

SEXUAL STRATIFICATION IN GUS VAN SANT'S *MILK*: A QUEER STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes how gay sexual stratification is portrayed in Gus Van Sant's *Milk* and how Harvey Milk as the key gay character breaks the gay sexual stratification. The study mainly applies the queer theory *Sexual Stratification* proposed by Gayle Rubin. The study is done by observing, selecting, and analyzing the film scripts and scenes which depict the gay sexual stratification and how Harvey Milk breaks such stratification. Since the main object is a film, both narrative and non-narrative film elements are analyzed as well. *Milk* is arguably feasible to analyse because the movie itself is rich of portrayals of gay sexual stratification.

Besides, Milk, who used to be at the bottom level in sexual stratification, gradually succeeds in breaking the gay sexual stratification. The main contribution of this thesis is to evoke further cultural sensitivity to any sexual minorities for empowering each individual unexceptionally. This study finds the portrayal of sexual stratification in *Milk* is in line with the notions suggested by Gayle Rubin. Heterosexuality stands high in the hierarchy, while gays are placed far below it. The conclusion reveals that both heterosexuals and Milk use the sexual stratification as the powerful tool to legally secure their own rights.

Keywords: Gay; Queer; Sexual Stratification

1. Introduction

Both gender and sexuality lay their very basic foundation on the male-female binary, though the emphasis is different. For gender, which the emphasis is placed on the traditional gender roles between the biological-sex dividing, males and females are more likely obliged to do this and that. The common basic example of the traditional gender roles is men, with his masculinity, must be at work, whereas women, as possessed femininity, are at home cooking for the family (Wilchins 2004, p. 6). The point is to build the unity of the core of society: a functional family consisted of a man, a woman, and children by a procreative marriage. In pretty much the same way as gender, sexuality is still understood in contemporary ways and is the "central foundations for social identity" (Wilchins 2004, p. 51).

As a result, a same-sex relationship is considered unequal within the society because it does not transform masculinity and femininity. Gayle Rubin in her book *Thinking Sex* states that "sexuality that is 'good', 'normal', and 'natural' should ideally be heterosexual, marital, monogamous, and reproductive. Any sex that violates these rules is 'bad', 'abnormal', or 'unnatural'" (1984, p. 165). The 'good' and the 'bad' sexuality are likely a binary opposition which implies that one term is inferior to the other since it is political, about power, and creates hierarchies (Wilchins 2004, p. 41).

As such, sexuality comes with the consequences of the emergence of a ranking system within the society. Or in Rubin's word, sexuality is being stratified. In sexual stratification, one term of sexuality should be on top and the other should not. Thereby, there is an imbalanced power between heterosexuality and homosexuality as being on the top level of sexual stratification means having greater power to control the one in the lower level. Since those who have the greater power in the society such as the State and police routinely intervene in sexuality, the *sex laws* prevails as the most adamant instrument in sexual stratification (Rubin 1984, p. 173).

Sex law is used to make homosexuals include in one of those criminalized groups which many of their rights to full citizenship are legally denied. These portrayals of various concepts of sexual stratification are well-documented in *Milk* a film directed by Gus Van Sant released theatrically in 2008. This two Oscar winner for Best Actor in a Leading Role and Best Original Screenplay (New York Times 2008) film is a dramatised true-story about the struggles of a self-identified gay man

named Harvey Milk, starring by Sean Penn, to get actively politically involved in San Francisco bureaucracy during the 1970s after closeted for 40 years back in New York.

He then moves to the Castro, a former Irish Catholic neighbourhood in San Francisco, with his younger lover Scott Smith and decides to live as an openly gay. Under any circumstances, Milk with all gays in the neighbourhood are engaged in various modes of discriminations. After three times failure, Milk eventually is inaugurated as the first openly gay City Supervisor through his coming out strategy. As such, *Milk* is feasible to analyse because the movie itself is rich of portrayals of sexual stratification towards gays. Besides, Harvey Milk, who used to be at the very bottom level in sexual stratification, gradually succeeds in breaking the gay sexual stratification.

To explore in-depth sexual stratification in this movie, two questions are taken into consideration: how gay sexual stratification is portrayed in Gus Van Sant's *Milk* and how Harvey Milk as the key gay character breaks the gay sexual stratification throughout the movie. The questions are examined mainly using Gayle Rubin's queer theory in *Thinking Sex*. Narrative and non-narrative film elements are applicable too. Thereby, this study is expected to encourage more research on this particular topic since no previous similar thesis has been found yet in the faculty. Besides, it attempts to evoke further cultural sensitivity to any sexual minorities in the means of empowering each individual unexceptionally.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Narrative film element

Narrative in a film is basically the stories themselves in which are made up of particular patterns and structures interrelated to one another. Amongst them, the most seen is the plot as it can present "a chain of events in cause-effect relationship occurring in time and space" (Bordwell & Thompson 2008, p.75). As such, the analyzed narrative film elements are plot, setting of time and place, and the film characters.

2.2 Non-narrative film elements

Non-narrative film elements are those elements which are concerned more with the aspects of film visualisation using cinematography techniques. *Mise-en-scène*, a French term for staging or putting into the scene or shot, is necessary to explore how all the elements placed by the director before the camera and inside the frame of the film in order to create the film symbolic meanings (Introduction to Digital Filmmaking). This study focuses on camera shots and camera angles.

2.3 Sexual stratification

Gayle Rubin in *Thinking Sex* states that just like many other aspects of human behavior, the concrete institutional forms of sexuality at any given time and place are products of human activity so that it has its own internal politics, inequities, and modes of oppression (1984, p. 152). In that sense, sex is always political. Sex negativity is the most important ideological formation in most thoughts of sexuality. This idea implicitly rests on the biological fact that the closest organ to genitalia is the organ which is seen 'dirty': the excretory (p. 162).

Sexuality is, in effect, treated with suspicions in the eye of the society. The sexual practice which has the worst expression remains as a low status and is an effective sanction against those who engage in it. It causes the society to conform to a single universal standard of sexuality: there is one best way to do it and everyone should do it that way. As a result, sexual acts are appraised in the society according to a hierarchical system of sexual value which marital and reproductive heterosexuals are alone at the top of the hierarchy.

Rubin coins the hierarchical value of sexuality into the figure below (p. 166):

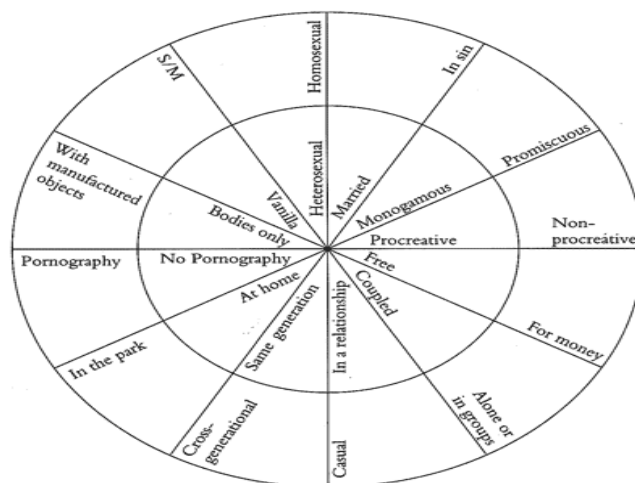


Figure 1: The Charmed Circle vs. The Outer Limits

Based on this system, the Charmed Circle is the place for the ‘good, normal, and natural’ sexuality: heterosexual, marital, and not involve roles other than male and female. In contrast, the Outer Limits is the place for the sex acts which are considered ‘bad, abnormal, or unnatural’ since those sex acts are not included in the Charmed Circle. Rubin claims this sexual stratification works more than a system to caste ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sexuality.

It follows another claim that individuals whose sexual practices stand high in this hierarchy are rewarded with certified mental health, respectability, social and physical mobility and material benefits. On the other hand, those whose sexual acts fall lower on the scale are subjected to a presumption of mental illness, restricted social and physical mobility, economic sanctions, and criminal prosecution (p. 163). The label attributed to them effectively leads to their sanctions. Because the state legislators cannot be ‘soft’ on the sexual vices, they routinely intervenes in sexual behavior at a level that would not be tolerated in other areas of social life (ibid.). Rubin herself clearly states sex law is harsh and becomes the most adamant instrument of sexual stratification.

3. Methodology

3.1 Technique of data collection

The primary source is a film directed by Gus Van Sant entitled *Milk* in which was theatrically published in 2008 produced by Focus Features in association with Axon Films. The secondary source is any printed or unprinted materials in regards both to the film and the queer theory. Then, observing the primary source is conducted through watching the film continuously to perceive the story of the film as well as its interpretations. Afterwards, selecting the movie dialogues and capturing the movie scenes which identifiably depict the gay sexual stratification and also the struggles of Harvey Milk in breaking the gay sexual stratification.

3.2 Technique of data analysis

The collected narrative data is firstly analysed by finding the binary opposition which is essentially used to show arbitrary terms presented throughout the movie. Once the first technique is done, as mentioned in the very beginning that it is the product of social constructions, one of important ways to uncover the root of those social constructions in sexual stratification is by exploring in what domains it affects the gays. To strengthen the narrative analysis, thereafter, each data is then combined with those from non-narrative elements and analysed using Gayle Rubin’s queer theory.

4. Discussion

4.1 The portrayal of gay sexual stratification in *Milk*

The movie opens with Harvey Milk walking down home at a subway platform in New York where he and the younger Scott Smith met for the first time. They two then kissing each other passionately and become lover. Milk works in the Great American Insurance Company in the year 1970. For not losing his job, as he confessed to Scott on his 40th birthday, the only option left for him is to be very discreet about his actual sexual orientation. After all this time being closeted, in 1972, he decides to move to the Castro in San Francisco with Scott to be a publicly gay. As an open gay, at the first time he newly-open small camera shop under his flat, he kisses Scott on the street in front of his Castro Camera.

The fact that the passers-by do not even take a glance at them infers that the existence of gays in the Castro is not acceptable as the Castro is a former Irish Catholic neighbourhood where the religious norms are still well-maintained. The unacceptability of their sexuality is more vividly seen when Mc Connely, a bar owner across Milk's camera store, run after them as soon as he sees they two kissing on the street. After shaking hand with Milk, Mc Connely rubs his hand with a handkerchief.

It infers having a psychical contact with a gay is something dirty which has to be cleaned immediately. When Milk asks him how to join the Eureka Valley Merchants Association, Mc Connely instead threatens him not to continue running his business or else the police will pull the license. His says that "the San Francisco police force is happy to enforce" (00:10:51). His respond, stressing on the word 'happy', implies that attacking gays is something fun for the police. That assumes that Mc Connely is portrayed as a heterosexist neighbor since, for him, two men kissing on the street is considered a disturbing behavior as well as the neighborhood environment.

That shows Milk and Scott's sexual act belongs to the Outer Limits. It means the society treats their sexuality as a 'bad sex' as it takes places in public, not home, and involves unusual roles other than male-and-female (1984, p. 165). The inferiority of the gays is portrayed with showing off their 'bad' sexuality in public sphere and being repressed in the neighborhood. In other words, the other sexuality, which is the 'good' one, automatically belongs to Mc Connely as he is depicted as a heterosexual with strong religious background and have power over the gays.

It infers that public acceptance of gays as well as how they do their sexuality is socially harmful and inappropriate. All the scenes affirm Rubin's argument that areas of sexual behavior become the object of social concern and of public fear and scrutiny. In that way, sexuality is merely perceived in term of its negativity. Both Milk and Scott are considered a 'sexual offender' which is functioned as a code for homosexuals as explained by Rubin (p. 154). Due to that, they two along with other gays are placed on the bottom of sexual hierarchical system.

As tracing back to the fact that Milk, who just ran a small camera business to economically support his life, is rejected to join the local merchant association fits Rubin's idea that one attempt of the politics of sex is to keep businesses run by homosexuals become marginal, underdeveloped, and distorted. By keeping them marginal, it makes them difficult to organize, be higher paid, and be less stigmatized so that they are more vulnerable to exploitation and unable to pursue their chosen careers (p. 174). That is generally because the more important and higher paid the job, the less the society will tolerate overt erotic deviance (ibid.).

Moreover, the insecurity towards the gays is evidenced when the cops frequently hold a sudden street sweeping which turn into attacking and pulling any gays they saw out of Toad Hall and sent 14 of them to jail for such a simple charge: blocking the sidewalk. Although the Castro becomes destination number one for gays, it is still not safe for them as they are powerless to the police attack. All they can do is wearing whistle around their necks or in their pockets to give a sign that a gay is in danger so that other gays who hear it run to look for help. It is what Rubin means by "even 'liberated' San Francisco was not 'immune' to the prevailing of sexual value system" (p. 155).

However, their effort to protect themselves is not enough since a gay, whose whistle coated in blood Milk picked, dead body had been found lying on the street

- Milk : "He used to come to my shop. Is there any witnesses?"
Cop : "Yeah, just the trick, Jerry Taylor."

Milk : "Jerry's not his trick, he's his lover."

Cop : "Hey, call it what you will." (00:17:59)

By saying 'call it what you will', it clearly does not matter for the police officer whether Taylor is Hillsborough's trick or lover because, to him, the two terms are the same. This shapes how the police see the gays by making generalization that all gays are prostitutes. Also, the police perceive the gays as a non-human since the word 'it' refers the gays to a non-living thing or an object. The fact that the name of the murderer has never been mentioned throughout the movie means a gay murder is not an essential case for the police.

This tendency of generalizing gays and prostitutes, according to Gayle Rubin, is because they two share some common features of social organization. Both are a criminal sexual population stigmatized on the basis of sexual activity and have to battle with police to defend and maintain their territories. The sexual stratification towards the gays in this movie becomes more problematic since the time has come for the local police to routinely intervene in it. That is, it is now possible to 'regulate' those who are seen violating the hierarchical sexual value system in a more legal way.

The persecution towards the gays has been stepped up to the state level with the biggest support comes from Anita Bryant a well-known celebrity who is also a church activist. As she highly values sexuality with religiosity, she along with her church organization is "crusading to repeal a four-month-old Dade County Law which protects homosexuals in housing and jobs" (00:34:54). By emphasising on the word 'very', her speech means the whole nation unity can only be measured with the existence of a family.

Under her point of view as a church activist, a family cannot be formed in a homosexual relationship due to the fact that two same-sex people are not 'married' so that so that keeping homosexuals in the society only tears the whole unity of America down. When it comes to the Vote Day, the statistics shows that only 8 thousand out of 26 thousand people against the ordinance. That is, her repeal action is successful so that the gays as well as their rights must be expelled out of the society.

It infers that the gays as placed in the bottom of the sexual hierarchy, they have no significant role and no voice in the society. Such thing fits Rubin's statement that legislators are loath to be 'soft' on vice so that sex laws are notoriously easy to enact. Once on the book, the sex laws are extremely difficult to dislodge, Rubin stressed (p. 173). The success of repealing the ordinance causes all gays all over Florida lose their rights in employment and housing. In other words, states and municipalities have been tightening regulations on sexual behavior (p. 155).

Moreover, the fact that Anita Bryant resides in Florida, not in San Francisco, indicates that the sexual stratification towards the gays is happening broadly elsewhere in counties of California. Furthermore, the wave of hate towards the gays is getting stronger as "State Senator, John Briggs, filed a petition for a statewide referendum to fire all gay teachers and anyone who supports them" (01:05:04). Briggs Initiative will massively affect all gays throughout every county in California.

When it comes to the Prop 6 motto, which is "Save Our Children", the motto is actually longer as coined by Rubin into: Save our children from alleged homosexual recruitment (p. 155). It implies the gays are declared unfit parents under such provision. That means the enforcement of sexual conformity is now in the hand of every family member. For the sake of protecting children, Prop 6 affects members of the teaching professions. The force power of the law ensures conservative sexual values with these kinds of controls over parenting and teaching (Rubin 1984, p. 175).

The peak of the sexual stratification in this movie is a gay killing scene at the end of the movie. It is when Dan White assassinates Milk along with the Mayor George Moscone at once. He shoots the Mayor first then Milk. That is the time when Milk has already seated in San Francisco public official as a city supervisor and the Briggs Initiative has just been repealed. Such timing infers that the sexual stratification almost reaches its end by the down of Briggs Initiative and by having their key figure in the major official seat. In order to stop such thing happening, something has to be done and, in this film, that thing is assassinating the top two prominent official figures in the city: the Mayor and Milk.

The fact that both the gays and the one that fully backs up them become White's target object of assassination shows that those who support gays in any means will end up the same as the gay himself: public witch hunt. That is, those sex acts in the Outer Limits are considered to be so intrinsically unpleasant that no one should be allowed under any circumstance to perform them due to the fact that individuals consent to or even prefer them is the additional evidence of sexual deviation (Rubin 1984, p. 175).

4.2 Harvey Milk's struggles in breaking the gay sexual stratification

In the society that 'punishes' same-sex relationship, such as the Castro, it is common to keep secret one's attraction to members of the same sex alongside efforts to resist their sexual status (Pickett 2009, p. 44). In this way, the term closet itself is constructed through social and legal restrictions of sexuality (Pickett 2009, p. 44). In addition to 'the closet', it is often psychologically debilitating and prevents gays from achieving a positive sense of self (Pickett 2009, p. 45). Since "the closet prevents gays from showing their true numbers" (ibid.), flourishing gay-friendly businesses sparks the sense of living in a gay-friendly neighbourhood for the gays themselves so that their existence is warmly welcomed and no longer closeted.

It is evidenced with the fact that amongst those shops which thrived is Mc Connely's which infers that he is fine having the gays hanging at his bar, though he used to be very rigid to the gay Milk and Scott. Milk's effort seemingly to gain significance when the Coors Beer boycott, as asked by Allan Baird to Milk, is successful. It is a proof that the gays are not "just a bunch of pansies anymore" (0:15:38). As such, they have their first taste of power because "only a week after the boycott, the Teamsters Union hires openly gay drivers for the very first time" (00:15:36).

In this way, Milk is able to effectively lobby their huge numbers and empower them as individuals. Because of this, Milk is first called the 'Mayor of Castro Street'. In spite of their first power in the neighbourhood, when it comes to the police, the one having the bigger power in the society, the gays remain vulnerable and powerless. That means the successful Coors beer boycott gives a significant yet still small power for the gays. To gain more power in the society, in 1972 Milk for the first time declares his candidacy for the City Supervisor. Getting actively participated in San Francisco politics is the main point of his struggles towards sexual stratification in the Castro.

The bottom-line is to get attention from others so that homosexuality is acknowledged by all people. In this way, rather than using the militant violent tactic of the police, he tends to prefer the tactic which is the complete opposite: non-violent and persuasive. His underscored movement is to achieve full citizenship rights for the gays. The term coming out in this particular sense is "generally used to refer to the process of disclosing, or no longer hiding, one's same-sex attraction" (Pickett 2009, p. 49). That is, for him, coming out is a way to reconstruct the long-stable image of homosexuals and homosexuality itself which is commonly perceived as social trash.

Since this first political campaign, he shows a strong support for all minority citizens not only gays. During such time of arranging strategy to gain allies, he receives a death threat for the first time which is handed directly by Scott: "Harvey Milk will have a dream journey and nightmare to hell, a night of horror. You'll be stabbed and have your genitals, cock, balls, and prick cut off." (00:23:05). Receiving a death threat means Milk's movement in entering major public bureaucracy for the sake of gay empowerment risks his personal safety as well as life.

However, as he does not threaten by the death threat, it sparks his true commitment and willingness to empower the gays to break down a dam of major stigma in the whole country. His strategy to gain more political allies continues as his activist friend, Jim Rivaldo, suggests going to David Goodstein, a rich gay who buys the biggest gay magazine *The Advocate*, to solicit an endorsement. It indicates no significant progress. Goodstein refuses to endorse him as he prefers backing straight candidates as long as they are friendly to a gay cause. Goodstein even tells Milk to go back in the closet.

On the Election Day, he lost, but he decides to try it again for the second time in 1975. Though he gains more votes on this second trial, he still does not succeed. So, for the third time, a year later,

against everyone's advice, Milk continues to get elected to the board of supervisor. Even though, he lost on his third trial of being elected in the governmental seat, he does not lose his hope to rejoin again. Hereby, in 1977, he is on the ballot for the City Supervisor seat for the fourth time. Such time is alongside the time Anita Bryant and her church organisation are crusading to repeal a four-month old Dade County, Florida, law which prohibits discrimination against gays in housing and employment.

In reaction to this, as a mayor of Castro Street, Milk quickly tells one of his activist friends to call and gather everyone to "out of the bars and into the streets" (00:40:58). This gay protest rally can be conducted since he pockets the permission from the police to march the gays. It infers him as the negotiator and the 'bridge' between the gays and the police. Bringing the gays out to the street while voicing how they feel and what they need is one of the ways to make the 'invisible' visible. Moreover, the fact that the police stay at their place not beat or attacks them as it used to, when he gives speech in front of huge crowd of gays in the City Hall, indicates that the control for the gays, which has been for such a long time in the hand of the police, is now in Milk.

In order to gain more supports, under his blue-print of making the invisible visible, he does the 'human billboard'. The 'human billboard' mechanism works by getting Milk himself along with his activist friends down on the street holding a poster with his name on it and handing the pedestrians with the campaign flyers. The 'human billboard' is at means of bringing himself and the gays visibly showed up to the street. At last, Milk gets his very first actual solicit endorsement from three big newspapers at once. The fact that he is endorsed for being a good businessman shows that the Castro Camera, which he keeps running on, grows and develops despite the previous threat from Mc Connely.

When the District Election Day on November 7th 1977 comes, Milk eventually wins the City Supervisor seat. He is inaugurated the first openly gay City Supervisor on January 9th 1978. The success of having Milk elected to the major public office means a huge win for the gays now that, finally, there is someone of their own in the government who looks out for their interests in the way they see things. Additionally, his winning signifies that having qualified endorsement is putting his name on popular papers which means a lot more people acknowledge the figure of Milk. Being interviewed live with the local TV implies that Milk's opinions significantly matter so that the gays now have voice in the society.

It can be inferred that his grassroots struggle, actively taking a role in the local politics, initially leads him to the same level as the majority heterosexual society. The very first order of business he is proposing right after becoming a politician guarantees "any person [in San Francisco] who already has a job cannot be fired on the basis of sexual orientation" (01:02:45). Nonetheless, the State Senator John Briggs proposes a statewide ordinance like the one Anita Bryant shuts down in Florida. That means having Milk in the government has not fully meant the gays can live their lives as easy as the heterosexuals. So that seeks for more powerful ally: A Speaker of The House, Phil Burton.

However, Milk totally disagrees with Burton's flyers due to no single mention of the word gay on the entire flyer. From Burton's point of view, since Milk on the behalf of gays already had a seat in the government, homosexuality issues are not as big as it used to be. In other words, he thinks homosexuality issues are 'cleared' already. Milk strongly believes that to break the sexual stratification is to create a positive sense of self and for that, it needs to come out which then emerges the pride in being a gay. Milk has to have something populist, the number one problem in the city, so that he picks up a very simple problem in the city which affects every people: the dog feces.

Under the new citywide ordinance he is proposing, besides voicing for the gays, he requires every dog owner to clean up their dogs mess otherwise they will be fined. Then on the voting day, the San Francisco gay rights ordinance Milk proposes is passed. That means with the gay rights bill passed, the gays throughout San Francisco have legally secured their rights as equal as heterosexuals in employment. It shows that Milk has taken a leap forward from the bottom of

sexual stratification. Besides, it prominently proves that as a gay supervisor, he can do something significant for all citizens, not only for the sexual marginalized population.

In this sense, major's perspective towards the gays, whose sexuality has been treated in suspicions, is slightly changed gradually. When the big day November 7th 1978 comes, the Proposition 6 Vote Day, with the final margin belongs to the gays, they ultimately achieve their huge victory. Their prominent politician figure, Milk, eventually successfully succeeds on guarantying a full citizenship privileges as equal as heterosexuals in employment and housing. This is what he himself called as "a homosexual with power" (01:48:24). The strategy Milk chooses to break down gay sexual stratification by bringing out their sexualities in public sphere is to gain a widely public recognition, homosexuality is no longer a shameful secret (Jagose 1996, p. 38).

5. Non-narrative film elements

5.1 Camera shots

The shot that can portray the sexuality of the gays, particularly Harvey Milk, which is out of the Charmed Circle is the extreme long shot. Since "the setting [of place] dominates most extreme long shots" (Giannetti 2001, p. 12) like in Figure 2, it makes the humans in that shot dwarf into visual insignificance, appear unimportant and vulnerable (Giannetti 2001, p. 11). It infers that, regarding the purpose of the extreme long shot, Milk and Scott appear vulnerable and unimportant for their surroundings.



Figure 2: Milk and Scott kissing on the street

The vulnerability and the unimportance of them regarding how they do their sexuality in public are more vividly seen with the fact that the passers-by in front of them does not even take a glance at them. What they do indicates that the gay existence in the Castro is ignored rather than showing that they are okay with such view of two men kissing each other passionately on the street. In this sense, by 'doing' their sexuality in public space, their sexuality is considered disturbing the Castro society they live in.

5.2 Camera angles

Camera angles, in this discussion, will be applicable to depict the scenes which specifically spark the glory of Harvey Milk in breaking the gay sexual stratification. The low angle is the only camera angling that will be highlighted to uncover what this discussion intends to do. It is regarding the psychological effect of the low angle in which "heightens the importance of a subject" (Giannetti 2001, p. 17). This discussion focuses on the scenes when Harvey Milk gets on the stage and gives speech not only because these are when the low angles are used at its best, but also more likely because such scenes supportively provide the argument in the narrative analysis: Milk's great potential leadership in the Castro.



Figure 3: Speech on the success of the Dade County Repeal

The Figure above takes place in front of the Castro's City Hall. It is on the night Dade County Law successfully repealed by Anita Bryant which broadly affects the gays elsewhere including the Castro. Such Figure applies the low angle since it meets the criteria of the low angle itself: the figure on the scene, Milk, is captured from below with the ceiling of the City Hall as the background, although it is not clearly seen. Such angle makes Milk seem taller than the edge of the City Hall front door and also the head of the police. As a result, the importance of Milk as the 'Mayor of Castro Street' is heightened. It can be elaborated with the fact that he is the only one who is able to lead and control the gays in the Castro who grow angry in reaction to the repeal action, even though at that time Milk has not legally had a seat in the local politics.

6. Conclusion

Milk interprets sexual stratification as the powerful tool used by both heterosexuals and gays, more specifically Harvey Milk, to legally secure their own rights as a citizen. Sexual stratification is the idea that there is a system of rank or hierarchy. As such, there is an imbalanced power between the two sexualities since they are not ranked in the same level. For the heterosexuals, it is those distinctive sexual values which lead the heterosexuals to the idea that the existence of the gay people threatens the core unity of the society: a family which consists of a male as the husband and a female as the wife who is responsible to reproduce a kid of their own. Because the gays are not able to do that, their rights as a citizen are worth to be banned legally.

However, for Milk, liberating homosexuality under the coming out strategy is to bring out their actual sexuality in public sphere. That way, a solidarity pride of being a gay and a widely public recognition of homosexuality prevail. In doing so, he requires more power as by legal means dealing with the political authority. Therefore, having Milk officially seated in the governmental major public office opens up the easier access for gays to legal protection as a citizen. After all, the portrayal of sexual stratification in this movie is in line with the *Sexual Stratification* theory proposed by Gayle Rubin in *Thinking Sex*.

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