
Borgeson, Kevin and Robin Valeri


This article by Borgeson and Valeri is an examination of the attitudes surrounding gay men who identify with the skinhead movement, by analyzing the responses of six interviewees in the context of previous studies done in the area. There are slight distinctions made for each participant, as there are varying extents to which each man identified with the two communities: gay and skin. The piece discusses this variation in the melding of identities mainly through the lens of two different models. The first, the Ecological Model of Gay Male Identity (Alderson, 2003) is concerned with the different stages of coming out, and the levels of acceptance required for each. The second model plays with the dynamic between the gay and skin identities a bit more, utilizing a constructionist view (Goffman, 1959; Nagel, 1994; Spector & Kitsuse, 1987) of how dominant the different parts of the total identity are in different situations. This model seems to be based in the ideas of social constructionism in that it acknowledges the affects that social contexts have on the formation and presentation of an identity.

The piecing together of these identities is heavily influenced by the gender policing that goes on within the skinhead communities. The participants felt varying degrees of comfort/threat in the crowds they associated with and in their family environments, leading to varying degrees of “outness” to these groups. The threat is cultivated by the enforcement of the facets of “traditional” masculinity valued by skins: aggression and violence, combined with a certain aesthetic. Individuals are targeted by the community, or rather by particularly militant portions of the group, for being too effeminate to fit in. This ties into the concept of “fag discourse,” (Bridges and Pascoe 2016) where skins and non-skins alike are targeted in homophobic and violent ways, regardless of their sexuality, but rather due to their perceived lack of acceptable masculinity. At one point in the article, it was even stated by one of the participants, who is indeed gay, that an effeminate gay man is the perfect target for what he called a “boot party,” or a drawn out session of hitting a victim to the ground and then kicking them, with the iconic Doc Marten boots of the skin identity, until they cease attempting to get back up (Borgeson & Valeri, 2015) sentences is too long and complex; try to streamline. Acceptable masculinity is rewarded with a sense of belonging in the community, whereas a lack thereof is punished, often brutally.

The main point of concern warranting note in this piece is the noticeably small sample size analyzed to make these broad conclusions. A method called the snowball sampling technique was employed to find participants, leading to a very small (six) and localized (most knew each other or had connections) grouping of interviewees. This is, of course, understandable to an extent as there may not be a large population of gay skinheads willing to give their firsthand accounts of the inner-workings of their communities and identities.

References Cited

Alderson, K. G.


Goffman, E.


Nagel, J.


Spector, M., & Kitsuse, J. I.


Reference is in same format as syllabus (e.g., American Antiquity style): yes no minor issues see Alderson above

Entry is concise and informative about the content of the article: Excellent good adequate needs work

Entry connects the resource reading to the core readings: Excellent good adequate needs work

Entry shows evidence of critical thought: Excellent good adequate needs work

Writing style: Excellent good adequate needs work