

## Popularizing the Gay Characters: A Study of American Gay-themed TV Series in 2000s

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### ABSTRACT

This study is qualitative research that concentrates on the rise of the TV series gay characters on American television starting in the early 2000s. The emergence of gay TV series in the 2000s has made this phenomenon interesting as well as essential to discuss since American television in the pre-2000s era was not open about gay characters in television series. The data for this study were obtained through a literature review consisting of journal articles as well as books. This study intended to identify as well as analyze the reason gay-themed TV series appeared or emerged rapidly especially in the 2000s by applying Hall's theory of representation as a way for analyzing. It is also useful as an additional reference for other researchers and to increase people's understanding of the gay TV series phenomenon in the US. The research findings showed that there are at least four representations explaining the reasons for the emergence of gay-themed TV series in America – the progress of science and knowledge, the strength of minorities, the state support, and the new target consumers.

**Keywords:** American television, American television in 2000s, gay characters, gay-themed TV series

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Television has been one of the entertainment media chosen by many people. A lot of them often spend hours watching television programs. Therefore, television has also presented various kinds of programs including popular fictions with different types of genres (Adi & Rohani, 2011). American television which continues to experience changes from time to time shows that there are many conditions and upheavals occurred in American society playing a significant role in the development of American television. It is believed that American media have the power to influence, to question, to judge and to lead people to see something in society (Baim, 2013). TV series or soap operas, for instance, have undergone major changes because they are increasingly open to a more varied target audience (Henderson, 2007). It is no wonder that American TV series presented something different especially entering the era of 2000s.

Something phenomenal has taken place in American television. The existence of gay characters shown in American TV series seems to have brought about a significant change. Gay characters from sitcoms to drama series became more obvious and they were popular since the 2000s. For instance, *Will & Grace*, which was broadcast by American mainstream TV channel NBC from 1998-2006 received a good response. *Will & Grace* has even become one of the most successful gay-themed TV series in the US because it has been watched by millions of viewers and won Emmy Awards (McCarthy, 2001, Arthurs, 2004; Marcus, 2005; Becker, 2006 ; Needham, 2008).

The presence of gay characters in the American entertainment media at the end of 21<sup>st</sup> century could be seen obviously from the television media. The emerging of gay-themed TV series has automatically shown many gay characters on television. Daytime TV series began to show gay characters in the year 2000 (Marcus, 2005; Needham, 2008). As a daily entertainment medium favored by many families, the coming of gay-themed TV series is obviously opposite to the condition in the era before 2000s (the era from 1960s to 1990s). The hetero-normative culture which dominates the entertainment media, especially television series seems to have slowly lost its power today.

However, in the era before the 2000s, hetero-normative culture rooted in American television played a role to strictly filter the types of characters and scenes that were allowed to be shown on television series. Gay scenes were prohibited in TV series and gay people were considered taboo and negative (Marcus, 2005; Streitmatter 2009). A number of negative, frightening and disturbing view were attached to the image of gay people (Fejes, 2008). Therefore, homosexuals were not considered worthy characters to be shown in a TV series. Even if there were gay characters appeared in TV series, they were frequently depicted as strange, evil and have mental disorders (Benshoff, 2006 ; Avila-Saavedra, 2009).

Besides that, the image of gays portrayed in television was identical with the effeminacy and deviance (Streitmatter, 2009; D'Emilo, 2012) and this stereotype was strongly attached to gay people that they were considered far from the image of masculinity (Rudy, 2022). In other words, it marked that the issue of LGBT at that time was not worth watching for families since it was contrary to mainstream culture mostly influenced by religions. As a result, gay-themed TV series were rarely shown in America. The absence of gay scenes and characters in American television series was related to American mainstream cultural values. TV is a medium emphasizing the importance of family values to promote happy families that seemed to fulfil the expectations of every family who watched the programs (Arthurs, 2004; Cummins & Gordon, 2006). Therefore, TV series involving gay characters and scenes needed to be strictly restricted or banned.

A gay character discussed in this study is a TV series character described as someone with a homosexual orientation. Meanwhile, the term gay-themed TV series used in this study refers to the presence of gay characters as the main characters and their storyline about their lives which can be perceived as the hallmark of gay-themed TV series. This was also confirmed by (Jones & Bego, 2009) that gay characters playing their roles as main characters or protagonists were regarded as a significant point in American television.

The development of gay television series in 2000s could be seen as a crucial change in American television history. The historic events of the early 2000s ranging from large scale events such as the millennium march for the promotion of equality to the legalization of civil union laws in the State of Vermont (Stewart, 2003; Marcus, 2005; D'Emilo, 2012) have made the year 2000s an important era to be associated with the development of American television. Therefore, it is essential to understand why gay-themed TV series was able to grow rapidly in the 2000s.

The rise of gay characters portrayed in American TV series has provided an opportunity for people to observe issues related to existence of gay community. Regarding the emergence of gay characters in TV series, the objective of in this study is to identify why gay-themed TV series began to appear and develop on American television in the 2000s. This issue is important to explore because the conditions on American television which previously restricted or even prohibited gay characters from appearing changed in the 2000s.

## 2. METHOD

The data were gathered from the study of several relevant references including journal articles and books to identify the phenomenon. This library research is useful for the enrichment of theory or knowledge in certain fields of science such as humanities, media and film studies, literary studies, etc. Apart from that, this study is also helpful as an additional reference for other researchers who discuss the issue of several popular American gay TV series particularly in the early 2000s such as *Will & Grace*, *Queer as Folk*, *Six Feet Under*, *Some of My Best Friends*, *Modern Family*, etc. Since this is a descriptive qualitative research, the process of collecting and analyzing data according to (Hariwijaya & Djaelani, 2004) is to obtain as much information as possible in order to clearly explain the discussed issue or phenomena.

The data obtained from journal articles and books were sorted based on the sub-themes that had been set beforehand in order to facilitate the cataloging process. It is necessary to have a way to see this issue (phenomenon) as something that can be interpreted. Thus, after the cataloging process was complete, the data began to be analyzed by utilizing theory of representation from Stuart Hall to produce meaning. Hall's representation theory aims to construct the meaning of all the phenomena studied by viewing the research objects as a set of symbols that can be interpreted. All the acquired information aimed at explaining the discussed phenomenon. Therefore, with the theory of representation, the information would be representing something because according to Hall (1997), it could be treated as sign or symbols which can reflect a meaning. So, the phenomenon of the emergence of gay-themed TV series in America in the 2000s was studied as an object and this trend was seen from the fact that there were indeed many gay-themed TV series appeared in the early 2000s. This phenomenon could become a type of cultural symbol which meant something and would be interpreted by using data from literary sources such as scientific articles as well as books

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

It cannot be denied that the presence of American gay-themed TV series was inseparable from the results of interaction between gay culture and mainstream culture. The social interaction process has been going on for a long time. Iborra, (2007) explained that the interaction between gay people and heterosexuals in a society was actually a social relationship. This social relationship according to Herek (2009) was related to learning and experience. In other words, there was a purpose to see and figure out new experience when interacting with gay people. Thus, the interaction between gay and heterosexual people is unavoidable. It has slowly opened up opportunities for gay people and their experiences to be exposed to the screen. The result of data analysis suggested that the interaction between gay and heterosexual people triggered the emergence of several factors that made gay TV series develop in American television which can be understood from the following representations:

### 3.1 The Progress of Science and Knowledge

From reviewing various relevant references regarding the movement carried out by gay people and their social interactions toward heterosexual people in a hetero-normative society showed that it was undeniable that adequate knowledge about something will affect one's way of thinking, including knowledge on gender and sexuality.

The pattern gay people' struggle in changing the way people perceived them was rather similar to the women's right movement stressing the ideas about social treatment they experienced (Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000). The changes occurred as a result of rapid progress of knowledge, science and technology turn out to have a major impact on the history of gay people in the United States.

The development of knowledge about homosexuality can actually be perceived to have started from a decision taken by American Psychiatric Association in 1973. They rejected homosexuality as a mental disorder and recognized it as a type of sexual orientation (Marcus, 2005 ; Eaklor, 2008; Fejes, 2008 ; Herek, 2009). It is accepted as an indisputable fact in the medical world. That encouraged people to observe and find out more information about gender and sexuality issues. This was what later became the forerunner to the emergence of the studies on gender and sexual orientation in the US.

In other words, more and more people started conducting research on gender and sexuality, including issues of homosexuality and people's attitudes towards gay people from various kinds of perspectives (Stotzer, 2009). The development of knowledge on gender and sexuality in western countries, especially the United States has played a vital role in influencing one's perspective and attitude, especially among younger generation. The more knowledge about gender and sexuality develops, the more open one's mind is to the diversity of gender and sexual orientation. Research and theories about gender and sexuality are not something new. However, in the past years, the research was still relatively small. It was only in the late 1960s, research on gender development entered an important phase (Zosuls et al., 2011) (The increasing awareness of gender and sexuality knowledge in the US seemed to play a significant role in the way young people think. This was also expressed by (Jones & Bego, 2009) that people's openness to knowledge of gender and sexuality would be a good opportunity to understand the diversity of sexual orientation. Although society's acceptance of gender and sexuality knowledge is not instantaneous, this condition is still considered an important change in American culture. This is what (Persell et al., 2001) later said as the younger generation who showed a better attitude towards gay people. This gradually created a more open-minded generation that could see gender and sexual orientation differences as facts in society.

People started to talking and discussing about sexual orientation and gender in public forums including the mass media (Schindel, 2008). In addition, Tully (2000) suggested that the situation was then supported by the rapid development of the Internet in the early 2000s with a number of websites supporting LGBT community by presenting a lot knowledge and information on gender and sexuality. As a result, many college students also started showing their concern for the issue of gender (Swank et al., 2013). This could indicate that there was an opportunity for American people, especially those in the academic community, to start knowing and learning about gender diversity and sexual orientation. This change also inspired entertainment industry. Various entertainment media also begun to show sympathy and support the gay rights (Sender, 2005; Streitmatter, 2009). It provided an opportunity for American television to attract public attention by presenting TV series with gay themes. People started discussing about homosexuality and it would no longer be something to be avoided or feared.

Even in the late 1990s to the 2000s, American television was quite open in terms of gay themes and gay characters as the protagonists with TV programs such as *Will & Grace* (1998) by NBC, *Queer as Folk* (2000) by Showtime, *Six Feet Under* (2001) by HBO, *Dante's Cove* (2005) by Here!, *The Lair* (2007) by Here!, *90210* (2008) by The CW Network, *Glee* (2009) by Fox, *Modern Family* (2009) by ABC, *Shameless* (2011) by Showtime, *Hit The Floor* (2013) by VH1 Network, *How to Get Away with Murder* (2014) by ABC, by Fox, *American Crime* (2015) by ABC, *Empire* (2015) by ABC, *Scream Queen* (2015) by FOX, *Shadow Hunters* (2016) by Freeform TV Channel, *9-1-1: Lone Star* (2020) etc. This condition was explained by (Adi & Rohani, 2011) that film or TV media always show popular fictions in various forms and style in order to meet the needs of society.

Thus, it is not surprising that many TV series with gay themes appeared in the 2000s as a change in the taste of society (Marcus, 2005; and Benschhoff, 2006). This could indicate that many people have slowly seen the gay scenes in the mass media as something that no longer needs to be debated to be blamed because they have learned to see differences in sexual orientation as something that needs to be respected. This condition according to some researchers could encourage the growth of tolerance towards the gay community (Wood, 2003; Bernstein, 2004). Thus, it is not surprising that many heterosexuals do not mind having gay people as friends and even based on the study conducted by (Aberson & Dora, 2003), heterosexuals who have many gay friends have a tendency to show tolerance towards differences in sexual orientation.

The increase of tolerance for differences in sexual orientation could also reduce negative attitudes as well as discrimination toward gay people (Herek, 2009). This could gradually eliminate the stereotypes about homosexuals that have been formed long ago. It is essential because according to (Madon, 1997) stereotypes have the potential to create problems in society. All of those conditions have gradually encouraged more and more gay people to reveal their true selves or to come out to their family, friends and colleagues. The ideas above point to a relationship between the emergence of gay-themed TV series and the development of gender and sexuality knowledge, especially among younger generations. This means that the appearance of gay themes in American television series can be viewed as something that represents the progress of science.

### 3.2 The Strength of Minority

The existence of dominating power which is often called as majority is something inevitable in social life. Suppression by the majority against the minorities is definitely unavoidable. This is experienced by gay people in the US. Both hetero-normative and heterosexism are principles that only recognize heterosexuality as the ultimate truth while others sexual orientations must be wrong and abnormal (Harper & Schneider, 2003 ; Herek, 2009). Thus, living as a minority in sexual orientation has never been easy for gay community. However, it has made gay people learn to survive in the midst of the hetero-normative culture dominance and hetero-sexism principle.

The right way to maintain their existence was by speaking out, criticizing and protesting as activists or taking part in associations. Gay activists in the United States began to emerge and struggle in the 1960s (Eaklor, 2008). However, gay characters and theme were still prohibited and even if some gay characters appeared in TV series, their role was far from being portrayed with a positive image (Benschhoff, 2006; Fejes, 2008). Even so, the role of gay activists cannot be underestimated because over time, they have become more persistent in fighting for the rights of LGBT people in society. The struggle spirit of gay activists inflamed by the Stonewall incident in 1969 seemed to be great contribution. The mass media continue to cover news related to the gay community at that time (Reed, 2007).

As a result, it encouraged gay people in the 1970s in the US to be more open and fight for the freedom to express themselves and appear in in public places (Robinson, 2008). That is what (Jones & Bego, 2009) called the disco era which symbolized the liberation of gay people showing their true identity. The success of gay people in fighting for acceptance in society seemed to be fruitful. This can be seen from the establishing of GLAAD in 1985 (The Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation) which continues to play its role today (Eaklor, 2008 ; Baim, 2013). The spirit of the activist movement grew bigger in the 1990s to criticize and protest so that gay rights would be protected by the state. This condition was also explained by (Tully, 2000, and (Stewart, 2003) the era of 1990 was considered a time when views on gender equality spread fast, especially among LGBT activists. Thus, activities initiated by gay activists helped contribute to society's acceptance of gay



people. In line with this, (Reumann, 2005)'s research also found that because of the massive struggle of LGBT activists, gay people began to be seen as normal in the US.

The spirit of freedom was then carried on into the 2000s with more gay characters and themes emerging. Regarding this, (Eaklor, 2008) even found that the number of gay characters in television series increased significantly in the 2000s. The US version of *Queer as Folk* for example, pictured many story lines about gay issues in American urban life which was full of scenes. Some studies pointed out that *Queer as Folk* was considered a modern, wild, and realistic American gay TV series in 2000 (Marcus, 2005; Kooijman, 2008 ; Goltz, 2011). Thus, when it is compared to the condition of American television in the eras gay themes were strictly restricted, *Queer as Folk* can be considered a major revolution in the world of American television. This is in line with the opinion of Becker (2006) that scenes from kissing, having sex , same-sex marriage to child adopting in gay TV series such as *Queer as Folk* were watched by many families in America.

The data obtained through a study of a number of relevant to the discussed issue showed that the popularity of gay TV series in the US also seemed to be supported by celebrities in the world of entertainment. It is true that celebrities may have a strong influence on their fans. This opinion was also expressed by Robinson (2008) in his research that the American famous female singer Lady Gaga influenced her fans to support LGBT people. In the year 2000, for instance, the same idea was also pointed out by (Streitmatter, 2009) that Hollywood celebrities such as Tom Hanks and Robin Williams showed their support for LGBT community to fight for their rights. Therefore, the message those celebrities convey can be something that could change their fans' views on homosexuality.

Additionally, according to (Harper & Schneider, 2003) it was the support from those celebrities that would give even greater enthusiasm to the gay community including the activists to appear in public place and work hard to fight for their rights. Moreover, the study conducted by Jones & Bego (2009) revealed that the conditions that were considered to have aroused the enthusiasm of gay men in the US in the 1990s encouraged male and female celebrities to express their identity as homosexuals, for instance, Elton John, Rosie O'Donnell, Alan Cummings, Rupert Everett, Tracy Chapman, and so on. This step was later followed by even more celebrities who claimed to be homosexuals. This condition is explained by Baim (2013) as a significant change in the media world because the mass media covered a lot of news about gay community so that gay issues started being popular.

This condition can bring an impact on the emergence of gay-themed TV series. Thus, gay characters started playing the role of protagonists such as heroes, famous people, etc. (Jones & Bego, 2009). Besides, they were portrayed in the TV series as characters with good knowledge and skills in fashion (Rudy & Adhitya, 2022) and this provided an opportunity for TV stations to create a reality show program featuring fashion expertise gay men to help people look more attractive such as the popular TV reality shows *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (2003) and *Queer Eye* (2018). Thus, if it is compared to the images of gay characters in the 60s, 70s, 80s an 90s, it is obvious that the image of gay characters in American gay TV series of 2000s has changed from a negative image to a positive one. It seems that the gay-themed TV series does not only provide entertainment for gay people, but its presence also indicates that there have been efforts by gay people involved in the world of entertainment media to show sexual diversity to society.

Those points seemed to provide a good opportunity for the gay theme to rise and become phenomenal in hetero-normative society. In the end, gay characters or themes that appear in the media are slowly being seen as something common (Sender, 2005; Gamson, 2014; Cummins & Gordon, 2006). Therefore, from a representational point of view, the struggles of gay activists starting

from the movement for resistance at the time of the Stonewall incident, the disco era for self-expression, the founding of GLAAD and the support from celebrities can actually represent the strength of minority. Thus, the struggle carried out by the gay community as a minority in the midst of hetero-normative dominance turned out to be successful. It proves that the success paved the way for gay themes to bloom in the American television series.

### 3.3 The State Support

The emergence of gay-themed TV series also represented support from the state. American government's concern towards minorities such as LGBT community also seemed to be one of the factors in the increasing presence of gay contents in American television series. Support from the state was more evident in the 1990s. According to Prono (2008) and (Opalewski, 2012) many studies suggested that the era of Bill Clinton with his policy removing the prohibition against gay people to join the US army had a major impact on the gay community there. Although in the 1990s gays were allowed to join the US military on the principle of "don't ask don't tell", the condition was certainly not as free as it was in the 2000s. However, by allowing gay people to serve the state as military soldiers, based on Stewart's (2003) point of view, there was an increasing number of organizations as well as media started supporting LGBT people at that time. It was the 1990s era that could be considered the period which encouraged the emergence of gay themes in the media on a large scale. It was also confirmed by Marcus (2005) in his study that in 1990s gay themes with gay characters on television were pictured without any complicated problems.

Gay themes and characters that were increasingly broadcast in TV series would raise government's consciousness to protect the LGBT community in the US, especially since they have experienced discriminatory treatment, pressure, bullying, and persecution. Violence against gays often occurred in the US. One of the most heartbreaking persecution incidents of a gay man was the case of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming, 1998. The existence of people with mental disorders such as homophobes is a threat to the safety of gay men and this happened to Matthew Shepard who was brutally murdered. That incident is considered by the state as one of the most gruesome murders of a gay man (Becker, 2006 ; Baim, 2013). After 11 years later, the US government under the leadership of President Obama finally passed a law to prevent hate crimes. However, this is still seen as a great progress in terms of protecting LGBT people.

Entering the era of 2000s, America underwent major changes in terms of fulfilling equal rights for homosexuals. The early 2000s is said to be one of the most significant periods in the history of homosexuality in the US. It is recorded in the history that gay couples in the US received legal protection. A number of studies conducted by several researchers namely Stewart (2003), Hudson (2005), and (Eaklor, 2008) expressed the same opinion that with Vermont being the first state in the US which allowed homosexual couples to be legalized in civil union in July 2000, the state proved that the protection of gay rights was also their concern. Based on the studies by Burns (2005), Hudson (2005), and Kingston (2013) , The state of Massachusetts took a firm stance in 2004 to fulfil and protect the rights of homosexuals by legalizing same-sex marriage for the first time in the history of United States. It also influenced other states to do the same until same-sex marriage was legally announced in the entire United States under the administration of President Obama on June 26, 2015.

An important point to understand is that the legalization of same-sex marriage by the supreme court of the USA seems to be the culmination of all events related to the struggle of gay people. Frost (2015) said that the decision was an equal marriage for everyone. With regard to equal rights in marriage, several studies from Stewart (2003) and Kingston (2013) also suggested that gay people

have goals and visions that are not much different from what heterosexuals do. So, after the same-sex marriage was declared legal in the law of the USA, many gay couples entered into marriages and this phenomenon gradually became commonplace in the eyes of American society.

As a result, major change occurred in American television. Since then, mainstream American TV series have also included gay characters and their storylines such as *The Catch* (2016), *Legend's of Tomorrow* (2016), *Gone* (2017), *Prison Break: Resurrection* (2017), *A Million Little Things* (2018), *The Rookie* (2018), *Daybreak* (2019) *Council of Dads* (2020), *Bridgerton* (2020), *Gossip Girl* (2021), *Chucky* (2021), *Interview with the Vampire* (2022), *House of Dragon* (2022), etc. It is not only gay-themed TV series that have gay characters, but non-gay themed TV series also portray gay characters. American families who enjoy watching TV series would find gay characters, gay couple and their love storylines in several episodes of the series.

Thus, the conditions described above are perceived as support that comes from the government or the state which is definitely beneficial to the gay community in the US. The state policy that guarantees the security and rights of gay people can actually influence people's perspectives and attitude towards gay community. As a result, gay people can be more open to their families, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Thus, support and protection of the US for LGBT people have eventually provided access for many gay people to be able to freely work in any field without having anxiety, fright, and discriminatory treatment. This change led Jones & Bego (2009) as well as Streitmatter (2009) to observe that gay people began to show their identity by working in various fields such as art, medical treatment, education, business, entertainment intended to make people understand about gay community better and at the same time strengthening their existence in the US.

#### 3.4 The marketing strategy targeting gays as promising consumers

The existence of the gay community in the United States has been increasingly seen in many aspects of life (Tully, 2000). In the media world, they have started being considered as part of American culture. Many non-gay TV series have begun depicting gay characters and their stories to attract audiences. Apart from attracting gay audiences, gay themes and characters are also watched by heterosexual people. This can be proven from a number of TV series that include gay characters to impress audiences. The question that often arises is whether gay TV series have a good selling point.

From the review of some relevant literature, there have been several studies on gay community as promising consumers in the business world. Sander (2005), for instance, in her research found that the survey results indicated that gay consumers were perceived as loyal consumers of industries that supported them. This business opportunity has actually started to appear in the 90s with coming of cable television and home videos with gay contents specially for the gay community (Benshoff, 2006 ; Becker, 2006). The emergence of gay cable TV at that time indicates that a lot of gay people were interested in watching gay contents because they did not get it in TV programs on mainstream channels. However, in recent times gay themes and characters have been frequently shown on American television. It reflects that those gay themes are encouraged to be made into a certain genre in TV series or films for business purposes.

People believe that everything appears on television has a selling point because entertainment media is always related with business. It is true to say that gay TV series could appeal to the gay community and it would also be profitable for the producers of the TV series. However, the question of whether TV programs with gay contents or themes are only attractive to gay people is actually not something that needs to be debated. TV show *Queer Eye for The Straight Guy*, for instance, became



popular in 2003. Prono (2008) argued that such a TV program basically showed that gay and straight people can easily blend together and there is no threat or obstacle whatsoever regarding matters of sexuality. This shows that in reality there are still many people who also feel entertained by watching gay TV series.

After the official recognition of same-sex marriage by the state, the presence of gay people in the United States was even stronger. It is not surprising that the gay-themed television series no longer promotes the gay struggle for equal rights like it did during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Related to the points described above, it has indeed been proven the emergence of American TV cables with gay contents from the start could actually indicate that gay community have become a 'business opportunity' in the eyes of business people. They have been targeted by cable TV producers to become new audiences (Rohlinger, 2002; Marcus, 2005; Eaklor, 2008). Since a lot of gay people feel entertained by the presence of gay characters in television series played by good-looking and well-built actors (Streitmatter, 2009; Wheeler-Quinnell, 2010). Findings acquired from a number of studies related to the targeting of gay people as new consumers in the US market can actually reveal that industries understand that diversity in American society contains economic values (Chasin, 2000). Business people involved in the production of TV series or movies see this as a good opportunity to market the products that gay community would find attractive and that they would be interested in buying. Before the era of 2000s gay people from various professions especially those in the field of entertainment media, those who worked behind the screen, gay artists and others put efforts to bring up gay themes and characters in TV series to promote equal rights for gay people (Streitmatter, 2009), but now, the increasing number of TV series which give as much space as possible to gay characters and their storylines to grow, can be perceived as a way to lift up the number of viewers – by making the gay community one of the target consumers.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

There are several basic points that can be concluded from the results and discussion above. The emergence of TV series with gay characters as the main characters and gay themes can be perceived as a major change in American television in the 2000s because in the previous eras, gay-themed TV series were strictly restricted and were not even allowed to appear on American television. Gay-themed TV series that appeared quite a lot in the 2000s represented several conditions. The first was the progress of science and knowledge referring to the influence of the development of knowledge on gender and sexuality among the younger generation. The second was the strength of minority shown by gay people through their struggle as activists to criticize and protest so that their rights would be recognized and the influence of the celebrities' support that could change people's perceptions toward gay people. The third is support from the state reflected through the policies of American government in the 2000s to protect and guarantee the rights of the minorities. The fourth is a new target in the business world making gay community as a promising consumer.

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