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## Gaydar: Using Skilled Vision to Spot Gay “Bears” in Taipei

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Anthropological Quarterly

George Washington University Institute for Ethnographic Research

Volume 89, Number 3, Summer 2016

pp. 841-864

10.1353/anq.2016.0049

ARTICLE

[View Citation](#)

### Abstract

ABSTRACT:

Popular US queer discourses endow gay men and lesbians with the ability to determine the queerness of another person with a mere glance. Although the same discourses construct this queer-detecting “gaydar” as an inborn talent, I argue that it is, in fact, a form of “skilled vision” (Grasseni 2004, 2007) that anyone can acquire through sufficient socialization with gay men and lesbians. As much as it is about looking, it is equally about being looked at. In this article, I illustrate the cultural workings of gaydar using ethnographic data gathered during ongoing fieldwork among Taipei’s gay “Bears.” After tracing the origins of the Taiwanese Bear through Japan and ultimately back to the US, I critically examine how Taipei’s Bears embody Bearness through their clothes and bodily movements. I draw two conclusions. First, while the Bear

originally celebrated somatic diversity, interpersonal competition increasingly homogenizes Taipei's Bears' attire to reveal the limits of Bear sociability. Second, gaydar remains important to the majority of gay men who dress more subtly, as the ways they look convey their interest in the men that they encounter.

## ARTICLE

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