“Why do they do it?” Since the bareback phenomenon has entered the gay scene in the late 1990s, it has raised perplexing questions in the minds of popular journalists and public health professionals. The fact that numerous homosexual men intentionally engage in unprotected anal sex—and that many of them are out and proud about it—generated a new interest in investigating gay men’s sexual behaviors. In the past few years, many articles have presented barebacking as gay life’s new problem in urgent need of a solution, or as a mystery of human behavior that needs to be understood and treated. Psychological and social sciences (among others) are invoked to elucidate what makes individuals slip-up into life-threatening practices. Put another way, they ask how come gay men fail to use condoms. But it seems like no one really wanted to look closely at what is at the end of this question: an object, the condom. Of all the explanations that we could give about the bareback phenomenon, are there any that can be relegated to the actual reality of this item? In one of the firsts accounts of barebacking, Michael Scarce observed this subculture “through the latex looking glass”; I suggest the opposite view: to take position in queer culture and direct the “condom lense” at the industry that makes them, in order to understand what kind of mysterious problem makes it fail to create products to which gay men cannot relate.

In some aspects, the bareback subculture is a place for gay men to claim back the radical sexuality that they have, in part, lost since the AIDS crisis. However, the virus still runs around, and practices that contribute to the transmission of HIV do pose a social problem. Hopefully this paper will be able to introduce ideas toward a reconciliation, which will not be done by creating more deviance around the practice in question, but by asking: can a radical sexuality exist along with the use of condoms? Considering the present condom industry, the answer is “no!” In fact, if we look at its current activities, we see that this industry is by far more concerned about its heterosexual market, even though homosexuals are responsible for a huge part of their humble profits. Neglecting its gay market in the actual health crisis, we could go as far as saying that the condom industry is a homophobic one. What is certain, is that gay communities
should put forward their authority in the condom business, re-appropriate this object as their very own, and proudly make it the symbol of a radical sexual lifestyle.

Toward this claim, we will first look at the actual status of the condom in queer cultures, which will help us to understand why the object is so unappealing to many gay men nowadays. Then, we will observe the current market of the condom, searching for a product that could interest gay men. Seeing that the “gay condom” is nowhere to be found, but could possibly made, we will question the intentions of the condom industry.
**Queer culture and the condom**

The first occurrence of the term “barebacking” in print media dates from 1997 with an article in *Poz* magazine titled “My Turn: Riding Bareback” in which Stephen Gendin discussed the thrill of having unprotected sex with HIV-positive partners. A plethora of articles and conferences followed in popular media and social science circles which posited (and continue to do so) barebacking as one of the most troubling issue in gay males’ health. In a recent article, Gregory Tomso, from a Foucauldian approach, revealed the moralizing and disciplinarian ambitions present in these researches (2004:89). It is easy to raise a list of stereotypical psycho-social weaknesses of gay men to explain this life-threatening practice: low self-esteem, need to belong to a (HIV-positive) group, childhood sexual abuse, drug use, sexual self-control deficits, internalized homophobia, loneliness and need for intimacy, etc. (Listed in Tomso 2004 and Shernoff 2005) However, pathologizing the desires of a group of people does not seem the best way to solve a social problem. What most of the accounts on barebacking fail to acknowledge is, in my opinion, the fact that it is a (sub)culture: individuals linked by a common identity, practice and code of conduct, with their proper spaces, representations, celebrities, fashions, etc. If barebackers do not use condom to protect themselves, it is not simply because they fail to behave responsibly. Choosing not to use this device, is an exercise of freedom at the ontological level: it is an identitary choice, a longing to be someone. Thus I want to look briefly at the bareback subculture to understand what kind of “gay being” these individuals aspire to. Then we can ask what makes the condom excluded from that identity.

The condom has entered homosexual practice somewhat recently, after what we can call a “public culture of gay sex” has had its firsts expressions. The “Golden Age of gay sex” is how many people now refer to the period from Stonewall (1969) until the beginning of the AIDS crisis (first case reported in 1982). It is during those years that Western World’s gay men, benefitting from the generally more liberal climate of the time, began to enjoy a certain freedom of expression and behaviors in regard to their sexual inclinations.

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Presently, this period lives a resurgence in gay popular media as well as in academic works. Patrick Moore published *Beyond Shame: Reclaiming the abandoned history of a radical gay sexuality* (2004) which is a description of the American gay sex culture of that period through the unearthing of archival documents; the documentary movie *Gay Sex in the 70s* (2005) did a similar work. These examples (as well as many other) present the gay seventies as a quasi mythical time, a time when every gay men was promiscuous, when free love was abounding and never excessive, a time when gay men would not let anyone reprehend the most aberrant of their desires and practices. As documented in those works, we are led to imagine gay urban life in the 1970s as a perpetual orgy; New York City’s or San Francisco’s clubs, beaches, piers, or bathhouses, seem filled with a crowd of sex-driven gay men that freely exchange their bodily fluids, as nothing is holding them back. Despite what the reality of gay life might have really been for some of those individuals, what remains from that period, is the omnipresent will to use transgressive sexuality as an important strength in queer culture.

It is well known: the discovery of the HIV virus in many gay individuals in the early 1980s rapidly led to a major health crisis that somewhat put an end to that period of free love. A vast number of gay individuals were diagnosed with AIDS, and the lack of treatment brought gay life in a sad period of loss. Gay men around the world were influenced to change their sexual behaviors, mainly to have fewer sex partners and to start using condoms for anal intercourse. It is argued that these two factors only led the HIV infection rate among gay and bisexual men to drop dramatically beginning in the late 80s (Shernoff 2005:33).

However, the most recent accounts show that “gay men in the West are less likely to use condoms now than they were a decade ago” (Shernoff 2005:33). Statistics gathered between 2000 and now indicate a rise in the number of men having unprotected anal sex, whether they are in a monogamous relationship or not. The fact that we are not in the same crisis situation as in the 1980s and early 1990s greatly influences that, but does not diminish the problem: treatment for HIV-positive people has improved and got more available. In Western countries, less people die from AIDS-opportunistic infections and infected people are able to enjoy a comfortable and healthy life. This removes fear about the virus, but by no means eradicates it.
In parallel, the late 1990s saw the emergence of a new niche of gay pornography: barebacking videos. In contrast to films shot in the 1970s, gay movies after the beginning of the AIDS crisis rigorously integrated safe sex acts in their representations (Burger 1995). By the end of the 1980s, the gay porn industry, then composed of only a few, very lucrative, studios, regulated itself: anal sex had to be done with a condom, and semen in the mouth was prohibited. This was also an occasion for the gay porn business to prove its social worth, and demonstrate its capacity to be a ethical and well structured industry. But this came with a rigid standardization in the types of sexual acts represented and in the formal qualities of their depiction. It is all through the 1990s that the niche market exploded and allowed gay sub-groups to take voice in the medium of pornography (Thomas 2000). In this context, an emerging practice like barebacking quickly found its niche in the porn market.

New labels appeared in porn that revealed the fact that gay men seem tired of condoms. The films of the pre-AIDS era have been released on DVD and clearly indicate “pre-condom” on their covers. Many small studios now produce series of titles featuring the words “bareback” or “raw,” often accompanied with the mention “no condoms,” or “no rubbers.” Those videos do not differ much from the typical low-budget porn productions, except that they convinced their performers to engage in unprotected sex in exchange of a couple of hundreds of dollar more. But if we are to look at porn to understand the bareback phenomenon, we have to look at those productions that are closely linked to this practice as subculture. The most relevant place to look at is certainly Paul
Morris' studio, Treasure Island Media.

As a pornographer, Paul Morris gave himself the task of “documenting male sexuality for the 21st century” (Morris 2006), and he chose to focus his attention on unsafe sex practices because, as he puts it, “in part due to alienation from the larger processes of the politicization of gay life in America, unapologetically specific and often ‘extreme’ sexual behaviors in the gay or queer male world are becoming more important as elements in the building of personal identity” (Morris 1998). Thus portraying actual practices is more important than portraying safety, and this is where his work is at war with the major gay porn studios. As mentioned above, the “mainstream” gay porn companies (Falcon, Titan, Jet Set, Rascal, etc.) are often blamed for offering only manufactured, conventional, depictions of gay sex mirroring a sterile, “industrial dispassion.” For Morris, this fact is embodied in the symbol of the condom. He argues that larger companies directors’ inclusion of the condom in a movie is a hypocritical nod to political responsibility; “never has an object been so physically actual yet so representationally unreal” (1998). He reproaches to the people involved in those porn of acting with a “behavioral condom.” Of course, the accusations go both ways, and the directors that are proud “condom nazis”–as Chi Chi LaRue calls himself in his public service announcement Wrap it Up!, for example–decry the unethical work of the bareback studios. We are in the midst of a heated debate in gay porn, a fight around the object of the condom.

But the reasons why someone would take a side or the other in this condom war are not the technical
reasons for which someone would decide not to use the rubber. The bareback subculture, as represented by Paul Morris, is much more than a “no-condom” practice. The word “bareback” comes for the equestrian world, and refers to the risky practice of riding horses without the usual equipment. Transposed to queer culture, it keeps the “cowboy” attitude of engaging into dangerous activities for one’s personal excitement. Following this, the culture of bareback sex links with many other cultures of danger. “Treasure Island,” for example, refers to Robert Louis Stevenson’s novel about pirates and their ambiguous morality, and the logo of the company is the classic skull with two crossed swords. Morris also loves to integrate punk and skateboarder aesthetics in his productions. Thus barebacking is not only a practice, but also a marginal style in the gay world. The result is a very active subculture that offers a more radical and transgressive alternative to gay life and aesthetics for queer people that cannot identify, or are bored, of the more mainstream take on gay culture.

It cannot be assumed that the viewers enjoying bareback videos will necessarily practice unsafe sex. However, videos like T.I.M.’s are the expression of a real subculture of individuals involved in the practice. These groups will meet at specific bars, parties, events, and of course on the Internet, to form a community of barebackers that can help and support one in the proud accomplishment of stopping to use condoms. Websites like BarebackJack.com offer a multitude of information for those interested in the practice of barebacking. BarebackJack states that the will to not use condoms is very natural, and that no one should be ashamed of it. There is a health section on the website that gives many advices on how to keep sex with no condoms as safe as possible. Thus, barebacking is not only about the appeal of the danger of no-sex condom, it is also about creating safe-sex alternatives excluding the much unappreciated object that is the condom.
Looking at the cultural status of the condom in gay history, in the genres of porn, and in subcultural identities, gives us insight of what this object really means to those who should be using them the most. The condom is the symbol of the disastrous AIDS crisis that led many gay men to their death, and put an end to a period where the gay sex culture was especially vibrant. Also, in representation (in pornography), the condom is equated with a specific type of sexuality that is highly conventionalized and commodified. Those who want to claim the transgressive past of gay sexuality and let it take form in the actual queer scene, those who want to break up with the “mainstream” depiction of gay sexuality, do not feel linked with an object as the condom in any way. They can only see it as a disturbance. The object is neither really synonym of safety, as new methods of protecting oneself emerge (like sero-sorting), even if they are far from being totally safe.

In brief, instead of asking “why do they do it?” we looked here at what gay men who practice barebacking want. Instead of approaching the bareback phenomenon from a psychological approach, perhaps we should approach it as a marketing problem. If the condom is not desired anymore by many gay individuals, how could we change it to make it marketable?
The Heterosexual Condom Industry

Although condoms have a long history that can be traced back to the Antiquity, until recently, they have been low profile items (Hill et al. 1996:255). The condom as we know it took form when the vulcanized rubber was invented in 1843–44, and one firm, Schmid Laboratories Inc. has been making them since 1888. But before the mid-1980s, they were a minuscule contributor to the economy. In 1986, recognizing the importance of the AIDS epidemic, the surgeon general of the United States endorsed the use of condoms as the only currently available effective barrier against HIV (Murphy 1990:1). The social reputation of the condom changed radically, and so did its impact on the economy. Condom stopped being an embarrassment for their buyers and retailers, they moved from under the counter to highly visible positions, and they passed from a whispered subject to a highly mediatized one.

In 1990, the International Organization for Standardization set the standards for condom manufacturing (ISO 4074, Natural latex rubber condoms), which makes their production and wrapping highly regulated processes. Since 1976, The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ensures the safety and effectiveness of condoms by requiring a number of tests to be done on them. They are electronically inspected for holes and defects, and are submitted to air blowing and water filling tests. If a certain number of condoms in a batch are defect, they cannot go on the market.

Even if the condom industry grew significantly since the 1980s, it can still be considered a small one. As James S. Murphy showed in his extensive report on the condom industry (though it is dated), the total profits are not very high, the demand is limited, and the market is shared among a few sellers. Forming an oligopoly, the few participants dominating the condom market are aware of the activities of each other, which leads to a uniformization of products and prices. Because of the small market, of the strong regulations, and other factors, Murphy argues that it is very hard for new sellers to integrate the industry, which in the end limits the elaboration of this object.

In contradiction to what Murphy says, looking at the actual condom market, we find a lot of brands and
elaborations of condom. Yet, the market seems dominated by a small number of manufacturers, distributors, and sellers, though they are not the same than when Murphy did his analysis. A few companies are the source of the many brands available on the American market. The biggest ones being: Church & Dwight Company, Inc. that makes Trojan, Elexa, and Naturalamb; Ansell Healthcare Products Inc. with LifeStyles, Kama Sutra, and Contempo; Mayer Laboratories Inc. with Kimono, eZ-on, and the FC female condom (with Female Health Company); SSL International PLC makes Durex (and previously Sheik and Ramses); and finally Okamoto with Beyond Seven and Crown. A handful of other companies manufacture or import different brands of condoms that are sold only in specialty shops and on the web: Global Protection Corporation is the source of Pleasure Plus, Night Light, Atlas, One, and can produce custom brand condoms (for example, the Kiss condom); Line One Laboratories makes Kameleon, Trustex, Impulse, Fantasy, and Ria Wrangler; Richter Rubber Technology makes TheyFit; Kinyon Enterprises market the Hot Rod brand; Intellx Inc. makes Inspiral and the VA female condom.

Between all the brands, there is a variety of differences between the products, but what changes mostly is the packaging; similar condoms are sold under different brands to target slightly different types of consumers. However, what strikes is the absence of a brand take makes a condom destined to gay men. At best, the brands and packaging will be neutral and simply not specify the gender of the people who are to use the item, but a lot of items are marketed directly for women and heterosexual buyers. For example, Trojan, LifeStyles, and Durex, by far the three most known brands, each make a dozen of different products under their names that occupy most of the space on pharmacies’ shelves. Most Trojan products feature a silhouette of a heterosexual couple on their boxes. LifeStyles and Durex are less suggestive, yet, among all the types of condom they are making, each brand has at least one made for women: Trojan has “Her Pleasure,” LifeStyles “His n’ Her Pleasure,” and Durex “Her Sensation.” Trojan even recently came up with a line of products called Elexa “a woman’s perspective,” condoms that are said to be designed in accordance with research done with thousands of women. In the end, a quick look at the condom section in pharmacies will give the clear impression that they are products made for heterosexual buyers; no box will
say “a gay men’s perspective” nor “made of anal sex.” Specialized retailers like Condomania, Good Vibrations, Babeland, and many online stores, will offer a wider variety of condoms, but still none made specifically to attract homosexual men. Notable examples are the Contempo brand that makes the “Bareback” and “Rough Rider” condoms that, even though the name seems proper for gay users, features naked women on the packaging. What is more, the concept of One condoms is to provide a large variety of stylish packaging for the “hip” urban consumer so that the item never goes out of style. Around thirty different designs feature photographs of couples or landscapes; only one portrays a gay couple. Global Protection Corp. offers the possibility to create custom designed condom packaging. So far, they did the Vivid (famous straight porn studio) collection that features stars like Jenna Jameson on their packages, and the Kiss condom, for the popular rock band, but no popular gay icon seems to have decided to have their condom line made.

This widespread marketing of condoms for heterosexual buyers gives a reason to why rubbers do not occupy much space in gay retail stores and websites. In fact, my personal tour in gay shops of the gay areas of cities like New York, Montréal, or Paris revealed that condoms are sold in those stores, but only a small variety is available, and the space for them is minuscule. More than often, the customer has to ask the employees to see them. Many websites that sell videos, toys, lingerie, and lubricants for gay men will not sell condoms. Ironically, a website like Queeropolis.com sells only the Contempo brand that, with its pictures of naked women on the boxes give a weird shopping experience when you click on the condom page. Furthermore, the website GayCondoms.com sells the same brands as anywhere else (including “Her Pleasure”), without giving any special description of the products that could benefit the gay user.
Fig. 7–12 (clockwise), example of condoms destined for woman and heterosexual men. 7: Trojan’s Twisted Pleasure condom, featuring the typical heterosexual couple silhouette on the box. 8: An example of One Condom stylish packaging. 9: Contempo’s Bareback condom featuring a naked woman on the box, as sold on Queeropolis.com. 10: The Kiss Kondoms, produced on demand by Global Protection Corp. 11: Vivid condoms, from the popular porn studio, featuring star Jenna Jameson. 12: Elexa, “a woman’s perspective by Trojan.”
Despite the widespread "heterosexual" packaging, there is a large variety of condoms available with different characteristics. Let us go over all the possibilities, say how they are marketed nowadays, and how they could relate to a homosexual user.

First, condoms are made in different materials. Though most of them are made of latex, condoms made of natural membrane still exist (e.g. Trojan’s Naturalamb.) Recently, the polyurethane condom has been created and is sold by Trojan (Supra) and Durex (Avanti), mostly destined to users who are allergic to latex. Latex condoms are the most inexpensive to produce, but other materials are said to provide a better feel. Natural membrane, however, should not be used by gay males as, though it blocks sperm, it can let pass STDs like HIV. Polyurethane, on the other side, although more expensive at the moment, has many qualities that would make condoms more appealing. The material is more resistant than latex while it is thinner and conducts heat better, thus providing a more "natural" feel while protecting efficiently. Furthermore, polyurethane condoms are odorless, flavorless, more transparent, and softer than latex, thus less noticeable or burdensome. Also, the material lasts longer in storage with no need of keeping it at low temperature, and is not degraded by oil-based lubricants.

Latex condoms are offered in a variety of shape, size, thickness, and texture, and so could be polyurethane if it integrated the market more significantly. Size is the only characteristic that seems to be marketed towards male buyers, if we judge from the package design: larger condoms like Trojan Magnum and Durex Extra Large are sold in black boxes with big square letters indicating "XXL." Another interesting product is...
TheyFit, a line of “custom-made” condoms exclusively sold at Condomania. A flyer is distributed in stores and online that includes a tool for men to measure their penis length and girth so they can ask for the proper size of condom.

Then condoms are sold from “extra thin” to “extra resistant.” Though some have said that thicker condoms should be preferred for anal sex (as if the risks of breaking are higher), most recent sources (Gay Health 2006) say that this precaution is not necessary. Doctors and HIV prevention workers will recommend to use the condom that feels the best (usually the thinnest rubber will block less sensation); they are made and tested to ensure that they can resist most uses.

Condoms also come in a variety of colors. An interesting example is the LifeStyles Tuxedo black condom. Black leather, rubber, and vinyl are worn by man gay men for sexual play, and probably a black condom would be a great addition to their wardrobe! However, the straight reference of “tuxedo” of the only marketed black condom might does not fit with the proper fetish, and might be overlooked by the gay market.

Recently, latex technologies have improved and enabled the creation of condoms with assymetrical shapes. The Pleasure Plus was first to feature a wide pouch at the top of the condom that provides extra sensations to the head of the penis. The Inspiral, and Trojan Twisted Pleasure followed with their wide spiral pouch that twists in all directions during trusting. In addition, condoms can be made with ribbed or studded textures which will add sensations to the person penetrated. Those inventions may add interest to the condom, making it more like a sex toys and less like a medical device (even if they still meet the requirements of the FDA.) However, they are usually marketed as “Her Pleasure,” “His n’ Her,” or at best, “Shared Sensations.”

Other characteristics are added to the condom: flavors, lotions like lubricant, spermicide, and desensitizing,
warming or cooling gel. Flavors are made for people that use condoms for oral sex, which is not strongly advised by prevention workers as it used to be in the beginning of the AIDS crisis. Doctors now only recommend not to take semen in the mouth and to avoid brushing of flossing tooth before and after unprotected oral sex. Therefore, there might be a decrease of interest in flavored condoms. Warming and cooling gels are made to add a sensations to the user and also make the condom more like a special sex toy. Desensitizing gel should be used only by men who experience premature ejaculations, as the only fact of wearing a rubber is desensitizing to many users. Spermicide is present in many of the popular condom brands and is strongly counter-indicated for anal sex. HIV counselors ask gay men to avoid brands of lubricants containing Nonoxynol-9 (most common spermicide) as it can irritate the skin of the anus and make it even more receptive to STDs, and is also know to deaden sensation. Furthermore, spermicide does not kill viruses contained in semen and only helps for birth control. Condoms with spermicide also advice on their packages that they should not be used more than once a day, which is not proper for certain gay men who might engage in multiple sex acts in a same night. The use of lubricant is necessary for anal sex with condoms (to avoid breakage), however, the lubricated condoms do not have enough of it to enable a secure anal penetration and doctors advise to add some. As I will demonstrate further, lubricants are very popular products among gay men, therefore non-lubricated condoms could be preferred by gay men as it would not mix with their favorite type of lube and make the handling easier.

Lastly, condoms are mostly offered in models to be worn by males, but female condoms are also available. The female condoms is made of polyurethane and has two soft rings, one at the bottom end of the “pouch” and one around the opening. The condoms has to be inserted in the vagina; the inside ring will prevent it from coming out, the outer ring keeping the opening outside the vagina. The man then inserts his penis inside the condom for penetration. Even if called “female condom,” there are some documentation of gay men using it. In fact, with slight modifications (in the shape and size of the ring), this device could be appropriate for gay men’s use and could overcome some of the male condom’s flaws. One of the most shared obstacle to condom use, is the difficulty to keep erection for the wearer, which is heightened with
consumption of alcohol and drugs. Once the erection is lost, the worn condom must be discarded and a new one must be used. The “female” condom can be safely kept inside the penetrated person for many hours, thus there is no need to ‘stop-and-put-the-condom’ right after erection is obtained. Furthermore, though research as not been done on this, the “female” condom could allow many intercourses within a longer period of time with the same item, and perhaps could be use safely for sex with multiple partners without the need to change condom from one to another.

As mentioned earlier, Murphy claimed that the structure of the condom industry was not creating enough competition between the producers, which limited the potential for the elaboration of the item, and in the end did not allow the condom to be efficiently marketed to target groups. But after this extensive look at what is currently available in the condom market, I believe that there is enough existing elaboration to create a prophylactic made specifically for the homosexual user, and that it could be marketed directly towards gay men (in the same way that Trojan markets its Elexa line for women.)

One might wonder if gay consumers would be receptive to such products; this is where the example of personal lubricants becomes useful. Sex toys and lubes are marketed by many companies toward gay users. Lubricants, especially, are available in many types that occupy a lot of shelf space in gay sex shops. These products range from the very cheap to very expensive (from 5$ to 25$ for 100mL); some consumers will be satisfied with the standard water-based lube, while others require expensive silicone based products. Different brands of lube will appeal to different kinds of gay men. Stores have employees that are usually very knowledgeable in the subject and give advice to consumers; online stores also write their opinions on the products more consistently than they do with condoms. The consumer is invited to explore the variety of products, and thus potentially develop brand loyalty.

If gay sellers and buyers do not show the same interest and expertise in condoms than lubricant, it might very well be due to the fact that those items are not marketed efficiently toward them. Of all the variety of condoms stated above, many properties could interest gay men and would attract their interest if the marketing talked directly to them. As the market of lubricants reveal, gay men are willing to pay more for a
sexual item that is of good quality and marketed towards them. Condoms could be made by gay men and for them, and sold only in specialized stores. The commerce seems open to “a gay men’s perspective” on condoms.

Fig. 15-20 (clockwise). Some lubricant brands marketed toward gay men. 15: IT Leather Scented lube. 16: Colt Slick, from the popular gay porn studio. 17: Boi Toy Anal Lube. 18: Fist lube, imported from Amsterdam by Fort Troff, for adept of fisting. 19: Boy Butter. 20: Gun Oil, which is said to be what the men in the army had to use when they were on leave.

But why do not condom manufacturers like Church & Dwight, Ansell, and SLL, come up with lines of products for gay men? To answer this, I go back to Murphy’s analysis which shows that condom companies
are in competition with other birth control devices, mostly the contraceptive pill that is a much more lucrative business. In fact, as a barrier to STDs and HIV, the condom knows no marketable competition. The surgeon general identified the condom as the only efficient prevention device against HIV, and thus health workers do the work of promoting its use within target groups. Since the AIDS crisis, gay men are advised, if not ethically required, to use the condom in their sexual activities, and this, whether there is the picture of a woman on the box or not. For condom manufacturers, the gay market is a given, and they benefit much more in spending their marketing efforts towards heterosexuals who might be satisfied with the use of the contraceptive pill. However, as I have showed above, despite the fact that there is no marketable object to compete with the condom as a HIV-prevention device, there is a gay subculture that forms itself as an alternative to condom-use. This might not represent a huge loss of sales for the condom industry, but nonetheless should be considered in their marketing strategies.

In 1989, Franklin B. Krohn and Laura M. Milner argued in an article that condom marketers had neglected to aggressively promote their product to a substantial target market “because of homophobia.” They went as far as suggesting that they could “be guilty of negligent homicide for failing to effectively promote a product that is a known preventive for the AIDS syndrome to a highly vulnerable population.” (773) More than fifteen years later, this argument seems to have had no impact. If the condom industry would not be afraid of “getting dirty” and really look at what is happening right now in gay culture, they could come up with an object that gay men would want to buy. And if this had been done long ago, perhaps gay men would not be “less likely to use condoms now than they were a decade ago.”
Conclusion

In a recent publication, Jessamyn Neuhaus looks at an episode of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy (QE)* in which condoms come into play. Cleaning up the apartment of a nice young man and his girlfriend, Thom Filicia, one of the Fab Five, finds out two or three single packages of condoms and cannot avoid a funny remark: “So now you and Teresa are living in sin? A nice wholesome Marine like yourself?” Later, Thom says to Teresa, “If we design this as a sensual place, you’ll finally be able to get to use these!” To which she replies, giggling sheeishly, “Oh, we don’t use those.” Thom put his arm around his shoulder and mocks, “You don’t use them? Gosh, you use the rhythm method or something?”

In his article, Neuhaus simply states his contentment at the fact that the show demonstrates how nowadays, straight and gay people can mock each others’ sexual habits in a light and humorous way. What is most interesting is, I believe, the appearance of this object in a show that is articulated on the idea that gay men have some cultural authority of style over heterosexual people. This authority is also present in the discussion on the condom. For the straight couple, the condom is an object they probably bought when they were single, and that they do not use now that they form a respectable couple (and use the birth control pill as contraceptive.) But on the other side, it would be impossible that the Fab Five have not a great knowledge on this artefact; they have to throw a comment and offer their advice. It says that, on top of having style authority, gay men also have great expertise in the sexual health matters from which straight people could benefit.

This is, of course, stereotypical. Still, gay men are usually the ones who have to live with condoms for all their lives. They are the ones who will sit with zealous prevention workers will go as far as reminding them of how unsafe a monogamous relationship can be beyond the appearances. It should be intolerable that the condom industry does not consider more obviously its gay market in product making and advertizing. Pressure should be exerted on the actual makers of condoms, or an alternate industry should be installed.
References


