

'Duck Dynasty' Controversy Further Evidence of How Media Is Reshaping Cultural Issues

Randall Collins, a sociologist and author of *Discovery of Society*, tells us that culture is defined by the adoption of values and beliefs in seven spheres of culture, but four of these have the greatest influence: military, economic, political and cultural. Arts and entertainment, media, and education are the most influential in defining the values and beliefs people adopt in their life.

It only takes 3 to 5 percent of elites operating at the top of a cultural mountain of influence to shift the mindset of the larger population of that culture. Our best case study of this truth has been taking place in the last 25 years through the **gay rights** movement.

This small group of people (3.5 percent of the population, according to a Gallup poll) is literally changing the laws, the perceptions and the attitudes of 97 percent of the population by the effective use of media, arts and entertainment, and education. They have shifted the conversation from being a moral issue to being a civil discrimination issue. This has been a calculated and strategic plan since the late '80s.

When values are expressed through movies, media, education and the arts, those who view these messages on an ongoing basis adopt it, often subconsciously. If the messages that are being communicated are anti-biblical in nature, it is only time before the culture at large begins to adopt these values. Such is the case in America today. The observer does not recognize the subtle change until one day it is too late—our culture becomes like Europe, a society void of a God-consciousness.

Unless believers in the culture understand the messages that are being communicated and the values being represented in those messages and seek to change them, then the culture will be changed by whoever chooses to exert influence through the media, arts and entertainment, and education avenues available to them.

The Power of Arts and Entertainment

Tipping points can occur from movies. In 1934, in the movie *It Happened One Night*, popular star Clark Gable performed without an undershirt to better display his physique—and, thereafter, undershirt sales dropped dramatically. In 1942, when *Bambi* premiered, deer hunting in America dropped from a \$5.7 million business to barely \$1 million. More recently, the International News Service reported that after Afghanistan was invaded by coalition forces in the search for Osama bin Laden, the first public buildings in that country to reopen weren't hospitals, schools or government agencies but movie theaters, showing American movies.

The best example of how only 3 to 5 percent of a population can change a cultural mountain is seen in the gay rights movement. In the last 10 to 15 years, those in this movement have demonstrated they have major influence in Hollywood. Hollywood films have become one of the primary propaganda machines for their cause, designed to legitimize their lifestyle.

The Gay Agenda and How It Has Penetrated Mainstream and the Family

In February 1988, a meeting was held among 175 gay activists in Warrenton, Va. Marshall Kirk, a Harvard-educated researcher in neuropsychiatry, and Hunter Madsen, who holds a doctorate in politics from Harvard and is an expert in persuasion tactics and social marketing, were the conveners of this meeting.

In that meeting they said, "AIDS gives us a chance, however brief, to establish ourselves as a victimized minority legitimately deserving of America's special protection and care. It generates mass hysteria of precisely the sort that has brought about public stonings and leper colonies since the Dark Ages and before. ... How can we maximize the sympathy and minimize the fear? How, given the horrid hand that AIDS has dealt us, can we best play it?"

This was the beginning of a public relations multiyear plan. They developed a "public relations Bible" for the gay movement.

What were the key strategies of their plan?

It is documented in black and white in their paper that became a book, *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the '90s*. Their stated goal was to:

- Break current negative associations with their cause and replace them with positive associations
- Change what people actually think and feel
- Reframe the terms of the debate
- Seek desensitization and nothing more (until it doesn't matter anymore)

Seventeen magazine has been doing a survey about the gay lifestyle for several years. To get an idea of how effective the **gay rights movement** has been with public relations, one only needs to look at this survey of its readers compared to earlier years.

Consider the magazine's 1991 survey, which revealed that 17 percent of readers accepted homosexuality as appropriate. However, in the 1999 survey, after eight years of PR, the same survey said 54 percent accepted homosexuality as appropriate. I am sure that figure would be well over 75 percent today, although I have not seen an actual study.

Recently I was talking with a director of a Christian teen ministry that operated in public schools. I asked her what the greatest problem was that she saw among teens today. Her answer nearly knocked me down.

“Teen girls are experimenting with same sex,” she said. “They are not necessarily gay, but they are experimenting with same-sex affections. And what is worse, the teen boys think it is cool.”

I almost could not believe my ears. However, that is how media makes social issues normative. People see things on TV and think it’s cool. They have no idea they are playing with fire that could consume them.

Not-Born-Gay Admission

Most of us hear the rationale of **gay activists** that they are born gay rather than being an influence of how one is raised and their exposure to certain societal factors and childhood wounds that predisposed them to this lifestyle. Recently I heard Don Lemon, a weekend anchor of CNN, make this assertion during one of his broadcasts.

Kirk and Madsen made an amazing admission in their book: “We argue that, for all practical purposes, gays should be considered to have been born gay, even though sexual orientation, for most humans, seems to be the product of a complex interaction between innate predispositions and environmental factors during childhood and early adolescence.”

Today you will never hear a gay person admit to this.

What is the gay agenda’s ultimate goal? It isn’t just to get acceptance. It is far more than that. David Kupelian explains: “The end game is not only to bring about the complete acceptance of homosexuality, including **same-sex marriage**, but also to prohibit and even criminalize public criticism of homosexuality. In other words, total jamming of criticism with

the force of law. This is already the case in Canada and parts of Scandinavia.”

The controversy over *Duck Dynasty*’s reality TV star Phil Robertson and his comments about gays in *GQ* magazine are the most recent clash between the gay rights movement and Christianity. This is only the beginning. The roots of this began many years ago.

The gay rights movement experienced a tipping point when Ellen DeGeneres kissed Laura Dern in the 1997 episode of *Ellen*. This event became a tipping point for the gay rights movement. Gays and lesbians had long been prominent in the arts and entertainment worlds, but this event encouraged famous gays and lesbians to come out of the closet. Issues about gay life worked their way into story lines in television, movies and plays, and attitudes shifted for many gay and straight people.

I recently talked with a Christian executive at a major cable channel. This person was shocked to find that almost every programming executive at the cable channel was gay.

Using a Winsome Strategy

Christianity must learn something from the **gay community**. We are being pushed back on our heels by the gay issue instead of being proactive with a positive message to gays and the larger culture.

Sure, we must set boundaries and not allow our freedom of speech to be eroded by the 3.5 percent. However, we have become a subculture that is more known by what it doesn’t like than what it believes. In the eyes of the secular world, we have become a right-wing political action group instead of a loving, caring people representing our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our message has been shut out because of the way of the messenger. We still have the right message, but we have failed to deliver it in a manner consistent with the gospel of Jesus

Christ. Jesus modeled love and mercy and sought to change the hearts of people before He expected to see change in their behavior. Few people are attracted to Christ through a boycott or condemnation of others.

I agree with *Charisma* columnist Michael Brown when he suggests the position Christians should take regarding issues like the *Duck Dynasty* controversy: "I suggest that those of us who agree fundamentally with Robertson make clear that: 1) We are unashamed of our belief in Jesus and in biblical morality; 2) we stand against the mistreatment of all people, including gays and lesbians; and 3) we will not support the radical redefinition of marriage, regardless of the cost involved, nor do we see cultural capitulation to gay activism as inevitable. Now would be a perfect time to take a stand, but with grace, precision and wisdom."

Let's start using a winsome strategy to attract people to our faith by presenting the love and redemptive nature of Christ, yet remain faithful to the truth of Scripture.

Os Hillman is president of *Marketplace Leaders* and author of *Change Agent* and *TGIF Today God Is First*, a free email daily devotional.