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Nopporn Ruangwanit, Thammasat University, Thailand
Kritsadarat Wattanasuwan, Thammasat University, Thailand

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Living In Double World: Harmonizing Homosexuality And Masculinity Through Symbolic Consumption In Private Space

Nopporn Ruangwanit, Thammasat University, Thailand
Kritsadarat Wattanasuwan, Thammasat University, Thailand

ABSTRACT
This article demonstrates the interpretation of a selected homosexual’s narratives of his consumption patterns and taste which emerge as a refuge from any social stigmatization. These reconstruct a sense of masculinity while cherishing their homosexuality. The investigation emphasizes various experiential aspects of interior decorative activities of his secret room which is treated confidentially and demarcated from more open rooms. The interpretation indicates that the decoration is employed to sacralize the room which is used for the escapist and romantic ritual purpose. Moreover, the conflated decorative styles of loft and vintage, as reflective of camp consumption, are discussed in line with an affirmation of masculinity and an embrace of homosexuality. Hypermasculinization is also explored since it creates a cultural superiority over the heterosexual mainstream to achieve the homosexual mainstream.

THEORITICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE
Considerable literature determines that gay men have developed depression as they have experienced social stigmatization (Kilmartin 1994). Gay men, for instance, are socially punished by abusive comments, social ignorance and discrimination and sometime unprovoked violence (MacInnes 1998). Accordingly, many gay men do not truly express their homosexual self in the public arena in order to protect their social privileges which could not be acquired if revealed. As such, closet gay men do not associate with stereotypical homosexuality or femininity because they not only intend to minimize the social stigmatization but also attempt to enjoy the advantages of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1992). In this regard, gay men have a tendency to initiate the strategies which enable them to conceal their homosexuality and compensate for the perceived lack of their masculinity through hypermasculinization.

Stigmatization of Gay Men
Gay men are substantially more stigmatized by oppression and marginalization from various institutions in society (Weeks 1985). Even though a particular gay man has never engaged in stereotypically homosexual activities and institutions, these stigmatized circumstances and social punishment from both lived experience with significant other at home, schools and various social institutions and mediated experiences through different media products are learned (Thompson and Hirschman 1995). The gay men’s consciousness of social marginalization becomes intensified particularly when they involve in the circumstances where hegemonic masculinity is paramount and, consequently, homophobia is a stereotypically predisposition. Under this phenomenon, they both are socially expected to have and struggle to maintain a traditional set of masculine attributes. As such, males who engage in sets of habits, demonstrations, behaviors and consumptions that oppose to social expectations and beliefs of conventional masculinity or, particularly in the Thai context, appear to correlate with effeminate attributes are characterized as homosexual. Homosexual is apparently regarded as a condition abhorrent to the mainstream culture (Connell 1992). These constant reminders of heteropatriarchy attest to the masculinist discourses that denigrate femininity and, apparently, homosexuality (Thompson and Hirschman 1995). Encountering this paradoxical circumstance, gay men experience tensions because they have to maintain the equilibrium of the dualism of homosexuality and heterosexuality through constructing a self that could be harmoniously situated in these binary oppositions. Consequently, if their balancing strategies are found unproductive, they then experience social oppressions in which they are socially stigmatized and disqualified for various social rewards (Meyer 1995).

Public Concealment of Homosexuality and Symbolic Consumption
A minority’s confrontation with social stigmatization is theoretically affirmed to deteriorate their ego development (Caldwell et al 1989) and, in turn, contribute to the development of emotional distress (Potoczniak at al 2007). Moreover, since homosexuals are seen as a social construct that deviates from the mainstream culture. Because of this, they receive less or no support from social institutions and they potentially have a strong tendency to conceal their homosexual identity in public space in order to preserve social privileges awarded only for traditionally masculine individuals (Potoczniak at al 2007). The strategic concealment of the homosexual self is conceptualized as the development of the set of behaviors which are substantially associated with traditional masculinity and, apparently, disassociated with what is labeled as femininity and homosexuality (Kates 2002). By this regard, these strategic practices can be facilitated by consumption symbolism (Wattanasuwan 2005) which is used to represent symbolically masculine meanings and disassociate from homosexuality and femininity.

Gay men’s public exposure can result in a tension because of lower self-esteem (Caldwell et al 1989). This tension is empirically attested, by research in psychology (Villemarette-Pittman et al 2004) and consumer behavioral science (Hirschman 1992; Elliott 1994). Tension contributes to the development of the addictive behavior which potentially leads to the consumer’s hyperconsumption. By this regard, gay men, in order to protect their self-esteem, may become highly sensitive about their homosexual appearance particularly in public and, subsequently, are likely to hypermasculinize their self. This would secure their perceptually threatened masculinity. This practice can be done by engaging in consumption and activities in which masculinity is either implicitly or explicitly symbolized. The hypermasculinization also relates to the compensatory consumption (Grunert 1993). In Thailand, the homosexual is regarded as a man who not only has an ultimate relationship with a man but also incorporates a set of effeminate behaviors. In order to compensate for their homosexuality or the perceived lack of their masculinity, gay men are likely to involve in as many exaggerating consumptions and activities symbolically reaffirming masculinity and disassociating from homosexuality and femininity as possible. As such, the manifestion of their masculinity becomes maximized and their socially fragile femininity and homosexuality is minimized.

Sacralizing the Masculinity
Empirically, it posits that the status of commoditized objects can be enhanced through the sacralization process, the process...
by which the profane is changed by the sacred object and eventually become sacred (Belk et al. 1989). In a similar degree, the gay men’s perception of their inferiority to heterosexuals because of their experience of social oppression can be diminished through engaging in the consumptions and practices which confer them a sacred status (Belk et al. 1989). As eliciting the beneficial outcome, sacred objects provide a communiter in which an individual could transcend their existence from the profane, unfavorable stage to the utopia. In utopia, they could refuse from social stigmatization and accomplish their desired self or even create the situation, which is exaggerated to sacralize the self, in opposition to the mainstream. By this regard, to sacralize themselves, gay men would engage in sacred consumption objects and practices to manifest their superiority to the profane mainstream culture. Through the transfer process of cultural meaning, these sacred consumptions and practices operate to sacralize homosexuals and empower them to accomplish the superiority over ordinary heterosexuals (McCracken 1986). Eventually, by doing so, gay men could enhance their sense of masculinity.

Profane could be regarded as ordinary, mundane actions and practices, or, in the similar degree, conventional beliefs and expectations (Belk et al. 1989). As such, what opposite to the profane is recognized as sacred. The cultural capital that is gradually accumulated can be employed to create the social strata in which an individual with a higher degree of cultural capital is classified in the superior location against social others and the mainstream culture (Bourdieu 1984). Cultural capital sacralizes gay men and empowers them to situate themselves in the premier position in which they are able to criticize mainstream and heterosexual culture and justify them as inferior. A study by Kates (2001; 2002) indicates that camp, as the form of cultural capital, is the habitus, inherited in homosexuals, that embraces the excess, exaggeration, and flamboyance. As such, camp, as a mode of consumption expression, allows gay men to exaggerate their consumption to distinguish themselves from the mainstream culture and position themselves in the culturally superior position. What is not only heterosexuals but also other gay men. By this regard, gay men express and consume in accordance with their superior camp taste to sacralize themselves. With this sacred status, gay men could be protected from the social oppression by mainstream heterosexuals and could transcend themselves from the underprivileged to the culturally desired stage in which they could enjoy the social rewards conferred by the heterosexual majority. Cultural superiority allows gay men to secure their sense of masculinity.

**INTERPRETATIONS OF NARRATIVES AND DISCUSSIONS**

According to his narrative, it is apparent that his sense of masculinity is significantly intimidated by both straight and homosexual worlds. He, therefore, employs consumption symbolisms and experiential activities that could empower him both to alleviate from social threats to his masculinity and homosexuality and to construct the desired level of masculinity. Interpretations encompass his strategies to escape from intimidating threats and to reconstruct his sense of masculinity.

**The Sacred Room as Source of Escapism: The Refuge Base**

Since having lived his life in dichotomous worlds; one in straight and another in homosexuality, an informant attempts to create the place at where he could harmoniously compromise his both lives in order to escape from self-threats by both worlds while cherish his homosexual self. This location allows him to maintain his masculinity while satisfy his desired sense of homosexuality independent of social stigmatization. Since he encounters with the difficulty in maintaining his double identities in the society in which gay self is marginalized, this location therefore functions as a refuge base in which his sexual partner and he are only eligible.

**The Secret Room as the Sacred Place for Escapism.** As an investor in real estate, he possesses several units of apartment. All of these apartment units, but this secret one, are normally treated either as commodities which are transactioned to generate additional incomes or as where his family members dwell. Only this secret unit is exclusively sacralized (Belk et al 1989) since it is distinctively decorated and also maintained as the sphere in which he privately lives and performs romantic rituals only with his secret partner to fulfill his homosexuality desires.

Max: of course not. I don’t normally allow anyone to get into this room. This room is just only for my partner and
me. We normally spend much of our time together in this room since we cannot truly express our romantic acts in the public. I can free my mind, independent of worriesome of any social critique when I’m in this room. Or, I feel safe in this room and I can do whatever I desire. This room is totally different from any other rooms because of its interior design I initiated. Moreover, he (his partner) helps me design this room’s interior as well.

This apartment unit operates to shield him and his romantic partner from potential self-threats to their masculinity; threats of being perceived as sissy or gay. As mentioned earlier, this room is sacred because of its unique decoration differentiating it from other profane units and the treatment by which no one other person than him and his partner is allowed to enter. Moreover, this room’s sacredness is accelerated when his partner and he sacrifice their economic and cultural capitals to fund and conceptualize the room’s interior design (Mol 1976).

The premise of compensatory consumption suggests that when individuals experience the perceived lack of a certain thing and this need could be resolved by consuming a substitute (Grunert 1993). By this notion, the desire of expressing romantic signs with his partner that is strictly tabooed in public arena could be fulfilled in his privately secret place, the sacred room in which romantically behaved activities are completely fulfilled and finally become ritualized. So doing could transform the status of romantic expression from profanity into sacredness that could enhance this secret room’s sacredness. Epistemologically, his secret room and romantic rituals, because of their sacredness, not only allow him to escape from external threats to his self but also transcend him into the desired self; the self in which he is empowered to enhance and cherish his sense of homosexuality, independent of any social stigmatization (Belk et al 1989).

Objects become sacred when they are contaminated or associated with sacred things (O’Guinn and Belk 1989). In the same vein, his secret room is also sacralized through the unique interior design that contaminates it. The room’s interior design is initiated to differentiate its room from any other rooms he acquires. That is, this interior design style is intended to distinguish this room from other profane units (Belk et al 1989). By this end, this secret room appears to be sacred.

The Sacred Loft Interior Design as Source of Masculinity Affirmation.

Max employs the interior design to minimize the commoditization impact to his secret room. By this mean, the selected style of Loft interior design operates to differentiate its secret room from not only other rooms he acquires but also his social others’ rooms. As such, its loft interior design appears to sacralize the secret room.

Max: I want to decorate this room to be different from other rooms that I have and other people’s rooms as well, like my friends’ rooms. I think you can notice that when you leave the elevator and walk down the hallway to my room, you can definitely not imagine that this room is decorated in this style. I want to make it special to my partner and me.

According to an observation of his room’s loft interior design, because of its extraordinary nature, it is intended to sacralize (Belk et al 1989) and symbolically masculinize the room (Elliott and Wattanasuwon 1998). As Max’s extended possession, his room symbolically transfers its masculine meaning to masculinize him (Belk 1988). His narrative toward loft interior design is illustrated:

Max: the core of loft is to display the structure of the room and raw materials used to finish the room. Like, it shows the cement, metal and brick. This décor style shows the parts that suppose to be hidden. Like, it shows the cement on the wall which should have been colored or bricks should have been finished by the cement.

Interviewer: And how do you feel with this style?

Max: I think this style of décor make the room becomes ‘aggressive’ since it’s very rustic. It looks wide and barbarous. Anyway, it’s macho. It’s ‘man mak mak’ (highly masculine). You see those metals ….. they are strong!! Look at that brick….. It’s totally rough. Meantime, those who have seen my room said so as well.

Interviewer: Suppose you, by chance, meet a person who decorates his room similar to your, how would do you think about him?

Max: Kord Man (extremely macho).

It is ostensibly that he employs the symbolic meanings of loft décor style to secure his sense of masculinity. His masculine attribute of aggressiveness (Brannon 1976) is enhanced through his intention to involve metals and bricks in the decoration to symbolize ‘strength’ and ‘roughness’. This lofted room is substantially perceived as macho or ‘man mak mak’ which offers him the heightened sense of masculinity. As such, he consumes these symbolic meanings elicited from loft décor to symbolically reaffirm and reestablish his masculinity, in his private location, which is threatened by different socioeconomic forces. Moreover, the degree of his masculinity is reinforced by his social other’s approval of the masculinity of his room, which, in turn, could allow him to approach the increasing degree of his masculinity. In addition, he projects the imagery man who acquires a room with the same décor style that he is ‘kord man’ which metaphorically equates to hypermasculinization.

It evidently indicates that an informant employs loft decoration style to sacralize his secret room where his homosexuality is cherished and romantic rituals are performed independent of any social criticism. Moreover, decorating this secret room, considered as his extended possession, in the loft style with aggressive and strong manifestation greatly contributes to the symbolic reaffirmation of his masculinity.

Cherishment of Homosexuality through Feminine Decorative Items.

Even though his secret room is dominated by loft concept employed to valorize the room’s masculinity symbolically transferred to enhance his masculine self-image, there are several decorative items, such as red chandeliers and large curtain made from red flashy textile, which is symbolically associated with femininity as reflexive of his effeminate aspect of his self:

Max: You may think that my room is too lofted. But it’s practically not too extreme. I have bought some decorative items that help break the loft. I don’t like either when it’s too lofted. Look things that I bought !! red chandeliers

Interviewer: why did you buy chandeliers?

Max: firstly, they help break the loft, as what I told you. Loft is rustic and aggressive because of displays of bricks
and metals. On the other side, chandeliers are quite sweet and lavish. It’s called vintage style. These two, loft and vintage, are extremely different but they are just harmoniously located in this room.

Interviewer: What else do you consider as similar to chandeliers?

Max: Uhmmm…. Look at this big red curtain by the window that is made from flashy, sleek textile. I installed this curtain to contrast with the loft. Because of its material, it could also add luxurious sense into this room.

Even though, he attempts to illustrate his masculinity through macho-like interior design, his engagement in incorporating effeminate decorative items into the room still exists. In Thailand context, chandelier is perceived to be associated with femininity, especially the red chandelier whose personalities incorporate effeminate aspects. According to an interviewee’s consumption text, chandelier is also interpreted as a woman and is then purchased and installed in his apartment in order to moderate its rustic appearance which represents masculinity. This consumption practice exemplifies the postmodern consumption in which distinct dualism are allowed to be juxtaposed (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). An intermingle of masculine and feminine decorative items is achieved through his superior cultural taste and this also indicates the appreciation of both masculinity and femininity which could classified as camp taste, a taste that cherish the homosexuality (Kates 2001). Some gay men freely conduct consumption practices comfortably in public space (Kates 2002). For him, since he has to endure his straight life in public, all activities or objects symbolically correlated with femininity (red chandeliers and flashy curtain) are not supposedly consumed in public arena but rather in his utopia in which he is allowed to materialize and satisfy his feminine facet of the self

Paradox of Masculine Interior Decoration: The Campy Room

On one hand, loft style is employed to reestablish his masculinity. On the other hand, this unique style also signifies embracement of his inner sense of homosexuality.

The Meaning of Loft: An Appreciation of Masculinity and Homosexuality. Loft decorative style is conceptualized to symbolically affirm his masculine self. Its paradoxical concept tacitly represents the socially oppressed circumstance in which he is perceptually marginalized and desires to ‘become out’.

Interviewer: Why do you decorate your room in loft style?

Max: Uhmmm…. I like loft since it shows what all things are. Like, there is no hidden agenda. Metal is metal, brick is brick…. you know. They are all what they are without any modification or, if any, only with little decoration. This is so real of everything. All hidden stuffs are revealed. It’s to show what they are. Intentionally, loft just represents what I am.

According to consumption symbolism, consumers employ their symbolic meanings elicited from products and brands to construct both their identity and ideal self (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998). This is particular so when the object of consumption represents a part of an individual’s extended self, ‘loft just represents what I am’ (Belk 1988). As such, the extended possession could then represent the self-identity that could enable individuals to behave and consume particular products and activities (Laverie et al 2002) in order to promote congruence between self-image and product image (Hogg et al 2000). Decorating his secret room in the loft style which emphasizes on illustrating the real form of decorative materials and structure could be equivalent to the conduit by which his hidden self, homosexual self, is liberally articulated in his private world. In one way, the loft style is conceptualized to enhance the manliness of Max. In another way, its concept allows him to cherish and unveil his homosexual self that is publicly prohibited. This is particular so when he narrates about his chain-like curtain installed to functionally separate the inner area from the foyer:

Max: this curtain is made from metal chains. It’s used to divide areas between foyer and inner area. It seems like I enter into another world in which I can be what I wanna be.

Interviewer: Why metal chain?

Max: Firstly, as mentioned, I wanna make this room unique. Secondly, it’s ‘man mak mak’. Look very harsh and raw. Meanwhile, it’s a curtain so it represents a woman. It’s an iron woman. I like it very much.

Certainly, this curtain operates to separate the sacred area (inner living area) from the profanity which is foyer area in which he allocates for the shoe inventory (Belk et al 1989). Moreover, because of its intention to distinguish the inner living area from profanity, it acquires the power to sacredly contaminate him and transcend him into the communitas in which he could enjoy his publicly tabooed self independent of encountering traditional social norm (Belk at al 1989; Turner 1969). On one hand, the curtain allows him to transcend from straight into homosexual self. On the other hand, since made from the rustic-like materials, this curtain is employed to symbolize macho or masculinity and, in turn, to tacitly communicate his admiration to the masculinity. However, on the contrary, the curtain is perceptually viewed as a woman; a woman in chain or what he terms is ‘the iron woman’. The iron woman could be stereotypically conceived as a highly masculine woman who could assume the male gender role. Correspondingly, this chain-like curtain symbolically resembles to camp celebrities who are characterized in both stereotypically masculine and feminine aspects (Kates 1997). Kates indicates that most of camp celebrities are proportionally women (the curtain) with relatively greater masculine attributes (the metal chain). As such, an installation of the chained curtain, with symbolic characteristics of the amalgamation of masculinity and femininity, provides an exemplar of the cherishment of homosexuality through the campy taste.

These dichotomous dimensions which are harmoniously intertwined and become exaggerated could be conceptualized as the campy consumption which is indicative of ideology of tasteful gay consumption (Kates 1997). However, their synthesis exemplifies his attempts to reverse perceived imbalances between gays and heterosexuals through the cultural capital of taste (Kates 2002) which is also employed to construct aesthetic superiority over the heterosexual mainstream culture.

Moreover, his décor style epitomizes his intention to denigrate and challenge the mainstream culture and conventional thoughts (Babcock 1978). The degree of antagonism to the mainstream culture is intensified when he sprays his room wall by graffiti art:
Max: I think I’m the very first one who sprays on the wall in multi-colored graffiti style. I think I feel liberated!! and I can break all the social rules then since the graffiti is not supposed to appear in the high-end condominium room.

Interviewer: How do you feel about the graffiti?

Max: It’s very rustic!! I think it’s even more rustic than Loft style.

Apparently, the graffiti epitomizes the manliness and its meaning is transferred to Max to enhance his masculinity. On the other hand, it demonstrates the intense degree of his antagonism to the mainstream culture.

His interior style signifies the consumption in postmodernity in which the permutation of the opposites is appreciated and exaggerated (Firat and Venkatesh 1995) and is then drawn to manifest the greater degree of cultural capital which is exploited not only to create the superiority over heterosexual but also to negotiate the social distinction within the homosexual boundary (Kates 2001). By this regard, he employs his cultural capital to create cultural dominance over social others in a homosexual affiliation and finally achieve the greater degree of masculinity (Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes 1999) relatively to other gay men:

Max: If I compare my room to my closed gay friend’s room, they are totally different. His room is filled with lots of mass-produced decorative items, even he spent a big money on decorating it. The decorative style and items are just seen anywhere…. No creative!! It just looks like SB design. (SB is the furniture brand with a mass-production of different decorative items)

Apparently, his cultural capital empowers him to justify his gay friend’s taste of decoration. By this mode of comparison, his superiority over significant gay others is increasingly substantiated and he could therefore achieve the hegemonic masculinity. By this regard, his superiority is therefore constructed through structuring the boundary through aestheticizing the consumption of the highly tasteful interior design as a marker good which is instrumental to manifest the greater degree of masculine superiority over heterosexual males and the higher degree of distinctiveness over other homosexual friends (Kates 2002). The campy decoration allows Max to reaffirm his sense of masculinity while cherish his homosexuality.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The present study produces a contribution to knowledge in consumer research in the area of consumption behavior of homosexuals, especially those who situate in the world which is dominated by the binary opposition; one in which they attempt to cherish the homosexuality and another in which they may encounter with social stigmatization if their homosexuality is publicly observed. This study investigates the closet homosexual’s consumption phenomenon which is created both to reduce their tension likely occurred from the divergence of conventional masculinity and homosexuality and to balance their double dichotomous self (Kates 2002).

Construction of Homosexual Masculinity

Much of literature confirms the evidence in which homosexuals suffer from social stigmatization in the dominantly heterosexual culture (Week 1985; Connell 1992; Canary and Dainton 2003). As socially constructed, men are expected to endure the masculine attributes (Branon 1976) in order to enjoy the social privileges and rewards. As such, if men manifest any behaviors as opposed to what considered as hegemonic masculinity or homophobia, they may be seen as gay and eventually encounter with social stigmatization by various institutions in society (Week 1985; Donaldson 1993). For homosexuals, their continuing enjoyment of the fruitfulness of available social resources can be sustained as long as they could maintain their self-protection mechanism in which their homosexuality is concealed. Accordingly, the implication of various forms of consumptions and experiences of contemporary homosexuals are symbolically constructed to enhance his public masculinity. Consequently, they are highly self-monitoring and prevent their disposition and manifestation from being associated with effeminate or homosexual ideology. Under this implication, they have a tendency to establish hypermasculinity to compensate for the perceived lack of their masculinities. This likelihood is also empirically evident in the subculture of gay bodybuilder and gay clones; the subculture in which their members attempt to hypermasculinize their body to diverge from what labeled as homosexuality and femininity (Klein 1990; Levine 1992).

Apparently, homosexual masculinity, which enacts gay men to become hypermasculine, originally emerges from gay men’s experience of marginalization arisen by the perceived lack of their relative masculinity. As such, by the premise of compensatory theorem (Gruntz 1993), to compensate for their lower degree of masculinity, they actively look for various symbolic resources (Wattanussawon 2005) to construct hypermasculinity not only to symbolize their superiority over heterosexual but also to provide him a protectionism from social stigmatization by mainstream culture (Connell 1992; Kates 2002). Relating to this study, the homosexual masculinity is achieved by hypermasculinizing the self which symbolizes the superiority over heterosexuals.

Homosexual Masculinity and Camp Decorative Design

In order to protect their socially fragile facet of their self, homosexuals then pursue the extreme masculinity; a masculine form that is exaggerated by consumptions of available symbolic resources to symbolize the culturally superior differentiation from putative mainstream culture (Kates 2002). For this research, objects of consumption beneficial to this exaggeration discourse include both the secret room in which an informant refuges and protects him from social punishments, and the interior decorative design which is circumspectly adapted to hypermasculinize the room and, apparently, himself through its meaning transfer process (McCracken 1986). Although the loft decorative style is capitalized to substantially symbolize the intensified degree of masculinity, there appears to be several camouflage decorative items symbolically associated with femininity. This tasteful fusion reflects the stereotypical characteristics of homosexual aestheticization (Sontag 1964). This campy design where rigorous masculine attributes and latent feminine senses are conflated and exaggerated are considered as a form of culturally aesthetic capital a homosexual invests to establish the symbolism of hypermasculinity to culturally situate himself above dominant heterosexual mainstream (Kates 2001). As having accumulated their habitus of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984), homosexuals can then develop the social classification in which they are situated in the higher order and culturally superior to heterosexuals.

It is empirically evident that homosexual masculinity is reflexive of the discourse of hypermasculinity but not by the practice of over-mascularization discovered in gay bodybuilding subculture. Rather, the hypermasculinity, at least in this cultural context, is concretized through the cultural capital by which
homosexuals employ to illustrate the greater degree of their aesthetic taste over heterosexuals. Simply put, the campy consumption allows gay men to secure and enhance their masculinity by aestheticizing cultural meanings to achieve the superiority in the mainstream society. Finally, campy taste can be deployed to empower homosexuals to transform themselves from being considered as minority to be perceptually situated in where they are even superior to mainstream majority.

Challenge to Conventional Discourses of Masculinity

It has long been historically documented that gay men have been stigmatized by the various conventional institutions and mainstream believes and are also perceived as being substandard to hegemonic masculinity (Meyer 1995). Social antagonism to homosexuality provides rationales for gay men to secure their right and oppose against the heterosexual and mainstream culture. This counteraction is not only evident in homosexual group but also found salient in other subcultures deviant from putative mainstream culture (Brake 1985; Watson 1998). In postmodernism, consumption symbolism is engaged to construct the identity deemed to be acceptable in the society (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). In the similar degree, however, gay men could also consume various products and activities to create their identity that appears to be opposed to socially accepted norms. By this regard, the juxtaposition of binary oppositions of masculinity loft and vintage design together with graffiti art are employed to embrace the anticonventional discourse signifying the hostility to the heterosexual culture.

Ostensibly, a creative modification of consumption objects and practices can be employed by homosexuals and other stigma to appreciate the pluralism and fusion of opposites which signify the challenge to the mainstream culture. Moreover, if this creative discourse is attested culturally aesthetical, such as camp consumption, it could empower gay men to construct the identity culturally superior to heterosexuals and to be able to dominate the mainstream discourse.

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