role is. Less talk, more action.]

Sexual Role Preference

Sexual role preferences are diverse. Pure Tops would prefer Bottom roles, i.e., Versatile Bottom, Bottom or Power Bottom; Bottoms prefer Tops, excluding Versatiles; Power Bottoms prefer pure Tops; and Versatiles have no preferences because they rely instead on mood and their partner's preferences.

Sexual identity is not indicative of sexual role. For instance, a self-identified masculine heterosexual has regular sex with his girlfriend and engages in male-to-male sex when "in the mood for it" as a Bottom. The sensation of being "bottomed" makes him prefer anal sex with another man. In a similar quote, a straight-acting gay man would be expected to perform the Top or Versatile role plays Bottom roles. A Bottom says that,

Hindi ako effeminate! Yung ibang Top mas prefer nila yung discreet (sic) bottom kasi gusto nila yung idea na may fina-fuck silang as manly as I am (Bottom, 27, Caloocan City).

[No, I'm not effeminate! Some Tops prefer discreet (sic) Bottoms because they love the idea that they are fucking someone as manly as I am.]

Sexual identity does not indicate sexual role. However, MSM attach certain characteristics, expectations, and stereotypes to sexual roles. For instance, MSM expect Pure Tops to be masculine, straight-acting, and domineering in bed.

The notion that all Bottoms are effeminate and that all Tops are masculine still prevails among MSM. One Versatile Top shares that some of his casual partners were surprised to know that, despite being effeminate, his preferred sexual role is Top. This implies that MSM, still subscribe to stereotypes and expectations, i.e., effeminates are Bottoms only, submissive, and so forth. In the context of HIV, MSM believe that Bottoms and Versatiles are more prone to acquiring HIV than Tops, and that they should provide condoms for anal sex.

Physical Preference

This paper considers age, height, and body built as preferences variables. However, since the figures for Pure Tops and Power Bottoms were too few to compute for proportions, the former was combined with Top and the latter with Bottom.

Physical preferences are characteristics that MSM look for from potential sexual partners. Figure 4 shows that less than half of the respondents (42%) prefer potential sexual partners of same age. T-test reveals that there is no significant difference between sexual roles in terms of age preferences ($M = 3.55$, $s = 9.083$, $t = 5.215$).

Figure 5 shows that almost half of the respondents (42%) prefer sexual partners of same height as they are (Figure 5). More Bottoms prefer sexual partners who are taller than they are. This is considered to be of no significance because no significant difference in terms of height preferences is found ($M = 3.75$, $s = 9.050$, $t = 5.532$).

Figure 6 shows that more than half (56%) prefer an average built person. No significance in terms of sexual roles

Figure 4
Percentage of Age Preference, Sexual Role

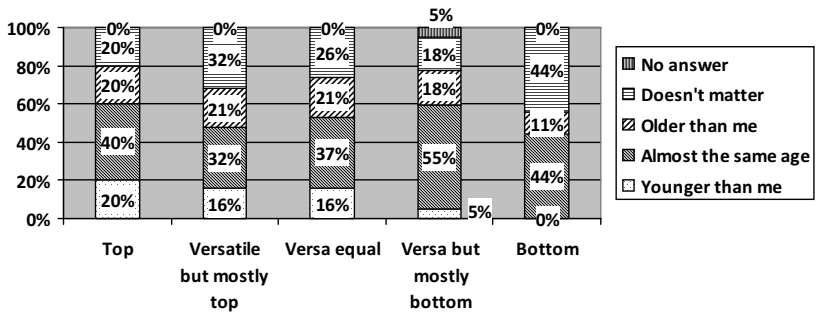


Figure 5
Percentage of Height Preference, Sexual Role

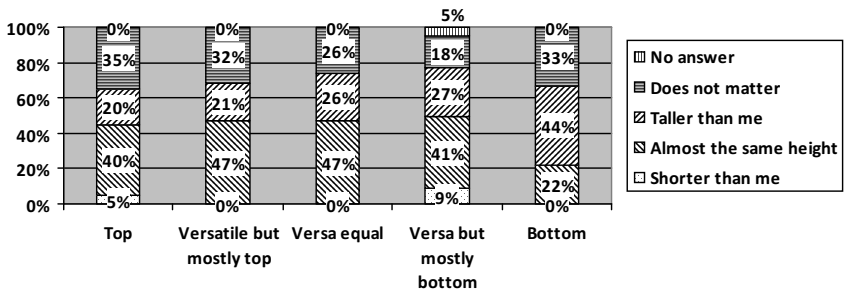
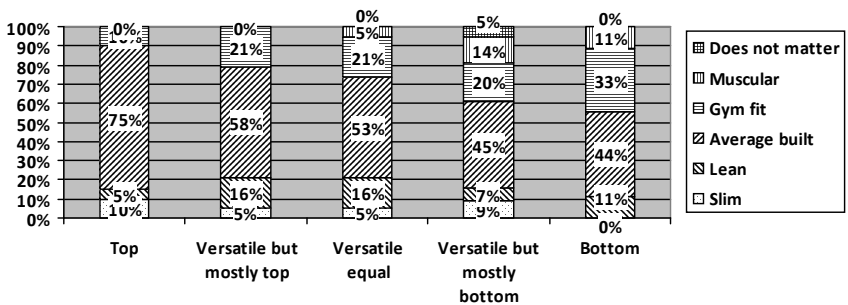


Figure 6
Percentage of Body Built Preference, by Sexual Role



are found in terms of preferred body build ($M = 4.02$, $s = 9.022$, $t = 5.949$).

Non-significance on the preference for age, height, and body built suggests that physical preference is not a gauge in looking for a sexual partner; instead, MSM would ask for their partner's sexual role. One of the basic questions, besides "ASL (age, sex and location)", in chat rooms and social networking apps and sites is the inquiry, "Top/Bottom?" Since sex role identification lays down the role expectations in sex, i.e., fellatio, Versatiles have to indicate their preferred roles. Looking for the physical characteristics (i.e. asking for height, weight, age, body built) becomes secondary, if not irrelevant.

Knowing their partner's sexual role and disclosing it before engaging in a sexual act even before meet ups help avoid confusion and disappointment. A Versatile Top says that,

Hindi siya importante pero mas alam ko yung pwedeng mangyari at kung papaano paliligayahin yung ka-sex ko. Mas mababawasan rin yung awkwardness sa aming dalawa (Interview with Versatile Top, 26, Pasig City.).

[It's not really important but it will enable us to know what to happen and will be easier for us to give pleasure to the other person. It will also lessen awkwardness between me and my partner.] Interview with Versatile Top, 26, Pasig City.

Negotiation and Power

The dichotomization of sexual roles into Top or Bottom does not only indicate heteronormativity but also denotes power relations. In heteronormative settings, the female is the receiver of sexual pleasure, while the male is the insertor and giver of pleasure. Some respondents reject this because MSM do not conform to the dichotomy. A Versatile Bottom says that,

Sa totoo lang, wala sa akin kung ang partner ko ay Top o Bottom. This is a social construction na gawin niya ito o gawin niya yan. Iba kasi ang homosexual

relationship sa het[erosexual relationship]. In heterosexuals, women must receptive and men must be on Top. [This is very] patriarchal. For homosexuals, this must not be an issue (Versatile Bottom, 28, Pasay City).

[To be frank, I don't care if my partner is Top or Bottom. This is a social construction of someone must do this and someone must to that. Homosexual relationship is different supposedly to het[erosexual relationship]. In heterosexuals, women must receptive and men must be on Top. [This is very] patriarchal. For homosexuals, this must not be an issue.]

The idea of power is not about submission but sharing of control between sexual partners. Power is redistributed from the insertor to the insertee. “[P]ower between two parties engaging in a sexual act becomes less unevenly distributed, and that the reliance of interdependent positions on each other will become relatively less one-sided and more reciprocal” (Elias, 1978, p. 145).

Top is synonymous with dominance. It is for this reason that Tops and Versatile give orders for Bottoms to follow. Bottoms and Versatile Bottom like being dominated and give pleasure to their partners. This contradicts heteronormative penetrative sexual act wherein men, as insertors, are givers of pleasure, while women, as receptors, are receivers of pleasure. Referring back to Elias' idea of power, some MSM prefer those who are like them in physical traits.

Since sexual roles are not overt, knowing one's sexual role is important. Otherwise, the sexual act might not happen. A Top says that,

Preferences are there as qualifications. Pero pag type ninyo ang isa't isa, yun na yun. Wag lang kayo parehong Top o Bottom. Walang mangyayari sa inyo (Top, 26, Marikina City).

[Preferences are there as qualifications. But if you like each other, that's it. Just don't be either Top or Bottom. Nothing will happen with you two [in bed.]

MSM get a sense of heightened ego boost and power over their partners who are also “men”. A Power Top says that,

The idea that someone equal, a man, is fucking you and that you can fuck him in return, gives me heightened pleasure. Parang mas astig kapag yung bino-Bottom mo ay astig din. Nakaka-boost ng confidence (Power Top, 23, Quezon City).

[The idea that someone equal, a man, is fucking you and that you can fuck him in return, gives me heightened pleasure. It boosts my confidence if the one I am fucking is as manly as I am.]

Tops get a feeling of ownership and dominance over other men whenever they have sex. A Power Top says that,

Ang sarap lang ng feeling na when you meet someone whom you have had sex with, ang sarap ipagyabang na, ‘ah siya? Na-fuck ko na yan, e (Power Top, 23, Quezon City).

[It feels good when you meet someone whom you had sex with. It adds to your confidence when you claim that you have already fucked someone.]

Vulnerability to HIV

MSM believe that Bottoms and Versatiles are prone to HIV than Tops. They also believe that Versatiles have higher vulnerabilities to HIV because of their roles than Bottoms. More than half of the respondents (56%) used condoms when they last engaged in anal sex for hygiene and protection against sexually transmitted diseases (STD), including HIV. The figure is higher compared to the 2010 data reported by the Philippines to the *Universal Access Full Report* in 2011 to the United Nations at only 32% (HAIN 2011).

Sex roles and stereotypes may partly explain low condom use among MSM. The interviewees state that Bottoms and Versatiles carry condoms while Tops do not. One Top asserts that he prefers not to use condoms because, as insertor, he is less likely to acquire any STD. A Versatile brought up the issue of pleasure: condoms

only lessen the sensation in anal sex. MSM do not use condom in fellatio because they do not like the feeling of sucking on rubber. Romantic partners do not use condom because they trust that their partners are safe. Ejaculating in the mouth and/or anus of partners is like “seeding” (*pagpupunla*), which symbolizes intimacy, acceptance, and heightened pleasure.

Conclusion

Preference and mood/situation define sexual roles, which are different from sexual identities. Sexual roles carry rules and meanings that set expectations on how MSM should perform in bed. Role altering factors include coercion and social ascriptions and expectations. In looking for a sexual partner, it is important for MSM to know their potential partner’s sexual role before engaging in a sexual act. No significant difference were also found between sexual role and physical preference, which suggests that physical traits are insignificant in looking for a sexual partner. Sexual compatibility then is determined based on sexual role and not the physical characteristics of their sexual partner. MSM have the mistaken notion that receptive, submissive, pleasure-giving roles are more prone to infections from STDs, including HIV, and therefore expect those who perform such roles to carry condoms for safe sex. Sexual roles are important in understanding the prevalence of HIV in MSM, including the production of educative and informative materials that target MSM communities towards safe sex.



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