

**Gay Pornography as Cultural Object:  
Homosexual Desire and the Transmission of Dominant Ideology**

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## ABSTRACT

### Gay Pornography as Cultural Object: Homosexual Desire and the Transmission of Dominant Ideology

David L. Fithern

This thesis explores from a cultural studies approach (sociology of culture) the transmission of dominant ideology within gay pornographic images and the manner in which the audience makes sense of, and acquires meaning from the text. Gay pornography is treated as a cultural object that is part of a broader system of social relations, conceptions of citizenship, and dominant sexual scripts within industrial societies.

By employing a negotiated reading perspective, the audience is viewed as active participants in the viewing process and the possible interpretation(s) of the visual images. This thesis investigates through the use of structural analysis scenes from four gay pornographic films for specific themes maintained within the physical - spatial relationship of the actors, dialogue, focus of the camera, and narrative of the scenes/films.

The findings support the hypothesis that instead of expressing resistance to dominant sociosexual ideology, much of gay sexuality portrayed in the four films analysed is situated within social structures that depend on the recognition of a male/female hierarchy and the idealization of masculinity for the text to have meaning.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction:

In an attempt to understand human sexuality we are all too often grappling with the familiar and the foreign. As a topic of inquiry, human sexuality has led to a resounding plurality of opinions, some consensus, and continued debate regarding matters of sexual orientation and the manifestation of a homosexual identity and desire. Male homosexuality has evolved from a historical context into a complex range of sites that centre around the admission of a homosexual identity and reflect the problematics of understanding gay male sex and sexuality from within a culture with its various discourses which has proclaimed heterosexuality as universal and natural. To further complicate matters, when one speaks of such issues they are conceived solely in the present. Rarely is a critical account of social history and cultural change afforded a place in which to explain how present conceptions of human sexuality have come to be.

The diversity and complexity of human sexuality is apparent in a comparison of different cultures which reflects and attests to the rigid ideals and beliefs inherent in our own society. In recent history up to the present, male homosexuality within European and North American societies has been framed by the core disciplines of medicine, psychiatry, sexology, and anthropology, which have attempted to explain

from their various perspectives the nature of male same sex desire, and intimacy. As products of historical circumstances, these various disciplines have flavoured, if not directed, social beliefs and ideology pertaining to this subject.

What remains central for the purposes of this project is to understand the manner in which male homosexuality has evolved from a historical perspective within our culture in relation to a universal heterosexual order/bias, and how elements of dominant sociosexual dynamics filter into the social construction of gay male sexuality and identity. In examining four gay male pornographic videos the aim of this project is to "articulate the ideologies around sexuality [homosexuality] and theories of power on which the [films] are premised" (Champagne, 44:1995). An examination of the visual presentation of gay sex will reveal clearly decipherable and socially ingrained ideals and behaviour that are products of dominant sociosexual ideology employed in the construction of human sexuality. Inclusive of such a relationship, that of the subjective experience of gay men as viewers of gay pornography and the coding/decoding of dominant sociosexual ideology are elements of sexual hegemony (heterosexism), the support of masculine ideals, and perhaps even forms of resistance suggested by some authors that compound any simple interpretation of the place and purpose for pornography within



such a subculture: the gay community. In understanding male homosexuality in relation to the prioritizing of heterosexuality; gay male sex, desire, and intimacy take on a whole new meaning as presented in such a visual form.

Although hard and fast answers to the questions of self contempt and self hatred in relation to the formation of a gay sexual identity will remain for the most part unanswered in this project, the glorification of masculinity by the homosexual community may more easily be explained. By taking part in the same cultural scripts that maintain men and masculinity intact and superior to women, femininity, homosexuality, and lesbianism to name a few, "gay men may in fact have more in common with men than with homosexuality" (McIntosh, 46:1981). Gay men in constructing a sexual identity may also have more in common with the dominant sexual scripts than with the formation of a unique and distinct social identity, devoid in the present culture.

While uncovering the history of male homosexuality as it is related to present conceptions about gay men, what remains evident is that nowhere does our culture provide the space in which the creation of alternate sexual responses to heterosexual behaviour can be constituted in a legitimate and unique manner. Individuals all fall back on the cultural scripts which make sense to them and are upheld within the

social environment through the processes of hegemony. As social beings our sexuality is conceived in relation to past and present social structures and ideology. As a recent cultural advent, the homosexual defines his/their identity within present social criteria, privileging masculinity and male power as a natural response for lack of cultural alternatives.

Drawing upon the theoretical principles of a cultural studies approach to the analysis of the media (sociology of culture) and by employing elements of a 'negotiated reading', this project maintains that the manner in which meaning is achieved through engagement with the media is based within the social structures that position the viewer within categories of dominance, thus affecting the individuals perception of the world (Hall, 137:1980). In tracing the present locale of a gay identity in relation to the product of gay pornography, we are left with the task of deciphering through the images and their significance.

The cultural record of the idealization of masculinity always associated with heterosexuality comes to light in an examination of gay pornography. Cultural scripts that attest to the rigid categories and ideology in our culture are clearly visible in relation to the visual content of much of gay pornography. As will be demonstrated, those who profess

the merits of pornography for gay men in the formation of a gay identity may be overlooking the dynamics of two men performing sexual acts, which itself is more than just sex, it is the amalgamation and expression of distinct cultural scripts. It is necessary for the purpose of this project to understand hegemony as it is related to the development of sexual scripts and the surfacing of a homosexual person(s) and identity within capitalist social relations. What is also important for this project is to understand the lack of a true homosexual identity in the construction of gay sex, thus the acceptance of existing sexual scripts as evident in the visual: gay porn.

When human sexuality in its present forms is treated as exactly that which it is, a social/cultural construct which has been shaped into supreme importance and significance in peoples' lives, we are better able to fully understand the complexities of how homosexuality has evolved to its present state and the manner in which the audience acquires meaning from the text in examining this cultural product. How gay sex is played out visually and the possible interpretations and implications of such images in contrast to heterosexuality is in need of critical review. A review that helps in the explanation of what "turn us on" as social beings emphasizing the culturally learned and imposed rather than the simplicity of biological mandates and difference, in seeing sex as an

element of human nature. In light of the proliferation of gay pornography an examination to confirm whether such visual depictions of gay sex truly represent forms of resistance to the sexual scripts in the present culture or, as will be contended, merely copy them (presenting sexual dynamics hinged upon a patriarchal ordering of gender systems and the privileging of masculinity which are historically rooted constructs) is required.

Sex and sexuality far from being a stagnant site of never changing meaning and truths grounded in nature and biology, have been assigned a central significance because of a history that has placed them there (Birch, 85-86:1980). Without insight into this history of sexuality the task and viability of making sense of this cultural creation, the basic 'human condition' of being sexual creatures is placed in a vacuum, taken for granted as natural or not, and thus seen in the light of absolutism (Weeks, 3:1985). Far from absolute, male homosexuality (and all human sexuality for that matter) is in need of critical review in order that it resist reduction to simple nature and the biological imperatives that conceal its true malleable cultural state.

The history of male homosexuality has only now reached the point where struggles around naming, speaking about, and making sense of the sexual self and a collective sexual

orientation is being pioneered by those who are central characters within the numerous discussions: gay men and lesbians. The implicit relationship between those who authored the historical accounts of male homosexuality and the individuals who now seek to make sense of their own changing history and its many complex components comes into question. For the purposes of this paper it is necessary to maintain that sexuality is both "a historical as well as a personal experience", placing emphasis on both the social constraints regarding human behaviour and in the same instance the seemingly subjective nature of sex itself (Weeks, 4:1985). How gay men shape their relationships, engage in sexual behaviour, and see themselves as sexual beings who contravene established social hierarchies plays into individual and community politics which emphasises the support and maintenance of sexuality outside the sphere of heterosexual dynamics. In the the same instance however, it is a product of a heterosexual culture. As Jeffrey Weeks suggests; the realm of human sexuality has in essence become a minefield. As well as being a measure of morality and political contestation, it is a site for the description of pleasures and anxiety. It is a language in and of itself which has created the terrain for forms of protest, commodification and the most intense of scrutiny in the name of individual beliefs and activism (Weeks, 5:1985). Therefore,

the process of writing a contemporary history of sexual politics which is more than a narrative of

events or a celebration requires an examination - at once theoretical and political - of our own historical location (Mort, 30:1980).

In looking at the ways in which a contemporary history of homosexuality has been constructed, we are able to understand through specific historical conditions the 'need' for our society to actively repress certain forms of sexuality considered as deviant, which act to ensure its proper functioning and the maintenance of 'appropriate' sexual forms.

While this restrictive sociosexual structure would be expected to force a stagnation of different forms of sexuality in our society, sexual behaviour, sexual images, and stereotypes are continually changing, depositing alluring and sometimes provocative images that suggest the very essence of a type of "sexual celebration" (Mort, 4:1980). Rather than witnessing the potential for the evolution of human sexuality, what is taking place is the creation of new forms of sexual types which are possibly just as limiting as the old stereotypes. These new sexual types, rather than being progressive "sexual scripts" - a form of emphasising the possible plurality of human sexuality in our seemingly sex positive culture - in fact are only imposed on certain types of behaviour and in a marginal fashion (Evans, 25:1993).

New cultural agents such as professional gay males with gym sculpted bodies who are now routinely featured in the pages of numerous gay men's living and 'lifestyle' periodicals are products of these new sexual types. What Jeffrey Weeks contends in his article Capitalism and the Organization of Sex, is that even in light of what seems to be a change in the 'sexual scripts' of our culture, more mysterious to the author is why "capitalism and sexuality are so inextricably linked" (Weeks, 13:1980). In addition to the intertwined relationship between human sexuality and the changing conceptions of (sexual) citizenship involved in the process of the dramatic evolution of capitalist economies in Europe and North America, are issues such as the maintenance (and possible subversion) of sexual identity and gender roles at play in the realm of gay sex and specifically their representation in media forms such as gay pornography.

The fine line between community politics, sociocultural ideology, and the manner in which gay sex is played out in pornography leads to questions of the possible existence of sexual conflation regarding the way gay men and gay sex is experienced, presented, and acquires meaning for the audience. The sexual conflation of gay sex in pornography is a measure of the degree to which dominant sexual ideology and behaviour are presented and possibly reinforced even in light of a sexual identity which is perceived as embodying all that is

not considered to exist within the realm of dominant (hetero) sexual relations.

The practices of hegemony and compulsory heterosexuality in our social environment have developed in relation to changing societal demands; economic, political, and legal within various social institutions which have shaped the cultural fabric and affect collective order. The relationship between gay oppression and the organisation of gender, class and race is one which is bound by a patriarchal system that works to maintain distinct structures in relation to family, agency, and economy; ostracizing those who exist outside of the prescribed system. Non-compliance to the dominant ideologies and institutionalized social scripts is remedied in the case of gay men through their marginalization in the form of heterosexism, "an ideology which proclaims lesbians and gays to be 'sick', heterosexuals to be normal" (Kinsman,14:1987). Hegemony deposits similar measures of control in relation to class, race, and gender.

Historically those who do not conform to the dominant ideology(ies) and norms have been paralysed with labels, treated as outsiders and commonly scrutinized with hostility. The social environment has allowed for little leeway in terms of acceptability and approval. While it must be recognized that forms of oppression may differ along the lines of gender,



race, and class from that of sexual orientation and identity, invisibility (rarely seeing reflections of oneself within society), in all cases, is a measure of subordination enacted on all who do not actively seek to conform to the prevailing cultural structures: in this case heterosexuality. With the growing array and proliferation of gay pornography it is essential to determine whether such visual depictions of gay sex are themselves complementary to the construction of a form of visibility that is often perceived as reactionary and liberating to the manifestation of gay mens identity and sexuality, or conclusive of heterosexual hegemony.

The effect of the regulation and aetiology of sexuality has emphasised the enforcement of heterosexuality as the appropriate, right choice. It has also provided the space in which gay men and lesbians - 'others' - being named have taken it upon themselves to represent a voice that now questions the inherent heterosexual bias in our society from a historical - political perspective. In the midst of oppression, forms of resistance are visible and take shape. Adrienne Rich contends that:

heterosexuality, like motherhood, needs to be recognized and studied as a political institution [a historical product/construct - my emphasis] - even, or especially, by those individuals who feel they are, in their personal experience, the precursors of a new social relation(s). (Rich, 182:1983)

In an attempt to name and define their experiences, those who are the most obvious victims of heterosexism are forced to locate themselves within the debate in order to claim a position from which to dissect and make sense of their oppression as it is related to their sexuality. The difficulty, as will be apparent later in the text, comes about in an attempt to understand and evaluate the context in which gay men specifically - as much as oppressed by heterosexual hegemony - are also products of such a system. The process of cultural indoctrination and the transmission of dominant ideology lays the foundations by which gay men make sense of the world, become familiar with the culture's sexual types, react and protest against them, and surprisingly follow the same sociosexual scripts as those who are heterosexual (McIntosh, 46:1981). In opposing the subordination of differing sexual types and orientations that exist outside of the sphere of heterosexuality one is no less free of the ingrained sexual ordering and hierarchy that, in the same instance is a method of understanding the world, even in light of this (gay mens') oppression.

While all forms of expression of non-heterosexuality may be seen as liberating by some authors working from a gay/lesbian studies or 'queer theory' perspective, inherent in gay culture with its many reactionary and liberating qualities are those elements which seem to mirror the behaviour and ascribed

status which maintains compulsory heterosexuality intact. Deciphering through the fantasy, history, and realities of male homosexuality will bring us closer to understanding the truths as they are lived in gay culture. By taking into account the complexity of the audience and in the same instance uncovering the social structures of domination and the transmission of ideology this project will forward an examination of gay male pornography that insists on the recognition of dominant sociosexual dynamics as they are lived in gay culture.

This thesis is presented in eight chapters. The first chapter consists of an introduction and examination of the historical context in which gay desire is framed and the necessity to view the gay pornographic text within the confines of dominant sociosexual ideology for the text to have meaning.

Chapter two examines the theoretical contribution in the area of cultural studies (sociology of culture) regarding the relationship between the audience and the transmission of meaning in the text. This chapter forwards a negotiated reading perspective maintaining that different meanings produced by the audience are contained within social relations based in dominance, thus affecting the meaning the cultural objects produce for the viewer.

In chapter three the changing roles of citizenship within capitalist society and the social structures which have altered the conception(s) of human sexuality (homosexuality) are presented. This chapter situates present ideology regarding male homosexuality and the construction of gay desire which are historically rooted, framing the social forces at work in transmission of dominant sociosexual ideology.

Chapter four examines the contemporary debate regarding the place and purpose of pornography within the gay community. At issue is the debate enacted around the merits of gay pornography as resistant to dominant sociosexual scripts, thus liberating - or conversely reinscriptive of dominant ideology.

The methodology is forwarded in chapter five, discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the technique chosen. The data collection, units of analysis, and method of analysis is also described.

The findings based on the 'storyboard' relating to the relevant scenes is presented in chapter six. This is followed in chapter seven by an examination of the units of analysis and the individual differences in each of the four films presented separately in relation to the specific text. A general discussion of the overall findings as related to the

identification of dominant sociosexual dynamics and the principles of a negotiated reading in relation to the media as previously examined is detailed.

The final chapter presents conclusions from the texts that were examined and their significance in relation to the theory presented in chapter two.

## Chapter Two

### Audience, Cultural Objects, and the Transmission of Ideology:

The following discussion examines the literature in the area of cultural studies (sociology of culture) whose prime objective is the analysis of processes of culture and communication within their social and material settings (Morely, 5:1992). While traditionally many key figures in cultural studies came from backgrounds in either the humanities or literary criticism, the focus for the purposes of this project will rest primarily on the tradition developed in Britain through work done at the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies under Stuart Hall in the 1970s (Fiske, 283:1992).

Mimi White suggests that this approach - being Marxist in orientation - acknowledges that in order to understand culture it must be seen as form of social expression (161:1992). Society and therefore culture are viewed "not as an organic whole but a complex network of groups, each with different interests and related to each other in terms of their power relationships within the dominant classes" (Fiske, 285:1992). Thus in an analysis of the media (print, television, film, etc.), ideology in its most distinctive sense is viewed as the transmission and/or transference of systems of meaning

(signification) through and across class lines (Bennett, 48:1986).

Cultural studies focus on the generation and circulation of meanings or systems of meanings which weave a web of a shared understanding, and in many instances, a shared conception of 'the world' within industrial societies. Therefore, meanings and the construction of meanings within culture are products of not only social structures but also historical circumstances. It then makes sense that "the social structure is held in place, by among other forces, the meanings that culture produces" (Fiske, 285:1992).

Within culture, through the various social structures, individual agents within such systems of meanings are also subject to the relative degree of closure in respect to the relationships of power and class domination. What is important to note is that this degree of closure based on class is also seen as suspect in the case of media analysis whereby the reading (interpretation and understanding) of the text is to a large extent open and fluid rather than closed and straightforward. The readers relative position within the class system is articulated and sometimes even contrasted against his or her active engagement with the text and the circulation of possible meanings or interpretations. It is argued that "people manipulate - rather than were manipulated

by - the mass media" (Curran et.al, 12:1982). The individual or reader of the text as an active participant in the process of communication came about through the research and analysis of the media within cultural studies as a response to the 'pessimistic mass society thesis' founded by members of the Frankfurt School.

#### Overcoming the Pessimistic Model of the Media:

The Frankfurt School, which originated at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt Germany in the 1920s, focused upon the lapse of German society into Fascism. The leading members of the Frankfurt School, Adorno, Marcuse, and Horkheimer, were primarily concerned with this 'breakdown' in society which they felt in part was due to the destruction and loss of traditional ties and structures. In turn, people were believed to be exposed to the influence of propaganda by political leaders (Curran et. al., 1982; Hall, 1985; Bennett, 1986). It was the mass media which served as the vehicle of such propaganda. David Morley suggests that "this 'pessimistic mass society thesis' stressed the conservative and reconciliatory role of 'mass culture' for the audience" (45:1992). The media was viewed as both a threat to the integrity of elite cultural values (high culture) and "the viability of potential institutions of democracy" (Bennet, 31:1982).



The scholars of the Frankfurt School, rather than seeing the space for mediation between the audience and the media, forwarded a very conservative view of this relationship as one sided. "The media propelled 'word bullets' that penetrated deep into the inert and passive victims" (Curran et.al.,12:1982). The audience unable to decipher the images and texts critically, in turn consumed them as dupes of the media and the political powers that be. The Frankfurt School's critical theory fostered the notion that "the cultural object is pure exchange value, with no use value what-soever, except perhaps as an ideological mystification in the service of already existing structures of power" (Grossberg, 397:1984).

With the emigration of key members of the Frankfurt School to America during the 1930s, this led to a "specifically American school of research in the forties and fifties" (Morley, 46:1992). The 'pessimistic thesis' of the Frankfurt School and the direct link they espoused between the media and Fascism was in turn critiqued as:

too direct and unmediated an impact by the media on their audiences; it took too far the thesis that all intermediary social structures between leaders/media and the masses had broken down; it didn't accurately reflect the pluralistic nature of American society; it was - to put it shortly - sociologically naive (Morley, 46:1992).

From an American perspective research was undertaken and developed in reaction to the Frankfurt School's analysis of

the media in the vein of quantitative and a positivist methodology(s) for audience research. Robert Merton's 1946 case study of the effects of war bond broadcasts - advertisements (Mass Persuasions) was one of the first studies of the media that advanced the notion that the previous research was limited because it had focused solely on the content rather than the effects of the propaganda on the audience (Morley, 47:1992). It was the 'process of persuasion' that had been left unexamined and as a result, "the view of society as being composed of isolated and anomic individuals", was shattered (Curran et. al.,12:1982).

The empirical demonstration of selective audience behaviour was further reinforced by a number of uses and gratification studies which argued that audience members are active rather than passive and bring to the media a variety of different needs and uses that influence their response to the media (Curran et. al., 12:1982).

The 'effects' of the media (Effects Research) fostered the empirical examination of the influence of the media on individuals, registering the relationship between the two in terms of "a switch in behaviour" (Hall, 59:1982). Thus contained within such an examination of the media/audience is the belief that:

The message played a determining role for the character of responses that were recorded, but argued against the notion that this was the only determination and that it connected to response in a simple cause - and - effect relationship.. ... the message cannot adequately be interpreted if it is severed from the cultural context in which it occurred (Morley, 48:1992).

Clearly what was missing from both the Frankfurt School and American mass communication research, inclusive of effects research and a uses and gratification approach to media analysis, is the assessment of social meanings. Both perspectives placed emphasis on behavioral effects and the social functions of the communication process between audience and the media but omit, to their detriment, any conception of "a way of thinking, a form of life, [and the implications of] a world of already - in place objects, purposes, goals, procedures, values and so on" (Fish, 304:1980). Uses and gratification as well as effects research miss the all important larger picture, that of social relations and in turn the creation of meanings within the cultural arena (Connell & Mills, 30:1985).

A more interpretive paradigm was now being applied at the Centre for Mass Communication Research at Leicester University, analyzing the media with the continued focus on the "trend away from the emphasis on the viewer as tabularasa, just waiting to soak up all that is beamed at him [her]" (Morley, 51:1992). The viewer is held as an articulate and active participant who encounters the viewing situation as a complex participant in the dissemination of possible meanings. It is the construction of meaning which was hailed as both problematic and unable to be taken for granted from the audience perspective.

In an examination of television viewing, the Centre for Mass Communication Research was preoccupied with the subjective experience of the viewer yet in applying previous tenets of effects research (uses and gratification approach) in an analysis of the relationship between audience and text, the outcome was suspiciously similar to the themes espoused by the 'mass thesis' approach. "The notion that the media are controlled by the peculiar interests of a powerful elite and the further notion that of course the media are successful in generalizing those interests by nothing more complex than deception," leaves the interpretive paradigm of such work deflated (Connell & Mills, 29:1985).

David Morley contends that the interpretive model of communication research/media studies adopted at Leicester University during the 1970s - while shedding light on aspects of "micro processes of interpersonal communication", the work by employing a uses and gratification approach which is essentially psychological in orientation - was insufficiently sociological in nature (53:1992). Thus such work remained insufficient in the ability to articulate "any notion of institutional power or of structural relations of class and politics" (Morley, 51:1992).

### Towards a Sociology of Culture: Marxist Interpretations

Stuart Hall in criticizing some of the approaches to mass communication research has forwarded that the conceptualization of the process of communication has been examined in far too narrow a fashion. He criticizes the fixation of understanding communication in terms of a "circulation circuit or loop" (Hall, 1980:128). He takes aim at this model for its linearity in terms of the direction and consumption of the media by the audience ("sender/message/receiver") and for its "concentration on the level of message exchange and the absence of a structured conception of different moments as a complex structure of relations" (Hall, 1980:128).

The process of watching television (as a specific example) involves for Hall the necessity to think of the interrelationships between social structures which are both produced and maintained within modes of "production, consumption, circulation, and reproduction", within society (1980:128). The manner in which the articulation and understanding of the message (the possible meanings of the communication process) is affected by the relative position(s) which the audience maintain in relation to their place within the structures of industrial society. It is imperative to think of this process as a:

complex structure in dominance, sustained through the articulation of connected practices, each of

which, however, retains its distinctiveness and has its own specific modality, its own forms and conditions of existence (Hall, 128:1980).

Therefore, the circulation of possible meanings is at the same time open and fluid but of necessity and through its production and consumption within the social structures, measured and organized in terms of social relations hinged on aspects of dominance within society. How individuals relate to the messages/images is not so much closed off by their position within social relations, but rather influenced and ordered (transformed) in reference to the trappings of the world around them. While there is no one single interpretation or reading of the communication process, and "no one moment can fully guarantee the next moment with which it is articulated", it is important to understand that the discourse of communication is "in dominance, without of course, subordinating out of existence the historical event so signified, the social relation in which the rules are set to work or the social and political consequences of the event having been signified" (Hall, 129:1980).

John Fiske's understanding of the study of culture and communication is supportive of Hall's analysis. The study of culture for Fiske consists of "the study of that incessant play of meanings that relate the subject within the social system and that underpin and maintain that system. These meanings and relationships are determined by and made manifest

in the discourses, which are then circulated by a variety of media" (Fiske, 200:1986).

In part, the reconceptualization of Marxist theory in the area of cultural studies was forged by such theorists as Louis Althusser who forwarded a re-evaluation of "Marx's totality as essentially a complex structure, not a simple one" (Hall, 91:1985). Althusser provided many of the researchers working from within the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies a rereading of the principles of social and economic organization, namely the mode of production. Rather than simply "reading the different levels of a social formation in terms of a one to one correspondence between practices", Althusser forwarded a conception of Marxist theory which enabled the recognition of difference (Hall, 92:1985).

Althusser expanded upon Marx's conception of the state apparatus as the primary mechanism of control and order, affecting the construction and maintenance of ideology within society. For Marx, the ruling class controlled the state apparatus (government, administration, army, police, courts, and prisons etc.) and through their dominant position and the institutional measures of control at their disposal as an overtly repressive mechanism - control of individuals, social

structures, and thus ideology for their benefit was enforced.

Marx argued that:

the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, ie. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships...therefore, the ideas of its dominance (Marx & Engels, 64:1988).

Those in the dominant class transposed not only their will, but their ideas and meanings upon their subordinates. In ruling as thinkers and producers of ideas, Marx felt the dominant class also, "regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age; thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch" (Marx & Engels, 64:1988).

For Althusser, the state apparatus must be thought of as 'ideological state apparatuses', the former a singular entity, the later a plurality of formal and informal institutions as structures in dominance. "The Repressive State Apparatus functions by violence, whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function by ideology" (Althusser, 138:1971). The difference with Althusser's approach is that the ideological state apparatuses are "multiple, distinct [and] relatively autonomous... secured usually in contradictory forms by the ruling ideology" (Althusser, 141 & 142:1971). Educational, religious, family, communication, and political institutions



are the ideological state apparatuses of which Althusser speaks - providing the vehicles in which social meaning(s) are constructed and related to the larger cultural context.

In applying the tenets of Althusser's work to the sociology of culture, the notion of false consciousness is replaced with difference. That is the state "has very distinct and dominant tendencies but it does not have a singly inscribed class character" (Hall, 92:1985). The states function is hailed as bringing together and articulating a range of social practices, political discourses and other domains of life; normalizing and transforming them in a chain of meanings. While different ideological state apparatuses possess the ability to articulate the dominant ideology for themselves, Stuart Hall maintains that all are linked together as systems of representation (104:1985).

As you enter an ideological field and pick out any one nodal representation or idea, you immediately trigger off a whole chain of connotative associations. So [that] a variety of different ideological systems or logics are available in any social formation (Hall, 104:1985).

Thus, the transmission of ideology (meaning) becomes complex and plural while at the same time retaining a connection out of necessity to social structures within dominance that supply an understanding and reference to the world around the individual.

Another theorist whose work has affected and influenced the sociology of culture is Antonio Gramsci. He forwards the notion of 'hegemony' which in many aspects has similar tenets to the work of Louis Althusser previously noted, yet with undeniable differences. Gramsci proposed that hegemony is to be understood as an explanation that provides for different levels of "individual variation in production and reception" that are, at the same time predisposed to and contained within the dominant ideology(ies) (Newcomb, 35:1984). Similar to Althusser, the state for Gramsci does not represent the sole dominating force in the transmission/formation of ideas and meaning. He forwards a conception of dominant ideology as being that which maintains the "general predominance of a particular class, political, and ideological interests within society" (White, 167:1992). The dominant class in society possesses the mechanisms of control to support such dominant ideology but the transmission of meanings is both complex and multidimensional, working across a variety of sociocultural institutions that in turn generate a conception of social life.

Hegemony in articulating the ideas of the dominant class is described by Mimi White as, "a struggle over which ideas are recognized as the prevailing, commonsense view for the majority of social participants" (67:1992). Therefore hegemony - the expression of dominant ideology - appears as

natural, taken for granted in some instances, and "spontaneous" within the social environment (Gramsci, 12:1971). The dominant interests that prevail reflect the interrelationships of social structures within industrial society. Hegemony allows for negotiation and struggle over possible meaning (ideology), yet in the end it reflects the relationships of subordination and dominance within the domain of social order/culture.

#### Audience, Texts, and the Negotiation of Meaning:

Stuart Hall in his article Encoding/Decoding contends that the manner in which meaning is achieved through engagement with the media is based within the social structures that position the viewer within categories of dominance, affecting ones perception of the world, their viewpoint. Rather than closed categories of 'reading', Hall suggests that the transmission of ideology is fluid and relatively open, yet maintained and referenced according to "situations and events which are in dominance" (137:1980). He proposes a 'negotiated' position or reading of the communication process emphasising the audience's ability to understand what is dominantly defined (taken for granted and 'natural') while "reserving the right to make a more negotiated application to local conditions" (137:1980). Therefore, the negotiated position is a hegemonic viewpoint.

For Horace Newcomb, all readings are in fact negotiated ones, "while parts of the content are questioned, the fundamental socio-political attitude is unquestioned" (36:1984). A negotiated reading provides for a range of social experience of the audience group, but concentrates on how dominant ideology is deciphered differently in the process of viewing. The social position of the audience may involve different experiences within dominance and thus a different interpretation or understanding of the text, yet the 'inflection' of dominant ideology maintains the existing power structures intact, enforced, and understood (Fiske, 296:1992).

While Stuart Hall also forwards both a dominant and oppositional position or coding of the message, these positions prove less useful in relation to a plural conception of the audience. The dominant position is "produced by a viewer situated to agree with and accept the dominant ideology and the subjectivity that it produces" (Fiske, 292:1992). This position implies that there is no negotiation or 'play' in the interpretation of meaning, it is straightforward and consumed as unproblematic. The oppositional position or reading involves the viewer whose social situation puts them in direct opposition to the dominant ideology. "He/she detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference" (Hall:138:1980). While both positions occur

regularly in the decoding of media, the negotiated position or reading while incorporating aspects of both maintains a more plausible focal point from which to deconstruct the plurality of the audience in relation to social structures fixed within levels of subordination and meaning.

The negotiated reading also incorporates the necessity to view the dominant ideology as pieces of a puzzle that are maintained both overtly and in some instances in more subtle formations. Depending upon the context of the images/text in question, different meanings produced by the audience can either flourish or be constrained but always contained within social relations and the meanings the cultural objects produce.

The negotiated version of the dominant ideology is shot through with contradictions, though these are only on certain occasions brought to full visibility. Negotiated codes operate through what we might call particular or situated logics: and these logics are sustained by their differential and unequal relation to the discourses and logics of power (Hall, 137:1980).

Therefore, within the images in question; substantial differences exist in the manner in which the message is articulated and interpreted. Negotiated readings allow for a variety of responses to the text from readers who are cooperative, "read[ing] with the structure of the text and seek[ing] to match their social experiences with the ideology-in-the-text", or those who "shift" the text to better fit their own relative social situation (Fiske, 297:1992). There

is space for an almost dominant reading of the text to one that exhibits degrees of opposition to it. Each however, is constructed with reference to the real world of material and social relations of the specific culture. Such negotiated theory of reading and the interpretation of cultural texts provides for the existence of heterogeneity without obscuring very real sociocultural boundaries.

While a negotiated reading does provide the most sound theoretical account of the everyday event of making sense of the media, it is important to reflect upon the outcome, the reinforcing of dominant ideology in its many forms and the ideological production of apparently natural, near universal codes in use (Hall, 132:1980). Human sex and sexuality is one such site. The ideological effect of such matters as sex and sexuality is one in which the seeming naturalness of our being sexual creatures conceals the variety of social practices, the maps of meaning into which culture is classified, that influence individuals ideas and understanding (Hall, 134:1980). Research into the process by which meanings are acquired must take account of the complex dynamics of the audience, and at the same time weigh in the social factors of domination and the transmission of ideology which maintains a collective framework of the world.

Investigating how dominant sexual scripts are deciphered and brought to life within the cultural arena requires an examination of material relations and the production of dominant ideology within society. Capitalist relations, built upon patriarchal social structures, lay the foundations on which notions of sex and sexuality are brought to life. Therefore, the decoding of such sexual images needs to be explored in a manner that reflects not only the structures of dominance and power within our culture but also employs an approach which remains attentive to the circulation and generation of meaning. The frameworks and meanings that hold social relations in place are "not only meanings of social experience, but also meanings of self, that is, constructions of social identity that enable people living in industrial capitalist societies to make sense of themselves and their social [sociosexual] relations" (Fiske, 285:1992).

Drawing upon the principles of an active subject and negotiated readings (hinged on Marxist interpretations of structures in dominance and the formation of ideology) this project will investigate the maintenance of dominant sociosexual scripts within homosexual dynamics. As Jane Woollacott contends in her article Messages and Meanings, it is the "messages in the media [which] are both composed and interpreted in accordance with certain rules and codes" (92:1982). Thus, in examining the historical circumstances

that gave rise to an ordering of sexual identity within patriarchal society, the objective of this project is to understand how homosexuality is constructed according to these various social rules and codes organized within dominant ideology.

The overview of historical events is necessary to establish the social structures that have affected and shaped human response and understanding towards matters of sexuality; namely homosexuality. A methodology that will enable the researcher to situate the structures of dominant ideology within the visual images of gay sex will also be necessary for the project at hand. Engaging in the decoding of visual images of gay sex requires the interpretation of aspects of dominant sociosexual ideology while maintaining an awareness of the audience and the negotiation of possible meanings within and interpretations of the text. It also requires an examination of historical circumstances that have shaped and altered social meanings in the present.



### Chapter Three

#### Homosexual bodies in History; Social Conditions as the Advent for Sexual Categories:

Within the material relations of industrial societies, male homosexuality like family structure, gender relations, and the manner of individual participation in the activities of daily life for men and women has undergone rapid change over the past two centuries. While 'progressive' change is clearly visible in our culture in relation to some of the former social structures, male homosexuality has in essence remained polemic in nature. Advancement in social conditions, character, and efficiency has freed human beings from previous roles, instituted new ones, yet all the while same gender sex has been relegated to some extent to a subordinate position. Thus history as applied in this sense (historical materialist perspective) is not only the past, it belongs to and participates in forming the historical present (Weeks, 5-10:1985).

In uncovering the changing role of citizenship in emergence with capitalism, the following chapter will present an examination of the various social structures which have altered the conception of sexuality, gender roles, and the manner in which a homosexual identity was created, institutionalized, and understood in opposition to compulsory

heterosexuality. Kenneth Plummer proposes that it is necessary to elaborate upon social institutions and social relations which continue to forge on occasion both predetermined and modified meanings that greatly alter, if not form and organize part of the individual's subjective experience and outlook in regards to sexuality (11:1975).

Sex, seen as fundamentally a social activity is as Gary Kinsman explains a "composition fabricated through the process of various socially learned courses of action" (Kinsman, 24:1987). The purpose of this chapter is to examine the historical processes that created the homosexual identity specifically, within a capitalist socioeconomic system and the cultural responses to such a person(s) that involves their subordination and hatred. Apparently our conceptions about sex and sexuality have proven to contain more than just the notion that sex is purely biological. Central to this project is that we must see;

sexuality's biological base is always experienced naturally, through a translation . The bare biological facts of sexuality do not speak for themselves; they must be expressed socially. Sex feels individual, or at least private, but those feelings always incorporate the roles, definitions, symbols, and meanings of the worlds in which they are constructed (Ross and Rapp, 52:1983).

The description of sex as a conquering force demanding fulfillment has become problematized precisely because of an examination of social forces at work, forces which shape individuals' conceptions and collective beliefs (Trolden,

80:1988). In the process of uncovering the historical location of male homosexuality which sheds light on its present social state of being, that is its form and functioning within our culture and perhaps apart - separate from dominant ideology, we are able to uncover elements of homosexual desire inextricably linked to its subordination. Therefore, sexual liberation, sexual identity, and the expression of gay desire are precisely located as ideological constructs, products resulting from the changing historical conditions of various social structures formed within relationships of dominance (Althusser, 138:1971).

To gain insight into the present reality of how homosexuality is constructed within our culture, the historical processes which have cemented male homosexuality as a despised form of sexual conduct will be examined in a brief historical account of the socially learned responses to the expression of gay desire in light of the changing dynamics of citizenship. Under investigation is the changing ideology(ies) which F. Randolph Trumbach influenced "the modern gender role for men [which] presumed that most men desired women exclusively and that all masculine behaviour flowed from such desire" (90:1992).

### Capitalism, Dominant Ideology, and Changing Sexual Scripts:

What paths have brought us to the point where we are 'at fault' with respect to our own sex (Foucault:9,1978).

The changes incurred with the rise and implementation of capitalism in Europe (and later with the adaptation of similar political and institutional systems duplicating predominately British social order within Canada and the United States) brought about a radical departure from the previous forms of individual and institutional organization. Enterprise congregated, centralizing the social organization of human activity from a once more or less self sufficient rural existence to one in which the individual, free to sell their labour power for a wage entered into salaried employment as a means of subsistence (Marx & Engels, 68-79:1988). Gary Kinsman suggests that part of this process that created the emergence of a working class and the bourgeoisie, with the divisions between those individuals owning and controlling the means of production in contrast to those who sold their wage labour (labour power) affected a shift in the attitudes and beliefs regarding gender roles, sexuality, class, and an array of previous ideological constructs - some being retained - others transformed in emerging capitalist society (38:1987).

Part of the process of cultural transformation affected social space and family-household relations. The process of work was separated from the household economy while the need

for employment outside the home forced the individual (male) from the household or family system. Public and private spaces took on new meaning and presented a shift in the necessity for dependency on the family as a unit of production, a self sustaining institution to be reformulated (Merrick, 171:1992). Outside the household these public worlds created the spaces for the gathering of individuals who through their earned wages and (forced) subsistence outside the family unit "brought men in contact with other men within new and distinct relationships apart from the work space as wage labourers" (Kinsman, 3:1987). Pat and Hugh Armstrong contend that this separation and emerging public nature of contact freed men to develop relationships outside of the home that lead to economic, social (and in some instances sexual) opportunities not afforded to women. Also inherent in the changing social/economic relations is "that biological differences (took) on particular significance under the capitalist mode of production" (Armstrong & Armstrong, 27:1990).

As the forementioned authors suggest, given that the raising of children is seen as non-capitalist, and based on women's "unique child bearing capacities, women are removed to a greater extent from the labour force than men, at least temporarily" (28:1990). Susannah Wilson argues that due in part to the non-interchangeability involved in the labour of

having/raising children which could not be equalized under capitalism, men and women's social positions were seen as taking on new forms of value in the market place (41:1986). Men free from childbirth and the child rearing process were more free in the market place to continue working uninterrupted, thus more valued as wage labour.

Thus the changing material relations in providing the basis for inequality between the sexes also provided for the changing ideological beliefs in relation to gender and sexuality in regards to those in the position to control the modes of production within these new and distinct social formations. For the newly formed bourgeoisie class, the necessity for women's contribution to the household economy all but disappeared as their dependency on men (husbands and fathers) through their earned wages placed women in an inferior position both economically and ideologically to men. Susannah Wilson raises the important point that the roles and function(s) of women within this class, relegated to the household were seen in relation to their new found femininity. This being a product of class and economic relations cemented women's position as of lesser order to that of men. Women and women's activities began to be seen as 'frivolous' and concerned primarily with the raising of children and as supporters and upholders of morality (Wilson, 40-44:1986).

Changing relations within capitalism provided the basis on which a series of formal and informal social agencies and institutions redefined the roles of men and women and laid the foundation for the emergence of changing ideology, beliefs, and values to be afforded either preferential treatment and support or conversely a subordinate status. The new meanings attached to gender, that of the greater order applied to men and masculinity and the subordinate position of women in relation to their femininity affected the derogatory implications in the labelling of persons seen as sexually deviant, as possessing 'feminine characteristics' (Trumbach, 91:1992).

To be labelled 'like woman' implied a spiritual, emotional, and physical weakness not associated with men and masculinity (Wilson, 91:1986). Today, present conceptions and beliefs concerning homosexuality may be traced to the formation of the changing female role(s) and femininity, whereby the homosexual is viewed as encompassing 'female' qualities; both psychological (behavioral) and physical. Gay men are seen in opposition to heterosexual men, thus incorporated within the framework of dominant gender relations that draw distinctions between men versus women/homosexuals.

David Evans proposes that within the changing familial relationships that now facilitated the evolution of feelings

of attraction and 'love' towards members of the opposite sex as a direct feature of economic well being; male power and freedom flourished (39:1993). This view of the changing family form is in opposition to that of past family units, many formed out of 'necessity' in a more immediate and economic sense in pre-capitalist society. Public space was now firmly the reserve of the male and masculinity with the private realm emerging as a domain of domesticity and femininity, a place for women (Evans, 241:1993). While such bourgeoisie ideology and changing way of life may not have been a reality as yet for many of the working class, the institutional; economic, legal, and, political agencies controlled by the bourgeoisie would reflect these new found norms, eventually to become universally disseminated and taken for granted through the processes of hegemony.

Along with the changing ideology regarding the role of women in bourgeoisie society to that of care giver, mother and companion, removed from the economic realm of family subsistence, the nuclear family took on one of the forms and functions of maintaining patriarchy and heterosexual hegemony intact. However, rather than seeing the nuclear family as the sole institution of the ruling class's regulation of sex and sexual behaviour, Jeffrey Weeks suggests that this was only part of the cultural/ideological system put into place that shaped human sexuality during this time. In spite of the



power of the dominant class to exercise ideological control through institutionalized means in society;

where the working class adopted, as it has increasingly in the twentieth century, a similar family form, it is much more as an adaptation to its own particular circumstances - the organization of work patterns, the move towards consumerism, the lowering of the birth rate - rather than a simple acceptance of the bourgeoisie model (Weeks, 15:1980).

What is clear in the evolution of this regulation of sex/sexuality and the emergence of compulsory heterosexuality are concepts of sexuality not only culturally specific but also class and gender specific (Weeks, 15:1980).

These newly formed bourgeoisie models, that of the nuclear family, the social construction of masculinity and femininity, the family as antidote to public pressure and women's central role in child rearing were transferred on the society as elements of respectability and stability. Central to the support and maintenance of these new and changing ideologies relating to the family and gender divisions in the market place was the emergence of "the creation of approved or respectable social identities, which necessarily meant the denial of alternatives" (Kinsman, 31:1987). Thus new sexual categories that formed in the nineteenth century were sustained within;

various social, legal, medical, religious practices: the masturbating child, the hysterical woman, the perverse adult, the congenital prostitute, the degenerate, the homosexual (Weeks, 16:1980).

It was with this explosion of sociosexual categories which centred around and upheld the notion of the importance of the nuclear family, heterosexual sex for purposes of procreation, marriage, monogamy, and the introduction of properly raised children into society, that all forms of sexual expression outside of the family institution and heterosexual love as John D'Emilio points out, "were not so much sharply differentiated between... but rather all condemned" (104:1983).

**The Social Construction of the Homosexual:**

Jeffrey Weeks has suggested that only with the development of the discourses of sexology in the late nineteenth century, and society's increased reliance on the developing institutions of medicine and psychiatry, which in naming these socially shunned forms or types of behaviour sought to remedy the "act rather than the actor[s]"; were distinctions made (16:1980). Along with institutional heterosexuality and in conjunction with the nuclear family, those types of behaviour which contravene 'normal' or rather conceived 'natural' sexual roles were confronted with the development of a new ideology within the practices of medicine and psychiatry. In defining different forms of behaviour, these social institutions also helped create both a type of behaviour and, most importantly a type of person, or identity. Michel Foucault speaks of the emergence of the homosexual person whereby:

Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species (Foucault, 43:1978).

This shift in focusing on the "sinful" acts was replaced with a discourse that related desire as the truth of the individual. The act of sodomy was replaced with the creation of the homosexual as an identity category, one's desires defining the type of person they were (Foucault:1978). As George Chauncey in his article From Sexual Inversion to Homosexuality explains, the term used in most nineteenth century literature; sexual inversion, "had as much broader meaning than our present term, homosexuality, which denotes solely the sex of the person one sexually desires" (90:1989).

While Michel Foucault has organized and explored the historical locale of what he sees as the creation of the 'sexual apparatus' he has criticized the faulty notion that sexuality is managed through forms of repression, that is the notion that there are in place social organizations (the state) which act as a formal source of power to constrain and limit sexual behaviour. His emphasis takes into account the complexity of meanings and cultural systems in place which affect the manifestation of human sexuality.

Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries to gradually uncover. It is the name that can be given to a historical construct: not a furtive

reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistance, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power (Foucault, 105, 1978).

Human sexuality for Foucault must be seen on a continuum, shaped and structured by a number of formal and informal social structures in hegemony, which affect the way sexuality is conceived of and experienced culturally.

With heterosexuality in place as a universal order, defence of this institution and the assemblage of dominant ideological constructs relating to the underlying modes of production required a collective effort by a variety of regulatory: legal, political, medical, judicial, and religious bodies which held the ideals of the bourgeoisie class as natural and of a higher moral order. The further an individual fell from these ideals and a bourgeoisie existence: of attraction to members of the opposite sex, marriage, and the social divisions along gender lines, the more likely they were to be labelled an "invert, pervert, queer, or later a homosexual" (Kinsman, 44:1987). The Victorian male along with an emerging middle class were now the pinnacles of a social and familial system in Britain (Europe) with such ideals being expropriated into North American society. Capitalist patriarchal relations forged the path in which heterosexual hegemony acquired a

prioritizing and oppositional effect pertaining to acceptable and required human behaviour; a value system which is traceable to the present. It is through a host of formal and informal social structures in dominance that the transmission of the dominant ideology is manifest in both overt and subtle ways, appearing as natural and essentially predetermined (White, 164:1992).

"Scientific knowledge of sex" which gave precedence to male heterosexuality and assisted in the formation of institutional forms of regulatory policies against 'problematic behaviour' is viewed by Garry Kinsman as emerging in contiguity with a changing politics regarding "population(s)" (46:1987). Persons in a collective sense were now viewed as a sociopolitical and economic entity. The precedent set by such a cultural advent, of seeing human society in terms of a population came about in the realization that without strict social (sociosexual) scripts; the relationship between human agents and socioeconomic prosperity came into question. As Michel Foucault suggests, people, or more correctly a population was recognized as the determinate force behind the growth, future maintenance and success of the culture; dependant on capitalism as the engine of the vessel.

One of the great innovations in the techniques of power in the eighteenth century was the emergence of population, as an economic and political problem: population as wealth, population as manpower or labour capacity, population balanced between its own growth and the resources it

commanded. Governments perceived that they were not dealing with simply subjects, or even with people, but with a population... birth and death rates, life expectancy, fertility, state of health, frequency of illness.... (Foucault, 25:1978).

A 'population' for Jeffrey Weeks was born out of fears of social, class, and racial purity issues within the bourgeoisie that saw the collective need to maintain class interests and social stability through the new forms of scientific knowledge and discourse (16:1980). It was fear of national decline, development of eugenics and concern with the imperial race that also aided in the construction of the "politics of population" (Weeks, 16:1980).

Deviant behaviour and those now seen as deviant actors, the prostitute, the homosexual, etc.. not only were conceived of in the formation of class morality as the exemplars of the decay of social purity but now also became individuals who conflicted with the maintenance of the population and thus affected social prosperity. Homosexual acts were perceived as barren, sodomy representing a form of "sexual inversion or reversal of sexual character" for men which according to George Chauncey denoted "a complete reversal of one's sex role" (89-90:1989). Michel Foucault points out that in the relationship between the state and the individual, sex became an issue, affecting a whole range of discourse, knowledge, and an insistence on effective means for controlling deviant acts and actors both overtly and in a more subtle fashion through

the production of a collective ideology fostered by various interconnected social structures (27:1978).

Sex scientific knowledge, through the work of the sexual scientists of the day now formed a complimentary apparatus of social rule in connection with class ideology and a shift in the use of the sciences in daily life. The sexual fabric of society was now ordered and controlled on a number of fronts. What remains clear is that the interests and ideology of the ruling class, threatened by non-heterosexual forms of sexuality attempted to, at first name and define, control conduct, and eventually eliminate the behaviour or the person through scientific and medical institutions/intervention (Mort, 43-44:1980).

Apparent in the material relations of capitalist society are class structures (classism), elements of patriarchy, and forms of racism (racial purity issues) which raised white heterosexual men first, in the bourgeoisie, then eventually all classes to that of dominant being in our culture. Class and economic interests transformed social life dramatically throughout the historical periods of industrialization with the entrenchment of capitalism, the Victorian era (in Britain), and into our present historical locale. Clearly fixed in this process of social evolution and embedded in the dominant ideology of our culture is opposite gender attraction

as the only correct sexual choice, patriarchy as a seemingly ahistorical mode, and the maintenance of masculine ideals and masculinity as inherently heterosexual. All such sociocultural ideals and forms of ordering and regulation were adopted from European (British society) into a Canadian and American context, with similar results in the manner in which homosexuality was perceived and treated as a contentious issue within the culture (Kinsman:1987).

The expansion of capitalism and the system of free labour radically redefined the role of human agency. John D'Emilio is a proponent of the fact that different freedoms involved in the system of wage labour; increased freedom of movement, relative freedom of type of wage labour choice and a greater measure of autonomy in general for men (and to lesser extent in the late nineteenth century for women) were offset by the "interplay between exploitation[s] under capitalism" (102:1983). Besides just the overt 'exploitations' enacted in the class system are elements of dominant ideology and the entrenchment of systems of meaning which play a role in limiting the manner in which sexuality is constructed. It is the dominant ideology(ies) which is laced with the perception of a kind of naturalness which disseminates a universal conception of the world around the individual, affecting the manner in which identity categories and cultural objects are understood and acquire meaning (White, 163-165:1992).



One of the greatest measures of human control was that of the regulation of sexuality through overt means by formal institutions - and - through the transmission of dominant ideology that transcribed meaning onto human agents in the form of sexual identities. Compulsory heterosexuality as a relatively recent historical construct enforced specific sexual scripts which transformed the relationship between the individual and society into a collective of ideals under capitalism. David Evans has suggested that;

Sexuality is inextricably tied to capitalism's requirements for reproduced labour of different values, the buoyant consumerism of the metropolitan economies and, as with all capitalist social relations, sexuality's material construction is effected not only directly through the market, but also mediated through the state's formal machineries and practices of citizenship, and in all these arenas sexuality is albeit attenuated, a channel of class relations (Evan . 36:1993).

The social structures inherent in capitalism forged the necessity for production and reproduction from market economics onto human relationships; production, the labour of human subjects and reproduction and replacement of labour relying on the nuclear family was now closely monitored on political and scientific fronts. The homosexual was thus displaced as a non-reproductive human relation, wasteful and inherently counter productive to the maintenance of the socioeconomic system. The homosexual was also displaced in relation to the institutionalization of identity categories which maintained heterosexuality as universal and in opposition to the construction of alternative identities

outside of gender relations insistent on appropriate gender roles being fulfilled according to sex (Chauncey, 91:1989).

Mary MacIntosh in her article The Homosexual Role maintains that our culture in defining people into specific categories in turn polarises and differentiates between actors accordingly. The homosexual and the social role they are ensigned becomes problematic in relation to socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviour (32:1981). The rigid categorizations of human sexuality (and gender roles) namely the homosexual identity is for MacIntosh built upon "important social process[es] connected with mechanisms of social control" (33:1988). It is these 'mechanisms of social control' which are bound in a more formal and definite sense to the collective construction of sexual meanings; foreclosing on the interpretation of cultural objects and the generation of possible meaning (MacIntosh, 33:1988).

#### From Individual Oppression to Group Conception:

Within the very same cultural framework which oppressed the homosexual individual and patterns of non-heterosexual behaviour, remarkably enough, the emergence of a gay subculture(s) began to take root. The demise of the family unit as a means of subsistence and the institutionalization of the homosexual identity and regulation of conduct also made possible "homosexual desire to coalesce into person identity"

(D'Emilio, 105:1983). For D'Emilio, this new found identity formed precisely because of the ability to exist outside of the heterosexual family structure and in part from the cultural change affording the importance of attraction within sexual relationships, to be internalized and played out by the homosexual as well as the adopting of new found labels as a means of self definition (105-106:1983). The emerging gay subcultures in the late nineteenth century and especially during the period prior to World War I in European and North American societies are seen by Dennis Altman as a response to a changing collective conception among gay men in the labels they chose as a means of self identity (47-48:1982).

Cemented in the freedom men had to relocate to growing urban centres in reference to North American culture, primarily to facilitate in their chances for employment, coincidentally also created the formation and recognition among 'like' individuals of group participation in the growing collective that now began to resemble the foundations of a distinct subculture; a gay community. The niche which was now formed by gay men within the urban domain in many cities allowed for the first time the recognition of community outside the social confines of dominant cultural scripts and lead to an affirmation of an alternate sexuality. This is especially true in a North American context as European gay culture does predate that of the former, as reference to "mollies" suggest

the creation of a gay community identity in England prior to that of North America (Trumbach, 93:1992). Apart from a select group of bourgeoisie men in which homosexuality was clearly a lifestyle in England and throughout Europe (in the late eighteen and early nineteen hundreds), the changing urban landscape of gay culture in North America proceeded in conjunction with the growth of urban centres (D'Emilio, 102:1983).

While the growing collective of gay men (and lesbians) within emerging metropolitan areas was partially facilitated by the degree of anonymity afforded by life in the city, the cultural response to homosexuality was still one which was regulated overtly by police, medical, and legal agencies. As homosexuality existed outside of the direct maintenance of the nuclear family in a biological-procreative sense Jeffrey Weeks maintains that, it in turn began to be recognized as no longer a disease but rather a 'condition' (Weeks, 18:1991). Theories developed in light of changing ideological definitions "describing homosexuality as a condition, something that was inherent in a person, part of his or her 'nature'" (D'Emilio, 105:1983). The homosexual whose occurrence was beyond the control of science and regulatory organisations was now effectively policed in all its manifestations within the public realm. A type of quarantining took place whereby the distinctions between public and private realms placed

homosexual relations into the private world, in essence a social acceptance of homosexuality as 'natural' (to use the term loosely), or more precisely as uncontrollable in such a milieu, but still contested and condemned in public.

The Victorian model of the sanctity and importance of the private world of home and family also added to the strengthening of later laws which guaranteed protection of individuals and their activities within the home; in private. As monitoring the conduct of peoples lives in such spaces was all but futile;

homosexuality was defined as something which is acceptable because unavoidable, in private, between consenting adults, but something which is not acceptable in public: hence a tripling of the convictions of men for homosexual behaviour in what were defined as public places (Weeks, 18:1980).

Although the above quote alludes to the Wolfenden Report of the nineteen fifties within England which brought about a change in the laws regarding male homosexuality and is viewed by Jeffrey Weeks to be a relaxing of the regulation of homosexuality, the point of importance is the social shift in relation to enforcement of sexual behaviour in terms of the locations and environments in which it is more free to express itself, in private, and conversely still actively banned, in public.

Similar patterns of the legal regulation can be seen within a North American context where different forms of sexual

conduct in private were impossible to enforce (Kinsman:1987). Thus, it is solely in public and where public occurrences of gay sex and sexuality occur that policing continually took place, effectively regulating the spaces in which homosexual desire was played out and the manner in which it surfaced. It has been forwarded that "the private domain may therefore be as crucial for the formation of social identities as the more public milieu of work and production" (Marshall et al, in Evans, 45:1993). It may also be argued that such private formations of sexual identity may limit the scope in which new and distinct relationships set apart from dominant heterosexual scripts and ideology can be constituted, accepted, and flourish (Trumbach, 93:1992). Thus, homosexual men were "obliged to play two roles, one in the public world in which they worked and must have spent most of their time and another in the molly house", the private spaces in which these men gathered (Trumbach, 93:1992).

**The Urban Domain and the Expansion of a Homosexual Identity:**

The opportunities provided to gay men and women to live their lives and express their sexuality with people like themselves grew from a history of isolation in which desire was manifested incidentally, to one in which, being named; the homosexual - identity amalgamated into community. Within this century (post World War One) the cohesive nature of the gay community (from a white male perspective - as the gay

community is itself divided along gender, racial and to an extent class lines) grew from the divisions between the public male sphere and the private female sphere, aiding in the greater freedom of gay men to continually expand and construct a personal life that existed between the two realms with some measure of independence from institutional controls. While it is difficult to map subcultural organization, it is clear that "effort to articulate an identity in a social climate that was hostile" was actively and self consciously forwarded by gay men as a collective (Weeks, 82:1989).

Gay culture began to express itself and confirm its own existence. With the rise of gay communities throughout North America and the cultural backlash against gay men in the form of police harassment, arrests, and surveillance of various gay groups and organizations by political and judicial agencies, the turning point in the history of gay culture centres on the Stonewall Riots of New York City in 1969. The epicentre of the gay movement is located precisely at this point, whereby individual and community struggles around gay mens' rights and freedoms were forced into the public arena, the discourse of homosexuality was taken back, re-appropriated by gay men and lesbians whose existence beyond the bounds of heterosexuality was now spoken about as an alternative and positive form of sexual expression - "gay is good" (Weeks, 82:1989). What was challenged was a history in which oppression against

homosexuality which neglected sexual plurality and was biased towards a universal heterosexual order, excluded all other forms of sexual expression from a legitimate place in our culture. Gay men now attached their own labels of self identification such as 'gay' and 'queer' as a means of diminishing the institutionalized, medical, and psychiatric onus associated with homosexuality (Birch, 85:1980).

No longer satisfied with the secondary status of homosexuality, gay voices now attempted to examine their own history and oppression, claiming as normal and positive their choice of sexual expression and desire. Theory and science which questioned the nature and occurrence of homosexuality were now collectively attacked and rendered non-qualified to speak to the condition of gay men's lives. In the present, the gay community is now its own author and voice in matters of sexual orientation. The politics of gay liberation have coalesced into a movement which actively seeks to incorporate within the framework of minority communities a social environment in which all individuals are worthy of the same rights and freedoms, regardless of sexual orientation, gender, race, and class (Altman, 6-11:1982). Compulsory heterosexuality and the sociopolitical environment within the capitalist system becomes but one history, an overpowering history that emphasizes and upholds heterosexuality. It is imperative to keep in mind the point raised by Jeffrey Weeks



which takes into account aspects of hegemony in the construction of the discourse of sexuality;

the meanings we give to sexuality in general... are socially organised, but contradictory, sustained by a variety of languages which seek to tell us what sex is, what it ought to be, and what it could be. Existing languages of sex embedded in moral treatises, laws, educational practices, psychological theories, medical definitions, social rituals, pornographic or romantic fictions, popular assumptions and sexual communities, set the limits of the possible. We in our various ways [both collectively and individually] try make sense of what we are offered (208:1991).

In an attempt to locate the evolution and oppression of other forms of sexual citizenship, Carole Vance suggest that gay men and lesbians are forced to examine the dynamics of cultural evolution that in part created and legitimized the existence of homosexuality, but was never inclusive of validating this form of sexual expression and desire as an equal to heterosexuality (28:1989). In understanding the history of homosexuality and its relationship within a cultural framework that has enforced and constructed sexual scripts which are ingrained within the social arena, gay men have insisted on reclaiming their own history. Part of the process of identity maintenance and expression of homosexual desire is ingrained in forms of re-sexualizing gay sex through the use of pornography.

In constructing an identity and politics which pronounce gay sex and sexuality as equal to heterosexuality, gay men have harnessed the images that eroticize homosexuality as

educational, affirming, and liberating. Gay men now consume these images as a means of seeing themselves and their desires played out and exposed as real. Gay porn is a part of the confirmation of homosexuality. While Guy Hocquenghem contends that promiscuity (with reference here to the gay community) and the "anus as phallic signifier" represent a challenge towards heterosexual hegemony and sexual scripts, he overlooks the very ideological pool from which meaning is produced and acquired for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation (95:1993). The systems of meaning and representation present a more closed medium of pre-existing and performed ideology that is structured within human social relations. It is also a site that renders an examination of the construction of gay desire as lacking any real form of difference in the maintenance of sexual scripts and behaviour deemed and interpreted collectively as erotic.

From this point, the dynamics of gay porn, with its place in our society as an industry of huge proportions, the role of spectatorship, and most importantly the messages conveyed in the images will be questioned. If we are to view gay male pornography as being an affirmation of gay desire and an expression of gay sexuality, then surely such images should both contradict and oppose the dominant sexual scripts (ideology) which have long been part of the subordination of homosexuality. In forming a distinct community and subculture

seemingly in contrast to heterosexual ideology, gay pornography must be examined in order to gain insight into a media form that should compact some of the same measures of resistance and opposition to heterosexual ideology as the gay movement itself.

## Chapter Four

### Telling (his) Stories: Gay Sex and the Maintenance of Dominant Ideology:

Pornography has long been a contentious issue, involving on the one hand individuals in support of its production and consumption while others are adamant about the harm associated with such images and respond with the need for all forms of pornography to be eliminated or at least severely limited. The debate enacted by pornography becomes complex and questionable in relation to advocates of gay pornography and many anti-porn feminists inclusive of a growing number of gay academics who view this media form as but another location that maintains and reinforces oppressive sexual dynamics, enacting standards of gender inequality regardless of who is having sex with whom.

Even with the prevalence of gay porn today, the reality is that the existence of this medium as we know it was drastically different only decades ago. Michael Bronski has alluded to the changing social conception of material that is deemed pornographic, as recently as the nineteen fifties in the United States, materials that "fall short of dealing with homosexuality from a scientific, historical, or critical point of view", were deemed "vulgar, dirty, and offensive to the moral senses" (Bronski, 162:1984). Thus in affirming the

naturalness of homosexuality, gay pornography is but one of the visual portrayals of male same sex and desire that has been credited as privileging the display of what in the very near past was effectively banned.

Pornography (including gay) is still a medium governed by laws concerning obscenity in Canada which regulate based on a community and judicial - governmental standard, material which is deemed fit for consumption by Canadians. As the majority of gay pornography is imported from the United States to Canada, Customs exercises the law(s) banning the entry of many images of gay sex. Suffice to say that the repertoire of individual tastes, fantasy, and fetishes runs the gambit, but mainstream gay porn set apart from hard-core material is in demand and with ample supply.

In 1985, for example, ten or more companies were producing gay male pornographic films at any one time. Together these companies produced more than one hundred or more films a year, all of which retailed for approximately forty dollars each... [with] gay pornographic magazines [having] a North American distribution totalling more than 600,000 monthly... yearly 7 million magazines (Kendall, 31:1993).

Needless to say there is most definitely a market for all this material. The fundamental principles of capitalism ring true and clear in relation to the economics of supply and demand regarding the commodity - gay porn. More interesting are the opinions and beliefs which contrast the role of social construction and consumption of gay pornography in our culture

forwarding the idea that; "porn has no narrative or aesthetic pleasure beyond mere getting off has suggested the wrong criteria for evaluation of decoding skills or difference," in examining this media product (Patton, 378:1991). Gay pornography then becomes a site which is mediated by, but in need of a more constructive review than just diverging opinions and beliefs in regards to the qualities attached to such a product; that of liberating and constructive or conversely detrimental and representational of sexual hierarchy or mistaken for real (Mayne, 59:1993).

The paradox of gay pornography is overlooked in much of the current literature. If it truly reinforces sexual hegemony the question must be asked: why has it taken on such an important role in the gay community? Conversely, if it is a tool that privileges resistance to dominant sexual scripts, then how is this manifested in the relationship between spectator and text? In examining the images involved, the researcher must retain the position that the cultural object is in fact produced within social structures hinged on aspects of dominance that produce meanings which are reflected within the social relations of the world around the audience (White, 285:1992). In applying aspects of the cultural studies approach to the media with an analysis of the sexual dynamics in gay pornography it is important to reflect upon the

transmission of dominant ideology in the construction of the self, sexual or otherwise.

**Gay Porn and Sexual Conflation:**

According to Christopher Kendall in his article Real Dominant, Real Fun!: Gay Male Porn and the Pursuit of Masculinity, there has been "considerable academic and political effort on the part of many gay men to defend gay male pornography as representative of a political and identity to which all gay men must have access" (21:1993). For many individuals it is seen as a site in which gay male sexuality is affirmed, a medium where forms of liberation take place which challenge institutionalized heterosexuality and in fact is different from heterosexual pornography (Kendall, 22:1993). Different in that; heterosexual pornography is fantasy which is representative of patriarchy and the fixed divisions along gender lines involving women's subordination to men (often exhibited through acts of violence and degradation). This being indicative of heterosexual social hierarchy whereby masculinity and male sex is seen as central and of greater importance than women's sexuality, often exhibited through the preponderance of images of overt racism sexualized and the objectification of women as merely sexual objects. Straight pornography is seen as manifesting itself in reality within the relationships of men and women.

Besides just the sexual dynamics (men having sex with men) gay male pornography is seen as exhibiting none of these qualities. Through a history of institutionalized oppression, gay pornography is for many the answer, a means of taking back what has visibly been lacking, that is the idea that gay male sex is natural, desirable, and erotic. The right to access pornography, namely gay porn is now seen as something;

integral to the struggle for gay liberation [so much so] that current gay rights strategies now include an almost unquestioned assumption that any commitment to social equality for gay men must, of necessity also include a commitment to the unbridled production and distribution of gay male pornography (Kendall, 22:1993).

Gay pornography is confirmed as performing a vital function for its viewers, gay men. It serves first as a location in which desire, namely homosexual desire is taken from within the conscious realm and exposed into a reality in the visual. Private thoughts are played out in the material world, the viewer is able to see the sex in front of him. The second function is pornography then becomes a "sexual object" whereby the sexuality and identity of the viewer is reinforced through his engaging in the viewing of, and responding to the visual subject as sexual object (Bronski, 160:1984). Gay pornography is held as a visual form in which both the negative and oppressive social scripts assigned to gay men are shattered in the bare honesty of the acts of sex. It is also a medium (media form) which is noted as being free of the stereotypes



of gay men so pervasive and contradictory in other forms of popular mainstream television and film.

The stereotypical gay man whose identity is confirmed merely through the decor of his apartment or the manner in which he is dressed and groomed in contrast to the straight characters or leading man in modern film is according to Richard Dyer, deconstructed and minimized in gay porn (11:1993). The stereotyping that exists in mainstream media forms is not necessary in gay pornography, where the criteria for relating to the subjects of the film and the text (gay sex) is the individuals' ability to objectify as sexual the films' subjects and content; this is done or perceived to be done outside the confines of heterosexual social scripts and ideology.

Charges by anti-porn feminists (inclusive of gay men) and some gay academics suggest that the hyper-masculinization of male images prevalent in gay pornography (but not exclusive to this visual medium) is seen as a product of an internalized homophobia, an alignment with heterosexism (Tucker, 268:1991). Such images are denoted by others as defence against the persistent feminization our culture has linked to male homosexuality, thus reactionary rather than reconstituting sexual ideology (Tyler, 37:1991). It is precisely because of this 'subversion' of gender roles and the reallocation as

erotic attached to gay male sex, that heterosexual hegemony is perceived as being dismantled. Scott Tucker proposes that gay pornography does not simply replicate the standard "sexual dualisms" prevalent in our culture and reinforced in much of straight porn, it is credited as resistant towards them and exploratory in contrast to institutionalized heterosexuality (268:1989). In objectifying gay sex, even when it indulges the viewer into taking part in the power dynamics that insist on the recognition of masculine/feminine roles being played out, ie; a 'top' and a 'bottom', the difference with two men engaged in sex is that the viewer is able to superimpose himself onto either performer.

The viewer is able to equally perceive as sexual and satisfying his objectification of sociosexual power in the position of being a 'top' while in the same instance relating to the desirability and pleasure of being a 'bottom' (Tucker, 266:1989). The sexual dualisms of heterosexual porn and the oppressive sexual scripts which emphasize the role of power, the masculine top verses the feminine bottom is effectively negated, or resolved without the perception of harm associated with patriarchy and cultural gender divisions in the viewer's ability to navigate and be both roles simultaneously. It is this ability to personally and intimately identify with either performer and the roles they partake in which is seemingly credited as overcoming gay men's willingness to practice the

roles presented to them in their personal lives, a distinction that again sets apart the function of pornography between straight and gay communities.

Criticism of the "utopia of homogenized humanity" transposed on the position of anti porn advocates, that is the ability to treat each individual as a "whole person" outside of the confines of institutionalized gender roles and the sexual objectification inherent in the gender hierarchy of straight pornography is viewed as being conflated onto images of gay sex (Bronski, 164:1984). Gay porn is then charged with acting out "the same dominant and subordinate roles as heterosexual pornography" (Bronski, 164:1984). The replication of heterosexual masculine and feminine gender roles (sex roles), that of dominant verses subordinate is levied against gay porn in its enacting through the process imitating the assigning one of the 'actors' the role of feminine stand-in, the subordinate bottom.

Although the standards by which we measure what constitutes pornography verses erotica; what is deemed harmful versus productive and enhancing to sexual experience in the role of spectator, is questionable and highly subjective, not all straight or gay porn exhibits such cut and dry sexual dynamics. At play are texts and images in gay pornography which on the one hand objectify mutual pleasure and transgress

culturally fixed gender and sex roles, other images reflect the status quo and re-enact sociocultural heterosexual (read homophobic) dynamics. Straight pornography like its gay counterpart is also not necessarily a stagnant site where heterosexual hegemony is constantly reinforced in every instance. Taken in their entirety, both forms of pornography are on the whole repetitious, the faces, settings, and situations in which actors are having sex may change from one film to the next but the onus to replicate the strict sexual dynamics that sell 'most' videos is dictated by consumer demand - cultural hegemony. It is suggested that pornography did not become an "8 billion dollar a year industry" by being confrontational or reactionary (White, 291:1990).

Gay pornography is full of images that are both "blatant and suggestive", which according to Michael Bronski "play a role in sparking the imagination" (171:1984). Turning this position around, if these 'sparks' that ignite the imagination are in fact produced by the visual, is it solely on the merits of a free and uncharged relationship established between the object (porn) and subject (spectator) or enmeshed in the sparking of ingrained and familiar (read: comfortable and learned) portrayals of sexual roles and dominant sociosexual ideology? John Stoltenberg, a gay anti-porn advocate maintains that:

the values in the sex that is depicted in gay male sex films are very much the values in the sex that

gay men tend to have. They are also, not incidentally, very much the values in the sex that straight men tend to have - because they are very much the values that male supremists tend to have: taking, using, estranging, dominating - essentially, sexual power-mongering (Stoltenberg, 249:1990).

Implicit in the remarks of the above author is the notion that the ideals of gay male pornography as being both liberating and educational for gay men at large, is an individual and community politics that is invested in the same ordering and subordination of women (and gay men themselves) as is present within our patriarchal culture. The assumption that all men regardless of sexual orientation and the type of pornography they view (gay or straight) are essentially "male supremists" is devoid of the complexities of the subjective experience of individual participation in the viewing of such images. The slightly archaic pronouncement that borders on biological essentialism, implied in the pronouncement of men "taking, using, dominating", (read rapist) in matters relating to sex and the male sex drive is also devoid of the cultural complexities of the transmission of dominant ideology which influences and affects the construction of meaning in the interpretation of the images at hand.

John Stoltenberg does however raise both a provocative and interesting point in arguing that the cultural system that prioritizes heterosexuality and masculinity - which is always associated with heterosexuality is a social hierarchy:

that necessarily derogates both those who are female and those who are queer - namely those who are male anatomically but not male enough sociosexually (250:1990).

It is through gay mens' perceived status of participating in the degraded status of the female, that even the hyper-masculinization of "macho" costumes and "posturing" cannot undo (Stoltenberg, 251:1990). In interpreting and understanding the images of gay pornography it is necessary to evaluate the transmission of dominant ideology involved in the material relations within the social structures of industrial societies which effectively shape the interpretation of meanings and viewpoint of the audience.

What is left unexamined by either side - pro pornography as resistant to the dominant ideology verses anti porn advocates whose view is that porn actually causes harm and violence to women and gay men alike - is that porn derives "most of its meaning and significance from the social context in which it exists" (Valverde, 125:1985). Mariana Valverde in Sex, Power, and Pleasure suggests that what is important in order to understand the relationship between pornography and the audience is the "broader understanding of the process[es] involved in the creation of both porn itself and the porn consumer" (125:1985). This author raises the idea that we must see pornography as an element that runs throughout our entire culture, implying - correctly so - that pornography as

a cultural object is not a socially isolated product or phenomenon (123:1985).

The images are brought to life and given meaning within social structures past and present - measured and understood by the dictates of dominant ideology which orders the world of the consumer/audience. To insist that pornography on its own is harmful requires the dismissal of an entire cultural system formed on elements of dominance and subordination. To claim its resistant to heterosexism requires removing the individual - audience from the systems of meaning and representation (ideology) which shape their conception(s) of culture and the construction of sexual identities. Neither position proves adequate nor useful. Instead, the cultural object - pornography and the subjectivity of the audience must be examined within the set of social relations which produce meanings and frameworks in which we reference and order the world both sexually and non-sexually.

Richard Dyer raise the important point overlooked in much of the 'reactive' literature regarding pornography. He asserts that the structuring of the porno text with specific reference to gay films and videos "would not be consistently returned to, did it not sell and it would not sell if it did not turn people on" (55:1994). Therefore, gay desire must then be seen as "lived and sensuously experienced in a multitude of ever

changing social and historical circumstances" (Watney, 17:1994). The culture of homosexuality is always in collusion with the wider social structures and cultural systems which on the one hand provide - and consequently - limit meaning. As John Champagne maintains:

many arguments against pornography make sweeping conclusions about pornography's purported violence without specific reference to a single text, treat the genre in such a way as to deny its significant heterogeneity, employing the most mechanistic notions of causality when describing the relationship between pornography and its spectator, and seem uninterested in working to articulate the ideologies around sexuality and theories of power on which they are premised (44:1995).

Champagne insists that culturally marginalized people are not simply denied subjectivity but rather "they are granted a certain (limited) and specific subjectivity that renders them useful by giving them a position in relation to the dominant culture" (xxv:1995). In interpreting the cultural object - the porno text, it is necessary to support the notion that "no relation whatsoever would be possible between the margin [homosexuality] and the centre [heterosexuality] if the margin did not hold something of the centre" (Champagne, xxvi:1995). For Champagne, gay pornography offers at the same time a transgressive tool by acting out and testing the limits of cultural scripts pertaining to the body and desire - "counter[ing] modern disciplinary society's 'economical' deployment of the body in the service of subject formation", while in the same instance acting as a "reinscription of that limit" (30:1995). In this sense gay pornography is both



resistant to and reinscriptive of dominant ideology. Such a theoretical position requires attentiveness to the concept of hegemony in the historical construction of sexual identities and the meaning they carry and articulate with reference to the wider social structures of our culture.

In privileging the heterogeneity of the porno text, John Champagne suggests that authors such as Richard Dyer and John Stoltenberg provide "an extremely monovocal reading of pornography" (34:1995). In support of the porn text as a "contested space" for the production of cultural explanations and meaning Champagne proposes an re-evaluation of gay male pornography that exists precariously close to obscuring out of existence the very real transmission of dominant meanings and their effect on the collective conception of sexual identity, behaviour, and appropriate sexual roles. While there is heterogeneity in relation to gay pornography and even ideological struggle, more than often the porno text must replicate aspects of dominant ideology for the production of meaning - even within the peripheries of a cultural system - to take place. It is the subject and even the individual's subjectivity which is formed within the structures of past and present social relations which determine the extent to which meaning in relation to cultural objects is manifest.

The discussion to follow will centre precisely on this notion, that in an attempt understand and interpret the images in question we are forced to examine how dominant sociosexual ideology constructs possible systems of meaning that guide and direct the construction of gay sex and desire. In order to rid homosexuality of the historical stigmatization of femaleness and to an extent its deviant label, gay sex in pornography has taken on a hyper-masculinization and sex role specific dimension concerning the subjects (actors) and texts of the films. Rather than liberating and self serving in the formation of a distinct gay identity, gay pornography maintains a masculine/male dynamic that represents an alignment with hegemonic sociosexual behaviour that may more aptly explain gay men's willingness to reject any sexual expression that undermines male power. Instead of expressing a different sexual perspective separate from dominant ideology, gay porn is situated within the structures that depend on a male/female hierarchy and the idealization of masculinity which maintains male supremacy intact.

In part, straight or at least 'straight acting' men maintain the role of the more powerful, more dominant male who is both romanticized and afforded the status of role model or star in contrast to the receptive actor who is in comparison and by default, the true homosexual (Kendall, 32:1993). In scenarios that involve the actors taking turns at being the top,

"dominance and non mutuality remain central to the sexual act" (Kendall, 32:1993). Rarely is the sexual hierarchy of patriarchal relations and the idealisation of masculinity resisted or shattered. Physical power, strength often equated with violence, and non-consensual behaviour is presented and advanced by our culture and consumed by gay men in the form of pornography. Gay porn in replicating what is socially defined as masculinity, also not coincidentally rejects all that is non masculine. The gay identity is both constructed and at the same time lost in the charade of mimicry. Less than reactive, the ideal of masculinity in the gay community is for Seymour Kleinberg;

so conservative it is almost primitive. That homosexuals are attracted to it and find it gratifying is not a total surprise. Gay male sexual preference has always favoured a butch, boyish beauty, and only in the artistic or intellectual circles has beauty been allowed a certain feyness. Butchness is relative; the least swishy man in the room is the most butch. It usually meant one looked straight, one could pass (123:1987).

At the other end of the of the spectrum but clearly part of the same sexual hierarchy is that there exists;

a special eroticism in the experience of pretending to be degraded that is by no means rare in adult sexual behaviour of whatever persuasion. The homosexual whose erotic feelings are enhanced by the illusion that his partner holds him in contempt, who is thrilled when told his ass or mouth is just like a cunt, is involved in a complicated self-deception. What appears to be happening is a homosexual variation of masochism: the contempt of the "straight" partner emblazes gay self contempt, which in turn is exploited as an aphrodisiac. Why this process works is less clear than how it does (Kleinberg, 124:1987).

Perhaps the complex web of glorifying masculinity and the experience of self degradation in the acceptance of, and eroticization of sexual inequality exist because of the cultural paradox in which homosexuality has been positioned. Gay men exist between cultural peripheries, boundaries established between heterosexuality and homosexuality which are constantly traversed in the process of passing in the 'real world' or conversely emerging oneself in the gay subculture. It is a journey that many gay men undertake on a daily basis, of being members that pass within our society for those on the outside yet understanding the measures of subordination as related to their sexual identity and the subculture they also inhabit. Such sexual dynamics may also play directly into the narrow construction of sexuality in our culture and speak of the power of cultural hegemony in the formation of all forms of sexual identity, gay or straight.

Examining gay male pornography will provide this project with a concrete foundation in order that the cultural studies approach (sociology of culture) forwarded and issues of hegemony in the construction of sexual scripts and identity be examined clearly through engaging the structures of such visual images.

## Chapter Five

### Methodology: Engaging the Visual:

Understanding the process of the evolution of a homosexual identity from a historical perspective and the social forces within capitalist relations which limit the expression of this cultural product, a methodology that would allow for the examination of the privileging of masculinity and heterosexual dynamics in gay culture is needed. This research maintains that the consumption of gay pornography by gay men is riddled with problems concerning the conflation of instituted sex roles and sociosexual hierarchy inherent in the process of identity formation. As cultural agents, gay men are predisposed to the same social forces that both create and form the prerequisites for understanding sex and sexuality.

In examining the relationship between the audience and the circulation of possible meaning(s) in the media Jane Woollacott in her article Messages and Meanings contends that:

The distinctive feature of production in the mass media as opposed to general economic production, is that it is concerned with the production and articulation of 'messages' within specific signifying systems, the rules and meanings of which we tend to take for granted. The messages in the media are both composed and interpreted in accordance with certain rules or codes. When we see a news event on television or film, we do not see that event 'raw' but we see a message about that event. We read the message and interpret it but we take for granted the rules and codes through which we read and interpret (92:1982).

Therefore, in interpreting the messages, this research project is intent on "reassert[ing] a concern with the media messages as structured wholes rather than with the quantified explicit content of fragmented parts of messages" (Woollacott, 93:1982). This requires employing the techniques of structural analysis to the interpretation and understanding of the images (and meaning) within gay pornography as such a methodology is positioned to "capture totalities and ask if the structures of observed items correspond to the structures of idea systems within the society" (Jackson, 235:1981).

Structural analysis focusing on the images of sex in gay pornography (and inclusive of dialogue) will allow for an investigation into the realm of questionable sexual dynamics, which this project presents as both hegemonic, homophobic, and taken for granted. This methodology enables the researcher to extrapolate dominant sociosexual dynamics at play and render an interpretation of the role of power, masculinity, and dominance as 'themes' central to the construction of a gay identity and sexuality - central also to the support of the socioeconomic system and culture itself.

#### **Advantages of the Technique:**

While a structural analysis of the images and themes in gay pornography is being used as an extension of the literature relating to the media studies/cultural studies approach to the

interpretation of dominant ideology within media forms, it in turn enables the researcher to actively interpret the cultural scripts that often remain solely theoretical, and never concretized. In examining the images of gay pornography this technique proves well suited for the task, of allowing a critical review of a cultural product which many gay men share as an experience of sexual affirmation and identity maintenance. Structural analysis focuses on the "relation between the cultural object and the social world of which it is a part in and of itself, not a mirror image" (Jackson, 244:1981).

The purpose of employing such a methodology is to examine the relationship between "corresponding structures", in this case the visual images of gay pornography (and associated dialogue) to a set of themes that are representative of characteristics of sexual conflation and dominant sociosexual ideology (Jackson, 235:1981). The chief use of such a methodology is to examine "the structure[s] of a text for the degree to which it embodies the structure of thought (or 'world vision') of the social class or group to which it belongs" (Eagleton, 32:1976). In applying the tenets of a cultural studies approach to the media and the negotiated reading of dominant ideology within the text, structural analysis facilitates the interpretation of themes to be

explored and articulated as direct products of social relations which provide meaning for the audience.

**Limitations of the Technique:**

As with all research methods, limitations exist with this technique. Firstly the subjective experiences of audience participation and the interpretation of individual meanings is left uncovered in this project. Participants and their reactions to the subject/text were not employed. While the purpose of this project is not to make generalizations concerning all forms of gay pornography and a single collective reading, inference to only four texts in this genre of film and an interpretation of the relations between themes is investigated for signs of dominant sociosexual scripts/hegemonic content.

As this was an exploratory study, the objective was to interpret specific signs of the idealization of masculinity and male dominance from an exploration of the historical changes and evolution of homosexual citizenship during the rise of capitalism to present sites that reveal the composition of gay desire and identity founded within dominant (sociosexual) ideology. In examining the cultural space in which homosexuality has been constituted and the manner in which gay men build a sexual identity as related to prior and



existing cultural scripts, the analysis of patterns of sexual behaviour in gay pornography proved suitable.

The purposive sampling technique involved in the selection of the four films was used as a means to overcome the variety of types of gay male pornography. In employing such a method of sampling, if the cultural objects under study vary substantially in their genre, room for interpreting specific and similar themes within the texts may prove difficult. These disadvantages were overcome by the selection of four films from within a similar genre with the employment of structural analysis as a "deciphering device" (Woollacott, 92:1982). In advancing the power of heterosexual hegemony in the formation of gay desire and an analysis of images of sex in gay culture as reinforcing dominant sexual dynamics it is necessary to incorporate a model that is suited for such an endeavour: structural analysis.

#### **Units of Analysis:**

In identifying with the enforcement of dominant sociosexual scripts within the images of gay male pornography a criteria for coding/interpreting the visual depiction of the sexual dynamics in gay sex is as follows:

The spatial - physical relationship of the two actors will be recorded and examined, including the sexual positions they

maintain, that of active (top) versus receptive (bottom) and whether these positions are mutually exclusive or interchangeable. The spatial - physical relationship of the actors will support either the relative degree of freedom or a more exclusive display of a distinctive role maintenance depending on the degree of interchangeability. Interchangeability of sexual roles constituting a more open and fluid position incorporating a more plural conception of gay desire. Non-interchangeable roles denoting a more closed display of gay desire that represents dominant sociosexual scripts which support an either or scenario in the construction of gender/sex (masculine/feminine) roles.

Dialogue that supports non consensual behaviour, i.e. orders, directions, and commands that represent power over the other will be incorporated and recorded according to the different sexual roles. Non consensual dialogue maintaining the distinction between active and passive, dominant verses subordinate roles, representing a more closed sexual hierarchy inherent in the distinction between masculine verses feminine. The dialogue between the actors is to be transcribed, recorded sequentially and in its entirety.

Lastly, an examination of the narrative of the film and its privileging of the active role over the receptive partner will be explored, inclusive of the focus of the camera and the

visual representation of the performers - whether one man is focused upon more directly than the other will be recorded. How the camera frames and/or exaggerates the actors positions will also be examined.

Analyzing the preceding structures of the text requires recording acts, actions, and script (units of analysis) in a straightforward manner. This replicates the actual viewing process of the audience although the individual's ability to rewind, freeze frame, and skip ahead must be recognized. In recording the actual events and dialogue on the screen, the intent is not to detach each moment or unit of analysis as an isolated event within the structure of the text (film) but to raise to the surface the reality of dominant sexual dynamics inherent in our culture (inclusive of gay culture) and to examine the manner in which the text reflects the dominant ideology.

#### Data Collection:

Four films were chosen for analysis of the sexual dynamics presented (and as argued inherent) in the social formation of a sexual identity and the manifestation of gay sex. These films were employed as a means to measure sociosexual hegemony in the construction of gay men's sexual identity. As previously argued, gay sex has adopted dominant sexual scripts that are at the same time directly involved in the

subordination of homosexuality through the maintenance of masculinity and male power as cultural ideals. We expect to see this reflected in the chosen four films.

The four films represent a selection of readily available videos for the adult gay market. Two of the films star, Jeff Stryker and Ryon Idol. They are two of the most popular and highest paid male performers of this genre. In addition to their status as 'stars', both men also identify themselves as heterosexual/straight. The third film stars Joey Stefano, a popular gay porn actor who now deceased was himself gay. The fourth film incorporates the work of a gay male director of this genre of film; Chi Chi La Rue. Only one scene in each film was analyzed. For the films which incorporate a specific actor, only the first scene in which they were 'participating' in sex with another man was studied. The scene from the one film which represents the work of a gay director was chosen by the same criteria, with only the first scene in which two actors are having sex being examined.

It must be recognised that within the visual images of gay sex, there are societal constraints on sexual desires, "not only in how we [gay men] act, but in how we conceptualize them" (Mann, 82:1995). A sexual desire not validated by our culture is thus lacking the means by which it can manifest itself in any separate or different manner from forms of

sexual identity and behaviour that are socially recognized and upheld by dominant ideology. In examining the four films an attempt will be made to articulate from the visual performance of sex an ingrained sexual ordering and hierarchy that privileges heterosexual dynamics and masculinity. At the same time such a structuring of the text will also demonstrate the failure of the films to effectively displaying homoerotic elements that are disruptive of dominant sexual scripts and ideology. In locating the sites of gay desire, ideological constructs that centre upon a patriarchal system and the dominant position of white heterosexual males is sexualized and harnessed as erotic.

The films chosen for the analysis represent some of the more recent video releases of this genre of film. The films examined were Ryon Idol's "Idol Thoughts" released in 1990 (Catalina Video), Jeff Stryker's "Powertool" from 1987 (Inches Video), Joey Stefano's "Best of Joey Stefano" 1993 (Metro Home Video/Rage Productions), and "Body Search" directed by Chi Chi LaRue in 1992 (His Video). The first film runs approximately 82 minutes long and features Ryon Idol in two scenes involving sex with a partner and one in which he masturbates alone. Only the first scene in which he is performing sex with another actor was examined. The film with Jeff Stryker is 78 minutes long and features him in three scenes. One in which he is masturbating alone (although watching two other men

engaged in sex) and two scenes involving sex with a partner. The third film with Joey Stefano is 120 minutes in length and features the actor in eight different scenes compiled from various films over his career. The opening scene has him masturbating alone while all other exerts from various films involve sex with other men, one or more at a time. Chi Chi La Rue's "Body Search" is 76 minutes long and involves five different sex scenes with different male actors, tied together by a rather elaborate plot involving a spurred lover from the 1960s, his revenge on the son of his ex-lover, and a kidnapping plot.

The choice of using only a scene in which both actors are involved in sex with another man positions the participants clearly within the realm of homosexual sex and enforces for the viewer the dynamics of gay desire that require an identification with dominant sexual scripts and roles not as evident in the scenes with the stars alone. The following two chapters will present the findings and an analysis of the sexual dynamics involved as related to the actors and the expression of gay sex and desire which centres upon very specific themes and decipherable cultural patterns.

## Chapter Six

### Findings from the Visual:

The following chapter presents the findings (storyboard) from the visual images/texts examined. A discussion of each scene with the units of analysis examined separately follows in chapter seven. Lastly a general discussion of the findings, examining the extent to which dominant sociosexual dynamics that insist on the privileging of masculinity and sex role specific behaviour in the films is presented.

#### First Film: "Idol Thoughts"

Ryon Idol in the film "Idol Thoughts" (1993, Catalina Video) is the central character of the film. Entering his apartment/house he changes from his street clothes into a bathrobe and proceeds to listen to his telephone messages while sitting on his sofa opening his mail. He reviews the messages which consists of a number of calls ranging from plans for a movie date to confirmation his car is ready at the garage. Ryon Idol has also been left a message confirming the content of one of the packages in his mail, with pictures inside of a new and 'hot guy' he may want to take a look at and use in his next film. The next message on the tape is left from a man named Luke who states he has forgotten his watch at Ryon Idol's home as he was in a rush to leave in the morning. Holding the watch retrieved from the coffee table in

his hands, Ryon Idol smiles while fondling it, presumably remembering the previous night's encounter. The scene then fades - a dream sequence - and re-emerges with Ryon Idol and Luke?, although the name of the other man in front of us is never confirmed.

Ryon Idol is sitting on the arm of his sofa, a jean shirt open and draped over his shoulders exposing his chest. Luke is performing oral sex on Idol's erect penis, kneeling on the cushions of the sofa on his hands and knees. He too is wearing a jean shirt opened and painter's cap. (The clothes still partially on both men reminds the viewer of the immediacy of the sex act. Both men presumably are so involved in having sex they had little time to disrobe completely.) The dialogue that accompanies the scene begins with Ryon Idol moaning accompanied by oohs, ahs, and him repeating the words: "Oh yeah." He tells Luke: "Come on, suck my dick" followed by "Tell me I'm pretty..... tell me I'm pretty." In the next sentence Ryon Idol commands Luke to: "Suck my big dick, come on suck it fast."

Luke still on his hands and knees is positioned below Ryon Idol. Occasionally Luke looks up at Ryon Idol who is moaning with pleasure. The camera angle frames the sexual act with extreme closeups of body parts and the orifices on which they are entering. The viewer rarely sees the two men, one engaged



in the act of fellatio as a whole, the scenes flipping from angle to angle but consistently focusing on body parts in close ups or facial shots (predominately Ryon Idol) which capture his expression of 'pleasure'. Ryon Idol is, so far, focused upon more intently by the camera than the other character.

Luke, looking up at Ryon Idol continues to perform fellatio, with Ryon Idol removing his penis from Luke's mouth, waving it in front of him several times, 'teasing' Luke. Luke has up to this point said nothing. Ryon Idol then asks Luke: "You want to lick my ass." In the next sentence he commands Luke to: "Lick my fucking ass." Luke's response: "Oh yeah". Laying back on the arm of the sofa Ryon Idol spreads his legs, with one knee resting on the arm of the sofa exposing his anus, penis and scrotum in the frame. The viewer is also witness to the fact that Ryon Idol is wearing cowboy boots as evident by his foot resting on the arm of the sofa. Luke is still on his hands and knees licking Ryon Idol's anus and scrotum, being commanded by Ryon Idol: "Come on, lick my ass."

Luke then begins to lick the boot of Ryon Idol and is given the order to lick all the way up his boot and then lick his (Ryon Idol's) anus again. The scene is again occasionally broken when a full shot of the two men reveals the sex scene and the two men in their entirety. Interspersed are a few

close up shots of Luke masturbating himself while he is performing the sex act as Ryon Idol has requested, the camera quickly returning to Ryon Idol. Extreme close ups continue to centre on the specific area of intent, namely Ryon Idol's anus and scrotum which Luke is alternately licking (his anus) and sucking (his scrotum). Shots of Ryon Idol's face reveal his eyes closed, with him repeating the words: "Oh yeah."

The preceding scene then fades and is replaced with Luke on his hands and knees on the floor, still partially clothed and with cap still on he is being anally penetrated by Ryon Idol who is on his knees. Ryon Idol says to Luke: "Is that a big cock." Luke's response: "Oh yeah I can feel it in my ass." At this point Luke has a very noticeable expression of 'discomfort' on his face. The camera angle is again from the top down, framing Ryon Idol over the prone Luke below. (As of yet no condom has been visible even in light of the intrusive camera shots and close ups of Ryon Idol's penis sliding in and out of Luke's anus.) At this point the dialogue increases with Luke commenting: "Oh yeah, that feels good." Ryon Idol: "You feel that." Luke: "Oh yeah, I feel that big cock."

In the process of anally penetrating Luke, Ryon Idol has an expression or look of 'concentration' on his face as the intensity and rapidness of his penis thrusting into the anus of Luke heightens. On two occasions Ryon Idol slaps Luke's

buttocks once, but with some degree of force since the contact of his hand on Luke's buttocks can be heard clearly by the viewer. This scene then fades and is replaced with Luke squatting on the arm of the sofa with Ryon Idol standing on the floor behind Luke, again penetrating him anally. (The condom that Ryon Idol has been wearing? becomes visible for the first time.) Ryon Idol's face looks 'strained with concentration' as he continues to penetrate Luke. Ryon Idol: "I'm gonna fuck that ass."

The camera reveals a close up of Ryon Idol's penis penetrating in and out (but never completely out) of Luke's anus. Again he comments: "I'm gonna fuck that ass" slapping Luke's buttock. Ryon Idol is grimacing as he continues to push his penis into Luke's anus with what appears to be a 'considerable degree of force'. As the intensity of the action surges towards the inevitable orgasm of Ryon Idol, the penetration of Luke becomes quicker and more forceful on his part. The scene then cuts to Ryon Idol standing above Luke who is positioned reclined in the corner of the sofa masturbating himself with the camera quickly panning upwards revealing Ryon Idol doing the same only standing over him. He says to Luke: "I'm going to come in your face."

Luke has at this point ejaculated as evidenced by the camera angle which reveals his body in its entirety, but once he has

finished ejaculating the camera focuses again on Ryon Idol. Ryon Idol standing over Luke ejaculates onto his face, with semen landing around Luke's nose, mouth, and chin. Ryon Idol says loudly: "Oh yeah, damn, yeah", as he ejaculates. Ryon Idol then pulls away for a moment still loudly grunting and groaning then says: "I'm gonna come again." Luke's response: "Oh yeah, sure." Luke who has semen on his face is again subject to Ryon Idol's penis in front of his mouth, ejaculating, his semen falling on Luke's chest as he continues to groan. At this point the scene cuts back from this daydream sequence to Ryon Idol, watch in hand on the sofa.

**Second Film: "Powertool"**

The second scene examined features Jeff Stryker; "Powertool" (1987, Inches Video). The video commences with a Judge presiding on a court bench telling Jeff Stryker he has been found guilty of the charges brought against him (the crime is never revealed) and asks if he has anything to say in his defence. Stryker in the face of justice comments that it wouldn't do him any good if he did. He is remanded to custody in prison for a period of no more than 30 days by the judge. With film credits interjected spontaneously, the viewer watches Jeff Stryker who is calm, cool and collected in light of his situation. Now in prison he is required to undress and forced to spread his legs and bend over presumably in order to be strip searched. He is defiant and there exudes from the

narrative a sense that he is in total control in spite of his incarceration. The film begins with Jeff Stryker in his prison cell.

The second sex scene of the film has Jeff Stryker and another inmate both mopping the floor of the prison. The other inmate and Stryker make eye contact, as the man enters a utility room. He re-emerges and nods to Jeff Stryker to come in, motioning with a joint (marijuana) in hand for Stryker to enter the room. Stryker sitting on a garbage can and the other man standing begin to smoke the joint. The inmate gropes at Jeff Stryker's crotch. Stryker: "You like that, well that will cost you a carton of cigarettes." The inmate comments: "Well I hear the story is out, and it's a big one." Jeff Stryker replies: "Two cartons and it's yours." With Jeff Stryker still smoking the joint the other man goes down on his knees in front of him unbuttoning Stryker's jeans. As he prepares to perform fellatio, Jeff Stryker grabs the inmate by the back of the shirt, confirming he will receive two cartons of cigarettes for allowing the man to perform fellatio on him.

Jeff Stryker: "See you like that don't you. See it is the biggest one around." Throwing the joint away Stryker tells the inmate to: "Suck that cock." The camera angle has at this point framed Jeff Stryker, looking up at him from a lower

vantage point, capturing in the frame his mid section and upper body, shirt partially opened and pants still around his knees. The other man's upper chest and face are visible, with the close up framing him from the side performing fellatio of Jeff Stryker's penis. The inmate is still fully dressed. Jeff Stryker: "Yeah, you like that big cock, it's the biggest." The inmate is then given directions by Jeff Stryker to lick the sides of his penis and lick his scrotum. Jeff Stryker; "Work that cock." The inmate still on his knees pulls Stryker's jeans down past his knees.

From the same vantage point the camera continues to focus on the close up of the sex act going on. Intercut at times with a full view/angle revealing the entire body of Jeff Stryker from the knees up sitting on the garbage can. Stryker continues to talk almost incessantly - giving directions and orders mingled with references to how big his penis is. Jeff Stryker: "Take that cock in your mouth, all the way down", grabbing the back of the head of the inmate and pushing his penis into the man's mouth. The camera focusing up at Jeff Stryker reveals him removing his shirt. He tells the inmate to: "Take off my pants." At this point Jeff Stryker comments: "Get down on your back, I'm gonna fuck you in the mouth."

The inmate removes his shirt (he is still wearing jeans) and lies on his back on the floor. The camera from the side angle

reveals Jeff Stryker in a 'push up' position sliding his penis in and out of the man's mouth. "You like me fucking you in the mouth don't you" comments Stryker. The camera cuts between the side angle, shots of the other man masturbating (but only briefly) and overhead shots of Jeff Stryker's entire body, his back facing the viewer. Jeff Stryker: "You like that big cock in your mouth." Turning around and facing inwards in relation to the inmate's body, Jeff Stryker squats above the man. Lowering his buttock down onto the man's face Jeff Stryker commands the man to: "Lick that asshole.... stick that tongue in that ass." Jeff Stryker squatting above the other man is filmed from the front as he masturbates, the other man also masturbating himself while still licking Stryker's anus.

The camera is placed to give the illusion that the viewer is looking at Stryker through the other man's eyes, with the main character still masturbating above. Intercut close ups of Jeff Stryker's face, reveal an expression of 'concentration' accompanied by his moaning. The inmate ejaculates, then quickly the camera reveals Stryker again from the other man's vantage point. Jeff Stryker still squatting over the inmates face ejaculates, the camera showing the expression on his face and capturing his semen spilling onto the man's chest. Jeff Stryker then tells the man: "Get up and get against that can." (The garbage can) "Come on, get against that can."

Jeff Stryker pushes the man down against the garbage can with his (the inmate's) hands resting on the side of the can, facing downwards, his knees bent. Jeff Stryker: "Spread that ass. Open that asshole, I'll give you your two cartons worth" referring to the cartons of cigarettes promised to him earlier. The other man's face is framed as he is grimacing. The camera pulls back revealing Jeff Stryker pushing his penis in to the man's anus. Jeff Stryker says loudly: "Oh yeah, nice tight ass. You can take that big cock up your ass." The inmate whose face is pictured grimacing with 'discomfort' can be heard grunting in accompaniment to Jeff Stryker thrusting his penis into the man's anus. Jeff Stryker shouts at the inmate: "Take it like a man." Jeff Stryker after a few minutes of intercourse pulls his penis out of the man's anus removing the pants around the knees of the inmate and tells him to bend over the garbage can, which the man has been doing throughout this sequence.

The viewer sees from below Jeff Stryker's penis entering the inmate's anus, with Stryker's voice being heard, commanding the man to: "Loosen that ass and let me in." Jeff Stryker being filmed from a side angle, but slightly forward is exposed from the knees up. The other man throughout this sequence has only ever been seen from his shoulder down with the exception of short frames showing his face grimacing. Jeff Stryker: "You'd like me to ram that cock in that ass."



Inmate: "Yeah." Jeff Stryker while continuing to penetrate the other man has a look of 'concentration' and 'intensity' on his face as he continues to push his penis into the man's anus forcefully. Jeff Stryker slaps the man's buttocks hard with his hand a number of times. The contact of hand to flesh can be heard by the viewer. Jeff Stryker says loudly: "Talk to me, you like that big cock rammed in your ass." The inmates replies 'blandly': "Yeah." The camera continues to cut between close-ups of Jeff Stryker's penis entering the man's anus from overhead. The camera is fixed between three separate shots or angles capturing for the viewer a top down angle of Stryker penetrating the inmate, a side profile of Stryker, and occasionally Stryker from behind.

At this point Jeff Stryker is yelling at the man. "I like it tight" - "You like that cock" and "tighten that asshole." He tells the inmate: "I'm earning those fucking cigarettes" again followed by the command to: "Tighten that fucking ass." The other man's face, shot close up, reveals for the viewer that he appears to be in a significant amount of 'discomfort'. Jeff Stryker pulling his penis out of the man's anus lies on his back on the floor and instructs the man to sit on his penis. From Jeff Stryker's position the camera frames the man who straddling the main character is bouncing up and down on his penis. The inmate is commanded to sit all the way down on Jeff Stryker' penis amidst orders to: "Tighten his ass." The

camera is now positioned from overhead. Jeff Stryker comments: "Oh yeah, fuck it, fuck it. I want this cock all the way in that ass." The scene for the first time is interrupted/cut with the other man, now squatting on Jeff Stryker legs, the two men facing each other with both of them masturbating. The inmate ejaculates and the camera focuses again on Jeff Stryker who also ejaculates.

The two men quickly stand up and begin immediately to get dressed with Jeff Stryker commenting: "That ought to hold me for a while." He tells the other man that he can give him the cigarettes when he wants. Exchanging small chat as they dress the scene fades.

**Third Film: "Best of Joey Stefano"**

In the third film "Best of Joey Stefano" (1993, Metro Home Video/Rage Productions) a series of scenes from various films of the gay star are featured. There is no storyline or plot, rather a compilation of what is presumed to be the 'best work' over the gay actor's career. The second scene of the film is the first that involves Joey Stefano with another man.

The second scene opens with a close up of a man's hairless chest, tanned and glistening with oil/sweat? The camera pulls away slowly revealing Joey Stefano standing behind a man who is seated, Stefano massaging his shoulders. The set is lit

from above: the floor is illuminated while the background and edges of the frame are completely blacked out. The other man is sitting on a black oil can, dressed only in a pair of underwear with black short boots. With Joey Stefano still behind the man, the camera pulls back, without cutting from the scene as Stefano continues to rub the man's shoulders and arms from behind.

The scene fades out and reemerges, revealing Joey Stefano's hands massaging the man's chest in a close up. The torso of the man filling the frame as Stefano continues to massage his chest and abdomen. The lighting from above has the effect accentuating the lines and crevices (muscles) of each man's body through the use of shadow and illumination. The frames cut back and forth between close ups of the man's torso and full frontal shots of the two men, Stefano still behind and massaging the other man slowly. The scene cuts to a close up of Stefano's hand moving up and down the torso and neck (of the other man) revealing the man's face arching upwards into the light. The close up of the man's face continues, with Stefano's torso visible behind him. Up to this point no dialogue has been recorded for the viewer.

In the same frame, Joey Stefano arches his head forward and begins to kiss the neck of the man, licking his ear lobe and moving down his neck along his shoulder. The camera begins to

pull back, framing the other man in his entirety with Joey Stefano still kissing his shoulder from behind. The shot cuts again to an extreme close up of the man's torso, his tanned skin glistening with beads of water/perspiration rolling down his chest. The camera pulling back reveals Stefano still behind the other man, his hand massaging the other man's chest. Stefano hovering over the other man is sliding his hands up and down the man's chest with the camera panning down focusing on the other man's crotch/waist.

The camera angle from below captures the waistline of the other man wearing Calvin Klein underwear with Joey Stefano's hand from behind massaging his chest. The other man has remained stationary except for flexing his torso, the overhead lighting again capturing the curves and crevasses of his body. The scene then cuts to a side angle shot of the other man's legs and upper body, arms bracing the sides on the oil drum/can for support as he is slightly reclined. Stefano behind the man has only his upper torso, shoulders, and head visible in the scene. Stefano continues to kiss the neck of the other man, his actions (kissing) audible to the audience. The scene cuts and is replaced with a shot from below, the camera in between the man's legs with Stefano's hands and fingers 'raking' up the man's chest. The man arches his shoulders backwards and extends his chest in the same instance. The frame closes in on the other man's upper chest

with Stefano's hands still massaging his chest, he begins to squeeze the man's nipples.

The scene again cuts to a side angle shot, with Joey Stefano behind the man who is still sitting on the oil can, one leg outstretched, the other bent at the knee, arms bracing the sides of the drum. Joey Stefano still continues to massage the man's chest, kissing his neck. The camera cuts to a close up of the man's face, tilting his head back, the light illuminating his face. The camera panning down the body of the man frames his arm from the side, his muscles flexing in the shot as he continues to hold the side of the oil drum. In the same scene, Joey Stefano squats down in front of the man on his (the man's) left side and begins to kiss and suck his nipple. With Stefano licking the man's nipple, the camera pulls back revealing the man's chest, Stefano's head below his shoulder. The man continues to tilt his head backwards into the light from above, swaying his head and neck from side to side as Joey Stefano continues to massage the man's chest with his hands.

Joey Stefano standing up, lifts the arm of the man into the air above his head and in the process begins licking the man's inseam of his arm. Squatting down again, Stefano begins to lick the man's arm pit with his tongue protruding from his mouth. The camera closes in on a close up of the Joey Stefano

licking the man's arm pit. The camera cutting to an overhead, side angle shot frames in a close up the face of the man, once again his head tilted back into the light, eyes closed with the shot capturing Stefano's face below looking up at the man. The scene cuts to a close up of the nose, mouth, and chin of the man sitting on the oil drum, his tongue running across his lips as he says: "Oh yeah" - slowly and drawn out. The scene then cuts, revealing Stefano from below, the camera positioned at ground level, licking the man's nipple.

Pulling back slowly, the camera frames Joey Stefano and the man, Stefano's hands lowering down the man's chest as he begins to rub the man's crotch. An extreme close up of the man's face intercuts the scene, his head arching back, eyes closed. Cutting back, Stefano is now in front of the man in between his legs squatting down, rubbing his face into the man's crotch and biting at his penis through his underwear. Joey Stefano kissing and licking the inner thighs of the man descends down his leg and disappears out of the frame/shot. The scene cuts back to Stefano, licking and kissing the man's penis through his underwear, the man's hand resting on the back of Stefano's head. Grabbing the man's erect penis and pulling it out the side of his underwear, Stefano takes the man's penis, holding it with his hand at the base and begins to lick it up and down, his tongue extended.

With the man's chest and waist in the centre of the frame, Stefano begins to perform fellatio, still squatting between his legs. Joey Stefano moves his mouth up and down the man's penis. The scene cuts to a close up of the man's face and shoulders, head arched back illuminated by the lighting, his eyes closed. The camera cuts to a long shot of the two men, positioned in front revealing Stefano still squatting between the man's legs performing fellatio. A close up of the man's chest and head captures him breathing more heavily. The camera, now positioned below Joey Stefano, in between the legs of the man captures Stefano's head bobbing up and down, the man's penis entering in and out of his mouth - but never completely out. From above, the camera frame now discloses the man's upper body, slightly reclined, his hand on the back of Stefano's head who continues to perform fellatio. A close up of the man's face captures him breathing heavily, sighing, he can be heard saying: "Oh yeah."

The camera from above pans down to Joey Stefano, both hands on the man's thighs as he continues to suck on his penis, his hands running up the man's legs, massaging his chest. The scene then fades to black and reemerges, both men now naked except for the same shoes they are both wearing. The man is still sitting on top of the oil drum with Stefano now on his knees on the floor. While kneeling performing fellatio, the scene cuts to a close up of Stefano's entire body, now

masturbating himself. The camera panning up, stops in a position above the man's shoulders, Stefano, looking into the camera and at the audience. The scene then cuts again, to a long shot on the two men in their entirety. The camera again cuts from the scene to a close up of one of the men's buttocks. The camera pulling back reveals for the audience the man (facing away from the camera) squatting above Joey Stefano who is lying on his back (head closest to the camera) with his hands grasping the man's legs above. Joey Stefano begins to lick the man's anus with his tongue. In an extreme closeup, frame by frame the camera pulls towards the man's anus until it is centre in the screen. The scene cuts to the man's face and upper body, looking up at him, his eyes closed, he is smiling. Cutting back to the man's buttocks Stefano continues to lick the man's anus, the shot capturing the two men's bodies from the side.

From this scene the frame cuts to the man penetrating Joey Stefano who is on his hands and knees of a raised platform, off the ground. With the man thrusting his penis into Joey Stefano, the camera cuts to a shot from below and in between the man's legs revealing his penis sliding back and forth in Stefano's anus. Joey Stefano can be heard by the audience 'grunting' as the man continues to penetrate him. From above the camera looks down on the man, holding around the waist of Joey Stefano with his hands as he continues to penetrate him



forcefully. Joey Stefano continues to 'grunt' and 'groan' in accompaniment to the man's penis penetrating his anus. From behind, looking up between the man's legs the camera frames a closeup of the anal penetration. Joey Stefano can be heard: "Oh...Oh.." in unison with the man's thrusts. An extreme close up of the man's face captures him 'snarling', with a look of 'concentration/intensity'. The shot then cuts to a close up of Joey Stefano's face grimacing as the man continues to penetrate him. The scene cuts revealing from in front the man's waist and upper body visible (only Stefano's back and buttocks are visible) - his body slamming into Stefano's buttocks forcefully enough for the contact to be heard by the audience.

The scene then cuts to Stefano squatting on his knees between the man's legs while he performs fellatio, rubbing the man's scrotum with one of his hands. The man's body is trembling as Joey Stefano continues to perform fellatio rapidly. In a tight shot of the man's body - chest to his knees, with Stefano's upper body in the frame the man ejaculates. The camera closing in on Stefano's face with the man's penis directly in front of him shows semen landing on Stefano's face, around his mouth and chin. With the man just finished ejaculating, Joey Stefano sucks on his penis again, putting it in and out of his mouth. Joey Stefano, his eyes closed and a looking 'exhausted' continues to stroke the man's

penis, putting it in his mouth twice more, then rubbing it (the man's penis) in his face, smearing the semen around his mouth and chin. The camera focuses in on a close up of Stefano's face as he continues to masturbate the man's penis with his hand while he licks his abdomen.

The camera panning upwards from Stefano's face focuses on the other man, who standing above Stefano, is looking down at him, closing his eyes as he tilts his head back into the light from above. The camera then cuts back to Joey Stefano who, leaning back but still squatting, is breathing heavily and moaning. The camera focuses on a closeup of Stefano's torso, waist, and upper thighs in the frame as he masturbates himself, ejaculating with semen landing on his legs and chest. After Joey Stefano finishes ejaculating, looking completely exhausted, the scene fades to black.

#### **Fourth Film: "Body Search"**

The fourth film, "Body Search" (1992, His Video) is directed by Chi Chi LaRue, a gay director of gay male pornography. The film begins with the year 1967 in white against a black background, fading out and reemerging with a lava lamp in the centre of the screen with 1960's music playing on the soundtrack. The camera pulling away from the lava lamp pans to walls decorated with flower cut outs in orange and red, the window in the background covered with tie dyed material. The

camera panning down reveals two men on a bed, one naked and one wearing paisley motif pants (he has very noticeable thick fake looking sideburns - presumably not his own). The two men are kissing while lying on the bed, with the man with the paisley pants and sideburns (Mr. X) stoking the naked man's penis.

The scene cuts to a close up of Mr. X performing fellatio on the other man who can be heard moaning: "Oh yeah.. aah, yeah." Mr. X begins to kiss up the chest of the other man towards his face where the two continue to kiss (tongues visible) as he then moves back down the man's neck and chest to continue with fellatio. Mr. X is resting his head on the torso of the other man, blocking his face from the camera positioned level with the bed. Cutting from this scene the frame reemerges with a peace symbol full in the screen. The camera, panning down from the peace symbol on the wall, shows the window with tie dyed curtain, pulling back in the process to reveal Mr. X, in the same position performing fellatio with the other man being heard in the background moaning: "Oh yeah." The camera cuts twice from the scene to close ups of the other man's upper body and face.

Mr. X still performing fellatio, removes the other man's penis from his mouth and begins to kiss his lower abdomen, moving up his chest, kissing the other man's body until he

reaches his mouth and they continue to kiss. The camera pulls in for an extreme close up of the two men kissing. The scene then cuts back to the camera at the foot of the bed capturing Mr. X masturbating the other man as they continue to kiss. Both men simultaneously turn their heads, looking down their bodies, lying side by side as Mr. X strokes the other man's penis with his hand. A close up of the two men's shoulders and heads captures then kissing, the other man running his fingers through Mr. X's hair. The camera pulling back frames the two men from the knees up lying on the bed kissing with Mr. X moving down the chest of the other man kissing his body while the other man raises his hands over his head. Mr. X begins to run his mouth and tongue up and down the shaft of the man's penis.

The camera cuts to a close up of the other man's legs spread open, torso still reclined on the bed as Mr. X continues to kiss his chest moving up towards his neck and head as the camera pans up and zooms in on the tie dyed curtain over the window, focusing upon a flower cut out at the top corner of the window. The frame then becomes blurred and fades out. The scene then cuts back to the other man standing on the bed while Mr. X positioned in front on him is licking his scrotum while kneeling. The other man can be heard saying: "Oh yeah, yeah." The frame then cuts back to reveal the other man's lower torso and waist from a side angle, his hands on the back

of Mr. X's head who continues to perform fellatio. Mr. X, holding the man's penis at the base in his left hand moves his mouth back and forth over the end of the man's penis. The camera pans up to the other man's face, then back down to reveal Mr. X masturbating himself with his right hand while he continues lick and suck the other man's scrotum. The other man can be heard by the audience again: "Oh yeah... oh god."

The scene cuts with the camera positioned near the floor, capturing from in front the two men, the torso and head of the other man standing on the bed with only the back of Mr. X' head and shoulders visible in the frame as he continues to perform fellatio. The other man can be heard saying: "Oh shit, oh yeah" and "Oh man." The camera changes position and from a side angle focuses on an upwards angle shot of Mr. X holding the testicles of the other man with one of his hands while he continues to slide his mouth back and forth over the other man's penis. From behind, the camera cuts to a shot that frames from below the buttocks and scrotum of the other man with Mr. X's head in the shot performing fellatio. The shot fades out and is replaced with the other man now performing fellatio on Mr. X who is lying on the bed, arms at his side. The other man is to his side, kneeling over Mr. X as he takes his penis in and out of his mouth. Mr. X can be heard moaning in the background. Mr. X: "Oh yeah... Mmmm...yeah oh yeah." The camera continues to pull back from

the two men towards the foot of the bed, capturing their entire bodies in the frame. The other man while giving head begins to run his hands up Mr. X's chest, fondling both his nipples. The other man, moving his one hand back to Mr. X's penis, holding it at the base continues to lick and suck on the head of his penis.

The scene cuts, the camera now positioned at Mr. X's shoulders, framing his chest and the other man's head as he is still continuing to perform fellatio. Mr X: "That feels good, oh yeah that's good." This scene is replaced with a close up of one man anally penetrating the other; the identity of who is who is not yet revealed to the audience. The man doing the penetrating is wearing a condom. The camera pulling back captures the other man penetrating Mr. X, both men lying on their sides on the bed with the other man behind Mr. X. The leg of Mr. X not against the bed is bent up towards his chest while the other man still on his side thrusts his penis in and out of his anus. Mr. X: "Oh yeah that feels good." The other man: "Oh yeah" as he continues to groan. The scene is then interrupted, with a close up of the two men kissing in the frame. As the camera pulls back towards the end on the bed for a full shot, it reveals for the viewer Mr. X lying on his back, his legs bent over onto the bed as the other man continues to anally penetrate him.

The shot now flashes to the other man, kneeling on the bed with Mr. X, legs raised into his chest and lying on his back exposing his buttocks as the other man slides his penis in and out of his anus. Mr. X: "Oh yeah, fuck me." The scene cuts to the other man's face who now has a look of 'intensity' and then pans down his chest to a close up of his penis thrusting into Mr. X's anus. The camera continues along in a fluid motion travelling in a close up along Mr. X's body and up to his face capturing his expression and his moaning. Mr. X: "Oh yeah, fuck me. That's it." The two men in the frame are captured in their entirety, with the other man penetrating Mr. X rapidly. Within the same frame, Mr. X rolls over onto his hands and knees on the bed as the other man kneeling behind reinserts his penis into his anus. The other man's hands resting on the buttocks of Mr. X continues to penetrate him. The camera now positioned below and from behind the other man frames a close up of his penis penetrating Mr. X's anus.

From in front of Mr. X the camera pans up revealing his face and the upper body and face of the other man who from behind is still thrusting his penis into Mr. X. Both men can be heard groaning and moaning, with their grunts and moans becoming louder. The camera pans upwards, leaving the bodies of the two men focusing on a flower cut out on the wall, the scene fades out in a blur. The two mens breathing and groans can be heard in the background. The scene reemerges with the

two men lying side by side on their backs on the bed. The camera zooms in on a close up of the mens faces, with Mr. X's face contorting as he has an orgasm (though the actual act of ejaculation is never shown to the audience). In the same shot the other man moans: "Oh yeah, fuck yeah." The camera cuts to a side angle of the two men's midsection and faces as Mr. X continues to masturbate himself slowly, semen now visible on and around his penis.

From the bottom of the bed the camera frames Mr. X kissing the other man as he continues (the other man) to masturbate himself. Mr. X propping himself up with his elbow, turns and looks down at the other man's penis. Mr. X: "I want to see you come." The other man moaning and groaning shouts:; "Oh yeah, oh yeah" as he ejaculates. Mr. X stroking the other man's chest with his hand then hold the man's face in his hand and begins to kiss him. The two men continue to kiss, tongues visible as Mr. X then lies his head on the other man's chest. The other man wraps his one arm around Mr. X's neck. The scene then cuts to the two men lying beside each other in the bed, Mr. X's head resting on the shoulder of the other man who has his arm under Mr. X resting his hand on his shoulder, holding him. In this position the two men begin the following conversation.



Other man: "You know, I don't ever think I've been as happy as I am right now." Mr X: "Really?" Other man: "Really. Before you came along I always thought I'd be alone." Mr. X: "I'm glad your so happy." Other man: "You know, one day people like us are going to be able to express how we feel about each other out in the open. Just like ordinary people." Mr. X: "Ya right." Other man: "You don't believe me. Some day somebody out there is gonna come down on a fag once too often and we're all going to riot just like the blacks are doing right now." Mr. X: "I was going to tell you... I might as well come straight out with it. We're going to have to break it off." Other man: "Oh, I see. You mind if I ask why?" Mr. X: "You know why." Other man: "Well spell it out for me again." Mr. X: "It's the bureau, you know I want to be a federal agent, it's what I always wanted. You know they don't allow faggots in the bureau." Other man: "Ha, no of course not." Mr X: "Look, I've been lucky so far but if someone's gonna find out, you know a relationship like ours can't be in the real world." Other man: "So what are you going to do, find some girl out there and have a brood of kids just to cover the fact that you're queer." Mr. X: "You know I don't like that word." Other man: "Queer, faggot, fairy, homosexual what does it matter what word we use. It's what you are dammit, it's what we both are and marrying a girl and having a brood of kids and, and, and fathering kids isn't going to cover up anything." Mr. X is now propped up on his

elbow facing the other man who is still lying on the bed on his back. Mr. X: "Your making more of this than it is." Pointing his finger at Mr. X the other man says: "And don't you make less of it than it is." Mr. X: "Come on you'll get over it." Getting up from the bed Mr. X exits the scene. Other man: "No I won't. Don't you walk out on me." Sitting up in the bed and pointing his finger towards the direction in which Mr. X has exited the frame the other man continues to speak. Other man: "Simon, if you walk out on me I'll make you pay." The scene ends and is replaced with a view of a city skyline at night, the date 1992 emerging in white in the frame.

## Chapter Seven

### Discussion and Analysis; Homosexual Acts - Heterosexual Order?:

Three of the films examined, "Idol Thoughts", "Powertool", and "Best of Joey Stefano" clearly display a more closed sexual hierarchy that delineates between those who have both sexual and physical power against those who have none, namely those who do the penetrating and those who get penetrated. The above mentioned films are structured in terms of the hierarchy of male power which is "milked for its evocation of dominance and submission" (Fung, 152:1991). While the exception was the scene from "Body Search", the films in their entirety (inclusive of the remaining scenes from the film "Body Search") depict an 'either or' scenario. You are either a top or a bottom, with the representation of these roles often polarized between those who are doing the penetrating being physically larger and more muscular (more 'straight acting and looking') and better equipped sexually - larger in comparison to the bottom man. All the films reinforce the images of men and male beauty as being white men and white male beauty (Fung, 149:1991).

What is clearly being represented in the first three films ("Idol Thoughts", "Powertool" and "Best of Joey Stefano") is a sexual hierarchy that contrasts the positions between those

who are dominant and those who are subordinate. In the scene from "Body Search" directed by Chi Chi La Rue, however, there is a portrayal of a sexual dynamic that is based on a narrative that more closely encompasses equality, affection, and tenderness between the actors. It is the exception in comparison to the other scenes that were examined. The following discussion will present an examination of the units of analysis chosen for the interpretation of dominant sociosexual themes/dynamics inherent in much of gay pornography and as previously argued, employed by the audience as a means of acquiring meaning from the text itself.

**Spatial - Physical Relationship:**

In the scene from the film "Idol Thoughts" the spatial - physical relationship between Ryon Idol and the other actor is polarized to the extreme. Ryon Idol is always positioned above the other actor maintaining the role of the active partner in contrast to the other man who is the subordinate. The audience views the two actors according to these sexual roles and is forced to partake in the construction of meaning(s) that disseminate from the differentiation between dominant verses subordinate. The scene presents and reinforces the non interchangeability of sex roles which closes off for the audience any plural conception of gay desire. The dominant man, Ryon Idol is contrasted against the subordinate man who, while sexually satisfying the film's

star, takes on a secondary role that is static and determined in contrast to his relationship to Ryon Idol.

Similarly in the scene from "Powertool" starring Jeff Stryker, he too maintains the role of the active partner who is serviced sexually by the other actor. Jeff Stryker is always positioned above the other actor and performs the role of the active partner. Like Ryon Idol, Jeff Stryker does not reciprocate in the sexual acts. He is the dominant, active partner in relation to the other actor who is his subordinate. In the one instance where he is prone, lying on his back on the floor - offsetting his superior role of power - any identification with him assuming a receptive, subordinate position is compensated through his total control of the situation as evidenced by his partner's compliance with his directions/commands.

The third film starring Joey Stefano, "Best of Joey Stefano" also polarizes between the sexual roles and the positions the actors maintain as being mutually exclusive. Joey Stefano performs the subordinate role in contrast to the other man. Stefano is constantly viewed by the audience behind the other actor as he rubs and kisses the man's body, massaging his neck and arms. In performing fellatio on the other actor, Joey Stefano is always positioned below the other man. The sexual roles between those performing the sex acts and being

penetrated is differentiated against those who are sexually serviced by their subordinates. In the case of the scene from "Best of Joey Stefano", the star (Joey Stefano) is always referenced by the camera constantly revealing his position in relation to the other actor who remains stationary and at times motionless. The sexual roles in this scene also remain closed and non-interchangeable.

The final film directed by Chi Chi LaRue, "Body Search" presents a very different sexual dynamic in relation to the sexual positions the actors maintain. It presents to the viewer a more plural conception of gay desire as related to the interchangeability of the sexual roles the actors perform. While only one of the men is penetrated anally, the scene leading up to this point reveals the actors each taking turns in relation to the sexual roles they perform. The audience partakes in a more open and fluid display of gay desire as related to the actors and the various roles they perform; reciprocating and mutually satisfying each other. For the audience the distinction between dominant and subordinate is blurred as referenced against the other three films which partake in a more closed sex role dynamic.

### Dialogue in the Texts:

The dialogue between Ryon Idol and the other actor in "Idol Thoughts" is constituted around issues of power and control. Consensual sex is left out of the picture as orders and demands are placed on the receptive partner according to what Ryon Idol wants done and how he needs to be satisfied. The audience is left to decipher from the dialogue orders, directions, and commands that represent power over the other. Again the dynamics of power and the distinction between active and passive subjects is clearly demarcated according to the dialogue between the actors. Ryon Idol is then viewed as in charge, which in turn closes off for the audience the perception of equality or the experience of mutual satisfaction between the two men.

The film starring Jeff Stryker employs the same dynamics in terms of the dialogue in the scene examined. Jeff Stryker, like Ryon Idol profits sexually from his inherent power to command and be obeyed with little negotiation or consensual engagement. For Jeff Stryker, maintaining the active sexual role is reinforced through the dialogue in the scene. The other actor rarely speaks and responds only when spoken to by the leading man. Clearly the non-consensual dialogue positions Jeff Stryker within the realm of the dominant sexual partner, the audience identifying with his position of authority and power over the other.

The third film, "Best of Joey Stefano" is almost void of dialogue, only the occasional grunting and groaning of the two men is audible to the audience. In the few instances of recorded dialogue, it is in relation to the other actor's expression of pleasure during the sexual acts. However, the lack of dialogue that is supportive of either a more closed or open interpretation of the sexual dynamics on screen should not be overlooked. The scene is still very much structured around themes of dominant versus subordinate roles. In this case, actions speak louder than words in the positioning of the actors into very decipherable and particular roles. Joey Stefano while maintaining the active sexual role in contrast to the other man who remains stationary for the majority of the scene is, as mentioned previously, always positioned lower or behind the other man and is over shadowed by the other actor who is the central focus of the scene/sex taking place. Even without dialogue, the spatial relationship of the two actors, their actions, and the focus of the camera contrasts and differentiates between their roles in this scene: Stefano is viewed in the subordinate role.

The final film "Body Search" is in contrast to the preceding films. While the dialogue between the actors engaged in sex is minimal, it increases at the end of the scene, providing the audience with essential information in order to understand the remainder of the film and the events that take place. In



the instances where there is dialogue between the two actors, it is sharply contrasted against the first two scenes with Ryon Idol and Jeff Stryker. The dialogue is consensual, unlike that contained in the first two films which privileges directions, orders, and commands by the lead actor to their partners. Elements of power and the differentiation between dominant and subordinate roles is reduced (eradicated) in conjunction with dialogue that in specific instances maintains a proactive stance by the receptive partner. In asking the other actor to "fuck me" and encouraging him to continue, the position of power implied in the act of penetration is reduced. Both actors are equally returned to one after the other in relation to their audible moans and groans. The spatial - physical relationship between the two men and their interchanging sexual roles, as well as the dialogue between the actors reinforces, for the audience the perception of equality between the two men.

**Narrative of the Films:**

The narrative of the film "Idol Thoughts" is clearly hinged on the central character of Ryon Idol and preserves the role of power and masculinity as paramount. The camera frames and privileges the position of Ryon Idol in contrast to the other actor and reveals for the viewer not only his central role in the scene (film) but his position of power and authority in relation to the spatial relationship between the two actors

and associated dialogue. Ryon Idol is returned to time after time by the camera, framing him and reinforcing for the audience his central role in the film. In comparison, the other actor's role in the scene is minimal. The viewing audience must employ elements of dominant sociosexual ideology in order to acquire meaning from the text. The text in turn reinforces dominant sociosexual ideology by identifying the dominant actor, Ryon Idol, within the confines of the more masculine role. The other actor is by default his subordinate - thus acquiring the feminized status of the true homosexual in contrast to his masculine counterpart.

The second film "Powertool" starring Jeff Stryker is structured around the same themes as the first film. The viewer is engaged by the star and his role as top man, the receptive partner is but a sexual tool for him to get off and therefore is not focused upon with the same degree of intensity nor frequency of presentation in the visual image. The narrative of the scene is centred upon the power and dominant status of Jeff Stryker in relation to the other actor who is his subordinate. The audience partakes in the construction of this relationship which is built upon power dynamics that differentiate between those with physical power and those without: the former being the more masculine and thus rewarded sexually. Jeff Stryker performs in such a role and thus is engaged by the audience in relation to the text

(narrative) that requires identifying with his position of control and power against the other man. The camera focus on Jeff Stryker references the entire scene around him; the other actor is constantly framed in relation to the leading man. The narrative only allows for a one way relationship to take place: it privileges the role of Jeff Stryker at the expense of the other actor.

The third film "Best of Joey Stefano" portrays the star Joey Stefano in the subordinate role in contrast to the other actor. The dynamics at play in the text and the narrative of the film contrast his position against that of the other actor. The other man is portrayed as the central focus of the camera and is returned to in most of the frames as a point of reference from which to reveal Joey Stefano's position - in relation to him. Stefano's gay identity is off set by the other actor who is serviced sexually with no negotiation or dialogue. While the viewer is engaged by sex that is seemingly anonymous, the audience is persuaded to identify the dominant role with the other actor. This is accomplished by the camera which continually frames, illuminates, and focuses upon the other actor. Joey Stefano is always captured behind or below the other man and the sexual acts are not reciprocated. While Stefano is the active partner he is also continually servicing the other man sexually, his position implying his subordinate status. In comparison, the other

actor is also larger and more muscular (thus presumably more masculine) than Stefano, adding to his position of dominance in relation to the narrative of the scene. The film insists on focusing upon the other actor, his superior position is eroticized through the use of the power he is afforded by the narrative of the film/scene. As a consequence, the audience is less likely to identify with Joey Stefano and the potential satisfaction of the sexual acts he is performing.

The fourth scene from the film "Body Search" is distinctly different from the preceding scenes. The scene portrays two men engaged in sex and offers for the audience a sexual dynamic centred upon equality. The camera frames and captures each man equally and does not fixate on one of the actors over the other. The narrative of the scene exemplifies sentiments of love and tenderness between the two men which is reinforced for the audience by the use of sixties paraphernalia (peace signs and flowers on the wall) identifying with a time where peace, unity and 'brotherly love' were supposedly the calling cards of the day. The structure of the text and the narrative presents the audience with a scenario that is purposefully structured around themes of affection and tenderness between the actors. It must be noted that while this scene from "Body Search" is structured around fundamentally different themes from the previously mentioned films, the remaining sequences of the film partake in similar dynamics as the first three

films. For the remainder of "Body Search" the audience views a number of sexual scenarios which centre upon the same power dynamics as the first three scenes.

**Discussion:**

In acquiring meaning from the text, the audience in relation to the first three films is more likely to rely on the employment of dominant ideology in the construction of masculine/feminine (dominant verse subordinate) sex roles for the scenes to have meaning. The first three films harness as erotic the distinctions between and hierarchy of the sexual roles and delineates between those who have both sexual and physical power against those who have none: namely those who fuck and those who get fucked. In the first three scenes the men who are being penetrated confirm for the audience the size of the penis of the active or dominant character both verbally and nonverbally through the pained expressions on their faces. In our culture, power and sexual power are fixated on issues of genital size for men: sexual apparatus being an indicator of manliness and masculinity. In the two films starring Jeff Stryker and Ryon Idol, the several references to the size of their genitalia reflects such cultural ideals.

When being anally penetrated the receptive partner is smeared with a type of subordination that for the narrative of the first three films is never sexualized from their (the

receptive partner's) position. The audience is only encouraged to identify with the dominant actors' position. This is reinforced by the camera which continually frames and references the sexual acts from their (the dominate partner's) position. In the first three films there is no confirmation of anal sex being a sexual and erotic (stimulating and desirable) act: only confirmation of the active partner's power, penis size, and his ability to inflict pain. What is sexualized in such instances is not mutuality or pleasure, but male power.

The exception was contained in the scene from the film "Body Search" directed by Chi Chi LaRue. The noticeable difference in this scene was that the narrative of the text was structured around equality between the two actors which was reinforced by their changing sexual roles and the avoidance of privileging one of the actors position over the other. The camera framed and captured both actors from the same vantage point or in instances where one partner was performing sexual acts on the other man the scene would either cut or re-emerge with the two men side by side on the bed, thus displacing the audiences ability to identify either actor in a dominant role.

The remainder of the scenes from "Body Search" do, however, present similar sexual dynamics to those involved in the first three films. The audience is presented with scenarios

involving the kidnapping of a gay character by members of a criminal organization and his forceful confinement (leading to sex) as well as a police officer who forces a male prostitute into sex by way of threat of arrest. Thus the same sexual dynamics employed in the first three scenes - elements of male power and masculinity as a means of eroticizing the sexual scenario - are also present in the remainder of the sequences from the film "Body Search".

The camera angles and sexual positions of the first three scenes also privilege a top - down dimension whereby one of the actors maintains his superior status in the physical acts by constantly being positioned (and viewed) above the other actors. In the scenes from "Idol Thoughts", "Powertool", and "Best of Joey Stefano", the dominant characters are never prone or pictured below their subordinates. Thus they are never portrayed in a lack of control or submissive posture. In the one instance where the dominant character is lying with his back on the floor, his authority is maintained through the directions and orders he places on the other actor. Prone is both a receptive and presumed inactive sexual position, the way women and gay men are envisioned as having sex and performing their sexual role. Real men, namely heterosexual men, are rarely perceived or depicted sexually as maintaining any position other than an active one. Such cultural norms are reinforced in the first three film sequences/scenes.

Consensual sex is also left out of the picture as orders and demands are placed of the receptive partner in specific reference to the films starring Ryon Idol and Jeff Stryker. In these instances engaging in anal sex or fellatio is never a proposition but a command issued to the other actors. To be receptive sexually, and thus subordinate, implies a feminine quality that by default omits a say in matters concerning sex since there is culturally little power implied in the female/homosexual role, both sexually and non-sexually. This demarcation is further heightened in the first three films by the structuring of the text which polarizes and differentiates between the actors, according to the units and analysis examined. The audience in turn is engaged by the text in terms of these differences which highlight and play into dominant sociosexual dynamics and ideology.

The close up shots, which display in full view the sex taking place and the various bodily parts, also reinforce the way sex is constructed culturally. This is the case in all the scenes examined. Sex is seen in bits and pieces, as parts that enter and exit in anticipation of the orgasm and ejaculation. Sexual socialization has placed an emphasis on the individual's genitalia as somehow being both separate and disassociated with the person in their entirety. Penises, anuses, vaginas, and breast are body parts, not part of the body in the conception of humans as sexual beings. The



extreme close ups of the bodily parts as central to the sexual act as a whole only confirms and plays to our learned inability to see clearly the whole picture. It also reinforces the social conception of sex being understood through a medicalized/institutionalized scientific approach, where sexuality has been brought to life through sex scientific classification (Kinsman, 219:1987). In the first three films the sex is never a fluid complimentary act of mutual pleasure, instead the sex is highly focused on genitalia and various orifices.

While the viewer in the first three scenes may have confirmed for them the receptive partner's orgasm, the film insists on the audience contrasting this in identifying and exposing the active partner's climax and orgasm as central and of greater importance. The fluidity and movement of the scenes/films narrative frames the audience's ability to identify with those who possess real power and their ejaculating penis rather than around those who have been penetrated. The receptive partner in the first three films falls to the way side as the negotiation of the text enforces an outcome which supports the importance of the sexual gratification on the active/dominant subject. At times in the films "Idol Thoughts", "Powertool", and "Best of Joey Stefano" the possibility that anal penetration might be pleasurable is entertained, however, this is shattered by the power and force

of the penis that can render pain and discomfort to the subordinate actor. Again, the exception was the scene from the film "Body Search" which does not employ the power dynamics used in the preceding films.

In acquiring meaning from the text, the audience for the most part is encouraged to accept the defined and structured roles which are adhered to closely: that of top or bottom, anal sex as punishment and thus subordination (the homosexual role) with love, romance, and caring being devoid in three of the four scenes examined - and for the most part the majority of images in gay pornography. As Richard Dyer suggests;

although at the level of public representation gay men may be thought of as deviant and disruptive of masculine norms because we assert the pleasure of being fucked and the eroticism of the anus, in our pornography this takes a back seat (28:1985).

Jeff Stryker and Ryon Idol need to be seen as heterosexual or as existing as close to heterosexuality as possible in order that prevailing sexual scripts provide the audience with a sexual performer with which to relate. The viewer must be able to place emphasis on the importance of the male orgasm as a pivotal feature to sexual intercourse being fulfilled by the real thing, a straight man or someone embodying the personification of this role. The homosexual role permits only an understanding of cultural scripts that read an appropriate sexual response being one that maintains a

distinction between the active heterosexual role and the subordinate and receptive female/homosexual opposite.

Joey Stefano in the scene from "Best of Joey Stefano" performs in the homosexual role and is differentiated against in relation to the other actor by the audience. He performs in the opposite role from both Jeff Stryker and Ryon Idol but clearly within the same structures that depend on the audience recognising his homosexual identity is paired against its masculine counterpart for the sex to be interpreted and identified as erotic. This is not to insist that the sexual dynamics presented in the scene from the film "Body Search" are not perceived as erotic and stimulating by the potential audience. This particular scene forwards a rendition of gay desire that is different from the majority of gay male pornography, different from the three other scenes examined in this project. What is presented is a rendition of gay desire that supports tenderness and mutuality yet in the remainder of the films sequences a sexual dynamics similar to the first three films is employed as a means of charging the sex with roles of power and submission as the erotic element.

For the audience the scene form "Body Search" can be applied locally to take account of the viewers own social position (Fiske, 298:1992). However, in acquiring meaning from the preceding scenes the viewer must situate themselves within the

dominant ideology in order that the images in question be interpreted as erotic and acquire meaning through the inflection of dominant ideology that runs throughout the visual texts. Such a negotiated reading of the media allows for a more localized interpretation of the dominant ideology and the subjectivity it produces, accounting for the possibility of 'struggle' with the text while in the same instance remaining attentive to the circulation of dominant ideology within the images in question.

Sex, like class, race, and gender is culturally not constructed on issues of sameness and likeness but on a dominant versus subordinate continuum. The sexual thrill and charge rendered in Ryon Idol and Jeff Stryker fucking and being sucked is heightened by the viewer's ability to believe and witness someone with real power is fulfilling and performing within the appropriate sexual role in a sociocultural sense. The same is true in the sequence with Joey Stefano who while sexually servicing his more masculine partner is identified within his appropriate homosexual role. In the first three scenes the larger physical size of the actors performing in the dominant role also heightens the perception of difference between the two men. In the final scene from the film "Body Search", the physical difference between the two actors is minimal, thus reducing the ability

of the audience to identify around the differences between the two men.

The social and personal experience of viewing gay pornography and the interaction between subject and text is reinforced through identification with reading the dominant sexual dynamics in the visual images. What this says about the sex gay men are viewing and perhaps partaking in is less about gay sex and more precisely about the kind of sex and sexual behaviour that has been forged and structured culturally. In harnessing the power of masculinity and maleness which is held in check within the realm of heterosexuality and patriarchal relations, gay desire is constructed in the visual within distinct structures of culturally learned and appropriate behaviours and roles. In harnessing the fantasy (reality?) of gay pornography, gay men may also be appropriating and thus expropriating very much the same ideals of dominant gender relations within society that include the manner sexuality and sex is understood and played out. The question that remains unanswered, but is in need of further examination, involves whether such sexual dynamics (those entertaining a dominance verses subordinate construction of sexuality) are in fact played out within sexual relationships involving real gay men, not actors on a set.

### Conclusion:

David Island and Patrick Letellier suggest that gay male domestic violence is the third largest health issue affecting gay men in North America (1991). This may also suggest that the roles gay men maintain within domestic relationships are very much the same roles heterosexual men maintain within their own domestic relationships; gay pornography being one of the sites in which such cultural scripts are acted out and displayed. Cultural scripts that insist upon "male equals masculine, equals dominant, while non-masculine equals feminized, equals subordinate" (Kendall, 47:1993).

For the audience this hold true in the reading/negotiation of the text and the interpretation of dominant sexual dynamics/ideology presented to the viewer. As Richard Dyer suggests, the structure of the gay porno text is returned to consistently because of its success at selling this cultural product (1993). More importantly the success of the text lies in its ability to offer the audience a sexual dynamic that in most instances is structured around the sexualization of power dynamics which are at play within the cultural arena, thus understood and easily interpreted. The success of the gay adult pornography business is centred upon texts that allow for the recognition of dominant sociosexual dynamics as experienced collectively and provide for a straightforward

reading of the dominant ideology in the text that offers few distractions.

The pluralism of body type, ethnicity and range of masculine imagery prevalent in the seventies and early eighties within the gay community has been replaced with more specific body types and costumes/wardrobe that delineates between masculine and dominant versus passive and receptive. Thus, male homosexuality may also have more to do with compensating for a history of its feminization and deviancy in acting upon dominant sociosexual dynamics entrenched in cultural hegemony, placing itself within an ideological framework and norms that alleviate or appear to do so, the social stigma of a homosexual identity, gay sex, and desire in adhering to dominant sociosexual scripts/ideology. The past explosion of sexual pluralisms in the gay subculture has been toned down. The public facade in the gay community presents an idealized version of masculinity, youth, and beauty that on the surface represents resistance towards the public perception of homosexual stereotypes. It also renders in the same instance pervasive ideals that construct codes of masculinity as the most desirable, and in embracing such ideals contrasts a passive sex role, the bottom as being both less desirable and often contested (Pela:1995). The images of the pornography examined reflect this scenario.

Gay sex and sexuality partake in a system of sexual hierarchy that has disseminated from changing cultural conceptions of citizenship which as argued can be traced historically in relation to the changing conceptions of gender roles, the reformulation of family structure, and the institutionalization of sex and sexual identity within industrial society. Gay pornography confirms these sexualized ideals and participates in the construction of images of male power and dominance as being requirements that spark in the viewer culturally learned elements that make the sex both sexy and rewarding. Objectifying the actors as sexual objects requires constant recognition of the inherent sexual dynamics of our culture in which all individuals regardless of sexual orientation partake in, framing the images and events in gay pornography within existing social and sexual norms and ideals, the text acquires meaning for the audience.

To insist that gay pornography is different from other forms of pornography in the ability of gay men to objectify as sexual both dominant and subordinate roles simultaneously, entertaining the taboo pleasure of the anus and male penetration while identifying with the trappings of masculinity, is to overlook the lack of any real social construct that actively maintains such a sexual response for men as being anything other than deviant/abnormal. It may also be argued that in forwarding the notion that gay men are



able to navigate and relate to both roles simultaneously, the distinction remains that in most images of gay pornography strict sexual codes are adhered to and comprised in them; "values like strength, power, lack of tenderness, vulnerability of the other, control and non-mutuality" (Kendall, 49:1993). The room to navigate and be both roles simultaneously is riddled by opposing sites that make difficult any rendering of a middle (different) ground.

Gay male sex and sexuality being built upon the repository of dominant sexual dynamics and the power of cultural hegemony to hold in check alternate forms of sexual expression have enforced specific situations/scenarios in the way sex is played out and understood in order that it can be seen as erotic. Gay desire must embrace its potential for difference in light of strict sexual scripts within our culture before it can truly be spoken about as a site of resistance and viewed as different. In this project, matters relating to sexual orientation and the manifestation of gay desire are deciphered through existing cultural scripts which are employed as the foundations of sexual relations. Gay pornography is therefore examined as one of the repositories of sexual hegemony. Male homosexuality, rather than subverting compulsory heterosexuality, maintains itself and a gay identity within the confines of prior and present sexual scripts within our culture. By popular demand, such dynamics are reflected in

choosing Jeff Stryker and Ryan Idol - from all the rest, to represent the personification of gay sexuality.

Further research on the consumption of pornography and identification with the images involved by gay men (from the viewers perspective) may uncover the adopting of dominant sexual dynamics within the gay community and the effect of such images on personal identity and the negotiation of sexual roles within gay men's intimate relationships.

## Chapter Eight

### Conclusion:

In examining the changes incurred with the rise of capitalism and altering conceptions of citizenship, a whole array of ideological constructs regarding sexuality, family structure, and gender roles were reconstructed. Gay desire as such a conception of citizenship is experienced through a translation of cultural ideals and norms situated within the realm of dominant sexual dynamics. Masculinity and male power have developed within a historical process, one that has delineated between sexual identities and gender specific roles. Homosexuality is then constituted as a sexual product which like heterosexuality maintains itself through the referencing of existing cultural structures, whether through the process of contrast or comparison. Cultural hegemony is an amalgamation of both formal and informal social processes that in conjunction with social institutions and the unique relations forged between agency and capitalism have provided narrow social scripts that enforce specific and recognisable forms of behaviour; sexual or otherwise.

My interpretations and the discursive exercise of examining the sexual dynamics of gay sex as presented in pornography is overshadowed by the codes, symbols, and meanings involved in the formation of sexual citizenship from a historical

perspective. The porno text as a cultural object acquires its meaning and is interpreted by the audience based on real and decipherable cultural scripts which order and transform human sexuality and desire, namely gay desire, within the confines of dominant sociosexual relationships structured around issues of power. While there exist images in gay pornography which may prove resistant to dominant ideology and viewers who partake in an oppositional reading of the text, the majority of the images examined reflect a sexual dynamic that is structured - and requires - a reading of the dominant ideology within the images for the sex to be significant and seen as erotic.

Our present conceptions of sexual citizenship are the remnants of past social orders. Social orders that support the construction of sexuality into decipherable categories, as oppositional scripts relating to gender and the expression of human sexuality. Male homosexuality is located within the confines of otherness - femaleness, in contrast to masculinity and heterosexuality. In the formation of a gay identity and an erotic life that involves attraction to members of the same sex, gay men have harnessed the components of heterosexual hegemony within the pornography they view and perhaps even their personal lives. Evidence of this is apparent in the analysis of the four scenes from individual pornographic films. Three of the four films present a sexual dynamic

hinged on themes of power and control with the glorification of manliness and masculinity as prime cultural ingredients.

The cultural response to human sexuality is one which has limited the manifestation of alternate ways of being and doing, and within this context male homosexuality has both flourished and at the same time been stranded. Making sense of one's sexual orientation and desire is framed within social scripts that limit our capacity to break through such cultural boundaries. While there is clearly social movement within the realm of sexuality it is solely within the boundaries of present/past social structures and ideology. This is fundamental aspect of culture, our history provides the basis for all present social relations (Evans:1993).

In exploring gay sex and sexuality it is both important and necessary to comprehend the cultural limitations and definitions placed on human sexuality historically in order to entertain possible measures of resistance towards them. Men having sex with other men is by no means a form of resistance and/or subversion of compulsory heterosexuality if both are engaged in posturing for dominance in the encounter. Nor is eroticizing the potential of the anus and anal penetration as pleasurable if in turn the gay community is left wrangling with trying to compensate, with an overt show of masculinity hiding the fact that the individual may harbour such desires.

This implies positioning oneself within the realm of femaleness, a social space resisted by all men. The same cultural responses to the subordination of women that depends on the gender subordination of all individuals who are non masculine is maintained and located in regards to issues of representation in gay pornography. "Because gay male pornography has a specific anti-gay bias, it is very much an issue of sex equality and sex discrimination", an issue that illuminates social structures built around the support of men and maleness as sites of social production and cultural conception (Kendall, 56:1993).

In consuming the sexual dynamics presented in the images of gay male pornography, gay men are in fact participating in the historical formation of social systems forged within capitalist relations. As social products of the culture, gay men must examine more closely the images they consume as a means of self reflection before larger relationships that are insistent on the subordination of alternate conceptions of sexual citizenship can be constructed.

It is necessary to address issues of the representation and the maintenance of dominant sexual dynamics in the gay community and within gay pornography that surprisingly and blindly entertain a myopic expression of male homosexuality not to mention overlook safe sexual practices at the same

time. It is also necessary to deconstruct the erotic images consumed in the gay community that reflect broader systems of social inequality for non male and non heterosexual individuals. Gay male sexuality must also be understood based on the unique relationships which it is built upon that offer the cultural advantages of maleness with all the trappings of power and dominance. At the same time gay desire represents a culturally contested expression of sexuality and acts as an appendage for labels of feminization, deviancy, and the recognition of being subordinate. What a majority of the visual images in gay pornography clearly represent is gay men's desire to toy with and embrace masculinity, power, and dominance as cultural ideals that can be decoded as erotic stimuli.

The negotiation of social scripts that organise the manner in which homosexuality is expressed centres upon a cultural pool of decipherable, learned, and supported forms of sexual identity which collectively impose both formal and informal structures of power which alter and effect the manifestation of same sex desire. As social beings, gay men's sexuality is, as Gary Kinsman suggests, a composition constructed through socially learned courses of action (1987). Homosexuality, like heterosexuality, is a manifestation of human sexuality that must be framed with reference to time and place in order to be understood.

In applying the tenets of a cultural studies approach to the media and by employing a 'negotiated reading' derived from the work of Stuart Hall, the porno text becomes a complex site where meaning is acquired based on the material construction of social experience (Fiske, 292:1992). It is this construction of social experience which guides the viewer, the transmission of dominant ideology forming the prerequisites for the interpretation and dissemination of meaning from the text.

While there is clearly room for a more local application or even oppositional reading of the text, as evident in the scene from the film "Body Search", such a position is always referenced against the dominant ideology of the culture. Since there is no one single reading that can apply to all viewers, the negotiated position implies that audience members are active subjects in the process of consuming media images and, are also positioned as participants in relation to the wider social structures which shape and form the basis for interpreting the actual text. Such is the case with the pornographic films examined. The meaning(s) the films may have for the viewer may vary from person to person, but the manner in which the individual interprets the text resides in their understanding and referencing of the world around them and the social structures which limit and supply the viewer with the tools necessary to interpret the images.



The central point of this project is to understand not only the manner in which male homosexuality has been constructed in a historical context, affecting our present conceptions, but also to examine the social forces that shape and define the way gay desire is constructed. It is evident in the four film sequences analyzed that male homosexuality is weighted down with the cultural ideology that maintains male power and masculinity intact.

Future projects which attempt to discover the truths about male homosexuality must, as Carole Vance has suggested, re-evaluate the essentialist factors in regards to the conception of human sexuality (1989). Such undertakings must also pose questions that relate to how and why our present understanding of male homosexuality has been confined to the realm of escaping from deviancy and abnormality in our conceptions of self. For those who insist that homosexuality has attained a measure of acceptance and legitimacy within cultural debates, a re-examination of the rules and social orders that gay men follow must address cultural hegemony, to gain insight into the social context in which capitalist relations have forged and continued to support the maintenance of men and maleness versus the conception of 'others/otherness' in our culture. Before the gay community can employ gay pornography as a positive resource, it is necessary to examine critically the images in question. While a majority of gay pornographic

material is structured in a way that requires the audiences to read along with the dominant ideology in the text for the images to have meaning, it then holds true that gay pornography can also offer a structuring of the text that provides a contested cultural space.

It is, in the last instance, the 'reader' or audience who determines the texts significance and the manner in which opposition or negotiation of the dominant ideology takes place. The limitations placed of the audience are in part cultural but more importantly reflected in the sameness of this genre of film and the insistence on preserving the role of masculinity and male power in eroticizing the cultural object.

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