Growls and Woofs: A Theoretical and Descriptive Analysis of Conceptual Animal Metaphors in Queer Speech

Jarrett Hopewell (He/him/his)

“Approaching a Queer Dialectology” Webinar
July 24, 2020
Trigger Warning: Graphic sexual language and profanity
Introduction
What do these animals have in common?
Types of queer community members
Uses of Queer Animal Metaphors

- Medium for (self-)identification
  - Physical appearances
  - Sub-community membership

- Tool for sexual communication
  - Sexual desires
  - Erotic behavior
General Definitions

Bear

An “older” hairy individual with a large, stocky body

Otter

A hairy individual with a slim, slender body
# General Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Cub</strong></th>
<th><strong>Pup(py)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A “younger” hairy individual with a large, stocky body</td>
<td>An individual who role plays as a puppy and assumes a submissive sexual role</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General Definitions

**Wolf**

A muscular or lean, hairy individual who assumes a dominant sexual role.

**Pig**

An individual who wants to have sex all the time; typically “dirty”, kinky sex.
Conceptual Metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1993; Kövecses, 2010)

- Conceptual metaphor refers to the understanding of an abstract concept in terms of a concrete source.
  - The different classifications of queer community members are understood in terms of animals

- Common in everyday communication

- Systematic relationship between dissimilar concepts

- Diachronic development
The animal metaphors are systematic, complex, and worthy of future research.

A queer dialectology would require a departure from traditional dialectology and a reconfiguration of modern dialectology.
Data Collection
Utilizing Multimedia Platforms

- 250 public profiles from online, dating apps
  - Grindr, GROWLr, SCRUFF

- Typed-out animal metaphors
  - No fictional animals (e.g. unicorn)
  - No pre-selected “tribes”

- Randomly selected regions of continental USA
  - Rural and urban
Most common animals

Bear: 73
Pup: 41
Pig: 35
Otter: 28
Wolf: 23
Cub: 18
On the Complexity of the Animal Metaphors
Systematic Patterns ofEncoded Elements

- - -

- Inclusivity
  - Users and identifiers of the animal metaphors

- Diminutives
  - Age is relative to the speaker

- Compounds
  - Constraints to multiple animal identification

- Partner entailment
  - Relationships through kinship/hierarchical terminology
Inclusivity: Not Just for Gay Men

- These animal metaphors are inclusive to individuals of various gender identities, ethnicities, age, and sexualities.

- Different species of an animal can refer to a person’s ethnicity and age.
Diminutives: How Young is “Young”?

- Some animal metaphors are the younger version of another animal metaphor and they function as a diminutive.
  - Bear → Cub
  - Wolf → Wolfpup
  - Pig → Piglet

- Individuals may identify as the diminutive animal if they are
  - Young by age or appearance
  - Inexperienced or a new community member
  - Sexually submissive

>i mostly like strong, beefy, furry men in their 40s and 50s 😍 though sometimes a 30-something cubbo does it for me tooMouseButton

piglet 😌

Just came out after many years leading a straight life. Only looking for sex. I’ve been deprived so now it’s time to get wild!
Compounds: Multiple Animal Identification

- It’s not uncommon to find individuals identifying as more than one animal metaphor. In this case they often surface as compounds.

barpup36  cubby

PigBear
## Compounds: Contrastive Elements

- There is a pattern to which animals compound to others.
- *Pig* can compound with any animal.
- *Pup* compounds with any animal except *Wolf*.
- *Bear, Cub, Otter, and Wolf* tend to not compound with one another.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bear</th>
<th>Cub</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hairy</td>
<td>Hairy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Older”</td>
<td>“Younger”</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Otter</th>
<th>Wolf</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hairy</td>
<td>Hairy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slim</td>
<td>Lean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Younger”</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Pig</th>
<th>Pup</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promiscuous</td>
<td>Role Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submissive</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Partner Entailment:

- Wolf and Pup may entail a relationship with at least one other partner.

- The entailment is not necessarily absolute, but can be specified in kinship/hierarchical terms.
  - Alpha, beta, gamma
  - Handler, owner
  - Pack, pack-mate

As a pup there’s a couple things I’d love to find. I’m an Alpha pup meaning looking to find pack-mates, while also looking for a handler/owner. I take care of others and love being there for my friends and pack. So you can imagine that sometimes I just need to take a break and relax, as a pup I don’t want to worry about being in charge. That’s where having a handler or owner comes in!
Issue: 2 Metaphors, 1 Pig
If you support 45, ya dead to me. Sorry, but he’s a pig. A racist, egotistical, narcissistic, chauvinistic, pontificating pig.

The only pigs I like are the ones that have an aversion to latex. There’s nothing better than hot, kinky, dirty sex with hot, raunchy pigs and taking a few rough breedings 🌧️🐷ńska
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Conceptual Blending
Conceptual Blending (Fauconnier and Turner, 1998; 2003)

- Extension of Conceptual Metaphor Theory
- A basic cognitive operation which blends concepts within a network of “mental spaces” in order to create new meaning.
- The conceptual blend of pig and 45 (aka Donald Trump) differs from the conceptual blend of pig and the ones with an aversion to latex
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Summary
These Animal Metaphors are Complex

- Medium for sexual communication
- Tool for identification
- Not limited to homosexual, cisgendered men
- Reflect interpersonal engagement
- Unique conceptualization, but homophonous to conventional metaphors
- Worthy of future research
Implications for Queer Dialectology
Beyond Traditional & Modern Dialectology

- Complicates what dialectology means for queer people
  - Sexuality and sexual role as the forefront of dialect research
  - Relation between metaphor/iconicity and sexuality

- Challenges the idea of place
  - Multimedia platforms considered as a regional place
  - Interference between regional, internet, and queer language variations
References


