Disjunctures within conventional knowledge of black male homosexual identity in contemporary South Africa

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Social Science in Sociology

Of

Rhodes University

By

XinLing Li

December 2009

Abstract

This thesis provides a sociological understanding of how conventional knowledge of sexuality negates the identity formation of black gay men in contemporary South Africa. It investigates the coming out experiences of six black gay men in order to reveal the disjunctures between being black and being gay. The theoretical formation of disjuncture is pursued through examining a number of sociological, historical, psychoanalytical, and feminist approaches to identity, sexuality, and society; featuring specifically the theories of George Herbert Mead, Michel Foucault, and Judith Butler.

The chosen research paradigm is symbolic interactionism, postulating both 'pragmatist' and 'empiricist' trends that lead to both interactionist and structuralist forms of argumentation. The interactionist approach to sexuality is central to the deconstruction of sexual conventions. It involves conceptualising modern sexuality in the landscapes of African colonial history and the global gay and lesbian movement. The prescribed literature on homosexuality is thus reviewed in conjunction with the South African gay and lesbian struggle, so as to spawn themes and perspectives for conducting life story interviews. The use of the life story interview favours the participants' own view of the studied phenomenon, yet aims to depict the structural influence on homosexual identification.

Following the qualitative research tradition, the data analysis is based on the interpretation of narratives. It illustrates interpersonal relationships and microscopic experiences that lead to the self-acceptance and self-actualisation of homosexuality. Within these processes, various disjunctures that exist between the cultural sanction of lifestyle and individual choice, between parents and children, between religious belief and personal desires, and between gender identity and sexual orientation are disclosed. The findings are associated with the historical transformation of masculinity in South Africa, sex role performance, and the heterosexualisation of desire. The solution to the proposed research problem is discussed through concepts of socialisation and gender conformity.

List of Acronyms

ANC: African National Congress

BEE: Black Economic Empowerment

COSAS: Congress of the South African Students

ECC: End Conscription Campaign

GALASA: the Gay and Lesbian Archives South Africa

GASA: Gay Association of South Africa (Now the Triangle Project in Cape Town)

GLOW: Gays and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand

HIV/AIDS: Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

HRAF: Human Research Areas Files

HSRC: Human Science Research Council (in Cape Town)

ILGA: International Lesbian and Gay Association

LGBTI: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, and Intersexual

OLGA: Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Activists

PE: Port Elizabeth

SABC: South African Broadcasting Corporation

SASAS: South African Social Attitudes Survey

SADF: South African Defence Force

UCT: University of Cape Town

UDF: the United Democratic Front

Glossary of Key Terms

Biological Sex: the anatomic classification of bodies as male and female based on factors including external sex organs, internal sexual and reproductive organs, hormones, and chromosomes.

Bisexual: a person who is attracted to both males and females

Discourse: A discourse consists of 'large groups of statements' that govern the way we speak about things and perceive a specific historical moment or moments (Salih, 2002: 47). Foucault (1979b, in ibid) understands these statements as repeatable events that are connected by their historical contexts, and therefore attempts to discover the continuities between statements that together make up discursive formations such as sexuality.

Gay: a synonym for homosexual sometimes used to describe only males who are attracted primarily to other males.

Gender: the social and cultural codes used to distinguish between what a society considers 'masculine' or 'feminine' conduct.

Gender expression: the external characteristics and behaviour which societies define as 'masculine' or 'feminine' – including such attributes as dress, appearance, mannerism, speech patterns, and social behaviour and interactions.

Gender identity: a person's internal, deeply felt sense of being masculine or feminine, or something other than or in between masculine and feminine.

Heterosexual: a person attracted primarily to people of the 'opposite' sex.

Homosexual: a person attracted primarily to people of the same sex.

Homophobia: it refers to the fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against homosexuality; it also signifies the hatred, hostility, and disapproval of homosexual people.

Lesbian: a female attracted primarily to other females.

LGBTI: an inclusive term for groups and identities sometimes also associated together as 'sexual minorities.'

Queer: Often used as a slur in English to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, the term 'queer' has been reclaimed by many people in the US and other countries as an expression of pride in one's homosexual sexual orientation and gender identity.

Sexual identity: a person's internal, deeply felt sense of being male or female, or something other than or in between male and female.

Sexual orientation: the way in which a person's asexual and emotional desires are directed. The term categorises according to the sex of the object of desire – that is, it describes whether a person is attracted primarily toward people of the same or 'opposite' sex, or to both.

(Adapted from Ottosson, 2007)

Table of Contents

0.1 The Idea of Disjuncture and the African Homosexual

The idea of disjuncture crossed my mind after the dearth of material I had collected for my literature review; indeed, I was a bit stunned by how ignorant and apathetic the South African academia was to gay and lesbian studies. Most academic papers produced in the realm of gender and sexuality studies have mainly focused on the empowerment of women, which makes me wonder whether men, and particularly gay men in South Africa, have had no problems with their lives since the inclusion of the same-sex clause in the Bill of Rights (Section 8). On the contrary, the lack of studies on gay men's lives could suggest precisely the lack of organisation in the South African LGBTI (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual Intersexual) community, the lack of collectivism in gay activism, and the lack of a politically organised gay consciousness. It is evident that homophobia has come to a rise after the 2009 election. President Jacob Zuma denounced homosexuality with hostility during his campaign, a move which has come to be viewed as a conscious betrayal of the ANC's Freedom Charter.[1] Corrective rape against both lesbians and gay men has long been negated from the public consciousness in South Africa, such that a post-colonial masculinist and heterosexist discourse is well sustained and reinforced by the social apathy towards alternative sexual identities. These social-political phenomena altogether have created disjunctions between ideologies and practice, between legal rights and cultural sanctions, and between intellectuals and ordinary civilians on both the macro and micro terrains of individual reality. Given the legal space for the cultivation of sexuality studies in South Africa for instance, little has been produced towards the desired political mechanisms for social change and for the betterment of the LGBTI people.

The pioneers of African gay and lesbian studies have drawn upon all available sources to obtain historical evidence of homoeroticism in Africa;[2] yet their relevance to the

---

[1] Jacob Zuma provoked the ire of homosexuals in September 24 2006, speaking at a Heritage Day celebration in Durban KwaDukuza. Zuma said "When I was growing up an ungqingili (a gay) would not have stood in front of me. I would knock him out." Later, the *Sowetan* quoted Zuma as saying that same-sex marriages were "a disgrace to the nation and to God" (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/5389378.stm)

[2] For the African societies in which there is sufficient discussion of male homosexuality to code the presence of same-sex relations, it is possible to correlate the occurrence, as it has been coded in the Human Research Area Files (HRAF) organised by George Peter Murdock (in Murray, 1998: 283), and to cross-classify the presence of particular social and cultural structures with types of homosexuality. According to Murray (1998: 267-8), there are three major patterns of same-sex practice found both in African males and females. The patterns are stratified respectively in terms of gender differentiated roles, age differentiated roles and egalitarian or mutual relations (non-stratified). Evidences of same-sex patterns in approximately 50 African societies have been reported and reviewed, within which there is substantial evidence that supports the contention that same-sex intercourse was 'traditional' and 'indigenous', and no further evidence observed is portentous to the argument that one group ever 'introduced' homosexuality to another.

contemporary gay and lesbian movement is barely suggested. The essays collected in the astonishing book, *Boy-wives and Female Husbands: Studies of African Homosexualities* (Murray & Roscoe, 1998), for instance, have elucidated almost all known same-sex practices in Africa, be that pederasty, homosexual incest or boy marriage on the Southern African mine compounds during colonisation. These essays have used testimonies, life story interviews, missionary records, colonial court records, and folktales, to depict the social circumstances under which African men and women engaged in same-sex intercourse in pre-colonial and post-colonial eras. But the biggest question left behind was: 'then what?' Contemporary gay and lesbian identity operates solely on sexual interest and object choice, which inevitably challenge the traditional institute of marriage and the cultural regime of reproduction; whereas traditional same-sex patterns were not mutually exclusive with heterosexual relations. Thus the corruption of same-sex patterns in post-colonial Africa as a result of Western imperialism must be acknowledged, through its distortion of traditional cultural values, gender structures, ethnic relations, and the pre-colonial division of labour.

The Western history of sexuality (since the emergence of the Roman Catholic Church) has centred upon the subject of desire which later led to the adoption of a hetero-homo dichotomy in theory (Wilchins, 2004). In both African and Western histories, heterosexuality was never cited as a juridical concept before the categorisation of homosexuality. The collective existence of homosexual people was never recognised in the West until the end of the 19th century. Before the groundbreaking work of Sigmund Freud, *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* (1905, 1st edition), homosexuality appeared like a phantom, if not dimly perceptible. In the 12-13th century, same-sex practice was regarded as a sin: people who engaged in a same-sex act had committed a 'crime' for the nature of their sexual act, rather than for being as a particular type of person (in Weeks, 1986: 33), since Christianity has worked assiduously to condemn same-sex desire as unnatural. From the late 19th century onwards, however, homosexuality suddenly became a psychological disposition (ibid) in that people who desire members of the same-sex were seen as 'pathologically disturbed' (Brake, 1976: 179). It was only after the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York[3] that

---

[3] Stonewall is the emblematic event in modern lesbian and gay history. The site of a series of riots in late June-early July 1969 that resulted from a police raid on a Greenwich Village gay bar, 'Stonewall' has become synonymous over the years with gay resistance to oppression (Duberman, 1993: xvii). The 1969 riots are now generally taken to mark the birth of the gay-rights campaign, where modern gays and lesbians recognised all at once their mistreatment and their solidarity. As such, 'Stonewall' has come to be viewed as an empowering symbol of global proportions (ibid).

the world begun to perceive 'homosexuals' as a particular group of population – a sexual minority.

In contrast, recent studies on African languages and literature have demonstrated that there are words associated with homosexual behaviours across the continent which existed way before the colonial intrusion. Prominent historians in the field, of sub-Sahara region (e.g. Marc Epprecht, Oliver Philips, Stephen O. Murray), have indicated that homosexuals in Southern Africa were less discriminated against in the pre-colonial era (from an estimated two thousand years ago, see Epprecht 2004: 26-8, 48) than they are today. African cave paintings (by the ancient *zvidhoma,* ibid) and most importantly African words (e.g. *Iqenge* and *isikhesona* in Zulu, and *hungochani* in chiShona are descriptive words for 'homosexual') are undeniable evidences of the existence of homosexual people as a social category during and since the pre-colonial era (see also Louw, 2001: 293). In Western Africa, for example, Oluwolo (2007: 170-1) has drawn on the views of some ancient Yoruba thinkers in Nigeria to address a politically challenging point that "there is neither explicit condemnation of homosexuality nor [is] the prescription of a particular sexual position an ideal." There is no doubt that contemporary African cultures have been imbued with Western religious doctrines in both explicit and implicit ways and having long taken them for granted, generations of Africans tend to disregard their own heritage regarding the linguistic depiction of sexual diversity. It is not that homoeroticism was absent in pre-colonial Africa, but rather that European imperialism corrupted African traditional sexuality by introducing homophobia (see Kendall, 1999: 157-78; Desai, 2001 in Migraine-George, 2003: 50; & Epprecht, 2004: 223).

> "The imposition of a colonial system does not introduce the colonised to same-sex practices. Rather, colonial discourse names and forbids those practices (through colonial law) while, at the same time, exploiting both black men and women sexually. It is trite to say that colonialism was corrupting; but one of its exploitative effects in fact was to construct the 'native' as sexually depraved" (Stychin, 1996: 473).

Nonetheless, the picture that emerges in the present is that Africans were not merely passive victims of the colonial regime. On the contrary, "they were active, complicated personalities who helped to shape the ways that changes in sexuality and society unfolded. The homosexual practices and identities that we see in Africa today are thus not mere imitations of Western gay life, or learned from deprived priests, abusive colonial officials and perverted tourists" (GALZ, 2008: 50). It can be unfair to blame Europeans for introducing distortions in traditional morals and sexual relations while there were Africans who eagerly

took advantage of the new conditions and opportunities created by Christianity, capitalism and colonial rule (see ibid: 49). To claim homosexuality is un-African is to embrace the intense Western "interrogation of sexual difference, and the obsessive categorisation of sexual perversities" (see Weeks, 1986: 14) which have contributed to the codification of a contemporary African sexual tradition. This sexual tradition demands that "one [should] function within the dominant heterosexual frame and to call the frame into question is perhaps to lose something of one's sense of place in gender" (Butler, 1999: xi). Homosexual performance disturbs conventional knowledge about what gender conceived as either male or female looks like (Spargo, 1999: 63); for example, male homosexuals do not neatly fit into the manly=male=man model. Conventional knowledge often falsely perceives homosexuals as "trapped somehow in the opposite gender" (Brake, 1976: 179; Morgan, 1993: 85). What homophobes fear, therefore, is that homoerotic practice has "the power to destabilise gender" (Butler, 1999: xi), which in turn explains the terror and anxiety that some African men suffer in 'becoming gay'. This problem is worth addressing because there is a possibility of an identity crisis among black homosexuals in South Africa due to the lack of adequate knowledge about the history of homosexuality in Africa and the alternative ways of understanding the relation between gender and sexuality.

Now it seems that the decolonisation process has delivered modern Africans the global package of sexual revolution, along with movements in the domains of feminism, queer politics, and human rights. With regard to the South African context, the success of gay rights in the post-apartheid constitution has created a unique relationship of law, politics, and social movement activism. The effects of this relationship have symbolised a dynamic negotiation between democracy and human rights. As Carl Stychin (1996: 455) states,

> "Unlike the Western paradigm of rights…the legitimacy of South African rights discourse is dependent upon its potential as a socially transformative instrument – as a tool for nation building and the reparation of the past injustices. At the same time, rights discourse is also invoked by self-described 'minorities' within South Africa, seeking protection from the actions of the majority. This creates an interesting dynamic between majoritarian and minority interventions".

The priority of the post-apartheid constitution is given to the protection of cultural diversity and human rights, which may necessarily oppose the dominant cultural ideologies and ethics. It is in this regard that the inclusion of a sexual orientation clause becomes a strategic intervention by which the gay-rights-seeking movement has taken advantage of the anti-apartheid movement during the period where the latter developed itself from the form of

racial liberation[4] into the liberation for human rights. It has been argued that as a result of this, the victory of gay rights was single-mindedly pursued by a group of activist organisations and individuals at the expense of a compromised democracy (ibid: 456). The achievement of gay rights, on the one hand, has failed to advocate gay identities and lifestyles in public and media, on the other hand; so that the cultural intolerance and social apathy to homosexuality has remained unchallenged. The gay rights clause is not progressively installed because it does not systematically encourage and motivate the coming out of homosexual people; instead it serves to benefit a very minute and mostly white middle-class-based population. The black majority is still not fully prepared to apply the constitutional change to their daily lives, because the exercise of certain rights can depend upon various degrees of (formal and informal) education and wealth. Since the New South Africa has inherited the social hierarchy of apartheid, the development of the gay and lesbian community has revealed a disjuncture. Gay rights may, for example, mean nothing to a rural-born, self-identified black lesbian, whose only means to survival is heterosexual marriage. For the average black gay man, too, being openly gay can put him in jeopardy when one happens to live in a township where gangsterism is ubiquitous. Truth be told, the gay and lesbian movement in South Africa has encountered stagnation due to the early arrival of its paper rights.

Now the question re-emerges: 'then what?' It is certainly not an option to give up on the constitutional privilege, neither is it possible to stop every conservative church group from reviling homosexuality. The crux here is that the gay rights clause seems to have made the act of coming out apolitical, but at the same time does not make coming out any easier for anyone. This paradox generates my theoretical formation of disjuncture: why is this? Why do lesbians and gay men live in such a paradox that delivers freedom, yet prevents them from calling upon each other or sharing their experiences and stories? Why are they so infringed, yet so quiet? The gay individual is camouflaged amid all the voices in gender and sexuality studies as they are centred upon how women want to have self-determination in reproduction and to sexual pleasure (e.g. Ojo, 2007; Oluwole, 2007; Kiiru, 2007), yet there are few male voices suggesting that they do not want to reproduce, irrespective of their sexual orientation, or that they do not want to conform to the prescribed hegemonic masculinity, whether they enjoy sports or not. Gay men have problems, whether closeted or out, whether masculine or feminine, whether wanting to have a gay life or not, since they all cannot escape their same-

---

[4] It should be noted that there were members of the ANC who argued that socialism and feminism ought to be included in the struggle for liberation.

sex desire. Even after having exhumed all that there is about traditional African same-sex patterns, this knowledge has either been dismissed from the public consciousness or has had little impact on ordinary Africans. Black homosexuals in South Africa have remained a silent majority,[5] hampered by the disjuncture between blackness and gayness (including the idea that 'gay' identity is imported from the USA). This study is therefore dedicated to identifying such disjunctures, so as to provide sociological inspiration for the future of the South African LGBTI community.

0.2 Homosexual Rhetoric: Christianity and Afrocentrism

In contemporary Africa, a word that is often used in devaluating homosexuality is 'tradition' – the argument being that homosexual relations are incompatible with traditional African social practices. "Discourses of Afrocentrism sometimes articulate homosexuality within a model of colonial contamination, in which African (usually) men were corrupted by whites. Homosexuality thus becomes un-African; a European identity that must be erased from the public sphere" (Stychin, 1996: 472). Various African leaders[6] have vilified homosexuality as a colonial residue, a 'white disease'.[7] For the Southern African governments who are unable to protect their populations against the public health disaster generated by HIV/AIDS, as well as political and economic crisis, they have fallen back on the language of protecting 'cultural authenticity'; and ironically, the quest for such cultural authenticity often takes up the tools of colonial oppression (Long, 2003: 7). Particularly in Zimbabwe, President Robert Mugabe presides over a dissolving economy and a deep popular demand for democracy:

> "Gays and lesbians have served him as a scapegoat for the first and a sideshow from the second. Mugabe speaks of his country's gays and lesbians as both servants and symbol of forces outside Zimbabwe, and outside Africa, threatening the cultural integrity and welfare of his country. He sees them as vanguard of, and metaphor for, a neo-colonial invasion" (ibid: 5).

It seems that the homosexual rhetoric in Southern Africa not only has no historical substance but also represents a form of impractical wisdom. According to Murray (1998: 270), "there are no examples of traditional African belief systems that singled out same-sex relations as sinful or linked them to concepts of disease or mental health – except where

---

[5] In contrast to the relative white 'majority' of the socially visible gay population

[6] These leaders include Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Sam Nujoma of Namibia, Sibusiso Dalmini of Swaziland, Frederick Chiluba of Zambia, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Seretse Ian Khama of Botswana (see Long, 2003: 12-46; Reddy, 2001: 84-6), and recently Jacob Zuma of South Africa, who have equated homosexuality to bestiality or something worse.

[7] The Wolfenden report of 1957 criticised the view of homosexuality as a disease and averred that 'private morality and immorality' are not anybody else's business (in Berliner, 1987: 142).

Christianity and Islam have been adopted".[8] It is only by having constituted Christianity (or Islam) as 'authentically' African that African people mobilised themselves against the citizenship claims of gays and lesbians.[9] Neville Hoad (1999, in Binnie, 2004: 78) argues that "it is significant and deeply ironic that religion – specifically Christianity – is used to valorise and give legitimacy to homophobic sentiments in Southern Africa, particularly as Christianity itself is a colonial import, whereas homosexuality is decried as Western, decadent and alien – un-African". The disapproval of homosexuality in modern Africa is largely based on the Biblical interpretation of a section in Leviticus (Long, 2003: 28), and the punishment for homoeroticism is also adopted from the colonial court by Africans themselves.[10] Homophobia is a trickle-down effect of colonial cultural imperialism[11] (GALZ, 2008: 133). If those African leaders claim that colonialism is responsible for bringing in homosexuality, then so is it responsible for introducing Christianity, industrialisation, capitalism, and democracy: why is Christianity or democracy never subjected to the colonial contamination model? Hoad (2007) has stressed that the cultural production of homophobia in contemporary Africa is indispensable with the rising of African Christian churches and the building of a particular kind of African nationalism. Sexual moralities in Africa are largely imitations of Christian and Islamic doctrines which have been reclaimed 'traditional' during colonisation.

Here I do not try to discuss whether or not the initial conduct of Christianity had a positive influence on African cultures; I only try to put forward an argument that it is simply wrong to apply any Western religious values for the de-Africanising of homosexuality, because any conservative Christian of any race, ethnicity or nationality in any continent will most likely disqualify homosexuality in absolute religious terms but not necessarily under

---

[8] For example, if the British missionaries did not convert king Mwanga's (Uganda) pages into Christians back in 1886, those pages would not dare to disobey their king's 'homosexual' demand. As Christian converts, those pages returned to their regions and, by using their status as future chiefs, spread Christianity (Hoad, 2007: 13). The battle between Mwanga and Christian missionaries reached its peak after Mwanga executed thirty pages for their refusal to engage in same-sex practices (ibid, & Sanders 1997). In the end, Mwanga's fall symbolised the end of his 'homosexuality' as a form of resistance to colonisation.

[9] Islam is as equally influential as Christianity in vituperating homosexuality, especially in the countries of Western and Northern Africa. Due to the geographical location of my research, Christianity is the major concern of this thesis.

[10] Marc Epprecht (1998a, 1998b, & 2004) has revealed the existence of a whole variety of relationships (from causal to committed, consensual to coercive, and one-night-stand to life-long partnerships) existing between African men prosecuted by the colonial authorities in the first thirty years of white settlement in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). His research makes clear that "charges for 'unnatural offences' in the early colonial courts were predominantly concerned with African men, and the white men's presence was limited to that of persecutor – in ironic contrasts to the current discourse and reported patterns of prosecutions" (in Phillips, 2001: 199).

[11] Sweet (1996: 186) has pointed out that some African homosexual men (e.g. shaman) have played a crucial role in African spiritual life for hundreds of years. This link between homosexual transvestism and the spiritual world has enabled some Africans to resist the Western Christian notion that all homosexuality is sinful.

any indigenous or racial imperatives. It is irrational that those African leaders persistently denounced homosexuality in both politics and media in the name of African tradition.

The establishment of Christianity in Africa is profound, says Sithole (1963: 37), "it was Christianity that introduced literacy on a continent-wide basis. Fundamentally too the continent of Africa owes Christianity an irrecoverable debt". But it was also Christianity that established an ideological foundation for the oppression and exploitation of Africans. The implementation of Christianity as a religious institute is multifaceted, argued Sithole (1963: 37): "[if] Christianity is used openly or subtly to maintain the status quo it becomes identified as an instrument of oppression and therefore suffers the fate of oppression". If any political power applies Christianity to conserve morality at the cost of individuality, it becomes an oppressive regime. Christian morality divides society into antagonistic groups by rendering conflicts within and thus becomes a menace to the social equilibrium. So why is homosexuality viewed as a threat to social order but not Christianity? The fact that homosexuality demands same-sex marriage[12] and the right to adopt children, does not instigate the abolishment of the marriage institute: the more people there are that get married, the stronger the marriage institution grows. Although same-sex marriage is a challenge to the nuclear family because its format transcends the boundaries of gender norms and sex roles, such marriage is only 'an option', as an alternative lifestyle, that will not 'replace' the traditional marriage.

The problem reflected by the African homosexual rhetoric is the lack of empathy amongst African politicians, African Church leaders, and the heterosexual majority who refuse to take the role of 'the other', the homosexual: to imagine the pain of having to challenge his/her world everyday just by his/her very existence. What has the homosexual done wrong to deserve such hostility and hatred if he/she only wants to achieve happiness at no one else's expense? Why does the will to conserve morality in the name of Christianity (or Islam) have to build upon the abasement and abuse of homosexuals? If adultery, homosexuality, and premarital sex are equally sinful acts according to the Bible, then one may ask: how is polygamy compatible with Christianity? Why is there no one persecuting adulterants by law? Why are there cases of exorcism performed on homosexuals, but not on adulterants? And why is the church so magnanimous and inclusive of the ones who have had premarital sex? The manipulation of Christian standards in modern Africa over time has

---

[12] "The Civil Union Act (No. 17 of 2006) is signed into law by the Deputy President of South Africa in November 30 2006, providing for the legal recognition of same-sex couples partnerships" (Reddy, 2009: 344). Although called Civil Union-ship, the constitutional court recognises it as a form of marriage that is equal to traditional marriage.

transformed Christianity into a nationalistic agenda for the consolidation of a politically-desired culture, through which "sexual orientation has become a cause, or perhaps an excuse, for political persecution and personal violence in diverse African contexts" (Amory, 1997: 5). The homosexual rhetoric in contemporary Africa is ultimately concerned with power and the maintenance of a particular ruling power.

0.3 The Knowledge of Sexuality: the South African Situation

During the preparation of this study, I was caught up in the question of how to locate homosexuality in contemporary South Africa, especially with regard to the unique apartheid context. Although South Africa is the world's first country to grant constitutional recognition to gays and lesbians as equal to other citizens (De Vos, 1995; in Hattingh, 2005: 195), only a small minority of the gay population, comprising mostly white men, participated in the previous lobbying for gay rights (Nel, 2005: 287). Black homosexuals were immobilised partly because their energies were centred on racial liberation during the apartheid era. Nonetheless, the lack of activism in pursing gay rights is still reflected in the lack of gay consciousness in the black community. The fact that the gay rights movement emerged within the white, well-educated, and middle-class-based urban population indicates that homosexuality as an identity category has its own discourse, with specific social and historical circumstances other than just homosexual behaviour.[13] As Gevisser and Cameron (1994: 5) argued, "asserting a lesbian or gay identity in South Africa is more than a necessary act of self-expression. It is a defiance of the fixed identities – of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality – that the apartheid system attempted to impose upon all of us". As a historically privileged sector, the South African white population has inherited notions of sexual freedom and gay subculture from the developed world; whereas black people (as well as coloured people and Indians) as the historically unprivileged sector have gained the imperatives of struggle, resistance, and social transformation (ibid); therefore inasmuch as people of different races share the same desire in sex, sexuality meant very different things according to one's colour of skin under apartheid. For black people to openly embrace a newly developed identity around their same-sex sexual orientation raises many difficult issues.

---

[13] Jacklyn Cock (2005: 188) has argued that "the inclusion of the gay rights clause in the final post-apartheid constitution was largely due to the ability of a male-dominant gay rights movement to form strategic alliance with the anti-apartheid struggle, to mobilise the master narrative of equality and non-discrimination and to lobby effectively during the constitution-making process".

Sociologists have identified sexuality as a mode by which sexual interests and sexual preference are expressed. It is both a biological development experienced by all human beings and a manifestation of society's boundaries in specific historical periods. Sexuality is a process, as George Herbert Mead (1934) would suggest, constantly shaped by symbolic interaction which involves both the actor's interpretation of sex and the societal definition of sex. This process is manifested in particular ways, upon which power acts. For Foucault, power is everywhere; it only requires a vessel for exercise. If such a vessel is what we experience as social order, or rather instituted order; then sexuality is both the product and the safeguard of that order. The term 'order' is the landmark to the social location of any sexuality. We are not sexual beings by nature if we are not shaped by external definitional structures, be that language or culture. Foucault (1979b: 152) therefore argues that sexuality is "a result and an instrument of power's design", a discursive product of history. Following his genealogy of sexuality, the sociological study of sexuality has 'demystified sex', presenting it as a social construct and thereby challenges the 'naturalness of heterosexuality' (Edwards, 1994: 23). It therefore follows that, on the one hand, sex as a powerful drive of the body does not inform one how best to engage in sex (Malinowski, 1963: 120, 127; Weeks, 1986: 13). The capacities of the body and psychology are given meanings only in culture and social relations (Weeks, 1986: 15, 63). On the other hand, the sociology of sexuality underscores that "the very mobility of sexuality, its chameleon-like ability to take many guises and forms…makes it a peculiarly sensitive conductor of cultural influences, and hence of social and political divisions" (ibid:11). Both heterosexuality and homosexuality are identity categories, yet they do not share equal social worth in identity formation. Queer studies have revealed that in modern society identity mediums (symbols) of heterosexuality are mainly produced and reproduced so that individuals are pre-occupied with the assumption that sexual attraction should be between 'opposite' sexes only. Queer studies have further revealed the disjunctures within conventional knowledge about gender, sex and sexuality in that the marginalisation of homosexual identity mediums not only presumes that homosexuality is wrong, but also visits 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu, 1989: 7) upon the individual, averting him/her from seeking homosexual identities.

Based on the above, the silence of black gays and lesbians in South Africa alludes to the lack of knowledge about one's sexual preference and the lack of access to the construction of a lifestyle that is based on one's sexual preference. As Gevisser and Cameron (1994: 4-5) indicated, "Our identities have been deformed by a system that classified us into those with freedom and those without. Apartheid legislated who we were, what work we

could do, where we could live, who we could associate with, what we could read and see and what kind of sex we could have. Apartheid even tried to dictate to use our self-conception and our self-regard". Thus the anti-apartheid struggle encompassed different objectives for white liberals as opposed to the black majority. With regards to gay rights, for instance, the ANC once misrecognised and negated the contribution of South African gays and lesbians to the success of the anti-apartheid struggle (further discussed in 2.3). Because black consciousness is primarily shaped by racial struggle not by sexual liberation, it is fundamentally difficult to imbue blackness with gayness in the process of racial liberation. On a demographical level, while the socially visible LGBTI group "consists predominantly of urbanised, middle class to upper class, mostly white men whose practices of consumerism and lifestyles parallel (and often exceed – through the pink rand) those of their heterosexual counterparts" (Van Zyl, 2005: 25), the vast majority of LGBTI individuals who are black and share the profile of the society at large do not have the economic means to participate in the mainstream gay culture because they are unemployed, poor and with low literacy (ibid).

More importantly, although the South African constitution can be viewed as an 'enabling tool' (ibid) for the creation of alternative sexualities, the condition of rights granting is constitutionally stipulated into specified identity categories. Kaven Botha points out that "the clause is meaningless unless you are out. In order to claim the rights you have to acknowledge and own the identity of being gay" (in Cock, 2005: 195). Such an identity specification though, promotes a sense of citizenship which can make it easier for people to identify as LGBTI because there is a sense of legal protection (Reid, in ibid; Van Zyl, 2005: 25). However, the post-apartheid constitution cannot by itself encourage the coming out of gay people; neither can it systematically eliminate the cultural intolerance of homosexuality. This problem is worth addressing because there appears to be very limited awareness, or critical understanding of the factors and social political influences contributing to the disempowerment of black gays and lesbians in South Africa.

So how compromising is it to juggle the political identities of 'black' and 'gay' within so charged and politicised a society? The previous discussion has touched briefly on the structural constraints on homosexuality wherein the individual can perform and reproduce those constraints; however there exists a notion of 'duality of structure' (Giddens, 1984: 25) because the individual has an agency that is capable of change. Individuals are not passive victims of a pre-existing structure because "structure has no existence independent of the knowledge that agents have about what they do in their day-to-day activity" (ibid: 26). Accordingly, the knowledge of sexuality depends on the 'knowledgeability' of actors (ibid),

who in turn depend on existing knowledge and strategy to achieve their ends. Therefore, we need to produce knowledge, a knowledge that not only explains who we are sexually, but also improves how we can relate and understand one another better in terms of sexuality.

0.4 <u>Research Plan and Thesis Overview</u>

This study investigates the coming out experiences of black men so as to discover the disjunctures between blackness and gayness. Given that the research focuses on interpersonal relationships involving the redefinition of self, I have chosen symbolic interactionism as the research paradigm to establish the theoretical foundation of my data analysis. Symbolic interactionism is broadly perceived as a conceptual framework rather than a specific theory (Nye & Berardo, 1966 in Longmore, 1998: 44). It allows scholars to look into the social world and draw upon perceptions about observed facts for establishing scientific problems as social objects (MaPhail & Rexroad, 1979: 452). As an attribute to the qualitative research tradition, which emphasises the micro (face-to-face) interaction among individuals, concepts of mind, body, self, and their relationships to each other have been the central concerns of symbolic interactionism. In order to study the inner side of life in relation to the emergent and constantly changing nature of social reality, the symbolic interactionist posits that "the individual is best studied in conjunction with some significant other or in collective action" (Plummer, 1975: 11). Thus my data analysis as well as findings will pay specific attention to classical sociological premises such as structure and agency (the 'I' and the 'Me') and socialisation.

My research draws primarily on qualitative research methods featuring participant observation and life story interviews. The role of the qualitative researcher is not that of an objective scientist (McCracken, 1988: 18-20; Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 273; Atkinson, 1998: 64, & Jones, 1993: 138); instead, given that the method of the research is biographical (story-telling), he/she interprets and explores the experiences of the respondents (Josselson & Lieblich, 1995: ix). Therefore my research not only records how respondents have achieved their homosexual identities within a predominantly homophobic social space; but also uncovers the understandings and changing perceptions of those involved in the research process so as to "penetrate the frame of meaning with which they operate" (Bryman, 1988: 61). Given the exploratory nature of the study, the essential research technique in gathering data is the life-story interview which allows "the opportunity for the researcher to probe deeply, to uncover new clues, to open new dimensions of a problem and to secure vivid, accurate, inclusive accounts that are based on personal experience" (Burgess, 1982: 165). Six

black, male, homosexual interviewees (of African descent) were selected, based on the following criteria: *a)* they must have come out of the closet, *b)* they must have had no involvement in the sex industry, *c)* they must have had no previous experience in same-sex relationships within institutions where such relationships are formalised, for example in mines and prisons (see Epprecht, 2004: 54, 83, 113-16, 160), since such types of homosexuality are largely situational and contingent (see further details in Moodie, 2001: 299, Louw, 2001: 295), *d)* while they may have had past experience of heterosexual affiliations, to avoid the issue of bisexuality, persons with a double-life style were excluded, *e)* they were not initially friends of the researcher. The research process involved:

1. Data overview of previous research into the history of African homosexuality and the contemporary South African gay and lesbian movement (Chapters 1 and 2). Relevant documents and literature at The Gay and Lesbian Archives South Africa (GALASA) at the University of Witwatersrand, the Triangle Project (NGO) in Cape Town and similar archives elsewhere in South Africa were used. The data was analysed in terms of recent theoretical trends so as to provide a clear understanding of the tradition, transition, and Westernisation of African sexuality.

2. Life story interviews were conducted with six respondents who were selected from Rhodes University (Out-Rhodes Society), Green Point Cape Town and Volunteers assigned to the Triangle Project in Cape Town. In order to examine the influence of the gay rights movement after 1994 on gay individuals, two interviewees were adults (the age of 18) before 1990 (the period of the first South African Gay and Lesbian movement, see Elder, 2005), and the other four became adults after 2000. At least one interviewee from each group had been involved in a long-term relationship (with a minimum length of three years).

Overall, four major schools of thought are effectively utilised in this thesis; they include: 1) the basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1963, 1967; Plummer, 1975, 1995, 1996; Stryker, 1981, 1987) in the production of knowledge and its methodological position from the perspective of Herbert Blumer (1969); 2) the genealogy of Foucault (1979a, 1979b, 1985, 1988) combined with queer theories featuring Guy Hocguenghem (1993) to demonstrate the history of sexuality and homosexual identification; 3) Freudian psychoanalysis (Freud, 1907, 1918, 1920, 1923) and the Frankfurt

School featuring Herbert Marcuse's (2001) essay on the one-dimensional man; 4) Feminist critiques of sexual binarism (Butler, 1993, 1999) and compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980).

In the first chapter, I begin by exploring the philosophical root, historical development and the sociological implications of symbolic interactionism; aiming to achieve a prior image of the social reality within which the homosexual individual is located. The aim here is to establish coherent themes for the sifting of data and the organisation of variables employed in analysing data. Apart from the theories of prominent symbolic interactionists, historians, feminists, and queer scholars are also incorporated into the discussion so as to provide a comprehensive perspective on the social construction of sexuality and how it is perpetuated in discourse and lived through our bodies and minds.

The second chapter takes individual stories involved in the South African gay and lesbian struggle as a form of literature review, examining the impact of the inclusion of the sexual orientation clause in the new South African constitution. In so doing it provides a preview of the type of content analysis that will be adopted in my data analysis (Chapter 4), using biographical materials such as letters, interviews, biographies, and autobiographies to demonstrate the strength of narrative study and its sociological significance in producing valid knowledge.

Chapter 3 provides a concrete discussion on methodology with the focus on the relationship between symbolic interactionism and the life story interview approach. It also illustrates, in consistency with Chapter 1, the thematic organisation of data. In addition, a fairly detailed description of the research procedure is included along with the acknowledgement of research difficulties, limitations, and the way in which I have tried to minimise research biases.

Chapter 4 is a straightforward data analysis organised in 'choreographical' sections. Due to the abundant life stories obtained, I have chosen not to present each life story in my thesis, instead selected narratives are drawn from every story to demonstrate the themes identified in Chapters 1 and 2. The goal of analysis is to identify the stages of the individual coming out so as to discover the external definitional structures that have caused respondents' suffering as well as the joy of self-acceptance after coming out.

The final chapter presents research findings and solutions, revealing the disjunctures within conventional knowledge of black homosexual identity in contemporary South Africa. It is argued that the sex/gender category is a social embodiment of heterosexual desire. The proposed argument rests on Judith Butler's (1993, 1999) scholarship which demonstrates that

the implementation of the sex/gender category is a social embodiment of heterosexual desire securing a proliferation of the heterosexist discourse, such that gay people's coming out symbolises the refusal of and challenge to socially imposed life-styles, gender norms, and sexual practices.

Chapter 1 Symbolic Interactionism and the Study of Homosexuality in Africa

1.1 <u>Introduction</u>

The first chapter examines the epistemological foundation of symbolic interactionism and its relevance to the study of homosexuality in Africa. The aim is to classify the strategies and regimes operating within the social construction of sexuality in both African and Western contexts. In so doing I problematise the conventional knowledge of sexuality by arguing that contemporary South African society represents a heteronormative nexus; while the distortions caused by colonialism in traditional sexual relations have left both impediments and opportunities for the self-acceptance and the cultural consent of homosexuality. The investigation of past research on African same-sex patterns is included for contesting the Western notion of the hetero-homo dichotomy. Throughout the chapter the empirical work on sexuality associated with culture, politics, institutions, history and power is examined. Included are the critics and argumentations of George Herbert Mead, Sigmund Freud, Herbert Marcuse, Guy Hocquenghem, Michel Foucault, and Kenneth Plummer as to demonstrate the epistemological foundation of my research. The goal is to explore the theoretical background of homosexuality in relation to the symbolic interactionist perspective, including its historical emergence, basic assumptions, concepts, and explanations. The discussion given to the above emphasises the impact of capitalism, Western imperialism, and globalisation on post-apartheid discourse so as to construe the ways by which it not only informs ordinary South Africans' sense of selves, but also contours their actual bodies (Steyn & Van Zyl, 2009: 6). In the end, I explore the use of symbolic interactionism in this research so as to provide a research guideline featuring biographical and narrative studies. The individual coming out story is the key to the solution of my research problem, and the basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism help guide the research procedure in a controlled yet fluid manner, at the same time providing the means for both assessing and analysing my data.

1.2 <u>The Philosophical Roots and the Basic Assumptions Underlying Symbolic Interactionism</u>

Symbolic interactionism as a conceptual framework is developed distinctly by a group of American philosophers including Charles Horton Cooley (1902), William James (1915), John Dewey (1922), William I. Thomas (1931) and George Herbert Mead (1934). For them, human thought, experience and conduct are essentially social. Like Max Weber's account on subjective interpretation (Verstehen) of human action, symbolic interactionists seek to explain social actions in terms of the meanings that individuals give to them. They believe

that, via symbols, meaning is imposed on the world of nature, and human interaction with that world is thereby made possible. The early moralists of the Scottish Enlightenment such as Smith (1723-1790), Hume (1711-1776), and Ferguson (1723-1816), started to perceive society as a network of interpersonal communications (Shott, 1976; Longmore, 1998). They propounded the symbolic interactionist assumptions that "society is necessarily antecedent to the individual, self and mind develop through interaction with others, self-control derives from social control, and people are actors as well as reactors" (Shott, 1976: 39). They also understood human behaviour as the result of various social networks rather than biology, in which the mind is instrumental to human adaptation. The individual adapts to situations via interaction with another in order to achieve 'sympathy'. Cooley's (1902) concept of 'the looking-glass-self'[14] and Stryker (1981) both have emphasised the importance of sympathy in human interaction. With respect to the former, Cooley notes that individuals are able to introspect sympathetically so as to imagine situations empathically as others see them (in Longmore, 1998). Via sympathy, meaning is embedded in our perceptions (e.g., reflected appraisals), which arise within the context of a group setting. With respect to the latter, Stryker (1981: 5) adds to this account by suggesting that sympathy "is the principal through which humans develop their sense of membership in and benefits to be derived from society, and through which they come to be controlled by others." In other words, individual identity or the sense of self is based on group membership, and human nature is therefore a group nature as the primary phase of society. The concept of sympathetic introspection (or role-take) had profound influence on the later symbolic interactionists in perceiving the self as multifaceted and as a product of consistent interactions with others: there can be no self without the other (Mead, 1934: 195) and the self is never truly fixed because of its interactive nature.

1.2.1 The Epistemological Framework of Symbolic Interactionism

As the founder of symbolic interactionism, George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) provided symbolic interactionism with its three chief concepts: mind, self and society. For him, mind is the transition from impulse to rationality, the ability of the individual to internalise the social process of communication in which meaning emerges (Morris, 1934: xxii). It is a psychological process, yet caused by social interaction (i.e. gesture and language), through which the individual develops a 'self'. The self arises in "the process of social experience and

---

[14] The notion of the looking-glass self emphasises the reflexivity of the self. For Cooley (1902: 183-4), "social reference takes the form of a somewhat definite imagination of how one's self appears in a particular mind, and the kind of self-feeling one has is determined by the attitude toward this attributed to that other mind".

activity, developed within the individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process" (Mead, 1934: 135). Through the self, the individual is able to note things and determine their significance for his line of action. In this process, the individual is able to achieve a character and become an object to him/herself.

The complete self, says Mead (in Morris, 1934: xxv), is conceived by both 'I' and 'me'. The 'I' refers to "the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others" (Mead, 1934: 175); whereas the 'me' is seen as an "organised set of attitudes of others which one him/herself assumes" (ibid). Although the relationship between the 'I' and the 'me' characterises a 'give-and-take' process (ibid: 182), whereby individuals make indications to each other and at the same time exchange thoughts, the process of indicating to someone or to a group (which ends in the form of interaction) will necessarily influence or change that original indication (ibid: 196). This reflexive quality of interaction is the cornerstone of symbolic interactionism (Callero, 2003: 117) in that humans do not regurgitate movements by instinct; instead every human action as well as reaction inevitably involves the personal interpretation and the group definition of that action. This is notably a social process that carries out complex social relations/structures which are simultaneously performed and reflected by our 'Is' and 'mes'. The 'I' enables us to change social structures (Morris, 1934: xxv); whereas the 'me' allows us to relate to each other so as to reinforce structures.

The 'I' and the 'me' are twin-born and both are necessary to the development of individuality (Hansen, 1976: 35). For individuality is an indispensible expression of the self, it cannot be developed in isolation but in reflection. "If one answered to a social situation immediately without reflection", argued Mead (1934: 182), "there would be no personality in the foregoing sense". The absence of reflection presupposes that one is not responsible for the social situation in which he/she finds him/herself, neither is the situation meaningful to the individual. Therefore for Mead (ibid: 134):

> "It is by means of reflexiveness – the turning back of the experience upon oneself – that the whole social process is thus brought into the experience of the individual involved in it; it is by such means, which enable the individual to take the attitude of the other toward himself, that the individual is able consciously to adjust him/herself to that process, and to modify the resultant of that process in any given social act in terms of his/her adjustment to it. Reflexiveness, then, is the essential condition, within the social process, for the development of mind".

This phenomenon is the basis of socialisation, in which Mead discussed the development of self-consciousness as a result of role-taking (ibid: 254). To role-take is 'to put oneself in the other's shoes' (Longmore, 1998: 45): the existence of society depends on each individual

seeing the world, as well as oneself, from the other person's perspective. The ability to role-take has led Mead to insist that self-consciousness can only be accomplished by taking on or assuming the position of the other, as he termed the 'generalised other' (Jenkins, 2004: 19).

> "Reason cannot become impersonal unless it takes an objective, non-affective attitude toward itself; otherwise we have just consciousness, not self-consciousness. And it is necessary to rational conduct that the individual should thus take an objective, impersonal attitude toward himself, that he should become an object to himself" (Mead, 1934: 138).

However, in so far as we view self-consciousness as unique, we are also caught up in the confusions of reason and relativity. The question goes: how can we be unique, but at the same time be able to live in an ordered world? If our claim for individuality is to bring about change in a given order, yet our coherence requires the preservation of the very same order, then how do we build change without having to destroy that order? The answer involves a dialectic through which "we understand that relativity gives way to involvement, and we also see the possibility that involvement can grow critical, as the individual turns from questions of how to maintain the social order to questions of how to realise his or her own individual possibilities and the possibilities of others" (Hansen: 1976: 19). For Mead, role-taking not only allows us to recognise what others make of even new situations, but also helps us predict how others will define their possibilities and choose their actions. In this way, we somehow feel as if we live in different worlds yet we still reason each other's existence in such a way that we share a world in common.

In Mead's view, the mind cannot exist without mediums that transmit whatever is external into the internal. The transition from impulse to rationality creates such mediums, or rather symbols such as gestures and languages which "enables us to attach meanings to objects and actions in everyday life" (McCall & Simmons, 1966; in Plummer, 1975: 11). Without symbols there is no distinctively human interior world, and without the stimulus of interaction with others, neither would there be anything to talk about or think about. Human beings thus interact in terms of symbols that are defined behaviourally. Mead's social behaviourism was established "as an attempt to explain individual conduct and experience in terms of the antecedent and ongoing organised conduct of the social group" (McPhail & Rexroat, 1979: 450). His view of scientific epistemology asserts that "individual experience presupposes the organised structure and that structure is not acquired inductively but is taught through formal instruction or through the theories and findings of preceding scholars" (ibid). In other words, conventional knowledge of any kind is not a product of a particular structure

per se, but rather the accumulation of individual experiences about a particular matter and the ongoing articulation of it produce the meaning and value of that knowledge in time. This epistemological framework is pivotal to my project because it enables the researcher to problematise sexuality by exploring the meanings and activities which are not captured under its conventional knowledge. Mead defines a research problem as "the checking or inhibition of some more or less habitual form of conduct, way of thinking or feeling" (in ibid: 451). If by empirical literature (Freud, 1918; Foucault, 1979b, 1985; Hocquenghem, 1993) modern society represents a heteronormative reality, which systematically denies or precludes symbols of homosexual behaviours/feelings/activities, then the conventional knowledge of sex/sexuality ought to be set as a problem according to Mead's scientific inquiry.

Even more specifically, Mead recognises the individual as the original "source of those exceptional experiences which establish problems as well as the source of hypothesised solutions to those problems" (in McPhail & Rexroad, 1979: 453), although he does not construe that hypothesis as individualistic. In other words, for establishing scientific problems as social objects, the research operation ought to be taken from the micro level of the individual. Therefore symbolic interactionism pertains to qualitative research traditions whereby it shows a commitment to naturally occurring data: "it assumes that systematic inquiry must occur in a natural setting rather than [an] artificially constrained one such as an experiment" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; in Ambert, et al., 1995: 880). For Mead, the solution to a problem can only be achieved through one's familiarity with the problematised phenomenon: "the greater one's familiarity with the phenomenon, the more likely one can recognise the problematic features in which an adequate hypothesis must occur" (Mead, 1936; in McPhail & Rexroad, 1979: 452). This approach introduced by Mead (1934) and later reinforced by Herbert Blumer (1969) has criticised positivism and scientific knowledge for disconnecting social inquiry and scientism from the unpredictable human interactions in which they are rooted. In order to reconnect the lost connection in positivist conducts, Mead suggested a method aimed at studying human experience without considering questions of their causes and objective reality. Therefore in essence, symbolic interactionism can mould a sociological theory that focuses on small-scale (micro) interaction situations rather than large-scale (macro) social change.

As opposed to functionalism which explains human behaviour as determined by society, the interactionist emphasises the individual's consciousness and symbol-manipulating ability by which "drives become subservient to meaning" and "determinism becomes subservient to man's intentionality and points of choice" (Plummer, 1975: 30).

Sexual behaviour, like any other human behaviour, is meaning-oriented: biology alone does not serve the purpose of behaving. As Kimmel and Fracher (1992: 473) state: "that we are sexual is determined by a biological imperative toward reproduction, but how we are sexual – where, when, how often, with whom, and why – has to do with cultural learning, with meanings transmitted in a cultural setting". Therefore one ought to perceive sexuality as a dependent variable that is shaped by conjoint action: "the social context becomes central for comprehending sexuality as it is commonly experienced in everyday life" (Plummer, 1975: 30). Although Kimmel and Fracher may have generalised sexual imperative in a heterosexist context, it is under the same epistemological framework that the use of symbolic interactionism is able to problematise the conventional understanding of sexuality; if it, at root, proclaims the individual's ability to recreate and transform the meaning of sexual acts.

1.2.2 *Contemporary Symbolic Interactionism*

There are three major methodological orientations within the school of symbolic interactionism. The foremost is the situational approach initiated by the Chicago School which deals with the emergence and maintenance of the self in face-to-face interaction. This approach views the process of social interaction as naturally occurring social situations and simultaneously emphasises the fluid and contingent nature of the social order (Longmore, 1998: 46). Scholars of the situational approach thus perceive individual behaviour as indefinite, flexible, spontaneous, and impulsive. Key contributors to this approach include Herbert Blumer and Erving Goffman, who are interested in how individuals define situations and thereby construct their own realities. In contrast to the Chicago school, relatively influential is the structural approach of the Iowa School which examines the structural features of social groups and the consequences of role relationships for individuals (ibid: 46). The Iowa school emphasises structural as opposed to processual conceptions of self and society and views behaviour not as emergent and unpredictable, but as determined by antecedent variables having to do with aspects of the self as well as with historical, developmental, and social conditions (Kuhn & McParland, 1954; Gecas & Bruke, 1995; in ibid: 47). The structural approach, in contrast to the situational orientation, aligns itself more closely to mainstream sociology which stresses social structure as the primary determining force in one's life opportunities of change. For instance, it emphasises social class as a critical determinant of sexual behaviour, as well as the effects of social institutions, such as education, family, and economics in shaping individual sexual experience. Lastly, an additional biographical-historical approach that has emerged recently appears to broaden our

understanding of the self and identity in scope: "it brings in temporal considerations at the personal (as biography) and societal (as history) levels and is concerned with the larger cultural context within which selves are constructed" (Gecas & Bruke, 1995: 44). This theoretical orientation aims to incorporate the study of history and culture into the study of a particular social phenomenon, such as sexuality. Foucault's historical analysis on the discursive production of sexuality in the West, for instance, pertains to the biographical-historical orientation in that sexuality is perceived as a social construct of particular historical moments (Foucault, 1979b: 152). Influenced by Foucault, much of the orientation is evident in gender studies, queer studies, ethnic studies and feminist scholarship and is often related to post-modernism (Longmore, 1998: 47). Scholars in favour of constructivism, text analyses, narrative analyses, and other interpretive methodologies have effectively utilised and explored the analytical potential of the biographical-historical approach.

1.3 The Interactionist Approach to Sexuality

The interactionist approach to sexuality deals with the problematic and socially constructed nature of sexual meanings. It stands in opposition to those accounts that presuppose human sexuality as able to "translate itself into a kind of universal knowing or wisdom", as well as "the assumption that sexuality possesses a magical ability that allows biological drives to seek direct expression in psycho-social areas in ways that we do not expect in other biologically rooted behaviour" (Simon & Gagnon, 1969; in Plummer, 1975: 39). Although it is irrefutable that conventionally defined sexual behaviour is rooted in biological capacities and processes, so is every other form of human behaviour.

> "Admitting the existence of a biological substrate for sex in no way allows a greater degree of biological determinism than is true of other areas of corresponding interaction. Indeed, the reverse is more likely to be true: the sexual area may be precisely that realm wherein the superordinate position of the socio-cultural over the biological level is most complete" (Gagnon & Simon, 2005: 10-1).

To perceive sexuality as a social construct is to suggest that "the social-psychological meaning of all sexual events must be learned because they supply the channels through which biology is expressed" (ibid: 4). Here, the body is not the actually exiting body-object described by biologists, but the body as lived in by the subject (De Beauvior, 1972: 66). Although the physiology and morphology of the body condition and limit what is possible in sex, they do not cause the patterns of sexual life (Weeks, 1986: 25). We may 'naturally' have sexual feelings, but we certainly do not 'naturally' possess knowledge about our sexual

feelings. Our biology does not possess intrinsic meanings in its own right (Brake, 1985: 25). These arise through interpretive and definitive procedures, in other words through symbolic interactions. The social construction of sexuality thus deals with how the meaning of sex is organised into categories and performed by individuals. As our knowledge of sexuality changes, so does the specification of individuals.

The scholarship of Blumer (1969), with its attempt to categorise basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism, holds that it is more effective to use 'sensitised concepts' rather than empirically defined variables in research (in McPhail & Rexroat, 1979: 451). For Blumer, theories of mainstream sociology (e.g. functionalism or conflict theories) often overlook individual differences as fixed social roles (e.g. sex roles, family roles, or work roles as structural codifications) by underestimating individuals' ability to create and recreate roles from one situation to another, and each individual does it differently according to his/her personal experience with the given subject. The interactionist account of sexuality thus aims to "deconstruct sexual categories and causal/etiological theories of sexual types" (Plummer, 2005: xv). It places greater emphasis on 'location' in the social structure as the primary force influencing the conceptions and experiences of sexuality. With regard to same-sex relations, the category of homosexual is an empirically defined variable that does not stand up well in cultural comparison (Amory, 1997: 8): although the construction of homosexuality is based on same-sex behaviour which is universal, same-sex behaviour is not recognised everywhere as exclusively homosexual/gay as it is in the West (Ford & Beach, 1951; Churchill, 1967; in Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991: 3). It is therefore critical to interrogate the applicability of the Western hetero/homo dichotomy in traditional African contexts.

The study of African sexuality has raised fundamental questions with regard to the theoretical frameworks of identity formation, sexual relations, and the use of pleasure. Early colonial anthropological studies (Falk, 1923; Evan-Prichard, 1970) as well as the traditional same-sex patterns revealed in the profound work of Murray and Roscoe (1998) have demonstrated that sexuality can be fluid, transitory, steady, and polymorphous depending on how one's "location within the social structure is reflected in the structure of the self" (Blumer, 1969; Plummer, 2005; Longmore, 1998: 46). For instance, David Greenberg's (1988) treatise on male prison sex has reduced homosexuality into a situational form whereby it is possible that pleasure overrides prescribed heterosexual identity in the absence of women. This kind of situational homosexuality correlates with some same-sex patterns in pre-colonial Africa. For example, Evan-Pritchard (1970) revealed a form of boy marriage amongst the Azande men (now Northern Angola) where a warrior-hood is reinforced by

same-sex practice (Williams, 1985: 352). The boy marriage is a crucial process whereby a boy becomes a man through performing the wife's role as informative of what he would not want to be in the future. Apart from that educational site, the boy marriage is partially caused by the lack of women as well as polygamy (Evan-Pritchard, 1970: 1429). It is inappropriate to call the Azande warriors homosexual therefrom. Similar is the boy marriage on the Southern African mines which dates back to the early 20th century (Sanders, 1997; Moodie, 2001; Epprecht, 2004). As T. Dunbar Moodie (2001) indicates, to become migrant labourers, men were forced to leave their community and hence failed to perform their duty as men. The boy marriage on the mines was an attempt to re-establish 'heterosexual marriage' so as to preserve black men's rural identity and traditional manhood. The same-sex behaviour that occurred on the mines did not define one's sexual orientation, thereby the miners' sexuality remained fluid.

Homoerotic activities observed in African societies often manifest in sensitised forms with terminological subtlety. Unlike the previous cases, the *'yan daudu* (singular: *'dan daudu*) men who engage in regular same-sex practice in the Hausa society of Nigeria may be the closest category to the Western gay identity in modern Africa. Nonetheless, the *'yan daudu* men do not see their 'homosexual behaviour' as incompatible with heterosexual behaviour, marriage, or parenthood, as a result "most *'yan daudu* men – including those who identify as 'women-like' – marry women and have children, even as they maintain their more covert identity as men who have sex with men" (Gaudio, 1998: 118). More importantly, *'yan daudu* do not view themselves as an overt and politicised community in Nigeria, most of those mentioned in Gaudio's report have little if any knowledge of Western gay life (ibid: 117). Although the formation of traditional same-sex patterns is rooted in their historical particularities which owe much to Western imperialism, "what perhaps is missing from this inventory of 'traditional' African same-sex patterns is an identity and lifestyle in which homosexual relationships are not based on gender difference" (Murray, 1998: 272). The traditional same-sex patterns have shown that it is possible not to make a mental connection between acts of copulation and procreation since, for example, the continuation of same-sex relations amongst the *'yan daudu* were pursued after their heterosexual marriages. It can be said that for the African men engaged in same-sex practice, it was not a particular desire but pleasure which became the prime object of their selves; whereas modern homosexuality defines individuals solely on the basis of sexual object choice.

The above case studies correspond with the structural interactionist account of sexuality in that sexuality is not a free-floating desire that simply finds its object for

gratification; instead it is always "grounded in wider material and cultural forces, be that economic, religious, political, or familial" (Plummer, 2005: xii). In modern society, "the availability of sexual partners, their ages, their incomes, their position in the economic process, time commitments…shape sexual careers far more than the minor influence of sexual desire" (Gagnon & Simon, 2005: 77). Thus structural interactionists reject the dispositional fallacy of the homo-hetero dichotomy and instead advocate the idea that there is no 'natural sexuality' but a variety of achieved sexualities. In this manner, the quest for discovering what makes people homosexual is no more or less interesting than questioning what makes people having different tastes in food or drink.

1.4 Modern Sexuality: Desire, Pleasure, and Knowledge

The structural interactionist approach to sexuality has its solid standpoint in cross-cultural studies. However, it tends to treat sexuality as a cultural phenomenon which potentially insinuates that the differentiation of sexualities is merely 'local'. If the definition of sexuality relies on the meaning of sex given by its actors, then as the meaning of sex changes, so does sexuality. Foucault (1985: 47) argues that humans have developed a science of sex that is devoted to the analysis of desire rather than the increase of pleasure. He traces the origin of sexuality and asserts that until the Enlightenment, sexual knowledge was primarily concerned with technique and pleasure: "there was nothing to be learned from it except perhaps how to enjoy it" (Foucault, in Wilchins, 2004: 49). Sexual relations in pre-colonial and colonial Africa were far more pliable than that of the European ones. Formalised same-sex relationships among the Herero and the Nama were called 'special friendship'. The Herero men and women are free to gratify their desire, "the question of 'how' (they do it) is unimportant; only the question of 'if at all' is of concern" (Falk, 1923: 192). For the Herero, there is not any recognition of separate forms of desire; instead, boys are free to engage in sex with girls, and also relatively free to have sex with each other. Furthermore, the most amorphous homosexual relations were found in Kaffir, Southwest Africa, where same-sex intercourse was widely practiced, even homosexual incest (ibid: 194-5). This is a less drastic social contract than the one offered to Western gays – to either repress same-sex desires and behaviour altogether or to accept the status of social outlaws. At the same time, "it largely forestalls homosexual identity construction, stigmatisation, and subculture formation" (Murray, 1998: 273). The intricacies revealed in African sexual relations imply that one should not assume a natural causal relationship between desire and pleasure as if pleasure is achieved whenever there is desire. Pleasure can be achieved through all human senses, be that

sight, sound, smell, or taste. However, sexual pleasure is, in contrast to the rest, 'inferior' (Foucault, 1985); because it does not require much of intellectual learning to enjoy it. In fact, traditional African sexual relations lead to question the category of 'sexuality' itself as an entirely Western construction (Amory, 1997: 8).

The Western notion of sexuality demands particular forms of vigilance. Following the Enlightenment, the Catholic Church made tremendous efforts to transform sexuality into "something akin to truth"; thereby to know one's self increasingly meant to know one's sexuality (Wilchins, 2004: 50). According to Foucault, Victorianism has made sexuality "something one has to search out in oneself, something that requires rigorous self-examination" (ibid). The very notion of sexuality was/is established so as to shape sexual desire by applying strategic disciplinary knowledge to sex. Hocquenghem (1993: 50) succinctly summarised desire as "an arbitrarily frozen frame in an unbroken and poly-vocal flux". For him, desire always emerges "in a multiple form, whose components are only divisible *a posteriori*, according to how we manipulate it" (ibid). The characterisation of desire as exclusively homosexual or heterosexual is a baseless fallacy; but each has a particularly manifest imagery, since each can become an object to the self, rendering meaning in the mind, it is possible to undertake a deconstruction of such images. The history of sexuality ought to illustrate the ways in which homosexuality and heterosexuality serve to define each other, that the one only exists in relation to the other, that neither makes sense without the other: they are co-constructed in a reciprocal, but hierarchical relationship. Heterosexuality in these terms is sustained by silencing and marginalising dissent, by naming the other as the outside (Jackson, 1999: 173-4). The incidence of homosexuality always threatens to undermine the heterosexual norm. If the idea of desire represents complete libidinal freedom as Freud proclaimed, then the emergence of modern homosexuality is precisely rooted in the prohibition of same-sex practice. The nature of desire before the Enlightenment was not demarcated because individuals did not seek sexual desire, but sources of pleasure, for sexual conduct, which resembles traditional African sexual relations as well as those of the Ancient Greeks.

Perhaps one can safely presume that pre-colonial/colonial African discourse was not organised to limit the scope of pleasure. Since desire was not an object of the self, one would not try to objectify 'the self' in sex. The meaning of sex was not located in the body (based upon reproductive difference), but in the process of one's interaction with accessible and desirable objects. Sex may be a powerful drive (Malinowski, 1963: 120, 127), but it certainly does not prescribe how sex is best done. Freud (1920: 144) extends this argument by viewing

sexuality as a discourse between the aim of a biological drive and its object. Although desires aim for satisfaction, what objects are deemed desirable is limited by social context. Butler (1993, 1999) adds to Freud's assumption by arguing that gender is a strategic idiom that regulates desire and its objects. As noted in the case study of mine marriage, it is possible that "sexual desire finds satisfaction in available and socially acceptable objects whose identities are not necessarily fixed" (Moodie, 2001: 299). For the miners, same-sex desire and practice exist without having to conceptualise a homosexuality, and the meaning of gender is systematically relocated in achieving pleasure. While same-sex desire is a timeless state of affairs, homosexuality is bound by time. Same-sex desire only disappears if humans become extinct, whereas homosexuality emerges when same-sex desire is regarded as an abomination. This explains why the *'yan daudu* men have deployed heterosexual gender roles for their homosexual intercourse. It is not that homosexuality and heterosexuality are caused by separated instincts, but because of the taboo on homosexuality the term "instinct [has] emerged into discourse and [so has] analysis of the cultural production of the notion of sexual desire as an index of individual and collective identity" (Stoler, 1995: 166).

Here one may argue that it is impossible to theorise desire and pleasure because of their emotional uncertainty. This is true, but it does not indicate that sexual desire and pleasure have no roles to play in any form of sexual identification, given that the Enlightenment turned sexuality into a 'hetero-homo dichotomy'. The critiques of the structural approach have exposed the significance of the biographical-historical approach because sexuality as a social construct owes its nature to the politics of its given historical period that produces the strategic knowledge of sex (Silverman, 1985: 89). In post-colonial Africa, not only has the modern apparatus of sexuality developed an exclusively heterosexual orientation, its subsequent discourse has also denied people's access to knowledge about sex. This approach coincides with the situational orientation, and proceeds from the assumption that sexuality is not one 'thing' (heterosexuality) or one 'truth', but is rather concerned with the various regulatory mechanisms through which sexual 'subjects' are produced and maintained (Butler, 1997b: 32). Foucault (1985: 4) indicates that,

> "To assume sexuality as a singular form, namely heterosexuality, is only possible through various mechanisms of repression to which it was bound to be subjected in every society. What this amounted to, in effect, was that desire and the subject of desire were withdrawn from the historical field, and interdiction as a general form was made to account for anything historical in sexuality".

This implies that there is an ongoing discourse of sexuality prior to one's knowledge of sex which pre-selects the basic ingredients of one's sexual identity at birth. Plummer (1975: 40) elaborates:

> "Man, then, is born into a pre-existing sexual world with its own laws, norms, values, meanings, typifications on the cultural level, and its own relationships on the structural level. This world exists independently of any specific actor, confronts him as massively real, and exerts a tacit power over him".

Most of us were born into a heteronormative society. Our ascribed docility provides the basis for heterosexual conversion. And to perpetuate heterosexuality as a dominant and normative form of sexuality, the pedagogy of sex requires individuals to consistently talk about sex only in the form of reproduction, to exhibit the pleasure of sex merely between 'opposite' sexes, and to produce the knowledge of sex exclusively based upon reproduction (but not upon oral sex, thigh sex, intracrural sex, etc.). Our knowledge of sexuality is restricted by our "accessibility to different partners" (Brake, 1985: 14): the diverse fields of knowledge for understanding one's sexual desire is systematically limited by the discourse that produces that knowledge. This is a process of 'individual subjugation' (Silverman, 1985: 85) according to which individuals are unaware of the process whereby their discourse of sexuality is constructed: they are subjected to it by heredity and gradually become incorporated into the discourse so as to reproduce the knowledge of the prescribed sexuality. However, to perceive sexuality as an object does not mean that sexuality is an objective choice which lives outside the body solely depending on the available partners; instead it has to be embodied in the body, performed by the body and through the body. Sexuality almost always politicises sexual desire. Our prescribed knowledge about sex/sexuality is a heterosexist convention that serves the interests of a particular hegemonic power. The consequence of individual subjugation to this conventional knowledge portrays a biographical-historical disjuncture in homosexual identification in contemporary Africa (or elsewhere). In which case how is one able to know that his/her knowledge about sex and its use towards pleasure fulfilment really meet his/her sexual feelings and needs if the homosexual option is rarely, if ever positively conveyed? This question leads back to the original motivation of my research.

1.5 Homosexuality in Contemporary Africa: Major Concepts and Theoretical Explanations

In modern Africa, sexuality has been stigmatised and placed into colonial Western discourse as deeply 'othered' (Arnfred, 2004: 7) – at times exotic, fecund, wild, and above all 'uncivilised'. As sex was severely silenced in the Victorian era, it was conspicuous that the practice of polygamy, thigh sex, intracrural sex, anal sex, and anything sexual in pre-colonial and colonial Africa was absolutely vile in the eyes of the early European missionaries. Ann Laura Stoler (1995: 6) argues that colonial studies in the 1970s may have neglected the relationship between colonial power and sexuality, but it has elucidated the impact of Western imperial expansion, culture, and the production of disciplinary knowledge. Not only did the emergence of European nation states demand colonies as sites of exploitation and competition, it also revealed an interplay between Western gender ideology and religion in which an African discourse of sexuality was articulated within the politics of race. Dunton and Palmberg (in Howard, 1998: 191) have noticed that on a continent (i.e. pre-colonial and colonial Africa) which highly values fertility, homoerotic activities have been tolerated as long as individuals also married and reproduced. But the condemnation of same-sex behaviour only arrived in Africa when Christianity and Islam were introduced (Murray, 1998: 270; Hoad, 2007). The 'Victorian project' colonised both African bodies and minds through religious conversion. The reason that the 'Victorians' did not understand same-sex practice in pre-colonial and colonial Africa was precisely because, firstly, Christianity was/is a heteronormative regime which presupposed a causal relationship between the drive to have sex and the need to procreate; secondly, with the influence of Christianity it was wrong to use sex merely for the achievement of bodily pleasure. It was only through the education of heterosexual desire that the ideas of race, and Western gender ideology, were incorporated into the African mind. For Stoler (1995: 11), this is a crucial process whereby "a cultivation of the European self was affirmed in the proliferating discourses around pedagogy, parenting, children's sexuality, servants, and tropical hygiene: macro-sites where designations of racial membership were subject to gendered appraisals and where character, good breeding, and proper rearing were implicitly raced". The language of race transmitted the European bourgeois identity into the African discourse of sexuality: being European and being white were tied in with the notions of heterosexuality and monogamy. Although boy-marriage on the Southern African mines was tolerated by the colonial management for its guarantee to productivity (Moodie, 2001; Epprecht, 2004), such sexual prescription in turn secured and delineated the authentic, first-class citizens of the colonial nation-states.

1.5.1 *Capitalism and Power in the State of Heteronormativity*

African countries that have criminalised homosexuality[15] represent the "totalitarian nature of modern capitalism" (Hocquenghem, 1993: 50). The emergence of capitalism and industrialisation requires a genital-focused sexuality because "it leaves the rest of the body free for use as an instrument of labour" (Marcuse, in Brake, 1985: 16). Homosexuality is seen as a perversion because it doesn't contribute to the reproduction of the work force. Capitalism has established the necessity of reproduction in species survival as central to a model of man and women in which biological arrangements are translated into socio-cultural imperatives (Gagnon & Simon, 2005: 3).

Here it may seem extreme to conclude that capitalism only supports reproductive sexualities, and that homosexual equality is impossible under capitalism:[16] Capitalism is very able to accommodate non-procreative sexualities, seen in its promotion of the use of condoms, the contraceptive pill and other forms of birth control. The 'Pink Dollar'[17] has revealed that there has been a trend to commercialise homosexuality since the emergence of gay subcultures. For example, gay parades have become tourist spots all over the world. More and more gay themed movies and TV series are manufactured to meet the growing interest in LGBTI communities. However, Marcuse's critique of capitalism is still valid because the commercialisation of homosexuality does not transform the mainstream discourse from a state of heteronormativity to a state of 'homonormativity'. Such commercialisation may indeed expose and even promote the marketing of homosexual 'paraphernalia'; yet it does not eliminate the oppression of homosexuals. This is because, argued Marcuse, since its emergence, capitalism has worked on the psychological capacity of the human mind:

> "Industrial society has surpassed its ideology by translating it into the reality of its political institutions, suburban homes, nuclear plants, super-markets, pharmacies and psychiatric offices. In these establishments, the idea of reason, equality, happiness, personality, etc. have obtained their value in practicable social relations. The process of translation suppressed or falsified those ideological contents [such as homosexuality] which threatened to explode these relations by calling for an 'end' of self-propelling productivity, namely, for a human existence where life is no longer a

---

[15] Male-male sex is illegal in African countries such as Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (Ottosson, 2007).

[16] See also Miligan, D. 1973. *The Politics of Homosexuality*, pp. 12

[17] The term, 'Pink Dollar', refers to the purchasing power of the LGBTI community in the USA.

means and man no longer determined by the instruments of his labour". [My emphasis] (Marcuse, 2001: 41)

For Marcuse, 'advanced industrial society' creates false needs which integrate individuals into the existing system of production and consumption. Mass media and culture, advertising, industrial management, and contemporary modes of thought altogether reproduce the existing system and attempt to eliminate negativity, critique, and opposition toward capitalism. In the African experience, on the one hand, colonialism has brought in industrialisation which inevitably undermined the pre-established order in Africa. On the other hand, capitalism manufactures the demand for heterosexist ideologies through media advertising, saturating African consciousness with fantasy, which affect social interaction as a general referent for how to act (ibid: 176). In this process, social control is achieved through a combination of compliance, coercion and commitment to social (or rather capitalist) values (Parsons, 1951). For instance, legitimisation in the form of reflexivity leads to "the internalisation of inferiority vis-à-vis the dominant group or of one's place in the system appropriate or both" (Musolf, 1992: 176). The taboo on homosexuality can be seen as a 'reflexive legitimisation' (ibid) of heterosexuality (i.e. heterosexuality was never cited as a juridical concept in any society, see Wittig, 1989: 245), whereby the oppression of homosexuality becomes an objectified identity to, and internalised by, the homosexual. Capitalism thus turns its homosexuals into 'failed normal people' (Hocquenghem, 1993: 94); just as it turns its working class into an imitation of the middle class. This imitation of the middle class provides the best illustration of bourgeois values: failed 'normal people' emphasises the normality whose values they assume, be that fertility, nuclear family or romantic love between the 'opposite' sexes.

Symbolic interactionism has argued that communication has macro-sociological links to hierarchical social structures (Mosulf, 1992: 180), and those who own the means of communication control the definition of reality (ibid). The heteronormative reality thus directly ties to structure and power; those social institutions that are able to invoke routine conversational procedures are able to accomplish power for the social domination of heterosexuality. For instance, the conjugal family takes custody of sex and the proper demeanour of sex is assigned to the legitimate partner by marriage (Foucault, 1979b: 3). The notion of sex as an act therefore "makes it possible to group together in an artificial unity; anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures; and it enables one to make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, and a secret to be discovered" everywhere in the form of coitus (ibid: 154). By religious

conversion, too; the Victorian, Islamic and Christian ideas of what is 'prim and proper' (Ajen, 1998: 129-130) have been so effectively promulgated amongst average Africans that they barely discuss certain issues that they consider unseemly. In consequence, the rule of homoerotic pleasure is coded in silence and ignorance in post-colonial Africa. This clamming up has emerged as part of the de-colonisation package, demonstrating how Western religions have replaced or merged into African traditions, so as to organise sexual relations anew. For example, the taboo of homoerotic behaviour is peculiar when viewed against the practice by same-sex peers in Africa of freely expressing intimacy in public (e.g. men holding hands) to a degree that is definitively homosexual in the West (Phillips, 2001: 195). Also in the light of HIV/AIDS, discourse about Africa has generated an 'epidemic of signification' (Treichler, 1999; Patton, 1991; in Van Zyl, 2005: 23) whereby sexuality is conceived as a meaningless artifice. As Miki Van Zyl (2005: 24) argues:

> "The silences around sexual pleasure unfortunately could play into masculinist or institutional cultures relying on discourses which construct sexualities as exclusively located within broadly-defined gendered social relations, essentialised into 'the African woman' or 'the African man', and which do not give recognition to the immense diversities which emerge when we pay enough attention to personalised performance or identities. Not only does a focus on the politics of reproduction write out alternative sexual practices which are not motivated by representation, but it reproduces sexualities as heteronormative".

The silence of homosexuals is a tangible manifestation of the heteronormative regime of power. Foucault dispenses with the idea that power works in a centralised, uniform way; instead, he is concerned with the idea of 'multiple forms of subjugation', which extends beyond formal rules and becomes embodied in particular techniques and equipped with particular instruments (Silverman, 1985: 86; Singer, 1993: 150). In this regard, power is not produced or contained in any legal system or social institution; instead power emerges at the 'extreme points of its exercise' (Silverman, 1985: 88). It is thus one of the primary effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals (Foucault, 1979b: 98; & Silverman, 1985: 89). In other words, the reproductive necessity of heterosexuality does not provide heterosexuality with dominance among all kinds of sexual acts, but rather the means that constantly conceals the possibilities of other feasible sexualities. For instance, the conventional notion of sex forged out of the Enlightenment has been incorporated into two distinctive orders of knowledge: "a biology of reproduction and a medicine of sex" (Foucault, 1979b: 54). Each order of knowledge works to validate the other so that sex is confined to specific rules of

formation. Sexuality as a historical construct is shaped by systems of rules and constraints, yet rules and constraints do not represent power able to suppress a particular sexual act. Instead they work on individuals' ability to prevent meanings of any unproductive sex from emerging. For the symbolic interactionist, homosexuality is therefore sublimated as the lack in the self and the inconceivable in the mind because it does not lead to reproduction. Lesbian and gay people are silenced in most African countries (or elsewhere, see Ottosson, 2007; Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009) because there is hardly the will to know or learn about anything homosexual, be that same-sex desire, pleasure or intimacy. As Foucault states in the Use of Pleasure (1985: 8),

> "After all, what would be the value of the passion for knowledge if it resulted only in a certain amount of knowledgeableness and not, in one way or another and to the extent possible, in the knower's straying afield of himself? There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all."

The not-knowing of same-sex feelings/drives represents the lack of impartation which makes the meaning of same-sex practice inaccessible: if there is hardly anything that can facilitate a discussion on a particular matter, the discourse centred on that matter is less likely to occur. Without an overt discourse, the knowledge of that matter will itself be submerged in history. As the individual is brought up within heteronomativity, his/her sense of self can only be achieved through the learning of heterosexual symbols. The repression of homosexuality before one's birth has assigned homosexuality itself as a sentence to disappear, as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of nonexistence, and, by implication, an admission that there is nothing to say about homosexual feelings or desire, nowhere to see or find homosexual people, and hence nothing to know about homosexuality. The issue then is not why heterosexual people want to dominate, or what their overall strategy is. Rather, the question is how heterosexuality works at the level of ongoing subjugation – a systematic process prior to our knowing of possible sexualities, whereby we identify ourselves as subjects of heterosexuality only.

1.5.2 The Homosexual Self

Mead has placed a strong emphasis on the embodiment of identity by distinguishing between the self and the body. The self is a reflexive process, both a subject and an object (Mead, 1934: 137; Blumer, 1969: 62; Plummer, 1975: 17); whereas the body is "a referentiation and a canvas upon which identification can play" (Jenkins, 2004: 19). The body can operate in

any intellectual fashion without there being a self involved in the experience if such an experience is not recognised as an object to the self, or; in other words, if that experience does not characterise the body. This is the key to the conceptualisation of the homosexual self because being aware that one is prone to homoerotic behaviour is very different from merely being eager for same-sex activities.[18] Homosexuality entails the ownership of same-sex desire, a work of the mind that transforms a particular biological drive into an object preserved in the self. It is a process that shapes the way one lives his/her life, the way one relates to others, and the way one perceives the world. It is not that male homosexuals and heterosexuals own different types of bodies, but they have claimed, via biological, psychological and social experiences, different 'selves'. The concept of the homosexual self is therefore substantial to my analysis because it pertains to a particular objective knowledge that is not produced, or rather censored implicitly as the unspeakable in the mainstream discourse.

For Marcuse, the discourse of industrial society demands every child to make an "immediate identification with the goals and projects of that society" so that "the individual quickly learns to experience the needs of the social system as his/her own personally felt needs" (Ober, 1970: 92). In this process, it is noted that "power (including governmental, religious, scientific, educational, cultural, and economic authorities) will always seek to intervene, directly or indirectly, in the public lives of those whom it has the eyes on, whom it governs, leads, instructs, taxes, and or sells things to" (Ratele, 2009: 298). But at the same time, power's interest is not restricted to the visible, outward life of its subjects or markets. The moment one is able to generate internal protests and oppositions to the status quo, he/she is caught up by the 'implicit censorship' (Butler, 1997a: 130) of power where his/her thoughts become the unsayable. In the end, "the aim of power in modern society is directed at producing and managing much of the self, including its desires, doubts, and weaknesses" (Ratele, 2009: 298). The result is a 'one-dimensional' universe of thought and behaviour in which "the very aptitude and ability for critical thinking and oppositional behaviour is withering away" (Kellner, 2001: 25). This phenomenon is a default mechanism in the mind whereby "the social controls have been interjected into the individuals in a depth which obscures the distinction between imposed and spontaneous behaviour" (Marcuse, 2001: 53). In the case of a homosexual, one's spontaneous behaviour is usually not offered/identified in

---

[18] One needs to be clear that a particular sexual desire is in any case the dominant factor in determining whom one finds sexually attractive, but whether one builds his/her lifestyle based on that sexual preference is not biologically determined. In other words, closeted homosexuals have not owned their same-sex desire on a conscious/subjective level; same-sex desire is only a bodily impulse to them.

the social thereby what he/she can be is a role/category either unavailable or unsayable to him/her. From an interactionist perspective, what one is offered to be represents the 'me' influenced by the external exigencies such as the generalised other and the significant other. What one can be signifies the 'I', an inner dimension distinguished from and even antagonistic to the external exigencies. As heterosexuality is the 'ubiquitous other' imposed upon every individual, the potentially homosexual 'inner' is smothered within the process of introjection whereby a self merely transposes the heterosexual 'other' into the 'inner'. Homosexuality is therefore primarily constructed as a lack in social representation: it is unspeakable because of the lack of symbols hence its absence in discourse.

In Marcuse's view, inner freedom (what one can be) also represents the ability of mind to create ideologies whose symbols (e.g. words) are scarce at a given time. Ideology, as a Marxian concept, includes a consciousness which is more advanced than the reality it confronts. The developing self requires both involvement in the social conventions and the capacity to challenge those conventions (Hansen, 1976: 35). Homosexuality as an ideology is advanced in the sense that it projects ideas that have been rendered possible, but at the same time it is arrested by societal development or lack thereof. On the one level, homosexuality is an identity category that anticipates, in an idealistic form, historical possibilities contained by the established reality. On another level, the meaning of being homosexual seems to denote spheres and forces not yet integrated with the established social-political conditions – spheres of tension and contradiction. In reference to African gays and lesbians, with the growing democratisation and integration of industrial society in the continent, the traditional same-sex patterns have lost their meanings in cultural representation. Their critical connotation in contemporary African literature becomes merely descriptive or even deceptive once politicised. The idea that lesbians and gays should openly repudiate heterosexual relations seems to strike many ordinary Africans as abhorrent (Howard, 1998: 191). Heterosexuality is imposed whereas homosexuality is only a dim alternative. And the difficulty is that, for anyone to evaluate a qualitative social change brought by homosexuality, it "requires the freedom to go beyond the facts and beyond the operations defined by the facts" (Marcuse, 2001: 55). For the individual to come to realise his/her homosexual tendencies requires him/her to distinguish primarily between what he/she is offered to be and what he/she can potentially be. It is the contradiction between what one is and what one can be that provides an impetus for qualitative social change.

1.5.3 Homophobia, Repression and Sexual freedom

In South Africa, for more than five years (1998-2003) the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality, on several occasions, urged the LGBTI community to get organised against unfavourable or discriminatory political decisions, and instituted campaigns that included pickets, petitions, marches and meetings throughout the country; yet seldom obtained mass support for its actions (Nel, 2005: 288-9; Reddy, 2009: 343). Homophobia is still evident in spite of the entrenchment of the same-sex clause in the new South African constitution. Expressions of homophobia are acceptable in contexts where other kinds of verbalised bigotry would be prohibited. Disparaging remarks and jokes about 'moffies'[19] and 'faggots' can be made without the slightest criticism in circles where 'kaffir'[20] jokes, for instance, would bring instant censure or even ostracism. Although the new constitution has normalised homosexuality on paper, it does not serve to naturalise homosexual behaviour in public opinion.

The public attitude towards homosexuality often goes like: 'it's unnatural, but no one's stopping you!' This statement has several dreadful connotations. It implies foremost that some people are part of nature and some are not, because the constitution permits or promotes unnatural behaviour. The term 'nature' "plays its paranoiac role as the supreme segregating authority [above the constitution], [while] the term 'unnatural' describes the homosexual who is against nature as the guarantor both of desire and of its repression" (Hocquenghem, 1993: 61-2). Secondly, this statement becomes symbolic and persuasive when spoken repeatedly such that the heterosexual frequently suffers from a paranoia that seeks to persecute the homosexual:

> "The intension in the confrontation between a homosexual and an individual who considers himself normal is created by the instinctive question in the mind of the 'normal' individual: does he desire me? As if the homosexual never chose his object and any male were good enough for him. There is a spontaneous sexualisation of all relationships with a homosexual" (ibid: 51).

Here the paranoia also contributes to the conflict of masculinity between the heterosexual and the homosexual. Because heterosexual men's interests are structurally entrenched in hegemonic masculinity, "for them homosexuality is a distinct threat, with phantasies of anal rape and fears of demotion to the second-class role of women" (Brake, 1985: 19). Heterosexual men's homophobia reveals that masculinity is in fact "a fragile essence, more

---

[19] The term 'moffie' is an Afrikaans slang for male homosexual or, in some cases, transvestite (see Croucher, 2002: 318).

[20] 'Kaffir', meaning 'heathen', is a derogatory name referring to black people in South Africa.

easily spoiled than maintained" (Murray, 1992: 31). And "in no culture do men want to question or analyse dispassionately their masculinity" (ibid). As homosexuals are living symbols of threats to hegemonic masculinity and the dominant moral order, these combined with heterosexual men's fear of their own homosexual feelings, may do much to explain homophobia. Indeed, the cultural intolerance of homosexuality is pervasive in contemporary South Africa because the constitution alone cannot facilitate the discourse of homosexuality if sexual freedom is not obtained through the transformation of masculinity and women's empowerment.

Marcuse traces a relationship between alienation in labour and the suppression of libidinal freedom. He argues that the expression of libidinous energy in directions which are politically useful to the ruling powers has been enhanced by technology (Ober, 1970: 90), therefore the technological society promotes ignorance and social apathy towards sexual minorities whose life interests are not negotiable under technological rationality. Lesbians and gay men are repressed because their instinctual pleasures have been transformed into painful experiences which continue to be rejected from public consciousness. From a post-Freudian perspective, the concept of repression must be understood in its twofold dimensions: "as a technical psychic mechanism of the individual to deny the entrance of painful instincts into consciousness; as a social process which transforms libidinous energy into channels which are useful to the preservation and perpetuation of the on-going society" (ibid: 85). The laws, customs, and institutions of capitalism have subverted sexual freedom "through external aggression and by extracting too great a toll from the resources of the individual" (ibid: 86-7). Therefore, Marcuse (ibid: 91) insists that "the authentic emancipation of the individual from his/her own superfluity of repression depends upon the elimination of institutions which serve as the agents of repression and demand the rigged release of sublimated and desublimated energy for their survival".

Society's fear of normalising homosexuality is that: were homosexuality to be approved in theory of any scientific discipline,[21] we would soon arrive at the abolition of the family and hetero-patriarch kinship, which are the foundation of Western society (see also Hocquenghem, 1993: 60). According to Marcuse on the contrary, the truth is that the "capitalist system's dominant pleasures are false and restrictive of true happiness and freedom" (Kellner, 2001: 13). The bourgeois identity has located sexual pleasure and happiness at home and presupposed the romantic love between husband and wife for the

---

[21] Homosexuality has been omitted from the framework of pathology in the USA since 1973 (see Krajeski, 1996: 17).

consolidation of the nuclear family. The notion of happiness, so to speak, becomes an embodiment of heterosexist practice in the conventional family. Society's discourse about homosexuality (which is also internalised by the homosexual individual himself) can be seen as "the fruit of the paranoia through which a dominant sexual mode, the family's reproductive heterosexuality, manifests its anxiety at the suppressed but constantly recurring sexual mode" (Hocquenghem, 1993: 56).

Sexual freedom, like sexual identity, is a battle with restraints; with "a recognition not only of one's own oppression but also of one's relationship to the oppression of others" (De Beauvior, 1972: 66). The result of the repression of homosexuality has been "the sublimation of the sexual instincts beyond the human capacity for sublimation, and the perpetuation of a particular society with its repressive performance principle at the expense of the health and relative happiness of the individual" (Ober, 1970: 87). Lesbian and gay male oppression is as detrimental as other oppressions; it is both of a political matter and a private concern. Although gay men and women in general do not share the same oppression, they are both the victims of heterosexism and gender inequality. Many homosexuals, when they adapt to their same-sex feelings, start to imagine and fear the up-coming struggles: "the life-destroying impact of lost jobs, children, friendships, and family; the demoralising toll of living in constant fear of being discovered by the wrong person, which pervades all lesbians and gay men's lives whether closeted or not; and the actual physical violence and deaths" (Smith, 1993: 100) which threatens those who are openly gay. For many gay men and lesbians, the social apathy towards and ignorance of their collective existence has rendered homosexuality an obsolescent dimension of the mind in a reproduction-centred reality.

1.5.4 The Closet and the Homosexual Lifestyle

Although the average African is likely to refute homosexuality as an African entity when asked in modern days, the self-denial may precisely be the fear of being assigned to religious condemnation and public stigmas like HIV/AIDS. Such fear of exposure works on homosexuals' predilection to hide and stay in the closet. According to Ajen, the creation of the closet in Africa resembles the North American experience: the silence towards and ignorance of homosexuality protects what happens among men, from question to condemnation, as was true in the United States before World War II and the publication of the Kinsey report (Ajen, 1998: 132). Silence and ignorance were described as an 'umbrella' effect by Samuel M. Steward, who recalled that:

"During [the] years from 1920 to 1950…everyone stayed deep in the closet, same [as] those who had been caught in *flagrante delicto* and been publicly disgraced or fired or disciplined in some way. Still those of us who could maintain our secret lived under an extraordinary *protective umbrella*: the ignorance and naivety of the American public…under the umbrella we lived and moved and made love and enjoyed our beddings, told our jokes and in general found life happy…The publication of Kinsey's *Sexual Behaviour of the Human Male* in 1948, although it did much good for our cases also stripped away the last tatters of the silk, to leave only the metal ribs above us" (Steward, 1982: ix, xii; in Ajen, 1998: 132).

My own interpretation of Steward's story is that the closet, initially, was (is) not necessarily created as a result of the repression of homosexuals, but rather as an exercise of men's power to create space outside the prescribed sexual norm for the increase of their own pleasure. Ajen's research on homosexuality in Ghana includes a case where he interviewed a self-identified black gay man who was polygamously married to two women, and had three children; at the same time, who was open about his homosexuality and declared that his parents knew about it (Ajen, 1998: 135). When asked for his judgement of his dual lifestyle, this man expressed confidence and pride and even labelled himself a 'big bitch' (ibid). This case evinces that what perhaps enables some African gay men to live on the down-low is patriarchy, which suppresses women's desire and immobilises men's ability to please women. Especially in a polygamous family, the husband's power entails primarily his wives' silence on sex. For the wives, they often find themselves in a competitive situation where the husband's favouritism of a particular wife depends on her ability to please him (see Foucault, 1985: 144). Thus the closet is intrinsic to the heterosexist patriarchal family and the unspoken world of women's desire. It emerges partly when women fail to realise their sexual potential as the equivalent counterpart of men's sexuality. Sexuality is a lived experience; women's pleasure seeking is located within and caged by reproductive duty, and further purchased by men's pleasure gaining. An argument that has been made about gender relations is that "European efforts over a long period to impose their vision of proper behaviour for men and women resulted in boosting African men's power over women and undercutting African women's traditional rights and dignities" (GALZ, 2008: 133).

The closeted lifestyle is therefore only possible when patriarchy is the cultural doctrine that governs households so that women have no right to know or judge their men's same-sex relationships. "Man is defined as a being who is not fixed, who knows himself what he is" (De Beauvior, 1972: 20). Men as the administrators of power are able to operate their pleasure outside marriage, and the prohibition of homosexuality can be a reverse of power representation: what is forbidden is precisely what can be done. As power emerges at

the exercise of rules, so does the reverse of rules. The excitement and joy of perfectly stolen moments are like having chocolates when one is on a diet: it is only a matter of changing the code of conduct. For a closeted gay man to practice homoerotic sex surreptitiously, he is mostly likely to perceive same-sex pleasure as a form of luxury expense, or a special treat once every now and then. The closet is founded upon the unstoppable craving for same-sex pleasure which legitimates homoerotic sex as neither a duty to fulfil, nor an accessory per se.

But the crucial question followed is: what does closetedness say about homosexuals' interactive nature? It is not that people with strong same-sex preference are repressed because they cannot have sex – homosexuality is evident even in places (e.g. Nigeria) where the maximum penalty for same-sex practice is death (see Gaudio, 1998; Ottosson, 2007) – nevertheless, the real problem is how homosexuals always struggle to say anything about their sex. The closeted homosexual is often caught up in a frustrating situation, says Hocquenghem (1993: 50), where he/she feels that "homosexuality expresses something which appears nowhere else", yet "that it is something that is not merely the accomplishment of the sexual act with a person of the same sex" (ibid). In other words, the closet has confined the interactive nature of homosexual practice: the meaning of homosexual sex begins and ends with its act. Therefore "in places where libidinal saturation appears, such as bathhouses, the population gathered in there do not compose a homosexual identity" (Scott, 1993: 400), because the sexual acts located in there do not produce adequate meanings for their performance. Modern homosexuality, in contrast, represents a qualitative change that provides individual lifestyles with new directions to personal happiness and accomplishment. It is a way of life, wrote Kenneth Plummer (1975: 100) six years after the Stonewall unrest; that homosexuality was destined to establish "a series of well-developed formal institutions – the homosexual bars and clubs, the homophile movements, the homosexual church – where, within an organised framework, homosexuality becomes the reason for the existence of the institution and provides meanings for homosexuals to develop as life styles".

As a way of life, sexuality becomes a battle ground for sexual interests. The way one conceptualises a particular sexuality carries the potential to create a political context for the arrival of interests that are currently unavailable. The individual acquisition of a particular sexuality not only materialises one's sexual interests/preferences, but also potentially substantiates one's commitment to its subsequent political struggle. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1985) writes:

"The importance of the category 'homosexual' comes not necessarily from its regulatory relation to a nascent or already constituted minority of homosexual people or desires, but from its potential for giving whoever wields it a structuring definitional leverage over the whole range of male bonds that shape the social constitution" (in Scott, 1991: 778-9).

On the one hand, homosexuality is not the cause of the struggle, but an effect that is synthesised out of the clash of different sexual interests. On the other hand, the individual commitment to homosexual desire does not make a particular kind of being per se. As the examination of African same-sex patterns has suggested, systematic homosexual practices all over Africa do not categorise individuals in terms of separate forms of desire; and it is only when homoerotic pleasure becomes the dominant life interest amongst certain individuals, that these individuals constitute (their) homosexuality. The emergence of homosexuality is a visualisation of homosexual desire and the increased demand for same-sex pleasure as they gradually become the dominant life interests of a previously diffused population.

1.5.5 The Globalisation of Gay Identities

Contemporary homosexuality "has surpassed the development from being casual, [then] personalised, to [being] situated" (Plummer, 1975: 98). For the very same reason, one's coming out as a gay man/woman is to detach oneself from the practice of heterosexual sex. Thus the problem is how to address the concurrent issue of sexual preference if homosexuality is perceived as merely utilitarian in various African studies? Same-sex practice in contemporary Africa is coded in silence and ignorance (Murray, 1998); most self-identified gay men choose to live their same-sex love life underground (Ajen, 1998; Amory, 1998; Gaudio, 1998; Epprecht, 1998a, 1998b, 2004; Long, 2003). For instance, Ajen (1998: 133) has interviewed three white European gay men who lived in West Africa with their boyfriends. They spoke of their ambivalent feelings towards their lovers' partial commitment to their relationships because of their marriages. "All three admitted to enjoying sex profoundly with their African men and only wished they could have them for themselves alone. The secrecy surrounding their homosexuality had made them feel bonded to their same-sex partners in a very heartening way" (ibid). This case is portentous in showing that an encounter between modernity and tradition is inevitable. On the one level, the global gay and lesbian movement has achieved a historical trend whereby the freedom to sexual expression and the right to self-determination have contributed new meanings and opportunities. On another level, studies of traditional African same-sex patterns have failed to put "the organising rubric of homosexuality under any conceptual pressure, and the case for sexuality as an organising

rubric is assumed rather than made" (Hoad, 2007: xxiv). Such studies are often snobbish and unaccommodating of the contemporary African gay and lesbian struggle. This is partially because the elites (professionals, academics, and politicians) can control the ability of culture and the means of communication to define reality, they are able to reproduce privileged social worlds and constitute their power discourse (Musolf, 1992: 179). The intention to theorise traditional same-sex patterns can therefore shift the focus of a global discourse away from understanding the actual needs of gay liberation in contemporary Africa. As John Mburu points out sharply:

> "What appears to be a division of labour between Western gay researchers, who study 'traditional' same-sex practices, and Kenyan gays and lesbians[22] who are more interested in pursuing research and organisations politically in order to confront the multiple inequalities of post-colonial Kenya: the oppression of women, gays and lesbians, political minorities and the desperately impoverished. That is, while Western scholars work to reclaim past traditions of 'homosexuality', African activists and scholars (particular in the diaspora) are more concerned with theorising post-colonial lesbian and gay identities. For these scholars and activists, the terms 'lesbian' and 'gay' are appropriated from their Western contexts and applied to African lives and politics" (in Amory, 1997: 8).

The critique of past studies on African same-sex relations is to demonstrate that discourses of sexuality, regardless of being Western or African or anything else, can be "mechanisms for maintaining or contesting hegemonies" (Van Zyl, 2005: 24). It is vital for queer theorists to realise that there are two interdependent yet interrelated discourses. The one discourse is at the top, within the 'ivory tower', where professionals and researchers entertain the 'authenticity' of sexuality. The other one is at the bottom which cultivates meanings and generates strength for average gay people to come out of the closet. In Hoad's (2007: xxvi) view, the book, *Boy-wives and Female Husbands*, "works to consolidate certain Western notions of gender transitive homosexuality in ways that risk repeating the commonplaces of commonsense homophobia that reduce gay and lesbian relationships to the template of heterosexual coupling". The oppression of homosexuals in Africa is not only the result of specific social, cultural, and economic structures governing their mostly patriarchal and family orientated communities, but also being a global consequence of the discrimination experienced by gay people all over the world. Under the influences of colonialism and globalisation, the 'reading' of those traditional same-sex patterns needs to be progressively 'updated' and the quest for gay identity needs to interpret traditional same-sex patterns for

---

[22] These are not gay and lesbian researchers, but ordinary self-identified homosexuals.

contesting homophobia and to support the contemporary African gay and lesbian (LGBTI) movement (Migraine-George, 2003: 45). This alludes to the fact that with the rise of global gay and lesbian movements, homosexual experiences in Africa are shifting their position towards a Westernised position rather than falling back to the old ways.

As part of the globalisation package, the global gay identity can be seen as "the compression and the intensification of the homosexual consciousness of the world as a whole" (Robertson, 1992; in Binnie, 2004: 33). On the one hand, the global network system has transmitted gay activism to every corner of this planet. On the other hand, the human rights movement has provided global citizens with opportunities to make their dreams come true. James Allen (1996) states:

> "Gay men, the world over, live similar lives and dream similar dreams. The poet WH Auden invented a word for this international homo-culture, 'hominterm', meaning the life experiences and innate personality traits that connect gays more closely with gays from other countries than with the heterosexual citizens of their own country, or even their own family. I know I often feel closer to a gay foreigner I've known for five minutes than to heterosexual relations I've known all my life" (in Binnie, 2004: 37).

As noted here, global gay identity is partly the result of a global hierarchy of sexualities whereby homosexuals and heterosexuals virtually do not share equal social space in every country. Heterosexual desire is always positioned prior to same-sex desire in any society: one night of television viewing indicates how very prioritised heterosexual desire is – almost always the theme of TV series and commercials. Being surrounded by sexual conventions, not only are we unaware that there are no average people whose sexual behaviour is heterosexual yet who do not view themselves as heterosexual, but we also remain ignorant of the people whose sexual behaviour is indeed homosexual yet who deny their homosexuality.

Heterosexual desire and heterosexuality are always a united entity whereas there is a disjuncture between homosexual desire and homosexuality. Homosexuality is not just a local phenomenon as some structural interactionists have assumed: what constitutes modern homosexuality is the common experience and recognition of same-sex desire and pleasure. With regard to the global gay and lesbian movement, the increasing demand for the visibility of same-sex practice since the mid twentieth century has achieved a historical trend whereby homosexual practice has become a dominant lifestyle interest. It is within this trend that homosexual people have emerged everywhere to externalise and materialise their homosexuality. Homosexual symbols including words and objects such as 'the rainbow flag' "have been appropriated by the world over as they imply a claim to the protection and rights

guaranteed under international treaties, and a way out of an almost universal form of marginalisation" (Phillips, 2000: 34). The term gay (or queer) has become a universal symbol that provides homosexual people across national borders with a common identity and a sense of solidarity. And the notion of coming out together signifies gay people's commitment to their desire and pleasure in order to transform various heteronormative social structures, be that family, education, or religion all over the world.

1.6 <u>Use of Symbolic Interactionism in this Research</u>

This project uses the coming out story as the dominant narrative in research, and its objective is to disclose the discontinuities between the conventional knowledge of sexuality and homosexual identification. Because everyone is born into the heteronormative discourse, one cannot "see the individual 'automatically' and 'intrinsically' knowing that he/she is a homosexual as the simple interpretation of prior elements" (Plummer, 1996: 70). The self-realisation of homosexual tendencies requires circumstances as well as the ability by which one is able to separate him/herself from the imposed heterosexuality. Therefore the researcher ought to analyse the situations and interaction style that lead to an individual building up a particular series of sexual meanings for homosexual identification (ibid). Here the situational approach specifically views "homosexuality as a process emerging through interactive encounters (part of which will include a potentially hostile reaction) in an inter-subjective world" (ibid: 65). It emphasises the 'reaction' of the heterosexual other as a significant determinant in the process of homosexual identification. Homosexuality in itself has only minor effects upon the development of individual personality. But the attitudes of the heterosexual majority towards the homosexual "create a stress situation which can have a profound effect upon personality development and can lead to character deterioration of a kind which prohibits effective integration with the community" (Schofield, 1965; in Plummer, 1975: 91). "The awareness of stigma that surrounds homosexuality leads the homosexual experience to become an extremely negative one: shame and secrecy, silence and self-awareness" (Plummer, 1995: 89). As long as the individual is always aware of the negative reactions towards homosexuality with or without his/her self-exposure to them, the difficulty confronting his/her engagement in homosexual identification is often the means by which he/she is able to search for 'the homosexual other'.

The key concepts of interactionism including self, role, reference group (peer group) and collective (or what Blumer calls 'joint') action have altogether portrayed the importance of 'otherness' (Plummer, 1975: 17). The homosexual otherness only becomes possible when

elements of homosexual self, gay community and gay activism are interlinked so as to proliferate the meanings of homosexuality. Homosexuality is a social category that manifests an experience shared by a particular group of people who constantly negotiate the meanings of their collective action; that is, "the fitting together of the lines of behaviour of the separate participants" (Blumer, 1969: 70). It is insufficient to conceptualise a sexuality merely based upon sexual feelings or the execution of those feelings; what counts the most in identity formation is our response to and negotiation of this information from and about our body. Plummer illustrates this point by suggesting that:

> "Central to interactionism is a sensitivity to the potentially enormous range of sexual meanings available to an actor and an awareness of their constantly negotiated character. Yet it remains an unreal picture if adequate weight is not also given to the constraints that are built into action through day to day encounters over the life span. Such constraints serve to narrow down, restrict, routinise and order the range of sexual meanings experienced by an individual. They may be such as to almost totally eliminate any sexual meanings from an actor's world" (Plummer, 1975: 40)

Plummer goes on to argue that:

> "When actors gain access to supportive norms, it is likely that less pathology will arise than when individuals gain no such access and feel their behaviour to be 'wrong'. If this is so, then it is probable that when sexual deviants gain access to group forms their experiences become more stable and orderly than when they do not. As long as sexual deviance remains an individual experience, it will remain problematic and unstable: once it becomes collectively organised, it becomes less problematic and more stable" (ibid: 85).

In order to capture the development of self-consciousness along with the creation of meanings in life, Plummer (1996) has categorised four periodic phases in the process of homosexual identification, those include 'sensitisation, signification, coming out and stabilisation'. The degree to which coming out is a successful transition from one stage to another in the life cycle depends on the affection and support of the others (Gagnon & Simon; 2005: 112). It is crucial to acknowledge that these phases do not fit in neatly with the stages of socialisation as the case with heterosexuals. A heterosexual male is socialised into a heteronormative society without sensing a difference in desire with the generalised other; his self-consciousness is developed as a 'given' and his progress from childhood to adulthood is a smooth 'three-course meal', for example:

1. I'm myself, John (as a child).
2. I'm myself, John, a boy (as a teenager).

3. I'm myself, John, a boy/man, now with the desire to have sexual activity with girls/women (as an adult).

This process has three conventional implications in sexual identification. Firstly, the difference in biological sexes and the attraction exercised by one sex upon the other are seen to be the preconditions of sexual identity. Secondly, where 'John' experiences same-sex attraction it can throw him into a state of deep panic and endanger his sexual identity. For instance, to label someone gay can be seen as an accusation whether or not that person is gay, whereas hardly anyone ever labels anyone straight because everyone is literally marked as straight. Lastly, "the basic precondition of one's sexual identity is the dual certainty of similarity and difference...Sexual identity is either the certainty of belonging to the master race or the fear of being excluded from it" (Hocquenghem, 1993: 101). Once the self is sensitised to homosexual tendencies, the individual can immediately reach the phase of signification where conflicts occur between his/her spontaneous feelings and the social stigmas surrounding those feelings. Although the individual does not have to go through all four phases as society becomes more open to sexual diversity, it is unlikely that one can skip the most critical and challenging phase of signification. Lee (1977) and Plummer (1995) define signification as a series of continual self-questioning/labelling. These include (adapted from Plummer, 1995: 88):

1. Devaluation: 'Am I sick; am I born wrong?'
2. Secrecy: 'Dare I tell anyone!'
3. Solitariness: 'Am I the only one around here or in the world?'
4. Self-consciousness: 'What is this all about; am I naturally like this?'
5. Identity: 'What kind of person am I; am I gay?'

During signification, the individual stands at the mid-point between his past experience (the prescribed culture preserved in the 'me') and his future one (the anticipatory culture operated in the 'I'), and it is almost impossible to divorce the individual from these wider experiences (Plummer, 1996: 69). When confronting sexual stigmas becomes inevitable, the socialisation process becomes a problem-making mechanism for the actor. If the problems are too great for the actors, they may attempt to resolve their problems by blocking them out, by seeking cures and therapies to give them a sense of identity that is different from the one they are heading towards. In the most unfortunate cases, the homosexual may end up with self-closure where his view of life is preoccupied with

pessimism: "how can I – in spite of vague feelings and fantasies – be one of the sick few? I can't – and even if by some freak chance I was, it must be kept as a dark and hidden secret to be carried quietly to my grave" (Plummer, 1995: 85). "The greater the stigma experienced, the greater the problems and the less likelihood of moving along through these problems" (ibid: 89). It is also likely that a homosexual person's attentiveness of sex role happens after reaching adulthood. In some cases the intervention and instruction is more direct in the case of a young man who is 'brought out' by a relative of the same age (or older) (Gagnon & Simon, 2005: 108).

So it is important to perceive the coming out story as a polymorphous journey which varies from individual to individual due to each individual's socialisation process. In the most advanced areas of industrial civilisation, "the chief agents of socialisation (i.e. the patriarchal family) have been increasingly replaced by direct socialisation through the mass media, education, sport teams, peer groups" (Ober, 1970: 91), and the internet. Past researches on sexual behaviour maintaining a strong Freudian orientation usually looked at a limited amount of agents – notably the mother and the father – whereas in my data collection these agents are broadened to encompass all possible significant others – real or imaginary – with whom one has contact over one's life span.

Plummer (1996) argues further that with regard to institutional influence, only a narrow understanding of homosexual identification can come from looking solely at, for instance, the family. The methodological stance of symbolic interactionism ought to provide critical understanding of the interpersonal processes and personal strategies involved in identity formation and the influential events involved in socialisation: it is a complex interplay whereby the individual comes to realise his/her same-sex tendencies on a subjective level and from there he/she becomes an object of others' homosexual feelings/desires. To achieve this, I employ the life story interview approach as the primary data collection technique, so as to provide a series of socially learnt accounts which validate homosexuality, as well as to accumulate a series of socially learnt strategies for homosexual encounters.

1.6.1 The Coming Out Story: A Dominant Narrative in Research

The act of coming out claims ownership of same-sex desire so that it becomes an object to the self. Once the objectification of desire is made, the reflexivity of the self will successively divulge the objective desire to the other in interaction. Symbolic interactionists are not so much interested in the actual event of coming out, but rather the incidents that motivate the homosexual and which progressively build up to his/her coming out. Plummer (1996: 69)

calls these incidents the 'turning points' at which life-changing decisions are made. These 'turning points' can be any social event ranging from a dramatic loss, such as the death of a gay friend or family relative, to a very minute, daily and unexpected interaction with strangers. It is possible that the homosexual individual comes out smoothly without having to undergo any internal or external conflicts. The differentiation of coming out experiences can be tied in with a structural induction in that the reaction to a particular homosexual individual is determined by whether or not his/her behaviour reflects the prescribed gender stereotypes. Notably, as Plummer (ibid) states, "man is not invariably 'rational', does not possess full knowledge, and is not always clear even about his immediate goals; and he thus acts at these 'turning points' in an un-reflexive mood." One can presume that a homosexual person never externalises his same-sex tendencies if no generalised other (other gay men, gay clubs, or any homoerotic objects) is found in his living environment. For that reason, the 'turning points' can also be materials that come into play as an indirect generalised other for the homosexual to know about him/herself. Such materials include gay magazines, gay pornography, gay themed movies and gay communities in cyberspace.

Past studies on homosexuality in South Africa have rarely qualitatively investigated the coming out experiences of black gay men partly because the Eurocentric analyses of homosexuality in Africa merely attempted to construe traditional same-sex patterns and avoid politicising sexuality for gay activism (Amory, 1997). Neither has any Afrocentric analysis concerning sexuality showed any major interests in homosexuality due to the prevalent circulation of homosexual rhetoric in African politics. Therefore my literature review is limited in resources; and I cannot strictly apply the dominant Western model of coming out to my data collection. I have found Sophie's (1985/1986, in Savin-Williams & Cohen, 1996: 115) four stages of homosexual identification useful, in which every interview is conducted by outlining the respondents' first awareness, test and exploration, identity acceptance, and identity integration of homosexuality. I am also aware that Sophie (1985/1986) examined lesbian identity development by taking 14 white female interviewees in the US, of which the findings can differ significantly from that of six black male gay South Africans as there are intra-stage variations in my data. To test the applicability of the dominant coming out model involves a significant shift from one particular sex, race, and ethnic category to another kind, as well as taking a leap between historical, geographical, and cultural constructions of two different social realities. Such methodological examination may not be necessary if, by utilising the central concepts of symbolic interactionism – self and other – the researcher analyses the coming out narrative in two complete yet pliable variables: coming out to self

and coming out to others (ibid: 115-7). In this manner, one is able to incorporate racial dynamics and the impact of constitutional change to individual identity formation. On the one hand, coming out to self is a process of self-initiation which involves the mental phases of sensitisation and signification. On the other hand, coming out to others emphasises the process of self-actualisation whereby one gradually grows into the social category of homosexual by telling his/her story to friends, family and peers.

1.6.2   Coming Out to Self

Coming out to self is usually an excruciating process whereby individuals are coerced to adopt heterosexuality such that their identity formation is diverted from their inward feelings and needs. Homosexual youth often grow up without knowing that they have been pretending to be someone other than themselves because of the historically inherited heteronormative discourse. Not until the homosexual comes out of the closet does he know what all the pretending, such "microscopic experiences", really meant all along: "it was a sign of a deep-stated, truly different nature" (Plummer, 1995: 86). For many self-identified gays and lesbians, coming out is a biological story of natural difference, creating its own essentialist story of identity that homosexuals are born just as heterosexuals are born (ibid: 86-7). Alongside these new identities comes a new political agenda that every coming out story is a building block to the discourse of homosexuality. As far as can be ascertained, every gay individual digs around in the past to claim his/her homosexual self and thereby creates a history of the homosexual species altogether. Accordingly, the interviews with my subjects focus on the ways by which they organise their past homosexual experiences anew and how one particular experience builds upon an 'other' to form their homosexual identity.

The self-initiation of homosexuality is the most substantial stage whereby a potentially homosexual person actively searches for symbols of homosexuality. "The first step is often the hardest, since it usually has to be taken alone without support from others; the whole weight of cultural indoctrination has to be broken down" (Plummer, 1995: 85). Under such circumstances, homosexual identification "with the external ego-ideal evokes anxiety, hostility in competition with others, the impossibility of satisfactorily living up to expectations which often transcend individual potentialities – a situation which prevails more often than not with the hero idols of advertising and entertainment" (Ober, 1970: 92). The person who has sexual feelings or desires toward persons of the same-sex usually has no vocabulary to explain to himself what those feelings mean (Dank, 1971; in Gagnon & Simon, 2005: 108). At home, or at school, either with peers, or through the media the message has

been the same: "the only story is the heterosexual one, and the tales learnt in school or street are tales of 'queers' – few, sick, dangerous" (Plummer, 1995: 85). Having been trapped in such a fearsome discourse and having had no means of self-expression, the homosexual often grows up in exceeding isolation through an obligatory deception. Homosexual individuals often initiate a 'paradox of secrecy' whereby the stigmatisation of homosexuality leads youths to conceal their same-sex attractions. "But by so doing, they remain invisible and thus powerless to incite social change" (Savin-Williams & Cohen, 1996: 134).

In coming out to self, Plummer (1995: 59) makes a distinction between the sufferings of danger and the sufferings of desire which entails the need to distinguish the content of stories. Before one's coming out, the content of the story is mostly about trying to experience a sexuality (heterosexuality) that is imposed upon a person which simultaneously provokes fear, violence, defilement and degradation because the individual does not want it. In the process of coming out, however, the content of the story is about making a 'damned' desire an object to the self. Often the "story is told which recognises a desire (often from a fairly early age) for some kind of satisfaction in a personal (emotional, erotic, intimate) life which is persistently thwarted" (ibid). In the story, the actor might spend days in silent longing in the presence of those he most desired, yet never dared to expose his 'strange tastes'. Perhaps at least if not often, the actor got some pleasure from situations that stimulated the thought of it, be that a crush on someone or a romantic movie. The self-initiation process is pivotal to my research; because in the interviewee's coming out to self, the researcher can read where disjunctures of conventional knowledge about sex, desire and pleasure are most likely to form obstacles for homosexual identification. The internal conflict between one's prescribed morals and homosexual feelings is usually the dilemma in this process. One's interaction with his/her significant others and their reactions to one's homosexual tendencies can potentially determine his/her own attitude to whether or not he/she is staying in the closet.

1.6.3   Coming Out to Others

Coming out to others is seen as the self-actualisation of homosexuality. This process is reciprocal in nature: as the coming-out process is experienced, perceptions of the self and the external world may undergo gradual or radical transformation. In contrast to coming out to self, coming out to others can be arduous and protracted, requiring continual decisions about when and where to come out and to whom (Savin-Williams & Cohen, 1996: 128). Therefore in research, "it is critical to distinguish among (a) who is told earliest, (b) who is most difficult to come out to, and (c) who is most important to tell" (ibid: 129). Although these are

likely to vary between individuals depending on developmental issues (that which is most critical in life at a particular moment) and personal characteristics (such as age, race, social class, religious values, and temperament).

Apart from those socio-demographic variables, there are also universal factors that affect most individual coming out experiences. The first is to acknowledge the role of family in one's coming out process as in most cases it provides life-time support to the individual. Certain questions will be addressed in my data analysis (Chapter 4), such as: at what age does one come out to his/her family? What does family support mean to the respondents? How encouraging can it be when one is accepted by parents and siblings? And if one is rejected or disowned by the family, can they reunite in future? Perhaps the most accurate assumption about parents' reaction to their children's homosexuality is that they are unpredictable:

> "I was concerned about my parents finding out, you know? Whether I was going to have a home or not, you know, if they found out? Whether I was going to be able to go to college or, you know, whether I was going to be physically attacked" (Hansen, 1990; in ibid: 125).

As a solution to such dilemmas, some youths strategically wait until they are in college and less financially and emotionally dependent on the family to begin the process of coming out. Here coming out is about choosing the right place and time to get started. Savin-Williams (1995) recorded a case:

> "I had feelings I wanted to explore but I was afraid. I kept it securely inside, afraid of my peers and afraid of what it would do to my family in the community. I did not want to be ostracised or let my family down…it wasn't until I was in college and broke up with my last girlfriend that I was ready to tell anyone. Figured it was time to stop fooling myself and others and to face the music" (in ibid: 127).

Here, not only have parents formed the structure of financial and emotional support for their children, parental acceptance is also important because they have played a vital role "in their children's developing sense of self-worth and sexual identity, especially in terms of a youth feeling comfortable with her or his homosexuality and of a youth disclosing that information to others" (ibid: 137).

Another prevailing factor that often coincides with one's coming out to others is love affairs, in which case they may either ease (even 'accelerate') or frustrate one's coming out. Unfortunately, there is no past quantitative or qualitative research in South Africa that demonstrates some sort of relationship between 'coupledness' and 'outness'. But in the US, McKirnan and Peterson (1988, in ibid: 133) found no relationship between 'coupledness' and

'outness' among 739 lesbians. Among 2625 gay men there was a slight tendency for those most out to be in a romantic relationship. My findings will not associate with assumptions that suggest a causal relationship between the degree of 'outness' and promiscuity, though stories of love affairs may centre on issues of infidelity or having incongruent 'outnesses' among gay lovers.

Thirdly, the researcher needs to distinguish the difference in the path of change in the stories (Plummer, 1995: 59). For some homosexuals, their parents are amongst the last to learn about their same-sex attractions, and one also needs to consider possibilities where the homosexual has a long-term or even a life-time same-sex relationship without his parents being informed. Subjects with experience of heterosexual marriage are also expected, in which case their recovery tale can be dramatically different from the rest and even more so if they have reproduced. Here the researcher can be encouraged to seek a 'collectivist change' (ibid) in coming out stories, because the diverse coming out routes usually lead to political consciousness that challenges the wider social environment.

Finally, the researcher needs to take into account the occupation of the subjects studied if necessary. The intention is to detect whether or not the subject passes as heterosexual in the workplace as well as the consequence of coming out in the workplace. For some occupational roles disclosure can be disastrous – the school teacher, the sports coach, the minister, and the politician, to name just four (see Gagnon & Simon; 2005: 116). Here the effects of race easily become involved in the South African context. Being a white, male, gay boss may not necessarily be degrading since he is a man and homosexuality is commonly seen as a 'white man's disease', however the very same benefit is unlikely to happen to a black, gay man. Although role models such as Judge Edwin Cameroon and activist, Zackie Achmat, represent gay people who hold positions of authority in legal and social institutions, their collective voice of gayness and leadership are limited by their professional ethics and the fact that neither of them is black. There are other occupations where the disclosure or assumption of homosexual interests is either of little consequence or – though relatively rare – has a positive consequence (ibid). Careers revolving around art, fashion, music, entertainment, and drama are often seen as the intrinsic sites of gayness. Nonetheless, these elements do not necessarily influence my data analysis, nor do they provide the criteria for the selection of my subjects, as such information can easily perpetuate social stereotypes that work to stigmatise homosexuality. Therefore my data collection and analysis on all the above factors is by no means to support common sense knowledge, in fact the less stereotypical the informant, the better the findings.

1.7 <u>Conclusion</u>

Given the intricacies of homosexuality in history, theory and everyday life especially before one's coming out, a meaningful way of understanding the lives of gay individuals entails a symbolic interactionist exploration. This indicates focusing on a marginalised area of existence that individuals, such as the eight black gay South Africans in this study, can provide expertise on a life world that is often ignored or invisible to the public. It is through the telling of their coming out stories that their own as well as the researcher's understanding, interpretation and meaning of their life world is found. For the men, it consists of narratives of growing up and at the same time having to deal with an identity that they do not want and the tremendous impact this process has on their selfhood. It is therefore crucial to understand how homosexuality is felt, experienced, expressed, articulated, and lived by studying participants. The literature reviewed in this chapter has determined the themes and questions which channelize the methodological procedure of this study, and guided the interpretation of the narratives.

The globalisation of sexuality has overtaken the definitional power of gender, race, and ethnicity in identity formation. Sex has become "the means of access to the life of the body and the life of the species" (Brake, 1985: 27). The global gay and lesbian movement therefore constitutes a historical trend where sexual meanings and interests become the sites of ongoing struggle: "it is a struggle for the body and its pleasures, a power struggle, with a power which comes from everywhere, and is sustained everywhere; yet there is always struggle" (ibid: 19). Through the antagonistic positioning of the hetero-homo dichotomy, homosexuality reveals ever more openly its dependence on containment of social change. Homosexuality is indeed about change – a change that is a genuine part of human rights moving towards an integrated, non-repressive society. In the following chapter, I continue to demonstrate how living with homophobia and by coming out of the closet, homosexual men and women mobilised gay liberation in the context of racial liberation in apartheid South Africa.

Chapter 2 The South African Gay and Lesbian Struggle – A Literature Review

2.1 <u>Introduction</u>

This chapter looks at the individual experiences of coming out in the context of the South African gay and lesbian struggle. The aim is to construct themes and perspectives for analysing my own data. As indicated in the previous chapters, I have not come across any qualitative analyses of the coming out experiences of black gay South Africans in literature, thus the purview of the prescribed narrative study is undefined. Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick's (1992) study on male homosexuality in pre-1994 South Africa is perhaps the closest to my topic, yet its conceptual framework is based on major crisis theories in the realm of psychology rather than sociology. What was also obscured in the title of their book, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa: Identity Formation, Culture, and Crisis,* was "the fact that the vast majority of their respondents were white professionals or businessmen"[23] (Leatt & Hendricks, 2005: 305). In addition, articles associated with male-male sexuality in South Africa (e.g. Dunton, 1989; Donham, 1998; Pincheon, 2000) have either failed to identify or have dismissed completely the challenges of coming out for black gay men. In these texts, issues of religion, reproduction and masculinity are neither criticised nor sensitised. It seems that scholars and academics are afraid to rock the boat a little in the business of coming out as if the gay rights clause has made coming out so effortless. Admittedly, my interpretation of this literature could have underestimated their original objectives, given that I might have taken the gay rights clause for granted because my study of homosexuality operates in a legally advanced landscape. Nevertheless, in no research material in the South African context have I ever encountered detailed discussion on the discrepancies between blackness and gayness.[24] The anticipated themes and perspectives ought to be assessed according to these discrepancies in order to form my own theoretical assumption of disjuncture. Since the prescribed model of narrative analysis is absent, I have decided to generate themes and perspectives by reviewing some biographical materials of the South African gay and lesbian struggle. These include interviews, testimonies, biographies, autobiographies, and letters in order to demonstrate the provisional style of narrative analysis that will be presented in my own analysis. Also, since the qualitative methodologies of symbolic interactionism share an

---

[23] "This book was published in 1992 and was based on earlier research findings. There is a noticeable difference between the kinds of language and analysis in this text and in those published after the political transformation. Although some of the broad analysis remains the same, the degree of ghettoisation and separation and the need to police the boundaries of the gay and lesbian community are somewhat alleviated" (Leatt & Kendricks, 2005: 307).

[24] There are research papers focusing on male homosexuality in the African American context, see Mays, V. M., et al., 1992; Litchtenstein, B., 2000; El Kornegay, Jr., 2004; Ward, E. G., 2005.

intimate history with the emergence of biographical research (see Bertaux, 1981: 8), the narrative reconstruction of these biographical sources can provide a link, methodologically, to the life story interview approach. The coming out stories of Ivan Toms and Simon Nkoli are specifically discussed in this chapter so as to address the relationships between apartheid and homophobia, and between gay rights and racial struggle. Issues of masculinity, Christianity, and race are also explored in this process, with specific remarks on the early ANC's approach to homosexuality during the anti-apartheid struggle. In the end, I discuss the status quo of the South African LGBTI community, in which I try to argue that racial division within the gay subculture is still evident, and that the post-apartheid South African media has either remained apathetic to, or continues in its misrepresentation of the LGBTI community.

2.2 <u>Apartheid and Homosexuality</u>

The apartheid system manifested a strong magnetism between racism and the state regulation of sexualities. They were implemented together so that the one element was the fetish of the other element. With regard to racial hierarchy, the system "unfolded contradictory processes in that it both emphasised many cultures and nations and homogenised all 'non-whites'. It created, on the one hand, a racial hierarchy and, on the other hand, initiated a levelling class process by which upward mobility for blacks was constrained" (Morrell, 1998: 625-6). Concerning the regulation of sexualities, the discriminatory acts[25] of apartheid have shown more than ever before "an obsessed national interest in South Africans' interior lives and close friendships" (Ratele: 2009: 300). The Immorality Act, for instance, not only banned extramarital affairs but also instigated the inhibition of certain behaviours – "behaviours which were given racial content and in the end meant that a so-named European or native person needed to learn to inhibit certain behaviours which the leaders of their race found unacceptable" (ibid: 294). Thus we see a resonance between two oppressive mechanisms: "sexuality comes to discipline race identification and, similarly, racial classification comes to shape sexual relations" (ibid). Van Zyl (2005: 21) also stresses that, "the politics of apartheid and its obsession with racial purity and state regulation of sexuality in the name of miscegenation has inscribed race indelibly on the landscape of sexual identities for South Africa, which resembles what Ratele calls 'kinky politics'".

---

[25] Until the 1980s marriage between people of the different races was a criminal offence under the Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act (No. 55 of 1949) (see Reddy, 2009: 346). Until its repeal in 1985, the Immorality Amendment Act (No. 57 of 1969) had criminalised sexual relations between black and white people (ibid: 347).

"Kinky politics follows the fetish of, and re-fetishes race. There can be no racism without this constant re-fetishisation. Indeed, one could say, racism is kinky politics as it always involves a sexual warping of identity politics. Racism, together with (hetero) sexism, then, is what keeps us in awe, of fear, or ignorance of black and white, male and female bodies and sexualities in this society" (in ibid).

Under apartheid, alternative sexual identities were equated with 'badness' or 'dirt'. As Ann Smith (2005: 60) recalled: "gay bashing was an institutionalised right, as the fairly common homophobic bumper stickers such as 'Kill a queer for Christ' and later 'AIDS is God's way of punishing queers' made clear". The stigmatising of homosexuality effectively created stereotypes and false connotations which encouraged and sponsored homophobia. For example, the concept of 'dirt' being 'matter out of place' (Douglas, 1966: 3) indicated symbolically that homosexuals did not deserve to exist, which then predicated the need to eradicate homosexuality by severely punishing gays and lesbians. Because homosexuals were seen as sexual perverts or as the psycho-pathologically disturbed, they were pressurised to internalise the meanings of 'dirt' and 'badness' as if they were born with a 'disease' (Adam, in Hattingh, 2005: 200). To name someone homosexual was to impose badness and dirt as an object to the person's sense of self. The more the person questioned him/herself as if there was something wrong with him/her, the deeper he/she felt the guilt. The internalised homophobia was therefore achieved through fear, self-hate, and guilt; which were further bolstered by the medical discourse regarding homosexuality during apartheid.

In the South African Defence Force (SADF), "homosexual conscripts were subjected to treatments, such as aversion therapy, through the administration of electric shocks" [26](Van Zyl, in ibid: 201). This brutal treatment originated in the insidious belief of sexual binarism – the assumption that men and women are 'naturally' compatible creatures and sexual attraction between the 'opposite' sexes is a predisposition in human biology. It has been alleged that chemical castrations and gender reassignment operations were also performed on scores of homosexual conscripts and that some sex-change operations were left incomplete (Kirk, in ibid). Here again, the terminology of sexual reassignment reveals the hegemonic and oppressive nature of heterosexism, which obstinately insisted on a biological coherence between gender identity and sexual orientation. Under the apartheid regime, racial segregation was synonymous with the restriction on human sexuality in that they were both

---

[26] The aversion shock therapy was conducted by Dr. Levine at Ward 22 at 1 Military Hospital Pretoria (Sinclair, 2007: 134). During the process, electrodes were strapped to the arms of the patient. Wires leading from these electrodes were in turn connected to a machine operated by a dial calibrated from one to ten. The shock therapy was combined with what Dr. Levine called 'reciprocal inhibition therapy': the patient was encouraged to fantasise by "verbally describing women in positive terms" and viewing "flashing pornographic pictures" (ibid: 164).

products of the Cartesian dualism – things had to remain either 'black' or 'white', not mixed; one was either masculine or feminine, not both. This kind of binary/oppositional rationale formed the basis of the apartheid social relations so that individuals were vulnerable to the ideological exploitation and manipulation of the apartheid regime. The idea of a 'cure' for homosexuality served to legitimise the state's persecution of homosexuals. Insistence upon brutal 'therapeutic' techniques to 'rehabilitate' homosexuals operated to safeguard the pre-existing social order and consolidated homophobia (Adam, 1978; in ibid). In this manner, exploitation of the oppressive ideologies internalised by the oppressed themselves contributed to the maintenance of a relatively quiescent and manipulable population.

2.2.1   *The Coming Out Story of Ivan Toms: Masculinity, Christianity and Homophobia*

The life story of Ivan Toms (1953-2008) perhaps best depicts the 'state sponsored homophobia' during apartheid, and the conflicts between one's self-actualisation of homosexuality and the prescribed identity imposed upon him/her for having a particular colour of skin, gender and class status. Ivan Toms was born in Germiston, raised in Durban – where he captained his rugby team and was deputy headboy in an illustrious school career (Hoad, Martin & Reid, 2005: 85). He graduated as a medical doctor from the University of Cape Town in 1976 (ibid). As an average white South African man, Toms' standard masculine performance at school and academic achievement at university appeared very peculiar to the public in the eighties when related to his sexuality: a well-educated white masculine gay man, what on earth was he? How could a 'faggot' captain a rugby team? Wasn't he supposed to be a sissy? Endless questions were posed to Toms himself, and even more to the idea or possibility of an 'Ivan Toms being': could there be many 'Ivan Tomses'? The public opinion on homosexuality was largely a reflection of commonsense knowledge (i.e. gay stereotypes) because a well established masculinist order was central to the maintenance of the apartheid state (Elder, 1995; in Leatt & Hendricks, 2005: 314). The very figure of Ivan Toms had disentangled male heterosexuality from hyper-masculinity, which challenged the way apartheid social relations were organised. As a member of the Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Activists (OLGA), Toms found himself surrounded by homophobic attacks and negative social commentaries. In his autobiography, Toms (1994: 258) recalls:

> "...Then the graffiti, 'Ivan fucks young boys' in the University of Cape Town subways; 'Toms is a moffie pig' spray-painted on my house and car. Other slogans sprayed on walls in Mowbray and Observatory included 'Toms does it rectally', 'ECC

homo perverts' and, rather bluntly, 'Hang Toms'. And later, the more sophisticated art works on street poles throughout Cape Town: "Toms AIDS test positive' and 'Ivan Toms dumped by lover Graham Perlman'. Along with these were the usual death threats, the advertising of my car for sale at a ridiculous low price, the delivery of a load of pig manure, and black condoms sent with obscene messages that linked anti-gay and anti-black prejudice."

Toms served the South African Defence Force (SADF) and worked as a medical doctor in the black townships. These experiences informed him that the SADF was used to defend apartheid. He joined the End Conscription Campaign (ECC) for his unwillingness to act as an accomplice in the violence of apartheid. As an anti-state organisation, however, the ECC was somehow ignorant towards the gay rights movement in South Africa. Toms further pointed out in his interview (see Hoad, Martin & Reid, 2005: 85) that he ironically experienced homophobia within the ECC. His membership to both OLGA and the ECC left him in a crevice:

> "In the heated debate on the subject between the ECC and the Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Activists (OGLA), of which I am an active member, the issue was always clothed in terms of what would most powerfully push the anti-conscription message. Interestingly, the most vociferous opposition to the inclusion of my gayness in my reasons for objecting, came from other gay men within the ECC" (Toms, 1994: 260).

Although Toms was not the only gay man in the ECC, he was the only openly gay member. For the closeted ECC members who were unable to speak out, it seemed quite obvious "that oppression can take a much more intense hold on what remains invisible and secret, especially to the extent the oppression is understood as an exteriorisation of domination in the mind of the dominated that guarantees submission to the sexual order and its hierarchies" (Eribon, 2004: 66). The will to hide oneself is nothing but the product of a subjected self, one that has actively owned inferiority and forever conscious of its exteriorisation. For one to identify with inferiority is "to give up the status of an autonomous person, for the dominant representation of the individual is always as an example of what should be condemned" (ibid: 71). Retrospectively, the reticence among gay members in the ECC was not new to Toms. He was ambivalent at times about pushing both messages: "I found myself in the unusual position of being externally out of the closet, yet still struggling internally within the long battle to see myself positively as a gay person. I had let my closet be kicked open, yet part of me was still desperately trying to stay inside" (Toms, 1994: 260). From a Meadian perspective, it was certainly difficult to achieve a complete homosexual self without the homosexual other. Had the other gay members of the ECC come out of the closet,

they could have helped each other build their homosexual selves in reflexivity. Although it would be unfair to criticise the position of the ECC on gay rights as most white gay men feared losing their privileges as the result of coming out, they did leave Toms with a lot to deal with:

> "…all along the way I did secretly feel I was not being true to myself. I had to cope with the continual pressure of 'What if someone brings up the gay issue?' during my frequent public platform appearances throughout the country. I had raised it in small groups and with the different organisations that made up the ECC – but never stated it publicly during the campaign. If they had known that I was gay, would they have supported me in the same way? This question plagued me after each public appearance. As I saw it, the public was creating and strengthening a myth – a straight Ivan Toms" (Toms, 1994: 260).

According to this narrative, it can be said that "the mark of oppression is inscribed in the conscious and unconscious minds of the oppressed not only as a difficulty in living out what one is, but also as a radical rejection – one that can take many forms – of what one is" (Eribon, 2004: 69). Toms could never be sure when and where to bring up his homosexuality; he was also unable to predict others' perceptions on this particular matter. For oppression to work it is not necessary that oppressive characteristics be apparent for all to see. Oppression works even before one becomes its direct victim. In the case of Ivan Toms, because homosexuality was prohibited by law and discredited in language, he did not need to actually be discredited if he was already discreditable. As Eribon (2004: 66) contends:

> "The very [status] of [being] discreditable (and of knowing that one is, and of fearing being discredited) acts on [an] individual both consciously and unconsciously as a subjectivising force, a force of interiorised domination, all the more effective given the fear of being discovered and the self-censoring necessary in order to avoid being so. Visibility does not disable oppression, and it is not capable of thwarting the subjugating process of surveillance, of policing, of the norm, for it cannot in and of itself cause insult or the social dissymmetry, of which it is the symptom, to disappear" (Eribon, 2004: 66).

Christianity was also a difficult terrain for Toms. He explains: "despite the support my own parish (priest) and a few senior clergymen had given me, the church, on the whole, remains a bulwark of homophobia in this society" (Toms, 1994: 261). In apartheid South Africa, the church, as one of most basic supportive structures, could either have reflected or lead public consciousness. This is because, in religion,

> "There will be less concern with intentionality or subjective states of mind and more with overt, visible behaviour. Instead of ascetic doctrines of self-discipline and

personal striving for spiritual perfection, elaborate ritualised codes will govern behaviour. Violations will be seen less as personal blemishes [and] more as threats to the collectivity. The wellbeing of the entire community is jeopardised by [the] misbehaviour of individual members, and as a result the deviant is conceived of as an outsider, an alien" (Brytryn & Greenburg, 1982: 529).

Because of Christianity, homosexuality is always and will most likely always be viewed as disgraceful. Even if the church were quiet about homosexuality, gay people's consciousness has still been invaded and rejected by discourses and images of that silence. In the end, the lack of the homosexual other and the lack of empathy in the generalised other denied Toms the very possibility of personal autonomy, "given the structural impossibility for him to identify with positive images of his own feelings and sexuality, and therefore of his own personalities – given, further, the impossibility of accepting a relation of reciprocity with other gay people" (adapted from Eribon, 2004: 77).

As a white gay anti-apartheid activist, Toms spoke about his homosexuality on several platforms, explaining how the oppression which he had experienced as a gay person had strengthened his commitment to the work for the liberation of all oppressed peoples. But for the apartheid government, his homosexuality had been used by "the state security apparatus in a futile campaign of attempted smears and harassment" (Hoad, Martin & Reid, 2005: 85): Toms' coming out created an opposition to state oppression, and even though the state's power to define and regulate sexuality was inadvertently increased on the one hand; not to have an homosexual identity, on the other hand, was "to retreat into defeat, retire into obscurity, or even vanish into invisibility" (Edwards, 1994: 15). Caught up in a political predicament, Toms pondered whether or not to leave South Africa, but could not bear the thought of leaving his partner. After his refusal to serve in the SADF the second time, he was sentenced to prison for 18 months in July 1987 (Toms, 1994: 259). In prison, having his freedom and privileges taken away, and having placed himself at the bottom of a social hierarchy, Toms started to see a more comprehensive picture of oppression:

> "Sitting for 22 hours a day alone in my cell I developed my thoughts on gay rights. I realised the shortcomings of the left: the fact that our supposedly sophisticated political insights did not necessarily extend to insights into social oppression. And I realised that in the left (be it ECC or the African National Congress), 'political correctness' and deep insight into the oppression of blacks did not necessarily mean an equal insight or commitment to rights for lesbian and gays" (Toms, 1994: 263).

While in prison, Toms engaged in a severe fight with another prisoner defending himself from being sexually assaulted. This painful event completely changed Tom's view on

homophobia: "it was the first time in my life I had ever hit someone: an explosion of pent-up aggression at the homophobia and lack of freedom that had obviously been eating away at me throughout the four months I had been locked up" (Toms, ibid). Homophobia is a social constraint to gay people as a whole, yet it spontaneously stimulates a discrepancy between the closeted homosexuals and the out homosexuals by directing fear, anger, jealousy and hatred of the former towards the latter. As Toms (ibid) noted:

> "I realised the extent to which homophobia existed, particularly amongst gays who have only partly come to terms with their sexual orientation. But I also realised, more fully than ever before, the difficulties of coming out. For lesbians or gays, coming out of the closet is not a once-for-all experience – a fling of the door and out we come in all our splendour! And public exposure does not necessarily speed things up – it remains a drawn out, exciting (and exacting) process of self-acceptance as well".

For one to be homosexual, as addressed in Chapter 1, he/she has to own same-sex desire first. The notion of coming out to self basically implies the act of being true to oneself, to make same-sex desire an object to one's self. Coming out to others instigates the active letting out of one's sexual desire and involves willingly addressing one's homosexuality in public speech. The lack of homosexual discourse is, in the first instance the result of homosexuals' silence and then incorporated into the mainstream discourse. It is only through the collective coming out of gay people that society can broaden the discourse of homosexuality. Toms (ibid) states:

> "The more open we are, the less we have to hide and fear further exposure. It sounds so simple, and yet my experiences during the trial proved how complex it really is. Life, and particularly public life, involves an intricate balancing trick of being open about one's sexuality and being sensitive to the best use of opportunities. I'm not sure I found the right balance – but maybe, finally, a balance was found in spite of me!"

Fighting alone, one cannot make a change, but without a pioneer there will not be any followers. The narrative reconstruction of Ivan Toms' story has indicated that resistance is existence (Foucault, 1979b): if the force of social change cannot be brought upon from the outside, subversion must occur within existing social structures. It also reveals major terrains of disjuncture within the process of homosexual identification, including masculinity, internalised homophobia through religion and language such as insult and stigmas, and how individual homosexual identity is both created by and subjected to the mainstream heterosexual discourse.

2.3 The South African Gay Liberation: Between Racism and Homophobia

Due to the historically inherited social-economic disparities amongst people of different colour in South Africa, gay liberation initially meant different strategies for black and white people. The first official gay organisation of South Africa, the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA), was established by a small group of white intellectuals in 1982 (Rydström, 2005: 37). Ann Smith (2005: 59), one of the founding members of GASA, described the organisation as "a white male dominant organisation where black people and women were not welcomed". The organisation saw homophobia as existing in a kind of vacuum, but also, unlike racism, something they could tackle. The long history of racial segregation had blinded members of GASA to the relationship between racism and homophobia. Here one has to acknowledge that without being placed in the position of the oppressed one's understanding of being oppressed is merely abstract: like a star in the sky, one sees it but never attempts to touch it, because it is too far away. Smith (ibid: 60) conceded:

> "We did not see the now glaringly obvious connections between homophobia and racism. It was not that we were [intentionally] blind to this relationship: we simply did not see it. I was a brand-new 'academic', very recently graduated from the old canonical school of English literature and with no training at all in the social or political sciences. We all 'knew' about racism, but the term 'heterosexism' had no place in our lexicon. Much less did we have any understanding of the ramifications of a social order so overwhelmingly based on its unquestioned inevitability. Nor, moreover, did we see the link between this inevitability and that on which racism is based".

As a non-profit and race/ethnic-inclusive organisation, GASA was caught up in the middle of the anti-apartheid struggle: it had no incentive to operate against the state because they simply did not know where to place racism in the framework of homophobia. This blindness is cardinal to the notion of blackness simply because, says Fanon (1986: 110), "for not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man". A given society is either racist or not; but more importantly there is a difference between a society that is racist and a society that is built upon racist structure (ibid: 85-7). South Africa belongs to the latter; in which case "the black man [had] no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man" (ibid: 100), because the racist structure demanded that "the black man's metaphysics, or less pretentiously, his customs and the sources on which they were based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilisation that he did not know and that imposed itself on him" (ibid). Therefore, symbolically speaking, for the superior (i.e. the GASA members) to see the suffering of the inferior requires fundamentally giving up its

superiority and to literally role-take the inferior in subjugation. This seemed, however, impossible to the members of GASA, because the belief that black experience of any sort has its unique perception about this world was something white people did not have any sensual intuition to: the black body and the white body have different substances in terms of the subjugation in the act of role-taking.

Mead (1934) does not distinguish between the different levels of role-taking nor does he differentiate the possible responses to the act of role-taking. Since one's action to the other is not merely determined by the actor him/herself but also determined by his/her projection of the other's reaction, there exists a hierarchy of responses, in which case one is not free to role-take unconditionally. Because both the superior and the inferior are produced by and have been subjected to different discourses (or power structures), their prescribed roles limit and will continue to limit their ability to role-take the other when the other is neither produced by nor subjected to the same discourse. This explains why members of GASA could know racism but could not see it at the same time. Therefore subjection, as a form of power, is in itself a paradox: the individual is subjugated to power but at the same time he/she is "dependent on power for his/her own formation, that that formation is impossible without dependency, and that the posture of the adult subject consists precisely in the denial and re-enactment of this dependency" (Butler, 1997b: 9). For black gays and lesbians to recognise their inferiority depends on both racism and homophobia, whereas racism is absent in the white counterpart.

The founders of GASA believed that an apolitical stance would guarantee them at least "some measure of protection from the draconian laws which frequently led to the banning of organisations and individuals" (Smith, 2005: 62). On the one hand, the operation of GASA was in itself a contradiction: how could an organisation that was established within a racially divided society pursue a route of racial inclusion and be inclined to function apolitically away from apartheid? Yet, on the other hand, GASA did not hesitate to obtain support from outside of South Africa and to achieve international recognition by applying for membership of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA). Low and behold, GASA had tremendous difficulties in demonstrating its inclusive nature towards the people of different colours. Thus for ILGA, to accept GASA's request for membership would have had serious repercussions, such as modifying its terminology on fighting against global racism as well as any governments based upon monolithic and compulsory hetero-patriarchal state-building agendas (Rydström, 2005: 34). In addition, most lesbian and gay organisations worldwide were by definition working against state sponsored heterosexism, and the National

Party in the Republic of South Africa was indisputably one of the most heterosexist governments. And because the theme of gay liberation was merged into the liberation for human rights in the eighties, GASA was immediately urged to declare its opposition to apartheid, and to perceive gay liberation as a genuine part of racial liberation.

Although GASA was granted full membership of ILGA in Helsinki in 1984 (ibid), its subsequent performance did not amalgamate with the active black gay population in the eighties. Smith admitted that members of GASA needed the 'white safety' and feared imprisonment and the loss of privilege once their operation had gone anti-apartheid. In a personal testimony, she explained the political stance of GASA as:

> "It is true that we were afraid, in our white liberal safety, to rock the boat too much: it was dangerous enough in those days to defy the tenets of apartheid by having an association open to people regardless of their colour. A founding principle of GASA was that we would – and here I must, yet again, refuse to suffer the seemingly expected embarrassment of having been so politically naive in that I will also, yet again, defend the very circularity of this naivety – 'keep out of politics'. What we understood by the word 'politics' was overt opposition to the apartheid laws of the government. What we understood by keeping out of politics was the same as that which we understood our function as 'liberals' was to mean – a way of opposing the system from within it, so we would have a racially integrated association – but we would not link 'gay liberation' to any civil rights liberation initiative" (Smith, 2005: 61).

As noted before, the white-led gay liberation in South Africa was purely of an intellectual foundation, whereas the Western gay liberation movements emerged predominantly from gay club culture[27] and later developed into queer politics (Edwards, 1994: 36). A club culture creates group consciousness and the increased demand of group interests. That being said, the Western queer culture is also inclusive in scope, incorporating literally whatever heterosexuality rejects. More importantly, queer politics, arising from the AIDS pandemic, is capable of producing reformist activism. It emphasises "the transgression and subversion of conventional heterosexual and gender norms which further entails an unapologetic 'in-your-face' activism" (Jackson, 1999: 160). This was not the case in apartheid South Africa: reformist activism meant to overthrow the apartheid system as whole. Yet, the sodomy law and legalised violence against gay people made the gay subculture in South Africa a 'ghost culture' – it was not about going underground, it was dead before it was born. In this way, GASA neither had firm support from a monolithic gay population, nor was

---

[27] It has been argued that there is a 'moffie' culture in the coloured communities of the Western Cape (Croucher, 2002: 318). However, because of the fluid, hybrid and permeable quality of moffie culture as well as racial segregation, it did not develop itself into a battle ground for political mobilization.

it able to project the actual interests and needs of the ordinary gay people in South Africa. As Smith (2005: 60) argued, "there is always a relationship between supply and demand, and the dynamics between a given segment of society and the clubs, organisations, associations, etc. that it gives rise to, reflect this relationship".

The difficulty faced by GASA was that it had very limited means to reach out to gay people in the first place. As a consequence, the notion of 'gay space' was basically defined to create 'opportunities of interaction'. According to Smith (ibid), "gay liberation was to create a safe space in which gay men and women could meet and interact without fear of being condemned, brutalised, shamed, humiliated or arrested. This is how we interpreted those rights to self-expression, privacy and freedom of association". In other words, it was already 'liberating' for self-identified gay people to 'physically meet' on a regular yet illicit basis, the initiative of having black members in GASA had to be considered with vigilance. In the ninth Annual conference of ILGA in Cologne, the South African representative, Alfred Siphiwe Machela, characterised the gay community in South Africa as deeply divided into two camps: "a white camp interested in gay social activities only, and a black camp which puts its weight behind all movements that are truly committed to the liberation of all South Africans" (in Croucher, 2002: 319). He also criticised GASA's position on gay liberation: "GASA does not represent the entire gay movement in South Africa. We would like to distance ourselves from GASA. And we don't wish them to represent us at any level without our mandate" (in ibid). The message here was lucid that black consciousness was (is) immanent in its own eyes (Fanon, 1986: 135), and that white gay South Africans and black gay South Africans did not share an equal footing on the discourse of liberation was simply because of apartheid. GASA's agenda for gay liberation was therefore an imitation of apartheid ideology: white homosexuals and black homosexuals ought to have undergone separate paths for liberation since they were formerly separated. GASA was naive on the account that black gays and lesbians were capable of achieving a better life by dealing with their oppression alone in their own communities. Although this was certainly not GASA's wish in the beginning, the lack of a racial scheme eventually led to its demise. The collapse of GASA took place when ILGA began to investigate why GASA remained unsupportive of one of their own black activists, Simon Nkoli, who had been imprisoned on political grounds.

2.3.1   The Coming Out Story of Simon Nkoli: When Blackness Meets Gayness

Simon Nkoli (1957-1998) was a legendary black gay activist in the history of South African gay and lesbian struggle. His life story manifests the unification of blackness and gayness in

the most rigorous era of racial struggle. For a long time in his life, he was challenged by his own people for being both an anti-apartheid and gay activist just because black and gay were seen as incompatible. Like many other gay men, coming out was a difficult journey for Nkoli, filled with sorrow and conflicts. He had to come out to his family about being gay and about his involvement with white men. For being an anti-apartheid activist, he had to come out to his comrades, putting his leadership in jeopardy. Nkoli (1994: 249) described his closet experience as akin to his parents (who were illegal squatters) locking themselves in the wardrobe whenever the police came to knock on their door:

> "In so many ways, the closet I have come out of is similar to the wardrobe my relieved parents stepped out when I unlocked them after the police left. If you are black in South Africa, the inhuman laws of apartheid closet you. If you are gay in South Africa, the homophobic customs and laws of this society closet you. If you are black and gay in South Africa, well, then it really is all the same closet, the same wardrobe. Inside is darkness and oppression. Outside is freedom. It is as simple as that" (ibid: 249-250).

Nkoli's mother discovered that he was involved with a white man on his twentieth birthday. He was then taken to see several sangomas[28] and a psychologist for a 'cure'; yet their advice did not match the mother's wish. As one of samgomas said, "Your child is a gay person. He is. And there's nothing you can do about it...I have dealt with these cases. A person is not sick" (in ibid: 251). It was ironic that the mother sought help from sangomas whose customary practice had no religious roots, yet her own judgement about Nkoli's homosexuality was based on Leviticus 18:22 in the Bible (ibid: 252). It seems that homophobia within the family is no different to other forms of exploitation within the framework of colonialism in that they all "seek the source of their necessity in some edict of a Biblical nature" (Fanon, 1986: 88). That said, this narrative also brings out a major disparity between racism and homophobia portrayed within the family, as Eribon (2004: 62) notes:

> "A black youth will most likely live in a black family, and thus, to the extent that he or she is subjected to racism, will likely be supported by his or her family through that experience. A gay youth is rather unlikely to live in a gay or lesbian family, and the insult and stigmatisation found in the exterior world are likely to be found in the family as well. Such young people will frequently be obliged to disguise themselves from their own as well as from others, and the kind of racism they are subjected to is as inherent in family as in the outside world".

---

[28] A 'sangoma' (or 'Iqgirha' in Xhosa) is a traditional Zulu healer who uses herbal treatments, and a respected elder in the Zulu community. 'Sangoma' is the most commonly used term for such traditional healers in contemporary South Africa.

Nkoli came out to the public in 1981. While he was the secretary of the Congress of the South African Students (COSAS) (Nkoli: 253), his leadership and public appearances destroyed the myths that gays were un-African and a weaker sex. Nkoli was also involved in GASA and played a key mediating role between the white gay organisation and the black community: for instance, he had organised GASA's 'non-racial' Saturday Group in Soweto, raising awareness of homosexuality and racial integration (see Rydström, 2005: 36). In 1984, Nkoli joined fellow comrades in the Delmas Treason Trial. His co-accused included UDF (the United Democratic Front) members and several ANC leaders,[29] who spent more than four years on trial (Achmat, 1998: 8). In connection with widespread protests against the new South African constitution in 1984, several town councillors had been killed, and together with 21 other activists, Nkoli eventually faced charges of high treason, terrorism, and murder (Rydström, 2005: 36), following the mass protests in the black townships of the Vaal Triangle region, southwest of Johannesburg in 1983 and 1984 (Achmat, 1998: 8). Facing Nkoli's 'personal' calamity and misfortune, GASA 'somehow' behaved in a hopeless manner and remained silent: it was for his anti-apartheid activism that he was imprisoned.

During his four-year imprisonment, "across the world, lesbian and gay people rallied in support of Simon Nkoli against the Delmas Treason Trial in South Africa, whereas the white-led gay and lesbian movement disowned Simon Nkoli and the struggle against apartheid" (ibid: 8). Nkoli said, 'it is largely because of the consistent support of the British lesbian and gay movement that I survived the terrible days and nights I spent in prison…I have had no support from GASA since the moment of my arrest' (in Cock, 2005: 191). After the start of the Delmas Treason Trial, Nkoli's homosexuality issue was frequently raised. During his initial interrogation, Nkoli (1994: 253-4) recalled:

> "…The police kept on saying, 'You say you are fighting for the people. But you're a moffie. Do you really think the ANC and SACP would be mad enough to take a moffie on?' They'd bring in things like a baton and tell me to go fuck myself with it. They also said they'd put me in prison with others and get me raped".

Nkoli's love life with white gay men brought him further torture and interrogation at John Vorster Square during the trial. He remembered (ibid: 254):

> "One policeman, who had seen snaps of white men in my photo album, became particularly angry. (He asked me): 'Why do you like fucking white men?' he asked. 'What have they done to you? Why don't you have sex with your own people?'"

---

[29] The ANC leaders involved in the Delmas Treason Trial include Terror Lekota, Popo Molefa, Tom Manthata, Gcina Malindi and Moss Chikena (see Achmat, 1998).

Based on the above narratives, it can be argued that homophobia differs in two critical ways from racism or sexism. Wickberg (2000: 44) points out that both racism and sexism have "putative neutrality" because the categories of race and sex are neutral and reversible. For example, a man can experience sexism if he cannot become a nurse just because he is a man. Likewise, white people can be discriminated against by the misuse of Affirmative Action. Although an individual or a homosexual group (e.g. gay thugs and bears) can be 'heterophobic', it is unlikely that his/her/their 'heterophobia' can be incorporated into the mainstream discourse since heterosexuals are the vast majority. By the same token, homophobia cannot be reversed on a societal level.[30] Thus accordingly, the policeman's words seem to suggest that it is better for a black man to have sex with his own kind, and just because he has sex with a white man he is somehow 'denatured'. In this manner, the policeman can be racist irrespective of his own race simply because he is homophobic.

Secondly, racist structure depends on economic exploitation (Fanon, 1986: 88), whereas homophobia does not. Homophobia is a form of power structure that does not rest on specific material relations. In other words, the exercise of homophobia does not necessarily depend on the performance of one's class, sex, gender, and racial status, as long as he/she maintains heterosexuality. This can be detected in the policeman's words: the heterosexual can project his/her fear of his own homosexual desires, or his/her own race's fear of homosexual desires, onto the external world. In turn, the homosexual internalises the social-phobia and hatred projected by the heterosexual world and this causes him/her to loathe him/herself.

The ILGA member groups saw GASA's unwillingness to support Nkoli as a betrayal of their joint anti-apartheid statement and therefore moved to exclude GASA from ILGA. Yet, from his cell, Nkoli wrote to ILGA calling on them to retain GASA's membership. A month later, said Nkoli: "I really feel bad if ILGA is going to expel GASA...And GASA has been doing so much to bring change in the life of the oppressed gays" (in ibid: 4). Nkoli was conscious of GASA's controversial position: the organisation's racially inclusive agenda was contradictory to its apolitical state. GASA would have adopted an anti-state position if it had outrightly supported Nkoli, which could have led to its own destruction. It would be unfair to

---

[30] Daphne Patai (2000: 130-1, 158) has revealed a language of heterophobia that is prevalent within contemporary feminist writing, giving examples such as the British lesbian separartist Sheila Jeffreys. Although this may be a crucial disparity within 21 century feminism, one cannot juxtapose academic discourse of lesbian feminism with public discourse of sexual discrimination. In any case, lesbianism cannot represent the attitudes of the entire lesbian population or gay men for that matter towards heterosexuals.

criticise GASA for not wholeheartedly defending Nkoli, given the organisation's desire to carry on operating. However, for a concrete social transformation to happen a racially integrated gay and lesbian struggle was destined. In a letter to Kevan Botha, the national Secretary of GASA, Nkoli's lawyer, Caroline E Heaton-Nicholls, addressed the urge to bridge gay and lesbian struggle with racial liberation (9 September 1986):

> "You will also recall that Simon Nkoli eventually in response to your solicitations expressed his opposition to GASA's expulsion from the ILGA despite the fact that GASA and other gay organisations in South Africa had given him very little, if any, solidarity or support in his long months of detention and trial on political charges…Simon has been in detention without conviction on any charges for very nearly two years now, but that at the same time you were content to smear him in your effort to keep GASA in the ILGA…Gay rights are inseparable from larger questions of human liberation. In South Africa, that means that gays should not think that they can fight in isolation from other oppressed groups for their right to live in peace and dignity. This country's oppressed form part of an invisible majority. Insular thinking and the sort of vicious pettiness which your attitude evinces do the larger cause of liberation profound harm…If South Africa's gay organisations are to regard themselves as legitimately entitled to remain part of international gay forums, it would seem to me that they have to establish their credentials in the anti-apartheid struggle…Gay institutions in South Africa are not only averse to the progressive forces which seek to create a freer and more just society in South Africa, but may well also be the appropriate objects of expulsion attempts from overseas…".

As an openly black gay activist, Nkoli always emphasised that the battles against homophobia and racism were inseparable. Since South African's unique history had placed black gay people at the bottom of its social hierarchy, a transformation from the 'bottom' had to be the most fundamental and comprehensive. In his speech at the first gay and lesbian pride march in 1990,[31] he said: "I am fighting for the abolition of apartheid. And I fight for the right of freedom of sexual orientation. These are inextricably linked with each other. I cannot be free as a black man if I am not free as a gay man" (in Cock, 2005: 191). Nkoli addressed being gay and black as a unified entity by his presence and in his speech. Although one cannot hide away from his/her skin colour, it is possible to hide the fact of being gay. It could be certain that many had chosen to hide or repress their homosexual being under the ferocious repression of apartheid. It was only through Nkoli's fearless coming out, through that particular moment of speech and interaction that he broke the silence and contributed an important moment to the unity of gay liberation and racial liberation. One's representation may be minute, on its own unable to bring about a change; but that representation continues

---

[31] The first gay and lesbian march was organised by the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) in Hillbrow Johannesburg 1990.

to influence and connect others alike. Social change thus emanates from those connections. Nkoli (1994:256) stated:

> "It is difficult to tell what the relationship is between my anti-apartheid activism and my gay activism, but there are two things I know for sure. The first is that my baptism in the struggle of the township helped me understand the need for a militant gay rights movement. The second is that this country will never protect the rights of its gay and lesbian citizens unless we stand up and fight – even when it makes us unpopular with our own comrades".

The social representation of Simon Nkoli has delivered an in-your-face activism with the simplest yet the most powerful message to the black community in South Africa: 'here I am, gay and black; whether or not you accept it, get used to it'. The narrative reconstruction of Smion Nkoli's story is crucial to the theoretical formation of the disjunctures between blackness and gayness. They relate to issues of the manipulation of Christian standards, and the difficulties of coming out to the family and community. These themes will be discussed with depth in my data analysis.

2.4 The Gay Rights Movement and the ANC

The alliance of the Gay Rights Movement with the African National Congress (ANC) has played a pivotal role in promoting the inclusion of the sexual orientation clause in the post-apartheid constitution. However, for gay and lesbian activists to be involved in the ANC is a story of its own kind. The ANC leaders in the eighties were initially unaware of the discrimination against gays and lesbians in South Africa, on the one hand. On the other hand, they attached themselves to the pervasive belief that homosexuality was un-African. Nonetheless, their ignorance was challenged significantly by the global gay and lesbian community. Since GASA joined ILGA, shortly after 1983, the global gay activist movement started to influence the anti-apartheid struggle by addressing the serious situation of South African gay people. The Australian gay activist Peter Tatchell interviewed Ruth Mompati, a member of the executive of the ANC, while she visited London to promote South Africa Women's day in August 1987. Tatchell recorded Mompati's opinion on gay rights as:

> "I hope that in a liberalised South Africa people will live a normal life… I emphasise the word normal…Tell me, are lesbians and gays normal? No, it is not normal…I cannot even begin to understand why people want lesbian and gay rights. The gays have no problems. They have nice houses and plenty to eat. I do not see the suffering. No one is persecuting them…we haven't heard about this problem in South Africa until recently. It seems to be fashionable in the West" (in Tatchell, 2005:74).

Here Mompati blatantly viewed the global gay and lesbian movement as a recent Western cultural invention, as the consequence of massive industrialisation and economic growth, as if the people in the developed world did not have anything to worry about or anything exciting to labour on. It implied, again, that homosexuality was un-African, something imported to South Africa through colonialism. A further interpretation of her statement was that homosexuality was not and would never be a 'black' issue but a 'white' issue. When asked her own opinion about the operation of the gay anti-apartheid organisations inside South Africa, Mompati denounced them with a passion:

> "They are not doing the liberation struggle a favour by organising separately and campaigning for their rights. The (gay) issue is being brought up to take attention away from the main struggle against apartheid. These other problems can wait until later. They are red herrings" (in ibid).

Mompati carried on defending ANC's ignorance to gay rights with a metaphor: "we don't have a policy on flower sellers either" (ibid). The irony in what Mompati said was that she either did not know that SADF were performing inhuman therapeutic treatments on gay people, or ignored this problem entirely because the people conscripted by the SADF were white men (Sinclair, 2007). Although she did acknowledge that women had particular problems and specific interests which needed to be addressed by the ANC, she was adamant that gays and lesbians did not (in Tatchell, 2005: 75). Another irony in what Mompati said was that gender and sexual orientation were (and are still) linked because women and queers were treated the way they were because of society's fear of all that was not masculine. If the ANC was to dismantle the masculinist apartheid system for women's empowerment, then a transformation of masculinity was destined for both white and black men. Mompati therefore failed to realise the relationship between sexual oppression and the oppression on the ground of sexual orientation, which assumed that women's empowerment did not take any concern on their sexual preferences.

Notably, Mompati was not the only one who disregarded the importance of gay rights. Solly Smith, the former liberation movement's chief representative of the ANC, expressed a similarly offensive opinion: "we don't have a policy. Lesbian and gay rights do not arise in the ANC. We cannot be diverted from our struggle by these issues. We believe in the majority being equal. These people (lesbian and gays) are in the minority. The majority must rule" (in ibid: 76). When asked if the ANC was opposed to discrimination against homosexuals and if an ANC-led government would repeal the anti-gay laws of the apartheid state, Smith replied: "I have no comment on that" (ibid). Surely the narratives of Mompati

and Smith are sufficient to expose homophobia within the ANC and the inadequacy and political insensitivity of the ANC's rights policy in the eighties.

Tatchell did not give up on the ANC. Instead he planned to publicise Mompati's and Smith's homophobia across the globe so as to pressurise the ANC from outside of South Africa. Tatchell's article, under the headline '*ANC Dashes Hopes for Gay Rights in SA*' (ibid: 77), was published in the London gay weekly newspaper, *Capital Gay*, on 18 September 1987. As he expected, Smith's and Mompati's homophobia provoked an outcry in the global lesbian and gay circles. The article later resulted in the ANC and the anti-apartheid movement internationally being flooded with letters of interrogation. People were "appalled that a 'liberation movement' like the ANC could be so ignorant, bigoted and intolerant" (ibid). Nevertheless, embarrassing the ANC leadership was merely a prelude. Tatchell then wrote a face-saving solution letter to the ANC so as to provide a constructive way forward. This was perhaps the most salient letter by Tatchell, dated 12 October 1987, addressed to Thabo Mbeki, then the ANC Director of Information.[32] In this letter, Tatchell argued, as the following extract illustrates, that support for lesbian and gay liberation was consistent with the principles of the ANC's Freedom Charter (in ibid: 78):

> *"Dear Thabo Mbeki,*
>
> *...Given that the Freedom Charter embodies the principle of civil and human rights for all South Africans, surely those rights should also apply to lesbians and gays? And surely the ANC should be committed to removing all forms of discrimination and oppression in a liberated South Africa?...To me, the fight against apartheid and the fight for lesbian and gay rights are part of the same fight for human rights.*
>
> *Yours in comradeship and solidarity*
> *Peter Tatchell"*

In this letter, Tatchell also addressed the leading gay anti-apartheid activists inside South Africa, including Ivan Toms and Simon Nkoli. For racial liberation to engage with gay liberation, it requires the coming out of both black and white gay people to form consensus and visibility. As Albie Sachs (2005, in Hoad, Martin, Reid, 2005: 82) notes: "the ANC policymakers were much influenced by the knowledge that people such as Simon Nkoli and Ivan Toms were gay: the fact that comrades were being affected by gay oppression did much to get the gay issue considered on its merits". On the 'white' side, Ivan Toms had represented

---

[32] On the advice of exiled ANC contacts, David and Norma Kitson, Mbeki was believed to be the most liberal-minded of the ANC leaders and senior enough to be able to push for a radical rethink of official policy (Tatchell, 2005: 78).

the progressive coming out of white gay activists who were anti-apartheid. On the 'black side', during many months of debate and discussion with his comrades and leaders, arguing that lesbian and gay people faced discrimination, Simon Nkoli confronted and destroyed the myth that it was un-African to be gay. His friends like Gcina Malindi also defended his record as an anti-apartheid activist (Achmat, 1998: 8). It was through the coming out of black gay anti-apartheid activists that the ANC reconsidered its rights policy to include gay rights. Although Tatchell was not the first activist to pressurise the ANC to change its homophobic stance, his article in the *Capital Gay* newspaper and his letter to Thabo Mbeki did promote the ANC's rethink on gay rights in the end. Constant efforts yielded success. The new pro-gay rights ANC policy was publicly announced in a letter to Tatchell from Thabo Mbeki, dated 24 November 1987. Mbeki apologised for the lack of inconsideration and political insensitivity of Ruth Mompati and Solly Smith (in Tatchell, 2005: 79) in the letter:

> *"Dear Peter*
>
> *…The ANC is indeed very firmly committed to removing all forms of discriminations and oppression in a liberated South Africa. You are correct to point this out. That commitment must surely extend to the protection of gay rights…I would like to believe that that my colleagues, Solly Smith and Ruth Momapti, did not want to suggest in any way that a free South Africa would want to see gays discriminated against or subjected to any form of repression. As a movement, we are of the view that the sexual preferences of an individual are a private matter. We would not compromise anybody's right to privacy…and would therefore not wish to legislate or decree how people should conduct their private lives…We would like to apologise for any misunderstanding that might have arisen over these issues…*
>
> *Yours in the common struggle*
> *Thabo Mbeki"*

Securing the ANC's official opposition to homophobic discrimination gave "the struggle for lesbian and gay emancipation inside South Africa new legitimacy and kudos" (Tatchell, 2005: 80). By giving the cause of homosexual rights political credibility, the ANC's stance helped pave the way for the subsequent inclusion of a ban on sexual orientation discrimination in the post-apartheid constitution.

2.5 The South African LGBTI Community: Victory or Stagnation?

The success of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa led to the adoption of the first constitution in human history that recognises a nation's gays, lesbians and transsexuals as

having equal rights to other citizens[33] (De Vos, in Hattingh, 2005: 195). The proposition of this rights guarantee has two critical social implications. On the one hand, it has provided real space within South African public discourse to "describe non-procreative sexuality in positive terms" (Stychin, 1996: 467). And there is no doubt that the sexual orientation[34] clause has restored the dignity of queers through "articulating the validity of their status as citizens, and opening a space in the discourse of national belonging" (Van Zyl, 2005: 27). However the effect of such rights is also described in conservative terms: "the impact of law would not go beyond the literal meaning of the rights guarantee" (ibid). In other words, the granting of rights certainly is not seen as potentially transformative of either sexuality or of a society, that is rights should not be regarded as a potential threat to the dominance of heterosexuality. Now it seems that the gay liberation movement in South Africa did not seek to undermine or challenge the underlying heterosexual norm, but rather wished merely not to be discriminated against. As noted previously, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was/is integral to apartheid (Stychin, 1996: 269). If the same-sex clause only provides a sense of citizenship to gays and lesbians, and remains unchallenging of the mentality of the heterosexual majority who were the majority under apartheid; then homophobia will remain intact.

The continuation of homophobia in post-apartheid South Africa was illustrated by "a survey of 2163 respondents, drawn from all races and regions of South African in 1995" (in Cock, 2005: 194). The report showed that 48 per cent of the public was rated as homophobic, and that 44 per cent of the respondents were against giving homosexual equal rights in the new constitution. A total of 64 per cent were opposed to legitimising same-sex marriage. A sixty-eight per cent majority opposed letting homosexuals adopt children (Charney, in ibid). Even more recently, the 2003 Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) conducted by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) showed that 78 per cent of respondents said that "it is wrong for two adults of the same sex to have sexual relations" (in Leatt & Hendricks, 2005:

---

[33] This recognition was affirmed in the current constitution, adopted on 8 May 1996. Section 9 of the Bill of Rights in this constitution became known as the equality clause (in Hattingh, 2005: 195):

> "(3) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.

> (4) No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3)".

[34] The notion of sexual orientation was raised as an 'immutable trait' that is neither 'contagious' nor 'promotable' (Stychin, 1996: 467).

303-4). According to these survey results, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is still pervasive in contemporary South Africa, which interrogates significantly the relationship between democracy and majoritarianism.

There seems to be a contradiction between democracy and majoritarianism with regard to the gay rights clause, which raises a pivotal concern in politics: under what circumstances can ordinary individuals or communities engage themselves in the discourse of democracy? Butler (2008: 3) succinctly points out that: "when we think about democracy or democratic theory, for the most part we accept that one precondition of a democracy is participation. Participation, at a very basic level, entails capacity to know the world, to judge the world, to deliberate upon it, and to make decisions that are based upon apprehension of the world". But individual apprehension of the world is constructed and influenced by a number of social structures such as media, education, religion and family. These structures surreptitiously "work on our capacities for apprehension: restricting them, enabling them, organising them in various ways" (ibid). This is true; but then, how can we come to apprehend the larger social and political world and ensure that what we know gives the right judgement to a particular issue? For Mead, "an increase of knowledge would bring an increase of virtue" (in Hansen, 1976: 56). However, the increase of knowledge can only be accomplished if we can see ourselves from the view of the other. Although we can never become the other by taking his/her role, by role-taking we aspire to being or not to being the other. Thus the heterosexual majority in South Africa can never have the right to decide what works best for the homosexual minority unless they can access the homosexual experience and thereby understand why the constitution acknowledges everyone as equal by virtue of being human and that everyone has the right to self-determination. It is crucial for South Africans to identify with their new constitution as to know that democracy does not represent majoritarianism, and that "the constitutional players at times have been faced with constructing a consensus document which may not, in all respects, reflect popular opinion" (Stychin, 1996: 455). Public opinion on homosexuality may be negative, but democracy is certainly not about perpetuating a dominant culture, instead it ought to perform an eclectic scrutiny on existing cultural norms and values.

It has been argued that the contemporary South African society inherited four major problems from the apartheid system including racism, patriarchy, class, and heterosexism, which disempowered the LGBTI community and further diverged LGBTI activists from bonding together with the ordinary LGBTI population (Nel, 2005: 288). Edwin Cameron (1993, in ibid) has described the South African LGBTI community as 'notoriously

uncohesive politically', because there is no communal political LGBTI identity existing in South Africa and one that LGBTI individuals can trust enough to relate to each other and through which to be exposed collectively. The legacy of oppression, of racial division, weakens the civil society by dividing one man from anther by skin pigment, privilege and residence (Crawhall, 2005: 277). A fairly wide gap still exists between black and white gay men such that a community tends to typically cater for one part of the LGBTI community and by default excludes another. The racial division also manifests a deformity in the consumption of sexuality. As Crawhall's (2005: 277) indicates:

> "Far more common is the strict pecking order that ranks beauty before brains, youth before maturity, and pale skin types over dark skin types. For a white man to sleep with a black gay man is still transgressive and considered to be low-status activity. So entrenched is this mentality that it still appears logical and normal. It's unspoken and unquestioned. This racial dynamic together with the lack of empathy have caused white gay men to remain ignorant of black gay men's experiences. Where there were some moments of contrition after the elections, the overall power imbalance, and not just of wealth or power, but human value and sexual ranking, maintains a strict and pernicious hierarchy within the gay social scene".

There is a lack of empathy, lack of common language and a lack of commitment to reconciliation. Although black gay people have taken a lot of social space for themselves, the institutional base is still fragile. For instance, how would one expect a black gay man living in a rural area in the Eastern Cape Province to have access to a gay community, or perhaps even to know anything about being a homosexual? Would the inadequate education in most South African rural areas educate children about homosexuality? On the contrary, this man's living environment almost certainly consists of 'traditional' families, churches, and gender-divided work places which are exclusively patriarchal, heterosexist and homophobic. Furthermore, even if he has fearlessly come out to his family and community, would there be a support group and a gay club for him to build a sense of belonging? Most likely not, and instead, being disowned by his family and the community could lead him to be expelled and/or to suicide. In the most optimistic case that he overcomes social pressure and achieves a homosexual identity, what if this black gay man desires men of races other than his own? Partially because I have collected a life story of a black gay man with a rural background, I want to emphasise this issue here because it seems that gay activism has not reached out to the rural areas of South Africa. Unlike cities, rural areas do not have the commercial capacity to develop gay bars and clubs.[35] Since gay communities in metropolitan cities such as Cape

---

[35] Perhaps a call centre can be helpful for gays and lesbians living in rural areas.

Town and Johannesburg remain largely white scenes, the lifestyle and consumption patterns involved do not correspond with those of the black gay population. Even more evidently, there are no 'gay ghettos' like those found in New York and San Francisco, nor are there homosexual populations based in particular residential areas, geographical regions, or on shared beliefs (Nel, 2005: 288). Therefore, the term 'LGBTI community' is not utilised to indicate a geographical location or neighbourhood, nor is the use of the term 'community' an indication of the nature of the interaction and the existence of bonds of affinity and affection.

South African gay organisations often rely heavily on foreign donors, and there is little support from the government[36] (Nel, 2005). There are no locations with a major concentration of predominantly LGBTI businesses. There are also no specific social services relating to gay and lesbian identity crises, such as coming out, disowned by families, youth isolated from their peers at schools, etc. (my data analysis will further demonstrate these issues). It is the result of state policies and practices that still cling to homophobic assumptions and the legacy of exclusion rather than inclusion. It is also to do with the nature of HIV transmission and the complexity of where sex fits in with our emotional lives and self-esteem. Partially because there is an absence of homosexual role models and moral codes that the instruction of appropriate gay identity/lifestyle is neither provided in education nor disseminated by the media. For example, there are no publicly 'out' black politicians and very few other LGBTI black role models with wide appeal available in South Africa. This has further limited the operation of a LGBTI community-based political and ideological social forum. In such a case, who will monitor the manner in which LGBTI people are depicted in the media or raise LGBTI policing concerns within community policing forums if not LGBTI people themselves. And who will address the need for LGBTI people to participate in, and exert pressure on existing structures of civil society and the organs of state if not LGBTI politicians? What has come to be known internationally as the queer movement is far removed from the worldview of most South African LGBTI individuals (ibid: 289). The South African history of 'gay liberation' is fruitful, yet ephemeral. There is hardly any public appearance of eminent gay figures of any profession, be that a musician, an artist, a celebrity, or a politician. Yalom (in Hattingh, 2005: 202) argues that "appearances enter the service of denial; we constitute the world in such a way that it appears independent of our constitution". If homosexuals are literally 'marked' as 'straight' or forced to behave 'straight' in society; it

---

[36] One of the examples is the Triangle Project in Cape Town which relies on foreign donors. The organisation has been trying to make the transition from its original constituency of white men in the urban core to serving black men and women directly in the townships areas (Crawhall, 2005: 274-5)

systematically denies their collective existence. In such instances, the social representation of homosexuals is disabled by various social institutions. A gay man's successful career or happy love life does not make his homosexuality acceptable in the eyes of the public if media, commercials, and education persistently use heterosexual images and ideologies to tacitly perpetuate the 'rightness' of heterosexuality. The inadequate social representation of queer culture in South Africa has made the gay rights clause a paper right which has put the development of LGBTI community in stagnation.

The social representation of queer culture is most absent in the South African media. One rarely finds gay characters in South African produced TV series or 'out' gay TV show hosts or sports men. In contrast, in the American TV industry gay figures have been portrayed in numerous TV series in both leading and supporting roles representing the variety of gay characteristics. Take for instance, Michael. K. Williams, who acts as Omar in *the Wire* (HBO), a black gay gangster. As opposed to the orthodox representation of a gay man, the character of Omar has challenged the conventional perceptions of gay men being soft, effeminate, and receptive. The popular black gay series, titled *Noah's Arch* (LOGO), in two seasons has covered issues related to HIV/AIDS, coming out, promiscuity, gay marriage, and gay parenting. These TV series inevitably break down the conventional perceptions of homosexuality which further works on the audience's capacity to understand and appreciate gay people. Individuals also learn from watching TV shows to look at gay people anew and to interact with them in amicable ways. The South African media thus has the power to reshape commonsense knowledge in showing what gay people really are like so as to expand social space for them.

Although the media may not necessarily normalise homosexuality, it surely can demonstrate gay people in positive terms by displaying their rich cultural and historical values. Unfortunately, talk shows and news concerning homosexuality in South Africa has played an ambiguous role in information delivery and public education. Although the media has promoted the use of condoms and carried information about AIDS organisations and AIDS events long before the heterosexual press woke up to the crisis, this is also problematic because it links HIV/AIDS to homosexuality and transvestism. For instance, the SABC 3 talk show, *3talk*, has invited the most celebrated drag queens for live interviews or performances during HIV/AIDS awareness week almost every year. The media have done little to create a real dialogue about what it is like to live as a gay man within an invisible epidemic, and the consequence of which leads to the public misinterpretation of a South African gay lifestyle: homosexuality is indeed about random sex and HIV/AIDS. "At one point two leading gay

editors were both giving credence to the 'AIDS dissidents', long before the former President Mbeki got the idea in his head" (Crawhall, 2005: 273). Further, gay characters appeared in South African TV series such as *Scandal* (E-TV), *Rhythm City* (E-TV), *Generations* (SABC 1), and *Isidingo* (SABC 3)[37] have had minor or vague storylines; and the male-male kisses are concealed in scenes from *Generations*, while the male-female kisses are not. What the South African media has failed to realise is that the gay characters in these series can be an indirect 'homosexual other' for the identification of the average homosexual, but unfortunately the media has merely made these characters perpetuate stereotypes of homosexuality. Indeed, one can conclude that information delivery in the post-apartheid South African media is still conservatively organised and limited in resources.

2.6 Conclusion

The South African gay and lesbian struggle manifests a political elitism which has taken advantage of the anti-apartheid struggle and fortunately 'cheated' the system if one considers the intensity of racism and homophobia during apartheid. The victory of the sexual orientation clause was accomplished at the expense of an unchallenged heteronormativity and gay rights not being culturally implemented. Sexuality is still a discreet topic in that a homosexual person has to be vigilant about the time and situation of coming out. The construction of homophobia has its sources in all gendered social structures which play a substantial role in the construction of any identity category. The sexual orientation clause therefore only benefits the ones who identify with constitutionally defined homosexuality; it systematically excludes closeted gay people. As the narrative reconstruction of coming out stories and gay liberation politics have shown in this chapter, my theoretical formation of disjuncture will be based on the themes of masculinity, Christianity, family, and education (i.e. the heterosexualisation of desire, and the masculinisation of boys).

---

[37] Isidingo (SABC 3) introduced a gay plot in 2006 featuring the marriage of Steve (Emmanuel Castis) and Luke (Gary D'Alessandro) as its climax (6th December 2006). Yet as both characters were/are white, the show failed to tackle issues over male homosexuality in the black community.

Chapter 3 Methodology: Life Story Research from an Interactionist Perspective

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to demonstrate the methodology of my study, which includes the design, procedure, techniques, and evaluation of my research. I start with the discussion on the nature of qualitative inquiry and its relation to the basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism. It deals with the ontological assumption of the qualitative paradigm which perceives the issues of social reality as subjective, multiple, constructed and highly contextual. Followed is the discussion on the methodological stance of symbolic interactionism with regard to the production of knowledge. The focus, here, is to show the way in which I use theory to obtain the prior image of the phenomenon under study, which correlates specifically to the discussion in Chapter 1 concerning both the structural influence and the individual's symbol manipulating ability in shaping sexual identity. The second section examines the use of the life story interview as the primary instrument for data collection in this research. It illustrates the role of the researcher within the life story approach as well as the interview procedure. On the one hand, I, as a qualitative researcher, develop the ability to be humane, empathic, sensitive and understanding (Atkinson, 1998: 2). On the other hand, the process of storytelling incorporates "the objective events of lived experiences and their symbolic interaction" (Ezzy, 1998: 243), and through which I am able to record not only stories but also the construction of various narrative identities. Lastly, I describe the procedure of data collection, data analysis and data evaluation, addressing the possible methodological biases and their coping strategies applied in this study.

3.2 Symbolic Interactionism as a Qualitative Research Tradition

According to Marshall and Rossman (1989, in Sutton, 1993: 413), the use of symbolic interactionism attributes to the qualitative research tradition, which shows "a preference to inductive reasoning"; meaning that there is no standard procedure in such a research stance (Bertaux & Kohli, 1984: 215). Qualitative research focuses on the entire process of a study rather than its outcome (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997: 3). This methodological stance originated in opposition to the positivist tradition (quantitative paradigm) by designating that researchers ought to interact with those being studied and must take into account the "situational constraints that shape inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003: 13). To achieve this, the researcher needs to get "inside the experience of the actor" (Blumer, 1969: 178) through methods that often imply "interpretive procedures, relativistic assumptions, and verbally rather than numerically based representations of data" (Sutton, 1993: 411). These qualitative

methods are designed to promote "sensitivity to setting that often takes as its highest priority a detailed understanding of the social setting in its own terms" (Sutton, 1993: 418). Thus the basic ontological assumption in the qualitative paradigm is that reality is subjective, multiple, constructed and contextual (Creswell, 1994: 4). Epistemologically, from a symbolic interactionist perspective, qualitative research design is "emergent" (Blumer, 1969: 48), which means that systematic inquiry emanates from the "direct examination" of the subjects under study. The nature of qualitative research is contextual with regard to the researcher being the primary instrument of data collection. As Peshkin (1988: 418) tersely remarks,

> "It (qualitative research) gives credence to the contextual nature within which both researchers and their research phenomenon abide, and also to the fact that both are protean, shaped by the embodying passions and values that are expressed variably in time and space. In these facts are its efficacy for capturing the surprise, disorder, and contradictions of a phenomenon".

Qualitative research usually begins with a hypothesis-generating scheme rather than a hypothesis-testing scheme (Glaser and Strauss 1967; in Ambert, et al., 1995: 880), in which the researcher has to "build abstractions, concepts, hypothesis, and theories from detail" (Creswell, 1994: 145). I have taken symbolic interactionism as the conceptual framework to formally identify concepts (or themes) and to construct the argument of disjuncture as they are suggested by the literature review of Chapter 2; yet the upcoming data analysis (Chapter 4) will also attempt to reflect upon those themes and arguments (see Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; in Jacob, 1987: 30). In this manner, my research is more concerned with process than outcomes. This research design does not propose that qualitative methodology ends with innumerable speculations. In my study, for instance, the argument of disjuncture is continually revised as the data emerges and as the analysis proceeds (see Silverman, 1993: 26; & Ambert, et al., 1995).

Blumer (1969) has placed symbolic interactionism in the realm of empirical science with "the goal of yielding verifiable knowledge" (Jacob, 1987: 29), and he claims that the existence of an empirical science presupposes the existence of an empirical world (Blumer, 1969: 21). Nevertheless, Bonner (1993: 229) argues that Blumer's premise may indeed contradict the methodological position of symbolic interactionism, because Blumer has specified the use of symbolic interactionism for acquiring verified knowledge (in a discovery model) rather than contextualised knowledge (in an interpretive model). The reason for noting this contradiction is not that I intend to solve it, but to acknowledge the existence of an empirical world in manifestation of the structural influence that constitutes the conventional

knowledge of sexuality. Blumer (1969: 35) states that "the empirical world is a world of everyday experience", and social conventions are "the top layers...which we see in our lives and recognise in the lives of others". With reference to the discussion in Chapter 1 (see 1.5.2 & 1.5.4), homosexuality in Africa is deprived of its meaning production/negotiation – it is not recognisable to the majority at an intellectual level – rather than its practice; and what impedes its meaning production is the influence of a particular discourse shaped by colonisation and the post-colonial-capitalism. Therefore although I have taken Blumer's methodological presumption on behalf of the qualitative paradigm to format my research design, the use of symbolic interactionism is mainly to explore meanings and motivations of individual homosexual identification as transcendent of sexual conventions and as deconstructive of heteronormativity and gender binarism. Perhaps from a heuristic perspective the notion of an empirical world is built upon explanatory models prior to the emergence of symbolic interactionism such as functionalism (i.e. Durkheim), dialectical materialism (i.e. Marx), and psychoanalysis (i.e. Freud). Their overriding purpose is to give a meaningful shape to observed detail (Sutton, 1993: 419) so that one can perceive the world as "something available for observation, study and analysis" (Blumer, 1969: 21). In this way, the solution to whether the world "stands over against the observer" lies in the actual research context and the initiative of the researcher's engagement with that particular context. I agree with Blumer (1969) that the goal of symbolic interactionism is "to make society intelligible, rather than testing relationships between variables" (Ritzer, 1980: 107-8). In which case whether or not the knowledge produced is verifiable depends upon the constituency of the researched as it never remains static in time and space.

With regard to the subject under study, qualitative research ultimately seeks depth rather than breadth. As portrayed in the basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism, the aim of research is to learn the meaning individuals make of their life experiences, rather than focusing on what people do or believe on a large scale (Ambert, et al., 1995: 880). The symbolic interactionist is therefore interested in understanding how individuals develop their points of view by taking one another's perspective and learning meanings and symbols in concrete instances of interaction (Denzin, 1978; Ritzer, 1983; in Jacob, 1987: 29). Blumer (1969: 53) notes,

> "The given sphere of life under study as a moving process in which the participants are defining and interpreting each other's acts…it is important to see how this process of designation and interpretation is sustaining, undercutting, redirecting, and

transforming the ways in which the participants are fitting together their lines of action".

Blumer's methodological stance implies that one needs to grasp not only "the characteristics of an action" but also "the inner motivations of the actor" (Sutton, 1993: 421). This is a central quest to my study in that I ask: under what conditions are individuals motivated to act upon their same-sex feelings instead of suppressing them? Mead (1959) suggests that "consciousness arises when organisms include their own 'organized attitudes' among the objects that shape their action" (in Ezzy, 1998: 240). This indicates that individuals interact based upon their memory of past experiences of sympathetic introspection (see 1.2), so that they can imagine 'organised responses', whether relevant or not (Mead, 1959; Ezzy, 1998). But in the case of homosexual interaction, consciousness arises when individuals disarm their prescribed heterosexual attitudes amongst desired objects, which eventually turn into the realisation of the same-sex act. In other words, the image of the homosexual man (or woman) only becomes perceivable when one sympathetically introspects the reverse of an organised response. To elaborate on this point, for instance, if one sees two men walking closely down the street, then usually, he/she is likely and willingly to assume these two are friends, colleagues, or even roommates rather than a gay couple, because the latter is not the conventionally organised response to such a scene. But this is precisely the reason that oftentimes people do not see any gays and lesbians in public.

For Blumer (1969: 47), the use of theory is to conceive a preceding image of the subject under study. In a Mead/Blumerian methodological fashion the possession of the prior image of the homosexual requires primarily the deconstruction of the ideal image of the heterosexual man in the empirical world. Conducting qualitative research is "to refine the process of theory emergence through a continual 'double-fitting' where researchers generate conceptual images of their settings, and then shape and reshape them according to their ongoing observations, thus enhancing the validity of their developing conceptualisation" (Ambert, et al., 1995: 881). The 'double-fitting' is indispensable with qualitative methods because the empirical world – as Blumer (1969: 22) understands it – can talk back to our assertions about it, which either reflects or resists our image of the subject studied. This obdurate nature of the empirical world has revealed the difficulty in obtaining a prior image of the homosexual man in contemporary South African society.

On an abstract level, the empirical literature on sexuality and queer theory implies that the empirical world postulates the lack of a sub-structure to account for the disembodiment of

homosexual identification in South Africa. The image of the homosexual man is a malnourished child in contrast to the heterosexual. The homosexual man's dreadful experience, both individual and collective, has culminated in the notion of disjuncture within his identity development. The confirmation of disjunctures within homosexual identification thereby revolves around the exploration and inspection of homosexual experiences; and subsequently the testing of my argument (i.e. disjunctures) relies on debunking the 'heterosexist' empirical world. It is the incompetence and limitation captured within the image of the heterosexual man that sets "the selection and formulation of problems, the determination of what are data, the means to be used in collecting data, the kinds of relations sought between data, and the forms in which propositions are cast" (Blumer, 1969: 25). Therefore instead of searching for evidence of hypothetical confirmation, I seek to "develop images and conceptions that can successfully handle and accommodate the resistance offered by the empirical world under study" (see ibid: 50). Based on the above discussion, my study is classified as primarily exploratory: the aim is to gather as much information as possible on the process of identity development within which the knowledge of homosexuality is inconclusive and in many cases not recognized. According to Yin (1994) interviews tend to be best suited for this classification, therefore I have chosen the life story interview as the primary means of data collection in this study.

3.3 <u>The Goal of this Research</u>

A crucial epistemological point is that I do not, through this research, aim to construct the concrete world of homosexual people in South Africa; but I intend to move beyond the deconstruction analyses so that individual life-stories collected in my data will necessarily resonate other individual experiences. Although the literature reviewed on sexuality and the gay and lesbian struggle in South Africa have provided illuminating insights, the process of deconstruction can be one-sided and tends to reduce concrete totalities into abstract totalities. For instance, Isaacs and Mckendrick's (1992) study on male homosexuality in the pre-1994 South Africa have mainly utilised 'crisis theory' (i.e. Erikson, 1968; Hirschowitz, 1972, 1979; Medora & Chesser, 1980, in ibid) to analyse homosexual identification, addressing both the negative impact and positive potential of coming out to oneself as a gay man. Nevertheless, what they have failed to demonstrate are the individual coping strategies employed throughout the process of homosexual identification. More importantly, though their research is inclusive of different racial participants, they have not adopted any specific theory to expound the different political pressures placed on white gay men and black gay

men. Although they suggest that homoerotic experience may differ significantly according to one's race owing to the apartheid regime, their research analysis somehow remains neglectful of the consequences of one's coming out as a black gay man in pre-1994 South African society.

Glen Elder (2005: 45) asserts that homosexual struggle in South Africa since 1990 has produced "a spatially differentiated gay space that is mostly white, male, exclusionary, classist, and neo-colonial". The case study on Simon Nkoli in Chapter 2 coincides with this argument by revealing the fact that there is less space for black gay men to come out in their own community than there is for their white counterparts. And there is no doubt that one's race influences how he/she views homosexuality, whether such views are imposed upon the individual or internalised by him/herself. It is therefore plausible that black gay men face more than just a moral dilemma; they can be continually alienated by white gay men. And the subsequent question is: can this be classified as merely a form of internalised homophobia or is there more to it than what meets the eye? The application of Western queer theory to the South African context can undermine the immediate fact of South Africa's unique apartheid experience whereby gays and lesbians from different racial and ethnic groups do not share a common ground of communication, hence different levels of being gay/gayness (Ellerson, 2005: 61). Based on the above, this research is not attempting to investigate black male homosexual silence as a whole but to discover and determine the ways of being silenced, which are shared by individuals (see Foucault, 1979b: 27). In elaboration, although one's individual experience cannot represent the complexity of the closet, it does share the ways/reasons of one's silence about being gay. And hopefully, one's coming out and experience of a same-sex relationship is able to contribute a strengthened experience for later generations of homosexuals. The individual experience of being in the closet and coming out is the focus of this study. The goals of the research are:

1. To explore the means by which individuals develop a male homosexual identity.
2. To investigate the individual experience of coming out; which includes questions of *a)* the circumstances leading up to the individual's decision to come out, *b)* the risks faced and crises experienced by the individual, and *c)* the methods the individual has employed to readjust according to his sexual preference.
3. To depict the formations of same-sex relationships performed by the individual. This requires a close look at; *a)* the ways male homosexuals develop and understand their attraction and intimacy within the context of a gay relationship,

b) the criteria used to organise moral codes for their sexual practice (monogamous or open), and *c)* the meanings applied to construct their sexual life; given the likelihood of limited cultural and social support.

4. To allocate the analysis of the above individual experiences within the context of South African gay and lesbian struggles. This allows the study to incorporate the influence of the gay and lesbian movement in 'repositioning' individuals differently within their social spaces.

3.4 <u>Life Story Research: Applications and Technicalities</u>

The contemporary life story approach differs significantly from the old Chicago tradition of life history research (the latter was once found highly attractive by Thomas, Blumer, and Denzin; see Bertaux, 1981: 5-8). Although both require the sheer quantity of raw data to be presented in the informant's own words, the life history approach aims to document every detail of one's life by reviewing letters, diaries, (auto) biographies, films and personal documents (Du Boulay & Williams, 1984: 138). Whereas the life story approach is used primarily to study "personality development": the telling of a life story "provides a subjective sense of self-continuity as it symbolically integrates the events of lived experience in the plot of the story a person most wants to tell" (Atkinson, 1998: 28; Ezzy, 1998: 239). The interview process thus investigates the construction of this long-term continuity with highlights on the most important aspects of one's life (Atkinson, 2002: 126; Du Boulay & Williams, 1984: 138).

That being the case, I have positioned the life story approach in so strategic a manner as to include various related narratives (i.e. childhood memory, boarding schooling) "as well as explanations and other forms of reflection on and reworking of a narrative" (Linde, 1993: 52). For instance, I usually ask the interviewee to start with childhood memory because it contains "a large enough number of narratives and their relations" which allow me to learn "the creation of coherence" (ibid). The facts of early years provide the source for recounting a coherent trajectory of experiences during a life story study (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003: 156-9). With reference to social context, institutions such as the family, schooling and (in many cases) the church become the objects of my sociological focus: they provide the necessary social space that connects one part of a person's life to another which in turn forms personal narratives as interrelated. Especially with regard to the development of sexual identity, schooling (i.e. peer association) and the family (i.e. parents being the perfect heterosexual role models) provide the fundamental connection between childhood and adulthood, which

are inherently problematic to the development of homosexual identity. The coming out narrative is unique and momentous because it signifies a deconstruction of individual reality in the sense that by fully accepting one's homosexuality, the boundaries of heteronormativity become apparent and brittle. Having realised this, the individual is able to alter his/her socially prescribed subject positions (or the ability to manipulate symbols) so that it leads to the reconstruction of his/her self-concept. The life story interview therefore captures the individual coming out narrative and its related tales so as to make sense of how it "transcends the barriers of self/society as well as those of the past/present/future" (Miller, 2000; in Jones, 2003: 60).

3.4.1 Narrative Identity: Dealing with Memories

The process of storytelling forms a particular narrative identity which constructs a sense of self-sameness, continuity and character in the plot of the story a person tells about him/herself (Ricoeur, 1988 in Ezzy, 1998: 245). The case studies of Ivan Toms and Simon Nkoli each reveal a unique self-consistent identity characterised by the conflicts, frictions, and synthesisation of their subject positions (i.e. race and class heritages, see Törrönen, 2001). For many homosexual men in South Africa (see Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992), this is an ongoing process whereby "their regular interaction with a network of others, the routines of everyday life, and the presence of physical props are unsatisfying" (see Slogoski & Ginsburg, 1989, in Ezzy, 1998: 250) because there is no organised response to their inner feelings and needs. The importance of an organised response to individual behaviour is its memorable effect (or introjection) in that it enables the individual to pre-conceive his/her own response directed towards his/her own behaviour. Ezzy (ibid: 241) elaborates on this:

> "Both memories of the past and anticipations of the future are symbolically organised and manipulated to provide a coherent self-concept that serves to direct current action. In the same way that a person passes from the present into their own remembered or anticipated actions, they also pass into the remembered or anticipated response of others".

With respect to the homosexual, however, his/her own response to his/her same-sex feelings is lost in his/her own imagination before his/her coming out. And the consequence of such is that their sense of self-concept (a set of socially prescribed identities) remains incomplete, delicate, and incoherent within. This indicates that closeted homosexuals can be seen as "constrained by the limited repertoire of available and sanctioned stories (which are largely heterosexual) that they can use to interpret their experience" (ibid: 248). Therefore the

narrative formed before and after one's coming out has two different modes: stories of being in the closet are often associated with the tragic mode in which the individual is isolated from society; whereas stories told after coming out usually fall under the comic (or romantic) mode where the individual is reincorporated into society (see ibid). For the same reason, it is unlikely that closeted individuals can maintain a consistent narrative in story telling: while there are opportunities for identity to be a creative work of style, most of them choose to adopt the culturally given plots (based on homosexual denunciation and stigma). Only if one has come out of the closet and achieved a relatively stable self-concept is one likely to work out what the past events meant to his/her present living situation. Without coming out, the homosexual's same-sex experience does not constitute a public identity (see 1.5.4), nor does each sexual event in his/her life connect to the others on a meaningful and reproductive basis.

As each event happens in one's life, it bears its own temporality to the actor's sense of self. Temporality is integral to Mead's theory of self, consciousness, and role-taking. Norbert Wiley (1994: 43) has pointed out that Mead's conception of the 'I' and 'me' are discovered experientially in memory images of the things individuals have done in the past (Mead, 1934: 76). To remember is to "take a questioning attitude to the past" therefore memory is a (re)construction of the past that orders everyone's inner world (Kuhn, 2000: 186-7). Ezzy (1998: 250) sums up Wiley and Kuhn's points as:

> "The past and future are continually reconstituted in the light of the emergent in the present. This reconstructive process involves an interweaving of the objective events of the past, the past's effects on the present, and the symbolic reconstruction of the past in the present. The 'me' does not simply have a temporal aspect. The imagined responses constitutive of the role-taking process are either remembered or anticipated. The 'me' that is constructed through this process is therefore integrally temporal".

In other words, the meanings of past and anticipated events change as a consequence of the reframing effects of the role-taking during the passage of interaction. Ezzy argues that Mead's (1934) analysis of taking the role of the other can be seen as exploring the internalisation of the intersubjective process of the creation of self-narratives. Although nobody else may be physically present, new episodes in one's life narrative are recast in the presence of imagined others (Ezzy, 1998: 246). Accordingly, coming out of the closet instigates an imagined response to one's sexual identity without the presence of a generalised other. For the homosexual, coming out challenges the basic principle of role-taking: he/she becomes capable of wiping out the conventionally organised responses (whether imagined or not) and consecutively develops his/her own positive response to his/her homosexuality

before projecting others' responses to it. In reality, gay culture can be seen as a congregation of gay people's collective role-taking: they simply take the opposite of socially prescribed sexual roles as a form of organised response. Yet most crucially, it is this recreational use of role-taking that establishes coherence to the individual's understanding of his/her own past in relation to the present, which in turn renders consistency and continuity to his/her life story, indeed to his/her storytelling as well.

3.4.2 *The Role of the Researcher*

Every interview is seen as a dynamic, meaning-making occasion where the actual circumstances of the meaning construction are important (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, in Berg, 1998: 59). The interviewer not only records the subjects' stories but more crucially he/she assists the subjects to achieve "a shared sense of meaning and purpose in life" that "makes a life story important and interesting to others" (Atkinson, 1998: 30). The life story interview requires the interviewer's ability to "invite stories as responses rather than reports", because what is ultimately persuasive in qualitative research is "an animated story illustrating chained events" rather than "a report chronicling things that happened" (ibid: 31). The role of the researcher is therefore understood metaphorically rather than terminologically, whether as a guide, a good listener, a choreographer, or a 'two way radio' (Reik, 1994; in Berg, 1998: 82). These metaphors emphasise two major qualities of the interviewer, that he/she subordinates to the interviewees (Douglas, 1984: 57), and he/she exercises "practical wisdom" (ibid: 17). On the one hand, the interviewer ought to be a good listener and sensitive to the timing and conditions of asking questions. As Atkinson (1998: 33) puts it, the interviewer "needs to look out for signals about when to ask another question or when to ask more about what has already been said, or was meant to be said, and when to go on to a new topic, [when] points needed elaborations". Here listening is not passive but rather involves full concentration and creativity.

On the other hand, to exercise practical wisdom entails that the interviewer listen with "the third ear" – it depends on the situation (Douglas, 1984: 17). This technique emphasises the necessity of flexibility in conducting the interview: the interviewer ought to use what he/she has heard in a self-aware and reflective manner so as to adjust the interview procedure in case of the omission of critical events. With reference to my research, I used open-ended interviews; thereby participants were encouraged to follow a "stream of consciousness" (Atkinson, 1998: 31) so that they could "hold the floor without interruption for as long as

they can or want to on a given topic or period in his/her life". This is a technique that encourages a free association of thoughts and therefore, deeper responses (ibid).

3.4.3 Questions

The central issue concerning questions asked in a life story interview is that they "should not be asked in a manner that inhibits or prevents a respondent from answering fully" (Berg, 1998: 67). In accordance with my research experience, I usually started with some 'straightforward' questions associated with demographical backgrounds for developing rapport between myself and the subjects (ibid). Next were the 'essential questions' that address the crux of the study (i.e. the coming out experience). These questions were "scattered throughout the interview, and geared toward eliciting specific desired information" (see ibid: 65-6). However, I have found that essential questions could be too straightforward and overly concise at times. There was a need to ensure that the informants were not bound by the essential questions, but by what they have deemed meaningful to their life stories and selfhood. The solution was to ask 'extra questions' so as to 'manage' what was said by asking core questions that corresponded with my overall study topic, namely a narrative account of coming out of the closet. Those questions were usually less structured and carried out less intentionally than the essential ones so that I could also adjust the interviewee's rhythm of telling. Body gesture and facial expression were also effective in facilitating the interviewing process (ibid: 66). I found that non-verbal techniques could sometimes guide informants into offering more details with ease. And lastly, there could always be more than one answer to the prepared and standardised questions in a life story interview. I permitted myself to 'digress' by using 'probing questions' at the moments where interviewees could offer some unexpected information.

How to ask questions creatively is an art form. In practice I avoided the use of academic jargon and philosophical concepts, and the use of double-barrelled questions as they can lead to the interviewee's loss of focus or partial response. On the one hand, the order of the questions in each interview was attentively designed in case they swayed the subject's moods of talking, and subsequently the results. On the other hand, my questions were also clear enough to convey exactly what was expected of the respondents (ibid: 68), which in turn motivated them to become involved and to communicate clearly their attitudes and opinions. I was also sensitive to the wording of questions. For instance, in pursuing further information, I often used 'how come' instead of 'why' as the former is more tactful and caring. In order to create a restful atmosphere, I demonstrated my own feelings during the

interview in addition to eliciting those of the subject (ibid: 59). Furthermore, I used various methods such as 'gay vocabulary' (i.e. bears, twinks, hunks, etc.) circumstantially to sustain the interviewee's interests in what he tells. The questions overall were asked of each interviewee in a systematic order, and my experience of participant observation in the Out Rhodes Society and the gay clubs in Cape Town helped me imagine the situations portrayed in their stories in retrospect.

3.4.4   Research Ethics

Research ethics are essential to rapport building. The conduct of the life story interview is founded on "a moral responsibility, because of the gift the researcher is being entrusted with" (Atkinson, 1998: 36). As pursued strictly in this study, I made my objectives clear to the participants: the aim, purpose, and agenda of the interviewer were declared and clarified from the beginning. I also gave my assurance that I would comply with the interviewees' wishes; along with a supportive and encouraging attitude and my acknowledgement that I and probably others would be touched and inspired by their stories. This helped to put them at ease and prepared them for the interview process that lay ahead. The more assuring and enthusiastic I was, the less convincing these people needed in going along with my request. Atkinson (1998) points out that life stories are primarily owned by the storytellers and it is the interviewer's job to protect the rights of the storyteller – to establish a truly collaborative partnership. Based on the above I classified four fundamental rights of the interviewee in participating in this research, these are (adapted from ibid: 37-8):

1. The right to know exactly what I plan to do with their stories; and make sure that storytellers are informed if there is any change of objectives in the research progress;
2. The right to decision-making prior to the interview, which prioritises the interviewee's own interests and privacy of their performances in telling their stories;
3. The right to anonymity; that their participation is entirely voluntary and that refusal to any questions in the actual interview is accepted;
4. The right to approve any use of the life story at any time during my research.

Before every interview, a research protocol (see Appendix I) was signed by both the researcher and the informant with research conditions declared. This protocol includes four components: 1) a heading which illustrates the purpose and use of research, 2) the permission

to use a digital recorder, 3) a form for filling in personal demographical information, and 4) an affirmation to anonymity. Two informants (Bahbuti and Jacob) agreed to use their real names in my data analysis, but the characters involved in all these life stories were renamed. All interviews were conducted in person, recorded and transcribed, and with the assistance of an interpreter if the interviewee was not fluent in English (see Berg, 1998: 69). The transcriptions of interviews have been sent back to the informants for review in case any parts of the transcription need to be erased due to personal reasons. A reference paper (see Creswell, 1994: 152) is also attached to each transcription addressing the key research questions asked, interpretations of probing questions, transitional messages of major events, and some space for the interviewee to leave comments or reflexive notes (see Appendix II).

3.4.5 Data Collection Procedure

The very idea of qualitative research is to purposefully select informants who will best answer the research question (Creswell, 1994: 148). Thus the planning of qualitative research can even be more structured and directed than that of quantitative research in terms of parameters. Data collection in qualitative research involves four basic techniques: participant observation, interviews, documents, and visual images (ibid: 149). The successful implementation of these techniques depends on the researcher's ability to organise settings, actors, events and process as according to each informant's personal preference in participation. Yet more importantly, the selection of life-story interviewees requires a heedful sifting of candidates by positioning oneself in the phenomenon under study. As Douglas (1984: 59) emphasises, "The world is a serious place where only people who are directly involved in it can know completely what it is like". Qualitative inquiry finds its "ultimate strength in the vast opportunity that the holism of being there makes possible" (Peshkin, 1988: 418). Therefore my data collection process begins with participant observation for establishing familiarity with gay people.

My first step was to become a member of the Out Rhodes (gay and lesbian) society at Rhodes University, through which I gradually learned to perceive "the world from the point of view of the people studied" (Hammersley, 1992: 165). Not only did I familiarise myself with gay people on a daily basis, I also established a social network searching for potential interviewees. Atkinson (1998: 27) contends: "the best interviewees for a life story interview may be those people who emerge naturally from one's everyday interactions". Thus my second step was to participate in society events and activities including the pride week 2009 and debates on gay and lesbian issues. I approached every potential interviewee by using the

'sales pitch' – telling him the truth about me and my research that "I merely beseeched his help in gaining a more complete...understanding of his life world" (see Douglas, 1984: 59).

As I moved to Cape Town for elder informants, I faced a much bigger and more sophisticated gay community. Therefore the selection of participants was thrown into a state of desuetude – there were simply too many of them, and I rarely had any opportunity or time to engage in a serious conversation with anyone in any gay club. Unlike members of a gay society, people in gay clubs and bars have a 'transient membership' to the sub-culture (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992: 26): not everyone is 'out' outside the sub-culture and indeed not everyone drawn in is gay, as gay culture itself becomes more inclusive and more leisure-consumption oriented. Fortunately, the Triangle Project spawned a list of participants and offered me a place for conducting interviews in Cape Town. Notably, age difference as a demographical variable caused different degrees of individual racial and political consciousness which systematically anticipated comparative analysis between the younger generation (who reached their adulthood after 2000) and the older generation (who reached their adulthood before 1990) of my informants.

Six participants' life stories were collected for data analysis, their demographic information is compiled in Table 2 in chapter 4 and a brief biographical write-up of each participant is provided in Appendix III.[38] My intention was to interview participants from different age groups, but unfortunately I have only encountered the out gay men above the age of forty amongst races other than black. Even those did not have any black acquaintances belonging to their age group, nor did they point me in the right direction for assistance. Although the narrow age variation presented in my samples is partially caused by limited research access, time restriction and finance, the feeling that the older generations of black gay men are more silent seems telling. That being the possibility, however, I do not intend to explain such a trend in my study, though I can safely assume that, according to the discussion in Chapter 2, the racial liberation during the anti-apartheid struggle marginalised the gay liberation movement which caused a partially liberated black gay population.

3.4.6   Data Analysis

Life story analysis starts from the very moment of transcribing raw data into text, to be read, understood, and interpreted on its own merits and in its own narrative structure (Atkinson, 1998: 21). Equally important, however, is the analysis of "oral performance" which portrays "how the situational factors feed into the event" as well as the interviewee's own emotional

---

[38] The friendship between the researcher and the participants has continued after the interviews.

dynamics (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996: 77). Emotion is a double-edged sword to data analysis, as it helps the researcher delve into the subject's inner world, but it can also lead to a biased interpretation of events if one bases his/her analysis solely upon emotions and loses insight to the cultural, structural, and historical factors that shape such events. In addition, emotions cannot be one-sided: emotional communication between the interviewer and the informant is encouraged because "blind spots exist wherever the researcher is too unemotional" (Douglas, 1984: 41). The challenge is how to expose such emotions in texts without having to produce a biased interpretation of stories. Having established 'coming out' as the pivot of my study, interviews become inescapably emotional: moments of silence, grief, sorrow, and eventually laughter frequented and penetrated every subject's life story. Here the problem with life story research (or qualitative research in general) is not that of limited data generated from a small sample, but rather the sheer quantity and complexity of data that must be analysed and linked to theory or models, either existing or new (Ambert, et al., 1995: 885). The concepts identified in Chapter 1 thus provide a schema to the narratives collected in my data so that they can be shaped into thematic and analytical properties.

The formal narrative analysis model practiced by Cortazzi (1993: 45 in Coffey & Atkinson, 1996: 56) is equivalent to content analysis, as presented below:

Table 1: the formal narrative analysis model

Structure	Questions
Abstract	What was this about?
Orientation	Who? What? Where? When?
Complication	Then what happened?
Evaluation	So what?
Result	What finally happened?
Coda	(Finish narrative)

The nature of content analysis is elementary: "it is a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases" (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:155). It enables the researcher to conceptualise narratives "as structures with identifiable properties and/or understand them in terms of functions" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996: 62). The content variables are not predetermined and fixed. Instead they develop during the interpretation of the collected records and are changed during the analysis (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:155). I have used this model to outline the major events of each transcription as to pre-specify themes for the later comparative analysis. This process minimises the probability of emotional effects overriding the objectification of

such events. Nonetheless, the weakness of this model is also evident in that it merely provides a deconstruction strategy for text analysis whereas in my study I needed to grasp the meanings and their relationships behind every important event.

Thompson (1978, in Du Boulay & Williams, 1984: 131) correctly notes that all biographical material provokes a tension in the analyst between fidelity to individual continuity on the one hand, and the logic of thematic argument on the other. Furthermore, all biographical data, however apparently 'raw', are acquired and used selectively with interpretive purposes in the individual aspect and minimise the thematic. A fundamental empirical question for the symbolic interactionist becomes the identification of the shifting modes of interpretation that characterise the interaction process (Denzin, 1969: 923). I have interpreted the narratives thematically, which is to establish connections amongst narratives based on the process of coming out to self (self-initiation) and coming out to others (self-actualisation). The former proceeds from coming out personally (self-questioning) to coming out privately (telling his friends and family). The latter addresses the stage where one comes out publically, and if necessary, politically. As discussed previously, coming out is integral to the success of homosexual identification, thus interpreting coming out narratives is perhaps the most quintessential to my findings. By interpretation, I expected more than either fact or fiction; instead I searched for personal definitions of what it means to be caught in a moral dilemma, how it feels to succeed or fail according to one's own wish, what it feels like to commit to one's own desire, how much space the commitment creates for one, and most profoundly what it feels like to witness the unfolding of one's own destiny.

The ample amount of information I have gathered from the interviews and transcripts are synthesised to make sense of the data, and my data analysis involves the following steps:

1. The major events of each life story are organised in chronological order (based on the division of coming out to self and coming out to others).
2. The data and their interpretations are scrutinized for underlying themes and patterns, with specific reference to the concepts identified in Chapter 1.
3. Peer debriefing and checking interpretations with the participants
4. An overall portrait of the analysis is constructed (Chapter 5) and followed by the final conclusion.

(Adapted from Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Ezzy, 2002: 64)

I was aware of the significance of the above techniques during the interviewing process. As a result, I informed the participants in advance that I might have follow-up interviews with them and I would like to see their opinions of my interpretations. This preparatory work helped me reduce the tedious process of transcribing data: I did not get stuck with some ambiguous parts of the stories because I knew that I could always contact the interviewees for further communications either via email or short in-depth interviews if necessary. I did have discussions with all my Rhodes University informants after data transcription for debriefing purposes, and apart from which I also had several debriefing meetings with my supervisor. His critiques of my interpretation have added more strength to my findings, and furthermore; I have benefited from his 'objective' look at the verbal updates of the interviewing process.

3.4.7   Research Evaluation: Validity and Reliability

Qualitative research findings, although they do not in principle abandon the quest for generalisability, often form an inimitable interpretation of the studied phenomenon (Creswell, 1994: 158). Such findings produce context-bound knowledge rather than generalised knowledge, in which case the evaluation of particular qualitative research can be difficult because "qualitative research often relies primarily on the informants' own formulations and constructions of reality checked against those of other similarly situated informants or the observations of an informed observer" (Ambert et al., 1995: 885). This suggests that the contextual nature of qualitative research can pose threats to both the internal validity and the external validity of qualitative findings. This is inevitable to my study. With respect to internal validity, the accuracy, applicability and consistency of my interpretation can be challenged by three major methodological biases, be that the observational, personal, and conformational (see Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007: 235-6), as discussed below.

Most qualitative methodologists have reached the conclusion that it is impossible to completely eliminate observational bias in practice due to the limited time and space available to the researcher. Inasmuch as to apprehend the complexity of qualitative data, the only way to minimise observational bias is to simplify data by intentionally drawing the degree to which "sufficient sampling of behaviours or words is obtained from the study participants" (ibid: 235). This implies that any qualitative findings do not have to reach a congregated and ultimate conclusion of its own kind.

Personal bias is also a recurrent issue in qualitative research; it appears when the researcher contaminates the data or intentionally affects interviewees' attitudes towards leading questions (ibid: 236). In my research procedure, I devised a 'recycling' technique to

reduce personal bias. Firstly, I made an effort to remain value-free towards the participants' stories, and avoided placing judgements in my data analysis. Secondly, I requested participants to review my transcriptions of the interviews, which provide an external evaluation to my data interpretation. Thirdly, Moilanen (2000: 381-2) notes that participant agreement (member checks) is an effective remedy for mitigating personal bias. I have practiced this technique by discussing certain transcriptions with my gay friends (without indicating the names of informants) as to gain alternative readings of my data. And oftentimes I find my friends' interpretations very insightful.

Lastly, dealing with conformational bias can be the most intriguing amongst all kinds of research biases. It is a selection bias toward the confirmation or disconfirmation of findings (Greenwald et al., 1986, in Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007: 236). In my study, for instance, one of my participants, Fufu, reported that he was never in the closet, which indicates the absence of a coming out event. Fufu's case study, at a methodological level, can be a rival explanation to the underlying findings that might be demonstrated as more suitable to the argument of disjunctures. Nonetheless, having an ascribed 'out' status did not mean that Fufu was spontaneously freed from homophobia: his childhood was not any easier than that of the other informants. As a result, although I could have intentionally discarded Fufu's story given that I have other potential informants, discarding the case may be rather unhealthy in that my interpretations tend to be overtly congruent with the prescribed argument.

In terms of external validity, I have to admit that the group of life stories cannot be a representative sample of anything that it could possibly be generalised to any group or be used to prove/disapprove a hypothesis. My interpretation of the stories (whether it matches reality) (see Creswell, 1994: 158) is limited by the participants' demographical variables (i.e., geographical location, time, sex, age, race, and ethnicity). However, the nature of life story research is extrapolative: I believe that readers can to various degrees recognise themselves in these stories and draw significant lessons from them for their own sexual development, whether homosexual or not. This is because evaluation of what has been involved in a life story interview should be made on the basis of how these data illustrate and give readers a sense of being there, of visualising the homosexual individuals, feeling their conflicts and emotions, and absorbing the flavour of their social setting (see Atkinson, 1998: 21). Once the underlying social setting and the interactive nature of the researched group is assessed and understood by the reader, the rigour becomes clear.

3.5 <u>Conclusion</u>

In this chapter, I have looked at the ontological, epistemological and specifically the methodological issues underpinning life story research. A crucial aim of this study is to see how the coming out narrative reconstructs the participants' role-taking process, as well as the perception of their social settings. Based on the methodological issues, I have described the research procedure, to show how data is created by the participants and me. The use of interview transcripts will highlight the complex interplay between the interviewees' recollections and the study questions in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

Due to the abundant and rich life stories I have collected, and partially because my focus is the coming out narrative, it can be misleading to present each complete life story respectively in this chapter. As a result, my data analysis does not pursue the traditional life story analysis,[39] instead I have taken out major narratives and reorganised them into chronological and thematic events or tales, which emulate the narrative reconstruction provided in Chapter 2. The aim is to construct yet contrast simultaneously my respondents' coming out experiences as a whole as if one is watching a show (see Berg, 1998): every respondent has his role in it and that role is to demonstrate themes such as gender/sex, masculinity/femininity, family and religion which will eventually lead to the discovery of disjunctures. The entire data analysis is divided into the sections of coming out to self and coming out to others, as designated in Chapter 1 (see 1.6.2 & 1.6.3), with one separate narrative as the coda. Each section consists of one or a few narratives, which are organised to demonstrate a number of themes regarding the theoretical discussions of the previous chapters. I begin with a table of the participants' demographics (summarised according to Appendix III), from which I proceed to the design of narratives and their relation to different themes. My interpretation of the narratives is built upon major sociological concepts and their implications borrowed from prominent symbolic interactionists as well as other critical thinkers. These include:

1. The influence of structure and agency on human thought and behaviour, featuring the argumentation of Denzin (1969), Stryker (1987), Plummer (1975, 1995, 1996), and Gagnon and Simon (2005);

2. The process of identity formation which emphasises the constitutive weight of social stigma (Goffman, 1963) and insult (Eribon, 2004) in the social construction of homosexuality;

3. Feminist critique of the social dominance of masculinity (Hearn, 1987), compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980), and gender conformity (Butler, 1993, 1999);

---

[39] Berger's (1982) research on gay men above the age of 40 in the Chicago area has employed the traditional style of life story analysis. It presents all collected stories on their own in one chapter and the researcher provides his interpretation and analysis in the following chapters.

4. Applying psychoanalysis and deploying Freud's notion of melancholia to make sense of the participants' internal conflicts and life crises in achieving a homosexual identity.

Along these lines, the basic assumptions of symbolic interactionism; including self/self-concept, the generalised/significant other, and role-take; are effectively utilised to construe the narratives as well as to elaborate on my interpretation.

Table 2: participants' demographic details:

Name	Ethnicity	Age	Occupation	Location	Out to	Religion
Babhuti	Xhosa	35	Somgoma/Consoler	Cape Town/ Eastern Cape	Friends/Parents/ Public	n/a
Dez	Xhosa	38	Field Assistant	East London/ Grahamstown	Friends	n/a
Elakhe	Xhosa	23	Call Centre Administrator	Grahamstown/ Queenstown/ East London/	Friends/Parents/ Public	Christian
Fufu	Xhosa	21	Undergraduate Student at Rhodes	King William's Town/ Grahamstown	Friends/Parents/ Public	Christian
Jacob	Sotho	22	Postgraduate Student at Rhodes	Benoni/ Grahamstown	Friends/Parents/ Public	n/a
K	Xhosa	25	Business Consultant	Cape Town/ Port Elizabeth	Friends/Parents/ Public	n/a

4.2 <u>Coming Out to Self</u>

The interactionist analysis of coming out to self begins with those first conscious and semi-conscious moments in which an individual comes to perceive of him/herself as potentially homosexual: "with the general process of constructing sexual meanings, modifying them, and in many instances neutralising them" (Plummer, 1996: 70). Plummer identified three situational indicators by which homosexual meanings are created. Firstly, there is the 'spillover effect' (ibid: 70), intending the linkage of one series of meanings in which there may be no clear sexual connotation with others where the sexual meaning is clearer. In my analysis, the sections based on the 'spillover effect' include *Playing with Girls* (4.2.1), *Hide and Seek* (4.2.2), *Knocks on My Door* (4.2.3), and *The Strange Arrangement* (4.2.5), which focus on same-sex activities and their relationship with the meaning production of homosexual identification. The themes discussed in these sections consist of gender conformity, the masculinist discourse, and heteronormativity. Secondly, the primary stage of homosexual identification is often associated with 'objects of sexual fantasy' (ibid), be that

penises, bottoms, football boots, and other male-orientated objects which may subsequently come to symbolise one's whole being as a homosexual. These objects are specifically revealed in the sections of *Boy Crush* (4.2.4) and *A Taste of Boyfriend* (4.2.7) with theoretical remarks on the influences of compulsory heterosexuality, by which the participants described their struggle within the emergence of the homosexual self. Lastly, what is less obvious but oftentimes exclusively suggestive of homosexual tendency, is a series of 'social events' (ibid: 71) which may be interpreted as homosexual. I have organised four sections to illustrate these social events, including *Trying out Girlfriends* (4.2.6), *Escape* (4.2.8), *My Confession* (4.2.10), and *Lost in the Closet* (4.2.11). They all place a specific emphasis on how homosexual individuals suffer from the structural constraints of being gay, in which case my discussion extends necessarily to the realms of psychoanalysis, history, and gender studies. Every section is centred upon various social factors respectively (i.e. peer association/pressure, religion, and geographical location) so as to understand how homosexual individuals are withdrawn from the dominant models of social interaction, which in turn systematically obliterate the construction of the homosexual self. In an overall view, the first part of my data analysis begins with the stage of self-questioning – signification (see 1.6) – which eventually leads to the shattering of one's prescribed heterosexual self and the onset of an identity crisis stage.

4.2.1 Playing with Girls

The dominant model of coming out is a story that usually starts in childhood and follows in a linear progression (Plummer, 1995; Savin-Williams & Cohen, 1996). For many gays and lesbians childhood is often seen as an unhappy time: there is often a strong sense of difference. Such a difference is often portrayed in the child's dislike of sports or other gruelling activities. But this characteristic cannot be defined as universal in terms of the state of being potentially gay: men with blatant effeminacy are stereotyped as gay in order to maintain the dominant image of straight men. In my study, Elakhe and Dez do not fit in with the social stereotypes expected of gay men. They never struggled with the adoption of masculinity and always formed peer associations with other boys at school. In comparison, however, the rest of the participants to various degrees expressed that they struggled to fit in. Babhuti, Fufu, K and Jacob experienced gender confusion for disliking conventionally defined male activities. Their difference provoked a sense of inferiority charged with a lack of cultural repertoire for the construction of alternative masculinities. Gender confusion is partly an issue of structural influence but also a product of a heterosexist discourse. It is the

101

effect of gender binarism (further illustrated in Chapter 5) that sets boys and girls apart by assigning them with separate behavioural traits. This separation is where my narrative analysis starts – 'playing with girls'.

Babhuti: While I was young (about the age of 8), I didn't understand my sexuality, or what's going on with me. But I used to play with girls. Whatever I was doing I was doing with girls, at a primary school level...I had male friends. But they were always, when we were together, talking about their girlfriends all the time. And I found out that I was not interested in having girlfriends. I've never had any interest in girls in terms of having a girlfriend...in the age of 13, [I noticed my same-sex attraction].[40] During primary school, I didn't know what was going on with me. My interests were just playing with girls...I felt the pressure from them (my male friends), because they would always ask me: 'why don't you approach a girl?' And then I didn't respond; they would just call me names: 'Maybe you are a moffie, you are stubborn.' And then I would just (be) angry and crying all the time, because of what they said to me. [They would ask me]: 'How can you not be involved with girls.' And all those challenges I met with them; it was frustrating me.

Me: Did the teachers help you at school?

Babhuti: No, because they didn't know what's going on with me. They see me that there is something wrong in me, but they've never even experienced anything [like what I was going through]. They didn't even support me in a way that: 'Don't worry about them, just ignore them.' There was no one saying that. It was just people laughing at me, calling me by names (e.g. moffie).

Me: Did you know anyone who was similar to you?

Babhuti: There was one, but he was pretending that he is not a gay person, the way he does things and the way he dresses, he was totally 'out' (very queer), more [obvious] than me. But it was very difficult to harass him, because he was older than me, he was just 'butch' and fighting with men when they harassed him. He was effeminate, but he had a strong personality, [whereas I would withdraw myself from a fight/crowd].

Jacob: [In primary school], I played with girls a lot. I really didn't think that that had anything to do with my past sexual identity. It's just that I like to do the less rough, not the sort of things boys did. And I had my space for girls: like, we play house, and I was always "daddy," which is fine, and, you know, we could do things like that. I was very much inside the house not outside, or being in the garden and fixing [things] with my father, you know that kind of thing, it is just like…dirty must go away!

Me: Did you feel you were being isolated because you were not fitting in?

Jacob: Initially, I just don't like doing this sort of [rough and dirty] things, but as I grow up, you get told things, like: 'No, you know, you should become a boy'. [I

---

[40] The contents in brackets are facts based on further questioning. Noticing that Bahbuti and Dez are not as fluent in English as the other respondents, their transcriptions have more bracketed contents to facilitate reading.

would say]: 'But I don't want to be like other boys!' [They would say]: '[you had to], because you are a boy'. That's where I started [to think]: 'OK, perhaps I should be like other boys, perhaps I should try harder.' But then I get isolated, because you know how kids are like. [They would tell me]: 'Oh, go and play with girls. That's fine, just go and do your things'. But [to me], it was like: I don't think it was such an issue, but I think as a child growing up, it was kind of an underlying thing, like: 'No, perhaps I should be doing this at all, perhaps I should not be different, or feeling this'.

Jacob: It was like: 'you know you don't understand, you've been told things [that, for example, boys are masculine] but you don't understand why'. And it gets more or more like that, I really got over it very quickly; it was just one of those things for me. It was just never an issue for me. I don't know, because you know, I cannot think of how I was different back then because what I know now, but the same time, I didn't feel exceptionally different, like 'Yes, I was isolated, because I just didn't do what those boys did'. I just dealt with it, OK; [I made a decision]: this is what I like doing, and I am gonna do it now and I did. It was mostly like in senior primary level till high school, where everything just shifted, because now I know about this gay thing.

K: I was very quiet at school. I used to read a lot, so since I was not anyone's favourite I was not getting anyone's attention in my view anyway, so I got into reading. I've always loved reading. That's why I was good at speech making and all that stuff. I always read...so that was sort of the childhood, and then, I think I was four, no, I was, well, OK, I've always been a bit feminine, I think even from a younger age. I used to have a huge afro. I used to look like a girl, and I was teased about it a lot, like the normal stereotypes, moffie, there is another one 'Talase'[41] in Xhosa, I don't actually know what it means. But I only got called those names probably mid or the middle of primary school, not like very early. And hence I didn't play with boys that much, I did play with boys for a while until an incident happened and then, I stayed with girls and play with girl for most of my high school, for most of my developmental stages, I guess, I would call it. But I mean not as much, I think, as far as I could remember, I was not overtly feminine. But I knew that I was just a bit different. I was too meticulous; I did not want to get dirty. I did not fancy some of the real boy stuff. You know, I was more reserved, I had my own set of values, you know, I have my own etiquette and decorum, the way of doing things that freaked everybody out. You know, coz I was a different child. I did not want mud on my hands; I would go and wash it, so stuff like that.

Me: Were you into sports?

K: No, I could never play sport, OK. There was no way, I was too clean to play sports, coz I am gonna get dirty, and I did not want that...in grade 6 and 7, I had guy friends all the way. They used to force me to play sports, and all those shit. And I became sexual at a very young age. I was very ashamed of being naked in front of other boys. I still am. I don't know why. I was very private about my body. And then they would, I remember at this time and stage, they wanted to see my willie (penis), and I was like: 'No!' And they were all like: 'dude, we've seen each other's willies, we haven't seen yours, to join our group or clique, you have to show us your willie.'

---

[41] Talase in Xhosa means a boy who is effeminate, which can be an indicator of being gay; but it is more of a gender connotation than of a sexual connotation.

And I was like: 'No!' So I remember they chased me to the soccer field, and they eventually grabbed me and held me down, put down my pants, and took a look...that was some rite of passage, whatever, to join their clique. But, I mean, I really enjoyed them. I didn't have desire to be friends with girls whatever.[42] I was just a normal boy. I think they could notice that I was a bit different, that I was a bit feminine. I was too meticulous. I was too neat.

The above narratives have depicted the issue of gender conformity in which all three actors struggled with the imposition of masculinity. Here, I do not intend to provide an essentialist account in explaining one's adoption of either masculinity or femininity. Instead, based on the participants' experience I stress the question of why individual gender performance (or 'performativity', see Butler, 1993: 12) seems to be predetermined before one's knowing of gender. Butler (1993, 1999) has defined gender as something one does rather than something one is (see also Salih, 2002: 10). It functions as a regulatory idiom that exists prior to the learning of gender categories. Butler (1999: 23) takes this argument further by suggesting that since the process of becoming a mandatory subject is gendered, so is our intelligence: the way we make indications to others is based on a gendered epistemology. Take for instance, how K was reluctant about being naked in front of other boys. This might not be because he was timid about physical exposure per se, but rather that his femininity had subliminally equated him to the ideological position of a girl as opposed to a boy. All participants were initially socialised to believe that somehow their biological sex would self-generate the coherent gender behaviour. However, the so-called spontaneous behaviour was rather achieved through 'encountering groups' or 'peer associations' whereby they facilitated and provided a 'script' for the learning of 'spontaneous' behaviour (see Gagnon & Simon, 2005: 13). This script is a product of group interaction endorsed by heterosexist discourse so that it perpetuates particular meanings/usage of the body (be that masculine or feminine). There is no causal/deterministic relationship between the physicality of the body and the social implication of that physicality. Their relationship is socially constructed to a mandate of hegemonic masculinity which is exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal, and violent (Donaldson, 1993; in Morrell, 1998: 608). This is the main reason the participants found the social embodiment of masculinity so coercive and inescapable - as soon as they failed to perform the prescribed masculine task, they all felt ostracised as if they had lost the 'substance' of their male body.

---

[42] It may seem confusing here that K played with girls most of the time at school, yet he did not want to have female friends. What he meant was the fact that he was initially isolated from boys because he was feminine, not because he did not like boys; which led him to associate with girls more often than what he would have wished.

According to Butler (1999), gender identity is not a performance prior to the existence of its performer, but 'a becoming' through unfailing performance. Once the individual failed to identify with the prescribed gender behaviour, his/her entire construction of self-concept collapsed. This explains where the participants' experience went 'wrong': for them to become socially coherent and consistent subjects, they needed to conform to gender norms unconditionally – in spite of what they did and where they were. The participants' identity formations were persistently arrested by an education system that is based on the dominance and compulsiveness of masculinity. For instance, both Jacob and K expressed their interest in reading which "is considered by the masculinist ideologies of working-class milieu as an activity for fairies or fags" (Eribon, 2004: 32). The working-class milieu seems to distinguish masculinity and femininity in terms of labour intensity and its systematic location. According to this terminology, the performative traits associated with a penchant for interior spaces, such as reading, cleaning, or knitting, are feminine; whereas those associated with a penchant to external spaces are masculine (see ibid). Perhaps only Jacob vaguely doubted the idea of doing 'the boy stuff' as being purely external-space-oriented. Although this form of self-questioning was no match for the rejection of Jacob's concurrent self-definition (his 'me') due to the power of peer association at school, it certainly showed that Jacob (as well as other individuals) was capable of initiating subversion from within.

Another theme reflected in this act is the consequence of insult. Eribon (2004: 56) points out that "the world of insults pre-existed gays and lesbians, and it takes hold of them even before they know what they are". As evidenced in the narratives, none of the informants knew anything about homosexuality as a child, nor did they fully understand the derogatory terms such as 'moffie' or 'talase'. These words were, in fact, literally used to address femininity rather than sexual orientation. So it was not a case where both 'the labelled' and 'the labelling' had given thoughts to the original meaning of the words associated with stigmas (Goffman, 1963: 5). It was rather that the reiteration of labelling/insults worked to shape the very being of the individual in question: "he was no longer the person he knew, but the one the others thought they knew, or one the others took to be this or that" (see Eribon, 2004: 15). In addition, insults functioned chiefly to affect the recipients' emotions. Their ability to role-take allowed them to memorise not only the response, but also the emotional effects of that response. Stryker (1987: 90) maintains that the affect of response and behaviour "are joined in a feedback loop such that actions are constructed in order to keep momentary feelings aligned with established sentiments". Along with this argument, Cooley (1902, in Denzin 1969: 923) has noted that upon the presentation of a self, "the person takes

on a sense of pleasure or displeasure based on his interpretations of the other's reactions". Insult (the aggressively unpleasant response) therefore works as a form of interpellation (Althusser, in Eribon, 2004: 57) to prevent the individual from assuring positive self-worth. Within this process, "the subject (a subjectivity) is subjected [to] the interpellation that [that] ideology (or language, according to Butler) throws its way" (ibid). The unpleasant response deteriorates one's sense of self-worth such that the individual is surrounded by incessant naming, thus learns to wear these names subconsciously.

Now the question is: if we ought to construct our identity based upon others' reaction to our behaviour, then are we really in control of the construction of our identity? Goffman (1963: 3) argues that once we receive an unexpected response, we learn to anticipate that response in a similar situation. Insult too is an anticipated response which works to dispossess the 'me'. The participants' subconsciousness therefore reads others' indications as "if someone could think girly of me, then in some way it must be true" (see Eribon, 2004: 15). As they kept anticipating this particular response in mind, they gradually transformed it into "a rigorously presented demand" (Goffman, 1963: 2). As seen in the narratives, while K, Babhuti, and Jacob were unaware of the responsive affect of their interests in girly activities, they had already learned to anticipate the response that other boys act toward girls and apply it to themselves. In which case as soon as they realised that this response wasn't what they wanted according to the 'essence' of the male body, they became isolated. Each participant's consciousness was therefore beleaguered by the incessant aggression of insult. Each one's self became a devaluating object – "an object that rests on affective-emotional criticisms" (Denzin, 1969: 923) – marked by hurt and inscribed by shame. Their identity development was 'malnourished' because their external agencies were unable to carry out necessary coping strategies for their socially 'incoherent' behaviour. As a result, participants' senses of self were haunted by gender norms, on the one hand. On the other hand, insults perpetuated their gender confusion.

4.2.2 Hide and Seek

Freud (1918, 1920) once suggested that gender confusion in childhood and early adolescence was inextricable with or consequential to the development of homosexuality, but he was then inconclusive as to whether same-sex attraction was an outcome of gender confusion. Perhaps for Freud the relationship between same-sex desire and gender identity is a chicken and egg problem, but from a symbolic interactionist perspective, it can be seen as the variation of a dialogue established between the mind and the body. Yet again, I do not align myself with an

essentialist approach, whether relevant or not; instead I try to argue that in any case the dialogue only becomes substantial to the construction of self-concept when meaning is conveyed through it. As mentioned in Chapter 1, same-sex practice was (is) present in 'fifty African societies' regardless of the acknowledgment of same-sex attraction in language (Murray, 1998: 267-8). But in modern African societies, because same-sex attraction is denounced or secondary to the heterosexuality, same-sex practice has remained discrete in dominant cultural ideologies. This phenomenon is revealed in participants' stories: three of them experienced same-sex intimacy and two of them even engaged in same-sex intercourse before they realised their same-sex attraction on a subjective level. And because the expression of same-sex attraction was not verbal either at school or at home, two participants became vulnerable to their own feelings.

> **Elakhe**: I remember this one day, we went to Themba and Phelelani's house, they're brothers, and we were playing 'hide and seek'. I decided to hide in the backroom with Phelelani, Themba's younger brother, and we got under the table, and I just reached over and kissed him. But not like the usual kiss that you do; say, with your parents and friends or family, but a full-on kiss, as you would kiss your boyfriend, you know. So I just kissed this boy.

> **Me**: How old were you?

> **Elakhe**: I was probably six or seven, I can't remember. I was very young. I didn't feel sexually attracted to Phelelani or anything. I was just curious about it. It was very mental; I didn't feel any hormonal compulsion, or at least, I don't recall feeling attracted to him. I just did it, because I was curious to see what kissing was about. Why I chose a boy? I don't know. I suppose it was a matter of opportunity, because then I only played with this group of four guys, you know. There was just no opportunity to meet girls, so I suppose that's why I decided to just do it. I didn't see anything wrong with just kissing a boy. Anyway, that night, I remember thinking about the kiss though: "Wow! That was quite cool," and "that was so much fun! It felt really good;" and I wanted to do it again, but I didn't want to do it with Phelelani, I wanted to do it with Themba. That one was premeditated, it was a matter of me going to their house, and then we were all at their house – the whole gang, and then I suggested we play 'hide and seek', and then I suggested that Themba and I hide together, it was completely premeditated, coz this time I knew exactly what I wanted to do. And ja, same thing: we were in the same backroom, this time I was with Themba, and we were sitting waiting to be found. And I just leaned over and kissed him, and we kissed each other. You know, that was the very next day! [laughs] So ja, that was my first 'homosexual' experience, I suppose".

> **K**: "I had a sexual encounter with one boy. I don't know if he still remembers it. But I remember those games we play when the sun goes down, those 'hide and seek'. I used to play 'hide and seek' in our street. And he would always hide with me. He was probably like three or four years older than me. But he used to hide with me, so like whenever we get an opportunity, everyone has looked for everyone, everyone has

been found, and we haven't been. I'll be like: "OK, dude, give up, nobody is gonna find us, let's just get out". He will be like: "No, let's stay". I will be like: "OK, cool." And imagine the insecure child who does not get attention, I was getting attention from this guy. I was six, or seven (he was like ten). He pulled my pants down; we had sex (anal sex). And it was not sour, funny enough, I enjoyed it. And then it happened repeatedly in that year before we moved to another house in another township. He had a single parent. His mom was a domestic worker, so he was always alone. So sometimes, he would sleep over at our house, and we would do it again. He always slept in my room. When we do it outside, I was like: 'this is happening.' But when it was gonna happen in my room, I was like: 'dude, No!' He would be like: 'Don't tell anyone'. And nobody knew. But I wonder if he still remembers, when I see him, he is always embarrassed when he greets me. I don't know coz now he knows that I am out. Most of my childhood friends they keep their distance, now that they know what is going on with me. That's how it is in the African cultures. This is totally unacceptable, it is hard for people to reconcile with you, once they realise that you swing in another way".

K: We moved to Motherwell, and I moved to another school, I was at grade 3 or grade 4. And this (sexual encounter) happened again with another boy, actually two other boys whom I was friends with. This boy stays opposite our house. This time I was becoming effeminate. I was exhibiting feminine behaviour...I still played with boys, and played boys' stuff. But I also played with girls. You know, [I gain] the benefit of two extremes. So this happened again, in our house, we used to stay with our grandma; she had gone to New Brighton, our main house for a funeral. So it was just the kids, and my brother was at soccer practice something like that. But I was alone at the house, you know, so this happened again. It happened only once, and I never spoke about it, even with the first guy, we never spoke about it. He would sleep over [at] my house, and we would have sex, and in the morning we don't speak about it.

It has been argued (see Gagnon & Simon, 2005: 13), that without a sexual script nothing sexual is likely to happen. The above narratives, however, seem to demonstrate the opposite: without the obvious elements of a sexual script that names the actors, plots their behaviour, or defines the scene as homosexual, Elakhe kissed two boys at the age of 6/7, and K even engaged in anal sex at the same age. Gagnon and Simon define 'sexual script' as "a routinised form comprised of a large set of gestures, both verbal and nonverbal, which correspond to the sequence of petting behaviour amongst adolescents and adults and the conventional styles establishing sexual willingness'" (ibid: 14). This is true on a structural level. But they have also clarified that sex happens when both the external and internal dimensions of a sexual script are mutually accessed by the actors (ibid). If one reviews K's narrative, the external dimension of their sexual script was unfilled in language, on the one hand. On the other hand, they were too young to assess the internal motivation of their interaction. Perhaps their mutual curiosity and the influence of the slightly older boy as an instructor resulted in sexual exploration. But there is still a peculiarity to the exploration

because their same-sex intercourse operated on a regular basis in the absence of a sexual script. It was unclear how the sexual act affected the participants from within. Perhaps one can argue that psychologically the homoerotic events were just an enjoyment for the actors: they were not yet sufficiently mature to fully comprehend the emotional fulfilment of their interaction, nor were they mature enough to receive the emotional rewards of their interaction. Nevertheless, Gagnon and Simon (2005: 26) also note that in some cases children are provided with "responses that are a function of adult sexual scripts, without providing the actual scripts". This may explain the participants' kissing event as imitative of what they saw on TV or what their parents did, irrespective of the actors' biological sex. But it is still impossible to trace the motivation of K's regular same-sex intercourse because the mediums (i.e. significant/generalised other) of homosexuality were sparse, therefore the meaning of the intercourse could not be defined. In any case, the participants could only learn to comprehend their 'sexual' behaviour based upon the complex judgements made by adults about their behaviour. Perhaps I can only conclude that, although it is possible that some part of the adult definition of their activities may be realised later in life, the adult meaning regarding their activities can be fragmentary or ill-formed at the time of the original act.

4.2.3   *Knocks on My Door*

Based on his research, Kinsey (1948) proposed that most homosexual contacts between men in their early adolescence (age 11-13) are more like pre-pubertal play in their motives (in Gagnon & Simon, 2005: 52). Their occurrence is mostly situational: "it can be the transient response to opportunity where there is arousal in private situations, or it can have more emotional depth between an admired older boy and a follower" (ibid). With respect to the former, situational homosexuality is less likely to yield meaning as constitutive of a group identity. With respect to the latter, homosexual behaviour has the potential to convey meanings "depending on the social location and the prior social and sexual experiences of the actors" (ibid). The previous narratives do not fall into either category because the participants were too young (under the age of 10) to have acknowledged their sexuality. In contrast to Elakhe and K, Babhuti recognised his same-sex feelings at a relatively younger age, and the subsequent homosexual experience manifested in the form of role-play (i.e. the inserter and the receiver), which began to distinguish between homosexuality as an act and homosexuality as an orientation.

> **Babhuti**: There was a game ('hide and seek') that we were playing in the evening (age 11/12). At that time, we would just hide ourselves somewhere, and that's where

we started having sex. And my interest was in men.[43] And I would sleep with them, although they did not want to be identified as 'just sleeping with other men.' And we would just know that we are playing, because we are kids. And then that time, I hide myself as well, and they hide themselves as well. And then I left them, that age I went to high school, I get to high school, then I was living in a boarding school. In that boarding school, I was just having difficulties. That time, in the high school, there were girls and boys, but the dormitory was separated. And then that time, that's where I got the difficulties, because men would come into my dormitory and knock (on my door) in the evening while they were drunk. [They would say]: "Come, I lost my key, can I sleep with you?" When we slept, that's where we started having sex. It's penetration, and also oral. Because they were [more] mature than me, they've already experienced sex. We did the penetration that time. They were telling each other. Each and every time, during the weekend, I would just get knocked [on my door] in the dormitory, and people wanted to sleep with me.

Me: Did you have a choice not to sleep with them?

Babhuti: No, it was not a matter of choice in a way, because I was just also in need. But I just felt scared to talk to a man, because I know I've got this interest in men. They way they were coming to me. They had girlfriends already, but most of the time, they were spending time with me. Three or four guys would come to me, but different guys (at different time). (They would just say): "I want to talk to you. I want to sit with you. I want to be with you today." And it's where we would be like just having sex.

Me: How did they find out about you?

Babhuti: I didn't know, because I was not that person that would just go out to clubs. Because I start socialising in an elder age while I was in Cape Town, that time I was just focusing on change, and I was a Christian that time. I never even started dreaming (about sex with women), but in spite of the sex, we were doing the sex. If there is man who came and sleep with me, and then at night I would just have that one coming over, and then the sex starts.

Me: How did they know that you would want to have sex with them?

Babhuti: I didn't know, maybe because the way they look at the way I walk? Or, there was something they were noticing. Because I never even know what makes them come to me, why they come to knock (on my door). Is it the way I dress? But I was not that person who was effeminate. Because I was trying to be like other people, I didn't know why. Because some of them just asked me, do you have a girlfriend, I don't see your girlfriend around you. Maybe that's one of the things that make them [want to have sex with me].

Me: So they just came to you and ask you: "Can I sleep with you?"

Babhuti: Yes, and this thing happening inside of them, because they would not come when they were not drunk, but when they are drunk.

---

[43] By 'men' Babhuti meant the boys who were older than him at school.

Me: Only when they were drunk?

Babhuti: It's what they already planned on their mind, during the day. Because you cannot just come to the person, while you were drunk, what makes you think (that) I must come to this person. That's just an excuse.

Me: Anyway, but how did you feel about it?

Babhuti: I slept with them, because I was lonely at that time, and so that I wouldn't feel like that I'm lonely [afterwards]. And I slept with them, because it's fine, I don't have a problem. And I also need security in the committee of the dormitory. Also because they are coming from this committee, but they are living in the dormitory, because it is a boarding school; at least I can just go out with them, or maybe if I need to go to town. They will give me the necessary protection at school [or in town].

It is important to recognise that, in this particular story, Babhuti lived under apartheid where homosexual prejudice was brutal: once caught severe punishments awaited. The apartheid government with its notorious pursuit of Christian nationalism demonised homosexuality in both law and public culture. Consecutively, the pedagogy of sex coupled with the Christian doctrine merely placed individual sexual interests solely on people of the 'opposite' sex; whereas anything homosexual had to remain discreet. In consequence, Babhuti's homoerotic experience operated in such a dramatic manner that, together with peer-pressure, his sexual interest was completely exploited. He was too afraid to approach any boy for intimacy; because firstly, being gay was outlawed, and secondly he did not know anyone of his own kind; and as a result, the lack of response to his homoerotic feelings built tremendous insecurity within him. Given the prohibition of homosexuality, there was no external agency that could possibly pacify his needs, nor was any teacher willing to help him or to stand up for him when he was in trouble.

There was also the issue of bisexuality revealed in Babhuti's same-sex relations. It is likely for the reader to perceive Babhuti's sexual partners as bisexual since they were heterosexually involved. This assertion, however, needs to be clarified because multiple-sexual relations tend to manifest the exercise of power, founded upon the masculinist discourse, which seeks to be sustained in heterosexual relations. A bisexual can be someone whose sexual preference is yet to be defined (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991: 2-3). And perhaps a bisexual is ideally someone who achieves equal sexual gratification from both sexes (ibid). Therefore I wanted to ask why Babhuti's sexual partners chose to maintain their same-sex relations if they were not in need of gay sex specifically. I am not trying to label these boys gay, but one ought to realise that, as discussed in Chapter 2, sexual relations in

contemporary Africa are still dominated by masculinity. The so-called masculine partner in any kind of sexual relation is led "to focus their attention on themselves, to decipher, recognise, and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire, bringing into play between themselves and themselves a certain relationship that allows them to discover, in desire, the truth of their being, be it natural or fallen" (Foucault, 1985: 5). As a result, their sexual relations functioned thoroughly as a masculinist economy, in which power was exercised by the intrusive partner of intercourse. Rankhotha (1998: 38) has adapted the Turkish model of masculinities to the South African context in his research, whereby he specifies a same-sex relationship within which only the passive partner (the penetrated) gets the label of gay, as an insult. According to Brice (in Hattingh, 2005), Babhuti's femininity provokes images of inferiority. Thus "to insult homosexuality for being feminine is based not only on the social inferiority of women but also the fact that femininity is perhaps the only method in language to interiorise a man whose wish is to be penetrated like a woman" (Eribon, 2004: 65).

As the story shows, Babhuti never spoke of his gayness publicly, nor was he driven to approach any boy; it was only that, as Babhuti suspected, those boys took his femininity as a sign of his passive sexual wants. For them, Babhuti was a girlfriend in a man's body. This is where the actors' relationship fits into the broader picture of sexual binarism – it is not that male and female bodies are necessarily or exclusively compatible with each other but rather that masculinity and femininity are socially constructed to be compatible. Therefore "masculine domination can be understood as the domination of a masculine principle over a feminine principle, and thus a heterosexual man over a homosexual one, to the extent that homosexuality is filed under femininity in the unconscious of our societies" (ibid: 80). In this manner, homosexual activity conveyed different meanings to Babhuti and his sexual partners, although none of them had overtly expressed their sexual preferences be they for a feminine boy or a masculine girl or anything else. Their performance together carried out a pernicious feature of sexual binarism – only opposites attract. The upcoming narratives then proceed from this point.

4.2.4   Boy Crush

I have rejected the essentialist account on 'natural sexuality' because it views sexuality as pre-dispositional, an instinct, that the acquisition of sexual and reproductive behaviours happens without socialisation.[44] The case studies on feral children (Hirst & Woolley, 1982)

---

[44] It is also shown that higher primates have to learn how to copulate and specific experiences during development are needed to elicit their common sexual and reproductive behaviours. "Among mammals, cats,

have indicated that humans do not know how to engage in sex unless they are socialised (especially with regard to the development of intelligence and language acquisition) into appropriate sexual roles. But I am also aware that there are pre-dispositions which require learning and experience to culminate in recognisable and standard forms of sexual behaviour. A pre-disposition might not be for a particular form of sexual behaviour but for seeking certain experiences and generating behaviour from these. Research on feral children has noted that these children displayed varying degrees of sexual frustration during and after puberty yet only lacked the means to externalise it. [45] Although this account does not suffice to conclude same-sex drive as pre-dispositional, it potentially interrogates the limitation of conventional sexual education.

The reason that one's self-realisation of heterosexual desire/preference is congruent with the socialisation process is due to a reproduction centred regime, whereby a social system (e.g. capitalism) seeks to maintain its normative state (Ober, 1970; Marcuse, 2001). The heterosexual self is not pre-given, but a historical product that has taken certain emotional needs, biological drives and reproductive capacity for granted. As Stryker (1987: 91) argues, self is not a passive product of structured influence, it can also guide and organise behaviour when emotional responses from necessary oppositions to anticipated actions. Thus the first step of constructing the homosexual self is the self-awareness of the various emotions attached to same-sex feelings and desire. The seeds of the participants' homosexual selves were sown in the tacit moments of boy crushes.

> **Jacob**: The earliest memory I have is when I was like 7. I watched a movie, and then there was a very pretty boy, and I was like: "Wow! He is pretty." You kinda think of the kind of idea: you know, like mommy and daddy are together, like, I can be together with him, like mommy and daddy are, you know, that kind of thing. And I did not really think about it too much, it was, like, a kind of idea [that] maybe it is just what other boys are feeling, so there is nothing wrong with it. Then from there, you know, like, I was comfortable with dolls and stuff, and I didn't see anything wrong with it, but I was only being told: "No, boys don't do this! Don't do the doll." And eventually my doll was taken away from me. And I was very sad, but I got over it. Then psychologically, I don't think about it, it's never been, like, a conscious awareness after all. This has always been going above...At school I just looked at

elephant seals, guinea pigs, mice, and rats demonstrate experience dependent improvement in reproductive performances" (Woodson, 2002: 71).

[45] The prominent case studies of feral children (e.g. Genie, Victor, and Itard) have shown that they were to various degrees disturbed by the onset of puberty. In the case study of Genie, for instance, it is reported that she masturbated increasingly (Hirst & Woolley, 1982: 58). Psychoanalysis has also demonstrated that children acquire sexual beliefs and practices remarkably early; thereby none of these feral children can be viewed as a sexual tabula rasa (ibid). In the case of Victor, "he was attracted to girls, but he had no idea of what to do with them" (ibid). Therefore, theses case studies support "the thesis that human sexual practices and identities must be learned and are not naturally 'given'" (ibid).

them (boys), I was like: "Wow! He is pretty." It was not all guys. I think, because you look at all people the way you look at people, and then you have people who you kinda think that maybe you might [just be] attracted to them, because they are just pretty looking. It was more of a subconscious thing, and like, I remember about, God! I would tell myself: "No, no, no, no! You are just appreciating beauty where you see it." I didn't look at girls on the same pitch, like you know, this is the one...there was never that, that conquest to kinda find a girlfriend and be with the girlfriend forever and ever.

Elakhe: Um, when we first moved to East London I was 12 years old. That was when I had my first crush. It was on Graeme Fuhr. Wow! Graeme Fuhr. This was in primary school, I was 12. He was just awesome. He was just a really nice guy. We used to hang out together and play. I remember the day I met him, um, I was waiting to get picked up from school, and for some reason, my grandparents were late, so he offered - he lived across the road from school - so he was like: "Why don't you come to my house, and wait there?" I was like: "OK!" So I go to his house, and we have sandwiches and just hang out, and just talk. Whatever! Then my grandparents came to pick me up. That was the first day I met Graeme Fuhr...Before then, it [my friendship with boys] was a completely platonic thing. Coz I was a kid. It was only when I hit 12-years old, then I just got this *crush* on Graeme. We all [my friends and I] became prefects, so we all went on this leadership camp. And, wow: group showers! That was the first most awkward thing: "Oh, my word! I am having a shower with Graeme Fuhr!" It was just, little things like that: We are playing volleyball, and he gets hot. He takes off, like, his T-shirt, and carries on playing. And I am like: "Oh, my word! He is, like, half naked in front of me!" I had all these really sexual feelings, for the first time, for this boy. I never heard anyone calling me a queer, or say "fag", or say "moffie", or whatever; but like, I just knew that: "this is something I have to keep secret, I couldn't tell anybody about these feelings, coz it is *weird*."

Elakhe: A girl friend at the age of 12 is like: "We just hold hands, or we share lunch and *maybe* see a movie together." You know, that's a girlfriend at 12, but they [everyone else at school] are all doing that kinda thing: writing each other letters: like, girls writing letters, and they would decorate them, and put glitter on them, send them to guys... You know? And, you know, it was that time, you know? And so now, I was... I didn't have a girl, so my friends [would] ask me: "So, Elakhe, who do *you* like?" I'm like: "I'm expected to have a girlfriend, or a girl that I'm interested in?" And there is just no one, you know what I mean? In my head, [I keep thinking]: "Graeme, Graeme, that's who I like." Then, high school happens. [There were] so many, so many [boys], yoh! Eddie McCormick. He just looked...Wow! Even right now, as I think of him, in my memory he's just so perfect, like, he's just perfect, and that's impossible, I know, he couldn't have been perfect, but he was just... I was very boy-mad! And I had these insane feelings and desires. And I just couldn't express them! I couldn't say them to anyone, share them with anyone, it was completely secret, you know? I thought I was going insane. Eddie McCormick, the Beresford twins: two of them! Both beautiful, and they looked identical, it's like... it was insane! It was like, "queer-heaven" - anyway, ja, yoh! That was high school.

K: It would be, like, this one boy, my God! The biggest crush was Brian. He came in grade 11. But, I mean, I was too sacred, it was just my own secret crush in my mind, in my own fantasy, in my own world. I wanted to be close to him. I used to actually

follow him around. I used to look at his ass all the time. This is like the biggest, this is God intervening! He came in grade 11. I moved to the Xhosa first language [class] in Grade 10. So I was tasked to teach him, because he came from another school, and he didn't do any Xhosa. So he was gonna do Xhosa first language in Grade 11 and continue to matric. I was supposed to help him and to tutor him. His first language was Xhosa, but he had grown up in multi-racial schools, and never did any Xhosa. So he had to start in Grade 11 from scratch, you know. So I had this big task, coz I was the top student. He was a basketball player, and he was the provincial something...He was 'the man' and obviously the lady's man. Every single girl was, like, dying to get close to him. I had to walk with him all the time. After school we had to go to the library together. I was like: 'God, you just love me, come on.' He was just friendly, he was touchy. You know those guys who are very affectionate, always gives you a hug. I was like: 'Oh, my God! You have no idea what you are doing to me.' I actually wanted to tell him that on Facebook, but anyway. I am planning on doing that.

Having crushes on people of the same-sex is a counter attack to the notion of compulsory heterosexuality – the assumption that biology excludes a naturalised explanation of homosexuality and limits humans to only heterosexual attraction (Rich, 1980). Although both heterosexuality and homosexuality are social constructs (see 1.3), the social construction of sexuality is by no means a detachment from the erotic response of the body, which is the indicator of one's sexual preference. Boy crushes are without doubt a form of erotic response. According to Kinsey's research (1948: 165), individuals react sexually to a variety of objects (i.e. they do not have to be human). Approximately 13.6% of his male participants reported having major erotic responses from seeing male bodies or male genitals. The above narratives have epitomised Kinsey's assertion: Jacob had romantic fantasies about a man he had seen on TV at the age of 7; Elakhe felt very aroused at seeing naked male bodies in group showers at the age of 12; and K almost prayed that his 'private' student/classmate Brian could be his lover at the age of 16. Unfortunately, the only problem was that none of them ever externalised or materialised their crushes. Their closeted feelings represented a form of silence which entailed that the participants' homosexual selves were established around secrecy, concealment and anxiety. Their active suppression of same-sex desire underwent a psychological process of 'melancholia' (Frued, 1923: 713). Freud describes melancholia as the mourning of an imagined loss whereby one's desired yet unattainable objects are taken into the internal and preserved in the ego through introjection. According to this assumption, melancholia can be seen as the foundation of the gay closet: while the individual substitutes his impermissible object-cathxis (desire) for an identification with that object (Salih, 2002: 54), he develops sexual fantasies as a prerequisite for letting the desired object go.

Apart from the psychoanalytical explanation of same-sex crushes, one ought to realise that "with the prevailing symbolic manifesto, the loss of same-sex desire is based upon

societal approval or disapproval" (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992: 49). When social measures of one's homosexuality are limited by peer association and sexual stigmas; they spell the continuation of melancholia, thereby the homosexual reaches a stage of identity crisis. All participants in this act experienced the spiralling effects of an identity crisis, which includes the loss of self-image, of the ability to cope with…, and of the approval of significant others (Puryear, 1979; in ibid). Thus the preliminary development of the homosexual self is hindered by the system impossibility of speaking about same-sex feelings and desire. Once the speech is practically forbidden, its subsequent interaction becomes a mirage. However, the effects of loss on individuals are not always negative. Medora and Chesser (1980, in ibid: 48) point out that crisis can also anticipate hope and gain. The homosexual is capable of generating coping strategies at the absence of external agencies or societal approval although they usually do not lead to the self-acceptance of homosexuality. For example, Jacob and Elakhe transformed their boy crushes into an appreciation of beauty. Perhaps I can safely conclude that unlike the construction of the heterosexual self, the construction of the homosexual self is based on the lack of various interpretive and interactive procedures whereby meanings of same-sex feelings can be organised into identifiable categories. Although there are categories developed within the gay subculture, they merely work to specify either one's sexual position (i.e. bottom or top) or one's physicality (i.e. hunk, twink, bear, etc.).

4.2.5 The Strange Arrangement

The previous section questioned the nature of interaction: we do not interact as if we are free to interact; instead we interact by submitting to a heterosexist discourse so that "we are stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting its submission" (Eribon, 2004: 57). Notably, by submission, we simultaneously perpetuate the discourse. And by interacting within the discourse, we exclude the unsayable. The historically accumulated thinkable shapes and develops our logic of interaction which, from a symbolic interactionist account, forms the basis for group interaction. This recycling process becomes a set of structural "including-systems" (Stryker, 1987: 91), and by revolving around the friction between the thinkable and the unthinkable they expand their scope for the creation of new roles and subjective positions. If one of the outcomes of interaction is to create roles in order to define a particular relationship, then it is important to see how homosexual interaction works to create roles. Within the previous acts, homosexual interaction operated without a sexual script. As a result, even if the actors went all the way to anal sex, very little meaning was

conveyed through their interaction. In this particular section, however, actors achieved a certain degree of emotional maturity by which they were able to read each other's feelings in depth. Although the actors did not characterise themselves as lovers to each other, their same-sex relationship was tacitly recognised by themselves.

Fufu: It was my birthday, actually. I was still in grade 7. June 5th, it was a Thursday, I remember. I went to town with Mother to get cake, and my mother dropped me off at a friend's place and I had to walk back home. When I was walking home, this guy was sitting there with…this bunch of boys. Just sitting there in this corner; just sitting there, just chatting; and then he said something to me about the cake, because he had seen me and my mother in the shop buying the cake. So he said he was gonna come over for the cake. And then it was Friday, [and] he came over, I [had] just come out of band practice, and I had…this chunk of notes to learn. After I walked out of the band…We kissed outside. But it took a while, because he kept walking me, and I walked him and he walked me, and we eventually kissed. That's all really good, after the evening I went home. Usually on Friday nights I will stay up until late [and] watch movies, but that evening I just went to bed to sleep, because I didn't want anything to mess it up (still thinking about the kiss).

Me: Why did you kiss him?

Fufu: I didn't kiss him, he kissed me, OK! But it was one of those: 'Get yourself close enough to me so I can kiss you' (situations). I could read from his body language though, he wanted to do something, so all I had to do was just…sit next to him, and he just came in. But it was well thought of, it was very much planned. I still see him, although I hate him at the moment. We are still friends, we pretend to be friends. It was quite fun, it was not a relationship, you know what I mean? There was never: 'I love you, I love you too'. But it was just this *strange arrangement* where we would find time for each other. He'd come over to my place, or he'd ask me to go over to his place, then we just chill. We talk about random stuff and then we kiss, and then we stop it.

Fufu: It ('the strange arrangement') went on and on. He used to come in December and June for the holidays, so every time I would pray that he comes for the holidays, because he went to school in PE (Port Elizabeth) and his mother lived in King Williams Town. So I had to pray he would come back for the holiday so we can get this arrangement going, until high school, grade 9 and 10. Then that's when he started dissipating because they moved. And then, but I still see him, it is not the same. It's one of those: we dating, but because boys and boys don't do such thing – we had our *strange arrangement* – where we just meet and then we talk and then we kiss. I know it's not just a relationship, because I used to play with boys actually for a long time in my life. So every time me and the rest of the boys go and play somewhere, [and] if he is there and if there is one boy that seems to be very close to me, I could see that he would get jealous; he would want to go, and stop playing. He would be put off. [He was] kind of jealous, because I would be closer to a boy, and because he wasn't sure what was going on between me and the boy. He wouldn't be sure, because you know we are bunch friends of boys, but because he and I kiss, he would wonder if I kiss the rest. So, I could see it, and then, even in our conversation, it would crop up: you like

so and so. [I said]: 'No, I don't'. [He would say]: 'Yes, you do!' I am like: 'No I don't!'

Fufu: ['the strange arrangement'] is all I had, just this kissing situation where you get stuck in it and it goes on for a long time until...because with this one, which is the high school arrangement, it took me coming here (to Rhodes University) for it to end. We meet we kiss, everywhere we are, if we find a place we kiss, and at that time, you should think that people should know who they are, and should express whether they like you or not, but we never did any of that. We never even exchanged numbers, and we both had cell phones. We'd never call each other to meet. We just bumped into each other. He says: 'Ok, listen, I am gonna come over to your place'. I am like: 'Sure'. Then we get there, we talk and then we kiss. And the worst thing was that he started dating girls, and I knew all the girls because they were my friends. And it never actually fazed me, you know what I mean. Girls talked about him, but I'd [be] like: 'OK.' But in my mind, I am trying to make sense of it, because there was one girl, she was close with him. He goes to see her at 6 o'clock on Friday, and then at about 8pm, he would be at my place. My parents are pretty chilled they don't mind my friends coming over later in the evening, so he kinda passed by at 8pm. So when I listen to the girl's story, I'll think: 'Oh, he went to see you at 6 to 8 and then he came to see me the rest of the night'. I am like: 'Ok!' Wow! I never got to a point where I was like: 'Dude, what's going on?' Because there was no communication that we were dating, or we love each other. No, we just had this arrangement.

Me: Did you feel like you were falling for him?

Fufu: I missed him (when he wasn't there). He'd come on Wednesdays and Fridays, and if he didn't pitch I'd miss him. And if I didn't see him during the day, not seeing him or speak to him, but see him just see him go pass. I missed him. I'd never say I loved him.

Me: Did you ever feel jealous about him seeing other girls?

Fufu: I do, but it's very controlled. That's how I am. I love easily and I hate easily, and there is nothing in-between. So when I see him with the girl, I just switched off. I just gave him this: 'Hi, how are you?' Then I move on. And I can see he is very uncomfortable with that, because he does not know what I am thinking. I came up to him just to say 'hi' in a friendly manner, and didn't say anything else. And I don't even put across threats like: 'I am gonna expose you'. No, it's very OK, it's like: 'Do your thing; I'll catch up with you later'. That's how I am. That's what I choose to do in a situation like that. I'd say I was jealous, because even going up to him, say 'Hi' to him, just finding out what he is doing, does something to me.

Fufu: I went through a phase, because I thought it frustrated me. Especially, you know grade 10, that's when most people get involved. Knowing high school, everyone's (girl) got a boyfriend, and I wanted one actually. I wanted one, and funny enough I didn't have someone in mind, knowing you would have a crush on someone. I never had a crush on anyone. I just wanted a boyfriend. I wanted to tell the stories that the girls told about 'how he called them, and she SMSed him'. You know what I mean? I wanted to have such stories as well, and that wasn't happening. And the reason why it wasn't happening was because I was a boy. So I was sort of thinking:

'OK, what's wrong with me?' I went reading instead. I used to go to the library, go to the homosexuality section and sit there, try to read up. And I realised that there was nothing wrong with it. It was OK to go through that, and that's how I have been ever since. I was lonely, I still am. I still feel that way.

In this narrative, actors displayed a variety of emotional responses with regard to their strange arrangement. Kinsey's (1948: 165) research on sexual relations has promoted the idea that the "physiological mechanism of any emotional response (i.e. anger, fright, jealousy) may be the basic mechanism of sexual response". This is typically reflected in this narrative. Fufu established a deep emotional attachment to his strange arrangement in both primary school and high school: he felt jealous of his partner's girlfriend and would long for the partner when he had left town. Fufu's partners appeared as 'friends' in his external world, but they were 'lover' figures in his psyche. He did not have any boy crush, partly because he was bonded to 'the strange arrangement', which he nevertheless denied as a form of relationship. And however frustrating this contradiction might be, Fufu was still afraid to cross the boundaries of heteronormativity. Consequently, 'the strange arrangement' seems to designate a closeted same-sex relationship: for maintaining the actors' previously acquired gender roles and social networks, they disengaged themselves from publicly exposing their same-sex intimacy which systematically compromised the meaning production of not only their homosexual behaviour but also everyone else's. As Butler (1999: 22) points out, "individual identity is understood sociologically in terms of an agency that claims ontological priority to the various roles and functions through which it assumes social visibility and meaning". It is the social invisibility of 'the strange arrangement' which had primarily precluded the creation of the 'boyfriend' role. In other words, the homosexual self is only achieved when its external dimension and internal dimension are met, and visualised in the social successively. Otherwise, as seen in the story, inasmuch as Fufu wanted a boyfriend in high school, his interaction with other boys had excluded the idea itself as the unthinkable.

Moreover, although there were a variety of emotions involved in both arrangements, there was no significant communication between the actors about their emotions. This characteristic appears similar to that of the *Knocks on My Door* (4.2.3), in which case Fufu and his 'lovers' are also the victims of the post-apartheid masculinist discourse. Morrell (1998) has argued that the dominant black masculinity in contemporary South Africa is a reflection of 'hegemonic masculinity'. It is a set of 'urgings' which require men to be determined, strong, and competitive in any social circumstances. Men are discouraged from developing any personality traits that are deemed 'vulnerable' (see Hearn, 1987: 97). They

are compelled to identify with particular behaviour traits out of their need for recognition of others. This is not the type of 'traditional' masculinity by which black men identify themselves - based on their problem-solving or decision-making status in their own households or communities. Instead men are lived 'masculinities', so that their 'choice' and their interrelations are shaped by gender practice which, in addition, embodies the legitimacy of patriarchy, which in turn guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (see Miescher et al, 1997: 21; Connell, 1995: 77). As portrayed in this narrative, although Fufu understood himself as more feminine than the average boy, according to gender convention, he was simultaneously urged to act like a man when confronting his 'lover's' girlfriend – in any case, he should not be competing with a woman because he is a man. Hegemonic masculinity creates hierarchical power relations within the male group (ibid). The fact that the 'lover' confronted Fufu for displaying attention to other boys was to reaffirm his position within their strange arrangement. The actors' sense of self, and their interaction, persisted in contradiction to each other. Their strange arrangement was the result of a masculinist discourse that systematically limited the materialisation/externalisation of personal feelings, by the distorted and self-destructive way that they perceived and related to each other, and by a generalized self-hate that caused them to feel comfortable only when they were functioning well in harness (see Clatterbaugh, 1992: 183).

4.2.6 *Trying out Girlfriends*

According to Fufu's interview, he was the only self-identified gay man at school, hence unable to reach out to other gays and lesbians. Indeed, the lack of a homosexual network at school became constitutive of Fufu's homosexual identity. His experience exemplifies Butler's argument that homosexuality emerges as a repudiated identity lost in its own interaction (see Eribon, 2004: 39). One of the major difficulties in coming out is how to elevate homosexuality from a repudiated form to an anneal form (bringing to a desired consistency). Gay people usually go through different phases in order to (re)claim their homosexuality, and usually a heterosexual relationship is a steady course for many.[46] In my study, Elakhe and Jacob engaged in straight relationships at both school and university. Their experiences fulfilled the characteristics of compulsory heterosexuality, in which they struggled to separate their actually experienced desire from their coercion towards heterosexuality. Since heterosexuality is integral to the way a society is organised, it becomes

---

[46] Two thirds of gay men reported in various studies that they had engaged in heterosexual relationships before they came out of the closet (see Savin-williams & Cohen, 1996: 172).

a 'naturalised' learned behaviour. This assumption stems from the questions of whether or not one could be gay, and what agency one has over his/her choices and desires.

Elakhe: I wasn't very happy, I was still stuck on that: "I am going to get married to a girl and have kids and everything," trajectory and in fact I got involved in a relationship that year. [It was] Thando. Thando and I had been friends since primary school, but not close enough for her to know that I was queer. [Thando was secretly in love with Elakhe for a long time, and she was also upset about the fact that Elakhe did not pick up on any signs of her attraction to him. Elakhe, on the other hand, was rather perplexed about Thando's weird attitude to him. After a couple of arguments with Elakhe, Thando eventually wrote Elakhe a letter to explain her feelings about him.]

Elakhe: The next day, she came to me with a letter; and we went to sit on a bench under this tree; and in the letter she says she's sorry that she is always upset with me, etc. etc; but the thing is, she has been in love with me since forever, and she just pretended that she didn't feel anything, coz I was completely indifferent. She was just frustrated at how indifferent I was, you know? I was like: "Wow! [shocked]," Then I saw this is as a perfect opportunity: I had decided that I was going to be straight, so maybe there was something in this. And I liked her; we've been friends forever; this is perfect, you know? So I decided to date her.

Elakhe: I had been dating her for a few months; mind you, we had been separated from each other over the December holidays; but I still hadn't kissed her. At that time in high school, I was 17 and in Matric. And so her girlfriends decided it was time to intervene. They came to me and they were like: "Elakhe, this is an intervention. You have been seeing her for months, and you still haven't kissed her!" I was like: "What? How did you know that?" [They said]: "Because we are her friends. This is ridiculous! You're gonna have to kiss her; like soon…very soon." In my mind, I was like: "Oh, my word! Of course; because she is my girlfriend, I am supposed to *want* to kiss her!" It hadn't crossed my mind at all. So I had to do it. I found her sitting in the Prefect's room. I just kissed her. It was very mechanical, it was, like, completely unromantic. I just did it. Eventually, she wanted to break up with me on our Matric Dance night; we had been together for about a year and half; and reason being that she just didn't feel like I wanted her as much as she wanted me. She was right, she was spot on. But she also thought that I was probably cheating on her because I was just as friendly with her, as I was with other girls. And she didn't like that at all: I had so many girls' phone numbers…She was hurt. It really bothered me that I'd hurt her, I wanted to make it work for her sake; as well as for mine, because I didn't want to be 'gay', you know? So I asked her to take me back. When she did break up with me, though, it wasn't like: "Oh, no, I've lost the love of my life;" it was just: "Ok, what am I gonna do? The plan is not working" Don't get me wrong, I wouldn't characterise it as a well thought-out 'plan'; I just needed to figure out how to be straight. Only now, in retrospect, I see that it was a plan, but at that time it wasn't planned. I had decided that I wasn't gonna be a gay, I was gonna marry a woman, have children, and that would be enough, and I would be happy. It was a compromise.

Jacob: I ask myself: 'why don't I have a girlfriend, why am I not like this, why am I not like the rest of [the] people?' And it was like a feeling like: 'Oh, shit, I need to behave in a certain way now'. You know? Because this is what everyone is doing, but

there was never that space for me. And it was only, like, February of year 10 - that's when [I started seeing] my first girlfriend; well, first serious girlfriend, because I had a girlfriend - lasted a week, because we just did not do things, you know? My first girlfriend, when I was 16: it wasn't a [relationship per se], like, I can't quite explain it, and perhaps [that's because] I didn't have prior experience of it - and I didn't have post experience of it either. That [relationship] was beyond that physical attraction to women, it was just like a close friend, [although] it was not just like a close friend who was my comfort dog: I loved her, and we were together for about 5 or 6 months. Hum, that year we had this enormous fight, and then we broke up.

Jacob: At that stage, it was just that...I felt like this is the way it was supposed to be, you know, and this is the type of person I want to be with. And it was not [that] I was kinda pushed into this by what people were telling me, or what I was experiencing around me, it was more of just: "this is a person, and this is who I like, and now we are together as a couple, and we were good together when things were good; when things are bad, we were [are] just not good together." That's why we broke up. And then, like, for that year and half, um, no: two and half years; there wasn't anyone quite as serious after that. It was just kind of a: "Oh well, like, this girlfriend thing is happening around me, so maybe, you know?" It never lasted, it wasn't a serious relationship, it was always kind of, like, a fling, or people that you score with, or... ja, that was during that time, like those two years of [grade] 11 and 12 [in] high school, that's when the serious questions started happening, it was like: "OK, you're gay! No, no, no; you are not! You are not! Just not! But look, you *are* gay, but no!"

Elakhe and Jacob's stories have demonstrated the structural constraints on homosexual identification. These constraints operate themselves through the concrete social mechanism of compulsory heterosexuality. It is a form of interpellation in socialisation so that individuals are compelled to achieve a heterosexual agency, irrespective of their own sexual preference. On a psychoanalytical level, this interpellation has caused the homosexual youth to be unable to externalise or materialise his primary desire in the social, therefore it remains as an imagined loss haunting his/her psyche. On a sociological level, one can presume that individual agency is first and foremost a 'trained' heterosexual entity: the various institutional forces by which some gay people are urged to engage in straight relationships are at large a reflection of structural constraints. Colman's (1982: 93) research has revealed that some gay men decide to marry women "because of societal and family pressures and the lack of intimacy in the gay world". For both Elakhe and Jacob, the lack of homosexual intimacy was certainly caused by the lack of the homosexual other or the inaccessibility to the kind of educational repertoire that is able to deal with homosexual youth. Elakhe was furthermore subscribed to the conventional function of marriage and family like other gay men who are motivated by "their interest in having and raising children" (ibid). Although Elakhe was ambivalent to the idea that marriage/straight relationships would somehow eliminate his same-sex feelings, he simply projected that he

could live without externalising his homosexuality as if he could live his life without having his favourite food. Nevertheless, Elakhe's relationship with Thando eventually became very mechanical and unemotional: he had to constantly remind himself to play the role of a boyfriend instead of simply being a boyfriend. As a result, Elakhe's heterosexual agency involved not only his active suppression of homosexual tendencies but also he was very passive about his girlfriend's needs and wants.

Jacob described his relationship with his girlfriend as a form of close friendship: he loved her, but he was not in love with her.[47] Although it is clear that gay men are capable of dating girls with or without the knowledge of homosexuality, the idea that heterosexuality, as a default sexual orientation, can be adopted by people regardless of their sexual preference is rather mythical. Everyone is socialised into heterosexual roles which are tied in with the learning of gender norms. As depicted in *Hide and Seek* (4.2.2), human interaction is largely governed by 'gender intelligibility', to think out of gender roles thus requires primarily a reconstruction of self-concept. Heterosexuality as a social construct corresponds to a particular 'human experience', the aspects of which lie within its scope (see Rogers, 1983: 1-3). Historically, this experience not only corresponds to the development of romanticism which emerged in the second half of the 18th century, but also is in itself an attribute of the necessity of human reproduction. It is this particular heterosexual experience that has caused individuals to recognise themselves as subjects of heterosexuality. If heterosexual relationships were only aimed at reproduction, then Elakhe and Jacob should not have broken up with their girlfriends. It is only after the development of romanticism, joined by the transition of marriage from a feudalistic model to a capitalistic model, that we have come to demand more than just reproduction in heterosexuality as well as in marriage. But ironically, it is precisely this historical transition which embodied more meanings in human sexual relations, that has 'abdicated' the 'compulsiveness' of heterosexuality (or reproduction). The ancient cultures of Greece and Africa have all shown that men practiced both heterosexual intercourse and homosexual intercourse irrespective of their individual preference,[48] but such a situation only took place in a social system where women's desire remained secondary to that of men. If women and men were to communicate sexual interests, feelings and emotions on an equal footing, then the former would most likely prioritise their sexual orientation as

---

[47] This statement indicates that although the actor is caring and loving towards the girlfriend, he is usually less involved with the girlfriend. Savin-williams and Cohen's (1996: 172-3) research on adolescent gay men have also shown that most of their respondents described their heterosexual relationships as a form of friendship even if sex was involved.

[48] See Foucault, 1985; also the story of Mwanga II in Sanders, 1997; & Hoad, 2007.

the pivot of their lifestyle. As seen in the narratives, both Elakhe and Jacob felt that there were 'things missing' in their straight relationships, 'things' that the female body and mind could never fulfil.

4.2.7 A Taste of Boyfriend

Unlike Fufu who denied his strange arrangement as a form of relationship, Elakhe described a same-sex encounter at high school. Although he was not sure if he was 'dating' the guy, he did express deep emotional attachment to him. Savin-Williams and Cohen (1996) assert that same-sex dating in adolescence is inherently problematic. The homosexual adolescent is often self-perceived as confused as to his/her own feelings and desires, on the one hand; while, on the other hand, he/she is often desperate and curious to try out his/her feelings and desire with someone of the same sex in clandestinity. As these testimonies illustrate however, the individual is only confused because the prescribed heterosexual self has prohibited him/herself from pursing his/her real desire.

> **Elakhe**: When Kevin came to my school, he was very excited about being a new-pot.[49] I remember one morning when Kevin knocked on my door; and I opened the door, [He said]: 'Hi, Elakhe, I am your new-pot, do you want me to take your laundry or something?' He was very proactive, and just excited about this, but I was like: "Just relax. I will take my own laundry, I'm fine." I wasn't keen on him doing anything for me, and he ended up not doing anything for me that year, but he'd always offer: I would be sitting down having lunch, and then he'd walks up to me and be like: "Hello, would you like me to bring you some coffee?" All the other new-pots were ordered around by their old-pots: 'eh, Garry, go and make me some coffee!' Kevin gets up and comes to me and *asks*: "Would you like some coffee?" He was very proactive. But I still didn't want to use him [as a servant], so we became friends. After a while, I noticed that we read some of the same books, and we had so much in common, you know what I mean? He was still starting high school, he was two years younger than me, but he was so wise, so well read. He wanted to try drama; he'd never tried drama before. And I was like: 'Go for it!' And I thought he'd be perfect for drama, but I could see [that] he never thought he would, probably because of the flack he got at his old school [he was bullied]. He joined drama and he absolutely loved it, so much happened, we were backstage together, we were doing so much stuff.

> **Elakhe**: There is this tradition at our house where at the end of the year, the new-pots get their old-pots a gift and then deliver a speech about them. But, no one likes their old-pot, so what they would usually do is to get them a mug, for like, 10 rand, at Price Home, and say a silly speech, you know [like]: 'Thanks for building my arms by making me taking laundry to the laundry room." Something like that, something

---

[49] Juniors (who were referred to as 'new-pots') at Elakhe's high school were expected to undergo a year of compulsory service, where they would run errands for their seniors (or 'old-pots') – a tradition found in many boarding schools in South Africa.

stupid, but then Kevin gets me a gift, and it's wrapped, and I am like: 'What is this?' So I opened it, and it's a book. So I opened it, inside was this long letter from Kevin. So Kevin's written all this stuff, and I'm like: "Wow! This is beautiful" – what he had written about me. [In the letter], he said that he hoped that the book would come to mean as much to me as it did to him. Then it's his turn to speak, in front of everyone, and it's, like, he just spoke from the heart, he didn't have a speech prepared. He spoke for the longest, and he just spoke so well, and I'm, like, almost crying because this is so moving, and everyone is just silent. I was just absolutely stunned. But I didn't want to cry in front of everyone, so I decided that after he was finished speaking, I was just going to tell them that I'm going to put the book away before it got messed on with juice or whatever. So off I go, and I got to my room, and I just cried. When I was done, I started walking back to the dinner. I'm walking back, and then I see Kevin in the corridor, and he's like: "Are you ok? Nandi said you were crying." I'm like: "No, I wasn't crying, I was just putting the book back, thanks, that's a really cool book." Then I noticed that he had his old school scarf in his hand, and then he says: "Ja, I was kind of stuck, I didn't know what to get you. I spoke to some of your friends, and one of things they said is that you really like scarves. I didn't know, coz you hardly ever wear a scarf, it's always hot here." I'm like: 'Ja, I do actually like scarves." Then he looks at me, and says: 'I want you to have this'. And he takes the scarf and puts it around my neck, but he doesn't let go of it... kinda holds it around my neck, then he tugged me towards him, and then we kissed in the corridor.

Elakhe: We kissed, we made out in the corridor. It was like: "Wow! We just kissed." So all that time he was so friendly towards me, and it wasn't that he wanted to be my new-pot and hang out, he was feeling these things for me. I had feelings for him as well, like, this homosexual attraction, but neither of us had said anything, because we were getting the same value out of our time together. After the kiss, it was random, every now and then, whenever we were alone, we would, like, hold hands. We just had this little thing, going. We still hung out, we still shared books and talked. (he is a white boy) I was a prefect, so I had my own room; so he'd come to my room, after 'lights out'. We wouldn't do anything sexual, well, I suppose kissing is kinda sexual (in a sense). Ja, but we wouldn't have sex, what we did was a little 'fooling around', and kiss - that kind of thing. Just talk, most nights - we just talked for hours, you know? Just comfort each other. So anyway, I remember my last night at hostel - I was gonna leave the next day, you know, we were all leaving. I was thinking about how I was never gonna see him again, coz I'm going to university or whatever. So, lights out, and I'm like, lying there thinking: 'Gosh! It's over, I'm leaving," and then I hear a knock on my door. I go open the door, and it's Kevin, and he is crying, he is like: I don't believe you are leaving, and I was like, "Me too!" So we were both very sad. We talked for a bit, and then we went to my bed, and slept together. Well, we didn't have sex, we just slept together. We were, like, in each others' arms and just cried each other to sleep. We just held each other.

This narrative demonstrates two major difficulties in dating same-sex partners during adolescence. The first is the rules of heterosexual language which classify romantic love between a man and a woman so that the individual assumes that love between two men is something that cannot be expressed in language. The unspeakableness of homosexuality can be seen as a form of "implicit censorship" (Butler, 1997b: 130) which "refers to implicit

operations of power that rule out in unspoken ways what will remain unspeakable. In such cases, no explicit regulation is needed in which to articulate this constraint". In this sense, heteronormativity precedes the text and consists of the "domain of the sayable" (ibid: 133) within which the individual begins to speak in the first place. The individual is partially afraid to speak it because that might 'name it' and bring about a formalising of the act, which might lead to shame, or regret in the other and so it will end. The actors' relationship ended not only because Elakhe had to leave school for university, but also because "it was no match for the social pressures and personal goals" that conflicted with Elakhe being in a same-sex relationship (ibid: 175). With respect to social pressures, it is tricky and troublesome for same-sex romances to flourish basically "because of negative peer prohibitions and the lack of social support" (ibid). Since homosexual desire is the unsayable in the mainstream discourse, it is difficult for one to make it an object of his/her self. And because both Kevin and Elakhe were conscious of the stigmas attached to homosexuality, to name each other 'boyfriend' would have imposed homosexuality onto each other – meanwhile, they had internalised such stigmas, and thus did not want to be homosexual. The actors' homosexual selves were stigmatised prior to their externalisation. They arose not only from the stigmatised individuals' not knowing which of several categories they would be placed in (i.e. Elakhe would not know whether or not he was a 'boyfriend' to Kevin), but also, where the placement was favourable; Elakhe knew in his heart that the others might be defining him in terms of his stigma (see Goffman, 1963: 14). In this manner, stigmatisation even works before one becomes its direct victim.

With respect to personal goals, same-sex partners are less likely to achieve a sense of self-worth through romance because, say for instance, even in a liberalised society such as South Africa, where gay people are entitled to legal protection and marriage, ordinary people have remained prejudiced to same-sex relationships. Thus a second impediment comes about due to the lack of "public recognition or 'celebration' of those who are romantically involved with members of the same sex" (ibid). The public, and especially the media, do not pay enough attention to gay people's lives. Homosexual love stories are not cherished publically as much as their heterosexual counterparts, on the one hand; while on the other hand, because all gay people to various extents carry the heritage of compulsory heterosexuality, they are somehow obliged to appreciate heterosexual romances more than their own. Elakhe admitted in his interview that he neither told anyone about his story with Kevin at school, nor did he feel the need to tell anyone even after he had come out of the closet. One ought to realise that the legacy of compulsory heterosexuality is a constitutive part of homosexuality. Even those

out gay men and lesbians, who feel the most freedom in post-apartheid South African society, sometimes still need to know how to deal at every instant with the surrounding world: to know whether it is possible to hold hands with a partner or to show signs of affection to someone of the same sex, or whether those actions should be avoided. Gay men and lesbians are to various degrees endowed with a sense of self-censorship: "a practical knowledge, so deeply interiorised that one seldom even notices it, does not need to be made fully conscious in order to have effects, to organise successful forms of behaviour" (Eribon, 2004: 19).

4.2.8   *Escape*

Unlike the other five participants, Dez grew up in a rural village outside King William's Town, Eastern Cape Province. For him, the initial impediment to homosexual identification was his location – a small village. The city, for instance, provides space for difference because it contains a large and varied world of strangers. It is therefore a means of escape as it allows "a certain anonymity to be maintained" (see Eribon, 2004: 21). In this manner, no matter how homophobic a city is, a homosexual can still find his/her own space because of the spaces required for other demographical variables (be that race, class, ethnicity, nationality) to coexist can either encourage or subsidise the space needed for homosexuality. In contrast, a small town or village is a place where it is difficult to escape from the only available space: the fact that everyone knows you – from the cleaning ladies in the local clubs to the cashiers in the local markets – almost forces you to be what others expect you to be. Similarly, it is difficult for a homosexual youth to "escape from the only mirror, that offered by family life and by school, difficult to escape from the 'interpellations' that enforce conformity to the affective, cultural, and social models of heterosexuality, to escape from 'compulsory homosexuality'" (ibid: 24). In relation to the rules of escape, the compulsory status of heterosexuality is not based upon procreation (O'Brien, 1987) per se, but rather the ability to forcefully direct one's actually experienced feelings or needs to a falsified destiny.

> **Dez**: [In] primary school, I was 'out'.[50] I knew nothing about homosexuality, even at high school. I didn't know that I could love a guy; but I slept with a guy, [and I thought] I was wrong of what I did...This guy was just a friend, at high school, we know (each other) from the same town, (coz) we are the only guys from that town [at our school]. We decided to make friends with each other. It happened [at] where I was staying. I was renting a house, we shared the same room, that is what happened that day with my homosexuality (Dez discovered his homosexuality), I just had these feelings for the guy, but (that was) my first time to share a bed with a guy. We knew (each other) from King William's Town, from the same town. And we discussed the

---

[50] Here 'out' means that Dez was aware of his same-sex feelings.

following morning [about] what happened. [That was] my first time, I wasn't sure [about my sexuality or] whatever, but I was sure [about] those feelings: I can fall in love [with a man]. [I only] had thigh sex [with] this guy. I know that it wasn't his first time. He said [that] he did this with his close relative whether it's uncle (or some sort) he did this with his uncle in King William's Town.

Dez: [I thought] maybe I was sick or whatever, you know in Xhosa. I escaped from King William's Town, which is my hometown, to my father's town. [I thought] maybe I would change [myself] there [and perhaps getting involved with] ladies[51]…We were doing matric during that time, that time at my father's home, trying to do the same thing (Dez was trying to change himself while doing matric)…I'm close to the guys, where I met a guy also from town, we were in the same school, 1993. I was in love with this guy. I thought I was doing something wrong, I hated myself, crying, maybe I was sick; but I had feelings for him…Even this guy was doing the same thing, he also escaped from his home, he didn't know what is happening inside [him]...I have never ever, ever in my life dated a lady, that's why at times when I was at high school, I started to escape from my town, all my guy [friends] of the same age were having girlfriends, I didn't have girlfriends...some people they ask me about (it): "Dez, you're supposed to have girlfriends?" I said: 'No! I don't have a girlfriend.' Like this, all my friends are just upsetting me, in my family (they are) trying [to ask me about this], even now. I don't like [it]. I don't know why. I started to escape, to go to another town, (I hope) maybe I will change [in] there [and getting] involved with ladies, [but] I don't like to be involved with ladies.

The limitation of a rural village to individual identity formation is not necessarily characterised by its insufficient resources but rather the inaccessibility of a broader social network. As a result, 'difference' initiates almost an obligatory contrast which in turn provokes a sense of good/bad, superior/inferior, normal/abnormal, or known/unknown. With regard to the narrative, Dez's homosexual feelings were not only unknown to him but also constantly rejected by his socialising process: the knowledge of homosexuality was deficient in the village to the extent that there was hardly any negative discussion about it. During adolescence, Dez experienced tremendous peer pressure for not having a girlfriend, and in order to overcome such pressure Dez chose to escape to other villages. The act of escape therefore symbolised a self-portrayed inferiority. According to Sullivan (in Goffman, 1963: 13), "the awareness of inferiority means that one is unable to keep out of consciousness the formulation of some chronic feeling of the worst sort of insecurity, and this means that one suffers anxiety and perhaps even something worse". This is evident in the narrative. Dez believed that he was sick, and wished that by moving to somewhere else, his homosexuality could be removed miraculously. In addition, the act of escape also signifies a stage of identity crisis. Isaacs and McKendrick's (1992) research has demonstrated that closeted individuals

---

[51] By ladies Dez meant girls.

often fear intervention for two principle reasons. Firstly, they fear that their crises, in general opinion, might be seen as a psychiatric breakdown rather than as a natural response to anxiety and emergency. Secondly, they have been afraid that to acknowledge the state of crisis might indicate failure to significant others (Salzberger-Wittenberg, 1970; in Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992: 45). In consequence, emotions can often be denied or over-controlled, with eventual disruptive expression. This is a key feature in the crisis of homosexual existence. "The cumulative ingestion of emotions, part of the 'closet' syndrome, may erupt in a manifested crisis response of disproportionate intensity" (ibid).

4.2.9 A Synopsis of the Previous Sections

From *Trying out Girlfriends* to *A Taste of Boyfriend*, all participants have experienced profoundly that a heterosexual self is lodged in a homosexual body: their stories have established "a deterministic tale suggesting that something happens at all participants' birth which sets up their difference in behaviour and sexual interests" (see Plummer, 1995: 83). All participants have grown up battling over the interpellation of compulsory heterosexuality. Their individual agency is at first a passive product of social structure: the homosexual is allocated to heterosexuality at birth on the basis of the knowledge of his/her external agencies (e.g. parents). Therefore, through the repositioning of the homosexual individual in a wider social network (with the opportunities to interact with like people), he/she can achieve a homosexual identity. Cumulatively, the participants' internal conflicts perfectly explicate the constraints of heteronormativity: not only were they refrained from expressing same-sex attraction, the learning of gender binarism deformed their self-concept as a whole. Because homosexuality is not formally registered in any social institution, there is an absence of organised and positive response to same-sex feelings and desire. Furthermore, the gay unconsciousness is structured by the rules of heterosexual language – gay men and lesbians will have to live with it. Yet, "only the political and cultural work of the collective reinvention of gay people by themselves could manage to perturb the immemorial cycle in which this unthought social heteronormativity reproduces itself" (Eribon, 2004: 87).

In reference to *Boy Crush*, *The Strange Arrangement*, and *A Taste of Boyfriend*, I do not attempt to interpret participants' narratives as love stories, but it is apparent that all respondents were once trapped in the ideology that only men and women could be sexually compatible creatures. In relation to gender performance, this ideology constitutes a discrepancy between virtual and actual identity (see Goffman, 1963: 3). A homosexual man as a stigmatised individual has to resign himself to a half-world in order to organise himself

without having to expose his actual identity (ibid: 14). Although Fufu and Elakhe started to develop their actual identity through same-sex intimacy and they tried whatever cue was available to construct their homosexuality (see Stryker, 1987: 90), they could never fully embrace it because they were virtually surrounded by the scenes, sounds, and scents of heterosexual activity – whether it was at school, on television, or in books. Equally influential was the lack of acquaintance (i.e. either generalised or significant homosexual other) that made them unable to effectively deconstruct their own heterosexist reality.

In relation to the effects of the masculinist discourse, the cardinal sin for men is to be weak and vulnerable. Thus participants did not openly express or show mourning or grief over the loss of their boy lovers, because it suggested feminine or weak behaviour. As both Fufu's strange arrangement and Elakhe's secret relationship with Kevin ended with them leaving for university, they never truly abandoned the desired object in their psyche; instead they only temporarily transferred the focus of the desired object from external to internal (see Salih & Butler, 2004: 246-7). In this process, homosexual desire is replaced by a melancholic identification with the desired object, which effectively turns homosexual desire back upon the individual self. The act of turning back is precisely an internalisation of self-berating and guilt (Butler, 1997b: 142). "Melancholy is [thus] both the refusal of grief and the incorporation of loss, a mining of the death it cannot mourn" (Butler, 1997b: 142). As seen in the above stories, an unfortunate development often appeared after the demise of the participants' same-sex relationships: "as their customary ways of thinking, feeling, and acting are deeply embedded in the heterosexist discourse, they were likely to interpret the demise as a homophobic issue and will then blame homosexuality as the cause of the demise, not the process of the relationship between two people which had come to an end" (see Isaacs & MaKendrick, 1992: 55). In response, participants used various strategies to cope with their crisis. Dez carried on escaping to other cities hoping for a change of his sexuality whereas Elakhe and K sought help from God (see 4.2.10 below).

4.2.10 My Confession

In my study, the moral invasion of Christianity into the participants' gay consciousness is telling. The participants who were born into Christian families had marked in their consciousness the principle that living derives from the words of God. Similar to the experience of compulsory heterosexuality, this process happens initially without a choice – before one fully realises his/her own ability to manipulate symbols. More importantly, the body governed by Christian rules is also manifest of a 'pathology' that defines all 'deviant'

behaviours as sins. The terminology of this pathology is highly controversial, which I will not examine here, but I do stress the point that this pathology in essence functions to foreclose any subversion pertaining to the reverse of Christian rules. It by no means stops the body from being actually diagnosed; it serves to define one's well being by what it finds sayable and thinkable. Amongst all participants, Elakhe and K once hoped that they could be redeemed from their sinful thoughts and behaviour. But ironically, their genuine wish to be 'saved' was precisely the start of their coming out to others.

> **Elakhe**: [My confession] was in my high school. I was 16. I joined a Baptist church then they wanted people to apply to become youth leaders and I wanted to do that, but then one of things you needed to do when you apply for youth leader is to speak with the minister (the youth pastor), so you speak to him about whatever spiritual problems you have. And one of the things I told him was that I had these homosexual feelings that I am really struggling with. I told him that I was attracted to some guys, well; one guy in particular, and I'm praying about this all the time, and I want God to help me, so I can serve him, so I can be faithful to him. I don't want this perversion to get in the way of my relationship with God. At that stage, my youth pastor likened homosexuality to a spiritual affliction, which means it is the same class as being possessed by demons, or something like that. You have a deep spiritual issue. You have to fight for your soul, by repenting and asking god to help you with the struggle. Being homosexual is equivalent to alcoholism or drug addiction or being compulsively promiscuous. [The church's attitude to homosexuality is that]: 'You are sick, you just have to pray about it and, you know, lean on the church and God, and they will help you find yourself again, your soul will be saved'. That's basically how he (the youth pastor) felt. He did keep the secret, but he told me I couldn't be a youth leader if I was queer. I guess a large part of me felt like I was afflicted. I bought into the whole 'it is a sickness' theology. I hated myself more, I was angry, I was just very upset.

> **Me**: Did you think that you were possessed?

> **Elakhe**: Possessed? I just thought I was…everyone has a spiritual Achilles heel, you know. Everyone has something that makes them frail, something that makes them weak, something they really struggle with, something very crippling in their life, and I just thought that this (homosexuality) is mine, that this was my big challenge, this is my *jihad*, if you want to talk in Islamic terms. This is what I had to struggle with, in order to become a better man.

> **Me**: How long did it take to get over it?

> **Elakhe**: It followed me into varsity; it took me years to reconcile my faith with my homosexuality.

> **K**: I tried [to be a Christian] in varsity. I started going to church. I started reading the Bible. I saw the mindset of the Bible. And I was like: 'This God is hectic, you know.'

> **Me**: So you were never like a God-person before?

K: No, we didn't grow up going to church. My dad didn't care about that. Then I got into the HP (the His People Church) thing, and then I was like: 'OK, Christianity, gay is a taboo.' I was like: 'OK, cool, I'm trying to hide this shit anyway.' So this is a perfect hiding place. 'You cannot have sex before marriage, so oh great, there is no pressure to go and get a girlfriend, or sleep around and all that stuff. I didn't grow up being really naughty: drinking, liking girls. And then I met a lot of people at varsity, by this time, I was already an extrovert. I wasn't an introvert anymore, because I started to realise who I am. I mean, in high school, already I was like: 'OK, I am gay. Coz I am different.' I realised, coz I was always having crushes on boys. I got to realise like: 'this is how I feel, and this is how I am. And I am not gonna change it'. But then there was this aspect of me being a Christian, and this is totally taboo. And that worried me the whole time. And I was like: 'OK, if you are God, and you don't want this thing, [that is] in me, then take it out.' Because in the Christian cycle, they're gonna tell you that you have a demon. You just need someone to pray for you, and all that stuff. This is totally not from God, this is from the devil. You need to pray. So I was like: 'Fine, if I need to pray, somebody prays for me.'

K: That was their approach: 'We will pray for you, then what you do is to detach yourself from anything that is gay, detach yourself from any gay friends you have, and try as best as you can to be straight. And I was like: 'No.' So I stopped, I was like...I remember that day I told him: 'God, if you are gonna condemn me for being like this, I didn't choose to be like this. I was like this for as long as I could remember. And I'm saying I am gay after I had my first sexual encounter or before, I don't know. But for me, as long as I could remember, I'd always liked boys. I'd always preferred boys. I don't remember any incident where I was fixated on any girl, even when I was very young'. I told the church. One of the leaders, he prayed for me, and I came back I was like: 'I still like guys.' I don't know if your prayer worked. I don't know what happened, but I still like guys.' And he was like: 'No, it is gradual, it is a process.' So I was like: 'No, come on, I'm not gonna live trying to not be gay for the rest of my life.'

As the above narratives illustrate, the church simply perceives homosexuality as a malevolent deviation from the normal state of the spirit or 'disease,' such that individuals inclined to homoerotic feelings, thoughts or behaviours had committed a 'sin' according to the natural law of the supreme. In confession, says Foucault (1988: 47), the Christian hermeneutics of the self deciphers inner thoughts: "it implies that there is something hidden in ourselves and that we are always in a self-illusion which hides the secret." Thus evil thoughts can only be expressed with difficulty and shame; and in practice, "only when one confesses verbally does the evil go out of him/her". Confession therefore becomes "the mark of truth" allowing the master to give better advice, as a form of law, for the confessed matter. To make confession a technology of the self, as "an idea of the permanent verbal", is to make everything that cannot be expressed into a sin (ibid: 48)

According to Pope (1997), however, the so-called natural law of Christianity suffers from two major weaknesses. Firstly, "it is typically subject to criticism on points of exegesis and hermeneutics, especially when it presents a straightforward use of the biblical scripture as moral law" (Pope, 1997: 108). It underscores the importance of reason as the basic source for knowing the natural law (ibid). This is an important area of criticism which I will not examine here because it lies outside the scope of my thesis. In any case, the natural law cannot be a monolithic ethical system that is pre-given. History has proven that the greatest human revolutions (including religious revolutions) were all moral-reformist in essence. Secondly, another criticism emphasises that since Christianity was imported to Africa through colonisation as the threshold to the alleged modern civilisation (or Westernisation), the concurrent moral system was established at the expense of discrediting the values of the pre-colonial ways of life. In other words, Christianity undermines the learning and interpretation of African cultural heritage: one cannot provide a reading of particular matters (e.g. homoerotic practice in pre-colonial Africa) within African history that can survive the moral judgement of Christianity. It is under the moral invasion of Christianity that Elakhe and K 'religiously' pursued the route of Christianity instead of looking for answers/help from psychiatry, science, or consulting a sangoma – they did not try to assess their homosexuality based on biological, psychological, or cultural grounds – although they eventually realised that the natural law of Christianity was rather morally manipulative.

Notably, the emergence of Christianity as a form of religion was inextricable with the development of asceticism (Brytryn & Greenburg, 1982). The latter restricts sex to procreation and condemns any sexual practice aimed at gaining pleasure. Followed was the teaching of the Bible which not only emphasises the godly legitimacy of heterosexuality, but also subsequently insinuates that the female body is the only desirable form in the human imaginary. Thereby two of the major influences revealed in the process of transmitting Christian doctrine to traditional African sexual relations were that the notion of desire was heterosexualised, and "sexual thoughts were now introduced into [the] commonest daily interactions" (GALZ, 2008: 137). In a sense, for example, nudity was/is not regarded as sexual in African traditions (e.g. the Zulu culture) yet in post-colonial Africa men and women cannot swim together naked because the situation is suggestive of lustful thoughts or actual sex. Therefore in retrospect, the transmission of Christian doctrine itself required "developing a new culture where constant self-repression could keep thoughts and the lust that followed, at bay" (ibid). Certainly the very same principle of self-repression applies to having same-sex feelings – resistance seems to be the ultimate solution to all 'unnatural' behaviours – but it is

only more confusing this time because the Bible hasn't even defined the male body as 'lascivious' to men themselves. After confession, both participants were told to pray, to actively suppress their same-sex feelings, and more importantly to bar themselves from seeing other gay men. Nonetheless the religious authority might have missed the point in that gay men hit on men in general – the participants would not know for sure in the first place whether the person they desired was gay – so how would they go about separating themselves from other gay men?

Moreover, the practice of asceticism exerts control over the body, which is imperative to the heterosexist discourse "because fixed social roles will be accompanied by strong social control" (Brytryn & Greenburg, 1982: 529). The Christian notion of sexuality is tied in with the practice of asceticism as well as the adoption of "philosophies based on dualistic oppositions of good and evil, spirit and flesh, male and female" (ibid, 1982: 520). Not only have these sentiments underpinned heterosexism and patriarchy, which in effect turned sexuality into a matter of reproductive alienation, they have also created a hierarchy within sexual diversity. According to Hearn (1987: 84), heterosexism restricts the "potential and capacity of individuals to do labour-power upon others and oneself in the creation of what is felt to be sexual desire, for bodies of others or oneself". Sexual labour power is therefore 'authorised' to procreation, on the one hand. On the other hand, "hierarchic sexuality and compulsory heterosexuality derive from the domination of sexual labour-power, not in some abstract way but in the material relation of bodies, either directly in heterosexual contacts or the attempted control of male homosexual and lesbian relations by (male) heterosexuals" (ibid: 91). As a result, any practice or motivation encouraging men to imitate, even slightly, the position of a woman has to be obliterated. This assumption coincides with McNeill's (1966) argument that "the principal reason the ancient Jews regarded homosexual practices as an abomination was that they viewed sodomy (anal intercourse) as an expression of scorn" (in Woggon, 1981: 159). He states: "in a society where the dignity of the male was a primary consideration, voluntary acts of a homosexual nature could not be tolerated. Both parties would then be undermining the very foundation of a patriarchal society, the one because he uses the other as a woman; the other because he allows himself to be used as a woman. The dignity of the male is dishonoured in both" (ibid). In this way, the participants' confession of their 'sin' authorised the church to 'demonise' their real natural behaviour such that they internalised self-hatred and shame.

4.2.11 Lost in the Closet

The term 'closet' addresses a social condition that is concealed from the public. Closet behaviours often reflect one's own efforts in hiding his/her secret desires, interests, or ambitions (see Lazerson, 1981: 275) by means of disguise. Eve Sedgwick (1990: 3) describes closetedness as "a performance initiated as such by the speech act of silence – not a particular silence, but a silence that accrues particularity by fits and starts, in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it". To elaborate on her point, the gay closet as a group silence is performed individually: the individual concealment starts with one's own conscious decision that he/she will remain completely silent about his/her sexuality, by giving up to the structural impossibility of externalising homosexuality, or by the fear of becoming a direct threat to the dominant heterosexual discourse. As seen in history, not until the public outcry caused by the Stonewall riots in 1969 did gays and lesbians start to 'come out' of the closet as a social movement to visualise their collective existence (see 1.5.4; Plummer, 1996: 90). Sociologically, one silence does not 'unite' the other; closeted individuals are powerless as though they are dispersed in a maze, lost from each other.

> **Elakhe**: In the end, my crush on Graeme, my crush on the Beresford twins, on Eddie McCormick, on any boy - it was just, like, something very dirty, something very vile, and I was a perverted person for having these feelings… and another reason why I didn't want anyone to know about it. I didn't want them to see that I was a pervert; I wasn't as decent as I appeared.

> **Me**: But did you get over it?

> **Elakhe**: I *didn't* get over it, because in Grade 10 (age 16), I decided: "You know what? Obviously I am gay, you know? But it is a terrible thing to be…" and I hated it! I was like, "… I'm just gonna be straight, date girls, and I'll get married one day, and have kids, and then that would be fine, I will be happy.

> **Me**: Did you think that you could somehow change yourself?

> **Elakhe**: Ja… maybe… no. I don't think I thought I'd ever change, but I thought I could manage it and live with it. I could live without being out. I could just be a straight man and actually get married and actually have kids, and then completely ignore it, because I had ignored it before, like since I was 12. No one knew about it, and I still excelled.

At a relatively young age, Elakhe was 'fully' prepared to stay in the closet and to enduringly suppress his same-sex desire no matter what. Like every other closeted gay man, Elakhe was obliged to hide what he was could never be sure that the person from whom he was hiding knew anyway, or at least suspected while pretending to know nothing (see Eribon,

2004: 53). In other words, the closet is not a 'safe zone' for its habitants, but rather a form of self-repression: the closeted individual has to guard his/her secret unconditionally. Consequently, the weight of concealment; compounded with shame, fear, insecurity, anxiety, and secrecy; could eventually overwhelm his/her entire existence. The closet is in practice a form of repeated "positional suffering" (ibid: 38): the longer one stays in the closet, the heavier the suffering, and the less likely one is going to speak about it. Therefore Elakhe was going to face a forever self-expanding project, which "grew out of the difficulty in transforming this weight of suffering into speech" (ibid).

> **Elakhe**: When I came to Rhodes (age 19), I was conscious of the fact that I was gay, but I had made that decision that I wasn't going to be a gay person. I wasn't going to have an out life, you know: "I'd get married someday, I'd have children, and that would be enough, I will be happy that way." I'd met Sonke in my res; he was out and gay[52]...I remember a number of occasions where people would say homophobic things. And often I would be the one saying something: "No, guys, that's not right, that's homophobic, or... you know, I was just defending 'homosexuals', [explaining] that: "What you are saying is completely ignorant and wrong." We'd often have those discussions: I remember, one in particular, outside the dining hall, where one guy was saying something about... um, 'why homosexuals chose to be homosexuals,' you know? And he said something like: "they try to get attention," or "they try to be different." But my response was that you don't choose your orientation, [in the same way that] you don't choose to *like* girls [if you're straight], you know? You just like girls, you know? Homosexuals wouldn't, *don't* choose how they are. They just are, same with lesbians, bisexuals whoever, whatever category you like. And Sonke was there, and he kept quiet through the whole conversation, and I still didn't know he was gay, he was just very 'straight-acting,' and you know, he was just sitting on the fence.

Eichberg (1990: 25) notes that "many people function in adult bodies, living much of their lives based on decisions made in childhood or adolescence". Elakhe had made the decision not to be gay at the age of 16, which was the start of his identity crisis. According to Hirschowitz (1979, in Isaacs & Mckendrick, 1992: 46), once the decision is made, the individual in crisis cannot invoke help, or cannot always use help when it is offered, "because crisis is the result of threat to certain essential attachments which presumably all human beings ought to take, and the subsequent inability to cope with that threat" (ibid: 49). On the one hand, homosexuality certainly threatens anyone who wants to have a straight life, even though in most cases, homosexuals are initially coerced into being straight as part of growing up within the heterosexual discourse. On the other hand, it is very difficult for the homosexual youth to cope with his/her identity crisis alone, since there are insufficient

---

[52] Sonke was out when Elakhe first arrived at Rhodes, but Elakhe did not know that Sonke was gay at that time.

community-based gay organisations in South Africa (see 0.3). The commonly known homosexual other can only be found at gay clubs or LGBTI societies at various universities. Not until the homosexual youth reaches the age of 18 which allows him/her to visit clubs or leaves home for university will he/she have a chance to engage in a conversation about his/her same-sex desires. Even so, the decision made in one's childhood/adolescence can be so powerful and irrevocable that, as Elakhe's story describes, having gay friends does not encourage one to join the 'coming out' crew immediately, therefore the crisis continues. Elakhe insisted on pursuing a straight life. He was then involved in a straight relationship at Rhodes University, hoping to convert loss into gain.

> **Elakhe**: It was during that term that I met Dianne. Me and Dianne did law together, and she did a BA. When did it start getting sexual? Oh, yes. It was a month of friendship and then one night, I was at Mary and Dianne's. I was alone with Dianne that night, and we did the usually thing: watched movies, talk, just all that kind of stuff, and then we started flirting with each other, seducing each other. And then we ended up having sex for the first time.

> **Elakhe**: This is my 'first time'; I'd never had sex before, this particular occasion, whatever. Anyway, after that we became a couple. And we dated, and we had a full-on sexual relationship. My aunt, Thenjiwe, found out that I was dating someone, and she was very upset that I was dating a white girl - Thenjiwe is anti 'inter-tribal' dating, (Xhosa people and Zulu people, Sotho people and Xhosa people) she is just like: "that's not on." But it is so much worse for her if it's inter-*racial*. She just doesn't like that kind of thing… she wasn't supportive of *this* inter-racial relationship. Nevertheless I broke up with Dianne, a month or two later, because the relationship wasn't working. I wasn't being the boyfriend she wanted me to be. It's because my feelings weren't really 'passionate' and 'in love' - the way that a straight man feels about the girl that he is with. They weren't there. She passed away. I loved her, and I still love her, coz she was a fantastic woman, we had so much fun together, and she was a great friend to me. But I wasn't *in* love with her. I wasn't 'gaga' over her, so whenever exams or tests would come up, I wouldn't be very unhappy [about not spending as much time with her], because it was very easy for me to say: "You know? Let's not do that, let's not go out tonight, coz I have to do this tut. I will see you tomorrow… you know?" "Let's not go away for the weekend like we planned coz…" I don't know, "I have a Choir meeting," something like that. So often I'd do that kind of thing to get away from her.

> **Elakhe**: I did feel pressurised into being a 'boyfriend', but then I can't say she forced me to be her boyfriend, coz I chose to be her boyfriend. It wasn't working, she was miserable because I wasn't meeting her needs. And my plan [to be straight], I guess, was kind of unravelling, it wasn't working out. It was a lot easier in theory: that I could meet a girl and marry her one day and have kids; but in practice, it was just impossible. It was too much work. It was like, I had to think about: "OK, what would be an appropriate thing for a guy who is into [in love with] this girl to do right now?" You know, in every situation, I would be like: "OK, what would a boyfriend do right now?" It was very mental, it was hardly ever emotional. Dianne was 'Thando: volume

two,' - completely counterfeit. Like Thando: I was dating her for over a month, until her friends came up to me and said: "you know what? You have to kiss her; why haven't you kissed your girlfriend?" You know? They had to *intervene* for me to *kiss* her! When they told me; in my mind I'm thinking: "Oh my gosh! Of course I have to kiss her - she *is* my girlfriend, and I'm her boyfriend." Of course, I didn't show them the surprise [at realising this major oversight], I was just very defensive. I was like: "Who are you? Get out of my relationship! It's our business, you know, we will take this as slow as we want to." But in mind, I was thinking: "Oh, my God! They're absolutely right. If I'm her boyfriend, I should *want* to kiss her *all* the time." Dianne was somewhat different, coz I *didn't* want to kiss her and I *did* want to kiss her. And to a degree I *did* want to sleep with her, I *did*. She *did* excite me, I was *attracted* to her - it wasn't nearly as intense as my attraction to some *men* is, you know? But it was there. Like, I did *love* her, I really did. I remember the feeling. I can see it in retrospect; I *really* did love this girl. But, you know, not quite how a 'boyfriend' should love 'a girlfriend.' So I ended it. She hated me.

Me: Did you just go and break up with her?

Elakhe: Yes, I went to her place. I just said everything, but the fact that I was gay. I said "I wasn't being the boyfriend that she wanted me to be." "I was side-lining her." She was not happy. "I don't feel the same way about her, she does about me." So I said everything, except the fact that I was gay. And then, it must have been... a month or two later... we were friends again. That's when I came out to her. I told her. I *did* tell her. She was stunned, but not quite: "Oh, my gosh!" as I had said [before] that I was bisexual. I said that to her at some stage. She was cool. We were friends [again]. And I remember Tri-varsity coming up, and I was supposed to go with her to PE for Tri-varsity, but then I had to do something that weekend, so I couldn't go. It just turned out to be the weekend that she had a car accident and died.

Me: Would it have made her life easier if you hadn't dated her?

Elakhe: It would have saved her a lot of heartbreak; a lot of frustration, you know? All that time that she was with me, you know? She could have met a fantastic man, and be happy. Maybe she wouldn't have even been in PE that weekend. Maybe she would have been away on a romantic trip with him. Her life could have been completely different!

Me: Does her death encourage you to be who you are, and encourage you to come out?

Elakhe: Dianne? I suppose it did. What it *did* make me do was never to date another girl again. After Dianne, I abandoned the whole theory of 'me getting married to a girl and having children.' I was like: "I'm not gonna do that. I'm not gonna live a lie. It hurts me. It hurts everyone involved. That [realisation] came directly from my relationship with Dianne, I was convinced that, "No, I can't live a lie. I can't be a 'straight guy.'" And so later, it was: "OK, maybe I *can* be a 'gay guy'." Later: "Maybe I can be a gay guy, and maybe I can marry a gay man." "Maybe I can have all those things I wanted - with a man," but then it was just... I don't think she encouraged me to come out; she encouraged me to face who I am.

In this narrative, Elakhe expressed the same difficulty of being a boyfriend to Dianne as he had with Thando in high school: the only difference was the sexual intercourse involved in this relationship. Elakhe did not explicitly comment on the sex, because it was his first time and it was before he had ever sex with a guy. However, investigations on gay men involved in heterosexual marriage and relationships have revealed four major perceptions with regard to the sex, they include: 1) "even though heterosexual sex often results in a low level of sexual gratification, it is deemed a necessary sacrifice to meet the expectations of peers and, by extension, receive their approval", even if this approval is indirect or self-projected; 2) "for many, heterosexual activities consisted of sex without feelings that they tried to enjoy without much success"; 3) "heterosexual sex felt unnatural because it lacked the desired emotional intensity"; 4) and for many gay men, they could not develop great lust or desire for women" (see Herdt & Boxer, 1993; in Savin-Williams & Cohen, 1996: 172-3). Elakhe concluded that he was only capable of loving a woman as a friend; many things between them had to be done in a planned manner rather than spontaneously. With such emotional barriers, however, Elakhe still honoured the relationship when he confronted his aunt's prejudice against his interracial relationship with Dianne. Soon after the confrontation, he ended this relationship in almost the same way that he did with Thando. Dianne's tragic death was a turning point for Elakhe's identity crisis, although it was not a wake-up call in his view. As mentioned earlier, Elakhe was not fully aware of the consequences and the weight of suffering accumulated after he decided to stay in the closet; perhaps had it not been for Dianne's death, Elakhe would have tried another girlfriend afterwards. Instead, he promised himself not to date a girl ever again. Bergson (in Eribon, 2004: 37) says that an individual's life is haunted by choices not made. Gay men who experience failure in heterosexual relationships during adolescence and adulthood either choose to date girls with increasing frequency or tend to conclude that they are incapable of human love (see Savin-williams & Cohen, 1996: 174). Before Dianne, Elakhe did not know whether it was possible to love a man; he simply wanted to avoid the idea. However, Dianne's death altered his initial decision, not in that it led him to come out of the closet immediately, but in that it influenced him to face himself truthfully. Indeed, every apparent loss in life can be used as an opportunity to learn, grow, and expand (Eichberg, 1990: 55). Being truthful to oneself is the finale of coming out to self, and telling the truth about oneself is the first step of coming out to others. Yet, this is not a straightforward linear progression: as in the story, part of Elakhe's truthfulness to himself had in fact entailed coming out to Dianne, although not to everyone.

In order to do so one needs to trust not only the person to whom he is telling the truth, but more importantly him/herself (ibid: 22).

4.3 <u>Coming Out to Others</u>

The second part of analysis deals with the self-actualisation of homosexuality, and the focus here is the motivation and social circumstances under which participants choose to divulge their secrets to important others. The priority of characters to be told and the timing of telling are usually carefully weighed by the participants according to the former's objective significance and historical relevance. The act of telling can be either positive and self-activated or passive and initiated by external interrogation. In the first case, the individual chooses to come out because he has reached the peak of his identity crisis thus seeking a complete life change in order to leave nothing behind. This step usually relies on the actor's attempt to re-associate with certain basic supportive structures such as family, friends, workplace, and community. In the second case, the individual is forced to come out by others' confrontation due to the spread of rumour. This situation usually happens during the exploration of one's sexuality and testing the water in the gay community. But notably, neither the positivity nor the passivity of coming out determines the actor's self-acceptance of his homosexual status, because the successful acquisition of a homosexual identity is usually accompanied by tangible changes in behaviours and attitudes (Savin-Williams & Cohen, 1996: 129). The self-actualisation of homosexuality indicates ultimately the recreational use of one's interactive resources for the reconstruction of a previously stigmatised identity.

4.3.1   My Friends and Exit Magazine

> **Dez**: I was thinking: 'No, it's wrong, whatever, or it's better to be out, maybe I was sick'. So I went to the villages...thinking maybe talk to sangoma. I know a story, in East London, there was a gay guy. His parents took him to a sangoma, they forced him to go to a sangoma...that sangoma, he knew about homosexuality, he said: 'no, you can't cure it, this guy is like this, he is not sick. You are wasting your time'...I didn't go to a sangoma, I know [if I had told my parents] they would do that. [And the thing is]: if you tell the parents, they will say you are wrong whatever, they will take you to a sangoma. Before I met this friend from PE, her brother is gay, that is Andile. The sister is straight, she is also very [supportive of me], before I met them, I was trying even to commit suicide...I was always alone, I didn't like me (myself). I was always crying; I was alone by myself. They support me, I get strength from them. They make me strong. [They told me]: 'Dez, you can't change it, just accept it. You are like this forever, this is not only you who are like this, they are everywhere'...from that year, I said: "No, I can't change, I am like this." Now I am established to dealing with friends, or maybe family.

Dez: After a friend that is [amongst] my straight friends told me about *Exit*; I bought an *Exit* paper. *Exit* makes me strong, I always buy *Exit* every month to read what is happening about homosexuality, that's where I get my strength, knowledge, people everywhere are like me. I tell myself that I must be strong, *Exit* paper makes me strong, to be out.

As discussed previously, gay people's suffering in post-colonial South Africa is still caused by not being able to speak about their suffering. Like most gay individuals who grow up in the rural areas of South Africa, it was not until Dez moved to PE, accompanied by the presence of a larger gay social network in the city, that he found it possible to acknowledge himself as gay. For Dez, moving to the city was not simply a matter of going to live somewhere else in search of anonymity. The psychological development of 'moving' "involves a serious break in one's biography: it provides [the] possibility of redefining one's subjectivity" (Eribon, 2004: 24). On a social level, in almost any given historical circumstance; the city provides space for specific group networks to engage in discussions that are censored (even if just implicitly) publically. As for homosexuals, it is only by meeting other gay people that the opportunity of speaking presents itself, "in the discovery of a context in which one can be what one is without hiding, even if only for a few hours a week, if only with a limited number of people" (ibid: 52). More specifically, only the gay people who are out and proud are more likely to initiate a conversation about their coming out crises, love stories and queer politics on any given social occasion irrespective of the social apathy and stigmas attached to those topics. Yet more crucially, it is often these unexpected conversations, which can motivate individuals to speak of their gayness with ease and comfort. Similarly, people who have self-identified as gay are more likely to take the step of buying gay videos or magazines in a shop without feeling embarrassed. In this way, Dez was encouraged by his friends to read *Exit*, one of the longest standing and the most prominent gay magazines in South Africa. Materials such as books, films, and magazines are part of the generalised homosexual other, and are therefore influential. It was through both the efforts of friends and the knowledge of homosexuality obtained from *Exit* magazine that Dez came to de-stigmatise and accept his sexuality.

4.3.2 *My Family*

Babhuti: What happened was my grandmother passed away, my father's brother went to Eastern Cape for (the) funeral, and when we got home, and my father's brother came. And he just said to my father: 'Do you like your child the way he is.' My father was like: 'why do I not like my son?' (The brother said): 'because he is gay.' And my father said: 'No, there is no other way that I can do, it's my child. There is nothing

that I can drop off him...whatever he is doing is OK with me.' And then I was so disappointed, he (the father's brother) just left us in the room. And my father told me that: 'Don't worry, I knew that you are gay, but I didn't want to show that you are gay. But don't worry about whatever they are saying. Because they need me to fight with my children, of which I don't want to do that'.

Me: How did your father's brother find out that you were gay?

Babhuti: Because they are in Cape Town, I used to visit them. They came to my place sometimes, because that time I used to live at the church. They used to see me in the streets, the way I dress, the way I walk with other people, [I was] with other gay people. And there were people who came from [my] hometown, when they saw me [being gay].The problem is the way they talk [about my being gay], you know in our place where we come from. In our society (community), people know if you are gay, you will be a daily talk to the society. People are talking about you. You'll feel like now they are doing this like a joke. They are making it something that they can laugh, and then attack you. [For my parents], in a way because they are talking about your child, and talking about bad things about your child, it's a sin, it's not good, what is he doing? He has to go to Sangomas, he has to go to this side. My parents were supporting me in the way they were saying that: 'If people are calling you moffie or whatever'; they kept saying to me: 'please if they are doing this to you, just go to the police station, and report them and sue them because they can't do this to you, because you are not born by them (raised by them). Why should you call you moffie? As your parents we don't call [you] by names, why they are doing this. And just go to the police station and report them'. [That] was the support I get from them. Even people are talking about me, about my sexuality, [saying]: 'He is gay!' And my mother will say: 'I don't like this', and fight with them.'

As discussed in Chapter 1, coming out to the family can cause the gay individual to be alienated from his own family. This alienation can further "jeopardise the individual's intra-family relationships, associations with other ethnic-group members, and progress toward a healthy sense of self" (Savin-williams & Cohen, 1996: 157). In many African communities, children are expected to live up to their parents' expectations, amongst which heterosexual marriage and raising children are the most fundamental (Kendall, 1998; Howard, 1998: 191). Homosexuality is obviously detrimental to the fulfilment of those expectations. To neglect such obligations often indicates that "a child is selfish; having only his/her own pleasure in mind rather than the community good" (Savin-williams & Cohen, 1996: 157). Since there is hardly a tradition of talking about sexuality in many African cultures, it is then very tricky for an ethnic/sexual-minority youth to discuss sexual identity, beliefs, and practices with family members (ibid: 159). Under such circumstances, for a gay youth to come out publicly and fearlessly he/she runs the risk of humiliating that which is most important in his/her life: "the close-knit" family (ibid). Nevertheless, in post-apartheid South Africa, cultural values at large cannot override the capacity of legal rights given to the individual; in which case it is the

parents who are selfish for imposing their own wish onto their children. Parents and children are separate physical entities, born into a different time era, and play different social roles according to their given historical trends. In comparison, their children are more likely to have better opportunities to take a more individualised life-route. It is even more so now that South African gay couples can legally adopt children. They play an important functional role in society, in terms of reducing poverty and starvation in South Africa. Furthermore, for child-adopting gay men and lesbians who are disowned by their own families, the home provided by the "gay family is, not simply an adoption of heterosexual models, but more fundamentally, of receiving a grounding in a lost family and perhaps thereby...restoring the bonds with the family one has left, or of re-entering 'normal' life by joining once again the sequence of generations" (Erion, 2004: 36). In this way parents (or past generations) should not be scornful of what the current generations are offered, although it always takes time for cultural sanctions to catch up with legal progress, which may necessarily cause conflict and sacrifice in various social institutions such as the family. Babhuti's story demonstrates that, even in a case where parents are supportive of their child's homosexuality, they cannot stop the public scandal of their child's sexuality. No matter how hard the parents strike back to protect the child, it can be an endless task. For the child, however, parents' acceptance of his/her homosexuality can be the most encouraging gift: their approval of the child's behaviour is a direct building block to his/her sense of self-worth because parents play the primary role in socialising the child into the world. The positive side to Babhuti's story shows that it is possible for parents to do their best to adjust their offspring's homosexuality, so as to prioritise and reinterpret its values, maintaining (in Babhuti's father's words): 'You are my child and I love you no matter what'.

4.3.3   My Girlfriend's Advice

Jacob: I came to Rhodes, and then low and behold, my ex-girlfriend, who I was with, was at Rhodes! Look at us, we are together again. I think about it now: "Wow, irony there!" We still have our unresolved things, and we still love each other very much, and we get to do our things, and we did our things. And it was great, but then, because I was exposed to this immense wave of, like, 'gay culture', so to speak - even if there is no real 'gay culture'; that's another thing which I had issue with - but hey, it was like: 'Oh, shit! Oh, shit! Oh, shit!' You know. I was even, like, asking myself: 'Am I doing the right thing?' It was like: 'I am in this relationship, but here are all these gay people, I am seeing them like this. And I felt like: 'perhaps I am being dishonest'. And like: 'Oh, I love my darling, because she is such a delight.' Because I remember: "We are lying in bed the one morning, she was like: 'You know, sometimes I really think you are not attracted to me as a woman.' [I was like]: 'What? What? What do you mean?' And she was like: 'No, sometimes I just think that you might even be gay,

and you just haven't noticed yet'. And I was like: 'No, don't be silly now, look we are together, we have been together, and it was wonderful, it was great. I don't see what you are on about'. And she was like: 'Well, OK'. Like, you know, it was left alone. And then, again it would come up. I was gonna get very frustrated. I will be like: 'But why? But why? But why?' I figured that's because if I had something repressed, I did not want to deal with it at that stage. So also, it was the conflict between, like, "this is what I want *now*: being with this woman, and it's that I really hold my dear to my heart, and it is really something I want to pursue and go on with." But at the same time, like, there was the sting that might come in between that. And, again, it was kind of like pushing it away sort of thing. We had our fights because of my own things, really, we just weren't, we weren't compatible enough as a couple, we just... at that stage we wanted two very different things. And I wasn't ready to give her what she wanted from me.

Jacob: At that particular period, I needed to be exposed. I was trying to reconstruct my own identity, then we broke up, because of our things, but in between that there was a moment where I was very naughty: when I met a boy, and we did things and then it wasn't so good. But I told her about it, she was like: she understood everything, and then…So we manage to resolve that, and then, perhaps, I thought that was just a once-off thing, ja. I was just testing the waters, you know? Kind of getting this 'gay thing' out of my system. Now it *is* out of my system. But then it was fine, coz we resolved our issues and she was like: 'Well look, it is just something you need to get out of yourself," now it's fine, so like, I don't think I broke up with her largely because of this particular thing (the hook-up), like she is still my best friend. It wasn't because of that. It wasn't because she felt like she can't do anything now because she has this gay boyfriend. It was just because we were just incompatible, but this is my interpretation of it. I discuss that link with her, she says she feels the same, but I am not entirely certain about it, coz you know how things are: Like, you know? You don't want to hurt people, but like, we've always been honest with each other, so, like, I am taking her word for it.

There were unfulfilled gaps between Jacob and his girlfriend, which were not so much tied in with the issue of sexuality but rather with their self-esteem and personality development. It is 'natural' for individuals to want different things at different stages of their lives, yet there is no universal procedure that inculcates individuals with an ideal lifestyle so that they all achieve universal happiness overnight. This is the pain of growing up, but apart from which there is always something extra – something seemingly superfluous, yet oddly determinative – for the homosexual youth; that which he/she has to find for him/herself sexually. This sometimes can only be accomplished by experimenting sexually. The stories of sexual cruising and irregular patterns of one-night-stands are frequently told by many gay men (Bell, 2003: 9) as part of their sexual exploration and crisis management. Isaacs and Mckendrick (1992: 25) contend that homosexual identification is a tripartite experience of development in which self-esteem, homosexuality, and crisis are related. Self-esteem is linked to "body satisfaction and body self-image" (La Torre & Wendenburg, 1983; Prytula et

al., 1979, in ibid: 34), as well as "to aspects which comprise features of an integrated ego" (Stricklin, 1974, in ibid). Jacob's self-esteem was built upon the respect of his personal space, which he sought to maintain for himself and perhaps for the special one who was yet to come. However, such a space had been preoccupied by his girlfriend. The girlfriend wanted a stable relationship, yet Jacob on the contrary felt like he was missing out on life. Notably, during the relationship Jacob was increasingly exposed to the gay and lesbian society at Rhodes. On the one level, the social collectivism of the gay society provides a safe zone for any sexually confused individuals to express and communicate their problems without having to worry about the opinion of the ordinary. And it is more likely that at least someone in the society has more or less shared the experience of the troubled individual. On another level, the very sociability of the gay society, whose emancipatory value and ever increasing uniformity that cannot be denounced legally in South Africa these days, surely offers the possibility to young gays and lesbians to speed up the process of self-acceptance (see also Eribon, 2004: 27). Jacob's sexuality was questioned by his girlfriend, which prompted him to interrogate himself and to explore his sexuality. Shortly after the girlfriend's advice, Jacob hooked up with a guy who was also in the process of exploring his sexuality. Although the story's course was unpleasing, Jacob took a step to come out afterwards.

4.3.4   The Words of My Psychiatrist

Elakhe: [...After I finished my second year at Rhodes, during the December vacation] I was at home. We were sitting around the table for supper, and I'm like: 'I have an announcement to make'. My mother, my (step) dad and my younger brother were sitting there as well. I said: 'I am gay'. And then my mother was like: 'We'll talk about this after supper.' We just ignored it till after supper. She called me to the lounge later that night, and she was like: 'What is this? You are gay? You know, we have to talk about it.' Like… It upset both of them (mom and dad). Even through the whole meeting, he (my step-dad) didn't say anything, my mom was talking about how I need therapy. She says: 'Please promise me; please promise me you are going to see a therapist.' So I'm like: 'I promise, I'm gonna see a therapist about this.' So I go and see a therapist for a very long time, a couple of months - and I'm glad I went, because it helped me to get rid of a lot of self-loathing. [There was also] a lot of self-learning - So I decided to see a therapist. We just spoke, and then afterwards, I just felt OK about myself, OK about being queer. I was no longer an evil person, a perverted person, a dirty person. The therapy helped a lot. I mean, I wanted to die. I wanted to kill myself. I hated myself. I was depressed. I hated it, when I didn't want to be this perverted 'gay person'. This is not how I wanted my life, I didn't know how I could excel in life, how I could excel and become the person I wanted to be, achieve the things I wanted to achieve, if I was gonna be queer, you know? And I saw 'queer' as something disgraceful, not the thing to be.

Me: Did your mother expect the result of the therapy that you got, for the fact that you actually felt more confident about being gay?

Elakhe: No, of course not. My mother wanted me to get over it. She thought the therapy would cure it. In fact, her words were like, "Are you sure you are gay, maybe something [has caused you to feel this way at the moment], hormones, just seeing new ideas - it doesn't mean you are gay. It's normal to be a little confused about your sexuality at times, just promise me you will see a therapist before you started telling people that you were gay."

Elakhe's mother did not approve of his sexuality. She hoped that the therapist would somehow bring Elakhe back to 'normal' by assuming that perhaps somewhere during puberty, by being exposed to radical ideas, Elakhe had learned 'new' and unnecessary ways of exploring his sexuality. For the mother, Elakhe was 'caught' in homosexuality as if he was going through a temporary phase and that in time he would recover 'naturally'. The reality, however, is quite the opposite. Homosexuality and heterosexuality cannot be switched around according to one's own wish, as if it is a matter of choosing one's favourite candy for the day. Besides, Elakhe also addressed a contradictory side to his mother's attitudes in the interview. He remembered one instance where his mother showed great empathy about gay people as she saw a piece of news related to LGBTI issues on TV. So in a sense she was somehow 'disposed' toward accepting homosexuals, but only when that involved people other than her own child. Perhaps there were sensible sides to this contradiction if one took into account the mother's personal relationship with Elakhe. On the one hand, Elakhe grew up in the absence of his biological parents - he was raised by his grandparents - in which case the mother might have felt guilty about not being there to raise him 'straight', or perhaps the lack of a father figure had caused Elakhe to 'go' queer. Thus her view of her own son's homosexuality could have been influenced more by her lack of emotional investment in Elakhe's life, rather than her own knowledge of homosexuality. On the other hand, perhaps what concerned the mother the most was not necessarily the question of whether homosexuality was 'immutable', but rather the perception that her son's homosexual 'condition' was simply a misfortune.

Me: Did she talk to the therapist in person?

Elakhe: No.

Me: Never?

Elakhe: Ja. She let me find a therapist, whoever the therapist was going to be, so I can feel comfortable talking to him. And then, that's when I found Michael, that's the person I was seeing.

Me: So the therapist didn't say anything bad about homosexuality?

Elakhe: No, it's so funny when I told him. [I said]: "You know that, I'm gay, but you know sometimes there are instances where I will find a girl attractive, every now and then, like once in a blue moon and it's just confusing".

Me: Did you say that for a purpose?

Elakhe: That *was* what I was actually feeling. Because there were girls, even now, every now and then, that I find attractive. Even though I find her attractive, it's not the same as my attraction to a boy, for instance, but it's definitely not just platonic. But it is not nearly as strong as it is when it happens with a guy. And with guys it happens all the time, it doesn't just happen once in a while. I don't have to attempt, it just comes.

Me: What did he say about it?

Elakhe: And his reaction was: 'So you are a gay guy who's sometimes attracted to women.' But he just summed it up like it that, he said it so casually, there was nothing complicated, there was nothing to be ashamed of, there was nothing.

Me: Was it a very successful therapy?

Elakhe: Yes. I was like: "Why can't I see it that way: that I am just a gay guy who's sometimes attracted to women? Why do I have to make an issue out of it? Why can't I just see it – the way he said, you know?" And it was just fantastic when I started thinking that way: "I'm just me, I like boys, and so what's wrong with that? It doesn't change anything else; there is nothing wrong with being that way, you know?" So that's why I'm glad I went to therapy, because I completely changed what I had thought about myself, you know? And I want to *live* now, you know? Now I want to do so *much* now, for myself.

Me: Did you tell this to your mother?

Elakhe: Yes, I told this to my mother. And she was still doubtful about the gay part, she didn't like it; [she says to me]: "you still got a lot of therapy to do basically." And I wasn't supposed to tell anyone in the family, but I didn't do that. I thought: "No, screw that." [I] changed my status on Facebook, and I told everyone, I told my family, everyone.

Me: Do you ever wish that you have a chance to tell them (your grandparents)?

Elakhe: They know, I've told them, they know, I told them at their grave.

The therapist was able to channel Elakhe's negative responses towards their origins and showed him that there was nothing wrong about his homosexuality: in fact if it was not for the way that he had always felt, he would have been an average heterosexual man all along. Savin-Williams and Cohen (1996: 127) have argued that "a person establishes contact

with the real self when the public self is made congruent with it". Thus the therapist simply redefined homosexuality in a positive and constructive manner, which was rarely given in the public, so that Elakhe was able to feel good about who he was (is). As Eribon (2004: 65) stated, given the alternative "to be what one really is can attenuate the weight of deviance that is lived as a personal drama". If one feels good about who he/she is, one will present his/her sexuality as just a part of his/her self (see Eichberg, 1990: 45). Hammersmith and Weinberg (1973, in Isaacs & Mckendrick, 1992: 35) have also found that "a commitment to a so-called deviant identity is positively correlated with significant others' support of that identity, and that those not fully committed to their identity (or who are in flux) have less support and a minimised or distorted image of the self". Thus what was the most constructive to Elakhe's homosexual identification was not entirely the therapist's expertise per se, but rather that, as an external agency, the therapist could just normalise homosexuality in a vividly casual manner as if Elakhe's suffering was simply misguided. Similar to the coming out narratives discussed above, one ought to realise that conflicts and suffering can build to a point of transformation. And oftentimes such a transformation needs to be initiated by external agencies or supportive structures, be that a book, a friend, or a therapist. The external agency is able to evoke the capacity and willpower of the individual to transform him/herself at a lower emotional cost than when he/she does it alone. Notably, "the necessary energy to do so [is] not only produced by his/her memories, but also by the permanent traces, the persistence of the feelings experienced during childhood and adolescence, feelings that have deeply structured the personal identity of many young gay people" (Eribon, 2004: 28). This transformation is simultaneously a process of de-stigmatising homosexuality, providing ways to rebuild one's self-esteem regarding their sexuality. For Elakhe, the rewards for being true to oneself are illuminating and the self-respect and self-esteem that follow cannot be explained by words until one experiences it him/herself (see Eichberg, 1990: 51).

4.3.5   *From Praying to Clubbing*

> **K**: I left (the church) when I started working, when I decided to stop going to church. Because I was having friends who are also born-again (Christians) and we used to sing together in church. And one day I just told them: 'Look, guys, we are in a band. Look, I can't be friends with you and you don't really know a very important part of me. I am like this (gay). So I have to tell you, I don't know what your belief is, I don't know if you agree. Or, you don't wanna be my friends anymore, you don't wanna sing with me anymore, or you'll move out of the band or whatever. Otherwise, I am gay.' And it's settled in my mind. I have tried to hide. I have done that already, with the church thing. So I can't anymore. But [eventually I realised that] I wasn't doing the church thing to hide, it just became convenient.

Me: Did you ever talk to the people in the gay society in UCT?

K: I was too sacred, I was a Christian. You know, how can a HP person go to the gay society? You'll be on the UCT newsletter. They'll probably put it there: 'An HP student went and inquired...' But anyway, so I told them, but the funny thing was they [also] told me: 'We're also gay. We are brothers[53].'

Me: Do they also belong to the HP?

K: Not necessarily HP, but they are also born-again Christians. They go to another church, they used to go to the HP as well while they were students, but in the end, they go to another local church in the township. So, now, we realise that we are like this (gay). One of them buys a car. We start going to clubs, we still Christians. But we are like: 'Let's just, we've never been to clubs. We've been Christians going to church reading the Bible. That's what we've been doing. We don't know anything else'. So we were like: 'let's go to Long Street, go and check it out.' And we finally go to places, and we see people, we meet people.' We didn't drink - initially anyway. And then, we started going a couple of times with other people. And then, we started like: 'Let's just have one cider.' You know, then gradually we started drinking. And we started meeting people. Then a guy would say: 'Look here, I like you, can I have your number. Can I talk to you outside? Is it OK if I kiss you?' You know how it is in the club culture. But I mean, here, 'straight guys' would come up to you: 'Hey, I am so and so, I stay in [there and that]'...but in my view, if you are not feminine, it is hard for me think that you are gay, [although] I know it is the stereotype.

Plummer (1995: 25) asserts that "the first painful experiences of coming out can be resolved progressively once other lesbians and gays are met and their stories are heard". Along these lines, "earlier doubts – the guilt, identity confusions, secrecy and sexual frustration – can begin to be faced once others are met who can tell the story of being 'glad to be gay,' living contented and productive lives" (ibid: 85). In this story, K achieved a relatively consistent and integrated sense of self by coming out to his friends and by revealing himself to the gay community. This experience became an essence, and the new stories that followed afterwards could be held together to fortify his self-concept. As K frequented gay clubs, his homosexual identity was no longer imposed; neither was it stigmatised, from the outside. It was instead embraced, willingly, from within. K's experience reflects Isaacs and McKendrick's (1992: 35) assumption that, symbolically, "positive self-esteem is related to a person's sense of commitment to his sexual identity, and also related to the presence or absence of support from significant others, such as family, friends, and peers within the sub-culture". Gay culture has allowed for the creation of lasting bonds of friendship. Friends are for gay people what straight people might call a substitute family, except that "such an

---

[53] K's friends were also closeted black gay men at that time.

expression would seem to recognise what rather should be put into question: the legitimacy and naturalness of the heterosexual way of life" (Eribon, 2004: 35). For gay individuals, friends can sometimes replace the position of parents if they are disowned after coming out publicly.

> **K**: I came out in December 2007. Well, I officially came out when I was here in Cape Town. I went to gay clubs, I was with gay friends. I used to walk with my gay friends in the streets. I didn't give a shit. [But then] my mom found out because I went with someone who is my friend from home, and we're like a clique, we dress in a certain way obviously. We wear skinny jeans. In the township you wear skinny jeans you are just gay. They don't understand it. I mean, you know how gay people dress so people were starting to say [to my mother]: 'Ja, your son, the way he dresses…' My mom was like: 'Why, what's wrong with him?' They were like: 'Yoh! Your son, you know, he wears metallic jackets? What is that?' My mom is like: 'No, my son is studying in Cape Town, don't be jealous!' And then one day, someone told her that: 'Look, we saw your son with another man in a drinking place, so we know that your son is gay.' So she confronted me, so I told her: 'It is true.' [And then] she went ballistic. She wanted to know when I started all of this stuff. And she thought I was a Christian, this is the ultimate betrayal. My mom now is a Christian. So she was like: 'OK, I have to accept you because you are my son and I love you, but I am totally against being gay.' She upsets me because she doesn't have a choice. She would rather prefer I was straight. You know what I mean, unlike some moms not trying to change you (their children). She didn't say that she was against being gay, but I can see in her attitude. She would be like: 'Ja, you're going through a phase now.' She thinks that I am in a phase. But I understand she is not educated about sexuality. Because she will talk about my wife, like, one day I am get married. She is like: 'Your wife, what if your wife doesn't like me, doesn't treat me well when I am old. You must go and put me in an old-age home. And I don't want to stay with you with your wife.'

> **K**: It (coming out to my mother) gave me confidence, if my mom is OK with this, fuck the world. If my uncle or anybody else comes and dares tells me shit, my mom says she is OK with me; that's fine.

> **Me**: Why mom?

> **K**: I don't know, I think it is the maternal thing. She asked me why I didn't tell her, because she always knew.[54] She was like: 'You're my son, I raised you, of course I knew. But I didn't want to tell you because I didn't think I had to'. [But if she had told me her suspicion], it would make it (being gay) so much easier. [Even if I denied in the beginning, at least I knew that she might not have a big issue with it].

> **K**: After I came out, my mom freaked out, but she is fine now. I went back to do my third year. She was like: 'Look here, you are my son, I love the way you are.' And you know there is nothing you can do.' But I know that intrinsically she wishes that I could just be straight, to be normal. It is the same with me, I also wish just to be

---

[54] K's mother had suspected that K was gay; but because K never mentioned it to her, she simply wished that K was not gay.

normal. There is part of me that wishes that I was just straight so I didn't have to go through the whole drama of being gay, and being looked at and laughed at, scoffed, and discriminated and marginalised, segregated and alienated all of that stuff. The names, the verbal abuse, growing up, I wish I don't have to go through all of that; I was just a normal boy.

K: I mean just heterosexual feelings. I will do anything to be heterosexual. I flirt with a girl and I made out with a girl in a club once, it doesn't make me straight. If it was a pill, if you had to take treatment for six months, every morning, I will be waking up at five to take that pill. If they promise me that by six months you're gonna be straight, I promise you, I will. But there is a part of me that loves this, because this is all I know. This is all I have. This is all I ever had. And I don't think it would be easy for me to let it go, although I have that desire to be normal or straight.

In contrast to the rest of the participants, K was rather pessimistic about coming out because he felt as if coming out had completely coerced him into facing homophobia. He has reached a stage where he is forever conscious of being subjected to others' verbal attacks. Butler's (1999) illustration of the emancipatory effects of drag seems to point out ways in which some are conditioned and produced by those norms even if they fashion a different, queer, relationship to them. The power of the historically inherited heterosexual discourse has shaped one's existence in so profound a manner that even if one rejects his/her heterosexuality, he/she is still surrounded by the reminiscence of heterosexual mediums. As Eribon (2004: 24) succinctly describes,

"Such an identity assembles itself step by step, necessarily remaining a conflicted one, no matter which alternative one chooses: in one case, there will be conflicts between the submission to the heterosexual order and the internal pressure for relations with people of the same sex; in the other case, there will be conflicts between the refusal to submit and the calls permanently emitted by every social agency to return to heteronormative order, be they in the form of the ordinary violence produced by the most banal situations of family or school life or the traumatising of insult and attacks".

It is indisputable that everyone is subjugated to heterosexuality at birth, because one is brought into heterosexually organised social structures such as family, the schooling system and religion - these being the ascribed and absolute privilege of being heterosexual - without a choice and by submission (Eribon, 2004: 54). Coming out as a homosexual therefore immediately signifies the loss of almost all heterosexual privileges. For K, the continuation of melancholy arises from the unending, unfinishable mourning of the loss homosexuality causes to him, that is to say, the loss of the heterosexual way of life; hence the ways of 'being understood'. Yet, the model of social integration attached to the rejected ways of life continues to haunt K's aspirations and his subconscious as well as that of many other gay

men and lesbians (see ibid: 37). In addition, loss is also associated with object or relationship loss experienced during childhood and adolescence. In this regard, "because [of] the actual or symbolic experiences of loss accumulated from the past as well as the present, it is difficult for the person in crisis to perceive that the experiencing of loss makes way for gain" (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992: 50). This is the reason that K still mourns for the loss of heterosexual privileges. He expressed the ambiguity of being gay in the narrative: on the one hand, he is willing to participate in the gay cub culture; on the other hand, "sexual stigmas, homophobic responses, and moral judgements threaten and exploit his self-esteem and his sense of self-worth by denying him positive social and emotional support" (see ibid: 35).

Although coming out is infinitely self-liberating, the social apathy to homosexuality can be a lifetime battle to many gays and lesbians. And because the majority of heterosexual people have submitted to heterosexuality by reflex, their collectivism forms a non-negotiable superiority. Heterosexuals will always have a point of view on gays and lesbians concerning what the latter should or should not do. Their privilege is not only based on institutional grounds, but also on an alleged intellectual supremacy: the heterosexual seems to know more about homosexuality than the homosexual him/herself. Indeed many gay men and lesbians have gone through the same phase as K and eventually realise what coming out really meant all along: it initially takes a moment; it takes one's entire life thereafter. It is thus "not hard to understand why one of the structuring principles of gay and lesbian subjectivities consists in seeking out means to feel insult and violence, whether it be by way of dissimulation or by way of emigration to more hospitable locations" (Eribon, 200: 19). Before one's coming out, insult defines the horizon of one's relation to the world; it produces a fateful feeling in a child or an adolescent who feels himself or herself to be contravening the world's order as well as a lasting and even permanent feeling of insecurity, anxiety, and even terror and panic (ibid: 65). Sedgwick accurately insists on the way in which the feelings of shame experienced in childhood form "a near-inexhaustible source of transformational energy" (ibid: 30). How can the intensity of this shame be understood by those who have never experienced it? How can they understand the strength of the motivations produced by the desire to escape from it? And there are many other feelings or behaviours produced by the sexual 'dissonance' within a family that might be mentioned for the subsequent roles they play as a 'source of energy' for someone's project of self-reconstruction. Take, for instance, "the vague sentiment of being different or marginal, of being 'separate'; take the investment in literary or artistic models in the place of family or society-based models, because the former represent the only available resource. The gay child — we need to be able to think here of gay childhoods — first of all

turned in on himself and organised his own psychology and his rapport with others around his secret and his silence. It is from this inner life that he draws the ability to transform himself" (ibid: 30).

4.4 Coda: Gay Rape

I choose to end my data analysis with a rape story, not because it is one of the most excruciating and horrendous experiences that can ever happen to anyone, but because it manifests the structural exploitation of femininity, homosexuality and the homosexual individual's outness. Foucault (1985: 38, 47-9, 55, 64) has argued that one's sexual pleasure in any kind of intercourse is based upon the other's suffering; yet, what defines the suffering is not the actual sexual intercourse per se, but the power relation that is symbolically exercised through it.[55] The intrusive (often dominant and masculine) partner in any sexual relation is led to focus on themselves, their own needs and desires, with or without necessarily considering the other partner's needs and wants. Rape happens when this power relation is not negotiated properly before the sex. As discussed in the act described in *Knocks on My Door* (4.2.3), when Babhuti's passive sexual needs met the other two partners' sexual interests in him, their sexual intercourse was legitimate in their own terms; therefore Babhuti was not raped. In contrast, however, K's experience demonstrates the opposite.

> **K**: That was in February 2008. We were at the party. They were like straight people obviously. And someone came and asked me for a smoke, so I got to know people like that. That's how I got to know with this guy with the leather jacket. He asked [me] for one ciggie. I was like: 'No, if you want another one, just come to me. I can give you a ciggie'. So we went outside, kept smoking, we came back [in], he sat next to me in the couch, drinking, and chatting and stuff like that. So everything was fine, and he's got his two other friends, and we got acquainted everybody. I've met him before, but this was the second time I am seeing him. This guy who actually raped me; but anyway, I guess we got too drunk, there's too much happening. These three girls I was with and their boyfriends disappeared. I think I was at the toilet at the back door side. I didn't know where I was, and I come out, I am like: 'Where are they? Where are my friends?' They were like: 'you friends have left.' I'm like: 'No, my friends can't leave, I'm here with them. I don't have transport to go home. So they were like: 'No, you friends went to town, they went to the club...' He tells me this, the guy in the leather jacket. I'm like: 'so how am I gonna go home'. He's like: 'No, you can get a lift with me and my friends in our car.' So I was like: 'OK, fine.' So [we] continued drinking. Eventually, it's time to go home. [Then] the car wouldn't start. So [he said]: 'OK, actually, I don't stay far from here. My other two friends can look after themselves, you can sleep at my place, and then tomorrow you can take a taxi

---

[55] See 'Aphrodisia' in The History of Sexuality Vol. II the Use of Pleasure: 'Aphrodisia' are the "acts, gestures, and contacts that produce a certain form of pleasure" (Foucault, 1985: 55). Foucault (1985: 48-9) addresses the 'inferior quality' of 'Aphrodisia' (based on Plato's argument of moderation) by arguing that pleasure is "mixed with privation and suffering", and "depended on the body and its necessities".

and go home'. I was like: 'OK, fine, do you stay far?' He's like: 'Ten minutes walk, it's not that far.' And it's like one o'clock in the morning, you know? So I was like: 'OK, cool'. I don't really have options. So I went with him, we walked to his house, going at the back. He first checked if his parents were still awake. Nobody sees him, because he is straight to me. He was flirting with girls at the party, and I didn't introduce myself to anybody as being gay. I just mingled with everybody. I think I was the only gay person there. So now, we get into bed, and he starts asking me: 'look here, come on, you know.' He starts brushing me. And I'm like: 'Please, you're making me uncomfortable, I just wanna sleep'. He's like: 'No, you know, I'm also a gay.' I'm like: 'What do you mean you are also a gay?' He's like: 'Ja, I understand, you know what I mean.' I'm like: 'No, I don't know what you mean. How do you know I'm gay?' Coz I didn't tell you I'm gay. He's like: 'Come on, man, you don't have to make this difficult.'

K: So now, he kept begging me the whole night, we [were] both drunk. And I'm like: 'Dude, I just wanna sleep, let me sleep, and when I wake up in the morning. We'll do this some other time, or we'll talk about this some other time'. So I was like: 'they will be another time. We can't do this now that I'm drunk or whatever. If you really want to do this, there will be another time'. [But] he begs me and begs me for a long time, maybe it was longer than what I think, because I was drunk, but plus minus thirty minutes he was begging me. So eventually, I gave in. [I said]: 'Do you have condoms?' So he's like: 'Yes, I've got condoms.' He goes to his draw and takes out his condoms, so we started having sex. You know everything is all good, you know. And then [somehow] I liked him, because he's got this masculine [feature], and he speaks in Tsotsi-taal[56]. And I like guys speaking in Tsotsi-taal.

K: Tsotsi-taal is the language they speak in the townships, it is Xhosa, but it is a certain kind of slang, or jargon that they use. And it's very sexy; a guy who speaks like that, it's very sexy. I was like: 'this guy is quite cute.' He is talking to me; straight people normally don't give me the breath. He just doesn't care that I am gay. I'm like: 'I assume that he can see, but it doesn't matter to me.' You know, so now he's begging me to have sex. So I'm like: 'Ok, I might as well.' But anyway, hum, so we have sex and he comes, and then he reaches for another condom. And I'm like: 'Dude! That was it. I was doing you a favour. I'm gonna sleep now.' He's like: 'No, we can't, we're not done yet. You know. That was just a warm up.' I'm like. While we still arguing for the second round, there was a knock on the door, you know. I'm like: 'Please don't answer it'. I thought that was his girlfriend or his mom, somebody found out, or heard us quarrelling or whatever. But it's dark, the lights are very dim. So I'm like: 'you are not gonna answer the door. Let's just sleep.' He's like: 'I have to answer it, maybe it's my friend. So his friends started calling him: 'Hey X, you know.' They call him by his X. He's like: 'No, it's my friends. I have to open for them.' They probably have nowhere to sleep. I'm like: 'But didn't we leave your friends at the party, don't they stay around here. Why do they have to come [and] sleep here?' He's like: 'You don't understand. These are my friends. These are my bulls and buddies. You know.' But I'm like: 'But you brought me here, there is one bed.' How is four people gonna sleep in one bed. I'm not being inconsiderate. But it's two o'clock in the morning, and is there nowhere else they could have gone, you know.' Coz I would be uncomfortable, there're four straight guys in one bed. I didn't

---

[56] Tsotsi-taal is a Xhosa gangster dialect.

say that, but I'm thinking: 'These are four straight guys that I don't know that well, anyway. I just know them from a party.' So they come in, as they come in I'm already getting dressed, you know. He was like: 'why are you getting dressed. No, I'm getting dressed coz I'm gonna sleep, there is four of us in the bed.' And by now, his friends can see that something was happening between us, so they walked in and they said: 'Usincedile kakhulu'. It means you've helped us a lot. So I'm like: 'What's going on?' So he's like: 'Take off your clothes.' I was like: 'No, I told you, I'm going to sleep. I just wanna sleep, please!' So he slaps me: 'Bitch, take off your clothes'. So I'm like: 'what!' And he's like: 'Bitch, take off your clothes.' And I said: 'No, I'm not gonna do that'. He takes off my cloth. I started to struggle and fight a bit, but there were three of them. They're stronger than me, so they hold me down. Eventually take off my cloth, and he is the first one to take the turn, the guy I was with, the Xolani, so they do their thing.

K: (Silence) I don't want to think about it. So they raped me. They get down, and they take turns and I ask them to use condoms. But I plead with them before they hold me down: 'Please don't do this to me; please don't do this to me. Please, I'll leave now. I'll even leave now. Please, I'll walk home, I don't care if I get robbed on the way, it's very far. But please, I'll leave; just don't do this to me. I begged them, coz I could see that: 'OK, these guys are gonna rape me. And they just didn't care, they just became very violent, even this guy became violent. He hit me first. And so they raped me, and they take turns and then when they're done, the other guy says you wear nice cloth. You know, I'd like this jacket; we could get a lot of money for this jacket. So the other one says I like the shoes, you know. So this guy now whose place is, like: 'No, leave his stuff, don't take his cloth.' And the other one takes my belt; they took my cloth and throw them on the floor, so the other says: 'No, I'm taking the belt'. So now they are fighting now: 'Give his stuff back, you can go now.' It's probably now three, four in the morning. He's like: 'You can go.' I'm like: 'I'm in your township; I have to walk to another township. And in that township, people don't sleep; robbers are like lurking in the streets at night, looking for people to rob. It's the weekend. We're coming back from places they can drink, so it's not safe. But I eventually walked home. They didn't take my phone, I remember my phone. It was past four, but at least they didn't take all my cloth. They could have taken all my cloth, and I was gonna walk home just wearing underwear. But he told them against taking anything. But it was still violent. I'll never forgive them.

This narrative demonstrates one of the most precarious aspects of coming out. As discussed in Chapter 2, gay men's coming out is an intrinsic threat to both straight men and closeted gay men. In the first case, the behavioural diversity portrayed by gay men challenges the cultural dominance of straightness as well as hegemonic masculinity. In the second case, closeted gay men adore the life of the self-liberated yet fear the sexual stigmas of and cultural intolerance to homosexuality. Therefore coming out is often seen as a risky business – who knows and who doesn't. Fufu, K and Babhuti's encounters with 'straight black men' who want to have sex with other men discloses the major disjuncture of being black and gay: the belief that same-sex behaviour per se is an insufficient basis for being gay. Rather, male homosexuality is equated with effeminacy and assuming the passive role in sexual

intercourse (see also Savin-williams & Cohen, 1996: 160). However, having strong sexual preference for people of the same-sex is the most fundamental attribute of homosexuality. The so-called 'straight men' who have involved themselves in homoerotic practices persistently are the people who are unwilling to come out at the expense of 'devaluating' what they have cherished in their lives, be that masculinity, phallocentrism, or reproduction. For heterosexuals as well as some closeted homosexuals there is a belief that the transformation of these elements will lead to the collapse of society, but in practice such a transformation mainly instigates the deconstruction of the heterosexual self. There is no evidence suggesting that "society has moral boundaries that are maintained by forbidding homosexual activity, or that society as a whole gains by the prohibition, or that the patterns we have described here are explained by their consequences" (Brytryn & Greenburg, 1982: 543). It is not that closeted individuals have no choice as if they are completely caged by social structure. Instead the cause of closetedness is the fear of losing the social benefits of being straight.

As in the narrative, the perpetrator initially flirted with girls so as to fully employ his masculinity at the party. At the same time, K took this man's masculinity as a performance of straightness. In a mirror image, however, the fact that the perpetrator took K's femininity as the evidence of being gay had assigned K to a vulnerable and sexually available position. Later, the fact that the perpetrator disarmed his heterosexual self in private for sex took advantage of K's out status – because in K's heart he was desperate for a lover and a stable relationship. K did start to like the guy before the interruption of the other two perpetrators. He found the perpetrator's Tsotsi-taal, a representation of township gangster masculinity, very attractive, and thereby subconsciously approved of his femininity. This dynamic correlates with Bartky's (1990) argument that a significant attribute of the performance of femininity is to seek 'repressive satisfactions' (in Wolkomir, 2004: 736). They result from "the fulfilment of individual needs established in the interests of the dominant group and whose possession and satisfaction benefit not the subject who has them but a social order whose interest lies in domination" (ibid). For K, growing up feminine had led to his internalisation of men's standards of ideal femininity, therefore using them to evaluate his femininity. Indeed, gay men can experience conformity to the conventional definition of femininity equally rewarding because it allows them to assess their same-sex relationship based on the heterosexual model, and through which they also feel competent, worthy and even empowered. K's experience of rape surely gives "a description of the mechanism by which a particular relation to reading is established for gay men and by which they are led to

identify with female characters, because perhaps this is the only way for them to live out, by proxy, an emotional relation with another man" (Eribon, 2004: 30). For K, again, being attracted to a man speaking Tsotsi-taal renders a sense of being desired or perhaps loved. Aforementioned in Chapter 1, however, homosexual behaviour is meaningless when it happens in any non-negotiated spaces. In this narrative, although negotiation happened before the actual gang rape, same-sex preference had different positions in the actors' self-concepts. The rapists may indeed be homosexuals. The violence of rape worked "to express their rage/anger towards themselves as a result of a dual lifestyle" (see Isaacs & Mckendrick, 1992: 35).

The perpetrators' role in the story shows that a gay man can participate in the 'gay world' without losing his place in the straight world: "he will have two (or more) identities, one attached to his professional insertion in the social world (or to his ethnic origin) and another attached to his leisure time – one identity for the daytime, another for the night and the weekends. This often produces the tension inherent in a difficult 'double life', but it also permits a good many gay men to resist oppression and marginalisation" (Eribon, 2004: 26-7). Such a life of duality has allowed many closeted gay men who are good at taking the roles of others to sexually exploit their own people (Mead, in Hansen, 1976: 67). This phenomenon corresponds to Torronen's critique of "Durkheim and contemporary Marxism's view of agency that societies do not essentially self-reproduce systems, i.e. that society coerces its members to behave in ways that exhibit, reinforce and ultimately reproduce extant social arrangement" (Stryker, 1987: 93). This argument can be interpreted as: 1) individual agency is self-productive/reproductive rather than entirely determined by social structure; 2) social structure operates within group interaction which in effect produces identity categories such as sexuality as well as organised response to individual action. But the problem is that, because of the structural influence, the identity category and its organised response are symmetrically hierarchicised. In many cases, organised response initiates a hierarchy of salience of socially prescribed identities, by which individual's symbol manipulating ability or the ability to role-take is also alienated in terms of the cost of maintaining an already learned identity. In consequence, sexuality becomes a form of risk business because individuals are socialised to invest in identities that are conveniently lucrative in terms of the merits of organised response (i.e. avoid identities that are stigmatised). From an interactionist perspective, the loss of organised response means the collapse of one's self-concept hence the deconstruction of social reality. As all participants have reported, coming out has made their perception of the world shift tremendously: they are able to see the world from another

dimension – a dimension adopted through the suffering of gender conformity, the 'positional suffering' of being concealed in the closet, and the courageous event of coming out.

4.5 <u>Conclusion</u>

In this chapter, the interpretation of the gay men's stories has elucidated both the structural influence to the social construction of homosexuality and the individual acquisition of homosexuality. The themes featured in the narratives of coming out to self have revealed major disjunctures in the conceptualisation of sex, gender, desire, and sexuality, as well as the complex relationships between them. The participants' experiences have, to an extent, reflected the dominant model of the coming out story (see 1.6), in which their hiding, confusion and suffering build to a point of transformation. In the section on coming out to others, it has been tangible throughout that external agencies and supportive structures are vital to the successful coming out of homosexual individuals; amongst which family, friends and the gay community are inextricable with the reconstruction of the homosexual individual's personal reality. The analysis raises a significant conceptualisation of disjunctures within conventional knowledge of sexuality. These disjunctures include: 1) gender conformity and its inherent relation to the heterosexualisation of desire; 2) problems of masculinity pertaining to being black and gay; 3) the religious condemnation of homosexuality in the black community. These elements are oftentimes interwoven with each other so as to conceal the negative effects of each element. In the following chapter, I will explore these disjunctures respectively and also try to achieve a possible social impetus for change.

Chapter 5 Revealing Disjunctures

5.1 <u>Introduction</u>

As argued in Chapter 4, the disjunctures within conventional knowledge of black homosexual identity are entrenched primarily in the heterosexualisation of desire through gender conformity. This is not a racial imperative per se, but a form of interpellation that is experienced in all human societies. To analyse interpellation in terms of gender conformity requires us to look at how the sex/gender category is personified as a bodily substance through various social institutions such as the family, education, and religion. Therefore in this chapter, I begin by investigating heterosexuality by drawing on Butler's post-structuralist analyses of gender, body, and performance in relationship to Mead's concepts of self and role-taking. The goal is to deconstruct the gendered reality so as to understand why all the respondents have, to varying degrees, suffered from being gay and that coming out has been the demarcation between suffering and self-acceptance. The proceeding section focuses on the disjunctures between blackness and gayness, which include: 1) the historical transition of masculinity in the black community of South Africa, and its consequences to homosexual identification; 2) the manipulation of Christian doctrine in shaping gender relations amongst men, and between men and women; and 3) issues related to reproduction. While my initial aim was to merely elucidate the proposed disjunctures, it seems propitious to further point individuals in the direction of a possible solution. Since this study is the first of its kind in South Africa, and knowing that, according to symbolic interactionism, the solution to a problem lies within the reconstruction of how that problem is experienced in interaction, I have decided to conclude this chapter by looking at socialisation, and introducing a homosexual repertoire in education, which could perhaps ease the process of homosexual identification and coming out.

5.2 <u>Primary Disjuncture: the Heterosexualisation of Desire</u>

The most fundamental disjuncture within homosexual identification is the heterosexualisation of desire, which is inextricably connected to gender conformity and sexual binarism. The participants' stories have demonstrated that given the same-sex clause in the Bill of Rights and the legitimatisation of same-sex marriage in South Africa, the public discourse of sexuality is still unreflectively heterosexual; and furthermore, compulsory heterosexuality is barely realised in practice. The public consciousness is still centred on the pernicious belief that there is "an innate connection between the fact of being biologically male or female (that is, having appropriate sex organs and reproductive potentialities) and the correct form of

erotic behaviour (usually genital intercourse between men and women)" (Weeks, 1986: 13). This assumption is a historical fallacy prevalent in many societies, especially with the influence of Christianity: the conventional knowledge of sex presupposes an ascribed heterosexuality in human biology which dispenses with language acquisition, socialisation and puberty.[57] On the contrary, the view that biological sex assumes a static causal relationship between the maturity of genitalia and the growth of heterosexual desire is preposterous. As Kinsey (1948) notes:

> "The publicly pretended code of morals, our social organisation, our marriage customs, our sex laws, and our educational and religious systems are based upon an assumption that individuals are much alike sexually and that it is an equally simple matter for all of them to confine their behaviour to the single pattern which the mores dictate" (in Weeks, 1986: 77).

Sedgewick (1990: 29) contends that biological sex which tends to cluster most tensely around certain genital sensations is not adequately defined by its array of acts, expectations, narratives, pleasures, identity-formations, and knowledge in both women and men. This means that the sexual differences between men and women, which should be known as reproductive differences in essence, do not inculcate a given individual with the ways he/she feels most comfortable to engage in sex. O'Brien (1981: 14-5, 32) argues that reproductive difference in practice creates different reproductive consciousnesses for men and women, which are manifested in various forms of social conduct, such as the sexual division of labour. From a Marxist perspective, the bodily substance of the sex/gender category is materialised only in labour, and so is any other form of behaviour. Sex, therefore, maintains a duality: "the term refers both to an act and to a category of person, to a practice and gender" (Weeks, 1986: 13). As portrayed in my data analysis, the very duality of sex precludes homosexuality from being identified: the participants learned very early on from many sources that natural sex was what took place with members of the 'opposite' sex. 'Sex' between people of the 'same sex' was therefore, by definition, 'unnatural' (see also ibid). This kind of misconception has led Butler (1999: 22) to argue that the category of sex, prior to any sexual difference, is constructed through the mode of heterosexuality; and the notion

---

[57] Exodus' belief (in Wolkomir, 2004: 744) that emotional needs for same-sex bonding are mistakenly sexualised at puberty, thereby creating homosexual desire, is indeed mythical. Kinsey's (1948) report has shown that puberty alone does not determine one's sexual sources of erotic response; instead it only signifies one's level of maturity for reproduction. His data verifies that "originally the pre-adolescent boy erects indiscriminately to the whole array of emotional situations, whether they be sexual or non-sexual in nature. By his late teens the male has been so conditioned that he rarely responds except [as] a direct result [of the] stimulation of genitalia, or to psychic situation[s] that are specifically sexual" (in Segal, 1994: 91).

of sex is a normative and regulatory ideal that produces the bodies it governs (Butler, 1993: 1-2). The body is only recognised by the cultural codification (i.e. meaning) of its materiality, rather than by the biological function of genitalia.

For the symbolic interactionist, the social embodiment of sex is accomplished primarily through language acquisition. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler (1993: 68) emphasises the materiality of language, and the linguistic nature of the materiality, by arguing that "language and materiality are not opposed, and what is material never fully escapes from the process by which it is signified". The naming of one's sex involves "the differentiating relations by which speaking subjects come into being" (ibid: 7). Sex is therefore a particular 'reading' of one's body that has no existence outside the language of 'that reading'. The relationship between the body and the naming of that body is founded upon certain assumptions that may not necessarily be in the best interests of that body carrier; or reversely, "the ways in which the very thinkable/sayable of what is possible in the 'sexed' life are foreclosed by certain habitual and violent presumptions" (Butler, 1999: viii).

Sexual differences are not reproductive differences as such. The sexual binary derived from reproductive biology is irrelevant to our lives since we rarely describe our sexual differences as reproductive differences. For instance, what is the point of knowing whether one's boss has a penis or a vagina; it does not change the fact that he/she is the employer? The point here is not to prove conventional gender structures useless, but to show that "there are other kinds of differences among people, differences in shape and size, in earlobe formation and the lengths of noses etc., but we do not ask when a child enters the world what species of earlobe it has" (Wittig, in Salih & Butler, 2004: 31). We instead immediately ask about certain sexually differentiated anatomical traits because we assume that those traits will in some sense determine that one's social destiny, and that destiny is structured by a gender system predicated upon the alleged naturalness of binary opposites and, consequently, heterosexuality.

Butler's (1993: 9) interpretation of the body coincides with that of the situational interactionist account, which perceives the body as a "process of materialisation that stabilises over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface [that] we call matter". The social embodiment of sex reiterates, in performance, a set of norms "to the extent that it not only requires an act-like status in the present, but also conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition" (ibid: 12). In this manner, "to theorise sex in terms of interpellation is to imply that one's body parts (particularly penis and vagina) are not simply and 'naturally there' from birth onwards, but one is 'performatively'

161

constituted when one's body is categorised as either 'male' or 'female'" (Salih, 2002: 79). For Butler, the sexing of the body is literally 'interpolated' at one's birth; she writes (1993: 7-8):

> "Considering the medical interpellation which (the recent emergence of the sonogram notwithstanding) shifts an infant from an 'it' to a 'she' or a 'he', and in that naming the girl is 'girled', brought into the domain of language and kinship through the interpellation of gender. But that 'girling' of the girl does not end there; in the contrary, that founding interpellation is reiterated by various authorities and throughout the various intervals of time to reinforce or contest this naturalised effect. The naming is at once the setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm".

At the scene of a newly born infant, hardly anyone announce: "look, 'it' has a penis." Instead, one yells with excitement: 'Oh, look, it's a boy!' By that statement, the infant is sexed into society, which has immediately brought him numerous tacit anticipations especially the continuation of his own kin for his own future. "To differentiate infants in the way that we do, [is to] restate heterosexuality as a precondition for human identity, and posit this constraining norm in the guise of a natural fact" (Salih & Butler, 2004: 31). Certainly the sexing does not end at one's birth. The consolidation of sexual binarism requires the social practice of "valorising certain anatomical features as being definitive not only of anatomical sex but of sexual identity" (ibid).

To perform, says Butler, is to cite (or to role-take) the symbolic figure of both significant others and generalised others. For example, the conventional family allows children to imitate the role of their parents – the clothes they wear respectively, the way they speak to each other, the manner they express love to each other – so as to construct their sexuality as provisionally heterosexual. Also seen in my participants' stories, at school, boys and girls were expected to look up to their elders by 'ritually imitating' (Goffman, 1967) their roles and behaviours, and they were also urged to gain satisfaction from completing gendered tasks respectively – girls sought to excel in arts and literature, whereas boys had to occupy the fields of science and sports. Accordingly, the socialisation process can be seen as "the repeated stylisation of the body" (Butler, 1999: 33): individuals practice "a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeals over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (ibid: 31; & Salih, 2002: 81). Nonetheless, the 'sexes' as materialised bodies are actually imitations without having the original copies of their bodies: although our ability to role-take is perhaps the only way by which we come to know ourselves as well as to establish our individuality (further discussed in 5.4); it is by the same

ability that we later learn to reject such roles in order to create new ones. This dialectical procedure has posed further criticism on the sex/gender distinction in that what seems to be biological and cultural may not stand alone as such. Butler (1993: 5) notes:

> "The natural is constructed as that which is also without value; moreover, it assumes its value at the same time that it assumes its social character, that is, at the same time that nature relinquishes itself as the natural. According to this view, then, the social construction of the natural presupposes the cancellation of the natural by the social. In so far as it relies on this construal, the sex/gender distinction founders along parallel lines; if gender is the social significance that sex assumes within a given culture – and for the sake of argument we will let 'social' and 'cultural' stand in an uneasy inter-changeability – then what, if anything, is left of 'sex' once it assumed its social character as gender?"

Along these lines, Butler "dispenses with the idea that either gender or sex is an 'abiding substance' by arguing that a heterosexual heterosexist culture establishes the coherence of those categories in order to perpetuate 'compulsory heterosexuality' – the dominant order in which men and women are required or even forced to be heterosexual" (in Salih, 2002: 49). On the one level, if gender is culturally constructed despite whatever biological intractability sex appears to have; then the distinction itself permits gender to be a multiple interpretation of biological sex (Butler, 1999: 9-10), in which case there should ideally be more than two genders. There is also no evidence suggesting that sex and gender categories ought to remain, in any discourse, a symmetrical binary setting. The concept of gender can be modified based on the structure of variation in much the same way as we have discovered colours as the variations of the sunlight through air. On another level, "when the constructed status of gender is theorised as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a 'free-floating' artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just [as] easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one" (ibid). Given this assumption, that is to say, if the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between biological sex and gender, then there should be some peculiar models of sexual identities such as 'female=masculine=woman=heterosexual', or 'male=feminine=woman=heterosexual'. Indeed, if we illustrate the potential models of sexualities based on the sex/gender category; then we obtain 24 variations of sexual identities according sexual orientation, presented in the table below:[58]

---

[58] I have excluded the categories of transsexual and intersexual from the table for their complexity in theory, which would necessarily affect the focus of my discussion.

Table 3: (Note that biological sex and sexual orientation are inflexible variables,[59] whereas gender identity and gender roles are flexible variables)

Biological Sex	Gender Identity	Prescribed Gender Role	Sexual Orientation
Male	masculine	man	heterosexual/homosexual/bisexual
Male	masculine	woman	heterosexual/homosexual/bisexual
Male	feminine	man	heterosexual/homosexual/bisexual
Male	feminine	woman	heterosexual/homosexual/bisexual

Biological Sex	Gender Identity	Prescribed Gender Role	Sexual Orientation
female	masculine	man	heterosexual/homosexual/bisexual
female	masculine	woman	heterosexual/homosexual/bisexual
female	feminine	man	heterosexual/homosexual/bisexual
female	feminine	woman	heterosexual/homosexual/bisexual

Kinsey's (1948) investigation on the patterns of orgasm[60] and sexual aging[61] across men and women has revealed that there is no scientific proof, if not for reproductive purposes, that can certify sexual compatibility between men and women. What can be sexual for one person may not be sexual for the other. The foundation of any erotic response is biological, yet the source of all erotic responses is psycho-social,[62] because the term 'sexual' indicates not only the uncertainty of human emotions but also the various interactive procedures through which sexual meanings are established. Such procedures are constitutive of socialisation along with puberty. We are not self-identical sexual beings, but rather our 'sexed' identities are socially constructed to be identical. The problem is that the structure and contents of conventional

---

[59] The masculinity/femininity and homosexual/heterosexual dichotomies are used here as the two poles of two separate spectrums respectively (Pillard, 1991: 41), in which individuals are located somewhere on each spectrum; yet, each location has no necessary biological correlations with the other.

[60] Men and women are not programmed to achieve orgasm simultaneously during heterosexual intercourse. Kinsey collected massive evidence of sexual dissimilarity. Before marriage, Kinsey's average male has experienced 1523 orgasms compared to the average woman's 223 orgasms. After marriage, almost all husbands achieved orgasm in almost all acts of intercourse, whereas at first only 39 per cent of wives experienced orgasm always or almost always, and after twenty years only around 50 per cent almost always experienced orgasm in coital sex, while 15 per cent never had (in ibid: 90-1).

[61] Kinsey's research also "points out the different patterns of sexual aging in men and women, making them seem, as Paul Robinson would later comment, more like 'ships passing the night' than sexual[ly] compatible creatures" (in ibid). Kinsey's (1948, in ibid) survey revealed men reaching their peak sexual performance 'somewhere around '16 or 17 years of age', and in decline from their late teens; women, however, only reached their maximum level of sexual activity in their early thirties and retained it into their fifties and sixties.

[62] The construction of sexual drive or erotic response, see Freud (1918: 66-7): "Diverse sexual constitutions" and "Paths of opposite influences."

sexual education are heterosexual whereby so much has been taken for granted in socialisation.

Normative Western and contemporary African assumptions (see Epprecht, 1998b, 2004; Morrell, 1998) about sexuality hold that "anatomical sex causes gender development which, in turn, causes sexual desire. The individual is assumed to be anatomically 'hard wired' to develop birth genitalia which correlate with gender behaviour" (in Preves, 2000: 29). As a result, the conventional knowledge of heterosexuality is limited to one pair of variations, namely the heteronormative model:

Male=masculine=man=heterosexual
Female=feminine=woman=heterosexual

This model characterises the heterosexual matrix of desire. As such it serves to mould individuals as self-identical and historically coherent and continuous 'subjects'. The other 22 variations are systematically negated because their formations of sex, gender behaviour and sexual orientation are culturally incoherent and discontinuous within heterosexual discourse. As discussed previously, one's self is marked by gender norms at one's birth, and is then successively shaped by highly gendered social institutions such as family and education. The construction of selfhood is initially inextricable with the heterosexual matrix because individuals "only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognisable standards of gender intelligibility" (Butler, 1999: 23). As Butler (ibid) argues,

"The coherence and continuity of the person are not logical or analytic features of personhood (selfhood), but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility. Inasmuch as identity is assured through the stabilising concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of the person is called into question by the cultural emergence of those incoherent or discontinuous gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined".

Gender intelligibility is the cornerstone of the heterosexualisation of desire. Since the introjection of conventional gender ideologies in our psyche is concurrently achieved with the development of intelligence, the interpellation of heterosexuality 'into' our biology is thus concealed in such a manner that we are heterosexual by default and unable to understand ourselves as anything other than heterosexual. The idea of sex/gender not only produces inadequate gender norms but also "excludes people who are not immediately captured or legitimated by the available gender norms" (Salih & Butlter, 2004: 3). As portrayed in my

data, three participants (Babhuti, Jacob, and K) experienced gender confusion, such that by disliking sports and rough work, they could not fit into the heteronormative model of male=masculine=man=heterosexual; but at the same time, neither could they identify themselves as male=feminine=man=homosexual because of the model's structural incoherence.

From a behaviourist perspective (Mead, 1934), the reason that many individuals struggle to understand the models of sexual identity such as male=feminine=man=heterosexual or female=masculine=woman=homosexual is that they are unable to take the roles of these socially incoherent beings, thereby unable to establish any form of social relations with them. It is the lack of social relations between the heterosexual majority and the homosexual minority that has created multiple realities for everyone in terms of sexuality. Butler uses the example of drag to illustrate gendered reality and the violence performed by gender. For her, the reason that some people fail to 'see' the image of a drag is because the knowledge or past experience that allows them to read/rationalise the drag (the ways he/she relates to them) constitutes an illusory appearance – an unreality, a gender-disembodied reality. Butler (1999: xxii) states:

> "The moment in which one's staid and usual cultural perception fails, when one cannot with surety read the body that one sees, is precisely the moment when one is no longer sure whether the body encountered is that of a man or a woman…the vacillation between the categories, [in] itself constitutes the experience of the body in question".

When we see a man dressed as a woman, the categorisation of bodily appearance starts to vacillate: what is this category representing, a man or a woman? For individuals a reality without gender is unreal; although what they "invoke as the naturalised knowledge of gender is, in fact, a changeable and revisable reality" (ibid). The gendered reality is structured and maintained on the basis of a sexual binary (the masculine/feminine divide), through which the notion of sexual difference and the naturalness of heterosexual desire (instead of just desire) are perpetuated.

Monique Wittig (1989: 247-8) maintains that "the ideology of sexual difference functions as censorship in our culture by masking, on the grounds of nature, the social opposition between men and women. Masculine/feminine and male/female are the categories which serve to conceal the fact that the difference is social." (Wittig, 1989: 247-8) There is no casual relationship between one's dominant gender behaviour being masculine and his/her sexual orientation being heterosexual (Kinsey, 1948; Pillard, 1991: 41). It is only by being

socialised into habituating the available gender norms that individuals have developed a propensity to remain, adjust, and alter their sexual preference for the proliferation of heterosexuality. As seen in Chapter 4, this tendency became even more necessary when the symbols of masculinity/femininity were deeply embedded for the participants in daily interactions as basic as gestures or greeting mannerisms – in fact, some participants attest to have always been bullied by their peers, because of the way they addressed each other, and deemed 'lesser' boys. By the same token, the normalisation of heterosexual desire is accomplished, with its consequence being that it falsifies our logic of categorising the many variations of acts (either sexual or social) into the logic of categorising binary opposites of sex/gender roles. Such a falsification instigates struggles within the discourse of sexuality by devaluing non-heterosexual identities. Butler elaborates (1999: 23-24) on this point:

> "The heterosexualisation of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical opposites between 'feminine' and 'masculine', where these are understood as expressive attributes of 'male' and female'. The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of identities cannot exist – that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not follow from either sex or gender".

The sex/gender category is itself a social embodiment of heterosexual desire that "only makes sense in terms of a binary sex discourse on sex in which 'men' and 'women' exhaust the possibilities of sex, and relate to each other as complementary opposite[s]" (Salih & Butler, 2004: 32). Although Freud (1907, 1918) was not sure whether there was a causal relationship between masculinity/femininity and sexual orientation,[63] nor was he certain about how masculine/feminine behaviour shapes sexuality. His research speculated that the individual's adaptation to masculine/feminine traits might foreclose one's best sexual interest before and during puberty. This hypothesis inspired social construction theory to explore in depth the relationship between the social and the psyche: one needs external sources (identity mediums/symbols, be those words or role models) to acknowledge the existence of certain innate feelings, to make these feelings objects to themselves. However, individuals are socialised to be axiomatic beings of existing gender structures so that the psyche is limited by the available identity mediums. The absence of homosexual identity mediums means that certain ~~innate~~ same-sex feelings/desires cannot be recognised and materialised, and instead they are constantly defied by social apathy.

---

[63] In the "differentiation between men and women", Freud (1918: 79) contends that "the libido is regularly and lawfully a masculine nature, whether in the man or in the woman; and if we consider its object, this may be either the man or the woman."

For men and women to remain historically binary, heterosexuality must subsist as an unwritten and unspoken social institution – "something exterior to the social order that has no juridical existence" (Wittig, 1989: 245). It is because of this mechanism that "heterosexuality is always pre-existent within all mental categories. It has sneaked into dialectical thought (the thought of differences) as its main category. For even abstract philosophical categories act to socialise the real. Language casts sheaves of reality upon the body, stamping it and violently shaping it" (ibid: 244). In reality, we often grow up without an option of thinking outside of the mental categories of heterosexuality. As discussed in Chapter 4, all the respondents experienced the discrepancy between the self-initiation of same-sex desire and the social imposition of heterosexual desire. Heterosexuality is a concrete 'social contract' (ibid) which initiates, conditions, and subsequently restricts the means of sexual performance so that heterosexuality dictates the meanings of sex: "for to live in society is to live heterosexuality", and the language of sex too must prevent individuals from recognising or responding to desires that seek pleasure from the bodies of their same sex (Weeks, 1984: 13). Butler elaborates on the point:

> "Primary homosexual desire is foreclosed by the taboo against homosexuality, so that all gendered and sexed identities are marked by that primary loss of desire – literally 'marked', since prohibited homosexual cathexes are incorporated on the surface of the body as sex, sex is thus symptomatic of the same-sex desire that must be abandoned if one is to count as a subject" (in Salih & Butler, 2004: 254).

As examined in Chapter 4 on the principle of melancholia, the loss of homosexual desire is only a loss when it cannot be externalised, which causes its preservation in the ego. Same-sex desire is thus hampered in the psyche by the negative response to homosexuality in the social. However, this is not to suggest that without the social recognition of homosexuality, homosexual feelings can be completely eliminated from practice. As described in *Hide and Seek* (4.2.2) and *Knocks on My Door* (4.2.3), it was precisely without knowing the prohibition of homosexuality in language that Elakhe, K, and Babhuti experienced same-sex intimacy at about the age of seven and eleven. A structuralist interpretation of this phenomenon would indicate that there is certainly a corresponding relationship between the level of one's language acquisition and the level of one's self-consciousness. For a subject to remain a strictly heterosexual one, socialisation has to establish a comprehensive coherence between the performance of the body and the conventional gender construal. This 'coherence' necessitates an unceasing synchronisation between what one knows and what one does (or in Marcuse's view, between what one is

offered to be and what one can become), so that heterosexuality is not only internalised progressively but also performed unconsciously.

Stevi Jackson (1999: 180) points out that most of the population 'do' heterosexuality everyday without reflecting critically on that doing. Unlike straight people who do not 'realise' that they are heterosexual – they simply are (because their sexuality is systematically entrenched in the self) – gays and lesbians somehow have to 'realise' homosexuality by declaring their same-sex desire. Heterosexual desire and homosexual desire do not 'weigh' equally in the formation of individual identity: same-sex desire is not regarded as an effortless and graceful enticement but instead is often regarded as a 'sexual perversion' (Weeks, 1986: 65). As my data shows, the way homosexuals desire people of the same sex shares no difference in expression and emotion with that of heterosexuals – gay people feel the desire and they know it. The impediment to homosexual expression is first and foremost a language barrier, where one surrenders to the 'implicit censorship' of the homosexual discourse. If a given individual is aware that his/her same-sex desire is the unsayable, and is hence subjected to the operation of power in implicit forms, then the objectification of that desire is automatically denied. The individual subjection to the unsayable thus demands that 'doing heterosexuality' is also about 'doing gender', in which the individual's daily performance becomes a systematic attribute of the consolidation of gender conformity.

According to the above discussion, if the heterosexualisation of desire stems from the very moment of gender acquisition, and if the onset of homosexual identification requires the destabilisation of gender identity, then to what extent can we perceive gender as a choice?

Butler perceives gender as a choice, but by choice it does not mean that gender is a 'free agent' which stands outside the body waiting to be selected (in Salih, 2002: 46). Instead, "to choose a gender is to interpret received gender norms in a way that organises them anew. A less radical act of creation, gender is a tacit project to renew one's cultural history in one's own terms. This is not a prescriptive task we must endeavour to do, but one in which we have been endeavouring all along" (Butler, 1987; in Salih & Butler, 2004: 26). It follows that such endeavouring is not one's innate need, but is socially imposed and reinforced by one's gender performance so that one's identity formation depends on it. Butler's argument, again, coincides with Mead's theory of role-taking: one undergoes socialisation so as to realise whether the received gender norms are congruent with his/her own feelings of gender, yet the realisation of one's sexual feelings can only be established at the presence of the conventional gender norms, whether in disapproval or approval. This is not to claim that sexual desire exists outside its cultural codification as essentialists would indicate; but rather that the

cultural characterisation of heterosexual desire as 'natural' shares the same ontological validity as the contention that homosexual desire is natural, for instance – they both exist. The only difference is the cultural manipulation of that validity, which is a matter of interpreting homosexual desire as equally 'practicable' as heterosexual desire, yet in any case they both exist as ontological necessities. It is because of gender conventions that homosexual desire exists as the lack, the unsayable, and the stigmatised. Thus to conclude, the 'magical' power of socialisation is to shape individuals into socially coherent beings so that in any given social context, the individual remains somehow externally related to the definitional structure of selfhood, be that consciousness, the capacity for language, or moral deliberation; yet at the same time it allows individuals to reshape themselves so as to influence others, which eventually serves to 'update' the external definitional structure of selfhood.

5.3 Secondary Disjuncture: Between Blackness and Gayness

Chapter 4 has revealed that the major impediments for the acceptance of homosexuality in the black South African community are issues related to Christianity, masculinity and family (i.e. reproduction and kinship). From my own research experience, especially my association with self-identified black gay men in Cape Town's Long Street clubs, as well as my friends at Rhodes University, I was initially surprised by how little some black people knew about pre-colonial or colonial patterns of same-sex relations in Africa, as well as the words associated with same-sex behaviour in African languages. With the exception of the *sangoma*, Babhuti, who conversed with me on traditional same-sex practice, the quantity and quality of knowledge disclosed amongst the other participants were tenuous. Many have genuinely believed that same-sex practice had always been a taboo in the black community. Some were also pessimistic about the gay and lesbian movement in South Africa and seemed to believe that although the inclusion of same-sex clause in the new constitution had burgeoned them to come out of the closet, it had also required of them to somehow 'denounce' their 'blackness'.[64] As discussed in Chapter 2, gay communities and organisations in South Africa have remained a white scene in the post-apartheid era, thus for black gays and lesbians to come out of the closet seems to denote that they have to go into the white gay community and forsake their ethnic roots. To merge blackness with gayness seems to imply that one is somehow "racially de-natured" (see Smith & Gomez, 1990: 54). Especially for the black

---

[64] The term, 'blackness', refers to the cultural and political heritage of black African descendants. Here it is used as an ethnic term rather than a racial term.

generations that have experienced apartheid, there seems to be a contradiction between being black and being gay: for them, because the burden of being black is somehow inescapable, the burden of being gay is somehow optional.

Concerning the legacy of apartheid, there is a drive for the abolishment of certain 'white influences' in the black community. There is also an invention of tradition (Palmberg 1996, in Migraine-George, 2003: 53): African homosexual rhetoric has concealed traditional same-sex practices, and manufactured modern homosexuality as a 'white disease' (Hoad, 2007, Epprecht, 1998a, 1998b, 2004; Phillips, 1998), so as to provide a politically convenient and sanitised reading of African history and the nature of the black community. There is no doubt that the sexual exploitation of Africans has long brought indignation amongst black people, such that it definitely has a role to play in the condemnation of homosexuality. Furthermore, it still seems impossible to save homosexuality from being vituperated in post-colonial Africa, if the Christian influence is not held responsible.

In this study, I do not attempt to seek answers to how Christianity not only survived the decolonisation process, but was also somehow turned into a black heritage in post-colonial South Africa. It is a rather peculiar phenomenon considering how Christianity was initially used to legitimise slavery along with its links to the emergence of racial hierarchy and exploitation.[65] Christianity is somehow paradoxically celebrated by black Africans in the present. Such a paradox is also prevalent in the African American community, as argued by Gomez and Smith (1990: 53):

> "Christianity does not say pick and choose which neighbours you're going to love. And those Biblical quotes that are used against black gays need to be looked at in the context that the selfsame Bible has been used to depict blacks as inhuman. Racists use Christianity against black people and then black people turn around and use Christianity against gays".

I have recognised that Christianity served as a bridge between African cultures and Westernisation (Hutchinson, 1957; Berman, 1974: 530), but its distortion of the pre-colonial ways of life has not been acknowledged adequately by Africans, especially in relation to the

---

[65] "While approving of the missions because they stimulated in the African a willingness to work within the European economy and live in a manner less offensive to white prejudices, the colonists parted company with many missionaries on the matter of racial relations. The Dutch settlers in particular believed that the Old Testament had established a hierarchy of races in which the Bantu occupied an unalterably subordinate position. On this basis relations between black and white could be friendly and often were. But, argued the colonists, no amount of teaching could ever raise the Bantu to a position of equality with themselves. Most of the early missionaries, on the other hand, had little doubt that, in due course, the Bantu could be admitted to Western civilization with a status equal to that of the white races; and on this point conflict between missionary and colonists was to be prolonged" (Hutchinson, 1957; 160-1).

African history of same-sex practice. This acknowledgement may seem worthless to the heterosexual majority, but it could in some way provide historical roots to contemporary African gays and lesbians and thereby serve to reinforce their sense of positive selfhood: the empowerment of black gay men and women requires that their sexuality be recognised as genuine, and with prestige, grown out of their own past and elevated by the current gay consciousness.

However, decolonisation discourse has produced a homophobic religious moralism that dovetails with the urgency of a racial consciousness of survival and preservation among black people, which seeks to construct black masculinity against white domination. Within this trend, homosexuality and whiteness are understood as equivalent to weakness and femininity. As a result, the new black masculinity is constructed in hyper-masculine terms.

> "The old idea central to African masculinity, that being a man is meant to be in control of oneself, not to resort to violence (the eschewal of which was learnt as part of the transitionary rite of passage through which boys become men) and to be wise was replaced with a tough masculinity that black consciousness captured in its early 1970s slogan, 'black man, you are on your own'"[66] (Morrell, 1998: 627).

Notably, the imposition of colonialism and Christianity, often by military means, did not wipe out traditional African masculinity. "It continued as a collective gender identity amongst African men, reflecting a pre-colonial past and the gender regimes of those institutions which remained relatively intact" (ibid: 630). "The fact that the one African response [to the colonists] was an attempt militarily to turn back colonial intrusion and the other involved taking Christianity and working it peacefully into the tapestry of Xhosa life are reflections of the ways masculinity were emerging" (ibid: 620). On the one hand, this new black masculinity incorporated work as its central feature of identity; while opposing the colonial state, it is still imbued with a strongly held view of the place of women. On the other hand, colonialism and Christianity brought "Victorian prejudices to bear in dealing with and reporting on matters involving 'deviant' sexual acts" (ibid: 621). This, together with the new black masculinity, led to the redefinition of sexual acts – their meanings and usages – which also "provided in the new towns, opportunities and spaces for the increase of homosexual liaisons" (ibid). In contrast, the masculinity that was practiced under a model of pederasty was a separate social institute from the practice of femininity.

---

[66] "Zulu men experiencing the harsh new urban conditions of Durban, for example, banded together and reaffirmed their rural roots and established ethics and codes of masculine conduct" (Morrell, 1998: 623).

With the adoption of Christianity there has been a conflation of sexuality and gender: "to be seen as masculine entails being heterosexual, promoting the hyper-masculinisation of behaviours among males in order to avoid being labelled a 'fag' or 'queer'" (Kimmer & Mahler, in Ward, 2005: 496). Thus a causal relationship between masculinity and femininity was also established: the performance of masculinity had to be defined in response to femininity, and vice versa. This is because "Western prejudice and repression against the 'feminine' and passive homosexual role contributed to the attrition of a seemingly well-defined gender category that defied Western norms" (Sweet, 1996: 200). Therefore, on the one side, for the man to find his place in society meant finding that woman who would approve of masculinity in reproduction; on the other side, to be a good Christian women required finding and keeping a man (see Wolkomir, 2004: 740). Following from this, the pre-existing boundaries between men and women in Africa were not only sustained, but were also transformed by Christian doctrine from the state of difference into the state of binary opposition.[67] This intricate process had fundamentally changed the definitions of role performance in sex: before colonisation homosexual practice was seen, for example, as the means of transmitting masculinity from an elder man to a young man (i.e. the Azande military camp), but in post-colonial Africa the passive lover (the receiver) of same-sex intercourse is often seen as a counterfeit woman. The boy marriage on the Southern African mines, for example, shows that for men to maintain their masculinity they would 'marry' younger boys as wives to reclaim their masculinity at the absence of women, although such a marriage could be highly emotional and romantic at times.

It seems that such a pattern has been well preserved in post-colonial Africa when related to K's rape story and Babhuti's report on his numerous sexual encounters with 'straight men'. For black men who experience same-sex attraction but who subscribe to the conventional definition of masculinity, there seems to be a belief that being masculine is incompatible with being gay; and for this reason they often choose to live on the 'down low'.[68] Here I am not trying to pass judgement on such a lifestyle, since it is a way of expressing the self; instead I try to ascertain why the proof of one's masculinity has to depend on the repressive response of femininity[69] if the individual does not subscribe to the Christian definition of manhood? According to the participants' reports, it seems that one is more likely

---

[67] E.g. The Igbo (in south-eastern and south Nigeria) language did not impute gender roles; English (which became the official language) masculinised or feminised roles and created stigmas (Morrell, 1998: 612).

[68] To live on a 'down low' usually indicates a closeted homosexual who either engages in anonymous sex with members of the same-sex regularly or maintains a stable homosexual relationship while he/she is heterosexually married or involved.

[69] Freud (1918: 79) indicates that the libido is always active (masculine) even when it is directed to passive aim.

to encounter a closeted feminine gay man than a closeted masculine gay man in the black community. This phenomenon is addressed specifically by both Fufu and Babhuti in their interviews, where they contend that being feminine and male is almost inextricable with being gay.[70] Conversely, Ross' (1983c, in Isaacs & Mckendrick, 1992: 76) research, which applied a stringent methodology to cross-cultural aspects of masculinity shows "that there is no causal relationship or any systematic relevance between femininity and male homosexuality; and that masculinity is inversely related to homosexuality depending on the degree of sex role stereotyping and anti-homosexual attitudes of the society in which the homosexual lives". Just because a man is self-identified as both gay and masculine does not mean that he has to seek sexual companionship from a conventionally defined feminine gay man. Hence it is possible that the social stereotypes of gayness have forced some closeted black gay men to face structurally-induced conflicts about masculinity – "conflicts between their sexuality and their choice of sexual object, and in their construction of relationships with women and with heterosexual men" (Connell, 1992: 737). This perhaps explains why some closeted masculine gay men think that by marrying a woman they will eventually alter their sexual orientation. But what they fail to realise is that masculinity does not define their sexual orientation, neither is masculinity incompatible with any particular sexual orientation: they articulate themselves within each other. Sexual orientation is an independent variable through which gender identity (either masculine or feminine) is expressed. The problem is that black manhood, since the adoption of Christianity, has been constantly rebuilt upon a Victorian sexual binarism, and compulsory heterosexuality, so that they are seen as dispositions rather than socially achieved behavioural traits.

Masculinity and femininity are accomplishments, "which emerge in tandem with the achievement of heterosexuality" (Freud, in Salih & Butler, 2004: 247). It is precisely for this reason that the maintenance of the new black masculinity as well as the 'traditional' male role shaped by Christianity rely heavily on the maintenance of heterosexuality. A primary way to maximise the influence of hegemonic masculinity in the black community, for example, is for the one male to call another a 'fag' or accuse him of being 'gay'. Even if one does not seriously think the other is gay, by stigmatising another male, a male shows that he is meeting at least one mandate of hegemonic masculinity – that of being heterosexual – while raising

---

[70] For instance, Zulu diviners are women; yet approximately 10 percent are male transvestites. Though in some case it is difficult to determine whether these transvestites are actually engaging in homosexual behaviours, given the strict division between male and female roles in labour, dress, and social behaviour in most African societies, one can suggest that once a society has accepted a biological male as 'woman', that person is tacitly understood to be sexually (and spiritually) penetrable (Sweet, 1996: 191).

his social status at the expense of another (see also Anderson, 2002: 872-3). This is the interconnection between racism and sexism: "homophobia is a logical extension of sexual oppression because sexual oppression is about roles – one gender does this, and the other does that. One is on [the] top; the other is on the bottom. You cannot eradicate one without the other" (Smith & Gomez, 1990: 51).

Now it seems that homophobia functions to lock masculinity in male heterosexuality. But "the view that homophobia is a means of policing the boundaries of a traditional male sex role grasps the dynamic character of the process but misconstrues its history: heterosexual masculinity did not predate homophobia but was historically produced along with it" (Connell, 1992: 736). Masculinity and homosexuality are not opposed to each other; neither are they mutually exclusive with race. Tapinc's (in Rankhotha, 1998: 40) investigation on Turkish masculinities, for example, has indicated a newly emerging group of masculine gay men, with whom the traditional distinction between the 'active' and 'receptive' sexual roles disappear. This phenomenon prevails amongst urban, young, educated, and middle class homosexuals who regard themselves as 'real men' and reject the adoption of any female identities. Even more specifically, there are groups of self-identified *'bear men'*[71] in the US who are shaped by competing masculinities within the gay culture. *Bear* is a symbol that "naturalises embodied masculinity" – hegemonic masculinity in particular – "as gendered socialisation and the somatisation of domination" (Hennen, 1997: 32, 35). Thus the bear culture itself is a form of gender resistance to women, heterosexual men, and feminine gay men. Rankhotha's (1998) research on men involved in homoeroticism in the Pietermaritzburg area shows that there has been a breakthrough in black gay men's view of role-play whereby the traditional inserter (husband) and receiver (wife) roles have been gradually abandoned within male-male sexual relations.[72]

Over all, my subjects' experiences have revealed that being gay is not a choice, neither is their blackness. These are two features of the same body: it is the cultural codification of both features that has disengaged one from the other. My participants suffered from varying degrees of internalised homophobia, it was only by coming out of the closet that

---

[71] Bears' naturalness registers in the key of 'blue collar' (Hennen, 2005: 30), and represents an image of working class masculinity. The bear body portrays the body that is literally consumed by the tough work in factories and mines. The destruction of hard labour becomes the imprint and membership of the bear culture. The bear masculinity is "developed and sustained intersubjectively, within the community itself, an interactive process that is greatly facilitated by the symbol of bear" (ibid: 35).

[72] According to Rankhotha (1998: 72), "43.3% of those respondents who practiced flexible role-playing believed that they were still men who simply enjoyed each other's company as men. They appealed to biological similarities to argue that, as men, they both had to be equally satisfied in bed, and equal satisfaction meant 'fucking and being fucked'".

they realised that such 'positional sufferings' were rather self-imposed than solely executed by society or inherited from their race. For the symbolic interactionist, society is not isolated from the individual, they coexist; individuals change as society changes. One's change may be too minute to be noticed by his/her acquaintances, yet in time the influence of that change can be adopted by members around him/her, as they subconsciously role-take that person's position. Therefore oftentimes the disjunctures between blackness and gayness are self-imposed at the same time self-anticipated or self-projected in social conduct. Although my subjects expressed their fear of sexual stigmas and homophobic attacks, save for K who was raped, the rest had rarely experienced direct assaults or personal humiliations for being gay. It was only through giving up one's willpower to achieve his/her homosexual self that one became accustomed to wearing names and internalising homophobic self-hate.

As seen in my data, the church is a major source of homophobic vilification in the black community. Standing (2004: 66) has noticed that there is an "increasingly powerful right-wing movement in the Church, which hides its outright fundamentalism and intolerance beneath a 'happy clappy', smiling, often middle-class, always 'respectable', veneer". If the purpose of the church is to conserve, then it can lead a society to a state of religious hegemony or ethnocentrism, as the case of apartheid South Africa has shown. Additionally, the church becomes oppressive and thereby encourages racial, gender, class, and ethnic hierarchies. If the church is supposed to oppose these hierarchies and the oppression of humans in all forms, then it is not enough to simply tolerate homosexuals outside the church. Instead a form of affirmative action is required of the church: it must not only provide membership for homosexuals, but also actively seek homosexuals or help those who are confused about being both gay and Christian. "If the church (particularly in its Protestant or Jewish forms) favours an ethic of personal autonomy and responsibility, it must logically support the least restrictive attitudes toward adults" (Berliner, 1987: 141) and avoid double standards with regard to sexual matters[73] (ibid, see also 0.2, 2.2.1, 2.3.1, & 4.2.10). The point is: any human behaviour can be morally offensive to some if that behaviour is interpreted from a particular cultural perspective, but the Church must understand that as long as that behaviour harms no one it is then nobody's business.

Notably, the church functions in intimate relation with the family. The attitudes of the black community to homosexuality are not necessarily borne from taboo, but rather the question of whether the homosexual is able to fulfil the expectations of his/her family while

---

[73] "The heterosexual majority can learn much from a joint communion: an enhanced capacity to respect diversity and to affirm the fundamental religious commitment to social justice" (Berliner, 1987: 142).

bearing the taboo. Oftentimes black gay men are encouraged to endure homosexuality, to perceive it as the ultimate challenge of manhood. As Elakhe, Babhuti and K indicated in their interviews, that many black people view homosexuality as a 'misfortune' is a more damning determinant of homophobia than the mere terminology of taboo. But the terminology of misfortune presupposes that one's being gay is not worthy of being understood in the first place. Following from this is the perception that for being gay one has chosen a path that betrays his/her cultural heritage because being gay alludes to the rejection of marriage and reproduction and is hence unsupportive of one's own family.

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 4, coming out to the family was perhaps the most challenging test for the respondents because the individual's self-awareness is primarily rooted in the family, whose roles the individual is able to take. To give up those roles is to give up the inner coherence and feelings of wellbeing that the family has made possible (adapted from Hansen, 1976: 70). But this is not merely experienced by black gays and lesbians, because every openly gay individual represents by definition the discontinuation of the heterosexual family. On the one level, the family, in being constitutively heterosexual, is itself a disjuncture to the parents' acceptance of their gay children because part of its structural purpose is to obliterate homosexuality. On another level, the family is the primary institution where the adoption of sex/gender roles and the development/recognition of heterosexual desire take place. The parents' understanding of a romantic union is systematically confined to the interactions between husband and wife. By the same token, the reason that parents are unable to understand the concept of a homosexual union is, by regurgitating heterosexual interaction on a daily basis, that they are unable to take the role of a same-sex partner. Parents do not usually know or simply cannot grasp how a gay family would function. For instance, Elakhe disclosed his mother's concern about him having a same-sex partner: she wants him to live like a 'traditional' Xhosa man, the one who is looked after in the family, served by his wife, without having to cook or wash his clothes. Given the mother's background, it could be painful to see her son looking after another man, especially a white man if one considers black people's agonising history of apartheid. Moreover, a family that is composed of two men (or women) deconstructs the conventional image of family because this family does not reproduce. Gay couples are too often seen as incapable of bringing up children 'straight' since they are the 'failed normal people'. However, the belief that same-sex families could be the breeding ground for future homosexuals is rather absurd considering the fact that most homosexuals were raised in heterosexual families. So in

Elakhe's case, his mother was more concerned with the continuation of his family's bloodline.

The refusal to reproduce is probably the most reprehensible decision in the black community of South Africa. All my respondents have told me that their parents had always wished to have grandchildren, but their coming out had totally dashed those hopes. Unfortunately, I have not come across any literature or research located in the South African context, which has a specific focus on how parents accept their child's implied refusal of reproduction in being gay where the child is not disowned after coming out. A belief shared by my respondents, is their parents' initial denial of their homosexuality. They either by all means tried to initiate a straight relationship for their sons, or chose to completely ignore it and prayed that one day their children would turn straight. Such sentiments have foreclosed, on the parents' behalf, a life that can be carried out by same-sex marriage and having adopted children. As discussed in Chapter 4 (i.e. see 4.3.4), the fact that homosexuality can be detrimental to the continuation of the family kin manifests the conflicts between cultural sanction of lifestyle and the legal freedom given to individual choice. To bridge these two ostensibly incompatible institutions, one needs to go back to the heterosexualisation of desire in order to foresee a solution. We should recompose sexual education at school so that children know from a young age that "binary sexes restrict their understanding of relevant sexual parts to those that aid in the process of reproduction thereby rendering heterosexuality an ontological necessity" (Wittig, in Salih & Butler, 2004: 30). Reproduction is a choice not a must. One's reproductive difference/function does not determine his/her sexual 'destiny', be that gender behaviour, desire, or the choice of one's sexual partner. Individuals should open up to possibilities of companionship that have been invalidated by the heteronormative discourse (see Table 3, pp. 164). To achieve this, I provide a bold yet delicate homosexual repertoire as to facilitate the normalisation of homosexuality, which operates conceptually within socialisation.

5.4 Re-juncture: A Homosexual Repertoire in Socialisation?

Socialisation is a complex psycho-social process that, by restraining certain feelings and emotions, moulds individuals into socially coherent beings. It is not an absolute monolithic process, as functionalists would assume, but rather, according to Hansen's (1976) interpretation of Mead, in order to develop a unique 'I', one has to go through an assimilating process wherein one's own preferences for certain practices are evoked. In other words, one needs to be assimilated first in order to develop resistance and opposition to his/her status

quo. This is also the irony and difficulty of self-awareness: "it is only in joining with others that we recognise our individual selves; yet as we express our individuality, we separate ourselves from the group" (Hansen, 1976: 35). As a result, individuality is produced dialectically: "it requires order yet destroys it at the same time" (ibid). To elaborate further on this point, say one is never told to prioritise the need of engaging in a particular practice and every practice is also given the same amount of social worth; there would then be no ground rules for social interaction, which would consequently lead society to a state of anomie. In the case of sexuality, if sexual education was not shaped in some way to distinguish between the aim of sex and the use of sex, then there would be no meanings attached to sex, nor would there be notions such as fetishism, bestiality, animalism, or bi/hetero/homosexuality, simply because everyone would have equal access to all sorts of sexual practices and all practices would share the same value, irrespective of individual preferences. As discussed in Chapter 1, this is perhaps the reason the ancient Greeks and pre-colonial and colonial Africans (i.e. Azande, Herero, and the South African mine compounds) widely practiced pederasty. As a matter of fact, they had a rather different approach to sexual pleasure than espoused by Christianity, although it is difficult to form conjectures about how they had come to distinguish between sex for reproduction and sex for pleasure. In contrast, the modern socialisation process serves the function of narrowing down sexual interests, feelings, emotions and pleasures until the youth reaches adulthood. He/she is then re-socialised into having more options in sexual practice. Admittedly, there is nothing wrong with the value of this principle. In other words, its conscientiousness has to be acknowledged and upheld as it is perhaps the only way through which individuality is achieved. However, one ought to realise that the fact that an education system does not constantly modify itself to cater for diversity with regards to gender, race, ethnicity, class and sexuality, is itself a discriminatory dogma. Social equilibrium cannot be achieved or maintained successfully through either conservatism or radical reform; especially the attempt to conserve the status quo at any cost, which is itself a form of oppression.

Mead (1934) insists that society must and will change, and social conflicts have been the universal means to bringing about this change. Conflict, argued Mead (in Hansen, 1976: 58), is an indispensable expression of the self which can only manifest itself in relation to public consciousness. These two dimensions are intertwined to form the individual's reflective consciousness. As shown in my data analysis, it is precisely when the participants' self-consciousness (the homosexual self) met their public consciousness (the heterosexual majority) in disjuncture, that their same-sex feelings/desires were largely disapproved by the

generalised other and that their self consciousness started to form resistance to the status quo. The coming out experiences of all participants jointly shows that there were numerous inconsistencies between their prescribed sexuality and their erotic feelings. It is therefore evident that the current education system in South Africa has not catered for the identity development of homosexual youths at large. The disjuncture is therefore caused by the lack of a 'homosexual repertoire' at school to facilitate the gay youth's self-acceptance.

The idea of the homosexual repertoire is inspired by the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy[74] and the multiracial (model c) school system[75] in South Africa, which are political interventions aimed at extirpating racial inequality. The homosexual repertoire could be accomplished by operation of the very same ideology, since the Bill of Rights purports to establish a state based upon non-discrimination on any social, biological, historical and economic grounds. There is no doubt that my participants have, to varying degrees, experienced the social hierarchy of sexualities while growing up; even more so given that others could not 'see' their sexuality (as they would 'see' race, for instance) and were thus unable to sense their struggle and suffering, which reinforced the public silence surrounding homosexuality. Therefore, the homosexual repertoire as a state intervention in the current education system ought to share the same political priority as the repertoire of racial non-discrimination (e.g. policies aimed at racial integration in schools). Nevertheless, the operation of this homosexual repertoire could be more difficult because we cannot see everyone's sexual orientation as we do their skin colour. Sexual orientation is something largely performed in private yet can be shared by people of different races, ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, and classes; we don't know each other's sexual orientation unless we communicate that particular matter. If the de-sublimation of homosexuality does not come by heredity as a result of the pre-existent heteronormative discourse, then it must come through communication.

---

[74] Black Economic Empowerment is a subset of Affirmative Action; its objective is not to establish a form of anachronistic or disjunctive compensation for the past injustices, but to rectify the way in which these injustices continue to permeate in South Africa (Sachs, 2007: 11). It "balances the realities of the past with the hope of a better future, [and] lies at the heart of the South African democratic dispensation" (ibid: 10).

[75] De Meillon's (2001: 139) research on the interpersonal relationships in multiracial (model c) schools in the South African context has shown a progressive integration of different races since 1994. Her data verifies that: "When asked whether they felt rejected by the other race, only 17% of the Afrikaans-speaking and 13% of the Black pupils reported that they did. Sixty-one percent of the Black and 52% of the Afrikaans speaking pupils felt that the other race was making an effort to understand them better. Sixty-one percent of the Black and 54% of the Afrikaans-speaking pupils felt that a better understanding between the races would develop in the future. Twelve percent of the Black and 22% of the Afrikaans-speaking pupils felt it was a challenge attending school with another race, while 46% of the Black and 45% of the Afrikaans-speaking pupils claimed that attending school with other races had no effect on them".

Needless to say, the homosexual repertoire will not and cannot cause a radical reform in education. I am not suggesting that the entire system is inadequate because it fails to cater for gay youths. Nor should the interpolation of a homosexual repertoire into the current education system be perceived as equivalent to the encouragement of bestiality or fetishism, as some conservative perspectives would assume – a view which I will not explore here as it lies beyond the scope of my research aims. However, the very idea of race was originally deployed to facilitate the conformity of people to a hierarchy of power and wealth, which led to the exploitation of the 'inferior races', and its effects are still causing outrage in modern societies. If this can be significantly mitigated by a racial repertoire that prohibits the very speech of racism, then the historical condemnation of homosexuality; caused by the 'demonisation' of sodomy, and later the hierarchisation of sexualities in the early 20th century; can also be alleviated by a homosexual repertoire 'interpolated' into education.

The minimal objective of this repertoire is not only to end verbal attacks and violence against gay youths, but also to facilitate a positive discussion amongst teachers and students so as to break the silence and apathy surrounding homosexuality. For creating such a repertoire we need to, first and foremost, understand the homosexual youth, try to play his/her roles, as well as construe the difficulties of having his/her wants and needs taken away and their sexuality haunted by social stigmas. The repertoire must be sympathetic, or rather empathic: it must begin not with denunciation or stigmatisation, but with an intimate appreciation of the homosexual as he/she is; and should proceed in a spirit opposed to the opinion that such endeavours encourage and maintain deviance. In other words, this cultural repertoire ought to incorporate a particular practice of sympathetic introspection (Cooley, 1902: 7, see also 1.2) into the school system so that students can feel at ease to have intimate contact with gay youths, and allow them to awake in themselves a life similar to that of the gay youth, which they afterwards, to the best of their ability, recall and describe (adapted from Cooley, 1902: 7).

The homosexual repertoire should also be reflected in the media in children stories, cartoons, films, and games. For instance, North American media has had a profound influence in engendering a culture of tolerance: Talk shows such as *Oprah* have celebrated gay icons and drawn attention to important gay issues (e.g. transgenderism, open relationships, the 'down low' in the African American community, etc.). Sitcoms such as *Will and Grace* and *Modern Family* feature diverse gay characters, and cast light on issues that emerge in the realm of sexual coexistence.

Cooley (ibid: 5) argues that "self and society are twin-born"; they can be mutually influential to each other. Through role-taking, states Mead (in Hansen, 1976: 67), the individual is able to take society into him/herself, and as he/she does so, he/she influences the process of his/her society; society responds to the innovative individual, and the social process goes on integrating. The homosexual repertoire must accordingly raise a social consciousness that enables the natural emergence of the (gay) individual's homosexual self, so that, in effect, we know ourselves immediately as we come to know the other (be it homosexual or heterosexual, they have equal value in self-realisation), and the notion of a separate and independent ego (where homosexual desire is preserved due to the social prohibition of homosexuality) fades away. This is perhaps the desired outcome of the homosexual repertoire in theory. In practice, homophobia will evanesce insofar as adolescents and students learn to spontaneously take the roles of the diverse homosexual others, which in turn will develop optimism towards any same-sex feelings of their own or anyone else. No people should hate the idea of being attracted to members of the same-sex, and neither should anyone end a seemingly awkward homosexual encounter with verbal assaults or violence. A straight man can resolve any homosexual encounters by simply stating that he is straight while respecting, and not assaulting, the fact that someone finds him attractive. In doing so, this will consequently transform any 'discomfort' into good humour and a potential friendship. The paranoia about being desired by the 'wrong' sex has no social worth when it is taken outside of the context of religion, sexual binarism and heterosexism. If school entrance, says Goffman (1963: 33), is often reported as the occasion of stigma learning; then reversely, school is also unquestionably the place for the correction of stigmas. As Foucault (in Salih, 2002: 59) has stated, since there is no position that can be taken up outside the historically inherited heterosexual discourse, subversion must occur within existing discursive structures, be they education, family or religion. And most importantly, in the social context of post-apartheid South Africa, a constitution without its social implementation has the same ill effect as impracticable standards or unenforceable law; they merely "accustom individuals to separate theory from practice and make a chasm between the individual and the moral ideas" (adapted from Cooley, 1902: 13). It is for this rationale that the ordinary South African's engagement with the new constitution should be self-digested, but because the individual awareness of the constitution cannot be raised by the constitution itself, a development of homosexual repertoire in education is required to fill in the disjuncture between the societal acceptance of homosexuality and the constitutional support of homosexuality.

School and family are interlinked in the process of socialisation. Yet, unlike family, school is the primary institution for sexualisation because children normally obtain the knowledge of sex from their peers rather than from their parents. The duty of a parent and a teacher is to equip the child for adult life. In this way, teachers and parents have a mandate to inform the child of everything he/she needs to know in order to grow into a competent and well-adjusted human being. Furthermore, teachers, as civil servants, and parents, as citizens, have an obligation to support constitutional precepts. Therefore, a homosexual repertoire should form part of their fulfilment of these mandates. However, private schools and parents could subscribe to values that stand in conflict with these responsibilities. The goal of a homosexual repertoire is not to prescribe certain behaviour but merely to inform children of the facts of homosexuality undistorted by bigoted views. Although religious families and church supported schools would view such tuition as morally reprehensible, without a homosexual repertoire we simply perpetuate the cycle of intolerance.

Marxist feminist perspectives (i.e. O'Brien, 1981) and the post-Freudian account on sexuality (i.e. Ober, 1970; Marcuse, 2001) have criticised conventional sexual education for being exclusively heterosexual, centred upon reproduction: in lieu of telling children that there are different sexual orientations which will significantly influence the ways they come to construct their lives in the future, they are taught single-mindedly to believe that sex means heterosexual intercourse which is the only way to achieve pleasure. The public fear of letting a young person get in touch with his/her homosexual feelings, either intense or faint, stems from the perception that 'an education of homosexuality' is an attempt as well as an encouragement to override the necessity of reproduction, and thereupon no individual will ever want to reproduce. This sentiment, says Freud (1907: 119), "is surely nothing but habitual prudery and a guilty conscience in teachers and parents themselves about sexual matters which causes adults to adopt this attitude of mystery towards children; possibly, however, a piece of theoretical ignorance on their part, to be counteracted only by fresh information, is also responsible". In the section of *Boy Crush* (4.2.4), all participants struggled with the emergence of same-sex feelings: their sexual fantasies with members of the same-sex have also shown that they were beings capable of love long before puberty (see also 4.2.2), lacking only the maturity of genitals. It can be asserted that the mystery surrounding homosexuality, which is socially constructed, withholds them only from an intellectual comprehension of achievements for which they are actually psychically and physically prepared (adapted from Freud, 1907: 119).

On the whole, I am not trying to design a syllabus for sexual education at school or in the family. Instead I am only suggesting that in most situations parents and teachers should not purposefully evade the task of teaching children about homosexuality, as the teacher or the parent's denial of a particular sexual matter can lead to the child's denial of that matter for his/her entire life. On an individual level, there is no good reason for children to be denied the information which their thirst for knowledge demands. On a societal level, in no human society has homosexual practice ever stopped humans from breeding; even given the proportion of homosexuals, which occupy 2-5.8% of any given population (see Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991: 5). It is still far from being a threat to reproduction. Perhaps the only problem rests on the parents who view their children's homosexuality as a misfortune, such that it is unfair for them to be born homosexual, and thereby less likely to reproduce. And usually after the children have come out to their families, the parents often feel a sense of tremendous loss, as though they have invested so much in a fruitless tree. Nevertheless, it is rather sad and unfortunate for any parents to perceive their children as investments or to expect that their children to carry out the merits of their investments. Thus to assist parents in accepting their own children's homosexuality, the communication between school and parents would be pivotal to the raising of a positive consciousness toward their children's prospective gay lifestyle. If parents are largely unaware of issues related to sexuality, it is then the school's duty to 'update' them so that where there is a chance that their children may not be straight, panic is averted. It is held that explanations about the "specific circumstances of human sexuality and indication of its social significance should be provided before the child is eleven years old" (adapted from Freud's model, though debatable, see 1907: 121). To locate the age of conformation at approximately the commencement of puberty is the most suitable time to instruct the child, who already starts to generate sexual attractions and has knowledge of the physical facts involved in those social obligations of sexuality. A gradual and progressive course of instruction in sexuality such as this (recommended by Freud, 1907: 122), in which the school takes the initiative, could be a valuable method of giving the necessary information that takes into consideration the development of the child and successively avoid ever-present dangers. Although the assumption of the need for a homosexual repertoire is only based upon a very small sample of research participants, having had their same-sex desire emerge during puberty, which is a universal biological fact, verifies the applicability of my research findings.

5.5 <u>Conclusion</u>

The heterosexualisation of desire is perhaps the central cause of all disjunctures within the process of homosexual identification. The sex/gender category and, more importantly, the social use of the category perpetuate heterosexuality as the dominant mode of sexuality in conventional knowledge. The category of sex is materialised through forcible reiteration of regulatory forms in the service of consolidating a heterosexual imperative (Butler, 1993: 2-4) which subjugates individuals at birth. It can be said that our self-formation depends on this power structure to achieve our 'selves', yet in this structure we are also always limited in the ways we perceive ourselves. The disjunctures between blackness and gayness are caused by specific cultural and historical imperatives manifested in conflicts amongst the mediums by which same-sex desire is expressed. Although conventionally defined masculinity can be the most problematic medium, it can be appropriated by homosexuals when more and more self-defined masculine gay men choose to come out. Perhaps only when masculinity is no longer seen as a uniquely male heterosexual characteristic that both straight men and gay men will perceive each other as equal. That being said, the social use of masculinity should also be made consonant with both practices of heterosexuality and homosexuality, so that no more stereotypes are assigned to either category: a gay man can captain a rugby team just as a straight man can play the leading role in a drag show. As greater social space is opened for the acceptance of homosexuality, the search for instabilities and discontinuities of normative heterosexuality will deconstruct its lawfulness. Thus the homosexual repertoire can be seen as an antidote to the heterosexual interpellation in the education system of South Africa, so that children learn, from a young age, to perceive same-sex attraction as normal.

Conclusion: A Call for Coming Out

In conclusion, I propose that the heterosexualisation of desire is the primary cause of pernicious disjunctures within the conventional knowledge of homosexuality. It persistently demands that individual ability to understand sex – both as an act and being – is shaped by male/female oppositions (i.e. sexual binarism). Individuals experience these oppositions as a form of interpolation, which initiates, conditions, and subsequently restricts the ways they engage in sex, so that heterosexuality dictates the meaning of sex. Furthermore, the language of sex is also established in tandem with sexual binarism so that it prevents individuals from recognising desire that seeks pleasure from bodies of the same-sex (Weeks, 1984: 13), or that the very moment of recognition is censored implicitly as the unsayable. If so many obstacles have been historically established to suppress homosexuality, then how is one to create his/her sexual identity outside of the heterosexual matrix? The challenge here is the question of how to create a system of sexual classification within a dominant heterosexual culture? Is the sex/gender category self-expandable to incorporate diversity? More intriguingly, "Do gays and lesbians need the binarism of male/female in order to articulate themselves since they do not have to necessarily reproduce?" (see Fuss, 1989: 111) One could argue that the homosexual is in a disadvantaged position, given that conventional sex/gender identities are more likely to provide heterosexual people with security, comfort and stability. What homosexual people need is an identity category that confirms their own existence. As Weeks (1986: 78) describes it:

> "Categorisation and self-labelling, that is the process of working out a social identity, may control, restrict and inhibit, as many critics have argued, but at the same time it provides, as Plummer has noted, 'comfort, security and assuredness', and a precondition for attaining a secure sense of personal identity and belonging has been the development of wider social networks, of finding a collective way of dealing with sexual differentiation, of establishing sexual communities".

It is the search for comfortable and secure social space that creates modern gay and lesbian communities. The global gay and lesbian movement has progressively "transformed the quality of a specific desire into a locus of political statement and possible social identity" (Weeks, 1986: 79). An increase in social interaction amongst homosexuals has the power to create good feelings about themselves; and the collectivity derived from their interactions is the means to convert 'what is possible' into 'what is real'. This is a reciprocal process whereby interaction creates the homosexual other for role-taking, and collectivity, stemming from individual role-taking, creates symbols for homosexual identification. This reciprocity

186

then raises political awareness amongst gay individuals for social struggle. Weeks (1986: 79) states, "it is the context of continuing struggle over appropriate behaviour that politicised sexual identities have also emerged, articulated since the late 19th century in a series of homosexual rights groupings and other sex reform movements throughout the industrial world". Sexual reform is not a battle between heterosexuals and homosexuals, but a battle within individuals to debunk the hidden structure of normative heterosexuality and the harm it does to the people who are involved in a struggle to overcome it.

> "For it is only by way of becoming critically and reflectively conscious of one's belonging to such a group that one can, to whatever extent it may be possible, liberate oneself from it. The collective exists independently of any individual's consciousness of it and independently of any individual will. Only by accepting and assuming this belonging can an individual come to constitute himself or herself as the subject of his or her own history" (Eribon, 2004: 59).

But for now, the absence of mass population-based participation in the South African gay and lesbian movement has caused stagnation in the building of the LGBTI community and an inadequate social representation of homosexual people. Heterosexuals and homosexuals have equal rights in South Africa, but they do not share equal social space in the public realm. It is not a question of equalising the visibility of both sexualities, but rather a question of how willingly South African social institutions especially the media, the family and education acculturate homosexuality. To achieve this, it is not enough to persist in gay activism. Education is essential to the extirpation of future homophobia. I have advocated in Chapter 5 that South Africa needs to interpolate a homosexual repertoire at school so as to facilitate a positive discussion about homosexuality amongst adolescents. In contrast, it would be more complicated to interpolate the same repertoire in the family since the conventional family has a fixed heterosexual structure and is putatively homophobic. As reflected in the stories of K and Elakhe, parents with gay children barely discuss or openly support their children's love lives. A straight man's parents can often feel obliged to ask their son 'stuff' about his girlfriend. But for a young gay man, even if his parents have accepted his homosexuality, they are most likely to ask him: *"how is your special friend?"* on very rare occasions. This form of intimate sharing between parents and children plays a substantial role in the creation of a gay-friendly structure within the family. And the support of the family is integral to the development of a positive gay identity.

Likewise, it is those identity mediums (symbols) embedded in education, media, popular culture, and the most frequent and intimate conversations between children and their

parents or peers that are most needed by homosexual people. It is these small but valuable interactions, which heterosexual people have been born with and have enjoyed by reflex, which homosexual people are fighting for. Without such symbols, 'the subject' of homosexuality can never be 'a subject', because what one feels is unspeakable. As a result, the repression of homosexual desire remains internal, and is caged in 'the body' that is governed by conventional gender norms. In media, for instance, one would not see a love scene between two men (or two women) in a chocolate TV commercial. Hardly any insurance company in South Africa has specialised its health care service for gay couples/families despite their money-spinning potential after the legalization of same-sex marriage. The talk show, *Great Expectations: The 21centruy Guide to Motherhood*, on E-TV, has never included issues relating to gay parenting. All in all, the South African media is conservative. It does not adequately work to promote constitutional rights and equality.

It is the communication, discussion, and supportive speech of homosexuality that is missing at school, at home, and in the media. For instance, why can schools and universities not lay down rules to discipline homophobic students by compelling them to do community service in gay societies on campus? The fact that heterosexual students do not usually participate in parties or social events hosted by homosexual students, is why the former is so ignorant and apathetic to the latter. The university has more to offer than a mere degree – it should be an eye opener, a counter organisation of society's customary practices, whereby pupils can become multi-dimensional thinkers rather than the gatekeepers of traditions. This is especially so with regards to the attitudes of the black community to homosexuality in South Africa (or Africa in general): "those still enamoured of the tradition/modernity postulate must understand that the objection to it is not that both are illusions, or that any cultural phenomenon is necessary inferior by virtue of being associate with tradition or modernity. Rather, the objection is to conceptions and uses of each term as the antithesis of the other" (Esonwanne, 1997; in Migraine-George, 2003: 53).

To empower homosexuals is about how to make them known in ordinary day-to-day life: to promulgate the knowledge of homosexuality as done with the knowledge of heterosexuality. The societal acceptance of homosexuality can be achieved when there is no longer need for homosexuals to come out, and when being homosexual is as effortless as being heterosexual. As Eribon (2004: 59) puts it:

> "If every homosexual is subjected-subjugated by way of identical processes that operate with reference to the same social and sexual norms and that produce the same effects in minds and in bodies, and if, as a consequence, a gay man is always-already

inscribed in a collective that includes him even before he belongs to it or knows or wants to belong to it, then clearly every gay gesture, every kind of participation – even the most reticent or distant or secretive – in gay life will place any gay men into relation with all the others, with the entire history of homosexuality and its struggle".

Accordingly, the desublimation of homosexuality is about building a homosexual discourse. Yet, the proliferation of such a discourse requires primarily more and more gay people to come out of the closet. The up-coming gay generations need to communicate their growing up experiences with the veterans of their kind, which will necessarily facilitate their processes of coming out. Gay youths must be aware that coming out is always rudimentary for, and inescapable in achieving a homosexual self. Within the South African context, this means the mass participation of the black majority in gay activism. As discussed in Chapter 5, many black gay men cannot come out or choose to live on the 'down low' because of their historically inherited religious and familial values. The church is the first obstacle: for many black gay men to be excluded from their church means to be ostracised from their community. The problem here is not Christianity itself, but the manipulation of Christian standards as discussed in the previous chapters. Gay Christians of any race or ethnicity are subjected to the church's vocabulary of motives that labels homosexuality as unacceptable. In response, if anyone is willing to stay in the church as an out gay person, he/she has to develop an alternative vocabulary of moral motives that labels his/her sexuality and lifestyle as compatible with Christianity (Yip, 1997: 116). This is a highly individualised spiritual journey which I will not discuss in this study. Perhaps it is only through the development of gay-inclusive churches that this process can be systematised. Alternatively, gay Christians can leave the church. In fact, three of my respondents (K, Bahbuti, Jacob) left their churches because they were gay. Apart from Dez, all respondents were to various extents affiliated with the church. Amongst them, Elakhe who has reconciled his Christianity and homosexuality is still actively involved in his church.

On a legal level, the church cannot give a verdict on homosexuality that exceeds constitutional authority, because there are many religions and hence many different standards with which to judge homosexuality. Who knows which one is the right one? However, the church functions to maintain a pre-existing social order, and homosexuality is a challenge to that order. Critical sociology understands that "freedom and growth are possible only in a social order that is coherent; because the tendency to conserve existing norms is a safeguard against social chaos" (Hansen, 1976: 18). Nonetheless, "we must recognise that an image of the individual and society based only on maintaining our given institutions is equally

wretched" (ibid). Therefore the church must change; and so must the family, since these two units are in close co-operation in the black community of South Africa. Here I am not calling for a radical reform of the church or the family. Rather, I am calling for people who are involved in those institutions to 'update' their worldview. Wyatt MacCaffey states that "change must be change in something that itself continues" (in Sweet, 1996: 185). The hetero-homo dichotomy has been created; the homosexual species has been named, performed, and continued in human history. My study is possible precisely because of these changes. And there is no doubt that my study itself is a genuine contribution to these changes. Anyone who is willing to read and understand this study will try to appreciate homosexuality and the social changes brought by it. The gay and lesbian movement is an unstoppable historical trend which redefines gender identity, alters sexual ethics, and invents lifestyles. The study is at last a call for black gay men in South Africa to come out.

In the end, I must acknowledge that the breadth of this master's dissertation is limited. My focus is merely on the coming out experiences of black gay men, in which case the interpretations of collected stories may not necessarily reflect that of so-called 'coloured' gay men, or the Afrikaans gay men in South Africa. In addition, I have only located my respondents in Grahamstown and Cape Town and as such my findings are limited by their location. Moreover, my respondents have, to varying degrees, disclosed their experiences of interracial relationship during the interviews, yet I could not incorporate them into my analysis owing to the goal of my research. In the end, these missing fields are waiting for future exploration.

Bibliography

Achmat, Z. 1998. 'We Mourn Simon Tseko Nkoli', in Hoad, N., Martin, K., & Reid, G. (eds.), *Sex and Politics in South Africa*, 2005. Double Story Books.

Adamczyk, A. & Pitt, C. 2009. 'Shaping Attitudes about Homosexuality: the Role of Religion and Cultural Context', in *Social Science Research* 38 (2009), pp. 338-251. Published by: Elsevier Inc.

Ajen, N. 1998. 'West African Homoeroticism: West African Men Who Have Sex with Men', in Murray, S. & Roscoe, W. (eds.), 1998. *Boy-wives and Female Husbands: Studies of African Homosexualities*. Macmillan.

Ambert, AM., Adler, P. A., Alder, P. & Detzner, D. F. 1995. 'Understanding and Evluating Qualitative Research', in *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (Nov., 1995), pp. 879-893. Published by: National Council on Family Relations.

Amory, D. P. 1997. 'Homosexuality in Africa: Issues and Debates', in *Journal of Opinion*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Commentaries in African Studies: Essays about African Social Change and the Meaning of Our Professional Work (1997), pp. 5-10. Published by: African Studies Association.

Amory, D. P. 1998. 'Mashoga, Mabasha, and Magi: "Homosexuality" on the East African Coast, in Murray', S & Roscoe, W (eds.), 1998. *Boy-wives and Female Husbands: Studies of African Homosexualities*, Macmillan.

Anderson, E. 2002. 'Openly Gay Athletes: Contesting Hegemonic Masculinity in a Homophobic Environment', in *Gender & Society*, Vol. 16, No. 6 (Dec., 2002), pp. 860-877. Published by: Sage Publications.

Arnfred, S. 2004. *Rethinking Sexualities in Africa*. Sweden: Nordic Institute of Africa.

Atkinson, R. 1998. *The Life Story Interview*. Qualitative Research Methods Series 44. Sage Publications.

Atkinson, R. 2002. 'The Life Story Interview', in Gubrium, J. F. & Holstein, J. A. (eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method*. California: Sage Publication, Inc.

Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. 2001. *The Practice of Social Research*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Bell, J. 2003. *Gay Men's Sexual Stories: Getting It!* Harrington Park Press.

Berg, B. L. 1998. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Science* (3rd edition), Allyn & Bacon.

Berger, R. M. 1982. *Gay and Gray: the Older Homosexual Man*. University of Illinois Press.

Berliner, A. K. 1987. 'Sex, Sin, and the Church: the Moral Dilemma of Homosexuality', in *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (summer, 1987), pp. 137-142. Published by: Springer.

Berman, E. H. 1974. 'African Responses to Christian Mission Education', in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Dec., 1974), pp. 527-540. Published by: African Studies Association.

Bertaux, D. 1981. *Biography and Society: The Life History Approach in the Social Sciences*. Sage.

Bertaux, D. & Kohli, M. 1984. 'The Life Story Approach: A Continental View', in *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 10 (1984), pp. 215-237. Published by: Annual Reviews.

Binnie, J. 2004. *The Globalisation of Sexuality*. Sage Publications.

Blumer, H. 1969. *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. Renewed Edition, 1998, University of California Press.

Brake, M. 1976. 'I May Be a Queer, but At Least I Am a Man', in Banker, D. & Allen, S (eds.), *Sexual Divisions and Society: Process and Change*. London: Tavistock.

Brake, M. 1985. 'Sexuality as Praxis – A Consideration of the Contribution of Sexual Theory to the Process of Sexual Being', in Brake, M. (ed.), 1985 *Human Sexual Relations: Towards a redefinition of sexual politics*. Pantheon Books: New York.

Bonner, K. 1994. 'Hermeneutics and Symbolic Interactionism: The Problem of Solipsism', in *Human Studeis*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Ari., 1994), pp. 225-249. Published by: Springer.

Bourdieu, P. 1989. 'Social Space and Symbolic Space', in *Practical Reason*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Bryman, A. 1988. *Quantity and Quality in Social Research*. London: Routledge.

Bystryn, H. M. & Greenburg, D. F. 1982. 'Christian Intolerance to Homosexuality', in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 88, No. 3 (Nev., 1982), pp. 515-548. Published by: the University of Chicago Press.

Butler, J. 1993. *Bodies That Matter*. Routledge: New York and London.

Butler, J. 1997a. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. Poutledge: New York and London.

Butler, J. 1997b. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford University Press.

Butler, J. (1990) 1999, *Gender Trouble* (anniversary edition). Routledge: New York and London.

Butler, J. 2008. *Judith Butler in Conversation: Analyzing the Texts and Talk of Everyday Life.* Bronwyn, D. (ed.), 2008. New York: Routledge.

Burgess, R. G. 1982. 'The Unstructured Interview as a Conversation', in Burgess, R. G. 1982 (ed.), *Field Research: A Source Book and Field Manual.* Routledge.

Callero, T. L. 2003. 'The Sociology of the Self', in *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 29 (2003), pp. 115-133). Published by: Annual Reviews.

Clatterbaugh, K. 1992. 'The Oppression Debate in Sexual Politics', in May, L. & Strikwerda, R. (ed.) *Rethinking Masculinity*. Maryland: Littlefield Adams.

Cock, J. 2005. 'Engendering Gay and Lesbian Rights: the Equality Clause in the South African Constitution', in Hoad, N., Martin, K. & Reid, G. (eds.), *Sex and Politics in South Africa*, 2005. Double Story Books.

Coffey, A. & Atkinson, P. 1996. *Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complementary Research Strategies*. Sage Publications.

Connell, R. W. 1992. 'A Very Straight Gay: Masculinity, Homosexual Experience, and the Dynamics of Gender', in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 57, No. 6 (Dec., 1992), pp. 735-751. Published by: American Sociological Association.

Connell, R. W. 1995. *Masculinities*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Cooley, C. H. 1902 (1956 edition). *Human Nature and the Social Order*. The Free Press.

Crawball, N. 2005. 'Balancing Freedom and Fear: Gay Men, Sex and HIV in the Post-apartheid Era', in Steyn, M. & Van Zyl, M. (ed.), 2005. *Performing Queer: Shaping Sexualities 1994-2004*. Kwela Books.

Creswell, J.W. 1998. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Croucher, S. 2002. 'South Africa's Democratisation and the Politics of Gay Liberation', in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 2, (2002), pp. 315-350. Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.

De Beauvior, S. 1972 (1989 edition). *The Second Sex* (translated and edited by H.M. Parshley; introduction to the Vintage edition by Deirdre Bair). New York: Vintage Books.

De Meillon, N. 2001. 'Interpersonal Relationships in Multiracial Schools in a South African Context', in *International Journal of Group Tensions*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2001, pp. 135-158. Published by: Human Sciences Press, Inc.

Denzin, N. K. 1969. 'Symbolic Interactionism and Ethnomethodology: A Proposed Synthesis', in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 34, No. 6 (Dec., 1969), pp. 922-934. Published by: American Sociological Association.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. 2003. *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, (2nd Edition). California: Sage Publication, Inc.

Donham, E. L. 1998. 'Freeing South Africa: The "Modernisation" of Male-Male Sexuality in Soweto', in *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Feb., 1998), pp. 3-21. Published by: Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the American Anthropological Association.

Douglas, J. D. 1984. *Creative Interviewing*, Vol. 159. Sage Library Research.

Douglas, M. 1966. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Du Boulay, J. & Williams, R. 1984. 'Collecting Life Histories', in Bryman, A. (ed.), 2007. *Qualitative Research, Vol. 2*. Sage Publications.

Duberman, 1993. *Stonewall*. Blume.

Dunton, C. 1989. '"Wheyting be Dat?" The Treatment of Homosexuality in African Literature', in *Research of African Literature*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Autumn, 1989), pp. 422-448. Published by: Indiana University Press.

Edwards, T. 1994. *Erotics & Politics: Gay Male Sexuality, Masculinity and Feminism*. Routledge: London and New York.

Eichberg, R. 1990. *Coming Out: An Act of Love*. Dunton.

Elder, G. S. 2005. 'Somewhere, over the Rainbow: Cape Town, South Africa, as a "Gay Destination"', in Ouzgane, L & Morrell, R. (eds.), *African Masculinities*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Ellerson, B. 2005. 'Visualising Homosexualities in Africa-Durkan: An Interview with Filmmaker Mohamed Camara', in Ouzgane, L & Morrell, R. (ed.), *African Masculinities*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Epprecht, M. 1998a. 'The "Unsaying" of Indigenous Homosexualities in Zimbabwe: Mapping a Blindspot in an African Masculinity', in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4, Special Issue on Masculinities in Southern Africa (Dec., 1998), pp. 631-651. Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.

Epprecht, M. 1998b. '"Good God Almighty, What's This!": Homosexual Crime in Early Colonial Zimbabwe', in *Boy-wives and Female Husbands: Studies of African Homosexualities*. Murray, S & Roscoe, W. (eds.) 1998. Macmillan.

Epprecht, M. 2004. *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Eribon, D. 2004. *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self* (translated by Michael Lucey). Duke University Press.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1970. 'Sexual Inversion among the Azande', in *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 72, No. 6 (Dec., 1970), pp. 1428-1434.

Ezzy, D. 1998. 'Theorising Narrative Identity: Symbolic Interactionism and Hermeneutics', in *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 39, Vol. 2 (Spring, 1998), pp. 239-252. Published by: Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the Midwest Sociological Society.

Falk, K. 1923. 'Same-sex Life among a few Negro Tribes of Angola' (translated by Bradley Rose), in Murray, S & Roscoe, W (eds.), 1998, *Boy-wives and Female Husbands: Studies of African Homosexualities.* Macmillan.

Fanon, F. 1986. *Black Skin, White Mask*. Pluto Press: London and Sydney.

Freud, S. 1907. 'The Sexual Enlightenment of Children' (translated by E. B. H. Herford), in *The Major Works of Sigmund Freud*, 1952, pp. 119-122, The University of Chicago, William Benton, Publisher. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.

Freud, S. 1918. *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* (translated by A. A. Brill, 3rd revised edition), New York and Washington Nervous and Mental Disease Publishing Company.

Freud, S. 1920 (1963 edition). 'The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman', in P. Rieff, (ed.), *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*. New York: Collier.

Freud, S. 1923. 'The Ego and the ID' (translated by Joan Riviere), in *The Major Works of Sigmund Freud*, 1952, pp. 697-717, The University of Chicago, William Benton, Publisher. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.

Foucault, M. 1979a. *Power/Knowledge*, Colin Gordon (ed.), Harvester Press, Brighton.

Foucault, M. 1979b. (1990 edition). *The History of Sexuality, Volume I, the Will to Knowledge* (translated from the French by Robert Hurley), Penguin Books.

Foucault, M. 1985. *The History of Sexuality, Volume II, the Use of Pleasure* (translated from the French by Robert Hurley), Pantheon Books: New York.

Foucault, M. 1988. 'Technologies of the Self', in Martin, L. H., Gutman, H. & Hutton, P. H. 1988 (eds.), *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Fuss, D. 1989. *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature & Difference*. Routledge: New York London.

Gagnon, J. H. & Simon, W. 2005. (2nd edition) *Sexual Conduct: the Social Sources of Human Sexuality*. Aldine Transaction: A Division of Transaction Publishers.

GALZ, 2008. *Unspoken Facts: a history of homosexualities in Africa*. Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe.

Gaudio, R. P. 1998. 'Male lesbians and Other Queer Notions in Hausa', in Murray, S & Roscoe, W (ed.), *Boy-wives and Female Husbands: Studies of African Homosexualities*. 1998. Macmillan.

Gecas, V. & Burke, P. J. 1995. 'Self and Identity', in K. S. Cook, G. A. Fine, & J. S. House (eds.), *Sociological Perspectives on Social Psychology*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, pp. 41-67.

Gevisser, M., & Cameron, E. 1994. *Defiant Desire*. Ravan Press.

Giddens, A. 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles.

Goffman, E. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

Goffman, E. 1967 (1972 edition). *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behaviour*. Allen Lane the Penguin Press.

Gonsiorek, J. C. & Weinrich, J. D. 1991. 'The Definition and Scope of Sexual Orientation', in Gonsiorek, J. C. & Weinrich, J. (eds.), 1991. *Homosexuality: Research Implications for Public Policy*. Sage Publications.

Greenburg, D. F. 1988. *The Construction of Homosexuality*. University of Chicago Press.

Gubrium, J. F. & Holstein, J. A. 1997. *The New Language of Qualitative Method*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

Hammersley, M. 1992. *What is wrong with ethnography? Methodological Explorations*. London: Routledge.

Hansen, D. A. 1976. *An Invitation to Critical Sociology*. The Free Press.

Hattingh, C. 2005. 'Struggles of Authenticity', in Van Zyl, M. & Steyn, M. (ed.), *Performing Queer: Shaping Sexualities 1994-2004*. Kwela Books.

Hearn, J. 1987. *The Gender of Oppression: Men, Masculinity and the Critique of Marxism*. Maryland: Littlefield Adams.

Heaton-Nicholls, C. E. 'A Letter to Kevan Botha' (9 September, 1986), in Hoad, N., Martin, K. & Reid, G. (eds.), 2005. *Sex and Politics in South Africa*. Double Story Books.

Hennen, P. 2005. 'Bears, Bear Masculinity: Recuperation, Resistance, or Retreat?' in *Gender and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Feb. 2005), pp. 25-43. Published by: Sage Publications, Inc.

Hirst, P. Q. & Woolley, P. 1982. *Social Relations and Human Attributes*. Tavistock Publishers Ltd.

Hoad, N. 1999. 'Between the White Man's Burden and the White Man's Disease: Tracking Lesbian and Gay Human Rights in Southern Africa'. GLQ: *A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 5(4): 559-584.

Hoad, N., Martin, K., & Reid, G. 2005. *Sex and Politics in South Africa*. Double Story Books.

Hoad, N. 2007. *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, and Globalisation.* University of Minnesota Press.

Hocquenghem, G. 1993. *Homosexual Desire* (1972 Editions Universitaries, 1978 Translation) Duke University Press.

Holstein, J. A. & Gubrium, J. F. 2003. (eds.), *Inside Interviewing: New Lenses, New Concerns.* California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Howard, R. 1998. 'Review': [untitled], Reviewed Work(s): *Human Rights and Homosexuality in Southern Africa* by Chris Dunton; Mai Palmberg; *Beset by Contradictions: Islamization, Legal Reform and Human Rights in Sudan* by Lawyers' committee for Human Rights, in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Apr., 1998), pp. 190-192. Published by: African Studies Association.

Hutchinson, B. 1957. 'Some Social Consequences of the Nineteenth Century Missionary Activity among the South African Bantu', in *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Apr., 1957), pp. 160-177. Published by: Edinburgh University Press.

Isaac, G., & McKendrick, B. 1992. *Male Homosexuality in South Africa: Identity Formation, Culture, and Crisis.* Oxford University Press Cape Town.

Jacob, E. 1987. 'Qualitative Research Traditions: A Review', in *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 57. No. 1 (Spring, 1987), pp. 1-50. Published by: American Educational Association.

Jackson, S. 1999. 'Heterosexuality, Heteronormativity and Gender Hierarchy: Some Reflections on Recent Debates', in Jackson, S. 1999. *Heterosexuality in Question.* Sage Publications.
Jenkins, R. 2004. *Social Identity* (2nd edition). Routledge.

Jones, P. 1993. *Studying Society, Sociological Theories and Research Practices.* London: Collins Educational.

Josselso, R & Lieblich, A. (eds.), 1995. *Interpreting Experience: the Narrative Study of Lives.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Kellner, D. 2001. 'Introduction: Herbert Marcuse and the Vicissitudes of Critical Theory', in Marcuse, H. 2001. *Toward a Critical Theory of Society*, Kellner, D. (ed.), Routledge.

Kendall, K. L. 1999. 'Women in Lesotho and the (Western) Construction of Homophobia', in Blackwood, E. and Wieringa, S., (eds.), *Same-Sex Relations and Female Desire: Transgender Practices across Cultures.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Kiiru, M. 2007. 'Delaying Gratification as a Beautiful Choice', in Maticka-Tyndale, E., Tiemoko, R., & Makinwa-Adebusoye, P. (eds.), 2007. *Human Sexuality in Africa: Beyond Reproduction*. Fanele.

Kimmel, M. S., & Fracher. J. 1992. 'Hard Issues and Soft Spots: Counselling Men about Sexuality', in Kimmel, M. S. & Messner, M. A. (eds.), *Men's lives*. New York: Macmillan.

Kinsey, A. 1948. *Human Sexuality in the Human Male*. W.B. Saunders.

Kornegay, Jr., E. 2004. 'Queering Homophobia: Black Theology as a Sexual Discourse of Transformation', in *Theology and Sexuality*, Vol. 11 No. 1 (2004), pp. 29-51. Published by: the Continuum Publishing Group Ltd.

Krajeski, J. 1996. 'Homosexuality and the Mental Health Professions: A Contemporary History', in CabaJ, R. P. & Stein, T. S. (eds.), *Textbook of Homosexuality and Mental Health*, 1996. American Psychiatric Press, Inc.

Kuhn, A. 2000. 'A Journey through Memory', in Radstone, S. (ed.), 2000. *Memory and Methodology*. Berg.

Lazerson, B. H. 1981. 'In and Out of the Closet', in *American Speech*, Vol. 56 No. 4 (Winter, 1981), pp. 274-277. Published by: Duke University Press.

Leatt, A. & Hendricks, G. 2005, 'Beyond Identity Politics: Homosexuality and Gayness in South Africa', in Van Zyl, M. & Steyn, M. (eds.), *Performing Queer: Shaping Sexualities 1994-2004*. Kwela Books.

Lee, J. A. 1977. 'Going Public: A Study of the Sociology of Homosexual Liberation', in *Journal of Homosexuality*, 3, 47-78.

Leedy, P.B. & Ormrod, J.E. 2001. *Practical Research: Planning and Design*. Upper Saddle, New Jersey: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Lichtenstein, B. 2000. 'Secret Encounters: Black Gay Men, Bisexuality and AIDS in Alabama', in *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 14 No. 3 (Sep., 2000), pp. 374-393. Published by: Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the American Anthropological Association.

Linde, C. 1993. *Life Stories: the Creation of Coherence*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

Long, S. 2003. *More than a Name: State-Sponsored Homophobia and Its Consequences in Southern Africa*. Human Rights Watch and the International Gay and Lesbian Rights Commission.

Longmore, M. A. 1998. 'Symbolic Interactionism and the Study of Sexuality', in *Journal of Sex Research*, Vol. 35, No. 1, the Use of Theory in Research and Scholarship on Sexuality (1998), pp. 44-57.

Louw, R. 2001. 'Mkhumbane and New Traditions of (Un)African Same-Sex Weddings', in Morrell, R. (ed.), 2001. *Changing Men in Southern Africa*. Zed Books Ltd: London & New York.

Malinowski, B. 1963. *Sex, Culture and Myth*. Ruper Hart-Davis, London.

Marcuse, H. 2001. *Towards a Critical Theory of Society*. Douglas Kellner (ed.), Routledge.

Mays, V. M., Cochran, S. D., Bellinger, G., Smith, R. G., Henly, N., Daniels, M., Tibbits, T., Victoriaane, G. D., Osi, O. K., & Birt, D. K., 1992, 'the Language of Black Gay Men's Behaviour: Implication for AIDS Risk Reduction', in *The Journal of Sex Research*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Aug., 1992), pp. 425-434. Published by: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (Taylor & Francis Group).

Mead, G. H. 1934. *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviourist*. Morris, C. (ed.), University of Chicago Press.

McCracken, G. 1988. *The Long Interview*. Newbury Park: Sage.

McPhail, C. & Rexroat, C. 1979. 'Mead vs. Blumer: the Divergent Methodological Perspectives of Social Behaviourism and Symbolic Interactionism', in *American Sociological Review*, 1979, Vol. 44 (June); pp. 449-467.

Migraine-George, T. 2003. 'Beyond the 'Internalist' vs. 'Externalist' Debate: the Local-Global Identities of African Homosexuals in Two Films, "Woubi Cheri" and "Dakan"', in *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Special Issue Focusing on the Media in and about Africa (Jun., 2003), pp 45-56. Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.

Miligan, D. 1973. *The Politics of Homosexuality*. Pluto Press.

Moilanen, P. 2000. 'Interpretation, Truth and Correspondence', in *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (2000), pp. 377-390. Published by: Blackwell Publishers.

Moodie, T. D. 2001. 'Black Migrant Mine Labours and the Vicissitudes of Male Desire', in Morrell, R. (ed.), 2001. *Changing Men in Southern Africa*. Zed Books Ltd: London & New York.

Morgan, D. 1993. 'You Too Can Have a Body Like Mine: Reflection on the Male Body and Masculinities', in Scott, S & Morgan, D. (eds.), *Body Matters: Essays on the Sociology of the Body*. The Falmer Press.

Morrell, R. 1998. 'Of Boys and Men: Masculinity and Gender in Southern African Studies', in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 4, Special Issue on Masculinities in Southern Africa (Dec., 1998), pp. 605-630. Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.

Morris, C. W. 1934. 'Introduction', in Mead, G. H. 1934. *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviourist*. Morris, C. W. (ed.), University of Chicago Press.

Murray, S. O. 1992. 'The Underdevelopment of Modern/gay Homosexuality in Mesoamerica', in Plummer, K. (ed.), 1992. *Modern Homosexualities: Fragments of Lesbian and Gay Experience*. Routledge.

Murray, S. O. 1998. 'Diversity and Identity: the Challenge of African Homosexualities', in Murray, S. & Roscoe, W (eds.), *Boy-wives and Female Husbands: Studies of African Homosexualities*. 1998. Macmillan.

Musolf, G. R. 1992. 'Structure, Institution, Power and Ideology: New Directions within Symbolic Interactionism', in *Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Summer, 1992), pp. 171-189. Published by: Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the Midwest Sociological Society.

Nel, J. 2005. 'Moving from Rhetoric to Creating the Reality: Empowering South Africa's Lesbian and Gay Community', in Van Zyl, M. & Steyn, M. (ed.), *Performing Queer: Shaping Sexualities 1994-2004*. Kwela Books.

Nkoli, S. 1994. 'Wardrobes: Coming Out as a Black Gay Activist in South Africa', in Gevisser, M. & Cameron, E. (ed.), *Defiant Desire*, 1994. Pavan Books – Johannesburg.

Ober, J. D. 1970. 'On Sexuality and Politics in the Work of Herbert Marcuse', in Brake, M. (ed.), 1985 *Human Sexual Relations: Towards a redefinition of sexual politics*. Pantheon Books: New York.

O'Brien, M. 1981. *The Politics of Reproduction*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Ojo, M. A. 2007. 'Religion and Sexuality: Individuality, Choice and Sexual Rights in Nigerian Christianity', in Maticka-Tyndale, E., Tiemoko, R., & Makinwa-Adebusoye, P. (eds.), 2007. *Human Sexuality in Africa: Beyond Reproduction*. Fanele.

Oluwolo, S. P. 2007. 'Health and the Individual Rights to Pleasure and Choice', in Maticka-Tyndale, E., Tiemoko, R., & Makinwa-Adebusoye, P. (eds.), 2007. *Human Sexuality in Africa: Beyond Reproduction*. Fanele.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J. & Leech, H. L. 2007. 'Validity and Qualitative Research: An Oxymoron?' in *Quality and Quantity*, Vol. 41 (2007), pp. 233-249. Published by: Springer.

Ottosson, D. 2007. *State-sponsored Homophobia: A World Survey of Laws Prohibiting Same-sex Activities between Consenting Adults*. April, 2007 report. International Lesbian and Gay Association.

Parsons, T. 1951. *The Social System*. Free Press.

Patai, D. 2000. *Heterophobia: Sexual Harassment and the Future of Feminism*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Peshkin, A. 1988. 'Understanding Complexity: A Gift of Qualitative Inquiry', in *Anthropology & Educational Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Dec., 1988), pp. 416-422.

Phillips, O. 2000. 'Contesting the Global Gay', in C. Stychin & D. Herman (eds.), *Sexuality in the Legal Arena*. London: The Athlone Press, pp. 17-34.

Phillips, O. 2001. 'Myths and Realities of African Sexuality', Reviewed Work(s): *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies of African Homosexualities* by Stephen O. Murray & Will Roscoe (ed.), in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 44, No.2, Ways of Seeing: Beyond the New Nativism (Sep., 2001), pp. 195-201.

Pillard, R. C. 1991. 'Masculinity and Femininity in Homosexuality: "Inversion" Revisited', in Gonsiorek, J. & Weinrich , J. D. (eds.), *Homosexuality: Research Implications For Public Policy*, 1991. Sage Publications.

Pincheon, B. S. 2000. 'An Ethnography of Silences: Race, (Homo)sexualities, and a Discourse of Africa', in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 43 (Dec., 2000), pp. 39-58. Published by: African Studies Association.

Plummer, K. 1975. *Sexual Stigma*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Plummer, K. 1995. *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change and Social Worlds*. Routledge.

Plummer, K. 1996. 'Symbolic Interactionism and the Forms of Homosexuality', in Seidman, S. (ed.), 1996. *Queer Theory/Sociology*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Plummer, K. 2005. '*Foreword*', in Gagnon, J H. & Simon, W. 2005 *Sexual Conduct: the Social Sources of Human Sexuality* (2nd edition). Aldine Transaction: A Division of Transaction Publishers.

Pope, S. J. 1997. 'Scientific and Natural Law Analyses of Homosexuality: A Methodological Study', in *the Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 25, No. 1, (Spring, 1997), pp. 89-126. Published by: Blackwell Publishing.

Preves, S. E. 2000. 'Negotiating the Constraints of Gender Binarism: Intersexuals' Challenge to Gender Categorisation', in *Current Sociology*, July 2000, Vol. 48(3): 27-50. Sage Publication.

Rankhotha, S. C. 1998. *How Black Men Involved in Same-Sex Relationships Construct Masculinities in the Pietermaritzburg Area*. Unpublished Thesis, University of Natal.

Ratele, K. 2009. 'Apartheid, Anti-apartheid and Post-apartheid Sexualities', in Steyn, M. & Van Zyl, M. (ed.), 2009. *The Prize and the Price: Shaping Sexualities in South Africa*. Human Science Research Council Press, Cape Town, South Africa.

Reddy, V. 2001. 'Homophobia, Human Rights and Gay and Lesbian Equality in Africa', in *Agenda*, No. 50, African Feminisms One (2001), pp. 83-87. Published by: Agenda Feminist Media.

Reddy, V. 2009. 'Queer Marriages: Sexualising Citizenship and the Development of Freedoms in South Africa', in Steyn, M. & Van Zyl, M. (ed.), 2009. *The Prize and the Price: Shaping Sexualities in South Africa*. Human Science Research Council Press, Cape Town, South Africa.

Rich, A. 1980. 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', in *Signs*, Vol. 5, No. 4, Women: Sex and Sexuality (Summer, 1980), pp. 631-660. Published by: The University of Chicago Press.

Ritzer, G. 1980. *Sociology: A Multiple Paradigm Science* (rev. ed.) Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Rogers, M. F. 1983. *Sociology, Ethno-methodology, and Experience: A Phenomenological Critique*. Cambridge University Press.

Rydström, J. 2005. 'Solidarity – with Whom? The International Gay & Lesbian Rights Movement and Apartheid', in Hoad, N., Martin, K., & Reid, G. (eds.), *Sex and Politics in South Africa*, 2005. Double Story Books.

Sachs, A. 2007. 'The Constitutional Principles Underpinning Black Economic Empowerment', in Mangcu, X., Marcus, G., Shubane, K. & Hadland, A., *Visions of Black Economic Empowerment*. Jacana.

Salih, S. 2002. *Judith Butler*. Routledge: New York and London.

Salih, S & Butler, J. 2004. *The Judith Butler Reader*. Blackwell Publishing.

Sanders, A. J. G. M. 1997. 'Homosexuality and the Law: A Gay Revolution in South Africa?' in *Journal of African Law*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (1997), pp. 100-108. Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of the School of Oriental and African Studies.

Savin-Williams, R. C. & Cohen, K. M. 1996. *The Lives of Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals: Children to Adults*. Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Scott, W. J. 1991. 'The Evidence of Experience', in *Critical Inquiry,* Vol. 17, No. 4 (summer, 1991), pp. 773-797. Published by: The University of Chicago Press.

Sedgwick, E. K. 1990. *Epistemology of the Closet*. University of California Press.

Segal, L. 1993. *Straight Sex: The Politics of Pleasure*. Virago.

Shott, S. 1976. 'Society, Self, and Mind in Moral Philosophy: the Scottish Moralists as Precursors of Symbolic Interactionism', in *Journal of the History of the Behavioural Science*, 12 (1976): 39-46.

Silverman, D. 1985. *Qualitative Methodology and Sociology: Describing the Social World*. Gower.

Silverman, D. 1993. *Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for Analysing Talk, Text and Interaction*. Sage Publications.

Sithole, N. 1963. 'African Nationalism and Christianity', in *Transition*, No. 10 (Sep., 1963), pp. 37-39. Published by: Indiana University Press on behalf of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute.

Sinclair, R. 2007. *The Official Treatment of White, South African, Homosexual Men and the Consequent Reaction of Gay Liberation from the 1960s to 2000*, unpublished thesis, University of Johannesburg. Access: http://hdl.handle.net/10210/163

Singer, L. 1993. *Erotic Welfare: Sexual Theory and Politics in the Age of Epidemic*, Butler, J. & MacGrogan, M. (ed.), Routledge.

Smith, B. & Gomez, J. & 1990. 'Talking about It: Homophobia in the Black Community', in *Feminist Review*, No. 34, Perverse Politics: Lesbian issues (Spring, 1990), pp. 47-55. Published by: Palgrave Macmillan Journal.

Smith, A. 2005. 'Where am I in the Eighties?' in *Sex and Politics in South Africa*, 2005. Hoad, N., Martin, K. & Reid, G. (ed.), Double Story Books.

Smith, B. 1993. 'Homophobia: Why Bring It Up?' in *the Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. 1993. Routledge.

Spargo, T. 1999. *Postmodern Encounters: Foucault and Queer Theory*. Icon Books UK Totem Books USA.

Stake, R.E. 1995. *The Art of Case Study Research*. London: Sage.

Standing, E. 2004. 'Homophobia and the Post-modern Condition', in *Theology & Sexuality*, Vol. 10, No. 2, (2004), pp. 65-72. Published by: the Continuum Publishing Group Ltd.

Steyn, M. & Van Zyl, M. 2009. 'The Prize and the Price', in Steyn, M. & Van Zyl, M. 2009, *The Prize and the Price: Shaping Sexualities in South Africa*. Human Science Research Council Press, Cape Town, South Africa.

Stoler, A. L. 1995. *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Duke University Press: Durham and London.

Stryker, S. 1981. 'Symbolic Interactionism: Themes and Variations', in M. Rosenberg & R. H. Turner (ed.), *Social Psychology: Sociological Perspectives* (pp. 3-29). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Stryker, S. 1987. 'The Vitalisation of Symbolic Interactionism', in *Social Psychology Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Mar., 1987), pp. 83-94. Published by: American Sociological Association.

Stychin, C. 1996. 'The Struggle for Sexual Orientation in the South African Bill of Rights', in *Journal of Law and Society*, Vol. 23, No. 4. pp. 255-283.

Sutton, B. 1993. 'The Rationale for Qualitative Research: A Review of Principles and Theoretical Foundations', in *The Library Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 4, *Symposium on Qualitative Research: Theory, Methods and Applications*, (Oct. 1993), pp. 411-430. Published by: University of Chicago Press.

Sweet, J. H. 1996. 'Male Homosexuality and Spiritism in the African Diaspora: The Legacies of a Link', in *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Oct., 1996), pp. 184-202. Published by: University of Texas Press.

Tatchell, P. 2005. The Moment the ANC Embraced Gay Rights, in Hoad, N., Martin, K,. & Reid, G. (eds.), *Sex and Politics in South Africa*, 2005. Double Story Books.

Toms, I. 1994. 'Ivan Toms is a fairy? The South African Defence Force, the End Conscription Campaign, and Me'; in Gevisser, M. & Cameron, E. (eds.), 1994. *Defiant Desire*. Pavan Books – Johannesburg.

Törrönen, J. 2001. 'The Concept of Subject Position in Empirical Research', in *Journal for the Social Behaviour*, 31: 3, 2001. pp, 313-329. Published by: Blackwell PublishersLtd.

Van Zyl, M. 2005. 'Shaping Sexualities – Per(trans)forming Queers', in *Performing Queer: Shaping Sexualities 1994-2004*. Kwela Books.

Van Zyl, M. & Steyn, M. 2009. 'The Prize and the Price', in Steyn, M. & Van Zyl, M. (ed.), 2009. *The Prize and the Price: Shaping Sexualities in South Africa*. Human Science Research Council Press, Cape Town, South Africa.

Ward, E. G. 2005. 'Homophobia, Hypermasculinity, and the US Black Church', in *Culture, Health and Sexuality,* Vol. 6, No. 5, Themed Symposium: Female Genital Cutting (Sep. – Oct., 2005), pp. 493-504. Published by: Taylor & Francis Ltd.

Weeks, J. 1986. *Sexuality*. Tavistock Publications: London and New York.

Wickberg, D. 2000. 'Homophobia: On the Cultural History of an Idea', in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 27, No. 1, (Autumn, 2000), pp. 42-57. Published by: the University of Chicago Press.

Wiley, N. 1994. *The Semiotic Self*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Williams, W. L. 1985. 'Review': [untitled]. Reviewed work(s): *Ritualised Homosexuality in Melanesia* by Gilbert, H. Herdt, in *Journal of Anthropological Research*, Vol. 41. No.3 (Autumn, 1985), pp. 351-354.

Wilchins, R. 2004. *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer*. Alyson Books.

Wittig, M. 1989. 'On The Social Contract', in Altman, D., Vance, C., Vicinus, M., & Weeks, J. (eds.), *Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality? International Conference on Gay and Lesbian Studies*. University of Amsterdam, GMP Publishers, London.

Woodson, J. C. 2002. 'Including "Learned Sexuality" in the Organisation of Sexual Behaviour' in Neuroscience and Biobehavioural Reviews, Vol. 26 (pp. 69-80).

Woggon, H. A. 1981. 'A Biblical and Historical Study of Homosexuality', in *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Summer, 1981), pp. 156-163. Published by: Springer.

Wolkomir, M. 2004. '"Giving up to God": Negotiating Femininity in Support Groups for Wives of Ex-Gay Christian Men', in *Gender and Society*, Vol. 18, No. 6 (Dec., 2004), pp. 735-755. Published by: Sage Publications, Inc.

Yin, R. K. 1994. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2nd edition). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Yip, A. K. T. 1997. 'Attacking the attacker: Gay Christians Talk Back', in *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 48, No. 1, (Mar., 1997), pp. 113-127. Published by: Blackwell Publishing on behalf of the London School of Economics and Political Sciences.

Appendix I

Interview Protocol

Interview Declaration: the use of this information is strictly for research purposes, and the interview is conducted in private. This information stands as the proof of my actual interview, which will be part of my data analysis and report. The further use of this information will be the final submission of my thesis in 2009.

Li Xinling

Signature_____   Date: _____

Interviewee's personal information

Name: _____

Birth Date (d/m/y): _____

Identity Number (Passport Number): _____

Race (i.e. Black, Caucasian): _____

Ethnicity (i.e. Xhosa, Zulu, Shona, Ndebele): _____

Education: _____

Occupation: _____

Religion: _____

Sexual Orientation:_____

Would you like me to use you real name in my data analysis? Yes _____No _____

Signature _____   Date _____

Appendix II

Reference paper

(For the respondents, the following questions need to be reconsidered after reading the transcription)

1. What is the most important motivation of your coming out?

   _____

   _____

2. What character (i.e. a person) or institute (i.e. work place, family) did you find most important to come out to? And why?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. Please address the spots in the transcription where mistakes or misinterpretations has occurred:

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Comments:

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

Appendix III

(The lengths of the write-ups vary according to the amount of personal information each interviewee disclosed to me.)

Bahbuti, born in Indwe 1974, Eastern Cape Province, moved to Cape Town in 1989. He received a calling to become a Sangoma at the age of four, but he was afraid of the training. Babhuti grew up during apartheid; racial segregation has marked a spot in his consciousness with regard to who he is and what race has meant to him. At high school, he recognised that he was feminine in comparison to other boys, and was encouraged to engage in same-sex intercourse with few elder boys. After moving to Cape Town, Babhuti lived in a church, and was very much involved in Christianity. But because of his 'disruptive' performance in the church and partially because of his homosexual tendencies, he was asked to leave the church. It was only then he was trained to be a sangoma in Cape Town. Babhuti has been through different phases in terms of exploring his sexuality. Random hook-ups and romances crisscrossed his life. He reached a stage where he was happily engaged to a guy, but only realised a year later that he had become the latter's punching bag. Bahbuti eventually took his fiancé back to his parents and their marriage was cancelled thereafter.

Dez, born in 1971, grew up in the rural area outside King William's Town, Eastern Cape Province. He discovered his same-sex tendency in primary school, yet remained quiet about it. For a long time Dez believed that there was something wrong with him according to 'the Xhosa culture'; and for which he experienced tremendous peer pressure while growing up. Dez is a professionally trained Marathon runner, and a caregiver to his family. In his hometown, he did both the work expected of men and women; and he never felt it was somehow unmanly to do traditionally female oriented works as most Xhosa men would regard such as unacceptable. Similar to Bahbuti, Dez experienced apartheid and the degrading social-economic boundaries placed upon people of different colours. For a long time, Dez had feared being gay after seeing his gay friends being disowned by their families after coming out. Dez came out after having met other gay friends through work, by which he was introduced to *Exit* magazine. It was also by advertising himself in *Exit* magazine, Dez met his current lover and together they have maintained a stable and fulfilling relationship.

Elakhe, born in eMthatha 1986, was raised by his grandparents in Queenstown, Eastern Cape Province. Elakhe's mother gave birth to him at the age of 17, and for 23 years of his life,

Elakhe had only met his biological father once. For a large part of his life, Elakhe was somewhat concerned about whether his birth had ruined his mother's life, as in his own words:

> "I felt like, she must have wanted to do so much. I think this is really around the time (when) I was 17/18 I started to have these questions. Wow, at this age my mother was pregnant with me, and about to be a mother, you know. And I am thinking, and I thought, wow, I must have ruined her life, because right now I have so many dreams and I have so many expectations, if I just got pregnant, that would just be the end of all those dreams. I would have to just rearrange my life. So I felt like I must have really ruined her life".

Elakhe spent his childhood on a farm (a place called Happy Valley) in Macleantown. In grade 10, Elakhe moved to stay with his uncle in East London due to the death of his grandparents. Throughout the interview, he never admitted that the absence of a father figure had an impact on his sexuality as some orthodox psychoanalysis would have suggested. For him, the love and caring given by his grandparents were at least equivalent if not more preferable to normal parenthood. Elakhe views himself as an average guy who enjoys various sports equally to fine arts, music and drama.

Elakhe's entire schooling experience forms a dramatic contrast to that of the pre-1994 black adults: having attended multi-racial schools his idea of race was rather vague. He never encountered obvious or direct racial assaults while growing up. And having boy crushes on people of different colours was feasible as the new South African constitution healed the past wounds and conflicts resulting from racial segregation. Indeed, upon till the interview, Elakhe had never engaged in any same-sex relationship within his own kind but men of other races. He came out at university after having to face the death of his ex-girlfriend in a car accident. Although such an event was not a wake-up call per se, Elakhe somehow believed that it was unfair of not having told her the truth about him, and perhaps that would have prevented the misfortunate. With regard to religion, Elakhe has made peace between his Christianity and homosexuality, happily involved in baptism. He graduated from Rhodes University in April 2009 with a Bachelor of Commerce degree.

Fufu, born in King William's Town 1988, Eastern Cape Province, was raised by his mother and step-father. Fufu was free to see his biological father and to stay with his father's family while growing up, for which he genuinely loved both families. Fufu noticed his difference from other boys because he was a bit more feminine than the average boy at school. Unlike other respondents Fufu was exposed to the idea of being gay at a relatively young age, and

was out since then. He wanted to have a boyfriend at school, yet what he had was a long-term 'arrangement' with two boys. Fufu came to Rhodes in 2007, and is currently finishing off his undergrad degree.

Jacob, born in Benoni 1987, a small city on the East Rand, Gauteng Province, had spent his entire life there before coming to study at Rhodes University. Growing up, Jacob admitted that he was a bit feminine according to the conventional definition of masculine/feminine divide. He went to multi-racial schools and did not feel that race was an issue to him. He was terrible at sports and preferred interior activities such as reading. Being born into a Christian family, Jacob struggled with his religious belief at one stage of his life, and left the church eventually. He came out at Rhodes University, and is currently doing his fourth year of the Bachelor of Law degree. Jacob's greatest passions in life are wine and politics, so to speak, if they do not necessarily oppose each other.

K, born in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth (PE) 1984, spent his life there before entering the University of Cape Town. Growing up, K believed that he did not get enough attention from his parents. The father ran a Jazz bar at home, was always drunk and out there doing things. In contrast, his younger sister was the father's favourite, and his younger brother the mother favourite. K felt lonely from a young age. He was isolated from other boys at school for being feminine and introverted. K developed a strong interest in reading and speech making, for which he excelled in school and won a scholarship to go to a prestigious high school in PE. Moving from a normal black township school to a private multi-racial school was initially a cultural shock to him, but it turned out to be fruitful and memorable in the end. K engaged in regular same-sex practices with one older boy at primary school, and was once almost taken advantages of by one of his uncles. He was closeted in high school and joined the church at university wishing to 'cure' him, but it eventually became the prelude of his coming out in 2008. He was raped in the same year, and subsequently experienced an emotional breakdown and as a result of that he left university.