

Intersecting Religion and Sexuality

Sociological Perspectives

Edited by

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'Agree to Disagree': An Analysis of the Narrative of a Young Indonesian Gay Christian through the Lens of Intersectional and Poststructuralist Feminism

Teguh Wijaya Mulya

1 Introduction

Feminist scholars have drawn attention to the onto-epistemological differences between intersectionality and poststructuralism, particularly the differing understandings of power, oppression, the self, and resistance strategies. There have been debates between scholars from both camps; the intersectional side have denounced poststructuralists for flattening oppressive hierarchies (Collins, 1998) and the poststructuralist camp have criticised the intersectional as identitarian (e.g., Mann, 2013; Nash, 2013). Some researchers have attempted to reconcile these disparate theoretical perspectives but have not been very successful (Carbin and Edenheim, 2013; Staunæs, 2003). Neither highlighting the conflicts nor attempting to combine these approaches, this chapter aims to offer an alternative way to approach this intersectional-poststructuralist debate, that is, by juxtaposing an intersectional and poststructuralist feminist analysis of one narrative (of a young Indonesian gay Christian), fleshing out their contrasting onto-epistemological stances, and reflecting on this juxtaposition. This chapter also seeks to contribute to the existing literature by exhibiting the underrepresented account of the interplay between religion and sexuality in a specific context in the Global South, namely, Indonesia.

The chapter begins with a review of the debates between intersectional and poststructuralist feminists. The context and the methodology of the study will then be discussed, before two analyses of Anto's narrative (a young Indonesian gay Christian) are presented. The chapter ends with some methodological, epistemological and conceptual reflections on how these approaches might be both enabling and constraining in different ways, and what the implications are for researchers in the field of sexuality and religion.

2 Intersectional versus Poststructuralist Feminists: Current Debates

Intersectional feminists are concerned with the ways in which interconnected systems of oppression shape individual and group-based identities, and how to liberate people from those oppressions (Collins, 2012). The main postulate is that the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of each system of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). The subordination of Black women, for example, cannot be fully understood by analysing racism and sexism in an additive manner (Yuval-Davis, 2006). One's specific (intersecting) social location, with its material and historical situatedness, uniquely forms one's epistemology in understanding one's identity and experiences of oppression. Identity categories such as race, class, gender, and sexuality provide shared commonalities as well as diversity within these categories (Collins, 2012). Traditionally, axes of intersectionality were race, gender, class, and sexuality, but contemporary intersectional analyses may also include ethnicity, age, religion, nationality, global North-South, culture, migration status, origin, and (dis)ability (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Throughout history, intersectional feminists have actively engaged in political struggles against oppressions by mobilising group solidarity and demanding emancipation (Davis, 2008). Identity politics is essential in their political movements.

In contrast, poststructuralist feminists apply insights from Foucault's (1978) thoughts on power, discourse, resistance, and subjectivity to deconstruct the essentialism of gender and any categorical thinking (Butler, 1990; Davies, 1991; Weedon, 1987). They focus on the operation of modern power through discursive mechanisms that constitute an individual's subjectivity, or sense of self, in ways that are both enabling and constraining (Weedon, 1987). Poststructuralist analyses are generally predicated upon the premise that there is no binary of structure/agency nor power/subjectivity (Carbin and Edenheim, 2013); individuals are both subject of and subjected to discourse; they are both 'fabricated' and agentic (Davies, 1991). Radically against the existence of a pre-discursive self, identities and social categories are understood as 'fictions-made-facts' (Gamson, 2003: 386); they are discursively constituted and fundamentally unstable, including gender binary of man/woman (Butler, 1990). Resistance strategies are not based on identity politics, but may take place in one's cultivation of novel sorts of subjectivity that disrupt the dominant discourses or transgress the norms.

These disparate theorisations of power, oppression, the self, and resistance have ignited debates between intersectional and poststructuralist feminists. For poststructuralist feminists, intersectionality only adds complexity to and maintains the existing identity categories, while the main problem may be the

very existence of such categories (Nash, 2013). Claims of shared histories and commonalities within certain groups (e.g., Black women) are questioned as each individual is unique and may act differently upon subject positions offered by available discourses (Mann, 2013). On the other hand, the intersectional camp considers poststructuralist feminists as ignoring the social and material realities of marginalised groups (Crenshaw, 1997). Collins argued that the poststructuralist resistance strategy is ineffective since poststructuralist conceptions of power do not include structures, hierarchies, and layers of oppression: '(T)alk of tops and bottoms, long associated with hierarchy, were recast as flattened geographies of centers and margins' (1998: 129). Poststructuralists' jettisoning of identity categories is criticised by intersectional feminists as having no political values for improving the lives of marginalised communities, because their identities are already annihilated before being recognised, let alone protected (Davis, 2008).

There have been attempts to reconcile intersectionality and poststructuralism, however, those efforts have been met with criticisms. Bilge (2010: 24), for example, called for a combining of intersectionality and poststructuralism in order to 'chart the contours of particular historical possibilities whereby particular forms and understanding of agency arise'. She viewed poststructuralist analysis as useful but it does not address socio-historical relations and structures shaping subjectivities; intersectionality, she believed, complements it. Correspondingly, Staunæs (2003) claimed that intersectional analysis is important to work against oppressive identity-based systems that have privileged certain fixed categories; but it is less relevant to the exploration of lived experiences, meaning-making processes of the oppressed individuals – and that is where poststructuralism, she argued, is valuable. Differing levels of analysis is also the reconciling view of Bomert (2015), who argued that intersectionality and poststructuralism are useful at different levels: intersectionality for analysing social structures and symbolic representation, while poststructuralism for identity construction. Davis (2008: 71) further claimed that 'intersectionality fits neatly into the poststructuralist project of conceptualising multiple and shifting identities', that is, by 'unmasking universalism, and exploring the dynamic and contradictory workings of power' (2008: 74). These scholars were not only calling for productive conversations between intersectionality and poststructuralism, but also attempting to outline ways or possibilities of reconciling them – with which some other scholars (below) have disagreed.

While poststructuralism and intersectionality share some commonalities – their constructionist view of knowledge and refusal of seeing research as neutral (Mann, 2013) – some scholars have objected to such reconciliation attempts. Carbin and Edenheim (2013), for example, strongly opposed Davis'

(2008) bid to reformulate intersectionality to fit into poststructuralism because such an attempt creates theoretical confusion in terms of the historicisation of the concept and the imprecise applications in analyses. For instance, the gesture of pursuing a more 'complete' knowledge by combining intersectionality and poststructuralism, they identified, falls close to a positivist agenda and ignores the poststructuralist presupposition that any knowledge is always partial and perspectival. Carbin and Edenheim (2013) also eloquently criticised Staunæs' (2003) attempt to balance structural analysis (using intersectionality) and individual lived-experience (using poststructuralism), arguing that such a dichotomy is in support of intersectionality's foundationalist ontologies and against a poststructuralist endeavour to implode structure-agency dualism. Carbin and Edenheim (2013) concluded that such consensus-based projects of reconciliation diminish the structuralist ontology of black feminism and de-legitimise poststructuralist ontology.

Seeking to engage the debate differently and moving beyond either criticising each perspective or indeed attempting reconciliation, the chapter will juxtapose an intersectional and a poststructuralist analysis of the same narrative. In so doing, both approaches may demonstrate their unique onto-epistemological stances in generating meanings from the data, and we may learn from both without combining or contesting them. Before exhibiting these analyses, the context and the methodology of the study will be described.

3 The Context: Sexuality, Christianity, and LGBT Movements in Indonesia

In Indonesia, religious discourses and institutions have been involved in regulating sexuality, particularly in moralising and controlling sexual practices. In 2015, for example, the Council of Indonesian Muslim leaders issued a *fatwa* (formal recommendation) that 'sodomy, homosexuality, or gay and lesbian practices' should be punished with a death sentence (Mutiarra, 2015, March 4). Previous studies in Indonesia (e.g., Smith-Hefner, 2006; van Wichelen, 2010) have explored this intersection of sexuality and religion particularly among Muslim communities (i.e., 87.2% of Indonesia's population in 2010). However, there is barely any sexuality research on other religions in Indonesia. This chapter aims to expand this body of knowledge by researching Indonesian Christian communities (which make up 9.9% of Indonesia's population in 2010).

Previous research among Indonesian Christian leaders, youth, and schools indicated that sex outside of heterosexual marriage is generally considered sinful, Christian young people are typically encouraged to maintain complete

sexual abstinence, and LGBT+ sexualities are widely condemned (Hoon, 2014; Wijaya Mulya, 2010, 2018b). While these views are common among Indonesian churches, there are also progressive Christian communities who resist such moralistic and heteronormative approaches to sexuality. For instance, the Jakarta Theological Seminary – the oldest seminary in Indonesia – has expressed an acceptance of LGBT+ sexualities through their monthly support group and annual LGBT+ event (Hoon, 2016; S. Suleeman, personal communication, November 24, 2014).

Support for LGBT+ sexualities from the Jakarta Theological Seminary reflects the fact that larger LGBT+ movements in Indonesia have grown significantly since the 1998 democratic reformation. Studies have documented how LGBT+ Indonesians have not only been condemned, pathologised, and physically violated (Ariyanto and Triawan, 2008; Wijaya Mulya, 2018b), but also have demonstrated resilience by organising themselves into a social movement (Rodriguez, 2015). Indonesian LGBT+ movements are currently regarded as the oldest and largest in Southeast Asia (Suvianita, 2013). Through their advocacy, educational, and community-based work, these LGBT+ movements have successfully circulated ideas around LGBT+ sexualities in Indonesia that are more affirming.

Despite all these efforts, there is still no legal recognition from the Indonesian government, nor legislative protection for LGBT+ communities. Instead, violent backlashes and pressures from conservative groups have increased in recent years. Some examples include the closing down of a *pesantren* for *waria* (Islamic boarding school designated for trans women) in Yogyakarta by the local authorities after a complaint from a hard-line Islamic group and the cancellation of a pro-LGBT+ peaceful rally in Jakarta and Yogyakarta by the police (Amnesty International, 2016, March 18). In early 2018, driven by conservative religious approaches to sexuality, Indonesia Parliament is considering the passing of a *zina* bill that attempts to criminalise all sexual activities outside of heterosexual, legal, and religiously-sanctioned marriage (Hodge and Rayda, 2018). It is against this social-political-religious backdrop that the current study took place, that is, where recognition of LGBT+ sexualities has become increasingly contested in Indonesian public discourses.

4 Methodology

I interviewed Anto (pseudonym) in 2013 as a part of my doctoral research on Indonesian Christian young people's sexual subjectivities (Wijaya Mulya, 2017). Coming from an urban middle-class family, 24-year-old Anto had just

completed his bachelor degree and worked in a local LGBT+ NGO when I interviewed him. He identified as male, gay, and Christian. Anto was recruited to my research through an advertisement distributed within his NGO. The name and location of the NGO is not disclosed to preserve confidentiality.

As my doctoral research employed computer-mediated-communication research methods (i.e., data collection methods mediated via computer systems, including the Internet), Anto's data collection was conducted between April-June 2013 which included 11 email correspondences, followed by one session of instant messenger interview (to clarify unclear answers in the emails), and one autobiographical essay (to provide a space for Anto to think and write about himself). Data collection was conducted in Anto's and my first language, that is, Bahasa Indonesia, and I translated his narrative into English.

Anto's data were first analysed using a Foucauldian discourse analysis method which was consistent with the poststructuralist framework of my doctoral thesis. Here, I looked for underlying ideas or assumptions (i.e., discourses) given rise to the way Anto understands himself as a religious/sexual subject. For this chapter, Anto's narrative is revisited and reanalysed using an intersectional framework, where I focus on Anto's various axes of identities and multiple layers of oppressions and privileges implicated within them. Both analyses may or may not include gender analysis, as both contemporary feminist frameworks have expanded beyond looking at gender-based oppressions and normativities, but other systems of oppressions and normativities as well. It is important to note that Anto's narrative here is not intended to be representative of larger populations. His narrative here is used as an entry point to investigate the intricacies of oppression and privilege, discursive mechanisms, and sense of self within the contextuality of this study.

5 **Intersecting a Gay Christian Identity: The Interplay of Privilege and Oppression in an Indonesian Context**

This section discusses Anto's sense of identity and multiple interlocking oppressions and privileges within his narrative. The discussion here is structured around Anto's specific categories of social identification, namely, gay (out, activist), Christian (Evangelical), urban, and academically achieving Indonesian youth. The analysis focuses on the intricate interplay between privilege and oppression in each axis of his sense of self. Intracategorical complexities (McCall, 2005) within Anto's narrative will be examined and used as an entry point to discuss the larger contexts of heterosexist (and other intersecting) oppressions in Indonesia.

I will begin by presenting Anto's narrative on his first encounter with the notion of gay identity:

During my intermediate school years I often browsed the Internet. One day I was thinking of browsing male genitals. I typed 'penis' and it resulted in various pictures of this heirloom of men in front of my face! Lub-dub-lub-dub-lub-dub. My eyes moved up and down reading lists of website on the screen. 'Gay' ... a word that attracts my attention. This word was very alien for me at that time. I typed this word on Google, and the results ... I wanted to scream!!! I am not alone!!! Until then I thought I was the only strange creature who is attracted to a same-sex person. But that day, everything was so bright! It's like a bucket of ice was poured on my head. An overwhelming feeling of relief I could not describe! (autobiographical writing)

Prior to his finding out about this gay identity, Anto indicated how he felt different, lonesome, and less of a human ('the only strange creature'). These feelings correspond with previous studies where LGBT+ young people often characterised their early non-heterosexual attractions with shame and abnormality (Hall, 2018; Rosenstreich, 2013). Without access to the knowledge about various sexual identities, the term 'gay' was unknown to him and was inaccessible in his everyday social interactions. An Internet search had opened up Anto's access to this knowledge and allowed him to find out that he was 'not alone' as he thought he was before. Anto expressed how the encounter with the naming of his identity was very liberating. He describes that moment as 'an overwhelming feeling of relief', 'like a bucket of ice was poured on my head' (a positive experience, because it is hot and humid all year in Indonesia), and 'everything was so bright'. He immediately felt connected with this identity and, without any doubt, confirmed that it is who he is/has been. His encounter with the term 'gay', to a degree, was enabled by his privileged social position, namely, middle-class urban Indonesian youth who can privately access the Internet. A study by Indonesian Internet Providers Association (Pratomo, 2019) documented that Indonesian Internet users in 2018 have increased to 64.8% (as compared to 54.86% in 2017), and the majority of them are urban youth aged 15-19 who own a smartphone. As already pointed out by other intersectional researchers (e.g., Hulko and Hovanes, 2018; Taylor, 2010), class and geographical location (urban/rural) continue to play a role in the ways and the extent in which LGBT youth experiencing oppression, as well as accessing knowledge and getting support.

During the interviews, an axis of identity salient in Anto's ways of seeing himself – beside his sexuality – was his religion, namely, Christianity. Christians

are a minority group in Indonesia (9.9%) and still often experience oppression and discriminations, such as in getting the (notoriously difficult) permit to build a church (e.g., Wijaya, 2017). However, religious proportions are different across Indonesian regions; there are Christian-majority provinces such as Papua or North Sulawesi, where there were cases of discriminations against Muslims. While Anto came from and lives in a Muslim-majority province in Java, his double minority status as a gay and a Christian does not necessarily put him in a worse situation than, for example, a gay Muslim. As a minority group, Christians in Java were very rarely involved in incidents of sexually-related, religiously-motivated physical violence. LGBT activists in Christian communities like myself, for example, were facing much less trouble than fellow activists working in the field of sexuality and Islam who have been receiving death threats.

Further, since Christian groups in Indonesia are far from homogenous, there are intracategorical complexities which need to be taken into account in examining Anto's narrative vis-à-vis his sexuality, privileges, and oppression. Early in the interview Anto talked about his faith, characterised by beliefs and practices commonly associated with evangelical Christianity. While Anto and his family were members of a small Pentecostal church, in recent years he had moved to a charismatic mega-church which he described as 'very conventional in terms of sexuality' including condemning LGBT+ people (email interview). During the interview I expressed my surprise about Anto's choice of church membership, considering those condemnations. Anto said he enjoyed Evangelical activities in this church, such as inviting people to get to know Jesus. He has 'a caring mentor' who supported him to be a faithful disciple, including his commitment to 'spend an hour per day reading the Bible' and to build an intimate relationship with Jesus (instant messenger interview). Evangelical Christianity refers to a distinct branch of Christianity that promotes beliefs such as biblical infallibility, salvation only for Christian believers, and places importance on church attendance, Bible reading, and conservative moral values (Mayhew et al., 2017), including on sexuality (Kaoma, 2014). Unsurprisingly, Indonesian Christian pastors who zealously wrote and spoke against LGBT+ sexualities are affiliated with evangelical denominations, such as Andik Wijaya and Yakub Tri Handoko. In contrast, there has been affirming gestures and movements among ecumenical and mainline churches in Indonesia. Beside the aforementioned Jakarta Theological Seminary, Council of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) whose members are predominantly mainline churches has issued an official letter in 2016 which affirms LGBT+ sexualities; although backlashes from evangelical groups were then immediately followed. Affiliation with which church

denomination, to a degree, shapes one's experience of oppression as a gay Christian in Indonesia.

The intersection between specific church affiliations and social class might also need to be considered in examining the intricacies of privilege and oppression operating among the minority group of Christians in Indonesia. For example, members of the charismatic mega-church Anto goes to is noticeably dominated by the middle-upper class, from the types of car in their parking lot, the attire of the churchgoers, to the financial growth of the church. While being minority in terms of religion, these Christians may hold a degree of economic power which, in Indonesia, implies significant social-sexual-political consequences. For example, every now and then Indonesian media reported raids towards unmarried couples suspected of engaging in sexual activities by hard-line Islamic groups or members of the community; but these were only common among the lower socio-economic status places like *kampung*s (village-like urban settlement). The rich ones were, most of the time, left untouched. In understanding the interplay between privilege and oppression against gay sexuality in Indonesia – as Anto's specific social location has showed – we might need to take into consideration the intersectional nature of one's religion, denomination, class, and geographical location.

Another important intersection of identity category, or subcategory, in Anto's narrative is his identification of himself as both an out gay and a family member. His narrative showed that being an out or closeted gay in Indonesia may imply considerably different consequences in terms of sense of self, relationship with others, and challenges he needs to anticipate. His narrative also shows that being out is quite complex and often contextualised. All his friends in the NGO knew that he is gay, but only a few close church friends knew about it. The pastor of his family church knew, but not pastors in his current charismatic church. For Anto, the most significant moment regarding his coming out is the coming out to his mother. In narrating his experience, Anto divided his life into two episodes, that is, before and after his coming out to his mother. Below is an example from his narrative:

Before I am “officially” gay in front of my mom, she was always suspicious every time I brought home a male friend, especially to sleep over. One night, my boyfriend went to the toilet, he heard she cried in her bedroom. But after I came out, she has never been like that anymore. We never talked about sexuality any more, she never asked about girlfriends any more, when I'm going to marry, nor wishing for grandchildren from me. Post [coming] out is the time of relief and hardship too, because although my nuclear family accepted me, my extended family do not (or

pretend not knowing), so when I attended family gatherings there was like “ziiiiiinggg. ...” (email interview)

Coming out, especially to his mother, was a defining moment for Anto. It was the time when his gay identity was not only for him to understand his sexual self, but also became public – first and foremost – in his nuclear family. Since his father worked out-of-town, and he was not close to him (email interview), Anto saw that being identified, acknowledged, and accepted as gay by his mother was of utmost importance, or what Chan (2017) called ‘coming home’. It was a new beginning, where his mother started to acknowledge and eventually accepted his sexual identity.

While coming out to his mother brought a sense of relief, freedom, and support, Anto also understood that occupying the category of an out gay brought new problems particularly beyond the context of his nuclear family. As studies have documented, coming out is not a one-off occasion because there are multiple social contexts of one’s life (Dewaele, van Houtte, Cox and Vincke, 2013). One might differentially and strategically manage the visibility of their sexual identity depending on the social contexts. Anto’s extended family, for example, is a context he avoided or did not want to be too visible about his sexual identity due to their ignorance and denial of his gayness. Since the normalcy of heterosexual marriage is overwhelmingly accepted in Indonesia, Anto was still often asked ‘where is your girlfriend?’ and ‘when are you going to marry?’ at family gatherings; they pretended to not know Anto’s gay identity. Such questions demonstrated a way heterosexist oppression operate, that is, by denying and delivering micro-aggressions toward one’s sexual identity (Nadal, 2013), especially in an Indonesian collective context where traditional forms of family and familial relationship are considered very important. While family may provide support and protection, it may also become a site of rejection, hatred, and humiliation for a gay person. Here, a contextual view on the intersection between sexual identity and a sense of self as a family member is crucial to understand the way heterosexist oppression operates in a specific context like Indonesia.

In his autobiographical writing, Anto wrote what his mother said when she finally accepted him as a gay person, which reveals another intersecting axis of Anto’s identity. Meeting Anto at church after he ran away from home for two weeks (more in the next section), she tearfully said:

Mommy loves you, my son ... Mommy accepts you ... [because] you are my son. Mommy fully accepts you, my son ... just one thing, make your

family proud of you ... make a lot of achievements so your family is proud of you. (autobiographical writing)

In Indonesia, it is widely accepted that children should protect family reputation by avoiding any conduct that brings family shame and instead doing things that make their family proud. Academic achievement is one of the most common things Indonesian parents demand from their children, because it increases family pride. In the past, schools had a ranking system which sorted all students in a class based on examination scores; some schools are still practising this system. Teachers and parents could easily compare children using this ranking system, categorising them as 'clever', 'average', or 'below average' students. Another dimension of Anto's identity is related to this axis, where he is located in the 'clever' student category. Anto said he has been an academically achieving student since primary school. He got into a top public university. At the time I interviewed him, he was submitting a scholarship application for a master's degree overseas. Being a 'clever' student has been a part of his sense of self, and might have also afforded him a degree of privileged protection because – in Indonesian contexts – academic achievement entails both symbolic and economic capital (Bourdieu, 2018). In a neoliberal state like Indonesia where welfare system is minimal, securing a high-paying job is one of the most important concerns of parents for their children; academic achievement is often seen as the gate into such jobs.

It is noteworthy that Anto's mother's acceptance of his gay son was immediately followed by an expectation for achievement. Achievements and making the family proud were specifically demanded from Anto, most likely to compensate for or cancel out his gay identity which is positioned here as "shameful" for the family (Chan, 2017). The intersection of 'gay and clever' Anto occupied was used by his mother to maintain family reputation by balancing the binary of family shame/pride. It does not mean that Anto's mother's acceptance is conditional; it may merely be a strategy to navigate the private/public domains. As I have discussed elsewhere (Wijaya Mulya, 2018b), the dualism between public face and private self has characterised many Indonesians' sense of identity. Her saying that 'Mommy accepts you ... [because] you are my son' might represent her full acceptance of Anto's gayness in private domain, while her demand for Anto's achievements was her means to protect the family's public reputation.

Coming out was the moment where Anto's gay identity moved from private to public, which must be understood in relation to the intersection of his identities and within specific cultural context of his life. As demonstrated in his

narrative, coming out as gay is a crucial moment in Anto's life, which brought both acceptance, rejection, and micro-aggressions; was intersected with his identity as a 'clever' student; and occurred in a specific Indonesian context where family shame/pride and private/public binaries are embedded in one's sense of identity.

Finally, the last category in Anto's identity development which is salient in his talk about himself is the activist identity. It begins with him attending a class where the lecturer taught sexuality and Anto helped her explaining the experience of a gay person:

She (the lecturer) was also a volunteer in an LGBT NGO, a perfect sexuality teacher for me. In her class many students were still 'blind' about sexuality so I also helped explaining to them several times. After that I learned about sexuality from several seminars I attended. ... (After joining an LGBT NGO) I also became a facilitator in a sexuality and human rights workshop. (email interview)

Sometime I feel like giving up, tired with some gay friends who don't care about this (activism) issue. They even distanced themselves from me because I am openly gay. It threatened them, because when they talked with me, others might accuse them as gays too. (instant messenger interview)

For Anto, taking up the identity as a gay activist means taking an oppositional stance against the oppressive operation of heterosexism. He campaigned, educated, and fought for the recognition and emancipation of gay identity by encouraging his gay friends to come out, become more visible, and mobilise social ~~instant messenger~~ movements – a strategy commonly engaged by intersectional activists (Davis, 2008). While being an activist has evidently brought advantages for Anto such as access to information, support, international networks, and solidarity struggles, challenging heterosexism through his activism also entails significant social consequences such as being ostracised from communities so that many of his gay friends chose to be silent, closeted, and avoided activists like Anto. Anto's passion and efforts as a gay activist is reminiscent of his evangelical Christian activism, in which he is equally passionate about 'inviting people to get to know Jesus'. He said that his favourite biblical character is the apostle Andrew, because "Andrew often brought people in need to Jesus" (email interview). The intersection of his gay activist and evangelical Christian identities gave rise to his zeal to bring about change in people's lives, both religiously and sexually.

Anto's specific social location – as gay, out, activist, evangelical, academically achieving, urban youth, a member of a family in Indonesia – has enabled an intersectional analysis which offers a closer examination of the dynamic of privileges and oppressions operating in an Indonesian contemporary context. The overwhelming power of heterosexism becomes vividly perceptible in his experience as a gay person, such as how he felt like the only “strange creature” who is attracted to men. The differences between in the closet/out gay were also very real for him, as it marked a public declaration of his identity. As an activist he is also able to see how heterosexist oppression resulted in an immense feeling of fear among his gay friends so they refused to come out. Anto was also able to draw on privileged elements of his identity to manage the marginality of his gayness, such as his access to educational resources and his intense religiosity; which might have afforded him a degree of protection in an Indonesian contemporary context where religious piety and academic achievement are highly valued. By exploring these intersectional intricacies of Anto's identity as an out Christian gay activist, this section has explored the interplay between privilege and oppression in an Indonesian context, in order to better understand the intersecting and contextual operations of heterosexism.

6 *'Scientia Sexualis and Ars Erotica': Contesting the Categorisation of Sexual Desire through a Poststructuralist Lens*

This section analyses Anto's narrative using a feminist poststructuralist framework. The focus is the identification and problematisation of discourses of sexuality given rise to his subjectivity (i.e., sense of self). While there are multiple discourses involved in the constitution of his sexual subjectivity, the analysis here will focus on the discourse of sexual desire, that is, a set of interconnected ideas that constitute sexual attraction and practices as categorise-able, name-able, specifiable, and relatively unchanging¹ (Davidson, 2001). This discourse offers a range of subject positions or sexual 'identities', such as gay, lesbian, and bisexual, by which subjects can give meaning and legitimacy to their sexual selves. This section explores how Anto has been both enabled/constrained discursively, and the extent to which he resisted or embraced this discourse in his journey of becoming a sexual subject.

1 I am aware that there are possibilities that one takes up a sexual identity and simultaneously recognise its malleability, particularly through a discourse of sexual fluidity. However, the discourse referred here is the one still dominant in contemporary Indonesia, where sexual identity is considered as relatively unchanging.

Foucault (1978) has identified the concept of sexual desire as part of a wider political project of making sexuality an object of science, or *scientia sexualis*. As opposed to the traditional view of power as the system of domination over the will of the people, Foucault identified that modern power administers, regulates, and transforms individuals into docile subjects who desire to support the existing power relations and conform to the norms, including in the field of sexuality. Through scientific analyses, classification, and theorisation of sexual desire, power administrates, regulates, (de)pathologises, and exercises disciplinary control over sexuality. Envisaging sexuality beyond such discursive regulation, Foucault offered the notion of *ars erotica* to think differently about sexuality – where the focus is less on the legal, scientific, or social ‘truth’ about sex, and more on the creative pursuit of sexual pleasure. This section employs the concept of *ars erotica* to interrogate and expand the current knowledge on categorisations of sexual desire. It argues that the constitution of Anto’s sexual subjectivities did not always involve mechanisms of naming, specification, classification, and (de)pathologisation of sexual desire, nor was it necessarily engaged in pursuing a scientific ‘truth’ about his desire. Rather, it involved esoteric exploration, imagination, creativity, and embodiment of alternative sexual pleasures.

As discussed in previous sections, Anto has evidently taken up a gay subject position offered by the discourse of sexual desire. Therefore, this section will not focus on how he drew on this discourse to understand himself; rather, it will pay attention to the possibility of resistance towards this dominant discourse. As I will argue below, Anto has also resisted the *scientia sexualis* mechanism of this discourse by showing how his journey of being a gay sexual subject was more esoteric than scientific:

When I was 7, I had a friend, my neighbour, his name was Johnny. One day, when there was no one at home, we played doctor. I was the doctor, and I asked him to remove his pants. For the first time in my life I saw a penis other than mine. I touched his penis meticulously to satisfy my curiosity. Then he asked for his turn. Since then, we often did that when we were alone.

At Year 3 (± age 8-9), my cousin often came and played at my house. He was 15. He was funny and liked to play with me. One day, he asked me: “Have you ever played doctor?” I nodded enthusiastically. He lowered my pants and with his big hand he held my penis. I thought it was like me and Johnny playing doctor, but this time it’s different. His hand moved up and down like whisking. I said: “It’s ticklish..!” But he said: “That’s okay,

we're playing doctor, aren't we? So you must follow what the doctor said if you want to feel better." Since then, he often did it with me for almost one year.²

I just knew that it's called masturbation from my friend when I was at intermediate school (\pm age 12-15). At that time my (male) friends and I watched porn together at school. He said, "It's called *onani*, dude." I asked: "What's that?" "Stroking [the] penis like that." I said to myself silently, "So what my cousin did to me is called *onani*!" When I watched that porn, I didn't realise that my gaze only focused on the male actor. My heart's racing every time he sighed or showed his penis.

Since (taking up the gay identity), I played my double lives cleverly; high-achieving, good student, but secretly practising gay relationships. But like an Indonesian saying, as skilful as a squirrel jumps, eventually it falls anyway. My mom found out. So I wrote a note, saying that I'm leaving rather than bringing shame to the family. Bringing only a few clothes and a little money, I left and stayed with a friend – a gay Muslim preacher living in an Islamic boarding school. Then my pastor called my mobile. He heard from mom that I left home. He said I can stay at the church if I'm not ready to go home. After two weeks, he told mom that I stayed at church. She rushed to the church. We sat silently, tearfully. My mom broke the silence, saying that she loves and accepts me just the way I am. (autobiographical writing)

In order to discover laws, theories, principles, or the 'truth', sexuality has been studied, analysed, theorised, and the findings are disseminated through academic publications (Foucault, 1978). While this *scientia sexualis* project is pervasive, polyvalent, and wide-scoped, here – relevant with Anto's narrative – I will specifically focus on the ways these 'truths' are distributed to a broader audience particularly the younger generation through education. It is the role of sexuality educators to identify relevant knowledge about sexuality for young people, compile it into lesson plans, and deliver it in the classroom. The purpose is to provide young people with 'accurate' scientific knowledge so that they can understand how sexuality works and then make responsible

² I am cognisant that this specific moment has generally been understood as child sexual abuse, considering the difference in age and power between Anto and his cousin. There is not space to elucidate further but for a fuller discussion, I have written elsewhere (Wijaya Mulya, 2018a) about this discourse of child sexual abuse.

decisions (Whitehead, 2005). For instance, it would have been beneficial for Anto if he was provided with sexuality education at school which informed him about sexual orientation (that he is not ‘the only strange creature who is attracted to a same-sex person’) or where one could find support when one’s mother found out that her son is gay (rather than running away from home).

However, Anto’s narrative – to a degree – shows resistance towards this *scientia sexualis* mechanism which reduces sexual desire into a set of ‘truths’ discoverable through academic inquiries and teachable in educational settings. His becoming a gay sexual subject might be more suitable to be characterised by what Foucault described as the *ars erotica* rather than *scientia sexualis*, that is, an esoteric personal journey instead of a lesson/unit plan. As Foucault (1978) has described, in *ars erotica* the way to gather knowledge is not through scientific methods, but through explorations and personal journeys with a master who holds secret knowledge of sex. Barely exposed to formal sexuality education, Anto has learned more about sexual pleasure and desire from various encounters and opportunities beyond school and classroom. His ‘teachers’ were Google, friends, a cousin, childhood sex play, pornography, and religious leaders. His learning involved secret personal exploration, unexpected encounters with pleasure, and social/sexual experimentation. The knowledge, skills, and strategies he learned are more like a masterful art, not a one-size-fits-all prescription. For instance, in Anto’s specific family context, running away from home might have been a much more effective way to let his mother accept his gayness, rather than a well-argued scientific explanation about the “nature” of sexual desire. In the constitution of his sexual subjectivity Anto has shown that to be gay is not only about *scientific* naming and specification, but also an *art* of being a sexual subject.

It is important to note that the juxtaposition of sexuality education with one’s personal esoteric journey above might be (mis)read as a comparison in which one is ‘better’ than another. This is not my aim. There are new possibilities for being and becoming sexual subjects which can be opened up through formal sexuality education in Indonesia, particularly that which recognises various sexual orientations. My point here is that the discourse of sexual desire (with its *scientia sexualis* mechanisms including sexuality education) has enabled certain ways of being a sexual subject, and simultaneously constrained other ways. One of these other ways that has been constrained, as Anto’s narrative has shown, is the artistic and personalised approach to learning about sexual desires – where truth and falsehood were not centre stage, but where beauty, pleasure, and self-mastery were. Anto’s experiences of understanding, taking up, and exploring gay sexual desire are too rich, exciting, and delicate to be contained in a classroom setting.

This section has discussed how Anto's experience may contribute to a new way to contest the discourse of sexual desire. His narrative displays how the discourse of sexual desire has been drawn on and one of the subject positions offered (i.e., gay) has been taken up. Resistance toward the *scientia sexualis* underpinning of this discourse has also been presented, that is, how his journey of being gay resembles Foucault's *ars erotica*, an esoteric exploration of pleasure and understanding of sexual self.

7 Concluding Remarks

This chapter aims to engage the intersectional-poststructuralist debate within feminism differently, that is, by juxtaposing both approaches through analysing a single narrative. Simultaneously, it brings a new contextuality to this field, that is, the intersection of religion and sexuality in an Indonesian context. It is important to note that this single-narrative analysis does not intended to be generalised to other contexts; rather, its aim is to better understood the complexity and contextuality of oppression, resistance, and sense of self. The intersectional analysis demonstrated the intricacies of Anto's sense of self and the interlocking privileges and oppressions implicated within Anto's intersecting identities as a young urban Indonesian gay Christian. The poststructuralist analysis identified and sought to destabilise the discourse of sexual desire by exploring how the notion of *ars erotica* might be drawn on in understanding Anto's sexual subjectivity. In this way, both approaches are allowed to 'agree to disagree', to demonstrate their uniqueness in generating meanings from a narrative.

Reflecting on this juxtaposition in writing this chapter, I initially found it considerably difficult to engage in an intersectional analysis due to my training as a poststructuralist researcher. Patiently fighting the urge to repudiate what I do not believe, I eventually arrived at a point where I can see how both approaches are equally powerful methodologies, enabling/limiting the analysis in different ways. For instance, my intersectional analysis started with locating Anto's identity categories and how those categories are intersected. Anto is the centre of analysis. It is a convenient place to start, and readers might more easily see the categories and give credibility to the analysis. My poststructuralist analysis began with identifying discourses Anto drew on in understanding his sexual self. Discourse is the centre of analysis. It was harder to locate and may be varied depending on the researcher's analytical eye. At the end of my intersectional analysis, I rechecked the data to ensure that all important intersections of Anto's identity and oppressions in the narrative

have been attended to; I wanted to be comprehensively representing the data. In contrast, my poststructuralist analysis embraced the perspectival nature of knowledge. I cared less about being comprehensive as I was about being creative or disruptive. Both approaches' different ways of conceptualising resistance demonstrated that they are equally valuable in the battle against social injustices.

The implication of this chapter for researchers in the field of sexuality and religion is that methodological perspective-taking might be a productive intellectual exercise. Becoming overly familiar with my own poststructuralist framework, I am reminded that it has its own paradigmatic assumptions and limitations. At the end of writing this chapter, I have more respect for the strengths of other approaches. I have an enhanced awareness of the onto-epistemo-methodological plurality in the field of sexuality and religion. I have learnt about methodological humility through this experiential learning.

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