

# Extinct or passé? New research examines the term, 'metrosexual'

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Did the "metrosexual" male die out with the last decade, or has he become the new normal? Erynn Masi de Casanova, a UC assistant professor of sociology, will present her research about the label on Nov. 14, at the 111th annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in San Francisco.

Casanova's research, based on interviews with men in three major metropolitan cities, found that men in general were taking more interest in a well-groomed appearance and that they felt the term, "metrosexual," was a stereotype that had run its course.

Some men who were interviewed indicated that they preferred dressing up and looking sharp – especially on weekends – even though many American businesses now promote workplace casual dress codes. This was prominently reported in New York.

Casanova based her presentation, "Is the Metrosexual Extinct? Men, Dress and Looking Good in Corporate America," on interviews with 22 men in which the word, "metrosexual," came up in the conversation. The men were white-collar workers in three major U.S. cities: New York, San Francisco and Cincinnati.

"I was really interested in finding out how individual men think about [social categories](#), such as metrosexual," says Casanova. "It's a word that's out there, but do men really think about it – does it mean anything to them?"

Casanova says the label was originally coined by British journalist Mark Simpson to describe a single, young (usually heterosexual) man with a high [disposable income](#), who worked in the city.

"I found out that people had contradictory opinions about what being metrosexual was. Sometimes one person would reveal both negative and positive connotations about the word," says Casanova. She says the majority of the men referred to the aesthetic aspect of the [stereotype](#) – men who were well-dressed and well-groomed.

The men also said that the term was being used less and less – that it was likely a buzz-word that was fizzling out, or that now it has just become a label, as more men pay more attention to their appearance. "One of the interviewees said it's just a new word for who used to be called a 'pretty boy,'" Casanova says.

Casanova's interviews also found that the metrosexual moniker opened up a way for heterosexual men to enjoy fashion without being stereotyped as gay, although others considered the term a more polite way of calling someone gay. Some men, says Casanova, saw the interest in fashion as a possible way to bridge gaps between gay and straight men. Some of the heterosexual men interviewed admitted taking fashion advice from gay men.

"As many men confirmed, this bridge seems to be a relatively new – and still somewhat tenuous – development," Casanova says.

Of the 22 men interviewed, half were from New York, 41 percent were from Cincinnati and nine percent were from San Francisco. The majority of the interviewees identified as white; three identified as African American; one as Indian and one as "Afro-Caribbean."

The men held a variety of positions in the corporate world, from

sales/marketing to finance, recruitment and architecture/design. The average age of the [men](#) interviewed was 36. The youngest was 24 and the oldest was 58.

Casanova says the research is part of a larger study that she plans to publish as a book.

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