

## **Conclusion.**

The principle intention of this thesis was to compare the official treatment of white, homosexual men in South Africa from the 1960s and how this treatment changed till 2000. Great changes did occur. From the criminalisation of homosexuality, punishable with gaol sentences, to the Sodomy Judgement of 1998 it is obvious that this once-deemed deviant lifestyle became tolerated and even accepted by some. From white, gay men working at being invisible and considered well-behaved in order to benefit from some affinity with hegemonic conceptions of masculinity; consequently ignored by the NP government, to gay Pride Parades and legal battles in the Constitutional Court, gay masculinities became recognisable, defined masculinities in South Africa. Cape Town is even supported in its quest to be the gay capital of Africa, if not the world.

Within the period covered by this thesis, the official treatment of white, gay men was, for the most part, geared towards maintaining the status quo and traditional, racist, heterosexist definitions of masculinity. The NP government and its institutions worked at entrenching and reinforcing heteronormativity. This was done partly through the policing of white morality, in accordance with the NP government's definition of morality. This was pursued, especially after the suppression of black resistance in the 1960s meant that the NP government and the SAP could direct their attention to white morality. Ironically, however, the threat to white morality and power posed by white homosexuality created an 'other', which only served to reinforce state hegemony. Through the creation of the threat of the 'other' the NP government continued to reproduce its hegemony. This occurred in tandem with the control apartheid afforded the NP government.

Controlling sexuality and acceptable definitions of white masculinity was part of the apartheid machine of power and the NP government relied on the repression of white homosexuality to entrench this power. In order to remain powerful the NP government had to control all South Africans and therefore all masculinities. Also, the government was intent on controlling the African population, which meant white men had to unify to guard against the black, communist onslaught it perceived to be a threat. Therefore a

non-conformist white, homosexual community that challenged the Afrikaner, nationalist, hegemonic masculinity could not be tolerated.

As my understanding of power and non-normative masculinities developed I realised it was not white, gay men the NP government was afraid of but rather the possibility of the loss of government power. A lack of white unity through the recognition of heterogeneity would translate to a lack of power. In this sense, white, gay men directly undermined the power of the state. Intriguingly, while this was the position of the state as a whole, discrete elements within in the NP government were prepared to entertain the notion of a white homosexual masculinity, and this is where change became possible.

This tolerance also went further than the government since many 1968 pro-gay/anti-amendment lobbyists recognised that stricter legislation against gay men was unfair, unnecessary, and legislatively unworkable. Therefore, in contrast to the official state position there was much acceptance or tolerance of homosexuality, even in 1968. Already there were members of the white public who recognised or tolerated the idea of a plurality of masculinities, that which included homosexual masculinities. There were elements in white South African society who challenged the NP government's version of white, hegemonic masculinity. This they did before the Select Committee in 1968. Such challenges highlight the fact the NP government had constantly to work at maintaining its hegemony and in the face of competing understandings of masculinity as variously defined.

Change also became evident in official SAP policy and through individuals within the police force. Major van Zyl had pushed for stricter legislation in the late 1960s because he and some other police commissioners felt that white homosexuality was out of control and more to the point, it threatened the SAP's power. Individuals within the SAP had varying opinions as to how to control white homosexuality and the extent to which it was a threat to the country. This again shows the extent to which the NP government had to work to maintain its power.

By 1994 the SAP had implemented a new recruitment and training programme which aimed to educate and fight against homophobia in the police force, although some white, senior officers and policemen were still insistent that there were no gay men in the SAP. These police officers felt there was no place for gay men of any colour in the police force.

Change also became obvious from some members of the SADF. During the late 1960s Dr Levine implemented aversion shock therapy at 1 Mil. to 'cure' white, gay soldiers. As a general rule, gay masculinities are perceived as taboo in institutions, which value conformity and aggressive masculinity. However, some SADF army commanders and soldiers were supportive of, or at the very least tolerated, gay recruits. This is not to say that all white, gay soldiers in the SADF in the 1970s and 80s were tolerated. However, the fact that there was some degree of tolerance of white homosexuality, especially in the 1980s, shows that the hegemony of the state was beginning to crumble internally. By the 1980s aversion shock therapy was no longer carried out by the SADF and by 1996 the SANDF White Paper on Defence unequivocally stated that the army would not discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation. Even that bastion of heterosexual masculinity had begun to recognise a multiplicity of masculinities.

One of the most prominent areas of concern in this thesis was the gay liberation movement and whether or not it was successful. In the first place, an active gay liberation movement showed that some public space was available for the tolerance of homosexuality. The obvious argument regarding the success of the movement was that if by the 1990s gay men had attained constitutional protection it stood to reason that the gay liberation movement had been successful. This was not necessarily the case. Within the political context of NP government control during the 1980s a number of gay liberation organisations tried to unify but were unsuccessful. This obviously had implications for what the movement as a movement could achieve. In fact South Africa's gay movement did not achieve much of what it set out to do, unlike the broader liberation struggle and to a lesser degree the women's movement, for example. This was the result of constant in-fighting within the movement which absorbed people's energies to the exclusion of other

work. Ironically, much of the tension between different elements of the movement lay in competing understandings of what it meant to be, and what was involved in being, gay. While most gay activists were trying to secure the recognition of a homosexual masculinity, black and white activists differed on what this entailed. It became obvious, through the lack of unity and the in-fighting that there was not a singular gay masculinity that sat equally comfortably with black and white gay men.

Unfortunately, white privilege meant that white homosexual interests dominated in the struggle for gay liberation. Most members of GASA were comfortable within the NP government's heterosexist, white definition of privileged masculinity and this left little scope for a movement based on the recognition of gay masculinities of all races. Race made gayness a political as well as a moral issue for the state, something, which some white gay activists attempted to deny by insisting their efforts to have homosexuality recognised were apolitical. Also, black, gay organisations were battling to merge black and gay definitions of masculinities in the apartheid context which left them arguing for human rights as opposed to gay rights within the broader liberation struggle. The ideological debate surrounding whether or not to be part of, or work outside the greater liberation struggle consumed most of the gay liberation movement's time. Therefore, typical of South Africa, even within gay liberation, the issue of race could not be avoided. This rendered the gay liberation movement ineffective until OLGA took decisive steps to attain constitutional protection for gay people, but only with the help of Albie Sachs from the ANC.

The in-fighting within gay organisations and the movement as a whole meant that the gay liberation movement rendered itself ineffective as a movement. The gay liberation movement, therefore, was unsuccessful. Led by GASA in the 1980s, the movement did not initiate much change because GASA's white, male membership refused to jeopardise its privileged status in South African society. It can therefore be said that the gay liberation movement in South Africa, because it failed to unify, was ultimately unsuccessful.

However, just because the movement itself failed, it did not necessarily mean that nothing was achieved. The in-fighting also represented a battle for supremacy and control around the construction of a hegemonic gay rights discourse and who got to define what these rights should ultimately be. When some of these rights were eventually achieved in the 1990s, the groundwork laid by the various movements' helped to serve as a framework for agitation. Many members of the NCGLE had formerly belonged to some of the organisations referred to above. Once sexual orientation was retained in the final Constitution the NCGLE could follow through with the legal entrenchment of gay rights in the Constitutional Court. This was initiated by the NCGLE in the Constitutional Court because the Constitution was at odds with older, heterosexist legislation.

The new Constitution and the chance for the NCGLE to challenge legislation in the Constitutional Court also came about because there was change in leadership in South Africa from an NP to an ANC government. However, the latter was not necessarily completely in favour of sexual tolerance. Just like the NP government insisted on heterosexist supremacy, so too did the ANC. Initially they took no stand on gay rights. Some ANC politicians even questioned why and what kind of rights gay men expected. By 1994 the ANC government had come to accept that it could move beyond a heteronormative outlook. The ANC came to accept homosexuality as a masculinity. The question then was, what instigated a change in the mentality towards gay men that led to constitutional protection?

The answer to this becomes clear when considering the attitudes and perceptions of individual members of the ANC and the pressure the anti-apartheid movement overseas placed on the ANC. The growing international importance of a human rights agenda helped to persuade the ANC of the importance of supporting openness with respect to homosexuality. Also the persistent lobbying by avid human rights activists such as Albie Sachs within the ANC, had an impact on the organisation as a whole. Much pressure from the anti-apartheid movement overseas forced the ANC to recognise that equality for all included gay people. Such change brought about the recognition that gay masculinities exist in their own right.

Subsequently much change occurred in the official treatment of white, gay men in this country. The NCGLE successfully challenged the ANC government in the Constitutional Court. Many South African laws found to be homophobic and discriminatory were overturned or amended. Government institutions began to put policies in place to guard against homophobia. Many churches changed their policies with respect to gay congregants and (non-practising) ministers. Society, both black and white began to embrace the idea of masculine difference, some of which extended to a tolerance of homosexuality. The Gay Pride Parades became more recognised and supported and in some communities the gay masculinity epitomised by drag queens was accepted.

While the content of my thesis has concerned the official treatment of gay men and their responses, it should be obvious that it has also considered questions of masculinity and power. Given that masculinity is a social construct, it will vary according to context and both within and between societies. Masculinities are not stable and are open to change, something, which my thesis uncovered. It was the intention of this dissertation to examine in particular, two South African masculinities – white heterosexual and white homosexual. As such this should not be seen as a definitive study of South African masculinities, given that I include little discussion on, for instance, different black masculinities.

In South Africa, the NP government had a particular stake in ensuring that its understanding of masculinity as involving white power and heteronormativity was maintained. Through a comparative assessment of white, gay masculinities from the 1960s to 2000 I sought to analyse the threat other white masculinities posed to the power of the NP government and the lengths the NP government would go to reinforce their definition. In analysing this I aimed to contribute to the genre of gender studies and to add to South Africa's political history by looking at official attitudes to sexuality and its influence and threat on political power. I questioned to what extent contest around the

definition of masculinity affected the government. This I considered regarding both the NP and the ANC governments.

My research is, hopefully, only the start of work of this nature in South Africa, from an historical context. I am confident, viewing the development of the field of gay/ queer studies in this country that other work will help to fill in the gaps that mine could not.

