# THE INVENTION OF *MOFFIE* LIFE IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

ALLANISE CLOETE

2142278

UNIVERSITY *of the* WESTERN CAPE

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Supervisor: Professor Heike Becker

**DECLARATION**

I declare that the **"The invention of *moffie* life in Cape Town, South Africa"** is entirely my own work, except where otherwise stated, and has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

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**Allanise Cloete**

UNIVERSITY *of the*
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I started this work, I was not only treading carefully around conceptualisations of the body, gender and sexuality, but was unsure about my ability to show my understanding of how my interlocutors make sense of their lives. My trepidation gradually decreased through fieldwork and academic and informal chats with my supervisor and fellow PhD colleagues. I began to feel less like a "stranger in a strange land".

I remain forever thankful to Professor Heike Becker who gave of her time to read and comment on several drafts of my thesis. Her words of encouragement such as "Just keep going" pushed me to a level of critical thinking that I did not know I was capable of. This kind of support is immeasurable and I will never be able to express my gratitude enough. Her encouragement to attend post-graduate seminars was my saving grace, having left university life 10 years before on completion of my MA in Social Anthropology.

Following committed attendance of post-graduate seminars, I was one of three PhD candidates invited into a project funded by the South Africa Netherlands Research Programme on Alternatives in Development (SANPAD). I am thankful for the opportunity to share my work with fellow colleagues at the Meertens Institute and the University of Amsterdam. I am deeply grateful to her in her role as my supervisor.

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The support that I received from those in the Anthropology and Sociology Department at UWC and the IASSCS was appreciated and needed. On the "home front" I thank Dr. Heidi van Rooyen who has been a constant support and without whose "coaching conversations" I would not have been able to complete this work or see my true value as researcher and academic; and that my opinions and my ideas do matter.

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**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation is an ethnography of the figure of the *moffie* as a performance of same sex desire amongst gender non-conforming men, as it is celebrated in the 'coloured' ('coloured' is a constructed racial category, similar to 'white' and 'black' designated onto South Africans during the system of legislated racial segregation) townships of Cape Town. In this dissertation I demonstrate that the *moffie* is central to the lives of gender non-conforming men living in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. Through historical and contemporary ethnography, I show how *moffie* life is a representation of same sex desire amongst men that is highly visible. I reveal how *moffie* life is socially sanctioned through feminine self-styling, embodied through that of the gay hairdresser, annual gay beauty pageant competitions and Gay Pride events.

I argue that this social acceptance is not outside (nor at the centre) of what is considered 'normal', but validates 'colouredness' as a creolised identity that makes allowances for such performances. I incorporate the work of Édouard Glissant, the Martinican philosopher who highlighted the blending, but also the non-essentialist formation of identities, into something new and different. In this way, by conceptualising 'colouredness' as a creolised identity, I depart, as does sociologist Zimitri Erasmus (2001), from 'pure' considerations of 'colouredness' based on miscegenation that were imposed by slavery, colonialism and the *apartheid* state. Like Erasmus (2001), I stress the ambiguity and fluidity (the making and re-making) of 'coloured' identity formations, whilst still remaining mindful of the conditions (i.e. slavery and colonialism) under which they were created.

In this instance, constructions of not only race but also of gender are seen as performances that are in essence unfixed and are continually reinvented. The use of gender as performative (as articulated by gender studies scholar, Judith Butler) implies the ongoing making thereof through repetitive acts which can be unsettled or interrupted. I show gender's character as performative in the context of the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town - how the notion of an original gender is often parodied (i.e. through comic exaggeration) within the cultural practices of drag, wherein the imitative structure of gender is revealed. To this end, this dissertation explores the following questions: Are creole social formations such as those found in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town facilitating the emergence of alternative performances of gender? Are the making and performance of alternative forms of gender an integral part of the processes of creolisation?

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Although the visibility of gender non-conforming men and women has increased in South Africa since the adoption of the 1996 Constitution (that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation), this dissertation shows that highly visible performances such as gay beauty pageant competitions have been a commonplace phenomenon in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town since before the advent of the 1996 Constitution. I make use of archival documentation to show that this visibility can be traced to the figure of the *moffie* who led the New Year celebrations in the city of Cape Town that culminates in street processions in the city centre known as the *Kaapse Klopse* (translated from Afrikaans to English, as The Cape Town Coon Carnival). During Carnival, a 'coloured' gender non-conforming man dressed in female clothing often led the carnival processions. These men were known in the local vernacular as *moffies*. I demonstrate that *moffie* life in the 1950s and 1960s was a representation of a highly visible same sex subculture that was able to flourish before the advent of legal protections. In doing so, I incorporate archival documentation and interviews with gender non-conforming men who lived in the inner-city suburb of District Six, near Cape Town harbour.

My fieldwork took me to the local clubs and bars, community centres and school halls situated in the 'coloured' townships of the Cape Flats (an area of Cape Town where 'coloured' and 'black' South Africans were forcibly relocated during *apartheid*). In these public spaces, local pageant queens held gay beauty pageant competitions where most of the audience members were not gay. Here my interlocutors (i.e. 'coloured' gender non-conforming men) refer to themselves as "girls" or "ladies"; "drag queens"; "female impersonators"; "gay"; every now and then, as "women"; very often, as "*moffie*". Snowballing from my initial fieldwork at gay beauty pageants, I started hanging out with my interlocutors: Taking part in everyday activities such as buying groceries at the local supermarket and window shopping for ball gowns at the local mall for the evening wear section of gay beauty pageants. I accompanied interlocutors to bars and clubs located on the Cape Flats and was able to hang out in the homes of my interlocutors, and thereby introduced to other spaces such as hair salons. In these social spaces, I was introduced to a 'language' based on female pronouns known as *moffietaal* (direct translation from Afrikaans to English is *moffie* language and also known as Gayle). *Moffietaal* is very much part of the *moffie's* performance of the feminine.

My study thus shows how gender non-conforming men living in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town create and invent themselves, through modes of self-styling, to stage a personal and a public performance that is crucial to an affirmation of femininity, and to the level of social acceptance that gender non-conforming men enjoy in the townships where they live. Through historical and contemporary ethnography, I demonstrate how creole social formations such as those found in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town make allowances for the emergence of alternative performances of gender such as those embodied in the figure of the *moffie.* I show how these can perhaps become useful in answering questions in post-1994 South Africa regarding issues of belonging and citizenship in respect of male-bodied persons who do not match masculine gender norms.

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

From childhood, I recall the hairdresser, Alexis, who dressed in female clothing despite his masculine features. I remember the boy who played netball (considered a feminine sport) with us in the street, and our next door neighbour's son who insisted on playing the girl child when we played house-house. Boys who played netball and house-house with us were known in the local vernacular as *moffies* (Cloete, 2011a b, 2013). I learnt that *moffie* referred to boys who cry when they get hurt and boys who chose home economics instead of woodwork at school (Cloete, 2011a b, 2013). Later on I learnt that the term is used to refer to boys or men who love and have sexual desires for other men. These were my understandings of what constituted *moffie-ness* during my formative years. Thus from childhood in the 'coloured'[1] township[2] of Belhar (situated about 22kms from the city centre of Cape Town) where I grew up, the *moffie* remained not only a ubiquitous figure, but appeared highly visible.

*Moffie-ness* as recalled in my childhood memories was associated with domesticity (i.e. cooking and cleaning); and with other feminine craftsmanship such as hairdressing. The historical figure of the *moffie* however is located within one of Cape Town's popular cultural events known as the *Kaapse Klopse* (translated from Afrikaans into English, as The Cape Town Coon Carnival, and formally known as The Cape Town Minstrel Festival). The *Kaapse Klopse* is organised into different troupes (i.e. *klopse*) parading and singing through the inner city streets of Cape Town as part of the New Year celebrations.

The *moffie* (as the only non-masculine performer, locally known during Carnival as the *voorloper*) (direct translation from Afrikaans to English as the frontrunner) often led the street processions during the annual New Year celebrations in the city of Cape Town (see Archival Material 1). Thus during Carnival, the *moffie* occupied a highly visible and central place in the *klopse.* During Carnival, according to historian Shamil Jeppie (1990a, 1990b), the public

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[1]'Coloured' is a constructed racial category, similar to 'white' and 'black', designated onto South Africans during the *apartheid* (the literal translation from Afrikaans to English refers to separateness) system of legislated segregation. The use of the terms 'coloured', 'colouredness' and other racial categories such as 'white' and 'black' throughout this dissertation, remains highly contested.

[2]Historically, townships are urban housing areas usually on the margins of towns and cities as a legacy of the *apartheid* system and which still remain underdeveloped and segregated along racial lines (Cloete et al., 2014).

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performance of the *moffie* was permissible amongst the inner-city population, at the same time as it inverted the cultural code of the city. Thus Carnival allowed for the mocking of traditional hierarchies of power, and for alternative performances of gender as embodied in the *moffie* figure.



Archival Material 1. Carmen Miranda and a dwarf at the *Kaapse Klopse* 1957
Photo by Barney Desai. *Source* (Chetty, 1995)

The *moffie* as *voorloper* in the *Kaapse Klopse* is no longer a prominent figure in the annual New Year's street processions, however the *moffie* in its camp aesthetic is socially sanctioned through gay beauty pageant competitions. Gay beauty pageant competitions have become popular social events in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. Similar to the *Kaapse Klopse*, gay beauty pageant competitions allow for the social order to be suspended, in particular with regards to the transgression of gender boundaries. On pageant night the limitations assigned to the body are tested with the fashion and stylization incorporated by the *moffie*. At gay beauty pageant competitions, pageant contestants adopt iconic female names (called stage names) and assume clothing styles, hairstyles and cosmetic practices that invoke the feminine persona onstage. The use of the names of female iconic figures (i.e. Carmen Miranda) goes along with the hyperbolic performance of femininity enacted by gay pageant contestants. Thus the *moffie* as recalled in my childhood memories was not only visible in the mundaneness that constitutes everyday life (i.e. cooking, cleaning and hairdressing), but obtained social sanction through public performances such as that of the *Kaapse Klopse* and gay beauty pageant competitions.

In summary, the personal and public performance of the *moffie* as recalled in my childhood memories was associated with femininity, and therefore implicitly juxtaposed with dominant ideas of masculinity. I understood in my formative years that the *moffie* does not adhere to the social norms and values that are expected of men. Social norms and values prescribe that men look and act masculine. Socially, very narrowly defined, it is expected of men to be the aggressors, the main providers of the household, and to marry women and have children. These masculine ideals and social expectations demonstrate that sex and gender are seen as not distinct in people's realities, despite theorisations that they are completely separate.

In the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town, those men who were assigned male at birth and who do not conform to these masculine ideals are called *moffie*. They are called *moffie* regardless of having same sex desires. Most often however, the term *moffie* is reserved for those men who have sexual desires for other men. Even though the term *moffie* is commonly used in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town, there is ambivalence regarding the appropriation thereof. Hence in this dissertation, I use the term gender non-conforming men to refer to those persons who have been assigned male at birth and who are perceived as transgressing masculine gender norms (in particular having sexual desires for other men). According to sociologist Eric Grollman (2011) gender non-conforming people are often assumed to also be lesbian, gay, or bisexual, while gender conforming people are assumed to be heterosexual. In this dissertation gender non-conforming men identify in terms of gender and sexuality as "man", "woman", "girl", "lady", "*moffie*", "drag queen", "female impersonator", "transgender[3]", "gay", "straight/heterosexual", "bisexual", "versatile", or can identify with all or none of these categories. I use the term gender non-conforming men with discretion because this term excludes those individuals who were assigned male at birth but who have always felt like a woman in a male body.

Not conforming to these masculine ideals subverts conventional social norms and values, and by extension those who are seen as transgressing said social norms are made more vulnerable to social rejection and marginalization. I recall that even though my sister and I played with

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[3]The term transgender is an "umbrella term" that refers to when one's gender identity differs from one's assigned sex (Coleman et al., 2012).The term describes a wide range of identities (i.e. transsexuals, transvestite, drag queen, and drag king and gender non-conforming persons) roles and experiences which can vary considerably from one culture to another (Poteat et al., 2015). This definition however does not capture the complexities that come with being confined to a 'male body' whilst performing a gender social position that ascribes to femininity. The reality however is far more complex, as reminded by Marksamer and Vade (2016) that transgendered bodies can be at any stage of medical transition, ranging from male to female to unusual and non-conforming bodies that cannot simply be defined in male-female binary.

the next door neighbour's son when we played house-house, he was often ridiculed and was subjected to name-calling as punishment for his non-conformity. Thus the term *moffie* is occasionally used in a derogatory manner to inflict hurt and pain onto those men who performed gender differently. Yet at the same time it is in this social context that boys and men were allowed to play netball, drag in public and engage in feminine tasks such as cleaning, cooking and hairdressing.

In this ambivalent social context, gender non-conforming men find themselves having to accommodate conflicting ideologies in their everyday lives, creating a dialogue between what is often deemed stigmatised (i.e. same sex identifications) and the dominant ideologies of heterosexuality. I argue that this ambivalent social context enables a space where sexual and social identities are negotiated, a space where gender non-conforming men are allowed to play and experiment with new and emergent social gender formations.

Thus this dissertation describes the figure of the *moffie* as a performance of same sex desire that is celebrated in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. While not outside (nor at the centre) of what is considered to be 'normal', I argue this validates 'colouredness' as a creolised cultural identity, which in turn makes allowances for such performances. In conceptualising 'colouredness' as a creolised identity, I am guided by Zimitri Erasmus (2001) as she departs from 'pure' considerations of 'colouredness' based on miscegenation that was imposed by slavery, colonialism and the South African system of legislated segregation (Erasmus, 2001). Instead, as does Erasmus (2001), I stress the ambiguity and fluidity (the making and re-making) of 'coloured' identity formations whilst still remaining mindful of the conditions under which they were created.

In this dissertation, I ask whether creole social formations such as those found in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town facilitate the emergence of alternative performances of gender, and whether the making and performance of alternative forms of gender is an integral part of the processes of creolisation. My aim was not merely to exhibit the popular cultural and everyday performances of 'coloured' gender non-conforming men, in order to show how certain cultural processes are unique or specific to 'colouredness'. This is contrary to the hybrid nature of creolisation. According to anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2007) processes of creolisation involve ideas of "assimilating and mixing materials of diverse origins" (p.26) which ultimately result in a tug of war between continuity (emphasizing the importance of ambiguities) and belonging - whilst acknowledging the impact of socio-historical forces.

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Theories of creolisation have primarily been used to describe the Caribbean and 'new world' processes of cultural cross-fertilisation (Eriksen, 2007). These were characterised by often violent processes of cultural exchange in the aftermath of slavery and colonialism (Eriksen, 2007). However, following this original application, Charles Stewart (2007) states that theories of creolisation have different meanings in different settings at different times. According to anthropologist Ulf Hannerz, (1987) writing in *The world in creolisation*, theories of creolisation have more recently been applied to wider contexts.

Hannerz (1987) indicates that theories of creolisation have moved from a focus on particular racial or ethnic categories to the discourse by linguists who apply the term more generally. To demonstrate this, Hannerz (1987) referenced the works of Lee Drummond (1978, 1980) and Johannes Fabian (1978): Drummond (1978; 1980) focused on the cultures of Guyana (on South America's North Atlantic coast). He moved from a consideration of change in the symbolic processes of ethnicity in Guyana to the general view that there are no distinct cultures - only internal change instead of uniformity and synchronicity driving the creolising of culture (Hannerz, 1987). Fabian (1978), in his study of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo in central Africa), suggests that the colonial system in Africa produced "pidgin contact cultures".
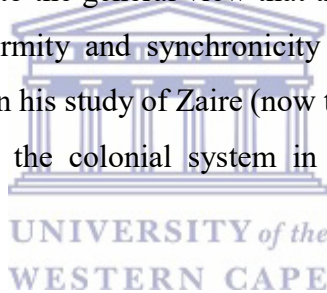
A complex mix is formed, not solely defined by identity (i.e. without the obsession of origins), but also by its relation to everything possible as well - the mutual mutations generated by this interplay of relations (Glissant & Wing, 1997:42). This idea of mutation is incorporated in the work of Édouard Glissant[4], who highlighted the blending but also non-essentialist formation of identities into something new and different. He developed the idea of creolisation, used originally in the Caribbean, to understanding the creation of other new worlds (Glissant &Wing, 1997). Édouard Glissant and Wing (1997) assert that creolisation brings identity into relation, and not to universal claims.

Édouard Glissant (21 September 1928 – 3 February 2011) was born in Sainte-Marie, Martinique, an island region of France, located in the eastern Caribbean Sea (Unknown, 2011).

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[4]The theoretical essays of Édouard Glissant have thus far remained largely unread by the English-language theorists in this field since these were written in French. I make use of post-colonial theorists who have translated his works from French to English. Glissant, studied ethnography at the *Musée de l'Homme* (Museum of Man) (Unknown, 2011).

He was a writer, poet and literary critic, whose thinking focused on diversity and *méttisage* (generally speaking, the meeting and synthesis of two differences, not as a simple mingling of cultures[5]) and from this premise, extended the conceptual field of creolisation beyond that of the Caribbean or the Americas (also see Martin, 2006). As elaborated in the book, titled: *Édouard Glissant and post-colonial theory: Strategies of language and resistance*, *méttisage*, according to Celia Britton (1999), refers to the mixture of races and culture that sweeps away notions of racial purity and singular origin. Even though Glissant (1989; 1997) emphasized the original applications of creolisation (i.e. in the context of slavery and colonialism in the Caribbean and other plantation economies) he also enlarged his theory to include the entire world of today. According to Édouard Glissant (1997): "Creolisation is distinguished by violent discontinuity, brutal rupture with the past and concerted efforts on the part of colonizers to annihilate the values and civilizations of the dominated" (p.640). Glissant and Wing (1997) argue:

> Creolisation, one of the ways of forming a complex mix-and not merely a linguistic result – is only exemplified by its processes and certainly not by the "contents" on which these operate.

Deeply implicated in the processes of creolisation are representations of gender, class, race, sexuality and an implied resistance to the notion of origins. Glissant (1997) is resolute in his move away from fixed identity towards identities always in flux, always becoming. Creolisation is in this way, exemplified as a becoming that refuses to resolve into a fixed, essentialised identity (Glissant, 1997). It is also important to acknowledge that this becoming is a transformation into something different, into a new set of possibilities (Glissant & Dash, 1989). It is no longer valid to deify "unique" origins (Glissant & Dash, 1989). This is why, Glissant (1997) stresses that creolisation is not "a half way between two pure extremes" (p.40). Creolised identities do not come together as a third term, instead creolisation is an impossibility of authentic heredities, wholesome ethnic roots (Glissant & Dash, 1989). In Prieto, Glissant, and Wing (1998) in a review of the *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant seeks a way of safeguarding cultural difference and localized identity without falling into the exclusionary tendencies of ethnic and national identity. The key concepts upon which Édouard Glissant's theorisation of creolisation are premised  are "opacity", "disaffiliation" and "relation" (Britton, 1999; Burns, 2009; Glissant & Wing, 1997; Prieto et al., 1998; Velázquez, 2010). "Opacity" according to

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[5]From the book: *Poetics of Relation*, p.34 (Glissant & Wing, 1997).

French scholar, Patrick Crowley (2006) is interpreted by critics as a form of resistance to cultural adoption. However, according to Crowley (2006) resistance as understood by Glissant "operates obliquely by both informing that which is culturally or psychically impenetrable and opening it to its outside in a process of creolisation in which the elements of exchange are transformed" (p. 105). Glissant's, concept of "disaffiliation" is the opposite of rootedness and the concept emphasize fluid frontiers.

Édouard Glissant is mostly recognised for his concept of "relation". In particular, according to Malian writer, filmmaker and cultural theorist Manthia Diawara (2011), Édouard Glissant's seminal dissertation *Philosophie de la Relation* (*Philosophy of Relation*) reveals "relation" to be a key concept in understanding a creolising world. The concept of "relation", according to Édouard Glissant in conversation with Manthia Diawara,– on the film titled: *One World in Relation* (2009) "moves beyond the oppositional discourse of the same and the other, operating instead with a new vision of difference as an assembler of the "dissimilars" " (p.2). According to Velázquez (2010), for Glissant, "relation" is both a philosophical stance, a practice, and poetics. Velázquez (2010) elaborates on the main premise of Glissant's *Poétique de la Relation* (*Poetics of Relation*) that any one situation, individual or entity is open, related, and relatable to any other - openness privileges diversity, not just in the encounter between entities but within each one. Moreover, according to Patrick Crowley (2006) in *Édouard Glissant: Resistance and Opacité* " "relation" is a movement towards others…an openness to exchange…"relation" is about fertile contacts and fruitful synergies" (p.106). The key concerns of Glissant's (1989) *Caribbean Discourse* according to Lora Burns (2009) in *Becoming-postcolonial, becoming Caribbean: Édouard Glissant and the poetics of creolization* is Glissant's "change from fixed identity towards identities always in flux, always becoming" (p100).

Édouard Glissant offers an approach to identity formation that is processual and counters the often essentialist ways of looking at identity construction. In the popular view, creolisation privileges ideas of blending, of cultures and races whilst at the same time emphasizing the potential for social cohesion, unity and nation-building. Hill and Willoughby (2005), writing from the contexts of the Caribbean, agree when they postulate that creolisation is a version of the old "melting pot" hypothesis that conceives of a new cultural unity evolving from the blending of diverse original elements (also see Bolland 1998).

In summary, theories of creolisation provide a framework for fluidity over fixity; ambivalence over certainty; and agency over structure. Such a framework allows for less boundedness in defining notions of culture, race and gender. In fact the stability of categories such as man or woman, 'coloured', 'white', 'black', culture is unsettled, in particular with the incorporation of the notion of performativity. Gender as performative becomes most apparent in gay beauty pageant competitions. Judith Butler (2003) however theorises gender differently that it is more than simply a performance.
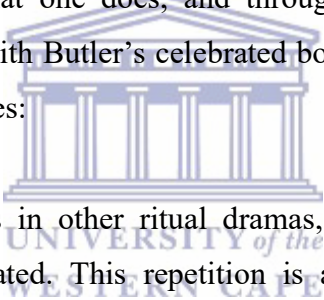
Similar to Judith Butler (1990) sociologist, Erving Goffman (1959) articulates that identity is always something that is performed; it is realized rather than essential. Thus, with regards to male-female binaries – these are brought into being performatively - these categories are not introduced into culture or society from the "nature" outside but rather are primarily shaped through discourse (Brickell, 2005 p.26). Erving Goffman's (1959) book titled: *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* incorporates a dramaturgical approach to understand human behaviour and social interactions in everyday life. The dramaturgical approach theorises all social interactions to performances no different to that of acts similar to that of a play performed onstage in a theatre. Thus according to Collett and Childs (2009), social interactions in everyday life framed within the dramaturgical model, is simply seen as a series of performances where "like the theatre, life has actors and audiences" (p.690). Hence, "it is through performances that social reality – including selves and the social world is created" (Collett & Childs, 2009: p690).

In summary, according to Hopper (1981) Goffman (1959) "makes use of theatrical performance to consider the way an individual presents 'self 'and actions to others, and the way the individual can guide and control the impressions which others develop" (p.47). An important element in Goffman's (1959) theorisation is that of impression management. In managing how the 'self' is perceived in Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach the 'self' assumes various roles dependent on the social context.

According to Brickell (2005) Goffman (1959) in his theorisation relies on the 'self', Butler (1990) on the other hand rarely uses the term 'self' (p.29). Notably, according to Gregson and Rose (2000) Judith Butler (1990), incorporates a linguistic definition of performativity (as articulated by John Austin), as opposed to a theatrical or psychoanalytic account of performance, as is the case with Goffman's (1959) theorisation on the constructedness of

identity. According to Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach through impression management, human behaviour (performed through various social roles) is carefully and consciously managed for the benefit of audience members. In using the dramaturgical approach applied to gender, the reliance on impression management points to an adherence to male-female binaries and minimises any potential for subversion of gender norms. In my reading, of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach, the central idea in his approach of impression management is restrictive. Goffman (1959) in theorising on human behaviour and social interaction does little to allow for the agency and subversion of gender hierarchies.

In this regard, Judith Butler (1990) argues that we are not simply adhering to a script based on biology but we are actively producing gender. Thus gender is made 'real', according to Butler (1990) through performance and repetition (very often the repetition of oppressive and painful gender norms). In this sense gender is performative. Hence gender is not an expression of what one is - gender is something that one does, and through this repetition, gender is then constructed (Butler, 1990). In Judith Butler's celebrated book titled: *Gender Trouble* (1990), the gender studies scholar reiterates:

> Gender is seen an act as in other ritual dramas, the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is an at once re-enactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established.

Society, according to Judith Butler (1990), assumes that gender roles are based on biology, that there is a special relationship between sex, gender and desire – where gender follows from sex and desire follows from gender. In the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town, gender non-conforming men create and invent themselves through modes of self-styling to stage a personal and a public performance of femininity that appears to be socially acceptable. On stage as drag queens, at gay beauty pageant competitions and in everyday life as hairdressers, gender non-conforming men present a physical and social compliance to femininity. Such a performance of femininity, according to anthropologist Andrea Cornwall (1994), presents the feminine within a particular temporal and spatial context as parody (i.e. comic exaggeration).

The doing and performing of gender is emphasized in dragging[6] in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. In previous ethnographic studies conducted with gender non-conforming men in 'black' and 'coloured' South African townships the doing and performing of gender was demonstrated by feminist studies scholar, Amanda Swarr (2009) and anthropologist Graeme Reid (2007 & 2013). Swarr (2004; 2009) incorporates Butler's (1990) notion of gender performativity to illuminate South African township drag performances. In fact, Swarr (2004) highlights in her ethnography that:

> Performativity allows us to avoid oversimplifying race and gender as natural or as socially constructed. It also gives space for staged "performances" while moving beyond this definition (p. 75).

Butler (1999) sees drag as a medium where ideas of gender are destabilised and the performative nature of gender is made visible. Drag denaturalises gender and shows the fabricated nature of gender (Butler, 1999). Gender performance, as understood by Butler (1990) is not "play-acting", but through repetitive acting is indeed "becoming". Similarly, Graeme Reid (2007 & 2013) in his ethnography of gay lifestyles in small town South Africa draws on Butler's (1990) notion of the performativity of gender. The notion of gender as performative as articulated by Judith Butler (1990) is also central to gender studies scholar, Vasu Reddy's (2005) analysis of two theatrical plays. Reddy's doctoral thesis titled: *Moffies, Stabanis, and Lesbos: The Political Construction of Queer Identities in Southern Africa* (2005) provides an exploration of the connections between same sex sexualities and identity formation, in particularly in the wake of the South African nation-building project. Reddy (2005) analyses in his dissertation two plays (i.e., Crossing the Line, 1989 & Apart, 1995) that foregrounds women's voices, and experiences in respect of gender, race, class and sexuality. Thus both plays opens up concerns, according to Reddy (2005) about the relationships between the performance of race and gender, inscription of the body, the production of gender, identity and visibility.

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[6]The term dragging is used by my interlocutors, to refer to men dressing as women on an everyday basis in public or onstage during gay beauty pageants and drag shows. According to this definition, dragging refers to the wearing of clothes that contradicts the gendered norms of dress within a given culture (Moore, 2013).

In my fieldwork the doing and performativity of gender was made apparent to me when I met Ayesha Khan. Ayesha lives in the "courts" (i.e. three storey tenement buildings) of Manenberg, a 'coloured' township located about 20kms from the city centre of Cape Town.

The first time I saw Ayesha Khan, the "Gay Queen of Cape Town", was in a jazz club called Valerie's on a Monday evening in November of 2011. Ayesha was dressed in a spectacular diamanté encrusted white cocktail dress with matching high heel stilettos to complete the look. The patrons of the club, including myself, automatically stepped aside to let the "Queen" and her entourage of young gender non-conforming men pass. I (together with the patrons of the club) was mesmerized by Ayesha Khan. On this Monday evening, Ayesha donned her crown and sash, displaying the title of Miss Gay Cape Town 2011. I could not help but admire her flawlessly made up face with sky-high false eyelashes complementing her big bedroom eyes. Her beautifully made up face was rounded off with bright red lipstick painted onto a wide but modest smile. Ayesha's shoulder length hair was meticulously styled. It was clear when I first saw the "Gay Queen of Cape Town" that she was not only aesthetically beautiful, but confident and demure at the same time, oozing an idealised femininity[7] reminiscent of a bygone era of glamour, beauty and hyper-femininity[8].

Ayesha Khan was not her assigned name at birth. She was named Abudien Davids. The name Abudien Davids was not only a marker of her inherited Islamic faith, but also of her assigned sex as male. However, in the year of her 28th birthday, Abudien was able to legally adopt the name, Ayesha Khan with the help of the Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act, 2003 (Act 49 of 2003), which makes provision for transgender people to align their bodies to their gender identity without necessarily requiring gender-affirming surgery (Klein, 2009). Ayesha was not only confident in her feminine presentation; she was also able to assert herself in the space of the jazz club. Through fashion and stylization, Ayesha feminised her masculine body to stage a performance of femininity that appears to be socially acceptable. In the space of the jazz club, Ayesha received validation of her presentation of femininity. It is here that she is able to freely express her social gender position as a woman.

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[7]In a study conducted by sociologist, Oluwakemi Balogun (2012) in Nigeria focusing on beauty pageants, idealised femininities are defined as those that are often performed at beauty pageant competitions because by its very nature a beauty pageant provides a unique showcase for performing the gendered ideals of the nation.

[8]Quoting Sarah Murnen and Donn Byrne (1991) in Jessica Strübel - Scheiner's (2011) publication that explores drag as masquerade - hyper-femininity is defined as an "exaggerated adherence to a stereotypic feminine gender role".

In "becoming a woman"[9], Ayesha made a decision to undergo "a medically assisted transition", a term used by Australian sociologist, Raewyn Connell (Connell, 2012). A "medically assisted transition" is a means of making a physical transition from male to female or female to male by surgically altering the body. In South Africa, there are two state-funded hospitals that provide medically assisted transitions such as those acquired by Ayesha. One of them is located in the city of Cape Town, called Groote Schuur Hospital. Ayesha is a patient enrolled at Groote Schuur Hospital where she receives her three-monthly prescription of hormone replacement therapy (HRT). She eventually underwent a vaginoplasty – which is a surgical construction of a vagina through skin inversion, involving removing the organs and erectile tissue of the penis. This was the last in a series of major transformations that Ayesha underwent in order to align her masculine body to her feminine social gender position. About two months after the first time I saw Ayesha at Valerie's she explained to me that this process of "becoming a woman":

> Is not about switching my gender, my gender was always the same (female). The transition process is about aligning my body, which was male, with my gender.

Ayesha's conception of herself as a woman and "aligning [her male body to her gender]" points to Western European categories of transgender (although there might be apparent differences). When I first met Ayesha in the lounge of the Miss Gay Western Cape (MGWC) pageant promoters she described herself to me as a transgender woman. Through our conversations, it became evident that when she first realised her same sex desires, she identified as a gay man. Ayesha thought that because she acts more *femme*, that she is probably a "gay bottom". "Gay bottom" is a term used to describe gender non-conforming men who prefer to be anally penetrated (also seen as the submissive sexual partner in a same sex relationship between men), as opposed to a "top" who is considered to be the insertive partner in a same sex sexual relationship between men[10]. When she was exposed to the term transgender, through documentaries and films and her work with a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) organisation in Cape Town, she actually discovered that she is not a "gay bottom", that she is actually a transgender woman. In the final year of my fieldwork, Ayesha identified as a straight woman. Thus in her sexual identifications, Ayesha first identified as a *femme* gay

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[9]The phrase: "Becoming a woman" is a play on the French existentialist, Simone de Beauvoir's opening statement in her book: *The Second Sex*, translated from French into English. Simone de Beauvoir states "One is not born, but rather, becomes a woman" (Beauvoire, 1953).

[10]The terms "top" and "bottom" are used in HIV prevention research with same sex men. Ayesha is able to draw from this vocabulary because of her work as a peer educator and her engagement in gay activism. She is often invited to speak at academic and social spaces to share her experiences as a transgender woman.

man, a transgender woman and finally a straight woman. In this way, Ayesha demonstrates the messiness of identifications (and the performativity thereof), that we often do not fit neatly into categories such as man or woman, gay man or straight woman, and that these categories are not fixed or stable.

In identifying as a *femme* gay man, a transgender woman and finally a straight woman, Ayesha described these identifications in terms of her sexual attractions to straight acting men. This description of herself in terms of the trajectories of sexual identifications also reveals a strict adherence to gender hierarchies. A strict adherence to gender hierarchies among gender non-conforming men in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town also became apparent to me in the following informal chat with Nico, a young feminine performing gay self-identified man who lives in close proximity to Ayesha. We were chatting about a man who Ayesha was attracted to at a gay social event held at a local club. This chat occurred whilst I was giving Ayesha and Nico a lift home from a club. Ayesha made her intentions clear that she was attracted to this anonymous man. Nico, pulling his face in disapproval, indicated: "He is a *moffie*". I interjected and wanted to know: "Why is he a *moffie*". In Nico's words: "He is a *moffie,* because he is a bottom". Of note, when Nico informed Ayesha that this man is a *moffie*, the initial attraction she had towards the anonymous man disappeared in an instant. I was interested why Ayesha was no longer attracted to this man. Ayesha explained that since being informed by Nico that this man she admired is a "bottom" she cannot allow herself to develop any kind of sexual desires towards him. When Ayesha realised that she was attracted to a "bottom", she was surprised, shocked and slightly horrified by the mere thought of this. In a same sex relationship, Ayesha in her identification as a straight woman has sexual desires for those same sex identified (or heterosexual identified) men who perform a masculine social gender position (i.e. "top"). It appears that both Ayesha and Nico, as evidenced from the above, police themselves to adhere to this gender hierarchy. The gender hierarchy is constructed along that of heterosexuality. Thus in Ayesha and Nico's subversion of gender norms they adhere strictly to the gender binaries prescribed by heterosexuality.

## 1.2 Doing ethnography: Notes on being situated in an "insider - outsider" position

I reflect in this section not only on the processes of doing ethnography, but on my particular experience of 'colouredness', and how this relates to the position I occupied during fieldwork as both 'insider' and 'outsider'. Geographically, this study is located in Cape Town. Cape Town

is a port city in the Western Cape province of South Africa, located on the Atlantic seashore of Table Bay, and is the southern-most metropolis on the African continent. Cape Town is divided into the Southern and Northern suburbs, the city of Cape Town and the Cape Flats (see Appendix 1). The city of Cape Town is the country's oldest and second largest city, with a population of approximately 4.1 million, according to Census 2016 (StatsSA, 2017) . It is locally known as the "Mother City" of South Africa. Reasons for this name vary (McDonald & Smith, 2004). One explanation is that Cape Town is considered by some as the "birth place" of South Africa as the location of the first 'white' settlement which was established by the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC) (i.e. the Dutch East India Company).

My fieldwork primarily took place in the area known as the Cape Flats. The Cape Flats is named as such because of its low-lying nature (Schalke, 1973). The area is characterised by large sandy areas, with a dry summer from November to April with prevailing South East trade winds and a wet winter from May to October with North West antitrade winds (Schalke, 1973). Very strong winds are frequent on the Cape Flats with cold wet winters (Standing, 2006). It is subject to flooding because of its flat terrain (Wilkinson, 2000). These conditions meant that the Cape Flats was not considered prime land by the South African *apartheid* government.
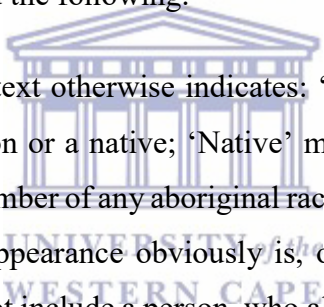
The Cape Flats is located in the southern part of the city of Cape Town and covers approximately 13 200 ha (City of Cape, 2013). It is bounded by major traffic thoroughfares such as the M5 in the west, N2 freeway to the north, Lansdowne Road and Weltevreden Road in the east and the False Bay coastline to the south (City of Cape Town, 2013). Topographically, the Cape Flats according to environmental scientists Adelana, Xu, and Vrbka (2010) is taken to be the area bounded by the Cape Town-Muizenberg, Cape Town-Bellville-Kraaifontein, Bellville-Eerste River-Strand railway lines and the False Bay coast; with a narrow strip of sand along the western coast, extending northwards from Cape Town and Bellville through Bloubergstrand as far as Atlantis (see Appendix 2). The location of these major thoroughfares is significant for understanding the architecture on which the *apartheid* state was built. In spatial *apartheid*, townships were separated from each other by highways, and in some instances, open spaces of land and railway lines, thus keeping people from different racial categories and communities separate. According to the Information and Knowledge Department of Cape Town (2005a, 2005b) the Cape Flats accounts for a substantial portion of the city's population. Oisen O'Brien (2012) reports in official documentation

released by the city of Cape Town that the population of the Cape Flats is difficult to determine because it comprises so many smaller entities.

The suburbs and 'coloured' townships on the Cape Flats were not unfamiliar territory to me. I can find my way fairly easily through the city centre of Cape Town right through to Stellenbosch, situated almost 50kms from the city. Yet while growing up I never felt a strong connection to Cape Town and its surrounds and in particular to the 'coloured' township of Belhar where I lived.

### 1.2.1 The construction of 'colouredness'

In South Africa, the Population Registration Act of 1950 (No. 30 of 1950) was an attempt to yield fixed, unchanging and uniform measures for racial classifications which were applied across all spheres of a person's life (cited in Posel, 2001). In its aim to categorise the citizens of South Africa, the Act stipulated the following:

> In the Act, unless the context otherwise indicates: 'Coloured' person means a person who is not a 'white' person or a native; 'Native' means a person who in fact is or is generally accepted as a member of any aboriginal race or tribe of Africa; 'White' person means a person who in appearance obviously is, or who is generally accepted as a 'white' person, but does not include a person, who although in appearance obviously is generally accepted as a 'coloured' person ("Population Registration Act," 1950).

With regards to the abovementioned stipulation, according to Yvonne Erasmus and George Ellison (2008) the Act divided the population into three main race or population groups, namely 'white', 'coloured' and 'native'. A fourth racial group – 'Indian' or 'Asian' - was differentiated in a subsequent amendment to the Population Registration Act at a later stage (having originally been subsumed as a sub-category of 'coloured' in the 1950 Act) ("Population Registration Act," 1950). These racial categories were constructed and imposed onto South Africans by the *apartheid* state that legislated 'white' supremacy, and as a consequence, those who were designated 'coloured' and 'black' were regarded as second class citizens. Arbitrary features such as skin colour, shape of one's nose and hair texture were used to classify individuals into these categories. More than this, as articulated by Yvonne Erasmus and George Ellison (2008), the Act took into account dominant notions of social acceptability (i.e. demonstration of language and social norms centred on notions of respectability) as well as physical features in determining race. Hence geoscientist Anthony Christopher (2002) claims that with regards to

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these classifications, there was a general tendency to exclude individuals who did not pass as 'white', according to the physical and behavioural tests that were implemented.

In particular, for those designated 'coloured', Erasmus (2001) maintains that 'coloured' was defined negatively, as persons neither 'native' nor 'white' a 'subject race' 'without tribes'. This was internalised by the 'coloured' group in the form of what Mohammed Adhikari (2006) calls "sexualised shame". One of the main features of the Act was to maintain racial purity as far as possible. In the case of those classified as 'coloured', 'coloured' was related to notions of racial impurity. In this discourse, 'coloureds' were constructed in the words of Martin (2000a) as "bastards" of the 'whites', therefore "degenerate", and considered doomed. In this regard, Martin (2000a) argues that whilst having been constructed as inferior to 'whites', those designated as 'coloured' were also constructed by the *apartheid* state as superior to 'blacks' because of the "grain of whiteness". As a consequence, according to Mohammed Adhikari (2006) the shame attached to the racial impurity, 'coloured' people often denied any linkage to any 'black' origins and embraced their 'white' ancestry in an effort to regain respect lost from having been named a "degenerate". For Mohammed Adhikari (2006) this had a counter reaction, in that embracing 'white' heritage puts more emphasis on the racial hybridity the 'coloured' group was constituted into.

Although these racial classifications were constructed by the *apartheid* government and are in essence 'not real', French scholar, Denis Constantine-Martin (2000a) reminds us that these taxonomies and the values attached to each of these categories have been internalised by South Africans. Indeed as Mohammed Adhikari (2006) puts it, these classifications have become entrenched in public discourse and popular culture in the form of racial stereotyping. Although South Africa experienced its first democratic elections in 1994, racial stereotyping still continues.

### 1.2.2 Growing up in a 'coloured' township

Forceful removals during the *apartheid* regime in South Africa were legitimised through the Group Areas Act of 1950, according to historian Vivian Bickford-Smith (1999). Although segregation was not legislated until the Natives (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, segregation of the city's 'native' population in the Cape Peninsula was initiated much earlier in 1901 (Bickford-Smith,1999). Segregation and forced removals of the 'native' populations out of the city was legitimised as an emergency measure to control the spread of the bubonic plague in densely

populated inner city areas, such as District Six, part of Woodstock[11], and the Central Business District of Cape Town (Jeppie & Soudien, 1990). Widespread forceful removal of those designated as 'coloured' and 'black' to the Cape Flats by the *apartheid* government continued with the implementation of the Group Areas Act of 1950 (Christopher, 2002). According to the Group Areas Act of 1950:

> Urban areas were to be divided into racially segregated zones where members of one specific race alone could live and work. Group areas were created for the exclusive ownership and occupation of a designated group. It further became a criminal offence for a member of one racial group to reside on or own land in an area set aside by proclamation for another race (Christopher, 2002).

The process of segregation following the Group Areas Act unfolded not only in the Western Cape province but throughout South Africa and, according to Elaine Salo (2003), led to the forced removals of 750 000 people between the 1960s and 1980s. Townships built on the Cape Flats were meant to be dormitories, with fairly basic rental housing, infrastructure and facilities (Visser & Kotze, 2008). In addition to the segregation and forced removal of 'coloured' and 'black' people from the urban centre of Cape Town, townships were designed to provide a home for a cheap labour force in close proximity to industry (Visser & Kotze, 2008). Houses were often too small to accommodate large families (Visser & Kotze, 2008). Urbanisation and migratory labour patterns, with the influx of people moving towards the city for work, also led to overcrowding (Christopher, 2005). In these overcrowded townships located on the Cape Flats, specifically meant for the 'coloured' and 'black' population groups, a burden was put on sewage systems, schools and other public facilities (also see Amoateng, 1997; Turok, 2001; Turok & Watson, 2001). In contrast, Myriam Houssay-Holzschuch and Annika Teppo (2009), indicate that 'white' residential areas were established in pleasant, green suburbs (i.e. "desirable areas"). The townships built on the Cape Flats were for those who had been forcibly removed from prime land or "desirable areas" such as Lower Claremont, Windermere, Newlands, Plumstead, Simon's Town, Tramway Road and District Six (Field, 2001; Matthews, 2009; Naidoo & Dreyer, 1984).

According to post-colonial theorists Pal Ahluwalia and Abebe Zegeye (2003) the 'coloured' townships on the Cape Flats were the "absolute invention and culmination of the *apartheid*

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[11]Woodstock is located less than 5kms from the city centre of Cape Town.

regime that set out to separate the 'races' under the Group Areas Act of 1950" (p. 254). Before World War II, almost a third of the population lived in mixed areas (Martin 1999, p. 147, cited in Ahluwalia & Zegeye, 2003). The post-colonial theorists indicate that in much recent historiography, Cape Town has been portrayed as an extremely cosmopolitan city, one where different races coexisted in harmony before the implementation of *apartheid* (Ahluwalia & Zegeye, 2003). Cape Town is seen as reluctantly having to be pulled into line with the other South African cities by an alien *apartheid* government based in Pretoria (Ahluwalia & Zegeye, 2003). Nevertheless, the post-colonial theorists remind the reader that the documented links between colonialism and sexual expression tend to support the opposite assumption, namely that 'official' or institutional racialism existed from the time of the earliest settlement of the Cape by 'white' people (Ahluwalia & Zegeye, 2003). That is, until policies such as the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act were put into place, according to Ahluwalia and Zegeye (2003).

The invention of separateness is most pronounced in the construction of 'coloured' townships such as Hanover Park, Manenberg, Bonteheuwel, Mitchells Plain and Bishop Lavis amongst others (Ahluwalia & Zegeye, 2003). The forceful removal of families, neighbours and friends who lived in close proximity with each other, from areas that were designated 'white', led to the destruction of entire communities and also of social and economic support systems (Salo, 2003). Many contemporary historical studies and museum exhibitions in post-1994 South Africa have focused on the memories of such communities prior to the forced removals experienced under *apartheid* (see Field, 2001; Rassool & Prosalendis, 2001). According to Salo (2003) these studies and museum exhibitions do not indicate that in the 40 years since the first removals, social webs have been painstakingly respun in what the anthropologist calls "old dumping grounds".

My identification as a 'coloured' woman and having grown up in Belhar provided me with some familiarity regarding the social context of my study. The township[12] where I grew up was established for those designated as 'coloured'. Belhar, according to Pentz (1991) is bounded by the Bellville/Langa railway line to the north, Stellenbosch Arterial Road to the south,

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[12]Some understand the term township as inappropriate to describe Belhar because of the negative connotations of crime, violence and poverty that often comes with an association of township. However, I define township as all enforced 'coloured' and 'black' dormitory suburbs, regardless of the characteristics that are considered to be stereotypically associated with the notion of township.

Modderdam Road to the west and Kuilsriver Freeway [R300] to the east (cited in Cloete, 2005). In the early 1980s Belhar was known as a "model township", mainly because it was home to the academic and politically elite of the 'coloured' group in Cape Town at that time (Howa, 1982). This soon changed, as reflected by local newspapers that labelled Belhar the "model township that went wrong" (Howa, 1982).

Belhar is formally divided into what are called "extensions"; (i.e. divisions or sections). However, residents were aware of another division. These internal divisions were known by residents as "Old Belhar" and "New Belhar". On a superficial level, "Old Belhar" can be regarded as more affluent, whereas "New Belhar" was the antithesis of this. The section known as "Old Belhar" was established in the early 1970s.

In "Old Belhar" is also where the government built the 'ministerial' residences of the executive of the defunct "Coloured' Persons Representative Council[13]" (Reporter, 1981a, 1981b). For instance, the late Jakes Gerwel, Rector and Vice-chancellor of the University of the Western Cape (UWC) lived in "Old Belhar" until his death in 2012. "Old Belhar" is also regarded as safer; however, because it is a more affluent section of Belhar it tends to be prone to more housebreakings. Regardless of this, in "Old Belhar" there are stand-alone houses, the environment is more tranquil and gives the appearance of a middle class suburb.

Much of what went wrong with the "model township" was blamed on the addition of the new section of Belhar, which was established in part to house those people who were forcibly removed from "desirable areas" (i.e. prime land) during legislated segregation. In contrast to "Old Belhar", "New Belhar", is characterised by semi-detached, uniform looking face-bricked houses. This is where I grew up and lived until the age of 24. One of the memories that I often reflect upon is that, when we heard gunshots outside whilst watching TV, we all just slid down into the couch and continued watching whichever programme was showing. Hence, in many respects violence became part of my everyday reality. In fact, the section of "New Belhar" where I grew up was associated with crime and violence and was often featured in the news. Because of the close proximity of "New Belhar" to "Old Belhar", and the popular idea that crime increased with the establishment of the new section of Belhar, those living in "New

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[13]This act, removed 'coloured' people from even indirect participation in the 'white' Parliament (Du Pré, 2004). It transferred the representation of 'coloureds' to an expanded 'Coloured' Persons Representative Council, which were authorized to legislate for 'coloured' people in such areas as social welfare, education and local government (Du Pré, 1994).

Belhar" were often blamed for the increase in crime, and were associated with a lower class and a lack of respectability.

Growing up in "New Belhar" we were not able to escape such labelling. The shame of living in this section of Belhar as children was to some extent internalised by myself and my sisters. Our working class situation did not allow us to relocate out of the township. Being raised by a single mother, we had to work hard to get good grades at school, and a higher education was the primary means of leaving the township. Bursaries and scholarships allowed us to obtain a higher educational degree. Although such aspirations for a better life outside of the township were important, at the same time they also created some distance between us and others in the township. What I was often confronted with was the phrase: *hulle hou vir hulle wit* [they act like 'white' people], which made me feel like an 'outsider' in the only place that I knew. From early school-going years this placed us in an awkward position in the township where we lived.

My 'outsider' social status was caused in part by my very light skin, ash blonde hair, and Northern Cape Afrikaans vernacular learnt from my parents. That my 'outsider' status was not complete is evidenced by my enduring friendships with people who lived down the street from us. I looked different to the majority of those living in this section of Belhar and, because of this attention, I was inevitably put in vulnerable and sometimes violent situations. As an adolescent girl I was gawked at; mocked for my skin colour; my hair pulled; and called names such as *witrot* (i.e. translated from Afrikaans to English: "white rat"). Gerald Stone (1991) in the publication of Martin (1998) titled: *What's in the name 'coloured'?* provides some explanations for this behaviour when he states that those 'coloured' people who were regarded as "haughty, complicated, who have forgotten the qualities of the group, were compared to 'white' people (i.e. *hulle hou vir hulle wit*). Only later did I realise that these internal divisions, both geographically, and in the minds of 'coloured' people, were actually created by the *apartheid* system of legislated segregation in order to create separation between different racial categories as well as within the 'coloured' group themselves.

Regardless of the awkward position that I occupied in this township, it was home to me for many years. Though regarded as a "stranger", I was not unfamiliar with the geographical and social contexts in which my study took place. Belhar closely resembles most of the townships where the majority of my interlocutors reside. During fieldwork I was able to relate to some of

the social conditions that characterise the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town and which my interlocutors sometimes reflected upon.

Like all my interlocutors, my home language is Afrikaans so our shared language facilitated communication. However, a 'language' spoken amongst gender non-conforming men known as Gayle (also referred to as *moffietaal*) sometimes impacted on informal chats with interlocutors, as the 'language' uses feminisation techniques, which makes following a conversation at times challenging. On the other hand, during these times, it provided me with an opportunity to discuss the use of Gayle amongst 'coloured' gender non-conforming men. Thus in many respects I was "doing anthropology at home" while simultaneously "doing anthropology in an unfamiliar setting". In the following discussion, I reflect on how I negotiated my presence in the field and report on my emotions, thoughts and initial interactions with my interlocutors. According to feminist linguist Deborah Cameron and anthropologist Don Kulick (2003a), working with people whose identities transgress what is considered to be 'normal' in mainstream society requires some extensive negotiation in order to gain access, as well as time to develop trust and build connections. I found that the abovementioned statement held true for my study.
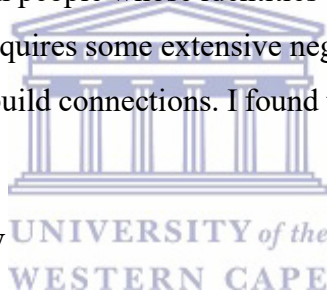
### 1.2.3 Why I conducted this study

Being reflexive throughout fieldwork requires self-awareness regarding personal cultural beliefs, gender identity and personal history, and how this might influence the collection and interpretation of the information. What follows is a reflection on the reasons that motivated me to undertake this study. In the first instance, my awkwardness growing up in Belhar, in particular focusing on my experiences of 'colouredness' and the consequent social rejection I often felt, created a sense of empathy for others who have also experienced social rejection. Later on in my life, this empathy drew me to my work with gender non-conforming men in my career as a HIV researcher.

In HIV research, men who have sex with men (MSM) are categorized as a "high risk" group because of the high HIV incidence and prevalence rates amongst this population. Given my work as a HIV researcher over the past 10 years, I have become accustomed to data collection for the purposes of quantitatively inferring HIV risk onto the lives of MSM. Secondly, I was sad to become familiar with the perception of MSM as a pathology blamed for "spreading HIV". Furthermore, according to public health specialists Rebecca Young and IIan Meyer

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(2005), the term MSM separates the body from identity (meaning sexual, ethnic, racial, gender identities), a community, networks and relationships in which sexuality means more than merely sexual behaviour (cited in Cloete, Sanger & Simbayi, 2011). As is evident in the use of the category MSM, such categories are often limiting for understanding lived experiences. Similarly, the term gay is also problematic as many MSM do not necessarily identify as such.

In addition to the politics of representation of MSM and other gender non-conforming men, I also became aware of the silences around non-heteronormative LGBTI sexualities that still persist in South African academia and in certain public spaces. Moreover, I was appalled by the fact that gender non-conforming men are seen as separate from mainstream society because of whom they love and their transgression of masculine gender norms. In many instances, it was because of the social injustices that gender non-conforming men face daily that I was motivated to explore the lifeworld of such men. Having empathy for the everyday social situations of others can create mutual respect, especially during fieldwork, where an imagined space is created between the researcher (us) and my interlocutors (them). However, even though I have worked with gender non-conforming men since 2008, and was familiar in general with the gay politics that frame the lives of such men, my presence in the field was not easy. In many respects, I was a "stranger" and was regarded as such by my interlocutors. I soon realised that spending more time in the field and becoming a familiar presence at gay clubs and gay social events was important for facilitating my presence in the field.

### 1.2.4 Hanging out with Miss Gay Cape Town

I am a naturally introverted individual, having been described by my undergraduate lecturers as "a shrinking violet", while my interlocutors were outgoing and flamboyant. The following description of some of my earlier encounters in the field describes how I often faded into the background.

During my fieldwork, I accompanied some of the beauty pageant contestants to straight venues and events. More often than not, we were met with stares (because of the 'girls' appearance as gender ambiguous). Strangers approached the 'girls' to engage them in conversation. During fieldwork I was aware of one incident, where the 'girls' were met with pejorative statements from a group of young heterosexual cisgender men.

On one occasion, the finalists for the MGWC pageant were on their way to a gay event outside of the city that was held in the local community centre of a peri-urban 'coloured' township. I

was following the mini-bus taxi which shuttled most of the beauty pageant contestants. Ayesha and Sierra (a beauty pageant queen who I met through Ayesha) and two of Sierra's friends were driving with me. The mini-bus taxi pulled into a petrol station alongside the freeway, I followed.

Our encounter at the café of the petrol station began no differently to most of the social situations I experience when I am hanging out with the 'girls'. Some of the patrons made a decision to ignore the tall, swanky 'girls' with their short frocks and at times loud giggles. Gawking from a distance, other patrons catcalled and made remarks such as: *Waarheen is julle oppad?* [Where are you going to?] And *Julle is darem mooi!* [You are so beautiful!]. Most of the patrons and staff complimented the 'girls', and most of the comments were made by women of how beautiful the 'girls' were. The 'girls' drew a lot of attention. I entered the café with Ayesha and she mockingly said, knowing that she will be gawked at: "I see gay people", a play on the line "I see dead people" from the 1999 movie *The Sixth Sense*. The 'girls' seemed to enjoy the attention they received outside of gay pageants and events. I, on the other hand, felt somewhat uncomfortable.

Basking in the attention, the 'girls' made use of sharp wit and humour seemingly at the drop of a hat – mocking themselves, others like them and conventional society. My shy demeanour in the presence of overly dramatic performances by the beauty pageant queens and gender non-conforming men who took part in my study often meant that I was forgotten "as part of the scene", and tended to fade into the background. I believe this allowed my interlocutors the freedom to express themselves without experiencing me as intrusive.

Another approach to negotiating my presence in the field was to rely on what is popularly termed a "Will & Grace" relationship (Quimby, 2005). Will and Grace is a popular TV sitcom, where Will is a gay identified man and Grace a straight woman, who formed an intimate friendship that, according to queer theorist Karin Quimby (2005), is a common and consequential relationship between gay identified men and straight women. In most instances, I was hanging out with Ayesha Khan and her friends at gay and straight clubs. Hanging out at nightclubs and in the homes of my interlocutors, provided me with depth insight into the lives of my interlocutors. Here, in the gay social spaces of Cape Town, my interlocutors let their guard down and were able to be themselves. I was confronted with the ethical dilemma of reporting on the intimate details of my interlocutors in light of having been allowed 'insider'

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privileges. In addition, because of the informality and leisure involved in going to a nightclub or attending a gay pageant competition, I was often also caught up in the joviality and cheerfulness of participating in social activities with my interlocutors and the making of friendships during fieldwork. This blurred the lines between fieldwork and joviality. I was often confronted with asking myself in the early hours of the morning: "Am I doing research now?" I found the joviality that often characterised what Dhianaraj Chetty (1995) refers to in the celebrated book: *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa* (1995)[14] as *moffie* life, most alluring.

Similar research of this nature was conducted by founding director of the Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa (GALA), Graeme Reid (2007) with 'black' self-identified gay men in Mpumalanga, in the northern region of South Africa. The visibility and social organisation of the self-identified gay men who took part in his study was surprising to the researcher (Reid, 2007 & 2013). The urban township setting in which my study took place is comparable with Reid's (2007 & 2013) position as ethnographer. In his capacity as ethnographer however, Reid (2007) recalled how his identification as gay made him an 'insider' while his 'white' racial and middle class background made him an 'outsider'. Upon reflection, I realised that although I live in Cape Town and have a 'coloured' experience similar to most of my interlocutors, making me an 'insider' to some extent, my identification as a straight woman meant I was regarded simultaneously as an 'outsider'. In addition, my educational background placed me as middle class, reinforcing my 'outsider' status. Like Reid (2007) in his seminal work in small-town South Africa, I occupied an 'insider-outsider' position.

Because of my 'insider-outsider' position, hanging out with my interlocutors seemed awkward at times. I was not able to relate to any of the informal chats or discussions that happened at restaurants, clubs and other social events: I was the naive researcher. This depth and intimate approach is a great advantage of ethnographic research, as opposed to more formulaic ways of conducting social science research, such as surveys. Even though I worked as a HIV researcher specifically with MSM, ethnographic fieldwork is different.

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[14]Following *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa* (1995), Dutch born journalist, Bart Luirink authored a book titled: *Moffies. Gay Lives in Southern Africa* that explores the trials and tribulations that gays and lesbians are exposed to in southern African contexts and how they negotiate their sexual orientation within often oppressive social contexts (Luirink, Bart, 2000).

Most of my interlocutors perform femininity in a highly visible manner, while the men they love are 'invisible' and remained elusive. This was, in many instances, a product of my identification as straight, while Reid (2007) in his study found that only towards the end was he introduced to the 'gents' who have relationships with the feminine performing men, called 'ladies' in this setting. Reid (2007) was also called a 'lady'; by the interlocutors of his study. My gender identification as a woman facilitated rather than hampered my presence in the field. This was because of the feminine-orientated culture often associated with gender non-conforming men who took part in my study: I was expected to act and perform femininity through dress, hair and my cooking abilities. Because I do not conform to stereotypical notions of how a woman is supposed to dress or talk (and I cannot cook), this often led to moments where we chatted about gender roles and expectations. This also served as opportunities for my interlocutors to teach me how to be a woman, which in the end also created less distance between myself as researcher and my interlocutors.

My initial fieldwork took me to public spaces such as gay and straight nightclubs, community centres, school halls, local hotels and the homes of some of my interlocutors. Interlocutors referred pageant queens to me and introduced me as a reporter from a local tabloid newspaper. They were aware that being introduced as a reporter contributed to "incentivising" participation in my study. Being introduced as a reporter facilitated the process of negotiating my presence in the field as a newcomer to social events such as gay beauty pageant competitions.

The gay beauty queens who "have been in the business" for a while were often featured in the local tabloid newspapers. This is how one also obtains legendary status as a gay beauty pageant contestant. The term legendary is used in similar ways to that of celebrity as articulated in Graeme Reid's (2013) ethnography of 'black' self-identified gay men living in small town South Africa. The term legendary refers to those gender non-conforming men who have obtained a level of social status as gay beauty pageant queens or as hairdressers.

*Die Son* (i.e. "The Daily Sun"), one of the local tabloid newspapers of Cape Town, is where I first learnt of gay beauty pageant competitions, and consequently contacted beauty queens after reading an article in which they featured. Regardless of my introduction as a reporter, the beauty queens were at times apprehensive at first of 'outsiders' or 'strangers' like me. Although my fieldwork served as my first experience in gay clubs (referred to in the following section),

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the gender non-conforming men at the clubs were welcoming, friendly and open to new patrons like myself.

I often made use of my camera during the early stages of my fieldwork because I realised that after a gay beauty pageant competition it is expected of audience members to pose with pageant queens. Hence taking pictures with pageant queens was part of negotiating my presence in the field. As fieldwork progressed my camera did not leave my side, as this oddly created less of a distance between myself and my interlocutors. I suspect that, to some extent, the use of the camera somewhat impacted on the perceived hierarchical role of researcher and that of interlocutor - where in this instance the drag or pageant queen was in control.

According to queer theorist Brian Brown (2001), the performance of gender is an inherently visual topic, hence I made use of visual materials to enrich some of the claims made in this dissertation. Early on in my study, I was reluctant to include visual materials because I did not want to exoticize my interlocutors or perpetuate a stereotypical image of the *moffie*. Much of what is in the popular media (in particular in the local tabloid newspapers) perpetuates a certain public image of the *moffie*. However, I realised that the use of visual materials provided my interlocutors with a means of telling their own stories through fashion and stylization. In this sense, it was also important for me to make use of the own words and meanings of my interlocutors as I wanted to get as close as possible to presenting people's own experiences in their own terms.

### 1.3 "This is your first time here, right?"

What follows is a brief description of my first visit to *Stars*, a well-known gay club situated in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town. This field note highlights the anxiety and excitement that is typical of entering the field. It also captures my first experience in a gay club in Cape Town and constitutes the first of many visits to this club, in particular after events such as gay beauty pageant competitions. For instance, I gave some of my interlocutors a lift home from the event, to the club, and sometimes back to their homes in the early hours of the morning. Becoming a familiar face at *Stars*, together with my constant presence at gay beauty pageant competitions, helped tremendously in situating myself within the gay scene. Hanging out at gay beauty pageants and gay clubs constituted my first time in such spaces. The title of this section: "This is your first time here right?" encapsulates not only the comment made by a patron at a gay club to me (as will become evident below) but also the fact that the use of fieldwork

methodologies and attending gay beauty pageants, supporting Gay Pride events and patronising gay clubs were all new and unfamiliar activities to me. This is a field note I composed after my first visit to *Stars*.

I was informed of *Stars*, a popular club for men and women with same sex desires, by my nephew who is 21 years old. The second time I heard of *Stars* was from a colleague who works for a research programme that recruits men from the club to participate in HIV bio-behavioural surveys. Again, I heard of *Stars* from Tessa, a friend of mine. It was at this point that I told her that I want to go to *Stars*. Very surprised she retorted with: "I did not know that you were into this?" "Into what", I asked. "*Moffies*, gays", she said. I asked her why she was so surprised and she replied: "Well people have a reaction to these things". She went on to explain that: "Where I grew up most of my friends are gay". She grew up in Kensington; a 'coloured' suburb located no more than 10kms from the city of Cape Town. In the five years that we had been friends this part of her life was unknown to me. She went on to show me pictures of her gay friends on her mobile. The following Saturday night we went to *Stars*. At past midnight I arrive at the club. According to Tessa, people usually go to *Stars* at that time, not earlier in the evening. Tessa was dressed in the shortest short black dress and high heels. And I had high heels on with black tights and a black tight fitted shirt, with a diamond detail on the left of the shoulder (which I bought specifically for this occasion). This was not me; this is not how I usually dress. But I wanted to make a good impression on potential interlocutors. I dressed up because I thought that this was expected. In retrospect, my attempt to dress up might have also been influenced by the stereotype of self-identified gay men being fashionable and I did not want to be labelled as a wall flower. Similarly, my personal history always compels me to assimilate and try to fit in, sometimes to my detriment. I desperately needed an 'in' and I clearly overcompensated (and overdressed). I felt out of place – most patrons wore jeans, and I was dressed like someone coming to a cocktail party located on the other side of town. I quickly realised that Tessa was well-known at *Stars*, as she paraded herself up and down the club greeting others, with me following on her heels. She introduced me but most of her friends did not pay me much attention; they hung on Tessa, laughed, kissed, screamed deliriously, and used hand gestures as they spoke. It was a frenzy, and it felt like I had failed already. Tessa's friends were not impressed with me. Tessa abandoned me and I walked aimlessly around in the club. A thin older man pulled her away, and I was left

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standing with one of her younger friends. He looked as if he just turned 18. He was kitted out in tight fitting short pants wearing sneakers and said to me: "This is your first time here right?" I said: "Yes", with a frown, as I immediately wondered how I must look to him. Throughout that night, as I became more comfortable in the space, I questioned my 'awkwardness' and was inundated by many questions, such as: Where do I situate myself in this space? Perhaps the other people here are also not sure where to place me? Because of my personality I am almost always anxious in any social situation, so I wondered if this episode was reflecting my social anxieties. As the club became one of my hang out spots with my interlocutors, I too was later able to spot a "stranger in a strange land" in consequent visits to the club.

Upon reflection of my first time at *Stars*, I realised that I must have looked to the patrons of the club like "a deer caught in the headlights". Indeed, for the first couple of months during fieldwork, I was "a stranger in a strange land" and at times my naivety was not only a reflection of my experiences during fieldwork, but it also demonstrated the naivety of the rest of South African society and indeed the world.

In addition, being a "stranger in a strange land" also refers to my work as a researcher and the fieldwork that guided the work on this dissertation. Although I received instruction and practice in ethnography during my training as an anthropologist, the fact that I am employed as a HIV researcher and have worked mostly on social and behavioural surveys over the past ten years presented substantial problems, especially in the early stages of my fieldwork: I reacquainted myself with conducting in-depth, intimate interviews, and finding the patience necessary for ethnographic fieldwork. I was reminded of the words of anthropologist Angeles Arriens: "Whoever shows up is exactly the right person. When it begins, it is always the right time. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened. When it is over, it is over" (Arriens, 2009). Her words also reminded me of how much the anthropological way of looking at the world appealed to me as a young researcher. I often felt that an anthropological gaze had the most potential to uncover some of the realities of the world that remain hidden to many of us.

When I started building my ethnographic account, I approached fieldwork in the manner that I had become accustomed to as a HIV researcher. I frequently used methodologies that establish an immediate distance between myself and the "survey respondents" of a research study. This

creates a 'safe' space for me as researcher without the 'muddle' of personal relationships that is often evident in ethnographic work.

My first potential interlocutor indicated that he would be comfortable to meet in a local bar, close to where we live. This was not an ideal situation for me, since I realised that I might not be able to conduct an interview in the manner I was trained to do, because it was likely that the bar would be noisy. This was indeed the case, and I ended up jotting down notes during our interview, which I later realised impacted his first impressions of me, since I was also armed with a digital recorder and an interview schedule and a notepad in hand. For me this was not only unfamiliar, but fieldwork methods used in ethnography are often not as structured as other data collection methods. In spite of my determination during the initial stages of my study I was resolute to adhere to rigorous data collection methods. I soon realised that I needed to be much more flexible during fieldwork.

Most of my interlocutors made appointments to meet me at bars and at gay beauty pageant competitions. Having a digital recorder and interview schedule in hand did not work in these settings, and in most instances were regarded as inappropriate for ethnographic research. Finally, I opted to carry only a notebook. At times, this was considered as acceptable, but at other times it was a constant reminder that I was the researcher - a label that often made me appear untrustworthy to those whom I approached to take part in my study.

When I started my fieldwork at a hair salon, the owner introduced me as her friend, and when other patrons asked her who I was they accepted this explanation. When the owner got irritated with my presence, she reminded me that I am "just a researcher". Once when she taught me how to make *akni/akhni* (a traditional Cape Malay spice one-pot rice based dish) she retorted:

> Write that in your little book; the *moffie* has the nerve to ask me to peel potatoes.

On other occasions in her hair salon when the 'girls' were chatting she turned to me, and said: "Ooh now you're going to write that in your little book". I slowly learnt that "my little book" prevented me from hanging out and familiarising myself with the everyday subjective realities of my interlocutors. At times "my little book" had to go. However, during my fieldwork I also came to realise that having "my little book" could also work to my advantage. As a HIV researcher, I have the advantage of reflecting on the two approaches to research; however, it is not my intention to create a dichotomy between these two approaches. What anthropology does

bring, however, is a looking glass into societies and cultures, which makes the discipline special and fascinating.

In my work as a HIV researcher, I often use designations such as "participants", and "survey respondents" to refer to those individuals who agree to take part in my research. Upon reflection, however I realised that these designations without problematizing the use thereof are not only simplistic but also reductionist in its application. Such designations reveal nothing of the complex relationship that develops between researcher and interlocutor, in particular during ethnographic fieldwork. In this dissertation, I use the designation interlocutors[15]. In showing my understanding of how my interlocutors makes sense of their lives, the use of this designation in my view encapsulate that interlocutors are actively involved in the production of knowledge as it pertains to their own lives. Thus, the use of interlocutor in this dissertation acknowledges a collaboration between researcher and interlocutor. I draw on the work of anthropologist Hortense Powdermaker (1966) in her self-reflexive autobiography titled: *Stranger and Friend. The way of an anthropologist* when she indicated that in "ethnography there is a need for communication between the investigator and the people being studied, an important distinguishing point between the social and natural sciences. There is no reciprocal personal communication between the physicist and atoms, molecules, or electrons, nor does he become part of the situation studied" (cited in Hier & Kemp, 2002, p. 16).

## 1.4 Ethical considerations

Hanging out with individuals who are potentially at threat of stigma and discrimination requires special care and ongoing sensitive reflection, in order to avoid any potential harm to my interlocutors. In this section I reflect on some of the ethical considerations that I encountered during my fieldwork.

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[15]The designation interlocutor as articulated by Edward Said (1989) in his essay titled: *Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors* - an interlocutor is seen as unstable. In the first instance, the use thereof resonates against an experience of colonial conflict: An interlocutor in the colonial situation is therefore by definition either someone who is compliant and belongs to what the French in Algeria called an *evoluè, notable*, or *caid* (the liberation group reserved the designation of *beni-wewe* or white man's nigger for the class), or someone who, like Fanon's native intellectual, simply refuses to talk, deciding that only a radically antagonistic, perhaps violent riposte is the only interlocution that is possible with colonial power. The other meaning for "interlocutor" is a good deal less political. It derives from an almost entirely academic or theoretical environment, and suggests the calm as well as the antiseptic, controlled quality of a thought-experiment (Said, 1989: pp.209-210).

Even though the 1996 Constitution protects the rights of all to express their individual sexual orientation, homophobia still persists in many communities. Hence I had to be mindful of this during my interaction with my interlocutors.

The photographic images included in this dissertation were either produced as part of public performances, such as gay beauty pageant competitions, or with the permission of my interlocutors. The majority of my interlocutors performed a highly visible non-conforming gender identity. Most of my interlocutors were gay beauty pageant contestants and well known in the townships where they live for their participation in gay beauty pageant competitions. They differed in important characteristics to those gender non-conforming and same sex identified men who live a 'hidden' and closeted life.

My interlocutors were informed that participation was voluntary and they were assured of their right to withdraw at any time. After carefully explaining the nature of the study, I gave eligible interlocutors the consent form to read or I read it to them. All questions that arose were addressed. All my interlocutors have verbally stated that they understood and agreed to all of the items contained in the consent form in order to take part in my study.

Dependent on the nature of the interview, most of the interviews with my interlocutors were conducted in a private space. In my study a private space referred to a space where disruptions of any kind was minimized and also where interlocutors felt most comfortable in to take part in the interview without fear of being outed if they were in the closet regarding their identifications. In these instances, a private space included the privacy of their own homes. Overall in order to not put any potential burden onto my interlocutors or increase harm to them, I met potential interlocutors at venues or spaces most convenient and considered to be private to them.

I have also adhered to the code of ethics as published by the association *Anthropology Southern Africa* (*Anthropology Southern Africa* in January 2005 volume 28 number 4 and 5).

## 1.5 Structure of this thesis

In Chapter 1 I introduced the figure of the *moffie* as a highly visible performance of same sex desire amongst gender non-conforming men in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. I introduce the scholarly works of Édouard Glissant, in particular his theorisation of creolisation. Regarding gender, I incorporate the work of Judith Butler (1990), in particular her notions on

the performativity of gender. Finally, I reflect on the processes of doing ethnography and where I am positioned socially and culturally as a 'coloured' anthropological researcher.

In Chapter 2 I frame the lives of my interlocutors as they negotiate a very visible performance of same sex desire within the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. In particular I focus on Manenberg, a township built to house those designated as 'coloured' during the implementation of the Group Areas Act. I describe Manenberg as a township where gender non-conforming men are able to freely express their non-conformity, and contextualise this within the context of the "gay rights clause" incorporated in the 1996 South African Constitution.

In Chapter 3 I explore District Six, as a "gay vicinity" and an integral part of the creolising city of Cape Town. In District Six, despite the laws brought on by the *apartheid* government, the historical figure of the *moffie* was able to flourish.

In Chapter 4 I explore the popularity of gay beauty pageant competitions in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. I show how gender non-conforming men are celebrated through their participation in gay beauty pageant competitions. Onstage, beauty pageant contestants are regarded as 'girls' or 'ladies'. Thus on the beauty pageant stage, the performativity of gender as articulated by Judith Butler (1990) becomes apparent.

In Chapter 5 I focus on how the figure of the *moffie* is challenged by the onset of Americanised drag. I argue that new, resistant identities are created by Americanised drag, which are fashioned through or against *moffie-ness*, and thus have the potential to challenge heterosexuality through the use of camp and exaggeration.

In Chapter 6 I explore the cultural figure of the *moffie* as hairdresser, who remains popular in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. Part of my fieldwork included visits to a local hair salon known as *Kay's Hair Salon*. I explore the hair salon as a creolised space.

Masquerading as a glamorous woman in popular cultural events provides a space for *moffies* where gender is performed and the self is stylized through drag. Part of this performance is the use of an in-group 'language', known as *moffietaal*. In Chapter 7 I explore the use of *moffietaal* and how language is performative.

I explore the public performance of the Gay Pride Parade in Chapter 8 as a carnivalesque moment that is entangled with the politics of everyday life of gender non-conforming men (and

women) in Cape Town. Here, I make use of observations conducted at Gay Pride events and consequent interviews that followed with gender non-conforming men who took part in the Pride parade.

In the Conclusion (Chapter 9) I draw together the main findings.

## CHAPTER 2: FRAMING THE LIVES OF GENDER NON-CONFORMING MEN IN THE 'COLOURED' TOWNSHIPS OF CAPE TOWN

### 2.1 Introduction

> At a young age I never had to come out to my family. So like [you] say that I am gay, I did not have that problem because my mom was very accepting of me and my family they were very accepting of me.

The above was shared with me by Marawaan Jumath, a 34 year-old self-identified gay man living in the residential clusters (i.e. three storey flats) also known as the "courts" of the 'coloured' township of Manenberg. Marawaan has lived all of his life in Manenberg and feels protected within the four corners of the "courts" where he is able to freely express a temporal performance of femininity. In his performance of the feminine, Marawaan transcends social norms of gender which is, in the words of anthropologist Esther Newton (1979), "a dangerous business" (cited in Coles, 2007, p.7). However, in Manenberg he receives social support and is admired for his participation in gay beauty pageant competitions.

Manenberg in common with other 'coloured' townships located on the Cape Flats was built in 1966 for those persons designated as 'coloured' who were forcibly removed from their metropolitan neighbourhoods during the implementation of the Group Areas Act (Jacobs, 2010). The township of Manenberg, in common with other 'coloured' townships, is characterised by sub-economic housing called dual occupancy homes/flats as described by Jacobs (2010). Thus similar to other 'coloured' townships, Manenberg shares the consequent social, economic and structural characteristics that are associated with such forced removals. Of course Manenberg, as is the case with other 'coloured' townships located on the Cape Flats, is unique in several ways.

In this chapter, I present the social and political context of Manenberg as representative of 'coloured' townships located on the Cape Flats. Manenberg is represented as a place where 'coloured' people reclaimed a sense of pride and identity that was stripped from them by the *apartheid* state during the implementation of the Group Areas Act. I argue that the social acceptance of gender non-conforming men found in Manenberg demonstrates how notions of 'colouredness' are less bounded and allow for new, different and emergent social identifications. This I argue is a defining characteristic of creolised identifications such as those

found in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. In this way, identifications of 'colouredness' theorised within the framework of creolisation allow for ambiguities, and this became most apparent when I examined the social meanings associated with the use of the term *moffie* in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. I articulate in this chapter the contestations attached to identifications of 'colouredness' and the inherent ambiguities attached to such identifications as it is presented through that of the *Kaapse Klopse* and relate these to the social position of the figure of the *moffie*. The social position of the *moffie* in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town is fragile, despite the formal protections brought about by the "gay rights clause" incorporated in the 1996 South African Constitution. Finally I provide a review of international and local literature describing highly visible same sex subcultures in order to contextualise this ethnography of *moffie* life in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town.

Marawaan Jumath provides to those living in the "courts" of Manenberg a highly visible performance of the feminine. Even though he does not identify as a woman, for the last 15 years he has taken part in gay beauty pageant competitions. Marawaan expressed in his own words that he takes part in gay beauty pageant competitions because: "[He] like[s] the dress-up [and] the make-up". He primarily drags onstage, sometimes, when we hang out in the local club situated about 10 minutes' drive from Manenberg, he is in drag. Thus Marawaan does not only drag onstage but also presents the feminine in social spaces such as the local club where most of the patrons are not gay. He is able to freely express his temporal gender non-conformity and same sex identifications without fear of prejudice in the township where he lives.

On stage Marawaan becomes Cleopatra (Cleo) De La Cruz. He chose this stage name because as he puts it: "I was always fascinated with Cleopatra, the queen of Egypt, especially how she operated, how she conquered everything". As Marawaan invited me into his world I realised that his stage name has much more meaning to him in his personal life as he struggles to overcome daily challenges. Since his mother passed away six years earlier, and his father disappeared from his life at a young age, he took on the role of both mother and father to his two younger siblings. More recently he was diagnosed with liver failure and is struggling to accept this diagnosis. In response to this he instead focuses on gay pageantry in order to escape to a world of glitz and glamour where he forgets temporarily about his daily struggles.

Even though Marawaan emphasizes that: "I did not have a problem like other gays, where parents disown[ed] them", his Muslim upbringing was in conflict with his same sex

identifications. According to Muhsin Hendricks[16](2010), same sex identified men who practise Islam are faced with many challenges, one of which is social rejection. Such social rejection, according to Hendricks (2010) is premised on the belief that homosexuality is a major sin in Islam and punishable by death under Shariah law[17]. Marawaan in his own words feels "uncomfortable to practice Islam":

> I feel very uncomfortable practising Islam or the Muslim religion as such because for me it feels like it does not cater for me. All you hear is condemnation, condemnation, whereas I go to church with a lot of my friends, I go as I am, I can dress up for church. I can do my hair the way that I want to do, if I wear make-up, I can wear make-up. But if I should go to a mosque I cannot be the way that they want me to be, and I do not feel comfortable, because that is not who I am, so I am not practising Islam. I feel more accepted into the Christian religion and so that is where I am at the moment.

When Marawaan goes to mosque he is forced to wear pants, and a long robe. In this attire he feels uncomfortable. Even though Marawaan does not wish to make any physical transformation to a female body, he shared with me that he desires to feel like a woman, and a woman in the Muslim faith does not wear a long robe. Thus even though Marawaan feels socially protected to express himself in his temporal gender non-conformity and in his same sex identifications in Manenberg, his Muslim upbringing prohibits such gender transgressions. Marawaan's family has always been supportive and at church he is comfortable to express his feminine persona through fashion and stylization. However, Islam as articulated by Marawaan disallows his same sex identifications and disregards Cleo his feminine persona.

Similarly, being brought up in a Muslim family proved to be particularly challenging for Ayesha. As a transgender woman who identifies as straight, in her words, she expressed to me that: "Islam does not have any place for me". Because she is "in transition" this gender fluidity does not allow her to practise Islam with others:

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[16]Muhsin Hendricks is recognised as the first openly gay Imam in the world. I met him through my work as a HIV researcher. He established The InnerCircle, an organisation providing support to gender non-conforming Muslims. The Muslim Judicial Council in Cape Town pronounced a fatwa or religious judgment against him in 2007 because Orthodox Islam regards homosexuality as unIslamic (Denny-Dimitriou, 2010).

[17]The Shariah is a code of law derived from the Quran and from the teachings and example of Muhammad's lifestyle and is developed through consensus of early Muslim scholars (Denny-Dimitriou, 2010). Muslims are subjected to this law specifically in Islamic countries (Denny-Dimitriou, 2010).

I think religiously speaking being brought up in Islamic family was one of the biggest challenges. I associate myself as a Muslim female, I think when the time comes, and especially when one talks about marriage, if I get married to a Muslim man, I would then embrace Islam fully, but I felt that I've never had a real Islamic role model. Islam to me was an abusive Islam, Islam did not accept me. Because a lot of the rituals involved in Islam is that you're doing are in congregation with other people, which kind of makes it difficult for me because in a stage of my transition, so people might have an issue with me attending mosque and praying with me or, so it makes it difficult to practice Islam, because you can't be Muslim in isolation, because that is the start of the major pillars of Islam.

Because of her Muslim upbringing, she found it challenging to *come out*. As a consequence of her Muslim upbringing, her family rejected her. Although having been rejected by her family, Ayesha has achieved legendary status in Manenberg because of her participation in gay beauty pageant competitions. In the 'coloured' township of Manenberg where Ayesha and her friends reside, it is no secret that she was "becoming a woman". Often, when I accompany her to the local club, patrons playfully reached under her short dress to assess if she had undergone the "full transition". In fact, Ayesha is seen and socially accepted in Manenberg as *'n ware vrou* [a real woman][18]. Because of her social status as a pageant queen, Ayesha is often invited as a judge for gay beauty pageant competitions. On these occasions, she is dressed in her most elegant evening wear. Those living close to her in Manenberg show their admiration and support by claiming her as their own, when they say: "Ayesha is *onse girl*", meaning Ayesha is our girl. Thus despite the apparent gender transgressions committed by both Marawaan and Ayesha, they are embraced by the residents of Manenberg. At the same time, the social acceptance as articulated by Marawaan and Ayesha is complicated and does not necessarily point to an overall social acceptance of same sex sexualities in all sectors of South African society.

## 2.2 Manenberg

Manenberg (also spelt "Mannenberg"[19]) is also the name of the unofficial "anti-*apartheid* anthem of Cape Town", according to John Edwin Mason (2007). Mason (2007) relates that in

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[18]In the gay social networks of Cape Town, notions of a 'real' woman are also captured by the phrase *sy is vis* or *sy is fishy* (the literal translation from Afrikaans to English is: "she is a fish or she is fishy").

[19]"Mannenberg" is spelt in the album: *Mannenberg is where it's happening*.

the 1980's "Mannenberg" from Abdullah Ibrahim's album, *Mannenberg is where it's happening* became the anthem of the struggle against *apartheid*. *Mannenberg is where it's happening* is a song which blended different South African musical forms – *marabi*, *mbaqanga*, and *langarm*--with American jazz-rock fusion (Mason, 2007). This song is a product of creolisation that expresses an authentically South African mode of expression within the jazz tradition that originated in the Cape.

The 'coloured' township of Manenberg is separated from Nyanga and Gugulethu (previously allocated during *apartheid* for those designated as 'black') townships by a railway line, according to ex-resident Julian Jacob's (2010), and flanked by another 'coloured' township Hanover Park to the west, Heideveld to the north and Nyanga to the east (see Appendix 4, the red arrow pointing to the location of Manenberg). In Manenberg according to the Strategic Information Branch of the city of Cape Town Municipality, 94.4% of its residents describe themselves as 'coloured' (Fourchard, 2012). Census 2011 (2012) revealed that the Manenberg labour force population (15-65 years) is 23126, of whom 5725 are unemployed and 9433 not economically active either (cited in Brandt, 2014).

Gang related violence in Manenberg is rife. In the "courts" is also where the notorious fights between rival gangs take place. According to a report released by the Western Cape Government (2013) Manenberg, in addition to other 'coloured' townships, namely Elsies River, Hanover Park, Lavender Hill are amongst the gangs priority hotspots in the Province. Ayesha resides adjacent to the three storey flat where her landlord lives is a small garden flat. She shares the flat with three 'butch' (masculine-performing) lesbians. At various times during my fieldwork, Ayesha called me in a state of panic that there were gang fights happening close to where she lives. Other times I had to take another route to visit Ayesha, because police tape (indicating a fresh crime scene) was spun across the road that takes me to where she lives. The residents however did not respond with apathy to the gang violence. In response to the gang related violence in Manenberg, public meetings were often held by the police in an effort to involve the residents of the township to fight crime and violence. In addition, in many of the sections of Manenberg, neighbourhood watches have been established by concerned residents to "take back the streets", and make it safer for those who live there.

In addition to the constant presence of gang violence, Marawaan and Ayesha struggle financially. They do not have full time employment nor the psychosocial support of their close relatives. In Marawaan's case, both his parents are no longer able to provide psychosocial support, whereas Ayesha was rejected by her family. This lack of psychosocial support in addition to the financial responsibilities weigh heavily on them. Marawaan works part-time as the storekeeper at his siblings' school. He is the sole guardian of his siblings. The salary provided to him is barely enough to last for the month. It is for this reason that Marawaan also relies on the prize money given to pageant winners. Because Marawaan and Ayesha do not have financial stability, they often borrow wigs and dresses from those living in the nearby "courts". Neighbours, other pageant contestants and friends provide support financially and materialistically on pageant night. Thus gay pageantry is a means for pageant contestants to gain social and monetary capital. The boundaries that are often imagined with performing a non-binary disposition in opposition to that of heterosexuality will often create an "us" vs "them" narrative. However, in Manenberg these boundaries are non-existent or less visible.

Salo (2003) argues that the residents of the township defined community in the local context in a way that has endured for over 40 years since the first removals. Because of their ability to refashion the notion of "social communities" (p.350) over this period, residents have creatively reinvented the township's physical and racial boundaries, using these borders as the physical and cultural capital to construct a positive notion of personhood and of community. According to Salo (2003), in this reinvention of community, the township's physical and social density has also influenced its residents' perceptions of community and differentially fashioned their social interactions with others - within the supposedly homogeneous racial area. In the densely constructed "courts", the spatial boundaries between the street and domestic spaces are indistinct, reconfiguring the divisions between private and public space (Salo, 2003, p.350). In Manenberg, despite the association of the township as a "dumping ground" for those classified as 'coloured', dominant discourses of a group of people who remained disenfranchised without the sense of community, created social cohesion and identity, a sense of community and of pride (Salo, 2003).

## 2.3 The *moffie* in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town

Historically the *moffie* is located within the *Kaapse Klopse*. According to Jeppie (1990a, 1990b), these New Year celebrations found their roots in the musical activities of the slaves in

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the Cape settlement (circa early 1700s) until the abolishment of slavery in 1834[20](Martin, 2000a, 2000b). The slave history in which the Cape settlement was forged, meant that different peoples met at the southern-most point of Africa, which informed processes of creolisation (Martin, 1997, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2001, 2006). According to Coplan (1985), the slave history in which the city was forged produced creolised forms of music, such as melodies brought on by the *ghoema* and the cushion dance, with elements of eastern music evolving and becoming part of the standard dance repertoire at social gatherings. *Ghoema*, according to Martin (1999), refers to a wooden drum instrument that tells of the many musical influences of the Cape embodied through the word and sound of the *ghoema* beat (cited in Oliphant, 2013). The *ghoema* beat is particularly associated with the *Kaapse Klopse*, guiding the *klopse* through the streets of Cape Town during the annual New Year's festivities.

Similarly, in Martin's (2011) article focusing on Cape Town and its creole origins, he makes reference to the late Vincent Kolbe's (musician, librarian, activist) contention that Cape Town is a creole city, firstly because of its location (i.e. as a port city) through which reverberations of the world could enter South Africa and be transformed to cultivate local processes of inventiveness. In particular, according to anthropologist David Coplan (1985) slaves from regions such as Java, Malaya, the Malabar Coast of India, Madagascar, Mozambique and East Africa brought with them a rich musical heritage (cited in Miller, 2007). At the same time, Collin Miller (2007) indicated that slave musicians engaged with European and local Khoi-Khoi (original inhabitants of Southern Africa) musical practices and blended these with their own musical practices.

Denis-Constant Martin (1999) writes that slaves worked on the first day of the New Year, but were allowed time off on the second day of the New Year. Therefore, on this day they celebrated the New Year with singing and parading in the streets (Martin, 2000a, 2000b). Even today, the main parade continues to take place on the second day of the New Year; hence the New Year carnival processions are also referred to by locals as *Tweede Nuwejaar* [Second New Year]. One of the popular songs associated with the *Kaapse Klopse* is titled: *Dis die Nuwe*

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[20]See also the following newspaper articles making reference to the origins of the *Kaapse Klopse*: a)"Coon Custom's Roots in Slavery" by George Manuel, *Cape Times*, December 30, 1979 &"Coon Carnival, Its Roots Are in Slavery" by George Manuel, *Cape Times*, December18, 1954 (Manuel, 1954, 1979); "Abolition of Slavery, The First of December", *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, December 6, 1834 (Unknown, 1834a); "Celebrations of Slave Emancipation, Midnight Services in City Churches, Scenes of 100 Years Ago Recalled", *The Cape Argus*, December 2, 1834 (Unknown, 1834b).

*Jaar, ons is deurmekaar* [It is the New Year, we are upside down]. As conveyed through this song: "turning [everything] upside down" the *Kaapse Klopse* presents as a malleable and ambiguous space allowing for excesses, freedom and expressivity.

Because of these 'suspensions of the social order', I grew up being warned by my mother that it is "unsafe" to be in the Cape Town city centre during these celebrations. I remember horrific stories told by my mother of people being cut with razor blades for no apparent reason during the carnival processions. This illustrates my middle class upbringing in the township, where notions of respectability were key to constructions of 'coloured' identifications. My mother would often say that we do not have to show others through our behaviour where we live. In other words, we have always to be respectable. This statement made by my mother is also illustrative of the internalised shame of living in the new section of Belhar, a township established for the 'coloured' group. For this reason, during my childhood in Cape Town we never went to the carnival processions.

During fieldwork, however, I decided to go to my first street processions of the *Kaapse Klopse* and more importantly to take my mother with me. From my observations it became clear that some people set up camp in the early hours of the morning, or the night before the parade, in order to get a "good spot" to watch the troupes pass by. I realised that families do not only overnight on the streets of Cape Town to get a "good spot" to watch the parade pass by, but spending the night on the streets is also an opportunity for spectators to become active participants of the carnival celebrations (and perhaps also an active part of the city). Although steel barricades were put up to separate performers and onlookers (audience), the boundaries that traditionally separate performer and audience member did not exist during the carnival processions.

Even though I felt like an 'outsider' (and was admittedly wary of anyone who came close to me because of the razor blade story told by my mother), carnival participants from performers to spectators make use of the carnival to re (create) a shared feeling of togetherness. Long before the troupes make their appearance, merry sounds pre-empt them. The troupes dressed in panama hats, some with painted faces and colourful satin lapels dance through the streets of the city of Cape Town to the sound of tambourines, the *ghoema* beat and brass instruments. Some hold multi-coloured parasols in one hand, and comically jab out their tongues and make facial expressions to entertain spectators. Onlookers respond with equal jollification, waving and

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shouting to friends and family who form part of the troupe. Others reach across the steel barriers to take photographs with troupe members.

The 'disorder' created by the crowds' merriment was part of what had prevented my mother from attending carnival processions. Although she was excited to see the processions, she became noticeably uncomfortable as the number of people increased and we were pushed out of our original position in front of the steel barricades. This confirmed her reasoning for never having previously attended the street processions, and she vowed to never come again as long as she lives. My mother's resistance to the carnival is also informed by her middle class upbringing. The middle class often rejected the idea of the *Kaapse Klopse* out of resistance to the 'kind of disorder' that the carnival is often associated with in its allowance of freedom, expression and excess.

These ambivalent feelings towards the *Kaapse Klopse* amongst 'coloured' people created divisions based on class and notions of respectability. Even though the *Kaapse Klopse* is in many ways accepted in a positive way as "a 'coloured' thing", at the same time there is also resistance to such associations by 'coloured' people. In this way, the *Kaapse Klopse* is situated in a contested space. Similarly, I argue that the figure of the *moffie* although very much rooted within identifications of 'colouredness', there is resistance by 'coloured' people to such associations. I argue that these divisions based on class and notions of respectability can also be transferred to that of the figure of the *moffie*.

The term *moffie* as in other 'coloured' townships of Cape Town is commonplace. The term is used jokingly and playfully amongst 'coloured' gender non-conforming men. This was made apparent to me in the following brief interviews:

> I use it [the term *moffie*] in my everyday life, but one thing we say *moffie* to each other with a lot of respect. We use the word *moffie* when we come together; we enjoy saying this to each other, because we understand (Samantha, Belhar)

> To me the word does not mean anything. Yes we do use it as friends. When we refer to other gay people or when we want to make fun of each other (Cindy Lauper, Athlone)

> Someone that dresses up in public, mostly during day time. Yes myself and my friends approach each other in this manner. We feel more at ease when we call one another *moffie* (Natalie Davids)

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> Well I do not take any offence when people call me *moffie*, because I have been called *moffie* by my family at a very young age and have adapted to being called *moffie* (Scarlett Rosario, Hanover Park)

> The word *moffie* does not faze me at all; I use it in chats with friends, family we joke about it so in all honestly I do not have any issues with the word *moffie* (Jamie Peters, Cape Town)

The above brief excerpts confirm that gender non-conforming men associate the term *moffie* with the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. This was also articulated by Errol, in the following manner:

> The word *moffie* is not really a welcoming word to hear or use. I do not like using that word, but coming from the Cape Flats, I have come to be used to that word. Many people only know the word *moffie* as they are not exposed to other forms of words such as homosexual, transsexual. So I do not mind the word *moffie* has become a word that relates to the Cape Flats - my community.

According to Shaun De Waal (1995)[21]: *Moffie* is a commonly used, uniquely South African term, which might have emerged from origins in the Afrikaans language and refers mainly to a male homosexual, gay self-identified man, an effeminate male, (and in rare instances a trans woman). The term *moffie*, according to Afrikaans and Nederlands scholar Roy Pheiffer, is derived from an old Dutch word *mof* used at the Cape to refer to any stranger (Jeppie, 1990a). In other words, in Shamil Jeppie's (1990a) rationalisation, *moffie* could be applied to gender non-conforming men as the 'other'.

This derivation of the term *moffie* demonstrates the often derogatory use thereof, and that it can be used to 'other' those who are seen as transgressing normative value systems. Thus in contrast to the commonplace use and the social acceptance of the term *moffie*, is the often derogatory use thereof and its deliberate intention to inflict hurt and pain. My interlocutors expressed their rejection of the use of the term *moffie* in the following ways:

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[21]Shaun de Waal was the literary editor of the newspaper, The Mail & Guardian from 1991 to 2006.

The word *moffie* is considered as a negative term. For example [it] degrades gay men; it is common, cheap, insulting and disrespectful. Amongst my friends, family we do not use the term *moffie* (Cece Winans, Retreat)

Well the word *moffie* it is not always nice to say. I personally do not like being called that because that word is for people that abuse women and I do not like that. When people called me that I will be upset, I just tell myself I deserve a better word then *moffie*. In most cases people are fine being called that, but I am not. A better word would be drag queen or on my stage name (Cassandra Hendricks)

*Moffie* is a term not used by me the same that sounds very disrespectful is faggot – we joke in my circle but outside I don't like or prefer not using the term *moffie* (Natalie King, Landsdowne)

The term is at times used to justify violence towards gender non-conforming men:

I was once attacked by three guys because I am a so-called *moffie* (Janet Jackson, Grassy Park)

Thus inasmuch as the term *moffie* is commonplace in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town, gender non-conforming men are often at opposite poles of either accepting or rejecting the term. This was expressed most poignantly to me in a recorded interview with Marlow Valentine-Newman. He is a well-known and respected gay activist. Marlow was born in the late 1960s in Heideveld (a 'coloured' township located 15.4kms from the Cape Town city centre) and reflects on the use of the term *moffie* in the following manner:

I have a particular ambivalence around the term, *moffie*. Both sort of a positive re-claiming perspective and then also a great awareness that it was a derogatory term which was claimed back by the LGBTI movement. It is quite strange, how one moves particularly within communities where the word *moffie* is used quite frequently, amongst LGBTI people, particularly your effeminate gay man subculture. Where they quite freely called each other *moffie* and were not offended when communities refer to them as *moffie* as well. My personal view is that it is a derogatory term; I do not like the use of *moffie* simply because of the connotations. So I kind of approach the word *moffie* with a lot of caution. And I understand there is a whole reclaiming of the word,

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however, I will not use it within my vocabulary or when I speak with people you know. Or I am very conscious of the pain that the word had caused.

In this interview, Marlow highlights several aspects that point to the ambivalence regarding the use of the term *moffie*. In the first instance he reflects on the positive reclaiming of the term *moffie*. In this instance, *moffie* has been re-appropriated as a term of self-identity and pride by gender non-conforming men. Secondly, Marlow stresses his rejection of the term *moffie*, in particular he is shocked by the commonplace use of the term in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. He highlighted that the term is commonly used in the effeminate gender non-conforming subcultures of Cape Town; in this way bringing attention to the use of the term and its association with that of femininity. Overall his rejection of the term *moffie* stems from his involvement in the LGBTI movement of Cape Town and having been exposed to a "more liberated vocabulary" (in his own words). In his work with gender non-conforming men he established safe spaces – where group discussions were held with primarily feminine performing gender non-conforming men living in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. In these safe spaces is also where he started interrogating the term *moffie* and in many respects providing a different "more liberated" vocabulary to the gender non-conforming men who attended these workshops. This articulation of Marlow towards the use of the term *moffie* and the consequent safe spaces that focus on interrogating the term, reminds me of what Reid (2007 & 2013) found in his ethnography, where gay activists held workshops on "How to be a real gay". In these workshops gay activists critiqued aspects of the hyper-feminine self-presentation of gays; suggested alternative ways of being; and engaged in extensive dialogue about various terms of classification (Reid, 2007 & 2013)[22].

Marlow maintains that the high visibility of the *moffie* does not automatically demonstrate a complete social acceptance of gender non-conforming men in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. The reality of gender non-conforming men in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town is much more complex. There is ambivalence with regards to the social position of the *moffie*.

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[22]Anthropologist, George Paul Meiu (2015) in a review of Reid's (2013) book, reminds the reader that "How to Be a Real Gay" offers a critique of an activist model of gay identity — a model that, as Reid rightly argues, has become hegemonic. According to Meiu (2015), Reid demonstrates in his ethnography "how queer identities premised on style, fashion and gender hierarchies might offer a more viable way to negotiate inclusion and visibility in small-town South Africa" (p148).

He articulated this ambivalence in the following manner to me:

> It is a community that accepts, but very ambivalently, but in the same way discriminates. It is the same community that does not allow me in the mosque, or in the church or in the school that forces me out of the school system, when I see the nurse. They might discriminate against me in a professional capacity. But it is that same nurse that will sit with me in the tavern that will drink with me, you know. And will use that word *moffie*, in an empowerment, way, Aah you my friend, *Jy is my moffie* [You are my *moffie*]. But tomorrow in my professional capacity, will say *moffies behoort nie hier nie* [*Moffies* do not belong here].

In this recorded interview, he reflects on the ambivalent social context that gender non-conforming men navigate across the different sectors of society (i.e. religion, education and healthcare). Thus this ambivalent social context is one, as articulated by Marlow, that makes allowances for the *moffie* to be socially included but also excludes and discriminates on the basis of sexual orientation. This ambivalent social context, highlighted in Marlow's interview, reflects that on a larger scale, according to Graeme Reid (2003), the broader, South African context presents itself as an ambivalent one: On the one hand, there is the 1996 South African Constitution, that protects the rights of gender non-conforming men and women, and on the other is the denunciation of same sex identifications as a threat to the 'natural order of things' (p.11).

## 2.4 The protective legal environment for gender non-conforming men and women in South Africa

In many respects, Marlow in his personal life, has been able to access the rights made available to him by the 1996 South African Constitution. In 2011, he married his partner of two years, Douglas Newman. Their wedding ceremony made the local news in the form of an article written in the Afrikaans lifestyle magazine, *Die Kuier* (February, 2011). The couple, both professionals, adopted three month old Rebecca in 2011 (Jackman, 2014). They set a precedent when they were granted paternity leave, given that the Basic Conditions of Employment Act makes no provision[23] for paternity leave (Jackman, 2014). This is not only an indication of the

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[23]New fathers in South Africa were allowed just three days of "family responsibility" leave (Van den Berg, 2016).

progressive laws governing South Africa regarding the rights of fathers, but it also provides testimony to the rights of same sex couples to be able to adopt.

In the 1996 South African Constitution, sociologist Jacklyn Cock (2003) reminds us that what is known as the "gay rights clause" is the first of its kind in the world. It was Justice Edwin Cameron[24], who drew attention to the need for constitutional protection of a person's sexual orientation in the Constitution of South Africa (De Vos, 1996). The "gay rights clause" in the South African 1996 Constitution prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, and provides for the protection of the rights of gender non-conforming men and women. Under Section 9 of the South African Constitution, a clear principle is drawn that discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation is unconstitutional. It reads:

> Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth (Constitution, 1996; cited in IIyayambwa, 2012).

Thus the "gay rights clause" in the 1996 Constitution of South Africa - according to South African constitutional law scholar, Pierre De Vos - prohibits unfair discrimination whether of a direct or indirect nature on any grounds including sexual orientation (De Vos, 1996). This in itself is a grand achievement for a country struggling with the legacies of its *apartheid* past. Within this context, De Vos and Barnard (2007) write, with regards to same-sex marriage:

> Even political rights, like the right to vote and nearly all other rights enumerated in the Constitution are secondary to the inalienable human rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness … and to this category the right to home and marriage unquestionably belongs (p.795).

In this regard, De Vos and Barnard (2007), comment that the constitutional court concluded in the case of Minister of Home Affairs vs. Fourie that the family life of gender non-conforming men and women is in all significant respects indistinguishable from that of heterosexual

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[24]Edwin Cameron is currently Justice of South Africa's highest court, the Constitutional Court (the first openly self-identified gay man to be appointed to the Constitutional Court).

spouses. In this ground-breaking decision in December of 2005, same sex marriages were legalised in South Africa, following the Supreme Court of Appeal's ruling that the common-law definition of marriage should be updated (De Vos & Barnard, 2007).

A review conducted by Jacklyn Cock (2003) outlines the trajectory of the gay rights movement in South Africa, following the advent of the "gay rights clause". Before the recognition of same sex marriages through the Civil Union Act, a number of significant gains were made. The first recognition of same sex relationships in South African Law was the Special Pension Fund Act set up for veterans from the Liberation Struggle in 1967-1996. This was due to the lobbying efforts of the many lesbians in MK, the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC) (Cock, 2003). Another example of lesbian action presented in Jacklyn Cock's (2003) review is when the Pretoria High Court ruled in favour of a lesbian police captain so that she could register her partner of 11 years on her medical aid. Other important events include: a) In 2000, a Pretoria High Court Judge ruled that a Johannesburg schoolgirl could live with her lesbian mother (reported in the Sunday Times); b) In 2000, the Pension Fund Adjudicator ruled that pension funds, which excluded same-sex partners from benefits, were unconstitutional; c) In 2001, a Pretoria High Court judge ruled that the Child Care Act and the Guardianship Act, which prevented a lesbian couple from jointly adopting their two children, was unconstitutional; d) In a second ruling, the judge ruled in favour of a lesbian in a 14-year cohabiting relationship who sought to have the conditions of the Judges Remuneration Act made applicable to her domestic partner. This involved benefits such as pension, medical aid and a subsistence allowance (Cock, 2003).

Henceforth, according to the late Ronald Louw, Proctor of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and former Chairperson of the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality, the Court has ruled that same-sex couples who are in permanent life partnerships should be entitled to the same rights as married couples - to immigration, employment benefits, custody and adoption of children (De Vos, 1996). These are some of the profound gains of the gay rights movement in South Africa. Hence there is no doubt that the "gay rights clause" of the 1996 South African Constitution, and significant gains since then, have provided a protective framework for gender non-conforming men and women in South Africa. Hence a legal right is created to protect the freedom to express one's sexual orientation, and this invokes a sense of belonging and citizenship for gender non-conforming men and women.

**2.5 Men performing differently**

**2.5.1 Same sex subcultures on other continents**

Globally, visible and socially accepted same sex subcultures have also been reported. In Hindu culture, according to queer theorist Sandeep Bakshi (2004; 2011), gender non-conforming men are part of a religious community known as *hijras*. *Hijras* dress up as women and have cultural and ritual sanction during wedding and birth ceremonies that have existed for centuries on the Indian sub-continent, according to anthropologist Serena Nanda (1985, 1998). Khan and colleagues (2009) articulate that *hijras* are born biologically male and culturally defined as neither man nor woman. With roots in ancient India, according to Nanda (1998): "The *hjras* stand out as a well-defined, culturally and socially acknowledged, organisationally set apart, ritually specialized, historically continuous, sex/gender variation which have allowed them to become powerful symbols of generativity and the divine" (p.144). Thus, Indian society and Hindu mythology provide some positive, or at least conciliatory, roles for such gender ambiguous figures like the *hijra* (Nanda, 1998).

In another setting, this time on the continent of South America, Don Kulick (1998) provides a description of the *travesti* originating from Brazil in his book titled: *Travesti: sex, gender, and culture amongst Brazilian transgendered prostitutes*. The *travesti* of Brazil, according to Kulick (1998), insist that they are not women, despite the effort and time spent feminising their bodies: they ingest large amounts of industrial silicone in order to attain a culturally idealised and embodied femininity, but they do not consider themselves to be women. They are not transsexuals, the *travesti* in Kulick's book (1998) describe themselves as homosexuals – men who ardently desire men, and who fashion and perfect themselves as an object of desire for men. Up until the 1960s, according to Garcia and Lehman (2011), the term *travesti* in Brazil was reserved for individuals who dressed as women in Carnival parodies, in shows, or even in their day to day lives. In the 1960s the term *travesti* started to be used to refer mainly to female impersonators who performed in shows that proliferated throughout the country (Green 2001).

In Juchitan in Mexico near the Guatemalan border, there is a society governed by a matrifocal family, where women have a great deal of power and autonomy economically, socially and in the kinship system (Mirande, 2011). Here in Juchitan is where *muxes* – a 'third gender' - is celebrated and widely accepted. *Muxes* is a Zapotec word derived from the Spanish word for woman (Mirande, 2011). The *muxe*, or "man-woman", is a person who seems predominantly

male but displays female characteristics such as dressing in the traditional *Zapotec* female attire and who assumes traditional female roles (Mirande, 2011).

In summary, the *hijras* have cultural and ritual sanctioning during wedding and birth ceremonies. The historical seemingly social acceptance of the *travesti*, as is the case with the figure of the *moffie*, can be traced to Carnival where men were allowed to dress like women. In Juchitan, according to Mirande (2011, p.520): "There is an openness and acceptance of gender/sex deviations hence to have a homosexual son is a blessing because they generally do not abandon the home but stay to help their parents unlike heterosexual men who get married and leave" (p.520).

### 2.5.2 Local same sex subcultures

Past ethnographic studies conducted in South Africa found that in 'black' and 'coloured' townships, same sex identified men have both same-sex desire and feminine gender (Swarr, 2004 & Reid, 2007). Amanda Swarr (2004) found that in 'black' and 'coloured' townships, most same sex identified men have relationships with cisgender men, and that such relationships are central to same sex relationships between men. In an article titled: *Moffies, Artists, and Queens: Race and the Production of South African Gay Male Drag*, Swarr (2004) draws on 17 months of ethnographic fieldwork in South Africa to explore the experiences of urban and township drag performers (p.73). Similarly, in his ethnography, Reid (2007 & 2013) explored gay hairdressers in the town of Wesselton, in the South African province of Mpumalanga and reveals how hairstyling, contributes to the social acceptance of gays in this setting.

Additional past and contemporary ethnographies of same sex desire between men reveal that, in certain social circumstances and contexts, men in same sex relationships perform the feminine role. Reid's (2007 & 2013) ethnography revealed that, masculine performing men were called 'gents' who have relationships with feminine performing men, called 'ladies'. Gender studies scholar Sylvester Rankotha (2005) claims that in South Africa, traditional notions of Zulu masculinities are constructed around notions of dominance, aggression, authority and power, whilst traditional femininity is associated with subordination and passivity. This gender normative binary is reflected in same sex relationships amongst Zulu men (Rankotha, 2005). According to Rankotha (2005), the 30 'black' men of Zulu origin who participated in his study, believed that what they did reflected the social practice at large, in

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which both a man and a woman played their respective roles, with the man playing the dominant role, while the woman had 'her' place under the man.

Anthropologist Dunbar Moodie, focused on the occurrence of "circumstantial homosexuality" in gold mining townships of South Africa in the early 20th century (Moodie, 1988). According to Moodie (1998), homosexuality on the mines had been seen as an accommodation to the migrant system of labour which increased in the early 20th century. In South African gold mining townships it was commonplace for men to take other men as their *wives* (Moodie, 1988). Sexual activity itself seldom involved anal penetration, but rather took place externally through "the satisfaction of sexual passions by actions between the thighs" (Moodie, 1988). Moodie (1998) notes that this is typical of a form of sexual play common amongst adolescent Nguni boys and girls, called *metsha* amongst Xhosa speakers and *hlobongo* (between man and man) amongst Zulu speakers.

In South African gold mining townships, these relationships took place within a system of rules that governed such relationships between older and younger men on the mine, where the youngsters are not merely sexual partners, but are seen as "wives" – providing domestic services to their "husbands". This "male wife" model has also been explored by Halperin (1999), who reported on male wife sexual encounters in South African mining townships. According to McLean and Ngcobo (1995), the male wife sexual encounter can be explained in terms of the framework of what the researchers refer to as hetero-patriarchal stereotypes; sometimes young men who are exploring same sex relationships would model themselves on their mother, sometimes on their father (cited in Rankotha, 2005).

Another form of "circumstantial homosexuality", according to Gear (2005); Gear and Ngubeni (2006) and Niehaus (2002), is observed amongst men in prisons. According to Gear (2005); Gear and Ngubeni (2006) anal sex is more common in the prison context where there is considerable coercion and sexual violence rather than gender scripted roles. However, cross-gender scripting is observed in prison marriages which have been described in South African penitentiaries (Gear & Ngubeni, 2006). The sexual relationships between inmates in these same sex dyads are scripted into gender oriented categories, with roles defined by power to husbands and subordination of "wives" or *wyfies*. Inmate culture dictates that a man who is anally penetrated is identified as a woman within the confines of the prison.

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McLean and Ngcobo (1995) write of a Zulu same sex subculture, in an area called Esinyameni in Mkumbane, today known as Cato Manor Township. In a study conducted by Rudwick (2011) one of the informants living in Cato Manor township, a 76 year-old Zulu woman who still resides in this township, recalls that when she was a child in the 1950s she and her friend often went over to the "men who were known to be different" and watched their extravagant and lavish marriage ceremonies. She also claimed that the lifestyle of these men was tolerated, if not even accepted, by the rest of the township (Rudwick, 2011).

## 2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed international and local research focused on highly visible same sex subcultures in order to contextualise this ethnography. International literature demonstrated that social acceptance and socially sanctioning of same sex desire between men and gender non-conformity are assisted in part by social and cultural rituals, historically associated with that of Carnival (social spaces where normativity is allowed to be challenged), and facilitated in culture(s) that are seen as being more open to gender/sex deviations. In this chapter, I framed the historical origins of the figure of the *moffie* with that of the *Kaapse Klopse*. The *Kaapse Klopse* originated from the musical activities of the slaves. The *ghoema* beat symbolic of the amalgamation of different sounds and melodies which were brought from the homelands of slaves to the Cape settlement guides the *klopse* through the streets of Cape Town during the annual New Year's festivities. In addition to the *ghoema* beat, and the suspension of the social order that is often associated with Carnival made allowance of gender non-conforming figures such as the *moffie*. In the space of Carnival as demonstrated through the *Kaapse Klopse* are indicative of an already creolised society.

I argue that the allowance of the figure of the *moffie* in the *Kaapse Klopse* contributed to the social acceptance of the *moffie* in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. At the same time I highlighted that this social acceptance is situated within an ambivalent context. The 1996 South African Constitution brought legal protections to gender non-conforming men of all races. Yet the social values enshrined in the "gay rights clause" does not prevent religious institutions such as that articulated by Marawaan and Ayesha from discrimination. However, in Manenberg both Marawaan and Ayesha receive not only social support but also validation of their performance of the feminine. They are also able to freely express their gender non-conformity in a highly visible manner. In Manenberg discourses of marginalisation brought on by the

Group Areas Act are replaced with that of popular notions of community and tolerance. According to Salo (2003), dominant discourses of a group of people who remained disenfranchised without a sense of community, social cohesion or identity were replaced by those who were able to create a world of their own, a sense of community and of pride.

In this chapter, I pointed to how the *moffie* was allowed in public performances such as those associated with Carnival. The following chapter, demonstrates how this rare form of social acceptance first allowed through performances in the *Kaapse Klopse* was particularly associated with an area called District Six. District Six in particular is associated with identity construction for those claiming (or resisting) 'coloured' social, political and cultural identifications.

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## CHAPTER 3: THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF *MOFFIE* LIFE

### 3.1 Introduction

> Beautiful houses we had in District Six, people accepted us in our gay life were and we were accepting of each other and [in and out] every door, without knocking on their doors, just opening up and barging in, we could come inside and say Good Morning, Good Afternoon, *Salaam* [*Aleikum*], Good Evening … they use to accept each and every gay … and each and every gay was accepted as female in every shop … they accepted the gays at the Seven Steps as well. People in Osborne Street, they use to adore me, they use to love me from babyhood, everybody seemed to have loved me there, the elderly, the youngsters, the grandfathers, the grandmothers. And my mother and father, normally if they were invited out into Osborne Street's birthday parties any hullabaloo, they could not come unless they brought me along, and I normally use to entertain the people from the age of 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and that is how I got acquainted with my neighbours and that is how they come to love me (Lewis, 1997).

- Kewpie (Cappucine) from the documentary: *A normal daughter: The life and times of Kewpie of District Six*[25]

The above was narrated by Kewpie or Cappucine (born Eugene Malcolm Fritz, 17th of April 1941 – 18 June 2012) in a documentary titled: *A Normal Daughter: The Life and Times of Kewpie of District Six* (Lewis, 1997). Eugene was assigned male at birth, but socially complied with femininity. Thus in this chapter and throughout this dissertation I will make use of female pronouns when referring to Eugene. She was called Kewpie because she looked like the Kewpie ("cherub-faced") doll that was famous roughly between the 1920s and 1960s (Chetty, 1995). In the above extract of the documentary about her life, Kewpie associates a rare form of social acceptance with a place called District Six. According to Kewpie, in District Six there was openness and a freedom that was unmatched in any other place in Cape Town. The social milieu of District Six was that: "People could be themselves and make their own worlds" (Lewis, 1997). From archival information and the documentary, about her life, it appears that Kewpie was able to express her social gender position as female freely and without negative

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[25]The documentary was produced by Jack Lewis, a Cape Town-based producer and director, who has made several films covering sexuality and gender issues, youth education, housing, programmes on land grants for the Department of Land Affairs, and language programmes for The National Language Project (See: http: www.africanfilmny.org).

consequences in District Six (see Archival Material 2). In fact, "District Six was [her] gay vicinity" (Lewis, 1997).



Archival Material 2. Kewpie in District Six
*Source* GALA

These opening statements made by Kewpie of her life in District Six, points to a social milieu that allows for new and emergent social identifications (i.e. "People could be themselves and make their own worlds"). In fact there was an openness and a freedom unparalleled to any other which permitted playing and experimenting with new and different notions of gender. These descriptions of life in District Six points to a creolising society. In this chapter I show through historical ethnography how 'coloured' gender non-conforming men used fashion and stylization to perform femininity in *moffie-drags* (as presented through popular media) and in everyday social spaces such as hair salons in particular in District Six. The historical ethnography includes archival documentation depicting the socio-historical origins of District Six; exposés on *moffie* life published in *Drum* and *The Golden City Post*, and personal accounts of gender non-conforming men who reflect on life in District Six.

I describe District Six as "gay vicinity" by incorporating historian Robert Aldrich's (2004) conceptualisation of "gay sociability" and explore what might have contributed to the notion that the social milieu of District Six was a facilitating factor for the figure of the *moffie* to flourish, as articulated by Andrew Tucker (2011). In my understanding, "gay sociability" refers to the social events, structures or general way of life that are conducive for the facilitation of same sex identifications. I ask if the notion of the *moffie* as a visible and socially accepted

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figure is part of the creation of a broader myth of a creolised society that lived in harmony, particularly in District Six. This is a central question which guides the discussion in this chapter.

In Kewpie's recollections this form of social acceptance was uncommon in other places in Cape Town. She recalls that her mother and father lived in an area known as Bellville about 23kms from District Six. In Kewpie's words:

> Well as you see, my dad and mother they were both *Bellvillites* [referring to people who live in Bellville], they were born in Bellville, and then my mother and father while they were being reared there they never grew up with gays, they never knew about gays, they never knew or understand the gays, but my mother coming to District Six with my father, she came to love the gay people, and Dad actually rejected the gay people, never wanted them to swim around with me and be friends with me (Lewis, 1997).

This high visibility and rare form of social acceptance was unusual, given that the Prohibition Laws prevented any forms of non-conformity. Before the 1960s, according to African historian Tiffany Jones (2008), in most countries of the world homosexuality was associated with criminal activity and seen as deviant. In South Africa, inherited from Roman-Dutch common law, same sex behaviours were seen as "crimes of sodomy" (Retief, 1995). Hence, same sex identified men, according to Bett Pacey (2014) at that time could potentially be jailed for up to three years in South Africa if they were "caught in the act". In South African law, there was also prohibition against concealing one's sex and passing oneself off as a woman, in other words dragging in public (Pacey, 2014). Thus gender non-conforming behaviours were also punishable by law. Procedures ensued to include the prohibition of same sex behaviours as an amendment to the Immorality Act of 1957 that prohibited marriage between 'whites' and 'non-whites' (Cock, 2003). Hence the *apartheid* state at that time extended its control from separate living to the body (i.e. controlling sexual identifications, sexual desires and gender non-conforming behaviours). Jacklyn Cock (2003) claims that prohibiting interracial sex ensured that 'whites' continued to flourish and preserve governmental and political supremacy, whilst the prohibition of any same sex behaviours safeguarded the Christian-nationalist procreative ideals of the *apartheid* state.

These laws were put into action by the constant surveillance of outdoor cruising places, with routine police surveillance of clubs, bars and parties in the 1970s, according to Retief (1995). Wells and Polders (2006) confirm that police surveillance continued until the 1980s, and those

caught were often photographed and threatened with exposure of their same sex desires. In a state governed by Christian-nationalist values, this meant social exclusion and in some cases loss of employment (Wells & Polders, 2006). Intensive campaigns were launched against the "unnatural vice" that was homosexuality, starting from the 1960s until the early 1990s (Retief, 1995). Paradoxically, according to Tiffany Jones (2008), the reason for this rigorous clamping down on "homosexual activities" in South Africa was that in the 1960s, the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, and a few states in the United States of America (USA), relaxed laws prohibiting same sex behaviours. Croucher (2002) claims that the *apartheid* government started in earnest into investigations into "homosexual activities" because of concerns that this trend would spill over to South African shores. However, it seems that these prohibition laws and extreme investigations did not affect the visibility of the figure of the *moffie*, especially in District Six. Anthropologist Stephanie Rudwick (2010) acknowledges that in South Africa during the 1950s and 1960s most of the public activity around city cruising spots and lesbian gatherings, was 'white-only', with the exception of the 'coloured' places in District Six, Cape Town.

I will draw on a discourse of District Six as a geographical space linked to the city of Cape Town, which provided 'coloured' people with a sense of belonging to the city - and the consequent loss thereof during the implementation of the Group Areas Act of 1950. District Six is popularly memorialised as a place of identity construction for those claiming (or resisting) 'coloured' social, political and cultural identifications as articulated by Helene Strauss (2009) in the book titled: *Burdened by Race: Coloured Identities in Southern Africa*. Here I engage with an argument developed by anthropologist Charmaine McEachern (1998), in her publication focusing on politics, place and identity in the District Six Museum, in framing memory making for those 'coloured' people who were forcibly relocated from District Six to the Cape Flats.

## 3.2 The making of District Six

Already in its earliest days, District Six had all the ingredients to develop into a creolising society (Bickford-Smith, 1990). Hence Annie Coombes (2004) points out that from its earliest beginnings, with the help of its location (i.e. close to the harbour), District Six consisted of an eclectic mix of individuals with historical links from across Africa, South East Asia, as well as Eastern Europe. By the end of the 19th century, the area known as District Six had a very cosmopolitan population of approximately 30 000, according to Bickford-Smith (1990). From

the 1870s, residents of the District consisted primarily of the "petty bourgeois" (i.e. artists, writers, poets) and overwhelmingly, the working class (Bickford-Smith, 1990). According to Bickford-Smith (1990); Manuel and Hatfield (1987); and Schoeman (1994), any reference made to the origins of District Six described the area as a "melting pot" of class, race and culture, and as a cosmopolitan and vibrant community (Coombes, 2004; Keeton, 1987; Martin, 2000a).

In early 20th century District Six, the diversity of people, religions and languages was reflected in the architecture and buildings (Coombes, 2004; Keeton, 1987; Martin, 2000a). Testament to this diversity was the many mosques and churches which stood in walking distance of each other (Keeton, 1987). The overall architecture also reflected the colonial past of Cape Town (Keeton, 1987). For example, Victorian-styled houses lined the streets of District Six (Keeton, 1987). Specific landmarks in early 20th century District Six became synonymous with the area (Coombes, 2004). In Lea's (2007) thesis titled: *Streets*, *Skollies*[26] *and Coons in District Six*, Hanover Street was one of those landmarks associated with District Six. According to Lea (2007):

> Hanover Street was the heart, life and soul of the District. It was the busiest street, filled with all the qualities one could ask for from an urban place. Sights, smells, people and sounds. Restaurants, cinemas and the big fish market (popularly known amongst residents as the *visveldjie* (i.e. fish field) lured people from all over the city to the district (p.50).

Another popular landmark associated with District Six was the Seven Steps, which according to Lea (2007) was a notorious meeting place in Hanover Street, where gamblers and gangsters hung out. These popular landmarks, as will become evident later on in this chapter, have become part of the collective memory bank of District Six, and are often drawn upon by those who lived in District Six.

Richard Rive (1990), acclaimed South African author born in District Six in 1931 and classified 'coloured' under the *apartheid* government, claims that District Six "had a mind and a soul of its own". These sentiments were also famously expressed by poet and ex-resident Adam Small,

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[26]According to Steffen Jensen (2008) in "Gangs, Politics & Dignity in Cape Town" the Afrikaans term can best be translated as 'scavenger', someone who refuses to work for a living. *Skollie* in the local vernacular refers to gangster.

when he said that: "[District Six] was a mix of all sorts of life" (Schoeman, 1994). According to Soudien (2001):

> District Six as a signifier stood to embody the qualities of tolerance, mutual respect and respect for difference, which by contrast South Africa, as a counter signifier was, and might still be presumed to be, without.

District Six was therefore, in the words of Julian Jonker (2014), "the opposite of South Africa … it was following this logic; not of South Africa in its *apartheid* guise, but a place apart" (p.36).

District Six lay between the 'castle moat', Canterbury Street, Constitution Street, Devils Peak, the military lines and the toll bar (Vernacular Architecture Society of South Africa, 1967) (see Appendix 3). This geographical location meant that District Six was conveniently located close to the old Cape Town harbour and the Castle of Good Hope. The Cape Town harbour received immigrants from all over the world who settled in District Six (Vernacular Architecture Society of South Africa, 1967). The Castle of Good Hope served as a meeting place for Capetonians and those who had travelled from other worlds (Jeppie & Soudien, 1990). Due to the employment opportunities brought on by the Cape Town harbour and by the growing city, the majority of those who settled in 19th century Cape Town needed to live close to their place of work (i.e. the harbour) (Bickford-Smith, 1990). Hence the geographical location of District Six, near the harbour, was ideal for those from far and wide, looking for a home in which to settle.

According to McCormick (1989) there is no archaeological evidence to show the existence of established populations in the part of the Cape Peninsula later to form District Six, before the 17th century. With the help of historical documentation, Manuel and Hatfield (1987) and Digby Warren (1985) suggest that proof of settlement in this area was recorded only from 1840 onwards, when the first Cape Town municipality was developed, and the area was designated District 12 (McCormick, 1989). In 1867 Cape Town was re-divided into six districts (McCormick, 1989). Hence District 12 was renamed District Six because it was the sixth district of Cape Town.  It has retained its name till this day whilst the other districts have all been renamed (Schaffers, n.d.).

In 1840, Cape Town was a small town with a population of 20 000 (Bickford-Smith, 1990). Towards the end of the 19th century, Cape Town's population increased to 140 000 (Bickford-

Smith, 1990). This growth was largely the result of the growth of the city's trade (mainly in wool and ostrich feathers) (Bickford-Smith, 1990). In addition, the emancipation of slaves in 1838 meant that there was greater occupation of land, so squatting became a problem: every structure was rented out - stables, cellars, holes under *stoeps* [small verandas] (Hallett, 2007). In consequence, there was overcrowding, particularly in District Six (Hallett, 2007). In addition to being overcrowded, District Six had poor infrastructure from its earliest beginnings (Hallett, 2007). It was affected by various sanitation violations as well as years of neglect by the municipality, leading to an outbreak of typhus (Manuel & Hatfield, 1987) and the bubonic plague in 1901 (Bickford-Smith et al., 1999).

Due to the overcrowding, those who were able to move out of District Six (i.e. the wealthy of Cape Town society) relocated to other more affluent districts, such as those further out of the inner city that are presently known as the Southern suburbs (Bickford-Smith, 1990) (see Appendix 1 for location of the Southern suburbs). Later on with the arrival of the railways and tramways, wealthier Capetonians were able to relocate to villas in the Gardens, Green Point and Sea Point (Bickford-Smith, 1990; Wilkinson, 2000). Wilkinson (2000) indicates that the expansion of the city was largely shaped in the 19th century by the development of the railway line to the Southern suburbs which reached Wynberg in 1864, Muizenberg in 1883, and Simon's Town in 1890. Expansion was furthered by the construction of the Alfred Basin, begun in 1860 and opened 10 years later – the largest public enterprise yet undertaken in the colony (Wilkinson, 2000). The poor stayed behind in District Six, because they had no means to travel to and from their places of work in the city centre of Cape Town (Wilkinson, 2000). The majority of people who stayed behind in District Six consisted of those classified as 'coloured' (Wilkinson, 2000).

Despite the overcrowding, poor sanitation and hard living conditions, the area was filled with *kanala*[27] (McCormick, 1989). Even amongst the inhabitants, according to McCormick (1989), the district was popularly known as *Kanaladorp*[28], from the Melayu-Portuguese word *kanala*. Yet, it is precisely because of these circumstances in District Six, according to ex-residents Hettie Adams and Hermione Suttner (1988), where "everyone were in the same boat" (materially speaking), where human warmth and the sense of community came to the fore – that

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[27]*Kanala* means "to do a favour" or neighbourliness.

[28]Others such as South African novelist and historian Karel Schoeman (1994) suggest that *Kanaladorp* is a name that is a mixture of Malay and Dutch (p.16).

created a place where no one could hide from any sense of self-importance that they might have. In District Six, no one who lived there tried to be anything but what he/she was (Breytenbach & Barrow, 1987). The great equaliser, according to Karel Schoeman (1994), was poverty, a common lifestyle of hardship, which created this sense of community. There was no outsider, because everyone was in the same boat, according to Adams and Suttner (1988):

> Not the 'coons', not the *moffie*, not the gangster, not the prostitute, everyone was welcomed in the District (p.7).

Anthropologist Jonas Ursin-Holm Lea (2007), Kathleen McCormick (1989) and historians Ciraj Rassool and Sandra Prosalendis (2001) add that the area was thought of as a refuge or as "… a place where help would be found" (p.99). According to Digby Warren (1985), District Six in its early origins (1840s and 50s) accommodated people of various social classes (cited in McCormick, 1989). During the 1840s and onwards, newspaper articles and letters to the municipality illustrated that a diverse set of people settled in District Six which included traders, merchants, immigrants, labourers, artisans and a large number of freed slaves (Bickford-Smith, 1990, Ebrahim, 1999, McCormick, 1989). For example, historical documentation revealed that Jewish immigrants from Tsarist Russia, Malay Muslims and Indians were amongst the biggest groups, together with the freed slaves, who settled in this area (Hart, 1988; Ridd, 1981). In addition, District Six housed large numbers of immigrants from Britain and several thousand from *Mfengu*, *Gcaleka* and *Gaika* from the Eastern Cape of South Africa (Hart, 1988; Ridd, 1981). Considerable numbers of Chinese and Australians also moved into District Six (Bickford-Smith, 1990). People from all over the world, with different religions, languages, cuisine etc. all settled into this small space at the foot of Table Mountain (Bickford-Smith, 1990).

## 3.3 District Six as "gay vicinity"?

District Six is viewed not only as a cosmopolitan space that is typical of port cities like Cape Town, but also a space which makes it more conducive for what Robert Aldrich (2004), in writing about the association of homosexuality with the city, calls "gay sociability". In this account, he provides case studies of cities (including Cape Town) that demonstrate how gender non-conforming persons have been both marginal and central to city space (Aldrich, 2004). In this sense, Aldrich (2004) argues that:

Urban centres have been conducive to homosexual expression, whether integrated into or transgressive against social norms (p.1719).

In providing a historical overview of what Aldrich (2004) calls "homosexuality and the city", the author lists the city of Cape Town as a city outside of Europe and North America that has seen more "open self-identified gay cultures" (p.1724). In looking at the city of Cape Town, Aldrich (2004) refers to the work of Lewis and Loots (1995), both contributors in the celebrated book: *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa* (1995) who provide a description of the figure of the *moffie* during the 1950s and 1960s as highly visible and socially accepted. Globally, historical sources and empirical studies suggest that urban spaces (New York, in the USA and Amsterdam in the Netherlands) are particularly favourable to the construction of gay identities (Chauncey, 1994; Sibalis, 2004; Weis & Fine, 2000). Because of the anonymity that the city affords it has become a particularly conducive space for "gay sociability" argues Aldrich (2004).

According to Aldrich (2004) same sex desires manifest in the city in identifiable ways. In his explanation of such manifestations, Aldrich (2004) points out that same sex desires can manifest in what he calls sexual topography (i.e. structures, landscapes, geography), urban occasions, as well as in Pride parades. In District Six, according to Chetty (1995), gays as well as lesbians have been a common occurrence in *shebeens* (local drinking places) and clubs, and occupied lodgings in Hanover Street. Before the razing of District Six, two additional manifestations mentioned by Aldrich (2004) applied to District Six. The first refers to the wash baths that were famously associated with the gays of District Six:

> People never complained about the gays at the wash baths. I think the guys were too glad when the gays walked in there. I actually got together with these guys – straight guys, very straight guys and they were married, quite a number of them were married. No one complained about the gays. People were so used to the gays you know. They never used to bother with the gays.
>
> - Piper Laurie. Source. The District Six Museum

This was an extract from an interview conducted with one of the legendary gay hairdressers of District Six, named Piper Laurie. Piper Laurie recalls that the wash baths were a popular place for gays in the 1960s and the 1970s (also see Ebrahim, 1999).

The second manifestation, street processions of the *Kaapse Klopse* can be described as an urban occasion, which also provides a space for same sex desires to be performed through the figure of the *moffie*, who often led the carnival parade (Martin, 1999). These street processions often started in Hanover Street in the heart and soul of the District.

### 3.3.1 Hairdressing in District Six

With the advent of the hairdressing industry in District Six, hair salons became social spaces for gays to socialize. In places such as District Six the hairdressing industry at that time gained popularity amongst gender non-conforming men and became synonymous with the figure of the *moffie*. Hairdressing became a niche market for the *moffie* because of the beauty, femininity and fashion associated with the industry.

The glamour which appeared to be synonymous with the 1950s and 1960s led to an increase in fashion and beautification practices, including the hairdressing industry. Beauty, femininity and fashion are important tools in the affirmation of a female social gender position. Kewpie learnt the art of hairdressing, according to one of the narrators in the documentary about her life, from visiting the first modern 'coloured' hair salon in District Six, named André's Hair Fashions (see Archival Material 3). Hairdressing competitions were often held amongst the local hairdressers (see Archival Material 4) in District Six.
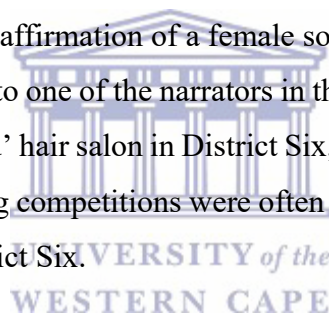
Archival Material 3. Andre's Hair Fashions, 31 Upper Darling Street. District Six
*Donor* Charles Arendse/Kewpie. *Courtesy of the District Six Museum*



Archival Material 4. Models in hairdressing competition at Salon Sheba. District Six
*Donor* Serina Du Plessis. *Courtesy of the District Six Museum*

The many hair salons complemented the number of barbershops, in particular in Hanover Street, District Six (Chetty, 1995). It seemed that legendary status was also obtained through

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hairdressing for some *moffie* queens who lived in District Six. Below is the story of the renowned hairdresser, Ishmael Hanief, told through a compilation of interviews conducted by the District Six Museum. Ishmael Hanief[29] (see Archival Material 5) was born in Balmoral Street, District Six on the 5th of January 1937.
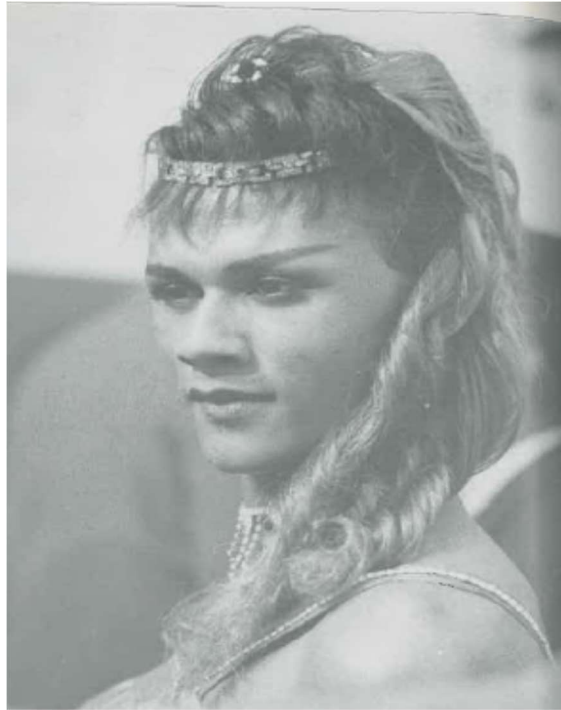
Archival Material 5. Piper Laurie, a celebrity gay hairdresser who lived in District Six
*Source* Chetty (1995)

Ishmael was brought up in a strict Muslim home. Ishmael, affectionately known as Piper Laurie (the name according to Piper, originated from the movies), lived for almost 40 years in District Six until the implementation of the Group Areas Act of 1950. She was relocated like the rest of her family to Mitchells Plain in 1966. Piper is considered to be one of the legendary hairdressers of District Six. Piper worked from the age of 16 in a shoe factory where some of her co-workers, women at the factory, asked her if she could do their hair. Since that time Piper started doing hairdressing in her home. To Piper, hairdressing is an almost 'natural' ability:

> Yes, I had a flair for hair and then the girls used to ask me from the factory to do their hair.

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[29]The information was based on an interview that was conducted by Pat Fahrenfort on the 25th of October 1999 with Piper Laurie. Courtesy of the District Six Museum.

She adds to the above statement, that: "Although I wanted to be a dress designer, but because I had the flair for hair, I just switched over". In addition, popular media during the period of 1950s – 1960s represented the figure of the *moffie* as 'naturally' inclined to hairdressing. As is evident in the statement made by Piper earlier, the use of the word "flair" is illustrative of not only a special instinctive aptitude, but within this context it also refers to a certain kind of stylishness and originality. In this sense, Piper believes that she has a 'natural' keenness for hairdressing. Such popular ideas of the figure of the *moffie* being 'naturally' inclined to hairdressing, contributed to hairdressing becoming a niche market for the figure of the *moffie* in District Six. As is clear in this article in *Drum* magazine:

> And the *moffies* have come to be accepted, however unusual, as a part of the Cape Society. That they dominate the hairdressing profession is no mystery. Their delicate hands and generally fragile personalities forbid any intrusion into the highly-demanding operations such as woodwork, building or truck-driving. Their femininity naturally craves for like company and this is found in the colleagues and the customers of the hairdressing salons. Their undeniable prowess in the hairdressing underlies the difference. The Cape set enjoy a nationwide reputation and many of the local entrepreneurs are contracted seasonally to work in all the country's main centres (Heyns, 1976 p.9).

After Piper realised her talent for hair, she went to study hairdressing. At that time, however, there was no place for "non-Europeans to study hairdressing". Fortunately, according to Piper, a person of German decent offered to teach her hairdressing skills. Following her qualification, she worked for a hair salon in Rotting Road in Upper Darling Street (which was in her memory the second non-European salon in the whole of Cape Town). In Piper's memory:

> It was first Rosemary, which was opposite us and of course the Salon Andre's (see Archival Material 3). *Apartheid* was not so severe – at that time, it was mixed. Mixed yes and they were all my customers. And I did all the nurses of Woodstock, the 'white' nurses. I was quite popular that time.

Here Piper draws on historical documentation that even though *apartheid* was implemented, Cape Town has been portrayed as an extremely multicultural city, one where different races coexisted in harmony. In this recollection, Piper recalls that in the space of the hair salon for

example, there was no separation of the races. As a hairdresser during *apartheid,* Piper as a person classified as 'coloured' by the segregationist policies was able to provide hairdressing services to 'white' nurses.

### 3.3.2 Performing the *moffie* in District Six

> SHE stopped at the doorway, to give them enough time to notice her. Then as if walking on a cloud, she flowed into the gathering with undulating hips. She manoeuvred through the tables and the men she passed, busy talking or drinking, turned to watch this beautiful, exciting creature wearing a tight fitting evening gown of silver grey lame that fitted well round the fullest bosom present. She was irresistible. And as she had expected she had hardly seated herself when she was surrounded by men. She chose her victim, but the 'flirtation' was short and sweet. After a while she begged to be excused, and moved off in the direction of a restroom. Passing under a low hanging decoration a lock of her tresses was hooked and before you could say Capuccine the wig came off revealing the close-cropped head of a man. The occasion was the celebrated visit to Cape Town by Capuccine. The biggest gathering of the undecided sex presented themselves at the theatre on the opening night of the show. Dressed in spectacular female finery they disported themselves as never before. (Heyns, 1964 p.7)

In the 1950s and 1960s, popular media like *Drum* magazine and the *Golden City Post* contributed to this production of the figure of the *moffie* in places such as District Six[30]. These publications provided readers with a glimpse of the everyday and staged performances of the *moffie*. Of note is that the term *moffie* was often used in the headlines of the stories published in *Drum* magazine and the *Golden City Post.* At the time the term *moffie* seemed to be a commonplace word to describe 'coloured' gender non-conforming men. For example, articles were titled: "Oh, so this is what they call a Cape *moffie-drag*" in big bold letters. Or another: "What makes our *moffies* tick?" Or: "It is the night of the *moffies*"; "*Moffies* call general election" etc. Popular representations of the figure of the *moffie* took centre stage during the early 1950s and 1960s, when popular media like *Drum* magazine became fascinated with this performance of the feminine.

Often, as in the above magazine passage, stories started with providing a detailed description of a glamorous woman fitted out "in spectacular female finery", producing an image of hyper-femininity, followed by: "the wig came off [accidentally], revealing the close-cropped head of

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[30]These newspaper articles were made available to me by the archivist at GALA.

a man" (Heyns, 1964, 1976). To the readership, this arguably produced an image of fabrication, impersonation and falsity that created an idea that *moffies* in their performance of the feminine aim to deceive. *Moffie* stories ranged from the election of a *moffie* queen, the glamour associated with becoming *moffie*, a narrative of a "*moffie-drag*", a description of the *moffies* dominance in Cape Town's hairdressing industry and the love life of a *moffie*. At that time, *moffies* took on amplified personas of movie stars – performing a femininity that seems unobtainable in the poorer 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. Female movie star names were adopted like Yvonne De Carlo, Doris Day, Rita Hayworth, Kay Kendall etc. With this came the "glamour", "glitter", "whirling skirts", "flamboyancy", "manicured and painted fingernails", "spectacular female finery" associated with the glamour of that era.

Hence popular representations of the figure of the *moffie* produced an aesthetic of glamour, not to mention fun and gaiety. With this production of glamour, *moffies* were considered as "different", and "indefinable". For example, well-known reporter Jackie Heyns (1976) who frequently covered the *moffie* stories titled: "The Gay world of the *moffie* hairdressers" for *Drum*, writes:

> Cape Town's *moffie*s are a breed apart. Humble gentle and highly talented they have little of the cattishness associated with jealous women, or the aggressive tendencies of men. They are an effeminate male glamour - who lives in a world of their own. The *moffie* phenomenon is all female despite their physical differences. Their laughter and tears love and hate, generosity and jealousy is paraded in true – womanlike manner to the point that verges on exhibitionism and this facet of their character identifies and separates the *moffie* from the true male and true female in the Cape community (p.11).

Important and defining aspects of the historical figure of the *moffie* are captured in this quote which highlights the following aspects: In the first instance the figure of the *moffie* is embodied as possessing all the good qualities of men and women: They have managed to invent a world of their own, described as "effeminate male glamour". Such a notion of "effeminate male glamour", presents an embodiment of the figure of the *moffie* as "neither true male nor true female". Hence the figure of the *moffie* is represented as gender ambivalent, almost suggesting a 'third gender', in particular with reference made to the distinctiveness of the *moffie* from the "true male and true female in the Cape community". This suggests that such fixed gender boundaries ascribed to the "Cape community" (and beyond) do not apply to the figure of the *moffie*.

The publication states further that: "Their sexual abnormality has been put to use, claiming that because of their sexual abnormality they have cornered the hairdressing industry in Cape Town." Somewhat similar to the description of gender non-conforming men in the 'black' townships of South Africa, as: "not exactly becoming a 'woman', but a variation thereof, a third sex, something in between " (Donham, 1998a, 1998b).

In an article in *Drum* (Heyns, 1976) *moffies* are described as: "nature's sex – indecisions". In fact: "*Moffies* [are] men who prefer to live as women" (Heyns, 1964). Similar themes can be found in another article, titled: "Oh so this is what they call a Cape *moffie* - drag" (Reporter, 1959) where the caption reads: "It looks like just another party. Now look again! Hey that dame's got beard stubble! Hey all these dames are wearing wigs!" The article continues to describe the following: "There was whispering in corners, and smudged lipstick and high-pitched giggles. There was wine and song. But there were no women. Hence *moffies* 'gossiped like women', 'put on make-up like women' and 'laughed like women' but they were not exactly becoming woman, they were: of the undecided sex" (Heyns, 1964).

Heyns (1976) in *Drum* comments: "*Moffies* have come to be accepted however unusual, as a part of the Cape society, and that they are very seldom, if ever, are seen as objects for snide humour". *Moffie* events were described as social spaces where: "Men in dresses, twisted with men in dresses; men in dresses danced with men in pants; and men in dresses twisted with little boys. And men in dresses did not twist with women in dresses" (Heyns, 1976).

Hence social spaces were available at the time for cisgender and gender non-conforming men to interact and socialize with one another. However most of the socially accepted spaces where cisgender and gender non-conforming men were able to interact with each other were at the home of a well-known *moffie* queen, and later on at gay owned hair salons. In a 1959 issue of *Drum* magazine, the reporter indicated that: "The *moffie* escorts had smart suits and spoke well. Some of them were worried that their wives might get to hear about their dancing with queers" (p.61). Here it also became apparent that men living a straight life were socializing with *moffies*. In addition, some men were worried that their wives might get to hear about their dancing with queers. This draws one's attention to the 'hidden' nature of such relationships and social disapproval thereof.

In many instances, *Drum* and the *Golden City Post* provided a platform for *moffies* to tell their own stories, how they see the world and how they see themselves. For example, the *Golden City Post* started a series that was called: "Confessions of a *moffie*" intended to "Deal with a

section of the community which lives a life suspended between two worlds. There is no attempt here – or in further issues – to point the finger of scorn; rather is it the aim to draw attention to the need for greater understanding and compassion for these troubled individuals". In these "confessions" one begins to see that the *moffies* represented in these articles identify as 'women', 'trapped in a man's body', according to the Western notion of transgender. For instance, according to a publication in *Drum* (Reporter, 1959) the article reads: "The *moffies* are people who were born as men, but would like to be female" (p.60). In another article titled: "What makes our *moffies* tick?", Zelda one of the *moffies* relates: "I am a woman, and I will remain a woman even if the effort kills me ... in a flight of fancy [nature] has placed the minds of women into the bodies of men" (p.21). In an article in the October issue of *Drum* (Reporter, 1967) a story is published of Angelique who wanted a sex-change operation, however the costs of this was too high. The caption ends "now she is working hard trying to save every cent for the operation that will make her a normal human being, a woman at last" (p.46). Locally, in the past and present, these men who prefer to live their lives as women were known as *moffies*, regardless of their identification as a woman.

In summary, even though the *moffie* stories provided a platform for gender non-conforming men to tell their own stories, *Drum* and the *Golden City Post* were also very much aware of what would sell, according to Chetty (1995). It is for this reason that the two print mediums started as "inventing" stories of the figure of the *moffie*. According to Chetty (1995), keeping up with the popular representation of the figure of the *moffie* as a glamorous woman and drawing heavily on the gender ambiguity of this figure, who is neither man nor woman, the *Drum* and the *Golden City Post* to a certain extent invented some of these stories. To explain, according to Chetty (1995), *Drum* played a particular role in "staging" *moffie-drags* (Chetty, 1995). *Drum* paid for the food and liquor at *moffie-drags*, hence to some extent the popular press at that time contributed to constructing the image of the *moffie* (Chetty, 1995) as a life filled with gaiety and playfulness. Chetty (1995) argues that *moffie* life was invented because the daily lives of 'coloured' gender non-conforming did not reflect the glitz and glamour that was associated with such performances of the feminine[31]. For Chetty (1995) the *moffie*-stories invented by *Drum* and the *Golden City Post* did not capture the complexities that are often associated with such public performances of gender transgression.

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[31] In many respects this statement made by Chetty (1995) marks the departure point for me in examining the lives of 'coloured' gender non-conforming men through the figure of the *moffie*.

## 3.4 The destruction and memorialisation of District Six

In 1966, District Six was declared a 'whites only' area by the *apartheid* government (Saunders, 1988). Soudien (1990) in the book titled: *The struggle for District Six: Past and Present* relates that:

> In general residents showed 'apathy' which could be interpreted as a 'rejection of politics', though there were several attempts to counter the decision of the national government by local resistance initiatives, organised by the middle class and educated workers, such as the District Six Defence Committee and the Friends of District Six Committee; there were also individual outcries published in the newspaper (p.123).

Despite local resistance movements, according to Ciraj Rassool (2006), after District Six was declared a 'whites only' area, removals conducted in the 1970s and early 1980s had sought to destroy the social fabric of the area, while its structures and material landscape, apart from mosques and some churches, had been razed to the ground. In the end 60 000 people were removed from District Six (Rassool, 2006). When District Six was destroyed, thousands of families were forcibly relocated to townships on the Cape Flats, stripped of their sense of community and social networks (Rassool, 2006). They now had to recreate themselves and their social lives as their old networks were no longer in existence (McEachern, 1998). As one of the 60 000, Linda Fortune recalls feeling disorientated, angry and powerless (Geschier, 2007). In this instance, this resident was not just thrown out of her home, but her identity and agency was violated (Geschier, 2007).

When District Six was razed to the ground, the area was renamed Zonnebloem ("sunflower"), by the *apartheid* state (Rassool, 2006). In an article tracing the redevelopment of District Six, social geographer Deborah Hart (1988) explains that plans to redevelop the area for middle income 'whites' started taking shape in 1970. In ensuing years, however, numerous protests not to build on "tainted territory" led to the abandonment of various initiatives to rebuild District Six as a residential area for 'whites' (Hart, 1988). The Oriental Plaza was built as a trading centre to appease the Indian traders who were removed from this area, and the Cape Technicon was constructed a couple of years before District Six was re-established as a residential area (Hart, 1988). In October 1982 the first 'white' Afrikaans speakers settled into

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District Six and by 1985, some 3000 to 4000 'white' lower and middle income residents were housed in the District (Hart, 1988).

Between the 1970s and 1990s, a range of NGOs and cultural projects came into existence to preserve the memory of District Six (Rassool, 2006). For example, the Hands off District Six (HODS) committee mounted a campaign in 1980 against initiatives by big business and the city to develop District Six along middle class, 'multiracial' lines, as an expression of efforts to 'reform' *apartheid* and reverse operation of its repressive apparatus (Rassool, 2006). In 1994, the District Six Museum was created, following HODS having held a two-week photographic exhibition in the Central Methodist Mission Church (Rassool, 2006). Rassool (2006) relates that the photographic collections and old film footage carried them back into their past in District Six. It was this desire to restore the integrity of District Six which led to the creation of the District Six Museum. The aim of the District Six Museum is to memorialise the area, and its people, and so to recreate social, religious and cultural activities that made up District Six (Rassool, 2006).
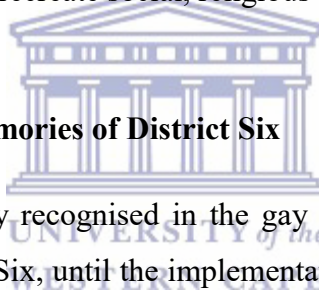
### 3.5 Mogamat and Igshaan's memories of District Six

Mogamat and Igshaan are widely recognised in the gay social networks of Cape Town as legendary. They lived in District Six, until the implementation of the Group Areas Act. Both were forcibly removed to the 'coloured' township of Mitchells Plain. Mitchells Plain was built for those people designated as 'coloured' by the South African *apartheid* government. The township is about 27kms from the city of Cape Town and located on the flat and sandy terrain of the Cape Flats. According to Census 2011 (2012), the population size of Mitchells Plain is 625 433. The majority living in Mitchells Plain were previously classified as 'coloured' (90.77%) (StatsSA, 2012). In Mitchells Plain, 48% of the households live below the poverty line, whilst only 43% of the working age population is employed (DPLG, 2004/5). The township is isolated to some extent due to its distance from the city, transport costs are high and commuters have to travel for a long time each day (DPLG, 2004/5).

To my knowledge, Mogamat and Igshaan do not know each other. Of note is that Mogamat and Igshaan's memories of life in District Six appear to be similar in some aspects. Their stories converge into a narrative that demonstrates how *apartheid* policies shaped the lives of ordinary South Africans. It is a narrative of resilience, inventiveness and creativity in a time when they

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were both classified as second class citizens by the *apartheid* state. From their personal accounts of life in District Six, it appears that ideologies of race still remain central to how they make sense of their lives, past and present. In this instance, Mogamat recalls how he and others "played white" during *apartheid*, whilst Igshaan draws on the race politics of *apartheid* South Africa in navigating himself in his career as a hairdresser. I begin this account with Mogamat's recollections of his life in District Six.

### *3.5.1 Mogamat's story*

### 3.5.1.1 Remembering the gays of District Six

I met Mogamat the Saturday before Ramadan. As I pulled up in the street next to the block of flats where he has lived for the last 30 years, Ayesha points to Mogamat walking up the street, with whom I later learnt is Boeta Salie. Boeta Salie resides in the same block of flats where Mogamat lives. They have been friends for years and often Boeta Salie will remind Mogamat of a story that he might have forgotten during our many chats. On this Saturday, when I first met Mogamat he was wearing a *thobe*[32]. As we get out of the car, and he recognises Ayesha, he comes up to us and greets with a flamboyant, *Salaam Aleikum* and proceeds to air kiss Ayesha. This initial visit was followed by numerous others to Mogamat's flat; where he made us coffee and I brought the croissants and cheese. Mogamat is a natural born story teller and performer, even at the age of 70. Boeta Salie as far as I can discern is in the same age range as Mogamat. I took Mogamat and Boeta Salie on pension day to draw their social grants that they receive from the South African government. For Mogamat, his pension is the only fixed source of income that he relies on every month. Mogamat also designs costume jewellery for bridal parties; he is a MC at variety shows and beauty pageant competitions and does hairdressing (which he is best known for) from his flat.

Designing costume jewellery and hairdressing as potential income sources are not fixed and unstable at best. Despite his insecure socio-economic situation, Mogamat remains flamboyant and dramatic - especially when he narrates his life in District Six. When I interviewed Mogamat he started our first conversation in the following manner:

> If you want me to start, just say action!

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[32]A long robe worn by Muslim men. The top is usually tailored like a shirt that is ankle-length and lose.

Mogamat lived in District Six until the late 1960s. When he shared his memories of District Six with me, he highlighted several aspects of life in District Six that have become major defining features of the area in popular memory. In the first instance, Mogamat recalls the poor living conditions in which most of the District Sixers find themselves, and importantly that despite these hard living conditions, there was a sense of community that remains unparalleled with any he had experienced post-District Six. According to Mogamat:

> District Six was mainly a place where people lived from the hand to the mouth. District Six was a place where you say people lived in poverty.

Mogamat remembers the "solid houses", "the monumental buildings" of District Six. In District Six, they had a big house and when they were relocated to Mitchells Plain, they had to sell their antique furniture "for next to nothing" because it did not fit into the small house to which they were forcibly relocated.

When we talk about the "gays of District Six", his vivid descriptions point to the high visibility of the *moffie – drag* culture in this area. In this instance he recalls the glamour of the Hollywood cinema era which inspired drag queens, with particular reference to Kewpie. He remembers Kewpie in the following mesmerizing public performance:

> Aawh I have seen carriages, lined up and in front of the Ambassador Hotel then Kewpie and them come with carriages, with horses, and the horses have feathers in their head, then they come out. They are dressed like the 18th century with these, 18th century, gorgeous dresses, like Queen Victoria, that was in the Post, the *moffie* queen.

The *moffie-drags* were also highly visible and publicized social events:

> And look when they even had drags, you know what a drag is? A drag is called, a gay party, and then if the one gay gives a party then all the gays can come with their partners. When you hear the name drag, it means that all the gays must come in with dresses; they must come with their hairdos.

Thus in Mogamat's memories, District Six was a place where gender non-conforming men can be themselves, without any fear of judgment or at that time prosecution. He remembers particularly the social acceptance of gender non-conforming men that was apparent in District Six: "Gays were treated no different to anyone else in District Six". In fact, according to Mogamat:

District Six was a place if you walk up the road or you go pass a shop and a gay passes by then it is like you saying hello to an ordinary person, because children in District Six they grew up, amongst say the gay society because gays presented themselves as what they are and even gangsters greeted them.

In this instance Mogamat emphasizes that gender non-conforming men were not isolated or socially rejected from the rest of the District Six society, and were free to express their same sex identifications. Indeed District Six was a place, according to Mogamat's memories where everyone was accepted, even the gangsters.

Furthermore, Mogamat adds: "The gays of District Six were lucky; they were seen and treated as 'girls' by everyone, even the gangsters, although they knew that they were not female". For example, in Mogamat's own words: "[The gangs] they did not touch any onlooker":

Even gangsters greeted them [the gays of District Six] and when gangsters have a fight from the one gang, say if a gangster was called the DK Killers, then you had gangsters called the Law Breakers. It does not matter who you are, the gays and everybody stood and watch by, but they did not touch any onlooker. They have their fight and you can go and run along and when they run with their gun and with their *pangas*[33] then the gays and everybody run to see who is going to win the fight.

Similarly in *Noor's Story: My Life in District Six*, Noor Ebrahim (1999) recalls listening to gangsters singing and enjoy watching gangsters fight amongst themselves. Noor also remembers an artist, a young 'white' woman called Sandra McGregor[34], who made paintings of the streets and buildings of District Six, in Noor's words: "The gangsters never bothered her. They protected her and carried her painting equipment for her". Sandra McGregor draws from this collective memory bank by indicating the following: "I painted from Caledon Street to Klein Hanover Street and learnt to know the people, the *skollies* became my friends" (Schoeman, 1994). In *Williams Street, District Six* Hettie Adams claims that: "In District Six

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[33]A panga is a broad, heavy knife.

[34]Sandra McGregor spent 18 years documenting the history of District Six, through painting life in District Six on canvas (Fleischer, 2010). In District Six, she was embraced by the locals, from day one, known by those living in District as *onse artist* (direct translation from Afrikaans to English: "our artist") (Fleischer, 2010).

we had decent *skollies* never harmed you if you minded your own business (Adams & Suttner, 1988).

When Mogamat recalls his life in District Six nostalgically, he expresses a particular admiration for the "gays of District Six". Often myself and Ayesha, with Boeta Salie and Mogamat gather in Mogamat's kitchen. Other times, the kitchen will be spilling over with visitors. On one occasion, I met Sandra Dee, the first Miss Gay Cape Town (held 25 years ago) in Mogamat's kitchen. I asked Sandra about her experiences of taking part in gay beauty pageants. Sandra Dee remembers that when she was 16 years old, she entered a gay beauty pageant, with "the big queens", such as Kewpie and Piper Laurie. Before Sandra continues, she insists that I record what I had anticipated to be simply a chat in Mogamat's kitchen. I got the impression that Sandra was eager to have her thoughts memorialised, and I switched on the recorder of my mobile phone. Sandra recalled taking part in her first gay pageant in the following manner:

> In the Kismet, it was called the Miss Gay, but in those days, they did not say the gay queen they just said directly the *moffie* queen here she is, the *moffie* queen, had it written down directly the ***moffie* queen**, that is how the people talked. But today there is another name like people say you are gay and whatsoever the case may be. And believe you me those gays, they had names like Elizabeth Taylor; they had names like Sophia Loren, Ingrid Bergman. Oh and but they act like the movie stars and when they go to drag they dressed like the movie stars, and they have their hair just like these movie stars. Wow you dare not call them on their normal boys' name, then they do not look around, but just say: "Hi Shirley Bassey" and Shirley turned around and said: "Hi". So those were people in our time, they opened up doors for any other gay, because when they go to straight clubs and they go and they want to dance with a guy, then they just dance with a guy, to other people it is so devastating they say gosh there are two men dancing but the one is slightly girlish, you know? And then they start to dance with the gays, and this was basically it, how the Cape Town, the District Six queens, I would call the drags and the gays they opened up the doors for all the other gays of today.

Both Mogamat and Sandra Dee, describe the "gays of District Six" as ahead of the time. They were trailblazers as mentioned by Sandra Dee: "The gays opened up the doors for all the other gays of today". From Sandra's recorded interview, the gays of District Six did not only play with gender, they also played with performances of race. In these instances, the idea of being

able to play with notions of gender and race in itself reveals the fabricated and constructedness of such categories.

### 3.5.1.2 "Playing white"

Both Mogamat and Sandra Dee recalled how in the 1960s and 1970s, because of *apartheid*, they not only played with gender in order to pass as female, but also "played white". On an analytical level, the notion of "playing white" highlights the constructedness of 'colouredness'. As articulated by Wicomb (1998), 'coloured' was invented by *apartheid* as a category, an artificial category that overlooked differences between communities and individuals. This categorisation was based on the discourse around race mixture. The constructedness of race and indeed 'colouredness' was made apparent to me in the conversation below that I had with Sandra Dee.

Sandra related to me that when she puts on her blonde wig and put on her make-up so that she had a 'white' skin, the police stopped and said: "Good evening Madame". She indicates to me:

I had the body, I looked like a Madame.

Almost whispering the word "Madame" to me, Sandra boasts that with her blonde wig on, she had access to many places, such as clubs that were meant only for 'whites'. She concludes:

The day I took off my blonde wig, they did not like me anymore.

This is a significant statement. In many respects it encapsulates the 'normalcy' associated with 'whiteness' that it is taken for granted. 'Whiteness' remains unquestioned. When she "played white", this performance remained unquestioned. In fact in her presentation as a 'white' woman she was allowed entry to many places.

Mogamat, similarly to Sandra Dee, also "played white". He deliberately did not want to live in Mitchells Plain where he and his family were relocated to, so he moved to an area that was designated as a 'whites only' area during *apartheid*. On one occasion, Mogamat indicated to me that he is not embarrassed to say that his father looked more 'white' than any other 'white' person might. He recalls the following story: "My father's brothers and my aunt, even in the unrest, told the police: "I looked 'whiter' than you do, but I do not want to be 'white'". Mogamat discloses to me that his father is of German descent.

The shame internalised by 'coloured' people imposed by the *apartheid* state prompts Mogamat to acknowledge his 'white' ancestry and deny to some extent his 'black' roots. Indeed "playing white" afforded him with more opportunities than the racial category imposed upon him as 'coloured'.

Often Mogamat comments that his family are very fair people, and he points to me and says you are fair but my family has much fairer skin. Nevertheless, as Mogamat indicated: "*Apartheid* was something that should not be - I had to play 'white' in order to survive". He boasts, like Sandra Dee, that he went to 'white' clubs, he was "a professional girl" (in his own words) at that time, and he danced professionally for the government broadcaster, the South African Bureau of Communications (SABC) as well. He might not have been able to engage in these entertainment opportunities if he had not "played white". In this instance, Mogamat recalls:

> We created the life ourselves, because being fashion models, the cars stopped, the European and 'white' people asked us where we are from, they couldn't believe that we were from District Six. They thought that we were foreigners because we dressed better than the 'white' people. What do they know about dressing? Where their hairdressing started it was in Hanover Street, the biggest hair salon in District Six. My mentor was Bernie who taught me everything I know today. We even danced professionally that time and things like that. And we used to dance for thousands and thousands of people. Every week I was in *Die Burger* or *The Cape Times* with new fashion.

**3.5.1.3 Living in the present**

> It was more uncomfortable, because if your roots are in District Six, there is nowhere else where you can get that home feeling and the warm feeling from other people. But luckily a lot of people from District Six were surrounded by us as neighbours, and we could converse and get along with one another, but you will never find anything like that in the world. People tried to create a community, it was there, but then it was not also there. But it was because people knew one another they got along very well.

Here Mogamat draws on the idea of identity and origins, that in this sense identity is related to place, and in this instance District Six. He reflects longingly on his origins in District Six, and associates this with a "home feeling and warm feeling from other people", thus drawing on ideas of community. His reflection on life in Mitchells Plain is one where, even though he does

not indicate this directly, it is implicit that in Mitchells Plain they created something new and different, that could not entirely be compared to the "home feeling" of District Six, but indeed "people got along very well".

For the past 30 years, he resides in Wynberg, located in the Southern suburbs of Cape Town. He lives in a one bedroomed flat. Most of the time, Mogamat will be busy with a client, styling hair in the makeshift hair salon in his flat. Other times we will sit and chat, most of these times Mogamat will talk about his sexual conquests the weekend before, or the night before, in an overly exaggerated and animated manner. In all our social interactions at his home, and out and about in town, it becomes evident that Mogamat is well known and somewhat of a local legend. A couple of times, Mogamat asked me to take him somewhere, either to Woodstock, where he buys second hand coats, or to take Boeta Salie too, to obtain their pension or for an early supper at an Indian eatery in the city centre. Mogamat was greeted very enthusiastically by a number of the patrons at this diner, and he proceeded to have long chats with some of the patrons. As we walked down a busy street in the city centre of Cape Town, people shouted at him, saying: "Hi Mogamat", or "*Salaam* Mogamat!" Mogamat's main craft and what he is famously known for is his hairdressing abilities. He often remarks: "I am the best, what can I say?". He has kept his clients for more than 20 years and boasts that now their grandchildren also come to him to have their hair done.
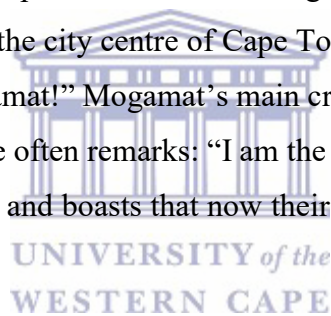
We were sitting in his kitchen, as we often do, and paging through old newspaper clippings of a life that he had as a fashion model and as a hairdresser working "abroad" (in Swaziland), as he puts it. Inevitably we came across old personal photos, I realised that Mogamat was married, and he has a daughter who is in her late forties. He has a relationship with his daughter, but he does not reveal much of what this entails. In most if not all of these photos, Mogamat is in his Muslim attire. He has made *The Hajj* (annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca) several times. Mogamat was reluctant to speak to me about his married life and even that of his daughter. I realised at that moment that, even though he has a very colourful life with everything that he is dabbling in, when he made the decision to "live a different life" it also meant that his life was a lonely one, a life somewhat divorced from his extended family.

**3.5.2.1 "In District Six, people use to mistake me for a girl"**

Igshaan is 54 years old. I made contact with him through the networks of gay pageant queens. He was born in 1961 in Stone Street in District Six, and went to Upper Ashley Street Preparatory school and Trafalgar High school in District Six until the age of 15, when he decided to leave school and start hairdressing full time. Igshaan recalls that when they were forcibly relocated from District Six to Mitchells Plain it was a very emotional time for him and his family. They were just given a letter and told to go: "There is a house waiting for you there". In Igshaan's memories it was "stunning" living in District Six. One of the earliest memories he reflects upon of his life in District Six is when he was five or six years old. He remembers how he used to steal his sisters' dresses from the washing line:

> We used to have these long staircases, and I ran down these staircases, with one of my sister's dresses on.

When he wore one of his sister's dresses his mother was disapproving. Igshaan remembers having to hide behind his grandfather's back for protection because his mother threatened to give him a hiding. He often fell asleep. When he woke up, he had "boy's clothes on again" (as told in his own words), and then he was very disappointed. Only at the age of 14 he made peace with the fact that he was "different". He remembers that in District Six, people use to mistake him for a girl. When he was at school, he did not cut his hair like the other boys. At school he was bad at woodwork, and was often scolded by the woodwork teacher because of this. Instead of playing soccer and rugby like the other boys, Igshaan preferred hanging out with the girls. During class at Trafalgar High School, he used to make up styles for the girls or braid the girls' hair. At school he recalls that there was this boy who always wanted to carry his bag. When he was 15 he had "his first experience" with this boy. He did not want to mention the name of this boy, because he is the son of someone who is well known in Cape Town. The boy (who is a man now) is also married (to a straight woman) with children. Igshaan says that in District Six when he was still young, he was mistaken for a girl and remembers that he was called *moffie*:

> *Kyk hoe loop die moffie* [Look at that *moffie* walking over there]

Hence passing as female was key to Igshaan's affirmation of femininity and to the level of social acceptance. As a young boy with same sex desires, he engaged in female roles and feminine craftsmanship such as hairdressing. The social environment of District Six allowed

for some freedom for Igshaan to express himself in his feminine social gender position. At an early age he braided the girls' hair at his school; he was bad at woodwork (considered a masculine craft). His social gender position as female prescribes that he also has sexual desires for cisgender boys (as is evident from his memory of his "first experience"). I found that having relationships with cisgender men is important in the affirmation of femininity for gender non-conforming men.

**3.5.2.2 Passing as female**

When Igshaan is in drag his stage name is Samantha (Sammy or Sam). Socially and sexually Igshaan subscribes to femininity. Although Igshaan performs a feminine social gender position, he does not drag in his everyday life. He is sexually attracted to cisgender men, and his cooking and hairdressing abilities affirm his social gender position as a woman. When he was younger, "when he looked more *femme*", he admits he was in drag every day. Igshaan prefers men, "real men", as he puts it, he is sexually attracted to straight men: "Not dainty looking men".

Igshaan prides himself in his ability to pass as female and to be able to have his gender affirmed by his sexual partners. I was invited by Igshaan for a Sunday lunch. On this Sunday afternoon, his long-time ex-partner came to Gwen's door. Gwen and Igshaan have been friends for over 20 years. Gwen lives down the road from Igshaan in Mitchells Plain. Curiously Igshaan's ex-partner is not allowed to come inside. Igshaan and Gwen sent out food for him. Igshaan disclosed that he has *Die Groot Aap* [The Great Ape] (referring to HIV), and that they were together for many years, but he has children from several different women. They have not been in a relationship for years. That Sunday afternoon, I also learnt that Igshaan can cook very well. He made a pot of *biryani* (a local Cape Malay dish). His mother was a cook, and because his sisters were busy "prettying themselves up" he used to help his mother with cooking. He says: "I am just now this and *dis klaar wat dit so is"* [I am just like this, and this is how it is]. On this Sunday afternoon, Igshaan showed me how he puts his make-up on and showed off his many ball gowns which he used to drag in for gay beauty pageant competitions (see Photo 1).

Photo 1. Igshaan putting make up on and showing off his ball gowns
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

Because he is attracted to cisgender men and because these men live a straight life, these relationships are in his words: "Always nerve wrecking", especially when he can sense that the person cares for him. This was especially true when he was younger and when he dragged every day. He recalls that usually in these relationships for about a month or two the man he was with was unaware that he was "different", as Igshaan puts it. However, when the relationship evolves to a deeper level, a decision had to be made to either disclose that he was "different", or simply leave the relationship. In one instance, he remembers clearly, in a relationship with a 'white' man he decided to disclose that he was not born a girl. In Igshaan's own words he confessed the following to the 'white' man: "Sweetheart I must tell you something, I am not what you think I am". To his surprise, the man responded positively and he disclosed to Igshaan that he was actually in love with him and that he did not want to discontinue the relationship. They were together for a while after Igshaan had disclosed his assigned male sex.

In Igshaan's view, he is just human:

> *Ek is maar net 'n mens.*[I am just human]. If they see me as a man, fine, if they see me as a woman, fine, even up to now when I am nicely dressed up when I get onto a train, then the men would say, have a seat 'lady', *dan sit ek maar net* [then I would just take a seat].

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At the age of 19, he planned to have a "sex change", and then he was in a car crash. He was in hospital for about four months, with his pelvis completely shattered. In this time the medical doctors advised that he could not have a medical transition whilst his body was still healing. When he was completely healed, Igshaan started dragging as he puts it "24/7 with stilettos, up and down the streets". Sometimes, in Cape Town, at that time, according to Igshaan:

> *As jy 'n rok aan het maak hulle so 'n* issue *van dit, jy weet*? [If you have a dress on in Cape Town, they make such an issue of it, you know?] You know what I am saying? Now they getting used to it, they just look, without saying anything you know. I just got so tired, of it.

Because of these prevailing attitudes (and the fear of being caught out), he decided to relocate to Johannesburg where he lived with one of the famous "dragging queens", Mona, a person of Indian decent, who had had a "sex change" as Igshaan puts it. Igshaan lived in Lenasia (a township designated for those who were classified as Indian during *apartheid*) in Johannesburg for almost ten years, where according to him:

> Indian men did not know of *moffies*. You were recognised as a woman. I use to sleep with the men and then they did not even know I am different, *dan sê ek vir hulle ek is pregnant, ek wil 'n abortion hê* [Then I would say to them, I am pregnant, and I want an abortion]. Johannesburg was the place to be, not now, now it is, "so black, not so cosmopolitan". At that time Johannesburg was like a magnet, but not now. *Ons was natural, jy weet, mens sou nooit gesê het daai Mavis is 'n moffie nie* [We were natural, you know, a person would have never said that that Mavis is a *moffie*].

Although Igshaan successfully passed as female, at the same time this social gender position made him vulnerable to violence. Following two incidents, one where he was almost sexually assaulted by "an African", as he puts it, and the other incident, where he was raped by two 'coloured' men, Igshaan decided to leave Johannesburg. In both these incidents, the men thought that Igshaan was a woman. However, when they realised that he was not, they sexually assaulted him. In order to pass as female, at that time, Igshaan says that he used to wear plastic gloves filled with water, which felt, as he puts it: "like real tits", but this time, he was caught out.

What is extraordinary though is that when Igshaan narrates this story he does not express any sadness. He has dealt with this sexual assaults in his own way and is able to freely talk to me

about these incidents. He remains constant in his quick wit and flamboyant personality. In his feminine social gender position, Igshaan continues in his career in hairdressing; in his words he has been doing hairdressing "all his life". In Mitchells Plain after normal working hours he "does hair" for weddings, birthdays and funerals. At a young age he left school, and during that time started dabbling in hairdressing, as Igshaan puts it: "Setting hair with curlers, and cutting hair". He started his professional career in hairdressing by assisting someone else in their hair salon. When I asked Igshaan how he knew he had a talent for hairdressing, he says: "I just had this natural flair for hair". This notion of having a "natural flair for hair" was also declared by Piper Laurie. In the popular press, hairdressing was represented as a niche market for gender non-conforming men. Both Igshaan and Piper Laurie draw on this in their personal life stories.

Igshaan's expression: *Klaar wat dit so is* reflects his self-acceptance of his same sex desires and associated feminine social gender position. In this environment it seems that he was able to accept himself in his desires for other men. I demonstrated that passing as female does not only involve engaging with feminine roles and responsibilities such as cooking and feminine craftsmanship such as hairdressing, a crucial component of an affirmation of femininity is having a sexual relationship with a cisgender man. In Igshaan's narrative, he confirms that "he is not into dainty looking men", referring in this instance to feminine performing men, like himself. Hence there is strong emphasis on social and sexual roles, which are modelled on heterosexual relationships. Inasmuch as there is a strong pull towards adhering to the gender binaries, Igshaan emphasizes his feminine social and sexual disposition that this is not fixed. Thus, he reiterates that: "If they see me as a man, fine, if they see me as a woman, fine", drawing attention to the malleability of categories such as man and woman.

I found that the "gay male - straight female friendship dyad" (Rumens, 2008) is key to the femininity that gender non-conforming men strive towards. This is demonstrated by the long friendship between Gwen and Igshaan. When Igshaan relocated back to Cape Town, he reignited his friendship with Gwen. Shepperd, Coyle, and Hegarty (2010) argue that the relationship between gay men and cisgender women works well because they share some common interests in critiquing heteropatriarchy; that in popular culture there is a public construction of a meaningful affinity between heterosexual women and gay men (most obviously through their shared sexual interest in men).

The friendship between Gwen and Igshaan has worked for over 20 years, because each one plays a definitive role and sticks to it religiously: Igshaan with his flamboyant character and

Gwen as supporting act. Where Igshaan seems to be able to draw attention to himself with his performances, Gwen is softly spoken, an introvert to some extent. If Igshaan goes off script as the *moffie* she gently guides him back to what is expected of him in this performance. Igshaan uses sharp wit and humour to mock himself, others like him, and conventional society.

Throughout my fieldwork, I learnt that humour is used by most of my interlocutors. They mock themselves with regards to their gender expression, as well as the many contradictions that are attached to the construction of 'colouredness' in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. Often camp humour is used. This, according to Susan Sontag (1964), is one thing that expresses and confirms being a gay man – mocking ourselves – in this sense camp is perhaps understood as covert protest humour.

Igshaan is always animated and we all hang onto his every word because he is able to perform his story very well, complete with facial expressions and hand gestures. I have found that part of the performance of the *moffie* is the use of language in a distinctive and unique way of expression. Such unique ways of using language complement the often exaggerated performance of femininity that is associated with the figure of the *moffie*.

### 3.5.2.3 Living in Mitchells Plain

When I first met Igshaan, he was working for what he called a "black-owned hair salon". On this day, the hair salon had its official opening, although it has been operational for a couple of months. I suspect that Igshaan invited me to come to the official opening because he needed a lift home to where he lives in Mitchells Plain. Because the opening lasted until public transport ceased, he had no means to travel from Cape Town to Mitchells Plain (see Appendix 4).

During the opening of the hair salon, Igshaan was somewhat reserved, which I later learnt, is contradictory to the animated person with whom I became more familiar in subsequent visits to Mitchells Plain. We did not get much of an opportunity to chat during the official opening. However, as I gave Igshaan a lift home to Mitchells Plain he complained about the "working conditions" at the hair salon, and that he will not stay there for long. A couple of months after this official opening, Igshaan informed me that he is now working in his own words at an "upmarket spa" in Sea Point, owned by "Jewish people". I went to visit him once at the spa, and he was the quiet and reserved Igshaan that I got to know when we met for the first time.

Nevertheless, it appears that his hairdressing skills create opportunities for him to be a highly sought after hairdresser in Cape Town.

However, the journey from Mitchells Plain to Sea Point (which is located close to the Cape Town waterfront) puts a financial and physical strain on Igshaan. Sea Point is one of the more affluent suburbs of Cape Town. With its prime location, Sean Point is an upmarket residential suburb in Cape Town and home to the upper echelon of Cape Town society. Igshaan sometimes called me for a lift home when there were functions at the spa, as his respectable and reserved self was too ashamed to inform the manager of the spa that he had no means to travel to and from Cape Town other than by public transport, which stops at about seven in the evening. Travelling from the townships located on the Cape Flats to the city of Cape Town to a place of work, is a journey most people living on the Cape Flats make every day. Although Igshaan was only 17 years old when he together with his family was forcibly removed from District Six to Mitchells Plain, I cannot help but wonder if Igshaan reflects on how different his life might have been if they were not forcibly removed from District Six.

As evidenced in Igshaan's story, he relies on the politics of race as legitimised in *apartheid* South Africa, which assigned superiority to 'whiteness' and an inferior status to notions of 'blackness', to make sense of his life in Cape Town. In his everyday life, he draws on these social values attached to performances of race in South Africa. In this instance, 'coloured' was constructed by the *apartheid* regime as superior to 'blacks' because of the "grain of whiteness" (see Martin, 2000a). These social constructions of race were internalised by 'coloured' people. Although *apartheid* policies have been abolished, in Igshaan's everyday life, he organises his world according to the social constructions of race imposed onto South Africans.


Igshaan invited me to come to the annual Mitchells Plain Festival. I have never been to this festival and, which has been in existence for a couple of years now, according to Igshaan. The festival, explains Igshaan, is a community carnival which has exhibition stalls and variety shows where local talent is showcased. It also provides a space for local traders to sell handmade goods such as leather sandals, cakes, *koeksisters* (a braided confectionary deep fried then soaked in syrup), *samosas* (fried or baked pastry with a savoury fillings) etc. On a windy Saturday afternoon in November, after much explanation as to where the festival is located in Mitchells Plain, I arrived with Ayesha. Igshaan with three of his friends (all cisgender women) meet us at the gate. One is Gwen his friend of 20 years standing. As we are walking through the festival grounds, it seems that Igshaan knows everyone in Mitchells Plain. At almost every

stall he is called over for a brief chat. We are making our way slowly to the huge stage that has been erected for the variety shows.

Igshaan together with his friends makes a huge performance over every one they meet at the festival. We make our way to where the crowd has gathered, waiting for the variety show to start. I have an opportunity to briefly chat with Igshaan, whilst his friends are chatting with someone else whom they have met at the festival. We decide to sit down on the grass. I ask Igshaan how life is here in Mitchells Plain. He says that in Lentegeur where he lives, it is quiet, compared to other sections of Mitchells Plain like Tafelsig and Beacon Valley. He says "the gangs are quiet in Lentegeur". To emphasize this, he explains that he can still walk to a friend's place after midnight and come back safely at six the next morning.

### 3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I demonstrated through historical documentation that, because of its location close to Cape Town harbour, District Six brought together people from all over the world. People representing different cultures, religions and speaking different languages, all converging into one geographical space. In this way, District Six became known as a "melting pot" of languages, ideas, social and religious identifications. In this popular view of District Six is the overarching theme of social acceptance and a sense of community and moreover of social cohesion. Thus, investigative journalist Don Pinnock (2016) argues that in District Six it is perhaps not so much a matter of where they lived, but who they were when they lived in District Six. He states in an academic seminar paper titled: *Is social cohesion the missing link in preventing violence?*, that in District Six, even if one was labelled as the gangster, in this setting, one was acknowledged for being somebody (Pinnock, 2016). This social milieu meant that those who are considered to live on the margins and who do not conform to gender norms and values, as is the case with the *moffie*, was not judged or ostracized, but socially included.

In the documentary of her life, Kewpie remembers that in District Six she was able to live a highly visible and socially acceptable life as a woman, despite the laws that prohibited dragging in public during *apartheid*. In Kewpie's recollection, she draws on District Six as a geographical space which made allowances for such performances. A clear connection is made by Kewpie to place, i.e. District Six. In remembering the past, Kewpie draws on popular reference points that are often associated with the memory of District Six. Such popular reference points form part of the collective memory bank that ex-residents of District Six draw upon. For instance, in Kewpie's recollections she recalls that Hanover Street was the "heart and soul" of District Six.

She remembers the many shops, barber shops and hair salons that were located on Hanover Street, as well as the *Kaapse Klopse* who paraded every New Year up Hanover Street, and everyone coming from near and far packed on the pavement of this famous and well-known street in District Six.

Kewpie recalls the Seven Steps also used often in remembering District Six. The Seven Steps are also commonly associated with the gangs of District Six. The fish market (i.e. the *visveldjie*), in addition to the barber shops and hair salons in Hanover Street, according to Adams and Suttner (1988), were all popular meeting places for the people of District Six and are often drawn upon in remembering District Six. Another major defining feature of life in District Six is the gangster, and whereas the figure of the gangster is in most contexts associated with violence, this figure, through memorialising District Six, was often romanticized (Beyers, 2009). District Six according to Kewpie, gangsters respected the gays as 'girls'. Kewpie's description of life in District Six seems to reflect one of non-judgement, a utopian kind of living, where each and every one, "even the gays", as Kewpie puts it, were accepted. These recollections were not just in the hearts and minds of individuals such as Kewpie, but were also depicted in popular media during the 1950s and 1960s. These memories were also recalled by Mogamat and are similar to those of others who lived in District Six. This is called nostalgic commemoration according to critical social theorist, Christiaan Beyers (2009) which is in this instance the portrayal of gangsterism as having been relatively innocuous.

The stories of Mogamat and Igshaan bear testimony to the larger social forces which no one can escape. A common thread in Mogamat and Igshaan's stories is the story of the Group Areas Act, which impacted on everyone's lives. Having been relocated to the Cape Flats meant not only a loss of a sense of belonging, but also fundamentally a loss of identity, a sense of being part of this idea of community, which was an important element of everyday life in District Six.

Although the glamour and glitz associated with the performance of the *moffie* in District Six seemed scattered and done "almost haphazardly" on the Cape Flats, these ideas first invoked in the District were carefully managed by people such as Igshaan and Mogamat. Even after many years, they found themselves reclaiming a social space in the suburbs and townships where they have created a home for themselves. In the stories of both Igshaan and Mogamat it becomes evident how they were able to use their creativity in order to outwit the *apartheid* policies. This is evidence of their agency despite the oppressive policies of that time. Both

stories convey the resilience and agency of ordinary people under oppressive circumstances, whose creativity, ingenuity and inventiveness contributed not only to their legendary status but also to their social acceptance.

Such creativity and inventiveness is demonstrated through the gay beauty pageant industry that has become synonymous with that of the *moffie* figure as performed in places such as District Six. Importantly, also of course gay beauty pageant competitions received social sanctioning despite the regulatory and oppressive policies instituted by the *apartheid* government. This is illustrative of the agency of ordinary individuals such as Sandra Dee and others who participated in such public performances of same sex desire. The following chapter provides an ethnography of the gay beauty pageant industry that is central to not only establishing social ties and support amongst gender non-conforming but also to the social acceptance of the *moffie* figure in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town.

# CHAPTER 4: PERFORMING NATION-BUILDING ON THE GAY BEAUTY PAGEANT STAGE

## 4.1 Introduction

According to Alegi (2008), few countries take beauty pageantry as seriously as South Africa. Growing up in Belhar, at school, beauty and femininity remained something to be celebrated through annual beauty pageants. At our school, we had annual beauty pageant competitions, like Miss and Mr Symphony Secondary School, Miss Spring Queen and Miss and Mr Valentine. These pageants were taken very seriously by the contestants and teachers, and some contestants' parents would come on the day of the event to support them. Little girls and boys all dressed and dolled up in their Sunday best. Contestants were the most beautiful (according to Westernised standards of beauty) girls and boys from our school. Everyone always knew who would end up winning the coveted title: it was always the most beautiful girl or boy dolled up in the latest fashion.

On the Cape Flats, the annual Miss Spring Queen beauty pageant competition is squarely rooted in the feminised workforce of factory workers based at clothing industries in Cape Town (Alegi, 2008). It is an annual beauty pageant competition that is held amongst female factory workers. According to Alegi (2008) the feminised and racialized character of the labour force in the Western Cape garment industry meant that Miss Spring Queen has been produced and watched mainly by 'coloured' women in the townships of Cape Town. Miss Spring Queen integrates categories of "home and work" by enabling other performances of 'coloured' women in working class communities of Cape Town i.e.: "worker", "mother", "wife", "trade unionist" and "beauty queen" (Alegi, 2008). Thus while this pageant shared the logic of beauty contests in placing gender norms and idealised femininities on stage, it also provided a rare opportunity for factory women to publicly assert their human dignity, enhance their self-esteem, and claim equal rights as women and workers in a democratizing South Africa (Alegi, 2008).

Similarly, gay beauty pageant competitions in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town are commonplace. During fieldwork, I attended gay beauty pageant competitions in suburbs and townships located in the city of Cape Town (e.g. Miss Gay Retreat 2011) and as far away as St Helena Bay (i.e. Miss Gay St. Helena Bay 2014). St Helena Bay is a small seaside town located almost an hour away from Cape Town along the West Coast of the Western Cape province of South Africa. I also attended the following gay pageants, amongst others, not necessarily linked to a township and some of which are held annually: Miss Gay Swartland (2011), Miss Gay

Disco Queen (2011), Miss Gay Cape Town (2012), Miss Gay Ambassador (2014), Miss Gay Covergirl (2012, 2013), the MGWC pageants (2011, 2012, 2013) and Miss Body Beautiful (2011, 2012, 2013), Miss Glamour (2012), Miss Gay Cape Town (2013) and Miss Gay Extravaganza (2012, 2013). I quickly realised that gay beauty pageant competitions are taken very seriously by the contestants, the families and friends of the contestants, pageant promoters and organisers. These alternative beauty pageant competitions are made popular by local pageant queens, and passionately supported by those living in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town.

The passionate support of gay beauty pageant competitions points to a highly visible same sex subculture that is socially sanctioned by those living in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. Gay beauty pageant competitions are held in school halls, local hotels and community centres, all non-traditional gay spaces, all socially embedded within the protective confines of the township. On pageant night, the elderly, young adults (cisgender men and women) and children of different ages all come to support "their girl". In this chapter I show that on the surface level, inasmuch as the gay beauty pageant competition is about the presentation of idealised femininities, gay beauty pageant competitions reflect the values intrinsic to the South African rainbow nation project that are associated with that of community, social cohesion, tolerance for difference and social acceptance, as apparent through the support that gay pageant contestants receive not only on pageant night, but also prior to the gay beauty pageant competition. On pageant night, there is a sense of pride invoked by audience members for "their girl", this reflects a social acceptance of gender non-conformity that is unusual.

In the space of the gay beauty pageant competition, gender non-conforming men become 'girls' and 'ladies' and call each other 'sister'. On pageant night, gender boundaries are crossed that are deemed unacceptable according to the dominant discourse of heterosexuality. In the space of the community hall or school hall, gay beauty pageant contestants are celebrated for their alternative performances of gender. However inasmuch as there is subversion of traditional gender norms, there is also re-affirmation of gender norms i.e the *moffie* as socially female are often seen dancing with straight performing men. In the space of the gay beauty pageant competition there is a strong emphasis on gendered social and sexual roles. The gender binary that is created by gay beauty pageant contestants onstage, that stands in opposition to the straight performing men attending gay beauty pageants. Heterosexuality is reinforced in the space of the gay beauty pageant. This will become apparent in the following field note of the 2011 Miss Gay Retreat pageant.

## 4.2 The 2011 Miss Gay Retreat pageant

I was invited to attend the 2011 Miss Gay Retreat pageant by Colin Daniels (Colin's stage name is Caster Semenya), the 2010 Miss Gay Retreat winner. The Miss Gay Retreat pageant was held on a Saturday night in July of 2011. This pageant has been in existence for the past 12 years. It was held in the main hall of the Grassy Park Hotel in Grassy Park. Grassy Park is situated next to Retreat to the west and Lavender Hill located to the south and wetlands (Zeekoevlei and Pelican Park) flanking it to the southeast. Similar to Retreat and Lavender Hill, Grassy Park is a township to which those designated as 'coloured' were forcibly relocated during the implementation of the Group Areas Act.

I arrived at eight in the evening at the Grassy Park Hotel. The cover charge was 20 South African Rands. In the main hall of the Grassy Park Hotel, seats were filled in the front, but there were still a few empty seats at the back of the hall. Two hours later the pageant has still not started. In the meanwhile, popular chart songs were entertaining the audience. The audience members comprised of not only men (and women) with same sex desires but the majority were cisgender men and women. A few of the audience members took to the dance floor, spontaneously dancing with each other, some alone, some with partners. On the dance floor was a partnership of a feminine performing man, dressed in denim shorts, kitten heel sandals, wearing a blouse, dancing with a straight performing man, dressed in a blue t-shirt and jeans, and a sports cap on his head, holding each other tightly, and slow dancing to the music (see Photo 2). Suddenly the spotlight falls on the master of ceremonies (MC). Those audience members who were dancing return to their seats. The MC greets the audience with: "Good evening, girls, guys, ladies, *moffies*, toffee apples…" I could not make out the rest.

Photo 2. Slow dancing at the 2011 Miss Gay Retreat pageant
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

This announcement made by the MC signals the official start of the Miss Gay Retreat pageant. Similar to other gay pageant competitions, the 2011 Miss Gay Retreat pageant follows a specific format. Finalists are selected (usually five, depending on how many contestants have entered) based on a score out of ten and judged according to the following categories: Personality (i.e. someone who has stage presence, someone who is not dead onstage), Poise (i.e. how contestants compose themselves), Cocktail Wear, Evening Wear, Best Dress. The 'girls' or 'ladies' are scored for their participation in swimwear and evening wear categories (see example of an entry form and "judges sheet" in Appendices 5 & 6). Following the swimwear and evening wear categories, finalists, usually five, are selected by a panel of judges. The finalists are then posed a set of questions by the panel of judges. It is very important that the five finalists give a good response to these questions. Usually in smaller pageants like the Miss Gay Retreat pageant, the same question is posed to all the contestants. This question remains hidden from the 'girls', until pageant night. Tonight the 'girls' should give their most elegant response to this question which has been prepared beforehand in consultation with the judges and the reigning Miss Gay Retreat.

The panel of judges in this competition comprised of men and women with quasi–celebrity status. They sit, all professional-looking with folders, each at a separate table. Most of the judges are men: A human rights activist, a former model, a former South African ballroom champion, a beauty expert, and the auditor. The judges' table face the audience and is located on a stage. The pageant contestants use the space in front of the stage to ramp. The Miss Gay Retreat pageant started with cocktail wear, followed by swimwear, and finally the contestants' ramp in evening wear. In between categories, a local 'girl' lip-syncs to: "Am I strong enough?" (The chorus line of a popular song, first performed by Cher).



Photo 3. Miss Gay Retreat 2011 beauty pageant contestants in the "International Wear" category
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

Next the contestants step out in International Costume Wear (see Photo 3). Miss Greece steps out onto the floor; she looks beautiful and demure, with a wide smile, and says: "I am representing Greece". Next is Miss South Africa, the audience quiets down when she struts in. She dons what appears to be a 'traditional' outfit: Leopard skins, but very skimpy. It looks like 'San[35] traditional wear', with a cloth covering the front area. When the MC asked her to introduce herself, she says: "I hail from South Africa, a place of non-racism, non-sexism, our rainbow nation, South Africa". The audience goes crazy for Miss South Africa's introduction. Next is Miss Venezuela, a tall, skinny 'girl', who appears very nervous. Miss Brazil is next on, and the audience gets up from their seats and howls as she dons a pink feathered back piece.

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[35]The indigenous people of South Africa, who lived as hunter gatherers in the Table Bay area of Cape Town.

Her bra is decorated with pink feathers and a silver G-string completes the look. Judged by the shouts and catcalling for Miss Brazil compared to Miss South Africa and Miss Venezuela, it seems that Miss Brazil is the audience favourite. The woman next to me says that Miss Brazil should have won last year. Miss Brazil was so sad that she did not win the title last year, according to this audience member, that she even cried. Lights are flashing, the audience is applauding, shouting, catcalling, and the MC asked the next contestant to introduce herself. The audience quietens down, and waits in what seems to be a "mass bated breath" for her response. Next onto the floor is Miss China, she is nervous and her deep voice betrays her, the audience chuckles at this. Miss Puerto Rico, steps out with a huge feathered (pink and yellow) headdress, donning a yellow swimsuit. Miss Puerto Rico seems to be one of the favourites as well. Some audience members jump to their feet, it seems the more glamorous, feathered, big and outrageous a performance is the more this pleases the audience. She introduces herself as Miss Puerto Rico and says: "If it is not on, it is not in".

The audience goes crazy for this safer sex message. And she walks off, members of the audience support their favourite to the extent of running up to contestants, and reaching out attempting to touch them. The MC pleads with the audience to quieten down, reminding them not to touch the contestants or shout hysterically but to be respectful. An audience member supports him by shouting: *Hou julle bekke!* [Shut up!]. Some of the audience members started smoking in the hall and the MC reminds them that smoking is prohibited in this space. After this performance, before an announcement of the five finalists is made, the MC pleads with the audience members to respect the judges' decision and to not show disappointment in anger because their 'girl' did not win.

There is an interval before the five finalists are selected, Miss Jada Pinkett-Smith (see Photo 4) entertains the audience, dressed in a salmon colour short dress and black stilettos, with dark curls, which she uses strategically during her performance. The audience are completely captivated by Miss Jada Pinkett-Smith's lip-syncing performance and they go crazy, shout, applaud and sing along with her to the tune of the song. Towards the end of her performance she pulls off her dark curls (wig), revealing a short crop of hair. Members of the audience, those who were still seated, jump to their feet.

Photo 4. Miss Jada Pinckett – Smith, a drag performer at the 2011 Miss Gay Retreat pageant
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

After this performance, each of the 'girls' are called by their stage name and come out one by one from the change room to respond to the question posed to them by the panel of judges. Miss Greece is called forward by the MC and asked the all-important question that might be the deciding factor as to the crowning of the next Miss Gay Retreat: "If there is one thing in the world that you would like to change, what would that be?" She responds with: "Poverty", and reverts to Afrikaans: *Ons almal kry mos swaar* [It is difficult for all of us]. The audience approves of this response, perhaps because Miss Greece responded in the local vernacular. She briskly walks off. The MC is not pleased with the audience and says something to the effect of … "how typical this behaviour is for 'coloured' people…" It is clear from their behaviour that some of the audience members are intoxicated and are intent on disrupting the pageant proceedings, by catcalling, shouting and laughing deliriously. He is very upset with the audience, and wants them to quiet down so that he can pose the question to the next contestant. The majority of the audience members do not take any notice of his pleas and are not perturbed by his generalisation of 'coloured' people, some laugh at him scolding them. Next is Miss Puerto Rico, and she responds with: "Many things, opportunities … HIV, crime" she would change all these things. Next is Miss South Africa, some of the audience members are also trying to quieten down other audience members, since they want to hear Miss South Africa's response to the question. Miss South Africa responds with: "World peace …" She continues:

"No corruption … education is the key to success". Next is Miss France; it seems as if the MC is frustrated because his attempt at quietening the audience does not seem to be working. Some of the audience members have now proceeded to stand on the chairs that they were sitting on, anxious to know who will be the next Miss Gay Retreat. Miss France also reiterates that HIV is a problem, she would help those suffering from the disease.

After Miss France, Miss Brazil is called to come up to the front, and someone in the audience shouts again: *Hou julle bekke*! The MC insults the audience again; he cannot believe that people can be so disruptive. He poses the following to Miss Brazil: "How are you feeling?" She says: "I am very nervous", in a schoolgirl (innocent) kind of voice. When the MC poses the question to her she suddenly bursts with confidence saying: "Xenophobia, the Iraq's …" I could not make out what else followed, because the audience goes crazy, jumps to their feet, yelping out screams, making her response inaudible. Nevertheless, it was an answer that pleased the audience. After the question and answer section, the MC asks the 'girls' to come up to the front one last time. They stand in a half circle, a young man runs up to Miss Brazil and attempts to touch her, but gets diverted back to his seat. After the judges' deliberation, the MC reminds the audience to accept the judges' decision. What seems to be a long deliberation is then followed by the MC who announces that the two princesses are Miss France and Miss Greece. The audience and I already know who is going to be the new title holder of Miss Gay Retreat – and we are elated to hear that the winner, as was expected, is Miss Brazil. The audience goes crazy and jumps up to their feet with a few running towards Miss Brazil. Everybody is pleased with this decision.

There are four aspects in the above field note that I will highlight in the following discussion. In the first instance, the gay pageant is held in a non-traditional gay space. Traditional gay spaces in Cape Town are primarily located in what is called the gay village which is situated in an inner-city suburb of Cape Town (i.e. Green Point) and is frequented by 'white' middle class self-identified gay men. Here, mainly 'white' professionals serve as clientele in the popular gay owned clubs, bars and restaurants. These spaces are often defined as exclusively for men meeting other men. In the gay village there are gay friendly accommodation options, restaurants, popular gay owned clubs and bars, saunas and meeting places for adult male to male sex. In the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town local hotels, school halls and community centres (as will become evident later on in this chapter) are re-inscribed as queer during the gay beauty pageant competition. Thus in many ways gay beauty pageant competitions are socially embedded within the boundaries of the township and not in the anonymity that is

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http://etd.uwc.ac.za

associated with the gay spaces located in the city of Cape Town. Secondly and related to the first point, most of the audience members attending gay pageants are not gay. Because of the location of gay pageants in the confines of the township, audience members are not only active participants in preparation and during the gay pageant competition, the majority of audience members attending gay pageants are family members, friends and neighbours of pageant contestants. This big social network of friends, neighbours and family members shouting for their 'girl' points to a level of social acceptance of non-conformity and of social embeddedness.

Thirdly the gay beauty pageant competition lend itself to various notions of performance and performativity. Gay beauty pageant competitions are staged performances, a theatrical event. The performativity of gender, as articulated by Butler (1990), becomes most apparent on the gay beauty pageant stage. The drag performance of Miss Jada Pinckett-Smith complicates understandings of female embodiment. On the one hand in the space of the Miss Gay Retreat pageant, where the art of female impersonation is to provide an authentic performance of femininity in order to win the title, Pinckett-Smith mocks (and subverts) traditional gender boundaries and offers an immediate alternative idea about gender formation to audience members. In this way, as argued by Moore (2007), in this performance of gender and identity, Miss Jada Pinckett-Smith uses this performance of pulling off her wig to create a hybrid space where naturalized boundaries between male and female bodies can be bridged. Gender is denaturalised in the setting of the gay beauty pageant competition. The idea of gender following sex as 'natural' and fixed is exposed and revealed to be fabricated on pageant night (Jacob, 1999). Gay pageant contestants reveal that with self-styling, they construct, maintain and communicate (i.e. perform) gendered identities (Jacob, 1999). Hence gay beauty pageant contestants are able to 'put on' femininity and masculinity – demonstrating that gender is not 'natural' (Strübel-Scheiner, 2011) it is in itself a performative act (Butler, 1990).

Finally, throughout the gay pageant competition, contestants make use of the language incorporated in the South African rainbow nation project (i.e. "I hail from South Africa, a place of non-racism, non-sexism, our rainbow nation, South Africa"). Implicit in the South African rainbow nation project is the co-existence of individual and collective identities; a representation of different cultures and of a shared 'South Africanness' (Baines, 1998). The rainbow nation symbolises the 'new' South Africa, the imaginary nation being constructed in the post-*apartheid* era; the metaphor of the rainbow nation both informs and reinforces the vision of nation-building (Baines, 1998).

**4.3 The Miss Gay Ambassador 2014 pageant**

> The Miss Gay Ambassador pageant is an annual event, to seek a female impersonator
> who is a role model, who embodies the values and morals of adherence to the law of
> the land, fairness and impartiality, a healthy respect for the rights of all people within
> and outside of the boundaries of the Western Cape and South Africa at large,
> irrespective of creed or colour, religion or affiliation, gender or age, disability or
> vulnerability and who is recognized as an ambassador of her community and LGBTI
> matters.
>
> - Posted by Milano (2013)

The above was articulated by the Miss Gay Ambassador pageant owner, Miss Logan
McGregor. Logan highlights the need for South Africans to live in harmony with each other
despite their differences, whether these are of sexual orientation or other forms of difference
(Van Dyk, 2016). She draws on the language of the South African rainbow nation project that
emphasizes tolerance of difference and social cohesion. This pageant is held every year in the
Kensington (a residential suburb about 10kms from the City of Cape Town) community hall.
Logan McGregor is from the area and embarked on this project to plough back into the suburb
in which she was raised (Dyk, 2016).

The Miss Gay Ambassador pageant focuses very loosely on "cultural heritage".  On the night
of the pageant, pageant contestants were expected to dress in "cultural wear", and give a short
speech on their personal cultural heritage. The pageant also happens close to National Heritage
Day (24th of September) celebrations. I was intrigued to find out how "cultural heritage" would
be staged by pageant contestants at the Miss Gay Ambassador pageant. Before the pageant
starts, the MC makes an announcement that it is not all about glitz and glamour, it is about
being an ambassador for the "gay community".

True to what was promised, there is minimal glitz and glamour as far as the decoration on the
stage is concerned. The stage is decorated with three small fake trees. In common with other
pageants, there are cocktail, evening and swimwear categories. I am interested however in the
category that is announced as "cultural wear". The 'girls' strut out in what the MC announces
as "cultural wear". One of the contestants wears a sari, which is meant to represent her 'Indian'
heritage. In her representation of 'Indian-ness', she has added six prosthetic arms representing

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the Hindu goddess Kali. Another contestant, Miss Brie Banks, wears a brown long skirt, with leaves depicted on a tree as a back piece. This is meant to be a representation of Africa. Yet another contestant mounts the stage with a back piece of the American flag, a replica of the Statue of Liberty crown on her head, and a torch in her hand. Leila Rajavacek wears a red and black short dress, with red roses pinned to one side of her head. This is meant to be a cultural representation of Spain. Alicia Amy Connersea (see Photo 5) has a *doek* on her head, dons 'traditional' fashion, and wears an 'African' printed dress to signify that her roots and personal heritage are grounded in South Africa.



Photo 5. Alicia Amy Connersea dressed in 'African' traditional wear at Miss Gay Ambassador 2014
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

From the profiles of "cultural heritage" provided by the pageant contestants onstage, it seems that in some way they engaged through dress and fashion with the popular ideas of "cultural heritage". However, none of the contestants engaged on any level with some of the performances of what is popularly understood as "colouredness". Perhaps this brings into question the popular notion that those individuals who were classified as 'coloured' have "no culture". In the pageant, what was most often engaged with were fashion and stylization of cultures other than those traditionally associated with cultures originating from South Africa. It seems that some play on 'African-ness' while others even more playfully adopt very different notions invoking a 'Spanish culture'. Also interesting is that none of the contestants seem to

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play on the (imagined) Khoisan heritage, which has become highlighted in certain attempts to (re)invent 'coloured culture' (Besten, 2009). These might be based on perceptions internalised by 'coloured' people themselves – that they do not have any origins and therefore "lack culture". "Lacking culture", for Mohammed Adhikari (2006), refers to the perception that the community lacks cultural distinctiveness or full ethnic integrity.

**4.4 Miss District Six Legends 2014**

I was invited to the Miss District Six Legends beauty pageant. This is the first Miss District Six Legends beauty pageant. Because of its association with District Six, the pageant has also received the attention of the local tabloid newspaper, *Die Son* [The Daily Sun]. The Miss District Six Legends beauty pageant took place in the Woodstock Town Hall. Woodstock is located less than 5kms from the city centre of Cape Town. From its early beginnings in the 1800s, according to Fleming (2011), Woodstock, like its neighbour District Six, was a mixed suburb, both from a race and a religious point of view, a place where 'white', 'black' and mixed race people, Jews, Christians and Muslims lived harmoniously side-by-side. Despite its close proximity to District Six, Woodstock was left untouched - no forced removals took place (Garside, 1993). Garside (1993) explains: "Woodstock developed into one of the few urban 'grey areas' across the country and avoided many of the large-scale, racially-motivated removals characteristic of the *apartheid* government's urban planning system seen in places such as neighbouring District Six."

Most of the audience members are older Muslim cisgender women. Mogamat is very excited about the pageant since he will be the MC, and it is through the events that he hosts for elderly people belonging to social clubs that he has invited most of the women. He is also excited because Miss District Six Legends is a gay pageant for those pageant queens of "yesteryear", the "legendary beauty queens". In one corner of the stage, a picture of Kewpie in drag has been blown up and pasted on the wall of the community hall (see Photo 6).

Photo 6. The stage setup in the Woodstock Community Centre for the Miss District Six Legends 2014 pageant
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

The pageant has the usual categories where pageant contestants dress in cocktail wear and evening wear and between these categories, local drag queens entertain the audience with lip-sync performances. The speech made by a woman representing the HODS committee make this particular pageant unusual. The HODS committee has been working to help reclaim land for those who were evicted during the Group Areas Act. This is an excerpt from one of the speeches made by the representative of this organisation:

> Welcome everybody, and *shukran* [thank you] for attending this great event. I'm from the District Six Working Committee [the HODS committee], for those who don't know, can I have some silence *kanalla* [please]. We are in association with this competition and whatever is happening here, so I would just like to inform you people to those of you who don't know. We are the people who will bring you people back to District Six, despite what the government say, that there is no more land, we know that they are lying to us. We are going back. We are going to claim our heritage. So I will make this very brief. *Ek bak en brou* [I bake and brew] *Al-ḥamdu lillāh* [Praise be to God]. We are going to make this now an annual show, we are taking you and this …*Inshallah* [God willing] to the city hall, next year. Say amen to that: *Julle gaan terug District Six toe* [You are going back to District Six].

The speech of the woman from the HODS committee seemed abrupt and somewhat out of place and separate from "whatever is going on here" (referring to the gay beauty pageant competition). I attended the event because I was interested to know how the event organisers would draw upon the memory of Kewpie and others who indeed were considered legendary in District Six. I was disappointed that neither the woman from the District Six Museum, nor the radio celebrities and talk show hosts who made brief appearances, mentioned any of the legends of District Six. A blown up picture of Kewpie set next to the stage was the only reminder of the theme of the night. All the spectators around me however did not know anything about Kewpie. All the pageant contestants who competed for the title of the Miss District Six Legends 2014 pageant were over 50 years old. As one of the spectators mentioned, this pageant is for the "old queens". None of the contestants, except for Igshaan, who of course on that night was known as Samantha, actually lived in District Six. Although this event was advertised as a gay pageant for the queens of "yesteryear", the main impetus of the event was for the HODS committee to bring their mission across that they will return to District Six.

The pageant brought frenzy to the Woodstock Community Centre. Even though the audience members were older cisgender women, they participated with the lip syncing performances by applauding along with the lyrics playing. I was sitting in the front row with most of the celebrity pageant queens like the first Miss Gay Ambassador (i.e. 2012), Zilin Ayoki Zhang, the Miss Gay Cape Town 2014 pageant queen, who came out in support of this initiative. Towards the end of the pageant, before the winner was announced, the area in front of the stage was filled with pageant queens, older cisgender women and younger feminine performing men shouting, catcalling and dancing to the music.

The Miss District Six Legends 2014 pageant is unusual in many respects. In the first instance, the pageant was overwhelmingly attended by older cisgender Muslim women. In Chapter 2, I demonstrated through the brief ethnographies of Marawaan and Ayesha that Islam rejects homosexuality. It appears however that the audience members took part in the celebration of alternative performances of gender as embodied through that of gay pageantry. This perhaps demonstrates that such performances spatially limited to the gay pageant stage are deemed socially acceptable within the space of the gay beauty pageant competition and not in other sectors of society. On another level, the Miss District Six Legends pageant is of course not about the gay pageant. The Miss District Six Legends pageant did not draw on any of the historical documentation of *moffie* life, nor did the hosts reflect on legends such as Kewpie and Piper Laurie. In many ways the name of the pageant was misleading. It was about the politics

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surrounding District Six that interestingly received a platform to be publicized through gay pageantry.

**4.5 The Miss Gay Covergirl pageant**

> Because I am over the gays. I am their *mamma*. For real man, for me it's just real. We can't judge them because we are over them. They make a show. Very excited to come and watch them they do things that women, can't really do, they do it 100%. We had a show where the gays competed against normal women but the gays finished them (in Afrikaans the *gays maak klaar*). In Mitchells Plan we have a lot of these shows.

This brief excerpt was part of a recorded interview conducted with an audience member at the Miss Gay Covergirl pageant. The Miss Gay Covergirl pageant was held in the school hall of the Princeton Senior Secondary School in Mitchells Plain on a Saturday night in August 2013. In many ways the Miss Gay Covergirl pageant demonstrates how local gay pageants bring everyone together in the township in one space in support of local pageant queens. Thus the popularity of gay beauty pageant competitions also has a positive impact on the lives of gay pageant contestants. It appears that with participation in gay beauty pageant competitions comes social support and inclusion, and also protection for gender non-conforming men in Mitchells Plain (i.e. I am their *mamma*). This audience member also demonstrates a non-judgemental attitude towards gender non-conforming men as expressed in her own words: "We can't judge them because we are over them". There is much admiration for gender non-conforming men who take part in gay pageants as women. Even though there is a strong differentiation made between 'real', 'normal' women and gender non-conforming men who take part in gay beauty pageant competitions, of note is that gay pageant contestants are seen as superior to 'real' women.

Similarly, another audience member at the Miss Gay Covergirl pageant expressed the following:

> I think that today it's more common than it used to be it's more acceptable because it's held in more communities. And also a lot of families are starting to accept their children a very important factor in the gay family within South Africa as well but especially for Cape Town because of the high population of you know LGBTI people that live here; so a lot more people are coming out, gay males specifically are coming out experiencing cross dressing for the first time.

According to this audience member, there is social acceptance of gender non-conforming men, hence they are more open to coming out and taking part in gay pageants.

The Miss Gay Covergirl pageant was advertised on Facebook under the theme: "Go Big or Go Home" (see Appendix 7, for the programme of Miss Gay Covergirl). The pageant contestants are expected to "make a show", as indicated by this audience member. Even though the school hall is open for audience members to enter, most of us stand outside in anticipation of the arrival of the pageant contestants. Audience members consisted of children (as young as three year olds, sitting on their mothers' laps), elderly people (mostly women) and young adults (same sex and straight). Some audience members were dressed smartly casual, whilst others came with flip flops to the event. In addition to the chairs, tables have also been set up. Some of the audience members brought alcohol stored in cooler boxes. I recalled that the invitation to the Miss Gay Covergirl pageant that was posted on Facebook read: "You can bring your own XYZ" (XYZ refers to alcohol), the cover charge was 25 South African Rands.

Even though the event as a gay beauty pageant is unusual in itself, for those audience members standing outside waiting for the pageant contestants to arrive this is a normal and commonplace social event. They understand that the 'girls' in the pageant transform their masculine bodies to perform the feminine onstage. However, the young daughter of the DJ, as the pageant contestants arrive, turns to her father and comments that she does not recognise any of the contestants since they looked so different from when they were rehearsing during the week. He laughs and explains they are dressed in feminine attire. She accepts this and continues staring.

Photo 7. Miss Gay Covergirl pageant contestants in the dressing room
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

Even though this is a local gay pageant, the 'girls' spare no expense to provide a performance of the feminine that is believable to audience members. In the dressing room the 'girls' support each other to get dressed (see Photo 7). I find some of the other 'girls' rehearsing in the corridor, a last minute preparation before the show starts. The pageant expects the 'girls' to make their own creative wear. Backstage in the dressing room, the 'girls' are anxious to show off their creations. After swimwear and a walk on the stage by the current MGWC winner, the 'girls' strut out onstage with their creative wear. One of the 'girls' struts out with a dress made out of the pages of the local tabloid newspaper *The Voice*. Her outfit is fashionably tapered like a top and a skirt (see Photo 8). Another contestant has made what resembles a ball gown out of unused condom wrappers. Wings were made out of shiny paper and stuck onto the back of the contestant (see Photos 8).

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Photo 8. Miss Gay Covergirl contestants dressed in "Creative Wear"
*Source* Photos taken by researcher



As per the programme, Anastacia Khan, a local drag performer, lip-syncs to a popular song. She moves in-between the tables and has the audience amazed (see Photo 9) with her lip-syncing rendition of "You make me feel like a natural woman".

Photo 9. Anastacia Khan entertains the audience members with a lip-syncing drag performance at the Miss Gay Covergirl pageant
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

Gay beauty pageant contestants are passionately supported by those living in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. Audience members demonstrate their support on pageant night with applause; catcalling, and standing in front of the stage taking photos of pageant contestants with their mobile phones (see Photo 10). Some hold banners spelling out the name of the pageant queen they support and shouting the number or the name of the beauty pageant contestant (see Photo 11).

Photo 10. Audience members standing in front of the stage to take photos of pageant contestants
*Source* Photo taken by researcher



Photo 11. Audience members supporting local gay beauty pageant queens
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

## 4.6 Bring the crown home!

In school halls and community centres, audience members shout, catcall and some run up to or reach out to touch pageant contestants (see Photo 12) showing their support of gay beauty pageant contestants. Reaching out to touch pageant contestants seemed to be a recurrent interaction between audience members and gay pageant contestants. Often the MC at gay beauty pageant competitions has to ask audience members not to touch pageant contestants. On one hand the reaching out to touch pageant contestants also reveals that audience members test in some way the 'realness' of the performance of the feminine presented by pageant contestants. On the other hand, gay beauty pageant contestants bring beauty and fashion to the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town that seems to be unobtainable to many of its residents. To many living on the Cape Flats, the possibilities of leaving the township are slight. The gay pageant brings the outside world to these townships. In many ways is a link to township residents to a promise of glitz and glamour. Zetha Jones, 47 year old pageant contestant articulates the support provided to her by neighbours in the following manner:



Photo 12. Audience members reaching out to touch gay beauty pageant contestants
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

> When we leave my house they [the community] stand outside to see what we are wearing and give us a blessing for the evening. Bring the crown home is always what they say. I live in a road where people are very much tolerable towards gays. We are

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four gay guys in the road. They are very helpful, and they enjoy to see me in action, they always make an effort to see me looking beautiful and amazing. Because of this I love my community very much (Zeta Jones, Steenberg)

Zeta Jones lives in Steenberg, a 'coloured' township bordered by Retreat. She has been taking part in gay beauty pageants for more than 20 years. In an interview Zeta revealed the following to me:

I was still in primary school when I first had a boyfriend. The experience was one of pure bliss. Never knew what it was too feel like this. I felt very much like a female at that stage.

Where she grew up, she never experienced any kind of discrimination because of her very visible performance of femininity:

People just accepted the fact that I was more female like and had to have a male companion. If they ever had other notions about it, they kept it for themselves. I had and still had a very easy life.

Zeta takes part in gay beauty pageants because it provides an outlet for her to express her femininity. Not only does she get support from her neighbours and other local township residents, but from her family and friends as well:

My late mom was a strong believer of gay rights and supported me 100%. The people in my road goes with to the pageants to support their favourite gay, which is me. I have very much respect for them and them for me. I have one sister and she knows of my involvement with men. She will always remind me to stock up on condoms. My mom always scrutinised a potential boyfriend, and if she did not approve she would tell me.

Zeta provides a description of a township where she does not live on the fringes, but is seen and accepted as an important part of the social fabric of the township. The unwavering support and social acceptance that Zeta refers to in the above excerpt is extraordinary. This social acceptance as articulated by Zeta is not unique and exclusive to Zeta or to the 'coloured' township of Steenberg. The following excerpts from interviews conducted with gay beauty pageant contestants revealed that through gay pageantry they are not only affirmed as women but they are also socially accepted in their non-conformity:

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They [the community] truly love me, and they show me big love and respect. Because if I walk into them on the street then they would always have something nice to say. If I know I have a show on this weekend and they know about it then they are always there for me. They help me to get clothes, shoes etc. They always want the best for me. Because without them I would not be able to do this. Because they are number one, and I can always depend on them because they love me a lot (Lee Jackson)

I have great support from the community because of the following. They attend all my beauty pageants. The men stand up and protect me from physical and verbal abuse from ignorant people, their children love me, they are friendly, kind and speak freely to me (Bebe Winans)

The community supports me in all aspects. They love me to bits. When they know I enter a pageant they advertise to everybody. They make my dresses and swim costumes with lots of bling. The others roll and set my wig and up styles. They make banners with my name Dawn. Because they know I always win! And don't I just love it (Dawn, Grassy Park)

My community and friends and family support me. They support me at all of my beauty pageants. They make my posters for me for the pageants and always make a way of supporting me (Alicia Amy Connersea, Ravensmead, Northern suburbs)

The community supports me tremendously. Yes, they love me and they have great love and respect for me. Because if I walk down the road, then they always have something good to say. When I know I have a show this weekend and I let them know about it then they are always there for me. They help me with clothes, shoes etc. Because they always want the best for me, because I am there number one, and I can always depend on them, because they love me (Shasha Leventhey, Claremont)

I am really going to lie if I say that they don't support me. I have never seen how people can be so crazy about me. They will always have something good to say about me it doesn't matter about my behaviour. In my community it is almost as if I am a role model. I don't think that there will come ever a day where they will reject or blackmail me. They will always have great respect for. As soon as I walk down the street or anyplace else, then they would always greet and they will always tell me that I look pretty and they will always put a smile on my face especially when I have a bad day.

When it comes to beauty pageants, they support me 100%. They will never make me feel less worthy or they won't let me feel like someone who doesn't belong in the community. I am always visible in the community (Beauty pageant contestant, Elsies River).

**4.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I demonstrated that gay beauty pageant competitions in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town are commonplace and passionately supported by neighbours, friends and family members. This passionate support and overwhelming preoccupation with gay pageantry in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town can be traced historically to District Six. Gay pageant competitions bring glitz and glamour to the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town that is synonymous with the portrayal of *moffie* life in District Six. *Moffie* life in District Six was inspired by the Hollywood cinema era. Even though popular media invented *moffie* life as articulated by Chetty (1995) to present a master narrative of glamour, beauty and glitz that is according to the author a fabricated presentation that is devoid of the often challenging daily realities of 'coloured' effeminate same sex men. I demonstrate in this chapter that the glamour and glitz invented in District Six that inspired *moffie* queens to present Hollywood female icons are reproduced in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. These are the connections between the performance of the *moffie* in creolised District Six and that of gay pageantry located in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town.

Evident in the brief ethnographies of the gay pageants presented in this chapter is the strong adherence to idealised femininities as produced in popular media such as that portrayed in the Hollywood cinema era. Onstage the 'girls' are rewarded for the fashion, stylization and overall performance of idealised femininities. In the Miss Gay Retreat pageant, the 'girls' bodies, speech and dress are under constant surveillance not only from the judging panel, but from audience members, and also from the 'girls' themselves. In the dressing room the 'girls' support each other, checking for any discrepancies in their presentation of the feminine and correcting themselves and each other's dress, stylization and speech accordingly. The audience wait in abated breath for any inconsistencies in the 'girls' presentation of the feminine. In fact pageant contestants are punished for any 'mistakes' onstage (i.e. the audience chuckles at this). Pageant contestants, audience members and the judging panel all work exceptionally hard to maintain the glitz and glamour associated with the *moffie* queen, first invented in District Six.

This master narrative of glitz and glamour are not passively consumed by pageant contestants in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. I argue that gay beauty pageant contestants invoke the language of the "gay rights clause" and that of the South African rainbow nation project to draw attention to the often oppressive circumstances that they find themselves in. Thus gay pageant contestants are not passively consuming the glitz and glamour that is historically connected to the *moffie* queen invented in District Six. They have successfully reproduced the master narrative of the *moffie* queen but broke from the "surface aesthetics" (hair, make-up, clothing) (as articulated by Charlotte Coles, 2007) instead and focused on social narratives such as that of raising awareness of the poverty associated with those living on the Cape Flats, public health problems such as HIV and the persistence of discrimination of gays and lesbians in South African contexts.

Beauty and idealised versions of femininity is what is portrayed onstage; however, the discourse prevalent in these pageants is one which states that:

> Beauty is about education and the mastery of the English language. Beauty is about good citizenship and professional orientation. Beauty is about sportsmanship with winners democratically decided on the basis of clear criteria (Johnson, 1997).

According to Cohen, Wilk and Stoelje (1996) beauty pageants are rarely about femininity or beauty or even competition; they invoke passionate interest and engagement with political issues central to the lives of beauty contestants, sponsors, organisers and audiences – issues that frequently have nothing obvious to do with the competition itself.

In the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town, the glamour and glitz of what remains a powerful discourse in the gay pageantry industry of Cape Town also provides a platform where pageant queens can make audience members aware of LGBTI rights, social issues such as poverty (as demonstrated in the Miss Gay Retreat pageant), the structural inequalities of racism, and at the same time draw on those ideals in the South African rainbow nation project of nation-building and citizenship. In the following chapter, I argue that the drag performed by gay beauty pageant contestants is not static, it is influenced not only by the local aesthetics of fashion and beauty, but also through global forms of stylization as embodied through that of the drag queen persona. The drag queen persona also opens the door for new identities to emerge that are not necessarily aligned to the male-female binaries. In this way, there is the potential for heterosexuality to be challenged.

## CHAPTER 5: FROM *MOFFIE* QUEEN TO DRAG SUPERSTAR

### 5.1 Introduction

This is my other persona. In 2005 when I first took part in a beauty pageant - a drag. I don't define myself as a drag. I don't define myself as a female impersonator. Whenever I am Evanka you would probably experience it totally different when you see Evanka then I call myself a woman with a difference. I don't want to be a woman I don't want parts of a woman. I am quite happy with what I have, but whenever I am a different person then I prefer to be called, a woman with a difference. I am the creator behind Evanka. It all started in 2005 and so it just kept on going where I entered competitions and I met a lot of people, but it is a part of me that I explored and enjoyed to a certain extent and to a certain time, then I just decided no this is actually a business now for me. But it is a lot of money it is a lot of effort, it is a lot of time, make-up and outfits are expensive and I always want to be different. Where the name Evanka comes from I would create either something that is from nature or something that is more different that people would not think of, something out of the box and that is where I started with the name Evanka and I was reading a book and I saw Evanka. Evanka sounds more like me, mysterious, but in a good way and people were always like wow whenever Evanka comes out or whatever I do or I am very daring, always naked, always revealing outfits but you would always say wow and that's where the whole name Evanka started. Also when you have an outfit you don't want to show the whole world but I would always be different instead of having just a plain swim costume.

I first met Craig (he was 26 in 2012), and was introduced to Evanka (Craig's "other persona") a couple of weeks after first having met him at a gay beauty pageant competition held in a club about 50kms outside of the city of Cape Town. Onstage Craig adopts a female persona and becomes Evanka. Evanka is a former MGWC winner. This accolade puts Evanka on a level where she is seen as somewhat of a local celebrity amongst her peers and by others living in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. Her performance of the feminine invokes an image of femininity that is associated with glamour and glitz, a life far removed from the majority of those living in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. Craig shares a modest looking flat with his mother in Stellenbosch. In his performance of "a woman with a difference" and his emphasis on being the "creator behind Evanka", he draws attention to the constructedness of gender. Fashion and self-styling are important tools that Craig makes use of to create Evanka.

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Evanka is a temporary disposition, he emphasizes in the above recorded interview, and that he does not want any parts of a woman. He is satisfied with his male body. Similar to the gender non-conforming men taking part in RuPaul's Drag Race (RPDR), Craig complicates gender in a camp and exaggerated performance of the feminine. RPDR is an American TV show. The show is organised as a "talent search" to find "America's Next Drag Superstar" and is presided over by head adjudicator RuPaul (born RuPaul Andre Charles) who has a long history of drag (Moore, 2013). Similar to the drag queens on RPDR, Craig drags because it provides a means for him to express himself in his gender non-conformity, and secondly, his drag persona has the potential for generating not only income but fame and celebrity status.

Craig has always been taking part in beauty pageant competitions. His career in beauty pageantry started in secondary school. Beauty pageant competitions were popular at school and provided an outlet for him to express his interest in beauty and fashion. At school, whilst there were no gay pageants, he was allowed to take part in not only the male category, but also the female category. In his own words:

> Just to show people that I am actually versatile but also this is me.

In his formative years, it appears that Craig was allowed to play with gender, to alternate between a masculine and feminine persona, even if only restricted to the beauty pageant stage. He admits that with taking part in gay beauty pageant competitions he experienced some "bullying", but for the most part he and his group of friends felt supported. At school, Craig was part, as he expressed in his own words, of the "popular clique". Craig did not experience social rejection from his peers for his non-conformity, instead he was embraced by those living in the township. This social acceptance he articulated in the following manner:

> I mean I've been gay for all my life I've been you know when you're being raised in a community where no one wants to speak about it … they're some sort of accept it if you are extremely feminine and out there, if I can put it that way.

In this chapter I argue that on the gay beauty pageant stage, the *moffie* figure as historically rooted in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town, is challenged with the appearance of Americanised drag (as expressed by my interlocutors) onto the Cape Town gay pageant scene. I demonstrate that, with the arrival of Americanised drag, class differentiations are made apparent based on local understandings of *moffie-ness*. Similarly, the glamour and glitz associated with gay pageantry, that on the surface masks the everyday economic and social

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pressures of pageant contestants, is exposed with the arrival of this phenomenon onto the local gay pageant scene. With the advent of Americanised drag and the fashion and stylization associated with it, additional financial burdens are placed on pageant contestants. I argue that new, resistant identities are created, which are fashioned through or against *moffie-ness*, and thus have the potential to challenge heterosexuality through their use of camp and exaggeration. In this space, created by the tensions between local understandings of *moffie-ness* and Americanised drag, there are possibilities for creativity and emergence of new identifications.

Americanised drag as understood by my interlocutors refers to the drag that is epitomized in the American TV show RPDR. RPDR premiered in 2009 on the Logo Network (Moore, 2013). The show, according to Moore (2013) has three distinct sections: the first section is centred on the completion of a mini-challenge, which takes place in the dressing/work room; the second portion of the show involves a performance (the main challenge) either in front of a live audience or in front of the camera; the third and final section of the show is a runway show which always culminates in the lowest performing contestants being forced to "lip sync for their lives" (Moore, 2013). Overall in this competition gender non-conforming men are expected to fashion exaggerated and camp performances of femininity and draw on originality, creativity and inventiveness in order to become "America's Next Drag Superstar". The contestants are judged for such exaggerated and camp performances by a panel of judges.

In terms of acting camp, particular characteristics such as a theatrical demeanour and flamboyant dress sense are played up (Sontag, 1964). In "Notes on Camp", writer and poet Susan Sontag (1964) articulates:

> To start very generally: Camp is a certain mode of aestheticism. It is one way of seeing the world as an aesthethic phenomenon. That way, the way of camp, is not in terms of beauty, but in terms of artifice, of stylization. (p2)

I argue that with Americanised drag strong emphasis is put on "exaggeration, parody, and juxtaposition" (Sontag, 1964), all elements of camp. Camp in essence contests dominant notions of taste, and challenges conventional understandings, in this instance, of gender (Kleinhans, 1994). Butler's (1999) notion of camp is that it has transgressive potential and has an intrinsic aim to emphasize those cultural ambiguities and contradictions that remain dominant. It is, according to Dyer (1999), the gay man's way of providing commentary on

normative heterosexuality and society in general, through exaggeration and drama. I question if gender non-conforming men who drag onstage in gay beauty pageant competitions conform to dominant ideas of heterosexuality, thus reflecting the social values and norms of society in general. Dragging in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town emphasizes a physical enactment of the female body and a social compliance of femininity in everyday life. On the gay beauty pageant stage, the pageant contestant who embodies the feminine most authentically (i.e. believably) wins the crown of *moffie* queen. Thus taking part in gay beauty pageant competitions serve as validation of their femininity. This reflects an adherence to normative gender binaries.

Whilst participation in gay beauty pageant competitions serves as validation of their femininity, the "obviousness of men in drag" provides some protection from harm in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town (Tucker, 2011). Similarly, participation in gay beauty pageant competitions serves as a bonding point amongst 'sisters' and thus provides social and emotional support from peers. The potential of achieving legendary status, and the associated financial gains from taking part in gay beauty pageant competitions, are also alluring to gender non-conforming men living in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. However, given that the opportunities for drag in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town have historically been confined to that of the township pageant stage, financial gains have been limited. With the arrival of Americanised drag, other opportunities to drag beyond that of the township gay pageant stage have been made available to 'coloured' gender non-conforming men; thus taking drag beyond the geographical and social boundaries of the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town to a wider audience with greater possibilities for fame and financial stability. Taking drag beyond the confines of the local township gay scene has implications however for how drag has historically been performed and defined.

I draw from field notes collated from my observations at gay beauty pageant competitions and drag shows. In particular I explore the advent of Americanised drag and how this impacts Cape Town's most coveted gay pageant, the MGWC pageant, through an interview with one of the pageant promoters. I make use of interviews conducted with 'coloured' gender non-conforming men who call themselves drag artists or drag performers, and examine attitudes and perceptions regarding the advent of Americanised drag on the Cape Town gay pageant scene. Thus in this chapter I also examine how gender non-conforming men define themselves in the context of the onset of Americanised drag.

**5.2 The Miss Gay Western Cape pageant**

Historically, the MGWC pageant was located at the Joseph Stone Auditorium in Athlone (a predominantly 'coloured' residential suburb). The historical location of the MGWC pageant meant that the pageant was accessible to those living on the Cape Flats. The MGWC pageant is the most sought after gay pageant in the pageantry world for those pageant contestants living in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. More recently, the MGWC pageant has relocated from its historical location to more commercial spaces such as the Cape Town International Convention Centre and the Baxter Theatre Centre. This relocation does not only entail a physical relocation, but also a shift in the presentation of the pageant. According to the MGWC pageant organisers, the MGWC pageant as located in the abovementioned commercial spaces has "a more professional look". The MGWC pageant winner is guaranteed to be featured in the local tabloid newspapers like *Die Son* (The Daily Sun) or in the *Cape Times*. The use of the phrase "a more professional look" reminds me of the drag queens in Newton's: *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators of America* (1979), who drew from norms of show business in order to establish legitimacy of the drag industry and of their performance as drag artists.

In 2011 the MGWC pageant was held in the Sea Point community hall. This edition of the MGWC pageant was small in comparison to the pageants held in 2012 and 2013. In 2011 there were no radio presenters or international or local TV celebrities hosting the event. The audience members comprised mostly of those living in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. For MGWC 2012, an 'African' theme was followed, complete with 'African' outfits, in line with this theme. Stage lights, smoke machines and a big screen accompany these performances. The show started with the theme song of the popular musical: "The Lion King". In this year, the MGWC pageant was held for the first time in the Cape Town International Convention Centre.

> Ooh MGWC is beautiful. I entered in 2011, I came in for the top 16, and I was then allowed to go through to the final show, to pageant night. For MGWC, the prelims (i.e. preliminaries), is Miss Body Beautiful, that is the swimwear section that usually occurs in September, and then they will now select who will go through to the final show, that usually happens in November. Before the final show are the rehearsals and then it is outreach work, and you then go out to other places to promote MGWC or you take part in other Miss Gay events. They will now announce that applications are open, you have to complete a form and then send it in, and then they will inform you about the first meeting that is happening on the 4th of August, where everyone is now meeting the girls,

then they will now give you the rules and regulations. Then say the 28th of September then you rehearse for Miss Body Beautiful, and then from then onwards it is every Sunday, rehearsal. If you miss a rehearsal, then you have to have a valid reason, and if you miss three rehearsals, then you are out. You have to have a valid reason. This year the entrance fee is R60.00.

In the above excerpt, this contestant provides a description of the MGWC pageant in terms of how to enter the pageant, the rehearsals and what is required financially of pageant contestants. This pageant contestant points to the glamour and glitz that is associated with the MGWC pageant, but also the financial pressures that come with taking part in the MGWC pageant. From the above, one can ascertain that from September to November (when the pageant is held), numerous rehearsals are held, and pageant contestants will have to travel from their homes to the rehearsal venue.



Photo 13. The Miss Gay Western Cape pageant, "Arabian Nights" performed at the Baxter Theatre, Cape Town
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

The most dramatically different to earlier MGWC pageants that I have observed was the 2013 MGWC pageant which was sold out for the first time (see Photo 13). For the MGWC 2013 pageant, advertising campaigns ran on social networking sites, stipulating the following:

The show will be extra special. On the line-up is: "The amazing Shengela (RuPaul's Drag Race) (see Photo 14) as well as Mario Ogle (gold record winner and South African

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Music Award (SAMA) nominated performer), as well as some other great surprises…"
In other adverts: "This year we are super excited to have from RuPaul's Drag Race, the
stunning performer, Shengela, who will not only perform, but also co-host the event.
Lastly, but not in the least, Cape Town's very own drag superstar: Manila von Teez
(see Photo 15) – an up and coming drag performing artist.

The theme for MGWC 2013 was Arabian nights and was performed complete with the fashion
and stylization that complements popular ideas of what an Arabian night entails. Stage props
such as Aladdin looking lamps, Persian carpets and accompanying music rounded off the
Arabian night's theme. A show of this magnitude requires intense rehearsals. The rehearsals
leading up to the MGWC pageant held in mid-November each year, require the contestants to
give total devotion to the pageant for at least three months, starting in early August. If a
rehearsal is missed a valid reason must be provided to the pageant organisers. Two or three
rehearsals missed without a valid reason results in disqualification.

The commercialisation of the MGWC pageant has implications for who is included and
excluded. This leads to the exclusion of those gender non-conforming men who are unable to
keep up with the financial obligations that come with the commercialisation of gay pageants in
general and with the MGWC pageant in particular. Due to the commercialisation of gay
pageants, there were often reports made by the 'girls' to me of exploitation and of favouritism.



Photo 14. Shengela – Ru Paul's Drag Race contestant co-hosting at the Miss Gay Western Cape 2013 pageant
*Source* Photo taken by researcher
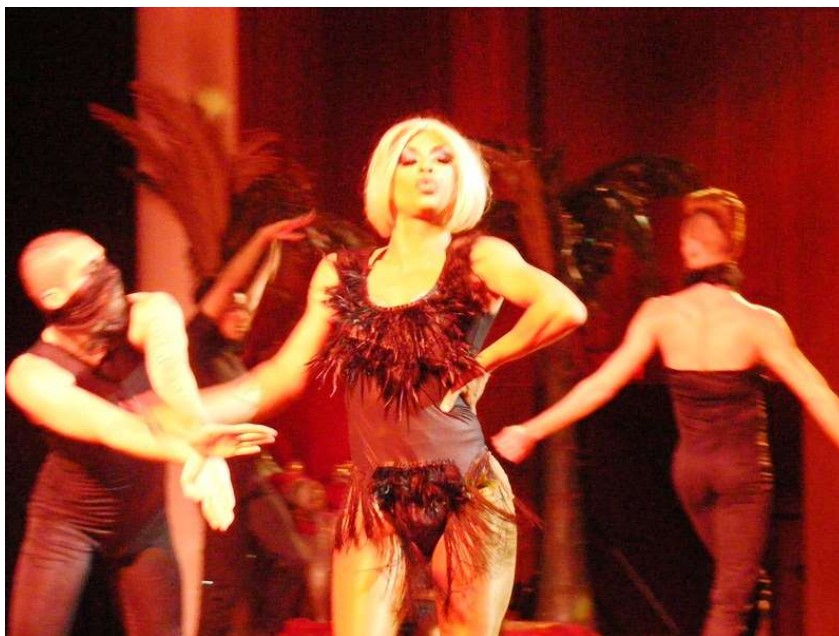
Photo 15. Manila von Teez performing onstage at the Miss Gay Western Cape 2013 pageant
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

## 5.3 Miss Glamour

Bringing drag to a mainstream audience beyond that found in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town was most apparent at the Miss Glamour pageant. The event was seen and marketed as being very exclusive. Of course this meant that some of the 'girls' were unable to compete because they were not able to keep to the high level of glamour that the pageant professes to uphold in fashion and style. The Miss Glamour pageant aims to bring more glamour, "bringing back class", to the gay pageant scene as one of the pageant organisers related to me.

The organisers felt that the glamour that was usually associated with gay pageantry has been lost – that "township pageants" have lost their touch. It should be about putting the beauty out there. In fact they wanted to bring back the class and style of the gay pageants that were popular during the time of Kewpie and other legendary figures. They emphasize that in Cape Town, most pageants are just put together, and that the glamour associated with pageantry is lost.

In fact, according to the pageant organisers, the pageant that they produced was not a pageant but more of a production. It was all about fashion and style. According to the pageant organisers, these 'girls' went all out. They very much understood gay pageantry to be about challenging stereotypes of effeminate gender non-conforming men and elevating the gay pageantry industry to not only hyper-feminine ideals but to taking gay pageantry to a level that

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is more fashionable. According to the pageant organisers, in most other pageants, it seems like a money making business, and feels sterile. On pageant night, the pageant organisers did not disappoint, they delivered a pageant that was not only challenging but also fashionable (see Photo 16).



Photo 16. Fashion show at Miss Glamour 2012
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

The Miss Glamour pageant was held in West End. West End has been in existence for over 30 years and is a well-known nightclub in Cape Town. Gay beauty pageants are hosted at the club on a fairly regular basis. Compared to other nightclubs that are located in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town, West End boasts three bars downstairs and one upstairs. In the middle of the nightclub is a huge glitter ball. The club is mostly patronised by 'coloured' men and women. It is known as friendly to gender non-conforming men and women. I often would accompany some of my interlocutors to this club. Apart from one incident at the club, where Cleo was called by a derogatory name, West End is a space where same sex and straight patrons socially interact with each other. It is not an exclusively gay club, nor is it an exclusively straight club. Because of the glamour that Miss Glamour promises to deliver, some of the patrons attending the event were typically not those living in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. They were 'white', dressed very smart casually. From their expressions when the 'girls' stepped onto the stage, gay pageantry was not a familiar and commonplace event for them.

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**5.4 Dragging in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town**

> Drag highlights the fact that gender roles are a type of performance, unrelated to biological sex (Butler, 1993).

The drag performed by gender non-conforming men is similar in the way that they denaturalise gender. Drag performances differ however in the ways that they perform gender on a temporal or everyday basis. Those who perform the feminine on a temporal basis do so on the gay beauty pageant stage; others performance of the feminine are crucial to their identification as women. Gender non-conforming men who perform the feminine only on the pageant stage call themselves "female impersonators", "drag queens" or "drag artists".

**5.4.1 On pageant night I become Caster**

> As I scan through the hall of the Grassy Park Hotel, I do not see Colin. I ask a few of the audience members and some other 'girls' if they have seen Colin? Most of them respond with: "Bah, Colin?" and walk off. Others call their friends to come and hear what seems to them to be a ridiculous question. Eventually someone says: You mean Caster? I apologise, they point me to where I can find Caster.

I did not know that on pageant night Colin becomes Caster, not only in name, but also in gender performance. Colin took on the stage name Caster Semenya when the athlete "came onto the scene" as a "very controversial girl". Caster Semenya is an 800 metre distance athlete, who is famous not only for her abilities on the athletic track but also because of her androgynous features. This 800 metre distance athlete caused controversy globally because she performs gender differently. She "blurs what we think of as normal in terms of gender", according to gender studies scholar Nadia Sanger (2009) because of her androgynous features: her biceps are large and powerful; she seems to have facial hair; and is physically strong and athletic (Sanger, 2009). Colin is also an athlete and he saw himself in her, hence the desire to take on the name Caster when he performs the feminine during gay beauty pageants.

Hence the 'real' Caster Semenya and Colin share some similarities; both challenge the gender binaries of man and woman. I was unsure as whether to address Colin by his birth name or by his stage name. I met Colin the week before, where he was dressed in jeans, sneakers and a jersey, revealing nothing of his "alter ego" Caster Semenya. He introduced himself as Colin when I met him. Everyone (except me) was aware that on pageant night, Colin disappears and Caster becomes 'real'. I learnt that even during gay beauty pageant rehearsals, stage names

should be used and no longer the names given to the 'girls' at birth. On pageant night, Colin is adorned in a yellow cat suit, with a black feathered scarf draped around his neck, a wig, a crown on his head, and toenails painted black. And so he becomes Caster. Colin complains that the transformation from a male to female-bodied person is "hectic" because of the make-up and shaving one's legs. He notes though that it is fairly easy to transform his face "into a girl" because he has a natural smile and a graceful walk. The stage name, graceful walk and smile are all tools that contribute to Colin's performance of femininity (i.e. Caster Semenya).

In the township of Lavender Hill, located on the Cape Flats, Colin is a legend in his own right. Colin identifies as a gay man. He was born 42 years ago at Rondevlei, which was an informal settlement in Lavender Hill. Colin was raised "in poverty" as he puts it, by a single mother who worked three jobs to keep the household running. Colin works to provide psychosocial support to the majority of cisgender men and women in the township of Lavender Hill. In his female persona, he sees himself as a role model for not only other pageant queens, but for those living in Lavender Hill, regardless of sexual orientation. With his bevy of 'girls', gay pageants are staged on an almost monthly basis, "bringing glamour to the townships" as Colin puts it - he can make people forget about their problems for a few hours.

Although, according to Colin, he grew up in poverty, this did not deter him and his brothers and sisters from their individual achievements. In his words, he "works with the poorest of the poor". He is one of seven boys and one sister, and according to him, he has now become the second, "other" daughter. Although Colin sees himself as the other daughter in a family of seven boys and one girl, he calls himself a female impersonator. This does not mean that he feels like a woman. Colin has indicated to me that making a physical transition from male to female body "has never crossed [his] mind". He is afraid of "how the boobs will look when he gets older – they are going to look *pap* [worn out]". Colin realised his same sex desires when he "got feelings for other boys". It is also important for him to emphasize that he was never a "gay girl" - he never played with dolls. Colin had "a normal life with boys but a different one". He remembers "fondling" that happened between boys while playing in the sand dunes of Lavender Hill, but he says of that time: "It was like a playing thing". When he realised he had these feelings for other boys, he mentioned this to his mother, and his mother was not only supportive, but told him:

> It is in the genes, because we have gay in the family, we have two lesbian aunties, two gay uncles.

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Hence when Colin "got some feelings when he was with boys" as he puts it, this was "nothing new" to his mother. His mother was very supportive of him, even encouraging him to play netball (which is considered to be a feminine sport):

> [My mother] she supported me on my gay life and that and she always taught me I'm the other daughter that she could never have but she had seven boys and one girl … I was the other daughter, yes and she encouraged me to play my game, I played netball since small.

Growing up in the 'coloured' township of Lavender Hill, Colin was able to play feminine sports such as netball. From a very young age he took part in gay beauty pageants. He admits that taking part in feminine sports such as netball, "kept [him] safe".

> We used to play netball on a Sunday between the gang fights and stuff, the Mongrels and the Mafias they were fighting they didn't shoot at us, they were hitting each other with *pangas* and stuff … but we were never a problem, they never messed with us. They actually came to see how we play netball with other areas like Hanover Park and that it was nice, we were seventeen, eighteen, nineteen at the time we were the [underling] generation because we had the international netball club which was called The Internationals where the old *moffies* used to play … and somehow the other it worked for us … in the community because that kept us safe …

Hence this public performance of femininity provides him with some form of social protection. Colin also disclosed to me that even when he was 17 he was not in a position where he could defend himself. One of his neighbours, as he puts it, "did things to him". Colin continues "everything went wrong". However, he says he did not report it. I asked him the reason why and he responded: "Because it will break up a happy home". He also indicated that he was afraid of "how [his] mother will take it". Now, however, in his words: "I am big and out there I shared it with my friends and colleagues because there is nothing you can do about it."
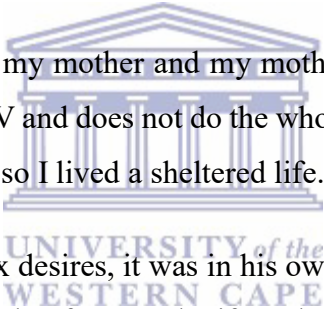
Because of what happened to him at this tender age, Colin continues, he is now doing "a lot of gay community outreach work", as he puts it. Colin did not tell me more about what happened and I also did not probe further. Hence, Colin's very visible performance of femininity, when he started taking part in gay beauty pageants afforded him some protection in the township

where he lives. At the same time his very public performance of femininity also left him vulnerable.

**5.4.2 "Getting on stage and acting"**

Trevor is new to the beauty pageant scene and only recently turned 23. He was guided by his drag mother (Evanka) to take part in gay beauty pageants. Trevor is a thin, very shy, plain and demure "gay male that cross-dresses" (as he described himself to me). Being naturally introverted, gay pageantry provides a stage where Trevor could not only glam up, but perform another persona - one that contradicts his plain, gay male everyday performance. When I saw Trevor for the first time his head was covered with a woollen cap, and he wore jeans, a pale blue t-shirt and sneakers.

In Trevor's personal history, religion seemed to play a prominent role in the construction of his identity:

> I grew up very close with my mother and my mother is extremely religious … where she does not even watch TV and does not do the whole dressing up … no open shoes … dresses until the ankles … so I lived a sheltered life.

When Trevor realised his same sex desires, it was in his own words: "devastating because [he] had [his] little dream of a white picket fence and wife and children [when he realised his same sex desires] it seems that this was all ripped away from [him]". The white picket fence, wife and children is symbolic of the dominant discourse of heterosexuality, so the realisation that he had desires for the same sex proved to be disruptive not only for himself, but also for his family. Trevor expected to adhere to gender roles prescribed for men in traditional societies (i.e. to get married to a woman and have children), in this way, policing his own behaviour. This normative existence was the only reality familiar to Trevor. According to Trevor, "gay individuals were never a prominent part of [his] life growing up".

Trevor works as a motor mechanic, having followed the family tradition of craftsmanship. Trevor grew up in a household where family time revolved around "building up a car"; and he learnt the trade from his father. According to Trevor, when he is a mechanic he does not act *femme*:

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In the work field I try to keep the almost *femme* sides to a minimum … because I found that generally people underestimate your capabilities as soon as you look a certain part they assume that you are best at doing hair than … fixing their car:

In this instance, Trevor expresses his awareness of the stereotype that having same sex desires often pigeonholes one into feminine craftsmanship such as hairdressing:

It's just I would refrain from using gay terminology in front of customers or I would be more introverted than extroverted. The introvert would just take over in the work situation because I found that that works better for me. Seeing that people they want to be almost they're more comforted if they believe that you are totally capable of doing the job and for some reason they think one aspect of being a mechanic is being butch and you can't be a proper mechanic if you're not butch and or manly and stuff.

Hence, when he is at work he also refrains from using what he calls "gay terminology". Trevor consciously acts "butch" (i.e. "I can't be a proper mechanic if I am not butch") in an attempt to keep to the social role of a motor mechanic, in order for the act to become real or believable to his co-workers. In this instance, speech, dress and stylization are used to authentically perform this masculine role of the motor mechanic.

He exchanges his grey mechanic overalls with a little black dress and stilettos; his hair is not hidden under a woollen cap, but transformed by an edgy hairstyle. Trevor transforms his masculine chest with fake breasts (socks tucked in a white bra) (see Photo 17). Hence Trevor prepares his physical body for his audience, especially with masculine men in mind – the idea is to help the audience forget his male body and perform an eroticized femininity considered beautiful (Swarr, 2012).
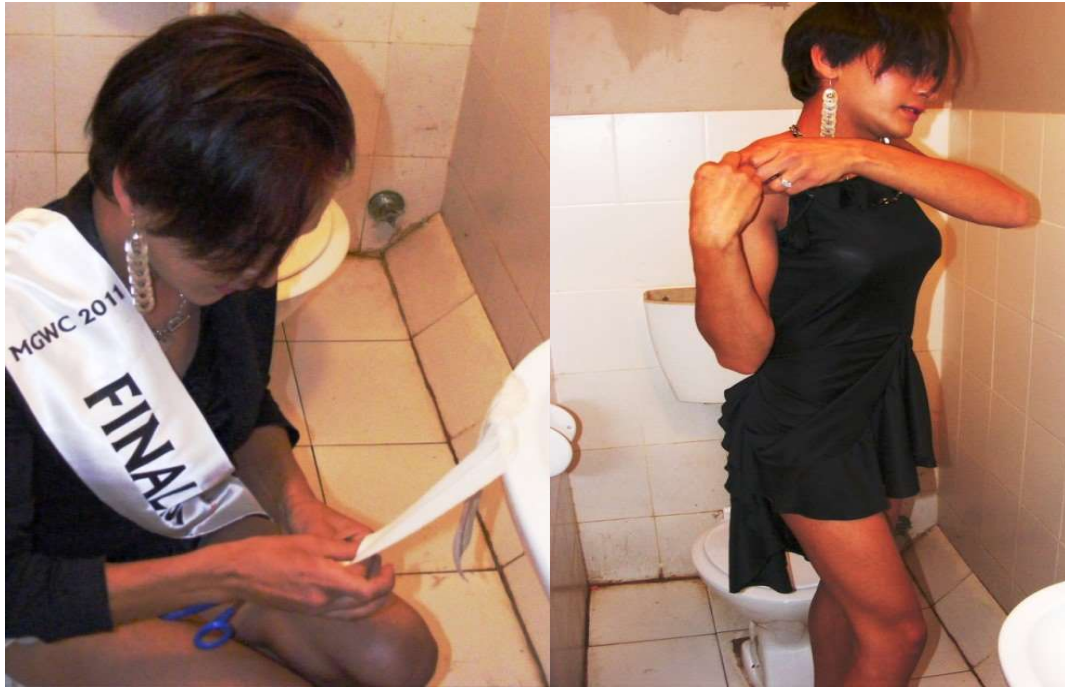
Photo 17. Trevor exchanging his overalls for a dress
*Source* Photo by researcher

Although both acts (motor mechanic and beauty pageant queen) are performative in nature, Trevor describes his participation in gay beauty pageant competitions as "high school drama … getting on a stage and acting":
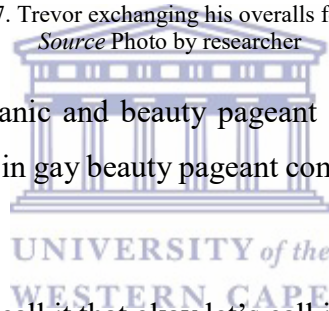
The jump [laughter] can I call it that okay let's call it that the jump is extra glamouring up, yes and also a glamouring up the alter ego the split personality. I know it's just to me it's just like in different spheres of your life you act differently between your family members compared to your work colleagues and for me that that change is the same as going from a straight, inverted commas, into Chloe. It wasn't something that I thought I would like or do in fact I thought for most of my life I thought they were too loud too in your face. Everything was just too much. So it was good to have cross-dressing friends but then you would want to see them maybe once a month; once a year [laughter] and then you have a couple of good laughs because they usually have, most of us most of the girls have weird ways of saying things and weird ways of looking at things. It's almost like I find it very similar to who I think you can maybe relate if you're in the company of poets looking at things or people who are so. It's a different experience because the way they put things, the way they see the world.

This statement made by Trevor, who goes by the stage name, Chloe is revealing in many respects. According to Strübel-Scheiner (2011) in a study conducted in Dallas, in the USA, men who chose to perform in drag are self-described as shy and not of the prescribed standard of "gay beauty". Hence Strübel-Scheiner (2011) claims that performing in drag is a way of drawing attention to themselves, attention they do not receive out of drag. In real life, as articulated by Strübel-Scheiner (2011), the masquerade of gender allows them to try on a new identity, one whereby they may receive the attention they desire. For example, drag queen Lauren Richards says that when she is in drag, "I feel like I am a movie star or some great actor … because when I am out of drag no one comes up to me randomly and asks to take pictures with me" (Strübel-Scheiner, 2011: p12).

It goes without saying then that plain and demure "gay male" Trevor has a "different circle of friends" to that of "glammed-up" Chloe. Chloe "developed her own personality" that is hugely different from Trevor who works as a motor mechanic during the day:

> I enjoyed it. It was nice to play around it reminded me of high school drama … getting on a stage and acting ... me being naturally introverted … being in drag it was it automatically … forces you to be an extrovert …

Of note is that he does not question the conscious act that he has to put on when he is a motor mechanic. In this sense, he does not question heterosexuality. Trevor sees his masculine self as 'natural', and as more 'real' than the performance he puts on during pageant night, the one that he describes as "a high school drama".

**5.4.3 The glamour and glitz of the gay beauty pageant competition**

> It is three o'clock on a Sunday afternoon, Cleo and myself arrive at the local nightclub, called West End for the first rehearsal of Miss Gay Extravaganza. Miss Gay Extravaganza will take place in two weeks' time at West End. Today at the first rehearsal where the dance floor is situated is a stage on which the 'girls' are expected to ramp. Unlike other nightclubs this one has a big seating area, consisting of chairs and couches facing the stage. On Sunday evenings, live jazz bands take up the stage. I have accompanied Cleo and Nico to this nightclub on several occasions, on either Friday or Saturday evenings. Even though the club is not known as a gay club, Cleo, Nico and others often come to this club (sometimes in drag) and they are well-known both amongst the patrons and the staff of the nightclub. It is not exclusively meant for gender

non-conforming men to meet other men with same sex desires, nor is it a space for gay - only social activities to take place. In the space of the club, most of the patrons are cisgender men and women. The club is located in Rylands not more than 10 minutes' drive from Manenberg. Save for one incident that happened at the nightclub that I am aware of, locally it seems to be known as friendly towards gender non-conforming men. In fact patrons tend to run up and greet their favourite pageant 'girl' very enthusiastically.

The theme for Miss Gay Extravaganza is "Carnival". This is only the second year of the pageant's existence. Even though this pageant is much smaller than the MGWC pageant, for instance, preparations for any gay pageant are time-consuming, and moreover put a financial strain on pageant contestants. Often pageant contestants borrow ball gowns, swimsuits and make-up from each other. For this pageant, Marawaan decided to purchase or hire a ball gown. A week before the first rehearsal, we went to the local mall to the *souk*[36], in a shopping mall about 10 minutes drive from Manenberg.

On this visit to the *souk*, Marawaan was dressed very 'butch' (jeans and t-shirt). Marawaan holds up a dress that seems to have sparked his interest in front of the salesmen, and asks excitedly: "What do you think?" posing the question to me. Marawaan promises the salesman that he will return and purchase the dress. Other women passing by wearing *niqab* (a veil worn by some Muslim women, covering all of their face, only showing their eyes) look at the ruckus we are making at the stall. Later in the day, we go shopping for jewellery at a shop selling Indian dresses and costume made jewellery. The elderly woman (who we later find out is also the owner) behind the counter is very intrigued by Marawaan asking for jewellery and, unlike the salesmen at the *souk,* she enquires from Marawaan why he needs the jewellery. Marawaan very excitedly shares that he will take part in a gay pageant and starts explaining to the owner of the shop what he plans to wear at the pageant. The owner of the shop strikes up a conversation with Marawaan and eventually wishes him all the best for the pageant.

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[36]Souk refers to a market or a part of a market in Arabic. In fact, this section of the mall is called: *The Souk.*

Photo 18. Marawaan Jumath's carnival costume spread out on the bed for participation in the Miss Gay Extravaganza pageant
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

On the night of the pageant, Ayesha and I assist Marawaan in preparation for the Miss Gay Extravaganza pageant. Nico, who lives in the courts close to Marawaan, has just dropped off the back piece of the Carnival wear. He made the back piece for Marawaan out of a hula hoop, covered with feathers. Marawaan is wearing a multi-coloured swimsuit, and the feathered colourful back piece. His bra, make-up, evening wear and swimsuit are all spread out on the bed in his room (see Photo 18).

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Photo 19. Marawaan Jumath putting make-up on
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

Marawaan puts on a short white dress and a wig with long, straight black hair (which he also borrowed from someone else living in the courts next to him) (see Photo 19) and we finally make our way out of the door.

### 5.4.4 "Transgender women come out in Cape Town gay pageants"

> I call myself just being transgendered. If you are transgendered I am not deliberately impersonating a woman. This is a life that I live. I feel like a woman so that is why I dress like a woman because I feel like a woman every single day of my life. It sometimes is hard work especially getting outfits doing your hair, doing your make-up, all that things getting the right outfit to look good or whatever, but when I'm at home I'm just a plain normal person I will wear jeans sweater. I will still be girlish, understand still girlish. At work I'm still girlish because why the salon that I do work at it's like my boss is gay.

Sierra makes use of the category transgender to describe herself. In her presentation of the feminine, she dresses like a woman because she "feels like a woman". In Sierra's articulation of the feminine she relates that in this performance she is not purposively impersonating being a woman. She makes use of the word "impersonating" in order to show that her presentation of the feminine is 'real' and 'natural' because she "feels like a woman", whilst others imitate

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femininity. In this way, Sierra demonstrates the performativity of gender and how artificial such categories of man and woman are. Whilst she identifies as a woman, in her articulation she demonstrates how, she "puts on femininity" (Strübel-Scheiner, 2011), in doing her hair, doing her make-up and choosing the perfect outfit.

Strübel-Scheiner (2011) cautions that terms such as female impersonator and drag queen should not be confused and used to refer to any man who drags, particularly when it comes to transgendered and transsexual individuals who do live as women and even try to physically become more female. However, Sierra takes part in gay beauty pageant competitions because she feels free to express herself in her femininity, and has been taking part in gay beauty pageant competitions since she was young:

> Okay well growing up as a child you basically especially if you're gay you tend to like feminine things okay so I always had this interest in watching Miss SA Miss World Miss Universe pageants that come on television at that stage I never knew about gay pageants until I met gay I met other gay people who actually told me you know there's a lot of gay pageants and I used to read about it in the in the newspaper that you can enter Miss Gay whatever. Mostly it was that time you'd find gay beauty pageants in clubs up until today it still happens in clubs like nightclubs like this one itself and that's when I started and I thought okay fine and everyone told me wow you look beautiful you probably have potential and then I start entering pageants. My first pageant didn't go so well but my second pageant I immediately won and after that it started I entered a lot of pageants I used to feature a lot in the top three in total I won like 53 titles so far already.

Similarly, even though Ayesha Khan "feels like a woman", she takes part in gay beauty pageant competitions because it provides an outlet for her in her presentation of the feminine:

> I got onto stage and because I lived my life as a gay male, but knowing obviously that I am female. But never having the opportunity to express myself because I was living with family or living with people that did not accept this kind of way of expressing myself or in a community where they did not sort of be tolerant of me cross-dressing and I entered pageants for this reason so during the day I was a boy. I dressed like a boy I associated with what other gay males but when there is a pageant I would cross-dress

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and I would be with my other cross-dressing friends and I just completely transformed. When I hit that stage in my stilettos and my dress and my make-up I became this sort of superstar. This, superwoman and I envisioned this glamorous life where everything is okay and everybody loves me and everybody wants to be me and that gave me the confidence I needed to be who I am and to find myself and also to fight back in my own little way to rebel in my own little way because I was in my own little world when I am on the stage.

Transgender women often only experiment with drag onstage and live their lives as effeminate self-identified gay men in public. This is the case particularly when they have not yet felt comfortable to drag every day. Throughout my fieldwork, I encountered young gender non-conforming men who dressed in masculine clothing and started dragging only at gay pageants, and only in a final stage of transformation, drag in their everyday lives.

Ayesha's participation in gay beauty pageant competitions serves as validation of her feminine social gender position. For instance, the first of many noticeable transformations that she underwent was that of taking part in gay beauty pageant competitions. After taking part in gay beauty pageant competitions, Ayesha became more confident to drag in public. Dragging in public validates Ayesha as female, and at the same time also interests (and attract) cisgender men. Many years after her first appearance onstage, Ayesha started on HRT. The HRT that she receives is a combination of oestrogen and an androgen blocker which stops testosterone from developing secondary male characteristics. Because of the hormonal treatment, she often experiences "hot flushes", her hair has grown significantly, and most noticeably, her breasts are now size 34.

In her everyday life she assumes a feminine social gender position. This is contrary to the majority of the gender non-conforming men whom I have met, who do not wish to physically transform, but to perform the feminine onstage only during gay beauty pageant competitions. All reveal the constructedness of gender, in that gender is both performed and constructed. They reveal that gender is an act that in order to become 'real' is repeated against an imitation of gender that was not 'real' or fixed to begin with. This repetition - for Ayesha, taking part in gay beauty pageant competitions – is an important part in the process of 'becoming woman', as she made clear to me in this statement:

To me I see it [taking part in gay beauty pageants] as a rite of passage. Even though you are not exposed to this information but innately you know that you are female or you are more effeminate and then you know through curiosity you want to experiment and men would often experiment with cross-dressing. Whether it is in the privacy of their own homes or when they are out clubbing with friends but in Cape Town the phenomenon are these gay pageants. You know these so-called gay pageants so then they slowly but surely start moving towards that they see a local pageant they go to rehearsals and enter these pageants and then they get their experience of cross-dressing they get to relate to other people in their identity and it gives you that kind of confidence you know build on your confidence. Until you feel secure enough to now come out openly and now everyday cross-dress and you know relate with that part of you and it was the same with me as well I started out entering pageants. I loved the thrill I loved the attention but most of all it was about the acceptance of me as a woman. People recognising me as a woman seeing me as a woman and it built on from there then I started wearing a bra each and every day. I started wearing more feminine clothes. I started with feminine jeans because I now see dress as a very important part of being female. You know without it you don't really identify as nobody identifies you as being female so that's what I started I took it step by step slowly but surely until I was confident enough to fully come out and fully represent myself as a woman. Gay pageants in Cape Town are part of this process for transgender women to come out.

Once pageant contestants *come out* onstage, many then have the confidence to drag in public. Ayesha is continuously working at 'becoming woman', and hence to fit into the heteronormative binary. In different ways, in the brief narrative of the processes she makes use of to become woman, she highlights Judith Butler's (1990) notion of gender performativity - that the act of gender becomes 'real' in its repetition. In this articulation, she understands that "dress" is a very important way of communicating gender. As expressed by Judith Butler (1990), Ayesha imitates the dominant conventions of gender. When she remarked: "I started with feminine jeans", she imitates in dress the dominant conventions of gender. Important to her articulation of this process of 'becoming woman' is that her social gender position as female is affirmed by her social network. Hence, in the space of the gay beauty pageant competition, she finds gender affirmation and social acceptance as a woman.

## 5.5 Americanised drag vs *moffie-ness*

In the midst of the different definitions and conceptualisations used by gender non-conforming men who drag onstage and in everyday life to articulate themselves in terms of their social gender position, Americanised drag has added another dimension. This notion of Americanised drag was brought up in a chat that I overheard during rehearsals of the Miss Gay Extravaganza pageant. Ayesha and Sierra made a comment about one of the contestants who, according to them, is not ramping but doing Americanised drag. They said this in somewhat of a disapproving manner. This particular contestant that Ayesha and Sierra was referring to performed a character of a teacher with a blonde wig in a bun, reading spectacles, a white t-shirt and a black tie. The pageant contestant performs with her dress and stylization, an exaggerated performance of the stereotype of a clerical worker. To this performance, the pageant contestant added seduction and mystery by tugging on a long thin cigarette. This is contrary to the physical and social performance of the feminine that the figure of the *moffie* presents onstage and in 'real' life.

The pageant contestant is not portraying a physical and social presentation of femininity but instead a drag queen persona - a production and commodification of gender that is commercialised for mainstream audiences. In this drag queen persona, it is more than just about "dressing girlie", more than just projecting hyper-feminine ideals. In this drag queen persona there is more emphasis on playing with gender, and less on projecting hyper-feminine ideals. Even though dragging is in itself considered gender ambiguous and subversive, local understandings of dragging (i.e. *moffie-ness*) are about presenting a physical and social embodiment of femininity to the extent that this can be seen as 'real'. The drag queen persona, as introduced by this characterisation of a clerical worker, to some extent not only mocks the 'realness' that is shown on stage and in everyday life, but reveals that gender in itself is not 'real', that gender can be played with, that gender is an imitation in itself, as articulated by Butler (1990). This is in contradiction to local understandings of *moffie-ness*, where the performance of femininity and indeed the believability thereof, is crucial to the social acceptance of gender non-conforming men in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. The simplicity expected of pageant contestants who perform femininity seems to be under threat. Sierra emphasizes this point by stating that in the past, it was putting a swimsuit on, and "there you go onstage".

The advent of Americanised drag has influenced how drag is performed by 'coloured' gender non-conforming men in the townships of Cape Town. According to Sierra and Ayesha, the apparent "Americanisation" of gay beauty pageants contributes to the increase in rehearsals, as well as the increase in the amount of money that pageant contestants have to invest during pageant competitions. They add that, in addition to financing ball gowns for evening and cocktail wear, accessories, wigs and make-up, money for transport has to be found. Most of the 'girls' do not have access to their own mode of transport so they have to pay someone for "dropping them off at rehearsals and then also picking them up". In these respects, definite commercialisation of gay pageants has occurred with the advent of Americanised drag.

I found the influence of Americanised drag evident in the drag performed by Manila von Teez, who is known locally as a drag diva. She is considered the most popular drag queen amongst 'coloured' gender non-conforming men and calls herself a "drag queen", "a performer", an "artist", and is one of a few 'coloured' drag performers who are pushing the boundaries of drag performances beyond that of the gay beauty pageant contestant. As in the ethnography of drag performers conducted by Eir-Anne Edgar (2011), I refer to Manila as "she", because even while out of drag, Manila refers to herself by the female-gendered pronoun. In this statement below, it becomes clear that drag is seen as a form of art for this 25 year-old who resides in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town (see Photo 20):

> I am a performer, but I am also an artist at what I do, because there are a lot of things that fall into place, when you do what you do. I do feel that there is a bit of artistry that goes into being a performer and a drag artist. But it is that whole mind set of overdramatizing, but that comes with the art form – I think that because we are so overly dramatically, being dramatic, that is because we are drag queens.

Photo 20. Manila von Teez in a camp over the top lip-syncing performance
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

In the above articulation, Manila refers to drag as a form of art ("I am also an artist at what I do"). Implicit in this statement is the commercialisation of drag, but at the same time, Manila implies there is much more creation and invention than in drag performed in gay beauty pageants. Manila also draws attention to the "overdramatizing" - the exaggerated and over the top performances that are read as gender parody. Dragging in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town is generally defined as "dressing girlie". In everyday life and onstage, gender non-conforming men use dress and stylization to successfully transform a male to a female bodied person, regardless of gender, social or sexual identifications. The drag performed during gay pageants in the townships does not purport to be an "art form", as articulated by Manila. This signals a shift in how drag was performed in the past at gay beauty pageants documented historically, when compared with recent Cape Town history.

For instance, Manila performs at *Beefcakes*, a popular restaurant and bar that features drag queens in front of a predominantly 'white' paying audience. At the age of 25, Manila von Teez has been doing drag performances for four years, but has only recently become more popular onstage. In the following interview she speaks about her more recent popularity:

> I am a visual performer, so I have to stimulate you visually. So that is what I do, I constantly want to keep people visually entertained and I think that comes with

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experience. When I started no one got me, they did not understand what I was about, why I was so different. At the time, there was not a market for me, at the time no one understood me. I was the outsider [laughing]. I was doing Lady Gaga. And then I just said you know what I am not going to listen to anyone; eventually people are going to get with the programme. And that this is who I am.

Manila's drag performance follows similar routines to the standard ones that I observed at gay pageants, which includes over the top lip-syncing to popular songs. Although Manila lip-syncs to popular songs, just like all of the other 'coloured' drag performers that I have observed in the night clubs and pageants of the city of Cape Town, this performance is complemented by what I can only describe as powerful and strong dance moves. In some respects, Manila's drag performance relates to a particular dance performance style called *vogueing*. *Vogueing* is a sort of gymnastics mixed with dancing (Halberstam, 2003)[37].

Halberstam (2003) relates that *vogueing* has been associated with the drag queen culture in the USA since the 1920s and was made popular by Madonna, in her iconic song: *Vogue*. One of Manila's drag performances includes lip-syncing to this song. In this performance she vogues and ends with her signature dance move, which is a gymnastic split that is so powerful that at times the stage shook with the spectators following suit, and with huge applause. In summary, the type of drag that Manila performs is a loud, obnoxious, "make no excuses" kind of performance. Other drag performances include performances of an eroticized femininity and glam erotica. Such drag performances challenge normative ideas of femininity. In common with Eir-Anne Edgar's (2011) work focusing on the TV show RPDR, I found that in Manila's drag performance of femininity, the goal is not just for a man to perfect the appearance of a woman, rather, it entails the successful employment of multiple acts or qualities that demonstrate femininity. Ultimately, according to Eir-Anne Edgar (2011):

> Through the successful deployment of various femininities, Queens prove their adaptability in performances of gender. The emphasis then is on knowledge rather than a thin façade of womanhood. In the case of the Drag Race, contestants perform female gender through the performance of femininities. However, these performances of femininities and knowledge underscore that the Queens are being rewarded for overcoming their inherent masculinity (p.7).

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[37]Jack Halberstam (also known as Judith Halberstam), who is Director of The Centre for Feminist Research at the University of Southern California (USC).

Although Manila employs multiple acts or qualities that demonstrate femininity, the drag performed by Manila is androgynous, not quite male and not quite female. This is a field note of one of the drag performances that Manila performs at a popular club located in the gay village:

Manila is the house drag queen of the club named *Club 021*. The club is named as such because this is the dialling code of the province of the Western Cape. At this time of the night, the club is fairly empty, but just a couple of minutes before the DJ makes an announcement, however the club starts filling up. It has just turned 21h30, the DJ makes an announcement, that Manila is about to step onto the stage. And then the music starts. And everyone turns toward the stage. Because the club is so small, patrons are also standing next to the bar and the dance floor. The music starts, and Manila walks onto the stage. Before walking out onto the stage, the stage manager puts a red ottoman directly in front of the stage, a couple of meters onto the dance floor. This evening, she is dressed in a salmon coloured swim suit, bedazzled with glitters and diamanté. She also has stockings on, and this time wears a red hair wig. The song *Chandelier* by an artist known as Sia has a melody that is soft and alluring to the ear and one can slowly dance to this song, later on the melody takes a higher pitch. To start off her dance performance, Manila is carried off by the lyrics of the song and makes equally sad or melancholic lip-syncing to mimic the feelings that the song is supposed to elicit. As the song gains momentum, she lounges forward to the box that was placed in front of the stage and as the song directs, grabs hold of a red satin rope that has been hung from the ceiling of the club for this performance. Manila swings seductively from the stage to the red ottoman with the assistance of the red satin rope. The patrons of the club are amazed by this performance and watch in awe with many showing their appreciation by taking photographs of this performance (see Photo 21).

Photo 21. Manila von Teez performing in drag to Sia's song *Chandelier* at *Club 021*
*Source* Photos taken by researcher

Out of drag, Manila has no make-up on, no wig, a short crop of hair, usually wears a baseball cap, and is dressed in a hoodie, track pants and sneakers. At the Miss Matric Dance beauty pageant, Ayesha pointed Manila out to me amongst the spectators. Ayesha made a comment that, out of drag, Manila looks very "butch". "Butch" in this instance, refers to masculine performing. Hence, out of drag, Manila, the drag queen/diva is unrecognisable as Manila. It appears that a deliberate and conscious effort is made to stylize the body as either masculine or feminine.

The kind of drag that Manila performs onstage, according to Dana Berkowitz and Linda Belgrave (2010), allows some gender non-conforming men to emphasize aspects of femininity for the purpose of earning an income and garnering situational power, in a situation where many are still socially and economically on the margins. In this ethnography, Berkowitz and Belgrave (2010) detail the drag performances of drag queens performing at Miami Beach in the USA. Although, according to Berkowitz and Belgrave (2010), "the monetary rewards of drag are often miniscule, a subjective understanding of drag reveals that the rewards can be empowering (often beyond that assigned monetary value)" (p. 159). Manila is very much aware of the fact that the costs, time and effort involved in putting on a drag show often outweigh the monetary earnings received from such performances. If the monetary earnings received from

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drag is often miniscule, why do Manila and others like her drag? In answer to this question, Halberstam (2003) suggests that performing artists involved in *vogueing* often seek out mainstream attention for their performances and productions in the hope of gaining financial assistance for future endeavours. However, the cost in time, effort and money put into their own productions is at odds with the pittance that they receive for their performances.

Nevertheless, for drag queens like Manila, these dreams of earning a living only through drag performances remain just that for the moment. Even though Manila and others like her have been heavily influenced by popular TV shows such as RPDR, where fame and fortune have been gained through drag, the reality in the South African context - even in the 'pink city' of South Africa – is that drag performers do not earn much. They are strongly supported by both cisgender and gender non-conforming spectators and there is all round passionate support for drag performers such as Manila, but the monetary reward remains miniscule.

For this reason, at times Manila does more than one drag performance on one night. In addition to doing drag performances at the local clubs and bars, mostly located in the city centre of Cape Town, close to or in the gay village, Manila also designs and creates garments that suit her performances. From this very brief introduction to this drag performer, it becomes clear that Manila performs a very different type of drag from that which is usually associated with gay 'coloured' effeminate men who drag. Manila saw a gap in the market and is specifically creating garments for men who drag because there was no one "making clothes for men dressed as females" says Manila. Although she is fairly new at "making clothes for men dressed as females", in her own words she is "slowly but surely" perfecting the art of making dresses for men. However, and this brings me to an important point, in the drag that Manila performs, even though there is a market, the 'girls' do not have the financial means to go "the drag route". Now more than ever, Manila, like Ayesha and Sierra agree on the extent of the influences of what the 'girls' call Americanised drag - drag performances have become more expensive and unaffordable to many of the 'girls'.

Others such as the MGWC pageant promotors, articulate the advent of Americanised drag in the following manner:

> *Daai vuil moffies*, *uittande* [Those dirty *moffies*, no teeth], you know what it is like, beard, but long hair, it is just hairdressers, that whole concept but taking it that drag route, now it is becoming more accepted, that is why so many straight people are coming to our events, because they expecting the drag artists behind it. And so through accepting that or expecting anybody that's a female impersonator or you also doing lip-syncing. But where do you learn how to do make-up, how to dress, you learn from the people who are close to you, like your drag mother, your friend, or usually people from the older generation who has all that information for you, but now we have RuPaul's Drag Race on TV, we have Manila, we have all of this, that is starting to influence the way that people think.

The above interview was conducted with Larry, a MGWC pageant promotor. In this recorded interview, Larry draws attention to the reinvention of drag as it is locally associated with the *moffie-drag* culture, and juxtaposing this with Americanised drag as personified in RPDR. In juxtaposing the two Larry describes the *moffie-drag* culture in a derogatory or negative way, in particular with the use of the term *moffie* with the word "dirty". Another stereotypical association he makes is with the *moffie* as hairdresser, and frames this within a negative context. Larry indicates that now "having gone the drag route now it has become more accepted, more straight people go to these events". This is of course untrue. As demonstrated in Chapter 4, the majority of those attending gay pageants are straight performing. But why is Larry making such a statement? Of course as a MGWC pageant promotor, having more of a global appeal means that they will draw audience members who are not the typical audience members (i.e. 'coloured' people). A wider audience will include those who do not reside in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. Selling drag as an art elevates this from a 'coloured' thing to a 'white' thing. According to Larry, the drag performed as similar to RPDR provides legitimation to dragging.

## 5.6 Conclusion

I demonstrated in this chapter that these are men who defy not only the limits of the body, but subvert conventional understandings of sex and gender. However, does their participation in beauty pageants embody the very ideals that maintain traditional gender hierarchies? The perpetuation of narrow representations of femininity is a fundamental critique of drag, as presented by Charlotte Coles (2007). Participation in gay beauty pageant competitions seems to project often narrow cultural expectations of what it means to be a woman that are constructed around hyper-feminine ideals. Idealised performances of femininity that reinforce traditional gender scripts are for example evident in Esther Newton's book titled: *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators of America* (1979). In "Mother Camp…", drag queens rigidly naturalise drag as merely the wearing of women's clothing by homosexual men (cited in Moore, 2013). Similarly, in gay beauty pageant competitions held in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town, the emphasis is on passing as female - the contestant who looks most like a woman wins the coveted pageant title. Here, the claim that dragging is intrinsically "gender transgressive" is questioned. Butler (1990) claims that drag by its very nature challenges stereotypes of gender and sexuality is, in contrast to the feminist position that drag performances primarily draw upon what Coles (2007) refers to as "surface aesthetics" instead of social narratives of family and reproduction. In this instance, drag is criticized within feminist frameworks, according to Coles (2007), because it sustains forms of femininity that primarily serve patriarchal interests.

With the advent of Americanised drag and the associated drag queen persona there is potential for dragging to be "gender transgressive". In the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town, dragging refers to passing as female as presented through that of the *moffie* figure. In this chapter, I demonstrated that there is tension between local understandings of *moffie-ness* and global understandings of dragging as it is performed in the drag queen persona made popular by RPDR. My interlocutors do not seem to ingest this drag queen persona unconsciously: They are questioning how this drag queen persona will challenge local understandings of *moffie-ness*. In many ways they are protective of the preservation of the *moffie* figure as it was invented in District Six (i.e. effeminate glamour). I argue that pageant contestants incorporate global understandings of drag into local understandings of *moffie-ness* that can result in new ways of performing gender.

Chapter 5 illuminated on the growing drag queen phenomenon that resulted from the incorporation of global understandings of drag and the commercialisation of the township gay beauty pageant industry. In this chapter, I showed that drag shows are temporal in its existence and produced as a form of art for a paying audience. Thus, the growing drag queen phenomenon has received social sanction because it is increasingly seen as a form of artistic expression and as part of the local entertainment industry. Hence, "taking the drag route", bringing drag to a larger paying audience located in commercial centres of entertainment outside the confines of that of the 'coloured' township increases the visibility of gender non-conforming men and contribute to the emergence of queer spaces in the public domain where the hegemony of heterosexuality is challenged.

Historically, however, according to Reid (2013) 'coloured' gay hairdressers have long been the most visible faces of homosexuality in the South African public domain. In fact, whilst the growing drag queen phenomenon challenges local understandings of *moffie-ness* that can result in new ways of performing gender, the *moffie* as hairdresser remains constant in preserving the notion of *moffie-ness* , since its invention in places such as District Six. In the following chapter I provide a description of the various modes of camp aesthetic employed by the *moffie* and theorise the hair salon as a creolised space where the gay hairdresser remains influential in the making and remaking of 'colouredness'.

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**CHAPTER 6: *KAY'S HAIR SALON* AS A CREOLISED SPACE**

**6.1 Introduction**

Hair plays a significant role in the doing and performance of self. In fact, hair more so for cisgender 'coloured' women than men, plays a significant role in the doing and performance of femininity. Of course hair representations are not fixed and change over time (even on a daily basis). There was much social value placed on hair when I was growing up. As a young 'coloured' woman I learnt that "good hair" was sleek, straightened hair and *kroeshare* (i.e. kinky, very thick hair) was looked upon negatively. Having "good hair" was also associated with respectability and considered "upper-class" in the township where I grew up. Hence hair representations are not value-free. In this chapter I present the figure of the *moffie* as hairdresser and as central to this beautification practice in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town.

I conceptualise the hair salon as a creolised space of everyday feminine practice where the *moffie* as hairdresser has remained a ubiquitous figure - particularly those who have established a hair salon in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. I define the hair salon as a creolised space because of its potential to bring together a diverse set of people (ideas, opinions) into one geographical space, where the gay hairdresser is seen as a cultural purveyor in the making and re-making of 'colouredness'. The hair salon serves as a space where residents of the township meet and exchange stories of township living. Similarly, the hair salon becomes a discursive space which allows for the gay and straight world to meet, according to communication studies scholar Bryant Alexander (2003), in which the confluence of 'black' hair care[38], for and by 'black' people, with small talk, establishes a context for cultural exchange. In this chapter I primarily make use of observations conducted at a gay owned hair salon, called *Kay's Hair Salon*. *Kay's Hair Salon* is a space where not only her gay 'sisters' meet each other for a chat, but where the pastor, the elderly, the gangster and the homeless, gather to catch up with gossip.

During the implementation of the Group Areas Act, those gay hairdressers who worked in hair salons in District Six established salons in the townships located on the Cape Flats. Residential homes often doubled up as a hair salon in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town, owing to inadequate financial resources and the challenge of procuring or leasing a separate building or plot, because *apartheid* laws denied ownership of property by those designated 'coloured' or

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[38]In this work, Alexander (2003) looks at the barber shop phenomenon in African American communities in the USA. Even though the hair salon and barbershop are two different spaces, similar social exchanges occur in these two spaces that contribute to the gay hairdresser/barber being seen as cultural purveyor.

http://etd.uwc.ac.za

'black'. These makeshift hair salons were often fitted complete with washbasin unit(s) and seating for prospective clients. In other instances, makeshift hair salons were established in garages of residential homes or bathrooms, where the hair salon was sectioned off from the rest of the living area. Often the front of the house was sectioned off and used as a hair salon and the other rooms remained living quarters. Because of the location of the gay owned hair salon in a 'coloured' township, a regular client base is established comprising of people who lived in the township.

Like the camp aesthetic of the drag performer, I found that the gay hairdresser is also known as camp and parodic in performing femininity (Robinson, Hall, & Hockey, 2009). From my observations at the hair salon, it is expected of Kay to play up certain characteristics such as quickness of snappy or witty remarks in addition to exaggerating femininity. I argue that such acceptable (Robinson, Hall & Hockey, 2009) parodic and camp performances, which gay hairdressers are known for, have contributed to the social acceptance of the figure of the *moffie* in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. Historically, this social acceptance of the figure of the *moffie* can be traced to legendary hairdressers who achieved fame in District Six during the 1950s and 1960s. In particular Kewpie was known as a legendary hairdresser in District Six.

## 6.2 *Moffie-ness* is more than just about being fashionable

My interlocutors reminisced about the glamour and the glitz that is often associated with Kewpie. On a rare occasion, however, a visitor to *Kay's Hair Salon* remembers Kewpie in an everyday role as opposed to the glamour and glitz on which the popular media focused. On this particular day, all the 'ladies', Kay's 'sister' friends and elderly women were gathered in the hair salon. They were visiting Kay and exchanging stories of who married whom and whose son is serving a jail term. Suddenly a car pulled up on the big *stoep* of the hair salon. The driver is in his mid-to-late forties, a tall 'coloured' man. Kay and everyone else present are charmed by the visitor, and they proceed to coo over him. Once all the greetings were made and brief histories exchanged (I gathered they have not seen each other for a while), the visitor started having a conversation with Kay about how the *moffie*s used to take care of him as a young boy. According to the visitor:

> The *moffies het ander dag vir my skool toe gevat, my hare gewas, geknip* [The *moffies* took me to school, comb, wash and cut my hair]. The gays of today just show off. This ex-brother in law of mine, blow dry his hair, puts make-up on and stand in the door

with his coffee. I ask him: Do you know one *moffie*? Give me the name of one *moffie*? You can't, do you know Kewpie?

In this statement the visitor to the hair salon compares "the gays of today" with the figure of the *moffie*. In his opinion, the figure of the *moffie* is considered with more admiration than "the gays of today". Firstly, he recalls that when he was a young boy, the *moffie*s took him to school, combed, washed and cut his hair. These constitute feminine roles and responsibilities - the taking care of children, washing and cutting of hair for example. I argue that femininity as practised through such feminine roles and responsibilities was repeated and became 'real' to the visitor. In this sense, gender becomes 'real' inasmuch as it is performed for both the observer and the actor. By contrast, men like his gay ex-brother in law, were not performing feminine tasks but just "show[ing] off". The visitor's ex-brother in law it seems is disengaged from the social presentation of femininity and only playing with the idea of femininity on the "surface" (i.e. putting on make-up and blowing his hair). His ex-brother in law is preoccupied with being fashionable which is part of the gay lifestyle. The visitor is disapproving of such behaviours.

Secondly, the visitor to the hair salon frames his memory of the *moffie* (represented here by Kewpie) in terms of the present, making reference to "the gays of today". He expresses admiration for the *moffie* and qualifies this in juxtaposition to that of "the gays of today". In this statement the visitor makes his disapproval clear. When the visitor leaves, Kay says: *Daai mense het baie respek vir moffie*s [Those people have a lot of respect for *moffies*]. The visitor in this instance is not disapproving of his ex-brother in law's same sex desires as such. I argue, as does Reid (2003), that the visitor draws on the belief that "homosexuality is just a fashion" (another common belief held by many South Africans to question the prevalence of same sex identifications in South African contexts).

With his reflection on the past, at the same time juxtaposing it with the present, the visitor's disapproval might to some extent reveal an ambiguity towards gay lifestyles. In this instance, not disapproval towards *moffie-ness*, but to the lifestyle offered in the present through the embodiment which is that of "the gays of today". With the use of the term gay in this instance, the visitor makes a distinction between local understandings of *moffie-ness* and the almost 'foreign' and 'imported' idea of *gay-ness*. Tension is created between *moffie-ness* (embedded in local understandings) and the emergence of a gay identity, as presented by his ex-brother in law which seems to be socially unacceptable to the visitor in comparison to that of the *moffie*.

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As demonstrated in the previous chapters, being fashionable is an important element employed by the figure of the *moffie* to perform the feminine. In the above field note I show that participation in everyday tasks, in particular with regards to performing feminine roles and responsibilities, are equally important tools used by gender non-conforming men to facilitate social acceptance.

## 6.3 The politics of hair

The gay hairdresser is seen as a seasoned expert in creating, producing and performing feminine styles, and being cultural purveyors in the making and re-making of 'colouredness' in Cape Town. In the first instance, the gay hairdresser is a cultural purveyor of 'colouredness', at a time when the social value placed on hair was related not only to race performances but also to notions of respectability and class. Secondly, hairdressing and texturing remain key beautification practices in the making of womanhood amongst young 'coloured' women (Erasmus, 2001). In the *apartheid* system of legislated segregation, skin colour and hair texture was most often employed to differentiate between designated racial categories. To this end, distinctions based on skin colour and hair texture were especially made between those designated as 'coloured' and those classified as 'white'. With regards to hair, being 'coloured' meant between being either sleek, or kinky and coarse haired (Erasmus, 2001).

Jenna-Lee Marco (2012), in exploring identity and notions of beauty amongst 'black' South African women, maintains that the popular perception of "good hair" is hair that is closest to what looks like 'white' people's hair. This is hair that commonly fits the criteria of being "long, straight, silky, manageable, healthy and shiny" (Marco, 2012: p.175). "Bad hair" is described with criteria that juxtapose perceived "good hair" (Marco, 2012). It is described as hair that is "short, matted, kinky, woolly, coarse, brittle and nappy" (p.175). Kinky hair, I learnt as a young woman, had to be "straightened out". I had naturally curly hair that through the years of straightening is now difficult to curl. When I was growing up I disliked my curly hair. One of the adages often used by my mother when I did not conform to the notion of "good hair" was the following: *'n Vrou se hare is haar kroon* [A woman's hair is her crown and glory].

Hence hair and texturing, as indicated by Erasmus (2001), remain key beautification practices amongst 'coloured' women. This was corroborated by a statement made by Piper, documented in an interview conducted by the District Six museum archivists:

> Most people wanted sleek hair, in fact with the people with a little wavy hair, or kinky hair, very thick hair you used to iron it out first before you curl it. You know it was

terribly fashionable. It was the in thing at the time. 'Coloured' people as long as their hair is straight – that was important.

In this statement Piper highlights that 'coloured' people placed great social value on sleek, straight hair, which was associated with being fashionable. The racial politics connected to hair at that time however also informed notions of sleek, straight hair being more fashionable than wavy or kinky hair. Thus kinky hair, according to Piper in this interview, has to be "ironed out". Exchange student Carol Antunez (2013) found in her exploratory study focusing on the political significance of hair amongst 'coloured' and 'black' women in Cape Town, that hair representations are one of the most deeply significant forms of beauty performance, especially for women. In this instance, hair representations are deeply connected to race, class and gender performances. Hence, as argued by UK based researcher Kobena Mercer (2000), part of our everyday performances, the ways we shape and style hair might be seen as both individual expressions of the self and as embodiment of society's norms, conventions and expectations.

Here, the debate around "natural hair" vs. "chemically straightened" and synthetic hair", and the values attached to such hair representations, becomes important. Although the standard representations of beauty performances through hair is somewhat more flexible, according to Barrett, Thomas, and Hocevar (1995) there is still the underlying standard of beauty that is fundamentally European. Kobena Mercer (2000) for example explores hair representations within the 1960s slogan: "Black is beautiful". It implies that hairstyles that look 'natural', such as the afro or dreadlocks, are the more authentically black hairstyles and thus more ideologically 'right-on'. Similar to Kobena Mercer (2000), Stacia Brown (2015) stipulates that 'natural' hair is a signifier. The afro, for example, has a long political history. Stacia Brown (2015), in exploring the politics of hair, stipulates that for the women and men who popularised the afro during and following the civil rights movement, the style was a collective expression of culture, history and genetics. On the other hand, 'natural' hair is also looked at negatively, as indicated by Erasmus (2001) above. In fact, a discussion on 'black' and 'coloured' women's' hair carries a racial undertone, so such a discussion cannot be separated from race, culture and politics (Antunez, 2013 cited in Marco, 2012). In this context, the 'coloured' gay hairdresser is well placed to conform to or resist the politics associated with hair.

The politics associated with hair, in particular as it relates to performances of 'colouredness' (as key beautification practice for 'coloured' women), becomes particularly important in a context where the 'coloured' gay hairdresser is seen as having a 'natural' inclination for

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hairdressing. This makes the gay hairdresser an essential purveyor of notions of identity as expressed through hair.

## 6.4 A 'natural' flair for hair

Popular representations of the figure of the *moffie*, as evidenced in archival documentation (i.e. historical newspaper clippings and documentaries), show *moffie-ness* is intrinsically connected to a 'natural' affinity for various aspects of fashion, creativity and artistic performances, such as dance. Similarly, Piper Laurie referred to her abilities as a hairdresser as having a 'natural' flair for hair. This 'natural' flair for hair that gays are purported to have, is corroborated by Mogamat and Igshaan (see Photos 22 & 23).



Photo 22. Mogamat styling a client's hair
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

Photo 23. Igshaan blow-drying a client's hair
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

Mogamat and Igshaan learnt the art of hairdressing in District Six. Mogamat has an established makeshift hair salon in the bathroom of his flat. When he had a client, I heard him say: "Your hair is your crown, you have to take care of it" (this is reminiscent of what my mother often reminded me). This demonstrates the social value assigned to hair and indeed the social implications thereof. Mogamat is also not reluctant to declare that he is not what he calls a *tiekie* (translated from Afrikaans to English, refers to *small time*) hairdresser. In Mogamat's own words:

> I challenge any other hairdresser, to do hair that I do, I am good. I can say that I am good, because I have people still coming to me for their hair, for 50 years old, their children's children. They all come to me for their hair, because if I was not a good hairdresser, they would not have come to me.

In this declaration made by Mogamat it appears that there is competition between hairdressers as to their particular set of skills. Of course there is competition amongst 'coloured' gay hairdressers, because there is a strong marketplace created, with hair being seen as a key beautification practice amongst 'coloured' women. This is evident in Mogamat's announcement that he can challenge any hairdresser. Such competition is to be expected in a

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world where hairdressing is considered a niche market for gender non-conforming men. In this declaration he provides evidence in the form of generations of families having their hair styled by him. Mogamat has a loyal client base. They travel from the city centre or other townships such as Mitchells Plain to have him style their hair. In this sense, he has obtained celebrity status because of his hairdressing skills. Mogamat agrees that hairdressing is a niche market for gays because "people ran to the hair salons, because back then you did not really find ladies that time that did hair, as well as the hair salons (i.e. gays)". In his words, Mogamat believes that gay hairdressers have:

> That flair, the gays had that flair, in other words they were better than women that time.

That flair that Mogamat refers to which "the gays" are purported to have is most evident in fashion and stylization. In his statement that "in other words they were better than women that time" is revealing. He makes a comparison, between "the gays" and women because hairdressing is understood as feminine craftsmanship. Mogamat implies that "the gays" were born with such a talent for hairdressing, women however were not. Hence he qualifies that gays were better at hairdressing than women in having a 'natural' talent for hairdressing.

In this statement having a 'natural' flair for hair is extended from the dominant narrative of gays having a 'natural' talent for fashion and style. For instance, Mogamat made the following statement in reference to the assumed 'natural' sense of fashion that gays are purported to have:

> Man when you gay, or when you have got the flair inside of you like any gay has a flair for designing. Any gay has the flair to do sewing. Any gay has the flair to bake. Because people look up to gay people, because gay people have got lots of talent, and nobody can take the flair and the talent away from them because everything is inside of them. You know what I mean?

The 'natural' flair for "designing" that Mogamat believes gender non-conforming men have, emerged as a recurring theme. This statement made by Mogamat was in response to a conversation that we had where I enquired about his creative sensibilities. In addition to hairdressing, Mogamat also designs costume jewellery for bridal parties. He explained that "having a creative talent" comes 'natural' to gays. With reference to these 'natural' talents that gays are purported to have, Reid (2007) refers to gay hair salons in small-town South Africa, where he found that gay lifestyles are seen as fashion in themselves.

**6.5 The 'coloured' gay hairdresser**

I found that the gay hairdresser in the 'coloured' township finds social acceptance in the engagement of the mundaneness of everyday life in the suburbs or townships of Cape Town. I demonstrate this in observations made at *Kay's Hair Salon*.

Popular historical documentation suggests that Kewpie established the first gay owned hair salon in a 'coloured' township of Cape Town. Although unable to establish if there is any truth to this, I remained curious to trace the existence of the hair salon. The documentary of Kewpie's life provided some guidance as to the possible location of the hair salon. The location of the hair salon was confirmed by one of my colleagues who remembered that in this particular suburb of Kensington, not more than 10kms from the city of Cape Town, there was a hair salon called "Eugene's" that was a popular hangout spot for *moffie*s.

A couple of days after obtaining this information, I make my way to the hair salon. The hair salon is located on a busy four way stop. I immediately recognise the big wooden doors that Kewpie swings open in the documentary of his life. Instead of "Eugene's", the name of the hair salon now reflects that of the current owner: *Kay's Hair Salon.* The hair salon has a huge *stoep* which also doubles as a parking space for perhaps two small vehicles. As I drive up onto the *stoep*, a masculine figure, with bleached blonde hair, dressed in an off-cut shirt, jeans and wearing sandals, greets me. I assume that this is the current owner, Kay. This was my first encounter with Kay, who I later learnt has a very flamboyant personality. Kay has been living in this suburb of Cape Town for the last 30 years, and has been the owner of this hair salon for about 12 years.

Although we met for the first time today, Kay is very friendly, and welcomes me with open arms into the hair salon. It is a hot summer's day in Cape Town and I am offered some water. There is no one else in the hair salon besides myself and Kay. Kay exits through a curtain, which separates the hair salon from the living quarters, and returns with a champagne glass of cold water. Upon taking a seat, I explain to Kay what my research is about and why I am at this specific hair salon today. Kay confirms that years back the hair salon was known as "Eugene's" after Kewpie's 'real' name, Eugene Fritz; now it's called *Kay's Hair Salon*. It appears as if Kay is somewhat reluctant to speak about Kewpie. Kay indicates that Fridays and Saturdays are the busiest days in the hair salon, because in addition to the clients, all the 'girls' and 'ladies' will also be at the hair salon.

Kay dressed in feminine clothing, always jeans with a female cut, a blouse and sandals. In her younger years, she related to me she dressed more *femme*, for instance in a dress and with high heels. Nevertheless, her performance of femininity is still a highly visible one. Her bleached blonde hair does not only illustrate her extravagant mode of self-styling, but contributes to her visibility in the suburb where she has been living for the last 30 years. Although she sees herself as a 'lady', she informs me that she never had any inclination for transforming her body to 'match' her social gender performance. Kay is straightforward and speaks with some cheek. She has a tough exterior and brings this out when the occasion requires it.

Kay, eager to tell me a little bit more about herself when we first met, informed me that starting out in the hairdressing business was very challenging. At this moment, a friend of hers, Charlene comes into the hair salon. Charlene, as many of the other visitors to the hair salon I later learnt, is not there to style her hair; she is at the hair salon to make small talk with Kay. Or at least I think she is curious to find out who I am. Kay makes a formal introduction to Charlene. Charlene immediately responds with:

> We have been friends for over 30 years, everybody knows Kay, she helps everybody, at this hair salon, and it is not only about doing hair, at the hair salon is also where people are counselled.

Kay continues where she had left off, before Charlene entered the hair salon: "There have been very tough times". When Kay was younger, she had a serious drug problem, where she almost lost everything, but she managed to always get up again and start all over. Although she lives in small living quarters at the back of the hair salon, she also rents out a house which she owns. Whilst Kay is telling her story to me, people walk pass the hair salon and wave at her, and she makes much effort to acknowledge them. As indicated by Charlene, Kay does seem to know everybody.
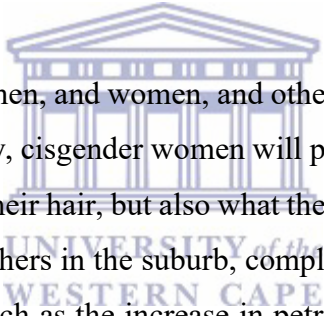
### 6.6 Hanging out at *Kay's Hair Salon*

The below field note provides a brief description of the overall aesthetics of *Kay's Hair Salon*:

> When Kay is at the hair salon, she locks the security gate and leave the two wooden doors standing wide open. Clients knock on the open standing wooden doors and Kay with keys always on her person will unlock the security gate.  As one enters the hair salon there is a small coffee table dressed with outdated magazines and a plastic plant.

Sometimes the plastic plant is replaced with colourful fake flowers. A huge mirror spans the width of the hair salon. Next to the mirror is a poster of a cisgender woman modelling the latest trend in hair fashion? Situated below the huge mirror is a counter where Kay keeps her brushes, combs, and hairstyling electronic equipment and Revlon hair products. Located in front of the mirror are two hairdressing chairs, which Kay sometimes playfully uses, pressing it up and down to the amusement of her clients. To the right of the mirror there is a TV set mounted onto the wall. However, I have never seen it switched on. A washbasin, is situated where the towels and hair curlers are stored. On the same side of the wall where the washbasin is situated is also a public telephone; however, I have not seen many people making use of this service. On both sides of the wooden doors are couches where clients sit and wait their turn. The hair salon even though modest in its design is furnished with all the basic equipment needed for hairstyling.

Elderly women, the pastor, adult men, and women, and other 'sisters' or 'ladies', are always in and out of the hair salon. Primarily, cisgender women will pop in to make small talk with Kay, asking her advice not only about their hair, but also what they should be wearing to a particular social event. They gossip about others in the suburb, complain about their male partners, they talk about everyday challenges such as the increase in petrol price, and increasing electricity rates.

Kay's clients consist mostly of elderly women, so the hair salon will be especially busy on pension pay out day (which is the 15th of every month). At other times, Kay will drive out into the suburb to style the hair of pensioners at their homes, because they are physically too weak to travel to the hair salon.

The hair salon is conveniently situated at a four way stop and about ten minutes' drive from the Main Road that takes one to the city centre. When it is a warm day and there are no clients at the salon, Kay and I stand outside on the big *stoep*. It is a busy four way stop as most of the residents of the suburb either take the bus or the taxi at this four way stop. Taxis and buses passed by, most hooting and waving deliriously at Kay. Kay always responds with an equally enthusiastic wave and a witty comment. To this they responded with a double hoot and wave as they drive on. It seems that, in addition to the hairdressing offered by Kay, it is also important for her to remain engaged with the residents of the suburb. Often when Kay is busy styling

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someone's hair, she stops briefly to chat with someone who has popped their head in, or Kay greets someone who is passing the hair salon on their way to town. When we drive to the local supermarket Kay flirts with men who are driving by, or with the cashier at the counter, or men that walk past the hair salon. None of these men seemed uneasy. Most reciprocated with a smile. When I accompanied Kay to the local supermarket to purchase spices for the *akni/akhni* that she will make and dispense to her neighbours and friends, we stopped every five minutes on our way to the supermarket, because friends or neighbours were eager to share any news or gossip.

During the course of the day when there are no clients, Kay and I sat in her room that is located at the back of the hair salon. The room serves as a bedroom, kitchen and lounge area. A small toilet is located outside the house for use by the clients who visit the hair salon, and for personal use by Kay. Because of the small living quarters, the only place to sit is on Kay's bed. Sometimes she will wash the dishes, other times we watched the Bold and the Beautiful, an international soap opera, which has become popular in South African households, together, and complain how the primary male characters in the soap opera are similar to men in 'real' life. Other times we chatted about issues of the day or how I should learn how to cook, since these are important things that a woman should know, which according to her viewpoint I am failing at. Kay was taught while very young how to cook and clean by a woman down the street where she lived. She is appalled by the fact that I cannot cook. Kay has taken it upon herself to teach me the ways of being a woman, which includes being able to cook.

The hair salon theorised as creolised space does not only allow for the performance of gay lifestyles but also for the expression of creativity in particular with regards to hairstyling. In the space of the hair salon, the gay hairdresser is able to experiment with hairstyling in collaboration with her clients. In this way, the space of the hair salon has the potential to be transgressive. In the first instance, the hair salon is transgressive because it allows for the exchange of ideas between the gay and the straight world. Secondly, in the hair salon where creative ideas are exchanged, the gay hairdresser is socially sanctioned as having a 'natural' talent for hairstyling hence they are socially accepted as an expert in this beautification practice. Thus with gay hairdressers being celebrated for having a 'natural' talent for hairstyling, 'coloured' cisgender women (more so than men) flock to the gay owned hair salon.

Gay hairdressers according to Reid (2007) is well placed to do hairdressing as seasoned experts in creating, producing and performing feminine styles. Moreover Reid (2007) articulates that

feminine performing gay men are acutely aware of the repeated performances that are required to successfully present themselves as convincing women (Reid, 2007). As one of my interlocutors reiterated gender is hard to perform, in fact Reid (2007) explains that for women their gender is allowed to be seen as 'natural' whereas gays occupy a liminal space. Thus in the space of the hair salon, in creating, producing and performing feminine styles, the gay hairdresser is not only involved in the body aesthetics of feminine self-styling but also with affirming heterosexuality as is evident in my aforementioned recollection of my informal chats with Kay.

## 6.7 Conclusion

Gay lifestyles, as presented in the work of Reid (2007 & 2013), focused on gay hairdressers in small-town South Africa, and reveals that this sense of fashion, expressed in hairdressing, contributes to the social acceptance of gays. Hairdressing as an expression of society's norms and value systems remains an important practice in performing gender, particularly as it is performed through femininity. The *moffie* as hairdresser is closely linked to fashion and stylization. In this sense, hair is political, and the *moffie* as hairdresser is integral to communicating the social values placed on hair.

As demonstrated in this chapter, the figure of the *moffie* as hairdresser has remained constant. There is continuity of the figure of the *moffie* as hairdresser, first presented in the popular media of the 1950s and 1960s and today, by Kay, Mogamat and Igshaan. The notion of creating a world of femininity and social acceptance in the hair salons of District Six was transferred to the local townships and suburbs of Cape Town to which 'coloured' people were forcibly relocated. In the hair salon, a space is created to unload the social pressures of the day, but also to provide a social hub of activity where everyone, regardless of class and social gender position meets socially to interact. Thus in many respects, the figure of the *moffie*, in its way of having been situated "in-between" worlds that have been invented as 'opposing', is best placed to act as commentator on the way we relate to each other. Similarly, the *moffie* as hairdresser embodies the ideals of a shared way of life.

I found in this chapter that inasmuch as there is emphasis placed on being *moffie*, and the social capital that comes with such performances (i.e. legendary status as obtained in gay beauty pageants or in the status that comes with *moffie* hairdresser), there is blurring of the imagined

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boundaries between the gay and straight world, in particular in the space of the hair salon as demonstrated in this chapter. In many respects, this is evidence of a world where such boundaries become blurred, indeed a world of creolisation where the pastor, the elderly, the camp and parodic hairdresser socialize in the liminal space of the hair salon; thus inventing new ways of performing community.

In other ways, however, I have found that there is also emphasis placed on the importance of expressing and preserving the "gay identity" as unique and perhaps as separate from heteronormative society. This is demonstrated in the following chapter with the performance of a 'secret language' known as *moffietaal* used by gender non-conforming men in Cape Town. However, I argue in the following chapter that the use of this 'secret language' amongst gender non-conforming men is illustrative of the politics of inclusion and exclusion.

## CHAPTER 7: PERFORMING LANGUAGE

### 7.1 Introduction

> This Gayle talking about her Gucci bag, but her bag doesn't even have a pram. Shame.
> Translation: This (gay) guy talking about her hot boyfriend but he doesn't even have a car. Shame.

> *Die Gertie soek 'n cilla.*
> Translation: This woman is looking for a cigarette.

> *Kala die Fatima bag se danja.*
> Translation: Look at how the fat guy is dancing.

The above are illustrations of a 'language' known as *moffietaal* or Gayle. *Moffietaal*, similar to British Polari and *Gayspeak* that originated from New York and San Francisco, uses a large number of female names as synonyms for a variety of nouns, adjectives and verbs (Cage, 1999). These 'languages' are part of what is termed "lavender linguistics" a term that was coined by anthropologist William Leap (1996) to describe the study of language as it is used by LGBTI speakers (Kulick 2000, 2005). I found that inasmuch as fashion and stylization (i.e. gay beauty pageant competitions and hairdressing) are modes of self-styling embodied by the *moffie*, part of the performance of the *moffie* is the use of *moffietaal*. *Moffietaal* is an 'in-group' 'language' that was historically created as a secret way of communication and primarily used in the *moffie* - drag culture of Cape Town (Cage, 1999, 2003a, 2003b; Pieterse, 2013; Rudwick, 2010). Thus *moffietaal* is often used as a defining (and identifiable) characteristic in the performance of the *moffie*. As is evident in the above illustrations, the 'language' makes use of female names (i.e. Gayle, Fatima and Gertie) as synonyms for a variety of nouns, adjectives and verbs (Cage, 1999, 2003b; Van der Merwe, 2012). As such, "old guy" becomes "Olah bag", "nothing" becomes "Nancy", "penis", "Lana", "party" becomes "Patsy", *moffie* is "Mavis", "mad/a bit crazy" becomes "Milly", "a beautiful man; to be beautiful; beautiful" becomes "Beulah", "closeted gay man" becomes *dettol doosie*, "vindictive gay man" becomes *Adele adder* and a "gay man with questionable body odour" becomes *Romana rottencrotch* (McCormick, 2010). There are variations with regards to the meanings of some of the terms used, for example, "Patsy" also refers to "dance". New words, according to some of my interlocutors, have also been added, for

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example, "eat" becomes "honey", *Wandi* refers to "work". Thus the vocabulary of the 'language' is evolving. Some of the words which I overheard most often include the following: *Chlora* which is 'coloured', "Wendy" which is 'white' people and *Natta*, "Natalia", "Natalie" refers to 'black' people and "Natalie bag", refers to 'black' man. In this way, the 'language' of *moffietaal* appears to be an evolving and fluid invention.

Before fieldwork commenced, I cannot recall having known of a 'language' such as *moffietaal*. I remember an experience of *moffietaal* only in my early 20s. My first experience of Gayle was when a friend's mother wanted to know: "When will you get a new bag?" I frowned and responded: "Why do I need a new bag?" "What's wrong with this one?" pointing to my handbag. My friend and her mother laughed, I did not know that "bag" refers to "man/boy/guy" in *moffietaal*. Although I grew up in a 'coloured' township, where the use of *moffietaal* is common, I was not aware of the existence of a 'language' such as *moffietaal*. This perhaps was a result of my middle class upbringing, where the use of *moffietaal* was often frowned upon.

Similarly, part of the performance of the *moffie* is the use of language in a distinctive and unique way of expression. Such unique ways of using language complement the often exaggerated performance of femininity associated with the figure of the *moffie*. There is an expectation of the *moffie* to "put on an act", "be loud", or "make a quip". I have seen this most in my observations at *Kay's Hair Salon*. In her social interactions with clients at the hair salon, she makes use of words and sentences to cleverly point out things and emphasize certain issues. Part of Kay's service, in addition to hairdressing, is her provision of some form of verbal performance for her clients. Patrons popped in for a chat with Kay and exchange stories of crime, economic hardships, and gossip about others in the township.

In this chapter, I explore the use of *moffietaal* within a larger context of the reinvention of Afrikaans into a local dialect known as *kombuistaal* [kitchen language] or *Kaaps* [Cape Afrikaans]. *Kombuistaal* is a blend of Afrikaans and English with Dutch origins that originated from District Six and was transferred as a consequence of the Group Areas Act to the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. I argue that the use of *moffietaal* and *kombuistaal* is linked to notions of class and respectability. My aim in this chapter is to point to the ways in which language is performed and at the same time reinvented as a form of resistance to the dominant ways of performing language.

## 7.2 An overview of lavender linguistics

The term lavender linguistics derives from the long-term association of the colour lavender with gay and lesbian communities (Kulick, 2005). Lavender linguistics is an established discipline in the USA and Europe, according to Tracey Lee McCormick (2010), within linguistics and sociolinguistics, that is dedicated to language as it relates to sexuality. According to McCormick (2010), research within this field has largely focused on attempting to capture the unique 'language' used by gender non-conforming men, that has been called different things such as *Gayspeak*, *Queerspeak* and *Faglish*, in dictionary and discourse form. Ken Cage (1999) created a dictionary of Gayle in his pioneering work for his MA thesis in Applied Linguistics and Literary Theory titled: *An Investigation into the Form and Function of Language used by Gay Men in South Africa*. McCormick (2010) notes that the majority of this research has been based on analysing lexical items and formulating gay dictionaries, which are also known as the lavender lexicon (Cameron, 2005; Gowen & Brit, 2006; Hennessy, 1994; Max, 1988; McCormick, 2010; Munson & Babel, 2007; Reddy, 2002).

William Leap (1995) however postulates that: "There is more to lesbian and gay communication than coded words with special meanings, and more to lesbian and gay linguistic research than the compilation of dictionaries or the tracing of single word etymologies" (pp17-18). Furthermore, according to McCormick (2010) and Cameron and Kulick (2003a), research tends also to focus on the examination of the speech sounds of lavender languages, and how this varies grammatically from standard speech intonation, interactional and discursive patterns, measuring frequencies, turn taking and the co-construction of topics and narratives.

Paul-Francis Tremlett (2006), who conducted a study on the use of language amongst those men who take part in gay beauty pageants in the Philippines, indicates that much of the research on gay and lesbian language consists of lists of in-group terms. According to McCormick (2010), in the first instance the majority of researchers are only interested in how language indexes a gay identity, and how the use of a 'secret language' is illustrative of the social cohesion between gender non-conforming men. Secondly, there is a lack of research into a specifically lesbian language and thirdly, most researchers in linguistics conclude that there are no noticeable differences between the ways in which same sex men and women use language compared to that of those who identify as straight (McCormick, 2010). This was also supported by William Leap (1995) in his book, titled: *Beyond the Lavender Lexicon* where he calls for a

move "beyond" this kind of work. These points of critique led Kulick (2000, p.247) to conclude that "there is no such thing as gay or lesbian language".

For Kulick (2000) to say that some self-identified gay men and lesbians may sometimes use language in certain ways in certain contexts, is not the same thing as saying that there is a gay or lesbian language. Language, claims Kulick (2000), is used by individuals who self-identify as gay and lesbians, including vocabulary and the use of grammatically and semantically feminine forms to refer to other men. For these reasons, McCormick (2010) concludes that gay language research has been contested by post-structural language theorists, who argue that the reason it has had no impact is because it constructs gay as a stable category. Benedicto (2008), Gevisser and Cameron (1995), Valentine (1999) and Wong (2005) have critiqued research into gay language as being based on essentialist notions of identity, where identity is reduced to sexuality (cited in McCormick, 2010). Here, drawing on post structural theories of language and gender, Cameron and Kulick (2003a) see Judith Butler's (1990) writings as crucial:

> Butler's call is to move away from the temptation to ground linguistic practices in particular identity categories, and to open up our analysis to exploring (rather than denying or lamenting) the ways that linguistic practices are inherently available to anyone to use for a wide variety of purposes, and to a wide variety of social effects.

Because of the foundation of gay language being based on essentialist notions of identity, Kulick (2000) argues that research on gay and lesbian language has had virtually no impact whatsoever on any branch of sociolinguistics or linguistic anthropology. In conclusion, making use of an argument postulated by author Rosemary Hennessy (1994) and McCormick (2010) calls for reformulating identity as a version of performance, as drag, masquerade or signifying play. This is reminiscent of Judith Butler's (1988) work on gender as performative, where she postulates that:

> Because there is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender creates the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all (Butler, 1988).

**7.3 From *moffietaal* to Gayle**

Historically *moffietaal* was constituted as a 'secret language' used amongst gender non-conforming men for their own protection. Stephanie Rudwick (2010) postulates the following argument:

> That while the secrecy function for the protection from sexual discrimination has been noted repeatedly in reference to gay codes, it is important to remember that they are also tools which unite and empower the identities of their speakers.

During fieldwork, it was not easy to catch someone using Gayle. Studying a 'language' that is used spontaneously made investigation thereof challenging. In addition, Gayle is not a 'language' as such, but a list of terms usually centred on female names strung together, or in most instances one term or word is used - mainly to emphasize something. Gayle was mostly used by my interlocutors during social events at gay clubs and pageants, but also in everyday situations, especially when gossiping.

Hence I found that the use of the 'language' is also a means of socialising, and is often used to exaggerate performances of gender. Nanda (2007); O'Flaherty (1982); Schacht (2002) in a study in the UK, made similar findings around the use of Polari spoken amongst gender non-conforming men. Although, the use of *moffietaal* is an integral part of the performance of femininity amongst gender non-conforming men in the 'coloured' townships and suburbs of Cape Town, *moffietaal* can no longer be regarded as a 'secret language'. Indeed, *moffietaal* has permeated everyday language use in Cape Town. Thus, in the *moffietaal* of the 1950s, the word used for "a chat" was Gayle, and it is from this word that the name Gayle has evolved (Gevisser, 1995).

The *moffietaal* which originated amongst gender non-conforming men in the 'coloured' suburbs and townships of Cape Town was reinvented through a number of socio-historical forces. According to Ken Cage (1999, 2003a, 2003b), before the implementation of the Group Areas Act of 1950, there was a fair amount of social interaction in the Western Cape between 'coloured' and 'white' gender non-conforming men. As a result Afrikaans speaking 'white' gender non-conforming men picked up Gayle from their coloured 'sisters' and started using it themselves (Cage, 1999, 2003a, 2003b). South African Airways (SAA) flight stewards or *koffie-moffies* (translation from Afrikaans to English is coffee-*moffies*) is a group that can be singled out as particularly instrumental in the spread of Gayle amongst 'white' gay men. (Cage,

1999, 2003a, 2003b). As SAA staff mixed with non-airline gender non-conforming men, Gayle spread into mainstream gay speech patterns (Cage, 1999). A large number of gender non-conforming men were employed as flight attendants[39], according to Cage (1999), who provides a brief description of the spread of Gayle as demonstrated by Gerrit Olivier (1995):

> The dissemination of Gayle amongst flight personnel is likely to have taken place in the infamous Rostering Office. It was situated at Jan Smuts Airport in Johannesburg. Flight stewards who were on duty, but had not been allocated flights, were scheduled to be on stand-by in the Rostering Office for up to six hours, in case a flight steward did not turn up for duty. In this eventuality, a standby steward would be substituted for the no-show (Cage, 1999). The hours on standby were excruciatingly boring, and so the stewards on standby amused themselves in time-honoured gay tradition, by telling jokes and gossiping to pass the time. In these hours of gay gossip, Gayle grew rapidly, as new words were coined to entertain and older ones entrenched or re-introduced into the language use of the *koffie-moffies*. The original *moffietaal* invented by 'coloured' gay men underwent a huge growth as words and expressions were introduced in feats of entertaining verbal creativity. As Jan Smuts Airport was the home base of SAA, gay flight personnel tended to live in Johannesburg. They set up homes in these areas, with many of them opting for the convenience of flats in Hillbrow, where they could live their gay lives. The favourite haunts of off-duty flight stewards were the gay bars and clubs of the city, where SAA staff mixed with non-airline gays, and Gayle spread into mainstream gay speech patterns. An interesting characteristic of this shift in the use of the users of Gayle was that for the first time Gayle became bilingual, and words and expressions could be used with ease in either English or Afrikaans.

According to Morrish, Morrish, and Sauntson (2007) a shared way of performing language is to create the idea of a single, cohesive identity that resists linguistic hegemony and is couched within a heteronormative framework. This can be seen as a speech community where speakers may resist culturally dominant languages and oppose cultural authority by maintaining their own varieties of speech (Morrish et al., 2007). The idea of a speech community is a community that shares linguistic traits whose boundaries tend to coincide with other social groups (Morrish et al., 2007). According to Cameron & Kulick (2003b), membership of speech communities is

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[39]According to Ken Cage (1999) gays were attracted to a lifestyle which enabled them to travel to exotic locations and escape the restrictions which they experienced at home under the beady eyes of their families.

often assumed, based on stereotypes about the community as defined by non-linguistic factors. In this instance language is performed in a unique way that identifies others who belong to this group.

Although the figure of the *moffie* is strongly associated with the use of Gayle, Gerrit Olivier (1995) warns that, although Gayle was historically invented as an 'in-group' 'language', one should not fall into the trap of suggesting that gender non-conforming men are a clearly identifiable and homogenous group in society. Nevertheless, the use of an 'in-group' 'language' means that others are excluded who are not familiar with the 'language'. This in turn means that the use of the 'language' by those who are familiar with it, those who make use of the 'language', are then easily identifiable. Implicitly the use of a 'language' such as Gayle that excludes others, and makes others identifiable as members of the same group, speaks to questions of belonging.

### 7.4 *Moffietaal* – "a language of our own"

*Moffietaal* originated in the 'coloured' drag culture of the Western Cape as a form of slang amongst Afrikaans-speakers, which over time grew into a stylect used by gay English and Afrikaans-speakers across South Africa (Cage, 2003). A stylect, combines "the two meanings of 'style' – linguistic and extra-linguistic" (p.8) according to Kathryn Luyt (2014) in her thesis focusing on the use of Gayle in Cape Town. Murray and Roscoe (1998) add that Gayle "is a lexicon (lect) inseparable from a discursive practice (style) which results in the construction of a relatively stable social identity and a relatively stable linguistic identity" (p.199). According to Banet-Weiser (1999), Gayle can be considered a lavender lexicon as it functions less like a language and more like a set of "coded" words with assigned meanings (Luyt, 2014). Polari, according to McCullagh (2011); and Roscoe and Murray (1997), can be categorised as a type of lexicon (*Gayspeak* as well) – a jargon used by a number of social groups to supplement English, not a constructed language, but a secret vocabulary that uses the grammar and syntax of English as well as most of its core vocabulary. According to Ken Cage (1999), Gayle is basically a set of alternative words, with no effect on the grammar, syntax, morphology or phonology of English.

British Polari, according to O'Flaherty (1982), was employed as a 'secret language' amongst men with same sex desires in the UK, and was made popular by a radio comedy based on two queer characters. According to Nanda (2007); O'Flaherty (1982), soon after the radio

programme ended, the 'language' lost its appeal and is no longer in much use by gender non-conforming men in the UK. Polari, according to Taylor (2007), originates in the platitudes of thieves and travelling tradesmen and was used to conceal criminal activity. Later on it came to be used by gay men as a 'secret language'. Anthropologist Tom Boellstorff (2004 a, b), in his work in Indonesia with gay men, uncovered a 'gay language' called "Bahasa gay", which involves the use of derivational processes, which include unique suffixes and word substitutions and practicalities oriented towards community rather than 'secrecy'.

More recently investigations into a 'black' equivalent of Gayle, *isiNgqumo,* was documented by McLean and Ngcobo (1995) and Stephanie Rudwick (2010). Rudwick (2010) acknowledges that the usage of *IsiNgqumo* is not as widespread as Gayle. Rudwick (2010, 2011); Rudwick and Ntuli (2008) postulate that *isiNgqumo* is a linguistically identifiable gay Nguni variety, which is an African equivalent to the English-based Gayle, as is argued in earlier work by Ken Cage (2003). Of note is that *isiNgqumo,* as an ancient linguistic isiZulu variety, can be compared to speaking Shakespearian English in Britain today and this is where the language-culture link has its roots (Rudwick, 2010, 2011). The fact that most lexical items in *isiNgqumo* are derive from ancient linguistic isiZulu is culturally meaningful (Rudwick 2010). According to Stephanie Rudwick (2010) it is a medium through which gay Zulu men perform 'Zuluness'. Furthermore, according to Rudwick (2010), the use of *isiNgqumo* is also an attempt by gay Zulu men to convince heterosexual Zulu people of the rightfulness of their identity and lifestyle within Zulu tradition. In this sense, according to Rudwick (2010), speaking *isiNgqumo* not only gives expression to one's gay identity but is also, by virtue of its culturally rooted linguistic vocabulary, a proclamation of 'Zuluness'. Hence language, in this instance isiZulu, is inextricably linked to a Zulu identity and points to notions of belonging.

Part of the resistance to dominant ways of performing language is the use of *moffietaal* by gender non-conforming men, particularly with the feminisation technique used in *moffietaal* that is unlike other lavender languages. In a chat with Jerome, one of Kay's friends, he described the feminisation technique used in *moffietaal* in the following manner:

> Gayle it is I suppose a language like any other; you know what I mean? Though it is not that hard at all to understand, as the terms are usually named after women, or women's accessories.

Different reasons are given for this feminisation in *moffietaal*, with some viewing it as serving to maintain group cohesion and identity (Cage, 1999). William Leap (1995), on the other hand, explains that the use of *moffietaal* reflects the gay experience, possibly as an attempt to define the gay man's unique gender identity through a reworking of female imagery, rather than recasting images in a heterosexual patriarchal paradigm. Thus I propose that the feminisation technique used in *moffietaal* means that language is performed differently by those who practice language within the discursive limits set by heteronormativity. Thus the use of *moffietaal* challenges and rejects heteronormativity and the power structures of hegemonic masculinity. In this instance, in order to maintain group cohesion, belonging to and identity amongst *moffies* - an authentic expression of identity through shared practices, symbols and rituals of a community - is important (Cameron & Kulick, 2003, preface).

Therefore, in order to authentically perform the feminine according to Craig, who becomes Evanka Perez when in drag:

> Gayle it is just something as you go on, that you have to learn.

Therefore, using Gayle signifies being part of *moffie*, and having the means to socially interact with other members of this group. For instance, Evanka expressed the following:

> Because it is almost like a foreign language, you have the opportunity to they call it
> *fidna*, to gossip talk about the people next to you, which is the fun part without them
> knowing. We start saying but the guy is hot, but we do not want to make it that obvious
> because the guy is straight. A lot of straight people by the way, experience, explore, but
> anyway … and then we go out and you would want to say something, when the other
> person is present, but you do not want the other person to understand.

Evanka made a reference to Gayle as a "foreign language". By implication the use of Gayle excludes others who are not familiar with the 'language' from taking part in "gossip talk". In this instance, Evanka specifically makes reference to a straight-identified man who might not necessarily be familiar with Gayle. In essence, claiming *moffietaal* as a "language of [their] own" excludes those who identify as straight. Here Evanka demonstrates that the use of *moffietaal* contributes to social cohesion amongst gender non-conforming men. As demonstrated in the above statement made by Evanka, in order to take part in socialising activities, such as "gossip talk", one has to learn how to Gayle.

**7.4.1 Notions of class and respectability associated with *moffietaal* and *Kaaps***

According to McCormick (1989), *kombuistaal* shares much of the elements of standard Afrikaans syntax, but draws heavily on English for vocabulary, and is less commonly known as Cape vernacular or *Kaaps* [Cape Afrikaans]. The use of *Kaaps* or *kombuistaal* is not value-free and is often associated with notions of lower class and lack of respectability. While growing up in a 'coloured' township, I was socialised to use only *Kaaps* with my friends and family members. Similarly, at school we were made aware by our teachers that *Kaaps* is tainted Afrikaans and hence considered to be improper use of the language. Early on I realised, as did most of us at my school, that the use of *Kaaps* was permissible in particular contexts and frowned upon in others. Similarly, during fieldwork I found that *moffietaal* is often used selectively and in particular contexts. Hence there is deliberate avoidance of using *moffietaal* in particular contexts by some of my interlocutors.

In common with most other lavender languages, as demonstrated in the previous section, *moffietaal* is characterised by feminisation and exaggerated (camp) verbal performances through the use of speech and language (i.e. distinctive speech patterns). Gayle is an element of camp, according to Ken Cage (1999). The stereotype often associated with the figure of the *moffie*, according to some of my interlocutors, is that *moffies* are "loud" and "always performing". In the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town, amongst gender non-conforming men, my interlocutors have a different conceptualisation of performance to what is fundamental to the performance of gender for Judith Butler (1990). Gender performance, as understood by Butler (1990), is not "play-acting", but through repetitive acting, indeed "becoming". British anthropologist Frederic George Bailey (1996) suggests that the noun performance carries with it the notion of publicity, something exhibited, and something that is staged. Amanda Swarr (2004) in her work found that in township gay vernacular, performance has another meaning:

> To perform is to try to gain attention, to act outrageously, to cause a scene. For example, a *moffie* who gets drunk and acts flamboyantly in a public place may be accused of "performing," the essence of which is drama. When a drag queen "performs" in this sense, the streets are her stage (p.86)

Such associations of verbal performances are often used to stereotype gender non-conforming men into a particular set of behaviours. For example, the notion of "sounding gay" is explored

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by Cameron and Kulick (2003a), Gowen and Britt (2006) and Munson and Babel (2007), amongst others. Although *moffietaal* shares some similarities of form with other lavender languages, for the purpose of this chapter, I frame the use of *moffietaal* within the context of the local vernacular (known as *kombuistaal* or *Kaaps*) used primarily by those living in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. In the following discussion I briefly provide a description of the origins of the local vernacular to contextualise the use of *moffietaal*.

Afrikaans is the primary language of communication that is used in the 'coloured' townships and suburbs of Cape Town. According to Kees Van der Waal (2012), Afrikaans was shaped by the structural violence of the colonial past where a new creolised language emerged in the complex mix of people from diverse origins at the Cape: masters from Holland, slaves from Indonesia, herders from the Cape, and many others. The late Achmat Davids (1990, 2011), organiser of the Boorhaanol Islam Movement, argues that from its earliest beginnings, Afrikaans has always been racialized because of its creole origins. In this instance, I am concerned with what Davids (1990) calls Cape Afrikaans, the local vernacular spoken in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. The origins of Afrikaans according to Kay McCormick (1988) were not only influenced by our colonial past, but born out of places such as District Six. McCormick (1988), for example, claims that the Afrikaans spoken in District Six served as a marker of neighbourhood and solidarity. The Afrikaans spoken in District Six was during the time of McCormick's (1989) research known as *kombuistaal*.

The use of *kombuistaal* as a marker of neighbourhood meant that those not familiar with the language were automatically excluded, hence in many respects the local vernacular was also constructed in opposition to the ideologies forced upon those designated as 'coloured' through legitimised segregation (McCormick, 1989). Like McCormick's (1993), this discussion is a descriptive one, of a speech community's history, language, attitudes and use of language in different domains. It is not a discussion on the shifts in language use. According to Bickford-Smith (1990), by the end of the 19th century, District Six was arguably one of the most cosmopolitan areas in the Cape, if not the whole of southern Africa. Hence, as argued by McCormick (1989), in order to get on with their everyday lives, residents made use of languages other than their own. In this context, language mixing and code switching became part of the everyday. In this sense, "language is performative".

*Kaaps* is not only different from the local vernacular spoken by 'coloured' South Africans in other provinces of South Africa, but also different from that spoken by people living in smaller

towns near Cape Town. The most prominent characteristic of the local vernacular used in such towns is that it rarely, if ever, blends English with Afrikaans words. Because of this, the Afrikaans spoken in small-town Cape Town is known as *suiwer* (pure, untainted) Afrikaans. *Suiwer* Afrikaans is also used by those designated as 'white'; hence the connotations of *suiwer* in this context are not value-free. This *suiwer* Afrikaans is often associated with notions of middle class and Christian-based respectability. In my personal history my parents lived outside of Cape Town, in the Northern Cape Province. From them we picked up the *suiwer* Afrikaans that is associated with small-town South Africa. Hence, although I grew up in a 'coloured' township, where *Kaaps* is considered the local vernacular, my middle class upbringing meant that I was more exposed to the *suiwer* Afrikaans that my parents spoke. This put me in a position to switch between language codes. In this instance my middle class upbringing led to the selective use of *Kaaps* in particular social situations. Here, language hierarchies come into play. This discussion will prove to be important for my conclusions around the use of *moffietaal* in everyday parlance.

Even though Evanka insists that: "Gayle it is just something as you go on, that you have to learn". At first, Evanka was hesitant to learn the 'language' because *moffietaal* was associated with negative perceptions of being *moffie*:

> So then I always told myself because I never ever wanted to be associated with the name *moffie*. I do not want to be because *moffie* whenever you think of *moffie* whenever people are calling someone *moffie* they think about someone who works in a hair salon, and is up and down with rollers in the street. [Someone who] is not educated, that is what they attach *moffie* to and I am not one so I never want to speak Gayle that is just me I never wanted to.

Although Evanka is adamant that Gayle is something that you have to learn, she also expressed ambivalence towards the use of *moffietaal*.

Similarly, Trevor relates his reluctance to start ramping because *moffie*s "perform" they are "loud":

> It was not something that I thought I would like or do … in fact I thought for most of my life I thought they were too loud, too in your face. Everything was just too much. So

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it was good to have cross-dressing friends but then you wanted to see them maybe once a month; once a year [laughter] and then you have a couple of good laughs.

## 7.4.2 *Moffietaal* is available for everybody to use

According to Evanka, Gayle is still popular and used mostly during beauty pageant competitions and drag shows amongst the "cross-dressers":

> Gayle however is not maybe in the normal, plain gay guy, a lot of straight people are using it, because they sit in company of gay people, and I've also picked it up, as you go on, you picked up the words as people speak you.

This sentiment that *moffietaal* is available for use by anyone, was also expressed by Jerome in the following manner:

> Everywhere, anywhere as far as I can imagine, you know what I mean it is like a part of their lifestyle wherever they are it is – yes everywhere, clubs in their homes with friends … basically wherever you find groups of gay people.

Jerome, for instance, related that he picked up Gayle where he grew up in an inner-city suburb of Cape Town known as Woodstock[40] which is no more than 5kms from the city centre of Cape Town:

> Basically it started when I was growing up, from a young age, being around so many gay peoples, lifestyles company friendships and so on – that you picked that up and I grew up in Woodstock – right next to the main road – right opposite us, was basically a gay lodge – the who and what of gay was going in and coming there.

The impulse to preserve the gay experience free from heterosexist influences is evident from the above assertion of "a language of our own". In this sense, the use of Gayle serves to exclude those who identify as heterosexual - it serves to maintain group cohesion, belonging and identity amongst *moffie*s Cage (1999). In an essay titled: *A Zelda on my Stoep*, Hein Kleinbooi (1995) recalls:

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[40]Woodstock is documented as untouched by the *apartheid* government hence making it more conducive for gender non-conforming men to flourish in such a protective environment.

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Once somebody on Greenmarket Square referred to the "bag" behind me. I looked around but saw no – one. The drunken person then exclaimed, My God, you must be gay! Coz I was talking about the haversack behind your back. Hein recalls further that he kept quiet and walked away thinking how awful it is that parts of *moffietaal* have been appropriated by straight people. They do not allow us any privacy at all.

From the above it becomes evident that Gayle is used as part of the performance of femininity: language is performed in a unique way that serves as a strategy to authenticate the performance of femininity, but it is also used to identify others who belong to this group. This is evident in Evanka's memory of her first encounter with Gayle:

I went to a club in Somerset West where I also did not know about the gay language Gayle, and I went to this particular club in Somerset West, and someone asked me for a *cilla*, and obviously he was gay, but I asked myself, what did he say?, is he now speaking German or what?, and then I looked at him, and I said excuse me, and he could see that I am lost, and then he said do you have a cigarette?

From this account it becomes evident that the 'language' is not only used amongst *moffies* and in gay-friendly spaces, but that it has spread into mainstream society. Even though Gayle was historically constructed as a form of secret communication between *moffies*, in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town much of the Gayle vocabulary has been incorporated into everyday talk, perhaps in ignorance of the fact that that these words originated from Gayle. Moreover, Hein's claim that: "They do not allow us any privacy at all", speaks to an impulse to separate "us" from "them".

Similar views were expressed by Evanka:

I am actually teaching my office members now, cause whenever someone walks in and we want to say something than we can say within the Gayle language, but I think also now the other part of the Gayle is that a lot of straight people know it, have learnt it and we now are twisting and turning around words that we would understand that is actually not in the book as is, but for you not to understand.

Even though Evanka is willing to share the use of Gayle with her colleagues, she relates that because Gayle is now used in everyday talk, we (i.e. gender non-conforming men) "turn and

twist words around so that others will not be able to understand". She relates further that "it almost gives us a bonus; separate us from you, or giving us that extra power of having an additional language".

## 7.5 Conclusion

*Moffietaal* is not used exclusively by gender non-conforming men in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. However, it still remains largely understood and used amongst gender non-conforming men. In my 'outsider-insider' status as researcher, I was privileged to observe some uses of *moffietaal*. At the same time however, as a cisgender woman I was also excluded from cultural exchanges in communications of gossip because I was unable to understand what was being talked about.

In this chapter, I presented distinct and unique ways of expression as performed through the use of language in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. *Kaaps* and *moffietaal* were presented as new formations of performing language by 'coloured' people. These unique ways of expression, through the use of *Kaaps* and *moffietaal* in its performance, comment respectively on society's stereotypes of 'colouredness' and on what it means to be feminine. The use of *Kaaps* and *moffietaal* are representations of resistance to dominant ways of performing language. Thus, in performing language and the use thereof, dominant ideologies are unsettled.

On the other hand, the use of *Kaaps* and *moffietaal* are linked to notions of class and respectability. The use of *Kaaps* and *moffietaal* is frowned upon. At the same time, the desire to be able to perform an authentic gay identity and invoke a sense of a "gay community" by using Gayle, is evident in the idea "to twist and turn words around", so that only those who belong to the 'in-group' are able to understand. In this process of authentication, power is shifted to those who belong to the 'in-group'. The assertion that the use of Gayle "separates us from them" speaks to the politics of belonging, and to the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. This performance of Gayle by gender non-conforming men in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town is a representation of the tension between the celebration of difference (as expressed in the use of *moffietaal* by gender non-conforming men) and the politics of belonging that is personified in the South African rainbow nation. I elaborate in the following chapter on the tension between the celebration of difference and the politics of belonging as made visible in the Cape Town Gay Pride parade.

**CHAPTER 8: "GAY PRIDE ALLOWS US TO HAVE PRESENCE IN A WAY, BECAUSE YOU BECOME MORE VISIBLE"**

**8.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I present Cape Town Gay Pride as a space of opposing discourses. Such opposing discourses are not only evident in masquerade, dress and drag, but on an ostensible level manifest in a protest vs. spectacle debate. These opposing discourses are drawn on by gay activists and ordinary South Africans with a similar aim of preserving what they perceive as contradictory to the intrinsic principles in which Gay Pride (locally and globally) was historically founded in. In recent years the overall aesthetic of the Cape Town Gay Pride parade has shifted from being a march connoting a political agenda to that of a festival. The march, with its political impetus in the hearts and minds of gay activists, has the ability to effect change.

Thus in this chapter, I present Cape Town Gay Pride as not only in its playful and carnivalesque aesthetic, there is also another important feature of the Cape Town Gay Pride parade, what I refer to as the protest arm of the parade. The protest arm of the parade is typically led by gay and community activist organisations and individuals. In the last couple of years (2011-2016), two themes have been recurrent in the Cape Town Pride parade, which is often led by LGBTI organisations and gay activists. These two themes focused on the politics of inclusion and exclusion, a remnant of the *apartheid* past, and opposition to the persistence of the homosexuality is 'unAfrican' debate.

The Cape Town Gay Pride parade seen as not only in its carnivalesque aesthetic but also in its endeavour to effect change is discussed in this chapter as a space where protest and celebratory discourses exist side by side. I argue that in this social space, these discourses do not exist separately from each other, they intermingle and create a space that allows for challenging discourses of power. A space that allows for more fluidity so that ideas that seem to be in opposition are influenced and indeed related ("in relation") to each other. In reference to Glissant (1997), post-doctoral researcher, Olivia Sheringham (2015) in an article titled: *Creolization, diaspora and Carnival: Living with diversity in the past and present* articulates that:

> Carnival – in its many disguises – represents a fascinating illustration of the interplay between creativity and resistance, in fact Carnival enacts the creative and resistant elements of creolisation (p2).

The Cape Town Gay Pride parade exhibits important defining elements of a Carnival. In the first instance, the notion of Carnival creates a platform where creativity, originality and inventiveness is expected from all performers. In tandem with its carnivalesque and playful aesthetic, is that of resistance and of challenging the status quo. Thus in these ways, the abovementioned statement is applicable to the Cape Town Gay Pride parade in that the Parade with its carnivalesque aesthetic is at the same time also challenging the status quo. Hence the Cape Town Gay Pride parade embodies, as articulated by Sheringham (2015) the creative and resistant elements of creolisation, in fact it is a moment, to borrow from Sheringham (2015) "where cultural identities merge and transform as official culture is challenged and often explicitly critiqued"(p2).

In this way, the Cape Town Gay Pride parade in its entirety challenges the status quo. On the other hand I argue that the overwhelmingly carnivalesque aesthetic masks the structural inequalities that prevents gender non-conforming and same sex identified men living in 'coloured' and 'black' townships from accessing those rights made available to them by the 1996 South African Constitution. Thus on a more critical level the protest vs. spectacle debate is representative of the politics of belonging (i.e. of inclusion and exclusion) that frames the lives of South Africans, regardless of sexual orientation. I found that the politics of belonging, as made visible during Cape Town Gay Pride, is delineated along notions of race, class and place (i.e. geography).

The playful aesthetic embodied in the gaiety, the floats, the dress and stylization, the parade, the partying afterwards, meeting new people, the majority representing variant sexual and gender identifications – are all important aspects of the Cape Town Gay Pride parade. These are all defining elements of Carnival as creolised social space. As Ayesha recalls the first time that she took part in the Pride parade: "It was a bit of a culture shock". Ayesha, remembers, that:

> There were all types of gay people, you see drag queens, you see the bears, the muscle Mary's and all of these fancy names they have for the people.

Green Point, located north-west of the Central Business District (CBD) of the city of Cape Town is where most of the city's gay-friendly clubs, bars and restaurants are situated. In Green

Point is also where the Cape Town Gay Pride parade and other Pride festivities are located. Main Road, Green Point is famous for its side walk Italian café restaurants (i.e. Mario's and Giovanni's), ice-cream parlours, the Cape Royale Suites Hotel, a spa, modern and renovated apartment buildings and other restaurants and pubs. All along the boulevard, trees are lined up.

The cuisine and easy access to supermarkets and other five star amenities make Main Road conducive for a walk either towards Beach Road, Sea Point (an affluent suburb of Cape Town) or towards the city centre. The Cape Town stadium built for the 2010 FIFA World Cup (hosted by South Africa in 2010), towers over the tourists and residents walking along Main Road. For the 2010 FIFA World Cup, major infrastructure developments and upgrades were made to the road works, the buildings and so forth around the Cape Town stadium. For example, more trees were planted and a fan walkway built especially for the 2010 FIFA World Cup now encourages strolling along Main Road. On any other day, the boulevard that stretches from Somerset Road and becomes Main Road resembles the laidback and relaxing atmosphere typical of a suburb such as Green Point.
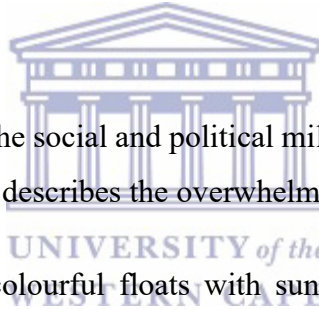
Green Point is far removed from the social and political milieu of the windswept Cape Flats of Cape Town. The field note below describes the overwhelming carnivalesque aesthetic:

> Trucks transformed into colourful floats with sunflowers, hearts, balloons, feathers, streamers and posters painted in all the colours of the rainbow move slowly along Somerset Road, which becomes Main Road, Green Point. Women, dressed in bikini tops and tight fitted shorts, adorning flower headbands on shouting yeah and waving posters of messages reading: "Love is love", "Born this way" and "Our hearts go out to the LGBTI youth of Uganda"[41]. Each colourful float representing a local LGBTI organisation, gay owned club or a restaurant most of which are primarily located in Cape Town's gay village (see Photos 24 & 25). Gay beauty pageant contestants and drag performers wearing similar to the Rio de Janeiro carnival headdress and feathered costumes sit in luxury convertible vehicles waving at the spectators who have gathered along Main Road. Music blaring loudly from each float, with moments of someone shouting over a loudspeaker: "We're out and proud", this is followed by cheerful shouts from the Pride goers following the floats. It is only 11h00 on a Saturday morning and it

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[41]This was in response to the Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Act that prohibited any form of sexual relations between persons of the same sex.

is already hot. This is Cape Town's annual Pride parade, held in the hottest months of summer and also the month (February to early March) that Cape Town sees the most tourists. Another float carries mostly young men dressed in tight blue and white striped shirts and white pants, with matched white sailor hats. Ropes, tubes and a cartoon cut out of a girl dressed in a sailor suit make out the decorations of this float. The young men wave rainbow coloured flags at the spectators. Those following each float are made up of girls and boys (young and old) dressed in rainbow colours, fancy dress and feathered boas. Drag queens walk in their stilettos and glitzy dresses side by side with young women wearing pink and rounding off their costumes with black or white feathered wings. Here at Pride, boys are dressed like girls some have feminine looking nursing uniforms on, girls adorning braces holding up short pants and sporting false moustaches. Boys are showing off their masculine chests whilst girls have pasties covering their nipples. Desire is not only openly expressed in terms of the body (i.e. masculine chests and nipple pasties), affection is also performed, where boys kiss boys, girls' kiss girls, and vice versa or hold hands (see Photo 26). Groupings of LGBTI organisations such as gay friendly health services, organisations offering help to LGBTI people, faith based, student and gay activist organisations in addition to small groupings of friends who have either met at Pride or whom has made a decision to take part in the Pride parade today all follow the colourful floats. The local political majority has a big contingent at Pride today; their float led by a drag queen sitting on top of a big old pink American made vehicle. Those following the contingent wave posters with messages saying: "Love Uganda, Hate Homophobia". The news media is also present at Pride, with a reporter following a young male couple, holding hands, one with bunny ears and the other wrapped in a rainbow flag[42]. Besides the organised Pride contingents, others have informally made up groups, carrying banners, saying: "I am proud and love my gay son and I love my gay brother". Young men in pink, white and black shorts shoot water out of water cannons to us following them. We welcome this because of the heat. It is a great big party along Main Road, Green Point. As we march on I notice a small truck carrying a very large cross draped in rainbow colours with a pastor following the small truck carrying a poster saying: "Sorry for the church's rejection". Others walking proudly with t-shirts, asking questions such as: "Would Jesus discriminate?" Some people wave and

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[42]The rainbow flag is recognised all over the world as a symbol of gay and lesbian pride. It was designed in 1978 by Gilbert Baker of San Francisco (Alyson, 1993).

honk in solidarity. Others try awkwardly not to look our way. The spectators applaud as we continue marching, others simply gawk at the Pride parade that seem to suddenly disturb their Saturday brunch or walk in Green Point.



Photo 24. Celebrating sex and the body at the 2012 Cape Town Gay Pride parade
*Source* Photo taken by researcher



Photo 25. Religious organisations at the 2012 Cape Town Gay Pride parade
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

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Photo 26. Freely expressing same sex love at the 2012 Cape Town Gay Pride parade
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

From my observations of the 2012 Cape Town Pride parade, costumes and masquerade seem to be the order of the day. What to wear to the Pride parade is an all-important decision. Creativity is not only evident in the production of the floats, but in fashion, stylization and dress, which all contributes to the overwhelmingly celebratory, playful and carnivalesque aesthetic. Myself and a group of friends made the decision that at Pride 2014 that we will dress as sailors. The year before we sported feathered wings and marched along Main Road, singing: "Born this way" and taking pictures with others who are dressed more outrageously. None of us were camera shy – it was Pride, after all. We all walked cheerily, some hopping and skipping, holding hands with their loved ones, and dancing to the sound of music coming from the floats. Half naked bodies dancing to music blaring over loudspeakers, drag and pageant queens adorned with big headdresses, feathered boas and larger than life back pieces all contribute to the carnivalesque aesthetic.

Social gender positions and sexual identifications are stylized through fashion, dress and in drag. The body is styled to push the limits of conventional understandings of gender. Pride becomes a platform to reveal what is often 'disallowed' in public. Normative gender and sexual expressions are subverted (and inverted) in the space of the Pride parade. The more outrageous, glamorous, glitzy and feathered, the more this is celebrated in the space of the Pride parade. Pride provides a stage for dressing up and for dragging, for those who do not drag every day. It is a performance of diversity, stylized through dress, fashion and gesture.

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In the space of the Pride parade, affection, intimacy and desire, that which is 'normally' deemed 'private', are displayed in the street alongside a pastor carrying a poster that reads: "Sorry for the church's rejection". In this way, the Pride parade also becomes a contested space, where sex, glamour, desire and religion occupy the same space.

**8.2 "Taking ourselves out of the 'closet' and into the streets"**

Historically, Pride marches have their roots in the USA, with the first Pride march commemorating the Stonewall Inn riots. These riots are documented as a spontaneous and violent response by same sex identified men and women after police raids on gay bars in 1969 in New York City (De Waal & Manion, 2006; Tucker, 2011). The first Pride march took place in 1970 in New York in memory of the Stonewall Inn riots, and marked the start of the contemporary gay and lesbian rights movement (Enguix, 2009). Hence, in many respects, as suggested by Terence Kissack (1995), the Stonewall Inn Riots are considered to be the birthplace of the gay rights movement, signalling a move from being long silenced and made invisible to having a public stage. Begonya Enguix (2009) comments that Pride marches all over the world illustrate social mobilisation - "bringing the community from stigma to pride, turning homosexuals (a term used to illustrate the medicalization of same sex behaviours) into gays" (p.16).

In South Africa, same sex identified men and women took to the streets of Johannesburg in October 1990, in a moment that can only be described as their "own Stonewall" (quotation used by Renkin, 2007 in an ethnography of Gay Pride in Hungary). Justice Edwin Cameron[43] (1995) recollects that although some marchers covered their heads with brown paper bags, the march was a joyful assertion of gay and lesbian identifications. At the time of the planning for the first Pride march, South Africa was also undergoing its first democratic transition (Cameron, 1995). Nevertheless, others such as Simon Nkoli (a 'black' gay activist) felt that it was an appropriate time, since race cannot be separated from the freedom to express one's sexual orientation (De Waal & Manion, 2006). Simon Nkoli and Bev Ditsie, organisers of the first Pride march, and others such as Justice Edwin Cameron, recall that the "air was daring, yet festive", filled with an incredible sense of excitement and history in the making (Busse, 2006; Gevisser & Reid, 1995; Thoreson, 2008). The first Pride march brought 'black' and 'white' together, everyone took part in Pride, even the drag queens, according to Busse (2006). At that time, De Waal and

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[43]At the time of the Pride March, Justice Edwin Cameron was a human rights lawyer.

Manion (2006) note that in South Africa one could be jailed for engaging in same sex behaviours or prosecuted under the Disguises Act. Pride all over the world, and specifically at the pivotal moment of the Stonewall Inn Riots, is rooted within a politically conscious agenda mobilising same sex identified men and women to achieve equality before the law.

Three years later, in 1993, the first Pride march took place in Cape Town, and was organised by well-known gay activists, Theresa and Taghmeda (Midi) (Achmat & Raizenberg, 2006). Theresa grew up in the 'coloured' township of Bonteheuwel, about 13kms from the city of Cape Town, whilst Midi lived in Salt River, a neighbouring suburb of the city of Cape Town, and a predominantly Muslim community. Midi is the sister of Zackie Achmat, the well-known and respected gay and AIDS activist, one of the founding members of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC)[44]. In the preface of a paper dedicated to the work of Theresa and Midi, author Rachel Holmes describes Midi and Theresa as two of South Africa's best known lesbians (Achmat, Raizenberg & Holmes, 2003). They are the two founding members of one of the first LGBTI organisations in Cape Town, the Association of Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians (ABIGALE) (Achmat, Raizenberg & Holmes, 2003). Achmat and Raizenberg (2006) recall that the idea of Cape Town Pride was motivated by the first Pride march which took place in Johannesburg in 1990. In order to mobilise people to attend the first Pride march in Cape Town, Theresa recalls that she had to visit *shebeens* and clubs in the townships (Achmat & Raizenberg, 2006). Both activists narrate the following in Shaun De Waal and Anthony Manion's (2006) book titled: *Pride, Protest and Celebration*:

> It was a year before the democratic elections, and to march past Parliament [South Africa's legislature and consisting of the National Assembly and the Senate] was very emotional for us. It was a feeling of "I fought for the new South Africa, now I am fighting for gay and lesbian rights". We marched along Darling Street, turned into Adderley Street and went through the Company Gardens. The route took us past Parliament. The march ended, ironically enough in the park in Camp Street [i.e. De Waal Park]. We organised the Cape Town Pride march again in 1994, but later that year ABIGALE collapsed, because of infighting and our involvement in Pride ended. The other reason for stepping away from Pride was because of the shift from protest march to *mardi gras*. The third Cape Town Pride march was held in Observatory in 1996, but

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[44]The TAC is recognised nationally and internationally for pushing the government to make anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment freely available to South Africans.

we weren't involved. It was held at night and it was more of a party and that did not interest us (Achmat & Raizenberg, 2006).

Theresa and Midi's reflections of the first Pride march in Cape Town are significant, particularly within the context of the contemporary politics of Gay Pride, not only in Cape Town, but also as it pertains to Pride in Johannesburg. The other important point that both Theresa and Midi allude to in the above statement, is the amalgamation of rights as an equal citizen in South Africa, as this relates to race as well as to their rights as same sex identified women. Another point that I also want to draw attention to is the route of the first Pride march, which according to the map is in the city centre of Cape Town (see Appendix 8). Finally, both Theresa and Midi confirm that one of the reasons why they pulled away from Pride in subsequent years was because of the shift from a protest march to that of *mardi gras*. This inevitably creates a divide between individuals and organisations who believe that Pride should be about protest and politics, and not simply about celebration. More recently these divisions have become more apparent during the Cape Town Pride parades. It seems that the protest vs. spectacle debate was intensified with the merge of Cape Town Pride with a more 'commercial' event known as the Mother City Queer Project (MCQP). The MCQP is a themed costume party held annually over a single night in December in Cape Town since 1994 (Steyn, 2006). It was established to celebrate the inclusion of the "gay rights clause" into the 1996 Constitution (Oswin, 2005). To a large extent the merge with MCQP signalled an official shift from a pride march to that of a celebration or festival, and incorporation of Cape Town Pride into the MCQP brand officially signalled a shift from a pride march to a pride celebration.

The MCQP was in its 19th year when I first attended the event in 2012. The theme of the event was "Fairy Tale Fantasy". In the following year, the theme was "Space Cowboys". Both events were held at the Cape Town Stadium. For both events, the stadium was transformed into different dance floors, food stalls, bars and a dark room for men aged 18 years and older. Both events were spectacular in scale and creativity, and sparked the imagination of attendees.

This playful aesthetic and invented world that MCQP provides to its patrons is similar to the festivities of the annual Cape Town Gay Pride parade. In this sense, the MCQP in many respects is representative of a complete break from the political impetus in which Pride is historically active. This was confirmed by MCQP board members in the following manner: "The festival is not fighting for anyone's rights. We're just trying to bring unity and fun" (Steyn, 2006). The emphasis on "trying to bring unity and fun" is problematic for gay activists in South Africa,

because the event is seen as excluding those individuals who might not have full access to the rights provided to them by the "gay rights clause". The premise of MCQP as "not fighting for anyone's rights" highlights the notion that this event denies the very existence of those individuals who do not have access to the rights provided by the "gay rights clause". Indeed, they ask, how can we celebrate Pride when some of our 'brothers' and 'sisters' are not free? In South Africa, gay activists draw on the global and local historical roots of Gay Pride and question: "What is there to celebrate?"

## 8.3 Protest vs. spectacle?

Cape Town Gay Pride has shifted in focus from a protest march (i.e. politically charged) to one that is overwhelmingly playful and celebratory (i.e. "Cape Town Pride has become much more social, it has kind of lost its focus"). Brian, a 'coloured' gender non-conforming man is a student at the Law Faculty of UWC, who goes by the stage name Brie Banks (a MGWC pageant title holder). He is well respected for his political views in the gay social networks of Cape Town, and makes use of the gay pageant industry to create awareness around LGBTI rights. According to Brian, the majority of people go to Pride only for the street party afterwards (i.e. "People were just there because it is fun and games").

In his female embodiment as Brie Banks he will not "boycott Pride", since "we are celebrating us as a community". For Pride this year, his aim is to attend Pride, and make a political statement to express who he is as a "'black' citizen who cross-dresses in South Africa". In the second instance, Brian indicates that by being at Pride in his "political embodiment", he makes visible for others what is happening in Africa. Brian states that race and class in Cape Town are intertwined. If one is 'black' or 'coloured', for example, according to Brian, one is more likely to have experienced discrimination because of one's sexual orientation. He recalls the story of David Olyne, a 'coloured' self-identified gay man from a peri-urban setting on the outskirts of Cape Town, who was brutally murdered because of his sexual orientation. David Olyne was only 22 years old when he was bludgeoned and burned to death in a small farming community outside Cape Town. According to a newspaper article: "His charred remains were found in a dilapidated pump house on a farm outside Ceres .... his limbs tied with wire. Olyne's alleged attacker is said to have invited children nearby to watch him kill a *moffie*" (Serra, 2012).

It is because of David Olyne's story and others such as his, that Brian feels that Pride cannot simply be about celebration, because there are others who are not yet "free". At the same time,

he is of the opinion that it is at Pride, because of its visibility, where South Africans should be mobilising, because others are unable to. Hence, he will never boycott Pride, because it means one less "political voice" that year. Brian expresses the popular idea that Carnival (i.e. fun, gaiety) does not necessarily reflect those values that are assumed for promoting a political cause. Often popular ideas about Carnival mean it is not seen as a public performance that aims at "reversing the social order of the day" (Bakhtin, 1984).

The playful aesthetic however is offset by the protest arm of the parade. LGBTI organisations and gay activists at the Pride parade opposes the politics of inclusion and exclusion that is still prevalent in South African society and oppose the persistence of the homosexuality is 'unAfrican' debate. That homosexuality is 'unAfrican' and in contrast to traditional norms and value systems is often what political leaders draw upon in African countries, in order to legitimise the criminalisation of homosexuality. For example, Adam Justice, journalist for the *International Business Times*, writes that the Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe rejected calls from the United Nations (UN) to implement gay rights in his country (cited in Chiguvare, 2016). Mugabe spoke on the 28 September 2015 at the UN General Assembly meeting, where he rejected the imposition of what he called "new rights" for gay marriage that have been advocated elsewhere in the world (Chiguvare, 2016). In his speech he mentioned that:

> We equally reject attempts to prescribe new rights that are contrary to our norms, values, traditions and beliefs. We are not gays.

The above speech is by no means the first of its kind made by President Mugabe. He is not the only political leader who has publicly claimed that homosexuality is 'unAfrican', and therefore counter to traditional norms and value systems; that homosexuality is a "European perversion" (Epprecht, 1998, 2006). In his exploration of homophobia as hate speech in Africa, gender studies scholar Vasu Reddy (2002) addresses the increase in public speeches made by political leaders to oppose homosexuality in African countries. Reddy (2002) confirms that like Mugabe, his counterparts from Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, Uganda and Kenya have virulently opposed homosexuality, labelling it a "scourge" that goes against Christian teachings and African traditions.

In response to the homosexuality is 'unAfrican' debate, historian Marc Epprecht (2006) provides a proliferation of accounts of traditional societies having "sophisticated and humane ways of dealing with people who did not meet heterosexual ideals of marriage and fertility".

In his books, Epprecht (1998, 2004, 2005) challenges the notion that homosexuality is 'unAfrican' through his historical accounts of same sex sexualities, in particular in southern African countries, arguing for acceptance of the existence of same sex sexualities in traditional societies before colonialism. In particular, Epprecht's (2004) book titled: *Hungochani: The History of Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa* and more recently, *Unspoken Facts: A History of Homosexualities in Africa* (2008) are amongst the most celebrated accounts of historical and archival information documenting same sex sexualities, specifically in southern African countries.

In addition to the prolific work focused on 'African' same sex sexualities by Marc Epprecht, his contemporaries such as Stephen Murray and Will Roscoe (1998) claim that same sex sexualities and identifications in African contexts are not only widespread, but also diverse. Stephanie Rudwick (2011) adds that pre-historical cave paintings in South Africa document same sex activities from the earliest times. Quoting Epprecht (2004, 2006), Rudwick (2011), in her investigation of ethnolinguistic identity constructions as they pertain to ideas of 'Zuluness', claims that the first written documentation of incidents of 'African' same sex identifications are from the beginning of the 20th century.

Despite the above ethnographic works, historical and archival documentation, such as those presented by Marc Epprecht that same sex sexualities are not imports from Europe, but part of human behaviour, African leaders have continued to publicly denounce the existence of homosexuality as being part of traditional societies. Activists and academics alike have called the increase in such public speeches and anti-homosexuality laws an onset of "waves of homophobia" that are sweeping through some African countries. More than "hate speech", much of the anti-gay rhetoric has made its way into the laws of countries such as Uganda, East Africa.

At Pride 2011 one of my colleagues who work for the LGBTI organisation, the Triangle Project, handed me a purple t-shirt (see Photo 27) that reads on the back: "Homosexuality is African! Homophobic violence is not!" We hope to make a strong performance of solidarity for our 'brothers' and 'sisters' in other African countries, where homosexuality is illegal. Anti-homosexuality laws in African countries are premised on this notion that homosexuality is 'unAfrican'. Hence, my protest was in response to the Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Act that prohibits any form of sexual relations between persons of the same sex. This Anti-

Homosexuality Act is particularly brutal because of its death penalty proposal. In this context of the celebratory atmosphere of the Pride parade, I cannot help but see the contrast: here I am with my serious political t-shirt, following a very cheerful, colourful and exuberant affair.



Photo 27. Researcher in her purple t-shirt, protesting against the Uganda Hate Bill at 2011 Cape Town Gay Pride parade
*Source* Photo taken by Pride comrade

Pride is not alone in its protest against the Uganda Hate Bill. In local newspapers such as the Cape Argus, a journalist, Warren Fortune (2014) writes that for Pride 2014, the marchers were thinking of their 'brothers' and 'sisters' in Uganda, victims of a new anti-gay law that saw gender non-conforming men and women jailed. Educationist Thabo Msibi (2011) reminds us that while many countries in the western world have begun to address outmoded laws against same sex individuals, most countries in Africa continue to lag behind, effectively silencing the voices of those individuals. According to Msibi (2011), in 38 of 53 African states, it is illegal to engage in consensual gay sex. Given this context, South Africa serves as a beacon of hope for gender non-conforming men and women in other African countries, who are prevented from living openly due to the criminalisation of homosexuality. Theron and Bezuidenhout (1995), of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation at the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS), report that this has led to "an influx of LGBTI refugees to South Africa".

Paradoxically however, not only did South African activists start mobilising organisations and individuals to rage against the hate crimes committed against their 'brothers' and 'sisters' in countries such as Uganda, they also placed the spotlight onto South African gay politics. By Pride 2014, pride-goers sent a message that although the 1996 South African Constitution has affirmed that men and women with same sex desires do have public space, this is not an everyday reality for many same sex identified South Africans. Hence, whereas the homosexuality is 'unAfrican' debate unites all same sex identified persons in solidarity regardless of gender expression, race or socio-economic status, the local politics of racial division still persistent in South Africa, creating divisions within the community of same sex identified men and women. The vignette below captures my observations during Cape Town Pride 2014:

> The social movement known as *Pride Yarona* (Our Pride) has made a call on the social networking site Facebook for other organisations and individuals to join them in protesting against the Cape Town Gay Pride parade. On the *Pride Yarona*, Facebook page, the organisers have called for a "silent protest against the deliberate exclusion and marginalisation of non-white-gay male voices at Cape Town Gay Pride". We have gathered in front of the Gallows Hill Traffic Department, better known locally as the Green Point Traffic Department. I am greeted by a small gathering of mostly young lesbians who are affiliated with some of the other gay and community activist organisations. However, most of the young people who have heeded the call for the "silent protest" are individuals like myself. I also recognise some activists and colleagues who I have worked with as an HIV researcher and greet them; the others do not mind that I have joined in. My name is not important; we nevertheless greet each other, with an unsaid feeling of solidarity. I ask what I can do to help, I am handed boxes to cut out (which will be used as posters), paint and brushes (see Photo 28). I brought my own paint, brushes and cardboard as well. The air is filled with something exhilarating, a sense of camaraderie. We started painting messages on the cardboards reading: "Museveni get your facts straight: I am AFRICAN, GAY" and "BORN THIS WAY", "Cape Town Pride needs real representation!", "Live and Let Live", "Marching for Zimbabwe", "Stop sexism and racism at Cape Town Pride", "Stop transphobia" (see Photo 29). These very strong and powerful messages are painted in beautiful colours of the rainbow, with some painted with flowers and stars. What a contrast, I think having such serious matters written in all the colours of the rainbow? When we are done with

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painting our cardboards with these messages, we are given black duct tape to shut our mouths. This is meant to be symbolic for those who do not have a voice and for those who are unable to march. We take our place in the Pride parade, and as we walk down Main Road, Green Point, the spectators who have gathered to watch, say: "Thank you, Thanks".



Photo 28. Painting messages on cardboard cut outs at the 2014 Cape Town Gay Pride parade
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

Photo 29. Recurrent messages at the 2014 Cape Town Gay Pride parade
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

The above protest was in many respects the beginning of an organised protest against the official organiser of the Gay Pride parade, the Cape Town Gay Pride. The following year (2015), these protests gained momentum and were led by activists such as Zethu Matebeni and Funeka Soldaat. Zethu Matebeni is a senior researcher at the University of Cape Town (UCT) Institute for Humanities in Africa (HUMA), an activist and documentary film maker. Funeka Soldaat, a prominent gay activist, started the group Free Gender in 2008 in response to the increase in incidents of 'corrective rape'[45] against 'black' lesbians in the township where she lives. Research and media reports suggest that black lesbians, particularly in townships, are increasingly targeted for rape because they are seen as transgressing patriarchal gender norms which prescribe what a woman should look like and how a woman should behave (Nel & Judge, 2008 cited in Henderson, Cloete & Van Zyl, 2011). One of the main focuses of the group is to campaign for justice for Zoliswa Nkonyana who was brutally murdered on February 4th 2006 by a gang of 20 men, and for Millicent Gaika who was beaten and raped on the 6th April 2010 (Sokari, 2011). Free Gender, according to Sokari (2011), in *Queer Politics, South Africa* started

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[45]The term 'corrective rape' is commonly used in South Africa to refer to rape that is justified by the claim that rape 'corrects' or 'cures' a lesbian by turning her into a 'real (heterosexual) woman' (Henderson, Cloete & Van Zyl, 2011). Although as noted by Henderson, Cloete & Van Zyl (2011) the term has become a central element in the sensationalist depiction of violence against lesbians in South Africa and has disturbing political implications of reproducing the myth. Hence uncritical use of the term is problematic and is opposed by the authors.

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as a blog by a group of 14 'black' lesbians, living in Khayelitsha. Khayelitsha is the largest and fastest growing township in South Africa (City of Cape Town, 2013). According to the Strategic Development Information and GIS Department of the city of Cape Town, in 2011 (2013), a census in Khayelitsha counted 391 749 predominantly 'black' (99%) people.

These are some of my observations at Cape Town Gay Pride 2015, where Free Gender (a 'black' lesbian organisation), amongst other organisations and activists, such as Zethu Matebeni, led the protest arm of the parade. At the 2015 Cape Town Gay Pride parade we are all gathered under a tree. Under the tree, Zethu positions herself on top of a concrete block to address the small crowd who have gathered at the traffic department. In a very audible voice she addresses the crowd "It is enough that Cape Town Pride does not cater for all of our needs, it is enough that Cape Town Pride does not include every person in Cape Town! We are here to claim our space! We are here to say Cape Town is for all of us! *Amandla Awethu! Amandla Awethu!*" [Power to the People, Power to the People]. The crowd shouts back *Amandla Awethu.* The crowd is led in spontaneous singing in isiXhosa, with another comrade keeping rhythm with a drum. A couple of minutes after her initial speech, she gets onto the concrete block again and makes the following statement:
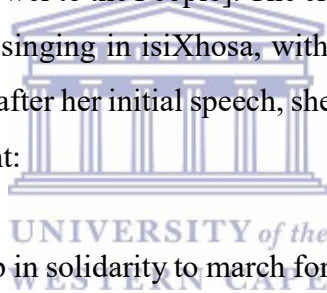
> We are standing as a group in solidarity to march for an inclusive Pride. We are joining the main Pride, we are not boycotting, we are joining the main Pride, to make a statement that Pride must be inclusive of all races, of all genders, of all sexual orientations, and sexes, and all social classes, etc. etc. So we will walk together, leaving a short step between us and the main Pride to show, that we are here, but we are also making a stand. All of you have song sheets; there will be songs, so please sing along.
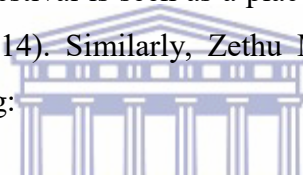
This time, Zethu is asking us to leave a short distance between us and the main Pride – and adds that we are part of the main Pride, but we have to keep some distance between ourselves and the main parade. Some in the crowd find this a contradiction in terms. I too find this speech curious. In the first instance, we are protesting against Cape Town Gay Pride not being inclusive, but yet we are excluding ourselves from the main Pride? Upon reflection, I realised that in this gesture we ask ourselves why we should show solidarity where we have been implicitly or explicitly excluded[46]. When we started the march, we all made attempts (including

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[46]Although in a different context – this was also reflected by Leatt and Reid (2005) in a book chapter exploring gay identity in South Africa

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myself) to distance ourselves from the main Pride – with a sit-down in the streets or marching slower when we were too close to the main Pride parade. Because of this, although we are taking part in the Cape Town Gay Pride parade, I cannot help feeling isolated from the main Pride. This is a conscious effort to separate ourselves, although there is a sense of solidarity and camaraderie in the air for everyone present at Pride. There is a call for separation between us and the main Pride in order to illustrate social exclusions felt by others from the main Pride, and indeed from public space in Cape Town. For example, even before this announcement, I felt excluded from the main Pride event because ours had a so-called political impetus and the main Pride has an overwhelmingly celebratory motivation. We tended to fade into the camp and playful aesthetic that characterises the parade. Indeed, the celebratory atmosphere drowned out (even if it did not so consciously) our protest campaign.

Funeka Soldaat, chairperson of the Khayelitsha's Free Gender organisation, mentioned on the website: GroundUP[47] that: "The festival is seen as a place to go to drink and have fun. It has become meaningless" (Sefali, 2014). Similarly, Zethu Matebeni in another publication of GroundUP expresses the following:

> Cape Town Pride event should not be run by three 'white' gays who actually do not care about [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual] LGBTQIAP issues in all communities. We cannot be silent and be part of a Pride event that pushes an agenda of one race (Chiguvare, 2016).

There are several aspects emphasized in the protest arm of the Cape Town Pride parade that gay activists such as Funeka and Zethu are hoping to raise consciousness of during the parade. In the first instance, one of the principles enshrined in the Cape Town Pride Constitution is to be "inclusive" and "representative". This principle however is not implemented during Cape Town Pride, according to Funeka and Zethu. The overall playful aesthetic denies the existence of groups of people who are not able to enjoy the liberties afforded to them by the 1996 Constitution. For instance, Funeka fights for those lesbians living in 'black' townships who are sexually assaulted and punished because of their same sex desires. In this instance, the Pride parade is not inclusive of all gender non-conforming South Africans regardless of race, class and place affiliations. Most poignantly, the overwhelmingly playful aesthetic silences the realities of the lives of for instance lesbians who are brutally attacked in the 'black' townships

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[47]GroundUP offers media platforms for community stories.

of Cape Town. For Zethu, therefore, Cape Town Pride is not inclusive of all gender non-conforming men and women: firstly because of the location (Green Point) and its main activities; and secondly, Pride excludes those individuals who are not able to financially take part in it. These individuals are usually located on the outskirts of Cape Town in the impoverished townships of the Cape Flats. Others, like my friend Tshidiso, express ambivalence towards Cape Town Pride.

These realities were also made evident to me by Tshidiso, who is often my companion during Pride. He lives in the city centre of Cape Town in a flat he shares with two roommates. He is a 32 year-old self-identified gay man, studying towards his Masters in Social Anthropology. Tshidiso grew up in Khayelitsha, so is able to reflect on the social implications of living in the city centre of Cape Town and of growing up in the 'black' township of Khayelitsha.

On the one hand he sees Pride as a celebration of what he calls: "Who I am". At the other end of the spectrum, he is aware of the politics of inclusion and exclusion that Cape Town Pride has been criticised for in the last couple of years. Because of his personal history he is able to see both sides of the protest vs. spectacle debate.

In the first instance, for Tshidiso taking part in Pride is a joyous occasion, and cause for celebration. There is laughter, dancing, hopping and skipping along to music coming from the floats. At Pride we are all stirred by a message that we display in the costumes that we wear, the colourful banners, floats, falsies, high heels etc. saying: "I am proud to be who I am".

For Tshidiso, taking part in Pride is about having fun:

> I always feel like I have missed out on a big part of my life, you know my formative years as a teenager; I spent most of my time, struggling with my sexuality when I could have been having fun! It is fun, the floats, the marching, the parade and the partying afterwards and meeting new people, and hanging out with my friends. You know the dress up, I always refer to that, and it is fun. Pride is about being absolutely and outrageously gay.

At the same time, according to Tshidiso, Pride is also about taking pride in celebrating one's sexuality, celebrating "who I am". He concludes:

It is a public display you know or creating awareness in the sense that when people see the floats and the partying and stuff like that than they know it is Pride. It is gay people celebrating their identities, you know of who they are in a way it also creates some awareness or … what is the word, it allows us to have presence in a way, because you become visible.

Gay Pride, in Tshidiso's words: "Allows us to have presence in a way, because you become visible". This is a significant statement: it implies that in everyday life, self-identified gay men like himself are 'invisible'. Van der Wal (2008) agrees, when he states that in everyday life, public spaces often function to affirm the dominant ideologies of heterosexuality.

It is not just that Pride has been only about the "street party", "the drinking", "the carnival", Tshidiso, who grew up in Khayelitsha sees Pride as exclusive. In many respects the protest vs. spectacle debate is illustrative of the racial divisions still apparent in the city of Cape Town. For instance, the parade and street party that happens at the end of the 10-day Pride Programme is seen as not "inclusive". In fact, to Ayesha, when she started getting politically involved with civil society organisations and the gay rights movement, she discovered that Cape Town Pride is in many ways inaccessible. In her opinion, the issue was that Pride should subsidise people travelling from township areas so that they can attend Pride. This is because of its location, Pride is inaccessible, both geographically and socio-economically for those living in the 'coloured' and 'black' townships of Cape Town.

Ayesha recalls that she and her friends were made to feel that they do not belong in places such as the gay village, because certain places like clubs or bars were restricting people from coming in by setting the entry fees high. In the gay village during Pride, according to Ayesha, there is constant policing and they are made to feel unwelcome. In her own words: "It was not really inclusive of the cultures of Cape Town, it was very Green Point orientated, you know the 'white', sort of "gay community" scene, it was that". As noted earlier, these exclusions are not only race based, they are also delineated along notions of class and social geography.

Although Thidiso is attracted to the "fun" and the "partying" of the festival and the fact that the Pride parade "allows [him] to have visibility", he also takes part in the protest arm of the parade. Tshidiso came to terms with his sexuality later on in his life. In his own words he expressed the following to me: "My formative years as a teenager; I spent most of my time struggling with my sexuality when I could have been having fun!"

Coming to terms with his sexuality while growing up in the township was not easy, because there were no role models or older gender non-conforming men that he could relate to or talk to, or friends who were out. In many respects it was a lonely journey for him. Moreover, the environment (i.e. the township) had always felt threatening. For example, there was name calling, and he recalls that once he had a fight with someone because they called him a *moffie*. Tshidiso has moved to the city, a mere stone's throw away from where he grew up, but these two environments differ to him in terms of safety, infrastructure and socio-economic circumstances. In the city, Tshidiso explains: "You have to be careful, but not as much that you have to be careful in the township". According to Tshidiso, being gay in the township and being gay in the city are two very different experiences. Hence, for Tshidiso the township "was a very unstable environment, and it still is, you still have to be careful" he says. In addition, the township is not conducive to him because of firstly, the crime and violence that townships are usually associated with; and even more so, as a gender non-conforming man it is not easy to live in the township. In the township where he grew up, Tshidiso is constrained from as he puts it "being absolutely and outrageously gay". That environment is still very homophobic. The township does not allow him to be visible whereas the city - and by implication because of its location - the Pride parade, becomes a space that is more accepting of his same sex identifications.
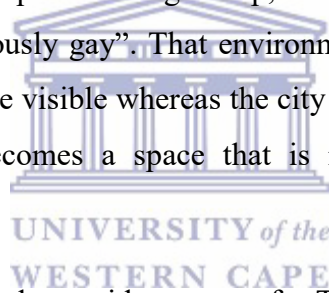
However, although, the Pride parade provides a space for Tshidiso, where he can be visible in his gay self, Tshidiso is also aware of how the Pride parade and the official street party can exclude others like him. For example, the official street party is located within the borders of the gay village, and is usually fenced. There is an entrance fee required in order to take part in the official street party. This entrance fee is often too high for those gender non-conforming persons living in the 'black' (such as Khayelitsha) townships of Cape Town. Hence some are unable to pay the entrance fee for the official street party, and unable to take part in this specific celebration of Pride.

### 8.3.1 The 'pink' city of South Africa

Cape Town with its metropolitan character is known as an international gay destination, as South Africa's 'pink city'. The Cape Town Gay Pride parade is marketed as a tourist attraction. The notion of Cape Town as South Africa's 'pink city' I believe should be contested. Although it is true that the establishment of gay bars and restaurants in Cape Town increased tremendously post-1994, these spaces still remain available to be enjoyed by 'white', middle

class gender non-conforming men and those who visit the city as tourists. More than two decades after the first political transformations, the race and gender demographics in the gay village have not changed much (Leatt & Reid, 2005). The 'pink city' (i.e. Cape Town) is thus available to those who are able to make use of such public spaces because of their socio-economic circumstances, thus it remains being enjoyed by a privileged few. In Cape Town the privileged few overwhelmingly include 'white' gender non-conforming men, and a few middle class 'black' and 'coloured' gender non-conforming men, or those who have otherwise had access to this model of "gay community", as reflected in the gay village through media and personal connections. Tshidiso also believes that the notion that Cape Town is the 'pink city' of Africa and of South Africa should be contested when he says:

> Not everyone in Cape Town that is gay benefit or is free to live their lives … you have to buy your way there, to get under the rainbow, so if you do not have the resources to buy your place under the rainbow you will not get under the rainbow.

The city centre is regarded as a metropolitan space that is more accepting of relationships between men, whilst townships and suburbs that are located furthest from the city centre are less densely populated, with a lesser cosmopolitan character than the suburbs that are located closer to the inner city. Those social spaces available for gender non-conforming men in the townships are temporal and spatial, not necessarily less frequent or invisible as implied in previous scholarly works, although the social spaces located in the 'coloured' townships are very different if looked at from the dominant homonormative (i.e. 'white') perspective. From this perspective, gay sociability available for gender non-conforming men in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town seems less visible.

The above narrative of life as a 'black' gender non-conforming man growing up in the township as presented by Tshidiso cannot be more different to the highly visible *moffie-drag* culture as presented in the previous chapters. In the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town, the *moffie* is highly visible. Social spaces do exist for gender non-conforming men to affirm themselves in their gender expression as women. In the community halls, schools and local dance clubs, in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town, are all social spaces that are very much socially embedded within notions of community. In these social spaces the *moffie* figure is celebrated. They find social protection in such highly visible performances of same sex desire. In addition to the public performances of same sex desire between men, the *moffie* as hairdresser is an integral part of the "Cape community". Importantly, Tshidiso articulates that he had no role

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models or older gender non-conforming men in his social network of friends, family or neighbours in the township where he grew up. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, young gender non-conforming men in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town are guided by drag mothers, older gender non-conforming men such as Igshaan and Mogamat are the custodians of the historical roots of *moffie* life and in this way ensures the reproduction of the *moffie* figure. Thus contrary to the experiences as narrated by Tshidiso of identifying as gay in 'black' South African townships, that the township does not allow him to be visible in his gender non-conformity, in 'coloured' townships of Cape Town this narrative is far less constraining to gender non-conforming men.

## 8.4 *Khumbulani* Pride: The "alternative inclusive pride"

In response to the protests against Cape Town Pride, an alternative inclusive pride organisation has been established, known as *Khumbulani* Pride. Tshidiso informed me of *Khumbulani* Pride, which he called an "alternative pride", and which means "To remember":

> To remember those who were brutally killed because of their same sex orientation and remembering those who died of AIDS (see Photo 30).



Photo 30. Leading the *Khumbulani* Pride march in the township of Philippi, on the Cape Flats (1)
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

*Khumbulani* Pride, according to Funeka Soldaat, was initially established to remember those 'black' lesbians who were murdered because of their same sex expressions (Sefali, 2014). This event was scheduled to take place on the 17th of May 2014, less than two months after Cape

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Town Gay Pride. The implicit aim of *Khumbulani* Pride is to "Bring Pride to townships". We arrived at about 9h30 in the morning in the township of Philippi. According to the City of Cape Town (2013), Philippi has 191 025 people, 98.2% of whom describe themselves as 'black' South Africans. The unemployment rate amongst the predominantly 'black' population is almost forty percent (38.28%) (City of Cape, 2013). It is a very windy, warm Saturday morning. Tshidiso has to call the organiser of the event, because we are not familiar with this area, and she directs us to where we are supposed to meet. The township is surrounded by Gugulethu, Crossroads and Nyanga to the north of Philippi, Mitchells Plain is located to the south east of the township, and Cape Town International Airport located to the north east of the township. The township is also surrounded by farm areas and small holdings (City of Cape Town, 2013).

When we arrive at the point of assembly, which was next to a community centre, in what seemed to be a main road, three other vehicles also arrive. We find a good location next to the community centre to park our vehicles, because the Pride march is scheduled to start from where the community centre is located. However, the organiser does not want us to leave our vehicles here, because it is too risky, and explains that we have to follow her and park in a more secure location. The sports field I later learnt is where the march is expected to end, although we will follow a much longer route from the community centre to the sports field. A minibus is organised to take us back to where the march is expected to start (the community centre). The taxi driver is reluctant to take us back (he is worried because no one has paid taxi fares to him) and we sit for about 15 minutes in the taxi. After some time of negotiating with one of the organisers, the driver calls someone I suspect is his boss, and is given the go ahead for us to be taken back to the community centre. As we arrived at the community centre we saw the initial smallish crowd had grown to about 70 people.

The crowd consists mainly of 'black' lesbians and young self-identified gay men. The organisation called "Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM) seems to have a huge following of mostly 'white' men and women. Two women wearing clerical collars carry a big banner that reads: "Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM). I am what I am by the grace of God".

IAM was founded in 1995 in Cape Town. The organisation focuses on being a facilitator for inclusion and the celebration of diversity within religious contexts. IAM is well placed as a catalyst for inclusion and for celebrating diversity of religions, sexual orientation, race etc.

Apart from primarily young lesbians and young self-identified gay men, most of the marchers consist of members of this organisation. Others carry a poster with the words, "Nobody is free, until everybody is free". There are also two police vehicles and about five police officers lined up with the marchers. Although this is a smallish crowd, the energy exerted by the crowd amplifies the numbers.  The marchers sing in isiXhosa, walk in silence and sometimes almost *toyi-toyi*[48] (see Photos 31 & 32) through the streets of Philippi.



Photo 31. Leading the *Khumbulani* Pride march in the township of Philippi, on the Cape Flats (2)
*Source* Photo taken by researcher

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[48]*Toyi-toyi* could begin as the stomping of feet and spontaneous chanting during protests that could include political slogans or songs, either improvised or previously created. Some sources claim that South Africans learnt it from Zimbabweans (Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toyi-toyi).

http://etd.uwc.ac.za

Photo 32. Marching in the streets of Philippi at the 2013 *Khumbulani* Pride
*Source Khumbulani* Pride Website

As we start marching, we were all squashed onto one side of the street. Some of us are pushed onto the pavement, where some of the residents peeled out of their homes to watch us. We are marching almost on the doorsteps of some of the houses. The houses seemed to be built almost on the street. Houses are poorly constructed and poorly fenced. Washing is draped over the concrete walls since the sun is out today. In some dwellings there are makeshift houses (i.e. shacks) built on the stand. Other dwellings consist of only shacks.

As the crowd meanders through the houses of the township, we sometimes have to watch where we are walking, because in some streets, sewage water is overflowing, and we have to either jump over it, or reroute pass puddles of sewage water. We finally reached the sports field where activities are meant to take place. The crowd appears much smaller now, since we have gathered on a sports field, and we are not being contained as much as we have been during the march. The wind is so strong (characteristic of the weather on the Cape Flats) that the audio-system is cutting out every time the Cape Town Gay Pride festival director wants to speak to officially open the *Khumbulani* Pride event. He speaks in English, and someone else translates for him. After the official opening, music is playing in the background, groups of mostly young lesbians are spontaneously dancing to the music that cuts out every now and then, because of the strong wind. Tshidiso and I decide to leave, since it does not seem that there is anything else planned for *Khumbulani* Pride.

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The majority of the 70 marchers were young 'black' lesbians who live in the 'black' townships of Cape Town. Contrary to Pride held in the upmarket suburb of Green Point in Cape Town, there were no decorative and colourful floats, no dressing up, no streets lined with huge palm trees. Certainly no half naked bodies, dancing in the streets of Philippi shouting: "I am born this way!" There are dogs running around in the street, mini-bus taxis hooting, we are constantly regulated by the police and the marshals to stay on one side of the street. There is no freedom of expression, no celebration, I feel constrained by the presence of police (whom I do not recall being visible during the main Pride parade in Cape Town). We march through the streets of Philippi, as Tshidiso explained: "Bringing Pride to the townships".

From the arguments presented above, one can deduce that Pride means different things to different people. What is true for all South Africans however, regardless of class, race and where one is placed socially or geographically, is that "we all have equal rights". Whether all gender non-conforming men and women in South Africa have access to those rights is contested during Pride. It is not simply that the "gay rights clause" guarantees social and legal protections, the reality is more nuanced and complicated.

It is true that the advent of the 1996 Constitution of South Africa guaranteed legal and social protections to all, regardless of sexual orientation. This, together with an increase in the visibility of gender non-conforming men and women, makes a vocabulary available where discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is recognised. Although there is recognition of increasing visibilities of gender non-conforming men and women, this also has a contradictory effect (Graziano, 2004a b, 2005). According to McDonald (2003) higher levels of 'outness', integration into communities and challenging patriarchal gender roles, are all linked to increased rates of certain forms of homophobic victimization. Increasing identifications as gay, and the recognition of often derogatory connotations attached to the use of local terms such as *moffie*, is illustrative of a vocabulary that recognises a discourse around gay rights.

The Cape Town Gay Pride parades (2011-2015) that I attended were overwhelmingly a jovial occasion. The answer to the question, "what is there to celebrate?" was answered by my 17-year-old niece, who went with me to her first Pride parade in 2015. When I explained to her, while walking very slowly behind the colourful floats, that we were making protest against the Pride parade, she was confused. She responded in the following manner: "I thought that we are celebrating being gay and out into the streets". What Zethu and others like her remind us of is that we cannot be complacent because a few of us are enjoying the privileges of the "gay rights

clause", whereas the 'black' majority's vulnerabilities become invisibilised by the spectacle that has become Cape Town Pride.

The nuanced and complicated reality that gender non-conforming men in South Africa find themselves in can be explained by the theory of intersectionality. American critical legal scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality in 1989. The term intersectionality, according to Crenshaw (1989), from its inception, had a long-standing interest in one particular intersection: the intersections of race and gender revealing the complexities inherent in understanding human life (p139). The central ideas of an intersectionality perspective according to Olena Hankivsky (2014), in *Intersectionality 101*, is that "lived realities are shaped by different factors and social dynamics operating together, thus human lives cannot be explained by taking into account single categories, such as gender, race, and socio-economic status" (Hankivsky, 2014: p3).

In this way, according to Crenshaw (1991, p. 1244), intersectionality rejects the 'single-axis framework' (feminist researchers have been acutely aware of the limitations of gender as a single analytical category) instead analysing the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of black women's experiences' (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244; McCall (2005, p. 1771). In summary, according to the intersectionality perspective, inequities are never the result of single, distinct factors (Olena Hankivsky, 2014).Thus, as articulated by Veenstra (2011) intersectionality theory is a way of understanding social inequalities by race, gender, class, and sexuality that emphasizes their mutually constitutive natures, possesses potential to uncover and explicate previously unknown inequalities.

**8.5 Conclusion**

Inasmuch as Carnival provides a space to release the pressures and frustrations of everyday life, Gay Pride (similar to Carnival) is about politics, in particular identity politics as well. Of course, as postulated by cultural sociologist Kate Gaudio (1994), in the second edition of *Contemporary Political Sociology: Globalization, Politics and Power*, that what counts as "political" in terms of content and style must first be made "political", it must be made visible and relevant to visions of how social relations are and could be organised. In a similar vein, taking into consideration the processual qualities of identity formations and that everyday life is not static, Nash (2009) calls for wider definitions of politics (as well as power) that encompass the formation, contestations and transformation of identities and institutions.

I propose that theorising identity politics within a framework of incorporating creolisation allows for opposing discourses to exist side by side. Everyday life is not static, as articulated by Nash (2009). Ideas and identity formations are influenced by each other (i.e. "relation"). In fact the Cape Town Gay Pride parade affirms that we live in a creolising world, where opposing ideas can exist side by side. Inevitably, the imagined boundaries between protest and spectacle becomes blurred and in essence influenced by each other, in this way there is more potential to effect change.
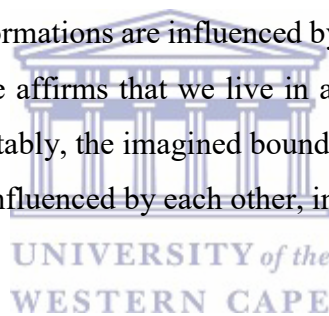
I highlighted in this chapter that Pride is not only about celebration, it is also about raising political consciousness. As demonstrated in this chapter, the first Gay Pride parade, that took place in Cape Town before the advent of the 1996 South African Constitution, had a political impetus. This in many respects is a reflection of gay liberation politics globally. Historically, the first Pride marches have their roots in the USA, with the commemoration of the Stone Wall Inn riots. In South Africa, the first Pride marches in Johannesburg and Cape Town mobilised men and women with same sex desires to achieve equality before the law. This was not only a pivotal time for same sex men and women in South Africa but for the country as a whole. In this sense, gender non-conforming men and women, regardless of creed, class, gender or race performances, were united in the struggle to achieve equality before the law - and for those classified as 'black' and 'coloured' to obtain equal citizenship.

Twenty-three years after the first Pride parade was held in Cape Town, there is uneasiness with regards to whether all South African citizens have obtained equal citizenship and have equal access to the resources that South Africa has to offer. This is demonstrated by the protests

characterising the Cape Town Gay Pride parade in the last couple of years. The spectacle of the Pride parade in its overwhelmingly carnivalesque aesthetic was juxtaposed with the protest arm of the parade in this chapter.

In this chapter, I describe Green Point, where the main Pride activities and the Pride parade take place. This environment is far apart from where *Khumbulani* Pride takes place, in the township of Philippi. In Green Point, traffic officials guide the marches in their colourful floats through Main Road, Green Point, singing and dancing and half naked bodies gyrating to popular tunes. We are all greeted by onlookers, some commending us for being brave enough to come out into the streets. One cannot help but make a comparison to *Khumbulani* Pride, where we march, controlled not by traffic officials but police vans in streets where we have to watch where we walk because of sewage water having spilled out onto the pavement. The call to "bring Pride to the townships" is an implicit call to make the township environment more conducive for gender non-conforming men such as Tshidiso. Even though this might not be the explicit aim of "bringing Pride to the townships", but a consequence of "bringing Pride to the townships", it also means that the spotlight will be on the township. Hence by "bringing Pride to the townships" the subjective realities of those gender non-conforming men and women who live in 'black' South African townships, in that it still reflects the legacies of our *apartheid* past, cannot be ignored. Hence, although Pride provides a platform for the "gay community", the public performance consists of multiple and contested meanings, brought on by the interconnections between spaces, subjectivities and sexualities (Markwell & Waitt, 2009).

# CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

## 9.1 Introduction

Nowhere else in South African contexts exists a highly visible same sex subculture such as that found in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. Through historical and contemporary ethnography I framed the invention of *moffie* life in relation to creolising identifications, such as those found in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. I propose, as does Helene Strauss (2009), that creolisation is a process of identity formation that takes place in contexts where the cultural codes governing behaviours are difficult to decipher. This idea that the cultural codes that govern behaviour is vague to decode, is reminiscent of the perception that 'coloured' people "lack culture". Mohammed Adhikari (2006) puts this argument forward as it is expressed by a 'coloured' informant:

> We 'coloured' people are not a proper nation, we don't have our own culture or land that we can say is our own. The 'coloured' people is like a mixed *bredie* [stew] made up of all different kinds of people (p.481).

These perceptions reinforce the discourse of miscegenation that is based on essentialist assumptions and cultural expression (Adhikari, 2006). Whilst acknowledging that such perceptions feed into essentialist discourses of race mixture, it also contributes to understanding identity formation within creolising societies. In Erasmus's (2001) reading of 'colouredness', the sociologist has taken identifications of 'colouredness' away from the often essentialist notions of race mixture to one that incorporates processes of creolisation. Erasmus (2001) articulates 'coloured' identifications as culturally creative responses to the violent legacies of slavery and colonialism and *apartheid*. Processes of creolisation are not preoccupied with origins, hence all notions of identifications as fixed are understood as in flux and fluid, allowing for ambiguity. In this sense, if 'colouredness' is understood within processes of creolisation, gender ambivalent figures such as the *moffie* are not only allowed, but also valorised. Hence as embodied in the figure of the *moffie*, creole social formations such as those found in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town facilitate the emergence of alternative performances of gender.

*Moffie-ness* as described in this dissertation is embodied in the highly visible same sex subculture that is historically rooted in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. In this dissertation I used the term gender non-conforming men to refer to those persons who have

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been assigned male at birth and who are perceived as transgressing masculine gender norms (in particular having sexual desires for the same sex). At the centre of this study is the figure of the *moffie*. The figure of the *moffie* is described as central to the social organisation of gender non-conforming men in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. It becomes evident right from the beginning that within these townships same sex relationships between men, gay social lifestyles and feminine self-styling are all centred on either resisting or conforming to notions of *moffie-ness*. This highly visible same sex subculture is described in this ethnography as celebrated in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town, despite the apparent gender transgressions and same sex intentions.

This however does not point to an overall social acceptance of same sex sexualities. It is well documented that gender non-conforming persons often live outside of the protective boundaries of conventional society. Even though the 1996 Constitution theoretically created a protective environment for gender non-conforming persons, reports of hate crimes, violence and discrimination towards men and women who are open about their same sex identification persist (Mkhize, Bennett, Reddy, & Moletsane, 2010). This is demonstrated by the brutal attacks directed towards gender non-conforming men, where it is suggestive of a disjunction between legislation and everyday life. Of course there is recognition of the progressiveness inherent in the 1996 South African Constitution and the consequent statutes and laws that followed.

However, homophobic attacks directed to gender non-conforming persons continue to be reported, investigated by researchers and testified to by those affected. In examining attitudes towards gender non-conforming persons and towards homosexuality in general, a survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) revealed that about half a million South Africans over the course of a year have physically harmed women who dressed and behaved like men in public, and 240,000 have beaten up men who dressed and behaved like women (Sutherland et al., 2016). Alarmingly, the report revealed that about three million South Africans indicated that they might commit acts of violence against gender non-conforming people in the future (Sutherland et al., 2016). Similarly, this dissertation highlighted the perception that still perseveres in the public domain of homosexuality as 'unAfrican'. This dominant narrative effectively invisibilizes gender non-conforming persons, contributing to the myth that same sex identifications are not that prevalent on the African continent. In many ways this master narrative informs the everyday lives of gender non-conforming persons, pushing them into silence and onto the fringes of society.

By the same token, the high visibility of gender non-conforming men in drag provides some protection for those individuals. At the same time, it also has the potential of putting them in harm's way. This is similar to experiences reported by Swarr (2012), in her ethnographic fieldwork - that because men in drag perform such highly visible femininity, they are often made vulnerable because of this, but at the same time are also protected because of this. Reid (2007 & 2013) in his ethnography also found that there are indeed advantages and disadvantages of "feminine self-styling". Inasmuch as Colin obtained legendary status, as articulated by Reid (2007 & 2013) femininity renders gays vulnerable in the same way that women are vulnerable (see Chapter 4). Similar to the experiences of some of the 'ladies' in Reid's (2007 & 2013) study, gender-based violence, including sexual assault, often forms part of the life stories of my interlocutors.

This ethnography of *moffie* life is one that described a highly visible and socially organised same sex subculture that does not live outside of the power structures protecting heteronormativity (Johnson, 2008). Heteronormativity - the way it is considered 'normal' for men and women to love each other/have sex with each other, and 'abnormal' for men to love and have sex with each other - contributes to gender non-conforming men being made vulnerable to social rejection and social marginalisation (Cloete et al., 2011). My intention in this study is not to deny the existence of homophobia and structural violence committed towards gender non-conforming persons and in particular towards 'coloured' gender non-conforming men as was testified to by some of my interlocutors. I also do not intend to turn a "blind-eye" to the everyday realities of gender non-conforming men, in that various sectors of society operate within a heteronormative framework, where heterosexuality and vaginal sex are assumed to be the norm. In this study, I illuminated how the high visibility that, on the one hand provides gender non-conforming men with some protection, also contributes to their vulnerabilities.

As an HIV researcher working with LGBT populations, I am made very aware of the realities of being marginalised, of being victimised every day for loving the same sex. However, gender non-conforming men's vulnerabilities have been presented from a victim-based approach that ultimately ignores the agency and inventiveness of this group to negotiate their non-conformity in a largely heteronormative society. Instead in this dissertation I explore this counter-narrative of celebrating alternative performances of gender as experienced through that of the figure of the *moffie*. In this world of femininity created by gender non-conforming men, I ask if the social

acceptance of gender non-conforming men is facilitated by the emergence of creolised identities such as those found amongst 'coloured' Afrikaans speaking people? And whether the making and performance of alternative performances of gender is an integral part of the processes of creolisation. I do so to answer questions of citizenship and belonging in post-1994 South Africa.

## 9.2 The ambivalent social context in which gender non-conforming men in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town find themselves in

I explored the links between the performance of the *moffie* in the carnival/local popular culture and the everyday performance of being *moffie* and how this is related to the social acceptance of *moffie* life in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. In Chapters 2 & 3 I looked at how the figure of the *moffie* emerged historically in popular culture. It emerged that the *Kaapse Klopse* served as historical link to the social acceptance of the *moffie* figure in everyday life. In fact the *moffie* figure was prominent in the *Kaapse Klopse*. The *moffie* often led the troupes through the streets of the inner-suburb of District Six during Carnival. Thus the allowance of the *moffie* through popular cultural events such as the *Kaapse Klopse* contributed to the social acceptance of the *moffie* in everyday life. This study found that the social acceptance of the *moffie* as with that of the *Kaapse Klopse* is class-based. With the *moffie* figure and the *Kaapse Klopse* having been embraced by the working class and often rejected by middle class 'coloured' people.

Similar to the contested social terrain in which the *Kaapse Klopse* is located, so too is the *moffie*, in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town situated in an ambivalent space. In the first instance, with the social and legal protective framework provided by the 1996 Constitution comes protection and thus having been able to freely express same sex identifications. On the other hand, many gender non-conforming persons experience structural discrimination based on sexual orientation. This dissertation described the various strategies, fashion and stylization used by gender non-conforming men to present a femininity that appears to be socially acceptable. Such a presentation of the feminine however is negotiated within often rigid and seemingly fixed social structures that do not bend to the implied gender transgressions that gender non-conforming men are engaged in. In this way, gender non-conforming men often have to negotiate same sex identifications within such rigid structures. In particular I found that identifying as gay and/or having same sex desires opposes the fundamental principles of Islam. Muslims in South Africa represent a small minority, a mere 1.5 percent of the total population

in 2001 (Bangstad, 2007). However, Muslims in Cape Town, the historical heartland of Islam in South Africa, represent approximately 10 percent of the population (Bangstad, 2007).

Islam remained in some way or the other a defining feature in the lives of many of my interlocutors. When Mogamat was younger, he was married to a woman and from the pictures and stories that he shared with me, was a devout Muslim man. In present day Cape Town in his gay self, he continues to practise Islam. Mogamat celebrates Ramadan. This celebration however he does not share with his family. It appears that to some extent he had to choose between his life as a Muslim man and his same sex desires. In Chapter 2 is also where the lives of Marawaan and Ayesha is shown as on the one hand experiencing social acceptance within the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town and on the other hand having felt rejection based on the Islamic faith.

This ambivalent social context is revealed on an interpersonal level with the high visibility of the figure of the *moffie* in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town and paradoxically placed with that of the men they love. The men who have desires for feminine performing men are often talked about by my interlocutors. They engage in "gay sex" but have straight lives. For instance during fieldwork, the straight performing men who visited Mogamat's apartment disappeared as soon as I entered the small flat. Throughout my fieldwork, the men who my interlocutors loved and had sexual desires for remained elusive. They remained hidden in the most part because they love and had sex with other men whilst many lived a straight life.

## 9.3 *Moffie* life in creolising District Six

In Chapter 3, I traced the historical roots of the *moffie* to that of District Six. District Six was popularly described as a "melting pot" of cultures, ideas and people, all settling down and carving a life for themselves at the foot of Table Mountain. It is remembered by those who lived there as a society in harmony with each other; as a place that was apart from the rest of South Africa. Those who lived in District Six felt protected from the social ills brought on by the South African *apartheid* government. In the District, people from all races, creeds and religious backgrounds shared the geographical space at the foot of Table Mountain. Here, they created for themselves a "new world". Framing this "new world" within Édouard Glissant's concept of creolisation is one that, according to associate professor of English Carine Mardorossian in *Poetics of Landscape: Édouard Glissant's Creolized Ecologies* (Mardorossian, 2013) recognises "an ethos that transcends boundaries by bringing races,

classes, and people together and by replacing separatism with relationality (or in Glissant's deceptively simple term, with "relation")" (p.983). In *One World in Relation* (2009) Édouard Glissant revealed the "fluidity of "relation" beyond the closed doors of systems of discrimination, segregation, and rejection, and to insist that difference is more constructive when viewed as a by-product of solidarity and conciliation between two or more elements of the *Tout-Monde*[49]" (Diawara, 2011) (p.1).

Testimonies provided by Igshaan and Mogamat in Chapter 3 supported the popular idea of District Six as a harmonious and diverse society, free from the laws implemented by the *apartheid* government. Indeed, District Six provided an example of an ideology of the South African rainbow nation project. Implicit in the rainbow nation project, as argued by Baines (1998), is the co-existence of individual and collective identities, a representation of different cultures, and a shared 'South Africanness' (Baines, 1998); that is until the Group Areas Act was implemented, and forcefully removed thousands of families from the homes in Cape Town and relocated them to the windswept Cape Flats.

This conducive social milieu was also articulated by Mogamat and Igshaan, both natives to District Six. Both draw from memories of legendary *moffie* queens such as Kewpie who often publicly portrayed camp glamour in the streets of District Six. This visibility and social organisation was particularly noteworthy because the social context provided no protective legal or social environment: laws were in place that could potentially jail gender non-conforming persons. In one instance, Mogamat recalls that Kewpie wore a Victorian styled costume out in public to add to the campness a horse-drawn carriage completes the look. These were the kinds of public performances of gender non-conformity that were celebrated in the District. In fact Mogamat remembers that the queens of District Six were trailblazers for "the gays of today". Gender non-conforming men such as Igshaan and Mogamat reproduced the figure of the *moffie*, invented in part in District Six, in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town.

## 9.4 A 'natural' predisposition to perform femininity?

Research on stereotypes of same sex identified men has demonstrated that gay self-identified men are perceived to be more feminine and less masculine than their heterosexual counterparts

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[49]According to Patrick Crowley (2006) "Glissant's name for the relations between all things is the world, which appears threefold: as *tout-monde* (the world in its entirety)" (p.105).

(Fingerhut & Peplau, 2006). In this way, feminine craftsmanship such as hairdressing are ascribed to same sex identified men. Conversely, traditionally masculine craftsmanship such as a motor mechanic is not typically associated with same sex identified men. My interlocutors demonstrated that they are very much aware of these stereotypes. Whilst some actively contradict such stereotypes, others endorse notions of the *moffie* as exclusively *femme.*

In District Six, the stories of Kewpie, Mogamat and Igshaan demonstrated a narrative where the figure of the *moffie* is seen as 'naturally' associated with femininity in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. Through various modes of self-styling, including hairdressing and gay pageantry, I found that this narrative of gender non-conforming men being 'naturally' inclined to perform feminine roles and responsibilities was affirmed by my interlocutors and also reflected in public discourse. This 'natural' inclination was particularly associated with the ubiquitous gay hairdresser as having a 'natural' flair for hair. Through representations of *moffie* life in the popular media, *moffies* were described as having a 'natural' talent for hair and fashion. Mogamat and Igshaan are known in the local townships of Cape Town for their hairdressing abilities. They are seen as legends because of their 'natural' abilities as hairdressers.

The *moffie* as presented in popular media and through the stories told by my interlocutors embody feminine glamour. In everyday life, apart from hairdressing, they were often relegated to the confines of the kitchen and with feminine roles and responsibilities such as cooking and cleaning. An exaggerated social and physical compliance to femininity is strictly adhered to by my interlocutors. Importance is placed on gender non-conforming men living in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town to act and behave like women. Female pronouns are used by gender non-conforming men in conjunction with 'girl', 'lady' or 'sister'. These all function to affirm a feminine social gender position. In these instances, 'girl' or 'lady' and 'sister' all refer to a feminine social gender position and a sexual positioning as the feminised partner in a same sex relationship. I found that gender non-conforming men police not only themselves, but also each other in order to strengthen the gender binary they strive to associate with. Hence, not only is value placed on acting and behaving like women, the act of showing desires for straight-identified men goes to strengthen the gender binaries they adhere to. Gender non-conforming men are quick to correct each other when a male pronoun is used in error or the assigned name at birth is used instead of the adopted female name.

In addition to this, it is also expected from gender non-conforming men in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town to present a hyper-feminine performance. In the first instance, during gay beauty pageant competitions, the contestant with the most authentic performance of the feminine wins the crown. Gay beauty pageant queens who perform the feminine most authentically are rewarded with the title of Miss. In turn this celebratory status provides social protection for gay beauty pageant contestants in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town.

## 9.5 A biological inclination to same sex identifications

The notion that homosexuality is just a 'fashion' is shared by many South Africans (Reid, 2003). The term 'fashion', according to Reid (2003) suggests a temporary identity of choice. Reid (2003) continues in stating that:

> In fact the idea of homosexuality as a 'fashion' has become a particularly common refrain in post-apartheid South Africa and is frequently deployed to dismiss the increased visibility of gay men and lesbians in the wake of political transformation and a Constitution that guarantees equality on the grounds of 'sexual orientation' (p.7).

This discourse implies that same sex identifications and desires can be learnt and for that reason unlearnt. Of course such a discourse is often used as brutal attacks against same sex identified men as a means to 'correct' same sex behaviours and desires. That homosexuality is just a 'fashion' is in contradiction to a discourse that supports a biological premise for same sex identifications and desires.

The idea that sexual orientation is biological has important implications for how same sex sexualities are perceived. Even though having to 'prove' that same sex sexualities are innate in order to be socially accepted is problematic in itself a possible benefit to a focus on genetic origins also serves to counter the assertions by religious fundamentalist groups that homosexuality is a chosen 'sin', a 'lifestyle' and is 'unnatural' (Sheldon et al., 2007). Such a focus have led some groupings to adopt the notion that identifying an innate causal role for homosexuality will result in more tolerant attitudes, as well as social and legal gains for same sex identified men and women and whereas negative attitudes are associated with the view that its origin is personal choice (Sheldon et al., 2007). As was demonstrated in Chapter 8 of this dissertation, a common theme throughout Pride is the adoption by many gender non-conforming men and women of the slogan "I was born this way". According to Sheldon et al.

(2007) gender non-conforming men and women adopt such a slogan to advocate for legal and civil rights.

In the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town a narrative exists of same sex identifications/gender transgressions as "running in the family", although not repeated by any of the other interlocutors of my study, which is very interesting and worth exploring. In fact, because of this notion, Colin was accepted as his gay self. In Colin's family having same sex desires is seen as not outside of what is perceived as 'normal' – that same sex identifications are 'natural', and hence in this instance remain unquestionable. They are to some extent 'taken-for-granted' (much as heterosexuality remains unquestionable). In Colin's family it appears that this articulation used to explain same sex identifications demonstrates that they perceive homosexuality as having a biological basis. Such an understanding of same sex desires being "in the genes" can perhaps help to explain the high visibility and social acceptance of the figure of the *moffie* in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town.

## 9.6 "Boys will be girls"- Performing gender

The works of scholars such as Michel Foucault (1978), Judith Butler (1990) and Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) (cited in Petchesky, 2007) demonstrate that "sex, the body simultaneously produces, and is produced by, social meanings, and that, most dramatically in the case of inter-sex infants, culture, discourse, and society influence the material body from its prenatal and neonatal beginnings" (p12). In this way, according to Butler (2011), "there is nothing left if any of sex, since gender encompasses the social meanings that sex assumes and gender in this instance replaces sex by the social meanings it takes on" (p.102). To demonstrate how gender subsumes sex, Butler (1990) writes the following: "I think for a woman to identify as a woman *is* a culturally enforced effect. I do not think that it's a given that on the basis of a given anatomy, an identification will follow. I think that 'coherent identification' has to be cultivated, policed, and enforced; and that the violation of that has to be punished, usually through shame" (p.1).

Judith Butler's (1990) articulation of the performativity of gender is revealed in drag as performed by gender non-conforming men in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. For Butler (1990) "gender is an impersonation". In light of Butler's (1990) articulation of the performativity of gender (the imitation of gender), what are the implications of this for the dominant discourse around heterosexuality? To assert that all gender is like drag, or is drag, is to suggest that imitation is at the heart of heterosexuality and its gender binaries, and that drag

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is not a secondary imitation but that hegemonic heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations (Butler, 2011).

Judith Butler's (1990) theory on the performativity of gender highlights that gender is both constructed and performed. In fact through repetition the performance of gender becomes 'real'. Butler (1990) stresses that one is not born a woman (or a man) one is always becoming. In this way emphasizing that despite understandings of gender to be fixed, it is fluid. The performativity of gender becomes most apparent on the gay beauty pageant stage. Here gay pageant queens reveal that the fixity of gender is fabricated. Through 'feminising' their masculine bodies, pageant queens reveal the constructedness of gender. On stage, in everyday life gender non-conforming men use fashion and stylization to present a physical and social embodiment of the feminine. For most gender non-conforming men they do not wish to become but to temporarily play with gender. In her performance of the feminine, Ayesha revealed that through repetition the act of gender becomes 'real'. In her performance of the feminine she identified as a *femme* gay man, taking part in gay pageant competitions, following performing the feminine exclusively onstage, she started dragging in everyday life and consequently identified as a straight woman.

Dragging as performed on stage and in everyday life in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town demonstrates that there is no 'natural', essential, biological basis to gender or in fact to heterosexuality (see Tyler, 1999). Thus it is invented. The iconic phrase: "Boys will be girls" captured in the Kinks song of the 1970s ("Girls will be boys and boys will be girls/It is a mixed up muddled up shook up world except for Lola") illustrates not only the invention of gender but also the politics of gay drag. For Carole-Ann Tyler, associate professor of English, the politics of gay drag "catches gender in the act" (Tyler, 1999). Hence to suggest that all gender is like drag, or is drag, is to suggest that imitation is at the heart of heterosexuality and its gender binaries. It is to suggest that drag is not a secondary imitation but that hegemonic heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations (Butler, 2011).

## 9.7 Afrikaans – a creole language

Édouard Glissant (2008) states that a creole language is commonly understood to work within two languages or two fields of language. In fact creole languages merge the structures of two (or more) linguistic traditions, the product of this synthesis, according to Glissant (2008) "is a

new kind of expression, a supplement to the two (or more) original roots, or series of roots from which the creole language was born" (p.83).

In Glissant's (2008) conceptualisation of what constitutes a creole language, Afrikaans fulfil these requirements. Social anthropologist, Kees van der Waal (2012) reminds us that Afrikaans was shaped by the structural violence of the colonial past, a creolised language emerging in the complex mix of people from diverse origins at the Cape: masters from Holland, slaves from Indonesia (Davids 2011), herders from the Cape and many others. To this, van der Waal, (2012) notes that the Cape vernacular amongst 'coloured' "Afrikaans-speakers is primarily associated with a history of creolisation, enjoyment of local social life, celebration of connectedness and a drive towards the full recognition of this vernacular" (p.458). From its creole beginnings, the language underwent more transformations and mutations in District Six and emerged into a new local vernacular known as *kombuistaal* or Cape Afrikaans.

In Chapter 7 of this dissertation I draw attention to the invention of Cape Afrikaans as indication of the creativity and unique ways of expression that characterises creole social formations such as those found amongst 'coloured' people. The origins of *moffietaal* rooted in the Cape *moffie-drag* culture also points to the creativity typical of creolised societies. These mutations of Afrikaans as originating from creole beginnings into Cape Afrikaans also demonstrates that the vernacular remains open to alternative and new ways of expression. Similarly, 'white' and middle class 'coloured' South Africans claim a 'pure' Afrikaans in opposition to that of the Cape vernacular, which is considered to be 'tainted' and associated with working class 'coloured' people. Ironically a language that originated historically as a creole language through a process that merged cultures and people together, has resulted in creating divisions based on imaginary racial boundaries.

Afrikaans however is always becoming and in flux, hence there is potential, according to van der Waal (2012) to resist a hegemonic position of standard Afrikaans with its overtones of purism and exclusivity. To this van der Waal (2012) notes that an additional suggestion of the celebratory and politically conscious way that Afrikaans was reappropriated by previously marginalised Afrikaans-speakers was the *Afrikaaps* production and the associated movement around Afrikaans and Khoisan in 'coloured' popular culture.

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**9.8 The Cape Town Gay Pride as creolised space**

The Cape Town Gay Pride parade reveals that the structural inequalities brought on by the *apartheid* government in many ways impact on the lives of ordinary South Africans. Even though the system of *apartheid* was abolished, 'black' and 'coloured' South Africans remain living in poverty with little access to the rights provided to them by the 1996 Constitution. These persistent structural inequalities is illuminated upon in the space of the Cape Town Gay Pride parade. In particular in the mobilisation of "taking pride to the townships" these structural inequalities are highlighted. The alternative pride is held in Philippi, a predominantly 'black' township of Cape Town, and juxtaposed with that of the upper class suburb of Green Point. Green Point is where the Cape Town Gay Pride parade takes place.

In taking "taking pride to the townships" it becomes more difficult to ignore the apparent structural inequalities that is still very much race-based. In this way, the alternative pride parade is constituted upon a political cause to raise awareness of the lives of LGBTI people in the township. Politically, in the hearts and minds of activists the alternative pride has to separate itself from the main pride, which is located in Green Point. In contrast to the alternative pride, the main pride is characterised by an overwhelmingly carnivalesque aesthetic, that celebrates the benefits brought on by the "gay rights clause". Those LGBTI people firmly located in the political arm of the Pride parade argues that the "gay rights clause" are not accessible to many gender non-conforming men (and women) living in 'black' and 'coloured' townships of South Africa.

In the Cape Town Gay Pride parade opposing discourses of protest and celebration exist side by side. On a superficial level of analysis these discourses are in opposition to each other. The carnivalesque aesthetic with its implicit aim to celebrate diversity and on the other hand, the protest arm with its political aim to reverse the social order and to effect change. I argue that taken separately and seen as in opposition to each other and indeed different to each other does little to facilitate its intrinsic aim to effect change. If seen to exist side by side, there is potential to allow for a space that challenges the current status quo. I argue that by incorporating Glissant's processes of creolisation, a space is created where opposing discourses are seen as complementing each other and not necessarily in opposition to each other.

Moreover the Cape Town Gay Pride parade interpreted as Carnival, where Carnival creates a platform where creativity, originality and inventiveness is expected from all performers is in

line with Glissantian's creolisation. In tandem with Carnival's playful aesthetic, is that of resistance and of challenging the status quo.

## 9.9 Conclusion

In this dissertation I presented a case study of the *moffie* as it is rooted in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. A figure that embodies an alternative performance of gender. Moreover the figure of the *moffie* is highly visible and socially accepted in the 'coloured' townships of Cape Town. Through the use of Judith Butler's (1990) gender performativity, the processual qualities of gender are acknowledged and the idea of gender as fixed is replaced with the notion of "always becoming". This notion of "becoming" is also reflected in Glissant's creolisation, where identities remain in constant flux. Thus the two theoretical frameworks are complementary to each other and useful in a creolising world. In the end incorporating processes such as creolisation to examine performances of race and gender is more useful to look at questions of citizenship and belonging (in particular in post-1994 South Africa) instead of focusing on identifications such as 'coloured', 'white' and 'black' and for that matter the fixities that are often associated with gender.

Creolisation highlights difference in a positive way by celebrating diversity whilst at the same de-emphasizing origins. In celebrating diversity, instead of focusing on differences based on race and/or gender, the power relations usually associated with such identifications become mute. In this way, there is potential to allow for alternative and new identifications. Glissant's creolised world acknowledges that the boundaries of identities, borders, cultures and the idea of origins are obsolete. These identifications, according to Glissant are no longer valid in a creolised world. Moving beyond fixed identifications such as 'colouredness', 'coloured' and performances of gender creates new possibilities of exchange between cultures and opportunities for the emergence of new hybrid identifications. Previously, identifications of 'colouredness' have been presented as race mixture, a race situated between 'black' and 'white'. In this dissertation, I argue that in the South African nation-building project, 'colouredness', seen as creolised identifications has the potential to go beyond the ideologies of race that were created during *apartheid.*

**APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1. Map of the Cape Metropolitan area**
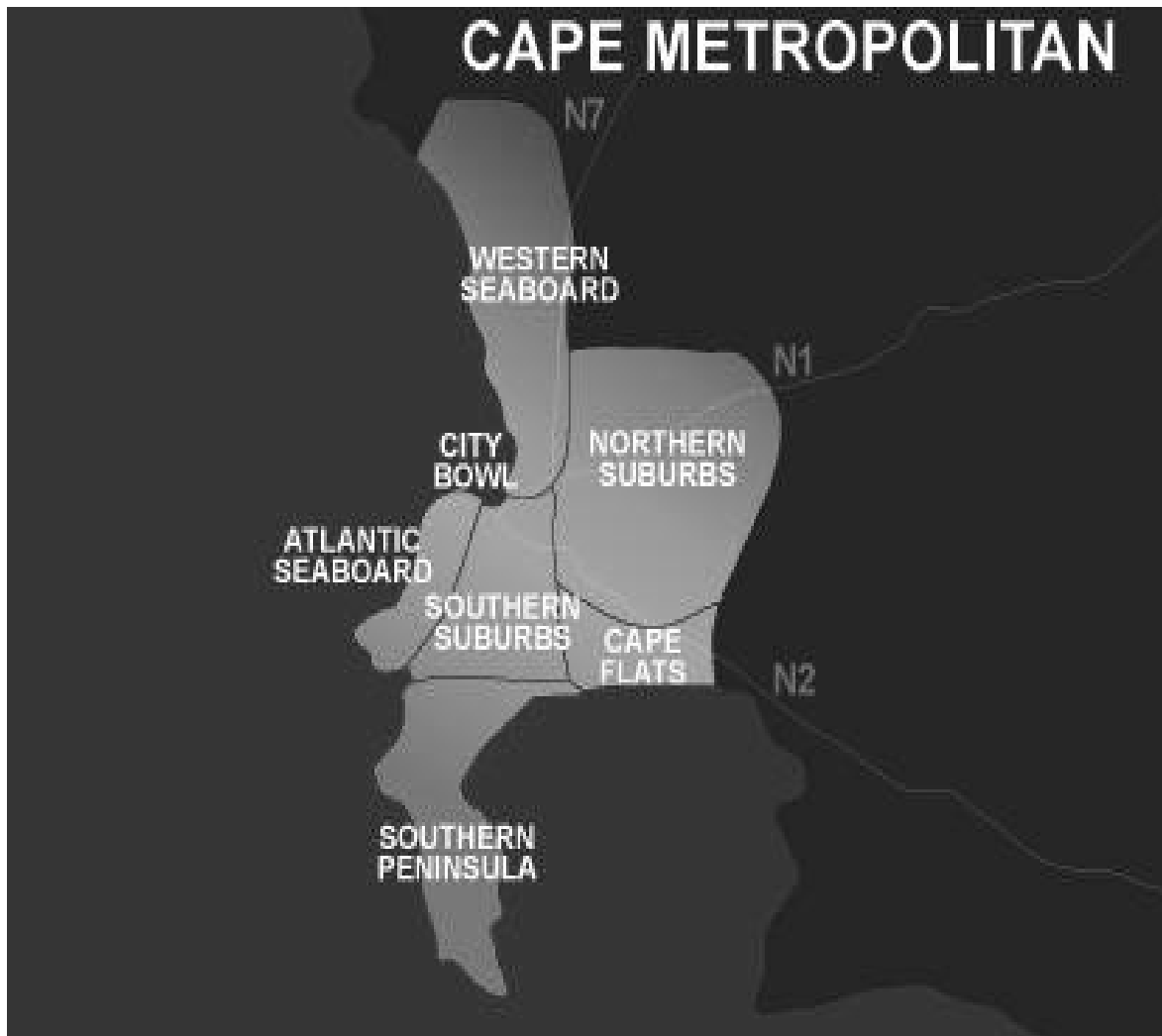
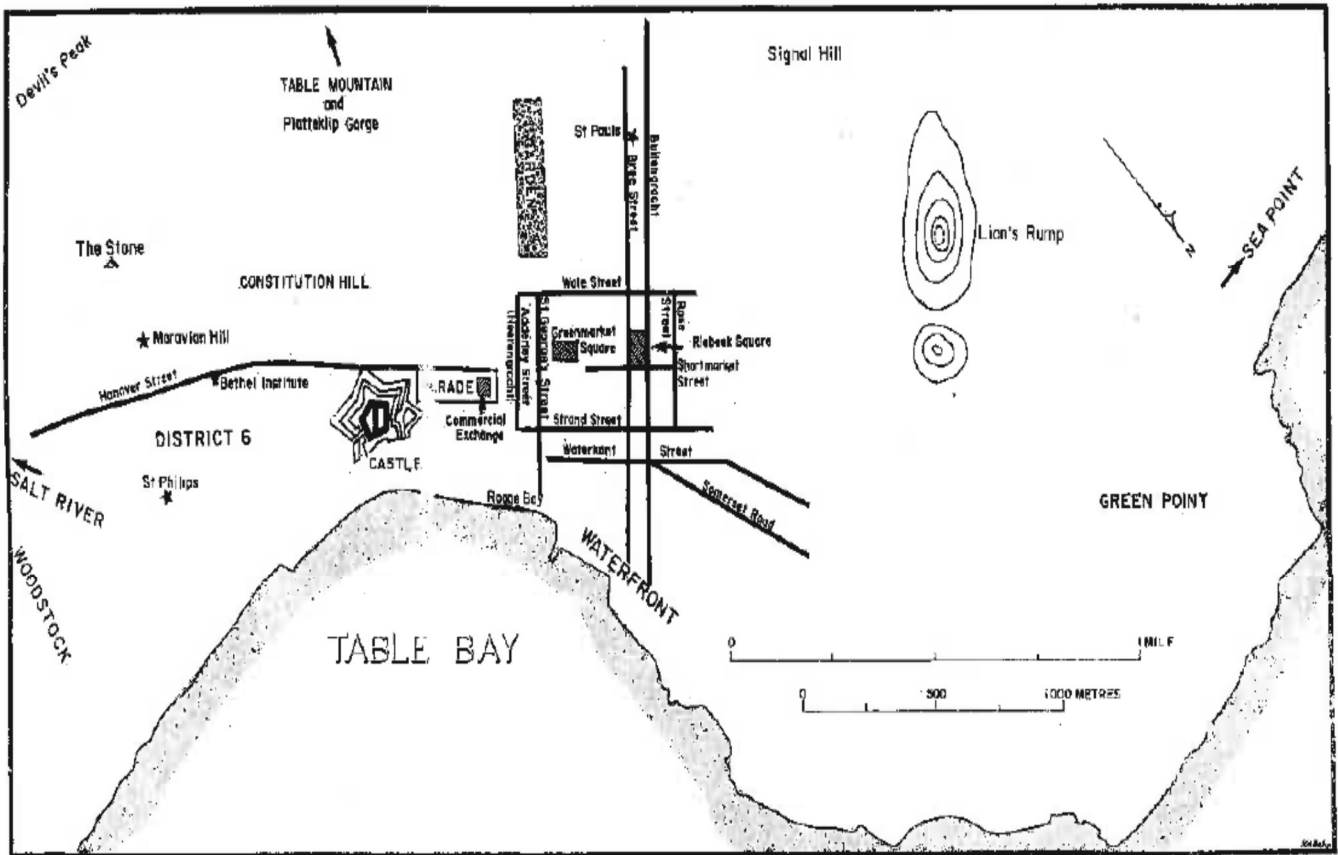**Appendix 2. Map of the location of the Cape Flats sands (lightly speckled area on the map) in the Western Cape, South Africa**
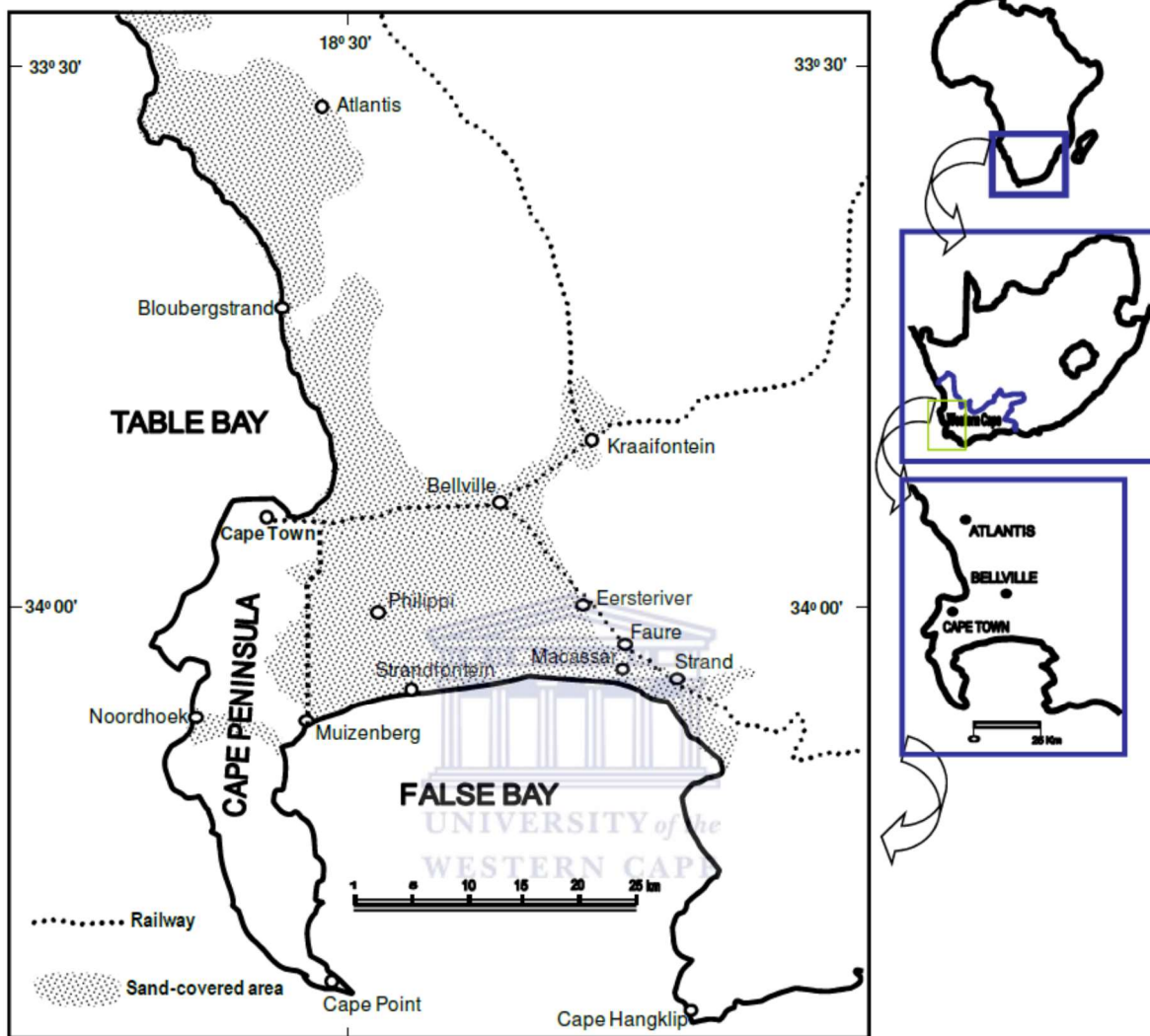


*Source (Adelana et al., 2010)*

**Appendix 3. Location of District Six in 19th Century Cape Town**



*Source* (Worden & Crais, 1994)

**Appendix 4. Map of the geographical and social locations of my study**
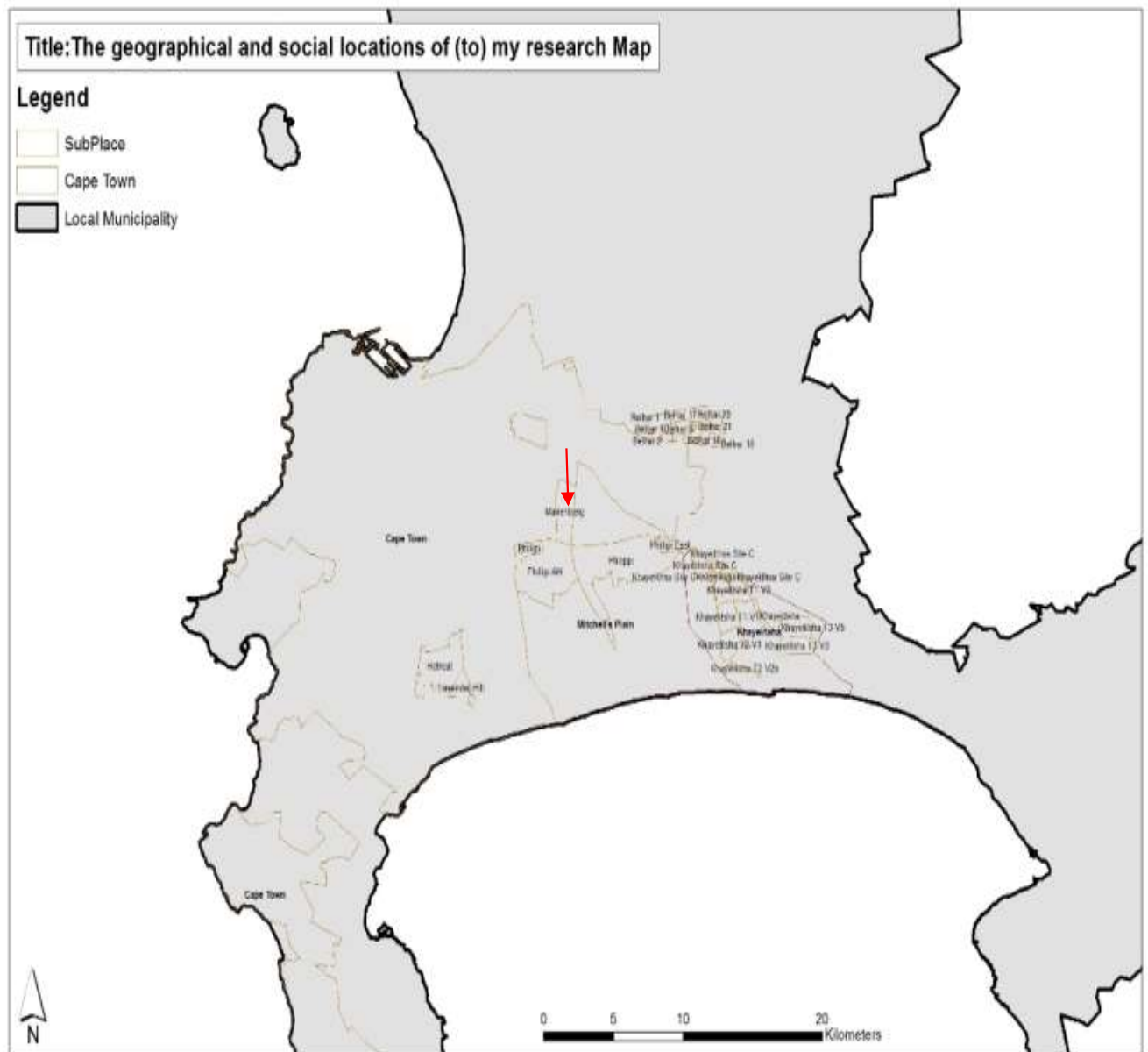


*Source* Frederick Tshitangano. Human Sciences Research Council

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**Appendix 5. Example of an entry form for a gay beauty pageant competition**

# Miss Gay Parow 2012

## Entry Form

Name: _____

Surname: _____

Age: _____

Hobby: _____

Contact details: _____

## Rules:

1. All contestants will be judged in swimwear & evening wear.
2. All contestants must be punctual 20:00 till 21:00
3. Entry fee R20.00

## Prizes:

1. Queens             R1500
2. 1st Princess      R1000
3. 2nd Princess      R500

For any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Rosie (Miss Parow) @ 083 867 5544 (WhatsApp).

**Appendix 6. Example of a judge's sheet**

| Judge Name | Ayesha Khan | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Contestant Name** | **Personality (10)** | **Poise (10)** | **Cocktail Wear (10)** | **Evening Wear (10)** | **Best dress (10)** | **Total (50)** |
| **1** | | | | | | | |
| **2** | | | | | | | |
| **3** | | | | | | | |
| **4** | | | | | | | |
| **5** | | | | | | | |
| **6** | | | | | | | |
| **7** | | | | | | | |
| **8** | | | | | | | |
| **9** | | | | | | | |
| **10** | | | | | | | |
| **11** | | | | | | | |
| **12** | | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | | |

**Appendix 7. The Miss Gay Covergirl Pageant Programme**

1. Introduction

2. Opening

3. Anastacia Khan

4. Dance group Hein and Crew

5. Swimwear

Break (15 min)

6. Tisharn von Amburg (Miss Gay Western Cape 2013)

7. Creative Wear

8. Singing Act by Shaylene Booysen

9. Dance Act – ironic dance crew

10. Top 8 + Questions

11. Anastacia Khan + Queen of 2012 Final Walk

12. Word of thanks

13. Crowning
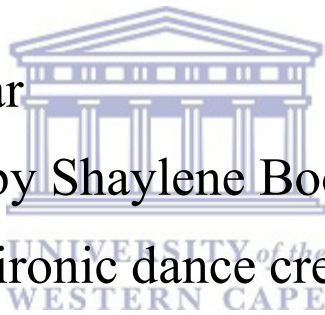
**Appendix 8. Historical route of the first Cape Town Pride Parade**

Cape Town Gay Pride Route 1993



Map data ©2016 AfriGIS (Pty) Ltd, Google    200 m

WESTERN CAPE

# REFERENCES

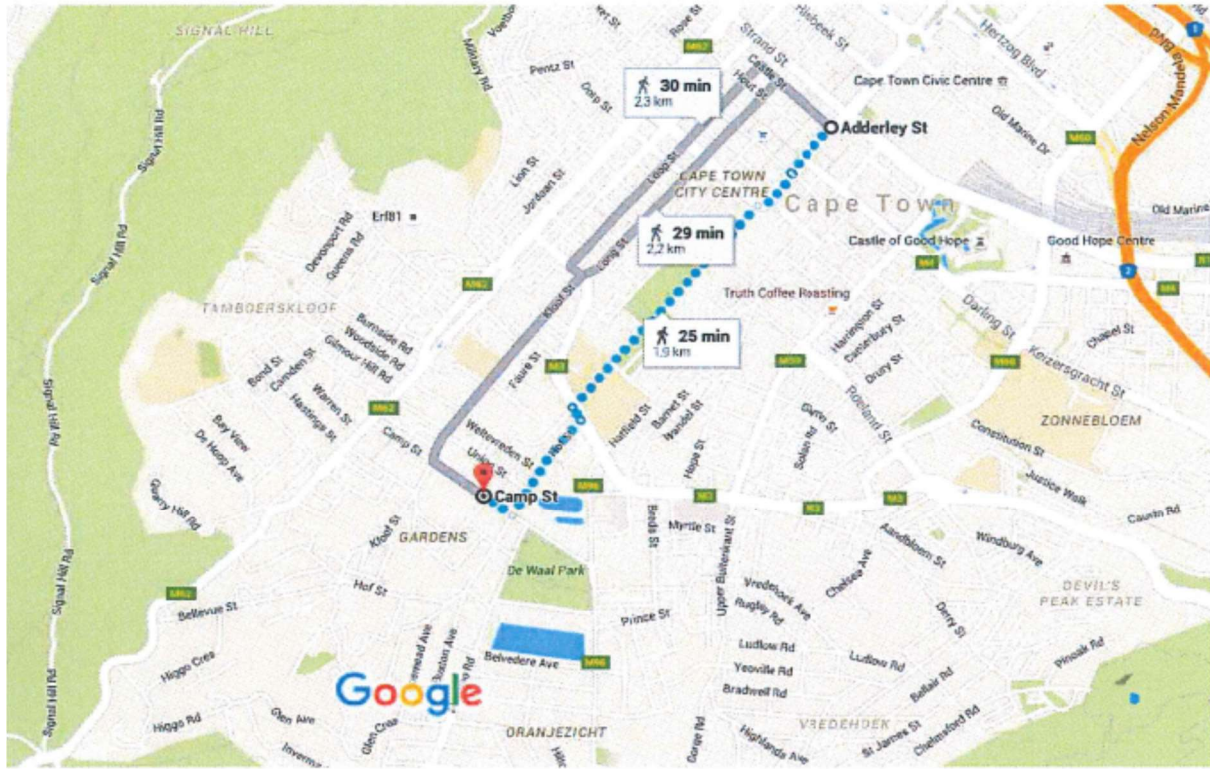Achmat, T., & Raizenberg, T. (2006). Cape Town Pride was a blast! In S. De Waal & A. Manion (Eds.), *Pride. Protest and Celebration*. Johannesburg: Jacana Media.

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