
STRUGGLING AGAINST STEREOTYPE: A STUDY OF MASCULINITY IN AMERICAN GAY TV SERIES

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the concept of masculinity in the gay male community and identify the image of masculinity in gay men shown in the American gay television series. Data for this qualitative research was gathered from several American gay TV series in the 2000s. The data analysis process involved representation theory in interpreting the dialogs and the scenes in the television series. The study found that masculinity does not always have to be associated with physical strength and heterosexuality because there are other essential aspects such as the ability to achieve success and to meet the needs of life that can be used to conceptualize masculinity. It also revealed that American gay television series frequently showed the representation of masculinity in gay characters to reject the stereotype through images such as physical strength in sports, attractive physical appearance, profession, and ability to achieve success.

Keywords: *American gay television series, homosexuality, masculinity, stereotype*

Article information

(Filled by Editorial Management)

Received: 12 February, 2022

Revised: 05 April, 2022

Accepted: 05 April, 2022

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.22146/rubikon.v9i1.72979>

Available at <https://jurnal.ugm.ac.id/rubikon/article/view/72979>

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INTRODUCTION

In everyday life, stereotypes are often found in society. People easily form any kind of stereotype of a certain person or group. One of the minority groups in society that people frequently stereotype is homosexual men or gay. Regardless of religious beliefs, norms or customs, it is undeniable that homosexuals are also part of society. They are commonly known as gays. As individuals with a sexual orientation that is considered

unusual in society, gay people often get negative stereotypes.

As a man who has a feeling of loving for the same sex, a gay man almost always feels excluded from heterosexuals, who are considered to have always dominated mainstream culture. Gay men are then seen as men who do not conform to the mainstream tradition of men. Gay's sexual orientation has made them be questioned for their masculinity, especially in countries with

conventional traditions and laws against homosexuality. For instance, in the United States of America, the dominant and dominating heteronormative view characterizes masculinity as a man with the heterosexual orientation. Caughey (2006, p. 48) explained that the tradition in American society and culture has always placed white, non-disabled heterosexual men as a priority. There is still a stereotype that heterosexual men are ideal masculine figures in the eyes of society in general.

Poole (2013, p. 280) argued that men who have feminine characteristics such as soft voice, emotional nature, and graceful behaviors are considered gay men. In general, mainstream culture and societal norms tend to view men as having the power or strength to dominate (Connell & Messerschmidt., 2005, p. 832; Shefer & Ruiters, 1998, p. 44). This idea can be related to a man's behavior. The behavior seems to be essential in one's life. It means that people can see and judge other people from the way they behave. A man, for instance, has particular behaviors that he performs in his life in order to show whether or not his behaviors can represent who he is. Regarding this, behaviors that a man exhibits can symbolize masculinity.

There are various kinds of perceptions of masculine behavior. The conventional concept of masculine behavior is almost always identical with men's bodies and personalities. This principle seems to be a strong grip for many cultures to conceptualize the term "masculinity". Consequently, gay men who are often labeled as weak and effeminate male individuals are not still considered masculine men in various cultures. However, the discussion of masculinity in gay men becomes interesting

and essential regarding the image depicted in the American gay television series. In academia and science, popular fiction, such as movies and TV, play a significant role. There are many things that can be learned and explored from those entertainment media (Rudy et al., 2021, p. 42). For that reason, TV series as a source of entertainment is a medium that needs to be studied.

This study aims to analyze the meaning of masculinity and identify how masculinity in gay men is represented in American gay television series. According to Usman and Akbar (2008, p. 79), qualitative research is to understand and interpret the phenomena of the behaviors of a group of individuals and their interactions under certain circumstances based on the views of the research. The data obtained for analysis were in the form of dialogs along with the descriptions of scenes that appeared in American gay television series broadcasted by mainstream TV stations and cable TV in the US, such as *Will & Grace* (1998 by NBC), *Queer as Folk* (2000 by Showtime Network), *Some of My Best Friends* (2001 by CBS), *Six Feet Under* (2001 by HBO), and several gay TV series aired by American gay TV cable HERE TV, such as *Dante's Cove* (2005), *DL Chronicles* (2007) and *The Lair* (2007).

The dialogues and scene descriptions in the television series were analyzed using Stuart Hall's representation theory to show the meanings symbolized by the dialogues and scenes in the series. Regarding this, Hall (1997, p. 25) argued that all objects have no meaning unless humans create meaning, and thus, this system is also known as a constructionist approach that aims at constructing meanings. Therefore, this study used American gay television series to

discuss the concept of masculinity and obtain an image of masculinity in the gay male community represented in the series.

DISCUSSION

Conceptualizing Masculinity

In American culture, for example, the concept of masculinity has been focused on physical power, masculine characters, and skills. As pointed out by Carroll (2003, pp. 3–4), from the 19th century to the 21st century, masculinity in American culture has always been strongly associated with physical strength and toughness. This image has been firmly attached to American men. Masculine behaviors have been associated with men's physical capacity and all the virile characteristics that can enable men to behave, act, and perform to show masculinity.

Spraggins (1999, p. 48) argued that masculine behavior is often identical with the way a man shows his physical strength and ability. Masculine behavior then plays an important role in a man's life. Humans are generally categorized by society through their sexes, male and female, and that is also the basis for distinguishing male and female characteristics (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009, p. 279). For that reason, in American mainstream culture, a man must have manly behaviors that are often associated with physical strength and domination. People always see a man's behavior from a biological perspective. A male individual must have a male behavior and a gender as a man.

For this reason, society perceives that the male gender includes a set of masculine behaviors that are commonly accepted in many cultures (Skeggs, 1991, p. 129). Thus,

society tends to have standards to define a masculine man. Society seems to set a rule based on biological sex. A person is considered a man if he fulfills masculine traits or behaviors such as being tough, domineering, manly, and paired with a woman. This point shows that the opposite of "masculinity" is "femininity". It commonly lets people think that masculine behavior always contrasts with feminine behavior. Even this definition is strongly attached to mainstream culture, which has been strongly influenced by the heteronormative tradition that commonly agrees masculinity means not feminine and is always associated with heterosexuality (Anderson, 2002, p. 874; Bird, 1996, p. 126; Pinar, 2001, pp. 1161–1162).

With such a thought, then gay men are always described as men who are not masculine because they like and partner with the same sex. Researchers from different fields have often carried out various kinds of studies on masculinity. They reveal that the term "masculinity" needs to be discussed from several perspectives to show a broader concept of masculinity. How a male individual behaves in society can be influenced by many factors. It depends on the society in which the individual lives.

For example, a multicultural country has various cultures, which may affect how people define masculinity. It is true to say that the concept of masculinity has been influenced by various factors such as social status, class, race, ethnicity, experience, etc. (Epstein, 1998, p. 49; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009, p. 280; Shefer & Ruiters, 1998, p. 39). This means that each culture can view masculinity in a different way. In other words, the conventional definition of

masculinity cannot always be the most acceptable one if the social and cultural change occurs due to the many factors.

Gay men who were born male but have a homosexual orientation tend to be stereotyped by mainstream culture as unmasculine men because they do not meet the standards of masculinity traits. This condition is also mentioned by Poole (2013, p. 281) that a man who does not meet the criteria as a masculine man conventionally embraced by society in general, then he will feel different from other men and marginalized from the mainstream culture. Gay men are in such a condition. Society in general assumes that a gay man is not categorized as an effeminate man. This kind of perception forms a negative image attached to a gay man (Edwards, 1994, p. 46; Epstein, 1998, p. 56). However, many researchers question whether such a view can be considered true or still acceptable in the present time. People are free to define what masculinity is. However, the most important thing to note is that the concept of masculinity should be free from any forms of discrimination, prejudice, hatred, and violence (Epstein, 1998, p. 58).

In order to explore the concept of masculinity in the gay community, it can also be seen from several examples that appeared in the American gay television series. There was a dialog shown on American gay-themed television series. For example, the main gay character, Brian, on *Queer as Folk* (2000) in episode 15 of season 1, came out to his father. His father cursed him, as shown in the following dialog.

Brian : "I'm gay."
His father : "Well, you picked an h*ll of a f**king time to tell me

you're a *fairy*. As if I don't have enough to deal with. Geez... You're the one that should be dying, instead of me."

Another episode of *Queer as Folk* (episode 9 of season 4) showed that one of the main gay characters, Emmett and his gay friend were handling the catering at the house of a popular football player, Drew Boyd. The host's friends made fun of Emmett and his friend.

Drew Boyd's friend : "Hey, Drew.
Where'd you get those caterers?"
Drew Boyd : "Look like a couple
of flamers to me."

The use of the words "fairy" and "flamer" sounds offensive, and those words are to symbolize effeminacy and weakness. Such words are used to insult gay men who are considered to have no masculine behavior.

Additionally, ridiculing gay men by associating them with women is frequently seen in society. For instance, many heterosexual persons make fun of gay men by treating them like women, for example, changing their names to female names. This condition also appeared in a dialog in the series *Will & Grace* (episode 22 of season 5).

Karen : "... because I've got the best lawyer in town in my corner, Miss Wilma Truman."
Will : "Karen, I can't represent you. Stan's my biggest client."

One of the main female characters changed the name of her gay friend "Will" to "Wilma" and called him "Miss". Even though the audience knows that it is a joke, it still has a lot to do with the mainstream perspective on gay men. This idea is reinforced by the basic assumption in society that men who have no sexual attraction to women are not real men.

Kroeper, Sanchez & Himmelstein (2014, p. 3) also explain that men consider themselves masculine when other people view them heterosexual men. This kind of thought in conventional culture is considered “masculine”. A man must meet the criteria of being a heterosexual man. This perception may give rise to an assumption that homosexuality is the opposite of masculinity.

Gay men are often synonymous with the nature of women and things related to beauty and aesthetic activities such as styling hair, as well as designing clothes and make-up. This stigma was also depicted in *Some of My Best Friends* (2001), Episode “A Brief Encounter”.

Frankie: “I know you people are good at this kind of stuff.”

Warren: “and Stop... what do you mean “you people”?”

Frankie: “Cause you know... gay...”

Warren: “Do you know that you do this a lot and it drives me crazy? You assume that because I’m gay, that I’m good at doing laundry, you know... or styling hair or arranging flowers. It’s very offensive, Frankie. I’m not stereotyped. I’m a person.”

It is still a stereotype that gay men have to face and fight in society. There are still many people who associate homosexuality with the expression of effeminate nature (Sandfort, 2005, p. 607). However, all of these views cannot necessarily conceptualize “masculinity” for both among gay men and among heterosexual men. The concept of masculinity is not that simple. It may involve many aspects to describe.

A man’s masculinity can be viewed from various angles. Each person could define “manly” or “masculine” based on their version of the criteria. There is no fixed or

correct form of the definition of masculinity. Studies on male masculine traits have revealed a lot of information about the concept of masculinity. In other words, the concept of “masculinity” is not only about physical toughness and heterosexuality. A man’s mental readiness may also be considered to define masculinity. Masculinity can be perceived through one’s traits, attitude, responsibility and confidence. Additionally, the concept has been expanded by Carroll (2003, p. 4), stating that the definition of masculinity in the 21st century is more likely to be associated with a man’s success in winning something or showing achievement. Many people connect a man’s masculinity to the ability to live independently and succeed in meeting the needs of his life.

For this reason, it is true to say that the concept of masculinity may vary in types, degrees, practices, etc. (Connell & Messerschmidt., 2005, p. 836; Pompper, 2010, p. 688; Poole, 2013, p. 281). This point adds that the criteria constructed by society regarding masculinity have undergone a change. Although there are still many who argue that a man’s masculinity is closely related to physical strength and heterosexuality, people must also see the fact that masculinity has a broad definition. As science, technology, and social media grow rapidly, people have started perceiving masculinity as a male characteristic that is not merely seen in terms of physical and sexual orientation. There are other significant values to be included in forming the concept of masculinity.

The Portrait of Physical Strength through Sports

Strength has always been a keyword that is always used to describe a man's masculinity. One of the most debated issues about masculinity among gay men is the ability to engage in physical activities such as exercise (sports). The stereotype that associates gay men with feminine activities seems to be a serious concern for gay people to try to eradicate this view. The series portrayed gay characters who enjoyed doing sports activities. For instance, in *Will & Grace* (1998), in the episode "Advice and Resent" Will Truman, the main character, shows his confidence in sports in the following dialog.

Mr. Doucette: "I want to play racquetball with you at 6:00."

Will : "Well, I should warn you, Ben. I'm a pretty serious racquetball player. I never lose. Until today."

Mr. Doucette: "Good man."

Gay men being described with good sport skill that requires physical strength actually reflects that there is a phenomenon in gay culture to expose their masculine behavior as normally shown in a man. They are in fact showing society that gay men are not different from heterosexual men in general.

There is another example, one of the scenes on *Queer as Folk* (2000) portrayed the gay character, Ben, showing good skill in playing basketball.

Ben : "Well, I love basketball in case you haven't noticed, I'm queer, too."

Michael : "Oh, I've noticed."

It is reflected that the gay community has been attempting to remove the "effeminacy" stereotype, which has always been attached

to them, by showing that they can also perform well in activities that require strength and strategies. Many gay men think that activities like sports will exhibit their masculine behavior (Sánchez & Vilain, 2012, p. 114). Regarding this, Devall (1979, pp. 183–184) has also stated the same thing in a research conducted in the 1970s that many gay men had done sports activities to keep them healthy and display a masculine image. Both opinions show that gay men want to prove that the stigma that has been formed by society about gay men who can only carry out aesthetic tasks is a wrong view.

The scene showing gay men with their sports routines portrayed in the American gay TV series seemed to present the concept of masculinity in the gay community to show a phenomenon that people need to see and understand. It is also seen in a number of American gay-themed movies, which have shown that gay men are also identical with masculine looks and traits such as cowboys, athletes, etc. (Rudy, 2016, p. 64). The masculine gay image that appeared in the TV series seems to form a view that the stigma of "effeminacy" attached to gay men needs to be removed. In the series, gay characters often did various sports such as basketball, fitness, push-ups, and bowling. However, some sports, such as boxing, karate and martial arts, did not appear in the series. It can be understood that the image of gay masculine characters in the TV series can reflect that gay men are portrayed as people who can rely on their physical strength for sports, except for non-violent or fighting sports.

Because of the importance of a "masculine" image to them, there are gay men who have to show their inconvenience

toward their gay friends who act in a feminine way. For example, Will showed that he was not comfortable with Jack showing his effeminacy at the gym in *Will & Grace*, episode “Will Works out” of season 1.

Grace : “And Jack was just being Jack. You’re over-reacting. Who cares if Jack is at the gym?”

Will : “I don’t know. Sometimes, he’s just such a... fag.”

It frequently happens when gay men do not want their heterosexual friends to label them as the effeminate ones. They are worried that people will keep holding the stereotype that all gay men are feminine and will always compare them to heterosexual men (Sánchez & Vilain, 2012, p. 111; Sandfort, 2005, p. 608). Some gays refuse to exhibit effeminacy, which means that exposing masculine behavior is essential to fight against the stereotype of effeminacy among them.

Severely afraid of being known as “effeminate”, many gay men do not show any feminine attitudes at all. For instance, in the TV series *Some of My Best Friends* (2001), in the episode “Blah Blah Blah”, Frankie suspected that Warren was pretending to be gay even though Warren is actually portrayed as a gay character.

Frankie : “Keep your hands off from my girlfriend.”

Warren : “Frankie, how can you be jealous, I think you’re forgetting something, I’m a gay.”

Frankie : “Oh yeah, prove it!”

Frankie : “... You’re not pretending right? I mean you really are gay.”

Warren : “Why would I pretend?”

Frankie : “I just don’t get it. You don’t talk gay, walk gay, act gay.”

Warren : “What does that mean anyway, act gay?”

It reveals that gay characters in television series no longer adopt effeminate behaviors. The manliness among gay men has become more visible and is shown frequently in TV series in the 2000s. The stereotype of effeminacy has made many gay men realize the importance of showing society that sexual orientation is not necessarily associated with someone’s behavior. In other words, being gay does not mean losing masculine qualities.

Masculinity is practically perceived by how a man performs social actions (Connell & Messerschmidt., 2005, p. 836). So, this point adds that masculinity is also related to how a man interacts with other people in society. Thus, it is not surprising that the image of gay men portrayed in American gay TV series shows masculine gay men who are played by actors with athletic bodies and masculine faces. It can also be an indication that gay men want to fight against the stereotypes attached to them so that they can receive equal treatment from society and bring about changes in people’s perspectives (Rudy, 2015, p. 64). In other words, they wish to be perceived as masculine as heterosexual men in terms of physical strength and appearance.

The Portrait of Physical Appearance

Physical appearance has been a significant element in showing one’s self. People see that physical appearance will reflect and show who someone is and what he looks like. Physical appearance is almost always related to the physical look of a person. For instance, a male individual’s physical appearance, which refers to body and facial look, plays a role in portraying one’s masculinity. There may be certain

criteria to fulfill to be known as “masculine”. Many people would set a standard of a man’s physical appearance to tell whether he is attractive in a masculine way. Since the physical appearance of a man identified as masculine has many aspects, society always constructs a mainstream perception of a man’s physical appearance to indicate masculinity.

People can make their criteria regarding the type of body and face look that they consider being masculine. Studies on the physical and appearance of a person are also widely carried out. For example, Mehrabian and Blum (1997, p. 20) found that a person’s body shape plays an essential role in being attractive, whether male or female. The ideal masculine appearance in mainstream culture is a tall, broad-shouldered and muscular body type (Dittmar et al., 2000, pp. 890–891). The same opinion also comes from Fouts and Vaughan (2002, p. 441), who argued that muscular men are considered to be the hallmark of masculinity. Thus, masculine physical appearance in a man is generally associated with a proportional height and weight and a muscular body. In other words, men with this kind of body shape are always seen as men who meet masculine criteria. However, culture from other countries may have a different perception. In Asian culture, for example, Pompper (2010, pp. 688–689) explained that based on the research, many young men in Asian cultures do not think that muscular body is identical with masculinity.

There is a perception in society that a man’s facial look is attractive if he has a large, pointed nose and a prominent chin (Sergl et al., 1998, p. 125). There are also research revealing that a facial look of a man

is considered more attractive if he has prominent cheekbones, higher pupils and a bigger smile (Mehrabian & Blum, 1997, p. 21). So, gay characters in the television series are also portrayed with typical masculine body type as well as the face look. Almost all the gay characters in the American TV series observed in this study had ideal body shape and muscular body. They were portrayed with an athletic body shape. With this kind of body type, the effeminate stereotype seems incompatible with gay men’s physical appearance. This reflects the efforts of gay end to end the stereotype.

For instance, in the episode “He Shoots, They Snore” (season 4 of *Will & Grace*), Will responded to the question from several heterosexual men who were curious about being a gay man.

Will : “We’re all the same. We’re just men. I’m a regular guy like you.”
Will’s statement can reveal that many people still do not understand what a gay man is. His response shows no difference in physical appearance, ability, and behavior between a gay man and a heterosexual man.

Another example was found in the episode “The Honeymoon’s Over” of *Will & Grace*, The guest star, Elton John, in his dialogue, agreed that Will, a gay character has the masculine qualities:

Elton : “Listen Will. You’re a smart boy. You’ve got a good face, flat stomach...”
To be known as a man with intelligence, ideal body, and good look is used to indicate a more complete concept of masculinity. There is also an interesting joke in *Will & Grace* in the episode *Starkin’ Care of Business*”.

Will : “This is gym. This is a gay church.”

The joke above can somehow reflect the enthusiasm of gay men to build a body to look more muscular and athletic. Having a muscular and sturdy body type seems to be the main goal of many gay men. For instance, Nate, a main heterosexual character, in the episode of “Dancing for Me” of the series *Six Feet Under*, thought that his dead friend was gay.

Nate : “Look at you. You used to be so obsessed with your f**king six-pack. I thought you were secretly gay.”

The dialogs above can reveal that fitness activity to build a fit and muscular body is used to describe how important masculine physical appearance is for gay men.

There is also a scene in *Will & Grace* in “Flip Flop” episode where Jack admitted that he loved to keep his body fit and attractive.

Jack : “That’s why I take care of myself, I eat right, I exercise, I take multivitamin ...”

Stuart : “You don’t have to worry about that anymore. You got the guy. Give up the gym.”

Jack : “Yeah, but I’ve been doing cardio since I was nine.”

It proves that a good and healthy physical appearance is significant for gay men as well. This image may use to refute the notion that gay men do not care about their physical health.

Since masculine physical appearance is essential for gay men, gay TV series depicted that gay character were often perceived as heterosexual men by people who do not know their sexual orientation. It can be found in the episode “Object of My Rejection” in *Will & Grace*.

The man : “Hey... hey... how long have you two been married?”

Cause maybe it’s been long enough.”

Grace : “We’re not married.”

Will : “I’m gay.”

And in the series in the episode “The Dare” of the fourth season of *Six Feet Under* (2001). Keith’s new colleague Javier does not know that he is gay.

Javier : “Your old lady pissed off? You could’ve told her that you was at some fag bar. And there was no chance you were taking home some p***y tonight.”

Keith : “Yeah. Javier, I’m gay. I have a boyfriend. I sleep with men, okay? I have a lot of sex and it’s really really gay.”

The two dialogues above reveal that a homosexual man with a physical appearance similar to a heterosexual man can easily be mistakenly seen as a straight man. It may tell that masculinity can be shown through how a man shows their physical appearance and behavior.

A gay man talks and behaves like a heterosexual man. As a result, people may find it difficult to distinguish between homosexual and heterosexual men. The above scenes that appeared in gay TV series can be seen as a significant change in portraying the gay character in TV series. Sexual orientation is not something that is visible from physical appearance. So, it will be a wrong perception if people attribute the definition of masculinity only to heterosexual men. Such scenes are frequently found in gay series because many people still think that gay men do not meet masculine qualities.

Many studies have tried to describe the male body type and facial appearance that are considered attractive. It is perhaps only for mapping a set of characteristics of a man’s physical appearance so that it would be used

as a kind of standardization in categorizing male handsomeness and masculinity. However, it is not always reliable because body shape, appearance, and face look can be subjective.

The Portrait of Profession and Success

In most cultures, a man must demonstrate his ability to fulfill his needs well and/or achieve success. One of the ways is through working or having a profession that can be a source of income for him. Having a good job can be considered one of the masculine criteria that a man should meet. Gay men also use the profession as a tool to show that they will not lose to compete with heterosexual men in terms of profession and success. After the gay movement and struggle for their equal rights, more and more gay men in the US have been found in professions ranging from aesthetics to the military.

American gay TV series analyzed in this study also often depicted gay characters with their professions and achievements to improve their lives. In entertainment media, such as current television series, they are depicted as characters who live in urban areas with all their luxuries (Poole, 2013, p. 286). The profession and a good life portrayed in the TV series also seem to be linked to an attempt to reflect the ability to be established in work, independent and successful. It is in line with the concept of masculinity discussed above, which links masculinity to the ability to live a successful life.

From the television series observed in the study, there are several professions such as policeman, lawyer, author, lecturer, accountant, businessman, and artist used to

depict the gay characters. *Queer as Folk* pictures some main gay characters with successful work and life. For instance, the main gay character, Michael, has a doctor ex-boyfriend and a boyfriend who works at university as a professor and a writer.

Ben : “It reflects the subject of the course I’m teaching: A survey of gay aesthetics in post-modern American art and literature.”

A gay character pictured as a professor can indicate a better image of gay characters on television series because being a lecturer in a university shows a good profession.

There are some examples shown in the series *Will & Grace*. In the episode of “Polk Defeats Truman”, Will showed that he was able to do his job professionally and successfully.

Will : “I just closed the deal for Harlin to buy a cable company, which means, as his attorney, that I am now 10% rolling in it.”

In another scene of the episode “Courting Disaster, Will proudly introduces himself as Karen’s attorney at the court, as shown in the dialog below.

Will : “For the record, my name is Will Truman. I’m the attorney for the defense.”

Being portrayed as a talented and famous attorney, the gay character, Will, may symbolize a man who is successful in his profession and respected. These qualities are necessary to be considered masculine values that a man should have. In fact, many gay men in urban areas have demonstrated their prowess in their professions. According to Reddy (1998, p. 65) masculinity in the gay community has been more open and can be seen in the media, offices, education, etc. It indicates that gay men have also occupied professional fields previously considered

appropriate for them because they were perceived as less masculine.

The profession of gay men cannot always be associated with jobs in beauty, fashion, or work that is identical to women's tasks. Gay men struggle against such a stereotype. This notion needs to be clarified so that people will not misunderstand and generalize all gay men with that view. The analysis result of the TV series observed in this study showed that several main gay characters were portrayed as having professions reflected masculinity. In the TV series *Six Feet Under*, the main gay character Keith was depicted as a police officer and David as a funeral homeowner. In *Will & Grace*, the main character Will worked as a professional lawyer and his boyfriend, Vince, was a cop. Additionally, the main characters in *Queer as Folk* series were also depicted as men who worked like heterosexual men in general, for instance, Brian as a CEO and a nightclub owner, Ben as a lecturer, Ted as an accountant, and Michael as a comic writer. The gay character, Austin, in *The DL Chronicles* was portrayed as a healthy-food store manager.

The types of work mentioned above are professions commonly found in society and are always associated with men's jobs. It reflects that the image of the gay men shown in the series has been changed. They have been portrayed as the same as heterosexual men who can also have professions which associate with masculinity. Many people in society may still hold onto the stereotype that the police or army profession is impossible for gay men to do. As a matter of fact, gays can be found in many professions. American TV series have portrayed gays as protagonists who play essential roles and are

heroic (Becker, 2006, pp. 136–137; Jones & Bego, 2009, p. 13; Streitmatter, 2009, p. 146). It signifies that there has been a significant change in the world of TV. Gay characters in the TV series have been depicted as figures who can attract viewers' attention.

The portraits of gays as ordinary men who are able to carry out sports activities, who have athletic and muscular body type as well as attractive appearance, and have professions in a field associated with masculinity in the American gay TV series can prove that these images can represent fighting against the stereotypes that have long been constructed by societies strongly influenced by heteronormative domination. Through the portraits that reflect the masculine side of gay men in the TV series, the perception that gay men are not masculine is something that needs to be clarified because the concept of masculine is broad, and it can be applied to every man without discriminating one's sexual orientation, skin color, culture, and background.

CONCLUSION

There are several essential points to be concluded from the explanations of analysis results of this study. First, gay men in everyday life often face stereotype that they are not masculine men because of their homosexuality. Second, the concept of masculinity is basically broad. This can be seen from a number of researches which have suggested that masculinity cannot only be associated with physical characteristics or certain traits constructed by society.

Third, masculinity in American gay television series can be represented through the image of physical strength of gay men in

terms of sports. The gay characters in the series showed the ability to do sports and these depictions seems to be able to reject the stereotypes about gay men being effeminacy. Forth, physical appearance in the form of an ideal male body such as a tall and muscular body and attractive face look frequently appeared in the series to represent masculine qualities of a gay man as well as to build an image of masculinity in the gay community. Finally, the gay TV series also portrayed that gay men were not always identical with feminine professions. The main gay characters in the series were depicted as successful individuals with common professions associated with masculinity such as police, lawyer, CEO, manager, lecturer, etc.

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