Risgo: Exploring Queer Men's Narratives of Risks and Stigma in Queer Dating Applications through an Interactive Film

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Abstract: Risgo, a practice-based research initiative, employs interactive film to intricately explore the experiences of queer men navigating dating apps, focusing on risks and stigma. Through intimate narratives shared by eight queer-identifying men, the analysis is guided by the Sexual Script Theory, revealing five prominent themes: hypermasculinity, body shaming, misgendering, prejudice in sex roles, and inherent risks. In the transformative process of translating these findings into an interactive film, Brecht's Aesthetic Theory plays a pivotal role, incorporating historicization, gestus, and alienation techniques. The resulting interactive film undergoes assessment for interactivity and narrativity, drawing from Windsor's explanation-demonstration model for interactive visualizations. The film provides users with a unique 'branching narrative' approach, empowering them with control over the story's progression and facilitating a profound understanding of the experiences within the realm of queer dating apps. By immersing viewers in these diverse narratives, the film elucidates the impact of knowledge gaps and the pervasive stigma within LGBTQ+ communities. This interactive medium ultimately catalyzes open discussions and the acknowledgment of challenges faced by queer individuals in the dynamic landscape of dating apps, casting a spotlight on the critical issues within the LGBTQ+ community.

Keywords: Interactive film, Queer dating applications, Queer men's narratives

INTRODUCTION

In the capacious domain of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and more (LGBTQ+) existence, "queer" has become an inclusive canopy that embraces a wide spectrum of gender identities and sexual orientations that may not conform to the binary and normative understanding of gender and sexuality. Through the term's reclamation by the LGBTQ+ community, "queer" has become a self-affirming description that empowers identities and individuals outside societal norms of gender (Worthen, 2023). It consolidates the innate fluidity representing the heterogeneous experiences found in the LGBTQ+ community.

Traversing the intricate setting of queer men's socialization in reserved spaces requires an acknowledgment of fine distinctions in the queer narrative. The term "queer men" embraces men-identifying individuals who acknowledge their inclusion within the LGBTQ+ community, through the use of the word queer as a term through which self-identity and actions are formulated (Fraser, 2008). They recognize the intersectionality and intricacy of their identities and sexual orientations, which may include but extend beyond bisexual, homosexual, pansexual, or queer. Moreover, gender expressions within queer men may vary, dismantling conventional perspectives towards masculinity and providing a diverse front-end presentation of identities within the broad concept of queer men. Understanding the definition of queer men comes as the primary step toward exploring queer men's socialization. By acknowledging its nuances, it paves the way for a deeper recognition of the unique opportunities and challenges confronting queer men in LGBTQ+ spaces. This necessitates an exploration of how conventions, stereotypes, and expectations intersect with the wide-ranging identities, sexual orientations, and experiences of queer men, impacting their social connections, interactions, and sense of inclusivity within the broader scope of the LGBT+ community.

A distinguished discussion is the burgeoning expansion of cyberspaces, driven by advancements in information and communication technology, which has become a pivotal arena for the LGBTQ+ community to amplify and progress their representation goals. Through networking, information exchange, and inclusive discussions on gender and sexuality (Hawkins, 2017), these digital spaces have provided a powerful platform for LGBTQ+ individuals. Notably, queer dating applications stand out as exemplars of these virtual realms, fostering social and intimate connections within the community.

While these digital spaces contribute significantly to building a sense of community that empowers LGBTQ+ individuals to express their identities (Byron et al., 2021), the surge in dating apps has brought concurrent challenges, complicating the positive narrative surrounding these platforms. Concerns related to health and well-being, including the spread of sexually transmitted infections due to insufficient safe sex knowledge within dating apps, have emerged as pressing issues (Alsing et al., 2021)). Moreover, discrimination, prejudice, and bias within the LGBTQ + community manifest on these platforms, resulting in feelings of frustration, rejection, and exclusion (Byron et al., 2021). Despite their prevalence, the discussion and evidence surrounding these risks and the associated stigma remain relatively understated.

In response to this nuanced landscape, this artistic project takes a unique approach, integrating interactivity in film to shed light on the challenges faced by queer individuals within the minority. The digitalization of these narratives through multimedia aims to raise awareness and knowledge for these groups (Kitts, 2015). Employing digital storytelling across various media not only enables us to connect with these narratives but also serves as a powerful tool to evoke empathy. This becomes especially crucial as many LGBTQ+ individuals hesitate to share their stories due to societal risks and prejudices (Lambert, 2013). The significance of disseminating knowledge and stories through digital storytelling lies in its capacity to reach diverse audiences, transcending temporal, and geographical boundaries.

With these concepts in account, this project-based research aimed to address two objectives:
1. Collect and analyze narratives from queer men concerning risks and stigma through thematic analysis anchored in the Sexual Scripting Theory by Simon and Gagnon (1973).
2. Create an interactive film that visualizes the narratives of queer men about the risks and stigma in queer dating applications.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Differentiating the line between stigma and preference

Attraction among queer men is shaped by power dynamics, sexual roles, gender identity, orientation, and expression (Eastwick et al., 2011). In the socialization of queer men, a blurred line exists between preference and stigma. It becomes an unaddressed concern that lingers due to the discrimination and alienation faced by queer individuals in a heteronormative society. This results in struggles like isolation, depression, and even suicide as they navigate their sexual identity development (Harrison, 2003). To address this, LGBTQ+ communities and queer dating applications serve as outlets for inclusion and solutions to combat judgment against their sexual orientations and gender identities. However, these challenges extend not only from the heteronormative society but also within the LGBTQ+ community (Parmenter et al., 2020).

This concern, termed intracommunity stigma, is influenced by factors like gender expression, sexual orientation, sexual roles (Hammack et al., 2022), and physical appearance (Wood, 2004). It affects specific minorities within LGBTQ+ groups, leading to severe consequences, including feelings of frustration and hopelessness (Rinke, 2022), Identity invalidation, and the loss of community support (Alarie & Gaudet, 2013; Welzer-Lang, 2008). The imposition of well-being risks and marginalization distinguishes intracommunity stigma from preference. Stigma arises when negative stereotypes affect the majority's perception (Goffman, 2009). Online spaces, using "preference" for matchmaking, exacerbate intracommunity stigma, despite offering community and inclusion, increasing risks for marginalized subgroups.

Interactivity through Digital Media

Interactivity in digital media blends various forms, such as audio, video, text, graphics, and tactile tech (Dhir, 2021), shaping immersive user experiences. In filmmaking, interactive digital media introduces a participatory

dimension to storytelling. Its prevalence and capacity to use multiple media forms simultaneously have reshaped the delivery of films, altering narrative conventions (Pietrak, 2020). This evolution has given rise to interactive film, a subcategory that blends cinematic attributes with digital interactivity, which aims to create an immersive and interactive film experience for the viewer.

The interplay between interactivity and immersiveness in interactive films can be intricate, with interactivity potentially disrupting immersion. Two primary interaction approaches are used: implicit and explicit. Implicit interaction prioritizes immersion by minimizing interruptions, while explicit interaction involves viewers engaging in both watching and interacting. A study by Bustos (2016) found more positive outcomes in viewer participation and immersion with explicit interaction, challenging the idea that "interactivity hinders immersive experiences" (Johnson, 2008). The choice of interaction approach depends on the intended purpose, scope, and desired outcome of the interactive film.

Emerging from the sphere of new media, interactive media boasts a wide-ranging scope that has led to diverse specializations such as global media, website development, motion graphics, and digital media production (Imm, 2021). Communication plays a pivotal role in this landscape, especially in its intersection with culture, society, and identity. This form of multimedia fosters connectivity, allowing users to actively engage with media products through interactivity (Chen, 2012). Its educational aspect gains prominence in academic settings and ICT4D initiatives, facilitating active participation, collaborative efforts, immersive learning experiences, and enhancing public awareness of specific issues (Chen, 2012). Beyond its interactive features, interactive media serves as a primary educational tool, utilizing online platforms to conveniently disseminate educational information through digital media and web links (Leong & Chennupati, 2008). The fusion of interactivity and education underscores its potential as a versatile and influential tool for both educational purposes and the augmentation of public awareness.

The LGBTQ+ Scene in Philippine Media

The influence of media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of conventions and social norms by creatively and strategically depicting the LGBTQ+ community. Utilizing media to promote LGBTQ+ awareness is crucial, as it can positively impact the community by fostering self-esteem (Martin et al., 2022). However, the approach to LGBTQ+ awareness in Philippine media has deviated from the desired outcome of the community. Stereotypical portrayals of LGBTQ+ individuals persist, categorizing queer identities into tolerable stereotypes.

For instance, Inton's study (2017) reveals how the representation of gay men in Philippine media aligns with accepted definitions of "bakla" (gay in Filipino), encapsulating various aspects of gay identity (homosexuality, effeminate gestures, cross-dressing, transgenderism, and transsexualism) into a single category. The unrealistic portrayal of the LGBTQ+ community in Philippine media also involves sensationalizing and commercializing specific queer attributes that fail to accurately represent the struggles and real-life experiences of community members. For instance, queerbaiting is a marketing strategy that subtly hints at queer attributes in on-screen characters to attract LGBTQ+ viewers. Research by Martin, Pilar, and Pangan (2022) reveals that queerbaiting, as a mode of representation, is tolerated but diminishes the community's diversity and complexity. It also undermines LGBTQ+ minority groups due to its insincerity and commercial motivations.

Given the unrepresentative and commercialized depictions of the LGBTQ+ community in Philippine media, the internet and digital media serve as platforms for showcasing the diverse and multi-faceted aspects of less-represented queer individuals. Filipinos recognize the internet as a potent communication tool for promoting LGBTQ+ awareness and rights (UNDP & USAID, 2014). These digital expressions take shape across various platforms and content, including social media, blogs, websites, video-hosting platforms, and e-magazines. Through the internet, LGBTQ+ stories can be narrated without conforming to the heteronormative norms prevailing in Philippine society. This digital medium also provides an opportunity to address and shed light on issues within the LGBTQ+ community, furthering its role in raising awareness and normalizing queer identities in society.

Theoretical and Conceptual Underpinnings

The project explored risks and stigma in queer dating apps through an interactive film, which was created by first analyzing participants' narratives within Gagnon and Simon's Sexual Script Theory (1973). This theory highlights how societal and cultural factors shape sexual identities, behaviors, and experiences, emphasizing the influence of sexual scripts on individual and collective sexual norms. These norms can manifest in social contexts as either liberating or oppressive.
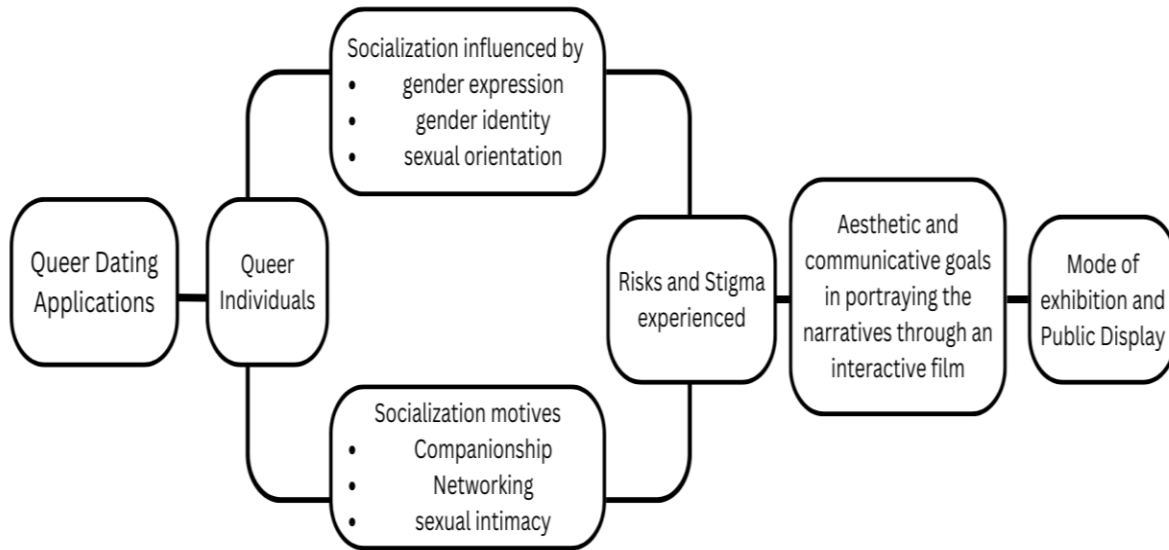
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

From eight distinct narratives, technical work was employed to create an interactive film using components of Brecht's aesthetic theory, inspired by Çavuş & Özcan's interactive model (2010). Brecht's theory deviates from Aristotle's dramatic narrative by prioritizing thought over feeling, aiming to engage the audience's cognitive capabilities for rationalization and criticism. Interactive cinema aligns with Brechtian aesthetics in its technical, creative, and ideological aspects, as both aim to engage and distance the audience from the dramatic narrative. This project utilized specific Brechtian components: historicization, alienation, and gestus.

1. Historicization - signifies events' reflection of their spatiotemporal context, serving as a mirror of society and enabling dialectical discourse through alienation, as explained by Demirdiş & Aksoy (2021).
2. Alienation - is a Brechtian technique that purposefully creates a psychological distance between the film and the audience. It aims to prompt awareness and intellectual engagement in the audience, fostering a reflective connection between what they observe and the real world, as noted by Althusser through Çavuş & Özcan (2010).
3. Gestus - refers to the component that represents the personification of a disposition as an actor portrays a specific character attribute. These particular attributes do not just define the character but also how to determine their position in society (Apex Drama Tools, 2021).
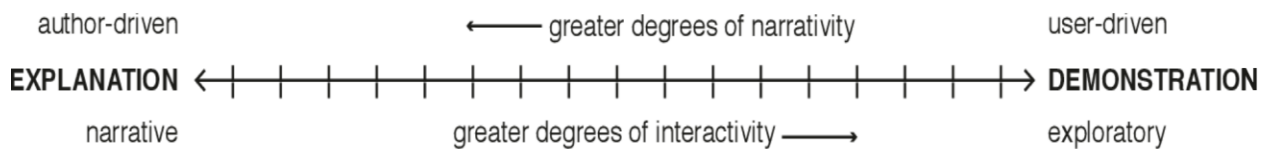

Figure 2. Explanation-Demonstration Spectrum by Windsor (2016)

The Windsor (2016) spectrum framework measured interactivity in the interactive film, emphasizing narrativity and interactivity on opposite ends. This model integrates cognitive thinking and communication, with narrativity organizing content linearly and interactivity enabling dynamic engagement. Key factors affecting the film's position on this spectrum are *temporality, interactivity, perspective, ordering, and messaging* (Windsor, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

The project aimed to explore the narratives of queer individuals regarding risks and stigma in queer dating applications through an interactive film. Before commencing the project, the researcher closely adhered to ethical principles and viewing restrictions for the interactive film, which are as follows:

1. *Informed Consent:* The researcher obtained informed consent from each participant, securing their willingness to participate in the project.
2. *Confidentiality:* Participants were informed about how their private information submitted for the project would be handled.
3. *Presentation and Publicity:* Participants were informed about how the results would be presented and publicized through one-on-one and group discussions, including an interactive film screening, considering the confidential nature of the data.
4. *R-18+ Viewing Classification*: Due to the explicit nature of the interactive film, it carries an "R-18" viewing restriction.

Using Snowball Sampling, narratives were gathered through unstructured interviews from eight participants, aged 18-40, who were assigned male at birth but currently identify as queer men or queer individuals with different gender identities and expressions from their initial assignments. These participants were active users of gay/queer dating applications and resided in Davao City, Davao del Sur. The researcher employed thematic analysis to examine qualitative information anchored in Simon and Gagnon's Sexual Script Theory (1973). The researcher employed three techniques from Brechtian aesthetics theory to craft interactive storylines: historicization, gestus, and alienation. These aesthetic principles and components informed the analysis and translation of the storyline, which were integrated into the expression strategy and practical application in the interactive film.

The interactive film's creation followed a three-step process: pre-production, production, and post-production. Feedback sessions assessed the film in areas of content and awareness, educational impact, viewer engagement, production quality, and recommendations. The project's interactivity and narrativity level were evaluated using Windsor's (2016) Explanation-demonstration model for interactive visualizations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Analysis of the Explored Narratives

Table 1
Participant's gender identity, expression and sexual orientation

Participant	Gender Identity	Gender Expression	Sexual Orientation
1	Male	Effeminate	Homosexual
2	Male	Masculine	Bisexual
3	Male	Effeminate	Homosexual
4	Male	Masculine	Bisexual
5	Male	Masculine	Bisexual
6	Male	Feminine	Homosexual
7	Male	Masculine	Bisexual
8	Male	Effeminate	Homosexual

The study informed the eight participants to articulate their self-identification in terms of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation. These self-descriptions were pivotal in shaping their interactions within queer dating platforms, including aspects such as companionship, networking, and sexual intimacy.

Table 2
Description of emerging themes

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
Body Shaming	Fat shaming	Discriminated for having more weight
	Skinny shaming	Coerced to eat more
Misgendering	Gendered terms	Uneasiness in the intentional use of masculine terms
Hypermasculinity	Effeminophobia	Compel to act masculine
	Mascing	Deprivation of social interaction
Prejudice in Sex Roles	Bottom-shaming	Assumption that bottoms are disease carriers
Risks	Scam	● Fake persona ● Blatant lying
	Non-Consensual activities	● Forceful substance use ● Pressure in sex roles

Body Shaming

Body shaming involves negative comments about a person's physical characteristics, such as weight, appearance, and size. Online body shaming has increased with the use of image-based technologies, where connections are often formed based on specific physical features (Walsh & Baker, 2017). In the interviews, participants raised concerns about body shaming in queer dating apps. They noted that these platforms often prioritize beauty and masculine ideals, which hinders meaningful connections and fosters harmful stereotypes that damage self-esteem. Body shaming manifested in two sub-themes: fat shaming, where individuals with larger body features face discrimination and rejection (Foster-Gimbel & Engeln, 2016), and skinny shaming, which discriminates against those with slimmer body types, associating them with weakness (Levine, 2020).

Sexual Script explains this issue by suggesting that cultural and social conventions significantly influence physical and psychological expression of gender and sexuality. In the context of queer men communities, due to its idealized inclination to physical masculine features, there has been a practice norm that queer men with this buff and muscled physicality are viewed as attractive and appealing. This norm propels body shaming within these queer dating applications, which target those with unique body types and do not conform to such idealistic body proportions.

Misgendering

Misgendering is the direct use of inappropriate pronouns and terms to an individual's gender identity. This is mainly acted by categorizing queer individuals through the conventional binary understanding of gender (eg., male and female). Those identifying themselves as queer, including queer men, are vulnerable to this harmful act.

Accounts of participants show that misgendering is about misusing pronouns and objectifying and subjugating queer individuals based on their limited knowledge (Mclemore, 2015). One subtheme was drawn from the general theme of misgendering: Gendered terms. Apart from the conventional pronouns, the use of gender binary terms has also become an issue in adequately addressing queer individuals.

Misgendering, as per Sexual Script Theory, is linked to performative metaphor where individuals follow internalized scripts shaped by their gender identity, expression, and social norms. Through utilizing these scripts,

sexual motives are also influenced. Since scripts are influenced by social and cultural norms, misgendering surfaces through the binary understanding of gender and conformity preference. The latter is defined as the restricted view of gender wherein only the male and female framework is acknowledged and accepted. On the other hand, the former refers to the conformity of other queer men towards the hegemonic view of masculinity, which puts those who conform to it into a higher social and sexual status. Queer dating applications contribute to its existence since their filter features tend to exclude queer individuals who constitute the minority (Conner, 2019). Through these limited profile options, queer men who do not see themselves in these options are forced to be identified with the available options, contributing to the narrow understanding of gender identity, expression, and sexual orientation.

Hypermasculinity

Hypermasculinity is the exaggeration and conformity to conventional masculine behaviors, features, language, and traits. It amplifies the stereotypical "macho" persona, in which an individual becomes confronted with the expected heteronormative perception of how males should act and express themselves (Halkitis, 2019).

Most participants shared their distinct experiences with hypermasculinity. They define it as alienating, exclusionary, and repressive, particularly to queer men who resist conforming to the hegemonic masculine influence. Under the general theme of hypermasculinity, two sub-themes were drawn: Effeminophobia and Mascing. The former is the direct suppression of the feminine qualities of queer men, be it through expression or physical appearance. It is a form of discrimination that reduces the chances of effeminate queer men to socialize within the community. The latter is the term used for presenting oneself with masculine features, an act of conformity to traditional and hegemonic masculine characteristics despite having an identity or gender expression different from it. It is more of a response to the effeminophobia that circles queer men community since it is evident that straight-passing queer men have better socialization opportunities than those who do not.

Hypermasculinity is further explained by sexual script theory through how queer men emphasize masculinity over other gender identities. Sexual script theory asserts that existing cultural and social norms influence the perception of gender, which sets expectations for how individuals must act and express themselves according to these norms. The norms of masculinity continue to permeate the queer men community wherein masculinity is prioritized, particularly its hyper aspects like muscular physical features and expression of dominance. Therefore, embracing hypermasculinity attributes becomes apparent in social groups within queer men due to its compelling nature of influence towards identity development and degree of social acceptance. In queer men communities, it has become a construct that oppresses femininity and gender expressions outside the norms of masculinity (Rinke, 2022). As an outcome, there is a collective presumption of negativity towards effeminate queer men, encompassing public socialization and sexual intimacy.

Prejudice in Sex Roles

Prejudice in sexual roles discriminates and excludes individuals due to their preferred sexual positions. In the typical queer men hook-up setup, common positions are top (penetrative), bottom (receptive), and versatile (satisfied by either being a top or bottom). Most of the context of queer men dating revolves around these terms since compatibility and preference contribute as driving factors to successful match-making endeavors. However, hypermasculinity remains a massive influence in this discourse. When a queer man tops, he is automatically perceived as dominant and masculine. It differs from a queer man who bottoms, as he is perceived as vulnerable and subservient, akin to the traits conventionally associated with women (Woods, 2021).

Participants shared their experiences with prejudice in sex roles where they elucidated the grounds of these experiences towards lack of sexual health education and conformity to hypermasculinity. These accounts further provide contexts of how prejudice in sex roles is executed in queer dating applications. These accounts assert the discussion of sexual positioning by Winder (2023), where he posits that having a receptive role in queer men's sexual intercourse is subdued to the collective perception that intends to attach shame in bottoming since it is associated with the social position of femininity. It has become a norm that to be at the bottom is to be emasculated in a community where conformity to hypermasculinity is rewarded.

Since sexual roles play an essential role in queer men's interaction and formation of sexual identities (Winder, 2023), notably, these sexual roles are grounded on the cultural perspectives and societal norms a particular queer individual belongs to. Gagnon and Simon (2017) explain this through the sexual script theory, as it includes sexual roles and preferences, the aspect of putting less value on sexual roles that are conceived under the "top=masculine"

concept becomes an area of concern. As we analyze it through the sexual script theory, queer men who prefer receptive sexual roles, which constitute a part of their sexual scripts, ought to be submissive and are positioned lower than those who like to act the penetrative sexual roles.

Risks

Numerous participant accounts further explain the risks of queer dating applications, which can come in different forms according to these accounts. Seven out of eight participants shared different experiences under the general theme, where each account ranges from minor to severe. Risks are apparent not only in the online platform but also in the offline setting, wherein the former primarily involves stigma, discrimination, and deception. Experiences in the offline setting highly regard risks that affect their mental, emotional, and physical safety. Within the general theme, two sub-themes were drawn: Scamming and Non-consensual activities.

Through the analysis of the narratives, one factor that permits these risks to exist is the provision of anonymity in these queer dating applications. It is in the users' authority whether they provide their personal information, a portion of it, or even nothing. Users can also create fake profiles, enabling them to communicate with other app users using a fabricated identity (Murphy, 2017). This ability to remain anonymous while still interacting with other people to pursue personal interests causes the rise of risks in queer dating applications, putting more victims in a traumatic state which affects their socialization experience and may even cause self-blaming for putting themselves in such situations.

The second sub-theme drawn from the analysis under the general theme of risks highlights the actuality of non-consensual activities that transpire within queer men's interactions, particularly during sexual encounters. The accounts show that it may come in pressuring an individual to conform to a specific sex role, substance abuse, blackmailing, sexual coercion, and many unaccounted incidents wherein victims are forced and pressured.

Sexual script theory highlights how social norms and customs influence queer men's experiences on queer dating applications as a way of understanding these risks. Internal and external pressure may manifest in queer men's interaction with other queer men since the community is also influenced by sexual role expectations, which consider the gender-binary perspective. For queer men who deviate from these expectations or refuse adaptability, there may be demands on who should take the receptive or penetrative role. It may cause pressure and anxiousness to an individual, which the intimidator may take advantage of. Apart from that, the preconceived notion about these queer dating applications (e.g., having known to offer hook-ups and casual meetups) also contributes to the larger area wherein the subjugation of other queer individuals can take place.

Creation of the Interactive Film

Pre-production

Using themes extracted from narrative analysis and participants' accounts, the initial sub-phase of pre-production involved outlining the visual and narrative structure of the interactive film. This process encompassed creating an idea board, employing Brecht's historicization, scriptwriting, storyboarding, talent scouting, and tech-stack building. The idea board played a pivotal role in guiding the artistic treatment of the film, emulating a queer dating application to immerse users. The color scheme, consisting of black, white, and red, was strategically chosen to symbolize the positive and negative aspects of queer dating applications (black and white) and emphasize the boldness and risks inherent in the film's context (red) (Olesen, n.d.; Halton, 2023).

Historicization was employed during the pre-production process, which involved three steps. First, the coded narratives were highlighted wherein various experiences were drawn, considering how these experiences represent the larger and collective history of the situation of queer men in queer dating applications, coherent to the central point of Brecht's theory of interpreting a piece as a prescription of society's reality (Koutsourakis, 2018).

In the second step, the highlighted experiences were presented dialectically, following Brecht's approach that focuses on history's transformation, reconstruction, and contradiction, without adhering to linearity. This led to the interactive film having multiple paths, illustrating how history, when viewed through choices, can lead to different present versions. Six paths were established, each associated with a theme, starting from the same premise, and unfolding as viewers gravitated towards their preferred ending.

The third step divided the six paths into segments, reflecting Brecht's aesthetic theory of discontinuity to stimulate critical thinking and diverse perspectives. Segmenting the paths in the interactive film created connecting

points for deviations and convergence through choice points with two options, forming additional segments that visualized the map structure using Brecht's historicization technique.

Lastly, the script, storyboard, talent scouting, and tech-stack development were completed. The script was meticulously crafted to align with interview transcripts, ensuring accuracy and continuity within the segmented structure. Individual storyboards were created, featuring annotations for technical details, and talent scouting was done online with talent release agreements. The chosen tech stack included JavaScript, HTML, and CSS due to their beginner-friendly nature, web compatibility, and ease of learning, ideal for someone with limited programming expertise.
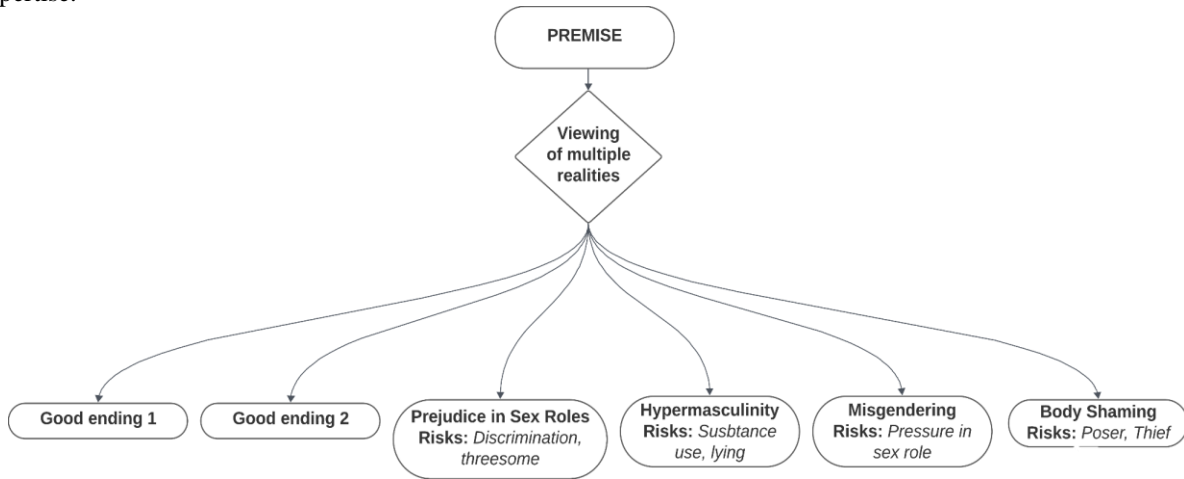
Figure 3. Rough interactive film map structure with themes

Brecht's historicization through segmenting in an interactive film involved creating six narrative paths addressing issues like body shaming, hypermasculinity, and risks in queer dating apps. This approach prompted critical reflection on diverse perspectives, with two paths illustrating positive experiences within these platforms.
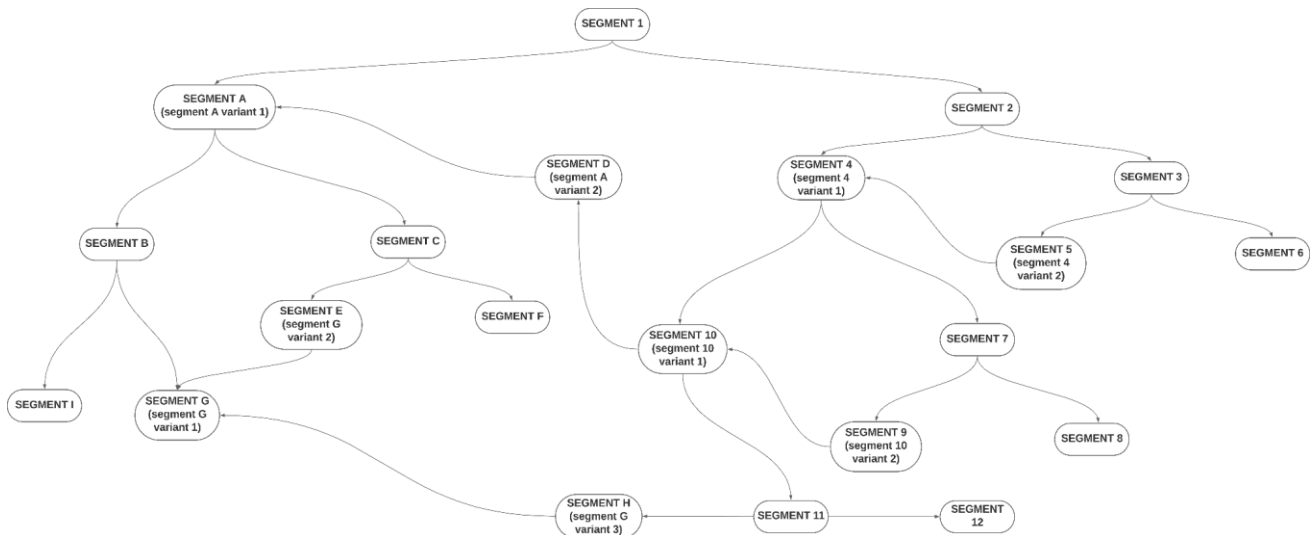

Figure 4. Final interactive film map structure with themes

The initial structure was divided into smaller segments, totaling twenty-one, which acted as linking points for the convergence or divergence of specific paths. Viewers could redirect their progression by choosing between two options presented at choice points, each leading to a different segment and desired themes.
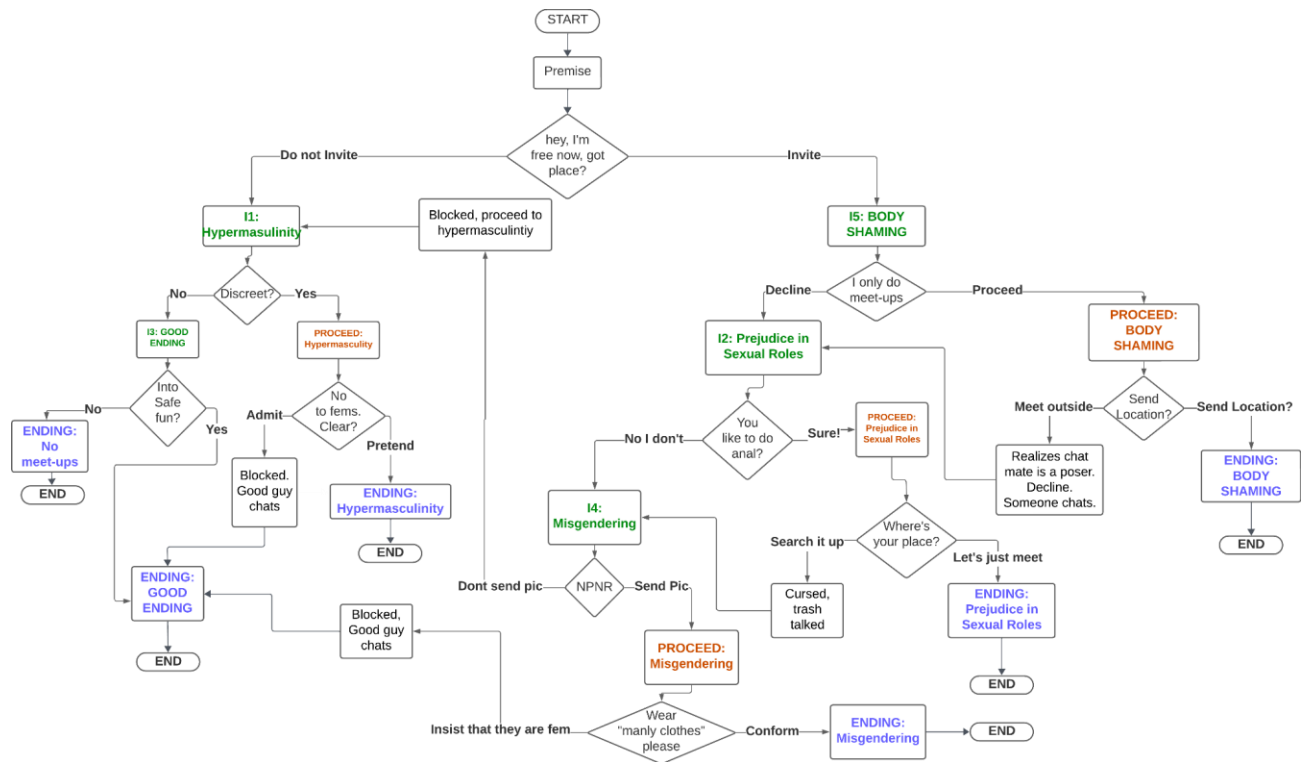
Figure 5. Detailed film map structure

The detailed film map structure provides a visual overview of the entire process of the interactive film, which includes premises and themes (rectangles), start and end points (pill shapes), choice points (diamonds), and decision pathways (arrows).

Production

The preparations that took place in the preproduction phase instigated the execution of the production phase, which included shooting the scenes and coding the interactive film. The researcher, who served as the director and cinematographer, employed the traditional way of recording scenes in the film, dependent on the details provided for each segment from the storyboard. The employment of Gestus was executed during the shooting period. Brecht defines it as an acting technique that aims to explicitly depict a character through movements, facial expressions, and tone of voice as these are all governed by the character's social position and reality (Doherty, 2000). Gestus was used to portray secondary roles in the context of queer men dating, emphasizing hypermasculinity through low voice modulation, cis-man gestures, gendered terms like bro, bai, and dude, and discreet meet-up gestures detailed by the participants during the interviews.

Coding the interactive film marked the second half of the production phase, incorporating ideas from the idea board and visuals from the storyboard. HTML, CSS, and JavaScript were used to create an engaging and dynamic viewing experience. It was in this step that Brecht's alienation effect was executed for critical interpretation (Çavuş & Özcan, 2010). To achieve this, four interactive elements were applied: choice points, interactable objects, registration, and log-out screens. Choice points presented options for viewers to shape the narrative, while interactable objects triggered models with additional information. The registration and log-out screen were used to define the app-

emulation technique, emphasizing the film's focus on the user's experience with queer dating apps. These interactive screens allowed for personalization to immerse the audience in the character's perspective.
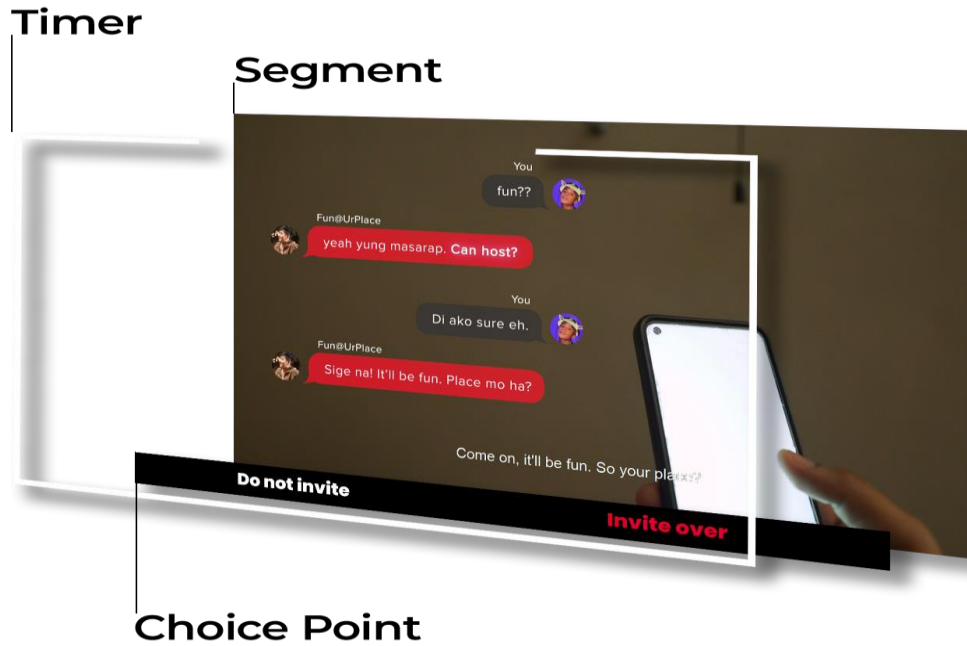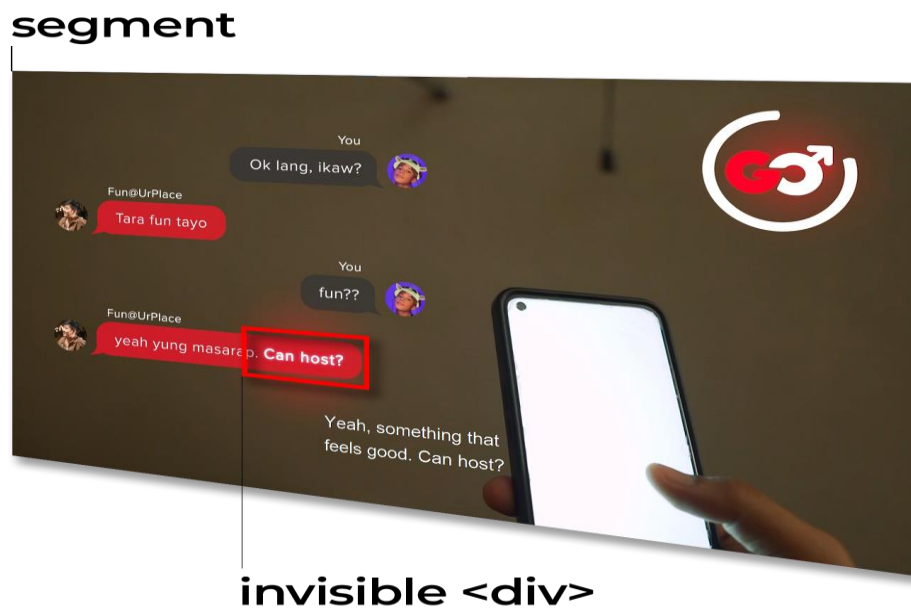

Figure 6. Choice point deconstruction

Figure 7. Interactable object deconstruction

Figures 6 and 7 present a deconstructed point of view of the choice point and the interactable objects, two major interactive elements in the film. In the interactive film, choice points comprising segments, choice labels, and timers were strategically placed to grant users autonomy in selecting which segment to connect. These segments and choice points were implemented through coding and layered atop one another to create a dynamic viewing experience. On the other hand, the interactable objects allow viewers to click on text or objects, triggering modal pop-ups containing additional information, and facilitating interactive learning and content presentation, with each object's attributes stored alongside its associated segment in the code.
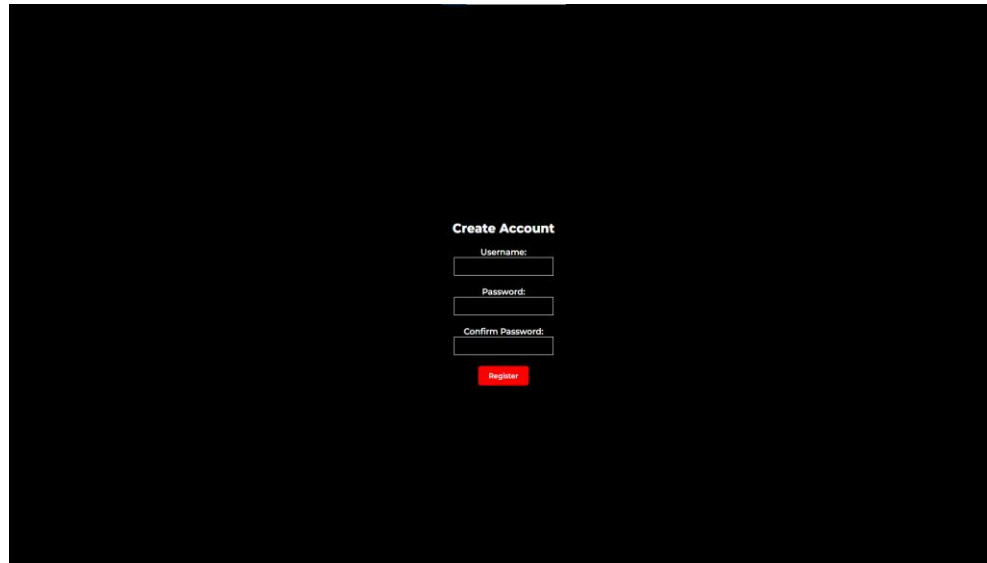

Figure 8. Risgo registration screen

The third interactive element in the film was the Registration screen, which mimicked queer dating applications to immerse viewers in the experience, offering personalization to enhance audience engagement. However, despite its attempt to provide agency, interference from other interactive elements like choice points and interactable objects compromised the sense of control offered by registration.

Post-Production

The editing process encompassed various tasks, including manipulating video files, clip arrangement, animation, sound design, and color grading. These actions were essential for structuring the film's segments and preparing them for integration into the final product. The integration phase followed, involving the seamless merging of visuals and technology to bring the interactive film to life. This step was crucial as it not only supported the film's web-based application but also defined and implemented the user interface, including the placement of interactive elements for a cohesive user experience.

After developing the interactive film, testing of the project was then executed. It served as one of the critical phases in developing the interactive film as it ensured that the execution of the integration process was correct and that all its mechanisms were working correctly. This stage was also concerned with locating technical problems that might hamper the viewers' experience. The testing phase involved two steps: Test case and Test execution.

The interactive exhibition involved feedback sessions, comprising both individual and focused groups. Prior to the exhibition, viewers were briefed on the project's purpose, goals, and concept. The feedback sessions were guided by questions aligned with various assessment areas, including content and awareness, educational impact, viewer engagement, production quality, and recommendations. Overall, the interactive film received praise in all these areas, with a consensus on the need to expand the exploration of narratives, terminologies, and concepts relevant to the queer men community.

Lastly, assessment results using Windsor's (2016) interactive visualization components position the interactive film Risgo as predominantly explanation-focused due to its linear segment ordering and author-driven design. While it offers considerable user control through interactive objects, choice points, and a registration/log-out screen, it remains confined within the author's central narrative structure. The passage of time is evident, employing cinematic techniques and messaging elements to deliver both implicit and explicit story narration.
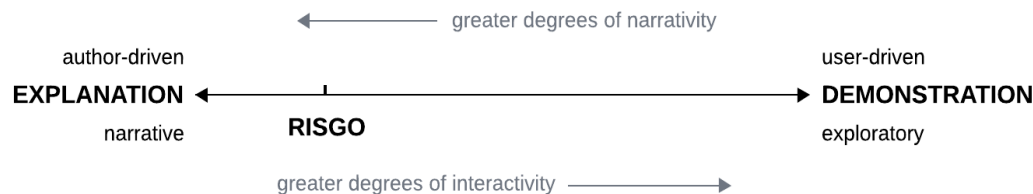

Figure 9. Placement of Risgo in the exploration-demonstration model

CONCLUSION

In culmination, Risgo stands as a project-based research endeavor with a paramount goal to illuminate and raise awareness about the challenges faced by queer men in the minority, specifically within the realm of risks and stigma prevalent in queer dating applications. The genesis of this project lies in the main author's odyssey of self-acceptance amidst a heteronormative society, propelling him to delve into the realms of inclusive cyberspaces. Within these spaces, the project brought to light the enduring prevalence of hegemonic and binary gender perspectives, further contributing to the marginalization of queer individuals within their communities.

Fueled by multimedia, this project-based research has uncovered the transformative potential of digital storytelling to unveil narratives rooted in diverse social realities. The incorporation of multimedia has not only broadened the scope of storytelling but has also amplified its reach and resonance. The interactive film, a tangible outcome of this exploration, stands as a testament to the significance of addressing experiences and has validated the efficacy of digital storytelling as a potent medium of expression.

In the contemporary, technology-driven era, Risgo serves as an exemplary demonstration of the capacity of multimedia to not only raise awareness but also to act as a catalyst for resistance against regressive societal norms. This project is not confined to the community it directly concerns; rather, it is presented as a mirror reflecting the arduous journey of self-acceptance that resonates universally. By sharing these untold narratives, Risgo extends an invitation for collective introspection, fostering empathy, understanding, and a collective commitment to dismantling barriers in the pursuit of a more inclusive and affirming future for all.

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