

**Sweeping the Ashes of a Flame:  
Understanding the Political Economy of the OutGames**

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## **Abstract**

### **Sweeping the Ashes of a Flame: Understanding the Political Economy of the OutGames**

**Pierre Campeau**

The research contained in this thesis suggests multiple possible points of intersection between political economy and cultural studies. It looks at the production of the World OutGames in Montreal and the gay and lesbian commodity, and the subsequent effort to contain radical queer activism for the tourism industry and the local commercial media industry. This thesis examines the role of media in commodifying content, reflecting existing heteronormative ideologies and values. Specifically, this thesis examines the gay and lesbian commodity by the first World OutGames and its sponsors, and contrasts it with content analysis from local commercial media (including mainstream, free-weeklies, and gay media). The thesis concludes that the OutGames prioritized profits over activism, therefore dividing a seemingly cohesive community.

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## Introduction

On August 4, 2006, the *Montreal Gazette* published an article about the success of the first World OutGames, held in that city: “Pour moi, le succès des OutGames est d’abord dans l’impertuable sanction apportée par ces petits mononcles straight à ces jeux dont ils ont fais des jeux comme les autres, olympiques, panaméricains, peu importe” (Foglia 2006). Two seemingly different concepts, yet inextricably linked, are hidden within the quote: the survival of the gay community and control of its activism within a world of corporate sponsorship.

Survival and control are two simple words that have a significant impact on culture, its production and reproduction. The point of intersection warrants a discussion about those who control culture and those who try to survive in the seemingly fluid, yet rigid, corporate environment. In other words, the meeting point between survival and control provides the background to examine relationships between marginalized communities, like the gay and lesbian communities, and corporations. It also permits the exploration of the production of culture in terms of commodity, wherein individuals become commodities to be sold on the marketplace, and wherein their actions create and sustain ideals. It looks at the pervasive effects that the process of commodification has by naturalizing and silencing marginalized communities and those who challenge the status quo.

The intent of this thesis is to examine the political economy of the first World OutGames<sup>1</sup>. I examine how the Games were produced by corporations, represented by media, and commodified to attract large audiences, mainly white gay males, from around

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<sup>1</sup> From this point forward, I refer to the 1<sup>st</sup> World OutGames as the Games for ease of reading.

the world. Specifically, I examine the relationship between the Games, the Montreal tourism industry, and media and how the commodification processes contribute to a hegemonic gay state that impedes activism.

I first argue that the Games were produced by and for the tourism industry rather than advancing the question of sexuality in sports. Second, media representation promoted the Games as entertainment, as opposed to a venue for athletic accomplishments and the discourse of sexuality within sports. Considering the notion of survival and control, there are two questions that I wish to answer, or at the very least unearth: first, bearing in mind that the Games are a cultural product, how does the Games' institutional structure, coupled with that of media structures, affect gay and lesbian representation? Second, how can media impede activism within Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer (LGBTQ) communities?

### **The Games – A Case Study**

In 2002, when Montreal won the bid to host the VII Gay Games, the Canadian government released the Canadian Sports Policy, a document that highlights the future of sports and athletes in policies.<sup>2</sup> The policy examines the role of athletes, coaches, infrastructures, and programs that contribute to athletic development, financial resources, and wellbeing. As it states: “With the power to be a major influence on marginalized and under-represented groups and individuals at risk, sport develops self-esteem and helps to overcome personal and social challenges” (Canadian Sports Policy 2002, 5). While it

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<sup>2</sup> The Canadian Sport Policy is a report built on years of research and results from the following documents: High Performance Athlete Development in Canada (1995), The Canadian Policy on Doping in Sport (1991), The Canada Governance Document (1997), London Declaration on *Expectations for Fairness in Sports* (2001), The Canadian Strategy for Ethical Conduct in Sport: Policy Framework (2002). For a complete list, refer to The Canadian Sport Policy, p. 21.



highlights gender, race, and age, it omits any mention of sexual orientation and diversity. As a possible entry point for debate and discussion, sexuality as policy becomes more evident by its absence in the Canadian Sports Policy.

Montreal hosted a number of large scale events, like the 1967 International and Universal Exposition (Expo 67), the 1976 Summer Olympics, the 2005 World Aquatic Championships, and the annual Grand Prix de Montréal. The latter attracts 250,000 spectators who spend \$50 million (Levine 2003, 111-112). Without a doubt, the city of Montreal has the power to attract many athletes, cultural enthusiasts, and tourists to experience world-class culture, generating economic growth for the tourism industry in Canada.

From July 30 until August 5, 2006, gay athletes lined Montreal's streets and crowded into sport centres, bars, and bathhouses to experience their own unique sporting event. The Games provided an opportunity for gay athletes to participate in a world-class sporting event, much like the Olympics, and created an opportunity for a global dialogue amongst gay, lesbian, and queer communities. In terms of human rights, they provided opportunities for gay men and lesbians living in countries where homosexuality is punishable by death to celebrate their difference, and experience democracy through their sexuality (Giorgi 2002, Kaur Puar 2002, Markwell 2002). The Games, as a tourist destination, promoted the ideal gay creating the idea of a "global gay" who lives a free experience in a village located in a city situated in a democracy.

In total, more than 12,000 athletes as well as cultural enthusiasts and volunteers from around the world came to celebrate the place of gay and lesbian identity in sports by participating in a series of events. Registrations to attend the Games and to receive an

official accreditation were done over the Internet and offered an anonymous system that provided some security for those who feared any type of consequences and/or repercussions from attending a gay labeled event. Each participant paid \$395 CAD to register which did not include the cost of travel, accommodations, leisure, and parties which may have led to a significant divide between the 34% women participating at the Games versus the 66% of male constituents ([www.galisa.org](http://www.galisa.org) 2007).

Sports events included aerobics, badminton, basketball, beach volleyball, bowling, bridge, cross-country, cycling, dancesport, diving, dragon boat regatta, figure skating, golf, handball, pool billiards, powerlifting, racquetball, roller-racing, rowing, soccer (football), softball, squash, swimming, synchronized swimming, table tennis, tennis, track and field, triathlon, volleyball, waterpolo, wrestling, and out-splash.<sup>3</sup>

Cultural events included: band/colourguard/cheerleading, choral festival, country western dancing, square dance, bears, leather. Events were held at various locations across the city of Montreal most of which were loaned by the City as part of the sponsorship/agreement: Parc Olympique, Claude Robillard Community Centre, Parc Jean-Drapeau, Le Bain Mathieu and numerous locations across the official gay village.

More than 80 organizations and corporations including the federal, provincial, and municipal governments; media corporations like Bell Canada, Société Radio-Canada, *The Gazette*, *La Presse*; and the tourism industry including Tourisme Montréal, partnered or sponsored the Games financially. In total, 71 employees and 500 volunteers worked in various departments to ensure its success ([www://montreal2006.info/en\\_permanent\\_staff.html](http://www://montreal2006.info/en_permanent_staff.html) 2006).

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<sup>3</sup> The International Rowing Federation (FISA) was the only international sports federation to sanction its respective event.

Events like Divers/Cité, the pride parade, and other circuit parties largely contributed in positioning the Games as a leading gay event in Montreal. Since 1992, the city and its economy benefited from more than \$500 million in spending by tourists at gay and lesbian festivals (Hunt and Zacharias 2008, 38). The entertainment, or party portion of the Games, not only permitted the experience of grand-scale ‘gayness,’ it also generated audiences and revenues from locals and tourists who experienced Montreal’s “joie-de-vivre.”

Despite all the concerted efforts from sponsors, registrations, merchandise, and parties, the Games filed for bankruptcy owing more than \$5.3 million to various companies and individuals (Duddin 2006, 3).<sup>4</sup> The second edition of the World OutGames hosted by the city of Copenhagen, Denmark, resulted in attracting 518 participants from 91 countries (World OutGames 2009, 4). Unlike its predecessor it made a profit of DDK 1,243,760 (World OutGames 2009, 4). The third World OutGames will be held in Antwerp, Belgium in 2013.

### **Scope**

I thought that being a gay athlete, and someone who contributed significant time and resources to institutions like *Out Magazine* and *Célébrations LGBTA Montreal*, would allow me to finally find my own identity, and leave all the questions behind. However, the truth is I have more questions now than I ever had before.

Finding a solid foundation from which to move the gay and lesbian political agenda forward, and trying to change existing discriminatory policies, have become more

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<sup>4</sup> The Games never made their financial report available to the public considering that it filled for bankruptcy. A financial report is available for the the 2<sup>nd</sup> World OutGames.

difficult over the years, as a younger gay generation simply has higher expectations and does not question or even consider the history of gay activism that started in the 1960s for recognition of equality rights. Personally, I question gay identity vis-à-vis queer activism, gay rights vis-à-vis human rights, and, more importantly, my identity within a corporate system.

### **Framework**

Borrowing from a number of theoretical frameworks such as the political economy of media and cultural studies, my research locates, situates, and revisits activism within gay and lesbian communities and more specifically, activism at the Games. I examine gay and lesbian communities as a commodity and the commodification of the Games to question how both contribute to an existing dominant ideology of a good gay citizen vis-à-vis queer activism.

Political economy, as a conceptual framework, provides a background to discuss the effect of commodification processes on the gay and lesbian communities and activism by nuancing the differences between the visibility and the silencing of a community. Whereas most gay and lesbian studies examine visibility as a final product, political economy as a framework allows for a discussion about the process of creating visibility. It also provides the basis to look at structures (institutions) that create the ideology by perpetuating a seemingly cohesive and natural relationship between the dominant and the marginalized.

Unpacking the political economy of media, one finds Smythe's (1977) notion of audience commodity as a central point of debate between traditional and progressive

political economists of media (Mosco 1996). The audience commodity provides the background to examine book/magazine readers, viewers of television, radio listeners, and Internet surfers as free labour for media companies who sell ratings to advertisers. As more and more scholars study the audience commodity, some like Eileen Meehan (2000, 2002) examined the issue and suggested that the market only recognizes one identity that of the white heterosexual male, rendering differences obsolete. The paradox Meehan proposes confirms that marginalized individuals contribute to ideologies, yet their differences are silenced and erased by the market place.

Gay and lesbian communities experience their freedom, and in some cases democracy, through various media including establishments like bars and bathhouses, television, and books, rendering them, as per Smythe's notion of audience, free labour for institutions. Most political economists have looked both at gay men and lesbians as commodities as well as the products they consume, but few challenge structures that create visibility. By situating the Games as a media institution, much like Janet Wasko's (1993, 2001) interrogations of the Disney corporation and Katherine Sender's (2005) research of the gay and lesbian publishing industry, commodification provides a particular setting to discuss a seemingly effortless transition from audience to target market. The erasure of identity is implicit but is rarely at the forefront of gay and lesbian political economy. To balance the arguments regarding commodification, I borrow from Joshua Gamson (1995) and Lisa Duggan's (2002) interpretation of the commodification of gay and lesbian communities, and its effect on activism.

To provide a better understanding of gay and lesbian representation during the Games, I have chosen to look at the controlled environment of print media with local

newspapers like *La Presse*, *The Gazette*, *Le Devoir*, *Ici, Mirror*, *Voir*, *Fugues*, and *Le Journal de Montreal*. By briefly examining the ownership of these various newspapers, it is easier to see how politics and economics fix and control content and discourse. While new media is used by marginalized groups to voice their opinions about various topics including the Games, the scarcity of such information and products limits the research. As such, I have left all new media including blogs, vlogs, and videos out of this research.

### **Methodology**

As this thesis examines two different directions within communication studies (cultural studies and the political economy of communication), it is important to note that there is no single and clear methodology to illustrate how commodification affects social relations and, ultimately, the visibility of gay and lesbian communities. Katherine Sender (2005) acknowledges that questions surrounding the intersection of political economy and identity arise from various types of sources:

A nuanced approach to studying the gay market, therefore, must consider how marketing does not merely represent gay and lesbian people, but produces recognizable—and sellable—definitions of what it means to be gay or lesbian. Such an approach is situated at the intersection between marketing as a set of historically and socially specific practices, and consumers who are engaged in those practices in the course of sexual identification (Sender 2005, 8).

Sender's illustration of past and current studies on gay and lesbian communities highlights the need to present experiences in relation to the evolution of gay and lesbian activists into audiences, and eventually commodities.

First, I provide an in-depth analysis of the role of the political economy of communication. By highlighting the contribution of political economy in communication

studies, I set the larger framework for my research. My main argument is supported with references to queer theory exploring intersecting points between the free-market and the creation of a singular marketable gay representation, therefore exploring differences between both inextricably linked identities.

Second, I illustrate the history of the Games, from its inception as the Gay Games in 1982 to its divide into two distinct groups and events, the Federation of the Gay Games (FGG) and its Gay Games, and the Gay and Lesbian International Sports Association (GLISA) and its event, the OutGames. Then, by focusing the research solely on the OutGames, I examine structure, marketing strategies, and tourism.

Third, I examine media coverage and how it creates a discourse about the Games. I conduct a content analysis of the key themes found in news clippings from July 31 to August 5, 2006 in the following local print media: *La Presse*, *The Gazette*, *Le Journal de Montréal*, and *Le Devoir*; four free weeklies *The Mirror*, *Voir*, *Ici*, *Hour* and *Fugues*, the monthly gay magazine. This provides a sense of whether reporters portrayed the Games as an athletic achievement, a site for activism, or simply another entertainment venue. The articles were selected on the basis of availability and accessibility, which raises the question of an authoritative gay presence in sport and media.

## **Chapter Breakdown**

Chapter Two explores political economists Dallas Smythe (1981), Vincent Mosco (1996, 2009), and Eileen Meehan (2002) and their contributions in challenging administrative communications towards more progressive trends in the field of communications, such as gender studies and globalization that emanate from traditional

Marxian thought. The effects of globalization on political economy raised many concerns during the past few decades, when the economy of information affected the politics of identity in local contexts, as well as in the global environment.

Commodification, as Vincent Mosco (1996) states, is, “. . . The way capitalism carries out its objective of accumulating capital or realizing value through the transformation of use values into exchange values” (140). The normalization of gay characters in advertising has had important effects on recognizing the gay community as important consumers, and attracting the *pink dollar*. But how can it push political action? Katherine Sender’s (2005) insights into the American gay and lesbian publishing industry is a prime example of how multiple LGBTQ communities are being commodified into a niche market. This market affects the everyday lives of gay men, lesbians and queers who do not fit the common image of the North American white, middle- to upper-class, heterosexual man, and creates its own set of normative values, what Judith Halberstram (2005), Lisa Duggan (2005), and Eric O. Clarke (2003) describe as “homonormative.”

Cultural theorists Fred Fejes (2001), Robyn Jones and Roger Leblanc (2005) and Katherine Sender examine the changing face of gay identity with respect to the rapid emergence of the *pink dollar* in the mainstream. From window shopping, as Fejes (2001) explains, to building an entire publishing industry, the *pink dollar* mobilizes different gay and lesbian communities toward one seemingly democratic goal: visibility. On one hand, accessibility to products and services due to mainstream advertising has made the radical gay community more conservative. On the other hand, experiencing “gayness” by means of travel, publishing and sports puts pressure on local experience to concentrate on global appeal. Sender (2005) explores how marketing agencies recognize the gay market and its



politics. As a result, she suggests, advertisers and marketers helped define gay identity by convincing corporations, like Absolut Vodka, and pharmaceutical companies, such as Glaxo Smith Kline, to create advertising campaigns geared toward the gay market.

Queer theorists and activists Joshua Gamson (1995) and Lisa Duggan (2004) examine the internal tensions between different gay and lesbian communities, and reflect on how globalization affects these groups. Both Gamson and Duggan have extensively critiqued the existing tensions between gay and lesbian politics (Duggan 2004, Gamson 1995). While their articles illustrate local situations in the U.S., they also allude to other problems, such as the effects of globalization on local gay and lesbian politics.

Chapter Three explores the creation of a gay identity within sport; particularly in Montreal, a city that prides itself on hosting international sporting events, as it did with the 1976 Olympics and 2005 World Aquatic Championship (FINA). The creation of the Games and its alliance with Tourisme Montreal is examined. The first part of the chapter details the history of the Games, from former arrangements with the Federation of the Gay Games—including their disagreements and eventual separation—to the creation of its own governing body: The Gay and Lesbian International Sport Association (GLISA).

The discussion continues with an analysis of Tourisme Montreal's partnership with the Games. The study of Tourisme Montreal's annual reports from 2004 through 2006 seem to indicate that gay identity is constructed by institutions who attract a large constituency of gays and lesbians. This results in local politics being displaced to showcase acceptance of gay and lesbian culture.

Chapter four presents my findings from the content analysis I conducted from a series of mainstream, free, and gay media. By positioning the Games as an

event/entertainment rather than athletic accomplishments, and describing its athletes as “just like everyone else,” the ambivalence to find stable footing within the gay community is demonstrated here as becoming more difficult. While queer theory suggests that identity is fluid, content from various articles proves otherwise.

This thesis concludes by questioning how market forces that reach gays and lesbians across the world affect their identity; in other words, how does local identity negotiate with global market forces to find its place in an increasingly globalized gay villages. This thesis also takes into account the continuities and discontinuities of the gay and lesbian community, as it watches its identity become a currency in an increasingly globalized world.

Perhaps the shift in activism is due to the evolution of communications and how media institutions and the Outgames’ institutional structures affect gay and lesbian representation. The causality behind the problem of activism exists as media are now producing and packaging the ideal representation of gay and lesbian identities. Or maybe it is based solely on corporate commitment, responsibility and goodwill? Whatever the reason, the democratic discourse is unfolding, unseen by some while revealing the truth to others.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This chapter examines current understandings of the political economy of media, its challenges and blindspots; provides a history of the cultural transformation from radical queer activism to gay community; and discusses how the seemingly natural relationship between gay and lesbian communities and corporate industries, like the media and tourism industry, transformed gay identity from activist and resistant, to corporate consumer.

Gay culture changed drastically since the 1969 Stonewall Riots and it continues to experience many social transformations with the help of media. There are an increasing number of gay characters on primetime American television shows like *Queer as Folk*, *Will & Grace*, *Survivor*, *the Amazing Race*, and *the Biggest Loser*. The distribution of gay magazines to global markets is a large contrast to the underground network it once knew during the 1930s. (Chauncey 1995, Sender 2005) Finally, more and more corporations, like VISA, NIKE, and IKEA target gay men and lesbians as prime audiences for products. (Jones and Leblanc, 2005) With these examples, the gap between the sexually marginalized, also known as “the Other”, and mainstream audiences, seems to be closing, perpetuating the idea that there is a wider acceptance of gayness by the media.

Social transformation, or in this case, cultural transformation, is represented as symbols (images, texts, and sound) and as values (acceptance, openness). In large part, the media have facilitated the integration of symbols and values in daily lives; creating relationships between individual and good/services, which they eventually became the

new “normal.” These symbols and values are part of Western society’s understanding of democracy, but what is troubling is that they also contribute to structure and limit what is acceptable in terms of sexual diversity.

By unpacking the theoretical framework of the political economy of media vis-à-vis the notion of hegemony, I argue that gay culture is the product of processes that aim to take radical queer culture and transform it so that corporations can benefit from affluent white gay males. Specifically, I look at the commodification of gay culture and its transformation from activism to a target market, thus creating a normalized gay culture.

The first section of this chapter provides a brief history of political economy, commodification, and audience-commodity. Following is an overview of the intervention of feminist political economists and queer political economists who challenge the straight-forward classical approach to political economy by suggesting its effects on experience. The relationships between people and goods/services are of particular interest within the current understanding of how structures explicitly intervene in our daily lives creating and shaping desires for individuals and collective masses.

The second section of this chapter provides a brief history of queer, gay and lesbian activism and their relationships with media. The cultural transformation from queer to gay and lesbian was not captured by media but is undoubtedly a result of corporate control in an otherwise underground media system. Within the gay and lesbian community, the marketing and selling of gay goods and services created a new pseudo-economy, the “pink dollar”, where information about spending behaviors, informs the types of products and services that gay men and lesbians desire.

The last section of this chapter discusses the role that institutions, like the tourism industry, play in defining gay and lesbian experiences. On one hand, the tourism industry provides a safe place to express sexuality and on the other hand, capitalizes on the opportunity to increase the value of prices in light of limited available spaces where one can freely express sexuality.

### **Post-structuralist Approach**

The Games provide an interesting terrain to examine the evolution of gay culture in the last three decades. To limit the Games within either postmodern thought, postcolonial thought, or even post-structuralist thought is a difficult task considering the symbols, discourse, and models of cultural reproduction it provides. Postmodern thought would look at the limitations, and even reject labels like gay, straight, or even bisexual. Postcolonial thought would look at representations, or the lack thereof, of “subaltern” like gay, and “dominant” like heterosexual, especially in terms of race and nationality in a seemingly cohesive democracy. Post-structuralist thought would look at structures that reproduce, sustain and perpetuate ideologies regarding sexuality, class, gender, and race. Each contributes significant information and perspectives about gay culture and the way it is materialized, like the Games, in a capitalistic society.

As the Games are the product of gay liberation movements and corporations across North America, a post-structuralist approach is appropriate to examine how corporations reproduce and perpetuate ideologies about sexuality at an event like the Games. Scholars like Mosco (1996, 2009), McChesney (2000), and even feminist political-economist Meehan (1993, 2000, 2001, 2002) agree that post-structuralism

allows for a discussion of the reproduction of ideologies through structures. They examine evolving relationships between social movements and structures like corporations by looking at how the latter affects identities, resulting in silenced voices, representation of the majority, and therefore a dominant ideology. Thus, the reproduction of ideologies, and in the case of the Games, the reproduction of gay culture and identity, questions the entire liberation movement by looking at existing inequalities created by structures.

Louis Althusser's (1970) *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, drawing on Marx's *Capital* and Gramsci's notion of hegemony, was pivotal in exposing the role of structures (infrastructures) and economy in creating and sustaining ideologies through a class system. While his thesis was located in structuralist thought, it is a point of departure for post-structuralists to examine the relationship between ideologies, created by the State and economy, and the existence of minorities in public, or the lack thereof. While debating the differences between the State and public, Althusser acknowledges that inequalities, in terms of wages, are what separate the bourgeois from the working class. With an understanding of 'survival' of the repressed, also known as minorities, he questions their role in producing the material to sustain a national economy. As he states: "All the agents of production, exploitation and repression... must in one way or another be 'steeped' in this ideology in order to perform their tasks 'conscientiously'..." (Althusser 1970, <http://marxists.org/references/archive/althusser/1970/ideology>). In this case, the term survival is knowing and understanding the conditions in which the minorities produce in order to continue existing.

It is the understanding of the conditions of production/reproduction that political economists of media examine.<sup>5</sup> Post-structuralism contributes by providing a “resistant reading of the invisible operations of power reproduced through media accounts, representation, and practices” (Hedge 2005, p. 62). With the increasing visibility of race, gender, class, and even sexual minorities in media, careful attention must be paid to the relationship between media structures, ideologies, and the environment in which the message is produced, distributed, and consumed—the creation of a seemingly natural state.

### **Hegemony**

According to Mosco, the concept of hegemony “is the ongoing formation of both images and information to produce a map of common sense which is sufficiently persuasive to most people that it provides the social and cultural coordinates to define the natural attitude of social life” (Mosco 2009, 206). Ideology and values continuously define and establish what is deemed “normal” and “acceptable.” Gramsci’s (1971) definition of hegemony went further in that “dominant ideology operates to sustain itself” (Steeves 2008, 419).

The concept of hegemony is defined as producing and distributing symbols; and representation that reflects a dominant point of view, a so-called “truth” for society. It creates legitimacy as symbols and representation are believed to be the truth. Considering “legitimacy” with Althusser’s (1970) idea of “ideology,” the reproduction of

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<sup>5</sup> I wish to clarify that not all political economists identify with post-structuralism.

culture can only be done so in a reproducible environment where culture is the same, sustaining a dominant ideology.

Through his work, Mosco examines explicitly the concept of hegemony from a political economy perspective suggesting how structures play an important role in disseminating it. He states:

Hegemony is also embodied in a range of substantive ideas such as the widespread acceptance of marketplace as the cornerstone of a productive economy, or voting as the primary means of carrying out a democracy, and of journalistic objectivity as the product of views on an issue of the day (Mosco 2009, 207).

The marketplace is the enabler that produces, distributes, and allows individuals to consume products, services, and information that reflect what the majority wants, but it does not offer any space to display or even touch upon alternative ideas. Considering that the economy sustains structures (i.e. corporations) that produce, distribute, and enable consumerism, democracy is thus an illusion of the economy which in turn is a reflection of the majority.

The issue with hegemony is that it proposes itself to be natural without examining its dialectical nature. By this I mean that those who oppose the seemingly “natural” state find themselves incorporated in text, representation, and images at the demise of the dominant view (Steeves 2008, 419). The investigation of this issue remains in the processes by which structures produce, distribute, and create desire to consume products, through a naturalizing relationship, resulting in a hegemonic state. As a result, the marginalized continue to survive while corporations hold control over their purchasing choices. The next section will look at current understandings in the political economy of media.



## **Political Economy of Media**

. The study of political economy within communications studies addresses relationships between media, communications systems, and society. It investigates media systems and ownership, the content they produce, and how they “reinforce, challenge, or influence existing class and social relations” (McChesney 2000, 110). It explores how media systems and communications contribute to, or challenge democracy in a capitalistic society (McChesney 2000, 109). Mosco proposes a different definition of political economy that explores how media systems affect social relations between individuals and information: “Political economy is the study of the social relations, particularly the power relations, that constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources, including communications resources” (Mosco 2009, 2). While McChesney’s (2000) economically and politically rooted definition explores media systems and their structures, Mosco’s (2009) definition allows for an exploration of how media and communications infiltrate existing structures to perpetuate the ideologies and values in social relations between humans and goods/services.

On one hand, McChesney (2000) looks at the creation of media monopolies in North America, notably Time Warner Inc., and their effects on smaller media companies who hold distinct audiences in terms of geography, content, and/or language. As Wasko states: “A good deal of Political Economy of Communications research has focused on the evolution of mass communications as commodities that are produced and distributed by profit-seeking organizations in capitalist industries” (Wasko 2005, 32). In this case, the commodity is media industries, their holdings, and their potential return on investment.

On the other hand, Mosco (1996) explores the effects of media companies on social relations. His approach is unique in comparison with traditional political economy in that he explores three entry points, commodification, spatialization, and structuration, that present how media in a capitalistic world is reaching new markets and territories, and media's effect on widening the gap between class, gender, and racial struggle. He considers media to be an agent of cultural and political transformation, rather than being a static product of information dissemination, as it allows "people [to] rethink desires, values, expectations, visions, and possibilities" (Meehan, Mosco, and Wasko 1993) It is about media's contribution to hegemonic society and its unruly effects on individuals and their relations with others, products, and services.

While Mosco and McChesney offer different, yet compelling theories about the political economy of media, both allude to the control of society, and question the survival or representation of marginalized groups. Control of society is done via media monopolies, limiting the number of alternative choices, offering limited representation, and by centralizing all activity with private companies. It creates and sustains values and ideologies that reach audiences across delimited geographical territories without any intervention by governments to protect smaller companies, different view points, or to offer diverse representation in media. That said, in a capitalistic society, media capitalizes on opportunities to become stronger and more powerful with the amount of viewers it reaches across the largest territory.

Not only do both authors debate extensively the idea of survival in their works, it is also the object of debate with other political economists like Eileen Meehan (1993, 2000, 2001, 2002), Janet Wasko (2001), and Lisa McLaughlin (1999), to name a few.

Most examine the class, gender, or racial struggle in light of survival in a media saturated environment. It is a question of survival in that only certain images and texts are distributed to large audiences. However, at the core of the debate is the idea of democracy vis-à-vis cultural imperialism of a world saturated with symbols that created, and to some extent, embody the material world. According to Mosco: “Numerous social movements have taken on national and local policy-making processes, including efforts to democratize decisions about station licensing, spectrum allocation, industry structure, and media content” (Mosco 2009, 204). Historically, media was a major force in shaping government policies and steering away from them in some instances. Yet in the case of cultural transformation, it goes deeper in that it directly affects those who participate in creating media and those who receive the information (Mosco 2009, 111-112). The critical approach and debate of survival in a media saturated environment continues to be discussed by class, gender, racial, and more recently sexuality, and social movements.

Critical to understanding the idea of survival and control are Mosco’s three entry points in the political economy of communication: *commodification*, *spatialization*, and *structuration*. (Mosco 1996, 2009) All three entry points contribute equally important, yet distinct, arguments to the general idea of production, distribution, and consumption. *Commodification*, which will be discussed at greater length further on, is “the process of transforming use values into exchange values” (Mosco 2009, 129). *Spatialization* is “the process of overcoming the constraints of space and time in social life” (Mosco 2009, 157). Finally, *structuration* is “the process by which structures are constituted out of human agency, even as they provide the very medium of that constitution” (Mosco 2009, 185). All three are inextricably linked by the idea of media content and the media

structures on social life by revealing that culture is not simply made up of communication but by other forces like economic and politics. According to Mosco, the truth or reality of culture or communication does not only lie in content, but rather, in the various forces that make up the processes that produce, distribute media content, and affect the reality of those who consume it (Mosco 2009, 127).

### **Commodification**

Commodification relies on different forces to bring a product from raw value (use-value) to market-value. In other words, it is the process by which a raw product becomes a commodity; where the public, or in this case the market, determines its value by how much individuals are willing to pay for the item. A clear, yet simple, example remains the “pay-per-view” television example established in the 1980s where individuals who wanted to view desirable content would pay an additional fee for a viewing. In the millennium, the same can be applied to cellular phone companies who provide applications to smart phone users for a minimal fee.

The study of commodification is of particular interest in analyzing how structures contribute to a hegemonic state by examining how they convert resources from raw material to market value through its commercialized representation (Steeves 2008, 420). The commercialized representation is rapidly changing desires and reaching new audiences at exponential rates with technologies like the Internet. In other words, if commercial products and/or representation is reaching new audiences and changing their desires, the market is reaching new territory.

Thus far, the idea of commodification is situated in material goods, services, and even information that create hegemony, or a hegemonic state. Yet, there was a shift to understand and examine those who produce and reproduce the cultural product as a commodity. Political economists like Smythe (1977), Mosco (1996), Meehan (2000), and Meehan and Riordan (2002) argue that the process of commodification extends itself to humans in that “workers are made to exchange their labour power for a wage that does not compensate fully for the labour they sell” (Mosco 2009, 131). The idea is that the labourers are usually the marginalized who produce and reproduce products that are sold, yet surplus value only goes to those who create the ideology behind the product, the managers who are usually white heterosexual affluent men (Althusser 1970).

Unpacking Mosco’s (1996, 2009) idea of commodification provides a new way of understanding how media conglomerates generate revenue that in turn silences alternative voices. He examines three areas: *commodification of content*, *commodification of labour*, and *the audience commodity*. He defines the *commodification of content* as “...transforming messages, ranging from bits of data to systems of meaningful thought, into marketable products” (Mosco 2009, 133). For example, marketing data of potential consumers often provides information that can help shape advertising specific to that market, which in turn, can be distributed through many channels to reach a larger audience, thus creating more potential revenue.

He continues by defining the *commodification of labour* as the process to transform labour, use-value, into exchange value, where the surplus is used to repackage content and find new distribution channels to create even more revenues. For example, Michèle Martin’s (1991) examination of women in telephone operators played an

important role in revolutionizing telephony in Canada by simply connecting individuals with each other across the country. While their labour power was sufficient to generate significant revenue for companies, like Bell Canada, the latter were able to expand their products and services through other channels, but the companies did not adequately compensate their labour force (Martin 1991).

Finally, *the audience-commodity* is a term created by Dallas Smythe (1977), and described by Mosco as the process where “media companies produc[e] audiences and [deliver] them to advertisers” (Mosco 2009, 136). In other words, the audience becomes a commodity for advertisers, where they exchange ratings data (use-value), seen as the absolute truth in the market, for space in media (exchange-value). For example, data collected from the gay publishing industry, from magazines like *Out* and *The Advocate*, is pushed to advertisers who create ads based on data and distribute to markets accordingly (Sender 2005). As a result, advertisers--or in Smythe’s (1977) case, broadcasters—can place ads in spaces where they will get the viewers who are most likely to enjoy the advertisement, the product therefore generating sales for corporations.

The *audience-commodity* is a clear example of consumerism, in Mosco’s (1996) definition of political economy, which is inextricably linked to the idea of production. The relationship’s cyclical nature between production, distribution, and consumerism reinforces the hegemonic state, as what is produced is constantly being reproduced in the same environment to generate revenues for corporations. Smythe (1977) considers it a “free lunch,” a space where audiences can enjoy television shows, magazines, and movies that are seemingly detached from their lives yet generate enough information for

advertisers to produce, package, and in some cases repackage the information, and distribute them across various channels.

So far, commodification processes, whether the *commodification of content*, the *commodification of labour*, or *the audience-commodity*, are rooted in economics, and to Althusser's (1970) point, demonstrate how structures benefit from the marginalized to produce, reproduce, and consume products in order to be part of society's ideology. His arguments are still true today, but what is debated in political economy of media are the effects of commodification—the alienation of alternative experiences and silenced voices. I argue that that is where the “post” in “post-structuralism” arrives. In large part, it examines the inequalities between the dominant and the marginalized and the reactions to ideas like globalization, policy, and cultural politics (McChesney 2000, McLaughlin 1999, Meehan 1993, 2000, 2001, 2002, Mosco 1996, 2009, Sender 2005, Janet Wasko 2001, 2005). Whereas Althusser (1970) and even Smythe (1977) were engrained in economics and the media industry respectively, the more progressive political economists look at the causal relationship between media structures, policy, and culture.

Some of the most notable work in examining political economy begins with looking at blindspots like gender, race, and class as entry points, rather than looking at the media systems in which they are produced. Situated in feminist political economy, Meehan (2000, 2002) highlighted continuities and discontinuities with Smythe's (1977) theory, specifically in terms of gender. She argues that Smythe's (1977) work assumes heterosexual white males are the audience, as “society defined as the proverbial bread-winners, that social reality governed the decisions of advertisers, networks, and the ratings monopolist” (Meehan 2000, 13). She largely debated the idea of patriarchal

structure in media that the audience commodity produced (Meehan 2000, 2002). Qualifying the white male audience as the most valuable in the market was done by presenting sports during prime time and inserting women's programming, such as soap operas during the daytime (Meehan 2000), and by creating entire networks dedicated to sports like ESPN (owned by Disney), and TSN (a joint venture between CTV Global Media and ESPN). Such networks, produced and sustained by advertisers, dedicate their content for the male perspective and experience.

The gender discussion continues in areas like globalization and transnational systems (McLaughlin 1999, Steeves 2008).<sup>6</sup> In contrast, images of the latter are often shown in North America in shows like *Survivor* and *the Amazing Race*, creating a distorted and sensationalized image of under-developed countries to attract larger audiences (Steeves 2008). The production of content, media systems, and distribution channels to construct images and representations of ethnicity, race, and nationality, in order to attract a new or larger audience, allow for a better understanding of identities that are deemed valuable for television while neglecting the other. Inequalities are increasingly debated by examining how media systems and structures allow for certain identities to be represented, distributed, and consumed by the dominant.

Commodification, as the process to bring a product or service from use-value to exchange value, provides an interesting terrain to examine how media, as a commodity in and of itself or as a structure that perpetuates ideologies and values, contributes to a hegemonic state or society. The debate between structures and commodification of labour and audiences becomes even more interesting in that those marginalized groups

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<sup>6</sup> McLaughlin's and Steeves' works use a post-colonial approach to examine issues of commodification in under-developed countries.



who are under-represented/misrepresented in media play a large part in sustaining the ideology, yet remain under-valued. And the issue of visibility remains a question, in large part, of production and distribution.

Marginalized groups, like gay and lesbian communities, struggle to find a legitimate representation of themselves in media, yet, gay and lesbian visibility is largely dependant on media to prove that they are “just like everyone else” (Sender 2005). So where does this leave the politics of a seemingly cohesive community? How does commodification play a role in validating sexual politics in media? The next section of this chapter examines current trends in the commodification of gay and lesbian communities vis-à-vis queer politics.

### **The Gay and Lesbian Commodity**

Thus far, this thesis has considered the commodification of labour, audiences, and content where social minorities contribute their energy and time to social reproduction. However, the issue of sexuality has been left behind by many political economists. This section will explore the various scholars who have looked at the commodification of sexuality, specifically examining the gay and lesbian communities as a commodity in media industries and tourism. While most work tackles the representation of gay and lesbians in media as well as consumer behavior, very few question the production of gay identity in media, leaving an opportunity to discuss the various politics between gay, lesbian, and queer communities.

In 1983, John D’Emilio discussed the effects of capitalism on shaping and defining gay and lesbian identity:

Capitalism has created the material conditions for homosexual desire to express itself as a central component of some individuals' lives, now, our political movements are changing consciousness, creating the ideological conditions that make it easier for people to make that choice (D'Emilio 1983, 53).

The attention on economy and identity brought a new way of looking at gays and lesbians in academia rather than as just deviants in society or sad men in films (Russo, 1987). As D'Emilio points out, capitalism permits us to look at the idea of gay identity and its movement as an opening to be citizens in society, living in a democracy. The illusion of being an economic citizen, facilitated in large part by media industries, informs the basic premise to look at inequalities created by a capitalistic society (Steeves 2008, 421).

Scholars who have examined the gay and lesbian commodity have done so in one of three ways: the consumption behavior of gays and lesbians (Chasin 2000, Fejes 2003, Ivy 2001, Kaur Puar 2002, Pellegrini 2002, Pritchard et al. 2000, Sender 2005); the representation of gay bodies in media (Bronski 1998, Chasin 2000, Dyer 2002, Meyer 1991, Pronger 1990, Sender 2005, Simpson 2006, Waitt 2003); or the gay and lesbian communities as a commodity produced by industries like media and tourism (Chasin 2000, Hunt and Zaccharias 2008, Ivy 2001, Jones and Leblanc 2005, Kaur Puar 2002, Markwell 2002, Pritchard et al. 2000, Sender 2005). Every approach examines the process of commodification and discusses the pervasive impact it has on social relations between individuals and product. As for effects on the gay and lesbian movement, few discuss the negative impact (Chasin 2000, Sender 2005) or leave it entirely to queer studies which looks at inequalities in terms of sexuality (Bourcier 2001, Clarke 2000, Duggan 1994, 2002, Gamson 1995, Halberstram 2005, Martel 1999).

As mentioned earlier, capitalist society provides a seemingly free environment for gays and lesbians to enjoy the pleasures of money. As marketers realized that gay men had more disposable income than a married couple with children, special attention was placed on making them not only economic citizens but a market in and of itself (Chasin 2000, Sender 2005). The term “pink dollar” indicates the purchasing power of gay and lesbian communities that have disposable income. As a sign of validation or legitimization, the “pink dollar” and its market become a source of control of “gayness” by corporations (Fejes 2002, 218).<sup>7</sup> By creating and managing the market, gay identity is self-contained, leaving out alternatives that do not have the financial means to permeate within the boundaries set by market forces.

As social tolerance of homosexuality may exist in glossy images, Jones and Leblanc (2005) find that tolerance leads to social marketing. The fashion industry (such as Nike), the entertainment industry (Disney Gay Days), and tourism organizations (Tourisme Montréal) manage to include advertisements to attract and cater to a gay and lesbian market. Analyzing certain corporations suggests that the trend to be gay-tolerant and acceptable, refocuses the idea from acceptance to market. Jones and Leblanc argue that corporations are investing time and money in a relatively new market:

In recognition of the power of the pink dollar, corporate logic has dictated that many mainstream marketers are now broadening their appeal to this emerging consumer market. In doing so, however, they face a dilemma. That is, despite an awareness of its growing financial significance and some evidence of increasing social tolerance, the use of homosexual imagery in ads remains controversial (Jones and Leblanc 2005, 124).

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<sup>7</sup> Fred Fejes (2002) explains that the evolution of production in a free market has had a negative impact on community projects such as the gay and lesbian publishing industry (Fejes 2002, 219). For example, he argues that a gay male who is coming out might only see well-toned, muscular white males in gay publications, and not other gay males of normal appearance, thereby closing the door on diversity.

While they suggest that controversial ads are the dilemma to a prudent heterosexual society, issues regarding control of sexual identity and of its differences, remains the real problem raised throughout this thesis.<sup>8</sup>

The gay and lesbian publishing industry has a long history of defining the affluent gay man through its production and distribution processes. As advertisers seek to cater to gay men's needs and create a niche market, they have also changed the way content is produced and distributed. For example, prior to the appearance of mainstream advertising, pornographic images and text dominated gay magazines. Former *Out* magazine President, Henry Scott discusses a long history of tension between advertisers and the entertainment magazine, as opposed to *The Advocate*, a more political magazine. He suggests that advertisers were reluctant to appear in *Out* because of its nature since it was not as political as *The Advocate*. At the time, both magazines were owned by Liberation Publications Inc (LPI).

The gay publishing industry grew exponentially over the 1980s, 1990s, and the millennium as advertisers like Absolut Vodka recognized gay and lesbian communities as audiences who spent a significant portion of their money on entertainment, food, and beverages. Absolut Vodka is simply one corporation amongst many, like Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Sony, and Nike, who now advertise in *Out* magazine.

Once the advertisers understood the superficial semiotic behind these images and text they began to include subtle sexual innuendo in their advertisements. As Sender (2005) states: "Advertisers have commonly avoided the minefield of stereotyping and

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<sup>8</sup> Like Fejes (2002) and Sender (2005), Jones and Leblanc argue that, while there are more positive images of homosexuals in media than in the 1960s and 1970s, they are often controlled by mainstream marketers.

sexual intimacy by using gay subcultural knowledge and iconography to signal their address of gay readers, sometimes with the added hope of escaping recognition from heterosexual consumers” (Sender 2005, 126). Advertisers soon understood that to create and reach the gay niche market, they had to create a distinct strategy that would attract the purchasing power of gay and lesbian communities, while maintaining a seemingly heteronormative discourse that would not offend any existing or potential investors.

The gay and lesbian commodity was largely shaped by the media industry in North America, but now the gay and lesbian commodity transcends borders and presents a sexual democracy to others around the globe through the tourism industry.

### **Queering Commodification**

Thus far, this thesis has examined the process of commodification as a means of control over gay and lesbian communities where survival is inherent to the idea of control. As queer theorists like Duggan (1994, 2002), Gamson (1995), and Halberstram (2005) look at the meeting point between control and survival, they uncover issues pertaining to the silencing of voices and loss of identity through commodification. However, their critiques lend themselves to explore the impact of capitalism and commodity on queer bodies and queer politics by proposing that commodification processes create a hegemonic state within the sexually marginalized community, also known as homonormativity. As corporations try to break down the barriers between heterosexuals and homosexuals, queer theory examines the limits of a market-driven gay body.

The result of the pervasiveness and intrusiveness of corporations in the lives of homosexuals allowed for a new body of politics to emerge and challenge the corporate involvement. Gamson (1995) provides the context in which the body politics emerged:

The emergence of queer politics, although it cannot be treated here in detail, can be traced to the early 1980's backlash against gay and lesbian movement gains, which 'punctured illusions of a coming era of tolerance and sexual pluralism;' to the AIDS crisis, which 'underscored the limits of a politics of minority rights and inclusion;' and to the eruption of 'long-simmering internal differences around race and sex, and criticism of political organizing as 'reflecting a white, middle-class experience and standpoint' (Gamson 1995, 393).

Gamson alludes to "gains," but according to him and other queer theorists, the gains are the catalysts for the rising of political tension and the divide between gay and queer.

Queer politics challenges the boundaries that gay and lesbian communities impose on themselves with the generous help of the market. Within these boundaries, homonormativity is established and reproduced in order to naturalize differences within a marginalized community, and as Duggan states:

... the new homonormativity—it is a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds and sustains them while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption (Duggan 2002, 179).

The reproduction of "heteronormative assumptions" in homonormativity presumes that production, distribution, and consumption of images and representation have already ironed out differences within the gay and lesbian communities. Homonormativity has an important impact on reinforcing the permeability of the boundaries between radical queer activism and the new gay and lesbian politics. As Gamson suggests, while the gay and lesbian communities together strive to destabilize mainstream ideas of sexuality, they forget to analyze those who make up the differences within their own collective identity

(Gamson 1995, 390). Without looking at the collective makeup of its own identity, it is a simple matter to target a market with one over-arching image and representation. As a result it becomes easier for the mainstream to understand the differences, while tensions arise between the gay and lesbian, and queer movements. The free market gives gays and lesbians a voice as citizens within a seemingly democratic society.

Visibility is a major point of contention situated in queer theory as it debates the idea of representation and citizenship determined by society. Duggan (2002) questions the role of the market, as a structure, that determines sustainable values and ideologies which gay and lesbian communities perpetuate through consumption. Through consumption they reproduce what these structures want, rendering them even more powerful, and eventually shifting gay and lesbian activism to target market. The cultural transformation it imposes divides communities on the premise of inequalities between those who can and cannot consume 'gayness' determined by the market. Judith Halberstram (2005) discusses the nature of pride parades, as a space where identity is constantly negotiated between consumption from a specific audience and political action. She states:

Gay pride may well be a massive consumer opportunity as its critics have astutely pointed out, but not everyone is "buying." For some folks, gay pride is the only "gay" thing they do all year; for others, the opportunity to march within ethnic groups that tend to be marginalized by white gay communities makes gay pride an important site for the disruption of a monolithic association of gay identity with white gay masculinity (Halberstram 2005, 223).

Pride Parades are a prime example of how corporations and even governments structure gay politics rendering them less radical and more commercial.<sup>9</sup> For example, in May

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<sup>9</sup> The first official gay pride "march" in Montreal in 1990 was a retaliation against police brutality inflicted upon gay men and lesbians at a Sex Garage Party. Over the years, the official Pride

2007, Divers/Cité, Montreal's gay pride festival, announced its official program would not include the traditional pride parade. Soon after, local gay and lesbian businesses and active members in the gay and lesbian community, created a new organization:

Célébrations LGBTA Montréal. Businesses were anxious to participate, since Celebration LGBTA Montreal allowed only 33% of the parade floats to represent sponsoring corporations, thus guaranteeing 67% visibility to Montreal's gay and lesbian organizations and businesses.<sup>10</sup>

Challenging the idea of self-imposed identity boundaries, queer theorists could provide some interesting arguments on the production, distribution, and consumption of a gay and lesbian commodity. Some queer theorists, like Duggan (2002), look at issues of survival in public. Others fail to examine the role of the marketplace as a major contributor in creating and sustaining inequalities of the sexually marginalized but explore the idea in terms of publicness. As Duggan states, the debate over "public" in this sense comes from its relationship to "private" or private interests. She further argues that the difference lies in government action, stating:

But when the state acts to support the 'private' business interests, meaning the interests of business owners and corporations, that can be good. But when the state acts in the 'public' interest, meaning in the interest of nonmarket forces or disadvantaged populations, that can be intrusive, coercive, and bad (Duggan 2002, 178).

It is the idea of "public" in conjunction with the notion of market that is of particular interest in looking at the differences between gay and lesbian, and queers. On the one hand, the market creates a public image of gay and lesbians as consumers and increases

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Parade has grown as certain corporations sponsored the parade by buying a space in order to promote itself as gay, lesbian, transsexual, and queer friendly. It becomes a beacon of hope for some gay men and lesbians that they are finally being accepted, while for others, it becomes a vital sign that the LGTB identity is becoming more marketable.

<sup>10</sup> Taken from my own experiences working with Célébrations LGBTA Montréal 2007



distribution via larger channels like advertising. On the other hand, queers challenge the idea of “public” as an erasure of identity and the silencing of individual voices.

Gamson (1995) pushes the idea of “public” dividing it between collective identity and personal identity where collective identity can only be reproduced within a larger structure like homonormativity. As for personal identity, it is erased by the collective, leaving differences— the main reason why individuals cannot permeate the circle of the collective. As he argues: “. . . collective identity is constructed not only within, but is also shaped and limited by ‘political policies and institutions, immigration policies, by ethnically link resource policies, and by political access structured along ethnic lines’” (Gamson 1995, 393). That said, identity, both collective or personal, is constructed by institutions but what remains to be discovered is how collective identities, or the homonormative, contribute to sustaining the limits of identity through production, distribution, and consumption of commodities.

### **The Tourist**

The tourism industry plays a large role in providing gay and lesbian communities with gay experiences around the world. Whereas the publishing industry used the gay and lesbian commodity to sell to advertisers and fashion industries like NIKE, appealing to gay and lesbian audiences with provocative advertisements, the tourism industry focuses primarily on expanding the market and reaching audiences around the world to experience ‘gayness’ in various environments (Kaur Puar 2002, 108). In 1996, “an estimated 5-25 million gay and lesbians (note the wide range) spent more than \$10-17 billion on travel products every year” (Kaur Puar 2002, 105) compared to “more recent

statistics... that suggests that the gay and lesbian travel market constitutes about 10 percent of the U.S. travel industry, generating \$54.1 billion a year” (Kaur Puar 2002, 110). There is a limited number of research that presents the gay tourism industry compared to the number of scholarly articles that present the impact of tourism on gay identity. This section will highlight how the tourism industry perpetuates the idea of gay and lesbian commodities in order to gain more revenue.

Tourism represents a major part of the economy and some cities rely on its tourism industry for economic development. Marc V. Lévine (2003) looks at the tourism industry and its effects on economic development and he argues that tourism is an inescapable part of cultural transformation dependant on economy. According to Lévine: “tourism is now a \$4 trillion international industry... and one of the economic sectors, in an era of deindustrialization and suburbanisation, in which cities seem to have a competitive advantage in attracting investment” (Lévine 2003, 103). Tourism revenues rely in part on tourists (accommodations, leisure, food, entertainment) but investments from governments and other private corporations represent a significant amount of money. Furthermore, according to Lévine:

Since the 1960s, the federal, provincial, and municipal governments have invested more than \$7 billion in tourist attractions and related infrastructure in Montréal, including “mega-event” (Expo 67 and the 1976 Olympics), a convention centre, casino, hotels, museums, sports stadiums, amusement parks, and a tourism-recreation district on the riverfront (Lévine 2003, 102).

Investments contribute to the landscape of tourism, bringing in revenues from tourists, and help shape a city’s international identity with the help of mega-events, architecture, and parks and recreation. As a result, tourists contribute to the city’s economy, that in turn returns the money in city-services for locals (Lévine 2003, 103).

Despite the excitement of mega-events and its contributions to city services, issues regarding labour persist where tourism workers are underpaid and undervalued in an industry where long-hours are worked to please tourists, leading to future investments. Tourism enables jobs—it is an important source of employment in some cities and rural areas (especially in the under-developed/developing countries)—and helps the “revitalization of property markets in North America” (Lévine 2003, 103). It is only with labour market institutions, like unions, that wages become close to representing acceptable living conditions but do not reflect the amount of profit of its industry (Lévine 2003, 103). As a result, “Tourism has been associated with spatial inequalities as tourist infrastructures are often enclosed in a ‘tourist bubble,’ an enclaved ‘cordoned off’ from the existing urban fabric and designated to cosset the affluent visitor while simultaneously warding off the threatening native” (Lévine 2003, 103). The commodification of labour indicates inequalities that exist between structures and workers. As workers continue to provide exceptional service to tourists who consume what the industry offers, workers continue to perpetuate the ideology and values of hotel chains, beaches, and mega-events like the Olympics or the Games.

The tourism industry and tourism studies look primarily at the economic development in cities and its effects on locals (Kaur Puar 2002, 102, Lévine 2003). Until recently, the tourist was considered a passive participant in tourism by simply visiting sites, paying accommodation bills, and enjoying culture in various cities. Jashir Kaur Puar (2002), Annette Pritchard et al. (2000), and Kevin Markwell (2002) gravitate towards the notion of audience-commodity, its impact on spaces, and the disruption of gay identity all within the tourism industry. The contention is situated between the gay

and lesbian commodity, the consumption of holiday choices due to “gay spaces,” and their impacts on the erasures of queer politics. There is little research of the current gay and lesbian economic impact in the tourism industry; rather it is about attracting them as a target-market based on their consumption patterns and their desire to escape the constraints of everyday life.

The practices of gay and lesbian consumption provide the background to examine how the gay and lesbian commodities are distributed in a globalized environment. Locations, like resorts and urban centres, are quintessential to travelers but the relationship between travel and gay identity is being expanded in tourism studies as well as gay and lesbian studies (Ivy 2001, Kaur Puar 2002, Markwell 2002, Pritchard et al. 2000) Examples of gay travel associations are the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA), Travel Gay Canada, and FunMaps. The practices of consumption are at the foreground of the relationship but an important facet remains the construction of gay identity through vacations and holiday.

Queer travel, in popular culture, often dictates where to go, how to get there, and what to do while you are there. Together, it proposes a gay identity and a gay roadmap while traveling, so that tourists can experience their identity anywhere, at anytime. The destination is no longer determined by its latitude and longitude but rather by the number of experiences lived in a certain area. Gay and lesbian identity is constantly constructed, negotiated and renegotiated in tourism spaces where multiple identities and global identities meet in one physical location to experience their identity (Pritchard et al. 2000, p. 271). Yet, the negotiation also offers an escape from the reality of everyday life (Ivy 2001, Kaur Puar 2002, Markwell 2002, Pritchard et al. 2000), and offers a sense of

belonging within the community (Pritchard et al 2000, 274). Scholars suggest an interesting paradox where one escapes the limits of everyday life to entertain another set of limits determined by the tourism industry (Pritchard et al. 2000, Ivy 2001, and Kaur Puar 2002). Even when crossing borders, structures are in place that determine one's identity with what one can purchase, consume, and experience.

The normalization of gay and lesbian identity transcends borders, infiltrating spaces, and gaining momentum on a global level. In some countries, like Jamaica or the Bahamas, policies against homosexuality prevented gay men and lesbians from traveling for fear of being identified as homosexuals (Pritchard et al. 2000, 271). However, the tourism industry is pressuring governments to shift their policies as it recognizes the economic impact of gay travel. It seeks to gain acceptance from government and from locals to not only cater to the gay and lesbians travelers, but to determine what they can and cannot experience (Pritchard et al. 2000, 270). For local governments, the shift signifies the potential of sexual expression by travelers and locals; for travelers, this same sexual expression is the right to mobility, to distribute their identity across borders and to be recognized by the tourism industry.

But this transcendence is not to be mistaken for liberation but rather an imposition of constraints on a global level. As Kaur Puar suggests: "It is one thing to problematize visibility by noting that only certain queers can participate in certain moments of queer visibility through consumption as dictated by race, ethnicity, class, gender, and nation." The imagined liberation suggests a certain freedom from the constraints of everyday life and a "democracy" where one was once in hiding and can now come out and play (Giorgi

2002, 60). With the ability to purchase a trip, the practices of consumption render gays visible within an already established structure which determines 'gayness' in tourism.

In sum, gay and lesbian communities fight to gain acceptance and visibility. Once they've succeeded and corporations have offered it to them on a silver platter, they move on to fight other injustices without questioning the effects of free market intervention. The alarming rate of corporate infiltration of the public domain and public opinion is putting political visibility at a high risk of becoming a silent visibility. For instance, Nike's adoption of lesbian spokeswomen has catapulted its sales within the lesbian market, but what has it done for the battle against sexual orientation discrimination in sports? With so many logos and brands now involved in sports, how can activism find its place at the Games?

The governance and structure within the Games give them credibility to other gay and lesbian associations and even sports association since they have "been sanctioned by mainstream sports federations within the structures of the Olympic movement and I.O.C. (International Olympic Committee), including how the results are captured . . . and types of venues" (CommercialCloset.org). Institutional structures make it difficult to break down existing societal structures,

With each new fight between gay space, gay body and corporations, gay activism is overshadowed by a corporate agenda and demographics, thus creating a homonormative movement. This raises new questions in the realm of democracy, closing the barrier between groups and opening new doors to a world where being gay is only about being, not experiencing. The gay and lesbian political viewpoint often overlooks

sports and its reproduction of existing patriarchal structures. The Games mobilized thousands of individuals who were concerned about discrimination against gay and lesbian athletes in sports, and celebrated diversity in a seemingly heteronormative structure. The creation and success of the Games has historically used media and technology as an underground network connecting various online audiences, communities and commodity.

To summarize, political economy examines power relations between institutions, their structures, and how they affect social relations amongst society. While there exist different ways of examining power relations, commodification illustrates the role, albeit passive one, of individuals within media systems. Advertisers and media institutions determine what can be read, heard, or seen by analyzing data which is generated by an unknown audience. The audience's labour remains unpaid and inequalities continue to exist as only those who have access to these media will be represented.

Producing the gay and lesbian community, or the audience commodity, through the Games allow media industries and tourism industries to dictate what can be experienced as "gayness" during the Games. Their investments, sponsors, and partners infiltrates the structure of the Games therefore determining the audience. The prevailing issue of democracy and its materialization within gay and lesbian communities and a free market, focuses on institutions' roles within society. As more institutions, corporate or government, determine how lives are lived, what can and cannot be said, questions of human rights become more important, yet are still ignored.

The following chapter examines the role of the Games as an institution that questions gay and lesbian identities and their acceptance in sports. It also considers the

Games' impact in creating the Declaration of Montreal, a human rights document that urges governments around the world to look at issues of sexuality within their institutions.



## **Chapter Three**

### **The Games: A Product**

This chapter examines the production of the Games and the gay and lesbian commodity at the Games. The chapter focuses primarily on the Games' history, its organizational structure (including board of directors), and the relationship between the Games and the sponsors, the tourism industry, and governments. The second portion of the chapter will look at the International Conference of LGBT Human Rights. The last section examines the notion of the survival of activism in an increasingly corporate environment.

Inherent to production is the idea of control. Mosco defined control as “how a society organizes itself, manages its affairs, and adapts or fails to adapt to the inevitable changes that all societies face” (Mosco 2009, 3). What Mosco demonstrates through his work is that change is often the result of a cultural transformation—often led by media—and that societies organize themselves around corporations, like media. The realization that cultural transformation is inevitably about control, by corporations, of lives and relationships between people and ideologies draws a unique scenario to understand why corporations are eager to manipulate people in the most seamless way possible

The Games mobilized thousands of individuals concerned about discrimination against gay and lesbian athletes in sports and the reproduction of patriarchal, heteronormative, and hypermasculine values in sports. The Games also celebrated the achievements of gay and lesbians in sports with a slogan “We play for real” as part of their marketing campaign. Among the myriad of means to question the authenticity of the

Games and its athletes, the issue remains in the production and reproduction of the gay and lesbian commodity reducing the level of activism at the Games.

The production of the Games is the prime example to examine the relationship between corporations and gay activism and between commodity and community. The process of normalizing gay and lesbian communities during the fight to gain acceptance is a paradox that is gaining more attention by scholars like Gamson (1995) and Duggan (2002). However, the real issue here is not only a matter of dominance producing and distributing images of gay and lesbians, but also the degree to which dominant culture manipulates identity as a means of controlling gay and lesbian activism (Stuckey and Morris 1999, 46).

Mosco refers to the commodification of content as transforming data and information into meaningful thoughts and into marketable products (Mosco 2009, 133). Part of commodification is to expand one's potential for revenue and profit, and to do so corporations must limit the number of alternatives. Yet, the complexities and fluctuation of markets make it difficult to eliminate competition; it's about making sure competition does not present itself to start with. The process to commodify content does go further than turning data into meaningful and marketable products; it becomes a process to offer the best content (or product) available, limiting the number of product possibilities, and making the relationship between people and product "natural."

The first section of this chapter addresses the history of the Games within the larger background of the gay and lesbian struggle for human rights. From its origins as the Gay Games in a San Francisco schoolyard in 1982, the Games developed into a global event attracting an increasing number of participants and audiences every four

years. Over time, political goals became less important, and the increasing number of sponsors overshadowed gay and lesbian politics.

The second section of the chapter focuses on the International Conference of LGBT Human Rights where the attendance of a large audience at the Conference provided a unique opportunity to discuss gay and lesbian political issues. The end product was the Declaration of Montreal, which challenged governments, sports associations and the LGBTQ community to rethink and revisit existing human rights policies.

The chapter concludes with a discussion about the effects of corporate involvement on gay and lesbian representation and democracy. Profitability became more important than political action and as a result, the division between politics and economics was more apparent when the local organizing committee in Montreal separated from the Federation of the Gay Games and eventually created the Games and its governing body, the Gay and Lesbian International Sport Association.

### **Montreal: World Gay Capital**

Montreal's relationship with gay and lesbian communities has a long history of moving from the financial district to a demarcated lower-class neighborhood (Hunt and Zacharias 2008, 36). In 2008, Montreal's gay village boundaries counted 62 blocks stretching from Saint-Hubert to Papineau (west-east) and from Ontario to René-Lévesque (north-south), with Saint-Catherine as the main commercial artery (Hunt and Zacharias 2008, 36).

In establishing relationships with all levels of government, Tourisme Montréal describes the Montreal Gay Village as a destination for gay and lesbian tourists. The relocation of gay establishments to an area with inexpensive rents allowed for economic growth, making it a more exciting market for local businesses and local events like Pride Parade, and circuit parties like Black and Blue.

The City of Montreal continues to support gay activities similar to the Bad Boys Club of Montreal's (BBCM) Black and Blue circuit party, which accounts for approximately \$300 million in revenue since its inception in 1992 (Hunt and Zacharias 2008, 38). In 2000, Divers/Cité, the Pride festival, generated \$40 million (Hunt and Zacharias 2008, 38). In total, since 1992, the city and its economy benefited from the gay and lesbian tourists who generated \$500 million (Hunt and Zacharias 2008, 38).

While the economic influx benefits the city and the gay village's visibility, there are numerous reasons why gay and lesbian tourists choose gay-friendly destinations such as Montreal. Through its major circuit parties, pride parades, and shopping, the city positioned itself as a world capital for gay and lesbian tourists. While Montreal does not offer the sun and beach that some tourists may look for in a vacation, it offers a comfort zone of belonging. Recognizing the city as a gay comfort zone, corporations like Air Canada, Desjardins, Via Rail, and Molson continue to manipulate gay consumers by placing ads promoting Montreal as the gay capital of Canada in local and national gay publications like *Fugues* and *Xtra* newspapers (Hunt and Zacharias 2008, 47).

## **The History of the Games**

In 1982, in a schoolyard in San Francisco, Tom Waddell organized the first Gay Games, mobilizing individuals from all over North America to showcase their athletic abilities and voice their discontent with discrimination in sports.<sup>11</sup> The Gay Games' success motivated the creation of its governing body, the Federation of the Gay Games (FGG), an organization that facilitates dialogue between gay sports organizations, international sports federations and mainstream media. Gordon Waitt (2003) recalls the importance of the FGG's mission at the sixth Gay Games in Sydney, Australia when he states:

The games are positioned as a site of 'celebration,' 'affirmation,' 'belonging', 'acceptance' and 'diversity' (FGG 2001). The FGG imagines both unity and difference in their sports 'community.' The Gay Games is positioned by the FGG as unifying people in their ability to participate in a festival of sports, whilst holding a variety of contrasting identities. These different identities include sexuality, nationality, ethnicity and ability (Waitt 2003, 168).

While Waitt (2003) suggests that "different identities" meet and share stories over a beer and "helping of cock," he neglects issues of homonormativity and its impact on celebrating differences.

## **Schism of the Games**

Like the Olympics, the host city is determined by members of the event's governing body amongst a number of bids presented by various cities (<http://www.gaygames.com/en/federation/index.cfm>). In 2001, considering the percentage of participants from North America, the 9/11 attacks, and the downturn in the global economy, North American cities were considered favourable to win the rights to

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<sup>11</sup> For a complete timeline of the Gay Games, see Appendix A.

host the Gay Games VII. Montreal won the rights to host the event, against three other North American cities: Chicago, Los Angeles, and Atlanta. As such, Montreal formed its organizing committee which worked closely with the FGG.

Financial commitments from international, national, and provincial governments, local businesses and media organizations determined the size, scope, and resources of the event. The previous Games attracted more than 12,000 participants, suggesting the financial affluence and liberty of gay and lesbian communities in relation to travel and tourism (Stafford 2003, 1). In October 2003, the number of projected participants was aligned with funding and services received by sponsors, partners and alliances, such as but not limited to the Government of Canada, the Government of Québec (Tourisme Québec, Ministère des Affaires municipales, du Sport et du Loisir, Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration), the City of Montréal, Tourisme Montréal, Équipe Montréal, Société Radio-Canada, Egale Canada, and the Québec Gay Chamber of Commerce. ([http://montreal2006.info/en\\_release\\_3\\_november\\_2003.html](http://montreal2006.info/en_release_3_november_2003.html)) As a result, Montreal's organizing committee estimated 24,000 participants as its target number considering the low cost for travel and accommodations and Montreal's position in the international gay community (Stafford 2003).

The FGG's financial concerns coupled with its concern of the estimated size prompted negotiations between the FGG and Montreal's organizing committee. The previous edition of Gay Games declared bankruptcy because of the lavish and large-scale events and at the FGG's request, Montreal scaled its number down to 16,000 participants, ensuring financial success (Stafford 2003). Negotiations over budget control and transparency, size of the event, and the future of Gay Games VII were discussed in 2003.

On November 11, 2003, a press release announced that Montreal was no longer hosting the Gay Games VII. Both teams communicated their versions of the story suggesting issues surrounding the control of finances and arguments over the size of the event (Stafford 2003, 1). *Fugues*, a local Montreal gay publication, had been following the entire Montreal 2006 project since the beginning, and announced:

The long road of negotiation has not been easy. The FGG, embittered by the deficits of previous host cities, demanded that Montréal's original candidature of 24,000 participants be reduced to 10,000, with budget cuts from an original \$20 million CAD down to a starting point of \$10 million CAD. In June, Montréal 2006 conceded to revise its numbers to 16,000 participants with a budget of \$16 million CAD. This participation level was based on the financial viability of the Games and on the fact that this will be the first time in twelve years that Games have taken place in North America (Héon 2003).

The *Fugues* report spotted the obvious; the Gay Games were now being treated as a business venture whereas it was once a movement that celebrated kinship, sports, and more importantly, diversity. By 2006, it had to be more than just another movement, it had to be profitable.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The debate over financial control carried over just before the Games as Daniel Arcand and Radio-Canada met with Louise Roy, Co-President of the Games, during an interview for *5 sur 5*, to discuss the difference between the 1st World OutGames and the Olympic Games that had left Turin, Italy, in major debt previously in 2006. "On est une corporation sans but lucratif privée... on est responsable totalement de l'exercice financier, de l'organisation... C'est la corporation," (Roy 2006). During the same interview, Robert Mantachi, Co-President of the Federation of the Gay Games, offered an interesting point of view about finances within the world of the Gay Games: "Dernièrement, c'est que nous avons senti, c'est qu'il y a de plus en plus de groupe qui est mal, par exemple, les autorités touristiques intéressés à cet événement. Je pense d'ailleurs que peut-être que l'une des raisons... négociations avec Montréal c'est qu'on s'est rendu compte qu'on avait à faire avec un groupe qui n'offrait pas les mêmes priorités ou les même que nous. Nos interlocuteurs, on s'est rendu compte finalement, ce n'était pas les gens de la communauté, de la communauté sportive gaie et lesbienne; on s'est rendu compte finalement que ces gens venait surtout de la communauté des autorités touristiques de Montréal" (Mantachi 2006). As such, the mediated debate between both

## **Gay and Lesbian International Sports Association (GLISA)**

Thus far the history of the Games, including the separation between the FGG and the Montreal local committee, tells a clear story of the struggle to gain visibility and recognition in the sports and gay and lesbian community. Creating a governing body, structuring gay and lesbian communities within strict parameters, and exploiting sexual identities to sustain business relationships with corporations and other sporting bodies, however, suggest an ambivalence that underscores existing tensions between political activists and consumer citizens. The difference between the FGG and GLISA resides within its governing structure and the need to reach out to larger sport institutions and corporations to ensure growth and survival.

GLISA is the governing body for the World OutGames. Unlike the FGG, GLISA has a set of bylaws that “relate to the general conduct of the affairs of the Gay and Lesbian International Sport Association, a corporation incorporated under the Canada Corporations Act (S.C. C-32 as amended) and referred to as ‘GLISA’ in these bylaws.” (GLISA Bylaws) The Bylaws dictate a series of articles including the Aims and Objectives, Membership, Governance, Meetings of Members, Finance and Management, Indemnification, Amendment of Bylaws, Notice, Adoption of These Bylaws (see Table 3.0).

Structures can limit membership to ideologies and individuals that reflect the institution’s mission, vision, and practices. GLISA’s governance structure illustrates how its Board of Directors and their committees can strategically achieve the institution’s

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parties suggests existing issues between corporate involvement, representation, and civic participation.



mission and vision. However, the main theme throughout all committees illustrates the need to foster relationships with “international federation members in their governance and capacity-building, and play a supporting role in creating new international federations” (GLISA Governance Structure). Furthermore, it focuses on the need to “develop relationships and promote partnerships with other organizations working to eliminate homophobia in sport and to support LGBTQ athletes in traditionally conservative environment” (GLISA Governance Structure). The difficulty of arguing against the elimination of homophobia does not reside in the statement, but rather, in its process, alignments, and agenda-setting.

Similar to its governance structure, GLISA’s aims and objectives identify how it plans to increase visibility. The bylaws clearly state that visibility is dependant on support, regardless if it is political or financial:

- To organize local, regional, national and international competitive sporting opportunities for gay and lesbian athletes;
- To assist in the development of gay and lesbian sports associations, teams and clubs by providing services to members and promoting participation in gay and lesbian sporting events;
- To increase awareness and visibility of gay and lesbian sports worldwide;
- To seek support from and work cooperatively with other organizations, groups and individuals, whose aims and objectives are consistent with those of GLISA, to promote the international gay and lesbian sporting movement;
- To seek and accept donations, gifts, legacies and bequests for the purpose of furthering these objects. (GLISA Bylaws)

On the one hand, furthering gay and lesbian politics in a heterosexist and heteronormative arena, such as sports, is beneficial to eliminate homophobia. On the other hand, mapping

out the different alignments, donations, gifts, individuals and their politics, suggests a different picture of gay and lesbian politics and visibility as the agenda may now reflect the interests of third parties such as sponsors.

### **The Games**

The divide between the FGG and Montreal's local organizing committee is largely based on financial issues and corporate involvement that does not reflect gay identity, but rather a corporate agenda. Historically, as gay communities became more mainstream and accepted by society, corporations started investing through advertisements and sponsorships, and as Katherine Sender (2005) argues, personal experience is lost through corporate involvement:

To think of the gay market not as a real thing but as a taxonomic collective organized around a set of assumptions for the purposes of selling goods reveals that the process of constructing markets does violence to those who don't belong by making them invisible or laughable, by depriving them of revenues for publications, and by making their presence less legitimate in the public domain (Sender 2005, 171-172).

After the divide and the creation of the Games, GLISA retained previous sponsorships, keeping them in the Montreal public domain and in gay and lesbian communities around the world by inserting the Games' message into mainstream discourse. Table 3.0 provides an overview of the two organizations.

**Table 3.0 – The differences between the FGG and GLISA**

	<b>FGG<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>GLISA<sup>14</sup></b>
<b>Year of establishment</b>	1982	2004
<b>Main product</b>	The Gay Games (every 4 consecutive years)	The World OutGames (every 4 consecutive years)
<b>Sub-product</b>		Continental Games
<b>Governance</b>	Delegates are nominated by member organizations to sit within the assembly.	Delegates are nominated by member organizations.
<b>Number of participants at last main event</b>	12 500 participants Gender percentage unavailable.	13 110 (including Conference and culture) 34% Women 66% Men
<b>Location of last main event</b>	Chicago (2006)	Montreal (2006)
<b>Mission</b>	The Federation of Gay Games ensures that the Gay Games offers participants the opportunity to express themselves openly and to experience camaraderie and validation through sport and culture.	GLISA's vision is a vibrant future LGBT sport movement that offers a compelling competition calendar, competitive events featuring the highest standards of organization and facilities, growing capacity at every level of the sport system, competitions fully recognized by mainstream sport governing bodies, and delivery of financially viable events, whether involving sport, culture or advocacy.

Both organizations have similar governance styles (including membership and the selection of delegates) and both work to eliminate discrimination regarding sexual orientation within sports. The main difference is that the FGG works with gay and lesbian sport organizations and helps create new ones; whereas GLISA works with mainstream sport governing bodies, such as international sport federations, to help recognize gay and lesbian athletes and sport organizations throughout the world.

<sup>13</sup> For more information about the Federation of the Gay Games, see [www.gaygames.com](http://www.gaygames.com).

<sup>14</sup> For more information about the Gay and Lesbian International Sports Association, see [www.glisa.org](http://www.glisa.org).

Unlike other sports events such as the Olympics, where athletes must qualify for a spot in a national delegation/competition, at the Games, athletes can register to participate as individuals or as part of a team. Depending on the size of a delegation, when an athlete signs up, he/she joins their city, state/province, or country's delegation.<sup>15</sup> For example, an athlete from Montreal joined the Montreal delegation but an athlete from Lebanon joined the Lebanon delegation.

### **Organizational Structure**

The Games have a governance structure that ensures a cohesive level of communication amongst its different internal departments, like sports, culture and finance. It also has a Board of Directors of seven members who guide the Games' organizing committee in producing them (see Table 3.1). Yet, it also has a governing body that works at arms-length to the Games and manages relationships between the Games and sports organizations around the world. The operational day-to-day organizing activities set against a strategy to develop the gay tourism dollar are well-positioned with a professionally diversified group.

The Games' Board of Directors includes two co-presidents, one secretary, three directors, and one general member. As such, the representation of gay and lesbian culture lies not in the hands of those who take part in it through sporting activities but rather those who shape it by economic means. Four members are part of the tourism

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<sup>15</sup> The first Gay Games in San Francisco were the first to implement this strategy in part because most participants were from North America creating a sense of competition amongst cities, much like local organized sports. This also raises questions of local sponsorships: gay and lesbian bars, establishments, and restaurants sponsoring local teams in order to gain visibility at the Games, recognizing and promoting gay-friendly cities to a self-contained audience/participants.

industry in Quebec, who are all located in Montreal, begging the question, was the Board put together for economic purposes, rather than activist purposes?

**Table 3.1 – The Board of Directors**

\*Denotes affiliations during the Games.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Current affiliations*</b>	<b>Media affiliations*</b>
<b>Mark Tewksbury</b>	Co-President	-Olympic athlete. Spokesperson National AIDS Walk and Children's Miracle Network	-None
<b>Marielle Dupérée</b>	Co-President	Financial services in Canada, USA, and Mexico. Board of Directors' Secretary of Chambre de commerce gaie du Québec. President of Canaztec Inc.	-None
<b>Pauline Vline</b>	Secretary	President of Maestro Plus, a leading Montreal destination management company	None
<b>François Goulet</b>	Director	Senior Vice President, Tourisme Montréal	None
<b>Marie-Josée Malo</b>	Director	Athlete, participated at the 2002 Gay Games in Sydney	None
<b>Johanne Roy</b>	Director	Former radio personality. Now involved with Grand Prix Formulae 1, Impact Soccer team, and a producer for the World Junior Hockey Championships	Former Radio Host with Corus Entertainment
<b>Pierre Côté</b>	Board Member	Doctor who worked for Dernier Recours, Equipe Itinérant	None

As of June 9, 2006, the organizing committee had 71 full-time employees, with more than 5,000 volunteers ([http://montreal2006.info/en\\_permanent\\_staff.html](http://montreal2006.info/en_permanent_staff.html)). A total of 10 departments, including Sports, Culture, Marketing, Media/Public Relations, Conference, Finance, Information Technology (IT), Volunteer, Logistics/Facilities, and the Office of the CEO (Louise Roy) divided the task of producing the Games.

GLISA worked diligently with sports and cultural associations, as well as international sport federations, to establish and sustain relationships. In total, there are 111 sports associations registered with GLISA in comparison to four international federations.<sup>16</sup>

The relationships that exist between the Games, the Board of Directors, the organizing committee, and GLISA effect the way the Games represent gay and lesbian communities. Despite the long hours of hard work, the lack of racial and gender diversity at the Games speak volumes about how the Games approached diversity and how it approached economics.

### **Funding**

Financial planning and predictions are essential to ensure successful games. Finances were divided in three major categories: fundraising, sponsors, and registrations. While fundraising collected significant amounts of money, I have chosen to focus on the sponsorships and registration as they were the main sources of finances for the Games. First, the organizing committee depended on sponsors to produce the Games. Second, the Games' survival depended on the amount of registered participants, and as mentioned earlier, a debatable figure that led to the divide between the FGG and Montreal's organizing committee.

The Games' production is in large part due to the sponsors', partners', and alliances' contributions of finances and goods. Financial contributions were made to hire

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<sup>16</sup> The Breakdown of registered sports associations by continent: 48 North America, 1 Africa, 23 Asia-Pacific, 11 Central and South America, 28 Europe. See [www.glista.org](http://www.glista.org) from more information.

and manage human resources, purchase technological equipment, and implement a marketing campaign. Goods and services contributions included venues, volunteering, and promotion through existing sports teams. For example, the City of Montreal offered many venues such as Square Viger and Parc Jarry, including site maintenance and cleaning. Without such contributions, planning and producing the Games would have been more difficult, if not impossible.

The number of participants was a major aspect of the Games' financial outcome as each registration was used to rent printers, equipment, and various other items from companies. Each participant paid a \$395CAD registration fee. The fee covered access to the opening and closing ceremonies, access to all venues, access to the subway, and discounts at participating bars. Accommodations, food, and leisure expenses were additional costs for participants. As the first edition of the Games, financial success contributed to ensure credibility to the city of Montreal and future Games. Despite all efforts, the Games filed for bankruptcy, owing more than \$5.3 million to various companies and individuals (Duddin 2006, 3).

### **Sponsorships**

As discussed earlier on, the purchasing power provided by the "*pink dollar*" allows gay men and lesbians to become economic citizens in society. However, corporations manipulate consumers, through production, distribution, and consumption in providing them with desired products. By doing so, with revenue generated from sales, corporations can grow their distribution line to access more consumers, thus influencing a

larger share of the market. More than 80 organizations, including governments and businesses sponsored the Games (see Table 3.2):

**Table 3.2: Sponsors of the Games**

<b>Sponsors of the Games</b>	
<b>Industry</b>	<b>Name of organization</b>
<b>Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government of Canada</li> <li>• Government of Quebec</li> <li>• The City of Montreal</li> <li>• Arrondissement Ville-Marie (The City of Montreal)</li> <li>• La Société Radio-Canada</li> <li>• Tourisme Montréal</li> </ul>
<b>Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bell Canada</li> <li>• Window Media, LLC</li> <li>• Prestige Média</li> <li>• PhotoAction</li> <li>• <i>Sydney Star Observer</i></li> <li>• CKOI.com 96.9 fm</li> <li>• Q92</li> <li>• <i>La Presse</i></li> <li>• <i>The Gazette</i></li> <li>• Gay Wired</li> <li>• Out in America</li> <li>• <i>La Voix du Village</i></li> <li>• Gay Crawler</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.outuk.com">www.outuk.com</a></li> <li>• Citégay.com</li> <li>• Lalucarne.org</li> <li>• <i>Gay&amp;Night</i> News Magazine</li> <li>• Duizendpoot, gay advertising, promotion &amp; event</li> <li>• OUTloud</li> <li>• <i>Têtu</i>, Le magazine des gays et des lesbiennes</li> <li>• Fugues.com</li> <li>• <i>FF, Femmefatale MADgazine</i></li> <li>• Gayradiobec.com</li> <li>• Pink tv</li> <li>• Gaydarguys.com</li> <li>• <i>Préf, Préférences</i> Mag</li> <li>• Camp</li> <li>• Ciel fm</li> <li>• Prideradio</li> <li>• <i>To be</i></li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out Tv</li> <li>• <i>The Jamaica OutPost</i></li> <li>• Eradio-com.mx</li> <li>• JEMAG</li> <li>• <i>Edge</i>, edgeboston.com</li> <li>• <i>About</i> magazine</li> <li>• <i>Pink Pages Roses</i></li> <li>• Q</li> </ul>
<b>Tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Via Rail Canada</li> <li>• Air Canada</li> <li>• Delta Centre-ville (Delta Hotel)</li> <li>• PG PortugalGay.PT</li> <li>• FunMaps</li> <li>• GayCanadaGuide</li> <li>• GA, Gay Afrique</li> <li>• LeGayParis.fr</li> <li>• G3mag.co.uk</li> <li>• Bigtraveller</li> <li>• GayCalgary magazine</li> </ul>
<b>Gay and Lesbian Establishments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking</li> <li>• Sky</li> <li>• Unity II</li> <li>• Le Cabaret Mado</li> <li>• Stock Bar</li> <li>• Redlite</li> <li>• Stud</li> <li>• Circus Afterhours</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labatt (food/drink)</li> <li>• CGI (Information technology (IT))</li> <li>• STM (transports/government)</li> <li>• Solotech (IT)</li> <li>• Pepsi (food/drink)</li> <li>• Fédération québécoise des massothérapeutes (wellbeing)</li> <li>• Kinatex Sports Physio (health)</li> <li>• Bent</li> <li>• Glaxo Smith Kline (pharmaceuticals)</li> <li>• Bad Boy Club Montréal (entertainment)</li> <li>• Mix Brasil</li> <li>• GCN</li> <li>• Integrus Solutions de marques inc. (IT)</li> <li>• Priape (fashion/gay organization)</li> <li>• Pre2post technologies (IT)</li> <li>• GUS</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Umas&amp;Outras</li> <li>• CIPAC</li> <li>• BOXDE</li> <li>• Back</li> <li>• IMPART LITHO</li> </ul>
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**Marketing**

Once GLISA was formed, its main goal was to attract as many participants as possible. The marketing campaign—images in promotional material and the media—featured a number of gay white males, a handful of white women and only one racially diverse woman, all of whom were clad in sports attire.<sup>17</sup> The fun and engaging campaign, plastered across Montreal and other major North America cities, encouraged many to participate in the Games without rethinking the image of gayness. Considering Mosco’s (1996) understanding of audience commodity, the images of half-naked white males are the reflection of the gay and lesbian commodity who consumes the image and have some influence on the representation which inevitably limits access to alternative images.

**Tourisme Montréal**

Strong efforts on behalf of Tourism Montréal positioned the gay community as welcomed tourists in the city. At first glance, including the LGTBQ market segment, the tourism discourse creates the illusion that its constituents are part of a national discourse that prides itself on including the community as part of its success. In other words, members of this community are regarded as individuals with the economic power to

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix B for the entire marketing campaign

make decisions based on discourses that reflect their belief systems. In return, this economy contributes to the nation, or in this case, the city, allowing it to invest in other types of projects. These projects, however, will not necessarily reflect the initial investment, as they may be redirected to other projects that may or may not support the LGTBQ community.

Tourisme Montréal recognized the economic opportunities that the Games would generate. Since 2004, it has included the economic benefits of the Games in its annual report. Pierre Bellerose, Tourisme Montréal's Vice President, Public Relations, Research and Development, indicated in his analysis that: "Mise à jour de plusieurs analyses de marchés cibles dont une refonte importante sur le marché gai et publication des résultats sur le site Internet" (Tourisme Montréal 2004, 13). Interestingly, 2004 was the same year that GLISA announced it would create the first World OutGames, after disagreements with the FGG over finances which drastically reduced the number of participants. The LGTBQ community, as a market, defined itself through behavioural shopping patterns, tending to choose commodities that would ultimately recognize its lifestyle.<sup>18</sup> Carmen Ciotola, Vice President, Communications Marketing, confirmed Tourisme Montréal's position toward the industry and its relationship with consumers, stating: "En 2004... Tourisme Montréal change de cap et adopte, dans la foulée de la plus importante campagne hivernale de son histoire, une stratégie marketing misant essentiellement sur la relation avec le consommateur" (Tourisme Montréal 2004, 6).

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<sup>18</sup> Katherine Sender (2005) argues that the entire LGTB community is considered in this market. She defines the Other within this same community as taxonomies that are not reflected in most advertisements geared towards representing the LGTB community. On the other hand, Alexandra Chasin (2000) identifies behavioural spending patterns within existing institutions such as Disney's Gay Days.

Tourisme Montréal's annual reports also indicate that in 2005 its strategic orientation recognized the success of building a stronger social relationship with the LGTBQ community, since it was the major focus for the upcoming year. Jacques Parisien, President, Board of Directors, and Charles Lapointe, President and Chief Executive Officer, both agreed that the OutGames was a major "upturn in the industry" as no other city in North America, especially in Canada, could offer the vitality and experience of the Games in Montreal. In comparison with 2004, Quebec tourism rose 0.2%, and their spending power increased by 3.4%, indicating that hosting major sporting events such as the FINA World Aquatic Championships had the potential to boost the province's economy (Tourisme Montréal 2004, 8). These results supported their 2006 brand image initiatives, including major campaigns, which were divided into sub-categories, one of which was identified as gay. That said, the LGTBQ was no longer just an audience; it had become a tangible market whose identity would be shaped for the tourism industry.

That same year, the communications and marketing strategy included a \$500,000 "gay campaign to promote the OutGames in Montréal in 2006" as one of its four major promotional campaigns (Tourisme Montréal 2004, 11). This same strategy provided the initiative to sponsor a float in the gay pride parades in New York City, San Francisco, Sydney and Toronto, and to host the conference on Gay Tourism in Montréal. However, as indicated in the 2004 annual report, Tourisme Montréal's efforts to attract the LGTB community and to create a new community based around the Games, were not particularly successful; indeed, the expected attendance had dropped from 85,000 in 2004 to 72,000 in 2005 (Tourisme Montreal 2005, 4).

## Discussion

When Mosco (2009) talked about the commodification of content, he made clear that the process isn't simply about producing and reproducing text and images but rather using content, and its surplus values, to create monopolies, strengthen a corporation's position in the market, and engage consumers in a singular brand. As he states:

Capital also aims to control consumer markets through a range of tactics that amount to achieving the status of the "natural" or taken-for-granted provider of a product. These include building a market monopoly or controlling an oligopoly arrangement, using advertising to create brand identification with the company, and diversifying its product line to achieve the flexibility to overcome changes in the market demand. The ability to realize surplus value also depends on the extent to which consumers are able to resist, a consideration that depends on its history of collective action and the general social conditions that enable or retard the ability of consumers to substitute products and services (Mosco 2009, 135).

The statement about consumers being able to resist or substitute products is of particular interest for this discussion as it highlights how relationships between corporations, such as the sponsors at the games, and people, like the athletes at the Games and gay and lesbian communities, are naturalized. With that in mind, if a larger audience is consuming the Games, how can the Games ensure that there are no other substitutes?

While there are two bodies, the FGG and GLISA, that provide international sporting events to gay and lesbians, there is no official monopoly. Considering that commodification is a process, the idea of corporate involvement at the Games suggests that a monopoly could eventually be created. The Games were held because sponsors allocated enough funds and resources to run the show. But considering the size, location of some sponsors (i.e., Tourisme Montréal, *The Jamaica OutPost*, Duizendpoot, and *Têtu*) and their distribution, the Games' brand was to transcend boundaries, capturing the attention of gay men and lesbians around the world. The general tendency is to jump

immediately to spatialization, meaning looking at overcoming space and time to communicate, but in this case, sponsors are seeking to gain more profits from a larger pool of audiences. Understanding distribution is instrumental to understand the impact that corporations have on creating consciousness.

Commodification is about creating surplus value as well as the creation of messages that shape consciousness. While the latter is done by “producing messages that reflect the interest of capital,” (Mosco 2009, 134), the ability to disseminate ideology, in this case the white gay hard-bodied male, through the various sponsors’ distribution system, allows for the message to reach segmented audiences, also known as “segments of capital” (Mosco 2009, 134).

The points of connection between the content and the distribution are critical elements to the production and reproduction of ideology. By manipulating, packaging, and repackaging the Games for segmented audiences, such as tourists, ideology can be reproduced as a collective for each individual regardless of their different environment. In a global environment, it is easier for corporations in the tourism industry to package the information in order to attract tourists. In the case of the Games, the tourism industry played a crucial part in sustaining the reproduction of homonormative culture around the world by being able to distribute the message to segmented audiences, who at the Games, were one.

That being said, with the help of sponsors, the Games ensure that there are a limited number of substitutes available to gay and lesbian communities around the world. In addition, by capturing the imagination of these audiences, corporations create the gay and lesbian commodity which can then be used in other situations to increase profit.

While the Games have an end date, new relationships between corporations and the gay and lesbian commodity will continue to grow, benefiting one while silencing the other.

### **International Conference on LGBT Human Rights**

The Games hosted an International Conference on LGBT Human Rights from July 26 to July 29, 2006 at the Palais des Congrès located in the heart of Old Montreal, a tourist destination.<sup>19</sup> Scheduled just before the opening ceremonies, athletic and cultural competitions, the Conference gave way to a more serious tone amidst the festivities, tackling issues such as gender, globalization, and diversity. As the first of its kind, the Conference provided common ground and a starting point to discuss issues that touch all humans, particularly, those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered/transsexual.

Discussions about homophobia were focused around five distinct themes, including essential human rights, global awareness, diversity of the LGBTQ community, society's participation, and creating social change. They are crucial elements to discussing homophobia and actions that individuals, corporations, and governments can act upon. The anticipated results of the conference were: "to support the uphill battles being fought from every corner of the globe to our very own backyards, and to establish bona fide recognition of the basic rights of the LGBTQ community, which remains still too often marginalized." Coupled with the Games, whose objective was to promote the LGBTQ agenda in sports, the Conference focused on the need for activism directed at governments.

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<sup>19</sup> For the purpose of length, from this point forward, I will refer to the International Conference on LGBT Human Rights as Conference.

While the Conference was organized by four full-time employees on the Games' organizing committee, there was a separate committee, comprised of lawyers, researchers, activists, journalists, and representatives of trade unions, that moderated the meetings and determined the purpose and themes for the Conference ([http://www.montreal2006.info/en\\_FAQ\\_conference.html](http://www.montreal2006.info/en_FAQ_conference.html)).

During the Conference, keynote speakers included Louise Arbour, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; Mark Tewksbury, Olympic athlete, gold medal winner and the Games' Co-President; Gérald Tremblay, City of Montreal Mayor; Yvon Marcoux, Minister of Justice (Canada); Martin Cauchon, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada (Canada); and Martina Navratilova, former tennis champion. While these keynote speakers presented at either the opening or closing remarks, other speakers from around the world spoke at each workshop.

The Conference allowed for discussions amongst various cultures who want to change certain policies that negatively affect lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual/transgendered people. Situated in the commercialness of the Games, the Conference allowed the silenced voices of gays and lesbians to speak out on substantial human rights issues. As a result, members of the Conference created the Declaration of Montreal, a guiding document that governments can refer to with respect to human rights and LGBT issues.



## **The Declaration of Montreal**

The need to discuss sexual identity has never been greater than it is today considering the impact of the commodification of gay and lesbian communities and its impact on activism. As part of a larger vision, the Games promoted an international conference on human rights, where issues of information, sexuality, and globalization intersected with experiences from around the world. The dialogue and discussion, held within a world event, raised even more questions regarding the commodification of the gay and lesbian community. While the International Human Rights Conference might have been positioned within a world-class sporting event, it nonetheless produced the Declaration of Montreal, a visionary document that structures the need for more discussion between the gay, lesbian, trans and queer communities, and the heterosexual community. The Declaration is broken down into specific sections that address existing concerns within international sports policies and international human rights policies, as well as existing issues between gay and lesbian communities.

The overall purpose of the Declaration is to urge governments to include lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans human rights on their agenda, either at the national level or with non-governmental organizations, or both. Moreover, it calls attention to women's rights within a larger LGBT community, including racial and ethnic minorities and transgender individuals.

The Declaration is divided in five sections including Essential Rights, Global Issues, The Diverse LGBT Community, Participation in Society, and Creating Social Change. Each section identifies issues that can be resolved through legal systems, government intervention and market intervention. There are 75 countries that continue to

uphold laws criminalizing homosexuality regardless of privacy violations. From a global perspective, the issue of privacy is also debated as more and more gay men and lesbians seek refuge in places where sexual democracy is lived. For example, the AIDS epidemic in Africa is a platform to create awareness and inform gay men and women about safe same-sex sexual relations; however, in countries where homosexuality is punishable by law or death, awareness campaigns are not possible. The Declaration states:

Criminalizing sexual activity between men, and banning freedom of expression for LGBT groups, still common practices in some countries, have a directly detrimental effect on the prevention of HIV/AIDS. Access to information, adequate health services, and the elimination of violence and discrimination are crucial for both the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS.

The Declaration would like to see countries that uphold laws against homosexuality engage in conversation about the governments' role in creating and sustaining change for not just the LGBT community but for the entire nation.

Gender and sexual diversity has come under the radar as a space for improvement. Like global issues, it focuses on the Other, such as women, trans communities, religious groups, and geographical location without mentioning the white gay male. The Declaration states:

We must fight discrimination within our own ranks. We cannot tolerate sexism and racism inside our movement. We are Muslims, Christians, Jews, non-believers, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and humanists. Among us, we have every form of disability, members of every age group, and members of every social and economic class (Declaration of Montreal).

As agents of social change, the Games, the International Conference, and the Declaration call upon government, corporations, and various other institutions to support and protect the rights of LGBT communities and individuals, but they forget how the agenda might be changed through various partnerships. There are numerous governing bodies and

political parties that joined GLISA in defending the rights of LGBTQ individuals and communities. These include elected bodies, parliaments, city councils, political parties and other various organizations (see Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3 – Organization that adopted the Declaration of Montreal**

<b>Types of organization</b>	<b>Names of organizations</b>
<b>Elected Bodies</b>	The Borough Council of Downtown Montréal (Conseil d'Arrondissement Ville-Marie) The City Council of Montréal The City Council of Brighton (UK) The City Council of San Francisco (US) City Council of Barcelona (Spain) City Council of Denver (US)
<b>Parliaments</b>	House of Commons, Canada
<b>City Councils</b>	Berlin, Germany Copenhagen, Denmark Mexico City, Mexico Munich, Germany Porto Alegre, Brazil Sao Paulo, Brazil Auckland, New Zealand
<b>Political Parties</b>	New Democratic Party, Canada New Democratic Party, Québec branch Bloc Québécois, Canada
<b>Others</b>	FNV, the largest trade union confederation in the Netherlands ABVAKABO FNV, the largest public services trade union in the Netherlands 'Schools Out' [UK] British Columbia (Canada) Government and Service Employees' Union

By adopting the Declaration, as a reference tool, within their own constituency, the governments and organizations agreed to consider gay and lesbian issues as human rights and work to change existing discriminatory policies against sexual orientation.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> There are no literature or reports that indicate if they have used the Declaration to affect change in policy.

## Discussion

Thus far, this thesis has examined the process of commodification and corporate involvement in shaping consciousness. More to the point, it looked at the gay and lesbian's overwhelming reliance on the market to secure their survival. As a result, queers want to destabilize identities created by market influence (Duggan 2002, Gamson 1995). Creating an alternative to commodification in public life, as Mosco explains, is "One way to address the problem ... [and] define the public sphere as a set of social processes that carry out democracy, namely advancing equality and the fullest possible participation in the complete range of economic, political, social, and cultural decision-making" (Mosco 2009, 152).<sup>21</sup> Democracy, being one of the debatable concepts through commodification, is put to the test when finding alternatives to commodification in that it questions if democracy, as understood by society today, is a product of corporations rather than civic participation.

With respect to commodification, the International Conference on LGBT Human Rights acts as an alternative to the commodification in the public life in that it questions the current understanding of gay identity, and a multitude of other identities, as the reproduction of patriarchal structure. It looks at finding ways to negotiate gay identity within existing structures like governments without the intervention of corporations. It is a shift that results in examining the notion of democracy within multiple gay and lesbian discourses in media and culture.

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<sup>21</sup> Alternatives to commodification in the public life are not to be confused with the process to decommodify, as Mosco explains: "[decommodification] involves the creation of social policies and programs to protect the economic existence of social actors, in the ranks of both capital and labor, including those who are by and large incapable or unable to participate in commodification" (Mosco 2009, 147). In alternative commodification, players do not want to participate in commodification whereas in decommodification, players can't participate in labour.

While the use of media to advance the case for change identified at the conference is not mentioned in any documents, considerable thought can be placed in examining the use of alternative media to disseminate queer discourse without silencing anyone. Unlike some queer theorists like Gamson (1995) and Bourcier (2001) who examine the effects of commodification on queer identity, Mosco alludes to the production of the alternative press, and the production of culture through the alternative press, public service broadcasting or networked communities. There is one clarification to be made in alternative commodification, which is that while the content may be alternative, often public media may be dependant on government subsidies or other distribution networks.

So far, the direct impact of commodification of the Games has unfortunately changed individual experience into bland collective experience. The white gay male, as the Games advertising suggests, continues to be the gay face in the mainstream, which conceals the disconnect between various gay and lesbian communities. As events like the Games promote a reclaiming of sexuality, the examination of discourse becomes more strenuous, as it now encompasses institutions and structure, in addition to content and image.

To summarize, the divide between the FGG and Montreal's local organizing committee created tension, much like the tension between various gay and lesbian communities in a globalized world. As more information about gay experience becomes readily available through the media, identity is becoming more structured and less fluid. With globalization seeking to structure gay and lesbian communities around the world, they are also feeling the effect, as more gay institutions are created, and/or align

themselves with corporations. Gay politics is becoming increasingly acceptable, but the issue of how information is directed from gay communities and disseminated in mainstream society remains.

The creation of a homonormative culture is in large part due to the dissemination of images via media technology, which ultimately affects discourse and, as Joshua Gamson (1995) illustrates, divides a community on the basis of accessibility. Though the debate over this divide focused primarily on past and current financial issues, it also reflects the current debates between mainstream gay and lesbian communities and those who consider themselves to be the “Other”, or queer, economic subjects.

The ambiguities between visibility and market, in the case of the Games, allow certain gaps and tensions between communities to linger, such as the limiting of dialogue between diverse groups within the community. While the Games offered a platform for diverse racial, gender and economic communities to communicate among themselves, use of the Internet significantly changed the face of the Games, from a grassroots social-political initiative to a market-driven enterprise.

As gay institutions find themselves separating gay and lesbian communities, the question of human rights extends itself as a universal platform, blurring the boundaries of identity. The next chapter focuses on media representation of the Games, examined from three different venues: mainstream media, alternative media, and gay media.

## **Chapter Four: Content Analysis**

This chapter will look at the relationship between the representation of the Games in local commercial newspapers in Montreal and the reproduction of the gay and lesbian commodity. First, this chapter provides a brief overview of the local commercial newspaper industry in Montreal including ownership and distribution. Second, this chapter will focus on media content of the Games situated in six newspapers distributed in Montreal. Finally, this chapter will explore the effects of media content as it packages and repackages the gay and lesbian commodity for the masses reading pleasure. It's a question of survival for a community whose increasing visibility is being shadowed by corporations.

Mosco's approach to commodification suggests that first media, as an agent, enables cultural change, manipulates, packages and repackages content for profitability (Mosco 2009, 133). Specifically, in today's media industry, conglomerates, regardless of their size and the number of channels that distribute messages and content, limit the number of voices and opinions. Secondly, the role of media in commodification processes facilitate to naturalize relationships between people and products by creating desire and shaping consciousness. Therefore, the issue with media as an agent of culture change is that rather than promoting change, it perpetuates current ideologies, sustaining hegemony in society all in the name of profit.

Commodification of content refers to the idea of creating, packaging, and repackaging bits of information into a meaningful product for a mass audience. For media conglomerates like Disney, commodification of content means turning a story into

a movie, into video, and into merchandise in order to make more profits and create other stories, venture into new business lines, and even acquire other media corporations like ESPN. But as people get used to the same old product, what type of content is worth commodifying? Or better yet, how does commodification of content impact relationships between what is radically different and the mainstream?

In many ways, the Games are the perfect example to look at the commodification of content as the prime subject, gay and lesbian communities, are those that are marginalized yet desperately seeking approval from the mainstream. The Games garnered substantial media coverage between July 31<sup>st</sup> and August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006 (when the event was held) and increased the visibility of the gay and lesbian community in many local commercial newspapers in Montreal. While considering Mosco's understanding of commodification of content, how does content provide a fair and equitable representation of the Games and sexuality in sports if the media industry is interested in expanding its market?

The first section of this chapter provides a brief overview of the print media industry in Montreal. As suggested earlier, media conglomerates have a larger share of the market and can thus influence a larger audience with its content. This section identifies ownership of print media and information about circulation and audience demographics.

The second section, with quantitative and qualitative analysis, looks at how three types of print media: commercial mainstream media, free weeklies (print), and gay print media that covered the Games. The print media selected for the analysis are: mainstream media: *La Presse*, *The Gazette*, *Journal de Montréal*, and *Le Devoir*; Free Weeklies:



*Voir*, *The Mirror*, *Hour*, and *Ici*; and Gay media: *Fugues* and *Outsports.com*. The qualitative section looks at specific quotes and ideas themed around gender and heteronormativity.

The final section of this chapter offers a brief discussion about content as a way to create and sustain ideologies and values. More importantly, this section will look at issues of homonormativity as a result of commodification of content. It provides a discussion between commodification processes, the perpetuation of gay and lesbian commodities, and a call for queer activism.

### **Types of Print Media**

In order to initiate a discussion amongst different types of media, I have selected three distinct types of newspapers to engage the topic of commodification of content: mainstream print newspapers, free weeklies, and gay media. To carefully categorize each type of media, I have based their characteristics on a set of criteria: intended audience, distribution, and resource allocation (advertisers). While the criteria work hand-in-hand, they define each type of newspaper by creating their niche audience.

Mainstream media, or agenda-setting media (Chomsky 1997), typically have print editions most days of the week. Mainstream newspapers can be purchased at stores, distribution machines, or through subscription. Because of the size of the audience, the price for advertising space is quite high, leaving only high-profit organizations to purchase space.

Free weekly newspapers differ from mainstream in that their audience is smaller and targeted. For example, *Hour* and *The Mirror* discuss culture and political issues that

are important to a small urban demographic rather than the masses. The price of advertising is usually smaller, if not free, considering its distribution pattern, the size of audience, and the large amount of local sponsors. Interestingly, their distribution points are random, including street stands, stands in cultural venues like local cinemas and movie complexes, and local coffee shops.

Finally, gay media have a specific audience in mind, the gay and lesbian population. Some advertisers cater to both heterosexuals and homosexuals, like design companies and real estate, but may have different images to represent gay sensitivities. For example, Groupe Carreaux Céragrès Inc., a tile and ceramic company, has advertisements in magazines like *La Voix de l'homme* with two men sharing a bath, while the same product is advertised in *Décormag* with a man, woman, and two children in a beautifully renovated kitchen.<sup>22</sup> The distribution of gay media is usually located in a defined set of geographic boundaries like Montreal's gay village.

These various types of media have distinct criteria all of which are part of the media industry. While content often reflects current affairs, put together, they offer an interesting dialogue, one where contested issues are debated in their own corners. As a contribution to culture, they reflect a democratic process where different points of view are available to different audiences.

### **Media Ownership**

With more media rapidly disseminating information around the world, authoritative media like print and television, create and shape public opinion on politics

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<sup>22</sup> This example stems from my own experiences while working as a marketing officer with Groupe Carreaux Céragrès Inc., in 2005.

and policy. It is in part because of its content but it is also attributed to the fact that media conglomerates repackage information to distribute it through various channels to various locations. Establishing a system of distribution not only ensures that content reaches a larger audience but also warrants a discussion about the impact of content distribution on democracy.

Table 4.0 provides a brief overview of ownership patterns of media used for the content analysis.

**Table 4.0 –Ownership of Media Sample**

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Owner</b>
The Gazette	Canwest	Asper family
La Presse	Gesca – a division of Power Corporation of Canada	James Burn and Michael Pitfield
Le Devoir	Independent	Independent
Le Journal de Montréal	Québecor	Pierre Karl Péladeau
Hour	Communications Voir Inc.	Pierre Paquet
The Mirror	Québecor	Pierre Karl Péladeau
Ici	Québecor	Pierre Karl Péladeau
Fugues	Editions Nitram Inc.	Editors: Réal Lefebvre and Maurice Nadeau
Outsports.com	Independent (Website)	Cyd Zeigler Jr. and Jim Buzinsky

Each newspaper has its own unique flair to present content depending on its audience. As indicated above, Québecor owns three of the newspapers, whereas Canwest, another considerable media conglomerate in Canada, only owns one newspaper used for this study. Most newspapers above are part of a conglomerate and therefore can produce content and redistribute it amongst its other media partners. For example, CanWest owns The Gazette, as well as the Ottawa Citizen, and therefore The Gazette shares its stories with the Ottawa Citizen, increasing the distribution of content. Some of the content of the Games appeared in both The Gazette and the Ottawa Citizen. The next

section will provide a more in-depth, yet brief, overview of CanWest's, Québecor, and Gesca's holdings.<sup>23</sup>

Canwest Global Communications Corporation<sup>24</sup> is based in Canada, its biggest financial holding, and has other holdings in various countries in the world including Australia, New Zealand, and Turkey. It owns radio, newspaper, television (its most profitable area of production), and outdoor advertising. In 2006, its consolidated revenue was \$2,878,625,000 CAD in which Canada represented 66.5% of its revenues (CanWest Annual Report 2006, 2). In Canada, CanWest owns the following newspapers: *National Post*, *Calgary Herald*, *Edmonton Journal*, *The Gazette*, *Regina Leader-Post*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *The StarPhoenix*, *The Time-Colonist*, *Windsor Star*, in addition to three Newspaper Groups (*Pacific Press Newspaper Group*, *The Van Net Newspaper Group*, and *Vancouver Island Newspaper Group*)

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_assets\\_owned\\_by\\_Canwest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_assets_owned_by_Canwest)).<sup>25</sup> While there is no clear indication of CanWest's political views, political inclination in content suggest that Izzy Asper, the owner now deceased, had a strong relationship with the Liberal Party of Canada ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_assets\\_owned\\_by\\_Canwest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_assets_owned_by_Canwest)).

Québecor's head office is located in Montreal and its holdings are all in Canada. In 2006, Québecor had holdings in television, print, radio, and telecommunications. In

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<sup>23</sup> The Gazette, Journal de Montréal, and La Presse contributed the most news coverage about the Games therefore providing a better example of the possible distribution points of content. As for Le Devoir, it is a unique type of newspaper in that it is independent but has strong political affiliations, as it was a newspaper created in 1910 by Henri Bourassa, French Canadian political leader. Le Devoir, Les Éditions Nitram, Communications Voir Inc. and Outsports.com do not have an annual report to share.

<sup>24</sup> The information contained in this section stems from their 2006 Annual Report. In late 2009, CanWest entered creditor bankruptcy protection. In spring 2010, Shaw Communications as well as Goldman Sachs Capital Partners signed a deal to acquire full control of CanWest's broadcasting holdings. Currently, the deal is pending approval.

<sup>25</sup> Considering that this thesis only looks at print media, I have chosen to only examine their newspaper holding.

2006, they reported \$9,822,100,000 CAD in revenues (Québecor Annual Report 2006, 4). From that, newspapers represented \$928,200,000 CAD in revenues (Québecor Annual Report 2006, 51). Under the division of SunMedia Inc., Québecor owns the following newspapers<sup>26</sup>: *Toronto Sun*, *Ottawa Sun*, *Winnipeg Sun*, *Calgary Sun*, *Edmonton Sun*, *London Free Press*, *Le Journal de Montréal*, *Le Journal de Québec*, *Le Journal de Trois-Rivières*, *The Recorder and Times*, *Daily Herald Tribune*, *Stratford Beacon Herald*, *St. Thomas Times-Journal*, *Fort McMurray Today*, *Daily Miner and News*, *Daily Graphic*, *Simcoe Reformer*, *Woodstock Sentinel Review*, *24H*.

Aside from Gesca Ltée, Power Corporation Canada owns few media. In 2009, it reported revenue earnings of \$33,152,000,000 but does not report Gesca's contribution (Power Corporation Canada 2009, 1). Gesca Ltée owns *La Presse* as well as six other newspapers in Québec and Ontario: *La Voix de l'est*, *La Tribune*, *Le Nouvelliste*, *Le Droit*, *Le Soleil*, and *Le Quotidien*.

### **Circulation and Demographics**

All selected newspapers were chosen due to their audience demographics and circulation. In order to assess size and scope of the newspaper, included is a brief overview of their circulation and demographics (see Table 4.1).

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<sup>26</sup> The list represents Québecor's ownership of print media in 2006. In 2007, Québecor bought Osprey Media including its newspaper holdings.

**Table 4.1 – Circulation and demographics**

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Circulation (per week)</b>	<b>Demographics</b>
The Gazette	97 265	Gender: 56% Men, 44% Women Biggest Age Group: 35-44 (23%) Income: 60K -75K (47%) <sup>27</sup>
La Presse	797 700	Gender: 54% Men, 46% Women Biggest Age Group: 24-54 (58%) Income: 75K (54%) <sup>28</sup>
Le Devoir	349 000	Gender: 58% Men, 42% Women Biggest Age Group: 50-64 (28%) Income: average \$44K <sup>29</sup>
Le Journal de Montréal	615 000	Gender: 46 % Men, 36 % Women Biggest Age Group: 25.-34 (94%) Income: less than \$50K (102%) <sup>30</sup>
Hour	55 000 <sup>31</sup>	n/a
The Mirror	Unavailable	Unavailable
Ici	Unavailable – no longer published	Unavailable – no longer published
Fugues	50 000	Gender: 76% Men, 24% Women Biggest Age Group: 18-45 (70%) Income: 60K-95K (48%) <sup>32</sup>
Outsports.com	Number of visitors: unavailable	Gender: unavailable Biggest Age Group:25-34 (41%) Income: 35K-60K (90%)

Newspaper content reflects culture, whether readers agree, disagree, or are neutral about the issues. The Games raised many issues in communications, such as commodification, sexuality and globalization. The promotion of the event to other audiences created a dialogue between the gay and lesbian communities and heterosexuals, and this brought sexuality into the public sphere. Regardless of the Games' financial troubles, media tended to consider and position the Games as a key feature in gay and lesbian communities, ultimately affecting the politics of visibility. As

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.montrealgazette.com/about-montreal-gazette/advertising/audience/reach-readership.html>

<sup>28</sup> Media Kit, La Presse.

<sup>29</sup> Media Kit, Le Devoir.

<sup>30</sup> Media Kit, Le Journal de Montreal.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.hour.ca/kitmedia/specifications.aspx>

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.fugues.com/DATA/Media/1\\_1.pdf](http://www.fugues.com/DATA/Media/1_1.pdf)

mainstream, alternative and gay media treated the event differently, the Games became a vehicle to discuss sexuality in sports, a heteronormative context. Different media industries, however, positioned the Games as a space where sexuality was more important than performance.

### **Mainstream Media**

Mainstream media is often defined in terms of circulation, but it can also be understood in terms of content and its readers, or, more specifically, as a reflection of the mass public (Warner, 2002). The collective rhetoric that generates mainstream media allows ideas to be discussed by the public, presenting information regarding politics, culture and economy. Editorials, advertisements, letters to the editor and even the classifieds create public discourse, and their dissemination and accessibility determine the size of the public. In staying aligned with its owner, its public and its advertisers, mainstream media reflects existing patriarchal and heteronormative values, and still treats gayness as the Other.

This thesis analyzes coverage of the Games by four mainstream newspapers, *La Presse*, *The Gazette*, *Le Journal de Montreal*, and *Le Devoir*. These newspapers were selected in part because of the heavy corporate advertising that sustain their existence. Also, these newspapers are part of a larger media conglomerate and therefore other newspapers within the conglomerate can use their content. While the analysis does focus on the use of content by other newspapers in the same conglomerate, all have the ability to share within their own family. The issue is not content production but rather its distribution to other audiences across Canada.

Table 4.2 illustrates the number of articles written about the Games in *La Presse*, *The Gazette*, *Le Devoir*, and *Journal de Montréal*. The results are also divided by theme: athletic performance or controversial nature, such as two men kissing. As Table 4.1 illustrates, athletic performance is reported far less than the sexual nature of the Games. On one hand, this suggests that heteronormative values still exist in sports pages, despite the Games' influence. On the other hand, it leads to a broader discussion of sexuality gaining new territory, such as sports and its global impact.

**Table 4.2 - Mainstream coverage of the Games**

	<b>La Presse</b>	<b>Le Journal de Montréal</b>	<b>Le Devoir</b>	<b>The Gazette</b>
Number of articles	6	5	11	9
Number of articles that mention athletic performance	1	5	0	3
Number of articles that mention sexuality	5	2	11	6
Number of articles in the sports section	0	3	0	2
Number of articles in the front section	6	2	11	7

An example of an article that mentions athletic performances: “Athletes skate through fog on ice during Montreal’s heatwave” (Sutherland 2006, A.9) An example of an article that mentions sexuality is: “Homophobia rampant in men’s sports” (Hickey 2006, D.1).

The scope of the content of the articles published in *La Presse*, *The Gazette*, *Le Devoir*, and *Journal de Montréal* was limited to understanding gay athletes from a cultural perspective. The athletic performance discussion was limited and did not offer any perspective on gay athletes. Rather, it focused on the logistics of the events and the



few kisses between same-sex individuals. In contrast to the mainstream media, *Voir*, *Hour*, *The Mirror*, and *Ici*'s articles debated the idea of sexuality within sports but did not offer any perspective on athletic performance.

### Free Weeklies

Free weeklies were selected in large part to examine the production of content in media that had a different distribution system and also one that reached an urban audience.

Table 4.3 illustrates coverage of the Games by *Voir*, the *Mirror*, *Hour*, and *Ici*. In general, the lack of media coverage could be due to a number of factors, including the tendency of gay and lesbian communities to move toward mainstream media to gain visibility, or simply because mainstream sponsors infiltrated a political movement, rendering the outcome less political.

**Table 4.3 – Free weeklies coverage of the Games**

	<b>Voir (Montréal)</b>	<b>Ici</b>	<b>Hour</b>	<b>Mirror</b>
Number of articles	1	1	2	1
Number of articles that mention athletic performance	0	0	0	0
Number of articles that mention sexuality	0	0	2	1
Number of articles in the sports section	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Number of articles in the front section	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

An example of an article that mentions sexuality was: “An Outgames audience member holds drag queen Dolly Bellefleur aloft as she belts out tunes at last Saturday’s festivities in Viger Square.” (Granosky 2006, D.1).

The limited coverage of the Games in free weeklies can be analyzed from two different perspectives. First, the commodification of gay and lesbian communities has created the “just like everyone” syndrome, where differences and alternative lifestyles are replaced by a set of seemingly heteronormative values. The recognition of gay and lesbian communities is based on advertisers’ investment, and their new understanding of sub-culture capital. Second, as corporations and industries increasingly shape gay identities, the need for an alternative-based identity is becoming less important.

Moving gay and lesbian communities and identities from alternative to mainstream—in other words, the effects of its commodification—puts a strain on the alternative media if they continue to rely on political and cultural movements. Commodification of identities is steering the radical movement toward conservative representation, and removing alternatives from the equation.

### **Gay Media**

As globalization affects gay and lesbian identities in media, the gay and lesbian media industry is also impacted. This aspect of the research concentrated on two venues of gay media: *Fugues* (print) and Outsports.com (online). Table 4.4 illustrates the breakdown of the findings. As both outlets claim to represent gay and lesbian identity, the diverse representation in text and image, and the lack thereof, raise substantial discussion about homonormativity in local and global contexts.

**Table 4.4 – Gay Media Coverage of the Games**

	<b>Fugues</b>	<b>Outsports</b>
Number of articles	6	70
Number of articles that mention athletic performance	1	38
Number of articles that mention sexuality	5	21
Number of articles in the sports section <sup>33</sup>	n/a	n/a
Number of articles in the front section <sup>34</sup>	n/a	n/a

Here is an example, found in *Outsports*, that speaks of athletic performance: “and who decided to join the B-division tennis tournament about a month ago, is through to the quarterfinals after a 7-5, 6-1 victory in the round of 16” (Zeigler 2006, <http://www.outsports.com/outgames/802.htm>). As for articles that mention sexuality: “While Cyprus decriminalized homosexuality in order to join the European Union, the culture has not caught up to the law” (Zeigler 2006, <http://www.outsports.com/outgames/801.htm>)

*Fugues* provides a local perspective to gays and lesbians in Montreal, while *Outsports.com* offers a global perspective of media, with an emphasis on events in North America. In both cases, athletic performance was no more than a lead-in to more serious and pressing issues surrounding gay identity in sports around the world.

<sup>33</sup> There are no figures for placement of articles since *Fugues* does not have a sports section and *Outsports.com* is an on-line newspaper.

<sup>34</sup> There are no figures for placement of articles since *Fugues* does not have a sports section and *Outsports.com* is an on-line newspaper.

## **Qualitative Analysis**

As quantitative research indicates the number of articles published in the mainstream, free, and gay media, qualitative analysis highlights emerging issues regarding the Games and sexuality. Understanding media structures and relationships is undeniably important, and sheds light on describing the dilemma of democracy that exists within the pages of newspapers, television shows, and radio programs. In fact, Schiller (1973) suggests that mass media are often taken as telling the truth to its audiences. Yet while technology becomes readily available and accessible, the truth becomes obsolete.

Qualitative analysis questions the role of media in creating messages, too often to be believed as truth. The same selection of media was used for qualitative as well as quantitative analysis. Two major themes are apparent in the content from these sources: gender and heteronormativity.

Gender, as a theme, examines the relationship between the Games and gender, or the lack of women as participants and its various reasons. While the Games, as well as the Declaration of Montreal, invited more women to be active citizens in a space like the Games, the current belief that women in sports are all lesbians was challenged by journalists in light of the Games.

Heteronormativity speaks to Sender's (2005) comments about "just like everyone else," and activism. The need for such games created an interesting dialogue amongst all media as they questioned the role of pride events in today's society. Yet, media quoted many athletes who stated that events like these show mainstream and heterosexuals that homosexuals are "just like everyone one else." The dialogue in this case is not to show

that homosexuality exists but rather to illustrate that these Games and its participants, are no different than other sports events.

While these categories are identified for the purpose of this thesis, they are also the three major concepts that affect gay and lesbian studies, as well as queer theory. Indeed, they are not only entry points to discuss sexuality and heterosexism from the gay, lesbian and queer perspectives, but they also lead to the examination of homonormativity, and the abstraction of diversity within gay and lesbian communities.

## **Gender**

Articles reflecting gender issues were selected from all types of media but only from the category of articles that speak of sexuality. In her book, Sender (2005) briefly discusses the inequalities that exist in lesbian publishing. Gender inequalities are still prevalent in sports, regardless of the many advances made by women. Associations like the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) discuss the discrimination faced by women in amateur and professional sport. With regard to sexuality, inequities in sport rely on the heterosexist belief that men involved in sports are straight, while women are lesbians. Ariane Lacoursière, *La Presse's* only female journalist, wrote a major article on women in sports, in which she opened the debate of sexuality and gender by stating: "Qu'elles soient lesbienne ou hétéros, les sportives sont souvent perçues comme des garçons manqués et étiquetées comme homosexuelles" (Lacoursière 2006). As lesbian identity is often equated to masculine tendencies, the real issue is that individuals must change their disposition

toward heteronormative values. She continues her argument by suggesting that the issue is not lesbians, but rather gender standards and expectations:

Certaines filles doivent faire semblant d'être hétéros, sous peine de voir leurs commanditaires arrêter de les financer. Les commanditaires paient pour que les filles dégagent de la féminité. Pour continuer d'évoluer dans leur sport, ces athlètes doivent se plier à cette image, ce qui met beaucoup de pression (Lacoursière 2006).

The need to meet certain identity expectations is discussed throughout the remainder of her article, and highlights organizations like CAAWS who promote gender equity in sport.

Lacoursière's (2006) argument about sponsorships also reflects what gay athletes Mark Tewkesbury (2006), Billy Bean (2002) and David Kopay (1977) argue in their autobiographies. Corporate sponsors hesitate to support any athlete who may not effectively represent their brand to a conservative audience. Pierre Foglia (2006) also comments on women's participation, or lack thereof, due to economic reasons: "Trop peu de femmes à ces Outgames, il semble qu'il soit plus difficile de s'afficher comme lesbienne que comme gay, trop peu de jeune aussi. Mais ici la raison est économique." (Foglia 2006) His comments reveal another important aspect of political economy and feminist theory, by discussing the unpaid labour by women who directly contribute to the Game's success (Meehan 2000, 2002).

As gender movements searched for ways to break existing barriers, the Games took on the additional responsibility of breaking the gender and sexual barriers in heterosexist sport structures. Jeff Heinrich (2006) examines how the Games helped to include gender and sexual diversity in sports. He states:

It's also lesbian-friendly. The logo and colours of the Outgames are displayed large under the ice, the sound system between plays reverberates

with songs like YMCA and Celebrate, and, just like in gay and lesbian nightclubs, the washrooms—all painted blue—are equal access, men or women (Heinrich 2006).

Comparing gender equity in sports to washrooms is an argument that resonates through most gay and lesbian studies, suggesting that gay men have always had more visibility than lesbians.<sup>35</sup>

### **Heteronormativity**

Articles chosen to show issues of heteronormativity were found in all types of media and from both categories--articles that mentioned athletic performance and sexuality. Breaking down homophobic barriers in sports implies that heteronormative structures govern the industry. The Games, as a tourist destination for its participants, gives them the permission to be sexually liberated, yet to be “just like everyone else”, as Sender (2005) suggests, has been an unofficial slogan for most athletes.

As journalists and reporters made their writing available to readers, they suggested that most athletes want to be like everyone else, and that gay athletes will remain visible by their participation in the Games. “While the Outgames can be expected to generate an enormous amount of goodwill this week . . . nobody is expecting to be trampled by professional and elite amateur athletes rushing out of the closet” (Yates 2006). The tone David Yates (2006) uses, suggesting that the Games is a goodwill act, serves as the basis for this section.

Even considering the achievements by some gay and lesbian athletes in amateur and professional sports, homophobia will continue to exist. More importantly, the difference between homophobia and heteronormativity implies that heterosexual silence

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<sup>35</sup> See Sender (2005).

prevents gay athletes from performing to the best of their abilities. Yates (2006) states: “While times have changed since the 1980’s and there is more public acceptance of gay athletes . . . Demers [a professor at the Laval University] said the OutGames will have little, if any, impact on the treatment and perception of gay and lesbian athletes performing at top level” (Yates 2006). The silent impact of heteronormativity prevents athletes from reaching the top.

Corporate sponsorship affects the image of the Games. On one hand, it determines space, look and acceptable politics. On the other, it has shaped gay identity so much as to render it invisibly visible to heterosexuals; in other words, making them like everyone else. Reporters and journalists focused on this angle, telling readers that the sexual difference was minimal. Pat Hickey (2006) interviewed the Australian rowing team regarding their opinions of gay athletes:

. . . the OutGames provided the rowers a chance to combine competition with a chance to ‘get together with our brothers and sisters.’ Evans added the games provide an opportunity to show the general public ‘we’re like everyone else.’ We like to train and compete and have fun. We’ve been pretty quiet the last few nights because we had races coming up, but we’re Aussies and we’ll drink some beer tonight (Hickey 2006).

As athletes and entire gay and lesbian communities try to be “just like everyone else,” politics were abandoned to accommodate certain expectations that sustain heteronormativity, but create homonormative standards as well.

Anne Sutherland (2006) identified the true spirit of the games as being, “Total strangers who meet, bond and have a blast doing a sport.” (Sutherland 2006) Since the Games focus on gay identity, heterosexual participants are left behind, but they remain the true success stories as straight men and women who mingle with gay men and lesbians. Pierre Foglia (2006) highlighted the presence of straight men participating at the



Games, suggesting that a competition was simply a competition. More importantly, he ironically suggested that their participation is not groundbreaking, but merely a gem in the stone:

Martin Lacasse, 33 ans, entraîneur à l'Université de Sherbrooke, un petit look militaire – il l'est d'ailleurs. Militaire et hétéro. Il y est allé du refrain habituel sur le respect des différences et sur l'inclusion, à peu près dans les mêmes termes que dans les discours officiels, mais donnons-lui qu'il avait l'air très convaincu (Foglia 2006).

Inclusion in this case takes on new meaning, suggesting that including heterosexuals in a space like the Games can only advance gay politics faster and further. Foglia (2006) describes their support as a turning point in gay politics. However, it can also be detrimental to gay politics, by making them less political yet more accessible to the mainstream.

*The Mirror* was the only newspaper to present a queer perspective of the Games by suggesting the negative effect that it had on other marginalized groups like the homeless and sex workers. The AssPirates, a queer radical group, voiced its opinion about the Games often, but only *The Mirror* acknowledged it during the Games.<sup>36</sup> The content of the article, albeit short, explains how the Games displaced members of Montreal's community to make space for tourists and corporate logos:

'We want to draw attention to the negative impact the Outgames has on marginalized segments of the population, including street workers and the homeless,' says AssPirate Michael Reeson. Sex worker and homeless rights groups say police usually target prostitutes and homeless youth during tourist season, especially this summer, as the Outgames take over many of their traditional stomping grounds. Viger Square, now used as a fairground by the Outgames, was cleared of street youth ahead of the Games. (Lejtenyi 2004).

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<sup>36</sup> This quote dates from 2004. While I proposed that my research would only take into account articles from July 31, 2006 until August 5, 2006, I wanted to show how queer anarchists were positioned regarding the Games.

The effects of the Games were not only economic but social and as *The Mirror* highlighted included displacing those considered as a negative representation of the city.

## **Discussion**

Mosco defines survival as: “how people produce what they need to reproduce themselves and to keep their society going” (Mosco 2009, 3). It is as simple as waking up every morning so that people can go about their everyday lives. That holds true until someone creates a product like an alarm clock, produces it, and sells it to millions of individuals to make a profit, and ventures into new products. There are two major issues behind the analogy. First, many people depend on alarm clocks to wake-up every morning, and second, the creator sold the products for much higher value than the cost of making the alarm clock and can now venture into creating new products. What keeps society going is the market, and without it, society would not wake up and survive.

Society is dependant on media to receive information and to help shape opinions. While media content (images, texts, and sound) has the power to shape consciousness through its messages, it is the packaging, repackaging, and distribution of content that indirectly informs and influences opinions. It is the repackaging and distribution of society’s ideologies and values that have kept it going so far while other information and opinions are left behind.

For media, the Games provided a compelling story to tell because the subject was one that relied heavily on media to gain visibility and acceptance, and to survive. As the media analysis suggests, various media covered the Games, giving the Games and the gay and lesbian community visibility in mainstream media, free weeklies, and of course

gay media. In total, newspapers published 112 articles about the Games between July 31<sup>st</sup> and August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006. The breakdown of articles per types of media includes: 31 articles in mainstream media, five in free weeklies, and 76 in gay media. In general, articles dealing with issues of sexuality (55 articles) surpassed articles dealing with athletic performance (48 articles).<sup>37</sup> With regards to the placement of the article, only five articles were situated in the Sports section compared to 26 located in the front section.<sup>38</sup>

Comparing the qualitative analysis with the quantitative analysis provides a compelling argument about how media see the Games. Out of 26 articles situated in the front section, 24 talked about sexuality. Examples are of these articles are: “Vous n’avez pas arrêté de le trouver pittoresque, moi je l’ai trouvé désespérément sportif, ce con. Désespérément loin des ses baskets. Je lui préfère meme son cliché. Le dessinateur de mode” (Foglia 2006, A.3). Other examples include: “Women can, in some cases share their sexuality with coaches and teammates... Heterosexual women are afraid of the presence of lesbians on a team that can damage their image” (Yates 2006, C.5).

The problem with the relationship between media and gay and lesbian communities is that most visibility reinforces the idea of “just like everyone else” which is the reproduction of societal norms. Considering Mosco’s idea of survival and that one must produce to reproduce, the visibility of the Games reproduces current understanding without challenging the status quo. The claim is supported by the simple fact that a radical point of view was located in the Mirror, a newspaper with a smaller distribution: “Sex worker and homeless rights groups say police usually target prostitutes and

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<sup>37</sup> Outsports.com generated lots of content about the Games, especially athletic performances.

<sup>38</sup> There are no figures for placement of articles from the gay media since Fugues does not have a sports section and Outsports.com is an on-line newspaper.

homeless youth during tourist season, especially this summer, as the Outgames take over many of their traditional stomping grounds” (Elatrash 2006, the Front). The problem does not lie with the carefully crafted message but rather with how the message will impact the reproduction of other articles and/or newspapers, in other words, whether it will reproduce existing ideologies and values controlled by corporations.

Media content is often understood as an end-product rather than the reflection of the commodification process. However, Mosco suggests that the commodification of content as a naturalized relationship is entertained between people and products. This relationship is filled with opportunities for corporations to solidify their position in their market by creating products that people desire. By holding a stronger position and generating enough revenue, corporations can branch out into other ventures. In addition, while monopolies limit the choices people have they also force them to buy their product as there is no other alternative.

The media industry, especially in Canada, is very concentrated. With fewer media companies, people have less choice for content. CanWest, Québecor, and Gesca Ltée capitalized on the opportunity to provide content about the Games and disseminate their messages across their newspapers. Considering that media repackages information to generate more viewers, content may have been used by Global (CanWest) or TVA (Québecor) reaching a larger audience. The distribution is an extremely important portion of the commodification, because by reaching a larger audience, media has the potential to become a powerful commodity in and of itself.

Mosco addressed the public sphere as a space reflecting the reproduction of culture, its values and ideologies. However, marginalized individuals are not represented

in hegemonic society, and their media does not represent them which calls for action against commodification, or at the very least, the quest to find alternatives. Without alternatives, commodification processes “carry out democracy, namely advancing the equality and the fullest possible participation in the complete range of economic, political, social, and cultural decision making” (Mosco 2009, 152). So how do the marginalized, like queer groups (rather than the gay and lesbian commodity), create alternatives around institutions? How can they avoid commodification? What are the impacts?

Sender’s (2005) attempts to distinguish business from politics is revisited in her last chapter, where she states: “It remains to be seen what impact gay marketing has had on GLBT people’s ability to imagine alternatives to the dominant gay habitus of gay consumer culture” (Sender 2005, 241). The imagining and creation of alternatives to both heteronormative and homonormative culture has questioned the validity and existence of many gay and lesbian activities, including pride parades and the Games.

The problem therein lies in visibility and activism. On the one hand, gay and lesbian representation in media is one step closer to achieving acceptance. On the other hand, activism challenges representation on the basis that it limits the truth of gays and lesbians based on market-value and what can be distributed amongst media and be sold to a public. If we consider media to be an agent of change and survival, what do alternatives to commodification mean to visibility and activism? Mosco suggests that while some turn to their governments for alternatives, they are caught in a compromising position between citizens, the market, and corporations who run the economy.

The Games provided a place where the demands of its politics and its public were reworked through the establishment of identity and communities. Gordon Waitt (2003) argues that the gay and lesbian community is at odds with itself as it realizes the intrinsic subjectivities that compose it.<sup>39</sup> He states: “Conceptualized in this way, however, community has been argued to be alienating, because not all gay men and women may see themselves within the consensus of what it is to be allegedly ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’.” (Waitt 2003, 168) The commodification of content is in large part in bringing people closer to their products. Survival of content and of a community relies more and more on media and its role to change attitudes and to promote the truth.

The idea of survival is therefore tossed up in commodification of content as content that can either promote the visibility of the Games or, by the virtues of media monopolies, limit access to alternative content. By making the alternative impossible to speak, media erases the struggle in which the gay and lesbian community lives. Therefore, the natural relationship puts the idea of democracy and equality into perspective.

In summary, resistance to commodification of content is a point of contention that queer theorists argue in that media content no longer represents activism but the promotion of the gay and lesbian commodity. Considering the analysis above, it is clear that the lack of queer representation in the Games’ coverage warrants a discussion about media’s role in advancing the rights of gay and lesbians. Rather, it promotes them in

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<sup>39</sup> Gordon Waitt’s article discusses both performance theory and social theory. It is one of the few articles that discuss at length the nature of the Gay Games.

their fight to be just like everyone else. The level of activism in the Games' media coverage provides food for thought for future considerations.

The Games provide an excellent backdrop to examine issues of the survival of gay and lesbian communities in media by situating them as agents who reproduce both heterosexist and heteronormative values and ideologies. As a commodity, they continue to be used by media to attract advertisers and to write compelling news stories that are sold to other media for profitability.

As media conglomerates and monopolies reach new global audiences, the meeting of commodification (of content, of labor, and of audiences) and space becomes an interesting debate to consider value. More importantly, it repositions the idea of survival vis-à-vis global hegemony.

## Conclusion

The Canadian Oxford dictionary defines “scull” as, “... a pair of small oars used by a single rower” (The Canadian Oxford Dictionary 2001, 1302). To maintain balance, both oars must be at the same level, otherwise the boat can go off course or lose speed, and the race is lost. A single rower is tasked with staying aware of the balance, to win the race over other competitors.

“Sweeping” constitutes a team of four or eight individuals who each use one oar, and must work together to balance a boat on the water. If one oar is higher than the other, the boat slows down. Individual rowers provide their own strength, technique and drive, but they each depend on the others to achieve a winning combination of skill and grace. It’s a question of control; controlling the oars, controlling personal strength, keeping up with the rest of the group, and controlling technique in order to gain momentum.

As the gay and lesbian communities rapidly gain visibility in mainstream media, individual or group politics are silenced as larger goals set their way into cultural beliefs. If gay or lesbian athletes hold a certain balance between their own beliefs and larger beliefs without losing sight of what lies ahead, they can win the race. However, when a larger team holds only one belief, it neglects other beliefs while rowing towards one main goal. The issue of identity politics is one that is personal and collective. As the collective has a stronger voice, the personal is often lost without any direction.

Rowing, as analogy, illustrates how one’s personal conviction can be powerful as it balances one’s views in relation to society’s expectations. When set within the collective, much like sweeping, the rower can only follow teammates, becoming a follower rather than a leader. In the case of activism and collective identities, the set of



personal beliefs is too often silenced by market forces who are putting greater efforts in targeting gay and lesbian consumers, making them not only economic subjects, but citizens who participate in democracy through the free market.

Media institutions and structures now produce more products for more distinct audience commodities and niche markets than ever before. At the same time, institutions are defining communities, placing them at the mercy of the next great innovation or turn in the market, both online and offline. These niche markets have become dependent on media institutions to define who they are and how they are organized. Gay and lesbian communities are no different. Katherine Sender (2005) identified key milestones that marked the history of the gay publishing industry's relationship with advertisers, marketers and the public, highlighting their very mechanisms of survival—visibility. The Games, a much younger industry, have faced different challenges, but like the publishing industry it has also redefined how gay communities present themselves. Thus, the Games as an institution, much like media institutions, have considerable influence on the representation of gay and lesbian communities.

The support that corporations brought has undeniably changed the Games' reach and image of activism. Financial support from multinational corporations like Molson, and efforts from local volunteer organizations, have also shifted the Games' agenda. For example, a comparison of the OutGames in Montreal to the Gay Games in Chicago indicates that Montreal's corporate image was supported by larger financial investments, whereas Chicago's grassroots games gave a sense of community to participants, taking them back to their origins in 1982. The contrast between the two highlights the different experiences that similar events can foster.

As a symbol of a global phenomenon, tourists experience global products from their own perspective. To be a tourist is to be both a participant in and an observer of a globalizing force that continuously realigns differing politics and culture in order to attract a larger audience. By creating a singular identity and ignoring others, institutions influence voices and opinions, therefore, producing culture.

Examining the commodification of the gay and lesbian communities presents different approaches to exploring and understanding the role of corporations in everyday life. Dallas Smythe's (1981) and Vincent Mosco's (1996) definitions of commodification, and Eileen Meehan's (2002) reexamination of experience within traditional political economy, examine how structures and institutions affect experience. Joshua Gamson's (1995) examination of personal and collective experience within queer movements sheds light on the existing tensions between different groups. Lisa Duggan's (2002) investigation of changing queer movements is a mix of both political economy and queer theory. The work of Vincent Mosco (1996, 2009)—*le fil conducteur* of this thesis—led to an understanding of how the commodification of media products, like the Games and people, reflect the world of inequalities in which minorities like the gay and lesbian communities live today. Differences are slowly burning up, becoming ashes ready to be swept away.

The questions: “how does the Games’ institutional structure coupled with that of media structures affect gay and lesbian representation?” and “how can media impede activism within LGBTQ communities?” located in my introduction are very important with regard to the changing face of gay and lesbian communities. The Games brought together gay and lesbian communities from around the world; however, it also divided

the same groups into different categories based on economics, gender, and race. Corporate and government involvement pushed these issues out of consideration. Sexuality—virtually invisible within political economy, but the main attraction of the Games—is becoming more structured.

Vincent Mosco (1996) and Eileen Meehan (2002) highlighted the understanding of how sexuality can become part of political economy. Commodification as an entry point structures gay and lesbian identities by shifting their agenda. Those with the power to purchase are reduced to statistics that can be redistributed from use-value to market-value in order to generate revenue. The many apparent effects of commodification are questionable. The quest for visibility is becoming easier as more images of gay men appear in the media, while the radical, and even political, viewpoint has shifted to reflect the demands of corporate social responsibility. As identified by Mosco (1996), social relations between individuals and products are changing; needs are being considered ‘must-haves’, and desires can increasingly be satisfied by the market. Major institutions like the Games—with their ability to produce artifacts and motivate needs and desires—change social relations by creating a citizen based on the distribution and accessibility of manufactured products, services and beliefs. Within a system of values, corporations and governments encourage institutions to produce a diverse array of media products, and to supposedly depict diverse representation. If the free market changes social relations, what happens to the political visibility of gay and lesbian communities?

As data is collected from a variety of sources, such as points-of-sale or the number of visits to a website, diverse representation is becoming increasingly limited and corporate. However, the more available the means to communicate are, the more

mainstream the silencing of the marginalized becomes. Data collected from marketers and advertisers contributes to the distribution of content of most types of media. In fact, as Sender (2005) argues, this data can also affect the content in areas where advertisers are the primary source of revenue.

Thus, data collected from a small proportion of a global market can reflect a seemingly unified, diverse community. Queer theorists, such as Laurent Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, have spoken about this contentious issue. They state:

. . . just as you, the desiring citizen, enter the sphere of what appears to be mutual consent, an invisible finger points back at you. It unveils your desire to see the spectacle of homoculture without being seen; it embarrasses you by making explicit your desire to 'enter' and your need for 'permission' to identify; it insists that you declare your body and your goods, and that you pay whatever political and erotic duty seems necessary (Berlant and Freeman 1993, 224).

But there is still some debate about sexuality entering the field of political economy, as Nancy Fraser (1990) demonstrates as she incorporates her argument with Jurgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere. She states: "In this sort of highly differentiated society, it does not make sense to me to conceive of the mode of sexual regulation as simply a part of the economic structure" (Fraser 1997, 284). There are many opportunities to discuss the relevance of sexuality within the realm of political economy. But the latter is important to understanding how institutions of sexuality are regulated from within.

### **The Quest to Queer Commodification**

Gamson (1995) illustrated how a multitude of voices can become a coalition-like structure. The premise of this argument lies between post-modern and post-structural

approaches. Sexuality is entering a new arena of contested ideologies from conservatives, liberals, and now neo-liberals. Single-identity politics is taking over and leaving the Other behind, as the mainstream considers it to be part of the same collective. Gamson (1995) highlights an interesting dynamic within gay and lesbian communities across the world. From a global perspective, gay and lesbian communities are unified through technology, such as the Internet. It is a means of exchanging insights with other communities that share similar experiences, regardless of their geographic location. Local boundaries are disappearing as global perspectives become more prevalent, and local experiences are becoming less available as they are replaced by global democratic views. Democracy for gays and lesbians is enhanced by the acceptance of an imaginary gay citizen, one that reflects the ideals of the Western lifestyle and capitalistic society. But how does this affect identity and representation? The market has taken over controversial issues like sexuality in order to regulate them, and make them more appealing to the masses. But what happens to those who do not fit the prescribed model? As a way to express diverse identities within sports, the Games created a singular-voice, which neglected those who do not fit the new homonormative identity. Whether it is based on economics, race or gender, the new homonormative distorts the notion of democracy within the global gay and lesbian movement. Questioning the continued existence of the gay and lesbian movement is not at issue, but should we concentrate our efforts on questioning the new gay and lesbian movement?

Lisa Duggan's (2002) arguments are central to this discussion. The new homonormative identity is a result of many changes within the movement over the past few decades. The advent of the Internet, and changes in policy regarding the market,

affect how gays and lesbians are viewed today. They are more visible to mainstream audiences due to corporate involvement, but at the same time they are becoming less political and more conservative in their views.

Tourists can experience the lives of others by learning about past experiences as they travel across borders. Readily available, pre-packaged destination information can expand the choice of places to go, but this also has the potential to limit experiences. The organization and re-organization of information, whether images, words or sound, affects the experience of the recipient by emphasizing certain desires and needs.

The constant evolution of products creates a larger divide between those who can, and those who cannot, purchase and consume them. Media products, whether technological (e.g., the Internet) or social (e.g., the Games), are concrete artifacts that contribute to this divide. The effects are numerous, but what needs to be questioned is corporations' use of information to create and disseminate needs and desires. If these products are a reflection of our needs and desires, are we the source, or part of, the problem?

Vincent Mosco (1996) acknowledged that experience is an important contributing factor to political economy, and Eileen Meehan (2002) wrote about a women's experience in media institutions. The relationship between commodification and experience explores new territory that Darwin's theory of natural selection did not address. While the heterosexual white male experience still governs the free market and institutions, the emergence of the marginalized's experience, whether defined by gender, sexuality, race or economics, has somewhat disrupted this male's grasp of so-called reality. The introduction of the Other's experience affects how media products are now

positioned in relation to each other. More importantly, it reorganizes audiences, increases markets and provides more financial and political possibilities for institutions and corporations to develop. If the tourist becomes known as the Other, however, how can corporations include, reflect and eventually commodify the tourist's own personal experience? How can the tourist become part of the organization?

Conditional representation itself creates a set of politics. Gamson's (1995) position presents the possibility of tourists exploring new territory without forgetting their own local roots. Does this mean that tourists can be tourists in their own cities? To suppose that the tourist can be both a participant and a spectator suggests that personal identity does not agree with collective identity, or that the local is at odds with the global. As collective identities increasingly depend on corporate goodwill, investments and, in the case of the Games, sponsorship, to survive in a bigger world, personal identities or politics are pushed aside. If homonormativity is settling political battles between mainstream and gay, what happens to the Other?

Homonormativity, the result of mediated political realignment, questions how radical movements have evolved into markets. In this case, the tourist as a participant, a symbol of democracy, or just as a person with disposal income exemplifies how the free market affects consumer behaviour. It highlights the shift from changing personal behaviour to changing an entire group by taking over their space and their voices. When corporations are talking on behalf of the Other, what will be the result?

Questioning the representation of gay and lesbian communities can be both exhausting and stimulating. There are many other avenues related to gay and lesbian rights that need to be explored, such as the health care system in Canada. Though policies

are supposedly in place to protect the human rights of citizens, it was only recently that gay men and lesbians attained certain legal rights. Public policies exist that are said to protect the general population, but still discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation. For example, due to the blood tragedy of the 1980s, Canadian Blood Services still upholds its policy regarding men having sex with men, which means if gay men adhere to the policy they cannot donate blood or blood products.

This thesis examined the concept of producing culture which also underlined questions of production. Inherent to producing culture, are the notions of control and survival. The commodification of content, of labour, and audiences play a significant role in shaping the way the market is understood today. Digitization allows for a faster processing time rendering communications with others easier and quicker. Because of these factors, spatial boundaries become more permeable to different cultures, different ideologies, and different values. Moving from commodification to spatialization a pressing concern remains: how does the gay and lesbian community reclaim a sense of identity in the constant renegotiation between space and time?



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## **Appendix A**

### **Timeline of Gay Games and Outgames**

June 1969	Stonewall Riots
Summer 1982	1 <sup>st</sup> Gay Games in San Francisco
1985	President Reagan talks about AIDS for the first time
Summer 1986	2 <sup>nd</sup> Gay Games in San Francisco
1987	ACT UP (Aids Coalition to Unleash Power) is founded in New York City
Summer 1990	3 <sup>rd</sup> Gay Games in Vancouver
Summer 1994	4 <sup>th</sup> Gay Games in New York City
Summer 1998	5 <sup>th</sup> Gay Games in Amsterdam
October 2001	Montreal wins the bid to host the 7 <sup>th</sup> Gay Games
Summer 2002	6 <sup>th</sup> Gay Games in Sydney
November 13, 2003	Montreal separates from the FGG and loses the opportunity to host the 7 <sup>th</sup> Gay Games
April 2004	Gay and Lesbian International Sports Federation (GLISA) is introduced
April 2004	GLISA announces plans to host the 1 <sup>st</sup> World OutGames in Montreal in 2006

## Appendix B Marketing Campaign

### Images of marketing campaign

