Stigmatisation of *Bule* Hunter: Unpacking the Prejudices

An Autoethnographic Study

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Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Appendices

List of Acronyms

ISS	Institute of Social Studies
PKL	*Penggemar Konthol Londo* (fan of Westerner's dick)
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity

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Abstract

There is a term that exists within Indonesian society which is mostly applied to an Indonesian woman dating or married to a Caucasian man: *bule* hunter. This term carries negative prejudices in relation to their gender, race, class, and sexuality. The objective of this research is to unpack the stigma of *bule* hunter by examining the prejudices which lead society to categorise women in this way. Besides investigating the stigma across genders, the study also analyses race, class, and sexuality-related power relation used to reproduce the stigma against cross-cultural relations between Indonesian women and Caucasian men. This research also aims to discuss and dissect the stigmatisation itself, to further the understanding of who is a *bule*, who is a *bule* hunter, and what are the prejudices underlying the stigma against either or both. I wish to fill a gap in existing research by incorporating perspectives from diverse populations with regard to interracial relationships and more importantly, to reflect on the stigma against *bule* hunters, and how that stigma is first produced and then reproduced.

Relevance to Development Studies

Development is not only about increasing the GDP nor is it about reducing the poverty. In my research context, it is also about the gaze of the West which is rooted in the history of colonisation and its continued manifestation across many aspects of society.

By analysing the personal narratives of Indonesian hetero women and men as well as gay and bisexual men with respect to their relationships with Westerners, I illustrate the present-day lingering views which are rooted in the colonial history of transnational relationships. This study engages critical development discourses in the analysis, such as gender, race, class, and sexuality which can make room for recognition of the stigma the term *bule* hunters places on women. By understanding the way Indonesians make sense of and insert their meaning into being a partner of a Westerner, I wish to present a discourse to counter a common prejudice against *bule* hunters and offer a tool of reflection for Indonesian society in relation to internalised views and perceptions.

Keywords

Women, *bule*, *bule* hunter, interracial relationship, stigma, gender, race, class, sexuality, whiteness, prejudices.

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 "Are you a *bule* hunter?"

This one simple question was directed at me around 2015 and it has been tickling my mind for years. *Bule* is a familiar term within the Indonesian community; it is used to refer to an animal that has white skin (e.g. *kebo bule* refers to a white buffalo) and it is commonly used term to refer to people with white skin (whether albino or Caucasian). I also have heard people call a woman *bule* hunter; yet I had not reflected on what it really meant until someone asked me that one little question. More importantly, I was not aware of the dynamics behind the label, nor did I understand what would prompt someone to assume a woman is a *bule* hunter.

I asked many people what *bule* hunter means. At the same time, as a result of having been asked that question, I internalised my own feelings while becoming more aware of not only when I saw an Indonesian woman and a white man, but also when I was with a white man. Whatever the nature of my relationship with a white man - it could be professional, amical, romantic or casual - I realised that I was becoming more aware of people around me and how my relationships with white men were being perceived. With the limited knowledge that I had about the label, I thought perhaps I continued to reproduce the stigmatisation of *bule* hunter without being aware that I was reinforcing the social injustices underneath this term. Only once I was asked the question, did I begin to question myself: What really is a *bule* hunter? Who are they? Who created this term? Why does this label exist and since when has it existed? What are the power relations between actors around this term, and what are the implications for women and men, of using the term *bule* hunter? These questions were running around in my head without finding any answer. Also, why was I asked this question in the first place? Was it because I was a Javanese woman with brown skin who, back at that time, was dating a white American man? But then, what about my Indonesian male friend who was dating a white Australian woman? Was he also asked the same question that I was? Has the gay Indonesian guy I met in Jakarta who is married to a white American man ever been asked if he was a *bule* hunter? More importantly, what do all these people think about the term itself, given that they are Indonesians who are also involved in interracial relationships?

My previous work environment allowed me to meet people from many different countries and backgrounds. I established professional relationships, and found friends with whom I shared stories and life experiences. I had dated some white men, yet it had never occurred to me to consider myself a *bule* hunter, no more than I presumed that my heterosexual male friend and my homosexual male acquaintances were *bule* hunters. In fact, I stopped using the term *bule* hunter itself once I learned that the terminology is derogatory, and is not meant to be a compliment about cultural openness.

1.2 Studying the Topic: Why and How

This topic is especially interesting for me because of the multiple layers and the complex dimensions associated with the labelling of *bule* hunters. I am intrigued by the social and economic contexts as well as issues related to gender, race, age, culture, religion, and sexuality that are all wrapped up in the label. Both from a historical and colonial point of view, and in the modern construct where women's sexuality is controlled by the state, the identity of *bule*

hunter goes against the patterns of sexuality, courtship and marriage legalised (and illegalised) by state institution in Indonesia.

The problem that becomes prominent for me is that it seems the gender, race, class, and sexuality of a person who dates a white man is what triggers the *bule* hunter labelling. Who is being stigmatised? Is it only women from lower classes or is it all women regardless of class, race, sexuality, and even religion? If a woman comes from the upper class or strata, will she still be labelled a *bule* hunter? How do these women perceive themselves in the relationship?

The label *bule* hunter exists; there is even a book titled '*Bule* Hunter' which is dedicated to telling the stories of Indonesian women who dated white men. In addition, there is a movie on the subject called '*Kenapa Harus Bule*' (referred as 'Why Does It Have to be a *Bule*?') which tells the story of a young woman finding the man of her dreams, who happens to be white. I have heard this term for a while now, and have seen women being called *bule* hunter yet I have never fully taken into account their stories and the motivations of those who label these women this way. Without knowing it, I was guilty of submitting to and consenting to the socially constructed label given to Indonesian women dating white men. Now, I am driven to find answers to my questions and investigate a subject matter that tends towards making a premise about interracial relationships that can reinforce gender inequalities and even promote racism. By doing this research in which I include my own experiences and weave them together with those of my participants', I wish to better understand the phenomenon and be conscious of myself as an Indonesian woman of colour in an interracial relationship with a white man.

In doing so, I adopt an autoethnography approach which "seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (Ellis et al. 2011). I realise that I am the author of this research whose personal narratives are used to analyse a cultural experience. However, it requires "comparing and contrasting personal experience against existing research or interviewing cultural members" (Ellis et al. 2011) too. Therefore, I use personal interviews of Indonesian stakeholders and I include the experiences of my research participants as the source of the personal narratives. Autoethnography recognises the complexity of stories yet they are constitutive and meaningful, and they teach morals and ethics, introduce unique ways of thinking and feeling, and they help people make sense of themselves and others (Ellis et al. 2011).

I aim to answer the main research question:

H**ow do the notions and practices of gender, race, class, and sexuality intersect to shape the stigmatisation of *bule* hunter and affect the relationship of Indonesian women, men, and LGBTQI+ community with their Caucasian partners?**

This main question is supported by exploring these four areas: 1) the meaning of *bule* and *bule* hunter; 2) the prejudices of a woman who is assumed to be a *bule* hunter; 3) how the notions of gender, race, class, and sexuality affect the stigma; and 4) the power relations of interracial relationships which consist of Indonesian women, men, and LGBTQI+ with their Caucasian partner.

I divide this research into six chapters. Chapter 1 gives a general introduction of the research. Chapter 2 provides more in-depth background of the study, such as the colonial history of concubinage, literature reviews, and theoretical discussion. Chapter 3 elaborates the method and methodology. Chapter 4 explores the notion of whiteness in relation to gender and sexuality across three levels: whiteness as seen as sexually and romantically desirable, whiteness as associated to social status, and whiteness as associated with sexually and socially desirable offspring. Chapter 5 discusses the gendered and racialised perceptions

of interracial relationship. And finally, Chapter 6 provides a synthesis to answer my research questions as well as the conclusion.

Chapter 2 Contextualising the Research Problem

2.1 Background

In order to set up the meaning of interracial relationship to study the stigma of *bule* hunter, I follow Buggs's description: interracial relationship not only "can be used to describe anything from friendship to a sexual encounter" (Buggs 2017: 2), but also "a pairing wherein people who identify with different racial of ethnic groups engage in romantic and/or sexual relationships, inclusive of dating, marriage, and cohabitation" (Buggs 2017: 2).

There is a presumption that in the interracial relationship involving an Indonesian woman and a Western man, the woman submits to the familiar Western dating scene where premarital sex is considered common place. In contrast, the Indonesian dating scene controls sex and sexuality through established norms and traditions; furthermore, they are institutionalised by the state. Besides being sexually active before marriage is taboo, being in a homosexual relationship is considered deviant. The LGBTQI+ community do not have a place to express their sexuality nor are they formally recognised. As a result, they create their own community and it is not uncommon to be underground; otherwise, they would be criminalised for their sexual practice. This is relevant because it has not been clearly established if the term *bule* hunter can be directed at both heterosexual men and LGBTQI+ community if their partner is Caucasian.

For most Indonesians, the characteristic of a *bule* is assigned to a male and female Caucasian despite their nationality. The labelling of *bule* describes the othering practice in Indonesian society; this concept is one of the prominent issues of expatriates' daily lives in Indonesia (Mustikawati 2019: 367). It has become one of the obstacles for expatriates who live in Indonesia to adapt and socialise with Indonesians. It has also become integrated in the Indonesian cultural scene through a "comedy show called *Bule Gila* (which literally means 'crazy white people') in the 2000s in which some foreigners did odd pranks around Indonesian people" (Mustikawati 2019: 368). Whether aware of its derogatory roots or not, foreigners are generally reluctant to be labelled as *bule* and to become the centre of attention (Mustikawati 2019: 369).

In relation to the term *bule* hunter, there is no exact date when the term was invented nor is there any record of who created it. I found the term appeared in news articles in 2010s such as 'I'm (Not) a *Bule* Hunter' in 2011 and 'What *Bule* Hunters Want' in 2014; the term and the phenomenon were also included in a book by Michael Powers in 2015 and by an Indonesian woman, Elisabeth Oktofani, in 2014. Furthermore, a movie titled *Kenapa Harus Bule?* was made in 2018 and in the same year, a bachelor thesis written by an Indonesian student captured the phenomenon of *bule* hunter in Jogjakarta, Indonesia. A Facebook group called Bali *Bule* Hunter Community was created in 2018 to accommodate people who want to find a Caucasian partner and for foreigners or tourists visiting Bali to find a local companion. Additionally, this term and its stigma also appeared in the studies of transnational relationship in Indonesia (Siddiqah-Oinonen 2015; Alawi 2020; Mustikawati 2019; Adveningtyas 2018). All told, media references to the term and popular usage seem to be a relatively recent phenomenon.

With numerous sources in which the term *bule* hunter appeared, I found that it remained challenging to settle on a definition of the term. A lot of the articles, discussions, and books refer to the term to target Indonesian women within a similar spectrum. On the one hand, Adveningtyas defines *bule* hunters as "a group of women who like to spend their time in some bars to find white male partners" (Adveningtyas 2018: xiii) whose behaviour includes

"partying, consuming alcohol, smoking, and wearing sexy clothes" (Adveningtyas 2018: xiii). Her description is echoed by Siddiqah-Oionen: *bule* hunter is "the type of woman who is approaching a Caucasian man, hoping to be married and migrate to the husband's home country to have a better life" (Siddiqah-Oinonen 2015: 8). On the other hand, Oktofani described *bule* hunter as "a group of people, both men and women, who chase Caucasians from the United States, Australia, and/or Europe" (Oktofani 2014: 14). Although she includes men in her description, her book is focused on women and does not mention anything about men in relation to the stigma of *bule* hunter. Nonetheless, her definition gives me more motivation to study the topic of *bule* hunter and to include men and the LGBTQI+ community.

2.2 *Nyai*: A Colonial Legacy of Miscegenation

In this subchapter, through exploring the historical background of the relationship between Indonesian women and Dutch men, I propose the idea that the label *bule* hunter is rooted in the history of concubinage and it is, to some degree, a contemporary manifestation of *Nyai* – a word used to refer to Javanese and Sumatran women living as concubines of European men (Stoler 2010: 48).

For centuries, the relationship between Indonesian women and Dutch men took the form of concubinage, "a contemporary term which referred to the cohabitation outside of marriage between European men and Asian women" (Stoler 1989: 637). In the 1600s, VOC "legally and financially made concubinage the most attractive domestic option for its employee" (Stoler 1989: 637). By the 19th century and until the early of the 20th century, "(…) concubinage was the most prevalent living arrangement for European colonials in the Indies" (Stoler 1989: 637).

The concubine arrangement which was a consequence of marital prohibition for European male employees of VOC, was reinforced for several reasons. First, it provided cheap domestic services for young bachelor employees as well as hastened the assimilation process, as Stoler said: "(…) colonial decision makers counted on the social services that local women supplied as useful guides to the language and other mysteries of the local societies" (Stoler 2010: 49). When recruiting, VOC preferred selecting bachelors as their European recruits since female migration was prohibited; furthermore, there was a fear of "the emergence of a European proletariat" (Stoler 2010: 29) based on the concern that married recruits would not have sufficient earnings to support their family in East Indies.

Second, the concubinage aimed to not only economically benefit the company by providing low salaries to its employees, but also to stabilise political order and colonial health (Stoler 1989: 637). Sexual relations and sanctions were central in the development and maintenance of colonial power; there was a continuous debate over matrimony arrangements, mixed-unions, and what privileges a mixed-offspring could claim. It was a way to maintain and enhance the social classifications of the "white" and the "native", to determine who were the citizens, who were the subjects, and which children were legitimate progeny and which were not (Stoler 1989: 635).

Concubinage does not exist anymore in Indonesia after the practice was officially prohibited in the early 20th century (Stoler 1989: 637). The term 'Nyai' has gone from common usage except in literature that tells of the relationships between Indonesian women with white men, such as in a novel titled 'This Earth of Mankind' written by a famous post-independence Indonesian writer, Toer. He discusses the social and legal status of a specific *Nyai* in colonial times and gives an illustration of the dynamic between the *Nyai* and Indonesian society in general. Toer notes there was an invisible gap and unspoken scoffs of

her status as a Dutch concubine and, although she ran a sugarcane company and she was well-respected among her fellow workers, her social status remained at the bottom of the ladder (Toer 1982). She was seen as a woman of low morals, a prostitute, and she did not have any legal rights over her mixed-race daughter. In contrast, the children who were the products of this arranged relationship had more rights and privileges compared to their mother (Toer 1982).

2.3 Romance and Stigma in Popular Culture

While a *Nyai's* life along with her restricted social privileges are portrayed in Toer's remarkable novel, the term *bule* hunter is used and its social perceptions are depicted in books and movies too. Although the concubinage arrangement and the nickname *Nyai* no longer appear in popular culture, the deep internalised thoughts which are rooted in the concubinage history are manifest in the prejudices associated with the term *bule* hunter. The lengthy history between Indonesian women and Dutch men has left its mark on Indonesian post-colonial society and is represented in popular culture.

A movie titled '*Kenapa Harus Bule?'* which was released in 2018 captures the contemporary dynamics of being a woman who seeks a white male partner. The main character who is a 29-year-old Indonesian woman, only wants to date white men whose position in the racial hierarchy is higher than an Indonesian man. While she is on her quest to find an 'ideal' partner who matches her ideal characteristics constructed around race, gender, and class, she helps to maintain and reproduces the negative perceptions of a woman who dates a Caucasian man; it is a situation where she distances herself from the stigma of *bule* hunter associated with being a prostitute by embracing the element of self-determination on the basis of sexuality.

A similar discourse also appears in a book written by an Indonesian woman, Elisabeth Oktofani. She wrote a book in 2014 titled '*Bule* Hunter' in which she explores the stories and lives of women whom she calls *bule* hunters. The author, who is married to a Canadian man (Rulistia 2014), describes how these relationships are perceived by society. For example, she notes that "Indonesian women who smoke, drink alcohol, and often return home late are called as *perempuan nakal"* (Oktofani 2014: 24) which can be translated to naughty women. The word *nakal* "can suggest inappropriate sexual behaviour but is also often used to describe the innocuous antics of mischievous child" (Stoler 2010: 180). Other examples of society's perceptions include "women who wear sexy clothes are called *perempuan murahan*" (Oktofani 2014: 24) and "women who often change boyfriend are called *perempuan gampangan*" (Oktofani 2014: 24) which both refer to cheap women in a derogatory way. In this book, Oktofani concludes that the women's motivation is driven by money, sex, and love (Oktofani 2014).

I found that the book partially exacerbates the stigma of *bule* hunter. Rather than telling the readers the other side of the story which she claims is her intention, she reaffirms the current prejudices and judges some women as the ones who "taint the image of other women" (Oktofani 2014: 55). In my observation, her judgments do not help to reduce the negative sentiments associated with the stigma; instead, it guides the readers to reproduce the stigma and prejudices.

Indonesian social norms require a woman "to keep her virginity only for her husband so that he can respect her" (Oktofani 2014: 114). If a woman is seen to be dating a Caucasian man, she will be considered someone who enjoys having sexual relationships with a white man. In lay language, such a woman is often called *"Penggemar Kontol Londho"* (PKL) (Adveningtyas 2018: xii) which can be translated as 'fan of Westerners' dick'. Some people

also call such a woman *keple,* which is a Javanese word that refers to a woman prostitute; there is no word reserved for a male prostitute. Another derogatory term associated with *bule* hunters is *"ayam kampung"*; it literally means 'free range chicken' and is a metaphor that is used to describe a woman as a prostitute. It is commonly shortened as only "*ayam*" which is used frequently by the lead character in the movie mentioned above when referring to other women she perceives to be *bule* hunters.

The movies and the books tell the same stories: whiteness is associated with being more modern, more open-minded, more romantic, and most importantly, it is associated with the ideal beauty standard. This discourse corresponds with the current Indonesian beauty standard where white is perceived as "one is rich, as one is beautiful, as one is intelligent" (Fanon 51-52). From these books and movies too, the stigma of *bule* hunter is circulated, popularized, and reproduced. Thus, to such a woman are attached additional derogatory and demeaning terms.

2.4 The Dating Scene in Indonesia

It is not an unusual for Indonesian women to date Caucasian men in Indonesia, especially in big cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, or Jogjakarta. While a woman is labelled as a *bule* hunter, I have rarely heard the label *bule* hunter given to an Indonesian man. Interracial relationships in Indonesia are generally dominated by the female partner being the local. Several studies on interracial relationships in the Indonesian context have been conducted; some focus on the women's motivation (Adveningtyas 2018; Alawi 2020) while others discuss the women's post-migration life after married to a Caucasian man (Siddiqah-Oinonen 2015) or the dating experience in Indonesia from the perspective of foreigners (Mustikawati 2019).

Adveningtyas's study suggests that *bule* hunters hang out in search of Caucasian partners in a particular tourist area in Jogjakarta (Adveningtyas 2018: xiii). They are being judged for the way they express their sexuality hence the nickname PKL and *keple*. Their expression of preference is against Indonesian norms and is seen as damaging to local values. Additionally, dating a white man is seen as a door to enter the more desirable Western world and "a way out from the repressive and oppressive Islamic Javanese culture" (Adveningtyas 2018: xiii).

The notion of liminality experienced by the women who "want to be the part of Western society while at the same time maintaining their local identity" (Adveningtyas 2018: 79) is explored in Alawi's study. It concludes that the racial hierarchy which was set during the European colonisation resulted in the remaining perceptions of white superiority among Indonesians (Alawi 2020: 61-61). Thus, many Indonesian women see white man as their ideal partner because they represent openness, appreciation towards women, and intelligence (Alawi 2020: 61-61). While these two studies provide information about women who are stigmatised as *bule* hunter and their motivations, both continue to maintain the constructed and gendered perceptions of women in interracial relationships without allowing the multiple realities to contribute.

Mustikawati, on the other hand, gives an outlook from the opposite perspective. Using a digital space to build relationships with Indonesians, the study presents how expatriates "express their cultural identities in the digital world in order to have an alternative dating scene in Indonesia" (Mustikawati 2019: 367). It shows how female and male expatriates in Jakarta seek to build romantic and amical relationship with Indonesians through Tinder. Their experiences are interesting to observe, from their motivation to their encounters with Indonesians. For instance, one Caucasian man called his female Tinder counterpart a *bule* hunter because he found her sexually forthright in an online space (Mustikawati 2019: 373). Another example, in addition to being more visible in Indonesia, one Caucasian woman was insulted and "sexually objected" (Mustikawati 2019: 375) multiple times by Indonesian men.

2.5 Theoretical Discussion

2.5.1 Stigma and Agency

As discussed, there are multifaceted dimensions in the stigmatisation of *bule* hunter in Indonesia. According to Stafford and Scott, stigma is "a characteristic of a persons that is contrary to a norm of a social unit" (1986: 6). The characteristic of women who are dating white men from Western culture is perceived as going against the Indonesian norm. Norm is defined as "a shared belief that a person ought to behave in a certain way at a certain time" (Stafford and Scott 1986: 81). While to Link and Phelan, stigma is a "mark of disgrace" (2001: 364). At a glance, stigma puts Indonesian women into a box of deviant; a box on which an "attribute that is deeply discrediting" is attached (Link and Phelan 2001: 364). When a woman does not behave properly in a romantic relationship according to the societal norms, the label deviant is likely attached. This begins to imply that the term *bule* hunter refers to a deviant person.

Additionally, one of the reasons why these women choose to date white men is to escape from the oppressive Islamic Javanese culture and the desire of emancipation and gender equality (Adventianingtyas 2018: xii). These women use their agency to revolt from their identity in which they grew up and were raised. The society that assigns the label also exercises its agency through language which, according to a linguist anthropologist, "language is a social action" (Ahearn 2000: 13). In explaining agency, I borrow Frank's definition: agency is widely understood as the relationship of "concepts such as subjectivity, the individual, the person, and the self (…) that require a great deal of explication themselves and that are employed in diverse ways" (2006: 281). It is also understood "in relation to notions of structure, resistance, performativity, motivation, desire, or of praxis of practice" (Frank 2006: 281). In studies of agency, such as Madhok and Rai, when exercising, mobilising, and framing agency (2012: 646), "it must be informed by mapping of power relations and multiple subjects positioning – of class, caste, religion, gender, space, and sexuality" (Madhok and Rai 2012: 646).

2.5.2 Intersection of Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality

Reflecting on the label's name – *bule* hunter – race is a very significant notion. As a postcolonial society, Indonesians have internalised for a long time the constructed and racialised social hierarchy and thus, postcolonialism is the theory I use "as an attempt to engage with particular historical condition" (Gandhi 2019, no page). The perceptions of interracial relationships in Indonesia which often, subconsciously or not, entailed colonial encounters is worth to be revisited, remembered, and interrogated in relation to the colonial past (Gandhi 2019, no page).

To study the stigma and to answer the key questions, I choose the intersectionality approach as one of the lenses for two reasons. First, I recognise the need to acknowledge that there are multiple layers of identity which correspond with each other and there are multiple axes in every individual that are shaped by and shape their environment including their political stance. This corresponds with Yuval-Davis's statement in which social divisions are always constructed and intermeshed with each other; it includes gender, social class, disability status, sexuality, age, nationality, immigration status, and geography (Yuval-Davis 2006: 195).

Secondly, the intersectionality approach allows me to analyse the power relation as well as observe how it is manifested in the *bule* hunter prejudices since "(…) intersectionality emphasizes the interwoven of the nature of these categories and explores how they weaken

or strengthen each other" (Winker 2011: 51). Hence, I incorporate diverse populations in the study which provides me with multiple realities and identities in order to explore how their social divisions weaken or strengthen the prejudices of being with a Caucasian partner. However, the connection between each social division of the participants cannot be simplified and each of them brings their own realities since (Yuval-Davis 2006: 195).

I also follow McCall and Hancock's more dynamic approach to understanding intersectionality. This approach "sees the dimensions of inequality themselves as dynamic and in changing, mutually constituted relationship with each other, from which they cannot be disentangled" (Ferree 2009: 85). Borrowing Wekker's argument that race and sexuality always go hand in hand when representing women of colour in modern life (Wekker 2014: 161), helps not only to explain how the gendered, racialised and sexualised stigma of *bule* hunter operates, but also to comprehend the society's double sided-perceptions of an Indonesian woman's attributes who is in an interracial relationship which are envied and scorned at the same time.

By definition, race plays a central role in what constitutes an interracial relationship. Many studies address race within the Indonesian context. Saraswati in her study elaborates how Caucasian whiteness is desired by Indonesians and has become the beauty standard, and how whiteness represents cosmopolitanness (Saraswati 2010). Whiteness symbolises modernity, beauty, and upper class which is one of the main threads in the stigma of *bule* hunter. It corresponds to Han and Choi's observations that "sexual desire cannot be understood without thinking about race, nor can racism be fully examined without grasping the role that sexual desires play in maintaining racial hierarchies" (Han and Choi 2018: 146-7). Furthermore, whiteness is also depicted in the stigma of wanting to have a mixed-race child. Hewett explored the shifting meaning of being a mixed-race child in Indonesia as well as their representation within the community (Hewett 2017). Meanwhile, Fecter offers the view of whiteness from the opposite perspective; whiteness "has to be viewed not only as constructed, but also as contested" (Fecter 2005: 88). He argues that whiteness does not have a permanent meaning but it has to be seen as a site of change and struggle (Fecter 2005: 88).

Further regarding interracial relationship, Buggs argues that "race becomes a component that a partner in a given relationship must manage" (2017: 3). This includes the notion of racial sexuality. Asian sexualities are portrayed as "submissive and ultra-feminine femininities are constructed, longhaired, attractive in traditional ways" (Wekker 2014: 161). It is echoed and added by Nemoto: while Asian women are desired for the hyperfemininity and idealised sexuality, Asian men do not experience the same desirability (Nemoto in Buggs 2017: 3). In the Indonesian context, Caucasian men are seen as more desired than Indonesian men (Ziv in Siddiqah-Oinonen 2015: 2-3) which is connected to the alleged stigma of *bule* hunter towards women.

2.5.3 Gender and Hegemonic Masculinity

The dominant past discourses on women and men was based on biological features from which the sex difference debates originated (Connell 2005: 21). It produced "the concept of social role" (Connell 2005: 21) also known as sex role. It is seen as a "cultural elaboration of biological sex differences" (Connell 2005: 21) or, as Scott noted: "women have the capacity to give birth and men have greater muscular strength" (Scott 1986: 1056). This concept produced male and female sex roles in the family and further in the education, politics, and ethics which became the exclusive domain for specific groups.

For Scott, gender goes beyond the relation between the men and women sex role; it is a social relation of power in that it differentiates "sexual practice from the social roles assigned to women and men" (Scott 1986: 1056). Gender as a power relation operates within notions

and practices of femininity and masculinity. The essentialist definition of masculinity as compared to femininity is through the image of active or passiveness (Connell 2005: 69). White men masculinities "are constructed not only in relation to white women but also in relation to black men" (Connell 2005: 75). In the Western discourse of masculinity, while black men's masculinity is associated with violence, white masculinity is associated with power control. In Indonesian context, white male represents masculinity while Asian men are demasculinised. This unequal relations between different masculinities actually determines the maintenance of patriarchy which is showed in theory of hegemonic masculinity (Tosh 2004: 44-45).

Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantee (or taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell 2005: 77). Tosh adds that hegemonic masculinity not only implies control and even oppression to women but also provides "a framework for placing men in relation to women and to those males whose manhood is for some reason denied" (Tosh 2004: 42). The notion of ranking men based on their sexual orientation and the fear which leads to disciplining sexual deviants and other marginal masculinities is fundamental to hegemonic masculinity (Tosh 2004: 46). It implies men whose sexuality does not comply to the dominant male masculinity are subject of oppression and are seen as a possible threat to other masculinities. Discrimination against men as well as women is the core practice of hegemonic masculinity (Tosh 2004: 47).

Patriarchy, as Gramsci explains, is the most significant influence in the structural character of hegemonic masculinity (Tosh 2004: 44) which, at its simplest, is "a convenient shorthand for male domination" (Tosh 2004: 44). The subordination of women is central; it is demonstrated in the "sexual division of labour, power relations within the family, the double standard of sexual conduct, and the exclusion of women from formal political institutions" (Tosh 2004: 44-45). However, feminists critiqued that "patriarchy tends to lock women into the role of victim and to demonise all men as the agents of that oppression" (Tosh 2004: 45). Although "most men benefit from the subordination of women" (Tosh 2004: 45), hegemonic masculinity explores the implication of most men's behaviour and experience "who either uphold hegemonic masculinity or collude in it as silent beneficiaries" (Tosh 2004: 47).

Chapter 3 Method and Methodology

3.1 An Autoethnography

This research is close to my personal and cultural experiences. I found myself unable to detach my emotions and personal experiences from the research topic. I have lived and swum in this topic, and I have internalised my personal experiences being in an interracial relationship. I learned that autoethnography approach "acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they do not exist" (Ellis et al. 2011). It was difficult to approach this topic by distancing myself from it; rather I needed to get closer and reflect more deeply. My identity, emotions, thoughts, and story are too conspicuous to be neglected and my personal and cultural experiences have shaped me into who I am today.

I opt for reflexive dyadic interviews which "focus on the interactively produced meanings and emotional dynamics of the interview itself" (Ellis et al. 2011). Aside from focusing on the participants' stories, my words, thoughts, and feelings as the researcher are also taken into account (Ellis et al. 2011). While this research is driven by my personal motivation to investigate the underlaying stigma of *bule* hunter; my experience is not the main focus. What adds to the context and layers of the story being told by the participants is my personal reflection (Ellis et al. 2011).

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I conducted online interviews. The first advantage is it allows me to expand my geographic boundaries (O'Leary 2017) and, especially during the pandemic, makes it easier to adhere the health protocol. Second, in addition to all interviews being conducted on a personal basis, all participants chose their preferred schedule. It gave them flexibility and ease of participation which are key interviewing factors (O'Leary 2017). The disadvantage that I encountered was making sure that the participants had access to technology, which turned out to be fine. Among twelve participants, only two chose to have the interview in public space due to problems with internet access.

When doing an autoethnography study, besides a researcher is faced with relational ethics, "autoethnographers often maintain and value interpersonal ties with their participants" (Ellis et al. 2011) which I recognised. I developed interpersonal ties with my participants through the research process which could make the storytelling complicated. I regarded my participants not only as "subjects to be mined for data" (Ellis et al. 2011) but they became people I valued with whom I shared deep and meaningful stories.

It takes courage to put a big chunk of myself into this research. I feel exposed like I am under a spotlight, which I detest. Despite the fear, I believe it is a way to "make sense of ourselves and our experiences" (Ellis et al. 2011) by writing my personal story. Furthermore, by intertwining my story and those the participants', I hope that the result of this research could help "improve and better understand our relationships, reduce prejudice, and raise consciousness and promote cultural change" (Ellis et al. 2011).

3.2 Gathering Participants' Stories

Figure 1
Interview Poster

Source: Fieldwork 2020

In order to get research participants, I made a poster as shown above and distributed it on social media. I used a snowball approach by passing it to my friends and acquaintances. I had trouble finding participants in the beginning. After having discussions with some friends, I realised the problem might be with the term *bule* hunter which is quite visible. Since the term is negatively perceived, perhaps strangers were reluctant to participate because they did not want to be perceived as a *bule* hunter. This helps explain why I received zero participants from distributing the interview poster online via social media. Nonetheless, the snowball technique worked really well in gathering potential research participants. This research does not intend to seek *bule* hunters, but it aims to seek people with whom I can explore the stigma by discussing and sharing stories of being in a relationship with a Caucasian. Additionally, my study is not the first to include heterosexual women, but it is the first to include multiple gender and sexual identity.

I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews in which I start with a "defined questioning plan" (O'Leary 2017, no page) such as asking the participants to share the interracial relationship experience that they feel comfortable sharing, their views on the term *bule* and *bule* hunter, and how their family and friends regard their relationship. I did not always ask the questions in order because I wanted "to follow the natural flow of conversation" (O'Leary 2017, no page). By doing this, not only did I have the advantage of getting all the data I intended, but also the interesting and unexpected story that emerges (O'Leary 2017, no page).

The following table and figure provide some basic demographic information about the participants. As an autoethnographer, I must "protect the privacy and safety of others" (Ellis et al. 2011); some of my participants requested to remain anonymous so I decided to assign all participants a pseudonym. All participants agreed that their gender and residence location, including places mentioned during the interview as associated with their interracial relationship experience, could be included in the data and research discussion.

Table 1 lists the participants by their pseudonym, the date of the interview, their gender identity and sexual orientation.

Table 1
List of Participants

	Pseudonym	Date of Interview	Sexual Orientation	Gender Identity
1	Ari	4 August 2020	Heterosexual	Female
2	Bila	11 August 2020	Heterosexual	Female
3	Candra	11 August 2020	Homosexual	Male
4	Dedi	12 August 2020	Heterosexual	Male
5	Eli	17 August 2020	Homosexual	Male
6	Fiona	19 August 2020	Heterosexual	Female
7	Geri	20 August 2020	Heterosexual	Male
8	Hesti	21 August 2020	Heterosexual	Female
9	Indra	27 August 2020	Heterosexual	Female
10	Jesi	28 August 2020	Heterosexual	Female
11	Kala	4 September 2020	Homosexual	Male
12	Lingga	4 September 2020	Bisexual	Male

Source: Fieldwork Note 2020.

Among six female heterosexuals, only Jesi who is at the dating stage with her Caucasian-Asian boyfriend, the rest is married to Caucasian men. One of the male heterosexuals, Geri, is married to a Caucasian-Middle Eastern woman, while Dedi has had several long-term relationships with Caucasian women in the past. The four participants who identify themselves as homosexuals and bisexual are not yet married. Eli and Kala were in a long-term relationship with Caucasian man, Candra is in multiple open and casual relationships with Caucasian men, and Lingga was in a long-term online relationship with a Caucasian man.

3.3 Obstacles and Limitations

From the outset, I understood the sensitivity of approaching and the difficulty of encapsulating this research topic. From the beginning until the end of the research process, everything was conducted online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This added to the difficulties in finding participants because, aside from limited mobility, I felt I was not able to fully explain my research topic and, therefore, it was hard to gain the participants' trust prior the interview.

In addition to the reserved vibe when discussing the stigma, relationship is a private field and some people might be reluctant to share their very personal experiences. This is particularly true of Indonesian participants who are bound by cultural and ideological norms that often make such topics taboo. Likewise, class and sexuality are quite sensitive topics to be discussed despite the fact that people tend to create stigma based on one's sexuality.

Lastly, the range in population comes with advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, it provides me with stories and perspectives from multiple backgrounds; on the other hand, my study has potential limits because I could not get the same number of participants for all populations. My research findings cannot represent the case for all heterosexual women, men, as well as the LGBTQI+ community in Indonesia because of the small number of participants.

Chapter 4 The Dynamic Interpretations of '*Bule*'

4.1 Introduction

In this section, I address the notion of whiteness which is closely bound up with the term *bule* hunter. Arguably, whiteness would not exist if the word *bule* itself was not used to define it. I will explore *bule* hunter as a concept on three levels, divided into three sub-sections. First, I consider how whiteness as a beauty standard contributes to white people being seen as sexually and romantically desirable. I investigate the double side of whiteness as a beauty standard within the Indonesian society while at the same time whiteness is seen as the 'Other'. The practices and process of othering can be seen in real life and media. Second, I consider the social status associated with whiteness – status which by implication can be achieved through association with a white person. Lastly, I consider the offspring of such unions, and how they 'produce' more sexually and socially 'desirable' future subjects.

There were many similarities and differences in what the participants shared. The first similarity was their view regarding the stigma of *bule* hunter. All participants disagreed with the general negative perceptions associated with an Indonesian woman in a relationship with Caucasian man. In addition to their point of view that not all women in interracial relationships were *bule* hunters, they believed that the constructed patriarchal culture underpinned the stigma. Second, the participants shared common views on the notion of openness regarding the representation of whiteness. Third, was the similarity among gay and bisexual participants; on the one hand they enjoyed being in homosexual relationships and expressing their sexuality and on the other hand, societal norms curbed their self-determination.

The first difference in the participants' views was the social perceptions *vis-à-vis* their interracial relationship. Within the heterosexual relationships, some women received negative comments and their relationships were frowned upon by their friends and colleagues, whereas other women did not receive such negativity. Meanwhile, male heterosexual participants received comments that were less negative, if not supportive or complimentary. Second, is the opinion among heterosexual women related to premarital sex; some chose to pursue premarital sexual relations while others did not and did not consider it in the interracial context of their relationship as a factor.

4.2 Whiteness: The Desirable 'Other'

I recall the moment when I was struck by what my French tutor said about the word *bule*. He was called *bule* by the kids in his neighbourhood and it upset him. My tutor's reaction and how he felt about being called as a *bule* is also encountered by foreigners in Mustikawati's research where she states "(…) some expatriates hate to be called *bule*" (Mustikawati 2019: 368). Meanwhile, Fechter describes two common Indonesian habits that expatriates find unsettling are the gaze and how the locals call them *bule* (Fechter 2005: 91).

Foreigners become the centre of attention in Indonesia; their tall physical stature, blonde hair, white skin, blue eyes, are quite striking among Indonesians. In many places, especially in smaller villages, locals often greet them with 'hello, mister' and ask to take a picture with them. Other practices that Fechter's participants found unsettling "include being talked to or shouted at in the street" (2005:91). These practices were experienced by some of my participants' partner which they find unpleasant. Candra's Dutch friends experience this too: 'I brought my two male Dutch friends to my hometown and they were riding motorbike with

me. Along the way, they were called "Mister, mister! *Bule bule*!" (Candra 11 August 2020). This situation is familiar to Fiona's husband as well; he expressed his discomfort when the locals surround him or take his pictures when they visit Lombok, Fiona's hometown. Fiona said,

> When we go back to Lombok to visit my family, it is always a bit challenging for him. When we arrive at the airport, people would stare at him or some people would come and ask for a picture. It is a very small airport and people there do not see many foreigners. For them, my husband is exotic and his appearance is very striking (Fiona 19 August 2020).

Besides Fiona, Kala and Eli shared a similar experience. They were members of a Couchsurfing community, a platform for travellers around the world to find a place to stay and for its members to share their home and hometown with travellers. When their guest was a Caucasian, their neighbours would come and ask for pictures. As Kala (4 September 2020) described: 'When I had *bule* guests from Couchsurfing, the neighbours in the village were very excited. They want to take pictures with them'. The curiosity, the stare, and the photo requests suggest that white is the 'Other'; it is not part of the community. Thus, it leads them to treat the Caucasians as they were objects of scrutiny.

Despite the gaze towards Caucasians which to some extent can be perceived as unsettling, their whiteness is also "something that is good and desirable" (Saraswati 2010: 19). I recall when I had a fieldtrip to Borobudur Temple with my white Canadian male student, Indonesian tourists swarmed him instantly. They asked me to take pictures for them with him. Teenager girls and women were shy and giggling but their eyes were sparkling in awe. It is not only Caucasian men who catch Indonesians' attention, but also Caucasian women. They are treated almost the same; the only difference is Caucasian women receive more unwanted attention which tend to be insulting. My white German female student told me once that she was verbally harassed while walking in Jakarta.

Both recollections of mine suggest that while whiteness is desired, gender plays an important role in the type of treatments directed towards Caucasians. Their whiteness is seen as sexually and romantically desirable. Candra's quote echoes:

> When I brought my male Dutch friends to the gym, oh my God, all the girls were hysterical! They surrounded them and they were asking to take pictures with them. It was crazy. (Candra 11 August 2020)

The way many Indonesians regard Caucasians as the superior "race" was already constructed during the time of Dutch colonisation when laws were established to ensure the social and racial hierarchy. Add to that, "during the early 20th century when Dutch colonialism fully matured in colonial Indonesia, preference for light skin colour was strengthened" (Saraswati 2010: 19-20). The preference for light skin colour was further supported by the Japanese after they took over the colonial power from the Dutch (Saraswati 2010: 20). Furthermore, during the rule of Suharto, the second Indonesian president who was a staunch pro-American, "American popular culture has become one of the strongest influences against which the Indonesian white beauty ideal is articulated and negotiated" (Saraswati 2010: 20).

White as the desired skin colour was constructed and continuously reinforced through the medias, including beauty advertisements in transnational women magazines. The preference for a light-skinned woman in Indonesia which "predates European colonialism" (Saraswati 2010: 19) remains to present day. As a result, referring to Caucasian whiteness as the ideal beauty, lighter skin complexion, tall and slim body figure, dark and long hair is considered as the beauty standard for Indonesian woman; it is supported by Ari's quote: 'I

know Indonesian men typically like women who have fair skin, slim body, and long hair' (Ari 4 August 2020). Ari is a heterosexual female who is married to a Dutch man and now lives in the Netherlands.

This viewpoint generates stereotypes for a woman who is dating a Caucasian man. In her study, Siddiqah-Oinonen explains how Caucasian men seem to "have particular physical type towards Indonesian women" (Siddiqah-Oinonen 2015: 5) which includes dark skin with a small and slim body (Siddiqah-Oinonen 2015: 5). This generalisation, creates a double perception in the eye of Indonesians towards women and men who are dating Caucasians. There is a sense of reduced desirability in relation to women's physical traits that is considered as the 'Caucasian type' and its representation of socioeconomic class, as Ari demonstrates in this quote:

> You are ugly. You are black and ugly and you should not dream of having a good life. Let alone in a foreign country with a white man. No [Indonesian] men would want to date with you because you are short, black, and ugly (Ari 4 August 2020).

Ari received such comment by her colleagues during a conversation about her dating a Dutch boyfriend. In Indonesia, it is quite common to be called 'black' when having a darker skin complexion. In Ari's case, having a darker skin complexion is seen as not only 'ugly' but also 'bad life' and 'undeserving', both for a good life and a partner. Yet, at the same time it is coveted because it is presumed to be attractive to Caucasians as alluded to by Siddiqah-Oinonen above. Lingga supports this point with his quote:

> *Bule* likes exotic people who have brown skin, like me. I was told that I am exotic and have beautiful brown skin. As far as I know, *bule* likes people with exotic, darker skin colour instead of fair complexion (Lingga 4 September 2020).

The following opinion from Ari resonates with Lingga's: brown skin embodies the exotic value.

> European men do not see women from their skin colour. If they really love you, it does not matter how you look. In fact, European men like exotic skin. Brown skin is exotic for them (Ari 4 August 2020).

It is interesting to observe while at first Ari was considered as 'ugly' and 'undeserving', her quote shows the claim to colour-blindness of European men and then the exoticisation of skin colour. It indicates the exoticisation is used as a tool to negotiate their status within their relationship as well as the perceptions from their society.

Compared to Indonesian women, the beauty standard for Indonesian men is quite a contrast. There appears to be less, if at all, criteria that establishes an Indonesian man as handsome, masculine, and desirable by Indonesian or Western standards. However, the representation of white male body circulates within hetero and homosexual relationship. Siddiqah-Oinonen shared her personal childhood view on Caucasian men and why she wanted to marry one: "Because Indonesian men are all ugly and Caucasian men are all handsome" (2015: 7). Her childhood view of Caucasian men, which she said changed after time, perhaps was shaped by the media, movies, and television which portray white as beautiful. Here too, colonial mentalities of Self and Other play a role.

The perception of Caucasian and Indonesian man suggests that "there is a sense that any white guy is better than an Indonesian" (Siddiqah-Oinonen 2015: 2-3). There different meaning and assumptions of white and dark skin in the Indonesian culture; "dark skin is

associated with peasantry and poverty" (Siddiqah-Oinonen 2015: 2-3) whereas white is "the rich elite" (Siddiqah-Oinonen 2015: 2-3).

Meanwhile, Eli and Candra who identify themselves as gay men, share the similar view; in addition to the beauty aspect, they regard Caucasian men's physical stature as masculine and strong. While Eli said: '*Bule* to me is sexy, hot, someone who turns me on' (Eli 17 August 2020), Candra said:

> I have interest in white men. Their tall, strong, and masculine figure, I am crazy about it. They are crazily attractive. I am very sexually attracted to them. If I see a strong, muscular white man at the gym, it drives me crazy! (Candra 11 August 2020).

Aside from Caucasian male bodies in which Fanon sees the representation of superiority (Fanon 1986: 12), the feelings mentioned above illustrate how whiteness is sexually and romantically desired across gender and sexual orientations. Nonetheless, it is important to indicate that although Eli and Candra visibly express their desire for Caucasian males, the stigma of *bule* hunter escaped them. Although based on their sexuality they do not conform to the hegemonic masculinity, they still benefit from their gender privilege which known as complicit masculinity (Connell 2005: 114).

However, the view towards Indonesian men and their masculinity is quite the opposite; they are regarded as less masculine in comparison to white male bodies. The current view is an outcome of "the demasculinisation of colonised men and the hypermasculinity of European males" (Stoler 2010: 46) which were the key elements in the maintenance of racial hierarchy in the colony. The demasculinisation in this context was a characteristic of Asian masculinities specifically, while black men were represented as hypermasculine in a negative way (Connell 2005). Consequently, it projects the opinion among heterosexual and homosexual Indonesian men of male bodies which regard Caucasian men as sexually more attractive.

To give an illustration, Dedi is a heterosexual male participant who has had Caucasian women partners. He seems to be regarded as not meeting the presumable constructed hegemonic masculine beauty by his friends. He received a comment about his physical stature: 'You do not look like the type of man that a white woman would find attractive' (Dedi 12 August 2020). The comment proposes the idea that his physical appearance does not meet the presumed criteria of white woman's ideal beauty of a man. According to the imaginary shared ideal of beauty in the Indonesian context, attractive men and women are those who have lighter skin, especially Caucasian-type whiteness (Saraswati 2010; Siddiqah-Oinonen 2015). Moreover, Caucasian men are highly attractive for their tall body, pointy nose, blonde hair, thin pink lips, and – obviously – white skin (Oktofani 2014: 38).

To me this suggests how ambiguous and full of assumptions dominant ideals of beauty are, based on what is generally found attractive. On the one hand, the beauty ideal for an Indonesian woman or man is set using the characteristics of Caucasian whiteness as the threshold. On the other hand, the widely shared assumptions of the attractiveness of Caucasian types of beauty, leads to stigmatising people who do not fit into this categorisation of being *locally* attractive. To juxtapose the local notion of beauty standard, I borrow Khawaja's rationale that "many of our deep-rooted social preferences for partners are ingrained and reinforced by the ubiquitous manifestations of patriarchal ideology" (2019: 41) as well as by impacts of racism imported especially during the colonial era.

Referring to Ari's point of view where she mentioned that Indonesian men's ideal beauty is of a woman who is light-skinned, with a slim body, and long hair. This suggests that hegemonic beauty norms are constructed by men in a society that operates under both masculine hegemony, and a colonial mindset. These norms are then submitted and

maintained by both women and men. Consequently, the result is the formation of powerful stereotypes among Indonesians about how women and men's bodies should look. One is the ideal body type associated with unrealistic Caucasian based beauty standard, the other is the real though gendered and sexualised body type associated with the stigma of *bule* hunter. This results are the ironic situation in which Indonesian men are seen as lucky if they find a 'beautiful' white partner, and Indonesian women are scorned and seen as undeserving.

Shifting from the stereotyping of Indonesian body standards, there are views and stereotypes of Caucasians which are sometimes unrealistically flattering and also in other ways, distinctly unflattering. To illustrate the latter, one of participants' family members had noted the different habit of self-hygiene when she told her mother that she was dating a Caucasian man. She said: 'A *bule*? Eww they never take a shower - they must be dirty!' (Bila 11 August 2020). In this context, taking a shower is associated with self-hygiene in which the Indonesian's habit and standard requires bathing twice a day. This geographically makes sense given Indonesia is located in the equator which has higher humidity and temperature compared to European countries in general. Most Indonesians bathe twice a day. As an Indonesian, I can understand the origins of this arguable stereotype.

Another example is the sexual stereotyping of a Caucasian man, based on culture and religion and tied to the Muslim belief that it is mandatory for an adult man to be circumcised. I had an interesting discussion over a coffee with one of my US American friends around 2017 where he shared with me his experience after meeting his - back then - Indonesian girlfriend's family. There was a concern from the girlfriend's family side that as a white American, he was not circumcised. His situation raised two interrelated issues: first, if he was planning to marry the girl, he needed to convert to Islam; second, if he was going to convert to Islam, he must be circumcised to obey the religious and cultural beliefs associated with Islam. The male family members raised their worry to him, saying with a kind of pity, that he must be circumcised once he converted to Islam. They also implied that this would not be a pleasant experience for an adult man to undergo, as the procedure could be painful. But he gladly told them that he was already circumcised! He told me that he was circumcised when he was a baby because circumcision was a common medical practice in the United States when he was born. He said that the male family members were all relieved and delighted to hear such news. Apparently, it is not only my American friend who was stereotyped in such way; the identical stereotyping is echoed in Bila's conversation with her friend:

> Why would you want to be with a *bule*? They are not circumcised. They do not bathe enough. They always wake up late in the morning (Bila 11 August 2020).

In addition to the notion of self-hygiene that again appeared in this quote, a Caucasian man whom Bila was dating was presumed not circumcised. Male circumcision is common practice within in Indonesia and therefore, uncircumcised man is seen as less desirable. However, instead of circumcising the boy while he is still a baby as in common Jewish practice, it is done usually when the boy is a teenager. This practice offers two different perspectives: the medical point of view that this is a healthy form of preventive hygiene, and this goes hand in hand with religiosity and sexual preference within both heterosexual and homosexual relationships.

The last example of the sexual stereotyping of a Caucasian man told by Hesti: 'There are many stereotypes about foreigners out there, such as they are impolite, they are 'naughty' (Hesti 21 August 2020). Here the word naughty is stressed; it is a word that Indonesians use to describe a naughty mischievous child – *nakal* – is often used for adults thought to be

engaged in inappropriate sexual behaviour (Stoler 2010: 180). An Indonesian woman who is engaged in a relationship with a Caucasian man is often called as *nakal* too (Oktofani 2014: Stoler 2010) hence the label *bule* hunter.

4.3 Social Status, Status-by-Association, and Social Mobility

In addition to masculine representation of a white man's body, "superior health, wealth, and education are tied to racial endowment and a White Man's norms" (Stoler 2010: 64). Caucasians are considered more desirable for social mobility when working and living in Indonesia. Their status includes their job and financial security and lower expenses due to the money currency. The latter is often translated as expatriates earn much higher salary compared to Indonesians, as evidenced by Siddiqah-Oinonen:

> "Caucasian men who are working in Indonesia not only receive bigger salary than Indonesian worker does but they also receive special treatment. It triggers the assumptions that all Caucasian men are rich" (2015: 3).

This is further supported by Candra's view as follows: 'It is so cool to be able to have a *bule* partner. A *bule* who is rich, gallant, who has a car and a luxurious life' (Candra 11 August 2020).

Possession of luxury goods and the upscale lifestyle of Caucasian expatriates (especially men) represents their different class position in the socioeconomic hierarchy. It is arguably true that most expatriates who work in Indonesia receive many benefits from their employment; such benefits are usually assumed by many Indonesians as their permanent job and life arrangement, rather than something temporary.

Having worked with female and male expatriates in Indonesia for almost seven years, I was aware of such expectations of a range of Caucasian people, from diplomats, foreign executives, researchers to volunteers. My experiences showed me that the first two groups receive the most secure and decent life arrangements while working overseas. Additionally, they receive households and education allowances for their families. It is important to mention that these groups receive their salary in their own currency rather than in Indonesian Rupiah which ultimately favours them.

Notwithstanding that those life arrangements are the basic and standard compensations for expatriates working overseas, it draws the (false) image for many Indonesians that all Caucasians have an equally comfortable and luxurious lifestyle. There are other expatriate realities that many seem to overlook, perhaps because they represent the minority or do not fit the powerful stereotypes of 'successful Westerners'. For instance, American Peace Corps volunteers who work as English Teachers are counted as expatriates. Yet their salaries and benefits do not resemble those of diplomats and foreign executives, for example. Still, interestingly, "whiteness affords the White man who is poor similar racial benefits as the White man who is wealthy" (Liu 2017: 352). They still hold a US passport which provides them with physical mobility. In brief, there are multiple realities for expatriates living in Indonesia. Fiona who is originally from Bima but now resides in Bali with her Caucasian husband shared her observation:

> In Bali, [there] remains people who think Caucasians are superior than us, but I think it is not as many as in Bima. Or people who think that marrying a white man means they have better economic life. In reality, *bule* are not all rich. They also have to work hard if they want a comfortable life. But somehow, the skin and hair colour play important role in shaping the

perspective that they are above us. People still have this perception, especially in smaller cities. (Fiona 19 August 2020)

It is important to home in on the point made by Fiona that the perception about Caucasians' position as being high on the socioeconomic ladder exists more in smaller cities than in the capital or big provinces such as Bali. Bali is considerably more populated than Bima and it is one of the main tourist destinations in Indonesia. Given that Bali's main income is from the tourism industry, I argue that foreigners arrive in the island with one main purpose: leisure. It means they spend their money to make the most of their visit, which to some people symbolises the wealth and social mobility of these tourists. In smaller cities like Bima, on the other hand, the chance to run into foreigners is likely smaller. Although some people in Bali still presume that Caucasians are wealthier, as Fiona implies, the tendency is higher in rural areas. Generally, smaller cities in Indonesia means lower income index which is arguably connected to less access to education. Fiona implies this when she suggests that the locals in smaller cities who less often encounter foreigners have a greater tendency to subscribe to stereotypes and project an alleged "…superiority of the European character" (Stoler 2010: 65) onto Caucasians. Additionally, the implication of education level in how Caucasians are perceived including addressing them is alluded to by Fechter: "any decent educated Indonesian will not address you as *bule* unless the person intended to flaunt disrespect" (2005: 95).

Subsequently, my findings show that Indonesians in relationship with Caucasians self-associate the perceived racial and class benefits from interracial relationships. It does not always involve a sexual and/or intimate relationship, but simply by having an amical relationship with a white person, as illustrated by Candra below:

In Jakarta, if you are seen with a *bule*, you are going to wow people. People want it. You will look cool if you walk with a *bule*, take a picture with a *bule* and post it on Facebook. I feel proud and my pride is higher if I can show to my social circle that I have *bule* friends or if I have a relationship with a *bule* (Candra 11 August 2020).

Then added by Ari's observation:

In Bogor, there many women who hang out with white men and they have this attitude of 'I have a *bule* boyfriend, I am cool' (Ari 4 August 2020).

Besides these two quotes are related to Jakarta and a suburb of Jakarta (Bogor) with relatively high numbers of foreigners and where interracial relationships are more commonly seen., both show an interesting mix of pride, stigma, and public display. The association of pride related to Caucasian's social mobility can be seen as an effort to gain recognition within the Indonesian public space, both online and in real life. Being with a Caucasian thus becomes a public display. It denotes the pride and stigma as two sides of the coin in relation to Indonesian women, as opposed to men, with a Caucasian man. Additionally, having a Caucasian boyfriend is seen as cutting a finer image in comparison to a local boyfriend. In this association, the presumable attachment of white prestige is being glued to and valued by the person with whom a Caucasian man is sharing his presence. However, it is not at all to say that having a local boyfriend is bad, it is a manifestation of "it is so much better to be white" (Fanon 1986: 48).

4.4 *Métis* Offspring: Sexually and Socially Desirable

Since the concubinage arrangement was enforced by the Dutch government and corporates, it entailed domestic and political problems between European employees and local workers. This arrangement undoubtedly produced *métis* or mixed-blood children who are called

"Indo" (Stoler 1989: 638). The position of these children was problematic during the colonial time because they were seen as threatening to blur the division of ruler and ruled (Stoler 2010: 51). Considered as disadvantage for the economy and invisible in social hierarchy, Indo children were "sent 'back' to *kampongs* or shuttled into the shoddy compounds of impoverished whites" (Stoler 2010: 51).

Differing from the circumstances of Indo in the past, their physical features have come to manifest ideal beauty in the post-colonial era as noted by an Indonesian feminist who said, it is the "light-skinned Indo or mixed-race women who embody the beauty ideal" (Saraswati 2010: 20). I echo her argument with, first, my own childhood recollection which comprises an internalised perception of an Indo woman. My elementary school friends and I were always fascinated by our classmate who looked quite different than the rest of us: she was taller, her skin was almost porcelain-like, her hair and eyes were brown, and her nose was pointy. She was always the most popular girl. She had an early career as a model and she told me that it was easy for her to enter the industry. When I visited her high school one day, everybody knew her; especially the boys. They all wanted to approach her and date her. I hated to say that her physical features made it easy for her to have a career as a model and to be popular among boys; meanwhile, I was internalising the racialised beauty imagination which thus made me believe that a beautiful girl had to look like her. I too have believed it was through her light colour that "I found her prettier than ever, and cleverer, and more refined" (Fanon 1986: 47).

Second, the research findings present both the aspiration to have mixed-race children and the assumption-by-racial association of Indonesians dating Caucasians. The desire to have a mixed-race child is expressed by Lingga as follow:

> I want to find a foreigner wife, a *bule*. They are beautiful. When I have kids, they will also be beautiful because they will be mixed-race (Lingga 4 September 2020).

Meanwhile, Fiona who is married to a Caucasian man was asked once by her sister: 'You are dating a *bule* so you can have an Indo child to improve your offspring?' (Fiona 19 August 2020). Dedi also encountered the same assumption regarding his relationship with a Caucasian woman: 'Oh, you are going to have such cute kids!' (Dedi 12 August 2020). Although there is an implication in both quotation that by dating a Caucasian it means and is assumed that the Indonesian partner wants a mixed-race child, there is a slight difference in the subtext; the first implies a presumption that Fiona did want a mixed-race child as an act of racial improvement by dating a white man, regardless of her background and motivation. Whilst the second one leans to a compliment instead of presumption of 'fixing the genes'. This case denotes the role of gender in shaping the presumed racial motivations of sexual and romantic relationship within heteronormativity.

Referring to Lingga's aspiration, it correlates with women in Alawi's study; he explains that there is an "obsession for *memperbaiki keturunan*" (Alawi 2020: 71) which translated to literally fix the offspring. Moreover, he explains that having a mixed-race child is also a pride (Alawi 2020: 71). The so-called 'obsession' to have Indo children cannot be disentangled from the deep-seated, internalised thinking of racial superiority. Pride, on the other hand, is connected to making status-by-association. Having a child who carries half whiteness is seen as lifting the social status.

According to my findings, having miscegenation progeny is a shared aspiration across gender. Having a mixed-race child, however, should not be seen as cynical or racist choice either; it is a manifestation of wanting to provide social mobility and more opportunities to their children.

Chapter 5 Diving into Perceptions of Interracial Couples

5.1 Internalising the Stigma

Drawing from my first experience hearing the term *bule* hunter, I was curious to find out what does the term mean to the research participants given that they, and I, are the insiders. I found two layers based on the findings: first, is the representations of the term by others in which the perceptions of family, friends, peers and strangers are intertwined, and second is the actors' self-representations which are important for them to make meanings of their interracial relationship.

The assumptions of 'marrying a white man to have a better life' or 'married to a white man to fix the genes' (Fieldwork Notes 2020) present the intersection of the term with race and socioeconomic class. Additionally, previous studies provided other assumptions related to gender and sexuality that form the basis for the associated derogatory nicknames (Adveningtyas 2018). In reality, the interconnectedness of these axes can be difficult to identify and isolate. Hesti, a heterosexual woman who grew up in Bali and is married to a Caucasian man, shared her observation:

> You can find a group of women who look for white men in Kuta. I have a friend who is obsessed to marry a *bule*. She is more vulgar, more freely expresses her sexuality. I personally feel that it is kind of sad. I feel that she has changed in order to be accepted in the *bule* world. She drinks, goes clubbing, smokes. I think there are some women who want to marry a *bule* so that they can have a better life. I think she is one of them. Also, she told me that she wants to have a mixed-race child (Hesti 21 August 2020).

From Hesti's point of view, her friend's socioeconomic motivation is seen in the reference to wanting a better life. What is less clear and harder to disentangle is the reference to wanting to have a mixed-race child – a motivation that is related to socioeconomics and race. The story of her friend whom she described as being 'obsessed with having a Caucasian partner', she therefore views as vulgar, indicating that the friend in some way has adopted a different behaviour regarding sexuality. According to common Indonesian social norms, this is considered deviant especially for a woman. To give an illustration of such societal norms, Oktofani sums them up precisely: "It is taboo to talk about sexual relationship with your partner openly, it is illicit for Indonesians to do premarital sex, and women are not supposed to 'ask' for sex" (Oktofani 2014: 114).

It is equally important to note that while considered deviant, the mention of drinking alcohol, clubbing, and smoking denotes the distinction of self-determination. It can be interpreted as an expression of self-determination *vis-à-vis* local norms but also as a form of subjugation. These habits are perceived as "modern women behaviour" (Oktofani 2014: 24) while at the same time this behaviour is against the societal norms and leads to the stereotyping of women who engage in these activities (Oktofani 2014: 24). They are perceived as longing to be part of Western society (Adveningtyas 2018: 79) and therefore are giving up their own identities, in order to please and fit into the *bule* world.

Ari experienced the assumptions of others in the form of a comment made by an Uber driver while she was with her Caucasian husband. They were staying at a hotel while finishing up marital and legal documents in Jakarta. As they approached the hotel, Ari recounts the Uber driver saying:

> Miss, you are going to go to a hotel, ya? You must be going to 'check in'. With a *bule* it must be great, miss. He must be big. Right, miss?" (Ari 4 August 2020).

Ari went on to tell me: 'I am wearing a hijab yet people still think I am a whore because I am with a white man' (Ari 4 August 2020). In Indonesia, the term 'check in' is commonly used to indicate a sexual transaction or extramarital sexual activities. In the above situation where Ari was with a Caucasian man heading to a hotel, she therefore was presumed to be a prostitute on the basis of her gender, and his identity as a white man, regardless of her marital relationship with her Caucasian husband. Interestingly, Indonesian women who desire Caucasian men as clients in the sex work industry are also stigmatised as *bule* hunters (Oktofani 2014: 14). In this configuration, sex between an Indonesian woman and a Caucasian man is necessarily seen as transactional, as "one of a broad spectrum of services and activities in which people engage to procure earnings" (Cabezas 2004: 992). This relationship is seen not merely as being for sex, but others also sometimes perceive it "as a potential boon for the local participants" (Cabezas 2004: 993), reinforcing the stigma of *bule* hunter as motivated by material advancement, even by greed.

It is important to point out that Ari's mention of wearing a hijab suggests a diametric opposite to women who are stigmatised and stereotyped by "wearing sexy clothes" (Adveningtyas 2015: xiii). In Indonesia, wearing hijab "shows the religious order and the symbol of godliness" (Arifah et al. 2018: 180) and represents an "act of obedience, as distinctly defined in the Qur'an and Sunnah" (Grine and Saeed 2015: 431). It is important to mention that women's appearance is pivotal in shaping societal perceptions. When I was at an Indian Restaurant in Jakarta which is connected to a sports bar next door, my colleague whispered to me while secretly pointing her finger at a couple: 'Look at that woman. She must be seeking for prey here. That *bule* perhaps will be one'. I asked her how she knew, and she simply said: 'Duh. Look at her clothes. Plus, the bar next door is also famous for *bule* looking for girls.' I did not say anything, but my mind was racing. I must admit that I partly accepted what she said while at the same time I wanted to ask her about what people thought when she was with her Caucasian boyfriend, but I did not ask her in the end. When I was invited by a group of foreigner friends to hang out at that sports bar one day, I was reluctant to go and, once there, was constantly aware of my surroundings because I realised that I did not want to be assumed to be a girl looking for *bule* prey.

Meanwhile, Geri, a heterosexual male participant, has a similar view to my colleague regarding women's appearance. He is originally from Bali and now resides in Australia after marrying an Australian woman. Geri commented:

> The appearance of women who intends to attract white men are different; it is easily to be spotted. The way they carry themselves, dance in a provoking way, their appearance and clothes. There are also Balinese women who dress up like that. I feel embarrassed when I see it. It looks cheap. The way they dress up shows their [lack of] self-respect. If a woman works as a sex worker but if she can carry themselves in a classier way, dresses up nicely, it is going to make her look classier or high-class. It is the opposite if a woman wears provoking clothes (Geri 20 August 2020).

While the representation of hijab does not correspond with the images associated with the stigma of *bule* hunter, a nice, classy dress denotes its possibility to shift a woman's social class. There are two important aspects to be observed here: first, the self-perceptions and perceptions by others of hijab and second, a representation of clothing in relation to sexuality and class. Hijab is seen as an indicator for gender and religious identity for Muslim women (Grine and Saeed 2015: 430). However, the religious identity often overlooks a woman's ethnicity, nationality, or age (Beta 2014: 378). Arifah in her study concluded that while religiosity still affects a woman's decision to wear hijab, it "does not significantly affect the

decision" (Arifah et al. 2018: 185). I, for instance, had to wear hijab in high school every Friday and every time I had religious class since it was compulsory, as is the case in many public Indonesian high schools. My decision was driven by the school's regulations rather than by religiosity and as a result, I dreaded Fridays.

Nowadays, the wearing of hijab represents "a greater desire to express beauty, maturity, and individualism" (Arifah et al. 2018: 180) hence the emergence of the hijab community and the increasing trend of hijab fashion in Indonesia. Hijab, although it has an "inextricable bond between gender and religion" (Beta 2014: 379), has been transformed into "a symbol of continuous transformation in society" (Beta 2014: 379) and a woman's instrument which it provides a sense of security (Beta 2014: 379). It is worth noting here that, ironically, it provided no such sense of security to Ari in the Uber, with her Caucasian husband.

Appearance and behaviour are seen as mirroring each other as presented. On one hand, choosing one's clothing is perceived as a freedom of choice, as a form of empowerment and a symbol of self-liberation from societal norms (Oktofani 2014: 24). On the other hand, Indonesian women "in a strong patriarchal society" (Beta 2014: 379) remain bound to "piety expressions in relation to modernity" (Beta 2014: 379). Nonetheless, since hijab does not merely represent religiosity anymore, it is questionable when it is used as a tool to measure woman's adherence to her religion. Likewise, other types of clothing i.e. sexy clothes, are a contentious way to represent woman's sexuality in the Indonesian context.

The issue of clothing aside, in contrast to Ari's experience, Geri shared that he has never encountered such comments from strangers nor from his family and friends about his relationships with Caucasian women. He said:

> When I was living in Jakarta, I often brought my foreigner girlfriends home to stay for a few days. My brother was happy and he never seemed to be bothered. I did not have any problems having foreigner girlfriends or bringing them to stay at home or introducing them to my family (Geri 20 August 2020).

Likewise, Dedi who dated Caucasian women in the past shared his experience regarding other people's perceptions:

> I do not think that I have received negative comments from my friends about my relationships with foreigners. Most of them said 'She is going to take you to her country' or 'You are going to have such cute kids'. I was never called a *bule* hunter. My friends who were curious would ask me questions like 'Why do you like dating foreigners?' Or, 'Are they more aggressive? Are they more open to try new things during sex?', stuff like that (Dedi 12 August 2020).

What is important to observe from Geri and Dedi's situations is the absence of perceptions related to their sexuality and class, and the nuance of the comments. First, the heterosexual male participants' sexualities and class are not being presumed nor is their sexual relationship taken as transactional. The question about sexual behaviour of Dedi's partner denotes that in the heterosexual relationship where the male partner is Indonesian, the female Caucasian partner's image is presumed to be aggressive which likely comes from representation of Western women on television and in movies. On the contrary, Asian women's sexuality is depicted as "submissive in the bed" (Siddiqah-Oinonen 2015: 8) and "as less aggressive, more docile" (Siddiqah-Oinonen 2015: 8).

Second, the nuance in the comments suggest that there is less concern from both participants' family and friends about their relationships with Caucasian women; if anything, the comments show support to the relationship by alluding to the benefit from social mobility in relation to their Caucasian partners, the desired mixed-offspring, and even pride. This is reflected in what Geri said: 'My father was never worried or concerned that I married an Australian woman. Instead, he is proud' (Geri 20 August 2020). The pride perhaps is rooted in when European women arrived in the colony. They symbolised the "middle-class

and respectable feminine contingents" (Stoler 2010: 55) who carried the image of a high-maintenance standard of living (Stoler 2010: 55). These images from the colonial era thus, to some degree and to some people, remain unchanging and generate the perceptions of Indonesian men in a relationship with Caucasian women as somehow privileged or fortunate.

The perception of a relationship between an Indonesian man with a Caucasian woman is regarded not only as fitting according to societal norms, but also more readily seen as being based on pure love. Ari said: 'If an Indonesian man is dating or marrying a white woman, it is because of love and the white woman really loves the Indonesian man' (Ari 4 August 2020). Her view is supported and elaborated further by Jesi below. She is married to a German man and now resides in Germany.

> If I see an Indonesian man married to a white woman, I think the woman is really in love with him because she must leave her comfortable life. In the West, life is better and there is a good health system. I read a story of an Indonesian fisherman who is married to a white woman and I was very amazed. She had to leave her comfortable life in order to live with her husband! She must love him very much. The husband must work very hard to meet her expectation and to be able to provide for her (Jesi 28 August 2020).

In this configuration, the love of the Caucasian woman and her presumable willingness to give up the advanced Western world suggest the underlying assumptions of the interracial relationship. Additionally, the mention of fisherman as the occupation indicates manual hard labour which, in Indonesia, and in most other countries too, is generally associated with lower socioeconomic class. However, the male's class in this case is overlooked; the stigma of marrying a Caucasian to have a better life is not indicated. It is equally important to observe that the role of main breadwinner is expected to be held by the male partner and he is counted on to fulfil the "elevated standard of living" (Stoler 2010: 55) of white women, rather than the other way round.

5.2 Making Meanings of Interracial Relationship

The meaning of interracial relationships are constantly changing especially for the actors who are in it, including myself. I resonate with the view of gender equality in domestic household although it is not merely about the whiteness and, to some extent, the liberty that is offered by the Western world. I experienced the demand to comply to the gendered social role; as a woman I was expected to marry by the age of 25 and to fulfil my duty as the main household caretaker.

A relationship with a Caucasian is considered to be gender equal and unbounded by societal norms (Adveningtyas 2018). For a long time, I felt I had an itch under my skin that I could not scratch, every time someone told me 'You are a woman, you should know how to cook' or 'Woman's age is like a Christmas tree, after 25 you are no longer attractive'. Or, it is even more itch-making to hear 'She is not married yet, but she already had sex with her boyfriend'. As a member of the Indonesian culture, I can relate with some of my participants' experiences and share the same views with them. I also understand the struggles they go through to make sense of a relationship which involves two completely different cultural poles and lifestyles.

In order to make meanings and sense of interracial relationships, the different notions that intertwine with each other should be observed as a unity of multiple realities. I begin with engaging the recurring theme in the findings i.e. open-mindedness and couple it with the notion of gender equality which is the current buzzword in Indonesia.

Ari who is now married to a Dutch man, shared her feelings being in an interracial relationship: 'I feel a *bule* treats and respects woman better than Indonesian men' (Ari 4

August 2020). Her opinion comes from her unpleasant experience with her previous boyfriend, who happened to be Indonesian. Her view is echoed by Bila, who is also married to a Caucasian man. She said:

> My first boyfriend was Indonesian. I did not feel happy like most other people at my age. I had doubts like, why am I not happy? What my friends said about their boyfriends, I experienced it myself. My boyfriend was not caring. He also did not listen to me and cast me off immediately when we were having a discussion. Then I said to myself: 'See! Do not date Indonesian men!' (Bila 11 August 2020).

The perspective of being treated and respected better by Caucasian men in this case is reflected by the affection and the respectful attitude in a discussion. It shows the desire to be listened to by the other discussant. Furthermore, all my participants told me that they enjoy the openness and the knowledge-sharing in discussions with foreigners. For instance, Indra who is a heterosexual woman in her 30s and in a long-term relationship with her mixed-race Dutch partner, does not want to get married, and shared her opinion below:

> I like having a foreigner boyfriend because they are open-minded therefore I can openly express my opinions. I cannot talk about certain things with local men, such as marriage, LGBTQI+, or sex education. They know nothing about it. If in the beginning of a relationship I tell a man 'I do not want to get married', he would be so confused and say 'So what are we doing here?' (Indra 27 August 2020).

It indicates the desire to be able to discuss topics which according to local norms are taboo, such as sexuality, sexual relationship, and homosexuality. I can support that such topics in Indonesia in general are taboo. I used to feel dirty when talking about sex and sexuality, let alone homosexuality. Some of my female friends and female participants prefer to use an abstract metaphor to refer to sexual relationship, such as 'husband and wife relationship'. Furthermore, Oktofani noted how, when a woman enjoys sexual relationships and enjoys discussions about sex, "she is judged and held hostage by the societal norms and the hypocrisy of patriarchal society" (Oktofani 2014: 115).

Next, is the mention of marriage. Heterosexual relationship in Indonesia must be legalised before a couple can live together under the same roof. The state is in charge of sexual control and thus, members of society who do not comply can be socially and legally sanctioned. In Indonesia, since "sex is fundamentally heterosexual" (Corrêa and Jolly 2008: 24), sex is only intended for procreation. And procreation is only allowed through a marital relationship. Therefore marriage is seen as a basic life goal for most Indonesians.

There is a sense that the Western world is foremost on the topic of gender equality, to include the equal distribution of domestic labour. Generally, the Indonesian nuclear family has a distinct gendered division of labour. I was told once that I was not a 'real' woman until I knew how to cook because it is a symbol of femininity. A woman is believed to be the main caretaker of the family and thus, this belief is internalised by many Indonesian women, including myself. However, cooking can bring out complicated feelings when mixed with social expectations and self-perceptions. This situation is shared by Hesti who is married to a Caucasian man and lives in Australia:

> In our household, we are quite equal. He cooks, I do laundry but nothing in the kitchen. My Indonesian family expects me to do my role as a woman. I feel bad and awkward when I am in Indonesia and I do not cook or make him coffee. My mother would tell me to make him coffee right in front him and it makes him upset. I do not feel guilty with him but more to my mother. Also, my mother in law is a really good cook so I feel kind of intimidated (Hesti 21 August 2020).

It denotes the intersection between gender, member of a cultural society and a household, which all influences Hesti's attitude and influences her emotions. It shows that she enjoys the liberty from the gendered social role while at the same time facing her guilt of not complying to the expected cultural and gender role that makes her mother ask her to make food or coffee for her husband, even though he does not want that.

Aside from cultural and social expectations, some participants regard religion as the fundamental motivation when establishing a relationship. While Oktofani argues that religious beliefs and values restrict some women from enjoying their sexuality and sexual relationships (Oktofani 2014: 116), my findings offer a different outlook. First, I quote Bila's experience:

> Religion is the most important thing to me. I will not betray my God. If he is not a Muslim, I will not marry him. I was not rushing him to convert to Islam nor was I rushing him to marry me. However, my parents asked me multiple times and you know, our society expects us to get married when we have a boyfriend. I told him that in Islam we do not do premarital sex. I believe as a Muslim, we cannot have sexual relationship until marriage (Bila 11 August 2020).

Bila's quote on religious identity which becomes the foundation to engage in a marital relationship is echoed by Ari. She said:

> For me, religion is very important. I will only marry a Muslim man. I will not ask somebody to convert to Islam only to marry me (Ari 4 August 2020).

The similarity among two quotes above is the unnegotiable value that is put on religious identity of the male partner. It suggests the firmness of self-determination and a tool to navigate and negotiate their interracial relationship with a Caucasian man. In other cases, I can understand when religion becomes the bargaining point in the relationship, such as in Fiona's experience below:

> I shared my family's concern about religion and he said: 'I am ok to convert to get married'. He was willing to convert because he wanted to be with me. He is willing to visit my family every Eid and to respect their religion despite his own belief. I think my family knows that both of us are not really practicing Islam but, they are fine with it (Fiona 19 August 2020).

However, when religious identity intersects with gender and race, sometimes the prejudices are still applied such as in Ari's experience with the Uber driver. One of the most predominant themes in the stigma of *bule* hunter is the perception that they seek to climb to a higher socioeconomic class; that they are social climbers. Geri who lives in Australia understands where this perception comes from. He said:

> I think my financial situation is better in Australia. What I earn here is much higher than what I would earn back home, not to mention that AUD currency is better to IDR. If I had a Master degree, my income would be much higher. I see myself as someone who does have a better life. I work in concrete production, window installation, and in a film industry. I will not do those jobs in Indonesia because the money is not good and people look down at those jobs because it is hard labour. Indonesians consider working in an office as the highest payment job, as a noble job (Geri 20 August 2020).

This quote suggests the different views on employment in Australia and Indonesia related to income. It also highlights that in Indonesia, hard labour indicates lower income while in Australia it is not the case. For instance, the GDP per capita (PPP in current international $) in 2019 for Indonesia was 12,301.80 while in Australia it was 53,320.30 (Worldbank 2019). This indicates a huge disparity in the purchasing power of an Australian worker over that of an Indonesian worker. Given the gap in the purchasing power which is sometimes overlooked, the presumption that Westerners are wealthy is logical. This becomes evident to me when I go abroad. I cannot help but compare that the 5€ cup of coffee and

muffin in the Netherlands would translate to a complete dinner set in a nice restaurant in Indonesia.

5.3 What Lies Beyond Heterosexuality

This section cannot be said to represent the LGBTQI+ community in Indonesia and the dynamic of their relationships with Caucasians, because of the small number of research participants who I was able to speak to. My participants are three gay men: Candra, Eli, and Kala; and one bisexual man: Lingga. Eli and Kala were involved in long-term relationships with Caucasian men and had each lived together with their partner in Indonesia. Candra was involved in an open relationship with a Caucasian man and in several casual short-term sexual relationships with other Caucasian men. Lingga never had a long-term offline relationship with a Caucasian man. His five-year relationship was through an online app and he met his partner in person only twice. Otherwise, he casually dated both Caucasian men and women.

As discussed in a previous chapter, in Indonesia, the representation of whiteness as more sexually and romantically desirable is inseparable from personal experiences and preferences. According to Kala, for instance, he is bound to cultural and social norms in relation to his gender and sexual orientation. As an Indonesian gay man, he said that his previous relationship with an Indonesian man restricted him from having a committed, sexual, romantic relationship. He narrated:

> I have had a relationship with an Indonesia man when I was in high school. We were being secretive because he came from a respected, high class family. After a few years, we decided to break the relationship because aside from our sexual orientation that is impossible to be accepted, he was dating a woman while still in a relationship with me. He is married to a woman now. After that experience, I realised that it is very difficult to find an Indonesian partner who has the same expectations in the same-sex relationship. Therefore, I find myself more comfortable to be with a Westerner because they share the same idealism, aspirations, and expectations (Kala 4 September 2020).

Kala's self-identification as a gay man and the mention of the impossibility of establishing a romantic relationship with an Indonesian man shows the unnegotiable concept of women, men, and sex which "compromises the articulation of sexuality, social change, democracy, and human rights" (Corrêa and Jolly 23). Kala's quote demonstrates an agency to navigate his desire in order to establish a sexual and romantic homosexual relationship in which the stigma is removed or reduced, so that his freedom to express and to perform his sexuality does not have to be curbed. Whiteness here is represented as providing access to one's own *true* identity, and a means of establishing a desired relationship and being accepted as a gay man.

The stigma of LGBTQI+ community in Indonesia, is internalised by the society and social attitudes, and also by LGBTQI+ people. This often leads to "self-hatred, low self-esteem and feelings of insecurity" (Wieringa 2019: 2). Furthermore, the intersection of sexual orientation, gender and race is not in favour of Indonesian gay men, as Kala described:

> One day we were walking side by side and I wanted to hold his hand. He said, 'It is up to you. If you feel safe to hold my hand then go for it. But if there is someone sees us holding hands and if that person says things to you, you must be ready. I am a *bule* and you are the local. I can probably can get away with it but I do not think you can' (Kala 4 September 2020)

Race and sexuality in this configuration denote that 'whiteness' can escape public scrutiny even if homosexual, whereas in contrast the local homosexual man is in an

environment which to some degree sanctions him, whilst upholding racial endowments that consider white homosexuality differently from that of an Indonesian man. Kala's boyfriend suggests that it would be only Kala who is going to be confronted although they are a couple. It indicates the white's self-perception of race and sexuality in relation to Others, but it may have a basis in experience, since white people may be considered 'not civilised' in their sexual habits.

Here Kala shared his observation of what can escape public scrutiny:

> I know a married gay couple in my hometown. People in the neighbourhood respect them and leave them alone. They are respected because they have achievements in their life. They are financially stable, they are wealthy. They have house, cars, and business (Kala September 2020).

It is important to observe the intersection of gender, sexual identity, and socioeconomic class. The possession of a house, cars, and a business denotes the high position of this couple up the socioeconomic ladder. The connection to gender and sexual identity of class can be interpreted as linear; the higher the class, the less open the stigma attached to homosexuality and the more readily such relationships are accepted or, at the least, overlooked.

While my gay participants prefer to have a relationship where they can be acknowledged and open about it, Lingga's situation does not seem to be the same. While covering his sexual identity from his family, he was engaged in a relationship with a Caucasian man. He said that he grew up in a moderately religious Muslim family and now is being pressured to get married to a woman. He said:

> Since my family has been asking when I am going to get married, my priority has changed. Now I am leaning to find a wife, to get married, and to have children. Besides, in Indonesia I cannot marry my partner unless it is a woman. A lot of my friends have married and have kids, it sems like they are happy. That is also one of my reasons. It is not an escape, but it is because I want to be a better person. What I feel right now is not going to disappear in a blink of an eye, but it takes time and in steps (Lingga 4 September 2020).

It is worth to observe the mention of *escape*, a *better person* and *disappear*. It can be interpreted as it is bad to be a homosexual therefore it needs to be fixed. This is a common attitude, and according to Wieringa, some LGBTQII+ people "are sent to religious institutions to be purified" (2019: 2). Lingga's statement implies that he can make a choice. Between male and female, the choice is to be engaged with a female in order to comply with the heterosexual norms. This can be seen as the choice he is forced to make to "avoid homophobic violence or losing out on social benefits afforded to straight people" (Fausto-Sterling 2007: 51). In Indonesia, LGBTQI+ people "are subjected to high levels of violence" (Wieringa 2019: 2) and face job discriminations or are even "fired when their sexual orientation or gender identity is disclosed" (Wieringa 2019: 2). Choice also carries "the connotations of conscious control and easy changeability" (Fausto-Sterling 2007: 51), which here is not the case. Although there are many stories of people who tried to become straight before accepting that they felt how they felt, for whatever reasons (Fausto-Sterling 2007: 51), neither homosexuals nor heterosexuals "can choose to change their state of desire" (Fausto-Sterling 2007: 51) in order to please their families or society.

With regard to the stigma of *bule* hunter, male homosexuals who go out with Caucasians are not referred to by the term. This has more to do with their being forced to live clandestinely or deny their real sexuality. It also has to do with the fact that, despite their sexuality, they remain men in a masculine hegemonic society. Candra, when discussing the meaning of *bule* hunter, provided the following observation on this matter:

> I have never encountered someone who judged me as a *bule* hunter or gave negative comments when I was in Jakarta, because back then I did not tell a lot of people. Only my close friends

> know I am gay. Because they know me and they are my close friends and my identity was still in the closet, I have never received negative comments (Candra 11 August 2020).

The quote suggests that the stigma does not apply to Candra regardless of the desire that he expressed in the previous chapter. It is important to observe the underlaying reason of why the stigma does not apply in this situation is the sexual identity rather than gender, race, or class. It is not clear if homosexuals would be called *bule* hunter if their relationships were openly expressed.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

I started this study by sharing the lingering recollection about having the label *bule* hunter attached to me, or at least it was how I felt. Being asked if I was a *bule* hunter was an epiphany. I began this writing process with an aim to make sense of my deep internalised thoughts on societal perceptions about women, especially those in relationships with Caucasian men. Although my findings cannot be said to represent all interracial relationships in the Indonesian context, in many ways they have provided a new outlook in relation to stigma of *bule* hunter.

In my own experience, I was only ever asked if I was a *bule* hunter and was never subjected to the overt criticism, assumptions, or negative comments experienced by some of my respondents. Despite that, I became very aware of the gazes from other people. I looked into people's eyes and found myself trying to read their minds. I observed how Indonesians treat me differently when I was in the presence of a white man. Security personnel and doormen would open the car door for me as a sign of respect. Workers – mostly those in the services sector – became *very* friendly. Or the opposite, I was once mistakenly assumed to be a tour guide while I was on an outing with a big group of US American volunteers. I felt a connection with my participants' stories by experiencing the different treatments. Whiteness in this study is translated in many different ways in relation to class, gender, sexuality, and desirability. The meaning of *bule* to each participant is fluid rather than rigid and permanent, while the racial endowments and stereotypes that the label carries remain intact and are reproduced.

In the process of making meanings of interracial relationships, agency navigates the self-perception and self-determination. Participants' perceptions in relation to gender, race, class, and sexuality are, to some degree, responsible for helping maintain the stigma. In a society where masculine hegemony is the dominant discourse, there is no easy way for women and marginal masculinities to cruise their relationship. This study has shown that the stigma of *bule* hunter revolves around Indonesian women while sexuality obscures the stigma in relation to marginal masculinities by virtue of their gender identity.

I realised that my study has multiple layers but does not offer a uniform number of participants from different gender identities and sexual orientations. Therefore, while it does not represent Indonesian society in general, it does offer a varied outlook regarding the stigma of *bule* hunter. Having interacted with the participants, and having heard their stories and woven them with mine, I can make sense of the stigma in relation to the deeply rooted colonial history which has been internalised by Indonesians. The stigma is a way to encapsulate and comprehend interracial relationships within the context of historical and contemporary social power relations.

Appendices

Guiding Questions

1. Can you tell me about interracial relationships in which you are or have been involved? *Karena kamu udah setuju untuk berpartisipasi dalam research project ini, aku berasumsi kamu udah pernah atau sedang dalam interracial relationship nih. Bisa kamu certain tentang pengalaman kamu menjalin hubungan dengan orang asing?*
2. Can you tell me what are the obstacles in that relationship? *Ketika kamu menjalin hubungan sama orang asing, pasti ada halangan dan hambatan, ya. Bisa kamu certain?*
3. How do your family and friends see you in your interracial relationship? *Bagaimana keluarga dan teman-teman kamu memandang kamu dan hubunganmu?*
4. What does *bule* mean to you? *Menurut kamu, apa arti bule?*
5. What does *bule* hunter mean to you? *Menurut pendapat kamu, apa arti bule* hunter?
6. What are your thoughts about that label? *Apa pendapatmu tentang label itu?*
7. What is your opinion about premarital sex? *Apa pendapat kamu tentang premarital sex?*
8. How do you see a relationship between an Indonesian woman and a Caucasian man? *Apa pendapat kamu jika melihat perempuan Indonesia berpasangan dengan laki-laki kulit putih?*
9. How does your community see a relationship between an Indonesian woman and a Caucasian man? *Apa pendapat masyarakat sekitarmu jika melihat perempuan Indonesia berpasangan dengan laki-laki kulit putih?*
10. How do you see a relationship between an Indonesian man and a Caucasian woman? *Apa pendapat kamu jika melihat laki-laki Indonesia berpasangan dengan perempuan kulit putih?*
11. How does your community see a relationship between an Indonesian man and a Caucasian woman? *Apa pendapat masyarakat sekitarmu jika melihat laki-laki Indonesia berpasangan dengan perempuan kulit putih?*

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Notes