

*“By defining the metrosexual
as a high-end consumer,
derived from gay stereotypes,
Simpson has provided
the ‘buzz word’ needed
by marketers to target and
expand a profitable market.”*

CONSUMING QUEER: *The Commodification of Culture and its Effects on Social Acceptance*

MICHAEL J. YAKSICH

CONSUMERS HAVE BECOME ATTRACTED TO “EXOTIC” OR CULTURALLY RELATED TRENDS. BY EXTRACTING AND CONSUMING STYLES AND CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH MARGINALIZED CULTURES, SOCIETY ELIMINATES DIVERSITY THROUGH HOMOGENIZATION. RECENTLY POPULAR TELEVISION PROGRAMS SUCH AS *QUEER EYE FOR THE STRAIGHT GUY*, WHICH DEPICTS THE MAKE-OVER OF A STRAIGHT MALE BY FIVE GAY HOSTS, DISPLAYS CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH THE GAY COMMUNITY ALLOWING FOR THE ABSORPTION OF STEREOTYPES. FOLLOWING THIS, THE CONFIGURATION OF THE “METROSEXUAL” BY MARKETERS HAS ALLOWED STRAIGHT MALES TO ADOPT THE POSITIVE QUEER STYLES. DISCUSSION GROUPS WERE CONVENED TO VIEW AN EPISODE OF *QUEER EYE* TO DISCUSS THE PROGRAM AND THE PORTRAYAL OF GAY IMAGES. FOCUS GROUPS INDICATE THAT THE PROGRAM IS A POSITIVE SIGN OF ACCEPTANCE ALTHOUGH IT REINFORCES MAINSTREAM STEREOTYPES. BOTH *QUEER EYE* AND THE METROSEXUAL ARE A RESULT OF THE BREAK DOWN HETEROSEXUAL GENDER NORMS AND PRODUCTION AND REDISTRIBUTION OF STEREOTYPES WHICH GENERATE PROFIT IN A CONSUMER SOCIETY. INSTEAD OF DISPELLING STEREOTYPES, PROGRAMS LIKE *QUEER EYE* RE-INSCRIBE AND VALIDATE THESE IMAGES. WHILE THE PRESENCE OF GAY CHARACTERS IN THE MEDIA SHOWS A MOVEMENT TOWARDS GREATER ACCEPTANCE OF HOMOSEXUALITY, THE COMMODIFICATION OF GAY STEREOTYPES DEMONSTRATES THE HEGEMONIC NATURE OF MASS CULTURE AND THE JUSTIFICATION OF EXPLOITATION THROUGH TOLERANCE.

“Commodification prefabricates culture into easy to consume products and images that allow the dominant culture to utilize stereotypes in constructing ‘lifestyles’ for consumption.”

The commodification of culture is a process through which the habits of the consumption of real commodities spread into relationships with culture. This results in the liquidation of cultural traditions whereby fundamentals of a particular culture are taken from their traditional context and engaged as “free-floating [postmodern] signifiers, put to decorative uses for removed from their original references.”ⁱ With the rise of global capitalism in the mid-1970s, mass production and marketing replaced traditional production and began to form a saturated and sophisticated market system. As a result, culture is drawn into corporate production in an effort to target niche markets, while individuals are increasingly socialized to engage culture with the same habits they employ in consumption.

As American consumer culture reacts to the introduction of new products, marketers strive to profit by presenting new styles in the form of trends. In recent instances the marketing industry has homogenized traits associated with marginalized cultures, allowing for the consumption of stereotypes.ⁱⁱ Specifically, the visibility of the gay community has come to depend on the exploitation of stereotypes via mass media and the marketing industry.ⁱⁱⁱ These stereotypes include “an obsession with fashion, cultural trends, and overt expressions of femininity.”^{iv} While cultural visibility is essential to a positive portrayal of gay individuals, the commodification of gay culture may perpetuate negativity. Images of middle-class gay consumers define queer identities only in terms of “style, textuality, or performance play [to] produce imaginary gay/queer subjects that keep invisible the division of wealth and labor these images depend on.”^v Commodified imagery also disguises homosexuals who are manual workers, unemployed, or impri-

soned. One quarter to a half a million homosexual and bisexual youths are thrown out of their homes and endure violence in the streets.^{vi} The dissection of these experiences, via commodification, must be addressed for progress to be made.

Postmodernism links the effects of consumerism and media-saturation to the modern development of industrial, capitalist societies. Once a system of production was established, consumption began to grow, and people needed to acquire a leisure or consumer ethic in addition to a work ethic.^{vii} An increase in affluence and types of conspicuous consumption drove the process, precipitating a growth in consumer credit, advertising, marketing, and the “emergence of a postmodern popular culture which celebrates consumerism, hedonism and style.”^{viii} The rise of mass media also contributed to the commodification of culture by portraying the dominant norms that assist in the assimilation of marginalized cultures.

Modern consumer culture currently considers the term ‘lifestyle’ in vogue. Within “contemporary consumer culture it connotes individuality, self-expression, and a stylistic self-consciousness” which establishes taste and a sense of style.^{ix} Mike Featherstone explains that, rather than accepting gay culture, lifestyles “display their individuality and sense of style in the particularity of the assemblage of goods, clothes, practices, experiences, and appearance and bodily disposition they design” regardless of stereotypes.^x Commodification prefabricates culture into easy to consume products and images that allow the dominant culture to utilize stereotypes in constructing “lifestyles” for consumption.

Theorist Antonio Gramsci defines hegemony as a cultural and ideological means whereby the dominant groups in society maintain their dominance by securing the “consent” of subordinate groups.^{xi} This “consent” is achieved by negotiating the construction of a political and ideological consensus which incorporates all groups. Gramsci states that hegemony “assimilated the world-view of the dominant group; an assimilation which allows the group” to extend its cultural norms over those of other groups and even assimilate marginalized groups in an effort to remain principal.^{xii} As homogenization and assimilation lead the media to state that differences no longer exist, the commodification of queer transgresses cultural taboos surrounding sexuality. The commodification of difference promotes paradigms of consumption wherein difference is eradicated, via exchange, by a consumer who not only displaces the Other but also denies the significance of that Other’s life-story by decontextualization.

COMMODYING QUEER

By presenting the makeover tactics of five gay male hosts, television’s popular reality program, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, has captured the attention of millions. The program, which appears on Bravo^{xiii}, depicts five professionals including interior and fashion designers, culinary and cultural experts, and a hair stylist, who redesign numerous aspects of a selected straight participant’s wardrobe, apartment, and mannerisms in an attempt to make him trendier.^{xiv} The five hosts’ use of flamboyant forms of presentation, while entertaining mainstream audiences, reinforces stereotypes that surround the gay community.

The program entertains viewers in a manner that screens them from the non-stereotypical aspects of the gay community. Mass media “has to balance the need of majority interests against those of specialized minorities.”^{xv} It is a reflection of the homogenized middle whose “tyranny of audience ratings and readership studies forces a consistency on content that is designed to attract the most” by screening content for its audiences.^{xvi} Media use this

method because it is easier to depict preexisting ideas surrounding a culture than introducing new ones. This “is a paradox because the increased visibility of marginalized groups often creates restrictions and recycles old stereotypes.”^{xvii} This paradox allows for a more effortless consumption of ideas that might otherwise be considered proscribed.

In portraying stereotypes, the media allow for society to be “embracing [of] images of gay life but still all too reluctant of a society readily embracing the realities of gay identities.”^{xviii} The society “we live in is deeply conflicted about homosexuality but no longer able to deny its existence.”^{xix} Media tactics “makes gay people simultaneously an ideal group for niche marketing and for the containment inherent in commodification to straight consumers.”^{xx}

While gay individuals may appear more in entertainment, depictions of their coming-out stories and cultural styles have either been transformed into mainstream versions or ignored. In relation to *Queer Eye*, the openly gay hosts are valued only as entertainment and a means for profit. As entertainers, who appear only on television, they no longer threaten society with their way of life. The gay individual has moved from being hidden and ridiculed, to out of “the closet” to perform. Guy Debord terms this “the spectacle,” stating that “in societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into representation.”^{xxi} The spectacle, which surrounds the practices and lives of its members, drives American consumer society. In consuming the media-propagated spectacle of the gay man, the consumer internalizes the stereotypes that surround it.

Programs like *Queer Eye* have a duplicitous nature which both help and hurt the gay community. While offering self-grooming and personal wellness advice, the program uses stereotypical hosts to convey to the audience how the “queer eye” is stereotypically better than the straight one. By “mainstreaming homosexuality, we are homogenizing the

gay society to a point in which that they are believed to dress and act similar in all fashions of their lives.”^{xxii} This homogenization could either damage gay culture by reinforcing a spectacle of reality or help it by existing in a time in which homosexuality was once considered a mental disorder^{xxiii} and taboo.^{xxiv}

The presence of popular gay programs such as *Queer Eye* in the media within the past 5 to 8 years demonstrates that marketers have focused on the idea of targeting a profitable gay market. Advertisers consider the gay consumer a “dream market.” According to research conducted in 1997 by Simmons Market Research Bureau, the gay market was found to have an estimated spending power reaching \$35 billion per year.^{xxv} Dr. Daniel Wardlow, Associate Professor of Marketing at San Francisco State University, stated, “As a ‘dream market’ gays and lesbians are reported to have significantly higher-than-average disposable incomes and a near-rabid desire for consumption.”^{xxvi}

In contrast, gay economist M.V. Lee Badgett released a study entitled *Income Inflation: The Myth of Affluence Among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Americans*, released by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force,^{xxvii} that indicated that “the gay population’s average wealth is no different than that of heterosexuals.” The 1998 study, which was an update to the 1990 U.S. census and General Social Survey, stated that “most marketing studies have mistakenly focused on upscale gays and does not accurately reflect the gay population.”^{xxviii} The depiction of this “dream market,” whether correct or exaggerated, in combination with preexisting stereotypes, has contributed to the development of a new image to expand a lucrative consumer segment.

TARGETING THE CONSUMER: MARKETING THE “METROSEXUAL”

In 1994 Mark Simpson, a British writer, coined the term “metrosexual” shortly after the publication of his book *Male Impersonators: Men Performing Masculinity*.^{xxix} Simpson’s aim in creating this term was to offer a slightly satirical critique on the effects of consumerism and media proliferation on traditional masculinity. In describing the term,

Simpson stated, “gay men provided the early prototype for metrosexuality.”^{xxx} They are mostly “decidedly single, definitely urban, dreadfully uncertain of their identity (hence the emphasis on pride and the susceptibility to the latest label) and socially emasculated. Gay men pioneered the business of accessorizing – and combining – masculinity and desirability.”^{xxxi} Simpson’s definition of the metrosexual, derived from gay stereotypes, raises interesting questions around the descriptor as a marketed idea.

Metrosexuality is a result of the production and redistribution of stereotypes that generate profit in a consumer society. The distinction refers to a male who has taken on fashionable characteristics, via consumption, that are stereotypically associated with homosexuality. Its existence is owed to the gay individual and his perceived excessive consumption habits. With the formation of the metrosexual, queer culture is being homogenized into a single stereotype that is easily absorbed by mass culture. In *Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance* author bell hooks states that modern depictions of the Other, marginalized minorities, have been transformed through a consumer culture that seeks to profit off of perceived difference. From this it can be noted that “the commodification of difference promoted paradigms of consumption wherein whatever difference the Other inhabits is eradicated, via exchange, by a consumer.”^{xxxii}

For much of the twentieth century, gay males relied upon the feminine image as a means to express their sexuality. From this notion came the culturally accepted association of homosexuality with feminine fashions. In 1965, J.L. Simmons believed that these stereotypes stemmed from two parts: “Stereotypes are variable: at one extreme they may be myths invented from superstition and misinformation; at the other verified [they are] scientific generalizations. They may be prejudices immune to reality testing or they may be tentative appraisals with the built in notion that their validity and applicability to all class members is problematic.”^{xxxiii} In the absence of any other information the effeminate stereotype became a template for the gay man’s expression of sexuality. From these stereotypes the metrosexual not only forms his appearance but also does not have

to denounce it by acting more masculine.^{xxxiv} In a January 2005 interview Simpson stated that “Metrosexuality is problematic because it speaks openly what should not be spoken in that kind of grouping: the possibility of male desirability and by implication, passivity.”^{xxxv} This observation of consumer culture and masculinity provides further insight into how metrosexuality may garner social acceptance via the possibility of challenge of norms.

The perception that gay men are trendy pioneers of shopping for stylish and tasteful articles of clothing is supported by the notion that “the gay quest for distinction is based on

The report surveyed 510 single males between the ages of 21-48 and 548 with wives. 82 percent of the male sample considered good grooming essential for businessmen today and the majority saw nothing wrong with a man getting a facial.^{xxxix} The report also stated that 76 percent of those surveyed considered themselves as “easygoing,” 74 percent as “caring,” and 68 percent as “open-minded.”^{xl} In contrast, many traditional male attributes were given a very low rating. “The metrosexual represents the tipping point of a shift that parallels the process—though not the passion or the politicization—of the women’s movement,” says Marian Salzman, Chief Strategy Officer at Euro RSCG

“Metrosexuality is a result of the production and redistribution of stereotypes that generate profit in a consumer society.”

a more complex and subtle dynamic” which uses sub cultural appearance standards in competition through consumption.^{xxxvi} Marketers then “ransack the vast array of cultural traditions in order to produce interesting and exotic material for wider audiences” in an effort to profit.^{xxxvii}

Simpson’s description of the metrosexual portrays him as a consumer who values products that hold high cultural value and give way to individual distinction. By defining the metrosexual as a high-end consumer, derived from gay stereotypes, Simpson has provided the “buzz word” needed by marketers to target and expand a profitable market. This market expansion was first conceived by the marketing industry after the article, Meet the Metrosexual, in which Mark Simpson described the metrosexual.^{xxxviii} International advertising giant EURO RSCG, which holds 233 offices worldwide, decided to conduct several metrosexual focus groups in the New York metropolitan area to discover if the metrosexual market was lucrative. After holding groups, the company published a report entitled *The Future of Men* in which the consumer habits of metrosexual men were examined.

Worldwide and one of the architects of the study.^{xli} “In the 1900s, women had to struggle to win parity with men. In this new century, men—still the dominant gender—are finding the courage to explore the female domain without fear of losing their status as ‘real’ men. As the survey results show, more and more men are willing to take that risk.”^{xlii} The report conducted by EURO RSCG was intended not only to gain a better understanding of the emerging metrosexual market, but also to advertise an upcoming trend.

FROM COMMODIFICATION TO SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE

The relationship between the commodification of culture and acceptance of homosexuality is ambiguous. The intensified marketing of gay images is less indicative of a growing acceptance of homosexuality than of capitalism’s appropriation of gay “styles” for mainstream audiences. Queer visibility is vital to “prepare the ground for gay civil rights protection [and] affirmative images of lesbians and gays in the mainstream media,” and can assist in further exposure in the dominant culture.^{xliii} Rosemary Hennessy states in the article Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture

that, “Visibility in commodity culture is in this sense a limited victory for gays who are welcome to be visible as a consumer subjects but not as social subjects.”^{xliv} The increase in gay images in consumer culture affects audiences by perpetuating stereotypes, and thus possibly limits the knowledge that is essential in advocating acceptance.

A study entitled *The Effect of Consumer Prejudices on Ad Processing: Heterosexual Consumers’ Responses to Homosexual Imagery in Ads* documents how consumers react to ads subjectively on the basis of their membership in groups defined by ethnicity or gender, or their life themes or experiences. The authors examine how heterosexuals react to the portrayals of homosexuals in advertisements. The research finds that “heterosexuals’ emotional and attitudinal responses to a homosexual ad depend on their general attitude toward homosexuality” and that the “more exposure an individual had to homosexuals the more positive their reactions were.”^{xlv} The results demonstrate the diverse opinions of consumers regarding social issues such as homosexuality.

To further examine public opinion concerning homosexuality in the context of consumer culture data, expansions on the General Social Survey have been collected. Given the attention given to the gay community in recent years, the statistics may show a trend in acceptance due to wider media exposure. Differences between males and females in the USA according to General Social Survey data found

that female’s opinions changed more than males in accepting homosexuality.^{xlvi} Attitudes towards homosexuality have traditionally been one of the very few areas where females equal or exceed males in the acceptance of a sexual behavior.

Recent data from Gallup and Pew Research polls indicate that Americans feel some tension between their desire to be fair to those who are different from themselves and a lingering unease with homosexuality itself. A 2003 Gallup survey indicated that while 47 percent of Americans strongly or not-strongly believe homosexuality should be accepted by society, 46 percent believed that it should be discouraged.^{xlvii} While Americans are split over the issue of acceptance, surveys demonstrate that acceptance of gays and lesbians has risen significantly. 2004 survey data show that 54 percent of Americans believe homosexuality should be an acceptable lifestyle.^{xlviii}

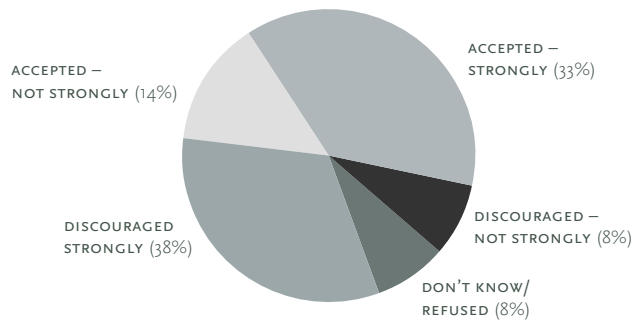
In determining levels of acceptance, television programs have utilized the role of consumer society to extend trends and challenge gender norms. The program *He’s A Lady* transforms several heterosexual males into women and has them accomplish feminine tasks, including weekly challenges which “include learning how to walk, talk and dress like a lady, followed by going out in public to find out how convincing they are; learning to flaunt their new attitude with training.”^{xlix} This gender switch demonstrates a new level of exposure for the gay community. Judith Butler de-

FIGURE 1-1

Pew Research Center June 2003

Americans are divided on whether homosexuality should be accepted or discouraged by society

Sample: 1,000 adults
Methodology: Telephone interview conducted June 4-8, 2003
Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent because of rounding



scribes in her book *Gender Trouble* a rearticulation of gender identity and sex and gender limitations. She states, “drag exposes the heterosexual matrix as a fabrication and sex as a performatively enacted signification.”¹ In relationship to consumer culture, the performances which participants take part in on *He’s A Lady* allows for the fabrication of identity. While this is a reaction against dominant culture, it maintains that heterosexuality is “real,” exposing a “pseudo-original” copy or representation that perpetuates dominance. Despite the increased exposure, these representations of stereotypes and gender twists are superficial and may not affect acceptance of the gay community.

Acceptance of homosexuality has risen over the decades, yet exposure via consumer culture may limit the circulation of true-to-life gay images. Whether commodifying a particular culture actually increased acceptance of the culture being commodified is hard to ascertain. While media portrayals provide wider exposure, commodification also assimilates trends and styles into the dominant culture. These trends assist in devaluing the gay community’s lived experience and problems while providing pseudo-false information to consumers. A consumer culture that utilizes trends allows for the continuation of these labels and stereotypes.

FOCUSING THE TOPIC: IS THERE A TREND?

After the initial introduction of metrosexuality into the mainstream by the St. John’s article and the efforts of EURO RSCG, it becomes important to ascertain how viewers of *Queer Eye*, a pinnacle of the phenomenon, relate to the commodified images of gays. A university in the New England area was selected as a site from which to assemble focus groups and gather data from college age students. Male, female, and male/female groups, consisting of six students per group, were formed. The all male group consisted of five students and the all female group consisted of six students. The 36 participants were selected randomly from those who responded to advertising for the study. The following quotations reflect a sample of the data collected.

In engaging with an all male focus group, members enjoyed *Queer Eye* while offering criticism of the straight male participant in the episode. The group’s reaction to interactions between the hosts and participant demonstrated how the gay individual is a pure object for entertainment and when displaced the reassertion of masculinity is unnecessary. “I think that it adds to the humorous value of the show, but I don’t know if it advanced the whole acceptance of gay rights any further because it just projects them as like the stereotypes” (M2). From this notion group member M3 mentioned that “I don’t think you could be like that in real life. But they still are so damn funny it’s sick.” Much of these responses show how the participants enjoyed the program for its entertainment value, but when asked what they felt about the show in relationship to how the majority of Americans may think about the gay community, they responded by stating that “it reinforces stereotypes and possibly limits acceptance” (M2).

The subject of acceptance brought about ideas surrounding the purpose of the program in relationship to the stereotypes the group believed it reinforced. Group members were very quick to note that “ratings are the main purpose of the show. Ratings equal money” (M2). The mention of ratings led to the observation that “the show may be skewed towards the flamboyant side to do well on television, but they do not do a good job of representing everyone” (M4). “They play off of the two extreme stereotypes. So, like these flamboyantly gay people come into the chip eating, Bud drinkin’, football watchin’ guys house... and they fix him up” (M3).

The conversation turned to the issue of acceptance of the gay community by mainstream society, in relation to programs like *Queer Eye*. “I think what started off as a stereotype for the gay man is becoming sort of our pop culture’s belief, and the majority of people in America believe that this is more than a stereotype,” stated M3. A serendipitous idea that emerged from this exchange was the ‘coming-out’ of M3 as a metrosexual and how the group reacted to the concept.

The idea surrounding gay male and metrosexual consumer trends sparked comments such as “people think it is trendy to have a gay friend right now” (M1) and the observation that, “people are buying into the stereotype and want the associated expertise that comes along with being gay” (M3). They also recognized that “Ten years ago we wouldn’t be able to have this discussion about how we all feel that gayness is trendy because it was taboo and just not talked about.” (M3). Group members valued the presence of a gay program on television, and the opportunity for discussion it provides.

From the reactions regarding how society viewed the gay community, it was clear that the group identified a “gay trend” that “demonstrated a trend at this point in time, selling itself, by making it trendy to look nice like they do” (M4). While exposing the gay community to mainstream culture was considered to still be positive, the group viewed with caution the idea that the continuation of stereotypes in the mainstream could hurt the community in the future.

Female group members also discussed both the stereotypical portrayal of the hosts and how the program’s entertainment value was important to the show’s popularity and media exposure. “In some ways this is the first TV show based upon gay men doing anything, it’s something showing how things are changing in the media” (F3). All members of the female group believed that the program was entertaining and the exposure of gay individuals to the general public was a positive step.

In an effort to change the conversation about gay stereotypes, the focus of the end of the conversation, F6 stated that her “guy friend wears all these [trendy] things, but he also identifies himself as a gay-straight man.” This statement led the group into a frenzy of excitement over the topic. “Oh my god, I know that word. It’s metrosexual,” stated F2. The understanding of metrosexuality by F2 demonstrates the filtering down into society of this new social trend and term. The identifications of metrosexuality by group members demonstrate how this new term has begun to permeate into popular culture. This is further

supported by the act of self identification that group members stated. The results of the focus groups support the theory that the marketing industry is succeeding in forming a new demographic.

DISCUSSION

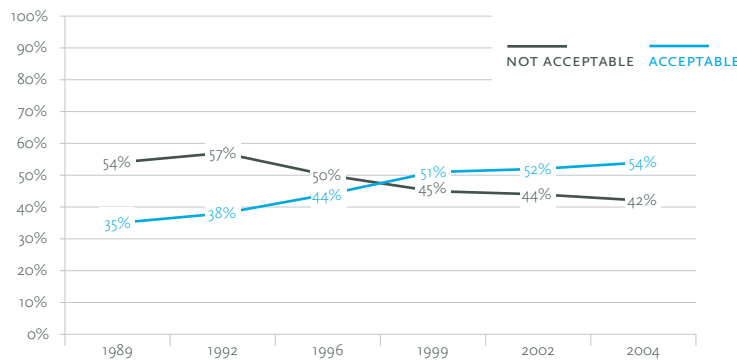
Within popular American culture, people seek out what is different establish individuality.^{li} In searching for this consumer individuality, presenting oneself as or with the gay man may confirm one’s positionality.^{liii} The metrosexual is an example of American consumer culture’s desire for marketable stereotypes. Marketers, such as EURO RSCG mainstream a stereotypical version of homosexuality by homogenizing it. As gay individuals are colonized by the majority culture, they may be absorbed by the dominant culture, even if it excludes or diminishes them.

The results of focus groups show that the consumption of queer has permeated American culture. While enjoying the entertainment value of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, focus groups commented on the perpetuation of stereotypes. These stereotypes, which include knowledge of fashion, style, and personal care, were then later reintroduced to describe the metrosexual. Participants saw the formation of the metrosexual as something that was not necessarily good or bad, but instead new and trendy.

In a society that thrives from the very nature of what it is consuming, the possibility that consuming queer will result in wider acceptance of the gay community seems problematic. The high turnover rates of consumer trends may mean that the metrosexual and television programs that feature gay casts may also be considered a consumer trend.

Metrosexuality is not necessarily a signal of wider acceptance of homosexuality by mainstream society. The metrosexual, according to Simpson’s definition and marketing efforts, is identified solely based upon consumption habits and mannerisms. Simpson stated that this signals that “every aspect of masculinity will be commodified and sold back to men - especially when it is sold as being ‘authentic’ or ‘traditional’.”^{liiii} Consumption devalues the lived experi-

FIGURE 1-2



Pew Research Center Various years

Acceptance of homosexuality has grown significantly

Sample: 1,000 adults [The number of respondents varied from year to year]
Methodology: Telephone interview conducted various years

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent because of rounding

ences of the homosexual while assuming the positive styles and traits with which it is associated. “For the time being...there is nothing straight about metrosexuality. The appeal of metrosexuality for many is precisely the transgressive association with homosexuality” and may not be a signal wider acceptance.^{liv}

The relationship between consumer trends and social acceptance demonstrates the influence of the new consumer culture. The commodification of homosexuals and other marginalized cultures calls into question the ethics of modern consumption. At this point, it is unrealistic to expect media alone to encourage challenges to societal norms of sexuality, gender, consumption, and class. But if television is where a conversation about human sexuality is taking place, it may at least be a starting point.^{lv} In the end, consumers must begin to value and learn from the differences that exist between cultures and communities in order to bring about true social acceptance.

ENDNOTES

- i Featherstone (1991)
- ii Hebdige (1979)
- iii hooks (1992)
- iv Hennessey (1994)
- v Hennessey (1994)
- vi Galst (1992)
- vii Strinati (1995)
- viii Strinati (1995)
- ix Featherstone (1991)
- x Featherstone (1991)
- xi Gramsci (1971)
- xii Ransome (1992)
- xiii Bravo is owned and operated by the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), which is wholly owned by General Electric.
- xiv *Queer Eye* (2003)
- xv Bowes (1996)
- xvi Bowes (1996)
- xvii Walters (2001)
- xviii Walters (2001)
- xix Schulman (1998)
- xx Schulman (1998)
- xxi Debord (1977)
- xxii Gross (1989)
- xxiii The American Psychiatric Association decided that homosexuality is not itself a psychiatric disorder. The change was an amendment to the official Diagnostic and Statistical

- Manual of Mental Disorders. The decision was also impart to the political struggle, and successful social movement and impact or counter culture in the 1960's (Spector, 1978, p.30).
- xxiv Debord (1977)
- xxv Chasin (2000)
- xxvi Wardlow (1996)
- xxvii Walters (2001)
- xxviii Badgett (1998)
- xxix The introduction of the term metrosexual into mainstream American consumer culture occurred in the New York Times article *Metrosexuals Come Out* in which the writer, Warren St. John, interviewed several metrosexuals in New York City after discovering the report by EURO RSCG (St. John, 2003, p.I,9).
- xxx Simpson (2003a)
- xxxi Simpson (2003a)
- xxxii hooks (1992)
- xxxiii Simmons (1965)
- xxxiv Breward (1999)
- xxxv Yaksich (2005)
- xxxvi Kates (2002)
- xxxvii Featherstone (1991)
- xxxviii Simpson (2003b)
- xxxix *Metrosexual Man* (2003)

- xl Metrosexual Man (2003)
 xli Metrosexual Man (2003)
 xlii Metrosexual Man (2003)
 xliii Hennessy (1994)
 xliv Hennessy (1994)
 xlv Bhat, Leigh, and Wardlow (1998)
 xlvi Bhat, Leigh, and Wardlow (1998)
- xlvii Princeton (2003)
 xlviii Gallup (2004)
 xlix He's A Lady (2004)
 l Butler (1990)
 li Kates (2002)
 lii hooks (1992)
 liii Yaksich (2005)
 liv Yaksich (2005)
 lv Gamson (2005)

REFERENCES

- Badgett, M. V. Lee. 1998. *Income Inflation: The Myth of Affluence among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Americans*. New York: A joint publication of the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies.
- Bhat, Subodh and Leigh, Thomas W. and Wardlow, Daniel L. 1998. *The Effect of Consumer Prejudices on Ad Processing: Heterosexual Consumers' Responses to Homosexual Imagery in Ads*. *Journal of Advertising*; Vol. 27 Issue 4, p9, 20p, 3.
- Bowes, John E. 1996. Out of the Closet and into the Marketplace: Meeting Basic Needs in the Gay Community. In Wardlow, D. (Ed.), *Gays, Lesbians, and Consumer Behavior*. (pp.219-244). Binghamton, NY: Hawthorn Press.
- Breward, Christopher. 1999. *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, fashion and city life 1860-1914*. Manchester, UK: Manchester Press.
- Bulter, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Chasin, Alexandra. 2000. *Selling Out: The Gay and Lesbian Movement Goes to Market*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press. p.37.
- Debord, Guy. 1977. *Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit, MI: Black and Red Books.
- Featherstone, Mike. 1991. *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. London, SAGE.
- Featherstone, Mike. 1983. *Consumer Culture: An Introduction*. Theory, Culture & Society: Nottingham Trent University, 1(3).
- Gallup Survey. September 1989- May 2004. *Acceptance of homosexuality has grown significantly*. The Gallup Organization: Washington, DC.
- Galst, Liz. 1992. Throwaway Kids. *Advocate*. 29 December, p. 54.
- Gamson, Joshua P. 2004. (forthcoming) The Intersection of Gay Street and Straight Street: Shopping, Social Class, and the New Gay Visibility. *Journal of Social Thought & Research*, vol.26.
- Gramsci Antonio. 1971. *Selections from Prison Notebooks* (trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith) London: Lawrence and Wishar
- Gross, Larry. 1989. *Out of the Mainstream*. Remote control: television, audiences and cultural power, ed. Ellen Seiter et al. (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 130-49
- He's A Lady Official Site*. Retrieved November 20, 2004, from TBS.com Website: <http://www.tbs.com/shows/hesalady>
- Hebdige, Dick. 1979. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Methuen.
- Hennessy, Rosemary (1994). Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture. *Cultural Critique*. New York, NY: Telos Press, pp. 31-76.
- Holt, Douglas. [1998] 2000. Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption? In Schor, J. and Holt, D. (Ed.), *The Consumer Society Reader* (pp. 212-252). New York, NY: The New Press.
- hooks, bell. [1992] 2000. Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance. In Schor, J. and Holt, D. (Ed.), *The Consumer Society Reader* (p. 343-359). New York, NY: The New Press.
- Inglehart, Ronald., Basañez, Miguel, Díez-Medrano, Jamie, Halman, Loek and Luijckx, Rudd (ed.) 2000. Human Beliefs and values. *A cross-cultural sourcebook based on the 1999-2002 values surveys*. Siglo XXI Editores, F2004, p.520
- Kates, Steven M. 2002. The Protean Quality of Subcultural Consumption: An Ethnographic Account of Gay Consumers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, Dec 2002, Vol. 29 Issue 3, p383, 17p.
- Making a Case for 'Masculine' Vanity (2003, July 17). *Marketing Week*. p.19
- Simpson, M. (2003b, July 25). *Meet the Metrosexual*. Retrieved November 4, 2003, from Salon.com Web site: <http://archive.salon.com/ent/feature/2002/07/22/metrosexual/>
- Marx, Karl. 1978. *The Fetishism of the commodity and its Secret*. The Marx-Engels Reader. (2nd ed.) Edited Robert C. Tucker. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company:
- Metrosexual man embraces feminism (2003, July 15). *PR Newswire Europe Limited*. Retrieved October 30, 2003 from

Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe database. Boston College.
[http://www.web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?
_m=5bb3506c4d868ffl](http://www.web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=5bb3506c4d868ffl)

Murdock, G. and Golding, P. 1977. 'Capitalism, communication and class relations', in J. Curran, M. Gurevitch and J. Woollacott (eds), *Mass Communication and Society*, London, Edward Arnold.

Princeton Survey Research Associates. June 4-8, 2003. *Americans are divided on whether homosexuality should be accepted or discouraged by society*. The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press: Washington, DC.

Queer Eye for the Straight Guy Official Site. Retrieved November 12, 2003, from Bravotv.com Website: http://www.bravotv.com/Queer_Eye_for_the_Straight_Guy/.

Ransome, P. (1992). *Antonio Gramsci: A New Introduction*, New York & London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Schouten, John W. and McAlexander, James. 1995. Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of the New Bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, June 22, 42-61.

Schulman, Sarah. 1998. *Stagestruck: Theater, AIDS, and the Marketing of Gay America*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Seidman, Steven. 2002. *Beyond the Closet The Transformation of Gay and Lesbian Life*. New York: Routledge.

Simmons, J.L. 1965. Public Stereotypes of Deviants. In Cole, S., *Don We Now Our Gay Apparel*. New York, NY: Berg.

Simpson, Mark. (2003a, June, 22). *Metrosexual? That rings a bell....* Retrieved November 4, 2003, from MarkSimpson.com Website: http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/metrosexual_ios.html

Simpson, Mark. (2003b, July 25). *Meet the Metrosexual*. Retrieved November 4, 2003, from Salon.com Web site: <http://archive.salon.com/ent/feature/2002/07/22/metrosexual/>

Spector, Malcolm. 1978. *The American Psychiatric Association Decision on Homosexuality*. New York, NY, p.30.

Strinati, Dominic. (1995). *An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*, London: Routledge.

St. John, Warren. (2003, July 22). *Metrosexuals Come Out*. *The New York Times*. p.1 section 9.

Walters, Suzanna. 2001. *All the Rage: The Story of Gay Visibility in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wardlow, Daniel L. 1996. *Introduction to Gays, Lesbians, and Consumer Behavior*. In

Wardlow, D. (Ed.), *Gays, Lesbians, and Consumer Behavior*. (pp.1-8). Binghamton, NY: Hawthorn Press Ed.

Yaksich, Michael J., personal interview with Mark Simpson, January 30, 2005.

