

---

# STAR INTERVIEW WITH JOSH GAMSON

## 10/10/2003

---

PREPARED BY HEATHER BURGESS  
*University of Kansas*

**STAR:** Tori Barnes-Brus, Heather Burgess, and Brian Tongier  
**JG:** Josh Gamson

**STAR [HB]:** Well, first of all, we were wondering a little bit about the research you're doing now about media and consumption and sexuality. What brought that for you, how did you get started with that?

**JG:** The one I'm talking about in the colloquium, or the later talk?

**STAR [HB]:** Either one.

**JG:** Because they're both different. The colloquium talk is sort of the beginning of a project I've been working on for, I guess, a year and a half now—it's taking me a long time to get the data analyzed—that was sparked by, I think it was sparked by an e-mail that I'll quote to you guys in the colloquium, written by an activist, by a guy who used to be publisher of *OUT* magazine, about the specter of monopoly in gay and lesbian press. And it sounded just like the things people were saying when AOL and Time Warner merged. You know, every time there is a big merger, there is the specter of monopoly from left-wing media critics. And I can identify with that side of media criticism, but I thought that was just kind of weird for a couple of reasons. First of all, the idea that gay and lesbian culture was developed enough that we could have our own media giant was funny—I'm used to just the little bar newspapers. So whereas, on the one hand this is a weird, hopeful sign—almost a backward hopeful sign—that we

could get powerful enough so that you could have your own monopoly, I thought it was interesting that the assumptions from mainstream media criticism were imported in as concerns for gay and lesbian alternative press, or whatever—non-mainstream press. I started to think about that, whether those were really the same thing, and whether there were reasons to think they would operate differently. So, I started to look into it. Plus, I just didn't think the concerns being imported had necessarily been demonstrated to me. Much as I'm sympathetic to the worries that, when you consolidate ownership in media, you're going to squelch dissent, and you're going to squelch diversity of content and so on—that it's going to narrow the content, and there's going to be censorship, and it's all going to be news that conforms to the interest of the owners, who are going to be just this little tight handful of people. I'm sympathetic to all of that, but I think it's a lot more complicated than that. I hadn't, to that point, seen evidence that that's really what happens, even when mainstream media consolidates ownership. So there are lots of reasons to be—there are things that are weird, or puzzling, and that's how I always start research. There's something off, or kind of nagging about it. So I looked around, and one of the things I did was I researched this instance where—I looked at everything that had been written on the impact of ownership on content—media ownership on media content, and particularly on what people call content diversity. . . . Anyway, there are not consistent findings about that. So I can't even rely on that as a jumping-off point for worrying about gay media consolidation, which has happened. I mean, there is a lot of conglomeration of ownership of gay press, so it wasn't that I was doubting that empirical fact, but doubting the imputed effect on content. And then we decided to look at it, and sort of try to get a before and after picture—before consolidation of ownership and after, looking at the content of gay and lesbian press in one way or another. So that's where it came from, originally, just from knowing there had been a lot of mergers among gay media companies, knowing there was something creepy about that, but also not knowing what that was that was creepy about it.

**STAR [TBB]:** Can you talk a little about diversity in representation in the media? You're going to be talking about *-Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* at 4:00, right? But can you talk about the portrayal of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender folks on other reality shows?

**JG:** Yeah. I think the thing that I won't talk about today that would be interesting to talk about as a comparison—but was too hard, and you know, I'm writing this from scratch, so I'm kind of trying to keep it focused and limited—would be reality programming that's oriented toward youngsters. MTV, and some Showtime—like *Freshman Diaries*, have you watched that all? I've just watched a little tiny bit of it; I think it's a Showtime show, *-Freshman Diaries*. But, you know, *The Real World*, which really is the precursor to all of these other shows, has been—it's a genre where there's been—I'm not sure why it's so much more open. But it is. And you can tell me why you think it is. But the visibility there of young, gay and lesbian people, in particular—sometimes bisexual—has been, I don't know, I'll say it's been more pronounced than elsewhere, for one thing. Earlier, there was Pedro Zamora a long time ago, when you were probably—how long ago was that already?

**STAR [HB]:** Probably, like 1995.

**JG:** Yeah, it was almost ten years ago. So, you know there was Pedro, and there was that guy, Norman, from one of the years. And there was something about the genre. I'm going to talk about genre conventions today as one of the things I think is important to look at, and somehow the genre convention got established that you need diversity in that group, either just because you want to have interesting interactions between people who are different, which works for reality TV, or some other reason. I don't think that it was ideological commitment, but probably more like it's a certain set of images of hipness or something like that. You can help me out anytime you want—this is all speculation. I don't know why. I haven't talked to the producers of that show, but it looks like there's a certain hipness element that leads you to mix it up, and then there's a desire to have drama—for a certain kind of drama, you

have to mix it up. That's meant that there's been some real well-drawn characters, you know, some pretty complicated characters—gay, lesbian, and bisexual characters on those kinds of reality shows that I don't think is really what you're seeing on some of these newer ones that seem to be much narrower, like the ones this year, the Bravo ones that I'm going to talk about today. And so that's interesting, a different audience is being targeted, probably, a younger audience. And it's continued, I think, on *The Real World*, hasn't it? You haven't watched?

**STAR [HB]:** I think they've gotten more interested in making sure that there's controversy, so trying to get someone that can be drawn as racist and then getting a black person together so they can scream at each other.

**JG:** But it's the same phenomenon for race or whatever else, whatever kind of difference. That's not all bad, when you bring in some people who—you know, I'm not worried about the visibility of racists in this country, I think they have enough visibility, and it's fine. I mean, everybody should get to talk, but I think they've had enough play. But, black people or anti-racist people who are going to say why they're offended by that or whatever, just being able to see that—where else do you see it? You see it in liberal, movie of the week, after school special kinds of stuff, where it's very scripted and predictable, and then on these places like TV talk shows and *The Real World* where the genre is very conflict-oriented. And you know, that's actually important for people to be seen saying those things, people who aren't politicians, in public.

**STAR [TBB]:** I hear a lot from my students, every time we talk about social problems, that age is really a factor, and they consider themselves *much* more diverse than past generations, but then they turn around and say that the media doesn't affect us.

**JG:** “It affects everybody else, but it doesn't affect me.”

**STAR [TBB]:** Right. So we've got this attitude, but at the same time, you could argue that it is allowing them to be much more open-minded.

**JG:** I actually think that's true. I do. I think there's an environment created by who is in your everyday life, and for a lot of people, that's who is on their TV. That's part of their everyday life, and it makes a difference to see people, especially in three-dimensions, not just—and some of those characters, not on talk shows so much, but on some of those shows, where there are ongoing, hour-long—edited, but hour-long—time with these people over however many weeks, ten weeks or something like that. You do feel like these people are in your life. Yeah, I think it makes a difference. I don't think it affects in some direct way, I think it's just what's the environment that you're living in? Who do you feel like you know? And what have you been exposed to that makes you more or less scared of different kinds of people? And I'd be surprised if students didn't agree with that, actually. I think they say, "It didn't affect me," as in, "It didn't change my mind." Because it's too top-down, they're worried about other people, but they know that they have agency, and they know they have brains, and they know it hasn't worked that way—where it's just changed their minds or something. But there is some major generational difference, especially in the area of sexuality but probably also in race and ethnicity. But I'm sure some of it has to do with a TV environment. I don't know if anyone's researched that, or how you would even demonstrate that what I'm saying is true because I'm talking about an environment that is kind of amorphous.

**STAR:** [TBB] Along the lines of the "It doesn't affect me, but..." that we've been talking about, we also do a lot of talking about stereotypes, and as you talked about in *Freaks Talk Back*, the visibility of—or the portrayal—that quantity doesn't actually mean quality, is the argument. But I get a lot of the argument, with my students, that TV is just for fun, if it depicted real life, it would be boring and no one would watch. [HB] And so therefore, if you talk about—like sometimes I present results of content analysis studies that say, "This percentage of programs represent people of color," or—so, the students say, "So what if there aren't working class people on TV? That would be boring; that would be depressing. TV is there for entertainment, does it have to reflect real life?" And so I guess the question is—

**JG:** Does it have to reflect real life?

**STAR [HB]:** Is it boring if it reflects real life? If it doesn't, are we hurting people because of this environment that they're in because of the culture? What do you think?

**JG:** Well, I think that they're right that it's weird to expect commercial television to be operating as something other than commercial television. And I think it's naïve to think that it's suddenly going to turn into—so I think that's one thing. I also think, in a general sense, that culture almost never represents real life. You know, it's always got the perspective of the presenters, and the needs of the presenters, built into it, and so on. So I think they're right on that side of things. But are they right that it's boring to show different people? I think they're right that it would be boring to look at the demographics of the population and try to have a certain number of shows—I mean, I think that's a horribly uncreative way to go about making things. So, from a creative point of view, that seems like, sort of, death. And I think it would lead to some boring stuff. But I don't think they're right that somehow showing working-class people is inherently boring, or something like that. And that's not why there are a dearth of working-class images on TV. That critique is wrong from the students, if they're saying that there are very few images of working-class people, or, let's say black lesbians, or whatever—some group that's not very well represented or portrayed in a very narrow way, that the reason is because other ways are boring. That's inaccurate. That's not why. That's not an analysis of why those images are being suppressed. So that's what I would say to them. If you dispense with that as a reason, what's left? So you say, yeah, you're right; we're not trying to get a reflection of the demographics of the population in society, in so-called reality—whatever . . . that is—and this is the TV, and we're going to try to get them to match. Yes, agreed, we're not going to do that. But if there's distortion going on over here, one, where does it come from, and two, why does it matter? And I've only talked about one thing, but the second was, does the distortion matter? Or is just, like, well, it's all fun, which is the familiar argument from the students, right? “It doesn't really mat-

ter; everyone knows it's just entertainment." It matters what is available for people to see and think about in the world. You can say that it doesn't matter if you don't feel—it's easy to say if you don't feel like you've been ripped off. So, you know, I guess one of the things I would do in a classroom like that is see if the people who don't feel visible say the same thing. They may not speak up, but I would have a hard time believing that the people who have seen themselves being trashed on TV, or who, they are nowhere to be found—people like them, either racially, sexually, class-wise, or some other form of identity who don't see themselves—I would be really surprised if they say, "It really doesn't matter if I'm invisible, it's all for fun." Or, it doesn't matter that people like me are presented as idiots, or really, incredibly extra-intelligent because it's all for fun. So, I'm familiar with that response, and it's important to try to break people out of it, I think.

**STAR [TBB]:** Well, that's something that we just struggle with our students a lot. I don't know if our students are different from yours or not.

**JG:** I've worked with a lot of different student populations. I didn't hear a lot at Yale—it certainly wasn't hard to get people to imagine that entertainment can matter. The other thing that I always say to people that I didn't mention, or that I try to say, is—just because you're saying it matters doesn't mean you're saying it's a deep experience. I think that's one of the things where you lose credibility as someone who's analyzing popular culture or TV, is to be out of touch with what the actual experience of being in the presence of the TV is or sitting there and watching it. But if you claim to people that sitting there and watching it is a really deep experience, and a really important cognitive experience for the viewer, and they know that's not what it is for someone or anyone else they've ever encountered, then who's going to listen to you? You don't know what you're talking about; you don't know what the experience is; you're attributing depth to something that is superficial. So I always try to get across to people—and this is also for other scholars, I think—What happens if you start off from the assumption that watching TV is generally a pretty thin

experience? I don't know what other adjectives to use, but not cognitively complicated and deep. What happens then? How do you then say what is important about it and significant about it? That sometimes helps with students, for you to acknowledge that you're not saying that it's important because you're saying that TV is, experientially, complicated and deep, but because it's what's available. It's a setting for what's available to be thought about, talked about, and so on. It can be socially significant without being, personally, deep. Sometimes that's hard to explain or get across, but I think that's a big mistake that people make—both teachers and scholars—when you act like what you're saying is that TV and a lot of pop culture are deeply felt. Because I know I don't watch TV like that, and I'm supposed to be watching TV like that.

**STAR [BT]:** WSe were interested in some of the archetypes of the depictions of homosexuals that are present in the media, vis-à-vis reality shows. For example, Richard, who came up in the first season of *Survivor*, and as the discussion went on, I began to think of the ex-Marine, I've forgotten what his name was, and the sort of confrontational roles.

**JG:** Right, right. Rudy.

**STAR [BT]:** And how that fits in with *The Real World* notion of having people butt heads.

**JG:** Right. I think that's the strategy. I think that's the basic programming strategy, when you're casting. It's a casting strategy. And I really doubt—I haven't talked to the producers about it, but I've talked to enough producers about enough TV to feel like I'm pretty confident that that's what they're looking for. That, and attractive. It's much more gone toward—I watched the recent *Survivor*, the new one, and it's gone much more toward being mostly about physical—they just all look like models. So I don't know why they moved away from that get-people-fighting. Maybe they're just more confident that they can get the fighting anyway, that they don't need to use social difference to get it, they'll just get it automatically, which is kind of true. Of course, you're exhausted, you're going to fight with anybody, you know? And you don't need more than indi-

vidual differences to do that. But anyway, the earlier one—so what were you asking about Rudy and Richard? There’s certainly a use of gay people that’s probably going to wear off soon; they’ll have to find a status that’s more controversial soon to get that in various forms of television. It still sort of works on talk shows, but not as much. You can’t just bring a gay person on and expect the whole audience to turn on them and be bigoted and get your program that way. They have to have a little bit more than that at this point. You have to have betrayed somebody. You have to have stolen somebody’s husband. You know, that stuff, so it moves itself along, makes itself obsolete or something. So that’s one use, and I think some of the things that I’m going to talk about this afternoon are uses, particularly now, of gay men. There are sort of stereotypes there, you know. The newer ones are counter-stereotypes. You’re still being used, but to some degree everybody’s being used on those shows. You know, I’m not *shocked* and amazed by the exploitation or something; it’s just that if you’re still in the process of becoming visible as a group, it’s more important. And gay people are still in that process, and I think are particularly in a stage where we’re popular in the culture, and that’s a particularly tricky period of becoming visible, and that’s what I’ve been interested in lately.

**STAR [HB]:** Have you noticed other reality shows where the attempt at invisibility makes sexuality visible? And I’ll give you an example of what I mean by that. I have this weird obsession with HGTV, and there are all of these redecorating shows, or people buying houses, and it will be like, two women buying a house together, or two men redecorating their home, but there will be no mention of what their relationship is to one another. But it’s painfully obvious what that relationship is, they’re just thinking—maybe you won’t notice.

**JG:** Do you think they think you won’t notice?

**STAR [HB]:** I don’t know. What do you think?

**JG:** I don’t watch those shows, so I don’t know. You know, I actually think it’s more progressive than maybe-they-won’t-notice. I think it’s more that—

**STAR [HB]:** It should go without saying?

**JG:** Yes, I think it's incidental. One of the things that's happening that I think is positive, over the years, or over the last decade, is that it's become less something that needs to be mentioned. And I don't think they're using that as, ooh, let's get a little extra titillation in here by using something taboo. It's totally not taboo; it's part of the normalization, which is one of the things that I'll be talking about today. It's part of the normal and normaler imagines. You know, they're just like us—straight people. They're saying, they're just like you to the audience. How are they just like you? They're just like you because they too have homes; they too are homeowners who can learn how to decorate their homes. They're just like you, almost class-wise. And that class similarity makes the sexual difference less relevant and less worth mentioning.

**STAR [HB]:** I think I just noticed this because often, when it's a heterosexual married couple, they'll say, "This is Bob and Susan, and they've been married five years, and now they're going to buy their first home." And that's always absent when—

**JG:** Is it? Because you'd think they would just say they've been together for four years or whatever.

**STAR [HB]:** That part, I've found just from casual observation, is not present if it's not a heterosexual couple. That's why I was thinking—

**JG:** They may be being a little cautious. That sounds like a having it both ways kind of thing. That for the people who are going to be really freaked out, you don't want to mention it, but for the people who are just like, well, my next-door neighbors are gay and their house is fabulous, you know, and here they go. But I don't know. That's a question for a producer. A lot of these questions are questions for people who make these shows. But I'm assuming that I know the answers, too, because I'm sort of producerly in my head, but I'm sure I'm wrong about a lot of them. What else was I going to say? A lot of this stuff seems to me, and I haven't gotten really clear

about it yet, but much of this gay visibility has to do with social class. I'll try to get at it ultimately, in the talk later, but I don't think it comes through because I'm talking about other things at the same time, but—I think that's really what's tricky about this stage of becoming normalized because you're becoming normalized in this class-specific way. And what's becoming visible is the class element of it because class is not marked as much in this culture. You know, it's coded, but it's so class-coded. So there are a lot of class and sexuality dynamics . . .

**STAR [HB]:** It's especially interesting, given that consumer element. I've done some research on media and adolescent girls, and you know they become really important in the media when people realize this is a market. So is it the same thing with gays and lesbians, like when people realize—

**JG:** Yeah, but on the new shows, I don't think it's primarily aimed at gay market niche. I think it's the same basic set of images you get if you look at the gay market niche, like if you look at gay glossy magazines and the advertising in that. The people look really similar to the guys on *Queer Eye*, to the Fab 5, and the guys on *Boy Meets Boy*. They look very similar, but I think they're mostly targeting straight audiences. Especially straight women. But I don't think, in the mainstream TV case that it's about targeting gay audiences. Maybe sort of *Queer as Folk* on Showtime, with the dual strategy of we'll get the straight women, and some straight men, and then we'll get the gay audience, gay males in particular. So I think that in a way the discovery of the gay market niche came earlier than what's going on in mainstream TV, but they dovetail really nicely. They go together really tightly, and it's all about who benefits from the particular images you're putting out. It's all about the money in the end. And I think that's something to watch out for.

**STAR [TBB]:** We've been talking a lot about gay men, and then lesbians—it seems a lot like in the past it's been more socially acceptable. But now you mention that it's hip; homosexual men are hot now. So what do you think—well, where are the lesbians? Are they still out there?

**JG:** That's a good question. I've been thinking about that. I don't know what is going on with that. Well, there is a lesbian-specific show that is coming up soon, so we'll see if that succeeds and then gets imitators because that's just the way that things are in TV. But what do I really think. Some of it I think has to do with preexisting stereotypes and images of a group, and how they can be mobilized. So, for instance, in doing a makeover show, I just don't think you're going to get *Lesbian Eye for the Straight Gal* because there isn't a preexisting stereotype of lesbians as particularly fashion-conscious, or as great consumers, or all about product and all of that, whereas there is that preexisting stereotype of gay men that can be used very efficiently in a makeover show. You just slot them in. People already think that makeup, hair, interior designers, and "culture." So, some of that—and a lot of those are class stereotypes, too.

**STAR [BT]:** Food.

**JG:** Food and *wine*. But, you know, the stereotype of gay men as having especially good taste, and as being especially classy, they're already there to be used very efficiently. And so I think that maybe the preexisting stereotypes of lesbians make them less easily used in the existing genres. You know, you could have, I suppose, a *Queer Eye for the Lesbian Gal*, or *Straight Eye for the Lesbian Gal*. But it would all be about making her more feminine. So you would have to use that stereotype. So some of it's that, and some of it's timidity, probably, on the part of the producers. Well, do I think that's true? I don't know? Do you have any ideas about why? I suppose one hypothesis would be because—like what you were saying before—because there's more fluidity, and more acceptance of woman-to-woman intimacy in the culture, that that's not as interesting somehow as a program. But I don't know why that doesn't seem right to me. It just doesn't seem accurate.

**STAR [TBB]:** It seems like, from what you were saying, there are still these stereotypes of lesbians, but then there's also the male gaze going on. So like you were saying, it would have to fall not in the butch-femme stereotype, but more in the lipstick lesbian—

**JG:** Femme-femme. Right, it's going to appeal to straight men. And that you've certainly had, in film and TV. When you get those images, they're usually that—again, it's a sort of a counter-stereotyping strategy.

**STAR [TBB]:** We were talking about, on *Will & Grace*, Karen's character.

**JG:** I love Karen.

**STAR [TBB]:** So do we. You know, as a heterosexual woman, married to Stan, and yet always wanting to grab somebody's breast. You know, and so, are they getting it both ways?

**JG:** She's just crazy; she has just no boundaries at all. And everything is so bounded; all the categories are so bounded all the time on TV. They work with those really simple categories, and I like that she's just, you know, what was the last one? "You're cute; do you want to make out?" To that blond woman, what was her name?

**STAR [?]:** Mira Sorvino.

**JG:** And it's just funny—humor allows a lot of things to slip in to the culture, so I just appreciate that she is crazy. Basically. And it's not presented that she's crazy because—maybe that is part of her craziness—she'll just sleep with anybody.

**STAR [TBB]:** She's also an alcoholic and a drug addict.

**JG:** I don't even know why, but she's kind of a gay man, when you come right down to it. The image is like, she gives these little quips that means she comes off more like Jack and Will than she is like Grace. I don't know. I don't have anything smart to say about Karen, I just like her.

**STAR [BT]:** I wanted to bring up, with the distinction you made between the lesbian stereotypes, the different stereotypes within each category of sexual orientation, about the depiction of lesbians in what I call the *MAXIM*-esque media. You know, the *Girls Gone Wild* glorification of lesbians, not just their sexuality, but to a certain extent, sex. How lesbian sex is glorified, while male ho-

mosexual sex is vilified. How in the sort of frat boy world lesbian sex is popular because it titillates, but gay male sex is invisible in media and vilified in discussion.

**JG:** I do think that's true. But that will be changing, I do think. I mean, some of that is—what are you going to do? That kind of media, and those kinds of magazines, are all about the sexual availability of women to men—whatever they are. So the possibility that there would be women who are not interested in them, it's pointless to be included in that kind of discourse, so it seems like it's going to be there. I don't know what you can do about that, except for point it out and fight it and have fierce lesbians in the face of the boys who read that stuff saying, you know, I'm not here for your sexual titillation, and that's not us. So on that side of things. The under-sexualization of gay men is really interesting and really also widespread, I think. What do I really think that has to do with? Some of that is really just flat-out, homophobia, a good read on an audience. Just like *MAXIM* knows its audience, cultural producers will be conservative, but they also want to know what's going to freak people out, and what's not going to freak people out. And then some of it is counter-stereotyping. Lesbians have not been stereotyped in the past as promiscuous people, and gay men have, and so you get these attitudes that we're doing socially responsible television by having unsexual images of gay men, very domestic so that we don't risk playing into that stereotype, which we know pisses off the gay media advocates. And I find that weird and I don't like it. I find it patronizing to have people cleaning up images of people I identify with, and so on. But that sort of comes and goes. Showtime's version, the American version of *Queer as Folk* is all about the sex, I mean, the soap opera and the sex. And it's a counter-counter-stereotype. And I thought that, oh good, the writing sucks, but they're not just making out. They're like, rimming on TV. I haven't seen that, and I know people do that. So you know, there's a lot of sort of pendulum swinging, and I don't think it's quite happened with lesbians yet. I don't know why or whether this new show is going to kick something into gear. I really don't. There's a lot of things I don't know, apparently.

**STAR [TBB]:** I wanted to talk a little bit about *Freaks Talk Back*, and a little bit about gender-bending.

**JG:** You'll have to remind me.

**STAR [TBB]:** It's more problematic if you are transgender or bisexual. People who identify as one or the other tend to be not as problematic for the audience. How do you see homosexuality fitting into this argument about gender bending? Is it still there? Is homosexuality still a vehicle of gender bending, I guess?

**JG:** You can keep asking it. I don't quite—

**STAR [BT]:** Is homosexuality enough gender bending for the average heterosexual?

**STAR [HB]:** What I get second-hand is that transgender and bisexuality are more controversial because they're perceived as gender bending. But we were wondering if homosexuality wasn't still seen, in some ways, also as gender bending.

**JG:** You mean public-opinion-wise? I mean, I think yeah. I don't know, actually. I haven't surveyed anyone to know whether that's still there. But the images are more and more eliminating the gender nonconformity association with homosexuality. So the stuff I'm talking about today has none of that in it. There's one scene in *Boy Meets Boy* where there's a drag queen that comes in. It's used to say, like, "We're gay." It's still used to symbolize this is what gay culture is, but everything else is really about men being masculine—conventional masculinity, conventional middle-class desires, which doesn't have to do with the gender-bending case. But conventional masculinity, and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* a little bit less so, because it's the straight men who have to change their gender a little bit. I don't know what's going on with public opinion, I don't know if it still associates cross-dressing with homosexuality. I assume that they still do. And certainly with grass-roots gay culture, it's still a force. People recognize that their sexuality marginalizes them, in other people's eyes, as a different gender, not just a different sexual set of desires.

**STAR [TBB]:** And we were thinking of how you still see a lot of traditionally female characteristics attributed to homosexual males. There's consumption. Women were seen as, you know, middle-class 1950s housewives were THE consumer, right, and now that's on gay men. Jokes in shows like *Will & Grace*; is Jack being a woman?

**JG:** I still think it's a prevalent part of gay male culture as a subculture. And I certainly still see it a lot in the shows. I think that there's a move against it, and I'm suspicious of that move against it both within the subculture and within the larger culture in things like these Bravo shows that are counter-stereotypes because one of the ways they counter-stereotype is to say—they are saying that not all gay men are. But that's not what they mean. They mean that *valuable* gay men are not effeminate, are not women. They're more like Will, and less valuable ones are more like women. And that's old, and tired, and messed-up, and very, very exclusionary. I think the gender-outsiderness of gay culture, until recently, is very important and has a lot in it. I think it's one of the ways that people have expressed—their distastes for the norms of both gender and sexuality. And I think that's an important distaste to encourage.

**STAR [TBB]:** I think the only thing we had left, and maybe we can talk about this later, is that we heard you were doing a biography.

**JG:** I am. I'm actually doing a biography of a gender bending—I wouldn't even saying gender bending, he was just whoever he wanted to be—disco star named Sylvester.

**JG:** I want it to be publicized. I want him to get as much attention as he can get.

**STAR [TBB]:** Well, thank you for you time.