denoting men who strive to look like sportsmen or porn stars, marks the next stage in the evolution of the preening, mediated ‘metrosexual’... and the rise in hypersexualized, homoprovocative imagery of sportsmen.”

Mercer says gay porn today also reflects a “saturated” masculinity, so broadly defined and conceived that it can mean “many things, some of them contradictory in nature.”

As a social construct, masculinity has changed over time, reflecting different interpretations of what’s appropriate male behavior.

“Popular understandings of masculinity during most of the 20th century were largely about the idea that masculinity was a very narrowly defined gender identity,” Mercer says. “Masculinity was hard to achieve and easily lost. In many ways, masculinity was understood as a tightrope walk, as it was all too easy to trip up and become ‘feminine’ or ‘feminized.’”

Now we understand there are many different ways of being a man, beyond the cultural normative version of masculinity. “A paradox that lies at the heart of gay porn is that it is, at points, both subversive and normative,” Mercer argues.

Makers of porn have adopted hetero norms about masculinity, while also developing subversive forms of masculinity, like twinks and bears.

“Masculinities are a multitude and are represented, likewise, in a multitude of ways,” Mercer said. “And this is vividly evidenced in the types that populate the fantasy worlds of gay porn—from the obvious ‘twink’ and ‘jock,’ but also ‘chavs’ and the hyper-masculine gay male.”

Mercer writes that this underlines “orthodoxies of masculine representation at the same time as producing new norms of gay sexual conduct and sexual performance.”

He says gay porn today is a great tool to “understand how modern masculinity works. Looking at the way that male bodies are presented for erotic consumption is important, as this is now more widely part and parcel of the fabric of popular culture, and informs a vocabulary that men of all ages and identities [use to] construct themselves or think of themselves as sexually desirable online. [Gay porn] is no longer a marginal, taboo minority interest, but is in fact part of popular culture.”

THE LGBTQ HEALTH CARE BILL OF RIGHTS
New York City made an important step toward equality.

In what appears to be a glimmer of hope in America’s current political climate, New York City has made a progressive and revolutionary step toward improving quality health care by introducing the LGBTQ Health Care Bill of Rights. The Advocate spoke with Dr. Dometre Daskalakis, NYC’s gay deputy commissioner of Disease Control, for more insight on the Big Apple’s new inclusive health care measure, how it benefits New Yorkers, and whether or not this can be a stepping stone for other cities to follow suit.

Does this bill recognize legal rights in New York City? Yes. The LGBTQ Health Care Bill of Rights includes rights and protections allowing anyone seeking health care in New York City, including LGBTQ people, to get the health care they need and deserve. Health care providers and their staff cannot legally provide LGBTQ patients with a lower quality of care because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Why was this necessary and what do you hope it changes? LGBTQ people are often silenced or stigmatized by the health care system. The LGBTQ Health Care Bill of Rights is designed to improve the quality and comprehensiveness of health care for LGBTQ people in New York City, and to systematically shift providers’ knowledge and behaviors related to LGBTQ health. It directs patients to contact the NYC Commission on Human Rights if they believe they have been mistreated or denied care because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression in any health care setting.

Could this bill be a model for other cities? We hope so. Clear statements of protections can empower people to seek care [and to] discuss their health and health care needs without the fear of judgment or discrimination.

Do you feel this was even more necessary with the current move to repeal the Affordable Care Act? It is unclear whether existing antidiscrimination protections under the ACA will remain intact given recent actions at the federal level. Regardless, the LGBTQ Health Care Bill of Rights is just one example of New York City’s commitment to ensuring health equality for LGBTQ New Yorkers. Knowledge is power, and New York City will continue to be a beacon of enlightened, culturally responsive health care for LGBTQ people.

—DESIREE GUERRERO

Read the full Bill of Rights at: http://on.NYC.gov/2vcclEF