WHO ARE YOU WEARING?

-An exploration of expressions of identity & vestimentary codes among gay men in Cape Town, South Africa-

Figure 1- Revellers at MCQP The Locker Room Project

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Foreword:

Before any fieldwork could commence in earnest, there were certain assumptions regarding my role as a researcher that required deeper consideration. Perhaps the comfort of the familiar, the fact that I was returning to a country I often claimed "felt more like home than home itself" had me operating on the presumption that I understood South Africa and the people that live there. Perhaps, I thought, I was off to a better start than most Master's students embarking on fieldwork for the first time. As I was soon to realise, however, I had to re-evaluate my relationship with South Africa, as well as my understanding of my role as a researcher, in order to conduct research that would be valuable and produce meaningful results.

There is an element of self-alienation involved in conducting qualitative research; a deliberate and necessary process of dissociation occurs in the life of the researcher. Never free to fully reveal her true feelings or intentions, the researcher grapples with the two-fold task of assimilating the data provided by her interviewees, and the often arduous matter of acquiring said data in the first place. What right do we as researchers have to pluck our data from others' stories'; sectioning whole lives into only those limited parts significant to our research? A question which becomes even more problematic when the research in question concerns matters of identity. Who a person is, simply in terms of their own experience, without considering the complicated network of biological and psychological factors that constitute identity, is a wholly subjective determination. It is also where the hardest questions lie, and where we are most prone to conceal or deny. Therefore, as a researcher in this field, what are the limits we set ourselves? What lines must be drawn? Where does research become prying? Where is the line of demarcation between rigorous investigation and encroachment? While these where all questions I posed with a view to answering during my fieldwork, they never seemed to resolve as I went along. In fact, I found these questions dogged me throughout my work, sometimes even subverting the fieldwork itself.

Nevertheless, with these concerns in mind I endeavoured to retain an awareness of my own precarious role as an invader of private lives as I set about my investigations. I allowed this awareness to become part of the research itself, which allowed me to approach my sources in a more honest way. My own self-consciousness in my role as researcher allowed me to remain mindful of this; serving as a constant reminder that we

can never truly comprehend the mind of another, that qualitative research can never be conclusive. Rather it is an idea, a nudge, in the direction of understanding the context of our own, utterly human lives.

South Africa is a wildly complex and diverse country, and my experience (and that of others, I believe) is that South Africans in general do not take too kindly to foreigners attempting to solve their problems for them. The avalanche of reporters, researchers and novelists, politicians, volunteers and tourists who daily project their impressions of South Africa onto its population must be exhausting for those who endure it. The historical, social and political currents that run through South Africa are almost impossible for those who are not from there to understand, and thus deceptively easy to criticise. The conversations I have had with visitors to South Africa who attack what they do not understand, who think there is an easy solution within reach, are manifold. Even I have been guilty of a few. In preparing for this fieldwork I have read many essays and theses on the subject of identity in South Africa, which I found to be without nuance or lacking in understanding of the complexity of South Africa and South African identity. I will discuss and critique this in-depth in this thesis, however, for introduction purposes I think it is important to note that even as I was setting out in the field, I was aware of my own shortcomings with regards to fully understanding the South African psyche.

This left me feeling rather inept at the start of my research, a foreigner, ready to pry into lives I could have no hope, and no business, of understanding. However, this approach filled me with optimism, rather than fear. In recognising my own place in the work I would be performing, I could hopefully approach the country and people that are the focus of my research with a newfound receptiveness. The stories we as researchers gather are never ours; rather we borrow them as we attempt to puzzle together an understanding of the world around us. We can never hold the truth, but rather, we can present a small fragment of truth wrapped up in our own perceptions and ideas. As a human being, I will always be biased, I will always see through my own eyes. Thus I accepted and embrace my place in my work as I set out to weave together the stories of vestimentary expressions of identity that have so generously been lent to me.

Introduction & Methodology

Fashion and the Cape Town gay scene

The richness of gay lives in Cape Town became apparent to me many years ago, as I lived in the city and interacted with many Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender-Queer-Intersexed people there. The acronym LGBTQI has by and large been adopted by this group of people as their preferred reference to self, as opposed to previously used derogatory terms such as 'moffie' (Gevisser 1995 p. xiii, Hoad et al. 2005). Moffie is however in some circumstances still used by LGBTQI people themselves as an attempt to reclaim the term (ibid). Throughout this text I will refer to Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender-Queer & Intersexed people as LGBTQI, although as my focus is on the men within the LGBTQI I will often refer to these men as 'gay' as this is the preferred term (Cage 2003 p.5).

This incredibly diverse group of people saw themselves as partaking in various 'gay communities', adhering to subtle social rules that were difficult for an outsider to interpret. In returning to Cape Town to research my Master's thesis, I looked to a web of theoretical influences to decipher the visual gay expressions apparent in various Cape Town communities and events. From a subcultural perspective the well-known writings of Dick Hebdige (*Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, 1979) helped me look at how subcultural communities form identities through their appearance. If LGBTQI people should be seen as part of a subcultural movement can be debated, however through symbols and clothing they do challenge the dominant hegemony and social norm (Leitch 1994), as we will see throughout this text. In *The Fashion System* (1967), Roland Barthes attempts to use a series of vestimentary codes to enable a semantic system of fashion, through the reading of images in fashion magazines. When I from here on out refer to the various 'dress codes' or 'ways of dress' of LGBTQI people (and in particular gay men) in Cape Town, as vestimentary codes, it is part of a 'Barthesian' attempt to contextualize the vestimentary codes of gay men in Cape Town, not through images in a magazine, but rather through observation, interviews and historical research. Changing Barthes' method allowed me a new approach to the reading of vestimentary codes, while at the same time maintaining Barthes' principles.

As Barthes explains in *The Fashion System* (1967 p.3-p.18): The idea of vestimentary codes in fashion refers to there being a signifier and a signified within the garment. As

Barthes used fashion magazines as a foundation for his work in *The Fashion System* (1967), here the signified is the image of the garment, and the signifier is the description accompanying the garment, describing it as 'fashionable'. Here I wondered if the same use of the term vestimentary codes could be transferred into real life observations, and if the use of certain clothing could signify its own unspoken rules (vestimentary codes) to others? In the context of gay lives in Cape Town this would run as an underlying current throughout my interviews and observations as I pondered if gay men had developed their own vestimentary codes out of humour or necessity, or perhaps both. As we will see in the text there was often a clear understanding of what one might 'read' from the dress of another.

They idea of vestimentary codes among the various gay male communities in Cape Town is quite abundant. At any given party or event with an LGBTQI following, there seems to be a higher frequency of not just flamboyant costume, but also fashionable wear among its attendees. This makes for intense visual stimulation at these events, but it also shows that LGBTQI people often operate within their own strict dress codes, depending on their own identity, and chosen expression of that identity (Gevisser & Cameron 1995 p.203). Fashion here serves the precarious role as identifier and disguise, at the same time signifying the wearer to his or hers contemporaries, while for others acting as a way to dress as 'the other', as a disguise for one's true sexuality. As we will see here, some choose to use fashion as a way of highlighting their sexual preferences, whereas others escape into the sense of 'normality' that certain ways of dressing can provide (Cage 2003 p. 42). In these codes of fashion, there are endless nuances, sometimes only understood by the wearer, but that nevertheless imbues the wearer with his or her own sense of identity.

If one were to interpret the term 'vestimentary codes' as something that was easily identifiable to the untrained eye, then the fashion aspect of the gay scene becomes immediately apparent. One may say that it is 'too easy' to categorise people based on their fashion choices, without having any further insight into their background or personality. However, on a purely superficial level it becomes apparent that the 'cliques' of men that identify under the LGBTQI umbrella often have their own ways of expressing their allegiances through clothing. In previous years this was done through exact signals of dress, such as various coloured handkerchiefs to express ones sexual preferences (Edsall 2003 p. 8 Cage 2003 p. 41). However, in a more contemporary context it can even relate to a fashionable trend by which, wittingly or not, one can then be categorised by a

casual onlooker who has a particular knowledge of current trends. We can then already say that the signifier as being an item or outfit deemed 'current' or 'trendy' is doing its job in signifying the wearer as someone who is able to 'read' and understand a trend and utilise it in his own wardrobe (Crane 2000- Introduction). The ability to read culture, and through it understand the power of utilising it to one's own advantage, becomes inherent in establishing oneself within a social order (Bourdieu 1979 P.12, Crane 2000 p. 8). Within the aspect of male fashion, there is very little, if any, distinction between what a heterosexual and a homosexual man might wear. As men's fashion has become a lot more accessible to the majority of heterosexual men, and the terms for 'visual heterosexuality' has become relaxed, the finer distinctions in 'dressing up ones sexuality' has become blurred (Simpson 1995). This is especially the case in larger metropolises where heterosexual men are as tuned to the current fashions as their homosexual counterparts, meaning that an awareness of fashionable trends is no longer a signifier for a gay man (Simpson 1995). But was it ever so?

To generalise that all homosexual men are interested in fashion is of course highly questionable, offensive even. It proliferates the idea that all gay men are the same, that they all fall under the stereotypical (and homophobic) idea of gay men as 'screaming nellies', hairdressing queens and prancing *moffies* (Gevisser 1995 p.12). We know that gay men are just like all other men, in that they are as different from each other as are their heterosexual counterparts. Therefore it feels like this exploration of gay men and their vestimentary codes and signifiers, their relationship with fashion and identity needs to be justified. Gay communities around the world have a strong tradition of using fashion and clothing as a form of protest and identification. The first rocks thrown at the infamous Stonewall riots (that started the gay rights movement in the United States and has become synonymous with gay rights all over the world) were thrown by drag queens (Edsall 2003, Gevisser & Cameron 1995 p.34). The annual Pride parades that happen all over the world are more often than not attended by those members of the LGBTQI movement dressed up to celebrate and to be seen; the outfits used as a way to shout 'we are here, and we will not be ignored' (De Waal 2006 p.83). LGBTQI communities have frequently utilised slogan t-shirts, bearing expressions of solidarity with the LGBTQI movement, with HIV and safe-sex charities, and with proud proclamations of one's sexuality (Cage 2003 p.47). What this shows us is that 'fashion' in its simplest definition as clothing, has long been a strong part of the gay world. There is of course a clear distinction between what someone might wear to a gay Pride rally, as opposed to what that same person might go to work in the next day. Expressing identity,

sexuality and personality through clothing always flourishes more outside corporate boundaries. While casual Friday is in effect in a lot of offices around the world, there are not many employers who are prepared for their employees to really express themselves in ways that might conflict with the norm on those occasions.

These uses of clothing in protest and celebration have been as popular in South Africa as it has in the West. Perhaps adopting ideas from their Western counterparts, South Africans involved in the LGBTQI movement also used fashion as a means of expression in many areas of their communities (De Waal & Manion 2006 p.43). The plight of LGBTQI communities in South Africa is in many ways unique because of the country's unique history. The apartheid government that separated the South African people also persecuted LGBTQI people (Hoad et. all 2005 p.17), and the LGBTQI rights movements that formed in the apartheid years were largely separated by race (ibid). South Africa's 'separation' from the rest of the world in the apartheid years meant the 'gay culture' that developed in this time is largely unique to that of the rest of the world, and it was only in a post-apartheid context that the 'gay culture' of South Africa truly started mimicking that of the western world (Rink 2001 p. 67).

Garments have also been used as a direct sign of one's sexual preferences, as for example with the infamous use of differently coloured handkerchiefs by the gay men of San Francisco, who employed the colours as a code to indicate their preferred sexual acts (Edsall 2003 p. 8). If one were to delve into the world of fetish wear, one finds that these garments all have a language of their own, each representative of a particular sexual fantasy (Meersman 2014 p. 48).

The fashion world has also been a place of refuge for the many homosexuals who worked in the field, having always been a place of relative open-mindedness throughout the struggle for gay rights. The fashion industry in South Africa is relatively new in many ways. The years of the apartheid government did not encourage creative industries associated with anything other than the traditional Afrikaner, and with strict importation embargos, the availability of certain garments in South Africa was limited. During apartheid, one of the stereotypical professions for male homosexuals was hairdressing. As previously mentioned, 'Gayle' developed from communities of mainly coloured homosexuals in the 1950's. Many of these men were hairdressers and had a persona one could describe as 'femme' or 'camp'. In differentiating themselves so clearly by adopting high camp, these men fought back against discrimination by becoming what

society feared. In doing so, they became a largely accepted community, at least for a time. What this shows us is that at least some urban areas in South Africa could be fairly accepting of homosexual communities as early as the 1950's (*Kewpie: A Normal Daughter*, 1997 documentary). The stringent homophobic laws brought in by the apartheid government only came in effect later, and for a while the 'moffie' communities of Cape Town flourished, and along with it, that community's somewhat untraditional fashion choices.

The idea of dressing and acting 'femme' is actually quite traditional within homosexual communities (as it is within lesbian communities where a 'femme' lesbian is one who enhances her female attributes, as opposed to a 'butch' lesbian, one who dresses/acts more 'male'). If, as Judith Butler (1999) says "Gender is a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred, never fully what it is at any given juncture in time", then the play on gender expression displayed by various sexualities is an embodiment of that. As 'femme' and 'camp' go hand in hand, a person being femme, or acting camp will often play up characteristics such as a quickness of snappy or witty remarks, a theatrical demeanour and a flamboyant dress sense (Sontag 1964). Dressing femme does not need to imply that the wearer is wearing garments intended for women; rather it's about the appropriation of a feminine style, while still maintaining the wearer's masculinity. Were a man to simply wear head to toe female garments, we would call this drag, or cross-dressing. For a femme man however, certain twists to an outfit, such as wearing jewellery, wearing tight-fitting or revealing garments, or using make-up, will put across a certain persona. A person who dresses femme is normally not worried about being perceived as being homosexual. In fact, one could say that the femme homosexual uses his overtly camp persona as a defence mechanism. In being as camp as possible, the person makes it harder for others to mock him for being 'queer' or 'feminine' when he is clearly showing off those traits as something to be proud of (Cage 2003 p.9).

There is great deal of talk about 'passing' in LGBTQI communities, whether it is thought of as positive or negative. To pass means that a person is able to maintain an illusion of something that he or she is not, but perhaps wishes to be. Examples of this are transgender or transsexual people 'passing' as their appropriated gender[1], and gay men and women 'passing' as straight. A gay man who is very femme and camp is perhaps not

[1] When speaking of transgender individuals it is important to note that as their gender identity or gender expression does not match their assigned sex, speaking of appropriation of gender is not appropriate in this context as it might be when speaking of transsexual individuals, or drag queens even.

trying to pass as anything he is not, whereas a gay man who wishes to disassociate himself with anything camp may be trying to hide his homosexuality (Cage 2003 p.30). Again, here I generalise to illustrate a point. There are of course many gay men who think being camp is unnecessary without them needing to reject their own homosexuality to believe so. However, the point of 'passing' is important in relation to attire and identity, as much of who we feel we are, or wish we were, is expressed in what we wear (Crane 2000 p.11). There are of course other social factors to consider, as many of the men who were comfortable with being seen as femme early on, perhaps worked in industries that readily accepted homosexuality, such as the fashion industry or the hairdressing industry.

What this can mean is that certain fashions become more socially acceptable within these groups while others are considered unsuitable. This allows for a social group to tighten its boundaries, excluding those that don't understand the subtleties of their dress code, perhaps even evoking distaste in outsiders (Crane 2000 p.8, Bourdieu 1979 p. 56). An individual that has already experienced rejection could feel this exclusion even more keenly. While it would be a generalisation to assume that all gay males have experienced rejection for their sexuality, most notably by family members, it is however an unavoidable truth that many have suffered for simply being themselves. Whether this is reflected in their behaviour when it comes to forming social groups and choosing attire is something that I will investigate further.

During my research for this thesis I spoke with Cape Town based fashion writer, Monde Harold Mtsi (Monde- September 12th 2014). Monde's blog, *Renaissance Men*, is very popular with the Cape Town fashion crowd. What I gathered from this meeting is that being gay or not is of very little importance in the Cape Town fashion scene, and that the gay men who consider themselves part of this scene seem to put more stock on their fashion identity as opposed to their gay identity.

Monde is an experienced fashion blogger, who for the last 3 years has been working on the *Renaissance Men* blog, making a name for himself on the South African fashion scene. Hailing from Langa, Monde dismisses those who accuse him of living a cushy life, citing hard work and frequent commuting as the pillars of his success. Though having recently accepted a job as a copywriter for a Cape Town based advertising firm, he is no less determined to ultimately make a living from his fashion blog. The years spent working solely on *Renaissance Men* has built up his reputation as someone to listen to –

somewhat of an authority on South African fashion. In this interview, we focused mainly on themes around the fashion industry in Cape Town, and South Africa as a whole. Being a frequent traveller to Johannesburg for the twice annual Johannesburg Fashion Week, and having also attended Durban's fashion week, Monde knows a thing or two about the behind the scene drama of the South African fashion world. However, I think it is more important to highlight Monde's thoughts on his own identity and place within the fashion industry.

Though a gay man himself, Monde nevertheless feels uncomfortable with large groups of gay men. This, he says jokingly, is down to preferring to be the star of the show, the focus of everyone's attention. However, I could speculate as to alternative reasons for this discomfort, supported by hints from Monde himself. Perhaps growing up in a community that was less than supportive of his emerging sexuality has left him with a certain disdain for those of the same orientation. Perhaps the pressure of sexual hook-ups that is presented in a gay-only environment adds to the levels of insecurity, or perhaps he is simply bored with the perceived old-fashioned aspects of the all-male gay club. Further more, Monde does not express any true links between his gay identity and his fashion choices, more emphasis is put on the pressure of his career choices and the wish to present himself as a fashionable person to further his own career in fashion. Therefore we can see that more emphasis is put on his fashion identity than his gay identity, implying that one does not need to simply identify oneself by a single all-defining feature, but rather have a multifaceted identity in flux; different faces to be worn according to circumstances.

This doesn't deflect from the original research question however: looking at the influence of fashion on gay identity in Cape Town. In doing so I hope to see how crucial clothing was, and is, in the forging of gay identity. By looking at the various sub-communities of gay men in Cape Town, mainly those that exists within the small structural world of the gay-village in De Waterkant, those that attend the annual dress up party, MCQP, and the annual Pride celebrations, and those that live a much more conservative gay life in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town, attending so-called Gat parties as amusement, I hope to gain insight into those that choose to focus on their gay identity above all else. The idea that we have one set or immutable identity, based on one aspect of our sense of self, is surely too simplistic, as I have already discussed. A gay man does not live his life based solely on his self-identification as homosexual, however, some choose their gay identities as their favoured sense of self; the self that they present

to the world. These seem to be the men that live/work/play in so-called gay villages, that will only go on gay friendly holidays, that mostly only socialize with other gay men. I met a man who ran a gay friendly guesthouse in Green Point who was utterly uninterested in anything that was not somehow gay related, and that included talking to me, a woman. He was not the first, nor will he be the last, gay man I encountered who was quite extreme in their approach to gay life. In the context of this research, and looking at vestimentary codes in relation to gay identity, I realised the strongest sense of vestimentary codes must exist among those who observe their sexual identity so rigidly. Throughout this research I spoke to and observed many gay men who to varying degrees expressed their gay identity as part of themselves. There were those who thought that being gay was only a small part of who they were, and others who rarely touched on anything that did not somehow relate back to their sexuality. Many focused on their South African identity first and foremost, their sense of self stemmed in many ways from their sense of Pride, or despair, about their country. The unique history of South Africa shone through without being the main topic of many a conversation.

In my quest for a reading of vestimentary codes, I found that with those who identified as being gay before anything else, the emphasis on clothing and dress was stronger, as we shall soon see. With all this in mind, the research question that I set out to answer was:

Through an exploration of gay lives in Cape Town, South Africa, what development do we see in the expressions of gay identity and the use of vestimentary codes in a post-apartheid context?

For this thesis I have broken down the material into four main chapters. In the first chapter I focus on an area where Cape Town comes closest to having what Rink (2003) refers to as a 'gay-village'. Here we will also take a look at other gay communities that have blossomed, and perhaps faded again, in certain urban enclaves in the Cape Town city area. With this I hope to show the link between freedom of gender performativity (Butler 2004) and expression through vestimentary codes. For the second chapter I look to the celebration of Cape Town Pride, an annual LGBTQI Pride parade, on its own as well as in comparison with similar events in the Johannesburg area. With that in mind I sojourn to Soweto Pride as this chapter ponders the spectacle of Pride (Johnston 2005) as a stage for vestimentary codes and expressions of identity. The third chapter looks to a very different kind of gay event, the Gat party, catering to a more conservative gay

crowd. The final chapter focuses on an annual costume party in Cape Town, Mother City Queer Project, or MCQP, as it is known. Here I look more closely at the clothing worn over the last 20 years of MCQP, and how the event has changed as I question the necessity of vestimentary codes in what is billed as a gender and sexuality inclusive event.

I chose to focus on the events that follow because I feel that they represent a relatively wide aspect of gay lives in Cape Town (with exceptions, which will be discussed per event). While more traditional, and mainly Afrikaans, LGBTQI people in Cape Town attend the Gat party, MCQP was launched for a more art-orientated, or 'queer' crowd. Cape Town Pride attempts to bring together all LGBTQI people in Cape Town, and De Waterkant is both loved and hated by many as the symbol of gay lives in Cape Town, while only truly representing the lives of a few. By linking these events together with discussions of gender politics, vestimentary codes, expressions of identity and explorations of gay commodification I hope to answer my research question while opening up new areas of discussion within LGBTQI lives in cape Town.

Before then, I shall leave you with a few choice words on South African identity from my favourite interviewee:

"Take into consideration that (for example) my 'South African' identity, such as it is, was formed (perhaps is still being formed) during a time when the whole notion of 'South Africa' started to change in some truly radical ways, and that this shift and crumbling was already gaining serious momentum in 1983, the year I was born. Now, some three decades later, we have the dwindling old guard and the rising 'born frees' (obnoxious term), and in between a whole generation of South Africans born into a fog. It simply isn't possible for me to speak of "South Africa" as if it were an immutable fact, an actual physical place, abiding in its 'identity informing' autonomy. Perhaps the people of Iceland can speak of national identity in such a clear and unambiguous way, but I cannot. Scores of South Africans cannot. We are, as Wallace Stegner would say, prophets of flux, who know that the flux is composed of parts that imitate and repeat each other. We are and we were, and we are cumulative, too. We are much of what our parents and especially our grandparents were – inherited stature, coloring, brains, bones and transmitted prejudices, culture, scruples, likings, moralities, and moral errors that we defend or oppose as if they were personal and not familial. We are like the air left by amputated limbs – throbbing with the disembodied ache of a non-past and a non-present simultaneously. We are still longing for

a home we know doesn't exist; never did. That's why we understand the word. Home is a notion that only the rootless comprehend." (Donovan- January 12th 2015)

Methodology

The emphasis on methodology is perhaps undermined because of the strong influence of anthropology on the field of African studies, and with that comes a certain resentment of method, which seems to be inherent in anthropology (Quédraogo 2011 P. 17). However, applying methodological approaches to anthropology, and therefore to the areas of African studies that lead down a similar path, can be problematic. If anthropology is the study of humankind, how do you systemize human responses and reaction in an attempt to fit within a methodological approach? Geertz (1988) warns of the researcher's difficulty in remaining neutral, with regard to their field of study, and that a researcher may easily become uncritically involved or believing of their subject. Geertz suggests an idealistic balance of familiarity and critical distance in the course of qualitative research.

This thesis is interdisciplinary between anthropology, African studies, queer studies and fashion studies, therefore the methodological approaches utilised must cover a wide scope of approaches. From a methodological standpoint I often felt I straddled the border between participant observation and non-participant observation. As Jorgensen conceded (Jorgensen 1989 p.6): *"The world of everyday life as viewed from the standpoint of insiders is the fundamental reality to be described by participant observation. Put still differently, the methodology of participant observation seeks to uncover, make accessible and reveal the meaning (realities) people use to make sense out of their daily lives".* While this is correct in describing the immediate goals of my immersion into participant observation, it is also true that the non-participant observation techniques of taking a step back to observe rather than interact, served as a first step in gathering information. As I was already involved to a certain extent in the communities where I was conducting research, it became important to not always be involved in the proceedings first hand, but rather to attempt the dual viewpoint of insider and outsider to most truthfully collect data for this fieldwork. Also, my previous experiences in Cape Town enabled me to utilise my own 'historical observations', meaning that my research-related observations were influenced by knowledge I'd gained from engaging in similar experiences in the past. Therefore I was not participating in many things for the first time as a person, but rather as a researcher. My subject of vestimentary codes is something I have been interested in over time, but the attempt at connecting the two, vestimentary codes and the gay lives of Cape Town, was a new approach for me.

Chapter 1:

De Waterkant and a multifaceted exploration of gender expression

Figure 2: Waiters at Beefcakes restaurant in De Waterkant- Image from www.capetownt.travel

When trying to understand the presence of vestimentary codes among gay men in Cape Town, the first obvious place to look would be where gay life is most visible in the city. Enter De Waterkant, as a visible area of consumption, reflecting the desires of white, wealthy gay men, according to Visser (2003) and Elder (2005). As Williams (2008) points our, the juxtaposition between the more affluent gay community in De Waterkant, and the reality for many LGBTQI people living in poorer areas of Cape Town, such as Khayelitsha (Williams 2008 p. 60) is one of extremes. I will thus be looking at De Waterkant first as a stage for the expression for vestimentary codes and secondly as a visualisation of gender performativity (Butler 2004).

From 1994 onwards, gay life blossomed in Cape Town as the anti-homosexuality laws of apartheid were abandoned, opening up a world of opportunity for the establishment of LGBTQI friendly nightclubs and businesses. Previously, LGBTQI people would have to stay hidden, gathering only at private parties, and even then in fear of the law, as seen at the infamous Forest Hill party in Johannesburg in 1978 (Cage 2003 p.12). With the opening of Cape Town's Bronx, a nightclub geared strictly towards homosexuals, a new

visibility of queer men became apparent in the Green Point area of Cape Town. Or rather a new 'legal' visibility as South Africa entered a new political era, banishing the draconian anti-homosexuality laws of the apartheid regime (Gevisser 1995 p. 6). This led to De Waterkant becoming a so-called gay village (Rink 2011, P.31), an urban area that served as a stage for the performance of queer sexualities.

I knew De Waterkant in the early 2000's, when the area was brimming with various LGBTQI friendly clubs, bars for lesbians, pumping nightclubs for the queens, leather bars for the "leather-moffies", and various establishments that welcomed all into its midst. The area was at that time known for its hedonism, which invariably spilled over into the more straight-laced establishments surrounding the area. This shows that businesses in De Waterkant that did not specifically cater to LGBTQI people benefitted from the presence of the LGBTQI crowd rejuvenating this area. I was curious and eager to reacquaint myself with De Waterkant as I had heard, through both social media and interviewees, that the area had changed dramatically. Property development and gentrification, plus changes in LGBTQI lifestyles had had a visible impact on this small city enclave. I would soon find that hedonism no longer ruled the roost in De Waterkant.

Cape Town is an important city on the LGBTQI world map. As the only country in Africa with a constitution that protects LGBTQI rights, South Africa has long been a favoured holiday destination within that group (Rink 2013 p.65). The money brought in by LGBTQI tourists has not been lost on those benefiting from the tourist market. Dubbed "the pink Rand", LGBTQI money spent is analysed within that group's gender context, thereby creating a separate market where the dominant actors cater mainly or solely to LGBTQI customers. The state-owned tourism board of the Western Cape promotes Cape Town as a 'pink' destination, but is reliant on the private sector to supply in-demand gay friendly accommodation to visitors (ibid).

De Waterkant established itself as a queer or gay-friendly area also through the marketing of businesses there towards the LGBTQI market, aimed at both locals and tourists alike (Rink 2013 p. 67). This courting of the LGBTQI customer came about as marketers saw a gap in the consumer market where LGBTQI people had high disposable incomes and above average lifestyle ambitions, and were willing to spend if they felt the product was marketed at them. The idea of the "pink rand" was born, a term coined to refer to LGBTQI people's spending power, perhaps specifically directed towards gay men (ibid). There is the assumed truth that certain homosexual men (more the men that

identify as gay than those that are queer) are drawn to a luxury lifestyle, and this idea is highly visible in De Waterkant where high-end interior shops and clothing boutiques cater to that market. Also, over the years, several restaurants have opened (and closed), directed at customers and tourists who lean towards wanting a high-end, or luxury, experience. We can merely speculate whether what is achieved here is actual luxury, or rather an idea of luxury. It would be tempting to identify several of the establishments in De Waterkant, and the people they cater to, as nouveau riche – a term that refers to people who seemingly like to flash their riches, perhaps in the hope of provoking envy in others. Certainly, this particular "gay lifestyle", where superficiality seems to thrive, is very visible in De Waterkant. People that choose to settle here can only do so with a high-level income or independent wealth. The businesses in De Waterkant cater for these people and those who enjoy the outward appearance of the lifestyle De Waterkant has to offer even if they do not live there. The seemingly, rather charming idea of a "gay village", where residents can live without fear of violent persecution and therefore are free to express their sexual identity on a day-to-day basis isn't without controversy as Visser points out:

"Underneath this liberated space of gay expression, lies a far more complex and "unliberated" race-class-gender matrix. Consequently, in terms on the contribution De Waterkant can make to gay identity formation, development or (re) affirmation in Cape Town, its role seems at best "coercive", otherwise exclusionary of those who are not "wealthy, white and male" (Visser 2003 p.136).

This uniformed idea of what being gay is, a unilateral representation of LGBTQI people in Cape Town as mainly white and male, is also apparent in the marketing of Cape Town as a gay friendly holiday destination. There is also a big emphasis on attracting upmarket tourists to the De Waterkant area. This is done in particular to catch the attention of the LGBTQI tourist and the essence of this comes in the form of the so-called "Pink Map", a map of Cape Town with emphasis on De Waterkant, where gay-friendly business such as retailers, hotels and restaurants are plotted in. As shown in Bradley M. Rink's "*Que(e)rying Cape Town: Touring Africa's 'Gay Capital' with the Pink Map"*(2013), this is an active, identity-based promotional device. The promotion of the businesses involved in the Pink Map also shows an exclusion of those who cannot afford the products on offer, thereby highlighting the vast socio-economic differences of Cape Town, including the disparities that exist within the microcosm of the CBD. Rink goes on to say that:

"The Pink Map is unabashedly commercial in nature, deriving income from advertisers who in turn get plotted on the map, which is ultimately intended to result in a visit from a tourist who will hopefully spend money. While the tourist-to-consumer trajectory may be an unsurprising outcome of most tourist maps, the result becomes more complicated when applied to a map intended primarily—although not exclusively – for sexual minority groups. The complication arises through the commodification of gay spaces that 'can be read as an instance of 'the new homonormativity', producing a global repertoire of themed gay villages, as cities throughout the world weave commodified gay space into their promotional campaigns'" (Rink 2013 P.

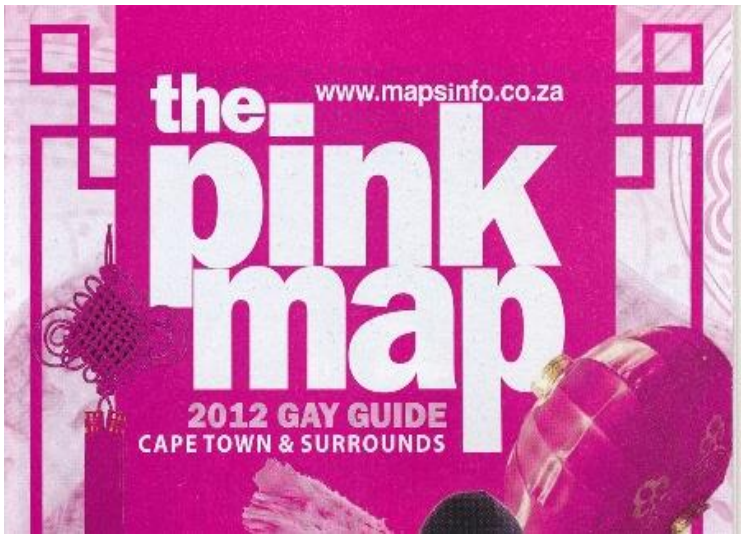

Figure 3: The Pink Map 2012- Image from the pinkbox.

Figure 4: The Pink Map- Image from thepinkbox.net

In *Queer Patriarchies, Queer Racisms, International* (2002), Heidi Nast discuss the so-called celebration of the radical nature of queer travel, arguing that "gay white patriarchies coexist with, and in some cases displace, heteronormative patriarchies, shoring up pre-existing racialized and politically and economic conservative processes of profit accumulation (Nast 2002 p.874).

The sartorial retailers on the Pink Map are those that scale on the luxury end of the market. The choices of clothing in these boutiques have that 'universal gay look' (Meersman 2014 p.24), of vests and short shorts, tiny swimming trunks and flashy (or dare I say "blingy") designer accessories. If De Waterkant and the people that frequent it have a singular vestimentary code, this would be it. Easily accessible, but also expensive, clothing designed to show off well-trained and buff gym bodies, another attribute that is part of De Waterkant's lifestyle image. Clothing of the same fundamental design are worn by the shop assistants, who covertly flirt with potential costumers, all in an effort to sell their idea of the gay lifestyle. Of the 43 businesses included in the Pink Map, eight offer "retail therapy", including the Cape Quarter Lifestyle Village, which sits in the space formerly occupied by several popular and well known gay night clubs, namely Sliver, Confessions and The Bronx, all of which have had to move or shut down in the face of this development. Whether the owners of the Cape Quarter Lifestyle Village, which targets LGBTQI consumers, sees the irony in trying to sell a lifestyle which it is partly responsible for driving gay establishments out of the area, is not known. A visit to the Cape Quarter Lifestyle Village webpage shows a definite drive to attract the high-end consumer, but a visit to the place itself shows empty halls and unoccupied stores. Perhaps not all LGBTQI customers wish to have their own lifestyle sold back to them? This will, however, not deter the marketing and business strategy people who seemingly will continue to chase the pink rand, whether that is a tangible phenomenon or not. Certainly, a visit to De Waterkant today will show you several new high-end developments in various stages of construction. On the former site of the "new" Bronx (the venue it briefly moved to after being forced out of its old home by property developers for the Cape Quarter Lifestyle Village, before finally shutting down permanently), a new apartment complex is being built with, what else, views of the Cape Quarter Lifestyle Village. This run-around of property developers pursuing the very people they are at the same time chasing out will most likely continue, as it has done in various other urban-village type scenarios around the world, such as I have observed first hand in Shoreditch, London or Kreuzberg, Berlin.

The commodification of the gay lives that exist in orbit of De Waterkant will continue to be financially exploited throughout the development of De Waterkant. With it comes the homogenisation of gay lives and of a 'gay culture', a disputed term if there ever was one. I wondered if De Waterkant could be seen as presenting a very one dimensional view of the gay lives of Cape Town, and if this had contributed to creating a one sided vestimentary code that the participants on the stage of De Waterkant adhered to unvaryingly. Through my own research as a participant/observer, through having conversations and conducting interviews with the people of De Waterkant today and those that remember its origins, I hoped to further my understanding of how this homogenisation of an idea of 'gay culture' can occur so easily within a small, urban area, and how that effects the actors as they navigate potential vestimentary codes.

Kewpie & Understanding Gender

Historically, De Waterkant and Bo-Kaap, two urban areas of Cape Town situated on the slopes of Signal Hill, were quiet urban enclaves incorporated in part in District Six. District Six was an anomaly in Cape Town during apartheid, a culturally rich and racially diverse community, which paid the price for its uniqueness with the eventual destruction of its community in the hands of the apartheid government. District Six was also unique in the community's acceptance of gay men at the time of apartheid; however, to accept these men the community identified them as "moffies", and thought of them, by and large, as women. The personalities of these men were often articulated through both language and expressions through cloth. In the 1950's and 1960's, the area around Hanover Street in District Six had a thriving gay community, based around a substantial amount of hairdressing salons. As social interaction, 'salon crawls', where participants would visit the various gay-run hairdressing salons, was popular at this time (Chetty 1995 p.123). The history of gay lives in this Cape Town city area can perhaps be best expressed through the story and images of Kewpie, a young, coloured man and well known transsexual/drag queen[2], as described in *A Drag at Madame Costello's: Cape moffie life and the popular press in the 1950s and 1960s (*Chetty 1995 p. 115)*:*

Kewpie:
The star performers in the 'moffie revues' of the 1950s and 1960s continue to use their stage names. Kewpie, also known as Kewpie Doll and Capucine, was one such star. Kewpie remains a legend in the coloured working class area of Kensington in Cape Town, although this enfant terrible of the moffie drag scene in the 1960s is now more sedate and even a little maudlin in his later years. His salon still has Pride of place on the street, and at 7 p.m. on the day in 1992 when I visited him, faithful male customers were still coming in for their haircuts.
Like its owner, the salon had a sense of faded glory, a mixture of kitsch and decay: this was not the world of track lighting and hi-tech. While we talked, two younger acolytes were preparing for a night at Tots, the favoured Wednesday evening venue for the coloured gay crowd. Both were perfectly cross-dressed in well-fitted jeans, blouses and accessories. Like

[2] Whether Kewpie was a transsexual, in that he identified as a woman, or a drag queen, a gay man who dresses as a woman for entertainment, is not totally clear. In the documentary Kewpie, A Normal Daughter, he refers to himself as a moffie and talks about his "drag", but also his Pride in being thought of as a daughter and female in various situations. When Kewpie's friends discuss him they alternate their use of pronouns. For the sake of this discussion, I will refer to Kewpie as a moffie and a he, although either gender-specific pronoun could have been used, and was used by Kewpie himself.

most of his generation of gay men, Kewpie grew up in District Six, in a family of six children who went to local schools like St. Philip's and the Berlin Mission School. His mother, a housewife, is remembered especially for her tolerance of his sexuality from its earliest expression. Kewpie wanted to be a dancer and began ballet classes at an early age: he was, in fact, trained in ballet at the University of Cape Town, destined for a career before the lights. Parental pressure, though, put a hold on these ambitions. It was nevertheless acceptable within the close confines of District Six for Kewpie to start cross-dressing at an early age. When his parents moved from the area, he stayed on, working as a clerk during the day and running a hairdressing business from home. Around 1954, Kewpie moved into what is now Kensington to set up his salon, the first in the area. It was a major achievement for a drag queen who was already vivacious, in the news, and on the move."

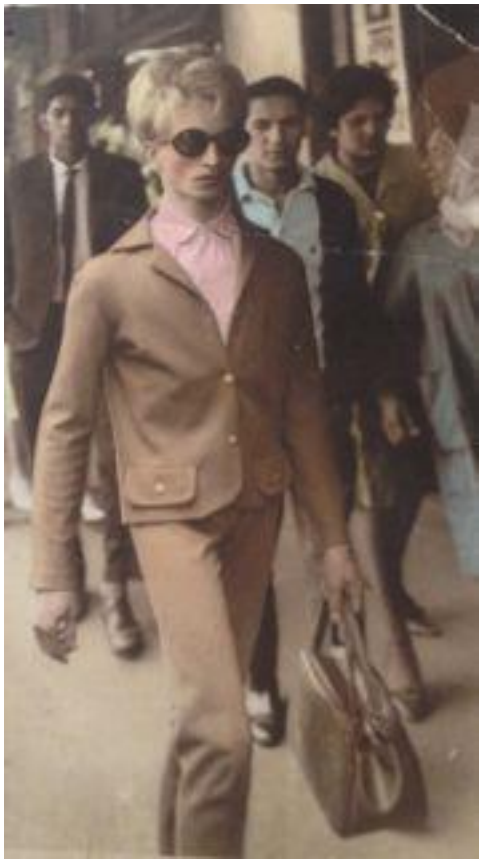

Figure 5: Kewpie- Image 1.33- from the Gay & Lesbian Archives (GALA) Johannesburg

There are a few points of discussion that I wish to refer to from this brief text. The sad breakdown of the community of the District Six area of Cape Town at the hands of the apartheid government had a potentially devastating effect on the early flourishing of a gay culture that was taking place in that area. However, when visiting the GALA (gay and lesbian archives) offices in Johannesburg I was lucky to look through a whole box of old

photographs from Kewpie's life, donated to the archive by his relatives after his death. Several of the photographs were clearly taken in the De Waterkant and Bo-Kaap areas, and others were at parties in Green Point and central Cape Town. Kewpie frequented these areas with his likeminded friends, while also appearing in drag and cabaret shows in the neighbourhood, attracting LGBTQI people, and various other people on the same wavelength. Kewpie and his peers gained acceptance as well know drag performers in their community of District Six, but also beyond it in their new home boroughs such as Kensington.

Figure 6: Kewpie- Image 1.37 from the Gay & Lesbian Archives (GALA) Johannesburg

This text also shows a level of tolerance exhibited towards Kewpie and his peers, and even respect and reverence among his neighbours, however their safety was reliant on the good will and protection of the local 'skollies' (thugs) (Chetty 1995 p.123). The coloured community of Cape Town was in this respect more tolerant towards LGBTQI people than the more conservative, white communities that supported apartheid and seemed to fear some overt expressions of homosexuality. Kewpie might also have experienced a level of protection due to his infamy, this according to the documentary *Kewpie: A Normal Daughter* (1997), directed by Jack Lewis for the Community Media

Trust, Cape Town.[3] What this documentary showed through interviews with Kewpie, his family and friends was that although the tolerance of gay men, or moffies, in District Six was unusually high during the 1950's and 1960's, the men accepted as moffies were in a way identified as a third gender, no longer man and not really female. The documentary shows Kewpie and his peers weaving in and out of the abodes of District Six as housekeepers of sorts, assisting with childcare and cleaning duties, and through that accepted in most homes. Kewpie was referred to in the feminine form "she" by most people interviewed for this documentary, while he referred to himself as a moffie, using the female pronoun mostly in jest, such as is the habit among gay men. On a day-to-day basis Kewpie wore women's clothing including skirts, blouses and bikinis on hot days, and often sported elaborate female hairstyles. Kewpie, and his moffie contemporaries, referred to themselves as "dragging" when they dressed up in more elaborate outfits for an evening's entertainment. Therefore the vestimentary code among Kewpie and his fellow 'moffies' was that of a female appearance, delighting in the idea that they were passing as a female and accepted as such. This relates to the theory of the third gender, an idea present in a variety of cultures, as discussed in *Sexing the Body- Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (Fausto-Sterling 2000 p.109): "*Several Native American cultures, for example, define a third gender, which may include people whom we would label as homosexual, transsexual, or intersexual but also people we would label as male or female".*

Here we see that third gender, of male to female, could be adopted by the local community as a way of contextualising the behaviour of homosexual individuals, thereby furthering the locals' understanding and ability to place them in a social construct. By stripping gay men of their masculinity by identifying them as female, they no longer present a threat to the community's sense of gender identification, and its fear of effeminate men (Murray & Roscoe 1998 p. 180). This continues with the dual classification of gender of homosexual men, in the context of their sexual preferences. A gay man that is submissive during sexual encounters is considered to be the 'woman', while the man who is active during sexual intercourse is thought to retain his manhood, and thus is not considered to be a homosexual in some cultures (Fausto-Sterling 2000). This hypocrisy continues to this day, with a distinction being made between queens or moffies, and more 'straight acting' or masculine men, a distinction that is often based on outward appearances. An elderly (heterosexual) gentleman I spoke to in a casual conversation on gay life in Cape Town said:

[3] http://www.cmt.org.za accessed January 15th 2014

"Oh, my wife has a gay friend. Very nice chap actually, quiet guy. Comes over to our house all the time. I don't have any problems with gay people like that. But you know, those moffies, I can't stand them. They're always so loud and silly and they can't behave themselves. I was on a flight from George to Cape Town just after the Knysna Pink Days, and it was horrible. They were screeching and loud. I can't stand those moffies." (Frank January 12th 2015)

Here we see how easily someone can draw a distinction between homosexual men based on the assumption of their level of apparent masculinity. The quiet gay friend becomes a separate entity from the loud moffie; leaving the impression that homosexuality is only okay if it is acted out in a straight narrative, while more aggressive displays of effeminate homosexuality is strongly disliked. In all the conversations I had with the older generation on my research topic, this same sentiment was expressed again and again; that gay men were fine as long as they didn't act too 'gay'. A gay man who acted too effeminate was thought to be a nuisance, and no longer quite a man. Clothing played a huge part in the identification of who was a moffie and who wasn't, and a great deal of confusion was contributed to the idea of a man wearing a skirt. These people were children, or young adults, in the 1950's, perhaps growing up in neighbourhoods much more conservative than District Six. However, their views never ceased to startle me as I wondered (as I have many times before), why the idea of men acting or dressing as women horrify so many people. This, in my opinion, makes District Six unique in its somewhat acceptance of 'moffies', these very effeminate gay men who were so gladly accepted into the community. While the community that thrived in District Six during Kewpie's time is no more, some of that sense of community spilled over into surrounding areas, such as De Waterkant, allowing a gay village to manifest itself.

The work of Alfred C. Kinsey and his colleagues proposed a scale to measure human sexuality, commonly known as the Kinsey scale (Fausto-Sterling 2000 p.9). On a scale from 0-6, sex researchers could try and measure their subject's sexuality, with 0 being 100 percent heterosexual and 6 being 100 percent homosexual. Despite designing this scale, Kinsey stressed "the reality includes individuals of every intermediate type, lying in a continuum between the two extremes and between each and every category on the scale"(ibid). Fausto goes on to mention the various other scales adopted by various sexual researchers, all variations of the scale invented by Kinsey. What none of these

attempts at measuring human sexuality can do is allow for the individual human experience. As Kinsey points out in the previous quote, there is a world of grey between each category, where perhaps most humans operate. In the context of Kewpie and his contemporaries, it is tempting to mention the story of Kewpie's boyfriend of 13 years revealed in the documentary *Kewpie: A Normal Daughter*. Kewpie and his boyfriend were in a relationship for 13 years, during which time Kewpie was accepted as a daughter-in-law by his partner's parents. After the duration of their relationship however, Kewpie's partner left him, to settle down with a "real" woman, in the hopes of producing offspring. Kewpie's partner's relationship with Kewpie did not label him as a homosexual, because Kewpie was thought of not as his homosexual partner, but as his girlfriend. Where would Kewpie's boyfriend have placed himself on Kinsey's scale? If I were to hazard a guess I would say that he would have thought of himself as 100 percent heterosexual, his affair with Kewpie notwithstanding.

The anthropologist Gil Herdt, a moderate constructionist, catalogues four primary cultural approaches to the organization of human sexuality. One of these is gender-reversed homosexuality, where "same sex activity involves a reversal of normative sex-role comportment: males dress and act like females, and females dress and behave as males" (Fausto-Sterling 2000 p. 18). We can argue that this gender-reversed homosexuality was more accepted in the case of Kewpie and District Six. By adopting a known gender role, that of a woman, Kewpie could exist without the stigma attached to being a homosexual at that time. This brings me on to the discussion of gender identity as a whole. When speaking of 'gay identity' as I do in these pages, how do we justify the basis of identity on gender and sexuality? The LGBTQI acronym includes an 'I' for Intersexed; individuals who in earlier years would have been referred to hermaphrodites. These are individuals that are born without a clear anatomical gender, with a mix of female and male genitalia and gonads. As Anne Fausto-Sterling shows in her work *Sexing the Body Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (2000), even today modern medicine usually attempts to immediately assign gender to a newborn intersexed individual by performing surgery to remove whichever genitalia is deemed to be "wrong". This follows on the idea that an intersexed person has a "right" gender, and if the offending genitalia of the wrong gender are removed that the individual can live as male or female. Often doctors will use tactics such as measuring the intersexed child's penis to verify if it can be classified as a penis or an enlarged clitoris, and make adjustments according to their assessment of what constitutes male or female gender. However, it is prudent to understand that reading nature is a socio-cultural act (Fausto-

Sterling 2000 p.75). The doctors who decide on a decisive gender for a newborn intersexed child do so because the culture tells them that only two sexes exist, and intersexed people must conform to one of these two sexes. This falls into the debate on nature versus nurture, a good example of this is the decade long battle between Dr. John Money and Dr. Milton Diamond (Fausto-Sterling 2000 p.66). These two prominent physicians supported two opposing beliefs in the nature vs. nurture debate. Dr. Money believed that an intersexed child could become whichever gender he/she was conformed to at birth, as long as he/she was raised as that gender. Dr. Diamond however, believed that the child would have a 'natural' gender that he or she was pre-disposed to, that would normally only fully reveal itself at the onset of puberty. While Dr. Money's theory was initially the more celebrated and accepted of the two, it seems today that he has been proven wrong by a relentless Dr. Diamond, who after years of publishing papers critical of Dr. Money's theory finally succeeded in debunking it.

Kewpie was not (as far as we know) intersexed, but born a man who quickly (his mother said as a small child already) showed himself to be homosexual. He did, however, come under the same pressure of having to act as one gender to be understood and accepted by his community. Anne Fausto-Sterling argues for the adoption of three more genders, bringing the total up to five, with addition to male and female, there would be the true hermaphrodite (with both male and female gonads), and male to female, female to male. While this is not yet accepted as truth in society at large, multiple genders outside of the male/female gender do exist as a way of life in various LGBTQI communities, as Kewpie and his contemporaries were an excellent example of. Today, it is hard to say if De Waterkant would have any of the same tolerance that District Six showed over 50 years ago. The homogenous idea of homosexuality exhibited in De Waterkant does not show much room for new adaptations of gender, but rather a more sterile view on homosexual life, with less room for interpretation. However, for those that fit in with De Waterkant's structuring of gay life I imagine the area to feel secure and welcoming.

De Waterkant, Vestimentary Codes & Commodified Urbanism

My starting point for understanding De Waterkant was therefore underlined by my assumption of De Waterkant as an area where queer people felt liberated and comfortable outside the heteronormativity of the city as whole. In its heyday, it was a place where you frequently saw all forms of visual expressions of non-heteronormative activity, such as hand holding and public displays of affection between LGBTQI people, as witnessed by myself through my many forays into the area. The area also cemented Cape Town's reputations as a pink holiday destination (Rink 2013 p.65), allowing for the sort of LGBTQI visitor who might frequent well known 'gay villages' such as Soho in London or Chelsea in New York City. These areas become places of the consumption of a new homonormative commodified urbanism, which is being embraced in gay villages on a global scale (Rink 2011 p.3). In this feast of consumption lies the obvious exclusion of any LGBTQI people that cannot compete with the rising costs of gay village living. This leads me to look at the exclusion of poorer LGBTQI people from the vision of safety that a gay village provides, and how such exclusion becomes apparent in the inability to consume the desired vestimentary products, thereby leaving the person outside of the group code.

De Waterkant felt safe for LGBTQI people, as one partygoer commented at Sliver nightclub in 2004:

"I know two guys that were beaten up for kissing at a petrol station, that big Woollies one over on Oranjestraat. At least here, you can make out with someone without fear of getting your face bashed in." (Phillip- 2004)

I remembered this statement on a more recent outing to De Waterkant, were I was curious to see if this sense of village safety was still predominant in the area. Here, a feeling of safety in numbers, of being protected by not being alone, was also reflected in a conversation I had a the nightclub Crew in Green Point, in December 2014:

(Sitting outside in the smoking section with my friend Jacques, talking to some young male adults)

Keraan: Guess how old I am?

Me: 18

Keraan: How did you know?!

(Keraan, as he introduced himself, is tall, wearing an ensemble of tight, white clothing, has a young face and speaks English with a thick, Afrikaans accent)

Me: You look pretty young

Keraan: Guess how old my friend is?

(I look at friend, again dressed in white, with a rather bewildered look on his face, which I take to mean he's far away from home)

Me: He looks 25

Friend: I am 25! I'm Johan, from Livingstone

Me: What are you guys up to tonight then?

Keraan: Agh, you know, I'm just visiting Cape Town over the holidays, I'm here with my fiancée, Simon, *(points to tall guy who looks like he's hardly in his 20's by the bar)* and then we bumped into Johann here and started chatting and it turns out he's from Livingstone! I used to live there! So yah, we've just been chatting. But what about you? You not from here are you? And you? *(pointing to Jacques, who looks bored)*

Me: No, I'm from Norway. I'm here to do research for my Master's degree.

Keraan: (says nothing)

Me: I'm writing about clothing and gay identity in Cape Town

Keraan & Simon: Oh!

Keraan: Well let me tell you right; about Cape Town you say? Well, I'm from Pretoria and let me tell you, it's not anything like here. There are gay clubs there but there is no area like this here, De Waterkant. Here everyone dresses so cool and they all look so good and they all just fit in here, you know? Lots of guys have been hitting on me… yoh. Simon gets upset but he knows I'd never do anything. We'll be together forever…

Me: Aren't you a bit young to be engaged maybe?

Keraan: Nah man, everyone says that, but we know it's true love. I mean, we've broken up lots of times so we know we really want to be together now.

Me: Sigh…

Keraan: But let me tell you, in Pretoria, everyone dresses to show off that they have money, right? They want people to see so they buy expensive labels and that, you know?

Me: Who's they?

Keraan: Agh, everyone man, it's all about the money there?

Me: In the 'gay scene' too?

Keraan: Yah, especially with the gays

Me: And you don't think it's the same in Cape Town?

Keraan: Nah, or yah, it is but it isn't you know? Cape Town people are just better at it I suppose..
Me: Better at what?
Keraan: I don't know, better at showing that they belong I guess..

Later, I bump into Johan again:

Me: So what's Livingstone like?
Johan: It's boring
Me: So you come to Cape Town to have fun?
Johan: Yah, it's different here. The scene is much bigger so you meet more people, and it's nice that you can just walk in-between the bars here.
Me: The gay scene?
Johan: Yeah, there's like a different sense of community or whatever
Me: You don't find that in Livingstone then?
Johan: Nah. I come down here for my holidays every year now. It feels like home, you know?
Me: And what do you think of all the people you meet here in De Waterkant?
Johan: Agh, they're all so nice, and you always meet someone cool. Everyone really looks after themselves here you know?

With Keraan again, much later in the evening:

Me: So why don't you move to Cape Town then, you seem to prefer it in Cape Town?
Keraan: Agh, I want to, I want to be an interior designer. I'm very good with colours and that. Simon is gonna introduce me to some of his contacts.
Me: So you'll make the move soon then?
Keraan: I don't know, what about my mom and that? Pretoria is not so bad if you know where to go, and stick to your area, you know?
Me: And what area is that?
Keraan: Agh, you know what I mean… Where it's safe. It's very dangerous up there.
Me: And do you think Cape Town is dangerous?
Keraan: Nah, I don't think so. You feel safe here, there's so many of us together that you feel protected, you know…?
(Keraan & Johan December 18th 2014)

"For gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender and other queers, as for other oppressed groups, this means seeking people, places, relationships and ways of being that provide the physical and emotional security, the wholeness as individuals and as collectives, and the solidarity that are denied us in the heterosexed world. (Knopp 2004, p.123)."

Perhaps then, this sense of needing protection, of feeling security within a larger group of like-minded people, enables a De Waterkant dweller to further attempt to fit in by adopting the well-rehearsed vestimentary code of that area. This would then lead said person to the local boutique's of the area, where a gay uniform of sorts is sold, enabling anyone to feel as if he is truly part of the 'gay culture' and vestimentary codes of De Waterkant. If the businesses of De Waterkant, and even the survival of this idea of a uniform gay culture, is reliant on the visibility of the men that adhere to it, then surely one of the biggest threats to the continuation of a gay village in De Waterkant is the rising popularity of smart phone hook-up apps such as Grindr and Tindr. While Grindr is strictly men only, Tindr was intended for heterosexual people but is now also frequently being used by gay men. Grindr simply works by allowing you to see pictures and chat to men that are in the same area as you, something the phone calculates through use of GPS. Tindr works on the same principle, but also allows users to quickly scroll through pictures of potential partners, by simply flicking the picture left if you're interested, right if you're not. While Tindr has some appeal to heterosexual people, homosexual men all-over quickly saw the appeal of Grindr as a quick and easy way to meet potential sexual partners. While there might be a few gay men who go on Grindr to look for romance, all gay men I have spoken to on the subject, both in South Africa and in Europe, use the app for sexual rendezvous, and rarely for potential romantic dates. In practice, what apps like Grindr do is allow men to circumvent the traditional hook-up places like bars, since they can find men on Grindr, then meet them in person in the comfort of their own homes. There is no point in denying the impact this has had on gay venues in the De Waterkant area, as one interviewee lamented:

"There used to be so much going on here. Any night of the week you could go here and meet someone. Either for drinks at one of the places that were always open, like Manhattan or The Bronx, or you could just go to the Hothouse[4], where you'd always meet someone fun. People interacted, went out into the street and met each other. In the summer months, De Waterkant was buzzing with the frenzied activity of hormones in overdrive. Now, everyone

4 The Hothouse is a gay sauna in the Green Point area of Cape Town

just sits at home and plays with their phones, having anonymous sex with strangers they meet online, and go to bed. It's a sad state of affairs really, sometimes it feels like the end of gay culture." (Andre- November 29th 2014)

If 'gay culture' continues to withdraw behind doors and screens, will it disappear completely or just go into a new phase of gay social life? Others I spoke to had a slightly different view on the matter. It seems several people feel that young, LGBTQI people are not attracted to De Waterkant area anymore, eschewing the idea of the homogeneous gay lifestyle that is on offer there. Rather young LGBTQI people in the Cape Town city centre go out to the bars and clubs that their heterosexual peers go to, showing that LGBTQI people in central Cape Town feel safe and accepted in the city. While this may be true to a certain extent, the gay venues that remain in De Waterkant are filled to the brim every weekend with both young and old. Like the young boys in Crew (See page 21), some still feel the need to be in an area that is more exclusively LGBTQI, still desiring the kind of gay village feeling that their slightly older counterparts did. This can be an inherit feeling of what gay life should be like, adopted from popular culture and literature, and perpetuated by places such as De Waterkant, and the people that frequent it.

In researching vestimentary codes among the gay men in De Waterkant, it has been difficult for me not to think of the idea of a "gay culture", not an all encompassing gay culture mind, but a De Waterkant gay culture; a truly homogenous idea of homosexuality, with a set dress code and perceived rules of behaviour (see p. 20). These often seem to be ideas that have been adopted from western, gay friendly cities, such as London, Sydney or San Francisco. As Meersman (2014) says, *"you can find an area like this in almost any Western city in the world"* (see also Tucker 2009 p.47). However, perhaps it would be interesting to look at those who view the lifestyle of De Waterkant as an entry to a different social standing, or social sphere, perhaps previously unattainable.

Diana Crane writes in *Fashion and its Social Agenda* (2000) of the distribution of clothing between the working, middle and upper classes of France, England and the United States. It seems clothing, far more so than any other consumer goods, is pivotal in creating a sense of self. Fashionable clothing was often the first thing requested of their relatives by newly arrived immigrants to the United States (Crane 2000 p.5). The right style of clothing was also one of the first purchases made by someone moving from

working class to middle class in England and France (ibid). This shows us that clothing can at least symbolically move someone up in social standing. While there needs to be some income to afford expensive fashions, there are those who are willing to funnel almost all their earnings into their apparel, to build a façade of finery, behind which perhaps a crumbling personal economy lies in ruins. If fashion only served to make a person "look-good" (a subjective matter if there ever was one), then it would not inspire the kind of hopes and desires in a person that makes them forgo eating, or paying rent, to acquire a desired garment. Examples of this could be seen in the 'Sapeurs' of the Congo, or indeed the 'Swenkas' in Johannesburg, fashionable men who invest all their assets in their clothing (Rønde 2004, Tamagni 2009). Fashionable clothing becomes a symbol for not just who a person is, but who they aspire to be, and in that lies the allure of the upmarket gay lifestyle on display at De Waterkant.

If we step back again here to have another look at Crane (2000) and Bourdieu (1979) we can further theorise about the seemingly fashionable lifestyle on display in De Waterkant. We hear from Diana Crane (2000- paraphrasing Bourdieu 1979) that:

"Cultural practises which include both knowledge of culture and critical abilities for assessing and appreciating it are acquired during childhood in the family and in the educational system and contribute to the reproduction of the existing social class structure (…) The social backgrounds and cultural practises of the middle and lower classes prevent them from fully assimilating the tastes of the upper middle class." (Crane 2000 p. 8)

In the view of Bourdieu then, one can never truly move up through the class system. Without the proper influences during childhood one can never fully understand the culture of a higher social standing than one's own. Bourdieu speaks of French society, which is certainly very different from that of South Africa. South Africa's elite was never aristocracy, but rather the 'classes' of South African society, divided by skin colour. Therefore, a poor white woodworker, for example, would still be considered superior to an affluent family of colour (there is a great example of this in the novel *Fiela's Child*, 1985, by Dalene Matthee). If we were to use Bourdieu's example of taste being the ultimate class divider, we would have to assume that all bad taste developed from the black South Africans as they were always considered the lowest class, and indeed that good taste came from the white South Africans being that they were always "upper class" to black South Africans, no matter their financial circumstances. This naturally

makes me question further use of Bourdieu's thoughts on taste in relation to South Africa.

We can also look at the social stratification within social groups in South Africa. Since the end of apartheid a black middle-class has developed, and a small number of white people have been downwardly mobile into a working class group (Seekings 2003 p.2). It has been argued that during apartheid the classes shifted from concerning race to following income, and that the white middle class stayed that way due to income, not skin colour (Seekings 2003 p.49). However, this still leaves the majority of black South Africans in the working class, or even lower, as unemployed. Going back to Bourdieu's theory on taste, we could apply the system within the social stratifications that developed within colour-separate class systems in South Africa. This would let us consider the development of taste to trickle down from top to bottom within separate spheres, thereby allowing for the cultural melting pot that is South Africa today. If there is such a thing as lower and upper class gay men in Cape Town, and if this (as is wanton in South Africa) is based mostly on the colour of their skin, then the working class (or "lower class") men were born out of social inequality and with the desire to at least symbolically move up in the class system. This would make it interesting to see if they are moving up within their own localised class system, or within one that is applicable to all of South Africans.

In his book *Fashion as Communication* (1996), Malcolm Barnard writes that fashion signals a desire to move up in social rank, while traditional clothes show a need for stability and an unwillingness to change. Use of a term such as 'traditional clothes' is wrought with controversy in South Africa. What is traditional, to whom and where, differs vastly across the country, thereby creating a chasm between the various definitions of tradition and traditional dress. However, in the context of theoretical literature, traditional clothing seems to mean the clothing worn by Africans before they were influenced by Western cloth. However, in wishing to be socially upwardly mobile, working class gay men may wish to adopt the uniform of their more wealthy counterparts in De Waterkant, but do not necessarily have traditional dress to shed in doing so. Rather, they wish to rid themselves of the clothing that exists as a representation of their social standing, clothing that isn't of the right style, doesn't have the right cut or the right labels.

In moving away from not just the 'traditional clothes' of the working class (as mentioned above), upwardly mobile, working class gay men show a desire to shed their everyday existence in favour of something deemed more desirable. The battle between traditional and European dress has been raging in Africa since the arrival of the Europeans, so perhaps then it is better to further investigate the intricate power struggles, which can be reflected through fashions in South Africa, and how even victims can glamorise the past. The men of De Waterkant dress homogenously, and without any allusion to their African identity in a pre-colonial sense, if we say that an anomaly such as African dress exists. For any person to blend in with their vestimentary code, to become part of De Waterkant's gay village, monetary funds are of the utmost significance, as it enables the person to participate in this particular expression of gay life.

However, while the outward appearance of De Waterkant is that of a homogenous, up-market gay lifestyle, the area has not completely lost touch with the expression of queer identity through performance. While some strive for trend perfection, others go the other way, eschewing the vestimentary code of the area in favour of their own expressions. In previous years, there was a thriving drag scene in De Waterkant, centring on bars such as Bubbles Bar. Drag queens would also make appearances at hot spots such as Crew bar, and were an important part of De Waterkant's image. Today, most drag performances in De Waterkant have moved to the restaurant Beefcakes, where two performances of queer culture happen simultaneously. Beefcakes is a burger restaurant that plates up ideas of camp and drag, and sells it to an often mainly heterosexual audience. The waiters working at Beefcakes wear the gay uniform of De Waterkant, with tight, white tank tops and shorts, and are hired specifically for their sexual appeal. Hamburgers come with catchy names such as "Buffy The Hamburger Slayer", "Hawaiian Hunk" And "Muscle Mary" and Beefcakes is frequented by an inordinate amount of bachelorette parties. As entertainment, Beefcakes has drag performances by Cape Town performers such Mary Scary. Here the various approaches to performing queer identity become apparent in the variety of their methods. On the one hand Beefcakes promotes itself as a venue for a homosexual clientele, but the reality is that there is a majority of heterosexual customers frequenting the establishment, as voyeurs of sorts, wishing to witness 'homosexual spectacle' first hand. Not just through the various drag performers, but also through the interaction between the gay men that supposedly frequent Beefcakes. However, as numerous screeching hen parties moved in, the gay clientele moved out, wanting nothing to do with being part of someone's evening entertainment.

In the vastness of possible approaches to LGBTQI identity expression, drag has a long history as being both controversial and capable of uniting (Chetty 1995 p.116). As seen with Kewpie, a gay man that can be identified as a woman seems less threatening since as a woman the gender is understood in a heteronormative context. While Kewpie could be identified as a woman in his day-to-day life, that is rarely the goal of drag performers, or drag queens. Here, women's clothing and make up is used to create an illusion of a caricature of femininity. A drag queen does not wish to pass as a woman, but rather be more woman than a woman, taking female appearance and behaviour to its absolute limit (*Kewpie- A Normal Daughter* 1997). This can also be done in so-called trash drag, where performers keep some male attributes visible, such as facial or body hair, or un-tucked male genitalia (the process where a drag queen hides his male genitalia by folding or "tucking" the penis and testicles inwards). By keeping symbols of masculinity visible while appropriating female attire, these drag queens keep the audience in a state of confusion thereby making it harder for them to be classified according to gender, thus creating a sense of discomfort. Kewpie might have sat more on the border of transsexualism or transgenderism if we consider Fausto-Sterling's (2000 p.107) thoughts on the matter:

"Within the past ten to twenty years, however, the edifice of transsexual dualism has developed large cracks. Some transsexual organizations have begun to support the concept of transgenderism, which constitutes a more radical re-visioning of sex and gender. Whereas traditional transsexuals might describe a male transvestite—a man dressing in women's clothing—as a transsexual on the road to becoming a complete female, transgenderists accept "kinship among those with gender-variant identities. Transgenderism supplants the dichotomy of transsexual and transvestite with a concept of continuity." Earlier generations of transsexuals did not want to depart from gender norms, but rather to blend totally into their new gender role. Today, however, many argue that they need to come out as transsexuals, permanently assuming a transsexual identity that is neither male nor female in the traditional sense."

Drag queens, however, need not identify with the various trans-isms as they generally adopt female attire to entertain, not to change their own gender irrevocably. Most drag queens are perfectly happy as gay men, although a few use drag as a stepping-stone towards revealing themselves as transgender. If we look at Simone de Beauvior's (1949) claim that 'one is not born a woman but becomes one', then the mannerisms and

outward appearances we (as a society) deem to be female can be adopted by anyone. Allowing for the exaggerated characteristics of females in drag, gives us the opportunity to break down the barriers to what is deemed female in the first place. By playing 'gender tricks' (Butler 2004) on an audience, drag queens allow us to celebrate an unrealistic approach to femininity, which lets us toy with our perceptions of what it means to be female in this world. This leads us to the performance of gender, both as how gender is performative in day-to-day life, and how gender is more literally performed in the context of drag queens. If we first look at the performance of gender and the performativity of queerness in regards to gender in the area of De Waterkant, we can look to Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (2004). Butler believes that gender performance is rooted in the heterosexual, and two-gender system that systemizes what we think of gender performativity. A gender performance that relies on gender being understood as simply two-fold, can never represent a true analysis of the performance of queer, because the performance is then wrongly understood in a heterosexual context. This supports the claim that understanding male queerness by assigning the queer male the feminine gender, does not fully comprehend the complexity of queer performativity. In other words, it can be deemed easier, or more approachable, to categorize queerness as feminine, as a commonly accepted gender. What this does is remove agency from those LGBTQI people who do not wish to play along with gender conformity.

I believe that the gender conformity that occurs in De Waterkant happens in between or as a part of the queer performativity of the actors that comprise the community of De Waterkant. In some ways this could mean that pressure does not come from the mainly heterosexual communities surrounding the neighborhood, but from the actors in the area themselves, conforming to a one-sided or un-nuanced 'gay lifestyle' and in doing so pressuring others to conform as well. This is also influenced by the gentrification of the district, and the continued selling of an up-market lifestyle, that leave little room for queerness performed outside of the neighborhood's accepted image.

I turn to Andrew Tucker's work on gay lives in Cape Town: *Queer Visibilities: Space, Identity and Interaction in Cape Town* (2009). Here, Tucker emphasizes the socio-economical differences of queer people in the Cape Town area, and underlines his own

frustration with research mostly being focused on those who are of a middle class background. Tucker feels that most research focuses solely on this because it is the 'gay culture' of South Africa that most easily corresponds with that of Western countries, meaning that Western queer theory is easily applicable.

Firstly, one must note that Andrew Tucker uses queer as a term covering all men that identify as something other than heterosexual. By referring to 'queer men', Tucker could mean bi-sexual, homosexual, transgender etc. The distinctions are not important to the discussion, according to Tucker, because they all face the same challenges and day to day problems and discriminations, and because the gay marriage laws of 2006 enables all men to marry each other, sexual identification notwithstanding (p.2). For the purpose of this discussion, I will use the term queer as Tucker does.

"If heteronormativity is viewed not as a monolithic entity, but as a type of regulative power dependent on other structures in society, then the options to over- come it must also depend on the factors that initially affect it. In Cape Town this means that queer visibilities will be strongly affected by the way apartheid's racial classifications impacted on different communities in different ways." (p.3)

In his introduction, Tucker highlights how apartheid and discrimination based on race have left South Africa with a deeply fractured queer community. Tucker points out the fact that anti-discrimination acts and gay marriage laws only benefit a few in the queer community, the mainly white and middle class queer men who have the education and disposable income to fully utilize their rights. However, Tucker asserts that his is the first writing to properly deal with this divide (p.3), forgetting, I believe, that the South African consciousness has long since accepted this divide as a truth, and have rallied against it with varying degrees of success. In criticizing the affluent, mostly white, queer male community that sprung up around Green Point in Cape Town after 1994, for not being inclusive enough, isn't he simply emphasizing a long standing debate in socially conscious discussion in South Africa, which is 'why aren't the rich doing more for the poor?'

Further on, Tucker looks at justification for focusing on Cape Town for this research, saying:

'A key justification for focusing on Cape Town rather than any other South African city is therefore the sheer disparity between popular representation of the city in relation to its liberated 'gay community' and the shocking reality for most of the queers who call it their home.' (p.26)

While it is indeed true that when Cape Town markets itself as a 'pink destination', and that it does so by focusing on the more affluent gay communities, it is not unique to the LGBTQI communities of Cape Town. In this respect I mean that Cape Town in general, markets itself as a safe, beautiful and friendly city. You rarely see pictures of the poorer townships and extreme poverty in travel catalogues, unless it is to promote so-called 'township tours'. There is therefore a disparity between the popular representation of Cape Town, and the 'shocking' reality for many of its citizens. While I understand why Tucker underlines the queer community in this context – this is after all what his work is focused on – I believe it becomes unfair to imply that the affluent queer community is perpetuating this illusion any more than any other affluent communities is Cape Town. Also, by saying that most queers who call Cape Town home live in a 'shocking reality', is taking away agency from these people, and in a sense lumping them all together in a sort of imagined miserable poverty. While I in no way wish to diminish the suffering that poverty and discrimination brings, I do know that many queer people in poorer areas in Cape Town can lead, and have led happy and fulfilling lives. Tucker here wishes to easily categorize his research subjects in to categories like rich or poor, and I would have to strongly disagree.

In negotiating a space for themselves, Tucker claims that the white queer male community in Cape Town in essence replicated the previous years of apartheid, when homosexuality was illegal, by grouping themselves together in a homogenous community such as De Waterkant in Greenpoint. (p.46). While being free to mingle in society without fear of being prosecuted, Tucker argues that the men's decision to create a queer community comes from ingrained fear of prosecution that no measure of law changing could alter. Tucker's description of the De Waterkant area in Greenpoint is no longer accurate. His book was published in 2009, when the area was still heaving with gay nightspots and attracted queer men from all over the world. These days, De Waterkant has less of an impact with fewer LGBTQI directed establishments, as I've discussed previously. Tucker says:

In any community where same-sex desire is seen as 'a means of personal identification', then some reason must exist as to why identification should occur because of it. In other words, there must be some understanding of dissimilarity (Tucker 2009 p.11).

The self-identification as homosexual may lead many men to De Waterkant. For these men to feel that they must group together, there must be a feeling among them that they differ from those men that do not frequent De Waterkant. This feeling of dissimilarity must come from somewhere, in the self-identification process that occurs throughout one's life. Tucker further claims that these ideas of gay, or queer, identity develops while anchored in thoughts about 'the closet' (p.12). 'The Closet', is hardcoded in gay identity in that, in one way or another, every gay life springs from it. As long as society assumes that a person is heterosexual, LGBTQI people must therefore reveal themselves to be non-heteronormative at some stage in their life. The period before this reveal will be referred to as 'being in the closet', a time in a LGBTQI person's life where they did not feel they could act out their sexuality in anyway. This undoubtedly has an impact on the forming of the identity of self. In reflecting on his own early childhood, one interviewee said:

"When I was still very young I became aware of something intrinsic, something all me and deep and present and terrifyingly wicked and shameful that set me apart from other people. Of course, I had no idea what it was and even if I had an inkling, I had no language with which to pronounce upon the spectre a name, and even if I had a sense of what that name might be, I had neither the courage nor the will at age eight to speak it. The awareness, such as it was, came at that time from other people, older people; forces and feelings outside of my own juvenile, crumbly and absolutely inarticulable sense of it. The whispered suspicions of aunties overheard in the parlour; the reproach-laden jokes the men made about all the girls I would charm one day and getting too old to hang around the women so much; my mother, who made all our clothes herself back then, anxiously avoiding certain colours when dressing me, even when I'd asked for them. Where previously we'd been allowed to pick, there was now a strict code of blues, greys and yellows being enforced. She, like all the adults in my life at that time, had started to exhibit signs of unease around me, which I felt acutely but couldn't comprehend. I felt I'd done something wrong; that their waning affection was somehow punitive – you can imagine for yourself what that might be like for a little kid. You started feeling like the grown-ups didn't like you, didn't love you, that perhaps they even hated you. What was actually going on was that I was sensing the discomfort caused when adults are presented with the

conflicting phenomenon of the innocent and unaware but effeminate and obviously-gonna-turn-out-fruity gay boy-child. And so the seeds of a lifelong, malignant, approval-seeking, overly sensitive self-awareness were planted." (Donovan- January 12th 2015)

A sense, at such an early age, of nameless dread, the feeling of being somehow different without knowing why, must influence that child in many ways as he grows up. As a child, this subject did not yet have the words, or even the understanding, to be able to identify himself as being dissimilar from his peers. The first insight the child gets of his own sexuality is that it frightens and repels others, grown-ups such as parents or teachers who perhaps understand the child better than the child does himself, but do not know how to handle the situation, preferring to casually steer the child away from colors or toys thought of as feminine.

In dealing with questions of LGBTQI identity, many parallels can be drawn to feminist writing on female identity. For example, Judith Butler (Gender Trouble 1990), points to the use of a masculine vocabulary as a way of hindering the development of female identity (p.18). This can be reflected on in relation to LGBTQI people as language that often lacks positive terms for self-identification among non-heteronormative people, especially in the context of male to female and female to male transsexuals, who must deal with terms such as *she-male* and *shim* (Tucker 2009 p. 89) in description of their gender. In the face of a deficient vocabulary, LGBTQI people often utilize languages of their own invention, thick with slang and innuendo that only the informed could understand fully. Before returning to the presence of vestimentary codes, and how vestimentary rules could work as a substitute for identification through language, I would like to look at the development of gay-slang and language, especially in relation to clothing and appearance.

South Africa does in fact have a unique history with gay slang as a language, in the form of Gayle. 'Gayle' developed as a '*moffietaal*' within the coloured drag community in Cape Town in the 1950's. "*Moffietaal"* means homosexual language, a gay argot language or 'lavender lexicon' as it's more commonly known, which became popular within Afrikaans and English speaking gay communities in urban areas of South Africa. The Bantu alternative to Gayle is *IsiNgqumo,* which is believed to have originated in South Africa in the early 1980's. Gayle simply uses women's names in replacement for words, such as Priscilla = Police, Vera = Vomit, Nora = Miserable, Beulah = Beautiful (Cage 2003 p.19). What Gayle did, as all argot languages do, was enable its users to express

themselves in a way that would not be understood by outsiders, thereby strengthening the bond between members of an oppressed community. The humor and 'camp' factor of Gayle must not be underestimated either in a community that highly praises wit and oral ability. The use of Gayle can be seen as utilizing a code language to maintain a level of not just secrecy, but also inclusion/exclusion of those that were, or were not, in on the joke. We see a correlation between lavender lexicons and gay vestimetary codes.
Gayle developed around the same time Kewpie and his contemporaries were situated in District Six, and was popularized by Kewpie and his friends. It was, and still is, common among some gay men (mostly those that identify as queens, or effeminate) to use female names for each other, mostly in jest.

While De Waterkant might be seen by some as a hub for gay life in Cape Town, there are events on the annual LGBTQI calendar that are seen as highlights of the year by some participants. These take place outside, and in, De Waterkant, and I chose to observe and participate at those in the upcoming chapters, while also conducting interviews with those involved. From this I gained further insight into the prevailing thoughts on vestimentary codes and identities among gay men in Cape Town.

Chapter 2- Cape Town Pride and the struggle for diversity

Figure 7: Author with fellow revellers at Cape Town Pride 2015. Photo by Phillip.

Pride marches emerged in North America when a new visibility for LGBTQI people surfaced. After the Stonewall riots occurred in New York, the very first Pride march happened in 1970 in commemoration of that event (Edsall 2003, Gevisser & Cameron 1995 p.34). As the next decades passed, several other gay friendly locations around the world followed suit, most notably cities like San Francisco and Amsterdam. They offered a new kind of open lifestyle to LGBTQI people. For South Africa, the new age of democracy heralded the opportunity for a new, queer visibility for LGBTQI people in the country. Taking their cue from the many western countries with established LGBTQI Pride events (such as the United States, United Kingdom, Germany and Australia), organisers in Johannesburg put on South Africa's first LGBTQI Pride parade in 1990 and Cape Town followed with their first Pride parade in 1993. The two cities, plus the various other South African cities that started their own LGBTQI Pride celebrations (including Durban and the province Mpumalanga) quickly deviated in how LGBTQI Pride parades were celebrated (GALA website accessed April 4th 2015). Johannesburg took a more political approach to Pride, eventually sparking frustration in some LGBTQI

people of the greater Johannesburg area, leading to the start of Soweto Pride. This I deal with in the chapter on Soweto Pride.

Cape Town‘s reputation as a LGBTQI tourist destination influenced Pride early on. In 2003 the city moved its Pride event to the following February in an attempt to cash in on the height of tourist season, when many LGBTQI visitors are in the city. Cape Town LGBTQI Pride has been celebrated in February ever since. With this move Cape Town continued to assert itself as South Africa’s main LGBTQI destination (Tucker 2009 p. 49). Focusing, as it did, on monetary gains and an increased promotional direction, Cape Town LGBTQI Pride tied itself in with promoters, bars, clubs, restaurants and other LGBTQI friendly businesses in the Green Point/De Waterkant neighbourhoods of Cape Town. In the early 2000’s, the Cape Town LGBTQI Pride parade was associated with the businesses of Green Point to such an extent that a fee was charged for entry to the “parade”. It was essentially a block party covering all the major venues in the area. This was a week-long event termed “Pride week”, where almost all the events were conditional to an entrance fee. As a result, it negated much of the political aspects of LGBTQI Pride in favour of a profitable income. It seems clear that at this point that Cape Town LGBTQI Pride was little more than an event to garner income for the various establishments involved, leading to the continued commodification of gay lives in Cape Town (Tucker 2009, p. 176).

What does this mean in the larger context of the various socio-economic backgrounds of LGBTQI people in Cape Town? Did this close the circle around those that could afford entrance fees and costly drinks, and also adhere to any vestimentary codes? As seen in my writings on De Waterkant, that milieu is rather firmly set in social and visual codes that the actors on the scene of De Waterkant play out in accordance. Therefore, one can conclude that Cape Town’s LGBTQI Pride was in the early 2000’s just an extension of the LGBTQI lives that revolved around De Waterkant. This would imply that the LGBTQI Pride of that time was not inclusive to those LGBTQI Capetonians who did not possess the funds to join in the celebration. This shows the dual aspects of Pride, firstly as a political event that encourages discussions on LGBTQI rights outside of its normal sphere (in that Pride marches often carry the marchers away from the normal enclave of ‘gay villages’ and into the city itself, such as Cape Town Pride Parade going through various parts of the city). Pride’s other side is financial, where organisers, promoters and advertisers clamour to get a piece of the ‘pink rand’. Through this commodification of gay Pride a continued strain is placed on participants to fit in with the image of

homosexuality that surrounds them. Meaning, that if one wishes to be a "successful homosexual", one must fit in with the representations of what gay lives present. As Pride events can carry participants out of the enclaves of "gay-villages", it is an opportunity to interact with spectators that do not normally attend LGBTQI events. In that interaction however comes the potential for spectacle; when acted out in a hetero-normative city space there is the inherent danger of turning its participants into figures of amusement, as shown by Lynda Johnston's (2005) work, *Queering tourism: paradoxical performances of gay Pride parades*. In it, Johnston points to the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade, attracting over a million visitors a year, as an example of the spectacle of Pride, when she says: "The spectacle of bodies on parade for tourists to 'gaze' at…" (p.9). She points out that the spectators at the Sydney Mardi Gras are often heterosexual people, observing Mardi Gras as a carnival or spectacle without paying much attention to its roots in political protest. The costumed participants of the world's various Pride parades therefore face the potential problem of being taken simply as either mere merriment, or more sinisterly, as a freak-show. In expressing their sexuality through clothing the Pride participants are relying on a crowd to read their costumes in the way they intended, something that isn't always possible in a mixed city crowd of spectators. The Cape Town based writer, Brett Meersman (2014) describes the looks of the various participants of the Mardi Gras parade:

" Next were the dykes on bikes, about a hundred lesbians, some topless with pierced nipples, some helmeted like Roman centurions, astride their blindingly chromed and deafening Harley-Davidsons. A long procession of rather tacky floats covered the full range from the mundane to the definitively ridiculous: the bearded and sagging Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a truckload of Jewish princesses, and a witty spoof on the movie Grease titled 'Lube'. To my surprise, there was also a group of black lesbians from Soweto" (p. 177)

The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade is not only different from the Cape Town Pride parade in size, but also in its policy. The focal point of Mardi Gras is the spectacle of the parade rather than political consciousness according to Meersman (2014) and Johnston (2005). In Cape Town, the political aspect of Pride is still apparent in the current attitude to Pride; as a way of letting disenfranchised voices be heard. However, the participants of Cape Town Pride look to the Sydney Mardi Gras for inspiration, as one interviewee told me:

"The Sydney Mardi Gras is like the Holy Grail of gay Pride, well that, and Amsterdam Pride I suppose. In San Francisco there's the Folsom Street Fair[5] that stands out. But the Mardi Gras is just seen as the most colourful, the most fun, the most hectic party around, it's so huge! When we make floats for (Cape Town) Pride, we always look at photos from Mardi Gras for inspiration" (anonymous 8 February 28th 2015)

Here we see that the Sydney Mardi Gras is looked to for visual inspiration by a smaller event such as Cape Town Pride. The annual revenue of Sydney Mardi Gras is over 30 million dollars, and it is listed as one of the main tourist draws in Australia.[6] This means that the Sydney Mardi Gras has a financial responsibility and associations with various Australian tourist organisations. As Lydia Johnston (2005) pointed out, in tourism promotion it is the spectacle of Pride that is seen as the major draw card, and this vision of spectacle is sold to draw in tourist from home and abroad. This is not to say that the Mardi Gras is without political opinion, but rather that perhaps in an effort to draw in the crowd it focuses more on party than politics. It may be that the gays and lesbians of Australia, and those that can fund a visit do not feel the need for political protest in a country like Australia. It might also be that they feel the visibility of LGBTQI people during Mardi Gras is a form of protest in itself. Said one gay man I met who attended the Sydney Mardi Gras:

"It was crazy. So many people! Colours and glitter and feathers and shouting and dancing. The whole thing is a blur really. Did it feel political? No, not really. But it was fun!" (anonymous 9 February 28th 2015)

Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras and Cape Town LGBTQI Pride are two events founded on the same idea, but that have taken off in slightly different directions, due in large part to the circumstances surrounding the people of each city. Is the potential for spectacle the same? In the continued push of Cape Town as a pink destination, Cape Town Pride is sold as part of that package, rather than as a recommendable event for heterosexual visitors. Through online searches and guidebooks, I found no mention of Cape Town Pride as an event recommended for mainstream visitors to Cape Town. One only finds mention of it in gay travel literature (see Lonely Planet 2008 guide to South Africa, The Rough Guide to Cape Town 2014). The smaller size of Cape Town's Pride event, and the

[5] The Folsom Street Fair is an annual leather and BDSM street fair held in San Francisco, attended by 400,000 people each year.
[6] http://www.mardigras.org.au

various changes the set-up of the parade has gone through in the previous years might have hindered its evolution into a tourist friendly spectacle. Whether this will still happen remains to be seen. What this means then is that Cape Town Pride remains an event catering mainly for LGBTQI people in the Western Cape, however, leading back to the question of the various socio-economic backgrounds of LGBTQI people in Cape Town, and in what ways some remain excluded from events they do not possess the funds to engage in. Furthermore, many feel excluded from Pride because it is seen as a mainly gay, white, male event, where the voices of disenfranchised LGBTQI people are not heard (De Waal & Manion 2006 p.9).

The Cape Town Pride of 2015 set out with the theme of Khumbulani, meaning to remember in Xhosa. This was done to highlight the plight of many disenfranchised black LGBTQI people who suffer for their sexuality, in particular black lesbians who daily live with the threat of corrective rape. This theme is a departure from the previous years of less political activity from the people behind Cape Town Pride, and may be the result of new management behind the event. However, if we look at how various LGBTQI organisations have attempted to manage the complicated differences between LGBTQI people in Cape Town, we see that many have struggled to be inclusive.

The Triangle Project began in the 1980's when a group of white, gay men started coming together for reasons of social support (Tucker 2009 p. 162). While the project was successful in this context, it had a harder time reaching out to gay men living in the Cape Flats, as its offices were situated towards the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town (Observatory/Mowbray to be exact). After opening an office in Gugulethu (part of the Cape Flats, inhabited almost exclusively by black South Africans) the Triangle Project attempted to bring HIV/AIDS counselling and other projects to the township. However, they soon found that the same way of operating did not work in their new office. An organisation that was run by white, gay men did not necessarily have the right social understanding that could be transferred to a township where social interaction and rules were very different from the city suburbs. According to Tucker (p.165), a new approach to counselling had to be developed in order to engage LGBTQI people in Gugulethu and other townships in the area, involving the local community and engaging local leaders in its work, very different from the preferred anonymous offices of The Triangle Project in the southern suburbs. This sits as one of many examples of the difficulties faced in developing any unanimous projects or events in the Cape Town larger area meant to appeal to LGBTQI people of various backgrounds. While I continue

in this work to focus on the more affluent inner city gay spaces in my attempt to prove the strict vestimentary codes that abound there, it is constantly worth noting the fractures in any comparisons of gay lives in Cape Town. The socio-economical differences that occur means that by focusing on one group of gay men, you by default ignore another. While people like Andrew Tucker (2009) uses his work to focus on the differences that are there, I chose to accept those differences as inherent in the current social circumstances, and continue to search for vestimentary codes among those that frequent certain areas of the city.

Cape Town Pride has since its conception in 1993 (De Waal & Manion 2006 p.6), started and ended its festivities in the Green Point area of Cape Town. When I attended the march in 2005 it was at its biggest yet, and participants marched from a meeting point near the Green Point stadium and stretched up as far as Long Street, down Loop Street and back again, covering much of the inner city. Traffic was closed off for cars along the route, and people cheered from the many bars and backpacker hostels lining Long Street. The atmosphere was festive and celebratory; it felt like the city was joining in on the party. The political element of the event was conducted with a few brief speeches back outside the Green Point stadium, and then the participants disappeared off to one of the many bars of De Waterkant/Green Point for a well-deserved drink in the heat. It was not, perhaps, a LGBTQI Pride event that felt revolutionary in any way, but it seemed to me (and those I spoke to) that both participants and the watching crowd enjoyed themselves. The gay couple I attended the march with both claimed to have enjoyed an entertaining event, and did not seem perturbed by the political aspect of the event that occurred. Already in 2005, and more so in recent years, the popularity of Pride was in decline among young LGBTQI people in Cape Town. The mainly white and middle class LGBTQI people that would attend Pride did perhaps not feel they had much to protest anymore, and around the time of Gay Pride 2010, no-one I spoke to wished to attend. It was deemed “sad” and “old school”, due to recent years’ lack of participants and poor organisation by the people in charge according to these accounts. This lethargic approach to Pride by the younger LGBTQI people of Cape Town seemed to stay in place until 2012 but with the public outrage at the treatment of LGBTQI people in Uganda (the proposed “Kill the gays” bill), it sparked renewed interest in LGBTQI Pride. The LGBTQI community in South Africa celebrated their freedom and protest for those that don’t have those freedoms through the event. At the time of Pride 2012, that was the sentiment on social media, and among acquaintances I had in Cape Town at the time. Also through social media and the internet, young LGBTQI Capetonians gained access to

information from other Pride events in South Africa, such as Soweto Pride, and saw that Pride could have an important function and not just be *"frumpy old queens on a barge"* (an acquaintance about Pride, 2010).

In the next chapter I will discuss Soweto Pride 2014, but for now we will stay in Cape Town, where the city's approach to LGBTQI events is very different from the more political stance of Soweto Pride.

LGBTQI Bodies & a Pride Divided

While Cape Town has for years been known as the 'pink capital of Africa' (Rink 2013), this has been heavily reliant on the white and coloured LGBTQI communities, and largely excluded the black LGBTQI people of the Western Cape. This can be traced back to the apartheid years, and the separation of cultures that the government imposed on its people (Hoad et al. 2005 p.17). Today, the divisions among the LGBTQI communities are primarily the result of economic factors. For disenfranchised LGBTQI people, the events and clubs that cater to them in Cape Town will be inaccessible due to the expense. As has happened in previous years, when Cape Town Pride charges admission for most of its events, it excludes those for whom the expense is unmanageable, making Pride more about commercial concerns and less about political protest. This mode of operation has been met with less protest in Cape Town than it was in Johannesburg, cementing Cape Town's reputation as having the less politically active citizens of the two cities. The socio-economic aspect of De Waterkant's gay and upmarket lifestyle promotion has been discussed in the previous chapter, but it is still of value here as Cape Town LGBTQI Pride has been held in Green Point since its conception. Therefore the same social and economic factors that influence the gay lives there will affect Pride and its satellite events.

For almost all the men I spoke to, there was a clear understanding of the privilege of the gay Capetonians who attended events in Green Point and De Waterkant, and frequented other gay hot-spots, such as Clifton 3rd beach. These are more often than not men who can afford to buy into the aforementioned "gay lifestyle", and therefore have no problem with fitting in the worldwide homogeneous idea of what gay life should look like. In *80 Gays Around the World*, Capetonian based writer Brent Meersman explores his encounters with other gay men as he travels the globe, and compares what it means to be gay in various corners of the world with what it means in Cape Town. In the introduction he writes about Cape Town's infamous gay beach, Clifton 3rd:

"It is a postcard for the country's human rights based constitution; black and white, straight and gay, young and old, male and female, all peacefully luxuriating in natural beauty. We are celebrating and no longer protesting. Yet there is another side; the majority of queer men in South Africa are black and living below the poverty line. Victimised by ignorance, cultural chauvinism and religious prejudice as bad as the naked racism of apartheid, they are unable to assert their rights" (Meersman 2014 P.16)

Any trip to Clifton 3rd beach today will reveal the naivety of Meersman's (2014) claims. After several trips to the beach the picture remained the same; mainly white, muscular men tanning alongside the tourists. That is not to imply that not everyone would be welcome on this beach, rather that not everyone goes. The visitors are rarely black, rarely old. As Meersman (2014) says that the majority of queer men in South Africa are black and living below the property line, he admits knowledge of the unlikelihood of finding these men on a beach in a very up-market neighbourhood of Cape Town. Meersman (2014) is not an academic, however he is a well-known gay writer in Cape Town, one who has been around the "scene" for many years and therefore I take him to be representative of other gay men of his socio-economic background. The views Meersman (2014) expresses in his book were confirmed to me by the other gay men I spoke to in the De Waterkant area. In wanting to present his city (Cape Town) as at least having some of the postcard perfect attributes of a racially impartial city, Meersman (2014) paints a rosy picture of Clifton 3rd beach. While everyone in South Africa has the right to be on Clifton 3rd beach, or any other beach for that matter, the reality is that not everyone has the economic means to act on this right. Yet even if this weren't the case, another question remains: would gay men from the Cape Flats (for example) necessarily want to partake in the social interaction of Clifton 3rd beach, De Waterkant, or even Cape Town Pride?

In relation to Cape Town Pride, this previous matter is relevant in that what is true on Clifton 3rd beach is also true at Cape Town Pride. While anyone is welcome at any Pride event, the socio-economic situation of many impedes them from attending. The political relevance of LGBTQI Pride in Cape Town saw a revival in 2006, when the Pride Parade was moved from the streets of central Cape Town, to the township Khayelitsha on the Cape Flats. Two weeks before the parade, a young woman named Zoliswa Nkonyana was stabbed, stoned, and beaten to death for admitting that she was a lesbian (Williams 2008 P. 59). This attack underpinned the ongoing violence against women in South Africa, and LGBTQI people, and therefore filled the following week's Pride parade with a political purpose not seen in years. As the Cape Town Pride events attract many foreign tourists each year, the Khayelitsha Pride of 2006 would be the first opportunity for many visitors to see a different side of gay life in Cape Town. However, the year before, in 2005, organisers of Cape Town Pride had put together a Gay shebeen tour (Williams 2008 p.62), shebeens being unlicensed bars that operate in the townships surrounding Cape Town. As a participant observer on one of these trips, Jill R. Williams (2008) noted

that many of the attendants were white gay males from Cape Town, having never been to the townships that were almost on their doorstep. This emphasises the gulf that can exists between various communities of LGBTQI people living in the Cape Town area. In visiting a gay shebeen in a township, the men from Cape Town were showing an interest in the gay lives lived outside of their own gay village enclaves, but there is also a sense of voyeurism. In accessing this gay shebeen through a guided tour the participants tacitly acknowledged that under normal circumstances they would not feel comfortable or safe enough to visit the area. They were not without their reasons for feeling trepidatious about entering a township shebeen on their own, as violent crime is an ever-present reality on the Cape Flats. Few white South Africans (whether they be young or old, gay or straight, male or female) had ever entered any of the Cape Town adjacent townships of their own accord. However, many expressed interest and had a desire to be able to interact with the people and visit these areas, but were sceptical of the many township tours on offer, as they felt it seemed too voyeuristic, engaging in what one observer called a *"poverty tour"* (Williams 2008 p.64).

Cape Town Pride moved back to the city centre after one year in Khayelitsha, once again taking a step away from politics in preference of a more festival orientated ethos. Taking Pride back to Cape Town and Green Point meant returning it to the gay village, an area believed to represent freedom of expressions of sexual identity.

While some appear cynical about the way gay culture has been commodified and represented in places like West Hollywood, Castro in San Francisco or Canal Street in Manchester, for many others these are spaces which play an important role in staking a visible claim to full sexual citizenship – these often centre on an upper- class, white notion of cosmopolitanism and sexual openness (Hubbard 2001 p.61).

The visibility of LGBTQI people then seems to be reliant on representatives of upper class, mainly white gay men, which cannot be truly representative of Cape Town as a whole. This would also mean that the visual representation of LGBTQI people at Pride is innately one-sided, leading back to the fixation on outward appearances inherent in the "gay culture" of De Waterkant. To consider Brett Meersman (2014) again, he includes several allusions to his frustrations with the superficiality of Cape Town's homosexuals in his book. Also, throughout the book, Meersman (2014) remains slightly critical of the consumerist and also the body-fixated side of "gay culture" (a term he vehemently

abhors) (P.16), something that becomes particularly apparent in his chapter on the Sydney Mardi Gras (p. 176):

"The restaurant was packed. My chair kept getting bumped by beefcake. They had come from all over the world. A decade ago, gay bodies didn't look like this, packaged and pumped up through weight training, anabolic steroids, ergogenic protein supplements, anti-catabolic hormones, and in extreme cases silicon calf and pectoral implants. It was a celebration of dysmorphia; the opposite of female anorexia: these men who could simply never be big enough, not until every muscle was tumescent, the veins visibly engorged, their bodies hard, until they looked like swollen cocks ready for phallic worship. "

Meersman's (2014) description of these gay bodies is not without its problems. What he describes as others' body obsessions end up sounding like his own. However, the fixation on body culture among gay men is blatantly visible at any gay bar in De Waterkant, or even the Cape Town Pride Parade. During a visit to an establishment in De Waterkant, I observed a room divided. To one side sat the slightly older gay men, dressed beautifully in silk shirts and perfectly ironed shorts, while on the other stood a group of young, thoroughly muscular guys. The older men shot the younger guys furtive looks, while the younger group would flex their muscles at other men of a similar appearance, completely ignoring the older men. However, as the night progressed, it became clear that most of these fit younger men were quite willing to pair up with the older guys, in exchange for a drink or two. So goes the age-old trade of beauty for money, however, the body worship among gay men does not just stretch to monetary compensation. Almost every gay male I spoke to mentioned the intense pressure they felt to be extremely fit and look attractive. Gay bodies seemed to only be interesting if they were quite young, or very muscular and well trained, leaving little room for anyone who didn't comply with that aesthetic. I did observe an emphasis on more expressive dress by those who perhaps did not feel that they measured up to the physical standards demanded. Said one man, who worked as a drag queen entertainer: "*I'm short and I'm fat, I'd never get laid if I wasn't funny. The outfits help too, boys want to know what's underneath all that make-up."* (Mary Scary – December 15th 2014)

In 2015, Cape Town's annual LGBTQI Pride parade was held on the 28th of February, with a week of Pride events leading up to the main event. From the moment the 2015 Pride was announced it caused a storm of discussion on social media, mainly in regard to its representation of the LGBTQI people of Cape Town as a mainly white homogenous

group. This may not have been the intention of Cape Town Pride 2015 – Uniting the Cultures of Cape Town. The organisation had set out for a uniting Pride event for Cape Town, highlighting a theme of Khumbulani, to highlight the plight of lesbians and gays in the townships who suffer violence.

In comparing the information provided by the Cape Town Pride organisers, and the opinions expressed on various social media, one can discern a great divide forming between the approach by the organisers and what their target audience distinguishes. From the Cape Town Pride website:[7]

Khumbulani Pride:

Since 2006, with the brutal murder of Zoliswa Nkonyana, the Western Cape has experienced a spike in the number of reported cases of brutal crimes against sexual minorities, including lesbians, gays, and trans-women individuals. So far there has been countless reported murders
It also does not help that we have religious leaders who are spewing words of hate, and actually encouraging the brutality targeted towards the LGBTI community.

To thoroughly impress the seriousness of these crimes and to make the community aware, we have decided on the theme "Khumbula (ni)". The theme aims to express how the community incorporating LGBT is mourning the loss and brutality targeted at sexual minorities, and to commemorate the brothers and sisters who have died senseless deaths. We also aim to use this opportunity to do community awareness and educational campaigns in collaboration with other community organizations, targeting venues and places where community members often gather to socialize.

Besides the obvious grammatical errors, there are several other problems with this webpage promoting Cape Town Pride, the main one being the reference to "community". Especially in the last sentence: "We also aim to use this opportunity to do community awareness and educational campaigns in collaboration with other community organisations". Which community is doing what education where? This lack of actual awareness in regard to LGBTQI people is well represented throughout the Cape Town Pride website, and was quickly picked up on by social media.

7 www.capetownpride.org accessed February 12th 2015

“Dear Cape Town Pride,

You’re too white.

I feel like that should cover what I have to say, but I also understand that you may not know what I am talking about. When I say you are too white, Cape Town Pride, I mean I don’t see myself able to participate in your events as a person who is fully aware of the lived realities of most LGBTIAQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual and queer) people living, working and studying in South Africa.

I have a series of questions I would like you to answer, or at the very least think about, because it’s 2015 and we cannot possibly still be talking about the same consumer-corporate-capital-fuelled Pride experience:

• We’re returning to the rainbow? Your slogan for this year’s Cape Town Pride Week (February 20 to 28) is “Return to the rainbow”. Whose rainbow is this? The nine events listed on your flyer do not appeal to me – except maybe the movie night, but that depends on the movie.

• Did you learn nothing from Jo’burg Pride 2012 and 2013? This is probably what upsets me most. Your older sibling went about hitting its head on these issues. People met after 2012 to consult and find a way forward that was balanced and brought back aspects of the political nature of Pride.

They did the work so that you don’t have to go through the same drama whenever Cape Town Pride erupts. Because it will erupt. There are frustrated LGBTIAQ persons who will soon have enough of being rendered invisible.

• Whiteness. Do you know what it is? You don’t? Really? Because you are doing it like a pro. Being “too white” is not limited to race – so your argument that everyone is welcome, regardless of race will not work here.

What I mean by “too white” is that you are working from a position of whiteness and that you are maintaining this position through the events you have put forward for Pride, by charging for events (whiteness and class are very good friends) and by the spaces you have selected as “Pride space”.

• Where is the broad variety of lived LGBTIAQ experience in your planned Pride events? Nothing in events such as the Pink Party, Ms Cape Town Pride, the Millionaire’s Gala Charity Dinner or Divas, Dames and Drags addresses the experience of the African queer woman, the transman, the non-binary individual, or intersex persons who daily negotiate society, its obstacles, violence and ignorance.

• Are you consulting the community when it comes to the planning of events? If you are, who are you consulting? And are you consulting in a way that is open to multiple

experiences? Honestly, I look at your events and I see business and corporate interests first. I do not see civil society, I do not see the trans, intersex, asexual or queer community represented in your planned events.

• Is there an organising committee? If yes, who sits on it and whose interests are being represented here? The events feel far too commercial for an event that should be transgressive and should advocate the rights of all LGBTIAQ persons.

• Accessibility? Who do these events target? The spaces in which the Pride events are due to be held are spaces for those with money, transport and social capital. Do you have to charge those fees for Pride? A degree of gatekeeping takes place when a price tag is attached to an event: it says that only those who can afford to be in these spaces are welcome. And what about accessibility of persons – have you catered for physical, sight and auditory disabilities?

Please think about all this. Not taking everyone into account makes this Pride non-inclusive. You can't claim to be returning to the rainbow if you're only taking a few members of the LGBTIAQ community with you.

Please put out an open call for your first planning meeting for Cape Town Pride 2016."

From the Facebook page of Sibusiso Nqunqeka.

This open letter to the Cape Town Pride organisers was posted on Facebook in the week before Pride as a response to the perceived "whiteness" of the events scheduled by the committee. An alternative Pride week was organized in the townships of Gugulethu and Khayelitsha as a means to express LGBTQI voices, other than those heard in the official Pride week. This is in many ways a representation of the conflict that has plagued Cape Town Pride over the years, and which also lead to the eventual demise of Johannesburg Pride which in 2015 became, "Sandton" Pride (Sandton being a very affluent suburb of Johannesburg), while a "Peoples Pride" took place in Johannesburg Proper.

Back in Cape Town however,

The Cape Town Pride Parade of 2015 started from the traffic department buildings in Green Point, and made its way down Somerset Road. Due perhaps to a lack of organisation, the streets had not been closed off for the parade, leaving pedestrians, cyclists and many irate drivers weaving in and out of the parade as they tried to get through this unexpected obstacle in the course of running their Saturday morning errands. As traffic officers arrived to divert the traffic, participants in the parade

seemingly took no notice of any obstacles, and marched on, waving banners proclaiming the visibility of LGBTQI people in Cape Town. The ruling party of the Western Cape province, the DA (Democratic Alliance), had a small contingency marching, but the country's leading party, the ANC, were nowhere to be seen.

While some floats contained scantly dressed men, on others women were equally undressed, proclaiming their freedom to expose themselves as much as their male counterparts, by baring their breasts in mermaid costumes. Each float very much had a theme in what the participants wore, and those few on each float that deviated from their floats theme very much looked the odd man out. A few minutes after the parade progressed around the corner, a last float came rushing down the road at full speed, obviously intent on catching up with the parade it had just missed. As balloons were blown off the float, a drag queen was lip-synching "It's Raining Men", one hand clutching her wig to keep it from disappearing down Somerset Road along with the balloons.

As the parade ended, another form of celebration started up. Two streets in Green Point, Colbern Street and Liddle Street, were closed off in preparation for the day's main event, a large-scale street party that the organisers had dubbed a "Mardi Gras". A stage was erected on each street where DJ's were playing loud 'club' music, and the area quickly filled up with revellers. On entering this Mardi Gras event, it became clear that the previous debates about the lack of diversity and Cape Town Pride had been premature. Here, to the naked eye at least, was a seemingly true representation of South Africa as the rainbow nation. A very mixed crowd of white, black and coloured, mainly men, in various costumes, outfits and stages of undress were dancing to a selection of pop music remixed with a heavy house beat. There didn't seem to be any tension in the crowd, and whatever protest there had been at the parade had dissipated by the time the Mardi Gras party started. However, there was an abundance of men, while the women were few and far between, prompting the likelihood for greater future protest by lesbian women who feel marginalized by Cape Town's Pride celebrations.

A conversation from Cape Town Pride February 28th 2015:

(At the after party for the Cape Town Pride Parade 2015, sitting on some wooden crates that the organisers had deemed suitable for seating)

Me: Cape Town has really changed since we started going out here, years ago…

J: Yeah, tell me about it. There seems to be a much more varied crowd here now.. Hey, look at those guys! (points to a group of men wearing some sort of interpretation of tribal wear)

Me: So do you think the critics of Cape Town Pride 2015 were wrong in saying that the event was going to be 'too white'?

J: Well, perhaps they should have waited until after the event to criticise… But I see their point from the way the events were promoted. And you can tell that although there is a lot of coloured guys here, there aren't that many blacks. Or women for that matter, except fag hags, haha!

Me: Well perhaps the diversity we see here now is just the start of greater things to come, you know? From here on out it really is all about the gay rainbow nation,…

J: Nah man, don't be so naïve. Cape Town will never change that much, but it is moving in the right direction it seems.

Me: Well, the fact that there's still one gay bar here in De Waterkant which is mostly for the black gays, and others mostly for the whites, it does seem like there's still a way to go.

J: Yeah, I saw that, almost depressing when you see the line of people waiting to get into different places being almost completely either black or white.

Me: I suppose people go where they feel comfortable, or where their friends are. Or maybe just where they play music they like.

J: That's true, but Pride should really be a time for everyone to just mingle, which seems to be happening at this party at least, if not at other venues tonight. Baby steps…

Interlude- Soweto Pride & A Sojourn to Johannesburg

Figure 8: V.I.N.T.A.G.E dance group- Image from Mamba Online

While my research is ultimately focused on Cape Town, I did have the chance to travel to Soweto and Johannesburg, which was an opportunity to explore more of South Africa, not just in the capacity of a researcher, but rather as a visitor. Arriving in Johannesburg just a month after landing in Cape Town, I planned to visit friends and fellow academics, and explore a city that is so vastly different from its seaside counterpart, Cape Town. However, I soon realized that to appreciate and gain insight into fashion's influence on the LGBTQI community in Johannesburg and the surrounding areas, would further my understanding of the complexities of gay identity in Cape Town.

Johannesburg and Cape Town have had an intense rivalry at times, for various reasons. While 'Capetonians' wouldn't dream of leaving their seaside wonderland, ''Jo'burg's' population thrive on the city's presumed pace and cosmopolitan nightlife (Jones 2013 p.44). I spent some time at the University of Witwatersrand's campus, and soon learned that many academics and students in Johannesburg also have political reasons for their dislike of Cape Town. A current popular topic of discussion was that of so-called white privilege, which is the idea that white South Africans still in some ways benefit from the old apartheid rule; that because of the privilege apartheid bestowed on white South

Africans, the younger generations today enjoy better economy, education, healthcare and so on, simply because their parents were privileged. To me it is a difficult debate because that would be a thesis in itself. White South Africans do not necessary feel privileged at a time when many are struggling economically and losing their jobs, and so refuse to admit to any privilege, something that seems to infuriate those South Africans that believe white privilege is at the root of many of the country's problems. The ANC and other political organisations pour fuel on the fire of this debate, perhaps to deflect from their own poor political choices. Many of those I met in Johannesburg disliked Cape Town because they felt it was the seat of white privilege in South Africa.[8] They commented on the fact that white South Africans still almost exclusively occupy central Cape Town and the more affluent suburbs, while black South Africans live in the poorer townships on the outskirts of town. When I commented on the fact that over 50 % of the Western Cape population are white, I was told that because apartheid hindered black South Africans from living in most parts of the Western Cape, it "wasn't right that a majority was still white". Again, to me, this is an almost impossible debate to enter into, as there is so much emotional investment on either side of the debate, and a solution, if you will, seems impossible. This topic will continue to trouble South Africans for years to come, and I personally find it hard to believe that it will ever result in an outcome that will please every South African. While this is a debate for a different thesis, I comment on it simply because I believe it shows the more political approach to youth and student life that is apparent in Johannesburg, something which inevitably influences LGBTQI debates and celebrations. This political aspect also becomes apparent in how Johannesburg and its satellite cities commemorate LGBTQI Pride events each year. Soweto Pride celebrated its 10th year anniversary in 2014, reflecting a South Africa in transformation.[9] From rather humble beginnings, Soweto Pride has developed into a celebration that LGBTQI people can be proud of, however, this has not come about easily. Johannesburg and its surrounding areas celebrate a multitude of separate LGBTQI Pride events from September to November each year. From Soweto Pride and Johannesburg Pride, Pretoria Pride and Wits Pride, do these events represent a new freedom for LGBTQI people in South Africa? Or does it show a fractured community, with Pride events blighted by behind the scenes disagreements and turmoil? To develop this idea of 'LGBTQI communities', I would first like to distinguish the existence of such communities, and if they are necessary in a country that has moved vastly forward on

8 http://www.iol.co.za/sundayindependent/white-privilege-carved-in-stone-1.1838405#.VRf7qLoWODo accessed March 29th 2015
9 www.sowetopride.co.za accessed March 29th 2015

issues of LGBTQI civil rights, but continue to battle social inequality. The idea behind the concept of LGBTQI communities is that the men and women who do not identify as heterosexual have something in common, mainly their non-heterosexual orientation, meaning that they are perceived to have the same life struggles which bonds them as a community (Hoad et al. 2005, De Waal & Manion 2006 p.9).

Figure 9: Woman is shown protesting the treatment of black lesbians- Image from sowetopride.co.za

However, as was shown during the Johannesburg Pride 2013, this is far from the truth. 1-9 is a feminist group, mainly run by black, lesbian women from Soweto, who staged a protest during Johannesburg Pride 2013[10]. As the mainly male, and white, participants of the Pride 2013 parade made their way through central Johannesburg, protesters from 1-9 lay down in the road, blocking their way, while taking on the position of victims, symbolizing the many black lesbian women who have been the victim of 'corrective rape' in South Africa. 1-9 and their supporters felt that Johannesburg Pride had become a purely commercial event, avoiding the political aspects of LGBTQI life, and excluding those in a disadvantaged socio-economic situation. This is not a new discussion in relation to Pride events in South Africa, nor is it settled. A glance at Pretoria Pride

[10] http://oneinnine.org.za March 29th 2015

2014's Facebook page[11] shows several arguments in full swing, as those who wish for a more politically conscious Pride disagree with those who 'just want to party'. The organisers of the events weigh in on the discussions, claiming that they have contacted several organisations to come and host panels and distribute information at the event, but it becomes clear from their language that this is mainly intended as a commercial event, catering to the party animals more than the politically minded. The event even charges an entry fee, separating it from more traditional approaches to Pride rallies, and thereby excluding those of a lower income bracket.

There are several approaches in looking at the multitude of Pride events that happen in the Johannesburg area each year. We could analyze these events, and the different people they each attract from the LGBTQI communities and say that the necessity of multiple Pride events has sprung up as an answer to the growing LGBTQI population that feels comfortable going to these kinds of events. As the openness around LGBTQI lives expands, the idea that those who are not heterosexual are expected to necessarily enjoy each other's company, and have the same ideals and outlook on life, without any regard for social or economic backgrounds, seem suddenly outdated, old fashioned even. People of a heterosexual orientation do not necessarily get along, so why should those who identify as LGBTQI get along (De Waal & Manion 2006 p.53)? It also points to the fault in having an idea of a LGBTQI community as such in South Africa, due to the separation of races that was enforced during apartheid. Black and white LGBTQI communities developed completely separately in those years, a separation that is still apparent today, for example in the mainly white, middle class Pretoria Pride, and the black, working class Soweto Pride. These events happen on the basis of the attendees' racial and economic background, not sexual orientation. That is not to say the events are intentionally exclusive based on their geographical situation and socio-economic standing in society, more that they are a reflection of how far Gauteng is from having an all-encompassing LGBTQI community. LGBTQI Pride events sprung up as a means of political protest, and of visibility for LGBTQI people all over the world (ibid p.9). In South Africa, some LGBTQI people no longer feel the need for protest, perhaps because they no longer feel persecuted for their sexuality. However, this is mainly in the middle class, as working class (and mainly black) South Africans are attacked every day. The occurrence of so-called 'corrective rape', where a lesbian woman is raped to 'correct' or 'cure' her homosexuality happens frequently in the townships of South Africa, something the organisers of Soweto Pride, and the people behind 1-9 (which alludes to

[11] https://www.facebook.com/events/1427306980877825/ January 11th 2015

the fact that one in nine lesbian women will be attacked due to their sexuality) are all too aware of (see 1-9 and GALA websites).

As I sat in the offices of GALA, the Gay & Lesbian Archives at the University of Witwatersrand, I was privy to a very interesting conversation. An American academic was interviewing a young, black woman, who was involved with the 1-9 group, and a GALA employee. As their conversation progressed, it became clear the interviewer was investigating instances of 'corrective rape' in Gauteng. There was an identifiable resignation in her voice when she described to this American the complicated social factors that lead to 'corrective rape' happening so frequently. The traditionally strong patriarchal views of many South African men, coupled with strong religious views, social failings, lack of education and work meant many young men were left angry, with a strong but misguided sense of right and wrong (Seedat et al. 2009). Meaning the 'corrective rape' of a lesbian woman was seen as doing the woman a favour, and contributing to society by 'curing' her lesbianism, as homosexuality is considered a sin among all the frequently practised branches of Christianity practised in South Africa (Nel & Judge 2008 p. 22).

In parts of Africa where Christianity was introduced by missionaries as a way to 'civilize the natives' (Conrad 1899), the religion has been adopted with enthusiasm, today about 80 % of the population follows some branch of Christianity (Curry 1990). Christianity has become intrinsic to family values and South African life, while many at the same time continue with their more inherited traditions, such as traditional medicine, adhering to the wishes of the ancestral spirits etc. This can create a confusing mix of old and new (Christian values and traditional values) for many South Africans, leaving them with 'one foot in each world' (Steinberg 2009). Homosexuality is not a new phenomenon in South Africa; it has existed in different forms for as long as people have existed here:

"When a boy sleeps with his friend they sleep together; it is not forbidden. Everyone thinks it is all right. Sometimes when boys sleep together each may have an emission on the other (bitundanila). If they are great friends there is no wrong done… Boys sometimes agree to dance together (ukukina) and work their evil together and that is also no wrong… Boys do this when they are out herding; then they begin to dance together and have intercourse together, then even if people find them, they say it is adolescence (lukulilo), all children are like that. And they say that sleeping together and dancing is also adolescence." (Murray & Roscoe 1998 p. 175 quoting Monica Wilson 1951)

Generally, evidence of homosexuality is documented among men, as in a strong patriarchal society it is not thought that two women could have a relationship, without a man (ibid). This viewpoint is still reinforced in modern day South Africa, where men who attack lesbian women in 'corrective rape' situations believe they are doing them a favour, that the women could not possibly live a life without the involvement of a man. Strong, inherited patriarchal views, coupled with a Christian sense of the 'sin of homosexuality' turn these men into rapists, and creates a dangerous situation for black lesbian women in South Africa. Simply by being visible, and by being open about their sexuality, they are more vulnerable to attack in this context., as discussed by the young woman at GALA, above.

What then, does this mean in the context of the various Pride events that take place in the Gauteng area each year? Is it fair to expect the white, middle class homosexual men who frequent the Johannesburg Pride event to take more of an interest in the situation among the black, working class lesbians, who march in Soweto Pride and the People's Pride? Or to put it in a slightly different way: do all LGBTQI people have a social and moral responsibility to act as a protective group when others within the broad scope implied by the acronym come under threat?

Historically, it would be wrong to suggest that there has always been a unity between lesbian women and gay men. In the history of Pride events, women have often taken on a more political stance, invoking feminist rhetoric, and not always approving of the more flamboyant side of the gay male participants of Pride events, where the costume aspect of their dress is often used as a means of protest (De Waal & Manion 2006 p.55). For a gay man, the visibility of being able to dress up in a way as to show off his sexuality can be its own form of protest, where for lesbian women it seems slogan t-shirts coupled with garments that don't exactly flaunt a traditional idea of femininity (jeans, lumber jack shirts, heavy boots etc) are more protest appropriate (ibid). A clear example of this was Soweto Pride 2014, where visually you could immediately see two camps forming. The men in attendance were dressed in spectacular excessiveness, in everything from high-fashion garments, women's garments, tribal and traditional garments, make up, lingerie, anything to distinguish themselves from a normative form of dress. Paying little to no attention to the stage where various political protests and speeches were being made, the gay men used the surrounding park as their own personal catwalk, walking

up and down to show off their outfits to their friends, acquaintances and any one else who might be interested.

At first glance this might seem superficial. Here we are, in the middle of an LGBTQI Pride rally, and all these guys are interested in is showing off. However, when analysed past the superficial, it becomes clear that these guys are engaging in a vestimentary protest as a way to declare their identity on their own turf. Soweto is unfortunately a hotbed for homophobia, where gay men and women live in fear of attack (Katlego-Interview September 27th 2014). For gay men living here, it can be a tough decision whether to come out of the closet, and risk attack, or to hide away and be safer, but unable to live according to their sexuality. While cross-dressing is generally associated with homosexuality in Soweto, it does have its place in a very different celebration too, namely that of soccer matches, were male attendees wear women's clothing as a tribute to their favourite teams (Jones 2013 P. 56). This is done while very much emphasising their masculinity with their actions and behaviour, leaving an ambivalent feeling as to any sexuality based motivation these men might have to cross-dress. The men in attendance at Soweto Pride however, made their sexuality a very public matter, by flaunting it in front of an audience of their peers, not just through dress but also in adopting exaggerated feminine gestures. By doing so in large groups they invoked the idea of 'safety in numbers', able to defy the threat of persecution in their own town(ship). By dressing overtly sexually, feminine or provocative, these gay men protested and made a political point by just wearing their clothes. Some did this by re-appropriating tribal wear, such as men wearing traditional Zulu wedding garments; thus reclaiming their history without the necessity of subverting an aspect of their identity. Perhaps what I was seeing at Soweto Pride was the visual result of a fully expressed social and sexual identity? I spoke to Katlego, a young academic who works at the University of Witswatersrand and attended the event. Having grown up in Soweto, Katlego was almost in his own backyard at Soweto Pride, his childhood home only being a few streets away. Katlego had just recently finished his own Master's thesis on visual representations of gay identity in the media, and spent his time at Soweto Pride taking pictures of the other participants. Not too interested in the political aspect of the event, he commented on how the gay men present were in essence just 'cruising', looking for sexual partners while showing off their garments. This reminded me of an LGBTQI Pride event I had attended in London, years previously, where after the parade a large park and its surrounding areas turned into an orgy of sorts, with men in various stages of undress visibly fornicating everywhere. Soweto Pride was much more restrained, but

the idea of sexual cruising and conquests may have been the same. Was this merely an effect of the gay men present feeling comfortable and safe enough to engage in flirting, or could it be seen as an avoidance of more uncomfortable aspects of the Pride event, such as the focus on corrective rape?

The women of Soweto Pride generally took a different approach. This can be seen as a rejection of the supposedly superficial approach taken by the gay men at the same event, which as we've already seen, is not necessarily all that superficial. It did also seem that for the lesbians in Soweto there was greater social pressure, and so a stronger commitment to be more politically active, as many feel (and rightfully so) that their community is under attack. It seems this encourages the women at the event to take a more active approach; engaging in rallies and political protests, handing out flyers and wearing slogan t-shirts supporting the various women's and LGBTQI rights organisations that take part. There wasn't any noticeable animosity between the LGBTQI people at Soweto Pride, rather just a noticeable separation in the visible approach to a day celebrating LGBTQI Pride. The different vestimentary codes and expressions were very visible within the different fractions, as were the high levels of apparent understanding of these codes. From what I saw, and those I spoke to, most attendees at this event had given at least some level of thought to the way they would be expressing themselves visually. On some level this is natural in the way that most social groups will dress up when interacting at large (social) gatherings (Allman 2004 p.88). It also shows that although there appears to be no unity in the various approaches to vestimentary codes by the LGBTQI people who attended Soweto Pride, there is a common thread, not in the appearance of the clothes they wore, but of the wish to express their sexual identity in some way through the way they dressed. However, the people in attendance at Soweto Pride were by and large black South Africans, and mainly living in Soweto. Therefore, whatever unity was present between LGBTQI people there comes not only from sharing the experience of identifying with a sexuality that is not heterosexual, but also from a shared background: racial, economic and cultural.

If such different approaches to celebrating LGBTQI Pride can be taken by attendees at the same event, with more or less the same background, it becomes more apparent how the major fractures in the LGBTQI communities of Gauteng has occurred. The 2013 clashes between those participating in Johannesburg Pride, and the women of 1-9, show that due to the separation of the races that was implemented during apartheid, and the social and economic consequences, the fractions between LGBTQI people in South Africa

are too great, making the term 'LGBTQI community' invalid as such in South Africa. While there are many LGBTQI communities existing separately, there is not enough unity to talk of one whole LGBTQI community, encompassing all those who do not identify as heterosexual, regardless of social, racial or economic background. In a country as fraught with social differences as South Africa, there is perhaps better use to be made of focusing on separate LGBTQI communities.

In 2014, Johannesburg Pride moved to Sandton, a predominantly white, middle-class suburb of Johannesburg. In many ways, Sandton is a satellite city, where social life is based around the enormous Sandton Mall, a massive shopping complex with stores that sell a luxury lifestyle. By moving the Pride event here, the organisers are perhaps trying to avoid the trouble that plagued Johannesburg Pride 2013, but they are also excluding those who live in Johannesburg proper, and who don't have access to transport to Sandton. Further more, by moving Johannesburg Pride to Sandton, Johannesburg, as a city, no longer has an LGBTQI Pride event.

Chapter 3- The Gat Party

Figure 10: The suburb of North Parow- Image from www.capetown.gov.za

In the Cape Town suburb of Parow North, lying up against the Tygerberg hill, a small gathering of houses sit in what appears to be a grove in the hillside. These well-maintained homes have unusually green lawns, and overly decorated interiors. Drawn here by the excess water that gathers in this unnatural setting, the birds flourish while the homeowners fight a loosing battle against the water damage done to their properties. What first appears to be just another middle class neighbourhood actually sits in a rock quarry, which was blasted out of the Tygerberg hill to provide material for the N1 motorway nearby. Before this neighbourhood was built here in the late 1990's, this quarry hosted an athletics track and a sports hall, and was known as 'The Gat' (or The Hole) by local Afrikaners. It was in this sports hall that a group of local gay men started throwing 'sokkies' where they could dance the traditional Afrikaans 'langarm' with each other, dubbing the party a Gat Party after where it's location, and according to one man I interviewed (Dan- October 9th 2014), the fact that naming a homosexual party a 'hole party' could be seen as having a dual meaning, was completely unintentional.

A 'sokkie' in Afrikaans is a term used for a party where traditionally, Afrikaans music is played, and the attendants dance in a style known as 'langarm', a sort of variation of more classical dances like waltz and two-step. Generally held in a sports hall or similar venue, partygoers can bring their own beverages, more often than not this will consist of the local favourite brandy & coke, and book long tables for themselves and their entourage. The floor is strewn with hay and the dance floor gets covered in flour to encourage the gliding footwork of the 'langarm' dance. These days a 'sokkie' will often play modern day pop music in-between more traditional 'langarm' numbers, to attract a

younger audience. This is generally to the dismay of the older attendees who only enjoy the 'langarm' element, and do not wish to be pushed out of the way by youngsters jostling to the latest hit song (Owen- October 9th 2014).

The 'sokkie' can embrace the ideal of the traditional South African white male. Men wear rugby shirts, and fights often break out over stolen glances at each other's partners (B- October 11th 2014). These are also gatherings that are frequented by those Afrikaners who still reminisce over the 'good old days', and that desperately cling on to any remaining ideas of white supremacy in South Africa. What we see when we move over to the Gat party, is that while the sexuality of the attendees differs, the attitudes can often be the same.

In Cape Town there is one bi-monthly Gat party. Every first and third Saturday of the month, the Milnerton Rugby Hall in the northern suburbs of Cape Town hosts its Gat party to a mixed crowd of young and old, gay and lesbian, straight and curious. It is a modern take on the Gat party, with the DJ focusing on current pop and club music; with the odd 'langarm' number thrown in for the nostalgic individuals. These Gat parties have moved far away from the traditional 'sokkies'; so much so that the crowd now come from a much more mixed background. This is a development from the original gat party hosted at the Tygerberg sports hall.

As the Gat party scene developed from the more conservative and white gay men living in the northern suburbs of Cape Town, the convoluted history of white gay men and their struggle to abolish the anti-homosexuality laws of apartheid come up against their refusal to acknowledge the inherent links of their struggle to that of the anti-apartheid struggle movement. Several "whites only" gay rights groups emerged in Johannesburg in the early 1980's (Hoad et al. 2005 p.20). The participants justified the 'whites only' approach by saying that they would have more success gaining rights for gay people if they didn't mix their cause with any other, failing perhaps to see that the anti-homosexuality laws were intrinsically mixed with the strict racial laws of apartheid, as that government attempted to control and subdue its subjects wholly (Tucker 2009 p.40). The Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) was the country's largest politically active queer group in the 1980's, and one of its founding members, Ann Smith, stated:

"Of course we knew that GASA had far, far more white members than black, but we did not see any way out of this except to make the GASA premises a racially integrated space… it is

true that we were afraid, in our white liberal safety, to rock the boat too much: it was dangerous enough in those days to defy the tenets of apartheid by having an association open to people regardless of their colour." (Tucker 2009 p. 47)

Within the context of apartheid, the ruling National Party relied in part on traditionalist views of Afrikaner culture, with the help of the Calvinist Dutch reform church, to promote an idea of Afrikaner traditionalism (Tucker 2009 p.41, Dubow 1995). Within this Afrikaner traditionalism the gender roles were set to that of the woman as housewife and unpaid keeper of tradition and the people's moral and spiritual mission (Tucker 2009p.41), while the man was keeper of the nation. There was unease about women working outside of the home, rooted somewhat in fear of white women coming into contact with 'over-sexed black men' (Tucker 2009 p.41). Within this discourse there was little room for homosexuality of any kind, or any attempt at a life that deviated from the strict family module encouraged by the ruling National Party. In fact, the fear of homosexuals became such that the government suggested infiltrating homosexual groups in an attempt to report on their actions (Hoad et al. 2005 p.17). In 1969 amendments were made to the Immorality Act, which made it illegal for any man at a party to commit 'any act which is calculated to stimulate sexual passion or to give sexual gratification' (ibid). A party was defined as 'any occasion where more than two people are present'. This new act came in response to growing hysteria in the media on the potential impact of homosexuals on the (white) society in South Africa. These new laws made it easier for the police force to implement raids on parties and venues suspected of harbouring individuals who engaged in homosexual activity, although the strictness of the law could technically implicate men engaged in something as innocent as a hand shake.

Homosexuals & The South African Defence Force

A manifestation of the sometimes-intense macho Afrikaner culture borne out of these traditionalist Afrikaner ideals could be seen in the South African army. While military service was still mandatory in South Africa, many gay men suffered greatly within the brutal confines of the military, something that is described to great effect in Carl van der Merwe's book, Moffie.

In South Africa, the word 'moffie' covers a range of interrelated senses, including 'male homosexual', 'effeminate male' and 'transvestite'. In its most widespread usage, it refers to the first category, but its more specific meaning of 'transvestite' is also found in the Cape coloured community (Chetty 1995 p.115). While in Cape Town I went to see a dance performance called "Moffie", based on a book by Carl van der Merwe of the same name. The book is based on his own experiences as a gay man in the South African army in the 1980's, where they had an assigned section for humiliating and torturing those soldiers that were deemed to be homosexual, whether truthfully or not:

"Although the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa has gone a long way to exposing and exorcising some of the atrocities committed in the name of apartheid, very little has been revealed about the adversities faced by gay people under the old regime. (…) I have often thought of the suffering of those who were the primary target of apartheid, but not even during the darkest days of our history was it illegal to be black. Never would a black parent throw a child out of his house because of his ethnicity. Yet this was what happened to gay people. I needed to document the turmoil of a child going through puberty, awakening spiritually, but being pressurised into believing that, because he is homosexual, he is doomed to eternal hell."[12]

The dance performance of Moffie attempted to express the pain of being homosexual in the army through dance, a difficult task at best. While this is no time for reviews, I did reflect on the audience's reaction to the show. I attended opening night, and the Artscape theatre in Cape Town was almost full to capacity. The unanimously white, male, and middle aged audience whooped in glee anytime two of the four male dancers kissed, but stayed in stony silence when the two female dancers did the same. The audience members rustled in their silk shirts while observing the young and muscular dancers fling themselves around the stage to a variety of music, from Wagner to James

[12] Why I Wrote Moffie- www.andrecarlvandermerwe.com accessed Jauanry 18th 2015

Blunt. As one of the (male) dancers stripped down to his underwear, there was an audible sigh from the audience, another sigh easy to hear as he dressed again.

What were these audience members thinking throughout this performance? Were they contemplating the hard lives lived by gay men in the South African army, or were they entertained by the novelty of a dance performance catering to them and their sexuality, not only in storyline but also in visual spectacle. The audience members I heard from after the play seemed confused by the plotline and the contemporary dance on display, but pleased with the visual aspects of the show. Perhaps in calling the book and subsequent performance "Moffie", Carl van der Merwe was attempting to reclaim the word.

Van der Merwe completed his conscription while several groups in South Africa were campaigning to end compulsory military service. The ECC (End Conscription Campaign) was subjected to a smear campaign because one of its prominent members was openly queer (Tucker 2009 p. 52, Toms 1995). This damaged the ECC's reputation, however they rallied and conscription was abolished with the new ANC government. The conservativeness that governed (white) lives in South Africa was therefore reflected in all parts of life, from home, to work, and to the army. Even with the shedding of the laws of apartheid, the conservative ways it encouraged still remain for some people, even those that should theoretically abstain from such rhetoric. With this in mind I wished to explore the outlook of those that started, and attended, those early Gat parties in Cape Town.

The Conservative Roots of The Gat party

When I set out to learn more about the origins of the Gat party I went to visit Dan and Owen, and gay couple in their late 50's, living in a northern suburb to Cape Town, Parow North. Owen is today a rather well known interior designer in South Africa, and their house functions as a showroom for prospective clients. When I arrive Dan gallantly insisted on showing me around, taking great pride in the house's furnishings and immaculate state. Dressed impeccably, in pants ironed with a perfect pleat, a pocket square poking out of his shirt pocket, newly polished shoes and what could only have been a toupee, brushed just so and matching perfectly to his dyed moustache, Dan looked every bit the traditional idea of a gentleman.

My impression of the house was that it seemed rather dated, in that it didn't reflect current trends within the world of interiors, with roman sculpture replicas, porcelain figurine collections and heavy draperies and thick wall-to-wall carpets in each room. This is the look, says Owen, that his clients' want, implying that it is a more old fashioned way of showing of wealth. I couldn't help but wonder in what demographic I would find most of Owen's clients, however he remained mute on the subject, favouring discretion over gossip. However, I was at Dan and Owens' house to talk to Owen about his role in starting the Gat parties, and their increasing and then declining popularity.

Owen threw the first gat party in the late 1980's, a time when homosexuality was still illegal in South Africa. What is interesting here is that both Dan and Owen carry very conservative views when it comes to politics in South Africa, and did not necessarily attempt to rock the boat with the gat parties. Rather, they invited only white gay and lesbian people to attend, and kept the gathering small at the old Tygerberg sports hall. When I spoke to them, there were several allusions to 'the old ways', especially from Dan, who even confessed to being against gay marriage, thinking it "nonsense that gay people should get married, it's just not right", even though he had been living with his partner Dan for over 20 years. Northern Parow is in many ways a quite traditional and conservative Afrikaans suburb. Neighbours and good friends of Dan and Owen regularly express their scepticism of 'the new South Africa', and although they will not come straight out and say it, regularly imply that 'things were better before'. Dan and Owen get along well with their neighbours, and told me that there are a lot of gay men living in the area. These aren't the men that would necessarily walk in Pride parades or attend

MCQP, they told me, seemingly they just want to blend in with their heteronormative neighbourhood, and dress accordingly. Dan and Owen are outwardly not much different from their heterosexual neighbours, while Owen works, Dan drinks tea with the neighbourhood ladies and they gossip about their neighbours.

A conversation with Dan about the Gat parties:

Me: Your home is very interesting, and so immaculate

Dan: Yes, we keep it as a show room for Owen's design company. Potential clients come here to see what Owen could do for their home. Therefore it must be spotless at all times.

Me: Wow, I'm impressed, this level of tidiness escapes me. But Dan, tell me about the early Gat parties you and Owen threw. How came? What were they like?

Dan: Well, this was the late 80's, and things were different then. People didn't just mix the way they do now, the Gat parties were mainly for us gay men and lesbians living in the Northern Suburbs.

Me: So mainly people with an Afrikaner background?

Dan: Absolutely. The Gat parties are very Afrikans. English people (meaning English speaking South Africans- author's note) always make fun of them, but they still come sometimes and have a great 'jol' (party).

Me: What was the vibe like at Gat parties back then? Was it ever outrageous, did people dress up and do crazy things?

Dan: Oh no no, never. That was never what it was all about. The Gat parties are for those who want to just dance the langaarm and enjoy themselves. We might have dressed up by wearing a nice shirt and shining our shoes, but never crazy, never coustumes, no.

Me: Do you still enjoy a Gat party? I know you and Owen don't throw them anymore, but they do happen in Milnerton every couple of weeks.

Dan: No, we don't go to those. Those are for the youngsters. Also, they play to much of that loud music that kids listen to today, and not enough for the langaarm. No these days we stay at home.

The idea behind the Gat party was born out of the idea of maintaining the Afrikaans tradition of the 'langarm' dance, but in a gay context, removed from the potential confrontation with heterosexuals who did not approve of homosexuality. In many ways, said Owen, it was to be like a large house party, which was common among gay men from the 1960's onwards (Hoad et al. 2005 p.16). However, after the New Forrest house party raid in Johannesburg, where 6 men were arrested and headlines blasting the homosexual activity in the house reached newspapers around the country, gay men were more careful about announcing their activities(Gevisser & Cameron 1995 p.30). By the 1980's, a new sense of freedom emerged among gay men in South Africa, born more out of the political upheaval than any actual new freedom, as homosexuality was still illegal at the time. Edwin Cameron, the a human rights advocate, stated to a group of individuals in 1986 (as quoted in Gevisser & Cameron 1995 p.60):

"The shocking truth is that many gays in South Africa have to a great extent been living a dream that is in fact a legal nightmare. The simple fact is that male gays in South Africa have no legal rights to practice their gayness. Almost every gay here this afternoon, is according to South African law, a criminal."

This didn't stop the queer parties from happening, nor did it hinder the opening of several gay bars in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Gay men were ready to defy the government, realising that the potential for arrest could add an exiting element to their evening. The naivety behind this thrill-seeking approach seems extreme in the face of the very real threat of arrest that black South Africans faced every day, should they be caught without the correct paper work, or any other real or invented offence. In the context of these newly opened gay venues, being white only would have served as a way of avoiding open provocation of the establishment.

Chapter 4:

MCQP and an exploration of its vestimentary codes

Figure 11: MCQP Royal Navy logo- Image from www.mcqp.co.za

The Locker Room Project 1994

The first MCQP (Mother City Queer Project) ever was held on the 9th of December 1994 at Cape Town's River Club. Almost 2000 revellers took part in what was at the time a revolutionary party in Cape Town (ADA Magazine nr. 13, 1994).

The following information has been gathered from "What is the Locker Room project?" an information booklet handed out to those who purchased tickets for the first annual MCQP event; and "The Locker Room Project Revisited/ The Secret Garden Project Revealed", a follow up booklet to the first MCQP party with information on the next, including interviews with Andre Vorster and Andrew Putter, the organisers of the event. There is the ADA magazine article on MCQP appearing in their 13th issue, and also, my own interview with Andre Vorster (November 29th 2014), and the various people involved in MCQP throughout the years:

MCQP was to be the first annual LGBTQI fancy-dress party in Cape Town, where the various 'queer (Browne 2008) tribes' (Steyn 2004 p.49) of the city, along with the straight arty crowd, would shed their own vestimentary codes and come together in a variety of costumes. Andre Vorster & Andrew Putter had hoped this would move people on from the comfort of their own 'queer tribe' and enable more queer people to get together in the future. As Andre said, part of the feeling of the "New South Africa" of 1994 was the idea that all people, regardless of age, race, sexuality and

social/economical/political background could come together and celebrate their newfound freedom. Andre said; *"While firstly it was the end of the segregation of the races, also the decriminalizing of homosexuality, and the relaxation of laws on strict censorship of arts and culture, which also included the un-banning of pornography, had a huge impact on the youth, culture and art scene in Cape Town"* (November 29th 2014). In fact, The Locker Room Project had an impressive array of South African artists present when it finally opened its doors, such as; Brett Murray, Beezy Bailey, Tracey Payne, Sue Williamson, Baren de Wet and Kevin Brand.[13]

The freedom of the art scene that democracy brought to Cape Town becomes apparent in the ADA Magazine's 13th issue that features a photo series from The Locker Room Project. According to the accompanying article, 2500 artists, architects, DJs, photographers, sculptors, designers, art students and other creative Capetonians were involved in production and hosting of The Locker Room Project. The photographs from the night show and impressive array of rooms decorated in various artistic interpretations of sports themes, each room filled with revellers in wild and inventive costumes. Here's more from the ADA Magazine (1994) article:

"…The interior of the once institutionally drab railway recreational club suddenly sported shocking pink and mandarin passages. Upstairs was a plunge from the tropical heat of pink and oranges into aquatic blues and shimmering silvers(…) Guests, or "players", were greeted by crinolined hockey players with platforms and groovy hairdos, Scottish dancers in the shortest tartan and drag queens in A-line tennis frocks complete with traditionally frilly underwear."

With this description it seemed the Locker Room Project did indeed live up to its promise of having: "fourteen fabulous party-playgrounds under one roof' where "Leaping Latex Lesbians", "Moffie Mountaineers", "Gorgeous Goalkeepers" and "Raving Rollerbladers" could mingle, drink, dance and relax in an atmosphere where sport was played with in *"an outrageously camp way*" to deliver a *"lush, over-the-top, eccentric, bizarre, outlandish, odd, hysterical sporty experience"*[14]

[13] MCQP promotional pamphlet, 1995. The Locker Room Project revisited/ The Secret Garden project revealed.
[14] From *What Is The Locker Room Project?* promotional booklet

For me it seems clear that contemporary queer culture in New York and London also influenced MCQP and its revellers. From the promise of *"paparazzi following each participant on the night"* to *"being met with a wall of camera's flashing"* and *"being famous for one night"* (all from The Locker Room Booklet), the party certainly had a post-modern twist, adopted perhaps from New York club culture, which again latched onto the idea of 'fame for a night' from the artist Andy Warhol, which I will get back to further on in this chapter.

MCQP had a more serious side too, as the party was dedicated to Craig Darlow, Andre's partner who had passed away from HIV/AIDS. The party was held on what would have been Craig's 25th birthday, and several of the artworks inside were made in honour of Craig, including a piece by Brett Murray of 25 daisy lights. As Andre said*: "It was a mix of gay & lesbian mardi gras, the Mexican Festival of the Dead, and a living art installation".*

From "The Locker Room Project Revisited/The Secret Garden Project" booklet, which includes an interview with Andre and Andrew, conducted in 1995:

"SEX: The AIDS- crisis had forced people to talk more openly about sex and recognise how different we are sexually. This trend towards openness needed to be supported and developed. On the other hand, sexual "apartheid" kept lesbians, gay men and straights culturally separated. It was a time to bring people from different sexual camps together to celebrate and share differences. Sexual stereotyping needed to be laid to rest. We want our city to be a place of where no one needs to hide - or to be embarrassed by - their sexual orientation. (Imagine living in a city where no one ever has to come out of the closet because the city just doesn't have closets). And on a positive note, our country's new interim constitution - the only constitution in the world to protect its homosexual citizens - needed to be celebrated. We wanted to show our city how much its gay community appreciated the vote of confidence."

They also go on to say:

"The Project would also celebrate differences in sexual orientation, subcultural style, musical taste and age (…) Costumes give people the chance to be someone else for a night. Costumes are worn as a disguise allowing us to take chances we wouldn't normally take if we were recognizable."

At the 1994 Grahamstown Art Festival, Andre Vorster and Andrew Putter started plotting what would become the first MCQP party, The Locker Room Project. The South Africa of 1994 was just emerging into the light of democracy, blinking its eyes in the blinding light, and slowly starting to grasp what opportunities lay ahead. With a new, non-discriminatory constitution, LGBTQI people could come out of the shadows, ready to claim the spotlight. With The Locker Room Project, the first order of business was to convince LGBTQI people that MCQP was representative of their own particular group of people. MCQP aimed to bring together all LGBTQI people, and straight people who identified as 'queer'.

Here it becomes pertinent to recognise that the term 'queer' is applied in many different ways, however the most common understanding of the term queer is a gay man or woman who identifies as an unorthodox individual in terms of popular consensus. A heterosexual person can also be 'queer' if they choose to identify as such. The term 'queer' has also been used as a homophobic slur, therefore by calling themselves queer, LGBTQI people can re-appropriate the term with positive connotations within their cultural context (Cage 2003 p.31). I would like to again emphasise that the labels that people might use to identify themselves are constantly shifting, and not always easily identifiable for an outsider. It is also important to note that how people choose to identify themselves is not necessarily the way that you might see them. In Johannesburg I met a person who was born a man but identified as a queer lesbian. I met a woman who identified as a male drag queen and a transgender male to female who identified as a lesbian. The current relative openness to LGBTQI people in South Africa has given LGBTQI people the freedom to identify with the gender and sexuality that they feel best describes them. While these terminologies can get confusing in an academic sense, I do not think that too much importance should be placed on the how's and what's of someone's sexuality, rather what it means in the bigger picture of Cape Town and South Africa. Throughout my research I found, and as Andre emphasised in our conversations, a reluctance to have the idea of ones sexuality and identity mixed up with the reality of who one chooses to sleep with. Andre, for example, mentioned in passing a friend who is a man that identifies as a lesbian but has never slept with a woman. Pre-conceived notions of how a sexual orientation should be "acted out" is best left at the door I think.

For the Locker Room Project, Andre & Andrew put together a booklet, an instruction manual if you will, advising guests of the upcoming event on what to expect and how to behave. The booklet, called ' What is the Locker Room Project?' includes, among headlines such as 'Imagine the Night' and 'Sport through a queer lens', a page write-up called 'Are you Queer Enough?':

Are You Queer Enough?

The word QUEER has many meanings:
unusual, playful, extraordinary,
Productive, pleasure-loving.
It could describe an off-the-wall
approach to life.
It questions conventions.
It finds creative alternatives
to things we take for granted.
People- hetero and homo alike- are
waking up to the fact that their sexual
Identity will always defy neat labelling.

Although most Queer people are
homosexual, not all homosexuals are
Queer.
Nor are all heterosexuals un-Queer.
In fact, some "straight" people are
Queerer than some "gay" people.

Queerness is not a cut-and-dried
definition of one's sexual orientation

Queerness is an attitude.

Again, this shows queer as a term used to describe an unconventional person in terms of cultural traditions, probably artistically influenced, and if not LGBTQI then definitely not homophobic. For the sake of discussion we could say that the persons who would attend

a ‘Gat Party’ would probably not identify as queer in the same way that is intended for MCQP (for more on this see chapter Gat Party). While MCQP was meant to attract a mixed group of sexualities and races, it was inevitable that the price of a ticket would exclude those in a poorer socio-economic situation. In recent years this is something MCQP has come under fire for, as several critics have pointed out that MCQP could have done more to include all queer Capetonians, especially more black South Africa, which was something I had heard about through word of mouth. When I spoke to Andre about this he conceded that perhaps they could have done more to research under-privileged queer communities in areas like the Cape Flats. However, as he said, their initial focus was to bring together all queer people from Cape Town, and even then they had their work cut out for them.

Firstly, Andre said, they had to indentify the various ‘groups’ or ‘tribes’ (as Andre called them) of queer people in and around Cape Town. This involved identifying the various queer tribes through their vestimentary codes and musical associations. This said Andre was a quite straightforward approach, as at the time there was a clear line between the various queer tribes in Cape Town. The ‘butch lesbians’ wore garments such as loose fitting jeans and lumberjack shirts, the ‘art queers’ dressed in layers of black, the ‘club kids’ were the first in line at the cities newly opened nightclubs and embraced all things neon. Andre and Andrew had the tickets for The Locker Room Project printed on a rosette, the kind you’d win at a sporting event. This had to be worn by everyone entering the party. To create buzz around the party, Andre and Andrew set out to invite and offer a free ticket to ‘leaders’ of the various ‘queer tribes’ around Cape Town. This, said Andre, was done by firstly identifying the different tribes, mostly by the way they dressed, and where they gathered for social interactions. Also, at this time, it seemed, according to Andre, that most ‘tribes’ encompassed a group of people who shared the same sexual identity. Not only their sexuality, but also preferences within that sexuality were specified from tribe to tribe in that the “butch lesbians, femme lesbians, leather queens, queenie boys, drag queens, trannies and so forth all identified within their own marginal group” (Andre). This also meant that there was a certain reluctance to interact with other tribes, and that the various tribes viewed each other with scepticism and sometimes mockery. Therefore, MCQP was to be revolutionary in Cape Town in its attempt to bring all these tribes together, and as Andrew and Andre saw it, the best way to do this was through costumes and art. Forcing participants to drop their tribes’ vestimentary codes for one evening of tribe-interactions would open up new opportunities for a more open and inclusive queer scene in Cape Town, where sexual

stereotyping would be laid to rest. I set out to interview some people who had attended The Locker Room Project, to hear their thoughts on the ethos of the party:

"MCQP certainly brings people together (as most esp (sic) dress-up parties do), I was young then, in my twenties, and the whole gay thing was not so familiar to me. I myself was sorted but I hadn't discovered sex yet and was a late bloomer, never went to a gay club properly until I was 25. Due to its exciting themes and group dress-up, in an almost competitive way, I suppose all that surely over rided (sic) or at least shadowed most gender issues that people may have had. I'm not saying it didn't exist, but at the party there were other priorities. People were costume watching, eating, partying and getting laid, rather then being prejudiced. Maybe even resolving prejudice through what one would experience there." (Charl- December 29th 2014)

Several other people I spoke to also voiced surprise in what Andre had told me of their work in bringing the queer tribes of Cape Town together as one of the motives of MCQP. As we see in Charl's answer, he is initially sceptical about there even being such as thing as 'queer tribes', but later concedes that MCQP would work as a place for people to forget their prejudices and just party together. As for the costume element bringing people together and perhaps removing previous social barriers.

"No, it would only scare away the few people that don't dress up and even those who feel their costume is not so good. One can only encourage, not enforce. It's a party not a competition." (Charl- December 29th 2014)

From What is The Locker Room Project Booklet:

Party-Time!

"No-one gets off the creative hook in the
Locker Room Project.
All of the 2004* partygoers (that's you!)
will be expected to complete the Project
by arriving on the night in
deluxe sporty outfits.

Costumes can be simple but there are a
few rules which will be strictly enforced.
Partygoers must come in teams of two or
more and the entire team must be wearing
matching kit that's totally queer and
immediately sporty.

For example: one team might come in
suits covered in hundreds of shuttlecocks,
another might wear tennis whites
studded with glittering rhinestones.
A third team could be stark naked,
their cycling gear painted on with
stage make-up.

The possibilities are endless-
as long as they're funky, sporty and
unforgettable.

*The number 2004 refers to the exact number of tickets on sale.

Several issues arise for further elucidation with regards to this entry to the Locker Room Project booklet. Firstly; it is clear that Andrew and Andre are attempting to lay down strict rules for a vestimentary code for their event, one that will be enforced with the threat of expulsion on the night. Secondly: As they allude to the possibility of showing up naked (or in bicycle make-up, as stated) they are embodying the recent changes in the previously strict anti-pornography laws of South Africa that would previously have made public nudity an offence. Thirdly: By taking objects and outfits from the world of sport (a world often thought of as strictly heterosexual, according to Andre) and "gaying them up" (Andre), they are reclaiming an area of life where homosexuals have often been excluded or ridiculed i.e. the sports arena, or the locker room.

Andre and Andrew also wished to emphasise the idea of teams, meaning that although the party was held as an encouragement for people of various queer tribes to interact with each other, they could still arrive together, in matching garments thereby still

allowing for a remnant of tribal vestimentary code to exist. What the team rule also did was exclude anyone who wished to go in on his or her own. This meant that anyone who was perhaps visiting the city and didn't know anyone, or was alone for any reason could not attend the event. I was curious as to the inclusion of the 'team only' rule, as I thought an event proposing to be as inclusive as MCQP surely shouldn't exclude someone simply for being alone. I spoke to Charl about this, he has attended every MCQP in the last 20 years, and even worked for Andre Vorster at some stage. Charl said:

"It was to encourage that groups dress up in the same outfit as it always seemed to add a comical element. I doubt the rule was ever enforced."

I still cannot help but feel that there is an element of exclusion with a "two's or more" rule, however, none of my interview subjects agreed on this, stating repeatedly that it was all due to a belief that the costumes would be better if they were done as a team.

When Andrew & Andre decided to make MCQP a costume party, being heavily involved in the art scene in Cape Town as they were, they must have been aware of the fact that costume parties conjure up ideas of playing with ones appearance, sexuality and sense of belonging. However, the success of most costume parties lies in their ability to come up with a good theme; one that appeals to people, and lays the foundation for an array of costume ideas. The Locker Room Project had a controversial appeal in that the use of sport wear was considered to be such a heterosexual past time. Among white South Africans, rugby and cricket is what 'the men of the family' do on weekends, where as black South Africans seem to favor football, although this is of course an extreme generalization. I believe that the sports theme also had a post-modern irony to it, as the inverted heterosexuality of the sports wear gave patrons a change to lightly mock a world that they previously had perhaps not had access to. However, the attendees loosely interpreted the theme on the night, as apparent in the images from the evening on display on the pages of ADA magazine nr. 13:

Figure 12: A man wears a feathered headdress, a black venetian style mask, a long thin scarf with a sort of black netting shrug. So far, not so sporty. However, he is carrying a squash racket wrapped in tinsel.

Figure 13: A dance floor photo, we see revelers wearing what perhaps looks like a fireman suit (?), a woman in torn fishnet stockings waving a flag, a woman dancing in a simple cotton dress whose sports attribute seems to be the sash-like item she's wearing around her upper body, and a man in cowboy boots, leopard print

onesie, sequined jacket and a cowboy hat, carrying what must be a drum majorette baton.

Figure 14: Two women are seated wearing their hair slicked back, cat-eye glasses, black shorts and boots, and white t-shirts that bear the legend 'queer leaders'.

Figure 15: (also figure 1) Three men dressed in tutu's, black bikini tops, stockings and high heels, with Madonna early 80's style head dresses (basically just a large piece of fabric wrapped around the head with a bow in front).

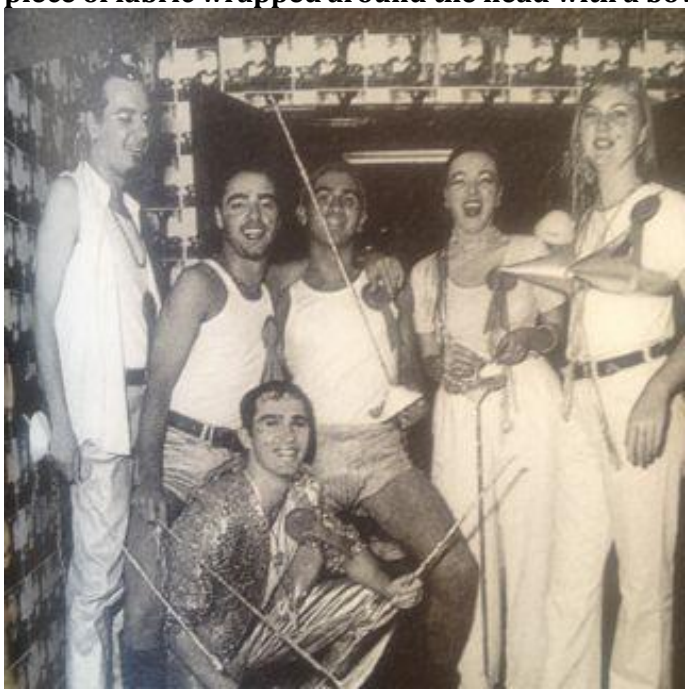

Figure 16: A group of six men and women, dressed in white pants and tops. One woman has a conical shaped bra over her top (one assumes inspired by Madonna's Gaultier top during her Blond Ambition tour). The group carries sticks, which may or may not be fishing rods of some sort

Figure 17: Woman dressed in 20's style head-dress and make up, with a dress which might be made out of tin foil, a man with bicycle cut outs glued to his bicycle helmet.

Figure 18: Two people, their back turned to the camera, seem to be wearing turbans with fish glued to them.

Figure 19: To men with their upper bodies and faces painted in black & white checkered print, black trousers, white socks, one in black shoes, and one in white shoes.

Figure 20: Image shows a group of people standing in front of a large Nelson Mandela cut-out. They wear a variety of animal horns, balloons and other shapes on their heads, some are in silver body paint.

These images show the various interpretations of a sporty theme as manifested by the participants of The Locker Room Project. It also allows for a further analysis of the understanding of any existing vestimentary codes on the evening in questions. What is interesting in the images is the incorporation of various garments or accessories that were in keeping with the times, such as the conical shape bra worn in image 5, the biker boots worn in image 3, or the fishnets worn by one of the women in image 2. These were all accessories that could have been read by the other participants at the event for the wearer's ability to understand and incorporate current trends into a non-trendy theme, such as sports. The biker boots could have been by worn by the two women to show their allegiance with the more butch, lesbian crowd (Beffon 1995 p.202), or could have been a statement to show that they were on-trend with the current (at that time) public fascination with all things 'grunge'. The conical bra that would have served as both a nod to Madonna and to the designer Jean Paul Gaultier must have been one of the most popular costume accessories in the early 90's (as can be attested to by anyone who lived through that time). By wearing these, the woman is showing her understanding of popular culture, and perhaps of the fact that both Madonna and Jean Paul Gaultier were at the time considered gay icons (Watts 1996 p.100). The fishnets can be seen as another nod to the popular grunge aesthetics of the time, I believe, and fishnets also seem to be a recurring item worn at costume parties.

What this image analysis shows us is that no matter how strictly the organisers wanted to enforce a strict vestimentary code, the participants found ways to show their allegiance to their various 'tribe' or friends, or to the current zeitgeist. This also shows an ability to truly understand the various vestimentary codes that must have been visible, and a reliance on the fact that other participants would read the same vestimentary codes into the various items of dress on display. This is in no way guaranteed, as surely what we understand of others is based on what we understand of ourselves. My interpretation of the conical bra being based on the Gaultier model worn by Madonna is based on my own knowledge of Western popular culture in the early 1990's. Even a global superstar, like Madonna was at the time, is not known everywhere. It would be amusing to ponder what a person who had no knowledge of this piece of clothing worn by Madonna might read into the conical bra worn by the woman at MCQP - The Locker Room Project. However if, as several have criticized (again, this I learned from word of mouth) that first MCQP was mainly attended by middle class, mostly white Capetonians, then we can safely assume that most, if not all, would have understood the

Madonna reference, thereby binding them together in their cultural reading and a joint understanding of their vestimentary codes.

This brings us on to the criticism MCQP has received over the years regarding how some people felt that the organisers did not do enough to ensure that disadvantaged queer people, mainly from the Cape Flats, also had an opportunity to go to MCQP. As a subject this is difficult for many reasons. It is part of a larger discussion in the LGBTQI scene in Cape Town, and I will therefore approach it in relation to all the events I based my research around. When I mentioned the topic to Andre Vorster, he sighed, and said that in retrospect they thought that more could have been done at the time to be more inclusive. However, MCQP was never NOT inclusive, the point being that everyone would be welcomed, perhaps queers from the Cape Flats even more so, due to the liberal queer community, and the liberal arts community's desire to engage in interracial socialisation now that it was suddenly available to them in a way it had not been before (Charl - December 29th 2014). However, there were two main barriers to there being more black queer people at MCQP. Firstly, and most easily explained, was the financial aspect. A ticket for The Locker Room Project would set you back 30 Rand, and in addition, any participant would need transport to the venue, money for beverages and most importantly, money to put together a costume in accordance with the theme. This would have been out of reach for a majority of South Africans in 1994, and still is to this day. Secondly, and more complicated, is the invisible but still very real social barrier that was implemented by apartheid, and has continued to exist in the new democracy.

I believe MCQP was (and is) in many ways a Western import. The influences were clearly imported from club scenes in major Western cities, such as London and New York, according to Andre. In particular the cross-pollination of art, fashion and fest with a dash of fetishism, was popular in the early 90's, seen at parties such as Torture Garden in London, or at the hedonistic New York club, Limelight. What MCQP did do was add an element of South Africa in the décor (such as the depiction of Nelson Mandela wearing boxing gloves, overlooking the beer bar), and in the individual artists' representation of South African uniqueness as they approached their various tasks in the run up to the event. What was truly South African about the event however was the unique position of the country at the time, and what that meant not only to the revelers at the event, but also the mere fact of there even being a party in the first place. This negation of previous social norms should have contributed to there being a more mixed crowd at this, the first MCQP, but it did not. What this shows us is that even though the legal barriers that

had been in place to keep the different races of South Africa separated had been lifted, the social implications of decades enduring those barriers were still very much in place. This meant that there was a certain tension between queer communities based not only on sexuality, but also on racial and social background (Gevisser & Cameron 1995 p.79).

This matter was not helped by the fraught relationship between the South African liberation/struggle movement and the gay-rights fighters. From the early 1980's, the South African gay-rights movement distanced itself from the liberation movement. This was brought on by the fact that the gay-rights movement was mainly run by, and concerned with, white LGBTQI South Africans, and did not see that their plight was indeed intricately linked with that of the struggle movement. The idea, as read in *Sex & Politics in South Africa* (Hoad, Martin & Reid 2005) was that GLAD and other gay-rights groups would have a greater chance at success if they did not associate themselves with other civil rights movements. In other words, the gay-rights they sought were only to benefit white LGBTQI South Africans, as any queer black South Africans would still be under the rules of apartheid, whether they were gay or not.

This, of course, was not how things were to pan out. Several black South Africans came to the forefront of the gay-rights movement, however, by some factions this was considered too little, too late, and therefore the gay-rights movement continued to be a predominantly white South African enterprise. It is hard to imagine that black LGBTQI South Africans don't still remember this slight against them by their fellow LGBTQI brothers and sisters. This becomes apparent in incidents such as that of Johannesburg Pride 2012, something that I discuss further in the chapter on Soweto Pride. However, I believe it is also apparent in the divide by colour of LGBTQI people in Cape Town, and why so few black queer people attended The Locker Room Project, or the 2004 MCQP, Jungle Fever (which I attended) or again last years MCQP, Royal Navy (which I was also present at). This again cements my belief that doing a study of fashion's influence on gay identity in central Cape Town will always be a study of mainly white (and perhaps) coloured South Africans, which includes the black South Africans that have risen to a middle class income, but not those who are in an impoverished position and live outside the city itself. An event like MCQP shows this divide in a way I believe legitimises my point, and makes it clear that if I were to study a more racially mixed group of LGBTQI people I would have to compare events where either one or the other was more present. I would also then be talking about vestimentary codes where people of quite different cultural backgrounds would have a very different understanding of what certain

expressions of fashion meant. I have tackled this question in the chapter on Soweto Pride, but I just wished to again emphasize this truth in South African society as a whole, and therefore also in any queer or LGBTQI communities as well.

Royal Navy - MCQP 2014

The 2014 MCQP, Royal Navy, was held at the Cape Town City Hall, a beautiful, old and rather grand building on the Grand Parade in central Cape Town. Over 10000 attendees were expected, the party was to start at 5 p.m. and last well into the early morning. Stages had been erected outside, while inside there were five dance floors playing host to a variety of DJ's and performance acts. Arriving at the party there was the traditional stage where new arrivals would pose to have their picture taken to draw attention to their costumes as they entered the party. Inside the party the decorations were limited and a far cry from the earlier days of MCQP when you could expect new art installations around every corner. Here, some fabric had been draped, seemingly at random, covering patches of wall and engulfing the already beautiful grand staircase of the city hall in a silvery glow. Upstairs there were neon cloths hanging from the ceilings, and the only trace of decorations actually connected to the theme, Royal Navy, was to be found in strings of balloons depicting an oversized king's crown. This disconnection between theme, venue and décor was something that Andre had lamented when we discussed his view on the new owners of MCQP. He said: " A few years back the theme was Flower Power, it was held at the convention centre, and the décor was giant Santa Clauses. Those three things don't really have anything to do with each other! If your theme is Flower Power, surely you would have the party outside somewhere, and get hippie and 1960's inspired décor? It's a disappointment to see that the new owners just don't care about that anymore, for them it's just all about the money" (Andre – November 29th 2014).

(I made several attempts at contacting Ian McMahon, through social media, email, and friends that knew him, but he seemed reluctant, or perhaps just completely disinterested, to talk to me. While in previous years, Andre Vorster had always made himself available to the various academics that wished to use MCQP in their research, it seemed MCQP had now closed their doors to those wishing to explore and contextualise this institution in Cape Town.)

Royal Navy was the theme for MCQP 2014, well advertised and promoted in both local and national media before the event. To illustrate some of the changes that have occurred with the changing of ownership and management at MCQP, here is an interview with Ian McMahon (the current event manager in charge of MCQP) from the online publication Mambaonline:

You joined MCQP in 2008. What do you think you've brought to the event since then?

The last couple of years we've managed to welcome a bigger and more varied group of people to MCQP, making it a truly inclusive event. MCQP started out as a gay event in 1994. Today most of the partygoers are straight. Just under 30% of partygoers are from outside Cape Town. It's not only a showcase of Cape Town's creative spirit, but also a platform for people from all over South Africa and from other parts of the world to meet and have fun.

Where do you see MCQP going into the next 21 years?

This is only the beginning of great things to come. We're looking forward to bringing MCQP to other parts of South Africa and we're also planning projects that will allow us to help Capetonians plan their dress-up parties.

Do you think it's gotten as big as it can get – or can it get bigger?

There is always room for growth. There are still a lot of people who have yet to experience the fun and excitement of MCQP.

Do you feel that MCQP still remains a predominantly "queer" event or has it gone mainstream?

I don't know if mainstream is the correct word – not everybody believes in dressing up in costume and having fun, dancing to music – but MCQP is definitely not a gay event anymore. It's a party for everyone. Most partygoers are actually straight. It will however always be queer or eccentric…[15]

In regards to this interview I found it rather odd that the director of MCQP went to great lengths to emphasize that MCQP is no longer a gay event. It is also contradictory in many ways. In the days leading up to, during and after Royal Navy, both radio and newspapers billed the party as the 'largest celebration of LGBTQI culture in South Africa' (GoodHopeFM 21st of December 2014). I was in De Waterkant area a couple of days before the Royal Navy party, and saw several people handing out flyers for the event at various gay friendly venues, showing that MCQP still targets LGBTQI people for their

[15] http://www.mambaonline.com/2014/12/16/mcqps-ian-mcmahon-talks-royal-navy-mcqp-jozi/ January 8th 2015

event. At the event itself (which I attended with a friend) I had the impression of a mostly gay, male crowd with some groups of heterosexual women in the company of gay men. While my observations are of course not equal to fact, MCQP Royal Navy seemed to be very much a "gay party". I spoke to about ten people after the event and they all agreed that they thought it was very much a predominantly gay crowd at the party, albeit with a decent percentage of straight people mixed in.

However, could it be that if expectations of MCQP were that of it being a mainly LGBTQI party, and that the same assumptions were true for the people I spoke to, that we simply projected our idea of what gay people might look like, thereby assuming a crowd to be gay that wasn't? Here is where the factor of the costume at MCQP comes in, and how the deviance from a set vestimentary code can challenge our perception of an individual based on their clothing. With a theme like 'Royal Navy' it was inevitable that this party would contain sailors galore, with a few pirates and some kings and queens thrown in for good measure. The plethora of sailor hats, jaunty neck scarves, short shorts and stripy vests on offer was rather overwhelming. When faced with a group of young men dressed up to match in the clothing items just mentioned, I tend to make assumptions about their sexuality, by way of judging their clothes. I do not think I am alone in this, as those I spoke to after MCQP all based the their assumptions on how people looked, dressed and behaved. However, can we not assume that wearing a costume might free people to act a bit more unguarded than they normally would, and with that creating an atmosphere that seemed less impeded by the heterosexual ideal? There is also the undeniable aspect of camp within the creation of MCQP events, something that perhaps was brought more to the fore during the event's earlier years, but that is nevertheless a large part of MCQP's continued success:

In his Master's thesis, "Queering the city: A social and spatial account of the Mother City Queer Project at the Cape Town International Convention Centre in 2003"; Daniel Steyn writes:

Originally the broadly influential theme was accompanied by a camp style of presentation and creativity. The theme, interpreted in this camp style would be the play on words in naming the various dance floors and musical styles, and the installations worked around the theme using the cheap, recycled and everyday materials made to "look beautiful in that camp queer style". This camp style sought to create inexpensive installations that did not promote the politics or agenda of the event but were rather exaggerated, textured and

playful. For example the Locker Room featured the "Leaping Latex Lesbians" in the "Lovely Long-jump Lounge" and "Gorgeous Goalkeepers" in the "Ra-Ra Rugga-Bugga Bar", and ten years later a poster advertising Kitsch Kitchen encouraged people to bring their "full-flavoured finger-licking fruity friends" to join "fab fridge-cake faggots" and "marvelous moffie muffins". The style was intended to be consistent but the theme would change each year. (Steyn, 2003 P. 117)

This shows the undeniable influence of a camp aesthetic in the first decade of MCQP, a tongue-in-check approach to décor and costumes, intended as something to be 'read' and understood by participants of the events. However, the later owners of MCQP, who dropped most of the artistic aspects of MCQP in favour of a more financially driven motive, did not take this approach.

Camp as an aesthetic was crucial to set the mood for the early MCQP's, and to influence the costumes of the punters. Camp, along with kitsch, came with an idea of not taking oneself to seriously, while at the same time fully understanding the irony implied in a camp approach. In *Notes On Camp* (1966) Susan Sontag wrote: *"Camp is a vision of the world in terms of style - but a particular kind of style. It is the love of the exaggerated, the "off", of things-being-what-they-are-not."*

In a sense this is a perfect description of the visual ethos of MCQP, and with it the camp influence on the costumes and attitudes of the party participants. Understanding the camp approach to the fullest would allow revelers to free themselves of their own vestimentary codes while singularly adopting a new vestimentary code for the night, that of camp. This seems to contradict Ian McMahon's statement that MCQP is not longer a predominantly gay event. For as Sontag (1966) says: "*Nevertheless, even though homosexuals have been its vanguard, Camp taste is much more than homosexual taste. Obviously, its metaphor of life as theater is peculiarly suited as a justification and projection of a certain aspect of the situation of homosexuals. (The Camp insistence on not being "serious," on playing, also connects with the homosexual's desire to remain youthful.) Yet one feels that if homosexuals hadn't more or less invented Camp, someone else would. For the aristocratic posture with relation to culture cannot die, though it may persist only in increasingly arbitrary and ingenious ways. Camp is (to repeat) the relation to style in a time in which the adoption of style, as such, has become altogether questionable. (In the modem era, each new style, unless frankly anachronistic, has come on the scene as an anti-style)."*

Camp is interlinked and interchangeable with homosexuality in that homosexuals, by and large, promoted the camp aesthetic as desirable. Therefore, to remove MCQP's focus on queer culture is to remove the foundation of the party, camp. Without it, MCQP becomes just another party, having nothing unique or different to offer besides the promise that revelers will arrive in costume, which, at the 2014 MCQP it became apparent people were very relaxed about. The original appeal of MCQP was based on its slight underground roots, the promise of something that might be a bit more daring, more outré than your average large-scale event. By denying its queer majority, and thereby its camp aesthetics, MCQP lost touch with its own beginnings, thereby setting the whole party afloat in a sea of uncertain intentions and motives.

Surely, a theme like Royal Navy is the very epitome of camp. Striped jersey sailor boys conjure images and inspirations from artists such as Pierre & Gilles, or the French fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier, known for his signature striped Breton jersey. From watching party attendees sweeping into the event and posing at the arrivals stage, I felt that the emphasis on camp was as present, if not even more, then previous MCQP's I had attended. Even what looked like heterosexual couples arrived decked out in kitschy and camp dress, sequins, feathers and sailor hats galore were on display. I realized that perhaps in trying to 'straighten' MCQP, the organizers may have succeeded in having more heterosexual attendees, but that they used MCQP as an opportunity to explore their campest self, far removed from any everyday vestimentary codes that they may encounter in their normal lives.

Figure 21: A group of partygoers at Royal Navy MCQP sporting the ubiquitous Breton stripes. Photo via Facebook

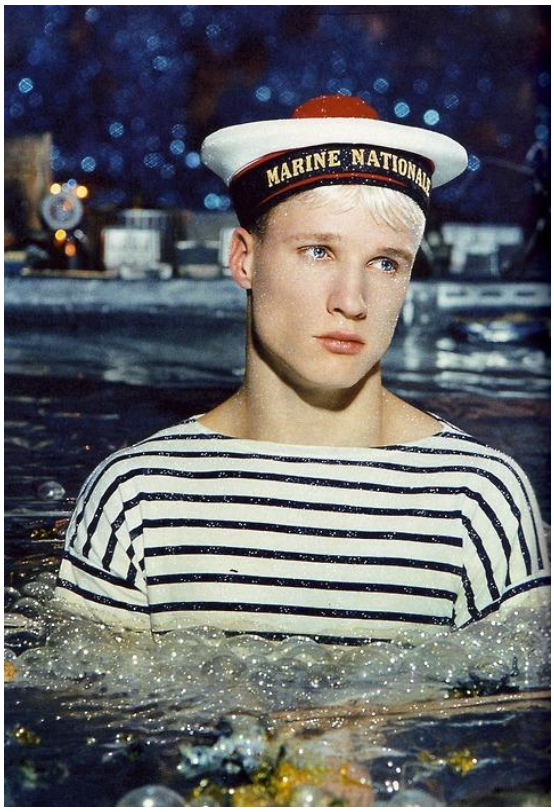

Figure 22: An image of a sailor by Pierre et Gilles www.artnet.com

A Conversation from MCQP 2014 Royal Navy:

(Wandering the corridors of city hall, exploring the various rooms and stages hosting a multitude of acts and DJs I bump into a very excitable lady, with spiky hair of which she has jauntily placed a sailors hat)

Me: Hi there! You look positively ecstatically happy!

Woman: (while practically jumping up and down) I am! I love it here!

Me: Is this your first MCQP?

Woman: (laughs) NO! I've been coming since they've started, luv! I met my girlfriend at one of these parties (points to dancing with a group of other women)

Me: I see, and what do you think of MCQP now, compared to how it was in the beginning?

Woman: Oh well, we all know it's rubbish now, isn't it? The effort has gone out of it, and the younger kids don't seem to care about the message. It's not alternative anymore, it has gone completely mainstream… But we still love it!

Me: Why?

Woman: Because it just feels like a big carnival! And no matter what the straight people say, it is still OUR party, a queer-gay-lesbian what have you party, where the straight people are more than welcome to come, but WE call the shots!

Me: Then how do you feel about the man in charge, Ian McKellon, saying that MCQP is not a gay party anymore?

Woman: Bullshit! He can say whatever he wants; we know it's our night! (Winks at me before disappearing back into the crowd…)

Summary & Conclusion

The research on which this thesis is based started out as an exploration of gay lives in Cape Town, South Africa. My goal was to examine the development of gay identity in a post-apartheid context, especially focusing on unpacking any apparent vestimentary codes among gay men. I soon discovered that to explore gay lives was to explore and understand the personal stories of all the men I met and interviewed in the research process. Therefore the work took on a much more personal aspect than I had originally anticipated, as I in retrospect explore in the foreword to this thesis.

I was often touched by the honesty of people speaking about something as deeply personal as gender identity and sexuality, and I feel a tremendous amount of respect for the material I have here divulged to the reader. When keeping in mind the broad aspect of the stories I have borrowed for this thesis I feel that there cannot be one simple conclusion of the work, as there are as many conclusions as there are stories to be told.

While attempting to unravel the complexities of gender it must be understood that our own viewpoint on gender comes into play. In today's world where terms like 'genderfluid' and 'gender-flux'[16] are used among some young people to explain their own concept of gender identity, a term such as 'gay' seems overly simplistic. Almost every interviewee I spoke with expressed a different viewpoint on what it meant to be 'gay'. Therefore it becomes important to note that the flux-like nature of gender and sexuality cannot be fully assimilated in this one thesis. Rather, my own understanding of gender comes into play as I chose my own interview subjects based in part on what I assumed to know about their sexual and gender identity. This underlying assumption of sexual and gender identity is then again reflected in the analysing of vestimentary codes. If I was already making assumptions about gender and sexuality based on an interviewee fitting into my narrative on vestimentary codes, were the 'codes' then already doing their job?

Perhaps then, if vestimentary codes represent anything, it is a desire to adhere to a group with a set sexual identity. Possibly only in the 'gay village' of De Waterkant are these vestimentary codes still used to verify a code of conduct and identity by including

16 http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/06/18/miley-cyrus-and-jaden-smith-s-gender-fluid-revolution.html accessed June 26th 2015

those that adhere to the code, and excluding those that do not. MCQP shows us the unity between LGBTQI and heterosexual people that exist in Cape Town, and that when costume is used the need for definite vestimentary codes falls away. The chapters on Cape Town and Soweto LGBTQI Pride refer to the strong expressions of LGBTQI identity not just in Cape Town, but South Africa as a whole. 'Pride' events show us that while clothing can be used for celebration and protest, at the core of 'Pride' is the desire of LGBTQI people to express and accept their own identity. Finally, the bi-monthly 'Gat' parties tell a story of gay identity that is rooted in a past many South Africans would like to forget. The conservative ways of dress of the old guard at the 'Gat' party stands in stark contrast with the younger force moving in, meaning that perhaps soon wistful remembrance of 'the old South Africa' may be a thing of the past. However, the 'Gat' parties also show us that a gay identity does not need to be liberal to exist. I hope the juxtaposition of the 'Gat' party and MCQP show that even though the men that started the two parties came from relatively similar backgrounds, their outlook on their own and others sexual identity, and what kind of platform they chose to represent that identity, could be seen as indicative of their own understanding of sexual and gender identity.

In the 1990 preface to her work Gender Trouble, Judith Butler writes: "*Gender practices within gay and lesbian cultures often thematize "the natural" in parodic contexts that bring into relief the performative construction of an original and true sex*" (p. xxix). With this in mind, perhaps the adaption of vestimentary codes and a 'gay identity' can be seen as an attempt by some LGBTQI people to adapt a "natural" sexuality within the LGBTQI spectre, while truthfully identifying their gender in a much more flux-like manner? Were a person to feel pressured into adapting the mannerisms and ways of dress that is so apparent in 'gay culture', and to therefore be easily identified as being 'gay'; could this be as gender and sexuality simplistic as 'the old way' of assuming that all those with male genitalia are male and heterosexual, and those with female genitalia are women and straight? A very human need to fit-in with those one encounter every day became apparent in my search for vestimentary codes among the gay men of Cape Town. This need does not disappear when the person self identifies as non-heterosexual in any way, but rather creates newer categories of self to identify with. In many ways, I believe the creation of 'gay culture' can be linked to the need to stand together in the face of oppression and persecution, a need for safety among likeminded people. However, the reality today is that there are as many gender identities as there are people, and that those who identify within the LGBTQI spectre often do not have anything else in

common than a slight deviation from the heteronormative narrative. Therefore vestimentary codes can be seen as uniform to create an easily identifiable common ground. However, as South African society adopts a more normalised approach to LGBTQI people, the need for categorisation as a way to self identify might become less important. Were there to be no more discrimination of LGBTQI people, the need to stand together and celebrate 'Pride' would fall away. Already we see how a mainly LGBTQI inclusive event such as MCQP has transformed into an evening with a more non-sexuality focused approach. As my interviews and research showed me, it is often the older LGBTQI people that hold on to what they see as 'gay culture' traditions, such as 'Pride' or the 'Gat' party, while younger LGBTQI people find it unnecessary to comply with these traditions, preferring to go where they please, without letting their gender identity be the final decider in what they wear, where they go, or who they see.

As the need for vestimentary codes and strict self-identification within one aspect of the acronym LGBTQI perhaps becomes more diluted in the future, research on the matter will become even more rewarding. Sexuality and gender is such an enormous part of how people present themselves and are perceived by others, and to focus future research on those that toy with these set perceptions would be most intriguing. As South Africa continues to take a stand for gay rights, there is still a long way to go before discrimination of LGBTQI people will become a thing of the past. Therefore some vestimentary codes will continue to flourish as LGBTQI people strive to adopt and fit in with their chosen part of 'gay culture'. The positive influence of 'gay culture' must not be denied in any way, as it is the LGBTQI people that have engaged in years of fighting against oppression, and celebrating their sexuality, that have changed the publics perception of LGBTQI people in South Africa. Therefore, perhaps the best way forward for LGBTQI people in South Africa is to continue the fight and celebration that have led LGBTQI people this far, while at the same time opening up further to concepts such as 'genderfluid'. This allows for a larger acceptance of those that may identify as being somewhere within the LGBTQI spectre, but at the same time refuse to fall into any one category, or adhere to any set vestimentary codes.

List of Acronyms:

LGBT- Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender

LGBTQI- Lesbian-gay Bisexual-Transgender-Queer-Intersexed

MCQP- Mother City Queer Project

GALA- Gay & Lesbian Archives- Johannesburg

List of Interviews:

Andre	November 29th, 2014 February 13th 2015
Arianna	September 27th , October 5th 2014
B	October 11th 2014
Charl	October 9th 2014, December 29th
Dan & Owen	October 9th 2014
Donovan	December 5th 2014, January 12th 2015
Ferdinand	August 20th- March 10th 2014
Frank	January 12th
J	February 28th 2015
Jacques	December 18th 2014
James	October 14th 201
Johan	December 18th 2014
Katlego	September 27th 2014
Keraan	December 18th 2014
M	September 17th 2014
Mary Scary	December 15th 2014
Monde	September 15th 2014
Phillip	February 28th 2015
Anonymous 1-3	October 27th 2014
Anonymous 4-7	December 20th 2014
Anonymous 8-10	February 28th 2015

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