



# The Construction and Contestation of Homosexual Identities in Contemporary Popular Culture

*Christoph Rosenthal*

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Essay from the year 2013 in the subject Sociology - Gender Studies, London School of Economics, language: English, abstract: Where the popular meets culture, a rich repository of oppositional voices versus hegemonic narratives evolves through representations, images and media discourses. Embedded in commercial networks of cultural production and distribution, popular culture is indicative of societal macro spheres and therefore resembles a fruitful realm for studying the construction and contestation of identities.

The omnipresence of (sexual) identity conflicts in popular culture, such as Bollywood movies, can be interpreted as a manifestation of identity crises in postmodern society. These crises reflect wider societal processes of change and progress that can give individuals the feeling of being thrown out of joint. Minority groups, such as homosexuals, are especially exposed, which is why it is crucially important to further advance related knowledge and inform associated current debates around the question: What is popular culture and how does it serve as a site of struggle around the construction and contestation around sexual identity? In an attempt to shed light on these highly relevant and prevailing questions, the present essay is structured in the following way.

After untangling the complexities of how popular culture serves as a representational, mediated space where identities are constructed, contested and negotiated, Bollywood cinema will be availed for a comprehensive case study of how different homosexual identity disputes are situated within cinematographic representations.

Comparing national and diasporic audiences shows that culture is a powerful mediator exerting influence over how certain media texts are negotiated. The main argumentative conclusions propose that the construction and contestation of sexual identities is an individually unique, culture-specific and constantly evolving process unfolding at the intersection of macro and micro levels.



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