

Introduction.

This dissertation is about the official treatment of white, gay men in South Africa from World War II, but more specifically the 1960s to 2000; how gay men reacted to this treatment and the results of these reactions. By official I mean the government (be it the National Party (NP), or the African National Congress (ANC)), the South African Police (SAP), and the South African Defence Force (SADF). During the 1960s the NP government did not espouse tolerance towards homosexuality. However, by the mid-1990s, a South African Constitution tolerant of homosexual behaviour had come into existence, an endeavour partially located in the reaction of gay rights activists to homosexual repression. This dissertation attempts to chart some of the processes behind this development.

Although official repression of white, homosexual behaviour is evident in South Africa from the nineteenth century (see chapter 1), it began in earnest during the 1960s. In 1968, through the prompting of the SAP and the Minister of Justice, the NP government convened a select committee to investigate the extent of white homosexuality with a view to implementing stricter legislation, which I discuss in chapter 2. State attention had been drawn to the matter, not as a result of an increase in overt white, homosexual behaviour, but as a result of the SAP's attempt to draw greater attention to the problem in order to maintain their power. During the following decade, with South Africa at 'war' with Angola, repression of white, homosexual behaviour stepped up a notch with the activities of the SADF. The SADF reacted to white, gay soldiers with electro-shock therapy and sex changes, many of which were not completed.

By the mid-1980s an embryonic gay liberation movement had emerged, although it was reactionary and defensive and found it difficult to achieve anything concrete in the face of state support for its own version of masculinity. Despite greater efforts at consolidation and cooperation during the later 1980s, the gay liberation movement remained largely unsuccessful. However, there was recognisable change in official attitudes to homosexuality at this point and particularly after 1994, with the change to an ANC-led government in South Africa. A notable aspect of these changes was the

protection given gay rights in the Constitution, and constitutional court rulings validating the Constitution. One of the questions I attempt to answer in this thesis is why the gay liberation movement was somewhat lacking, and consequently what or who then entrenched constitutional protection for gay men?

Within this dissertation, the idea of competing masculinities is of key importance, where heterosexuality and homosexuality among men have close association with certain types of masculinity. In addition, I also work with the concept of hegemony, since the exercise of power is key to definitions of masculinity. I am also affected by Michel Foucault's thinking on the necessity of normalisation to the maintenance of power.¹ In this thesis, normativity is understood as masculine normativity. Here it is necessary to have some consideration of the concepts of masculinity, power and heterosexuality.

Masculinity, is a social construct.² It relates to the range of behaviour and roles that a particular society expects of its men folk. Masculinity is often, but not always, associated with and about being a 'man'. It is difficult to pin down any one definition of masculinity and, depending on social context, masculinities are constantly remade. Masculinity and sex roles are taught and acted out according to social prescriptions. In many societies the playing out of gender roles is linked to heterosexuality. This is termed heteronormativity: an adherence to fixed gender stereotypes located in compulsory heterosexuality.³

Much thinking on masculinity structures masculinity around the notion of white, heterosexual males. This tends to be the case despite much recent work, which shows how class, race, and culture construct different masculinities.⁴ In South Africa, normative masculinity is defined by the dominant masculinity, which, until recently was

¹ M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, (Penguin Books Ltd, England, 1978), p 23.

² N. Edley, M. Wetherall, 'Masculinity, Power and Identity', in M. Mac an Ghail, *Understanding Masculinities*, (Open University Press, Buckingham, Philadelphia, 1996), p 100.

³ K. Phillips, B. Reay, (eds), *Sexualities in History*, (Routledge, New York, London, 2002), p 3.

⁴ R. Morrell, *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, (University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, Zed Books Ltd, London, New York, 2001), p 8.

white, middle-class, middle-aged, and heterosexual.⁵ In white South Africa conservative, Christian morals were an important part of being South African. Afrikaner masculinity stressed independence, resourcefulness, physical and emotional toughness, the ability to give and take orders, and being moral and God-fearing. Within South African government institutions it is also possible to see how Afrikaner nationalism was premised upon a certain kind of masculinity. In its patriarchal and racially-exclusive form, it reinforced a particular definition of white, male behaviour.⁶

The emergence of a hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity marginalized alternative masculinities by silencing or stigmatising them. Hegemonic Afrikaner masculinity was intrinsically bound up with social and political power in Afrikaner society and hence with Afrikaner nationalism.⁷

This was entrenched by the church, schools, communities, sport, and the Afrikaans media.⁸ Other masculinities were considered deviant.⁹

Different cultures and times in history construct gender differences.¹⁰ In my thesis for instance, I refer to a gay,¹¹ an African,¹² and a white hegemonic masculinity. Historical circumstance helps to explain why any one masculinity will have more prominence at a particular point in time.¹³ Bob Connell argues the need for historical research that looks at specific ways in which masculinities were created and how a particular masculinity comes to be hegemonic within society,¹⁴ although it need not be the most common form

⁵ M. Kimmel and M. Messner, *Men's Lives*, (Allyn and Bacon, America, 1998), p xix.

⁶ K. Du Pisani, 'Puritanism Transformed, Afrikaner Masculinities in the Apartheid and Post-Apartheid Period', in Morrell, *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, p 157.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Morrell, *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, p 15.

⁹ Du Pisani, 'Puritanism Transformed', p 167.

¹⁰ R. Connell, *The Men and the Boys*, (Polity, Great Britain, 2000), p 10.

¹¹ See V. Reddy, 'Negotiating Gay Masculinities' in *Agenda*, no 37, 1998.

¹² See Ratele, 'The End of the Black Man' and K. Ratele, 'Contradictions in Constructions of African Masculinity', *Nordic Africa Institute*, 1996-2002.

¹³ A. Solomon-Godeau, 'Male Trouble', in M. Berger, B. Wallis, S. Watson, *Constructing Masculinities*, (Routledge, New York, London, 1995), p 74.

¹⁴ R. Morrell, 'Masculinity in South African History: Towards a Gendered Approach to the Past', in *SAHJ*, vol. 37, 1997, p 172.

of masculinity.¹⁵ In South Africa, owing to demographics, black masculinity was more common but because of the context of apartheid white masculinity was dominant.

It is important to understand what white masculinity included because one can then see why the South African government considered it a threat. It cannot be disputed that the greater threat to the apartheid government was black resistance rather than white homosexuality. However, white homosexuality directly challenged the hegemonic masculinity of Afrikaner nationalism in a way which black resistance could not. The heteronormative assumptions of white, Afrikaans masculinity existed as part of lived experience in a manner, which led few to challenge these assumptions.¹⁶ The existence of white homosexuality did, however, threaten this order but in a way which served to confirm this normativity. In this scheme of things, white homosexuality both opposed and reinforced the hegemony the NP government relied upon.

Masculinity is often defensive,¹⁷ that is, it requires 'an other' that is less powerful in order to define itself against. Key to the maintenance of most masculinities is the notion of dominance, and the assertion of power.¹⁸ This is what the NP government, and its espousal of a particular kind of masculinity subscribed to. This is why it is possible to see white homosexuality as a key threat to certain elements of state power. This perceived challenge is evidenced by the NP government's relative toleration of black homosexuality on the mines as opposed to consideration of stricter legislation for homosexual behaviour that aimed to predominantly affect white, homosexual men. The fact that the Select Committee, set up by the NP government to investigate homosexuality in 1968, only elicited reaction from white members of the public also shows that control differed. It was white, homosexual men who were seen as the threat to the power created through defining hegemonic masculinity. The state would not allow white, gay men to entrench their masculinity because this diminished the state's power

¹⁵ Connell in K. Mooney, 'Ducktails, Flick-Knives and Pugnacity': Subcultural and Hegemonic Masculinities in South Africa, 1948-1960', in *JSAS*, vol. 24, no. 4, Dec. 1998, p 757.

¹⁶ R. Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, (Verso Editions, London, 1980), p 37.

¹⁷ Edley, Wetherall, 'Masculinity, Power and Identity', p 99.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p 98.

and control. By the same token homophobia is not necessarily an instrument for oppressing a sexual minority only. It becomes a tool for regulating all male dominance¹⁹ and reinforcing and sometimes redefining hegemony.

White, gay men as well as all black men, undermined these definitions of hegemonic masculinity. Therefore the subordination of homosexual men is not by chance or the reproduction of the social system but by hegemonic masculinity and the realisation of this masculinity.²⁰ Without this power the NP government would have been unable to establish its apartheid state. Therefore sexuality becomes political²¹ because sexual normativity is policed.²² Some masculinities will always dominate over others in order to be the hegemonic masculinity. Therefore boundaries of maleness are created. If the boundaries are transgressed normalisation is challenged and this results in varying degrees of violent behaviour.²³ In order to try to assert a masculinity different groups attempt to impose their own definition of masculinity to reinforce their social position.²⁴ This is what the NP government did. The definition and recognition of a hegemonic masculinity created and maintained power. In order for this to be achieved white, homosexual masculinity had to be oppressed.

However, regarding black homosexuality the NP government used a different form of non-conformist repression. Literally speaking the NP government often did not repress black homosexuality, for example black homosexual behaviour on the mines and coloured drag queens in townships were perceived as being ignored by NP government repression. A blind eye was often turned. If homosexuality was about civilisation, as some said, then Africans were more civilised than white, gay men were because supposedly there was little homosexuality in the black communities.²⁵ If the NP

¹⁹ Mooney, ‘Ducktails, Flick-Knives and Pugnacity’, p 771.

²⁰ R. Connell, Gender and Power, (Polity, Great Britain, 1987), p 215.

²¹ C. Vance, ‘Social Construction Theory and Sexuality’, in Berger, Wallis, Watson, Constructing Masculinity, p 41.

²² J. Hayes, Queer Nations, (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, London, 2000), p 16.

²³ C. Haywood, Mac an Ghail, ‘Schooling Masculinities’ in Mac an Ghail, Understanding Masculinities, p 55.

²⁴ Ibid, p 58.

²⁵ R. Bleys, The Geography of Perversion, (Cassell, London, New York, 1996), p 243.

government knew there was black homosexuality, on a relatively large scale, white people would appear to be more civilised than the black community because, unlike the black communities, there was little recognised white homosexuality. Also, conveniently for the NP government, black homosexuality was geographically controlled in compounds or black townships.

State attention to white homosexuality during the period under research occurred across a number of public fronts. In many cases it was driven by the need to entrench white, masculine values, since a powerful white masculinity was seen to be the key to the state's attempts to maintain hegemonic masculinity, one which included the denial of the status of manhood to black men and an attempt to extend the reach of masculine heteronormativity. For this reason, many of the attempts to suppress homosexuality occurred in those bodies – the SAP and the SADF – for whom the promotion of white, heterosexual masculinity was key.

While this thesis looks at issues of masculinity in public, it does not look closely at issues around gay identity. Underlying this thesis is my understanding of private versus public space created by, in this instance, white homosexual men. While I recognise that both hold equal importance in gender studies and gay history, I unfortunately could not explore the avenues of private homosexual spaces, such as gay identity and gay sub-cultures, within the scope of this thesis. This would have been an enormous undertaking and too big a topic for a doctoral dissertation. This thesis focuses on white, gay men specifically creating public, not private spaces. Further study will prove how the relationship between such gay spaces in this country created the level of tolerance we experience today.

Aims/Justification

My initial interest in homosexuality originated from my gay friends and a gay friend who died of AIDS-related diseases. According to my friends, living a gay life in the late 1990s was not difficult which led them to compare their situation to those of gay men under NP government rule. The lack of information supplied by such conversations led

me to research what we began to call, 'their history'. Many of my aims and research questions were therefore initiated by gay men who wanted a comparison of the then and now.

Homosexuality is also a current concern firstly, because there is still the need to disprove the stigma that HIV/AIDS is a gay disease (although this belief has diminished considerably). And secondly, because the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE) took various government departments to court in the 1990s to entrench legally the Constitution's protection of gay rights. However, some issues remains such as 'gay marriage' or the recognition of lifetime partnerships.

I initially began my dissertation researching the history of the official treatment of white, gay men in South Africa with the aim of contributing to gay, South African history, which is necessary because there is very little of this history to speak of. "An estimated one out of 10 South Africans has a homosexual identity..." yet there is little gay history.²⁶

As I continued my research, some of my aims began to shift. It became obvious that my thesis was not about white, gay men only. To paraphrase Allan Bérubé: the nature of my subject was pulling me from the margins of minority history into the mainstream of South African history.²⁷ My research began to pull me from how white, gay men were officially treated to why they were treated in this way by the men controlling the country. That is, from gay history to questions on masculinity (a relatively neglected area within gender studies),²⁸ gender construction, and power. So my dissertation shifted from a focus on essentialist notions concerning the oppression of white, gay men to a consideration of socially constructed definitions of masculinity. My thesis came to consider how masculinities were asserted, how the state exploited sexuality to ensure a hegemonic cultural identity and therefore the obedience of the white population, how the

²⁶ G. Isaacs and B. McKendrick, Male Homosexuality in South Africa, (Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1992), p x.

²⁷ A. Bérubé, Coming Out Under Fire, (The Free Press, MacMillan Inc, New York, 1990), p x.

²⁸ Mooney, "Ducktails, Flick-Knives and Pugnacity", p 756.

state ensured heteronormative citizenship,²⁹ how it consolidated its position through the control of minority sexualities, as well as how it defined African masculinity and treated black, gay men.

Part of my aim was also to consider the nature of history in contemporary South Africa. According to Foucault, history should not be about progression. This contrasts with theorists who view history as a linear progression. The present is just as strange as the past and a desirable present has not necessarily emerged.³⁰ Foucault uses history to diagnose the present, not establish how the present emerged from the past.³¹ I wanted to show how white, gay men had achieved the potential for equality, how they had come from being gaoled for their lifestyle to being able to declare it publicly. This I have done by showing the changes in the official treatment of white, gay men in a way, which does not always assume progress or the arrival at a better state of conditions.

I was also influenced by some of Foucault's other ideas. His approach to history is to choose a problem to investigate rather than an historical period.³² My initial tack was to look at the period of white, gay repression to constitutional protection. This did not work because although white gay men had gained more rights, this did not entail a reconceptualisation of dominant South African masculinities. Protection of gay men in the 1996 Constitution did not translate to the end of masculine competition for control. Initially I had failed to recognise this. My hypothesis was that the Constitution would be nice, tidy proof that the fight for gay rights was over. I failed to take account of the historical shifts, which occurred with respect to masculinity, race and power.

²⁹ D. Conway, 'Masculinity, Citizenship and Political Objection to Compulsory Military Service in the South African Defence Force: The Case of Ivan Toms', (Paper presented at IASSCS Sex and Secrecy Conference 2003), p 1.

³⁰ G. Kendall, G. Wickham, Using Foucault's Methods, (Sage Publications, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, 1999), p 4.

³¹ Ibid and C. Suzack in J. Hawley, (ed), Encyclopaedia of Postcolonial Studies, (Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, London, no date), p 186.

³² Kendall, Wickham, Using Foucault's Methods, p 22.

During my research I also aimed to engage with the nature of discourse. I came to realise discourses are productive, and not merely reflective of social reality.³³ I initially aimed to produce a reflection and leave it at that. I therefore came to learn that in contributing to discourse “it is crucial that we allow our investigations of a problem to surprise us.”³⁴ Initially, I had paid little attention to this notion. Knowing the present constitutional position of gay men was supposed to mean there would be no surprises. I thought I could follow and trace the official treatment of white, gay men showing progression and culmination in the Constitution. Not so. Queer theory posed questions I had not considered. Such as homosexuality being about the pleasure of the body, gay men asserting their own definition of masculinity, and the fact that the Constitution itself also attempts to establish a hegemonic masculinity, albeit a very different one from that of the NP government. I came to realise I was in no way writing a definitive history on white, gay men in this country. Even when my work is submitted I will have to continue researching because I am writing ‘the history of the present’. There can never be an end to my field of study. Therefore the successes of the Constitution, the protection of gay men, and the legal victories achieved in South Africa are not conclusive. My dissertation is not a conclusion to the official treatment of white, gay men in this country till 2000, but rather a contribution to a South African history of a sexuality that will continue to necessitate research and writing.

Research Questions

My main points of investigation in this dissertation concern state-based groupings in South Africa and how they defined and reinforced state-centric understandings of masculinity. I consider how those who controlled the definition of hegemonic masculinity reacted when threatened by another masculinity, namely white homosexual masculinity.

I also consider to what extent the NP government was willing to go to maintain its power and whether or not there were people who did not subscribe to the NP government’s

³³ Ibid, p 41.

³⁴ Ibid.

definition of the hegemonic masculinity. Was there any toleration of homosexuality under NP rule?

What measures did the SADF use, especially in the militarised context of South Africa, to ensure its soldiers conformed to the aggressive masculinity it advocated? What did the army do when the definition of the hegemonic masculinity and the power of the authorities were challenged by another masculinity? And as in the civilian population, was there any support of gay men in the SADF, an environment that actively promoted hegemonic understandings of masculinity?

I also questioned the reactions of gay liberation movements to the NP government's homophobic stance. To what degree would they challenge the NP government for gay rights, at the expense of their privileged position in white society? I questioned just how adversely heteronormativity affected white, gay men when considering what they would be giving up should they challenge this. At the same time what ideological tactic would black, gay men assume in a context that did not, first and foremost, afford them human rights? Considering the context of apartheid in which everything was categorised I also had to consider the extent to which the gay liberation movement would unify. Was it possible for gay men to come together to fight for gay rights when race and class played such an overriding role in lives of South Africans?

The status of gay men in South Africa undoubtedly changed, with more tolerance and even acceptance becoming evident, but how did this happen? During the early 1990s more space opened up in South Africa for non-heteronormative masculinity. There had to have been – the protection of sexual orientation was eventually entrenched in the equality clause of the Constitution. But how did this come about? Was the ANC particularly pro-gay rights or did gay rights merely feature in an extensive human rights agenda? Alternatively, was it the gay liberation movement that until such time had not managed to unify or secure much in the way of gay rights that finally achieved success?

And finally was the fight for gay rights over; how far removed from heteronormativity had the ANC government moved since the days of the NP government?

Structure

Chapter 1 begins in the 1960s. I comment briefly on early attempts by the colonial state to criminalise homosexuality. Repressive state attitudes to white homosexuality can be traced back to colonial legislation, where practices such as sodomy were taboo according to Christianity. Despite a number of notorious cases around homosexuality in the early 20th century and in 1939 it did not receive much public attention. This changed in 1966, owing to the gay party at a Forest Town residence in Johannesburg. A government-appointed Select Committee was set up in 1968 to investigate the so-called threat of white homosexuality. Despite some government support for greater criminalisation, the Committee failed to achieve its aim.

Chapter 2 uses the Select Committee submissions to look at the official treatment and understanding of white, homosexual men by, for instance the SAP and some religious quarters. However, numerous submissions to the Select Committee, especially those of psychiatrists, showed that the criminalisation of particularly private homosexual acts would be impractical and difficult. Many submissions also supported the idea that homosexuality was no threat and that an amendment to the 1957 Immorality Act would be ‘bad law’.

In Chapter 3 I discuss the official treatment of white, homosexual soldiers in the SADF in the 1970s and 1980s. The SADF supported entrenched ideas around masculinity and sought to eradicate alternative understandings, sometimes to the extent of using dubious and harmful therapies. Dr Aubrey Levine³⁵ used electro-shock therapy at 1 Military Hospital³⁶ and hormone treatment in an attempt to ‘cure’ gay soldiers. There was, however, some unofficial acceptance of gay soldiers in the SADF in the 1980s.

³⁵ There are discrepancies as to whether Dr Levine’s surname is spelt Levin or Levine. ‘The Aversion Project’ uses the former, newspaper articles the latter.

³⁶ It was affectionately known by the soldiers as 1 Mil. or Cinderella because it was reported to be the cleanest place in the Southern Hemisphere.

Chapter 4 shows the battle to establish the gay liberation movement and its failure to achieve success as a united movement. The movement started with the formation of the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA). However, it soon became apparent that white, gay essentialism did not always look to gay rights as part of the broader struggle. GASA failed to react to challenges from other gay movements (apart from the Law Reform Movement (LRM)) because it benefited, to a certain extent, from the privileges of being a white man. The gay liberation movement grew, but did not unify.

Chapter 5 looks at the success achieved for gay men, not necessarily by them. In 1987 two ANC members offended the gay community with homophobic statements, forcing the ANC to consider gay rights. In 1989 Albie Sachs met with the Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Activists (OLGA) to give advice on how best to suggest the inclusion of gay rights in the Constitution. OLGA, and later the NCGLE through Kevan Botha, helped secure gay rights in the Constitution but the gay liberation movement failed to do so. This constitutional protection was in itself a success but I argue that because it was secured by individual men, predominantly members of the ANC, who were influenced by the international anti-apartheid movement, the gay liberation movement itself was unsuccessful.

Chapter 6 looks at the legislative shortcomings of the Constitution. Much of this period is discussed in other, especially legal, works on the period, but I include it here to demonstrate the extent of change from the 1960s. Landmark constitutional court cases followed where gay men (and lesbians) fought for their rights, eliminating some of the contradiction between the law and the Constitution. The fact that gay people could take their complaints to the constitutional court shows the extent of acceptance or toleration of homosexuality in the New South Africa. This chapter also considers post-constitutional reaction by the churches, the SAP, and the public to gay rights.

Theory and Historiography

In this section I look at the influence of Foucault on my work, understandings of masculinity, the rise of gay history, the development of queer theory, and the development of South African literature on these subjects.

Foucault on Sexuality

Foucault was perhaps the first theorist to pay attention to the subject of sexuality via an understanding of power, discipline, punishment, and secrecy. He maintains that the homosexual as a person did not exist pre-19th century. From the 18th century, though, discourses around sexuality contributed to the development of a concept of homosexuality.³⁷

The development of this concept was linked to new forms of state-power. Foucault established that the state exercises power by managing all forms of individual human activity on a collective scale. In the 18th century, because of improvements in agriculture fewer people starved to death. Life, rather than death, became a preoccupation of states..³⁸ As part of greater attention to the individual, states came to be more interested in issues like the control of sexuality.³⁹ For Foucault, in order to control society individual actions had to be controlled and this led to society acquiring a political significance.⁴⁰ In order to achieve this, normative standards of behaviour were developed so that individuals could police themselves according to whether they did nor did not conform to these.

However, Foucault's concern was not so much with individual behaviour but rather how society created particular discourses as tools of power.⁴¹ According to him, religious, medical, psychiatric, and criminal justice discourses worked together to create the idea that certain kinds of sex could be a public danger.

³⁷ P. Rabinow, (ed), The Foucault Reader, (Pantheon Books, New York, 1984), p 11.

³⁸ Ibid, p 264.

³⁹ Ibid, p 268.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p 67.

⁴¹ Ibid, p 12.

Part of the proliferation of discourse around sexuality, however, was based on the idea of the secrecy of sexuality. Ironically, the repression of sex led to a discursive explosion around the subject. While sex itself became taboo, discussion of sex and its regulation became the norm. People became aware of the silences and discretions that permeated the discourse on sex. Sex was not to be discussed.⁴² However, the more people were told not to enjoy sex the more intriguing the topic became and therefore discourses on the topic proliferated. The result was that while certain kinds of behaviour became the subject of repression, sex was talked about more than anything else. Sex was consigned to a shadow existence yet it was constantly spoken about and simultaneously exploited as a secret.⁴³

Another reason for the repression of sexuality lay in the awareness that sex is also about pleasure. Sexuality also had to be repressed because it allowed for pleasure, which challenges the exercise of power. The restriction of homosexuality was therefore about power and having power over others, not necessarily about homosexuality itself.⁴⁴

Punishment, like repression can also be interpreted as positive.⁴⁵ Punishment is not simply a consequence of legislation and an indicator of social structures, it is a political tactic⁴⁶ to reinforce and exert power.⁴⁷ Punishment creates a comparison of who is wrong, and proves that a certain type of behaviour is intolerable. This creates a threshold to be respected and strive towards. If people know homosexual behaviour is perceived as deviant and is punishable they will not tolerate or practice such behaviour. If a sexuality is punished it must be wrong and a limit is placed on what will, and will not be accepted. People are expected not to push that limit and punishment ensures that they do not. Punishment introduces conformity and it traces the limits of what is normal. In short, penalty normalises and normalisation is an instrument of power. Normalisation makes it

⁴² Ibid, p 292.

⁴³ Foucault, The History of Sexuality, p 35.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p 152.

⁴⁵ Rabinow, The Foucault Reader, p 170.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

possible to punish and differentiate, allowing us to judge.⁴⁸ Punishment of homosexual expression meted out by the NP government, the SAP, and the SADF was an attempt to control homosexuality and therefore maintain power.

The History of Homosexuality

While there is very little South African, gay history, the subject has been better researched elsewhere in the world, particularly in the west. Historians of gay history have drawn largely on Foucault as well as the works of psychologists and psychiatrists such as Freud, Kinsey, and Masters and Johnson. The work of historians and psychologists and psychiatrists in this field cannot be divorced. Thus the older discussions of homosexuality concentrated on the origin of homosexuality.⁴⁹ Since then, researchers have worked with religious theories, causation theories, cures, gay identities, gay sub-cultures, gay liberation, definitions of homosexuality and what it means to be gay, what is normal, promiscuity, paedophilia, homophobia, police brutality, legislation affecting homosexual men, and queer theory. Through these themes “the atmosphere and mentality of past ages had to be reconstructed.”⁵⁰ For many historians in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s homosexuality was still connected to the notion of deviance.⁵¹ Homosexuality was not recognised as normal and neither was it seen as a defined masculinity.

The 1970s saw a far greater interest in homosexuality by historians. “Public interest in homosexuality (had) unquestionably increased”⁵² due to the enhanced sexualisation of culture, for example women’s and gay liberation.⁵³ The 1970s women’s liberation movement inspired research and writing on men and masculinity.⁵⁴ Gay and feminist theory shared the perception that masculinity was linked to power, domination, and resistance to change.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Ibid, p 205.

⁴⁸ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p 183/4.

⁴⁹ Morrell, *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, p 145.

⁵⁰ J. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, (Longman, London, New York, 1984), p 12.

⁵¹ For example A. Storr, *Sexual Deviation*, (Penguin Books, USA, Australia, 1964).

⁵² H. Hyde, *The Other Love*, (Heinemann, London, 1970), p 16.

⁵³ Morrell, *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, p 143.

⁵⁴ Kimmel and Messner, *Men’s Lives*, p xviii.

⁵⁵ Morrell, *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, p 42.

The late 1970s also saw further research into causation theories by William Masters and Virginia Johnson, while many professionals began to recognise that homosexuality could not be cured. The importance of medical theories was still prevalent but psychologists and psychiatrists were revising their attitudes to homosexuality.⁵⁶ Understanding homosexuality began to move from a belief in it as psychological deviance to the potential of homosexuality being an identity and gay men being manly. Accompanying this was the greater recognition of the homosexual sub-culture.⁵⁷ The disadvantage for any new material was that it had a short history and was not steeped in tradition like the medical and religious theories.⁵⁸ Hence it would take such new discourse time to establish itself as the replacement body of discourse for the older, more trusted works. Newer discourse from this period also shows the realisation that gay studies needed to be incorporated into history and literature. Historian Jeffery Weeks is widely recognised for his work on the treatment of homosexual men and British homosexual legislation and he moves away from traditional discourse, presenting new perspectives in gay history.

The term queer was popularised in these newer discourses by the American gay and lesbian community in the late 1980s.⁵⁹ It was initially bigoted language but became a defiant statement.⁶⁰ Prior to the term gay, the term homosexual was used but to gay men and queer theorists this was a reminder of psychiatry, the police, and the stigmatising of 'the other.'⁶¹ Although the term gay makes homosexuality important,⁶² it is queer that challenges marginalisation, normalisation, heterosexism,⁶³ and heteronormativity. The

⁵⁶ E. Goode, Deviant Behaviour, (Prentice-Hall Inc, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1978), p 362.

⁵⁷ Morrell, Changing Men in Southern Africa, p 144.

⁵⁸ C. Tripp, The Homosexual Matrix, (McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, St. Louis, San Francisco, Düsseldorf, Mexico, Toronto, 1975, p 279.

⁵⁹ E. Blackwood, S. Wieringa (eds), Female Desires, (Columbia University Press, New York, 1999), p 20. The term homosexual referred to the sexual behaviour only of males with males. (R. Bleys, The Geography of Perversion).

⁶⁰ V. Reddy, 'Institutionalizing Sexuality: Theorizing Queer in Post-Colonial Apartheid South Africa' in D. Constantine-Simms (ed), Homosexuality in Black Communities, (Alyson Books, Los Angeles, New York, 2001), p 168.

⁶¹ S. Dayal, 'By Way of an Afterword' in J. Hawley (ed), Post-Colonial Queer, (State University of New York Press, America, 2001), p 313.

⁶² Reddy, 'Institutionalizing Sexuality', p 168.

⁶³ "Heterosexist: a way of thinking and living where only emotional and sexual relationships between

gay experience has also sometimes been organised in heterosexual terms: one man is considered the woman in a relationship. This shows heterosexism and subordination to it.⁶⁴ The term queer is anti-normative regarding sexuality,⁶⁵ creating an awareness of normalisation.⁶⁶ Therefore the word queer is political. It represents pride, strength, and activism. It harnesses disgust and fear and directs it towards its homophobic source.⁶⁷

Queer Theory

A new genre emerged in the 1980s: queer theory, which influenced gay historiography. Queer theory evolved because the world was changing: queer theorists challenged older narratives and ideologies, leading to a re-evaluation of the gay sub-culture.⁶⁸ It also included the realisation that all citizenship was actually sexual citizenship and that heteronormativity had to be denaturalised.⁶⁹ A different approach to citizenship was necessary: a queer articulation of democratic theory.⁷⁰

The HIV/AIDS pandemic was critical in prompting the development of queer theory. The HIV/AIDS crisis had a twofold, simultaneous effect on gay men: it increased public consciousness of queer culture and created new forms of homophobia, for instance the reassertion of heterosexist discourses around family values. HIV/AIDS discourses could be interpreted as a hegemonic attempt to rehomosexualise and remedicalise the gay identity.⁷¹ In turn new discourses and new forms of gay activism evolved to fight the new homophobia.

The explosion of queer politics ... arose from the recognition that existing political strategies coming from the lesbian and gay community were impotent in the hyper-

men and women are recognised as being legal, normal, natural or legitimate.” (D. Fine ‘Lesbian and Gay Rights’ in *Developing Justice Series*, (1992), p 6.

⁶⁴ Connell, *Gender and Power*, p 117.

⁶⁵ Hawley, *Post-Colonial Queer*, p 3. According to Hawley the term queer could therefore exclude gay men living in a community where the gay identity is legitimate.

⁶⁶ Dayal, ‘By Way of an Afterword’, p 306.

⁶⁷ Reddy, ‘Institutionalizing Sexuality’, p 168.

⁶⁸ Clarke in D. Bell, J. Binnie, *The Sexual Citizen. Queer Politics and Beyond*, (Blackwell Publishers Ltd, England, 2000), p 8.

⁶⁹ Bell, Binnie, *The Sexual Citizen*, p 15.

⁷⁰ S. Seidman in Bell and Binnie, *The Sexual Citizen*, p 11.

homophobic context ... in the UK and USA (spurred on by AIDS and by a new moral agenda of 'family values'). In the face of the new right a new adversarial politics was called for: it was time for queers to bash back.⁷²

The HIV/AIDS pandemic changed the collective psyche of the gay world and injected a renewed anger, frustration, and impatience with the institutionalised oppression of gay men.⁷³ This resulted in more books on homosexuality, its normalcy, and how homophobia could be combated.⁷⁴ In sharp contrast to the rest of the world, South African publications on homosexuality were few and far between. Unfortunately, it took the HIV/AIDS crisis to force South African society and the NP government to once again acknowledge the existence of the gay community.⁷⁵

The initial focus of queer theory was lesbian and gay studies; however theorists soon turned their attention to disciplines such as history, political science, and literature to remove their heterosexist biases.⁷⁶ Within this range, queer theory denaturalises all that is heterosexual and challenges heterosexism. It questions what created and entrenched gay sub-cultures, how they have survived, and will continue to do so.⁷⁷ It is an alternative account of men and masculinity.⁷⁸ It de-gays and de-sexualises gayness. It establishes a gay identity, something from which to mobilise and mobilise *en masse*.

From the start, queer theory grappled with the concept of essentialism, where this refers to the idea that homosexuality is an essential, rather than a constructed trait. The essentialist versus the social construction theory debate is part of queer theory. This debate is comprehensively discussed in Edward Stein's Mismeasurement of Desire.

⁷¹ Reddy, 'Institutionalizing Sexuality', p 165.

⁷² Bell, Binnie, The Sexual Citizen, p 37.

⁷³ M. Mason, 'Out of the Closets on to the Streets: Gay Men's History' in E. Healey, A. Mason, (eds), Stonewall, (Virago Press Ltd, London, 1994), p 109.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p 45.

⁷⁵ ILGA Conference Report, (8th Annual Conference, 1-12 July 1986), (Alfred Machela Collection, Box 3. B-B3, AM 2622, GALA), p 5.

⁷⁶ E. Stein, The Mismeasurement of Desire, (University Press, Oxford, 1999), p 11.

⁷⁷ D. Forrest, 'We're Here, We're Queer, and We're Not Going Shopping'. Changing Gay Male Identities in Contemporary Britain', in A. Cornwall and N. Lindisfarne (eds), Dislocating Masculinity, (Routledge, London, New York, 1996).

⁷⁸ Mac an Ghaill (ed), Understanding Masculinities, p 24.

With regards to essentialism, the standard, or binary, view of sexual orientation is that there are two opposite sexual orientations: heterosexuality and homosexuality. Queer theory, however, considers that sexual orientation is a continuum, ranging from exclusive heterosexuality to exclusive homosexuality, with many variants in between.⁷⁹ This sees sexuality as continuous.

A factor of essentialism is that it presumes Western categories are relevant to other queer lives, creating a Eurocentric understanding of sexuality.⁸⁰ Hence the essentialist understanding of sexuality is limited because it is based on a first world understanding of homosexuality.⁸¹ This is important for South Africa, because discourses on male homosexuality in South Africa are not the same as those of Europe or America.⁸² Although South African history is shot through with the commitment of certain parties to essentialism (more specifically racial categorisation) the global, essential, western understanding of homosexuality does not do South African history justice.

Some early essentialist, gay liberation theorists treated gayness as separate from masculinity. Since the 1970s there had been a shift from the old, gay stereotype of the effeminate queen to a masculinised gay man.⁸³ This was in response to the hegemonic view that gay men lacked masculinity and the need to pull gay men away from the link with the female gender.⁸⁴ A butch-shift occurred in Britain: the country experienced an economic boom in the 1950s and 1960s, which led to social and economic changes. Labour lines were blurred (women could have men's jobs), contraception freed men and women from the traditional notion of reproduction (the premise was if reproduction was not the only male role then gay men were not that different from straight men), and the

⁷⁹ Stein, *The Mismeasurement of Desire*, p 40.

⁸⁰ E. Blackwood, 'Lesbian, Transgendered, and Queer Subjects: Notes of Difference', (IASSCS Sex and Secrecy Conference 2003).

⁸¹ G. Elder, 'Of Moffies, Kaffirs, and Perverts', in D. Bell, G. Valentine, (eds), *Mapping Desire*, (Routledge, London, New York, 1995), p 64.

⁸² Z. Achmat, "'Apostles of Civilised Vice": 'Immoral Practices' and 'Unnatural Vice' in South African Prisons and Compounds, 1890-1920' in *Social Dynamics*, A Journal of the Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, vol. 19, no. 1, 1993), p 107.

⁸³ Forrest, 'We're Here, We're Queer, and We're Not Going Shopping', p 101.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

male body was objectified (this had previously been the domain of women).⁸⁵ All of this led to the masculinisation of the gay man, which led to queer theory questioning the relation between masculinity, men, and gay men. To compound this an increase in the gay commercial scene created an arena for this masculinisation and developed a collective identity. In South Africa this masculinisation of the gay man was obvious in Exit, GASA's publication. Male pin ups and models were the epitome of the strong, fit, masculine man, but the white, gay man only.

During the 1980s and 90s sexuality became part of mainstream historical study. According to Jeffery Weeks fifteen years ago there were no serious historical studies of same-sex activity. Writings were only about unchanging homosexuality across cultures and through history, for example modern gay subcultures and ancient Greece were all seen as the same gay identity.⁸⁶ Early lesbian and gay scholarship recognised fixed sexual categories only, with orientations stable across time,⁸⁷ that is, essentialism. This assumed a global queer perspective.

Consequently during the 1980s queer theory explored another approach towards men. This was in response to essentialism, its biological determinism, its moralising discourse on the normality of heterosexuality, and male domination. The result was social construction theory which forces historians to move away from existing categories and explore historical production⁸⁸ whereby gender is constructed by historical circumstances and social discourses, not biology. Gender roles are therefore constructed by influences, some effects we control, others not.⁸⁹ Gender is performed, scripted, taught, and expressed and is not necessarily intrinsic.

Historians, anthropologists, sociologists, literary theorists, cultural studies scholars, and gay and lesbian scholars subscribe to constructionism, looking at the process of

⁸⁵ Ibid, p 102.

⁸⁶ J. Weeks, 'Sexuality and History Revisited', in Philips, Reay (eds), Sexualities in History, p 31.

⁸⁷ Philips, Reay, Sexualities in History, p 6.

⁸⁸ Weeks, 'Sexuality and History Revisited', p 39.

⁸⁹ Berger et al, Constructing Masculinity, p 3.

construction, whereas scientists and social scientists rely on essentialism⁹⁰ with its biological determinism. Social construction examines behaviour, ideology, meaning within human groups, and the body with its potentials and limits.

There are criticisms of queer theory. Some argue that existence of a debate between essentialism and constructivism actually reproduces the dimorphism of essentialism. That is, the debate continues the division between the physical and the social. However, queer theory also focuses on diversity and looks at current discourses on homosexuality in relation to, among other things, race. That is the generalised grouping together of people through their physical appearance. Race will always affect discourse on sexuality.

Those ethnic groups, which have historically wielded little power since the advent of colonialism, for instance, are subject to few investigations of their masculinity. This, however, is beginning to change, widening the previous notion of gay sub-cultures as homogenous, white, middle-class, and middle-aged.⁹¹ Historical research is changing because black sexual cultures are being studied. Multiculturalism as opposed to assimilationist politics is becoming recognised. Although my dissertation concentrates specifically on such men who were influenced by the western gay liberation movement, there were other gay sub-cultures in South Africa, for example black and coloured, that were recognised by their own communities and indeed the NP government. Black homosexuality in this country has a long, albeit unexplored history. I do not apologise for concentrating on white, gay men as I wanted to establish why the white, NP government was so threatened by them. But my dissertation would be somewhat lacking if black, gay men were not at least acknowledged. Indirectly, my lack of focus on black, gay men in South Africa hopefully aids homotextuality: looking at what is not said in homosexual discourse⁹² and questioning its absence. White discourse needs to be read in order to deconstruct racist marginalisation to provoke a reaction.⁹³ Deconstructing the

⁹⁰ Stein, *Mismeasurement of Desire*, p 71.

⁹¹ Bleys, *The Geography of Perversion*, p 7.

⁹² Ibid, p 11.

⁹³ Ibid, p 7/8.

discourse of male homosexuality fails if minorities are not considered.⁹⁴ There is competition for male dominance in society between men. Therefore the power play between black versus white masculinity exists.

Gay South African History

Gay South African historiography is a fledgling field of history, like black history and women's history. However, "there is a slim, but emerging body of work in gay South African historiography – the hidden, largely unacknowledged role played by gay men and lesbians in opposition politics and in the anti-apartheid and liberation movements."⁹⁵ This work is cut across by work on masculinity, and so I discuss them both.

In the first place, as discussed above, the western focus of prominent researchers explains why there is little discourse on black homosexuality and more on circumstantial or situational inclination, that is, same-sex male sexual practices occur because of a lack of women (for example in compounds and prisons).⁹⁶ More works regarding masculinities in South Africa are becoming apparent, recognising that the white, Afrikaner masculinity was the hegemonic one, but there was also a definitive African masculinity on the mines. Therefore historical research is changing because non-western sexual cultures are being studied.⁹⁷ It is now recognised that western and African experiences around homosexuality may differ. There is a newly recognised black, gay culture in South Africa, which has resulted in literature, but some of it continues to reinforce the rift in discourse between situational homosexuality and the gay male identity.⁹⁸ South African historian Patrick Harries and T. Dunbar Moodie are at loggerheads in this regard. Harries disputes Moodie's essentialist notions of situational homosexuality, rather advocating homosexuality on the mines as defiance and expression, a contribution to the gay, male identity. Harries also writes about patriarchal masculinity and power⁹⁹ in the context of

⁹⁴ Ibid, p 10.

⁹⁵ G. Kraak, 'Homosexuality and the South African Left: the Ambiguities of Exile', (unpublished, 26 Aug. 2002). See chapters 4, 5, and 6.

⁹⁶ Bleys, *Geography of Perversion*, p 171.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p 7.

⁹⁸ Elder, 'Of Moffies, Kaffirs, and Perverts', p 57.

⁹⁹ See P. Harries, *Work, Culture, and Identity*, (Witwatersrand University Press, James Currey Ltd,

social construction as opposed to essentialism. Most notably, Zackie Achmat, South African gay rights activist, author, and chairperson of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in the fight against HIV/AIDS, also questions this notion of situational homosexuality “that serve(s) to uphold normative discourses around sexuality.”¹⁰⁰ Achmat proposes that black homosexuality was rather an expression of pleasures of the body. Subsequently black homosexuality should not be interpreted as economic reductionism, simply a financial economic advantage for young, black men to be taken as wives by older miners in order to make money for lobola for their return to the rural areas. Neither should black homosexuality be viewed as a substitute for prostitutes who were believed to be spreading syphilis among the miners. Maybe “the compound represented a new space of desire and ... it fostered a number of practices, including male homosexuality.”¹⁰¹ This is further discussed in chapter 1.

Some South African work is, though, beginning to look at early figures in the struggle for gay rights. One such man was Cecil Williams, a driver and courier for the ANC.¹⁰² He is acknowledged by freedom fighters as the first person to introduce the issue of gay equality into the liberation struggle.¹⁰³

If you want to understand why the ANC took such a progressive open stand on the question of gay rights, you’ve just got to go back to Cecil. He was a living example of a freedom fighter who happened to be gay, and he brought something special into the movement. He raised our consciousness in relation to these questions.¹⁰⁴

In the 1960s gay men were considered deviants so there was little acknowledgement of Williams being homosexual. Some thought he was a little effeminate but that was all.

Heinemann, Portsmouth, Johannesburg, London).

¹⁰⁰ T. Dirsuweit, “‘I Sort of had a Boyfriend:’ Heterosexual Transgressions in Prison Space”, (Paper presented at IASSCS Sex and Secrecy Conference 2003), p 5.

¹⁰¹ Achmat, “‘Apostles of Civilized Vice’”, p 106.

¹⁰² Prior to that he was an English teacher at King Edwards. He left teaching to fight in WWII; he was a reporter for the SABC.

¹⁰³ D. Wilson, ‘Not Quite Driving Miss Daisy’, *Sunday Life*, (Nov. 1998, AM 2704, GALA). Sachs dedicated the 1990 Gay Pride Parade to Williams.

¹⁰⁴ Albie Sachs in Wilson, ‘Not Quite Driving Miss Daisy’, n.p. and T. Trengrove-Jones, ‘Fiction and the Law: Recent Inscriptions of Gayness in South Africa’, in *Modern Fiction Studies: South African*

People knew nothing of Williams's private life and he was more worried about being arrested for being a member of the SACP than for being homosexual. Privately Williams lived a gay lifestyle, picking up young men in Joubert Park before the war. He also went cruising and on one occasion went to a flat in Braamfontein where he was beaten up, and consequently hospitalised. People then began to assume he was homosexual although Williams did not say as much. Walter Sisulu knew Williams was gay but he only accepted it when the ANC did. He said he was conservative on such issues.¹⁰⁵

Williams smuggled Nelson Mandela back into South Africa in 1961. The night before he drove Mandela from Durban to Johannesburg Williams went to a party and stayed with a friend who was "carefully selected because he was as politically aware as a feather boa."¹⁰⁶ Williams marvelled at the contradictions of life. "Who the hell are you Cecil Williams?" he asked himself.¹⁰⁷ Williams swore he would have spent his life in gaol rather than talk politics. He was placed under house arrest, which was tolerable for married couples but not for a single man. Williams chose to leave the country, opting for England. Gay networks got him out of the country.

There is no hard evidence that Mandela and Williams discussed homosexuality but assumptions have been made that this was a topic that did not bypass Mandela, especially as Williams felt that discrimination against homosexuality mirrored that against black people under NP rule.¹⁰⁸ Williams therefore did not advocate essentialism, but rather gay liberation as part of the broader struggle. It is people such as Williams, and their stories that are now beginning to be written, contributing to South Africa's gay historical writing.

Fiction After Apartheid, vol 46, no. 1, p 114.

¹⁰⁵ Video: Interview with Sisulu in 'The Man Who Drove With Mandela', (Directed by G. Schiller, written and researched by M. Gevisser, Beulah Films).

¹⁰⁶ Video: According to Williams in 'The Man Who Drove With Mandela'.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Wilson, 'Not Quite Driving Miss Daisy', n.p.

Jacklyn Cock also contributed to gay South African history with Colonels and Cadres in 1991, looking at aggressive masculinity and masculine conditioning in the SADF.¹⁰⁹ If anything, there is more history on the gay liberation movement and personal experiences of gay men in this country than on the official treatment of gay men.¹¹⁰ There is reference to treatment by the SAP and how legislation affected gay men but people commenting on their own experiences write most of it.¹¹¹ Any histories are, however, incomplete because there is little writing on the black, gay contribution to the gay liberation movement.

There are numerous theoretical works on homosexuality by queer theorists overseas, but only few in South Africa. Mark Epprecht and Zachie Achmat have made valuable theoretical contributions to the issue of South African masculinities. Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron's, "pioneering work"¹¹² Defiant Desire – Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa and Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick's, Male Homosexuality in South Africa are widely used and quoted by other authors on homosexuality. Gevisser and Cameron tell of the gay liberation movement in South Africa and the history of legislation affecting gay men. Isaacs and McKendrick also look at South African gay liberation but more so as a sub-culture, defining gay men, and causation theories, thereby continuing many of the older, prevalent international gay historiographical themes.

Because they have been oppressed, because homosexuality was illegal and censored, and because white, gay liberation was reactionary and defensive white, South African, gay men lack written histories. This has created a silent history. John Tosh's general point that "political elites had an interest in promoting for public consumption a version of history which legitimized their own position ..."¹¹³ is applicable to South Africa. The official version of South African history did not include homosexuality.

¹⁰⁹ J. Cock, Colonels and Cadres, (Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1991).

¹¹⁰ See M. Gevisser and E. Cameron, Defiant Desire – Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa, and Isaacs and McKendrick, Male Homosexuality in South Africa.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Seminar conducted by G. Kraak, 'Homosexuality and the South African Left', 27 Aug. 2002.

Methodology

This dissertation is simultaneously thematically and chronologically structured. All of the chapters show the official treatment of gay men, although some portray a more private face of official treatment and others a more public one. Some gay reactions were very public for example law reform or submissions to the Select Committee but others were more private such as electro-shock therapy in the SADF or personal correspondence between members of the gay community.

My sources for this thesis were both textual and oral. Below I discuss the different sources I used and problems in locating them. Throughout my use of textual sources I attempted to ascertain the currents that went into their making, in order to ascertain their reliability.

The Gay and Lesbian Archives (GALA), established in 1997, housed in the William Cullen Library at the University of the Witwatersrand, is a wealth of information. GALA has been invaluable for this thesis and the majority of my primary sources were found here. Graeme Reid and Anthony Manion, especially, of GALA were extremely helpful.

To wander through the basement of the William Cullen Library is to go on a mental walkabout. It's also to journey into an underworld where the forgotten, hidden or repressed, lying in orderly rows, wait to be exhumed back into the light of common day by the visitor's curious scrutiny.¹¹⁴

There are numerous untapped sources at GALA, such as documentation of the 1968 Select Committee, court cases and legal opinion regarding gay rights, and newspaper articles. There are also vast collections of private correspondence and minutes of meetings, which contribute to the understanding of why the gay liberation movement in South Africa was not more effective in challenging the NP government. The Wits Gay and Lesbian Library was also vital in my research, by way of its video material.

¹¹³ Tosh, The Pursuit of History, p 66.

¹¹⁴ T. Trengrove-Jones, 'The Gay Files', Sunday Times, (27 Sept. 1998, AM 2704, GALA, William Cullen Library), n.p.

I battled to find other archival material for this dissertation. The Parliament Archives in Cape Town were of little use, as were the State Archives in Pretoria, except for a small amount of information. In attempting to locate information I spoke with a number of professional archivists, including Verne Harris, who used to be the Deputy Director of the National Archives, and who currently works for the South African Historical Archives (SAHA). Harris was extremely helpful and sympathetic, saying he understood my predicament as he had found himself in the same frustrating situation. He said I was pursuing “task impossible.” Harris then put me in touch with Clive Kirkwood at the National Archives, and as luck would have it he had, on his desk, a recently discovered file of police records that had not yet been processed or catalogued by the Archives. This was the gem I had been searching for. This file contained correspondence by Brigadier G.J. Joubert and Major F.A.J. van Zyl to Police Commissioner J.M. Keevy regarding the 1966 Forest Town party and subsequent letters and memoranda regarding the setting up of the Select Committee to investigate homosexuality in this country.

I also used the records of overseas anti-apartheid groups, civil rights organisations, the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) as well as overseas newspapers, and gay publications. But much of this material remains unexploited and it was very time consuming, albeit extremely fruitful, to work through the vast amounts of information in constructing chapter 4. Unfortunately after e-mailing the ILGA, it admitted it could be of no help because it was already overwhelmed with its regular work, it did not have the resources to help with scholarly research and its archives were not accessible due to renovations. It “would probably not even know whom to look for or where to find the persons who were involved at that time.”¹¹⁵

In addition to newspaper articles included in the GALA collection, I also used articles which I located with the aid of SA Media, the University of the Orange Free State database. Articles in this database are not specifically sorted to pertain to homosexuality (like the GALA articles). However, once found they provided valuable insight into

public perceptions of homosexuality and homophobia, as well as the change that was beginning to become evident by the fact that there was increased reporting on the subject.

I used the vast detailed correspondence between various prominent members of the gay community, both black and white, in South Africa in the writing of chapter 4. Their bickering and backbiting, albeit it highly entertaining, was vital in putting together the puzzle of the truths of why the gay liberation movement failed. Luise White's Speaking with Vampires helped me realise that, although I was dealing with the perceptions of individual people it was not necessarily detrimental to rely on such resources. In fact such sources, often based on rumour and gossip, should not be viewed with scepticism, but rather embraced as valuable insights. Rumour and gossip need to be included as historical sources.¹¹⁶ They perhaps give experience with greater accuracy than eye-witness accounts. Historians should rather question why there was such rumour. It is not so much the content of the rumour that should pique the historian's interest, but the intensity of it. The more widely told the rumour is, the more plausible it is.¹¹⁷ Therefore there is more importance to how and why the rumour was told, rather than its truth. Rumour is not necessarily misinterpretation or deformation of information or an event, but rather an event to be analysed and commented on.¹¹⁸ Even more beneficial to the historian is to historicise rumours and contextualise them with other rumours. This reveals a world of fears and ideas never before studied.¹¹⁹

As with rumour, the same holds true for gossip. Gossip asserts values and defines community standards.¹²⁰ It summarises public opinion.¹²¹ It creates intimacy between the gossips: the subject of the gossip is secondary; the bonding is primary.¹²² If we

¹¹⁵ E-mail from Tom Hoemig, Officer Administrator for ILGA, 15 Aug. 2002.

¹¹⁶ L. White, Speaking with Vampires, (University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2000), p 55.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p 58.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p 86.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p 58.

¹²¹ Ibid, p 60.

¹²² Ibid, p 59.

historicise gossip we end up looking at the boundaries and bonds of a community, who says what about whom, to whom they show alliances and affiliations.¹²³

Historicizing gossip may allow historians to access a more intimate terrain of personal experience and of thinking than other historical sources can do. The intimate anger and judgmental scorn of gossip map the changing fortunes, values, and standards of communities that other sources identify only broadly.¹²⁴

Hence, the GALA correspondence helped to show how the gay community created understandings of itself and the relationships between key members of the movement. White's interpretation is that it is not so much that people do not tell the truth and that their descriptions are inaccurate but rather that they construct and repeat stories that reinforce their own values.¹²⁵ This in itself is proof that the value of these primary sources lies in the writers' conviction that their own definition of masculinity and power possessed as much worth as the hegemonic one they were resisting.

According to White, historians foreground some information and submerge some. This creates meaning or authoritative interpretation of the past.¹²⁶ I was fearful of getting something wrong, or interpreting it incorrectly so I began to rely heavily on other historians' interpretations, especially western authors, and consequently lost sight of what I had set out to do. What I later realised was that historians do not reject information, they rearrange it and stress different parts according to their own interests and understandings of the world.¹²⁷ With this in mind, history-writing was not so overwhelming, although I had constantly to refocus: I initially became too embedded in the pettiness of the leading characters directing the gay liberation movement. I lost sight of the issues of power and masculinity that were so important to both the NP government and those within the gay liberation movement who were trying to create a power-hold and define their own masculinity.

¹²³ Ibid, p 65.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p 85.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p 30.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p 24.

¹²⁷ Ibid, p 25.

One of the difficulties I faced regarding the gay liberation movement in the 1980s and 1990s, apart from dissecting and cross-referencing gossip, rumour, and scandal of numerous gay organisations and individuals, was GASA's position on the broader struggle and its apparent racism. I sometimes found others' opinions of GASA a little harsh, especially the international gay community that was not living the white, South African masculine experience first hand. For me, whether or not GASA was racist, although consequential, is secondary to its members' need for self-preservation.¹²⁸ Such preservation was possible in South Africa's experience of hegemony because GASA members were white. So even though they did not fall into the heterosexual determinations of hegemony, they were members of the dominant ruling race, which meant they had the option of enjoying the privileged experience of hegemony.

I must admit interviews made me nervous although Gerald Kraak and Peter Mohlahedi went out of their way to help me. I was again fearful of misinterpreting or judging the information I was being given. White says with the transcription of oral sources there is not necessarily a loss of information. Rather, the messiness of the evidence allows for an analysis of contradictions, confusions, and policies.¹²⁹

Having established the direction and structure of my chapters I relied on oral interviews to fill in the gaps. There were connections and links to be made that the primary evidence from GALA and newspaper articles did not fill. I also needed the opinions of gay men who could contribute to areas that lacked written history, for example chapter 3 on the SADF and chapter 6 on the degree of change and tolerance. Anthony Manion put me in contact with Evert Knoesen, the then-acting director of the Lesbian and Gay Equality Project. Knoesen was extremely knowledgeable on the history of the gay liberation movement in South Africa in the 1980s, the personalities involved, and the differing ideologies of the various gay organisations. Mark Gevisser suggested I speak to

¹²⁸ See introduction of F. Cooper, A. Stoler, Tensions of Empire, (gay, white men and black men are 'colonised groups' and the NP is 'the coloniser').

¹²⁹ White, Speaking With Vampires, p 175.

Joe Garmeson who helped me better understand the mindset of the government and white, gay men in the 1960s. Beyers Malan, who hosted the 1966 Forest Town party, made a great contribution to my thesis. He wrote me, what he termed his memoir, of his recollections of the party, and this primary evidence exists nowhere else. Never before has such a detailed account of the party been available.

Much of my interviewing was done on an informal basis: conversations at dinner parties. Most twenty-something gay men were of the opinion that to be gay in the 1990s was not really 'a big deal'. I had the feeling that I was more concerned with how gay men had been treated than they were. In their eyes it is a gay world and they felt they experienced little, if any, homophobia. Such conversations were testimony to the new-found tolerance in South Africa, but also to the intolerance I had for such prejudice. I had to accept that even though I had 'insider status' I was very much still an outsider. I had to really listen to what I was being told, as opposed to expecting those I spoke to, to react a certain way because of the treatment gay men had received since the 1960s. The 1960s and the 1990s were very different. The past is another country as far as gay history in South Africa is concerned.



Initially, the main problem with my interviews was that some of my questions were very specific, pertaining to details of various occurrences or conversations that the primary evidence in GALA did not clarify. Some of those I interviewed then had to work on suppositions or presumptions in order to aid me. Even Mark Gevisser could not answer detailed questions on areas he had covered in his own book.¹³⁰ In later interviews I asked more general questions on power, political perceptions, and masculinity and found such line of questioning yielded more information, especially regarding the gay liberation movement and the NP government's mindset in the 1980s.

One person I was advised not to try to speak to was Dr A. Levine, who conducted electro-shock therapy on white, homosexual conscripts in the SADF from 1969 to the early 1970s. It is the opinion of SAHA that Levine is angry with many South Africans

for delving into his past regarding this electro-shock therapy. He is looking into legal proceedings against SAHA.¹³¹ SAHA felt my interest in this field could potentially compound the matter.¹³² I also tried to contact Zackie Achmat but he was unavailable.

I attempted to interview ministers from the NG Kerk and gave them questionnaires but they were not prepared to talk to me or answer any questions on paper until they had spoken to their superiors.

Where perseverance did pay off was for chapter 3 on the SADF. It is difficult to research the SADF's secret past given the extremely closed nature of the military environment and the secrecy surrounding military activities in the past. Gaining access to such information is difficult and documentary sources to corroborate the material are difficult to locate.¹³³ For example SADF files are missing and Dr Levine's personal file in the military archive is only twenty pages long, which according to Laura Pollecut who has researched Levine and the military, is very strange.¹³⁴ The SADF gave SAHA a copy of Levine's personal file. Records such as leave and work, which are usually kept in personal files, were not there. Such files should be weighty with these records, as they are of other government employees so "the gaps in the file are prominent."¹³⁵ It is suspected that Levine's file was cleaned out.¹³⁶ SAHA also requested the personal SADF files of nine ex-soldiers.¹³⁷ In 2003 they were still trying to locate documents on policies on gay men in the military prior to 1979 and records of Levine's involvement in aversion shock therapy. But "the dearth of records on this issue suggests that these records, and those of Levin's involvement in aversion therapy, may well have been deliberately

¹³⁰ Informal interview with Mark Gevisser, (4 September 2000, Johannesburg, 10:00am).

¹³¹ Informal conversation with Rolf Sorensen, (9 Oct. 2003, Johannesburg, 9:00am).

¹³² In correspondence with Daniel Conway, who is currently working on his PhD regarding the SADF, he originally advised me to try to track Levine down in Canada but reconsidered that this could start awkward legal issues for me so suggested I rather not try to contact him. (E-mail from D. Conway, 8 Oct. 2003).

¹³³ 'The Aversion Project' (all pages), (AM 2757, D. General Information, GALA), p 44.

¹³⁴ Talk given by Laura Pollecut at IASSCS Sex and Secrecy Conference 2003.

¹³⁵ A Project of GALA and SAHA, 'Gays in the Apartheid Military', Sept. 2003, p 13.

¹³⁶ E-mail from Laura Pollecut, 'Re: PhD Questions on Gay Men in the SA SADF', (6 Oct. 2003).

¹³⁷ Some of the applicants agreed to allow their files to be part of the SAHA archive, others did not. (A Project of the GALA and SAHA, 'Gays in the Apartheid Military', Sept. 2003).

removed or destroyed.”¹³⁸ Many people who worked with Levine or who were abused by him are now prepared to speak out and challenge what was done to them and in this was research on Levine is being collected.

‘The Aversion Project’ was invaluable for my chapter on the SADF.¹³⁹ It instigated chapter 3 on electro-shock therapy in the SADF. Graeme Reid of GALA was one of the authors of this project and I waited six months for its completion in order to use it. This study relied predominantly on the oral evidence of gay soldiers who had experienced some degree of aversion therapy in the army in the 1970s and 80s. Having read it I was fascinated by the fact that nothing of the sort had been covered in newspaper articles. A couple of months later the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) began to battle with this specific area of human rights abuses and newspapers then began reporting on the issue. This further encouraged me to delve into the topic. Like ‘The Aversion Project’ analysed aggressive masculinity and the tools of conformity, I too took this line to explain why the army treated gay conscripts the way it did and how it went about achieving this. Secondary sources were also used here to explain why an army had to condition its soldiers. Once I had an understanding of what the project entailed I used

¹³⁸ A Project of GALA and SAHA, ‘Gays in the Apartheid Military’, (27 June 2003). SAHA says these documents may still exist and come to light or they have been lost moving from one building to another. According to the SAHA the following records they have requested are either not to be found or incomplete: Service record and personal file of Dr Levine (0001/DOD/2001), all SADF records of 1 Military Hospital Psychiatric Ward, 1970 to 1990 (003/DOD/2001), all SADF records of or about 1 Military Hospital Psychiatric Ward, 1979 to 1990, (0004/DOD/2001), all SADF records relating to policy on homosexuality and to treatment of homosexuality, (0005/DOD/2001), all SADF records relating to or generated by Greefswald (0006/DOD/2001), training manuals relating to pharmaceutical, chaplain, medical, and psychological services, (0007/DOD/2002), claims in respect of injuries, death or treatment of uniform personnel, (0008/DOD/2002), documents relating to the panel of psychologists and psychiatrists who assessed conscripts/servicemen/women referred to for psychiatric treatment by commissioning officers, army doctors, social workers or chaplains (0013/DOD/2002), manuals describing the techniques used in the interrogation of conscripts particularly those suspected of being deviants, conscientious objectors or drug abusers (0015/DOD/2002), records relating to internship programmes of those serving in the SADF (0022/HPC/2002), SAMC documents and decisions relating to the definition and diagnosis of homosexuality as a sexual deviance or sociopathic personalities (0023/HPC/2003). One applicant experienced a traumatic time in the SADF and as of yet his file has not been located. Two others believe critical information is missing from their files. Access to records referring to soldiers in Greefswald was refused. (A Project of GALA and SAHA, ‘Gays in the Apartheid Military’).

¹³⁹ M. van Zyl, J. de Gruchy, S. Lapinsky, S. Levin, G. Reid, ‘The Aversion Project: Human Rights Abuses of Gays and Lesbians in the SADF by Health Workers During the Apartheid Era’, (Simply Said and Done, Cape Town, 1999).

questionnaires and interviews to substantiate and further understand the SADF mindset and how white, gay and straight ex-soldiers felt about their experiences in the army when it came to white, gay men. All my gay recipients knew about shock therapy in the army; it was not the enigma the TRC was battling with. The TRC seemed to be asking the wrong people the right questions. Asking the authorities what had been going on was not going to elicit much information very quickly.

I also used questionnaires to aid me in writing chapter 3. I used methods similar to those used by Jerry Lee Kramer in locating his interviewees. Kramer knew rural areas were a hostile social environment for gay men. But he did not find this too much of a problem because he studied his own rural hometown and therefore used his familiarity with local informants. He used his insider status and gained access to social networks and personal confidences that might not have otherwise been possible. He found networking productive. His interviewees referred him to other informants. The snowball technique is better for studies of invisible populations.¹⁴⁰ I gave questionnaires to white, gay and straight men that had been in the SADF in the 1970s and 1980s. My selection of respondents was purely random. Colonel J. Ungerer of the SADF also put me in contact with army personnel. Ironically, in order to understand how the SADF defined masculinity in the 1970s and 80s, I often had to play to it. For want of a better description, when using a more professional, academic approach when asking straight white, men who had been in the army to fill in my questionnaire, I was met with less than enthusiasm. I got the sense they did not appreciate me, a woman, questioning them on this very masculine domain, of which I had no claim, or right to claim. However, when I was 'cute' and demure, and admitted I knew nothing of the army I got a far better response, in fact in some situations my respondents did not let me leave.

Fifteen ex-soldiers completed my questionnaire. Initially I presumed a small number of respondents would be representative as I thought they would all verify the SADF's blanket homophobia in the 1970s and 1980s. This was not so. Although many respondents agreed on some of the questions or had similar answers I came to realise that

with every ex-soldier came a different experience regarding homosexuality. It often came down to the individual commander-in-charge and the specific unit. I could not expect to gain insight on the topic from every ex-soldier in the country. But what I did gain from these questionnaires, which was of particular importance, was the unofficial acceptance of gay men in the SADF in the 1980s which led me to review my perceptions of gay tolerance within the SADF. This I have included in chapter 3.

My respondents were both white, heterosexual and homosexual men who went to the army in the 1970s and 1980s. The heterosexual respondents seemed quite suspicious and rather disbelieving that I had asked them to fill out a questionnaire on homosexuality in the SADF. I got the feeling some believed I was sticking up for homosexuals, which was something I battled the entire dissertation. Some respondents, who had strong feelings of dislike for gay men, to say the least, felt uncomfortable that I was researching gay men and I felt as though they saw me as some sort of spy who was against the army. Others, although against homosexuality, were apologetic about some of their responses to certain questions in the questionnaire. I battled to explain that any information they could give me would aid my study, be it positive or negative, which is how they seemed to categorise their responses. Some found it rather insulting and seemed irritated by my interest in such a topic, but humoured me nonetheless. On introducing myself and explaining my studies many told me white homosexuality had nothing to do with them. It was, however, extremely difficult and sometimes fruitless trying to get the questionnaires back, specifically from the gay ex-conscripts, even after incessant nagging. They admitted they were too lazy to fill them in. In Michelle Owen's paper, 'Not the Same Story': Conducting Interviews with Queer Community Activists', she says she began her project with strong ideas on how to choose participants to interview. What surprised her was that it was participants who actually chose or not choose her.¹⁴¹ I found the same problem. Not everyone was as enthusiastic about my research as I was.

¹⁴⁰ J. Kramer, 'Bachelor Farmers and Spinsters' in Bell, Valentine, *Mapping Desire*, p 201.

¹⁴¹ M. Owen, 'Not the Same Story': Conducting Interviews with Queer Community Activists', in *Resources for 'Feminist Research'*, vol. 28, no1-2, 2000, p 53.

What did seem to work, and proved far more beneficial, was sitting with the respondents and filling out the questionnaire as they recited answers. This sort of questioning became more of an informal interview, anecdotal, and my responses, whether of surprise, laughter or disbelief seemed to make the respondents more comfortable. Consequently they presented me with far more information than they otherwise would have if they had simply filled in the questionnaire on their own.

The gay respondents who did fill in my questionnaire took far greater pleasure in doing so. When I introduced myself they were happy, almost excited, at the prospect of helping me. From those white, gay ex-conscripts I spoke to I got the feeling I had taken their military service too seriously, certainly more seriously than they had. Barring some beatings and homophobic language they enjoyed their military service and although they recognised the SADF as homophobic it seems that I was more affected and upset by this than they were.

From the answers to the questionnaires and the often varying experiences of white, ex-soldiers it became obvious that the respondents' perceptions were moulded by where they had been stationed, their commanding officer's opinion of homosexuality, and whether there were any openly white, gay soldiers in their platoon. This was more so in the 1980s. Those respondents who knew of gay soldiers or who had worked with them were far less aggressive in their opinions of gay soldiers, in contrast to those whose SADF experience was exclusively heterosexual. For example Kobus Joubert knew of many gay men in the army and accepting them "wasn't an issue."¹⁴²

The interviews I conducted with ex-soldiers, both straight and gay, were very informal and comfortable. These men seemed at ease with the topic and I felt they were only too keen to share their experiences and opinions with me. Willie Bronkhorst, especially, was hugely entertaining and seemed to have thoroughly enjoyed his army days, even though he suffered abuse, both physical and verbal, as a result of his homosexual behaviour. There was, however, a line drawn with him, in the sense that when he shared his sexual

experiences he told all. This was information I had not requested but he told me nonetheless. Conversely, when I asked more sensitive questions regarding the treatment of white, gay soldiers he sometimes stopped mid-sentence, seemingly checked his response and told me he did not want to discuss it. This, I felt was a non-negotiable stand, and opted not to push him further on the issue. I elected to accept any information he willingly gave, which was considerable, and respect that there were certain topics he preferred not to share with me.

I relied on Mark Gevisser's work quite heavily in some chapters. He has many published works on gay history, from newspaper articles to his book, Defiant Desire, with constitutional court judge, Edwin Cameron, and his new essay 'Mandela's Stepchildren: Homosexual Identity in Post-Apartheid South Africa'.¹⁴³ Defiant Desire is, for want of a better description, the 'gay bible' and is considered the authority on South African, gay history.¹⁴⁴ However, it became very difficult, firstly, not to rely too heavily on this book and secondly, to question it. Some omissions or statements in the book are questionable, especially after researching the 1980s gay liberation movement from the vast material in GALA. For example Alfred Machela's contribution to the movement was sorely missing in Defiant Desire. Gevisser and I did not agree on everything but I am extremely grateful to him for his time. Whenever I needed help or was concerned about an issue he had written on he freely gave his opinion.

Confidentiality never really became a problem in this dissertation. All the men I interviewed and those who filled in my questionnaire were either enthusiastic to help me or had no qualms about being specifically named. All the gay men I interviewed were 'out of the closet' and encouraging of the work I was doing. Straight men such as Col. Ungerer of the SADF and Father Power of the Catholic Church were only too willing to have their point of view put across. No one questioned me on confidentiality and even though I offered anonymity to all those I received information from no one found it necessary.

¹⁴² Questionnaire filled in by K. Joubert, 13 Oct. 2003. Joubert was a sergeant in the army 1979 to 1989.

¹⁴³ In P. Drucker (ed), Different Rainbows, (London, Gay Men's Press, 2000).



¹⁴⁴ It is constantly referred to in other gay writing and legal opinion.