



# Gay Men and Anal Eroticism: Tops, Bottoms, and Versatiles

*Steven G. Underwood*

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Gay men reveal their preference—and the reasons behind it!

Gay Men and Anal Eroticism: Tops, Bottoms, and Versatiles is a no-holds-barred examination of one of society's most persistent taboos. In a remarkably candid collection of frank and forthright interviews, 21 gay men talk about the role anal sex plays in their lives and relationships and their choices to act as insertive (“top”) or receptive (“bottom”) partners—or both (“versatile”). Ranging in age from 21 to 65, the men discuss the reasons behind (and consequences of) their choices; how they define their sexual roles (and how those roles are defined by gay society); issues of power, trust, and vulnerability; and the concept (in both straight and gay society) that tops and bottoms are socially and morally unequal.

These unique interviews, conducted by the author in the Boston and Provincetown areas, celebrate choice in gay men's sexuality while debating whether preference is genetically based or socially formed—a debate largely ignored in social science studies. The men interviewed—including gay porn icon Cole Tucker—discuss perceptions muddied by stereotypes, preconceived notions, and exaggerated scenarios, and the meanings gay men assign to anal sex, including dominance and submission roles related to masculine/feminine, aggressive/passive implications. The interviews also cover each subject's personal history as a gay man, safe sex in the AIDS era, childhood traumas, first-time sexual encounters, loves, desires, and obsessions.

The interviews for Gay Men and Anal Eroticism provide insights that are equal parts thoughtful and outrageous, humorous and heartbreaking:

- Aaron, age 24: “I sort of fell into this image of myself as being a very aggressive bottom, a guy who knew what he wanted and who didn't want any wimps applying.”
- Danny, 21: “There's a mindset about being a top ... it's kinda like maintaining the ship.”
- Sam, 36: “I hate to say it, but I'm a bottom ... I don't like to be identified like that because I feel it turns me into something all the way from my feet up to my head.”
- Eddie, 42: “I guess I enjoy more being a top than a bottom because I haven't found a good top.”
- and Cole Tucker: “A physical act doesn't really make you a top or a bottom. It's a function, an organic function of what you do. It's the dynamics of where you come from.”

The revealing disclosures of Gay Men and Anal Eroticism show equality in man-to-man sex to be as varied as the number of individuals who pursue it. Addressing traditional misunderstandings and misconceptions of gay men as either “limp-wrested fairies” or masculine “trade,” the book uncovers that there is much more to this complex issue than personal preference.

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