

Gay or European?

**An insight into societal perceptions of masculinity and the
resulting behaviour**

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Introduction

Societal gender roles and expectations have existed throughout history and in recent years have been ingrained into the minds of young men. However what judgement arises from the rejection of these ideals in favour of effeminate qualities that many are experiencing?

The focus of my personal interest project (PIP) is the social perceptions of masculinity and its impact on conformity. I am looking into the way people who present differently are judged and ostracised alongside the prejudices and assumptions individuals make as a result. I hypothesise that The increase of effeminate men is changing societal ideals however societal judgement and stigmatisation prevails, causing harm.

I selected this topic as I am a man who understands my sexuality and gender to feel comfortable presenting effeminately. I have watched people interact differently when I present like this, often with more threatening and disparaging behaviour alongside assumptions of my sexuality or demeaning resulting in first-hand experience of the judgement faced. My topic of inquiry into societal perceptions of masculinity and the impact on social conformity seeks to provide a greater understanding of Australian society's inclusiveness. It develops the information surrounding perceptions of strength and leadership within our society and how as a queer man I and others may be affected by stereotypes.

I seek to uncover the way that gender assumptions interact with stigmatisation and how biased Australia truly is. I intend to further my understanding of culture by researching how views have changed over time. I am comparing Generations Z and X to determine their differentiating nature when confronted with atypical gender expression. This in turn develops other research conducted to understand how Australia progresses across time to accept those previously "othered" in society. The Society and Culture concepts that connect to my PIP are stereotypes surrounding the assumptions of people who express gender differently. Social cohesion is how people present as male or female to remain as part of the "in group". Tradition is included as it is linked specifically to the assumptions and history of gender and conformity and provides reasoning for judgment across time. The concept of deviance surrounds this topic as it is linked to divulging from the standard presentation reflections on the emerging values, beliefs and the conflict between cultures. The conflict concept is an

example of how change calls beliefs into question leading to anger and pushback to new ideas.

I have incorporated primary and secondary research into my PIP including a Questionnaire, a personal reflection and an interview. I conducted a questionnaire to compare a large amount of qualitative data. I chose a personal reflection as it allows me to view my perspective and bias preventing the skewing of my work and examining my resulting understanding. I chose the interview to understand other perspectives in depth and clarify any faults in my knowledge. My secondary research revolves around scholarly papers as they display the change in ideas over time and strong data to aid my writing with news articles providing perspectives on events and ideas.

Log

My PIP idea emerged from harmful experiences surrounding my treatment by traditionally masculine men. I have had bottles thrown at me when out at night for painted nails and I wanted to see how my experience had emerged in society over time. Due to the emergence of far more effeminate fashion styles and the way that young men are willing to feminise themselves this topic is also socially and culturally relevant. This is an experience that is far more common than expected however due to embarrassment or stigmatisation it is not commonly discussed in social spaces nor popularised in the traditional media.

I initially wanted to exclude the queer community from my project to understand the impact on straight men however I soon realised that it was impossible to exclude my community, which is at the centre of the discussion. Being queer and presenting effeminately led me to my hypothesis that the increase of effeminate men is changing societal ideals however societal judgement remains. I struggled to find people for the primary research component willing to speak on their experiences and communicate personal ideas; however, I simply continued looking for people willing to inform me of their experiences and perspectives. I structured my project by introducing the community and building upon the previous themes outlined.

Through secondary research, I found that my questionnaire provided a plethora of opinions and voices from across generations to interrogate aiding in my cross-cultural analysis. The interview however provided me with an in-depth understanding of the effect on the individual and the reasoning behind facing the world to present in an effeminate way. The secondary research I conducted aided in my exposure to queer movements and acceptance of the normalisation of feminine qualities in men alongside stereotypes.

This is not to say there were no obstacles or barriers I encountered. My initial plan to interview the professional athlete Harry Garside concerning his feminine presentation in a highly masculine space of the boxing world was unsuccessful as I didn't receive a response. Due to this, I avoided the sporting side of the topic mostly as there was little evidence for me to implement in my writing. This skewed the research I conducted as my interviewee was someone who had grown up and lived in quite a judgmental part of the world.

Over all my pip was highly valuable to me, I grew to understand who I was and accept my feminine side. I believe that the pip was one of the most valuable parts of my high school experience as it provided me with a plethora of other ideals and ideas to interact with and aided my acceptance of others and my perceptions, it helped me to accept others and to define my sexuality across the course of my research and expression of findings. I improved my ability to communicate and relate to others alongside providing valid and informed conversational points to the struggles of others in society stemming from an insular culture.

Chapter One

Gay To Play

Masculinity, Femininity and Sexuality; Assumptions and Acceptance

Masculinity is viewed as the assertive, primary presentation for leaders and heads of households. This presumption leads to discrimination alongside judgement directed at feminine-presenting people and in particular differences in sexuality are conveyed to others through the outward presentation of appearance and vocal range deviating from the norm. However many people who do not conform to the assumed identity may struggle with assumptions surrounding them. Those who look or present in either masculine or feminine ways may experience the impact of societal expectations and gender norms from those who interact with them such as more effeminate people being pushed into traditionally female-dominated roles such as domestic work.

Within a masculine-centric society, the resulting default leadership qualities resemble masculine ideals¹. Those who present less traditionally are often associated with weakness in the minds of many men and women alike². Assumptions are made about sexuality from men who present as less masculine often being seen as gay or undervalued by those who happen to hold a traditional worldview³. Those who present in a feminine way often receive secondary treatment and attention to those appealing to stereotypical archetypes⁴. Roles in society that surround these gender ideals lead to judgement and people lacking the ability to express themselves in the way they feel suits them best. This struggle to express in a way true to oneself means that people's best qualities remain hidden and overlooked preventing active cooperation for the benefit of all⁵.

Across time assumptions have been made in Western society surrounding gendered presentation. For example, 100% of people within the Generation X age bracket described a homosexual male as someone with predominantly effeminate traits⁶. In contrast, the majority

¹K Kleinjans, 'The man of the house—How the use of household head characteristics may lead to omitted variable bias', 2013,

²Primary research, Questionnaire

³Primary research, Questionnaire

⁴J Falomir, 'The feminization of men leads to a rise in homophobia', in *EurekaAlert!*, 2019

⁵M Appel & N Kronberger, 'Stereotypes and the Achievement Gap: Stereotype Threat Prior to Test Taking', in *Educational Psychology Review*, vol. 24, 2012, 609–635,

⁶Primary research, Questionnaire

of Generation Z respondents labelled Homosexual men as simply men attracted to other men, summarised by one respondent “A man who likes men”. Generation Z describes a gay man not as any more effeminate than straight males, in fact, the only mention of homosexual men being effeminate was in regards to the change from the stereotypes stating that more masculine presenting figures are being accepted into the community⁷. Societal perspectives are changing however underpinning this change is the spread of information by the use of social media sites, which in turn promote information surrounding identity and acceptance one in five people part of Generation Z openly identify as queer.⁸

The presentation of individuals is dictated by tradition and stereotypes. Traditionally there has been a stigma surrounding the undermining of societal norms but within the modern context, this has been upturned. With the passage of time and the rise in communication technologies, people can gain political understanding towards the political left increasing acceptance of those around them and introducing them to new ideas of what masculinity is⁹. Stereotypes continue to exist surrounding feminine men. Conflict within society due to the presumptions of others remains however with the passage of time prejudice has begun to decrease, a primary example of this is the same-sex marriage referendum from 2016 with 61% of people being in favour showing a growth in tolerance and acceptance¹⁰. Traditionally feminine presentation has been connected with homosexuality, the same-sex referendum displays that acceptance is growing for those who present effeminately is increasing however this is not to say that there is no problematic typecasting of men with feminine qualities being perceived as gay.

Change over time surrounding assumptions of sexuality and the way that as a society the Western world is becoming more accepting is displayed in the questionnaire. The passage of time is undermining the existing stereotypes but discrimination remains primarily amongst Generation X rather than Generation Z. A key example of this is the personal reflection displaying discriminatory and aggressive behaviour by those making assumptions of sexuality based on presentation being less masculine together with threats and abuse that were thrown by those who noticed me.¹¹ Alongside this is the number of Americans who believe that gay and lesbian relationships are morally wrong sitting at 25% as of 2022, it is indicative of changing social values as it has dropped by 28% since 2001 but it still exists.¹²

⁷Primary research, Questionnaire

⁸J Jones, ‘LGBTQ+ Identification in U.S. Now at 7.6%’, in *Gallup.com*, 2024,

⁹PJ Chen, ‘Social media’, in *JSTOR*, ANU Press, 2013, pp. 69–112,

¹⁰Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘Main Features - Results’, in *Abs.gov.au*, c=AU; o=Commonwealth of Australia; ou=Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017,

¹¹Primary Research, personal reflection

¹²S Research Party, ‘Topic: Homosexuality in the United States’, in *Statista*, 2024,

The secondary research included in this chapter exists to display the wider cultural perspectives and existing stereotypes surrounding presentation and identity.

Alongside the statistical data, my experience has indicated that homophobia is still prevalent and places those subverting gender norms in danger. As documented in my reflection items of feminine accessories such as painted nails can cause negative interaction involving the use of slurs and threats alongside attempts of physical violence and intimidation¹³. People hold assumptions that they may react negatively due to these slurs¹⁴. Of course, it is important to state that this is a minority as displayed by the statistics surrounding homophobic interactions being one out of five people daily however, that number encapsulates ongoing purposeless discrimination and prejudice, socially excluding people who present in this way¹⁵.

Aiding both the acceptance effort of effeminate men is the rise of the “metrosexual” a man who rises to stereotypes surrounding gay men and includes himself in the community through the implementation of feminine qualities surrounding dress and communication despite being straight¹⁶. This is evidence of greater societal acceptance of men with feminine characteristics and lesser judgement owing to the large communities accepting the assumptions made surrounding them. Those part of the metrosexual community also highlight the progression in respectful interaction towards the LGBTQ+ community. In the words of Peter Paige his experiences over time and reaction to mistakes identifying feminine presenting heterosexual men “Before you used to get punched,” he said. “Now it’s all, ‘Gee thanks, I’m straight but I’m really flattered’”.¹⁷ The traditional “man’s man” archetype is fading away and being replaced by a realistic healthy perception of masculinity available to all and integrated into wider society. This in turn is leading to far more men who previously would have been excluded from social settings being encouraged to present true to themselves and to subvert the gender expectations and constraints placed upon them.

To summarise, masculinity traditionally has a stigma surrounding the subversion of its ideals. The primary target of this reactionary behaviour upholding the traditional standards is those that feel differently or enjoy presenting alternatively. This is often due to widespread homophobia or simple fear of what is different. However, there has been a rise in alternate

¹³Primary research, Personal Reflection

¹⁴M Popa-Wyatt & JL Wyatt, ‘Slurs, roles and power’, in *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 175, 2017, 2879–2906.

¹⁵E Goldstein, ‘Coming Out & LGBTQ+ Statistics’, in *Bespoke Surgical*, 2018,

¹⁶Cambridge Dictionary, ‘metrosexual’, in *@CambridgeWords*, 2023,

¹⁷A Williams, “‘Metrosexuals’ Were Just Straight Men Who Loved Self-Care. Right?’, in *The New York Times*, 15 June 2018, section Style

presentation and acceptance in recent times exemplified by the growing acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community and the rise in people identifying and acting as metrosexuals. This acceptance is largely due to the development of technologies to spread minorities' experiences and information such as social media. A more accepting environment is growing amongst the wider population and genuine change is occurring across the Western world.

Chapter Two

Limp Wristed Inadequacy

Assumptions of Effeminate Male Inadequacy and The Resulting Effects

Gender is a social concept, enforced and upheld by the individual and their community's interaction with presentation and stereotypes. Men who primarily present in a traditionally effeminate manner may struggle with judgement for not appealing to people's traditional worldviews, be passed over for job opportunities or pay rises in favour of the seemingly more confident masculine counterpart, have their views diminished in favour of the masculine figure or simply struggle to express themselves in a manner that fits them best due to judgement. This type of discrimination faced by effeminate men leads to a lack of social cohesion, prejudice and discrimination within the culture and environment of the Western world concerning gender and identity.

In the words of Judith Butler "Masculine and feminine roles are not biologically fixed but socially constructed."¹⁸ People are complex and diverse, and for that reason, it is important to support them in their self-expression as neglect of such carries serious mental impacts. People may identify with a gender but not entirely dress and present in this way which can have a range of implications on their interactions, many of which may be negative. It is important to distinguish between the differences between gender, identity and sexuality, that one does not dictate the other. Identity is made of both and sexuality revolves around gender but your presentation or attraction does not enforce your traits, they are linked together not chained together.

Social cohesion is disrupted when people are unable to prevent their judgement from affecting their treatment towards those who present differently. Primarily this is exemplified by how women are passed over for business opportunities in favour of traditionally masculine identifying figures exemplified by the statistic that only 3% of heads of companies are women¹⁹, the primary research undertaken presents the internal bias held by 31.82% of people placing men as the leading figure within social dynamics²⁰. This inherent prejudice against women from positions of power leads to a breaking of social cohesion with an us-them dynamic forming. This leads to weaker cooperation in society and enhanced

¹⁸D Broadway, 'It's Time Straight Men Embrace Their Femininity Without Judgment', in *AskMen*, 2021

¹⁹E Andersen, 'The Results Are In: Women Are Better Leaders', in *Forbes*, 2012,

²⁰Primary research, questionnaire

competition between genders. As a result, this harms the ability to discuss and implement opposing views and the perspectives of those within society. Despite the existing perceptions and discrimination change is occurring with a fair higher rate of acceptance of both women and effeminate men by Gen Z²¹. The primary research supports this with a greater number of Generation Z respondents believing that the leading traits of a household are far more gender neutral to feminine than masculine. The greatest contrast between the two generations is the number of queer people presenting true to themselves and being accepted²². Within Generation Z 51% believe that there are more than two genders largely due to the increase of people in their generation who present alternatively to traditional gendered ways of dress.²³ This inherent belittlement and perceived inferiority of women is damaging to men as well as effeminate presentation is then considered to be a weakness. The power of such a large proportion accepting others with a substantial growth every five years means that social cohesion is only growing, decreasing the amount of discrimination in society due to the lack of people willing to openly express their prejudices and act on them.

“Prejudice is a burden that confuses the past, threatens the future, and renders the present inaccessible.” Maya Angelou's words could not be truer today than when they were first said. It is undeniable that discrimination still exists in society, however, it is largely decreasing²⁴. This is supported by the primary research conducted, with the interviewee (a young non-binary person growing up and living within Sydney having experienced first-hand prejudice and discrimination) responding to his feelings on his safety “over all yes but there is always some stereotypes or discrimination”²⁵ This highlights the way that progression in society is occurring but lingering presumptions and treatment continue. The primary stereotypes existing revolve around the perceived weakness of effeminate men, an assumption of homosexuality and an idea that they are less valuable than their traditionally masculine counterparts. The questionnaire displays that 32% of people view masculinity as inherently stronger than the effeminate counterpart within Generation Z, with one response stating “I believe this as a large proportion of people who are the strongest in my life are masculine-presenting”. This however is not to say that the majority of people believe that effeminate figures are inherently weak, with only 35.6% of Generation X believing this to be true. There is a clear connection between both Generations and not wanting to group all people into one category however the way that effeminate men are stereotyped and treated displays an unconscious bias. Despite the greater acceptance across Generation Z towards people

²¹J Klein, 'How young people are shaking off gender binaries', in *www.bbc.com*, 2023,

²²JM Twenge, 'How Gen Z Changed Its Views On Gender', in *Time*, 2023

²³JM Twenge, 'How Gen Z Changed Its Views On Gender', in *Time*, 2023,

²⁴Taywaditep, KJ, 'Marginalization Among the Marginalized'. in *Journal of Homosexuality*

²⁵Primary research, interview

identifying alternatively almost half of all of this generation's respondents stated they saw a masculine figure as more powerful²⁶. Discrimination is on the decline with far greater acceptance in younger audiences however prejudice and assumptions continue to prevail, seemingly the next hill to climb after the battle against open discrimination is over²⁷.

Culturally transitional masculinity has been enforced upon men, with social outcasting and preferential treatment of more masculine people. This has led to a culture across the Western world where men who are naturally more effeminate face greater challenges²⁸. The greater problem surrounding this is the stagnation of social acceptance which causes fewer people to be willing to act in a way which subverts binaries and present as true to themselves. These dangerous environments are supported by personal reflection and interviews, the treatment of individuals who present in a somewhat feminine way leads to exclusion from social groups and environments with danger towards men like this. In the primary research, there is a personal reflection detailing how people may target people who do not conform to tradition²⁹, in addition, the interview details how "guys who dress in an effeminate way are judged but now that time has passed I'm used to it but I still feel uncomfortable sometimes", regarding the judgement and destructive culture and environment that surrounds effeminate men³⁰. The interviewee also stated that they "conform when I need to" to avoid dangerous environments.³¹ Judgement is undeniable towards those who subvert binaries but there is a growing acceptance for a softer approach to masculinity as it promotes greater communication in relationships.

In summary, discrimination surrounding men with feminine traits impacts social cohesion in the way they are excluded and judged but society is slowly changing. Prejudice and discrimination to effeminate men are continuous issues but Generation Z is far more accepting than Generation X and the amount of people who hold stereotypical views are diminishing. Gender, sexuality and identity are linked but do not dictate the other. Finally, harmful environments and cultural beliefs still exist surrounding effeminate men and it is incorrect to say this is not true despite the actions of some to conform to their environments.

²⁶Primary research questionnaire

²⁷Amnesty International, 'Discrimination'. in *Amnesty.org*, 2019,

²⁸D Mayer, 'How Men Get Penalized for Straying from Masculine Norms', in *Harvard Business Review*, 2018,

²⁹Primary research, personal reflection

³⁰Primary research, interview

³¹Primary research, Interview

Chapter Three

Soldiers, Poets and Kings

Changing masculinity across time

What is masculinity? Is it the gun-toting soldier storming the enemy, a six-foot boxer slugging in the trenches of the fight or simply a man willing to paint his nails and dress in an effeminate way? Masculinity is a social construct influenced by ideals surrounding evolution, race, media consumption, values, beliefs and religious influences³². Across time what represents masculinity changes, the chosen example being the 1980s, the time period that Generation X matured in. The androgynous presentation inherently feminine as a result of the masculine norm, began to decline from the 90s onward until today with the slow return of effeminate men³³. However, today's feminisation of men results in a new approach to masculinity, with not just the fashion style changing but rather the entire perspective of emotional acceptance³⁴. Within this chapter, those who present in an androgynous manner but are perceived as primarily masculine will fall under the effeminate banner due to masculinity being the norm.

Over time gender binaries have changed. Generation X in particular grew up in a time when binaries were evolving to become less rigid. The feminist movement aided in the loosening of these gender roles and this in turn led to a decrease in the "masculine" crimes (violent/aggressive crimes that line up with toxic or traditional masculinity) committed by men³⁵. However, as the primary research reveals Generation X continues to associate effeminate presentation with weakness and sexuality³⁶. This association limits the expression of men in society out of fear of misunderstanding or targeted behaviour toward others. Generation X enforces stereotypes, however, when young effeminate presenting figures were idolised in popular culture, despite this as time has progressed the views have emerged to be stagnant and lacking. Although Generation X have had a multitude of popular figures subvert traditional presentation the general population themselves have had little

³²G Hagedorn, *Scholarly and Creative Work from DePauw University The Socialization Process of Masculinity, and Its Manifestation at DePauw University: How Race, Media, and Gender Contribute to the Malleability of Masculinity*, 2019,

³³S Menkes & IH Tribune, 'Back to the 1980s : Androgyny Rules':, in *The New York Times*, 17 October 2000, section Style,

³⁴Primary research, questionnaire

³⁵K Wilkinson, 'An Investigation of the Contribution of Masculinity to Delinquent Behavior', in *Sociological Focus*, vol. 18, 1985, 249–263,

³⁶Primary research, questionnaire - Primary research, Interview - primary research, personal reflection

widespread acceptance, rather surface-level accepting statements with little genuine approval.

A key aid of the effeminate acceptance into society was the popular culture icons whose talent supported the integration of typically effeminate and queer displays of self. A central icon of this effect is the influence and impact of David Bowie. Playing into stereotypes surrounding queer men Bowie took a jab at authority figures and presented the outlook that it was acceptable to subvert gender expectations³⁷. Alongside Bowie, the band Queens crossdressing in their 1981 release "Under Pressure" further pushed feminine presentation into the mainstream discussion and style³⁸. These performers aided the willingness of the public to subvert gender expectations which is beneficial to society as social acceptance and cohesion strengthen cultural preservation, effective communication and social belonging meaning the individual can contribute to the culture of a space. The central performers of Generation X allowed key figures in Generation Z to express themselves, men such as Zach Bryan can act effeminately with it being normalised by Generation Z after seeing their parent's generation performers act in this way. Men like Zach Bryan fit into the traditional masculine archetype at first however his lyrics are emotionally charged and surround traditionally feminine topics such as heartbreak³⁹. In addition, Zach Bryan can express himself through the feminine means of poetry⁴⁰. Social acceptance across time matters because it allows for a greater spread of ideas in Western society, conflict decreases meaning that society becomes more productive and emotional struggles such as male aggression and isolation can decrease while social conformity grows⁴¹.

Leaving the 1980s to the 1990s feminine fashion was largely abandoned with the growth of the grunge scene⁴². The previous effeminate expression was shrouded in anti-queer sentiment and this resulted in a change in how self-expression was portrayed by men. Many previously involved in the fashion sense of the 80s found themselves leaving behind this style in favour of far more traditionally masculine presentations conforming to the exclusionary environment over time, attempting to avoid the stereotypical queer display. This

³⁷J Draper, 'How David Bowie's "I'm Gay" Interview Helped Redefine Sexuality', in *Dig!*

³⁸D Strauss, 'Freddie Mercury', in *Making Queer History*, 2023,

³⁹N Dibben, 'Representations of femininity in popular music', in *Popular Music*, vol. 18, 1999, 331–355.

⁴⁰Furman, R, & L Dill, 'Poetry therapy, men and masculinities'. in *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 39, 2012, 102–106

⁴¹Rumens, C, 'Poem of the Week: Aggression Diary by Annemarie Austin'. in *The Guardian*, 27 April 2015, section Books

⁴²CC Nugroho, 'Masculine and Mature Men's Fashion - Catur C. Nugroho - Medium', in *Medium*, Medium, 2023,

change away from effeminate fashion has only recently been deviated, with 2020's style appearing far more feminine than previous years⁴³. Within the personal reflection, the discriminatory nature in the present day toward femininity in men remains however acceptance is beginning to return with a divide within Gen Z with many becoming far more accepting than previous generations⁴⁴. The interview reveals far more masculine people willing to present and conduct themselves in a far more effeminate way willing to wear “crop tops” and “makeup” in public life. The advancement of fashion is often progressive however sheer recessions emerge in popular culture with the emergence of world-changing events such as the aids crisis in the 80s⁴⁵. This deviation from traditional masculinity actively harms social cohesion without mainstream figures aiding in the acceptance of the effeminate men these people are often excluded from participation in the social environment. As a result of this exclusion society fractures resulting in a lack of truth and honesty in public discussion⁴⁶.

The rejection of those individuals' expression of effeminate qualities is indicative of the underlying internalised homophobia and bigotry that exists within Generation X⁴⁷. Generation X has a large portion of respondents involved in the primary research questionnaire who label men who present effeminately as “gay” or weaker than their more traditionally masculine counterparts⁴⁸. A possible reason for this confounding exclusionary behaviour is ingrained disdain for such open expression resulting from a sense of fear propagated by confusion⁴⁹. Another proposed reason for this phenomenon is a nostalgia for traditional masculinity and the sense of social cohesion that was believed to be provided, men feel inadequate to the previous mythological archetypes of warfarin soldiers and seek to gain a sense of self through the implementation of such ideals⁵⁰.

In essence, masculinity changes across time to appear far more feminine, in a cycle of constant change of ideals people conform to their time's standards across time and emerge

⁴³T Grant, 'Menswear in 2020 is looking a lot more feminine', in *Fashion Journal*, 2019

⁴⁴Primary Research, personal reflection

⁴⁵Human Rights Campaign, 'HIV and the LGBTQ Community | Human Rights Campaign', in *Human Rights Campaign*, Human Rights Campaign, 2012,

⁴⁶Duffy, B, 'Is our society as divided as it seems?' in *www.kcl.ac.uk*, 2021

⁴⁷Bitterman, A, & DB Hess, 'Understanding Generation Gaps in LGBTQ+ Communities: Perspectives About Gay Neighbourhoods Among Heteronormative and Homonormative Generational Cohorts'. in *The Life and Afterlife of Gay Neighbourhoods*,307–338,

⁴⁸ Primary research questionnaire

⁴⁹J Bryner, LiveScience, 'Homophobes Might Be Hidden Homosexuals', in *Scientific American*, 2012

⁵⁰M MacKenzie & A Foster, 'Masculinity nostalgia: How war and occupation inspire a yearning for gender order', in *Security Dialogue*, vol. 48, 2017, 206–223,

as exclusionary. This exclusion leads to dishonesty within society and degradation of societal cohesion resulting in lower productivity. The feminist movement aided in the dislodging of traditionally masculine ideals while popular figures emerged embodying feminine ideals representing the generation. Fear still lingers within the population and bigotry remains across time however it does decrease with each generation. Effeminate men are still perceived as weaker than their traditionally masculine counterparts despite this Generation Z is aiding in the dissolution of these presumptions.

Conclusion

The increase of more effeminate men is changing societal ideals but a plethora of societal judgement and stigmatisation of those expressing feminine characteristics remains. My research on the perceptions of effeminate men reflected the way that a significant portion of judgement remains in mainstream society and public perception, providing benefits to those who present themselves in a traditionally masculine way.

My primary research supported my initial hypothesis that social ideals are progressing but stigmatisation remains. Hate crime continues to perforate the lives of the queer community. Fear continues to affect the way that individuals who are AMAB (assigned masculine at birth) are willing to present themselves. A moderate portion of Generation X believes that a head of household does not inherently need to be masculine, a perspective that only increases in the Generation Z portion of respondents. As a society, there is an assumption that traditional masculinity is the trait of a leader and often takes the central role in a social environment. In my primary research, it was revealed that societal ideals are shifting to be far more accepting of effeminate men, however, judgment remains.

My secondary research revealed to me the revoking of traditional social constructs surrounding gender ideals across time in alignment with my thesis, it was made apparent to me that traditional masculinity made a resurgence in the 1990s and until recent times heavy rejection of men with effeminate qualities existed. The popularisation of communication technology has meant that new fashion styles and ways of expression have emerged to acceptance by building communities around self-portrayal alongside the revival/resurgence of previous effeminate fashion styles. As a whole western society is becoming more progressive over time with far more men willing to present with feminine qualities and media figures aid in these effeminate qualities being seen and implemented by a large number of men in society.

Within this Personal Interest Project, Western society and its culture were examined across time to understand the social acceptance of femininity in men and how gender is perceived concerning the power and authority of the perception of people's presentation and actions. The culture is changing in Western society to become far more accepting, with the implementation of communication technology past effeminate fashion styles are returning to the popular culture and power is being taken away from being held only by those who

present themselves in a traditionally masculine way. Stereotypes are being disapproved and those in the previous generation are seeing an acceptance movement growing. Generation X has some deep-held beliefs that are anti effeminate presentation, with associations to the queer community and weakness and although there are those in Generation Z who hold these beliefs they are in the minority.

The personal interest project aided in my understanding of the core concepts and their implementation within the society and culture course. After this project, I further understand how communities develop and interact. I have furthered my understanding of how cultures influence one another and oppose traditional standards alongside the problems surrounding social disorder and the dangers of excluding others.

Bibliography

Primary Research

Personal reflection

This personal reflection was heavily related to my topic of the personal interest project (PIP) as it documented my experiences being targeted for presenting effeminately. I documented my experiences and the way that I was treated for my presentation. I inherently hold bias in my responses as the reflection is based on my life experiences so I have an emotional attachment to these perspectives. This reflection provided me with a strong understanding of my opinions and experiences that dictate my view of the topic. It reminded me of the dangers of existing in a homophobic environment while presenting in a feminine manner but it also reminded me that by acting in that way I am true to myself and can express my experiences and gain peace of mind. The personal reflection primarily aided in my writing surrounding judgement and discrimination alongside the fears people would hold about presenting in such a manner though it was used throughout all chapters of my Personal Interest Project. This personal reflection aided in how I viewed my secondary research and the types of articles I looked for providing examples of discrimination and fear of judgment.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire had 14 questions involved in attempting to understand the general community's perspectives on gender presentation and the traits held by those who are granted leadership positions far more commonly than their counterparts. Many of the open-ended questions gave me some insight into people's thought processes however often respondents did not want to provide detailed answers to the questions. The quantitative responses provided the best results in understanding the perspectives of the different generations studied. The respondents were numerous being 45 in number. It connected to each chapter of my writing as it had a multitude of questions posed. There was not necessarily a strong gender bias however the large majority of the respondents came from a white working-class background as a result of the community groups that responded to the questionnaire. Many of the questions required some context or example answers with hindsight. For instance, the question asking "How would you describe a gay man?" should have specified that I was referring to physical and emotional traits rather than the definition

of what a gay man was however I was able to use the information received to express the way that the two generations viewed a definition of a gay man and his masculinity. It was also unnecessary to question what people's political views were as they were not relevant to the PIP topic. I needed to further research the divides of each generation and the political leanings including the social media presence of the two generations to learn of the perspectives surrounding their ideals and the number of people breaking gender norms as I did not ask this in my questionnaire.

Interview

The interview was with a young nonbinary person who lives within a toxically masculine area, born as a man they continue to present as a man when feeling threatened around areas where they live. Ten questions were asked over about forty-five minutes with the answers written down as the interviewee spoke and spoken back to clarify what was said and ensure it was concise and it was what wanted to be expressed. It was incredibly useful for the chapter on discrimination as it was a direct experience from the perspective of someone other than a man who could understand the experience and the worry men feel by presenting effeminately. The interview was also incredibly useful in understanding shifting standards across time for men as it provided insight into how those perceived as men conform to these ideals. There was little link to the cross-cultural analysis other than the interviewee being Generation Z however with nothing to compare it to it would have been unhelpful to attempt to use it directly without secondary research to compare it to. The ability to interview meant that if anything was uncertain it could be clarified as did probing questions further such as asking if traditional masculinity is inherently negative. The interviewee also helped to clarify the personal reflection by detailing experiences in the same places that were negative and expressing fears and reasoning behind such actions experienced as both were young masculine presenting people with effeminate traits who were emersed in the culture and community.

Bibliography

Secondary Research

Amnesty International, 'Discrimination'. in *Amnesty.org*, 2019, <<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/discrimination>>. [accessed 3 may 2024]

In this article, many of the issues surrounding discrimination are outlined as are the major reasons for discrimination: ethnicity, nationality, class, caste, religion, belief, sex, gender, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, age, health or other status. It also defines discrimination as "when a person is unable to enjoy his or her human rights or other legal rights on an equal basis with others because of an unjustified distinction made in policy, law or treatment". This was incredibly useful for me to define what I was talking about and to inform me of the continuous battle for rights and acceptance. It was incredibly reliable as it was created by the reputable non-governmental organisation Amnesty International despite not having an author named.

Appel, M, & N Kronberger, 'Stereotypes and the Achievement Gap: Stereotype Threat Prior to Test Taking'. in *Educational Psychology Review*, 24, 2012, 609–635, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43546808?searchText=negatives+of+stereotypes&searchUri=%2Faction%2FdoBasicSearch%3FQuery%3Dnegatives%2Bof%2Bstereotypes%26so%3Drel&ab_segments=0%2Fbasic_search_gsv2%2Fcontrol&refreqid=fastly-default%3A633f4f8c6c290cf410c3df3f912777a6&seq=4> [accessed 10 august 2024]

The author examines the gender roles in society and the harm the presentation of individuals may attract from discriminatory audiences partially in testing environments. The text details that those part of minority groups often experience a struggle in educational environments. The talents and abilities of those in minority groups are often overlooked by those part of the majority meaning that their best traits are overlooked. In addition, stereotypes are defined in this paper and explained to be harmful. This was incredibly useful to explain the harm of stereotyping however it revolved around racial minorities harming the usefulness. It was peer reviewed and university published meaning it was incredibly reliable. This is useful to explain the danger and results of stereotyping in my research and why discrimination is so harmful.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Main Features - Results'. in *Abs.gov.au*, c=AU; o=Commonwealth of Australia; ou=Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017, <<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1800.0>>. [accessed 19 march 2024]

The main focus of this work is to outline the statistics surrounding same-sex acceptance and by association the treatment of effeminate and gay men in society. The statistics revolve around the voting percentages for the same-sex marriage bill. The website details the perspectives of the majority in relation to each state and the divide between ages and states in the vote. This was incredibly useful to my PIP as it displayed the breakdown of perspectives across the nation alongside the overall acceptance of queer minorities across Australia in recent years. This was an incredibly reliable source as it was published by the Australian Government and was stats collected directly from their voting base.

Cambridge Dictionary, 'metrosexual'. in @*CambridgeWords*, 2023, <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/metrosexual>>. [accessed 2 april 2024]

This source is a dictionary definition of what a metrosexual is and provides examples of what this is. It simply defines a metrosexual as a heterosexual man who engages in typically feminine or gay things such as cross-dressing and skin care. This is by the Cambridge dictionary so it is reliable and is a term directly related to my PIP however it provides little information overall.

Chen, PJ, 'Social media'. in *JSTOR*, ANU Press, 2013, pp. 69–112, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2jbkkn.11>>. [accessed 4 June 2024]

This article discusses the promotion of political movements on social media, including how social and political movements grow and how opposition to such movements spreads. This article details the way that movements grow over time on social media and how the politicisation of issues may lead to a change in society. It discusses the way perspectives surrounding how social customs are "plastic" and able to be remoulded into a new format. This text was useful for me to understand the way that social media builds movements and take my other research and apply it into that format to create a picture of the left-wing political movement and acceptance of effeminate men. This extract is reliable as it comes from the ANU Press and provides those it was published and written by, supported by JSTOR.

Dibben, N, 'Representations of femininity in popular music'. in *Popular Music*, 18, 1999, 331–355. [accessed 19 July 2024]

Within this book, it is proposed that ideology is charged through music to inspire others and push social change. It is said that the ideologies of the listener and the musician are channelled into their work in order to create a dialogue between the two and change the listener's perspective. Inherently within this music are the themes of gender and the ability of the listener to accept masculine or feminine roles while listening. This text was incredibly useful to my PIP as it displayed the way that music and gender interact and how masculine figures can express themselves in a feminine way. The text is incredibly reliable as it is written by experts in the field and published by Cambridge University.

Duffy, B, 'Is our society as divided as it seems?' in *www.kcl.ac.uk*, 2021, <<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/is-our-society-as-divided-as-it-seems>>. [accessed 25 feb 2024]

This news article details the discrimination and fragmentation of society that has emerged from social media sites within modern society. This article details the breakdown of truthful conversation in modern society as a result of the growth of misinformation on social media. The article details how social presentations have deviated over time and the way that people divided based on their presentations. This source was useful as it provided details surrounding the fragmentation of society alongside judgment and factionalisation that is arising in the modern day. This work was somewhat reliable being endorsed by a multitude of Doctors and a College however it does not explicitly state who wrote the article.

Falomir, J, 'The feminization of men leads to a rise in homophobia'. in *EurekaAlert!*, 2019, <<https://www.eurekaalert.org/news-releases/557771>>. [accessed 3 March 2024]

This paper talks upon the foundation of masculinity in society and the way it has emerged in the 1960s to the modern day. The fight for gay rights is detailed as is the acceptance movement for the feminine presenting men as the inspiration of masculinity from past feminine traits. It is questioned if the rise in feminine men led to a rise of homophobia which was useful to my PIP as I explored this theme in my research. This article is incredibly reliable as it comes from a scientific journal, published by a reputable university. It is directly useful to my PIP and aided in my early research around the topic and questions that arose from this.

Furman, R, & L Dill, 'Poetry therapy, men and masculinities'. in *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 39, 2012, 102–106, <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4849890/>>. [accessed 2 July 2024]

This medical journal details the way that men are now accepting femininity to heal in society and to express themselves through effeminate means. It details how the stigma surrounding

feminine traits and actions has been a struggle in society to help their understanding of male anger and traditionally masculine aggression. In this journal, the connection between gender and poetry is explored and discussed as a way to calm toxically masculine ideals held. This was incredibly useful to my PIP as mainstream “traditionally masculine” figures such as country singers and military men are accepted and praised for their poetry which displayed an acceptance of feminine ideals over time. This journal was incredibly reliable as it was published by the United States Government's medical branch and details the experiences of inmates expressing themselves.

Goldstein, E, 'Coming Out & LGBTQ+ Statistics'. in *Bespoke Surgical*, 2018,
<<https://bespokesurgical.com/2018/10/11/statistics-experience-coming-out-lgbtq/>>.
[accessed 16 May 2024]

This website details the queer men in society's comfortability with being open about sexuality in the modern day comparing generational divides and perspectives. The willingness of men in society to come out to their peers is detailed as is the timing needed before these men will express themselves as queer to the community surrounding them. It also details the timing for someone to come out in each generation displaying societal acceptance over time. This was incredibly useful to compare my cross-culture study in the form of Generations X and Z. It was mostly reliable as it was published by a surgical clinic and written by a Doctor.

Jones, J, 'LGBTQ+ Identification in U.S. Now at 7.6%'. in *Gallup.com*, 2024,
<<https://news.gallup.com/poll/611864/lgbtq-identification.aspx>>. [accessed 22 July 2024]

This article describes the percentage of Generation Z who are part of the queer community and how they interact with older generations in society. Acceptance in society is detailed as is the breakdown of the different parts of the queer community such as different sexualities and genders. The article details how each generation presents and the way people are accepted in society for this identification. This article was useful to my cross-generational comparison for my cross-cultural comparison as it provided me with the Generation Z statistics and growth across generations. It is a reliable source as it is a reputable news source that published the article alongside being written by an experienced author.

Klein, J, 'How young people are shaking off gender binaries'. in *www.bbc.com*, 2023,
<<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20230327-how-young-people-are-shaking-off-gender-binaries>>.

This article expresses the way that Generation Z is rejecting gender binaries and traditional masculinity to present in a way that suits the individual rather than the traditional societal ideals. Examples from people throughout Generation Z are provided alongside interviews expressing the views of the youth. The popular opinions of others is expressed as being an accepting generation mostly allowing their peers to present how they like with little judgment. This is limited in my research as it doesn't provide me with a cross-generational perspective however it does express a large amount of understanding for Generation Z. The publisher is a reputable organisation being a branch of the U.K. government alongside having an experienced author.

Kleinjans, K, 'The man of the house—How the use of household head characteristics may lead to omitted variable bias'. , 2013, <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0165176513000505>>. [accessed 4 April 2024]

Within this scientific journal, the idea surrounding a head of household is presented and explained. It details how it creates a rift in society often making men the head and associating leadership traits with masculine ones in turn harming feminine men and women in general. The author explains the reasoning behind governments assigning or asking for a head of household as it prevents families from being counted twice in census data. This article is useful to my major work as it speaks on my topic of prioritisation of those who present in a more masculine way however it does not directly acknowledge the discrimination. This is a reliable text as it is a reputable scientific journal and has a credible author.

Mayer, D, 'How Men Get Penalized for Straying from Masculine Norms'. in *Harvard Business Review*, 2018, <<https://hbr.org/2018/10/how-men-get-penalized-for-straying-from-masculine-norms>> [accessed 2 June 2024]

This article states that men who deviate from masculine standards are subject to backlash in the same way that women who present as far more masculine are. In this article, it is said that men are far more harshly judged for presenting in a feminine way than those who are not which in turn leads to repression of true social identity and the ability to present true to oneself. The article also states that men who do present themselves in a further feminine way are more likely to be able to understand their emotions. This article is useful to

understand the discrimination towards feminine presenting men and to find benefit to this presentation. It is a reliable source as it is published by a reputable agency alongside being published recently.

Popa-Wyatt, M, & JL Wyatt, 'Slurs, roles and power'. in *Philosophical Studies*, 175, 2017, 2879–2906. <<https://research.manchester.ac.uk/en/publications/slurs-roles-and-power>> [accessed 3 April 2024]

Slurs are used to make others uncomfortable and shift power dynamics in favour of the user through harmful speech. The authors document the shifting power balance of the dialogue and seek to explain how slurs arise from social roles and can be used to unite groups under a term or recognise the other's views. The power of slurs is outlined to be the unjust nature of this shifting power dynamic to intimidate the recipient. This is a reliable source as it is peer-reviewed and a published work. This was useful to my research as it outlined how slurs are harmful the power they hold over the beliefs of an audience and the way they can be implemented to intimidate. Research Party, S, 'Topic: Homosexuality in the United States'. in *Statista*, 2024, <<https://www.statista.com/topics/1249/homosexuality/#topicOverview>>.

Rumens, C, 'Poem of the Week: Aggression Diary by Annemarie Austin'. in *The Guardian*, 27 April 2015, section Books, <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2015/apr/27/poem-of-the-week-aggression-diary-by-annemarie-austin>> [accessed 25 July 2024].

This poem is an example of the way that poetry can be used in society to express aggression and "traditional" or "toxic" masculine characteristics. The poem expresses how without this aggression people can grow to be far more productive and accepting. It talks on the ease that a lack of control can arise as a result of aggression. This is useful for my PIP to explain why poetry is now accepted and important for men in society to express themselves to avoid violence. It is a work that is reliable because it is a personal expression of the world rather than being a journal or reporting piece.

Taywaditep, KJ, 'Marginalization Among the Marginalized'. in *Journal of Homosexuality*, 42, 2002, 1–28. <<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11991561/>> [accessed 4 March 2024]

This article discusses how gay men defeminise themselves to fit social norms seeking to conform. Furthermore, the stereotypes surrounding gay men's effeminate nature are detailed and it is expressed that only a small portion of the community is actually like this, rather many are far more masculine. This article suggests that even within the gay community anger and judgement towards those who present as feminine exist. However, it does state

that discrimination is on the decline overall despite remaining within the queer community. This article informs my understanding of effeminate acceptance. It is reliable as the author is a doctor and published by the American Government, this however may leave a bias towards accepting pro-government rhetoric as that is beneficial to the publisher.

Twenge, JM, 'How Gen Z Changed Its Views On Gender'. in *Time*, 2023, <<https://time.com/6275663/generation-z-gender-identity/>>. [accessed 8 March 2024]

This article states that gender is fluid and in the last ten years a great number of people have become far more accepted as the amount of education surrounding presentation and gender has grown. The article explains how the population has become far more accepting and open to new ideas across generations. It is outlined that alternate gender presentation is on the rise. I cannot see a flaw in the information provided in this article and the author has been writing on it for a long time meaning he has experience and is credible. The paper is center right however so it is likely the people interviewed had a conservative slant. It is useful to my PIP as it provides a perspective of identity across time from a bias different to my own.

Williams, A, "“Metrosexuals” Were Just Straight Men Who Loved Self-Care. Right?' in *The New York Times*, 15 June 2018, section Style, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/15/style/metrosexuals.html>>. [accessed 17 April 2024]

This article details the way that rigid binaries began to fall away with the emergence of “metrosexuals” However it also calls into question the possibility that on a base level homophobia emerges from this. Metrosexuals are described and are said to have emerged around the early 2000s. The article states that it was consumerism affecting the way men dress to create a new idea of what it means to be a man by attempting to increase spending habits. This article was reliable being from the New York Times however this meant that it held somewhat of a right-wing bias. This article fits into my PIP by detailing the emergence of the metrosexual, what it means and the reason for its emergence.