



NETFLIX' *QUEER EYE*: VALID REPRESENTATION OR A PLEASER FOR THE STRAIGHT EYE?

A qualitative research on queer representation in media and lifestyle television through a discourse analysis of the Netflix series *Queer Eye*.

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ABSTRACTAbstract – Nederlands

Netflix bracht in 2018 een gemoderniseerde versie uit van *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, een make-over reeks waarin vijf homoseksuele mannen iedere week een ander persoon hun leven trachten te verbeteren. In deze versie beweerden zij een meer diverse groep van experts te hebben en een breder publiek te willen bereiken om hen aan queer lichamen voor te stellen. Ondanks dat de vertegenwoordiging en diversiteit beter is dan in de originele versie, worden de experts van de show nog steeds voorgesteld als vijf homoseksuele mannen, waardoor maar een klein aspect van de queer gemeenschap vertoond wordt en op een manier getoond wordt die hen toegankelijk maakt voor een heteronormatief publiek. In deze thesis baseer ik mij op de theoretische werken van Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam, Sarah Ahmed en Jasbir Puar om samen met een discoursanalyse van het vijfde seizoen van *Queer Eye* te komen tot een overzicht in hoeverre de heruitgevonden *Queer Eye* effectief queer lichamen vertegenwoordigt.. De analyse focust zich zowel op visuele aspecten als discours en verhaallijnen.

Abstract – English

In 2018, Netflix released a rebranded version of the 2003 series *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, a makeover show in which five gay men tried to improve another person's life every week. With a self-proclaimed more diverse group of experts on a worldwide platform, the producers wanted to introduce an even wider audience to queer bodies on television. Even though the representation and diversity is more than what it used to be, the show's experts are still advertised as five gay men, covering only a small aspect of the queer community and displayed in a way that makes them approachable for a heteronormative audience. In this thesis, by means of a theoretical framework built on the basis of the works of Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam, Sarah Ahmed and Jasbir Puar and a discourse analysis of the fifth season of *Queer Eye*, I explore to what extent the modern-day *Queer Eye* is actually representative of queer bodies. The analysis engages with visual aspects as well as discourse and narratives.

This thesis stems from a brainstormed idea that was turned into an actual project because of the support, advice, guidance, insights and patience of Dr. Ladan Rahbari, and the motivation instilled in me by friends and family, who in moments had more faith in me than I had in myself.

For all help that lead to the realisation of this final product, I am eternally grateful.

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PREFACE

This thesis was written during the COVID-19 pandemic and the university shut down as a result of it. The disturbance of routine and limit in free movement to avoid the spread of the virus heavily impacted my mental health, work schedule and motivation around university as a whole. As for practicalities, my chosen methods were not influenced as they did not involve the input of other people. I did, however, struggle with finding academic resources as the libraries were closed and not all books and sources with useful information are available online. This limited me to an extent in the information I was able to acquire and use in the theoretical framework. A final way in which I believe the pandemic influenced this work, is that queerness and queer identities is a topic I would discuss when around my friends, giving me a less biased view on the topic. Because I was not able to do this, this thesis is, apart from the academic sources used, more heavily influenced by my own experiences and biases around the topic than it would have been if I was able to maintain those conversations.

INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the reality series *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* appeared on American television (Hart, 2004). The series showed five gay men taking over the life of a heterosexual, often conservative, man in an attempt to bring him knowledge about culinary, fashion, grooming, interior and cultural matters that, as by stereotype, gay men are experts on. The five men appointed to run the show and its makeovers were famously dubbed 'The Fabulous Five', a playful alliteration associated with their sexuality and the expected behaviour that comes with being gay. The show's producers, Scout Productions, claimed that their Fabulous Five were "professionals first, gay second" and that they were "not looking to fill stereotypes" (Rutenberg, 2002). However, the initial way in which the series was set up, with the premise of five gay men improving a straight man, already enforces stereotypization as it is. Hart (2004) argues that the show was groundbreaking, as it was the first series to portray gay men in a role that was superior to heterosexual people and with that, to undermine the message of inferiority that had been sent out through earlier US television. On top of that, it was the first time in television history where gay men were not a minority on reality TV. Even though producers claimed the intend of the show was to break stereotypical boundaries that have separated gay men from heterosexual men, the separation is reinforced in conversation, editing and in the idea that straight men need gay men to teach them how to be truly happy or how to please the women they love.

I instantly rejected it. Not all gay men are the purveyors and bearers of culture. Not all gay men are feminine. Not all gay men are like that. Or more importantly, I'm not like that, that's not me.
(Brooks, 2019)

There has been plenty of research done on the 2003 original *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. It is the 2018 reboot of the series, however, that will be the focus of my research due to its claim to more diversity. What was the incentive to reproduce the series fifteen years after its release and most importantly, what makes this reboot different from the original? The producer of the show, David Collins, spoke on wanting to bring back the show to a younger audience, that had not yet met the Fab Five (Martin, 2018). As for differences, he states that he wanted to take the show South, into republican states, to meet completely different people from those in the original production, which took place in New York, and to pay more attention to personal stories of the Fab Five, depicting them as human rather than superheroes swooping in to save those in need of a makeover. Modern Fab Five's Bobby Berk speaks on the importance of getting to know the men in the Fab Five, saying that back in 2003, there was still a taboo about gay guys, whereas they are more accepted now (Burrioni, 2019). Berk says that the biggest difference is that they are not just there to pick a person apart, but to show them what is great about them and to teach them how to love themselves more.

The Netflix show has an 8.6 IMBD rating, has won seven Emmy awards, and has received plenty of other awards and nominations (IMDb.com, 2019). Nevertheless, even though the show has

received quite some praise, criticisms have been formed as well. After the show its release in 2018, several articles surfaced calling out the reboot for its reinforcing of stereotypes and its lack of cultural awareness. These critiques were not only formed on the topic of queer representation but also about poor representation of people with a disability and cultural appropriation and disrespect during a short series in which the Fabulous Five took to Japan (Brooks, 2019; Duguay, 2018; Jackson & Haagaard, n.d.; Kornhaber, 2018; Wakabayashi, 2020) . Jude Dry (2018) introduces her article by stating that *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* may have changed its title, but is still living in the past and remains made with the straight eye in mind as a target audience. With the release of the most recent season, verified twitter user *sageyoungest* took to twitter to remind everyone of a very questionable prank the producers pulled during the first season, where they had Karamo, a black man, pulled over by a police officer (Young, 2020). A lot of the criticism given also discuss the makeover paradigm and the ideals that the Fabulous Five impose onto the people they give a makeover; the idea that someone can be “fixed” to fit into society with the help of five queer persons. In *Queer Minstrels for the Straight Eye* (2005), Muñoz criticizes the original series for representing queerness as an almost exclusively white formation. Although the new Fab Five is now promoted as a diverse group: one person in the group is sexually fluid, one identifies as non-binary, and there is diversity in ethnicity and religion as well, it can be said that they are still a polished group that fit the idea of what queer persons look and act like. Based on this observation, I form the question as to whether the modern-day Fab Five are a proper representation of the queer community, or whether their program continues to reinforce stereotypes and a certain idea of queer people, for example that queer people, specifically men, are fixated on culture and are stylish and can therefore fix the people that are lacking those aspects in the same ways that the original series did (Sender, 2006).

In this research I will review the literature on queer theory and the makeover paradigm and draw on existing literature to discuss the portrayal of queer-identifying people in current media, specifically Netflix' reboot of *Queer Eye*. This will be done by analyzing the series through discourse analysis and looking for repeated patterns of performativity, gender relations, discourse, representations... which will then be placed into the theoretical frame discussed earlier.

As *Queer Eye* has several seasons, the research will be focusing on the first episode of the first season of the reboot, which was released in February 2018. This because it is the episode in which the “Fabulous Five”, the five individuals giving the makeover, are introduced to the audience and the goal and message of the show is formulated. The episode helps sketch an idea of what the series is meant to represent and display and is the most direct way to introduce the series. Next to the very first episode, the most recent season of the series will be analyzed as it is the most relevant and up to date with the current climate to analyse for patterns. The research will thus consist of a literature review combined with a discourse analysis of the fifth season of the Netflix show. During the analysis, I will look for certain patterns in behaviour, performativity or portrayal of those representing the ‘queer eye’ and apply queer theory to discuss whether or not the Fabulous Five are a proper representation for those that

identify as queer. The analysis itself will take in account different aspects of the series, this meaning visual aspects as well as discourse and narratives.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis aims to create a theoretical understanding of the term queer and to explore the ways in which this identity is represented in the Netflix series *Queer Eye*. Firstly, I will discuss the theoretical insights of Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam, Sarah Ahmed and Jasbir Puar in order to formulate a theoretical framework that helps understand queerness and queer performativity. In addition to that, I will review literature on makeover television and its connection to queerness in order to be able to discuss the way in which *Queer Eye* does or does not represent queer people in general. This discussion will be executed through an analysis of *Queer Eye*'s fifth season during which I will take note of certain patterns in performance, behaviour, speech or portrayal. I am aware that all choices made in frame of this thesis can be influenced by personal context, biases, interests and ideologies, therefore I will also discuss my choices of methods and personal position in reference to the subject.

For the theoretical analysis, I gathered literature of four researchers who have all contributed substantially to queer theory studies and literature on lifestyle television. Although this framework is to be finished before starting the actual analysis, its shape was influenced by the prior knowledge that the series to analyse is focussed around making over an individual and 'transforming' their life. When studying the literature, both primary and secondary sources were used.

In trying to form an understanding of the term queer, I wanted to pay attention to the meaning of the word, as well as the connotation and social power it carries. In other words, I wanted to focus on both what it means to be queer in a society and what defines a queer individual. To do so, I consulted Judith Butler's *Critically Queer* (1993), Jack Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), Sarah Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006) and Jasbir Puar's *Queer Times, Queer Assemblages* (2005). Butler is an American philosopher and gender theorist whose visions have shaped queer theory to what it is today. In *Critically Queer*, Butler discusses the function of speech and how and where words get their power and authority. She notes how it is discourse that constructs a subject, and not the other way around as the notion of agency would make us want to believe. In the second part, Butler discusses the concept of 'queer', performativity of identity and the politics behind the term. Another author who has written about queer performativity, is Jack Halberstam. He is a professor at the Institute for Research on Women, Gender and Sexuality at Columbia University and is known for his work on the perceptions of gender and female masculinity. In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Halberstam describes queer as those that fail to conform to heteronormative regulations, stating that defying those societal standards allows for a more creative and free way of existing in the world. Ahmed is a British-Australian scholar whose work focuses on topics such as lesbian feminism, feminist theory and queer theory. Specifically her work around queer phenomenology is relevant to this thesis because of its exploration of queerness and how it orients someone in space and time. In her work, Ahmed argues that queer phenomenology shows how social relations are arranged and how queerness disrupts said arrangements by straying from the expected paths. The fourth queer theorist discussed, is Jasbir Puar and her work on queer assemblages. Puar is a United States based theorist who, in *Queer Times*,

Queer Assemblages, describes how 'queer' is theorised by examining discourses of queerness and problematic perceptions of queerness. In addition to these four theorists, other sources on queer studies were consulted as well, this in order to create a general understanding of the term and its social power.

To be able to create an understanding of what 'queer' means and how it is represented in media, I also wanted to pay attention to research on queer embodiment, language and how queer bodies are defined. In *Policing Queer bodies: Focusing on Queer Embodiment in Policing Research as an Ethical Question*, Dwyer (2008) explores how the understanding and act of 'queering practises' can result in policing bodies and the ways in which they queer heteronormative performances.

In order to link queer theory and portrayal of the queer identity to *Queer Eye*, sources on how makeover television and lifestyle television both challenges and affirms societal norms are discussed.

The used sources cover different academic fields and perspectives, giving a broader concept of the term 'queer' and allowing for a deeper understanding of what it means to be queer, how queerness is performed and how queerness takes place and form in a heteronormative society. In studying the resources, it became clear that here is no one defined way to understand queerness, but by the use of a variety of sources, I try to describe what 'queer' means within this thesis and the analysis performed.

1. What does queer mean?

“Queer” is an attractive label precisely because its intentional ambiguity covers all sexual and gender “minorities” who self-identify as non-gender-conforming and/or not heterosexual. Originally connoting “strange” or “peculiar” in the late 19th century, the expression “queer” persisted for decades and was used pejoratively against people with same-sex desires or relationships. Then, to the chagrin of those lesbians and gay men pained by the insult, activists identifying as anti-heteronormative and/or anti-homonormative “reclaimed” the term at the end of the 20th century.

(Elman, 2019)

To write about queerness and its depiction within a television series, one must first form a clear vision of what the word queer means and what is referred to when using the term 'queer' within this thesis. The term was used as a derogatory form of slang when referring to homosexuals until it was reclaimed by the LGBTQIA+ community and became an umbrella term for sexual self-identifications straying from the norm (Jagose & Genschel, 1996). Generally speaking, queer covers everything that destabilizes the assumed relations between sex, gender and sexual desire, the assumed relations being cisgender heterosexuality. It describes a different way of thinking about the sexual. Because it came from a way of challenging the traditional identity, it can be argued that queer is more a critique of identity, than it is an identity in itself.

Although the term queer has been reclaimed by the LGBTQIA+ community, its general meaning of covering all sexual identities straying from the norm suggests a notion of abnormality and *othering*. Othering is a term that is commonly used in gender studies. Think of De Beauvoir who writes about the notion of women seen as 'the other' in relation to men, who are described as the norm (Beauvoir et al., 2012). She argues that women being described as 'the other' influences personal perspectives because in this notion, women only exist and are conscious of themselves in ways and ideas that were created by and in comparison, to men. Othering also occurs in post-colonial studies and any other context that discusses race, sex, class or any combination of the three, and is a way language is used to degrade and influence identity formation (Jensen, 2011). Roughly put, othering is a practise in which anyone who is not a white, cisgender, heterosexual, middle class male is offered as well as forced into an identity and subject position of 'the other'. The practise of othering creates a hierarchy in which those fitting the norm are in power and the other is constructed as inferior to the norm, and with that also confirms the legitimacy and superiority of those fitting the norm. It is a way for the dominant group to create the existence of an inferior group in order to assert its dominance, purely through language (Schwalbe et al., 2000). Not only does othering create differences, it also problematizes them. A similar thing happens with the term queer, as it refers to those straying from the heterosexual, cisgender norm. 'The other' is categorized as a group and dehumanised by being reduced to stereotypical characteristics, which are often negative or ridiculed. These stereotypical characteristics are something that can be found in the LGBTQIA+ community as well, having as a consequence that someone's sexuality can be questioned when they do not look "gay enough" or someone's gender is questioned by the way they present themselves. As queer is such a broad term used for everyone who does not fit the gender and/or sexual attraction norm, it raises the question as to what is referred to when using the term queer and what imaginary comes with that notion.

It is clear that there is no general consensus of what the term queer actually captures, but that it does introduce power dynamics installed by those that are not queer. To create an idea and more general overview of what is being referred to within this research when using the term queer, I will discuss a number of researchers who have written numerous works on queer studies and queer theories to create a general concept of the term.

Queer theory was given its name by Teresa de Lauretis (1991) in her work *Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities*. Her definition of it being an interrelation between three different projects: refusing heterosexuality as the norm, challenging the belief that lesbian and gay studies can be categorised as the same and a focus on the ways in which race influences sexual bias. The concept of queer theory, however, existed before de Lauretis coined the term. Since it developed from different critical and cultural contexts such as feminism, gay and lesbian movements, postcolonialism..., there is no clear origin to queer theory. It is, however, known what it aims at, which is to challenge the set definitions of identity categories (Literatures and Languages Library, 2020). Queer theorists contest the norm by claiming that there is no such thing as 'normal', only ever-changing categories that people will

or will not fit into. In order to get a better grasp on what it means to be queer, I have selected four queer theorists to look into. These being Judith Butler, who is known for her modern understandings of gender and sex and is often seen as a pioneer in queer theory, Jack Halberstam and his work on performativity and body, Sarah Ahmed who has written on queer phenomenology and Jaspir Puar, who writes about queer assemblages and how queer is theorised.

1.1. Judith Butler

In her discussion of the heterosexual matrix, Butler demonstrates that normative Western assumptions about sexual identity are based on a belief that anatomical sex causes gender development which, in turn causes sexual desire. In this sense, one is assumed to be anatomically “hard wired” to develop a gender identity (one’s gendered sense of self) and gender role (one’s gendered presentation of self) that correlate with one’s birth genitalia. In addition, this model assumes heterosexuality, that is, that one will naturally be attracted to individuals whose genitals are different from their own. However, as Butler and others note, this model has many limitations, because gender identity and gender role do not always coincide with genitalia or result in heterosexual attraction.

(Preves, 2003, p.18)

In order to understand Butler’s vision of queer, one must be aware of her criticism towards the way in which we view the relation between sex, gender and sexuality. In a heteronormative reasoning, all women can be reduced to one idea: they are assigned female at birth, are attracted to men and dress and behave feminine. The same happens with men. Butler, however, challenges the assumption that gender identity and expression align with one’s birth sex and that an individual’s sexual orientation is heterosexual. As mentioned before, defining those that deviate from the norm as *queer* is a way of othering. It is in the concept of othering that Butler forms her understanding of queerness (Butler, 1997). She describes those that live their lives as other to the main subject as “the abject”. It indicates the so-called ‘unliveable’ zones of social life in which there are still a lot of people to be found. According to Butler’s reasoning, the abject is used to create the subjects in the first place: there is no inside without having an outside to exclude, the exclusion creates a boundary that shapes the subject. In doing so, those seen as abjects are made into individuals that are ‘less human’ and the self-created subject that has decided the norm, gives itself power in being.

In *Critically Queer* (1993), Butler speaks of performative acts. She describes these performatives as authoritative speech, or statements that also exert a certain action and carry a sense of power in them. Examples would be legal sentences, inaugurations, or wedding vows. Performative acts show how power can act in discourse. She then speaks of the performativity behind the word *queer* originally being to shame the subject it names, by using the term as an accusation or insult. It is a

younger generation who want to resist the politics behind the term by reclaiming it and taking authority by self-identifying as queer, also battling the politics behind the terms lesbian and gay by applying a more general term, even if it represents a false unity between women and men. The reclaiming of a term, however, does suggest that language allows authority and choice, rather than it is carrying a history of power and discourse through which words and the meaning they carry have been created and reworked. Within reclaiming the term, the fact that this is done by a mostly white group that seems to neglect how the term is perceived in non-white communities is often not considered.

Butler argues that laying claim to terminology such as woman, queer, gay or lesbian, that defines our lives without us even being fully aware is necessary to counter homophobic or discriminatory uses of the terms by those that do not identify with them. Deconstructing a term of its negative connotation cannot be done to the extent where the word loses its power, Butler states. She adds that neutralizing it also takes away its democratic power, which is of value in considering when and where certain terminology is important, in which contexts it can be applied and what power relations the terms have constructed. This reasoning of neutralizing a term can be applied to the term queer. By reclaiming it and using it as an umbrella term within the community and taking away its degrading power, one must also be aware that this creates a shift in democratic power. Because the history of 'queer' being used as a slur is quite recent still, the connotation behind the term changes depending on the situation in which it is used, by whom it is expressed and who the term is directed at.

Even in reclaiming a term and creating what feels like freedom and agency for oneself, the individual remains created by the norms and whether they defy them or fit into them. Take gender performativity, or the way in which we express gender. This is not a creation of the individual themselves, but a matter of executing or challenging the norms which are taught to us. A norm cannot be destroyed by solely objecting to it, they are too deeply rooted into society and formal structures to do so.

Butler supports the use of queer in research and argues that what makes the term so effective, is the way in which the term is not singular in meaning and its effects can therefore not be anticipated (Jagose & Genschel, 1996). Just like gender identity and sexual orientation, the term queer is self-evident and descriptive, the individual using the term gives it meaning to fit their own identity. Butler stresses that 'queer' has a flexible and responsive nature and with that challenges the so-called evident categories of identification that are seen as the 'norm'. Generally, Butler claims that there cannot be one definition of what 'queer' means. It is focussed around self-recognition, community and shared identity within said community.

1.2. Jack Halberstam

Queer refers to nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment and activity in space and time.
(Halberstam, 2005, p.6)

Halberstam (2011) explains the title to his work *The Queer Art of Failure* by describing failure as a method to escape the norm and the punishment that comes with having to conform to said norms. In his eyes, the norm is what is negative, not failure. It is what disciplines behaviour, takes away the freedom of childhood and what shapes people into predictable and monotonous adults. Through discipline, a code of normalization is defined. By failing the norm, one can preserve the free spirit of childhood and avoid becoming a part of the fake positive ideal that is sold about adulthood and contemporary life. He introduces Stuart Hall's 'low theory' as a way to "explore alternatives and to look for a way out of the usual traps and impassés of binary formulations" (Halberstam, 2011, p.2). It is a way of breaking away from the norm and challenging hegemonic ideals while still recognizing that doing so may be perceived as negative and come with consequences such as disappointment or despair.

Halberstam proposes the notion of forgetting as the most useful tool to break away from the ordinary, arguing that even when challenging the norm, the sole awareness of said norm will always influence behaviour and decisions because of how deep-rooted it is installed into our everyday life (Halberstam, 2011). In his reasoning, Halberstam expresses that queer persons can still contribute to reproducing heteronormative standards and can too make the mistake of assuming someone's sexual orientation or gender identity according to those ideals. An example offered that shows the deeply rooted heteronormativity, is the fight for marriage equality. Marriage itself is an invented institution and offers an ideology of family that invalidates any other kind of relationship. Changing laws to allow same-sex couples to marry as well, does not change the origin of the institution and the normative family ideal that marriage sells. The longing to get married, according to Lee Edelman, stems from a desire to be accepted in and belong to the heteronormative frame. Halberstam understands queer as challenging anything imposed as the norm and as "somehow operating against the logics of succession, progress, development, and tradition proper to hetero-familial development" (Halberstam, 2011, p.75). In comparison to Butler, he handles a slightly more pessimistic view of queerness, keeping in mind the challenges that come with defying the norm and the reality that it is a lot more difficult to let go of heteronormativity completely as it is a constant part of everyone their past. Even when someone is queer, they are most likely to be raised in a heteronormative environment and with heteronormative values. Where Halberstam does agree with Butler, is that heterosexuality is dependent on the existence of nonnormative subjects to be able to establish itself as the norm.

When searching for queer bodies in art, film and television, Halberstam notices that the notion of failure is often centralised when displaying queerness. It is being portrayed as something dark, giving a feeling of confusion, loneliness, othering, impossibility... An idea of image that stems from the heteronormative systems that instil the idea that queerness as straying from the norm is something negative and will be negatively received by audiences. In general, it seems that queerness is often shown as the impossible, this because of historical and political exclusion. An important point of awareness, Halberstam notes, is the distinction between gender role and sexual orientation. For example: queer femininity, or the notion of challenging feminine norms, is often directly linked to and lost in lesbianism

even though the way in which someone expresses their gender does not say anything about their sexual orientation. A similar assumption happens with men that 'queer' masculinity, reasoning that men who portray feminine characteristics must be gay. Another assumption often made, is that gay men or women have to act a certain way to be accepted for their sexuality. In his reasoning, Halberstam does not write explicitly about gender identity, but a similar way or reasoning can be applied in that gender identity and expression do not always align perfectly but still one is expected to present masculine when identifying as a man.

Obviously not all gay, lesbian and transgender people live their lives in radically different ways from their heterosexual counterparts, but part of what has made queerness compelling as a form of self-description in the past decade or so has to do with the way it has potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space.

(Halberstam, 2005, p.1)

Halberstam recognizes that the assumptions and conclusions made about queerness and queer bodies are not to be generalised for all queer, nonnormative persons, but does emphasize the importance of challenging the norm and the potential it brings to change stereotypical images, gender roles, family formations and so on.

1.3. Sarah Ahmed

What difference does it make what or who we are oriented toward in the very direction of our desire? If orientation is a matter of how we reside in space, then sexual orientation might also be a matter of residence, of how we inhabit spaces, and who or what we inhabit spaces with.

(Ahmed, 2006a, p.543)

In her work, Sarah Ahmed tries to make sense of what it means to be oriented (Ahmed, 2006a). She describes it as knowing where one belongs in a society that imposes certain norms and expectations, where they are and where they are headed. An oriented person knows their starting point of orientation, the point from which the world around them develops, and knows what to do in order to move to a next, desired position. She extends this understanding to sexual orientation and how attraction can be oriented, reasoning that if orientation is how we find ourselves in a space, sexual orientation shows how a person occupies a space and who or what they occupy those spaces with.

Like beforementioned authors, Ahmed has written about the ambiguity of the word 'queer' and how the term shaped individuals as well as places them into a certain position within society, a practise I have earlier described as othering (Ahmed, 2006b). In her work *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed refers to queerness as a way we see ourselves and how experiences shape an identity. Phenomenology in itself

considers the role that repeated patterns and habits play in shaping the world, the bodies within said world and the norms that come from that. In queering phenomenology, she aims to address otherness in a way that centralises the experience of the individual that is being othered and without reducing an individual to only that what makes them 'the other'. In contrast to Butler's work that focusses on the structural power and identity of queerness, Ahmed discovers queerness through lived experiences of queer individuals that defy the norm and dare to step out of line (Ahmed, 2006b; Butler, 1993). Another contrast between the two, is that Butler describes queerness as a construction to make the heteronormative subject more real and distinguish it from the other, whereas Ahmed her theories construe queerness as that what disturbs the order in a heteronormative society, it is seen as a reaction to or deflection of heterosexuality. She points out how queer desires and behaviour is described as deviant through the heteronormative perspective. By envisioning heteronormativity into a spatial metaphor where everything follows a certain 'straight' pattern, any orientation that does not follow the lines of said pattern, is defined as queer. This does not only encapsulate the object it is aimed at, but the norms it defies, challenges and therefore does not reproduce.

I would say that being oriented in different ways does matter, precisely because of how spaces are already oriented, which makes some bodies feel in place, or at home, and not others. Orientations affect what bodies can do: it is not that the object causes desire but that in desiring certain objects, other things follow, given how the social is already arranged.
(Ahmed, 2006a, p.563)

This is why Ahmed speaks about the importance of orientations. She creates awareness for the way sexual orientation shapes a person and their life and points out that orientations are used as straightening devices. They are not only an effect of how bodies are treated in space, but the spaces are already oriented around the straight body, allowing it to grow and expand whereas queer bodies find themselves limited, forced to adjust to the straight bodies in order to be able to grow. Heteronormativity is a frame used to straighten queer moments, things that 'stray from the straight'. This idea of correcting queer bodies in order to fit into the heterosexual frame can be linked to Halberstam's mention of same-sex marriage and how it is a way of fitting and belonging into a heteronormative frame, rather than to be queer on its own (Halberstam, 2011). Solely by minimising all contact that is not straight, heteronormativity has created an environment in which it is inherently reproduced as the only safe and comfortable space to exist (Ahmed, 2006b). Ahmed describes a direct link between bodies and the space that they occupy and evolve in, as the space marks and is marked by the bodies moving in it. In Ahmed's analogy of space, the queer subject that does not fit, and is made to feel uncomfortable, is perceived as disruptive to both the space and the other bodies within said space. Following this reasoning, it can be said that one is queer in spaces where they are made to feel uncomfortable, referring to both sexuality and being the other in more general areas such as ethnicity, ability, gender... This is a negative aspect

of queerness that Ahmed describes as disorientation, the uncomfortable sense that comes with not fitting in and failing to reproduce the norm. This uncomfortable sense spreads itself unevenly between all those who are queer. Because the functionality of the world is divided and privileges certain individuals, think able, white, cisgender, heterosexual bodies, some individuals in their intersectional identities experience more discomfort than others. Despite the discomfort being unevenly divided, the feeling is still a shared experience to all those that do not fit into the heteronormative, often white, boxes society has created. The disorientation makes life more complicated and makes things that those that fit the heteronormative structure take for granted more difficult to achieve or execute. The shared experience of discrimination towards a group of people, however, is what creates a sense of community, a positive thing to come out of queerness. It is important to note that these experiences are still completely different from person to person depending on the intersectional identity of each individual, but it remains a shared experience. The sense of being uncomfortable is something Ahmed attributes to the beginning of change and working towards contentment, all things that the queer community is striving towards.

Other ways in which Ahmed describes queerness as something positive, is in the ways it offers a different perspective to the world. She argues that straying from the line is not a temporary detour that will eventually lead back to the line, but an opportunity to discover what is lost by following the line in the first place, what lays beyond and beside the line. Similar to Butler's reasoning that the existence of anything besides the norm is what creates the norm in the first place, Ahmed argues that queerness is what makes the lines and limits created by society's norm, and with that the exclusions it leads to, visible (Ahmed, 2006b; Butler, 1993). Without anyone that doesn't fit the ideal, one wouldn't be aware of said ideal to begin with. In Ahmed's definition, 'queering' is a valuable method to criticise the biases installed into the existing phenomenology and to create a queer phenomenology that considers and includes everyone, that does not exclude 'the other'.

1.4. Jasbir Puar

In *Queer Times, Queer Assemblages*, Puar (2005) writes that, in order to understand the queer times we are living in, one must understand queer thought, creativity and expression. By approaching and discussing queerness as an assemblage, Puar takes queerness and its alternative, resistant nature and brings out the ways in which queerness does collaborate with the dominant, normative structures. Queer assemblage resists queerness as only a sexual (anti-)identity and describes it in any way normative ideas are challenged. Through assemblages, one is able to establish their own privilege or superiority over other groups and to create new normativities. This is something that happens within queer studies as well. She calls out issues in queer theorising, arguing that the studies come from a very westernized perspective and the idea of queer liberalism prioritises certain queer bodies over others. Focussing on the United States, Puar speaks of U.S. exceptionalisms, which is when the country projects itself as progressive and tolerant towards queer bodies, while those that are portrayed as tolerant are still classified as having a 'normal' gender, race and sexuality. It is clear that this tolerance only goes for

certain persons that carry the American nationality and are therefore accepted as exceptions, making whiteness a queer norm. In this projection of themselves as progressive, 'the other' is indirectly accused of being homophobic and perverse.

An example that displays how sexuality is easily discussed from a western perspective, is in a statement Al-Fatiha made in which they discuss Muslim sexuality. Having to define it as Muslim sexuality already places it in the position of the other, where it differs from normative sexuality and therefore needs specifying. The organization, by speaking of Muslim sexuality, reinforces the narrative about U.S. sexual exceptionalism. In their statement, the organization said that sexual humiliation is the worst form of torture for any Muslim. This because Islam values modesty and sexual privacy a lot, as well as gender norms and masculinity. This is not to say that homosexuality does not occur in Muslim communities. For them, the humiliation towards homosexuality lies in the gay identity and more feminine profile, not in the act itself. Puar criticises the statement both as sexually repressive and nurturing for racist, white agendas.

By constructing both homosexuality and Muslim as mutually exclusive categories, the United States immerge as the tolerant, exceptional country, whereas the Middle East are shown as repressed. This, again, shows that there is not one correct way to be queer. However, queerness is often approached from a Westernized gaze and in doing so, other ways of being queer are often neglected or negatively judged. Think, for example, of countries that want to ban the use of headscarves, turbans or even beards. By portraying these religious features in the newspapers as linked to negative events and terrorist movements, one creates a negative image of an entire religion. While a white male perpetrator will not be portrayed as an unfavourable representative for an entire group of people. Through queer assemblages, bodies are linked to negative images in order to obtain a feeling of superiority for western ideals and bodies.

2. Makeover television

2.1. Lifestyle programming

The concept of transforming a person, a home, a wardrobe... can be categorized under lifestyle programming in reality television (Palmer, 2004). Lifestyle television is a popular genre that had its rise in primetime television in the 2000s and that focusses on instructing people how to better manage their everyday lives (Lewis, 2008). This can go from making over people's homes and wardrobes to giving advice on health, relationships or even how to live more sustainably. It creates a space in which the relationship between an individual and their community is put on display and reshaped. The reason for the rise in popularity, was the upcoming neoliberal and consumer-oriented perspectives that prioritised the individual choice (Larner, 2000). While neoliberalism claims to centralize the individual, it still presents forms of governance that push individuals as well as institutions to conform to certain norms imposed by the popular market. Miller (2007) describes lifestyle television and the makeover ideology

as a link being created between norm imposed beliefs of self-improvement and self-governance along with the neoliberal model of agency within identity creation.

Lifestyle programming is criticized, however, that they create a feeling of superiority that is both class and taste based (Palmer, 2004). Behaviour and how an individual acts, thinks or chooses, are all formed by a social field. Each field has its own rules about conduct and language. Focussing on elements of someone's lifestyle therefore directly links to focussing on elements of someone's identity. The assumption that all goods are a way of expressing one's identity is what lifestyle television is based upon. Those situated in a higher class that are seen as tasteful bring said 'taste' to the lower classes. The norm is decided by and gives power to the middle class. They are the class of experts and have the authority in deciding how an individual should be styled ideally.

When placing an individual in front of a camera, they are suddenly made to look at themselves through the perspective of 'the other'. The ever-present feeling of being watched forces the individual to reconsider their looks and lifestyle. Through objectifying themselves, the individuals on lifestyle television find things they believe they should change, not necessarily that they want to change. The presenters or hosts of the show are displayed as finished, the participant becomes an individual following and submitting to rules laid down by the 'finished' presenters. There is a notion that within transforming the candidates and making them look better, they should, as a result, also be better or at least feel happier about themselves.

The base concept of a makeover is that people are projects and that one can achieve complete happiness by focussing on who you are and what you can achieve as a person. It links the quality of life directly to the choices an individual makes, which is a lot of pressure to put onto a person. We live in a post-traditional world where identities are 'made', rather than assigned, and can therefore be adjusted (Beck et al., 1994). Beck speaks of reflexive individualization, meaning that how people see and display themselves is disconnected from social identity categorizations. He claims that people's identities are formed through lifestyle-oriented decisions. This theory, however, erases the way in which social fields still exist and continue to influence people's life; the social norms that will affect individual choices and make them not as individual that neoliberalist though makes them out to be. In essence, lifestyle television reduces individuals to a set of 'problems' that can be fixed by self-labelled experts who in their turn improve the individual by fixing their problems (Lewis, 2007). Makeover television balances the idea that selfhood is individual and self-managing and the dependency on the lifestyle expert who tells the individual how to 'fix' themselves.

2.2. The lifestyle expert

All makeover programmes heavily rely on the figure taking on the role of the lifestyle expert (Lewis, 2007). Whether that person be an actual expert on the topic or not, they provide the knowledge the show's participants require and offer it to the audience at the same time. They can also function as an agent between guest experts and the participant. The expert(s) get introduced to a participant, seize them

up and list their 'problems', then make a decision on what levels said participant requires help and how the experts can fix them. Lifestyle television is associated with daytime television and the feminine domestic space because of its focus on home decoration, body care and grooming, dietary regimes, personal life... With that association, the person offering their expertise is also linked to femininity. It is only home makeovers or do it yourself programmes that are linked to masculinity. When straying from this feminine frame and having men play a big part in lifestyle television, they are most likely to be effeminate or gay. Whereas this does add a new sort of gender representation to the genre, it somehow still conveniently fit into the feminine frame that is connected to lifestyle television.

However, by introducing men into makeover television, a shift in gender representation does take place (Attwood, 2005). The masculinities represented in lifestyle television are seen as 'new masculinities' and often come with a sense of unease as they require attention for self-presentation and selfhood, things that are not often linked with masculinity. This opens a lot of doors and creates opportunities to change or reshape certain norms and expectations, but the accurateness of these new representations is of utter importance to be able to do so. Jen Richards (2020) sums up that the importance of a proper portrayal of nonnormative bodies is so strong, mainly because of the lack of proper representation.

There is a one-word solution to almost all the problems in queer media. We just need more, and that way, the occasional clumsy representation wouldn't matter as much because it wouldn't be all that there is.

(Jen Richards in Disclosure, 2020)

2.3. The 'queering' of television

Reality television creates an interesting balance between the norm and challenging said norm through its focus on personal life, emotions and appearance (Kavka, 2004). It challenges the traditional forms of masculinity by linking them to lifestyle television, something previously associated with femininity. The expert is set to challenge the comfortable norm fixed by community, this by promising a transformation to the participant. In challenging these norms and as a means of making over masculinity in ways that seem out of place in society, queerness is used as an argument for expertise (Miller, 2005). This is how queer bodies, for the first time, came to be represented in a television series without being a minority or used for comedic effect. In makeover television, they become the expert. A link is created between feminine programming and masculinity, by the means of queer identity (Lewis, 2007). Feminine knowledge and expertise are in this way reassigned as queer, male expertise. The expert gaze, hence the title of the chosen data *Queer Eye*, that has authority in deciding what is in style and what is not, notes failures in the heteronormative vision of masculinity and therefore within those that adhere to said norms as well. By the use of strategies such as utilizing humour and creating a playful

atmosphere or showing the participants and experts doing typically masculine things such as driving or playing sports to compensate, some of the more feminine aspects of makeover television are neutralized. This makes the challenging of masculinity easier and efforts like teaching men how to cook or groom feel less forced. Another way in which the differences between the participant and the queer expert are levelled to make both the participant and the viewer more comfortable with what they do not know, is by having the queer expert share personal stories and experiences that do not have anything to do with their queerness. An example could be their experiences with owning a business or family relations. Important to note, is that even though queerness is being used as a segway to introduce a previously feminine perceived programming to a wider audience, it is not accepted as a norm nor seen as the end goal. The experts are in this case no longer seen as 'finished' and set as a goal for the participant to achieve, but a gateway into reaching a bigger audience. A second part of the reasoning behind including queer bodies to attract a wider audience, is because queer persons are always looking for representation. This is why more and more; a big heteronormative storyline will feature a queer side character or have a same-sex couple make an appearance. When this is used purely as a marketing-ploy and does not offer any actual, positive representation, the strategy is dubbed queerbaiting (Ng, 2017).

2.4. Queer embodiment and language

The key issue (...) is the degree to which members of the queer community, who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, queer, questioning, do embodiment in ways that position them as outside dominant heterosexist ways of doing gender and sexuality. These bodies 'queer' taken for granted expectations about gender and sexuality: they disrupt the expectation that people ought to be properly masculine and heterosexual for example.
(Dwyer, 2008)

From Puar (2005), we have seen that Western culture privileges certain ways of 'doing' gender and sexuality over others. In the queer sense, this speaks of the ways gender and sexuality are expressed and performed. Ways in which this performance can take place, are embodiment and language. Queer embodiments are the ways in which Western ways of doing gender are challenged, or queered (Dwyer, 2008). Reading bodies as queer is something that happens often and is easy to research in law enforcement, as laws that criminalised homosexual activity cannot be applied if there is no understanding of what these queer bodies look like. In police reports of New Zealand officers, homosexual men were described as such based on 'an effeminate way of speaking, walking and standing'. In general, any form of non-heteronormative embodiment or behaviour can be perceived as queer, comes with a negative connotation and is often linked with a queered sexual orientation as well. Boys that act effeminate are called 'sissies' and are assumed to be gay, while girls that act or dress in a

more masculine way are described as 'butch', a term associated with lesbians, and are ridiculed for wanting to be like men.

There is also such a thing as queer language. One of the most known and distinguishable versions of queer language is Polari, a language that was developed and used by gay men and lesbians in the United Kingdom (Baker, 2002). The secret language came to existence in a time where homosexuality was illegal and was used to communicate with others publicly without having to fear their own safety. The language lost its relevance and was less often used after a 1970s British television series featuring a gay couple used the language for comedic effect and with that exposed the language to the general public, taking away its anonymity. Although the language is no longer actively used and is therefore considered a dead language, some terms or expressions that find their origin in Polari are still used within the queer community. An example is the use of 'queen' when referring to a gay man. The meaning of the term has now been generalised and refers to someone looking fierce and fabulous, despite their sexual orientation, but finds its original metaphorical meaning in Polari. Another example of queer language, is Legman's list, which was published in 1941 (Kulick, 2000). This list contained terminology that described things related to the queer community and most of which were used exclusively by queer-identifying persons. Today, a lot of the words on the list are no longer in use, but some did survive and found their way into general use. Some examples are 'drag' and 'straight'. To this day, there are still linguistic ways in which the queer community finds different ways to express themselves. Although these 'languages' are no longer secret and are sometimes borrowed by non-queer groups through internet culture, they still find their origin in queer, often black, communities (Tenbarge, 2020). Think of expressions like "and I oop", "wig", "periodt", "tea" or the abbreviation of words like "fab" instead of fabulous. They are originally used within black queer communities, are then picked up by non-black queer communities and, through the use of the internet, often find their way into mainstream vocabulary.

Whereas language changes quickly or gets adopted into mainstream use and is therefore hard to define as queer, the understanding of queer embodiment seems to be clear: If queer identity is that what challenges the norm, whether it be based on sexual orientation or gender identity, then queer embodiment is challenging the performativity associated with certain genders or heterosexuality. However, even though it is the heteronormative expectation for gender, sex, sexual orientation and gender role or expression to all be aligned, it is not because one identifies as queer, that said person will 'queer' all expectations or norms. Someone can identify as lesbian and still conform to the female gender role and femininity, another person can identify as female yet present very masculine etc... This leaves the question: what about those that identify as queer but do not necessarily embody queerness or fit the idea of what a queer body should look like? Not appearing queer in the definition and understanding that a heteronormative frame has given to queer bodies, does not make a person any less queer. Queerness is solely defined and shaped in the ways it strays from the normative frame and in the ways an individual gives meaning to their queerness, whether it be visible or not.

3. Conclusion and applications

The general consensus is that queerness occurs when hegemonic and heteronormative structures are challenged and that it is defined in the ways that it is oppositional to the norm, however there are some small differences to be found in each theorist their understanding of the term 'queer'.

According to Butler, those that are queer are abject, the ones that are seen as 'the other' when compared to the main subject or those that fit the norm. If the norm is heterosexual, cisgender and a performance that aligns with said gender, then queerness is any play on or diversion of that. In her reasoning, the abject is created to distinguish the subject as the norm in the first place. Halberstam agrees with this reasoning, stating that normative bodies need the existence of queer bodies in order to be able to establish themselves as the norm. Because queerness was originally constructed to create the norm and target those that did not fit the heteronormative ideal, the term came with a negative connotation directed towards being 'other'. To this day still, the word carries a political and social power that establishes a sort of hierarchy between the subject and the abject, in which the abject is seen as less complete, as a derivative of those that are the norm. In Butler's definition of queerness, it focusses on self-recognition, personal identification and shared identity to create a sense of community, this in any way that challenges the categories of identification that are considered the norm. Her definition recognizes the differences within queerness and the fact that each queer individual can be queer in a completely different manner, but also highlights the shared experience in being other that brings people together as a community.

Similar to Butler, Halberstam describes queerness as a failure to conform to the heteronormative frame enforced by the society we grow up in. In comparison to Butler's view of agency in challenging the norm by queerness, Halberstam has a slightly more pessimistic view of the concept. This because he is aware that challenging a deep-rooted norm does not come without any complications and can come with negative responses or experiences. A big problem in challenging the norm, is that we are often not aware of behaviour that serves to reproduce ideals, therefore Halberstam argues that the only way to fully get rid of heteronormative ideals, one should be able to forget they ever existed.

Ahmed follows the reasoning that queerness is what strays from the norm but makes it more physical by describing queer physical bodies, how they occupy a space and who they occupy those spaces with. Ahmed strays from Butler and Halberstam's ideas that queerness is created as a separate identity in order to confirm the norm, and reasons that queerness exists to disturb the order and dullness that exist in a heteronormative world. She says that the space we reside in has been oriented around the straight body and that queer bodies, despite going against the current, remain influenced by the fixed and deep-rooted ideals, a theory similar to Halberstam's. Her understanding of queerness does match Butler's in the sense that Ahmed describes the forming of a community through shared experiences in 'not fitting in' and that every individual experiences queerness in a different way. She describes being

queer as a method that reshapes set norms in order to create an environment for everyone to feel comfortable, not only those that fit the supposed norm.

Puar joins Butler and Halberstam in the idea that queerness exists in every way that normative ideals are challenged. She does, however, call for awareness that queerness is often approached from a Western perspective and that in doing so, other ways of being queer or expressing queer identity are ignored or perceived incorrectly. She describes the judging of queer bodies, similarly to Butler and Halberstam's perception, as a way of establishing and maintaining a hierarchy in which those that adhere to the norm are superior.

As Butler states, the understanding of queerness is not singular in meaning and can have different effects and perceptions depending on the context in which and by whom it is described. Despite the many ways in which queerness can be interpreted, a lot of expectations and misconceptions still come with the notion, an idea that Halberstam shares. One of these misconceptions, is the idea that if one strays from the norm in one way, they must be queer in a lot of different ways. A concrete example is the reasoning that all feminine men must be gay or that transsexual people know queer sexual attraction. Just like any other identity, however, queer persons consist of different, intersectional identities and characteristics. They are made up of more than the shared queer identity.

When analysing *Queer Eye* to find repeated patterns of performativity, gender relations, discourse, and different ways of representing queerness, I will use queer in the most basic definition of the term: all ways in which the heteronormative ideal is challenged, the nonnormative organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment and activity. There are, however, two distinctive perceptions of queerness. The first being queerness and the expectations with which the heteronormative society perceives it. It is in this perception that stereotypical views about queer identities take place and that assumptions, like the idea that all masculine women must be lesbian, are made. The second is the actual and broad understanding of queerness in which is understood that to be queer means to challenge heteronormative norms, whether it be in one way or in multiple ways. There is no one right way to be queer or to define queerness, despite there being set ideas of what queer bodies should look and act like. Queer in itself does not refer to a determined object but is defined by its oppositional and challenging relation to the norm. The approach used to analyse the portrayal of queerness in the show will consider both the broad and full understanding of queerness and the heteronormative understanding of what queerness looks like in order to formulate to what extent queerness is properly represented in the series.

METHODOLOGY

4. Data and analysis

For this thesis, I conducted an unstructured qualitative and interpretive discourse analysis of the Netflix series *Queer Eye*. With the end goal of this thesis in mind, I make a note of and transcribe any scenes that display queerness in the most basic sense of the term: challenging the heteronormative ideal. I then categorise the different transcriptions into groups and make the distinction between ways in which queerness in its entirety is discussed and ways in which being queer is displayed in the way it is expected by heteronormative ideas. As said before, there is not one correct definition of queerness nor a correct way to be queer. There is, however, a heteronormative perception of queerness. The goal of the analysis is to distinguish to what extent the 'queer eye' is representative of queerness in the broadest sense of the term.

To answer my research question and analyse whether *Queer Eye* gives a proper representation for those who identify as queer or if it is a portrayal of what the queer body should look like according to heteronormative ideals, I watched the most recent season of the series (season five) and observed it for patterns in behaviour, speech, narratives and visual aspects that could be perceived as a portrayal of the queer identity. When watching the series, moments that feature any noticeable patterns in respects to queer identity were transcribed in order to be able to link them to the written theoretical frame. The analysis is heavily influenced by the theoretical frame, which was written to formulate an idea of what it means to be queer. Performative behaviour or other patterns that stood out, did so because they can be linked to ideas of queer identity described before. The choice of transcribing and analysing patterns and moments that stood out, came from the fact that the season consists of ten episodes that are all approximately 50 minutes long and therefore contain a lot of content. On top of that, the format of every episode is the same: the Fabulous Five meet a person that requires their help and they each use their 'queer eye' to offer advice in their field of expertise. Because every episode knows the same format and each individual in the Fabulous Five focusses on their own speciality, it makes sense for repetitive patterns to appear.

4.1. Recurring patterns

Because I wanted to write about the portrayal of queerness, I mainly looked out for recurring patterns and themes in the different episodes. As Halberstam (2011) states, heteronormativity and stereotypical ideas of performance are often so deeply rooted in our upbringing that they appear unconsciously. This results in queer bodies behaving the way they are expected to by their surrounding society or unknowingly conceding to expectations set about their queer identity. Whether it be from the producers', editors' or the Fab Five their doing, when a certain behaviour, theme or way of presentation recurs, it can be expected that this certain way of presenting is a part of their identity or thought process and therefore the way they present themselves or other queer bodies to the world. In this reasoning, because

the five 'experts' are presented as representatives of the queer eye, their behavioural patterns are also a part of that what should represent queerness.

I am aware that by analysing patterns I am creating categories solely for the purpose of placing behaviour and other factors into them and that queerness is much more complex and intersectional than that. However, I believe that by being aware of these patterns, one becomes more aware of the ways in which the behaviour and portrayal of queerness in the show can influence the viewer their perception of the notion. Another reason I chose to analyse patterns in my chosen data, is because every episode of the series is structured in the same way. You always have the same five people entering someone's life in order to give them a makeover. In a span of ten fifty-minute-long episodes, it can be expected for repeated acts and portrayals to appear from those five persons and the team editing the show. When seeing identities portrayed on television that one is not familiar with, the way they are presented will become the way the viewer perceives said identity (Macey et al., 2014). This reasoning can be applied to the portrayal of queer bodies, where the recurring themes or patterns are more likely to be remembered by the audience and therefore shape the audiences' idea of what queer bodies look and act like.

4.2. Transcription

Because I wanted to pay attention to visual aspects as well as discourse and narratives in the discourse analysis of the series, I made sure to write down all that caught my attention in the transcription of the scenes. I wanted to base my observations on lingual, discursive as well as visual patterns. To achieve this, I started by writing down the spoken dialogue between all persons and added commentary between the lines of dialogue about interesting visual aspects like movement, emotion, location or context. In order to create a transparent and clear context for any transcribed scenes, I wrote introductory texts providing more information about what had been happening before. Even though I tried to transcribe as much and as thorough as possible, I am aware that some items might still get lost. Because the full source of analysis is audio-visual media, there is a lot happening at once and it is inevitable that some things escape my eye or the transcription. The transcriptions are mainly a way to give the reader a clear understanding of what is happening in the analyzed media described, without having access to the actual form of media.

4.3. *Queer Eye*

In a lot of ways, identities and the way they are shaped are influenced by popular media. Adolescents today have quick access to a wide range of media of which they can choose those that best suit their personalities and identities (Arnett, 1995). On top of that, when growing up in a small town or a heteronormative society, media is often the most efficient way to be introduced to more diversity and different kinds of identities. Although queer representation is improving and more and more queer people are made visible in media, it is not often that they are featured as the protagonist in a story. When

featuring a queer character, I find they are often added for comedic effect or to feature as 'the gay sidekick'. Plus, as discussed in the theoretical frame, queer is a very broad term that can cover a lot of identities, of which a lot still remain invisible or ignored. Because of the little representation known in the queer community, the way in which those that do get portrayed are depicted is of utter most importance, as it can break or reaffirm potentially harmful stereotypes.

The reason I chose *Queer Eye* as source material for my analysis, is that it is very popularly received Netflix series with five queer persons in its most important roles. With three gay identifying men, one sexually fluid man and one non-binary gay person, the Fabulous Five is presented as a diverse group here to break stereotypes and connect with those with less progressive mindsets in order to "open their eyes". Upon the series' initial release, however, I noticed a pattern in the way the series was received by people I know and people on the internet. It caught my attention that those that were enthusiastic about the show all identified as straight, whereas my queer friends and reviews written online by queer persons all noted a sense of discomfort with the way "the queers" were portrayed as the stylish, flamboyant superheroes here to save the day. This difference in response to the show made me wonder if the producers had really dropped the "for the straight guy" aspect when removing it from the title. Personal perception and experiences, however, are not sufficient to form a conclusion which is why I wanted to look at the series with a theoretical frame in the background.

5. Influences of context

This thesis is influenced by multiple factors making up the context it was created in. Both the theoretical framework and the discourse analysis allow for personal biases to influence the result. This can manifest itself in the sources being selected for the literature review as well as the cultural biases and contextual knowledge that may influence interpretations when analysing *Queer Eye*. To be as transparent as possible about my decisions and the context this thesis came from, I want to offer a description of the personal context in which this work was written. This is an attempt to offer an understanding of the ways in which the text can be influenced by context.

This thesis was written in the academic year of 2019-2020, part of which I spent in London working for an LGBTQIA+ youth group as an intern, part of which I spent in Belgium during the COVID-19 lockdown. Sociologically, the work is heavily influenced by the Western society in which I grew up and have always resided. Politically, a lot has been happening around queer issues both worldwide and in my closer areas. A 2019 questionnaire showed that 3 out of 10 Flemish inhabitants would vote for *Vlaams Belang*, a right-wing political party who is known to have racist and anti-LGBTQIA+ policies (Thijs, 2019). In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Boris Johnson wants to scrap the policy that allows people to legally change their gender by self-identification and wants to protect female spaces by banning those with male genitalia (Cordon, 2020). These are policy changes that would set back the fight for trans rights a numerous amount of years.

On top of that, during the COVID-19 lockdown, a rise in activism happened. This took place specifically around the Black Lives Matter movement. This rise in combination with June being pride month led to extra attention being brought to queer history and the fact that international pride is all made possible because of the Stonewall Uprising, which was initiated by black and POC trans* women. These attempted policy changes and voting results show that, even though a lot has been achieved in terms of queer rights, there is still a lot to be fought for as well. Personally, I am a white, lesbian person who struggles with their gender identity daily and who grew up in a rural town with little to no queer people I could identify with. I also grew up between the generations of millennials and Generation Z, surrounded by a very liberal family. I have not experienced the time in which “queer” was used as a slur, so I have no negative feelings attached to the term, as opposed to the older generation in the LGBTQIA+ community. Growing up and now still, I would always find myself looking for people and characters I could see myself in and could relate to. Being a young, lesbian person who has worked closely with LGBTQIA+ young persons and who is studying to achieve a Masters in Gender and Diversity, the way in which I perceive the world and the critical way in which I look at media and other representations of queer identities are heavily influenced. Both by personal and professional biases.

It is also important to be aware of the political context in which the *Queer Eye* season is filmed. As mentioned before, the initial thought behind the reboot of the series was to take the Fabulous Five to more conservative states, in hopes of opening people's eyes and bring attention to the need for equality. The fifth season to the series was recorded during the summer of 2019 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In the 2016 presidential elections, the state's Electoral College went to Donald Trump, painting the state red. Philadelphia, however, was the only city in the state of which 70% voted for the democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton ('2016 United States Presidential Election in Pennsylvania', 2020). Pennsylvania was the last of the Mid-Atlantic states to legalize same-sex marriage. This happened in 2014 when a federal judge had ruled that the state's law forbidding same-sex marriage violated the U.S. Constitution, making it the 19th state in the U.S. to have marriage equality (Ring, 2014). Just because same-sex marriage was not yet legal, does not mean that queerness could not be celebrated. The city has been celebrating gay pride with a parade yearly since 1972 (Cohen, 2017). The state introduced a law to protect LGBT+ identifying persons from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity in 2016, changed the requirements for transgender people to change their gender on their birth certificates in the same year, removing sex reassignment surgery as a requirement and in 2020 added a third, gender-neutral, option for driver's licenses and state IDs (Equality Pennsylvania, 2016; Goodin-Smith, 2019; Lavers, 2016). Although trans* persons do still need a medical note proving that they have had clinical treatment for gender transition before being able to legally change their gender, Pennsylvania has made a lot of progress protecting LGBTQIA+ persons and Philadelphia itself appears to be a city supportive of LGBTQIA+ rights.

Opting for a discourse analysis as a research method is very closely linked to the source-material selected for this thesis. It allows me to take an explorative role both in sketching a frame of

what it means to be queer and what “queer” looks like, and in analysing and interpreting the material that is supposed to represent queer people. It is important, however, to be aware of how the interpretation and analysis of the source material is very dependent on my personal biases the selection of literature prior to the analysis. I have read additional research and several academic sources in an attempt to be aware of my personal bias as much as possible. I have done this in order to be able to offer a more structured discourse analysis of how queer identities are represented in *Queer Eye*. Nonetheless, it is essential to be apprehensive of any possible biases that could influence the research, both for me as a writer and for others when reading this text.

ANALYSIS

To introduce the *Queer Eye* group, information was extracted from the very first episode of the 2018 series in addition to some interviews the Fab Five did when promoting their show. The actual analysis is, unless stated otherwise, based entirely on information extracted from an observation of the fifth and most recent season of *Queer Eye*.

6. Introducing the 'queer eye'

It is important to note that the return and rebranding of *Queer Eye*, and with that the introduction of the new and fresh 'Fabulous Five' happened early in 2018. Since then, Jonathan Van Ness has expressed in an interview with Out Magazine that he identifies as non-binary (Tirado, 2019). This does mean that originally, the new Fab Five were introduced as five gay men, which is now no longer an accurate description. Choosing to select a group of five gay men to represent the 'queer eye', seems to be an interesting approach. This changes slightly when you know that Antoni Porowski considers his sexuality as something fluid and says he is attracted to a person, not their gender (Rubin, 2018). The choice to still advertise the group as five gay men, despite one of the group not identifying as gay, can be a strategical choice, or a sign that not a lot of thought went into the terminology used in and around the show.

(About the original Fab Five) When I watched you guys do what you do, it was absolutely incredible. It did help so many young kids, but there is so much more work to do. The fact that we are now in a position where there is a black guy on the show, on a commercial show, who is gay and who has got children. There's a Muslim man on the show who is openly gay and married to a Mormon.

(Tan France in Netflix, 2018)

The very first episode of the 2018 version of *Queer Eye* introduces the five with an image in which they are walking across a rainbow zebra crossing, taking off their sunglasses in a synchronised movement and with the camera then focussing on a street sign that reads 'Gay Street'. An image that again portrays the Fabulous Five as gay men. You hear every member of the Fabulous Five give personal statements about what it means for them to be a part of the show and what they believe the show is set to achieve. Antoni, the food and wine expert, says his goal is to figure out how they are similar as opposed to how different they are from the participants of the show. Tan France, who specialises in fashion, states the difference between the 2003 version and the 2018 version by saying "the original show was fighting for tolerance; our fight is for acceptance". According to Karamo Brown, the culture and lifestyle expert, the shows allows for different people to come together in a way where they can understand each other. Jonathan Van Ness, whose expertise is grooming, describes the importance of his role as making sure the world sees the best version of you, which is only possible

when one takes care of themselves. Bobby Berk, who takes on the design part of the show and renovates the homes, which is what they call the contestants, their homes, follows Karamo's reasoning in using the show to form a connection despite differences.

All human beings have a commonality. More so than anyone thinks. We're all really exactly the same. We all are born, we all grow up wanting to be loved, we all become an adult searching for love. It doesn't matter if it's gay or straight. A common thread that holds every human together is that we just want to be loved.
(Bobby Berk, S01E01, 2018)

In interviews and other formats of promotion for the show's remake, the new Fab Five distinguished themselves from the original group in different ways. One being the extra diversity in ethnicity and religion, another the fact that network television now seems to be more ready to get to know queer people on a deeper, less superficial level. With Netflix, the show is also taken worldwide and there is an opportunity for people all over the world to connect with participants or members of the Fab Five, to see queer people represented as they are, not as a gimmick.

We're changing the concept of the word, the interpretation. Like if you look at Tom Jackson in the very first episode, he was sharing with us at the end how incredible it was that five gay guys came in and showed him so much kindness and paid attention to him. He took a concept of gay, something that was so abstract, and it was personalised by the end of that week into five individuals. Like guys who just came in and helped in all these various departments. Like that is changing something. You change that for one person and people watch that and they relate to that in a very personal way.
(Antoni Porowski in GLAAD, 2018)

Another way in which the newer Fab Five sees themselves as different from the original group, is that their being gay is not what makes them the experts or places them in a higher position. Berk says they are just going into every episode as five men who want to help someone become the best version of themselves, Tan France adds that gay men are about so much more than making things pretty. It is an interesting statement to make when talking about a show that is titled *Queer Eye* and that advertises their experts as five gay men coming in to help, but does show clearly that the Fab Five wants to stray from the stereotypical depiction of queer bodies by creating a more personal connection with the participant and the audience.

7. Analysing patterns

Upon watching the fifth season to Netflix' *Queer Eye*, I noticed multiple recurring ways in which queerness was portrayed or reacted to by both the Fabulous Five and participants. I then tried to categorise them into groups that all serve a same reaction or way of portraying queerness. I am aware by placing the behaviour of a person into groups, I am taking away some of the individuality of said person. This is done, however, in order to discuss the way queerness is displayed. Going from the way Netflix has presented their Fab Five as representatives of the queer eye, I have taken a similar approach and have analysed them as an entity of representation.

The first pattern is the clear depictions and references to queerness, like showing pride flags or the Fab Five mentioning their partners. It is the most direct approach to displaying queerness that is found in the show, it is not hidden in metaphors or other mannerisms that hint towards queerness. A second is the tactical approach used by television to make the queer bodies more approachable to the audience and participants. Known tactics used in media to do so are the use of humour or portraying gay men in more masculine ways as to appeal to a wider audience. I noticed *Queer Eye* making use of this tactic of levelling out discomfort in seeing heteronormative frameworks being broken. This by the use of humour, by displaying their Fab Five in stereotypically masculine frames, by making gay jokes that serve the heterosexual individual, such as complimenting them by making flirty remarks and by having them recount personal experiences in order to connect with the participant. A third pattern I noticed, is the ways in which queerness is represented in its entirety. These are the ways in which the Fab Five challenged heteronormative ideals, spoke of struggles that queer people face and in general pay attention to everyone their gender identity, diversity and intersectional identities. A final and fourth pattern that appeared, ties to Halberstam's theory on how the heteronormative frame is such an inherent part of society that one can only fully avoid conforming to heteronormative ideas by forgetting about the framework completely. The Fab Five, despite being a part of the queer community that challenges the norm, grew up in a heteronormative world as well and they too sometimes contribute to the normative ideas. This can be seen in the simple ways in which they push heteronormative standards onto their participants like when they tell women to dress more feminine, or the Fabulous Five themselves conform to stereotypes about gay/queer bodies. There are even moments in which they neglect or disrespect other members their gender identity or sexual orientation by misgendering them or speaking of five gay men, while that description does not fit all five members of the group.

7.1. Pattern 1: direct queerness

The most direct way in which the focus is put onto the queerness of our Fabulous Five, is by visual portrayals. One example is the imagery and different kinds of transition shots used by the production team. The season kicks off showing Jonathan, Bobby, Antoni, Tan and Karamo move into their new headquarters in Philadelphia. The five are excitedly dancing around and decorating the loft, placing a rainbow pride flag by their front door as a finishing touch. The camera then pans out showing a street

sign that says “straight street” that runs parallel with the street the Fab Five headquarters is on and another sign that reads “gay street”, pointing directly towards the loft. These street signs are brought into focus multiple times throughout the season. It does not say queer street, but gay street, immediately suggesting to the viewer that all of the Fab Five are gay which is not the case. On top of that, by only putting up signs that say “straight” and “gay”, the producers follow a heteronormative, binary frame in which it is believed that one is either gay or straight, while queerness and sexuality is a much broader spectrum than that. Later in the first episode, in which they are helping Noah who is a gay priest, more images of pride rallies, pride flags or landscapes with rainbows are shown as transitions between certain scenes. These are all very direct and indisputable ways of showing the show's link to queerness.

A slightly less obvious, but still quite direct way in which queerness is visually displayed, is in what production shows you as a viewer in terms of emotion and in the outfits the Fab Five wear. When knowing that queerness means any manner of challenging or rejecting heteronormative standards, displaying male presenting people in clothes or behaviour that does not pass as typically masculine, is a display of queerness as well. *Queer Eye* does this through camera frames by zooming in on the Fab Five's faces when they show emotion and conclude the week that they have spent with that episode's participant with tears showing in their eyes. It is a moment in which the focus should be put onto the participant and their progress, yet for every episode, the cameras focuses on the Fabulous Five who respond to the compliments about their achievements and the ways in which they helped during the week with tears in their eyes.

NATE

That's now how you're supposed to sit in a skirt,
I'm just saying.

JONATHAN

When it's long like this, you can totally go like
this as a lady. It's really like, high fashion,
you know.

The Fab Five themselves also show their queerness in the way they dress. Jonathan is often shown challenging gendered stereotypes by wearing a dress or skirt, and even Antoni wears a skirt in one of the episodes. The other members put their own twist of challenging gendered clothing by wearing crop tops, sheer blouses or adding jewellery to their outfits. The conversation above happens in the final episode when Jonathan is sat in a way that could be described as ‘manspreading’ while he is wearing a skirt, to which the week's participant tells him he should not be sitting that way when wearing a skirt. In this scenario, a juxtaposition of gender stereotyping takes place. Where the heteronormative remark would be to point out that someone who is not female is wearing a skirt, Nate accepts the queerness in Jonathan's choice of clothing, yet still comments on the queerness in his behaviour and the way he sits

when wearing a dress. In this, Nate accepts queerness and reinforces a heteronormative way of thinking all in one remark. Other ways in which the Fab Five express their connection to queerness in their clothing, is by having rainbow accents in their outfits. Antoni wears a shirt that has a rainbow logo on the front, Jonathan accessorises his outfit with a rainbow print bag and a participant is blindfolded with a rainbow print bandana when being taken back to his building to reveal his transformed and improved home. Karamo, in his turn, expresses his connection to the queer community through the sentences on his T-shirts, which often carry motivational expressions. In the second episode, he wears a shirt that says “trans people belong” and in episode eight his shirt has the sentence “black, gay and gifted”.

Another quite direct way in which queerness is noticeable and accentuated, is in what I describe as queer embodiment. This encompasses both behaviour and language that is typically used by queer people or does not necessarily fit the heteronormative idea of how a certain gender identity should behave. Some of Jonathan's enthusiastic exclamations include “ferosh”, “queen”, “love” and referring towards the person who becomes their ‘project’ during the week as “little baby (name)” or using the word “baby” for anything that is slightly small. In episode nine, he also refers to the makeover process as “giving a little baby zhuzh to her outsides”. Antoni in his turn changes the ‘oh my god’ expression to “oh my gosh!” and likes to shorten words like “professional” into “profesh”, something Jonathan does as well when referring to a denture as “dench”. Karamo and Bobby use the utterance “girl” or versions of “sister” when expressing shock or attitude towards their participant, whether it be a girl, boy or non-binary person and at a certain point, Bobby shouts “oh my god, what in gay hell?” in shock, adding a queer touch to a otherwise common expression. Tan, who styles the participants, often uses words like “sexy” to describe a look or posture and hypes the participant in episode seven up by chanting “work, work, work. Yes queen, yes Beyoncé” and “va-va-voom” when she shows of her new look. All five of the group use expressions such as “slay” and “yas” to express enthusiasm and hype up a person and the words “gorgeous” and “fabulous” seem to be the most used adjectives in the season.

JONATHAN

Let me see your little naily-nailies. Girl, pretty. Maybe we could just treat you to a little bit of pampering. Love, let's do it. (...) The New Rahanna, honey she came to slay! Are you ready? New Rahanna, she's stunning and she's ready for you to see her.

The extract written above is only a small part of the expressions said in the season and is from the second episode when Jonathan takes Rahanna to his salon to give her a makeover. There are no written rules on what can be considered queer languages and what cannot, but referring to nails as “naily-nailies”, using terms such as “love” and “girl” outside their original definition and in multiple

contexts referring to someone or something in third person with female pronouns are all expressions we see the Fab Five use, not their heterosexual heroes.

KARAMO

Our hero this week is 6'4", a tall drink of water
Johnny would say.

Apart from using a diminutive/nickname, which is something that happens in different ways throughout the season (think of Jonathan referring to things as baby), this statement from the ninth episode also shows that the Fab Five are aware of each other's expressions and patterns and pick up on them. Apart from being aware of one another's language, the five create a distinction between queer and straight language as well. It happens inexplicitly purely on the basis that their heterosexual heroes do not use the same expressions as the Fab Five do, but at a certain point in the final episode Tan explicitly states that he is aware his language differs from that week's participant.

TAN

It looks fly. Can I continue to use your word,
even though it is definitely not in my normal
vernacular?

The episode is ended with Karamo saying "And I oop", an expression that was widely used across the internet and even real life by all sexual orientations and gender identities in 2019, but that was originated by a black, gay drag queen.

The second aspect of queer embodiment, being behaviour and body language, is often more subtle but then bursts out in other scenes. In the second episode, the five organise a dog fashion show for their participant. After the pink carpet is rolled out, Karamo takes it upon him to strut the runway in a very extravagant manner and drape his scarf over him, showing off his fashionable outfit. Later, in episode four, he is shown leaving a building while doing a double pirouette, as per request from Jonathan, and in episode five we see Karamo skipping, carefree and with a lot of flare, across a city square. Another notably queer moment in behaviour that happens episode five, shows the Fab Five back in their headquarters ready to sit on the couch and watch the progress their hero has made and how she is getting along without them. In this scene, Jonathan is shown strutting to the couch, while Karamo picks Tan up from his seat and carries him over bridal style.

7.2. Pattern 2: Making the 'queer' more approachable

Makeover programmes are something that is considered as feminine and in the heteronormative ideology, so are gay men. This is part of why queer men take on the role of expert in makeover television: they create a link between femininity of the programme and having a man be the expert. However, then the problem of not being able to relate to the experts arises for a largely heterosexual audience, as they do not fit into a heteronormative frame.

ANTONI

We're always intimidated by what we don't know.

To counter this, the experts are shown in activities or camera shots that fit the idea of how their gender should behave. This in a way to make them more approachable for the heterosexual audience. They are, despite their queerness, shown in ways that go along with heteronormative expectations. Another way in which queer people make themselves more approachable to those that might be uncomfortable by their 'otherness', is by making jokes that stem from heteronormativity or that just lighten the mood in general. These are strategies applied within makeover television and can also be found in *Queer Eye*.

The first strategy to be found in *Queer Eye*, is showing the Fab Five, who are often described as "five gay guys" even though not all five are gay nor identify as male, in typically masculine environments or activities. In the first episode, we see Karamo and Antoni engage in a sword fight during which Antoni screams that he is "the power" and Karamo responds shouting "He man!". In a way combining both masculinity and silliness to ease the tension of 'otherness'. Almost every episode also starts with the Fab Five driving a truck-like car, en route to their new hero of the week. The car is black, and the seats are covered in dark brown leather, fitting into the heteronormative idea of what a man should drive. On top of that, the five take turns driving, so we see all five members behind the wheel at some point. Another point in which the five are displayed as typically masculine, is when they take their hero to a scrapyard, an occasion for which they dress up in construction helmets and fluorescent vests. This too has a sense of silliness to it to break tension, as the attire does not fit the five you see during the rest of the episode at all.

Apart from the Fabulous Five engaging in typically masculine behaviour, the production uses the strategy as well to portray them in ways that men are often shown. The music used in the background when the Fab Five are driving towards their new hero often gives off a tough vibe. An example is the use of rap, hip-hop or the introduction to Tina Turner's Eye of the Tiger. There are also transition shots that show the five in front of a white screen. While most of the time, they are dancing in these fragments, sometimes they are also displayed in more tough activities such as working out.

A second way in which the Fab Five break the tension that comes with not fitting the heteronormative frame, is by simply acting silly and making jokes. Production-wise, this strategy is

regularly used in transition scenes. The Fab Five will be shown acting silly and dancing around in front of a white background, sometimes even dressed up with a hint towards American revolutionaries. There is no particular reason for this stated or to be detected, so it can be assumed that it is for comedic effect. Aside from the production, the five turn to silliness in many situations as well. In the second episode, after barging into that week's hero their home, Jonathan and Tan are shown practising ballet in the living room and Karamo finds wigs in a closet and starts putting on a drag-like fashion show. Similarly to the second episode, Antoni and Jonathan are shown riding around on a miniature horse through the hero's home in the third episode. In the fourth episode, we see the Fab Five biking through town instead of driving. Again, silliness is added to the simple activity by giving all five a flashy helmet that has sparkles or is shaped like a funny animal. The sixth episode combines both masculinity and goofiness by switching up the episodes' standard introduction and making it Jersey Shore themed, showing the five in swimwear and flashy tight tops, both highlighting their masculine features and making fun of the Jersey Shore style. This combination of masculinity and silliness can also be found in the eighth episode, where they use a clip of Antoni running in slow motion as a transition shot. While this could be considered a masculine activity, the added slow motion and the fact that the running has nothing to do with the episode make the shot feel out of place and add humour to it.

Not all of the silliness and jokes stem from a heteronormative frame, but a lot do. They are based on stereotypes or negative opinions about the queer community and are given a twist by queer persons to break tension and laugh with heteronormativity. While these ideas are often used as insults towards or arguments against the queer community, they are made light of by queer persons themselves and turned into an antic. For instance, from the argument that the Bible is against homosexuality and based on negative personal experiences, Bobby jokes that he was pre-warned and put on his fireproof suit when the five are on their way to a church to help the priest. Jonathan, later in that episode, makes a joke about how he cannot do math, a comment that is also based on a stereotype.

BOBBY

Is it extra as hell? Yes, but what did you expect from us?

Queer bodies are often perceived as 'extra' because of being different from a heteronormative viewpoint. This is another stereotype that the five used to joke about and warrant their choices with. Similar to Jonathan's remark about not being able to do math because he's gay, Bobby, in this case, jokingly confirms that, because he is gay, he will make decisions that are considered 'extra'. In the third episode, Bobby makes a joke tied to the idea that gay men are feminine, by saying that a lace curtain in the hero's home reminds him of a pair of underwear he owns, to which Karamo replies saying, "I bet it does, you nasty freak." Another stereotype that the five take and turn into a joke to lighten the mood, is the idea that queer persons are automatically attracted to every person of the gender that they feel attracted to.

So in this scenario, that the Fab Five will be attracted to the man they are helping that week, solely because they are attracted to men. To ridicule this stereotype, the five often make flirty comments towards their male heroes, an example happens in the sixth episode when they surprise Ryan while he is laying shirtless in a tanning bed. All five members act overly swooned by the body they see before them.

ANTONI

Oh my god, I'm so glad you're wearing shorts! I'm distracted by his abs.

TAN

I am a married man. I am a happily married man. Look, has he got a body that doesn't quit? Absolutely.

JONATHAN

Take us to your bedroom, Ryan. If you feel the need to take your top off again, we understand, it's fine. (...) We're going to jump in your shower, we're going to take our clothes off. I'm going to scrub your back, you're going to scrub my back. And then we'll go get our spray tan.

The reason behind these flirty comments, is purely to give their hero a confidence boost and to create an easy-going atmosphere between them and the Fab Five. Later in the episode, Karamo takes Ryan to the club where he works as a DJ and remarks that, if he were to see Ryan DJ, he would take off his panties and throw them up on stage. In the eighth episode, similar remarks are made and Bobby comments on the way that week's hero looks by blinking his eyes and saying, "You look like a tasty fruit salad."

The following episode, the Fab Five take the stereotype that gay men dress feminine and run with it while trying on clothing from this week's female hero. We have seen Karamo strut a runway earlier in the season, a joke that is now brought back when Karamo tries on a pair of shorts and struts through the house wearing imaginary heels.

TAN

Look how short they are, would you ever wear something this short?

KARAMO

Yes, I'm a hoe.

TAN

Oh mister Brown, oh my mister Brown! I love how you've already put your imaginary heels on. Can you give us a full on walk please?

KARAMO

Of course I can. You know I love a catwalk.

Adding to the feminine perception of queer men, is the idea that they are 'afraid' of dirty things and care about their appearance a lot. This is joked about in the final episode when they meet their hero of the week while he is teaching a fitness class. When he goes to hug Karamo after meeting the Fab Five, Karamo lets out a high-pitched squeal screaming that he cannot hug him because the sweat is "gross".

In the season's final episode, the five take the idea that being queer is wrong and disappoints one's parents and turn it into a joke. The five are rummaging through that week's hero their closet and decide to play dress-up when Tan goes into the closet with Karamo to put on a costume.

KARAMO

I'm going to show you what Tan's parents always really wanted. Give us one second.

BOBBY

To go back in the closet? (exaggerated laughter from Bobby and Jonathan)

The reason the five are able to take a lot of these stereotypes or negative perceptions of the queer community and joke about them, stems from the sole reason that they have found their community and are now in a safe space to be the most authentic versions of themselves. This is unfortunately not the case for a lot of queer bodies.

7.3. Pattern 3: Queer representation

In a television series where five queer bodies are the recurring protagonists, one should hope to find some representation of queerness in its entirety as well. Not in a way that makes makeover television more approachable for a male audience or to use as a gimmick, but queer bodies as diverse as they are and with attention to the struggles that they face for not fitting into the heteronormative framework. A subtle way in which this is shown, is in the way the five challenge the heteronormative framework and the idea that men should be masculine, women should be feminine etc. A more direct way is in explicit mentions of queer identities or testimonies they give about their personal queer experiences and about the importance of acceptance and diversity.

When I talk about ways in which *Queer Eye* challenges heteronormative ideals, I am referring to something as simple as acts of intimacy. While men are often expected to not show any emotions or intimacy between friends, the Fabulous Five are very intimate in a lot of ways. Not only are they often touching or have their arms intertwined when they are sat or walking in a group, they also kiss each other on the cheek and hug their candidates and each other a lot. This is something that stood out to one of the heroes so much that she pointed it out specifically.

JENNIFER

I've never done so much hugging and touching in my life.

TAN

We're huggers, we're huggers.

On the level of showing emotions, Karamo is the expert who pays the most attention to it. He takes on mental battles of their heroes and helps them fix those, always trying to create a safe space and encouraging the participants to keep talking and not be afraid to show emotions when things get rough. Although it can feel invasive when Karamo is sitting in on a heartfelt conversation of a father and daughter making amends, the focus of his clips often shifts from the actual conversation to the emotions that are being released. In a lot of moments, instead of asking what a hero thinks of a certain transition or adjustment, the five will ask them how they feel about it, again putting the focus on emotions. When concluding the week, production also chooses to pan the cameras onto the Fab Five when they watch a compilation of the progress made during the week with tears in their eyes. One of the male heroes pointed this focus on emotions out when expressing gratitude towards the Fab Five.

TYREEK

This has been an amazing week and I don't think I've ever had an experience anywhere near this. I don't get to talk to other people about my emotions. Well I don't get to have those conversations with men, and I feel like that's something that's always, like in a lot of our lives, and that means a lot. Yeah.

KARAMO

We are breeding this culture of men not asking for help because we tell them "you have to be strong, you gotta handle it on your own", and that's a problem.

It also happens that the participants are stuck within a heteronormative frame. In episode eight, the Fab Five go on a mission to help out Marcos, a father whose sole purpose in life is providing for his

family. It is then that the Fab Five points out that his children also need their father to be emotionally there for them, that there is much more to being a father than providing for his wife and children. In episode nine, there is more of a focus on a less traditional family situation, where the father stays at home and the mother goes to work. It is then pointed out that family should not be about a men's role and a woman's role, but about whoever can do what is best for the family to just do it. The episode challenges heteronormative expectations by focussing on doing what makes someone happy, not what is expected of them according to their gender.

The earlier discussed varied wardrobe of the Fabulous Five and Karamo's runway moments are also a way in which heteronormativity is challenged and queerness is represented in its entirety. It is focussing on wearing what a person wants to wear and what they feel comfortable in, not what clothing is assigned to which gender. Another idea that stems from heteronormative beauty ideals, is that women lose their worth when showing signs of age. It is why anti-ageing creams are so popular and hair dying supplies are targeted towards women whose hair is turning grey. Jonathan challenges this expectation for women to stay young by pointing out the beauty of grey hair.

JONATHAN

Growing your grey out is so brave, but it's also really beautiful. No, I don't need to embrace your ideals of beauty. I don't need to change who I am. I want more silver haired divas in the world.

Another way in which queerness is properly represented, is in open discussions about queer identity and the struggles a lot of queer persons endure. This is very heavily discussed in the first episode because it features a gay priest, bringing religion and queerness together, a combination that is rare.

KARAMO

Faith and religion is really important to me. So to hear that we have a pastor that identifies as part of the LGBT community is really amazing for me. What was that journey like for you?

NOAH

At first I think it was like, I finally get to be me. Then it was like, "oh, crap, this is really hard." The church wasn't really ready for openly gay clergy. You could be openly gay in the pew, but you couldn't be an openly gay pastor. (...) I wasn't able to come out until much later in life, and I wasn't at the forefront of people leading the church into greater acceptance. I felt guilty. I have a severe case of impostor

syndrome. Huge. Like, am I really the best person for them here? This is a community that is struggling for survival, and I need to... I need to be a leader.

KARAMO

It is important for Noah to be around other LGBTQ clergy, so that he can understand that he's not alone in his struggles.

NOAH

I had always avoided saying that I was gay because of the church's lack of acceptance. But I feel held back by my past. And I feel like I can't be the kind of leader in the church that I could be. I keep running a negative script in my head, because I didn't step up within the larger story of the queer community. I haven't gotten over it.

They discuss the pressure to perform and live up to expectations as a queer person, the guilt that comes with coming out at a later age because you feel like you let down other queer persons and the importance of positive representation like a queer priest in an institution that is known to be homophobic. Noah brings up his struggles with guilt and shame a lot and it is nice to see him at the other end of the tunnel, no longer ashamed of his sexuality. He is a wonderful example to show that it is never too late to come out and that there is no wrong way to be queer, despite the pressure you put onto yourself.

Aside from the one queer hero in the season, the Fab Five bring up some experiences and discussions as well. Bobby, in episode four and ten, shares his experiences of being homeless after being kicked out of his house because he came out as gay. Saying that he had to live in his car or rely on friends whose couches he could crash on. Bringing up a topic that is unfortunately very common for queer youth and being an example to show that things can look up in the end, no matter how rough the situation you are in is.

BOBBY

I can really, truly, honestly say I have been there. I dropped out of high school at 15, no education at all. I mean I used to live in my car, I've been homeless. And now I have a furniture brand that's in stores all over the world.

Antoni, too, shares his negative experiences with family relationships after he came out, when he speaks about how he has not spoken to his mother in about five years and how that is really difficult for him because the family was always important. He then brightens the mood by saying he eventually found family elsewhere, referring to the queer community. In a lot of queer experiences, family does not necessarily mean related by blood. Jonathan, in episode nine, shares his experiences with being bullied because of his 'otherness', starting his testimony saying that "obviously", he was bullied. The term obviously here shows that it is a common experience for queer persons to get bullied, but Jonathan in his turn also shows how he has turned that negative experience in something to grow from.

JONATHAN

Obviously, well it's sad that I have to say "obviously", but I got bullied a lot and I think, you know, as tough as it was then, I think sometimes it can be the reason why we can be so empathetic and so sensitive and be able to help on the level that we help.

One of the first times explicit attention is paid to the Fab Fives' different queer identities, is when Jonathan corrects himself and describes the groups as four men and one non-binary person instead of a group of men, boys, or guys. It happens again later in the season when Tan refers to the Fab Five as "fives", instead of a male-gendered term, which is used in most situations.

JONATHAN

You have five, well, four gay godfathers and me, you know, just a non-binary fairy... parent, who is always there for you, should you need skincare, should you have questions.

This awareness for queerness happens again at the start of episode six, when their hero is introduced as a 37-year old, single man. They explicitly challenge heteronormative expectations of relationships, something that is still very inherent in our way of thinking.

ANTONI

He wants to marry and start a family like his brothers, but right now, he's not meeting the right women.

BOBBY

Here's an idea. Maybe he's not looking for women.

TAN

Maybe he's looking for the right man.

JONATHAN

Excuse me, everyone, maybe he's looking for the right person.

In the season's final episode, the intersectionality of one's identity plays a very big role and is brought into the conversation when the week's hero narrows herself down to one identity, rather than a multiplicity of characteristics. Something that definitely stems from heteronormative expectations but is then challenged by the Fab Five.

LILY

I never went on a lot of dates growing up. I always just thought I was the smart one, not the pretty one or the hot one.

ANTONI

You didn't think that you could be more than one thing? (...) That is heartbreaking. She is someone who is deeply passionate about her job and about helping others, who loves her husband, who wants to spend more time with her daughter. She is very much lovable.

JONATHAN

I want to empower her with the tools that she needs to be like, "I am confident. I am a fierce mom, and I am someone who's capable of wearing all these different hats and owning that."

7.4. Pattern 4: Failing to shake heteronormativity

Despite being queer themselves, the Fab Five sometimes make the mistake of amplifying heteronormative expectations as well. This can be attributed to the fact that heteronormativity is so ingrained into our lives, society and institutions. In *Queer Eye*, this happens in three different ways: by simply conveying heteronormative expectations about gender performance or relationships, by conforming to queer stereotypes that stem from heteronormativity and by disrespecting or neglecting someone else's queerness. Fortunately, the last one does not happen often, but it does happen.

Looking at the Fab Five their wardrobe, one would expect them to challenge gender roles when it comes down to their heroes' clothes as well. However, it quickly becomes clear that they want to dress their heroes in clothing that aligns with what expected of their gender.

TAN

(About heels) I know you don't need them for your height, but I feel like they make you stand in a different way. Wear them more often, like show people you don't give a ****. (...) Watching Rahanna in a pair of heels, walking so confidently, makes me feel like we're starting to evolve. We're starting to realize that maybe our height is something to be embraced.

He actively chooses to dress female heroes in dresses and pushes them to wear heels, even if they have said they do not feel comfortable in them. In episode five, he even pushes a girl who dresses more androgynous to dress up more feminine and see her femininity as her power, completely adding to the heteronormative expectations that women should dress feminine. He tells her that there is no such thing as being too feminine or looking too pretty and that as a young, hard working woman, she should look stylish, fashionable and professional.

TAN

She has been with her boyfriend for ten years, they've been together since high school, they have recently moved in together, but there is no proposal in sight.

In this statement, Tan preserves the idea and expectation that a couple should get married to be happy, that a relationship is incomplete without marriage. This is a train of thought that stems from heteronormative institutions. Other ways in which they add to heteronormative expectations, is in their display of shock in episode six when they enter a single man's house and it looks clean. Because he is a 37-year-old bachelor, they expect his house to be a mess and make that obvious in their reactions to how nice the house looks. On top of that, they attribute the fact that Ryan is not happy to the fact that he does not have a wife. In episode nine, the five meet a family where the mother works as a doctor and the father stays at home to take care of their daughter. This is, by all means, a family situation that breaks the norm, however by constantly focussing on how special this is and by reminding the viewer that it is non-traditional, the Fab Five indirectly confirm the heteronormative expectations.

JONATHAN

Modern family. Working mom, three-year-old baby daughter, yes yes yes.

KARAMO

I love the dynamic you two have here. You being a stay at home dad. That's not a traditional role that we see men in. (...) It's a hard feeling for a mother. Especially in a society that doesn't really praise "non-traditional roles", where the mom is at work and father's at home. It causes this internal conflict. You're already dealing with the guilt of not being there and then you're also dealing with the judgement of other people.

Later in the episode, we see Antoni teaching Lily how to cook, a moment during which he states more than once that her taking more time to cook for her family will be something positive to share, saying that nothing matters more than "breaking bread with husband and daughter". By saying this, he places Lily back into the pattern of what the norm expects from her as a mother.

Conforming to queer stereotypes is not necessarily negative as this may as well be a part of their personality, however by doing so they do fit into the idea of what a gay man should look and act like and therefore limit the representation of queerness that a queer community is looking for. An example is Jonathan saying he would like to be the first lady of the church, after seeing how handsome the priest is. This both contributes to the idea that in same-sex couples there is a woman and a man, as well as the idea that gay persons are feminine. The production adds to the stereotype that gay men are feminine by using songs that have lyrics about girls wanting to belong when showing images of the Fab Five. Then there is the idea that all gay persons are into fashion, which is perpetuated in every episode when that week's hero shows off their new wardrobe and the Fab Five critique it. This ritual of offering opinions does not happen for any other of the four areas of expertise, only for the field of fashion. Tan later in the season even refers to fashion as "a higher power". While it could be argued that Bobby's area of expertise is the most masculine and aligning with heteronormative expectations of what a man should do, as he renovates the heroes' living spaces. However, when scenes of the actual construction site are being shown, Bobby is never displayed working, even though he works hard. He will be shown watching his team work while he holds a shopping bag, or while playfully using a chandelier as a wig. This could also be perceived as a display of gay men as a prude, as persons who care a lot about the way they look and are afraid to get their hands dirty. This vision is also shown in episode six, when Antoni pushes Tan onto an unmade bed and Tan exclaims that the sheets are not clean, and that Antoni should know how he feels about that stuff. It also comes up in the final episode when Karamo refuses to hug someone who is sweaty or when Tan uses a broomstick to go through someone's wardrobe because he is so disgusted by it.

In terms of generalising queerness or ignoring queer identities, the first occasion in which this happens is when Tan introduces a group of eight people as "a gaggle of gays". None of the persons their gender or sexual orientation is specified but the group has male presenting, female-presenting and

androgynous looking persons, making it clear that Tan uses “gay” as an umbrella term rather than in its meaning of being attracted to the same gender. In a show titled *Queer Eye*, you would expect one of the Fab Five to use a more all-encompassing term to describe a group of queer bodies. A big and recurring way in which the Fab Five seem to not consider the variety of queerness, is in the ways they neglect Jonathan being non-binary when referring to the group as “boys”. This happens multiple times during the season. Karamo, in episode four, even describes Jonathan as a “fairy gay father”, and in episode ten, Jonathan is described as a gentleman, completely neglecting his gender identity. Referring to the five as “boys”, is a consequence of a very binary train of thought. As discussed before, this binary way of thinking occurs in the street signs in front of the Fab Five headquarters that say “gay street” and “straight street” as well. That in combination with only the rainbow pride flag being brought into view, shows that the production uses gay as an umbrella term for same-sex attraction, which is technically incorrect and unfortunate to be seen used in a show that is supposed to represent queerness and teach its viewers about the community.

CONCLUSION

The main goal of this thesis is to answer the question as to whether *Queer Eye*, with the Fabulous Five, offers a proper representation of the queer community, or whether their programme reinforces heteronormative stereotypes and expectations of what queer bodies should look like. To answer this, the work of queer theorists Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam, Sarah Ahmed and Jasbir Puar was consulted in order to create a clear understanding of what it means to be queer. Queerness appears in any situation that challenges the heteronormative framework on which society is built (Ahmed, 2006b; Butler, 1993; Halberstam, 2011; Puar, 2005). Because of its opposition to a heteronormative framework, queerness in itself is what creates the norm and allows it to exist, always placing the queer body in the role of 'the other'. Because heteronormativity is so inherent to the world we live in, one often falls into perpetuating stereotypes without actively being conscious of doing so. Within the heteronormative framework, a stereotypical understanding of queerness has been construed, being that those who challenge the norm, do so in gender expression, gender identity and in sexual orientation, not just in one way. From this comes the idea that all gay men are feminine and lesbian women are masculine, an idea that sticks to very binary, heteronormative expectations. Queerness, however, is much more varied than that. It goes beyond the binary, covering all the ways in which heteronormativity is challenged or objected. *Queer Eye*, by putting queer in its title, is expected to offer a representation of queerness in the most varied sense of the word. Although there is no one correct way to represent queerness, there is a responsibility when representing queer identities to not conform to stereotypes or create a singular idea of queerness for an audience that is not familiar with nonnormative bodies.

Within the most recent season of *Queer Eye*, it is noticeable that there are several ways in which the norm gets challenged, and other ways in which the Fab Five, the persons organizing the makeover, confirm certain stereotypical images. There are four patterns to be distinguished: ways in which queerness is displayed directly and clearly, practises applied to make queer bodies more approachable for a normative audience, ways in which queerness is properly represented and lastly, moments where even queer bodies fail to shake heteronormativity and perpetuate the norm. Examples of direct displays of queerness include the display of rainbows and a street sign that read "gay street" as well as queer language and behaviour from the Fabulous Five themselves. One of the techniques applied in the show to make queer bodies more approachable are displaying them in typically masculine images such as driving a trucklike car or participating in sports. The other is by the use of humour and silliness; the Fab Five often take queer stereotypes such as that queer men are attracted to all men and turn them into jokes to flatter their heterosexual participants and audience. The Fabulous Five offer a proper representation of queerness and challenge heteronormative expectations actively by showing attitudes, performance and interactions such as intimacy between men, dressing in clothes that would typically be expected to be worn by women, and showing unconventional emotions, among others. They also have open discussions about struggles queer youth often face such as troubled family relations and even homelessness. However, they sometimes become complicit to the norm by pushing female heroes to

wear heels, telling a mother to make time to cook for her family, or questioning why a couple is not married when they have been together for a while. They also often misgender and disregard the non-binary person in the Fab Five by referring to the group as “boys” or “five gay men”.

By perpetuating heteronormative stereotypes, not only on the level of queerness, but on the level of gender expectations as well, the Fab Five push persons into certain categories associated with their gender. Harmful stereotypes and expectations can only be overcome by challenging them and reasoning outside of gender and sexuality. When the very persons challenging heteronormativity, still contribute to an reproduce existing gender and sexual stereotypes on television available worldwide, the persons fighting to abolish these gendered categories and ideas lose their credibility, because if the queer bodies do not mind, then why should others? Because they are only a group of five persons that is sold to the audience as representative of the queer community, it appears that everything they believe, support and enforce can be generalised to the queer community in its entirety. Even though Halberstam's theories about how forgetting is the only way to get rid of the deeply-rooted heteronormative ideologies can explain the ways in which the Fabulous Five perpetuate heteronormativity, it is clear that the show's enforcing of gender ideals goes beyond that and that the queer representatives were selected on a basis of who a heteronormative audience would feel comfortable watching (Halberstam, 2011).

Moreover, even though inherently, the Fab Five covers different queer identities with a non-binary person and a sexually fluid person, there are still a lot of queer aspects that remain uncovered. For example, there is no representation whatsoever of transgender persons, female identity, lesbian, bi- or pansexual sexual orientations, nor is there any discussion of asexuality or genderfluidity. On top of that, because the *Queer Eye* production focusses on the gayness of the Fab Five a lot through displaying rainbows and advertises them as five gay men, they lose the little bit of diversity within queerness that exists within the group. This relates back to lifestyle television introducing queer bodies, in this case gay men, to create a link between feminine programming and masculinity and bring men into the programmes, to then use strategies like displaying them in typically masculine ways or have them make jokes about queerness as to fit in a heteronormative framework so that they can appeal to a larger audience (Lewis, 2007). Through these measures, the unknown and oddities are levelled out. Having them fit into a heteronormative frame, however, takes away the queerness of persons in the first place as queerness in its very definition is challenging heteronormative ideologies.

Even though the *Queer Eye* group is now more diverse than the original Fabulous Five, they are still very much a polished and limited version of what queerness truly means and they are actively made to be more approachable to the audience and people unfamiliar with nonnormative persons. This shows that still, much thought goes into making the queer approachable to a heteronormative audience. Especially since the *Queer Eye* production actively advertises their Fab Five as a group of five gay men, having the show title use the term ‘queer’ and suggesting that their Fab Five speaks for all queer persons, is very far-fetched. Aside from attracting a heterosexual audience, using the term ‘queer’ in the show's

title also serves to attract queer persons to the show. Because there is so little queer representation on popular television, queer persons will quickly watch anything that features bodies they can relate to. Had the *Queer Eye* production team named their show “Gay Eye”, in the same way they promote their Fab Five as “five gay men”, they immediately lose a big curve of the queer community as an audience. The strategical choice to advertise something as queer, is known as queerbaiting (Ng, 2017).

As a queer person, when looking for representation in shows like *Queer Eye*, you are immediately let down if you are not a gay man or a non-binary person who is attracted to men. Neither are you represented if you do not care about things like fashion or interior design, something that can definitely not be assumed about all queer bodies as there is not just a single version of a queer body and all queer experiences differ depending on the intersectional identity of each individual (Ahmed, 2006b). To fully achieve the queer eye, instead of a heteronormatively acceptable gay eye, the Fab Five should be even more diverse instead of existing of three gay men, one sexually fluid man and one non-binary gay person who are all advertised as gay men. They should also consider using more inclusive language such as “fives” or simply “everyone” instead of “boys”. The five should also lose their own heteronormative gaze. For now, all men and all women they make over end up with similar wardrobes, even though queerness emphasises individuality and challenging expectations. Were we to really see the queer gaze represented, we would see more everyday aspects of fashion and design instead of the glamorous sides, we would see the participants queering gender expectations, not just the Fab Five. An end result that comes from a queer eye, to its very definition, would not be predictable and mainstream, but out there and unruly, challenging the heteronormative as that is what makes it queer.

In Ahmed (2006), we learn how queerness influences experiences and shapes an identity and how it is shaped as something negative by heteronormativity. It is only by finding bodies similar to themselves, that queer bodies learn that it is heteronormativity that makes them feel deviant, not because they are. The sense of being made to feel uncomfortable by heteronormative structures, unites queer bodies and creates a sense of community. When one lives a life of being made to feel out of place and uncomfortable, seeing a body you can relate to displayed on television can be of very important value. It is only through showing diverse and nonnormative bodies, that awareness for the privileged and heteronormative frame on which a lot of society is built can be created and one can start to question the assumed heteronormative framework.

As mentioned before, the current Fabulous Five is more representative and diverse than the original five and in many ways do present a lot of queer aspects and struggles that otherwise would not be displayed on television, think of queer homelessness or the way that the married men can mention their husbands without having to fear being rejected. They are in no way the perfect representation for queer bodies, but a small step forward is still a step forward. The popularity and easy renewal of the show also leaves room for progress during the seasons and for hopefully a more diverse crowd to be represented. With that, opportunities for other research arise as well. I will describe potential topics and areas to focus on that I did not have the opportunity to below.

Recommendations for future research

Of course, this research and observation is limited in time and resources and therefore based upon one season only, while different seasons might have shown different representations of queerness based on the persons they meet during the seasons as well. It would also be interesting to make a comparative study between the original *Queer Eye* for the Straight Guy and the current *Queer Eye*, in which possibly a more promising curve of improvement can be found. Due to time restrictions, there were also certain theoretical aspects that could prove to be interesting but that I did not discuss too much into depth. I believe looking into queerbaiting and the intentionality of the strategy in shows like *Queer Eye* could be interesting as well, as a person who has strongly internalised heteronormativity can contribute to queerbaiting without being aware of doing so.

Because there is still very little representation of queer bodies in media, the research related to the topic is limited as well. When queer bodies are added to television, it is often to meet a diversity quota or simply to obtain a bigger audience, but even then, these bodies are often written by heterosexual persons who cannot fully understand the queer experience, or the queer bodies are selected to fit heteronormative expectations. I believe more research to the impact of properly represented queer bodies and experiences on young persons who are discovering their gender identity and sexual orientation, can be very relevant and impactful in changing current media to a safer, more diverse and more accurately representative place.

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