UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

TITLE

IsiNgqumo: Exploring origins, growth and sociolinguistics of an *Nguni* urban-township homosexual subculture

By

Praisegod Mduduzi Ntuli

204505680

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Supervisor: Prof. Thenjiwe Meyiwa

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DECLARATION

Submitted in fulfilment / partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. I confirm that an external editor was / was not used (delete whichever is applicable) and that my Supervisor was informed of the identity and details of my editor. It is being submitted for the degree of *Master of Social Science Gender studies* in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

Praiseged Mduduzi Nhuli
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Student name

26 / 02 / 2010
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Date

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Editor

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of gay subcultures in Africa can be attributed to the colonial entrenchment of homophobia and homophobic laws. This emergence of gay subcultures alongside the merciless homophobia necessitated the creation of secretive forms of linguistic communication amongst the sub cultured gays. Among the *Nguni* people of South Africa, *isiNgqumo* emerged as the lingua franca within the *Nguni* gay subculture. This study focuses on the *Nguni* gay subculture in Durban and the employment of *isiNgqumo* by township and city/urban *Nguni* gay men termed *skesanas*.

36 young *Nguni* homosexual men and one older *Nguni* man were the participants who were interviewed. The methodology that was used in this study was ethnography. The study also relied on a snowballing technique to access numerous of the 36 young *Nguni* homosexual men. The study found that the *Nguni* gay subculture of Durban is stratified throughout several places within Durban, it is not one geographical location. Two gay clubs and two gay salons were visited as they are some of the locations where the *Nguni* gay subculture is located.

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Glossary of terms

Skesana/skesane   submissive gay male

Injonga   dominant gay male

Imbube   versatile gay male

Tsotsi -   A township gangster

Panstula-   denotes a young black township man who dresses very smartly and is highly streetwise.

Heteronormative-   view that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation

Homonormative   view in opposition to heteronormativity, particularly in a gay subculture, where homosexuality is the normal sexual orientation

Nguni   group of southern Bantu people and languages

Transphobia   refers to discrimination against homosexuality, trans-sexuality and homosexual, transsexual or transgender people, based on the expression of their internal gender identity

Isibhomu   orgasm

Mkhumbane Community in Durban today known as Cator Manor, west of Durban

Sociolect   a sociolect is a variety of language associated with a particular

                  social group

Gayle   an English and Afrikaans-based argot used primarily by English

                  and Afrikaans-speaking gay men in urban communities

List of key words and terms

Skesana/skenane	submissive/ passive feminine/effeminate gay
Injonga	dominant gay lover
Imbube	versatile gay man
Amabhodwe esiZulu	bums
Nguni	cluster of southern Bantu languages
Ayina	anal sex
Metro lodge	pseudo name of a lodge/motel located in the Point area near the city centre of Durban.
Paradise lodge	pseudo name of a lodge/motel located in the Russell Street in the city centre of Durban
Sociolect	speech characteristic for a particular social group

Chapter one: Introduction

Background of the study

When discussing gay language in Africa it becomes necessary to also discuss homosexuality in Africa and argue against its stereotype as "the white man's disease" (Epprecht, 2004:4). The issue of shame has also been associated with homosexuality and anything that is associated with it. One of the reasons that inquiry into homosexuality and its associations such as gay language has indeed remained scarce even in the contemporary African context is that of the shame that still remains to be attached to being known as a homosexual. In the next chapter where literature around gay language and homosexuality will be reviewed, a book titled *Language and Sexuality* by Deborah Cameron and Don Kulick (2003) will be reviewed. This book isd about the roots of inquiry into gay language and offers some suggestions as to how further research can be done in this area. It also suggests an understanding of the relationship between language and homosexuality.

IsiNgqumo has emerged as a common lingo amongst numerous *Nguni* homosexuals in the city of Durban, and has been particularly popularized by young submissive *Nguni* homosexual men. Its social and linguistic history makes it a relevant and noteworthy linguistic phenomenon for an academic study. It is noteworthy not only because of its 'catchy lexicon' and its coinage, but also its social place as the lingo

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in the *Nguni* gay subculture of Durban. However, in order to properly study *isiNgqumo* and the subculture that it operates in, it will be important to discuss the history that has had great bearing on its creation and use today. It is largely employed by township urban gays and has its popularity amongst the lower-middle class gays. The aim of this introduction is to lay the historical and analytical groundwork that will be explored further in the forth coming chapters.

In this introductory chapter I am presenting the argument that underpins the hypotheses of this study: the argument that homosexuality existed in Africa prior to colonialism and was a known and accepted phenomenon. In this chapter I also acknowledge that amongst the Zulu people of South Africa there were certain rites of passage that included same-same or male-male sexual intercourse for the purpose of inducting young men into manhood. This supports the hypotheses of this study: that gay subcultures only emerged in African societies as a result of colonialism. This phenomenon was informed and propelled by the colonial homophobia. This emergence of gay subcultures also ultimately led to the need in gay people who operated within those subcultures to create secret ways of communication that eventually came to be known as gay language.

In this chapter I also introduce and briefly discuss literature that is relevant to this study. This literature also supports the above mentioned argument and hypotheses. It is essential to include this literature in this chapter: as it helps me lay the groundwork for the forthcoming discussions and analyses of the data which will be presented in chapters five and six.

Homophobic outbursts have historically been accepted and a frequent phenomenon by numerous African leaders such as Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe, where in his 1995 speech he referred to gays and lesbians as "worse than pigs and dogs" (Epprecht, 2004:4). Also, then Namibian President Sam Nujoma when he declared homosexuality as one of the two top enemies of the government (Epprecht, 2004). One wonders why such distinguished leaders would harbor such hateful resentment towards fellow Africans. The denial of the existence of homosexuality in Africa prior to colonialism may be as a result of this shame. Also an interesting note is that homosexuals in Africa have not been as visible as homosexuals in the west. Perhaps as a result of colonialism homosexuality in Africa began to be brought into the public light in an unprecedented manner. But it only seemed to have been introduced by the colonialists because of this reason, whereas in fact it had been there all along. Hayes (2000:34) invoking the Freudian chronology which argues that homosexuality was coming into existence around the same time as the scramble for Africa states that "the acknowledgement of homosexuality in Africa by colonialists coincides with the epoch of imperialism" (34).

It must be noted that the understanding of the terms homosexual and gay in the African context somewhat differ from those found in other societies, particularly societies from North America and Europe. However, in this study the understanding of these terms will be of men who have sex with men. Some may argue that this understanding leans more towards the western understanding of the terms

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homosexual and gay, it is this understanding that fits the South African context and the context in which *isiNgqumo* operates.

Later on in this study I will discuss the different sub-social categories in the *Nguni* gay subculture. By this I mean the *Nguni* gay subculture has its own sub-society that is underpinned by its own sub-social constructs. These constructed categories are subverted gender roles that reflect the nature of gay relationships and identities.

It must be noted that as it was mentioned in the proposal for this research, there was an initial study of *isiNgqumo* that ultimately gave birth to this lengthy and more extensive study. This study was conducted by myself, Mduduzi Ntuli) and a colleague, Dr Stephanie Rudwick (2008). Some of the data that we collected will also be reviewed and reused in particular areas of this dissertation that will be indicated.

<u>Significance of the study</u>

This study is significant in that it not only presents *isiNgqumo* as a relatively unknown socio-linguistic phenomenon, but it also studies the *Nguni* subculture where *isiNgqumo* is employed. By studying *isiNgqumo* not only in its linguistic form but also in its social employment, this study unearths relevant and significant stories and lifestyles of *Nguni* homosexual men that must be told and explored. A study of this nature is needed to document and present the vibrancy and dynamics of an ever-changing *Nguni* people. One such social phenomenon is the current

trend that has become more visible in our contemporary society - particularly in the context of Durban, my place of residence, there appears to be a growing number of young black gay men that do not only live their gay lifestyles out in the open but 'speak it'. It is crucial to understand why the gay men use *isiNgqumo*.

It is interesting to note that *isiNgqumo* as a sociolinguistic phenomenon with largely unrespectable origins, created by young gay men has survived and grown to such an extent that numerous heterosexuals have begun to take a liking to it. This shows that there are profound socially embedded circumstances that could be indicative of a changing status of homosexuality in our contemporary society. Chambers (2003) argues that such social variables have allowed *isiNgqumo* to develop as a distinguishable gay variety from its mother language *isiZulu*.

Objectives/aims of this study

Literature on *isiNgqumo* is limited: indigenous gay register, namely *isiNgqumo*, have gone under-researched and unnoticed within the arena of linguistics and by linguistic scholars who study the phenomena of forms of gay language. Also, literature on the *Nguni* gay subculture is limited. This study presents *isiNgqumo* and its latter and current existence in the *Nguni* gay culture. By extension and necessity, this study also discusses the existence of the *Nguni* gay subculture within the largely heteronormative community of Durban. This study presents *isiNgqumo* as a socio-linguistic phenomenon: a corpus of expressions and words used in

isiNgqumo – the lexicon and linguistic expressions are presented as a set collected from *uMlazi* township participants and another set from participants that identify themselves as city/suburban *isiNgqumo* speakers. Within this section is a presentation of corresponding *isiZulu* words. Corresponding English translations will also be provided. This fulfils the linguistic part of the study.

The second category is the social part of *isiNgqumo* that is discussed with the use of data collected from interviews. Although this category makes constant reference to the lexicon category, it mainly foregrounds the social aspects related to *isiNgqumo*. So, this section is equally a discussion seeking to present the reasons by the speakers of *isiNgqumo* for using *isiNgqumo* and kinds of social environment/s in which they employ it and reasons behind their use of *isiNgqumo*.

Problem statement and development of literature on the subject

IsiNgqumo is a Zulu gay register. Some have termed it a Zulu gay language. In its use in the *Nguni* gay subculture of Durban, it is primarily used by young *Nguni* sexually submissive homosexual men or *skesanas* in *isiNgqumo*. *IsiNgqumo* as an African gay register must be studied with the historical awareness of the existence and treatment of homosexuality in Africa. However, other studies on gay language must be acknowledged and applied in this study.

Inquiry into gay language began in North American and European contexts. Although these studies focused on English gay registers, namely Gayle, and European gay registers, namely Polari, these somewhat laid the ground work for gay language inquiry in Africa as well. Western scholars such as Gershon Legman and Donald Cory are some that have been credited with this pioneering inquiry. As previously mentioned Cameron and Kulick will be reviewed in the second chapter as their work relates to the latter mentioned scholars and gay language inquiry. This is also poignantly relevant to this study.

The hypothesis of this study is that gay subcultures only emerged in Africa as a result of the colonial entrenchment of homophobia. This homophobia had been non-existent in pre-colonial Africa. If there was negativity towards homosexuals in pre-colonial Africa, it was no more than a mild dislike. Therefore, when embarking on the data collection process I had to remember the homophobia that surrounds the *Nguni* gay culture. As previously mentioned, this meant that the assumption of the study had to be that most, if not all, of the participants had experienced some degree of homophobia.

In the second chapter I will review Marc Epprecht's (2004) *Hungochani: the history of a dissident sexuality in Southern Africa,* a publication which traces the history of homosexuality in pre-colonial and post-colonial Africa. With the promotion of African renaissance, the phrase 'unAfrican' has been thrown around happily by African homophobes referring to homosexuality. But if homosexuality is indeed

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unAfrican and is as a result of a brainwashing conspiracy by white colonialists from the 16th century onwards, how can the presence and practice of homosexual activities by tribes and societies that were relatively uninfluenced by white colonialists, such as the prehistoric indigenous Bushman of Southern Africa be explained (Epprecht, 2004).

In *Hungochani: a history of the dissident sexuality in Southern Africa* Epprecht (2004) presents an ancient Bushman cave painting located somewhere in Harare of a group of seemingly young Bushman men, some engaging in thigh sex, some engaging in anal sex and some embracing each other affectionately. The exact time of the painting is not known, but it is unlikely that the Bushman men had been taught by white colonialists to sexually desire one another and engage in those homosexual activities.

What the painting also suggests is that homosexuality did in fact exist amongst the Bushman tribes: it was a known fact and one can posit that it was an accepted and understood fact. The issue of understanding homosexuality or the lack of understanding homosexuality is one of the issues that we find at the core of any homophobia, in any degree: African black males have tended to play along with the stereotype of the stern, highly sexed foolish character that has been seen often depicted by western racists- the image of man as he was at the beginning. This image has historically been a heterosexual one and both the racists and black African males have happily played along with it, by so doing furthering western colonial ideals.

The claim that homosexuality is unAfrican loses credibility against such evidence and increasingly is seemingly unlikely that it was introduced by white colonialists who were themselves highly homophobic. The Christian missionaries continuously denounced and condemned homosexuality. In fact, numerous African homophobes have been documented using the Christian biblical family values; "even the claim that same-sex sexual behavior in un-African appears to have originated in the west rather than the African itself" (Epprecht, 2004:7).

Sir Richard Burton (as cited in Epprecht 2004) who had been known to be a racist divided the world into two sexual zones, the sotadic and non-sotadic in 1885 in a translation of *The Arabian Nights*. According to Burton (2004), Sotadic would be the zone where homosexual behaviour was believed to be indigenous to that zone and was more tolerated and accepted. Whereas the non-sotadic zone would be societies where homosexual behavior is believed to be not indigenous. Burton placed African societies into this zone alongside with Europe in the non-sotadic zone. Other European Anthropologists took lead from Burton and further entrenched the idea that black Africa was exclusively heterosexual. Even in later years other scholars, even those who were gay such as Michael Davidson (Epprecht 2004) continued to sell the 'gay-free' idea of Africa. When Davidson spent a year in a Zulu tribe in the 1920s he noted that "I never saw a sign of any kind of homosexual behaviour or understanding" (2004:8).

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Yet the ancient Zulu word *iqenge* (2004:xi) meaning a heterosexually identified gay male or a man who engages in same-sex behaviou was a known term amongst the Zulus. It is unlikely that Davidson would have known about the homosexuality amongst the Zulus because same-sex behaviour has historically been discreet amongst the Zulus, so as an outsider Davidson would not have been granted access to know the ins and outs of the Zulu society. As an outsider he could not gain access to homosexual behavior which was done discreetly away from public knowledge.

The Bushman cave painting is also one of the very scarce clues on the understanding and existence of homosexuality or same-sex behavior prior to colonial invasion. There is little doubt that black Africa has historically been heterosexually orientated: when one examines the various African cultures and their customs it is clear that the preference has historically been for men to marry women and continue the heterosexual heritage. However, this does not mean that there were no homosexuals in even as far back as the 16th century. It is reported (Naphy, 2004) that even Zulu king *Shaka Zulu* ordered his soldiers to refrain from sex with women and to have sex with other men and or their boy servants. This was believed to give them strength for the battle (Naphy, 2004). Gay men who openly lived out their lives were thought to have been possessed by an ancestral spirit of the opposite sex.

Another issue at hand is the depiction of African homosexuals and the image of homosexuality. The image of homosexual men in Africa has tended to be a direct

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opposite to the heterosexual stereotypical image. This image has tended to subscribe to the pathetic image given to western homosexuals (Alexander, 2000). Numerous western homophobes such as Alexander (2000) believe that homosexuality is a pathology, which is as a result of childhood trauma. Michael Foucault (1980) called it the pathology of the soul. It is with this homogenous perception of homosexuality, that of pathology, that homosexuality in Africa by western homophobes has tended to be depicted. This image served the colonial ideals: to depict Africa as heterosexual and used pathology to dismiss the indigenousness of homosexuality is Africa.

The argument that goes along with the image of Africa as inherently and purely heterosexual is that if Africa really be the birth place of human beings, than it was imagined that black Africans and their tribes were the original human beings and societies that were still living as human kind was at the beginning. This was thought to pertain to sexuality as well (Elam and Krasner, 2001).

However, if black Africans are heterosexual as a matter of pure instinct and were not believed to have the understanding of a complex matter such as sexuality, they were also imagined to act largely based on their animalistic instincts. By implication any other sexual matter including sexual deviance is also as a result of that pure instinct and can also be considered to be an indigenous aspect of that society. According to Priyamvada Gopal (2008) homophobia has served as a powerful tool to persuade people to conform to the heterosexual status quo as prescribed by colonialism. So, perhaps it is not far fetched to argue that the exclusively

heterosexual image of Africa, which was promoted by colonialism, was so done to further the colonial interests and further entrench white superiority.

Certainly Christian missionaries and their missionary activities throughout the continent of Africa played a vital role in entrenching western white ideals onto the minds of the colonized Africans. At the core of these ideals was white, heterosexual male supremacy. Western morality has tended to be very different from an African idea of morality in the sense that western values have tended to be more conservative and judgmental in nature of anything that does not conform to the hegemonic ideals (Naphy, 2004). This includes sexuality: where Africanness has tended to be more sexually overt and inclusive, western values have tended to be more covert and conservative.

Reason for the study

Hugh Mclean and Linda Ngcobo conducted a study on some gay social aspects. Mclean & Ngcobo (1994) mention *isiNgqumo* in their essay on circumstantial homosexuality in the Reef, titled "Abangibhamayo bathi ngimnandi: Those who fuck me say I am tasty" which was published along with other stories of homosexuality in Gevisser and Cameron's 1994 anthology titled *Defiant Desire*. Much of what we know of *isiNgqumo* is simple at a level of being – merely mentioned in linguistics and homosexual studies. Such 'mere mentioning' has served as a reference point for numerous interested parties on *isiNgqumo* and encourages pursuits like this study.

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Cage & Evans (2003) note that little research is being conducted into African gay registers, decrying that the focus has mainly been on English gay registers like Gayle. Cage and Evans are amongst very few linguistic scholars to take interest in black gay registers. However, they also barely go beyond mentioning *isiNgqumo* in their book *Gayle: The language of Kinks and Queens, a history and dictionary of gay language in South Africa.* Associate professor in the departments of history and global development studies at Queen's University and author of *Hungochani: The history of a dissident sexuality in southern Africa* Marc Epprecht (2004) makes a brief mention of *isiNgqumo* as an "African gay argot" (2004:xi). Such studies that document gay social issues as in Epprecht's (2004) *Hungochani: The history of a dissident sexuality in southern Africa* are useful as we learn from them a myriad of social phenomena

Homosexuality: A bitter pill to swallow

The recent upheavals that have occurred in South Africa regarding the length of a woman's skirt is one clue of the consequence and indeed success of colonial ideals and values which have been entrenched on black Africans. The irony in such an incident is that traditional Zulu attire for young women is much less and reveals much more than a mini-skirt.

So, if the conservative ideas of body exposure that so many black Africans tend to hold on to reflect the conservative ethics and morality of the early white colonialists, how much so than with homosexuality. In the era of colonialism the

approach to dress and body exposure in European countries was conservative, so this dress sense was implemented in the colonized societies as well.

Another issue at hand is the depiction of African homosexuals and the image of homosexuality. The image of homosexual men in Africa has tended to be a direct opposite of the heterosexual stereotypical image. Around the era of colonialism, homosexuality was perceived as an immorality. Colonialism did not just entrench ways of living or the cultures of the colonizing countries on the colonized societies, but it also entrenched belief systems about life and lifestyles. It can not be disputed that via Christian missionaries and other colonial resources such as literature, black Africans were made to feel ashamed of their perceived barbaric cultures and values in order to have them adopt the cultural norms and ethics of the colonizing European country. By doing this it facilitated the pursuit for total dominance and colonial rule.

One can ponder that pre-colonial Africans were well aware and had means to maintain the balance between heterosexuality and homosexuality. It must have been more profitable for the heterosexual system to be maintained even for the Africans. With the material benefits to having a heterosexual son and daughter, families must have had to entrench a heterosexual identity. In the society as a whole, it must have benefitted the whole flow of the society to maintain strict heterosexual norms. But this does not mean that pre-colonial African societies were oblivious to homosexual activities.

The Bushman cave painting of the young men engaging in same-sex behavior is an example of that awareness and balance. The Bushman was one of the earliest societies to have lived in the Southern part of Africa. One of the arguments that some scholars, namely Kügler (2006) and Keskussairaala and Klinikka (1971), have presented for the balanced view that the bushman had about homosexuality and heterosexuality is that they accepted homosexuality: the males that had interest in same-sex activities were allowed to engage in them. This is believed to have been done as a pregnancy preventative measure or a form of birth control (Epprecht, 2004). Even amongst the Zulus who are believed to have migrated south years after the Bushman, incidents of same-sex masturbation were common and condoned (Naphy, 2004). However, these youthful tendencies might not be indicative of underlying homosexual desires and satisfactions. The majority of the herd boys eventually grew up to be heterosexual men and genuinely sexually desire women. And if there are homosexual tendencies amongst a group of herd boys, as they mature into men those tendencies usually are left behind. Historically leading a heterosexual lifestyle has been the status quo and the most socially beneficial. Thus the same-sex love relationships occurred between adult males but were kept discreet. This formed part of the heterosexual lifestyle.

When one examines certain Zulu customs relating to sexual relations between men and their wives, it is striking to see that in certain Zulu societies it is part of the custom that the wife is not expected to be active during intercourse. In the 1990s a village in KwaZulu-Natal there was a peculiar case that was brought to the traditional leader of that village. A man laid a case against his wife to the village

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council comprised of village elders. He complained that while he and his wife were having sex, she moved. This ultimately disturbed him and he could not continue. It was not clear what the man meant by saying she moved. But one can deduce that in that particular community women are expected to lie still during sexual intercourse.

The relevance of this case is that such laws and invasive rules that govern such traditional societies make it convenient for men to maintain a heterosexual familial life but enjoy their male partners aside if they choose. They can achieve this balance by relying on the patriarchal system that has existed historically, and has benefited men in various ways. It made it possible for men whose sexual feelings for women were in low degrees to maintain heterosexual marriages and have children. One can assume that during the sexual intercourse, such men would fantasize about their male lovers and this enabled them to perform sex with their wives. So, perhaps in the case of the man in KwaZulu-Natal, when his wife moved she disturbed his fantasy and this disturbed his erection. Some scholars have even suggested that the sexual dissatisfaction that is experienced by women in such heterosexual relationships may contribute to numerous lesbian relationships that have often been dismissed as ancestral spirit possessions.

Same-sex sexual behaviour was ofcourse not performed in public and affection between men was still kept discreet (Naphy, 2004). Thus it would have been near impossible for any scholar to discover any homosexual activity amongst the Zulus. This discussion suggests that the patriarchal heterosexual system that operated in

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pre-colonial Africa coexisted peacefully with homosexuality. For as long as the heterosexual status quo was not challenged and disrupted, men had the discreet leeway to indulge in homosexual activities. One of the questions that emerge from this discussion is that could it be that it was the homophobia of the colonizing powers that turned Africans homophobic as well? As previously mentioned, the answer is a resounding yes.

This suggests that the existence of homosexuality was never as a result of colonialism. It is not a 'white man's disease'. Contrary to the beliefs of numerous African homophobes homosexuality was not a tool used by racist colonialists to further colonize African societies. But infact homosexuality had been there all along. What is as a result of colonialism is the denial of the indigenous existence of homosexuality in Africa. According to Williams-Myers (1995) by entrenching their own cultures and values colonialists diluted much of the understanding that pre-colonial African had regarding sexuality. So what has resulted from this is that the ruthless homophobia that is felt by so many Africans which is as a result of colonialism.

So, when Pan Africanists,[1] such as Dusé Mohamed Ali, Ahmed Ben Bella and JE Casely Hayford but to name a few, talk of decolonizing the mind, the acceptance of homosexuality and its peaceful coexistence with heterosexuality should be one of the objectives on the agenda. One can even go as far as to say that pre-colonial

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[1] Kind of African system or movement which seeks to unify native Africans and members of the African diaspora into a global African community.

Africans could have had a greater understanding of sexuality than the colonialists themselves: pre-colonial Africans were not at all the stereotype that was presented by white colonialists.

What the colonialists did was to dumb-down Africans and portrayed them as primitive beings that had very little understanding of life. This served the white superiority agenda. However, the idea that pre-colonial Africans were able to strike a balance between heterosexual standards and homosexual activities must mean that they understood the innateness of homosexual desires.

Such a balance would require a sophisticated and complex understanding of an equally sophisticated and complex issue such as sexuality. To acknowledge this would have forced the white colonialists to view the supposedly primitive Africans as highly intelligent people that were as human as they were.

Shame and homosexuality

The issue of shame is one that has played a large factor in the treatment of homosexuality in Africa and the world. In many traditional African societies shame can severely hurt an individual's social standing and have them be isolated even from their own families. African societies have tended to reason according to greater communal and traditional ideology. Matters that affect an individual's life no matter how private they may be have tended to be resolved in a public environment. Matters pertaining to sexuality have particularly been dealt with in public forums. According to Ikuenobe (1998) historically there has tended to be a

difference in the moral reasoning between Western philosophy and African cultures. Where as Western philosophy is systematic and individualistic, in African cultures morality has tended to be a communitarian and has had a tendency to be accompanied by customs that involve much spectacle (Ikuenobe, 1998).

This means that in many traditional African societies, an individual's personal affairs do not stay private for long. In many cases parents would also seek public help and advice as issues with their children began to surface. This means that an individual's life choices may have a direct influence on the status of that individual's family in the society. To many Africans, the idea of being shamed or disgraced is so humiliating that in some cases it is regarded as a fate worse than death. Many African societies, and other societies elsewhere in the world, have been know to even commission the killing of one of their own children if they have shamed or disgraced them in any way.

But the power of shame was not only known amongst the Africans. Western societies as well have had practices designed to deal with shame and to deal in shame. The Christian Bible, and indeed bibles of other religions, have been used as an instrument to provoke shame in some people and force them to be assimilated in the prescribed way of life. In the case of homosexuality and how numerous homophobic societies have dealt with it, shame has been the frequently and most effectively used tool.

When colonialists began entrenching their cultural norms and values on the colonized African societies, they used the tool of shame that the Africans were familiar with. So in order to entrench their homophobic, anti-same-sex behavior agenda, homosexuality was branded as a shameful act. In pre-colonial African societies there were perhaps those members of the society that disliked same-sex activities, but it stands to reason to suggest that their degree of homophobia could not contend with that of the western colonizers.

This suggests that amongst pre-colonial African societies, homosexuality was not associated with shame. But the notion of shame is one that African societies understood well. Thus when one is shamed it is with much greater impact and could even lead to death. However, not all African cultures took such severe action against the shamed as to murder them for the honor of the family. Numerous African societies either ostracized the shamed individual or demanded some sort of compensation (Epprecht, 2004). In western societies a shamed individual largely bore the brunt of that shame on his own and the stigma remained on them rather then their whole family.

This is one of the core premises of Christianity: that one individual is accountable for their sins. With the intense homophobia that has been showcased by numerous Africans and African leaders, it has shown that homosexuality is something that is considered shameful in many African societies.

So, what white colonialists were able to do, whether knowingly or not, they redirected shame and the idea of shame held by Africans onto such matters as homosexuality and whatever African religions that may have existed at that time. Through Christianity which was administered by the numerous missionaries, even the African cultures were branded as bad and Africans were encouraged to turn to their salvation and abandon them. The 'gay friendly' Africa that tolerated and even accepted same-sex desires as natural and can even be used in certain rites of passage for young men, became influenced by the intense homophobia and Calvinism of the colonizers.

Same-sex activities were not the only aspect of African social and personal life that was disrupted by colonialism. African patriarchy was challenged and usurped by Western patriarchy. African men could no longer conduct their lives as they had been able to previously. With the strict moral laws of the Dutch Calvinistic religious system, it became increasingly difficult for African men to have numerous wives and larger families.

Polygamy had been an important factor in trade dealings between African patriarchs of numerous societies. Also to improve relations between families, virgin girls were usually given away to be married into other families, whether an addition as one of the wives or as a bride to a young man. It is reported that in pre-colonial Zimbabwe, heterosexual transactions involving young virgin girls and wealthy families had become so profitable that "by the time the Portuguese arrived in Zimbabwe in the early 16th century, the most important *Shona* rulers were said to

have hundreds or even thousands of wives of varying status and to exercise political authority from the Indian Ocean in the east almost to the Kalahari in the west" (Epprecht, 2004:29).

In order to maintain their power and authority and keep it in the blood line, it was imperative that young people be heterosexual and maintain heterosexual families. Virginity for young women was vital in order for them to be chosen by a wealthy family to marry one of their sons. In the same token being heterosexual and maintaining that identity became vital for young men in order to rise to powerful positions of authority. Men who were known as only engaging in same-sex activities with other men were merely thought of as poor or possessed with some ancestral spirit.

Amongst the Zulu people social shame came when a man who had several wives was unable to sexually satisfy his wives or one of his wives and she would shame him by telling the whole community. Or, if a young virgin female fell pregnant before she married, she would have shamed herself and particularly her family. Homosexuality was not considered something that would be of shame amongst the Zulus. Same-sex activities were known and even expected from young people, particularly young boys. The understanding that sexual desires are part of what constitutes a human being allowed them to handle sexual behaviors that were not within the status quo, namely homosexuality. What occurred as a result of colonialism was that being known to engage in same-sex activities became to be as

shameful as a virgin girl falling pregnant before marriage or a man being known to unable to sexually satisfy his wife.

Origins of homophobia among colonized African societies

With the arrival of the white colonialists came much hardship for Africans. Many of them lost their wealth and status in their societies. Colonialists began to reward those black Africans who willingly rejected their cultures and previous ways of living. With much outpouring of homophobia, particularly from Christian missionaries, homophobic colonialists deemed same-sex behavior evil and worthy of harsh punishment (Brown, 2006).

Over time numerous African societies began to see same-sex activities even as bad luck and bringing hardship to their society, some believed that "homosexuality pollutes the country" (Epprecht, 2004:36) and that things such as "hunger and disease are being caused by this evil thing" (2004:36).

The anger and shame also spilt over to ancestral spirit possession: another issue which had been deemed evil by white colonialists and converted black Africans was ancestral spirit possession and traditional healing. As it had been thought in African belief, that some homosexuals were so as a result of ancestral spirit possession, this too became to be thought of as evil.

It was as a result of this homophobia from the colonialists and infected Africans that gay subcultures came about in Africa. After the Dutch took over the Cape and later on the British in numerous posts around South Africa, same-sex activities became illegal. What made the situation even more precarious were the converted black Africans who were also homophobic. They were able to gain access to black societies and understand things that the white law enforcers could not understand. In a sense, the converted black Africans were insiders but operating for and as outsiders. This allowed the white authorities to apprehend those people that were known or thought to be engaging in same-sex activities.

In an article titled *Humorous Names and Verbal Weapons*, Noleen Turner (2001) noted that among the Zulu people of South Africa the use of nick names, "demands social competence in order to evaluate the offensiveness of such names - a knowledge of social structure which is available only to 'insiders'" (2001:11). In this study Turner discusses how humor is used and embedded in the nick names that Zulu people give each other and others in the work place. She notes that the 'outsiders', which would be the people who are being given such names, usually are not aware of these names. Language may be one barrier in situations where there is a difference in the race and linguistic background between the insiders and outsiders. In such a case as the criminalization of homosexuality, what gave the converted black Africans, who were working for the colonialists and who were law enforcers, an edge was that they were insiders in the sense that they understood the language and the cultural ways of living of their fellow Africans.

However, the shared homophobia and the fear of the white authority created a situation where people with same-sex desires and engaging in same-sex activities became the outsiders within their societies and were singled out for punishment. This subsequently propelled the emergence of spaces within the society that would come to be known as gay subcultures and places where homosexuals could engage in their activities safely.

Where previously to engage in same-sex activities was condoned or if an individual chose to exclusively engage in same sex behaviour for their entire life time, was mildly frowned upon by some, it had become a crime. It must be remembered that even in pre-colonial Africa same-sex activities were done discreetly, but they were neither criminal nor shameful. So, if there was any degree of homophobia in pre-colonial Africa, it was no greater than a mild dislike. Perhaps African patriarchs found a good target for their anger and frustration in homosexuality. Perhaps by allowing themselves to be homophobic, they were able to direct the blame of their loss of power and authority onto homosexuals.

The first colonial post established in South Africa by Europe was at the Cape in South Africa. The Dutch were the first group of colonialists to settle at the Cape. The famous story of Jan Van Reebeek coming to the Cape in 1652 is one that most people can recite effortlessly. The history of the Dutch settlers that colonized the Cape is not presented in its entirety in the history books. For the purposes of our

study and pursuit we will examine the Dutch colonialism of the Cape, with sexuality as a perspective. This is a very necessary perspective because what colonialism managed to achieve was not just to physically disrupt whatever gender relations that had been there previously, it also disrupted the social understanding of sexuality that Africans had had.

One cannot be certain of whether white colonialists actually strategically planned to impose their understanding of sexuality onto their colonies. Or, whether they were aware of the far reaching consequences of entrenching their morally strict laws that influenced the ways of defining life for the African people. Whether they were well aware of this or not, control over the sexuality of the Africans became a very effective tool to further entrench colonial ideals and would have far lasting consequences in the long run.

One of the stereotypes that arose during the era of colonialism about black Africans was that they were highly sexed (Hall, 2001). Perhaps it was their highly revealing traditional attires or the rampant polygamy in numerous African societies that informed this stereotype. Perhaps black Africans appeared to be more sexually uninhibited as compared to the colonialists. It is interesting to note that the Africans did not place much attention on the sexual matters of their colonizers and they also never questioned their own sexuality. It can be argued that it was only

the colonizers that were so sexually preoccupied that they used that criterion in their judgement of the Africans.

As with the infamous inferiority complex that the majority of Africans supposedly have as a result of colonialism, as with the stereotype of being highly sexed about Africans, it was also a colonial construct (Kesteloot, 1972). The understanding behind the inferiority complex in Africans is that because Africans were treated with inferiority and the inferior was entrenched in them by their colonial masters, Africans became used to being treated as inferior and eventually began to think of themselves as inferior. And thus this inferiority complex stayed within the black African psyche even in the generations that followed.

The stereotype that depicts black Africans as highly sexed supported the efforts by colonialists to further entrench white colonial supremacy. Because white colonialists treated the black Africans in a highly sexually loaded manner, Africans eventually began to adopt that behaviour. White colonial rule created small living spaces for black Africans and terrible living conditions: these conditions were conducive for sexual misconducts and rampancy to thrive

These conditions were also conducive for numerous problems among the Africans to arise. Conditions such as hopelessness, poor self image and all kinds of emotionally damaging problems. These problems were such as that they also lead to

promiscuity and ultimately the loss of self constraint. In this regard many black Africans began to adopt the stereotype of being highly sexed. Numerous studies have been done in the addiction to alcohol by many township and squatter camp residents, but very little has been researched on the addiction to sex by such residents. Where drugs and alcohol addiction are able to thrive, sex addiction will not be too far away

This problem was evidenced by the number of cases of black children being conceived out of wedlock. This is not to say that in pre-colonial Africa there were no cases of children being conceived out of wedlock, but after the invasion and establishment of colonialism, the number rose dramatically. This rise was particularly notable in the urban black settlements and slums.

It must be noted that it would seem that the colonialism created a final product that appears to have been the very opposite of their stated intention and the intention of the Christian missionaries: to civilize the Africans and save their souls by teaching them the good Christian way of life (Epprecht, 2004). Life in the urban settlements and slums was full of lust and drunkenness. When one examines the behaviour of some black Africans today who have unwittingly bought into the highly sexed stereotype and the lifestyle choices that accompany that, one can see how distorted the image of black Africans was in the eyes of white colonialists.

So, because white colonialists treated black Africans in that manner for such a long period of time and they exerted their authority in numerous generations, such consequences of their treatment of blacks were able to be adopted in the black urban lifestyle and remained generationally.

It must also be noted that pre-colonial African patriarchy was also largely beneficial to men and boys rather than women and girls. But, on the large scale both men and women were allowed and encouraged to enjoy sexual pleasure. According to Meade and Wiesner (2004) as long as certain familial and societal expectations were met, sexual pleasure was something that was at the discretion of each individual and each man per his family. This gave leeway to same-sex activities to take place unchallenged and unthreatened.

However, one might argue that perhaps one of the good things that came out of colonialism was the changed treatment of women and the end of the heterosexual trade deals that involved virgin females being married off to men, who were often much older than they were, at a young age. However, the strict and racist laws of the colonial government, and the strict Calvinistic heterosexual laws preached by the missionaries had numerous negative impacts. This diluted and disrupted an understanding of sexuality that had been in place among the Africans that had been implemented as part of African life. With the entrenchment of the foreign and different colonial ethics and moral standards, it created a situation where it

appeared as if black Africans were foolish and clueless when it came to the issues of sexuality. What did also appear, which can be argued as true was that the black community had lost control.

This allowed the homophobic agenda to have further entrenchment because blacks began to aspire to the heterosexual nuclear Christian image that had been presented by colonialism. Some of the reasons for this were to have a better life and to escape the turmoil that had been created in the black urban settlements. This image was also homophobic. To be wholly inducted into colonial Christian ethics, the converted black Africans had to give up a lot. At the time of the colonial invasion of the Cape, the Dutch society was ruled by a Calvinist system. This system advocates for strict morality and that includes sexual behavior. Any kind of sexual overtness is prohibited and dealt with severely in this system (Epprecht, 2004).

Under this system there were several sexual activities that were considered to be immoral and fit for punishment. Some of these activities were same-sex activities: sodomy, masturbation and sexual relations of people of different races and religions such as intercourse between a Christian and a Jew (Philips 1999, as cited in Epprecht, 2004). Male homosexual behavior was at the top of the list of things that could potentially receive the capital punishment. One Jan Ooostuhoff (1988, as cited in Epprecht 2004: 52) noted that although trials for homosexual crimes were rare "they were often punished by death (2004:52).

The Dutch society itself was a highly inhospitable society to any sexual subvertiveness whether male or female and heterosexual or homosexual. According to van der Meer (1997) and Phillips (1999) as cited in Epprecht (2004) even the Dutch society back home in the Netherlands was aware of same-sex behaviors and that they were in existence even there as well. And perhaps it was as a result of the Calvinistic system, or the drive for the Dutch to create a distinct Dutch identity separate from the rest of Europe, particularly to move away from Catholicism, created this "unusual determination to discern and to punish all forms of same-sex sexuality" (2004:52).

When young boys are at the age of discovering their sexuality, which is from around the age of ten to early teens, they feed off each other sexually. Not in actual intercourse but whether in exerting their aggression on one another or showing off with their confidence, this has the ability to sexually stimulate males. For some boys this male-male sexual connection remains and for some it is replaced by sexual attraction for women. If a boy does not have other boys to play with and feed off from, there might be a close male relative such as an uncle who might feel that role, even unwittingly. The question that many sexologists and other scholars with interest in sexuality and homosexuality is what happens in the boy's mind during this process that determines sexual orientation.

It is this misunderstanding that makes people create all kinds of peculiar explanations that often lead to homophobia. Because heterosexuality has been so

necessary in terms of the growth of families and its material benefits, it has historically taken dominance and all people as they grow up tend to be socialized into the heterosexual vise. Those that do not fit this vise face being ostracized and ridiculed. During and after colonialism homosexuals had to learn to be discreet about being gay or be careful who knew of it. This created a sense of loneliness and extreme self awareness for homosexuals. According to Haggerty (2000:18) as a result of this and other factors male prostitution began to emerge in the early years of colonialism.

This change from original homosexuality to necessary heterosexuality is not a conscious one: boys are not aware of this process and change. This is a controversial claim indeed. It must be noted that the focus of our discussion will be on male homosexuality only. Heterosexual men once felt same-sex desires and most indulged in them whether knowingly or unwittingly as part of their sexual discovery. This claim not only suggests that homosexuality is as natural as heterosexuality but it is indeed also African.

Even in fully fledged heterosexual male adults there are still some homoerotic feelings that surface from time to time: the sexual gratification that men get from male-male conflicts and struggle for status and dominance over other males is indeed reminiscent of their homosexual roots? Perhaps this secret realization of some sexual pleasure by homophobes from such interactions with other males fuels the hatred for homosexual men.

This claim can be used to perhaps explain male bisexuality as well: some men fully embrace sexual attraction to women, because they were meant to be heterosexual, some men embrace it but overt sexual attraction still remains. These men are able to experience sexual feelings for both men and women. But some remain sexually attracted to other men because they were somehow meant to be homosexual.

Pre-colonial African societies were able to understand these three orientations and could strike a balance. However, because heterosexual partnership was the most preferred and profitable at that time and it was the hegemonic orientation, it formed part of the status quo. Pre-colonial African societies turned a blind eye to bisexual and homosexual behaviour, for as long as it was discreet and men still performed their heterosexual obligations because "such behavior was of no concern to the community provided it remained discreet" (Epprecht, 2004:33).

Perhaps the theory that some scholars have suggested: that homosexuality emerged as a form of a natural means of controlling the rapid increase in human population, has some credibility. The Bushman tribes in all their knowledge and spiritual wisdom are said to have encouraged male-male sexual behavior as a form of birth control: perhaps bisexuality was an expected, accepted and encouraged orientation.

One of the distortions that Christian missionaries created was that of the relationship between black Africans and their beliefs. In their pursuit to convert the Africans to Christianity they vilified all other forms of understanding and relating to

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God. The role of the ancestors was not equaled to the role of God, neither were they evil spirits. The understanding of the ancestors and the relationship that the Africans had with their ancestors was as mediators between the heavens and earth-guardian angels of some kind. An understanding of God was there. In this understanding God was an acceptance of all sexualities, as it was believed that even sexual desire came from him. The Christian missionaries introduced the idea of hell to the Africans that had never existed before amongst them. It may be argued that this meant that all the deeds that had been deemed evil by the missionaries became associated with going to hell.

This religious fear tactic worked very well, and continues to work well even today. The missionaries were able to convince the black Africans to turn away from their `evil' ways and receive their Christian salvation. But the kind of Christian ethics that were held by the Dutch church at the time of colonialism is one that raises concerns. As Calvinism was oppressive to the Dutch people as well, how so to than to the black Africans who were seen as primitive and inferior.

With regards to post colonial homophobic outbursts from numerous African homophobes, what has tended to be very disturbing is that the work that racist colonialists began in the minds of Africans has clearly been successfully entrenched generationally. To many Africans that have embraced the religion of Christianity and taken all the teachings of the Christian bible to heart, many aspects of African traditional life seem foreign. The belief amongst them is such that ancestral spirits

have come to be seen as evil spirits and the social understanding of the pre-colonial Africans has been lost on them.

It must be noted that the aim of this argument against Christian missionaries of the colonial era is not an argument or attack against Christianity or the Christian bible. On the contrary, Christianity as a gospel of love and compassion makes much sense and has the ability to unite. However, it is when it is used in such condemning tactics that its message of love and compassion is diluted.

Also, by discussing Christianity as used by the colonial era Dutch Christians, the aim is to prove how homosexuality became a crime based on Christian morals that were used by racist colonialists to claim superiority over black Africans.

It must be kept in mind that a large number of black Africans were forcefully gathered as slaves to the colonialists and most of the slaves were male. As a result of the highly subjective racist approach to black African and the belief that whites were superior to blacks, the views of colonialists about the black Africans were distorted. Because of this view, even the most natural and human behavior appeared as beastly and primitive to the colonialists.

The idea that adult black Africans were inherently little children that had to be taught the right way of doing things was one of the foundations of the racist treatment lashed upon black Africans. This idea was accompanied by the belief in white superiority. Again this image was still heterosexual. This suggests that being

heterosexual has historically been associated with power and the potential to be powerful: because after all, as a result of the patriarchal system that many have been socialized in, there has been a belief that has existed historically, that men are inherently more powerful, particularly over women.

In many societies, such as the Zulus, men have tended to measure the potency of their power by their relationships with women and their dominance over those women. Thus in such societies for one to be known as homosexual meant to be associated with the inferior less powerful position of women.

When one examines homophobia in Africa and its history it is important to remember that it was not always there. Numerous studies, such as those done by Epprecht (2004) and many others, have been able to present commendable evidence which argues that pre-colonial Africa was not homophobic at all. These studies have argued that same-sex behavior, particularly male-male sexual behavior was a commonly know and accepted thing. The pre-colonial Africans had a particular understanding of sexuality that included an acceptance and understanding of such matters as male-male desires. There were certain cultural laws that acknowledged and positively included guiding rules on how to go about practicing same-sex behavior and for how long.

Even with such an inclusive understanding of sexuality, men were still expected to marry women and produce families of their own. Numerous studies also point out that in pre-colonial Africa there was no such term as heterosexual: As with the

patriarchal system that has historically been present in Africa, sexual attraction to women was not questioned, it was presumed. In many instances women were ruled over by their families and society in general in a very sexist manner. In the numerous arranged marriages that took place in pre-colonial Africa, women were treated almost as commodities and objects to clinch deals and sustain heterosexual male power and authority.

This suggests that in pre-colonial Africa it was not a matter of one being gay or straight. Whether a man preferred to have sex with other men or not, that was of no concern to anyone. As long as he fulfilled what was expected of him, he could be known for having sex with other men, but it was not a negative indictment on him at all. The fact of his preference was accepted, and in the most part it was in a positive or indifferent attitude. The homophobia that has been 'propaganded' as something that is part and parcel of true African consciousness and thus has been the popular consensus with regards to the treatment of homosexuals, male homosexuals and female homosexuals alike must be questioned.

On homophobia, ILGA (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association) (Press release, 2006) stated that homophobia in Africa, and elsewhere in the world, is a war that is being lashed upon the homosexuals against and for their sexuality. This is a war that is not only aimed at deny homosexuals the right to enjoy each other as partners and enjoying the pleasures and privileges of life as homosexuals, but it is a war against the very people who are homosexuals.

When Africans have special occasions and memory services for black Africans that were murdered by colonialists during the colonial invasion and the entrenchment of colonial rule, they have a tendency to omit the fact that numerous men were drowned and hanged only for being homosexuals or suspected of such. So, many African patriarchs and pan Africanists wickedly do not question some of their neocolonial ideals and tendencies: in many regards numerous African leaders and homophobes who claim to be striving for African renaissance and discover the way of life that was lived by pre-colonial Africans are hypocritical. Certain omissions are decisively made to suit the neocolonial African patriarchal system.

In a 2006 press release ILGA stated that "We believe in an Africa where colonial prejudices have disappeared along with colonial power. We believe in an Africa freed from the evils of neocolonialism..." (ILGA, press release, 2006). In this release ILGA argued that homophobia in Africa exists and is administered with three paradoxes: the first paradox is that while numerous African leaders claim that homosexuality does not exist in their countries, there are laws that have been harnessed from the colonial era against homosexuals. The second paradox is that homosexuals, particularly male homosexuals, have historically taken the blame for the existence and spread of HIV/AIDS. Yet in Africa AIDS has proven to spread largely amongst the heterosexuals.

In this latter paradox ILGA also points out that in many African countries homosexuals are prevented from accessing treatment and educational resources for AIDS. The third paradox involves Europe and North America: while the west claims

to be shocked by the abuse and discrimination heaped on homosexuals in Africa, in many cases asylum is denied to homosexuals fleeing their countries of birth because of homophobic attacks.

The crime of being gay

In the early years of colonialism in the Cape, the city of Cape Town was reported to have had more incidents of legal punishments against same-sex behavior than any other colonial post (Epprecht, 2004). Perhaps this was because the colonial invasion in South Africa began in the Cape, and this meant that most of the colonial activities in those beginning stages of colonialism in South Africa were largely centered in the Cape colony. Most of the slaves that were captured and brought to the Cape were mostly male. It was reported that male slaves outnumbered female slaves by as much as 360 males to every 100 females (Elphick and Shell 1979, as cited in Epprecht 2004). This enabled and ultimately forced some men to turn to one another for sexual gratification.

It must be noted that the living and treatment conditions that the slaves lived in were no better than prison conditions. In such conditions where men were deprived of seeing their families and were forced to bear much loneliness, it was to be expected that they would ultimately turn to one another for comfort. However, according to Ntuli (2009) in an unpublished manuscript titled *The Truth about Being Gay and Choice,* although there might be varying degrees in sexuality, all sexual desires are inborn. This author argues that gay people were born gay and heterosexuals were born heterosexual. Children can not be socialized to be

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heterosexual; they can be socialized to adopt certain heterosexual behavior. In the same tone with regards to same-sex activities in prisons, men who practiced heterosexuality in the outside society cannot be socialized in prison to be homosexual, or to enjoy same-sex activities.

With slavery came the beginnings of such conditions as prison conditions. Because of the conditions that the slaves were living in and the sexual pressure and sexual frustration that they felt, when they engaged in same-sex intercourse with some slaves it came across as dirty and violent. There were those slaves that had been homosexuals even before being enslaved. The reason that the sexual intercourse among slaves appeared dirty and violent was as a result of prison like living conditions. One academic once likened prison sex to fucking a goat. For the dominant men who pursue and in some cases rape another male prisoner, the sexual act with another male is satisfying for him and he is aware of the humanness and the gender of his rape victim or consenting lover (Ntuli, 2009).

The relevance of this prison sex discussion is that this was likely the perception that the colonial authorities had on same-sex activities amongst the slaves. While it is safe to assume that most of the slaves lived heterosexual lifestyles before being enslaved, the close love relationships that were formed in those living conditions were very different to those documented in male prisons. The difference is that the slaves were not criminals who had committed crimes of varying severities. They were innocent men who had been yanked from their previous lives. This suggests that the same-sex relationships were comforting, beautiful and genuine. The

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colonial authorities were generally homophobic even to their own Dutch kind. It was this homophobia that propelled the colonialists to create sodomy laws and present homosexuality, in any degree, as a crime even before slavery began. By Dutch law from the Netherlands, all employees from the mother country who had travelled to colonial posts were not allowed to engage in any sexual activities of any kind with the natives (Epprecht, 2004).

As previously mentioned, same-sex activities in pre-colonial Africa were commonly known and accepted, so it became the most natural alternative for those slaves who had same-sex desires in the first place. For those slaves who did not have same-sex desires, they bore the life of loneliness.

Another difference between 'slave male-male' love relationships and prison sex is that there were no rapes amongst the slaves, or if there were they were very few and under-reported. What propelled the vast slaughter of same-sex lovers who were slaves was the homophobia of the colonial authorities. The evil paradoxes in colonialism are many: one of the striking paradoxes is that colonial authorities separated men and women slaves; they separated men from their families and wives and provided them with no other means to sexually relieve themselves, yet they made it illegal for the men to turn to each other even for sexual gratification.

Oosterhoff (1988) cited in Epprecht (2004) reports that about five cases of same-sex sodomy were tried in the Cape every year during the 1800s.

The Dutch colonialists put so much emphasis on expunging homosexuality among their black African colonies and slaves, and indeed their own Dutch kind, that forms of punishment included torture and imprisonment on Robben Island (Epprecht, 2004). Another act of hypocrisy among homophobic African leaders is the denial and ignoring of the suffering that homosexuals in the colonial and apartheid era of South Africa endured that equaled and in some cases even acceded the brutality that was suffered by all blacks under the racist laws.

The colonial government even forced numerous communities to rat-out known homosexuals or those suspected of same-sex activities. If communities refused to comply or had no knowledge of such people, reports of property destruction of the community by the authorities were not uncommon, even if to just scare them and send a message of intolerance. In fact on 13 May 1728 two slaves were put to death by drowning for male-male sodomy; in 1753 three slaves of different ethnicities were bound and thrown in the harbor for engaging in anal sex (Epprecht, 2004).

Faced with such heavy homophobia accompanied by the colonial racist brutality and further entrenched by homophobic Christian missionary teachings, black Africans were bound to begin to blame homosexuals for some of the harshness that fell upon them. In the long run, the acceptance and warm inclusion of same-sex practices that had existed in pre-colonial Africa began to diminish, and homophobia amongst the colonized African communities began to be entrenched and included in the socialization. As generally sexist as pre-colonial African patriarchy was, it was a

system that benefited all men, even men who enjoyed having sex with other men. When that system of patriarchy was replaced by Western patriarchy, all the fundamental laws that had served to govern and socialize youth into society had been changed and replaced by those operating in the societies of the colonialists. Black Africans had to adapt to a new understanding of sexuality, one that was strict and exclusive to heterosexuality only.

It must be noted that this discussion has no illusions about the status of heterosexuality in pre-colonial Africa: even in pre-colonial Africa heterosexuality was the status quo, but pre-colonial Africans had an understanding and appreciation for nature's acceptations, particularly with regards to sexuality. So, when one examines the homophobic outbursts from African leaders, it is clear to detect that those homophobic outbursts and attitudes are mere recitations of homophobic colonial entrenchments. What is even more disturbing is that leaders who would be expected to be familiar with vicious cycles of the entrenchment of negative and discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes about others have seemed to be blatantly unaware or unconcerned about entrenching neocolonial discriminatory beliefs onto the youths that admire them. The fact that in the era of much talk about African renaissance and the message for all Africans to unite, these neocolonial stereotypes and homophobic attitudes exclude many Africans in this joyous call for Africans to celebrate being African.

After the British won the Cape from the Dutch, things did not change for the status of homosexuality: the already existing laws that had been put in place and used by

the Dutch to exert and entrench homophobia and racism were largely maintained by the British and were given a new term of Roman Dutch law. It must be noted that black homosexuals suffered a double blow: homophobia and racism, and in the case of female homosexuals, they faced sexism as well.

The British also possessed a deep hatred for homosexuals, blacks, people of Latin origin, Catholics and oriental cultures as the Dutch (Epprecht, 2004). However, because the system of Calvinism was not in existence in British society, the punishments that had been carried out by the Dutch for sexual misconducts were lightened or abolished. However, homosexuality remained a crime. The only thing that changed with regards to the homosexual crime from the Dutch to the British was the manner of punishing homosexual perpetrators. Instead of drowning sodomy perpetrators as the Dutch had previously done, the British hanged them.

However, by 1871 through numerous appeals to the British government, the death penalty for same-sex crimes was finally abolished. The last man to have been put to death for being a homosexual was a Zulu named *Hogoza* in the colony of Natal in 1868 (Epprecht, 2004). But, homosexuality continued to be a crime and the punishment was in the form of imprisonment.

But the harsh punishment that black homosexuals received from the colonial government was not all that was punishment to them. They often received further abuse and rejection from their own black kind. More and more blacks became educated and began to appreciate the privileges of education and desired and later

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adopted the seemingly refined lifestyle of the colonialists. This lifestyle was based on the idea of the nuclear family that is largely Christian and has its believers go to church on Sundays. The practice of reading the bible and constructing one's lifestyle to coincide with biblical instructions was also adopted by the converted and newly 'refined' black Africans. This lifestyle and colonial culture was deeply homophobic and prejudicial.

Along-side with this lifestyle came a different kind of socialization that boxed children from an early age in an intolerant and prejudicial attitude. The difference here is not the presence or absent of heterosexuality: both Western and African communities rear their children to be heterosexual. The difference is the hardness and sexually conservativeness of Western Christian socialization. Where African culture was open about sex, sexual satisfaction and desires, Colonial Christian ethics were introverted, strict and prudent.

This also was reflected in the kinds of clothes that were worn by both Dutch and British colonialists: dresses that covered the whole body for women and an equally conservative suit attire for men. The skins that only covered the loins and few other areas that were worn by the Africans was a stark opposite to that colonial dress.

By the 1900s colonial Christian ethics had been firmly entrenched in African societies. It must be noted that it is important to also acknowledge that such positive imports of colonialism as education and the ability to read became beneficial to Africans as well. Numerous Africans were able to use these skills and

accesses to help some of their fellow Africans. This group readily adopted homophobia as well. The idea of power amongst the African themselves began to change and be usurped by that of the colonizing society (Ntuli, 2009).

The perception of homosexuals as weak has not always existed: there have been certain moments in history where same-sex activities thrived and publicly acceptable. In Ancient Greek male-male intercourse was included in the cultures of numerous societies, even as a means of a rite of passage (Dover, 1989:32). A man would gain some respect if he was able to penetrate another male, particularly one who was also masculine. He was thought to be strong as he was able to defeat and control another man sexually.

Amongst the Zulus such thoughts also existed around male-male sex. Epprecht (2004) notes one case reported in 1880 in Durban where a young Zulu man named *Umkongwana* claimed that his fellow servant named *Jim Uhliza* penetrated him anally while he was sleeping. *Uhliza* admitted to this act, but explained that he was trying to take 'the salt out of him' and make him a man. The two explanations for this are that either *Uhliza* actually believed his explanation or he just stated it to hide his actual sexual desire for *Umkongwana*. But such beliefs existed in pre-colonial Africa as well. It has been rumored that Zulu king, *Shaka Zulu*, on occasions instructed his soldiers to abstain from having sex with women, but rather have sex with their young boy servants. The purpose of this was so that they may gain more strength for the battle ahead.

This acceptance of same-sex desires and customs based on them has historically been tied to the idealized strength of masculinity. It was not believed that men who had sex with other men were weak and unmanly, as the British had believed; the Ancient Greeks and the Zulus thought differently.

Gay subcultures in Africa-lustful societies

Gay cultures have historically been thought of as cultures of lust, sex and immoral deeds (Waugh and Walker 2004). After Christian moral ethics had been firmly entrenched any same-sex behavior became taboo. This created a deep shame in the individuals who possessed same-sex desires. As previously stated it is the hypothesis of this dissertation that gay subcultures had not existed in pre-colonial African, at least not in the manner with which they came to exist during and after colonialism. Although same-sex activities were conducted discreetly and men did not publicly announce their sexual desires toward other men, there were no designated hot spots of same-sex activities.

As a result of being sub-cultured, homosexuals began to coin particular terms to facilitate their marginal lifestyle. According to David Riesman (1950) subcultures can be distinguished linguistically, aesthetically, religiously, politically, sexually, geographically, or a combination of factors. Language has tended to be one factor that accompanies all the other factors. In other words, in a subculture that came about as a result of sexual difference, linguistically this will also be reflected in the speech of the sub-cultured sexual minority. Homosexuals or the popular term 'gay community' falls under sexual minority.

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The idea of a gay community only came about somewhere during the 1970s (Cameron and Kulick, 2003). This idea has been one of the proponents to the emerging of gay- particular forms of communication. A usual combination of factors is sexual, linguistic and geographical. In fact all the above mentioned factors can be found in one subculture. A subculture may be found in a specific geographical place or compound, as in the case of the mine hostels that became gay subcultures in the cities of South Africa. The homosexual activities there by the inhabitants or visitors of that geographical place, which are usually in contradiction with the dominant and ruling culture, constitute a sexual subculture: a homosexual subculture. In most cases there will be a mixed number of people sharing the geographical surroundings. In the case of a sexual subculture, the homosexuals still live amongst heterosexuals, some of whom may be homophobic.

There is a great sense of isolation that tends to accompany homosexuals in traditional societies. In all societies people have ways of communicating their sexual desires to one another and about one another. Among the Zulus, men are allowed, and in some traditional communities even expected, to make some comments when a female passes by. When a Zulu man begins to court a female, traditionally he would greet her by saying *dudlu ntombi* (an equivalent of 'hi baby') and verbally adone her with *izidlaliso* (playing or amusement words) (Masondo, 1997). Other than this the construction of the Zulu language and the relationship between its grammar, morphology, phonology and syntax are designed to express

heterosexual discourse. Even such humor that is found in *izidlaliso* for romantic purposes, the language that delivers it is intrinsically heterosexual.

Male sexual speech amongst the *Ngunis* has historically been heterosexual: even with all the sexual humor that is found in male sexual speech, it is still heterosexual men talking about women.

This creates much isolation for homosexual men who can-not participate in those humorous sex conversations. Gay subcultures curbed this by displaying similar linguistic behavior but with a different content. As previously stated, humans instinctively express their feelings through language, this includes sexual feelings. Because of the dominance of heterosexuality, heterosexual sex speech can occur easily in public spaces: heterosexuals can talk about sex in public without fear and shame. This quality exists in all humans, so a homosexual subculture will usually have a kind of inner-lingo that will be secret amongst the sub-cultured or the in-group of that subculture. This allows those homosexuals to indulge in sex speech as the heterosexual men do.

It is in this way that gay language came about. The term 'gay language' will be used in this paper as an umbrella term inclusive of all kinds of gay registers. Processes of the emergence of gay language are similar in almost all gay subcultures and the reasons behind the emergence of that register. Even the background experiences of the emergence of that subculture will be similar to other subcultures, with the difference being the particular circumstances.

In the following chapter, one of the books that will be reviewed will be Deborah Cameron and Don Kulick's *Language and Sexuality* (2003), where they trace the history of research in gay language. This discussion will reveal that most of the experiences homosexuals go through are in fact universal and thus there are several approaches to researching gay language that can be applied universally in almost all contexts.

This suggests that homosexual cultures do not only function as gay subcultures that exist in almost all countries of the world, but also they function as speech communities as well. The peculiar and subversiveness that is done to the particular language that is manipulated can be found in most gay sublanguages. Although linguistic 'spin-offs' of a particular language do not affect the original language, they do affect the society in which they are spoken. As language expresses the ideals of the individual and the society, manipulations of a language are not triggered by linguistic variables, but are triggered by social or independent variables. This is the point of meeting between language in society and its usage: sociolinguistics. Language in its generic form is run by its own linguistic processes that are triggered by linguistic processes and must adhere to linguistic laws. For instance, the English phrase [the dog], is determined by the linguistic law that stipulates that [the] comes before the noun [dog]. Also, syntactic rules of each language will also determine the outcome of each sentence.

However, language in use becomes dynamic and non-static. Social variables, such as situation, context, mood, type of emotion, social expectation, status, class, gender, sex, age etc. will have a greater bearing on the meaning that is produced. The intention behind the utterance with the social variables will determine which linguistic variables are triggered in order to express the desired meaning. In other words the societal context will call for a particular way to use language.

In most in-group and out-group scenarios, the group that has created the subculture is the out-group, but this out-group becomes the in-group within the confines of their subculture. So, within the confines of any gay subculture the homosexuals and the men they service who largely do not view themselves and call themselves homosexual, are the in-group. The heterosexuals that may even be living within the physical boundaries of the gay subculture, such as the heterosexuals who lived within the mine compounds that have been documented as gay subcultures, are the outsiders.

With regards to language, the homosexuals who utilize a gay register that is only and largely spoken by the effeminate group of homosexuals as their lingo become the in-group of the out-group. This creates a situation where amongst the men that engage in same-sex activities, the gay register /slang is a distinguishing factor. Within the gay community, gay registers have often been largely associated with the subordinate or passive men who are the ones who are penetrated.

In South Africa the term homosexual denotes an effeminate male. The whole idea and understanding of homosexuality has historically been largely based on the idea of homosexuality as pathology. Even to numerous men who have sex with other men, but do not belong to the gay subculture, to be called homosexual or gay is not something they welcome because they believe they are not gay or homosexual.

One day I was flipping channels and happened to stumble on *Soweto TV* where on that particular insert they were discussing homosexuality. The interviewer asked one of the homosexuals to define what homosexuals are. The young effeminate male defined homosexuals as girls who are boys. This definition that was given by the very type of gay man that is denoted by the stereotype, further entrenches the pathology that is associated with homosexuality in South Africa.

There are numerous gay men who see themselves as females or who see themselves as males but not men. They emulate female behavior even in their daily ordinary lives. However, gay encounters and relationships are governed by the preferences of both the individuals: some gay men preferred to be the submissive partner and some prefer to be the dominant partner. This is not an emulation of heterosexual love-making and relationships. In actual fact the difference in preference amongst men who have sex with other men is necessary in order for there to be a balance.

It must be noted that the term homosexual will be used only in a general discussion about homosexuality and will include both men who penetrate and those who prefer

to be penetrated. However, when discussing activities within a gay subculture, *isiNgqumo* terms will be used, as they will be the most applicable to the *Nguni* gay subculture. The reason for this is that there are varying understandings, as previously discussed, of the term gay or homosexual.

The topic of this dissertation is largely focused on gay language as it is employed by *Nguni* homosexuals in Durban. The gay register that has been studied is *isiNgqumo*. However, by studying *isiNgqumo* the non-linguistic situations that impact on *isiNgqumo* as an active speech form has also been studied as well. These societal factors matter a great deal because they inform the mere existence and employment of *isiNgqumo*. Such situations include the homophobia that is intrinsic in society that forces gay men to speak in 'secret tongues' when expressing their sexual feelings in public. As it has been mentioned previously, the origins of any gay register are largely rooted in an act to combat homophobia and discriminatory social attitudes towards homosexuality: under the constitution all citizens have the right to enjoy all that the constitution allows, freedom of speech is one of the rights given to all citizens, but social homophobic attitudes have tended to prevent homosexuals from enjoying that right.

Homophobia as it is a generally accepted prejudice has created a social situation where gay men feel unable to talk about other men in public. The shame and embarrassment that a homophobic encounter and confrontation can cause also influences the employment of a gay register.

The homosexuals that have been studied are openly gay and are the men that play a submissive role in sexual intercourse with other men, with the exception of one *baba Dlamini* whose father lived in *Mkhumbane* and witnessed the events that took place. *Baba Dlamini* enjoys having sex with other men, but has kept it a secret his whole life.

The reason for choosing to include participants who are *skesanas* only is because it is this group of homosexuals that employ *isiNgqumo* on a regular basis, in private and in public. In the next chapter other studies that have been done on *isiNgqumo* will be reviewed and will also show that *isiNgqumo*, even in other areas outside Durban, has tended to be employed largely by *skesanas* [passive gay male] or homosexuals who would be considered to be *skesanas*.

The prior distinction between submissive partners and dominant partners will also be discussed further in the next chapter and as the study will show that amongst the *skesanas isiNgqumo* is also believed to be a defining factor between the *skesanas* and *injongas* [dominant gay male].

Historically the effeminate homosexuals in any society have tended to be the ones who bear the most brunt of homophobic confrontations. They are the most visible group of gay men and the most unashamed to be known as homosexuals. This fact of being unashamed is one that made it easier to study *isiNgqumo* through these men and the gay subculture they operate in. It is also this fact that propelles and allows these homosexuals to employ *isiNgqumo*.

Identity is another notion that is included in the employment of *isiNgqumo*. This too shall be discussed in the analysis chapter as well as touched on in the next chapter. Other literature on the relationship between homosexual identity and gay registers will be reviewed. Such literature will be an essay by Rudolf Gaudio (1998), where he presents findings for his study on the Hausa gay subculture of Nigeria. Gaudio (1998) focuses on the sexual lexicon that is employed by Hausa gay men. He also discusses the sexual lexicon, as he terms that gay register, and homosexual identity as a factor.

As Riesman (1950) stated subcultures can have numerous factors that underpin that particular subculture. The location of this study is Durban, but the gay subculture that has been at the centre for this study is not a geographical subculture, but a sexual subculture. The gay men that were participants in this study reside in different locations within Durban. Sexual subcultures usually exist within the very dominant community they are in opposition with. The reason for this is that prejudicial views and attitudes that may be held by people in society may not be reflected by the laws of that society.

In South Africa the laws regarding human rights and the constitution do not reflect the homophobia and resentment felt by numerous members of the society and some of the leaders as well. Many South Africans believe that homosexuality is 'unnatural' and think negatively of it. This means the rights of homosexuals

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guaranteed by the South African government will not change the homophobic views of the members of the society.

After the apartheid government entrenched its laws in 1948 homosexuality remained a crime. After the ANC government took over in 1994 homosexuality was no longer a crime. In fact laws were passed that allowed same-sex couples to adopt children and another ruling was passed that legally recognized same-sex marriage in 2002 and 2006 respectively (Alexander ,2006). However, this wonderful achievement for all homosexuals in South Africa did not erase the underlying homophobia in society. It also did not change the conduct of most of the members of the society towards homosexuals.

When mining activities began in South Africa, many black African men had to live their rural homes to travel to the cities to look for work. Two of the most densely populated fields of work were mining and construction labor. This created numerous mine compounds and hostels that housed many men. Most of the men rarely were able to see their families and began to adjust their lives to life away from their women and sharing small spaces with other men.

Mkhumbane – the birth place of *isiNgqumo*

In the 1950s as a result of urbanization numerous shanty towns were formed by rural migrants in the urban areas who had migrated from their homelands in search

of work. One such shanty land was *Mkhumbane*,[2] today predominantly known as Cator Manor, west of Durban. This shanty land or squatter camp comprised of great diversity formed by individuals from different backgrounds and cultural upbringings and indeed sexualities. The majority of whom were men who had left their wives and families behind. Amongst these men were young and older men. This mixture of mostly lone individuals who had left their cultural practices behind provided a breeding ground for a society of 'culturelessness' and created a door for new ways of living to spring up.

The kind of work that was possible for most of the men was mostly hard physical labor that paid little. As a result of this society of culturelessness and almost all-male populated, men that were away from their wives and families had to find alternative ways to satisfy their sexual and emotional needs- with other men. Also in this society homosexual men were then able to live their lives as homosexual men without fear of persecution by the heterosexual culture they had left behind.

This is an excerpt from one of the interviewed participants "It is common knowledge amongst our people that there were homosexual activities in *Mkhumbane* that were part of everyday life" as one *baba Dlamini* recollects stories told to him by his father about his stay in *Mkhumbane*, "there were weddings between men as if a man and a woman were getting married". The research found

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[2] Cator Manor.

that amongst all the shanty lands that existed alongside *Mkhumbane* in that same period, *Mkhumbane* seemed to be the one of the very few where such activities were socially common.

"One time a woman came to visit her husband from the rural areas and found him living as another man's wife" continued *baba Dlamini*.

Although there were older men who carried out duties to their husbands as wives would most of the subordinate and submissive men in these relationships and marriages were young boys who were appropriately known as 'boy wives'. This phenomenon of boy-wives was not a novel one; there had been other occurrences in the same era, such as those in mine compounds in Kimberly and Johannesburg (Mclean and Ngcobo 1994).

The research found that not all the men that lived in *Mkhumbane* participated in the homosexual activities as a result of being separated from their wives and girlfriends: some men, especially older men had finally found a safe haven to express their homosexual desires without fear of being ostracized, some of the men had been gay all along and had been practicing a homosexual lifestyle, particularly the younger men, whom some of them had lived in the urban areas for a long period of time. This meant that to be young and male in *Mkhumbane* meant that

one was inundated with proposals from other men-mostly older men- and was viewed as a potential boy wife.

So for the young men who were heterosexual and did not wish to participate in the homosexual activities, it became vital for them to find ways to fend off suitors; this usually resulted in violence. In places of entertainment where 'the matchmaking' would often take place such as *sheebeens*, where the few women that lived in *Mkhumbane* made a living from brewing African beer, it would be essential for these young heterosexual men and older heterosexual men who did not participate in these relationships and marriages to sit apart from those men who did. When an older man was looking for a boy wife he knew which section of the *sheebeen* to look to and who to look at.

This meant that the young gay boys and the ones who were already boy wives had their own section of the *sheebeen*. It must be noted that historically these older men who married or had sexual relations with the boy-wives did not view themselves as homosexuals, but they viewed themselves as heterosexuals, thus these homosexual relationships and marriages had a heterosexual basis. This meant that the boy-wives would dress and behave as women. Research found that when there were relatives who visited the husbands, the boy wives would be introduced as second or third wives; and for some time this gave the same-sex marriages in *Mkhumbane* some legitimacy.

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It must be noted that alcohol consumption was a frequent and daily activity amongst most of the men and the few women in *Mkhumbane* (gay or heterosexual) and at times alcohol was used as a tool to gain the affection of a potential boy-wife.

Historically, the image of African masculinity has been that of a hyper masculine and aggressive persona that shows very little if none at all, emotion and femininity or signs of femininity: perhaps as a counter to the racism and the feelings of being emasculated by the white oppressors. This kind of masculinity was accompanied by the importance of processions which were signifiers of social and familial manhood. One of the things that colonial rule and apartheid rule did was to emasculate African men, in the sense that they undermined and tried to limit their ability to attain these signifiers.

Certainly the men of *Mkhumbane* were emasculated and the gay activities further tarnished their masculinities to the outside eye. The boy-wives were not considered men at all by their husbands and the other men in *Mkhumbane*. With regards to sexual intercourse the husbands were able to enjoy their wives as they pleased and the wives were expected to be submissive. These boy-wives had been emasculated further by being essentially owned and controlled by other men who in turn were emasculated by the colonialism and the apartheid government.

The other young men who had refused to be boy wives were said to have been particularly hateful towards the boy-wives because they feared and hated the thought of being one of them and to be thought as one of them; they saw homosexuality as a form of further emasculation and they viewed proposals from other men as further emasculating them. In order to be known as a boy-wife and considered to be a boy-wife one needed to have behaved a certain way: one of the things that allowed these men who had sexual relations with boy-wives to continue calling themselves heterosexual was that these boy-wives looked like women and in some cases would be passed off as women. In other words, in order to appease the masculinity of the man he was to marry a potential boy-wife had to give up his masculinity and embrace femininity.

It must be made known that there were some reports of young heterosexual men who opted for being boy wives with the men in *Mkhumbane* for money: this was possible because the majority of the sexual acts constituted *ukusoma* [thigh sex] rather than penetration.

The boy-wives/*skesanas*

The duties of a boy-wife are said to have been the same as those of a female wife in a traditional heterosexual marriage: cooking cleaning and maintaining the room

they called home and providing sexual relief. If the boy-wife was not a full time wife he usually has another lifestyle outside of the relationship or was heterosexual and provided thigh sex and performed his duties in the evening.

Boy wives usually had one husband; and there were instances of violence in *sheebeens* over a new potential boy-wife between men- these boys were viewed as such a valuable commodity to these men that they were frequently showered with gifts and affection, and at times at the expense of the men's families back in the rural areas. It must be noted that this discussion on boy wifehood will be vital to our understanding of the reasons behind the creation of *isiNgqumo*.

It is not clear whether the boy-wives had emotional connections to their husbands or their aim was for financial bearing, but for a certain period of time while the old *Mkhumbane* was functioning, this subculture thrived; more and more boys were lured into the homosexual activities in *Mkhumbane*. As a result of this expansion the boy wives and the other gay boys within their circle began to create codes of communication amongst themselves: as most of the introductions and public interactions between the boy wives themselves and the potential husbands, they created a secret means of talking about the men in the *sheebeen* and teaching the newcomers 'who's who' in the community and where homophobic danger lurked.

IsiNgqumo as a linguistic code

The term for the men who were the dominant partners in sexual intercourse and were potential lovers or husbands is *injonga*- if a man was pointed out as an *injonga* it meant that he was safe to approach or to give signals to. The term that the boy-wives gave to themselves was *skesana*- if a gay boy or man called himself a *skesana* it meant that he was the wife or the submissive lover in the relationship and he should be with the other *skesanes* in their section of the *sheebeen*. The word for men in general was *umchak'sane*- if a man was part of the gay culture in *Mkhumbane* he would be known as *injonga mchak'sane*. It must be noted that the *skesanes* accepted the role of women or being viewed and treated as women; so it was common for them to speak of other men as men as if they were not.

With regards to sexual activities between the *skesanes* the men, there were two types of activities- a *skesana* could either provide thigh sex or anal sex. As mentioned before the word for thigh sex is the isiZulu word *ukusoma* [thigh sex] and '*ukudla emabhodweni esiZulu* [to indulge in anal sex] would be anal sex- the term for bums was *amabhodwe esiZulu*.

Thus, at this beginning stage *isiNgqumo* was no more than a set of codes used as a means of secret communication amongst the *skesanes* about the *injongas*: particularly as the homosexual activities in *Mkhumbane* were no longer just about companionship between the men but had grown to a mini-sex trade business-

isiNgqumo would be used by the more experienced *skesanes* to give information to new recruits about the preferences of the *injongas*.

According to the research done by Rudwick and Ntuli (2008), as these activities grew so did *isiNgqumo*; the *skesanes* became an integral part of the *Mkhumbane* community and their population had increased in number and thus their gatherings were no longer confined to the *sheebeens* and behind closed doors. They became free to walk around as they pleased and would visit one another in their homes; while they were in the presence of the *injongas* or heterosexuals *isiNgqumo* became an even more necessary code of communication to talk about what a certain *injonga* was doing and which *mchak'sane* [a boy] they found attractive without fear of being found out and beaten.

For a period of time the heterosexual culture and the homosexual culture lived relatively in harmony. Even the homophobic heterosexuals called it a truce for the time being: as life in *Mkhumbane* began to settle some men brought their wives and girlfriends to live with them, so even the young heterosexual men had no reason to fear being mistaken for *skesanes*. It is said that some of the *injongas* who had wives brought them to *Mkhumbane* and introduced the *skesanes* as their second wives.

For a period of time *Mkhumbane* became an oasis for black homosexuality; this is not to suggest that the homosexual activities there or homosexuality as a whole was ever revered by the heterosexual residents, but it was accepted and understood. Research data suggests that as the expansion took place, the *skesanes* became even more vigor about using *isiNgqumo* to communicate gossip and express themselves substantially.

When the old *Mkhumbane* was dispersed, its original citizens were moved to newly created townships around Durban such as *uMlazi* and *KwaMashu*. *IsiNgqumo* had grown enough to be sustained outside of *Mkhumbane*. Some of the *skesanes* followed their husbands to their new homes in the townships but most went their separate ways. What the townships offered was significantly different from the life *Mkhumbane* had provided: instead of room compounds the people were given small plots of land to build their homes, this meant that they could permanently settle in those homes with the rest of their families. The homosexual activities which had thrived at *Mkhumbane* could not be transferred to these townships; thus the harmony which had existed between the heterosexual culture and the homosexual culture in *Mkhumbane* had ended with the end of *Mkhumbane*.

Some of the *skesanes* moved back to their homelands: as they had become dependent on their husbands for financial support, once their marriages had ended, the financial support also ran out. Some came from the same rural areas and

remained in contact and continued to speak *isiNgqumo*; it was as a result of this dispersement that we might credit to the survival and the spread of *isiNgqumo*.

IsiNgqumo the slang

Over the past 50 years *isiNgqumo* has existed it has surpassed the status of being just a set of codes consisting of a limited vocabulary; today *isiNgqumo* could be considered to be a slang. Because of the nature and place of its creation, the grammatical makeup is similar to that of *isiZulu* and other *Nguni* languages (Rudwick & Ntuli, 2008).

IsiNgqumo has been used to translate the messages of gay men about heterosexuals without their knowledge. It is considered to be a language by some of those who speak and is held in high regard. It may not be the most popular slang around but it has proven to be enduring over the past 50 years. Most of the words in this slang are only morphologically similar to *isiZulu* words but can be considered to be *isiNgqumo* words; example, the word *windela* [want] is morphologically and phonetically and grammatically identical to any *isiZulu* word but it has no meaning in *isiZulu*; this word has been appropriated from the *isiZulu* word *iwindi* [window] (Rudwick & Ntuli, 2008).

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Some of the words in *isiNgqumo* are given meaning from already existing implications of the original *isiZulu* word which has been appropriated, for example: `amabhodwe esiZulu* [bums] one can clearly see the likeliness of the two butt chicks to the two Zulu pots standing together.

As *isiNgqumo* grew so did the vocabulary, the boy-wives had successfully passed their creation on to the next generation of gay men.

An excerpt of *isiNgqumo*

The short dialogue below (Rudwick and Ntuli, 2008, 4) showcases the dynamics of *isiNgqumo* with *isiZulu* in a (*isiNgqumo* lexical items are in bold, English translation in brackets):

BA: *Awu, dali, awukopit ucako akasalele kanje dali.*

[wow, darling, can't you see this cute guy, what a darling]

DA: *Ey, yo, ngiyakugcika, uma ngasa ngimgede, ngingayek' ukwentha dali.*

[Ey, yo, I tell you, if I could date this guy, I would not be fooling around anymore]

BA: *Asisethi kanje uphefu dali, kodwa imvelo ayisethi*

[It's so beautiful, his butt, darling, but it's just his perfect nature]

BA: *Kodwa ungathi ucako uyismesh, ngoba nje unompholiso.*

[But one could say that the guy is gay, because he is quite effeminate]

DA: *Hayibo, kala dol, ucako, esemonqolosa ubhovu unkanvule. Ungathi ufezela.*

[Hayibo, look doll, the guy is [French] kissing a woman. It seems he is straight]

BA: *Asiguze, dali, siya kuyena.*

[Let's go, darling, we'll go to him]

The extent to which *isiNgqumo* resembles a language is dependent on, among other things, the *isiNgqumo: isiZulu* ratio employed: in an *isiNgqumo* conversation there is much code switching between *isiZulu* and *isiNgqumo* vocabulary. However, even with this extensive code switching speakers of *isiZulu* (and speakers of other *Nguni* languages for that matter) would find it near impossible to understand what the conversation is about without knowledge of *isiNgqumo*. In 1994, writers McLean and Ngcobo published a mini-study on *isiNgqumo* (1995: 183) and claimed that: "The vocabulary for *isiNgqumo* is extensive and colorful. Although *isiNgqumo* incorporates many languages and styles, it works mainly through idiomatic corruptions of Zulu".

The sophistication and pervasiveness of *isiNgqumo* is an indication of the developed nature of black gay subculture and its rootedness in South African Black townships on the reef. Through the data collected in this research and the fact of the time and place of the creation of *isiNgqumo*, this claim has been substantiated.

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However, when analyzing the vocabulary of *isiNgqumo* one finds that the majority of *isiNgqumo* words belong to the lexical category of nouns; such as the word *isidudula* [car], *umngeni* [water] or *izimvakazi* [clothes]. McLean and Ngcobo (1995: 183) further refer to names, such as *injubugane* [old man/father], *mamburuza* [mother/grandmother], and *udayi* [white person]: these words were also recognized by some of the informants. These non-sexual words prove that *isiNgqumo* has indeed evolved from the set of codes that largely included sex talk and gossip by the *skesanes* in the old *Mkhumbane*, to a slang that can sustain a decent conversation.

Many adjectives and verbs in *isiNgqumo* are part of sex talk, such as *imbube* [sexually versatile], *ayina* [to have anal intercourse] (which has been modified from [*ukudla emabhodweni esiZulu*], from the *skesanes* of the old *Mkhumbane*)) and *skomora* [to masturbate]. The lexical category of verbs, however, includes many non-sex terms in *isiNgqumo*, such as *ukukala* [to look], *ukubhedlela* [to sleep], *ukukushaya/ ukuguza* [to go/walk], *ukufoza* [to smoke], or *ukuqeqa* [to drink], among many others. Judging from the data collected thus far, there are no distinct prepositions, adverbs or pronouns in the lexicon of *isiNgqumo*. Words which belong to those lexical categories are catered for in *isiZulu*. Words of endearment, such as *gweni, dali, dol* [darling/doll], are "very common in the speech variety" (Rudwick and Ntuli, 2008:4).

The same affixation processes (addition of affixes) common for *isiZulu* are also characteristic for *isiNgqumo*, for example in *isiZulu*, the verb *ukufundisa* [to teach] becomes *umfundisi* [teacher]; as a noun, in *isiNgqumo* the word for [to teach] is *ukujuketisa* which goes through the same process as the *isiZulu* verb to form a noun and it becomes *umjuketisi* [teacher]. Other words that belong to *isiNgqumo* and have been processed the same way are- *umqhumo* [work] and *emqhumenini* [to/from/at work] – in *isiZulu*: *umsebenzi* [work] and *emzebenzini* [to/from/at work]. This coinage process is indeed grammatically identical to that found in *isiZulu* (Rudwick and Ntuli, 2008).

New words continue to be created by gay men particularly still from the manipulation of *isiZulu* words; some of the manipulations include the word *thamela* [*bask*] this is an original *isiZulu* word which has been changed to *khamela* in *isiNgqumo* and has retained its original meaning. In addition the word *isihlahla* to *isiNgqumo* word *uhlahla* which has also retained its original meaning. Through the years of its existence there have been a few modifications to some of the vocabulary- example, the *isiNgqumo* word for [anal sex] is no longer considered to be *ukudla emabhodweni esiZulu* but as mentioned earlier it is now *uku-ayina.*

However, it must be noted that for a few years after *Mkhumbane* had been dispersed *isiNgqumo* continued to be used as a set of codes although the vocabulary had been extended; unless one was part of the group that spoke

isiNgqumo and understood the new appropriations, they could not understand what was being spoken about.

Many words in *isiNgqumo* were created in this manner and continue to be created in this manner: appropriations of *isiZulu* words. There are other words that have been borrowed from other languages such as English, example, *uyangitek'sela* [leaving/breaking up], the root of the word is *teksi-* which comes from the original English word 'taxi'; the implication of the word is to leave and go somewhere in a taxi and it is from that implication that the new *isiNgqumo* word is created. Such other intricate words that belong to different lexical categories other than the noun category is *muni* from the Afrikaans word [moonie] –which means [don't]- this word retained its original meaning and thus produces the sentence *muni tek'sela* [don't leave].

After the old *Mkhumbane* had been dispersed *isiNgqumo* ultimately moved from being a secret- relationship-orientated set of codes and sex talk and gossip encompassing and reflecting the new circumstances that the *skesanes* and other gay men (who subsequently adopted the slang) found themselves in.

It was as a result of this reflective quality that *isiNgqumo* survived: it became a way for the gay men who used it to verbalize their feelings and in fact enjoy the

benefits of male linguistic freedom in society that they had never experienced before.

In the analysis chapter the above except will be revisited and the humor that is found in *isiNgqumo* and the manner with which the *skesanes* use it will be discussed. I will also discuss the humor that is found in gay subcultures. The gay men that were participants in this study were not male prostitutes. This must be stressed because in previous studies done on gay subcultures the act of prostitution has tended to be included. Dover's (1989) study on Greek homosexuality focuses on submissive gay males prostituting themselves to the men who penetrated them and McLean and Ngcobo's study titled *abangibhamayo bathi ngimnandi*(1995) also discusses *isiNgqumo* as used by young men and boys who prostitute themselves to the miners in the Kimberly mine compounds.

Conclusion

The intense homophobia that was distributed by the Dutch and British colonial regimes entrenched resentment and blame towards homosexuals in the minds of black people who had suffered as a result of colonialism. This resentment and blame had never been there before. Colonial rule disrupted the delicate and balanced understanding of homosexuality that pre-colonial African had had. The Zulus particularly showed a great acceptance of same-sex desires and activities to the extent that even some rite of passage experiences for young boys included

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male-male intercourse between older men and their young male mentees. In this introduction chapter I have introduced the literature that will be reviewed in the following chapter; I have also given an introductory view at *isiNgqumo* that will be furthered in its entirety in the analysis chapter. In the analysis chapter the data that was collected in research phase of this study will be presented and then analyzed.

I have stated that the hypotheses of this study is that in pre-colonial Africa the Zulu societies did not have gay subcultures but is was only as a result of colonial rule that gay subcultures emerged and this influenced the creation and necessity of a gay register. *IsiNgqumo* as a sociolinguistic phenomenon that emerged as the gay register for *Nguni* homosexuals cannot be studied in isolation: its history and current surrounding societal influences must be taken into account. This requires that the *Nguni* gay subculture of Durban be studied as well.

These are four of the critical questions which this study intends to respond

- What is *isiNgqumo*?

- What is its significance in the gay community in Durban?

- How did it originate?

- Why and when is *isiNgqumo* used?

Chapter two: Literature review

In this chapter five main works are reviewed: Cameron and Kulick (2003) *Language And sexuality*, Willaim Leap (2004) *Language, belonging and (homo)sexual citizenship in Cape Town, South Africa.* This is a chapter in a larger book which is edited by Leap & Boellstorff titled *Speaking in Queer Tongues.* An essay in *Defiant desire* which is edited by Edwin Cameron and Mark Gevisser (1995) titled *Abangibhamayo bathin ngimnandi (those who fuck me say I'm tasty*, is also reviewed. this essay is written by Mclean and Ngcobo.

Rudolf Gaudio's essay is also reviewed. This essay is a contribution in Murray and Roscoe's (1998) *Boywives and female husbands: studies of African homosexualities.* Marc Epprecht's (2004) *Hungochani: The history of a dissident sexuality in southern Africa* is reviewed. Although this book has been substantially introduced and cited in the introductory chapter, it properly reviewed in this chapter.

Much work has been done around the area of gender and language, but in the analysis of this information sexuality and sexual orientation have scarcely been used as the criterion for analysis and understanding: such work has previously been analyzed by using gender and the relationship between gender and language. Analysis on male language has tended to reflect views of heterosexual males- this

in turn undermines the role of sexuality and sexual orientation in shaping ones views and use of language.

To study the manner in which the speakers of *isiNgqumo* employ it within the Durban gay subculture and outside, it would be important to also study the reasons behind the mere existence of a gay register which has historically been conveniently termed 'gay language'. It must be noted that the term 'gay language' is used with a particular understanding: it refers to that type of linguistic communication used by people identified as gay- this communication maybe in existence in any language and society, the circumstances under which the gay people are under inform the necessity and style of the form of gay register that they employ.

The term register refers to a language variety that is defined according to its context of use (Biber and Finegan, 1994). This includes academic writing and speech, courtroom speech, gay language. Gay language falls under this definition as well: as a register that is associated with situational use (1994). What Leap (2004) suggests is that there can be one language of homosexuality that can be accessed by all homosexuals who wish to employ it.

In this chapter the literature that is reviewed has a majority common theme: that of the relationship between language and sexuality. Cameron and Kulick (2003) look to distinguish between the particular and "specialized" (2003, 4) language that is used by homosexuals in sexual subcultures, and whether homosexuals have a particular and identifiable manner of speaking that is distinguishable from that of heterosexuals.

This review of Cameron and Kulick's *Language and Sexuality* (2003) does not dwell on the manner of speaking that is particular and identified with homosexuals. The focus is on their trace of the history of the emergence of gay language as it began in western gay subcultures.

Leap's suggestion that there might be a language of homosexuality suggests that all the gay subcultures merge into one and become the historically homogenous gay community. As Biber and Finegan, (1994) have stated that a register is exists based on the context of its use, each gay register is thus a product of its context of use. The context in which the *Nguni* homosexuals live within calls for the use of that particular register, namely *isiNgqumo*.

Homosexuality is not homogenous at all: with regards to male homosexuality, there are many kinds of masculinities within the gay population. So when it comes to the

expression of gay identity and gay pride, it varies from one gay individual or circle. Thus when it comes to the use of gay language it must be acknowledged that not all homosexuals speak, understand or are even interested and aware of such a thing, but for those who employ gay language, in any form, use it in order to give some kind of substance and meaning to their gay experience. Also with the expression of homosexuality and with regards to the expression of its pride it has been noted that class seems to be a factor as well: gay language is employed in some gay circles and not in others- in other societies gays express themselves in the conversational language of that society "French gays, for example, may spot Levi's 5015 and Tommy Hilfiger pullovers: they continue, however, to eat *paun au chocolat*, sip express in local cafés and speak a seemingly homogenous French language..."(Leap, 2004:35).

Being gay has historically been seen as a 'bad thing': to be called a homosexual is an insult to heterosexuals in almost all societies around the world- but, the men who are gay enjoy it and are proud of it, but express it heterogeneously. William Leap in his 2004 (137) essay on 'sexual citizenship' argues that sexuality forms part of the foundational tenants of being a citizen. Homosexual orientation is a 'sexual community' that has its own citizenship- a homosexual citizenship. However, in a homophobic context this homosexual citizenship is one that homosexuals have had to fight for: the recognition of sexual citizenship for homosexuals as homosexuals has historically been denied or ignored.

In the process of my research amongst the *Nguni* gay men that were interviewed many stated that it had been difficult for them to arrive at the point at which they were at: where they were able to talk about their sexual orientation so openly and proudly. Although, the majority of these gay men were not familiar with the concept of sexual citizenship or homosexual citizenship, they did show an awareness of the relationship between their sexual orientation and how they felt as gay citizens. They also revealed how being able to express their homosexual desires had been helpful in discovering their preferences as homosexual men.

In a homophobic context, gays who employ any form of gay language do so as a reaction to a need or desire to make sense of their role in society: because homosexuality is in such opposition to the dominant heterosexuality, a convenient way of communication becomes an agent for gay men to serve their expressive needs of their desires as gay men. Because gay men are attracted to other men, they are also attracted to heterosexual men. What *isiNgqumo* does is also allow gay men to talk about the heterosexual men that they are attracted to, heterosexual men who may also be homophobic. But, *isiNgqumo* gives the *Nguni* homosexuals a safe leeway to indulge in sexual talk amongst such heterosexuals. One of the qualities of *isiNgqumo* is the humor that is found in it.

The *Nguni* homosexuals display much humor and naughtiness in *isiNgqumo* during their dialogues, where they make fun of other gay men who may not understand

isiNgqumo and are not able to speak it or they humorously gossip about an attractive heterosexual man by describing how they think he might be in bed or talk about his features. In some cases the man or men that is/are the object and subject may or may not be homophobic. This convenient and safe way of communication allows the *Nguni* gay men to exercise their linguistic rights as citizens to express their sexual desires. So often heterosexual men take and are given leeway to express their sexual desires freely and often in public spaces.

In this chapter I explore numerous literature resources concerning gay language in all its variants. Leap discusses the relevance and profoundness of the names of gay clubs and pubs in Cape Town, "bar names as claims to gay presence. As bars and clubs with names like *Tot's* and *Henry's* are replaced by bars and clubs with names like *Detour* and *Blah Bar*, sites with protected or ambiguously defined public identities are replaced by sites whose names have a more explicit connection to gay life" (Leap, 2004:146). For the homosexuals that employ Gay language it helps to put things into perspective for them: the terms, labels and categories that exist in gay language, granted they are replicas of heterosexual gendered roles, help gay men identify their own individual preferences within a gay relationship and facilitate in defining ones role as a homosexual. What this also does is that it helps in the identification of the type of masculinity that one possesses or prefers. Leap (2004) reiterates that language is one of the means that gays employ to claim their presence and space and indeed to begin to legitimize their homosexual citizenship status.

One of the prominent factors about gay language, in any form, and one that has been espoused upon in much of the gay literature is its sexually charged nature- as Gaudio (1998) labeled the form of gay language in the gay Hausa subculture as a 'sexual lexicon'. Granted, the nature of much gay communication does revolve around sexual activities and sexual discourse and is indeed overtly sexual in nature-however, one has to consider the sort of environment that gives rise to any form of gay communication: gay subcultures, subcultures in general, constitute a very high pressure atmosphere, particularly with gay subcultures where the homosexuals attempt to discover, explore and claim their sexuality that has been pushed to the margins by the heterosexual orientated dominance- a sexually charged existence thus occurs.

However, such discourses do exist and are permitted amongst heterosexuals, particularly heterosexual men- [hetero]sexual citizenship has historically been the status quo and still remains so- and is even taken for granted by heterosexuals, thus the expression of that sexual citizenship has been taken as an accepted and acceptable privileged reserved for heterosexuals. What gay language has aimed to serve is to allow gay men to part-take in that right and privilege.

With regards to gay masculinities gay language amongst the gays that employ it can indeed help clarify this factor: as gay men are attracted to other men, there are

several preferences within the gay community as to which kind of gay masculinity is attracted to which. In other words, one of the stereotypes that inform homophobia is that gay men are only attracted to heterosexual men, however, through several researches on gay masculinities it has been realized that many gay men are attracted to other gay men- such terms as *skesana,* the passive partner in a gay partnership and *injonga,* the active or dominant male that can be found in the gay register *isiNgqumo* help distinguish these masculinities. Although, these terms differ from one gay register to another, in all gay registers they define these masculinities and others by using their own particular terms.

What has also emerged from studies done about homosexuality and its development, not necessarily studies focusing on gay language, is that homosexuality has moved from being constrained in gay subcultures; and gay lifestyles has been integrated within the mainstream community, particularly in South Africa where gays have gained rights such as to be legally married and to adopt children. Again the accompanying forms of gay language have tended to express this development by moving beyond sexual lexicon- in the case of *isiNgqumo* communication has been documented as having moved from just a set of sexual codes and innuendos. This development entails the inclusion of lexical items that are not sexual or erotic in nature but are direct and unambiguous translations of general items such as cars, money, food etc.

This linguistic development is also an expression and signal of the types of lifestyles of gays that have developed- from subcultures to being legally fully recognized citizens. This requires contemporary researches and studies on homosexuality and gay language to recognize this factor and implement it in the studies: as one researching on gay language it is vital that one looks and thinks of gay language as in terms of the manner with which it is used and the manner with which it was used. This requires the researcher to not only look at the lexical items that exist in that particular register but why and how they exist and came about. In other words, the reason gay registers have tended to be so sexually loaded and erotic is because the environment that precipitated them was such.

Another issue that around gay language that also deserves mention is the emergence of ways of talking and writing about same-sex desires and experiences and naming of same-sex identities (2004). As gay literature has made use of the freedom given by the constitution with regards to the "rights of same-sex identified women and men" (Leap, 2004:146) and takes into account the ever-progressing homosexual landscape, particularly in South Africa, new sets of phrases have been seen to be invented to document gay language and gay activities in general.

In recent years in the arena of gay language and studies of homosexuality and language there has been much writing about a gay language that would be the prima gay language that would be the emblem for a homosexual citizenship in

South Africa- as Polari is in Great Britain (Leap, 1996) and Bahia gay in Indonesia (Boellstorff 2004). With the release of GAYLE many have said that GAYLE might be a suitable language to be the prima gay language of homosexual citizenship in South Africa. However, in a society as diverse as South Africa, particularly linguistically, that has an equally diverse homosexual 'community' it would be difficult to implement that idea and would indeed create a certain amount of dis-ease within the gay 'community' of South Africa- if the English form of gay language were to be made prima.

Although, on a general scale GAYLE has been the most known gay register- this is as a result of the lack of exposure and research on other gay registers in South Africa, particularly indigenous forms of gay language. In fact, the fact that the GAYLE dictionary has been able to be published and there are dictionaries of indigenous gay registers is indicative of that lack of research in these indigenous gay registers, not for the lack of extensive usage and lexical items.

It must be noted that the significance of a homosexual citizenship or the fight for the recognition of homosexual citizenship or sexual citizenship for homosexuals as homosexuals is that under the constitution sexual orientation is recognized- the fact that every citizen in the country is viewed as having sexual citizenship regardless of their sexual orientation. As Leap (2004: 147) continues to extrapolate that:

Before 1996 homosexuality had been regulated carefully, if somewhat unevenly, in South African daily life. As part of its commitment to white privilege, apartheid

governmentality placed high values on heterosexual marriage, reproduction, and family life and established strict racial and social requirements to determine when proactive sexual activity (and its consequences) would be considered legitimate in the eyes of the state. Homosexuality was problematic under that arrangement to the extent that homosexual object choice prevented sexual subjects from meeting their procreative obligations.

It is also very important to acknowledge the difference in the formation of linguistic practices: because South Africa is so linguistically diverse most of the linguistic forms are constructed by drawing from a range of "linguistic traditions, yielding discussions of homosexuality and homosexual-as-citizen in an idiom meaningful in local speech contexts and beyond" (Leap, 2004:141). To begin to create this balance in recognition it is vital for indigenous forms of gay language such as isiNgqumo to be given as much exposure in the literary arena- one reason for this imbalance might be that white homosexuality has historically been the most visible homosexuality and thus the most studied and written about. The term homosexual citizenship has also been adopted by numerous writers of gay literature or literature about gays- and this term encompasses all homosexuals and aims to legitimize their sexual citizenship, regardless of race and ethnicity.

However, there are stark similarities between all gay registers with regards to why they were created: the need for a gay register has been similar in all gay contexts-

to access the right to sex discourse in private and in the public space as heterosexual have been accessing and permitted to indulge in sex discourse. So, even though much literature on gay language has focused on English and European gay varieties such as GAYLE and Polari, on a general scale that literature can indeed be applied to non-English and European gay varieties as well. That is what this chapter ultimately aims to accomplish: to explore the extensive studies and documentations done around English and European varieties, and even in European and other international areas, but use those concepts and discoveries in the study and exploration of isiNgqumo, in a South African context.

Leap remarks that even in popular newspapers such as The EXIT "statements in indigenous languages are never included in any of these English or Afrikaans texts nor are news reports in those languages" (Leap, 2004:147-148). He notes that there have been numerous newspapers, magazines and other publications that are dedicated to gay content but "their articles often make assumptions of affluence (and often affluent whiteness) that are not supported by the lived experiences of the majority of South Africa's lesbians and gay men".

In his argument for a language of homosexual citizenship he suggests a prima variety that would include terms from all languages and merge them in as one cohesive syntax "the language of homosexual citizenship at issue here allows speakers to address similar communicative tasks in individual speech settings...it

allows discussions of homosexuality in English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, Zulu and other South African languages" (Leap, 2004:157). In this defense Leap cites an article titled "*Umthondo Wesizwe*" in the August 1997 issue of 'The Exit'. He uses this article to present an idea of what a language of homosexuality might look and sound like. He notes that the "the written Zulu" text contains material from four languages, namely Zulu, English, Italian and Gayle (sometimes Gala) (2004:149) and concludes that "the audience regardless of language background will be able to make sense of the messages".

This is an excerpt of '*Umthondo Wesizwe*' as cited in Leap, (2004:149):

001 Girls! Girls! Girls! uGianni Versace ufile. What am I gonna do? What am I gonna wear? MaRegiesm, maNgobeni kanti kwenzekani? I already got my after tears party invitation from maVersace, but I can't RSVP as I have a new gay shebeen to review in Soweto. Will you attend in my honour? I need a professional mourner! I'm sure kumama factories ayi few azovala eBangkok as a result of this tragedy. Didn't I warn everyone about the dangers involved in picking up omarhosha (that's rita, dears) in the last issue?

While what Leap notes is not untrue, there are however some reservations to this suggestion: this language will be affected by context (linguistic context). He suggests that this suggestion of a language of homosexuality will enable gays to express their homosexuality linguistically and be understood by all- however, this

would require the gays who would wish to employ it to learn terms that would be considered in-group terms that would otherwise have no meaning in their experience: as Gayle is an expression of largely English (and white) gay experience that would be understood by people in that group (race and sexual group). For instance, the term *Rita* - unless one is indeed in that particular English demographic, *Rita* would be meaningless to one as a speaker or hearer.

Code switching is also an expression of a particular experience that is context-specific; it is not a cohesive expression of a large group as Leap argues it could be: one would have to learn Gayle, English, *isiZulu* and *isiXhosa* etc. In other words, in order for one to code switch from one language to another, they would have to have an good understanding of both languages, because one can not use words that have no meaning to them to express themselves. It must be understood that a standardized language will be treated differently from a marginalized form such as a gay register as *isiNgqumo*. When *isiNgqumo* is code-switched with another gay register such as Gayle and then mixed with a proper language such as English or *Xhosa* or *isiZulu* Thus, the code-switching that Leap provides in *Umthondo Wesizwe* is an example of a particular gay experience that involves an understanding of the particular languages involved as the speaker and receiver of the language spoken.

Another controversial point in Leap's suggestion is that this idea of a prima language of homosexuality will also disregard other forms of gay language and

assumes that the suggested language of homosexual citizenship will unite all homosexuals into one big cohesive happy homosexual 'family'. On the contrary this is unrealistic- As other forms of gay language, particularly indigenous varieties namely *isiNgqumo*, have been in existence for an extensive period of time and are as popular and fitting in their contexts of use as Gayle is in its own context.

Identity- gay language as an identity marker

In the early 1940s a shift occurred when several scholars who had been studying homosexuality began to notice the manner with which the homosexuals that they had been studying were using their peculiar way of communicating with each other. Researchers began to look at how gay language affects gay identity. Deborah Cameron and Don Kulick (2003) note that as gay language continued to be used by homosexuals, not only did this help create a "definable, relatively homogenous social group" (Cameron and Kulick 2003:74) and expressed the gay experience but also began to constitute a sort of identity. Later on one of the debates that ensued at that time around this issue of identity was which, between language and gay identity, gives rise to which. In other words, is gay language the source of gay identity- homosexuals in that particular group primarily attach their identity to the language that they speak- or is it that identity is the source of gay language- that because the homosexual men are homosexual they begin to adopt gay language. In the 1990s scholars had begun to examine how gay language not only expressed gay identity but also how the gay identity was influenced by gay language.

The tendency to treat the gay community as one such cohesive community is one of the reasons that give rise to such concepts as 'the gay community' that could have its own language. The idea that gay language not only expresses gay identity but also is a big part in formulating a gay identity for some individuals and even a particular group of homosexuals became more popular in the 1990s, Cameron and Kulick (2003:78) note that "the focus is on how language is employed by speakers to signal their identity as homosexuals". In other words, the fact that a particular homosexual may employ a gay language indicates that a particular identity. Furthermore, that homosexual may employ a particular form of gay language which further signals his kind of gay identity. So, the writer of *Umthondo Wesizwe* not only signals his identity as a homosexual, but also signals his particular kind of gay identity by employing that form of gay language.

It must be noted that the homosexuals that do not employ any form of gay language also do so as a kind of signaling their kind of gay identity.

What Cameron and Kulick (2003) suggest here is that when studying the relationship between language and identity in homosexual communities or sub-communities language becomes an identifying factor on homosexuals and does indeed signal them as homosexuals. As one studies further into gay communities that have an distinguishable gay register one may also find that that gay register

influences and constitutes a large part of the gay identity of those homosexuals who employ that gay register.

The term gay is itself a label of one's identity that could be used to exclude ones self from the surrounding heteronormative community that tends to be homophobic and use this as an exclusionary means of protection and validation. This identity that homosexuals have tended to cling on to is one that allows them to feel as insiders in a world that validates them and understands them and does not condemn them. This insider validation from being regarded as outsiders by the greater heterosexual community and the exclusivity of heterosexuality allows them to escape from the cruel reality of being gay in a homophobic society. Often the struggle to come to terms with ones homosexuality produces raging feelings of self-hatred and self-condemnation. These feelings are accompanied by other feelings of shame and unworthiness. Therefore, such a phenomenon as gay language becomes not just a secret way of communication that is employed by some homosexuals in order to enjoy sexual and otherwise linguistic freedom, but also a tool to keep the outsiders out.

Within gay identity there are several other more precise identities that a homosexual may adopt: for instance, whether one prefers to be the passive partner or the active partner, a queen or a straight-gay man. Such factors filter in and become essential to a formulation of any gay identity. Author Jack Malebranche

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presents a hard-core idea about gay masculinity; he advocates for gay men to act like men and presents a highly sexually charged masculine gay identity. In his book *Androphilia* he argues that:

Androphilia is a rejection of the overloaded gay identity and a return to a discussion of homosexuality in terms of desire: a raw, apolitical sexual desire and the sexualized appreciation for masculinity as experienced by men. The gay sensibility is a near-oblivious embrace of a castrating slur, the nonstop celebration of an age-old, emasculating stigma applied to men who engaged in homosexual acts. Gays and radical queers imagine that they challenge the status quo, but in appropriating the stigma of effeminacy, they merely conform to and confirm long-established expectations. Men who love men have been paradoxically cast as the enemies of masculinity--slaves to the feminist pipe dream of a 'gender-neutral' world (Malebranch, 2007:1).

What Malebranche (2007) suggests is that the term gay or gay community signalles a completely tainted picture of what it really means to be a man who love other men. Because the heterosexual community as relied around as one cohesive homophobic community, that gave rise to gay people rallying around one another to create a gay community that is aimed to be the anti-thesis to the homophobia. However, the very same kind of identity that many homosexuals in this gay community have tended to embrace is actually what the outside heterosexual community sees being gay as- effeminate queens.

Gay identity

There are many internal challenges that any homosexual struggles with after realizing that sexual orientation: as a result of the overwhelming pressure that comes from the surrounding society towards the heterosexual orientation, homosexuals have historically have had to either hide their homosexuality or risk being pushed to the margins of society. It must be noted that life in the margins of society does not literally mean homosexual are chased to a specific location in that society, but this is with the regard of homophobic attitudes and the exclusion of homosexuals in societal considerations. This includes denial by certain government health representatives for homosexuals to access essential treatments and awareness. The homophobia that is included in hetronormativity also breeds so much fear in many gay homosexuals that some become afraid to even go to places of treatment to seek help with their HIV/AIDS status (Lindow, 2009).

This 2009 Time article by Megan Lindow reveals how homophobia in Africa has aimed to hide the actual prevalence of male-male sex in Africa. The homophobic stance that so many African leaders such as South Africa president Jacob Zuma that homosexuality is unAfrican has hurt more African lives than it has helped. Such homophobic beliefs have become an impediment to the growth and unity of many Africans.

In Defiant desire McLean and Ngcobo (1995) present a documentation of the manner of use that the gay men in that particular lifestyle of *isiNgqumo*. In this essay they present the gay subculture of the Witwatersrand, where in the mine compounds there was an active practice of homosexual activities. What this essay also showcases is the definitions of key *isiNgqumo* terms such as *skesana* which denotes the submissive partner, *injonga* who is the dominant partner and *imbube* as the men who wants to be dominant and also submissive.

The interviews that were conducted with the gay men who were also *skesanas* revealed that the gay men who were considered to the men in the sexual romantic relationships in that particular subculture might not have even been aware that they had been termed *injongas*. This suggests that *isiNgqumo* is only employed by *skesanas*.

Through these interviews the real raunchiness of the gay subculture emerges. The life on the margins of society has created so much pressure on gay men that when they engage in sexual intercourse, even as a matter of being in love, they still come across as vile and with a sense of disgust.

The understanding that the *skesanas* have of being gay is reflected in the terminology that has been created for *isiNgqumo*. The *skesanas* in the

Witwatersrand subculture believe that only a *skesana* man is a gay man. The *injongas* are not viewed as gay men. As a result of this understanding the *skesanas* emulate heterosexual traditional female roles in sexual intercourse and in their interactions with their male lovers or husbands. One of the participants in Mclean and Ngcobo's study named Martin stated that "my male lover is not gay, he's just heterosexual. I am always the woman in a relationship" (McLean and Ngcobo, 1995:166).

In this sense *skesanas* (feminine *skesanas*) see themselves as women; their idea of true sexual intercourse largely involves being penetrated by an *injonga*. Later on in this dissertation there will be a much more extensive discussion on *skesanas* and their identity as homosexual men who are *skesanas*. This discussion will explain the distinction between *skesanas* who are feminine and consider themselves as women, with *skesanas* who are merely effeminate, but do not consider themselves as to be women.

This argues against the thinking that African homosexuals look down upon anal penetrative sex; in fact it underpins romantic relationships between *skesanas* and *injongas*. Another participants named Linda admitted that he has had sex with other *skesanas*, but it was not penetrative, it was oral and only because he did not have an *injonga* to fuck him (McLean and Ngcobo, 1995).This emulation of heteronormative (Warner, 1993) preference shown by *skesanas* in their relationship

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problemitizes the understanding of homosexuality: homosexual desire has historically been defined and understood via an heterosexual understanding, but around the 1960s and 70s scholars realized that gay men are attracted to other gay men and that there are numerous gay identities and masculinities that inform gay identity (Cameron and Kulick, 2003).

The heteronormative ideals and prescriptions are virtually entrenched in almost all institutionalized areas of life including sexuality and an understanding of sexual roles. Linda recounts that his first realization of the role that he would like to assume in a relationship was when he was about seven years old. He played *mantloana* (housie-housie) with other boys and he always preferred to be the mother (McLean and Ngcobo 1995). This suggests that it is only when the heteronormative ideals are entrenched in children that they learn to associate homosexual desire for other men with a bad act that is socially unaccepted. The other boys that Linda played with did not seem to have a problem with Linda being the mother.

Another participant named lucky recollects that one of the boys that played his husband in *mantloana* wanted to do "what mothers and father do" (McLean and Ngcobo, 1995:161). In these situations where boys play *mantloana*, in many cases they just kiss but in Lucky's case they also made love. It was only when they grew up and learnt what the consequences of being attracted to other boys and acting on those feelings are, so many of the boys grew and adopted a heteronormative lifestyle.

Part of the heteronormativity socialization is in accepting the male female binary: that males have sex with females and females have sex with males. Mclean and Ngcobo (1995) make a valid point in their analyses of the participants stories, that the *skesanas* are a product of that socialization as well as they grew up in the very community that now pushes them to the fringes with regards to their homophobic attitudes. Because the *skesanas* want to be fucked by men, they then see themselves as females and they continue to associate a man who does the penetration as heterosexual.

However, there is a difference between the role of women in traditional heterosexual relationships and the role of *skesanas* in homosexual relationships. In heteronormative relationships women are expected to be passive and be led by men in sexual intercourse and in the decision making procedures in that relationship. In most heterosexual encounters women have historically not been the ones who approach men and dictate how they want to be handled during sex. However, in homosexual relationships *skesanas* are only submissive because they choose to be.

Skesanas receive great pleasure in adopting female roles and behavior towards their lovers. In a sense they create their own rules as to how to conduct themselves in a relationship. Because homosexual relationships are conducted in an

'underground' atmosphere there are no institutionalized rules of conduct between male lovers. Mclean and Ngcobo (1995:164) note that the irony between the expectations of passivity and submissiveness on women and the chosen passivity and submissiveness of *skesanas* is that "*skesanas* often have to dominate [in order] to assert their own passivity".

The issue of power is integral in homosexual relationships: as both the *injonga* and the *skesana* are male, they operate in a situation where they deal with each other's power. To be in a submissive position does not entail being in a powerless position. For example, Lucky who preferred to be the mother in *mantloana* was also dominant with other boys outside of the submissive mother role.

Historically men, more precisely heterosexual men, have been thought to be more powerful than women in sexual intercourse and in daily relations. This has largely been attached to sexual intercourse and the domination that heterosexual men display in that penetrative position. To be in a submissive position during sexual intercourse has historically been extended to be an influential factor in male domination.

However, *skesanas* view the penetrator-role that *injongas* have as a service to them. *Skesanas* do not see themselves as oppressed or even dominated by

injongas. To be in a dominant possession during sexual intercourse does not extend to being in a dominant position outside of the sexual intercourse. What Mclean and Ngcobo (1995) suggest is that the *skesanas* retain their power even as they are being penetrated or 'serviced' by the *injongas*.

It seems that the gay subculture of the Witwatersrand is largely dominated by *skesanas* and their wants and needs. If an *injonga* wishes to be in a relationship with a *skesana*, he must be able to perform his designated duties and have the means to support his *skesana*. With such activities and power relations it would seem that black gay subcultures are predominantly centered on sex and money.

As previously mentioned the impetus for this research came in 2005 and subsequently a mini-research was conducted which led to the publication of an article by Stephanie Rudwick and Mduduzi Ntuli (2008) titled *IsiNgqumo: Introducing a gay black South African linguistic variety*. Through this mini-research it was discovered that *isiNgqumo* as a socio-linguistic phenomenon is extensive enough to be researched at further length. Its relevance and use in society, particularly the gay community of Durban (and manner of origin in *Mkhumbane*, west of Durban) warrants this great academic interest. It is interesting to note that *isiNgqumo* as a sociolinguistic phenomenon with largely unrespectable origins, created by young gay men has survived and grown to such an extent that numerous heterosexuals have begun to take a liking to it. This shows that there are

profound socially embedded circumstances that could be indicative of a changing status of homosexuality in our contemporary society. Chambers (2003) argues that such social variables have allowed *isiNgqumo* to develop as a distinguishable gay variety from its mother language *isiZulu*.

Relative to the conservative linguistic culture of *Nguni* speakers and *isiZulu*, *isiNgqumo* allows *Nguni* homosexuals to express their desires in an unprecedented manner. According to Turner (2001) Zulu speaking people of South Africa have a history of using names, whether personal names or nicknames, to express feelings and thoughts they would otherwise not be able to express in normal and institutionalized *isiZulu* speech. Humour is embedded in the construction of these names and their use. Such humour has been termed "tendentious and represents a kind of rebellion which permits the liberation of inhibited and suppressed feelings, bringing with it immense feelings of relief and pleasure" (Turner, 2001:451). From Rudwick and Ntulis' study it was apparent that *isiNgqumo* borrows much of its grammatical and vocabulary bases from *isiZulu* - the *Nguni* homosexuals that employ it continuously coin terms exhibiting much of the humour that Turner makes reference to. Terms such as [*amabhodwe esiZulu*][3] meaning bum and [*ukubhama*][4] meaning sexual intercourse showcase some of the Zulu humour.

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[3] Zulu traditional three-legged pots.
[4] Literally, to bounce.

The manner with which gay subcultures are conducted is only as a result of the treatment that homosexuals have received from the larger dominant heterosexual culture. As previously stated in most cases gay subcultures are not physically isolated structures outside the community or at the boundaries of a community, but they are physically within the community. However, they are relegated to the margins with regards to their opposition to the heteronormativity that the larger community operates by. To put this in a philosophical discourse, the gay subculture exists in the minds of homosexuals as well. Because homosexuals are aware of their status within the community and their inability to access societal respect and privileges solely because of their homosexuality, they react to that situation in the manner with which they do. Because the heteronormative society tries to squeeze homosexuality out what results is a pressure on homosexuals and an unrest within them that ultimately creates a sexual explosion.

Hence it appears that gay subcultures are cultures of lust and sex. However, the fact that *skesanas* emulate their relationships with *injongas* to heterosexual relationships also suggests that love relationships do develop within the gay subculture, but are conducted using heteronormative ideals. Homosexual men do not crave sex any more than heterosexual men, but the difference is that homosexuals have had to work out a way of engaging in sex that will benefit both partners. The difference is in the way they engage in sex and homosexual courtship.

Within gay subcultures the competitiveness that exists amongst heterosexual males to impress women with the right car or material possession is scarce. *Injongas* do not have to impress the *skesanas*, infact it is the *skesanas* that have to put most of the effort in homosexual courtship. If the pursued male is interested and wants to be an *injonga* this would have ended the courtship and sexual intercourse takes place. This is one of the factors that make gay subcultures so sexually loaded: the ease with which the homosexuals engage in sexual intercourse in the first meeting.

What emerges from Mclean and Ngcobo (1995) with regards to the *isiNgqumo* terminology they provide in their study is the relationship between the terms and their understanding by the homosexuals that employ them. It must be noted that although both *skesanas* and *injongas* were interviewed in Mclean and Ngcobo's study it is clear that it is mostly the *skesanas* who employ *isiNgqumo* and have a much more intimate connection to being a *skesana* and to be identified as such. To be called a *skesana* is a matter of identity for *skesanas*, whereas an *injonga* is a term that largely depicts a sexual role.

McLean and Ngcobo (1995) make a poignant point regarding the underlying reasons for homophobic attitudes contrasted with attitudes by some gay men. They note that part of the queer fantasy that some homosexuals, namely *skesanas*, have is to be treated as women. Historically one of the things that have informed homophobia is that homosexuality has been equated with 'womanlike' qualities

which are perceived as not to measure up to the expectations placed on males. This extends to the patriarchal view of women as underachievers as compared to men. Thus, underachievement has been inferred as part of being a homosexual.

Because of the patriarchal binaries of passive for women and active for men, any male that displays qualities of passivity, whether homosexual or heterosexual is regarded as weak. However, within a gay subculture these categories are subverted: *injongas*, who are homosexuals as well, assume the active male role and the *skesanas*, who are identifiable homosexuals, assume the passive position. The submissive role that is assumed by *skesanas* is not viewed as the giving of one's power away to another male, as heterosexual men may view it, but it is an innate role that the *skesana* enjoys. This latter point will be entirely discussed in the next chapter.

The roots of gay language in all its forms are similar in all contexts. Cameron and Kulick (2003) note that the history of research on language and homosexuality...has gone through four main phases. The first phase dates back in the 1920s where research on gay language began to be taken seriously by linguists. It must be noted that even in the early 20th century homosexuality was still viewed as a sexual perversion and pathology and in many societies it was still a criminal offence, particularly male homosexuality.

In these early years homosexuality was not thought to have its own language, but as Cameron and Kulick (2003) point out that the clinicians that gathered the data from their homosexual patients paid no attention to the manner with which the homosexuals expressed themselves. At this first phase of inquiry into gay language, any form of gay speech was dismissed as just mere linguistic expression of the pathology suffered by homosexuals.

By the 1950s and 60s as a result of activism around gay rights, western gay scholars began to take charge of research and documentation of the experiences of homosexuals. They began to compile literature which also paid attention to the peculiar form of speech employed by homosexuals. However, during this second phase there was a division within the identified gay community in western societies where studies on homosexuality had been carried out. Some gay scholars and activists encouraged the use and exposure of gay language while others opposed it. The real issue that was behind this ambivalence within the gay community was that the gay language was mostly employed by the queens and had been also largely invented and popularized by them.

Certain gay activists and scholars felt that the manner with which gay language was used by the queens and the image that those types of homosexuals portrayed was undesirable and would jeopardize the political and societal strides the gay movement had achieved at that point. According to Cameron and Kulick (2003:77)

the manner of use by the queens made gay language too `clanny` and Kemp; this image had not been the one that the politically orientated gay activists were in favor of. These politically orientated gay activists felt that the image and behavior exhibited by the queens epitomized the long-standing and homophobic view of homosexuality as a pathology.

It was only later on in the third phase which began in the 1970s that the idea of the gay community began to take hold: and this community was inclusive of queens as well Cameron and Kulick (2003). Gay language was also incorporated as part of this community. Gay language had come to be employed by western homosexuals to the extent that in most gay establishments and other places where gays were able to hangout it was not uncommon for gays to speak about the men they were attracted to without being found out.

In English gay registers there is a very common usage in the speech of male homosexuals of the replacing masculine pronouns with feminine ones. Male homosexuals who employ gay language tend to use the terms [she, her, miss, mother and girl] in reference to themselves and other male homosexuals such as them; these feminine properties are used in sentences where one might expect [he, his, sir, father and boy] Cameron and Kulick (2003). There is also much humor attached to gay language, particularly with such syntactic and grammatical

subversiveness. According to Cameron and Kulick (2003:80) this subvertiveness is also carried out when referring to heterosexuals.

Cameron and Kulick (2003: 82) provide an excerpt taken from a book by Donald Cory (1951:123-4) entitled *The Homosexual In America* where he documented a dialogue between two homosexual men in a bar conversing in an English form of gay language. The following excerpt is not given in it entirety, some parts have been cut off:

> At the end of the bar, having beers, are three young queens; their eyebrows are plucked, their hair quite obviously bleached, and ofcourse very wavy. Seldom seen in bars, their presence is discouraged not only by the proprietors, but also by the gay clientele. They gesticulate with graceful movements that are not so much feminine as caricatures and exaggerations of the feminine. They talk quickly, and their lips move in a manner not quite like the movements of either men or women. They can be more aptly compared to actors, seeking to imitate, yet not al all behaving that they are play acting. "So I told Margie that she`d have to find herself a new apartment, because I wasn`t going to put up with her carryings-on with all my friends that way and she got insulted and left in a huff". "She said you raised a stick when she brought a friend home one night." "She did? So you believe her?" "I didn't say I believe anyone." "Well, you can't believe a word she says."

Cory (1951) then proceeds to analyze the dialogue:

The onlooker or eavesdropper is puzzled, but the initiate is accustomed to the curious change in gender found in conversations of a few of the homosexual circles. Perhaps no other aspect of their lives is so amusing and, even to many inverts, so revolting. Nothing that these people do stamps them as being apart from the others so much as their conversational use of she for he, her for him, in the most matter-of-fact manner. And yet, after a few hours with groups of this sort, there is hardly a homosexual unable to say Joan for Joe, Rorberta for Robert... A few gay men, standing near the gesticulating group, listen to the conversation with amusement and contempt. "My, how those faggots Kemp" one remarks in a loud voice. A bleached blond turns around and the resort is quickly forthcoming, "are you jealous dearie, because nobody wants your trade?"

When reading this excerpt what must be noted is the way which Cory makes it clear that not all homosexuals or 'inverts' employ this sort of communication. The final dialogue between one of the two gay men and the queens makes this evidently clear: when one of the two gay men addresses the queens in plain English and one of the queens answers him back in their gay register. This excerpt exemplifies the nature of any gay register and the manner of its use within a community that employs whatever dominant language in that society, whether it be English, as it was in the excerpt, or isiZulu as it is found in Durban with the *Nguni* homosexuals.

Another scholar that was an influential voice in the early years of homosexual study and the study of gay language was Gershon Legman. Legman's research into homosexuality and particularly gay language as it existed at that time in that 1940s American context is largely regarded as the genesis of inquiry into gay language in any context. In 1941 Legman published a book titled *The Language of Homosexuality: An American Glossary*. In this book he provided a glossary with numerous terms and words that had been used by homosexuals in their conversations that constituted a gay register. Such terms appeared in Legman's list (1941) as cited in Cameron and Kulick (2003:80) as *church-mouse* which refers to a homosexual who chooses to visit churches to find men to be sexual with; *tea-room queen* which refers to a homosexual man that frequents toilets in search of men to be sexual with.

Legman's view on homosexuality was that it was a pathology that coincidentally had its own linguistic form of expression: he believed that all homosexuals spoke the gay register that he documented and that in fact homosexuality had its own language that was as exclusive to homosexuals as language is as exclusive to all human beings. One important point that Legman argued for, whether knowingly or not, was that homosexuals were born homosexuals and that it was I fact not as a result of any choice that they had made.

This is a very important note because it underwrites the different perception and treatment of homosexuality and homosexuals in the literary and scientific community as compared to the religious beliefs that have governed much homophobia historically. In other words, religion, particularly Christianity, has tended to present homosexuality as a choice to go against the will of God and pursue an immoral lifestyle; but, to a large extent, the scientific and the larger society has tended to treat homosexuality as an innate pathology.

Legman and Cory emerged as the two leading voices with regards to inquiry into gay language. However, they were on opposite sides: Cory believed that a gay register is only spoken by the few homosexuals in a particular context and conversational environment, while Legman believed that all homosexuals speak the same gay register.

One of the reasons for Legman's views was the highly sexualized and sexually loaded lexicon and lifestyle of most homosexuals that he had encountered. As it was mentioned in the previous introductory chapter, the mere existence of gay subcultures is really as a result of an attempt by society to squeeze homosexuality and homosexuals out of the larger heterosexual hegemonic society. Thus when anything is squeezed it will ultimately burst or explode.

Depending on the nature of the subculture, whether, linguistic, cultural or sexual that which is being squeezed out will explode and result in an exaggerated and larger-than-life existence. This explanation can be used to explain the highly sexual nature found in gay subcultures. Because homosexuals have been unable to engage in homosexual acts in the same way as heterosexuals have been able to historically, their existence in the margins has created a somewhat sexually desperate and promiscuous lifestyle. Such acts as groping men in toilets and other hidden places in order to satisfy their unfulfilled and socially denied and denounced homosexual desires have made it possible for many heterosexuals to group homosexuals in this same category.

Legman (1941) as cited in Cameron and Kulick (2003) had this view of homosexuals and thought that this was the lifestyle for all homosexuals. Thus the language that he encountered that was used by the homosexuals that he studied which indeed did express these acts, accompanied by his own homogenous view of homosexuality, became to be thought of as the language of all homosexuals.

Cory (1951) as cited in Cameron and Kulick 2003) on the other hand was more objective with his study on homosexual language. He noted that homosexuality was not homogenous and that meant gay language was not homogenous either. In his previously mentioned study he did note that not all the homosexuals in the gay establishment spoke or even understood what the two queens were saying.

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This discussion necessitates an important note about the term gay language. There is no such thing as a gay language or a homosexual language, what is denoted by this term is an umbrella for numerous gay registers. The term gay language is convenient to use when discussing gay speak in general.

Turning the discussion to the African context and the literature on gay language in Africa and inquiry into gay language in an African context, one struggles to find precise documentation of gay language amongst African homosexuals, with the exception of Defiant desire (1995). Most of the few documentations of gay language have tended to be linked to broader discussions about homosexuality in Africa.

Murray and Roscoe (1998) published a book a book titled *Boywives and Female Husbands*. This book presents an extensive documentation of numerous African societies where same sex relationships and numerous marriages occur. The authors tread a very narrow path where few have dared to tread: the issue of homosexuality in Africa has tended to be a very sore one that many African culturalists and scholars have tended to strictly and publicly avoid and even deny. Early anthropological work in Africa by anthropologists and western scholars researching African cultures such as Sir Richard Burton who was said to have

reported that "the negro race is mostly untainted by sodomy and tribalism" (1885, 246, cited in Murray and Roscoe, 1998:xii) referring to his studies done in Africa.

Much of the thinking around most heterosexuals in Africa, particularly those that tend to be traditional, is that homosexuality is unAfrican. The belief amongst such heterosexuals is that homosexuality was brought by western colonialists and other non-Africans. This belief came about after many homophobic African had finally admitted that homosexuality does indeed exist in Africa. Accusations have been lashed out at Arab slave-traders, Europeans. Eastern Bantu-speakers claimed that pedantry was imported by Nubians; but the Sudanese blamed Turkish marauders (Murray and Roscoe, 1998).

Murray and Roscoe continue to present the challenges that scholars researching homosexuality and all that is related to it face as a result of a denial and denouncement of homosexuality and the silence around it that. This has led to a scarce literature resource on the topic of homosexuality in Africa. They refer to E.E. Evans-Pritchard who is one of the leading authorities on indigenous African cultures. Even he said nothing about male homosexuality in his classic 1937 study titles *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Saude.* Nor did he mention homosexual relations among the Nuer of Southern Sudan in his equally influential monograph on the Sudanese people (Murray and Roscoe, 1998:xii). However, later on in his career in 1957 and the 1970s he admitted that he had indeed learnt about

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homosexual activities among the *Zande* warriors who married boys that functioned as temporary wives.

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There other anthropologists who chose to ignore and erase homosexual findings from their reports; Alan Merram, for example, who is also cited in Murray and Roscoe (1998) stated that homosexual behavior was absent among *Bala* men, but then later on he reported that "the natives of this society claim that the '*kitesha*', a gender-defined role, is a homosexual" (1971:93-94 cited in Murray and Roscoe, 1998:7).

However, when homosexuality is acknowledged in African societies, it is not given a cultural significance and meaning. Those who acknowledge it also tend to dismiss it as a western import or something that resulted as a result from the lack of women or part of an adolescent phase. To many African homophobes, it is difficult to accept that homosexuals innately desire and find pleasure in people of the same sex and have little or no sexual feeling for people of the opposite sex.

In 1979 Michael Gelfand stated another claim that denied the existence of homosexuality in Zimbabwe, saying "the traditional *Shona* have none of the problems associated with homosexuality" (1979:201). As a result of such blind denials of the existence of homosexuality in Africa, but then the reluctant and

distorted acknowledgement of its existence by Africans and Anthropologists, such remarks as those of Gelfand and numerous African homophobes must be regarded with a large degree of skepticism.

Murray and Roscoe (1998) continue with their ground breaking report on the phenomenon of boy wives and female husbands and assert that these activities have existed even way before the moment of colonialism. By asserting this they aim to prove that homosexuality is indeed indigenous to Africa. However, the issue of gay language is explored in one chapter in the whole book. This exemplifies the treatment of gay language in African texts: taking lead from the societal tensions around homosexuality, it would be understandable why it would even be more difficult to trace the manner of communication used by African homosexuals within their highly homophobic societies.

Gay Hausa subculture

Rudolf Gaudio in his essay contribution in Murray and Roscoe (1998) explored what he termed the "sexual lexicon" (1998:115) to define the gay register used by Hausa gay men in their gay subculture. As with most African countries, Nigeria is a highly homophobic society that not only has several oppressive laws and social attitudes towards women, but also towards homosexuals. Another factor that adds to this is that Nigeria is largely a Muslim society that practices strict codes of conduct with regards to sexuality. What is interesting about the Hausa gay men is that almost all

fulfill their socially expected roles of marrying women and making children with them. Even gay men that seem to be more feminine or effeminate in their mannerisms also get married and fulfill this expected duty.

However, there are several Hausa gay men that are openly gay and choose to only have sex with men. These gay men fulfill the commonly known social category of "homosexual or *'yan dauda*" (Gaudio, 1998:116). In addition, the term *'kamar mata* which means 'like women' is used to particularly refer to such homosexuals. The focus of Gaudio's (1998) study was centered on these *'kamar matas* who are the men that do not marry and are the ones who really embody the term *'yan dauda*. As in any gay subculture it is these men, equivalent of *skesanas* in isiNgqumo who are the glue that holds the gay subculture together: They provide the sexual and emotional relief for the unidentifiable and unidentified men who seek to have sex with other men. The sexual lexicon that exists in the Hausa gay subculture is then largely, if not completely, employed by the *'kamar mata 'yan dauda*.

It must be noted that to a large extent the term *'yan dauda* is used to refer to the *'kamar mata* because they are the visible homosexual. Another interesting factor is that the *'kamar mata 'yan dauda* consider themselves as men, but who prefer to look like and be like women. Similarly to the *skesanas* in the Durban gay subculture, most still consider themselves men but prefer to treated like women.

What results is that such gay men are at times the dominant partners in terms of decision making and what sexual activities take place, but the heterosexually identified men that seek sex with other men only become sexually dominant when they are allowed to penetrated the 'yan dauda.

It must also be noted this Gaudio (1998) does not presume the 'yan dauda as prostitutes because there is largely no money that exchanges hands as in a prostitution activity. Gaudio (1998) explains this in the following except:

In Hausa communities throughout Nigeria, the elaborate social-occupational network of 'yan dauda, who self-identify as men who act 'like women' ('kamar mata), constitutes a matrix for what can arguably be called a homosexual community in Hausa society, though this differs in important ways from gay communities in the west. One apparent similarity, however, is that, as drag queens and 'fairies' did for straight-acting gays in mid-twentieth century New York, 'yan dauda's visibility and social proximity to female karuwai [courtesans, prostitutes] attract otherwise unidentifiable 'men who seek men' (maza masu neman maza) and permit them to meet and socialize without having to blow their cover.

Gaudio (1998) construes these activities between the 'yan dauda and their 'unidentifiable' male suitors as the Hausa gay subculture. Also the term 'yan dauda is therefore almost always used to refer to the 'kamar mata men. The sexual

lexicon of the Hausa gay subculture contains elements from both the heterosexual Hausa discourse and the Hausa gay subculture. The sexual lexicon of the gay Hausa men is completely centered on the gay sexual activities that occur within the gay Hausa subculture and it can not be compared to other more extensive gay registers. What the Hausa homosexual men do in their sexual lexicon is that they subvert the "gendered grammatical and semantic structure of the Hausa language to assume subject positions as wives and girlfriends" (1998, 121). What this means is that this sexual lexicon operates in the same manner as what Cory (1951) described in his study of gay language in America and his description of the gay register that he encountered in his study.

Because the Hausa homosexual men prefer to behave and be treated like women, when they refer to themselves and each other they will swap he for she and him for her. Thus when they are conversing about their male partners they will assume the position of the feminine or the wife and the girlfriend. This is striking because they also identify themselves as men not women.

This is an important point in any study of gay men: to point out that many gay men still perceive themselves as men who enjoy the submissive role in a gay relationship and during gay intercourse. This point will be further extrapolated upon in the analysis chapter.

Even the gay register that Cory (1951) encountered was not an extensive one: it was a mere code-switching form of speaking that mixed the dominant communicative language with a few subverted words from the same language, in the case of Cory's study that language was English. This is done in order to create a new syntactic meaning and create an insider-outsider dynamic between the speakers of the gay register and the over-hearer.

In the case of Gaudio's study that language is the Hausa language. The sexual lexicon as it was studied by Gaudio (1998) can better be described as an in-group lingo that is only understood by the 'yan dauda who are part of the Hausa gay subculture. With in this gay subculture the term that is used for men who have sex with other men is *masu harka*: this term does not exist in the standardized or dominant Hausa language variety. The term *masu harka* is used as an umbrella term for all 'yan daudas.

The code switching is an important point to emphasize: that ay sublanguage will ultimately remain linked to the dominant language, or languages in the case of Leap's (2004) suggested example of a register that could be the prima gay register that largely constitutes English and *isiZulu*. This is a reoccurring factor that constitutes many gay registers, particularly those that are not very well established, such as the sexual lexicon of the Hausa gay subculture.

At the least almost all gay registers are sexual in nature or are highly sexually loaded: as a result of the limited space, socially, that is given to homosexuals as sexual beings who also have the sexual desires that need to be met, what largely constitutes gay subcultures is an aura of sex and sexual gratification. This is thus expressed by the language that is used to communicate these sexual interactions between the homosexual men. Thus Gaudio (1998) rightly defined the gay register of the Hausa gay subculture as a sexual lexicon

Another reoccurring theme in almost all gay subcultures is that of the manner in which power in negotiated and re-negotiated. As Gaudio (1998) pointed out, the Hausa homosexual men are not prostitutes and they still view themselves as men, but who prefer to adopt feminine behavior and roles. This suggests that they still maintain their power and dominance as men particularly within the context of their gay subculture. As a result of this, they willingly become submissive and give their power to the *miji* [man or husband], just as the *skesanas* willingly give their power to their *injongas* in the Durban gay subculture. This is done through a conscious and subconscious negotiation process.

In most instances the *'yan daudas* are dominant in any situations concerning sexual activities within their gay subculture- thus in this way power in negotiated by the *'yan daudas* and their *mijis* but also re-negotiated.

What is similar between the Hausa gay subculture and other gay subcultures, namely the Durban gay subculture, is that the 'yan daudas are the one who employ the sexual lexicon, but the mijis almost never employ it or have any understanding of it. Similarly in the Durban gay subculture it is the skesanas who employ isiNgqumo and almost never the injongas.

What Gaudio's (1998) study reveals and infact reemphasizes, is that even in such strict and highly heteronormative societies such as the Muslim society in Hausa in Nigeria, firstly homosexuality does exist there and was not a leant behavior from the west. Secondly that language continues to be an important and useful mediating factor in interactions between homosexual men and is also used to create and establish a sort of meaning and empowerment in their ever-so-subculture gay experience.

Much of what Marc Epprecht (2004) focuses on in his book has already been discussed in the introductory chapter, but there are still numerous points that Epprecht discusses that are worth extrapolating on.

The emergence of gay subcultures in colonial Africa and the subsequent emergence of gay sublanguages came as a result of the colonial disturbance of the social structure that existed prior to that colonial moment. According to Gerald Corey

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(2009) each society has a particular understanding of sexuality that is relevant to that cultural context. Particularly with homosexuality, as a kind of sexuality, different societies have dealt with it in different ways that are informed by that particular understanding. Thus, in pre-colonial Africa there was a particular understanding of sexuality as a whole that informed the tolerance that was existed towards homosexuality.

Epprecht (2004:132) included a noteworthy discussion in chapter five of his book which centered on the existed of homophobia in post-Africa. Epprecht (2004) cites a speech by one Mr. Border Gezi in his address to the Zimbabwean parliament in 1995, saying "we have asked these men whether they have been able to get pregnant...they have not been able to answer such questions. Even the women who are engaging in lesbian activities, we have asked them what they have got from such practices and no one has been able to answer".

There are two points of discernment that Epprecht (2004) provides for this statement. Firstly, the historical understanding of homophobia has been that of an active loathing and fear of homosexuals or same-sex behavior. However, the statement by Mr. Gezi reveals and represents an incomprehension of homosexuality rather than a fear or loathing.

This means, Africans who share and subscribe to the views and the thinking that informs the statement by Mr. Gezi can not in fact be considered homophobic. But rather, as according to the historical understanding of homophobia, lack the understanding of homosexuality and are infact curious to understand it.

Another point that Epprecht (2004: 132) gives to discern Mr. Gezi's statement and indeed thinking that is shared by numerous heterosexual Africans, is that of tolerance. The fact that such Africans as Mr. Gezi seek to understand homosexuals and their ways reveals a tolerance for same-sex behavior that might be construed with that which existed in pre-colonial Africa. Epprecht (2004) stated this tolerance as "the echo of an ancient de facto tolerance for sexual eccentries".

Mr. Gezi Continued to state that according to his rural constituents, they are aware of homosexualism and lesbianism and that they believe that it is not a good practice, but if it must go on (it should be discreet)" (Epptrecht, 2004:132).

However, one point which Epprecht overlooked in his book that is intrinsically linked to this discussion and indeed the homophobic discussion universally is that of the stereotype and the misconception of homosexual sexual intercourse. Not all gay men practice anal penetrative sex. For those heterosexual Africans who are homophobic, as per the historical understanding of homophobia, part of the

loathing that is directed at male homosexuals particularly is largely based on the disgust and fear that is associated with anal sex. Based on Mr. Gezi's questions about pregnancy, it is clear that male homosexuality is indeed thought to go hand in hand with anal penetration.

To most heterosexual men, to be anally penetrated by another man would be an insult and an inconceivable act. So, the association of this act with homosexual men fuels their loathing and fear of homosexual men. Cameron and Kulick (2003) made an interesting point in their book, that sexual desire and intercourse have historically been viewed with a heterosexual understanding and expectations. This means, someone like Mr. Gezi tries to understand homosexuality and homosexual sexual activities through his heterosexual understanding of what constitutes 'real sex'.

Epprecht also makes a mention of this heterosexual view of sex: which involves penetration. Although many homosexual men practice thigh sex *ukusoma* and are not interested in anal penetration, there are still those who do practice anal sex. *Ukusoma* is not considered to be a real sex act, according to Epprecht (2004) among Africans sex, "by customary definition, was seen as an act that served to continue a family's lineage, to connect one metaphysically to the ancestors" (2004:132). So, it had to be penetrative for the purpose of producing offspring.

This is the definition that numerous Africans, such as Mr. Gezi, use to define sex. Hence homosexual sex is this baffling because men can not carry offspring.

It must be noted that the hypotheses of this dissertation is that gay subcultures only emerged as a result of the entrenched homophobic ideals by western colonialists and the disturbance of the understanding of sexuality which existed among the pre-colonial Africans. This understanding informed the tolerance and acceptance of same-sex behavior and desires. This emergence of gay subcultures ultimately led to the emergence of gay sublanguages as an accompanying factor.

This hypothesis has already been mentioned in the previous introductory chapter, but the purpose of mentioning it again here is to highlight the shift in the understanding of sexuality from pre-colonial to colonial and post colonial Africa. The fear, loathing and indeed hatred of homosexuals by some heterosexuals in Africa was ensued by the homophobic teachings of the colonial regimes of the Calvinistic Dutch in the *Kaap Staad* and the British rule in the later Cape Colony.

However, it is not to say that same-sex behavior was celebrated in pre-colonial Africa, although same-sex desires were accepted and given their place in certain rites of passage rituals for young men into manhood. There were pre-colonial Africans who did not approve of any same-sex behavior.

According to Epprecht (2004) the term homophobia was only coined in 1969 at the beginning of the modern gay rights movement in the United States of America (USA). After that it became popularized and adopted globally as the descriptive term for anti-gay attitudes.

Physical gay subculture vs. psychological gay subculture

Although Epprecht's (2004) focus is on the history of homosexuality in Africa and not gay language in Africa, he does acknowledge the fact of gay language as a necessary accompanying factor. In this mention, however, he mentions Gayle or *Moffietaal* and not *isiNgqumo*, he states that "Moffietaal or Gayle was a secret language used by gay identified people to each other without calling wider attention to their sexuality" (2004:141). However, in the context of this discussion on Gayle, Epprecht is referring to white gay South Africans who employed Gayle. *IsiNgqumo* is a similar gay register which is an *Nguni* variety.

It must be noted that there is a slight uneasiness with the fact that Epprecht's (2004) focus is largely on black Africans and the history of homosexuality among them, yet he acknowledges an English/Afrikaans gay register and largely ignores *isiNgqumo*. As *isiNgqumo* is the gay register that emerged from the black homosexuals as a linguistic protective mechanism against black homophobes.

However, it is not uncommon for scholars, historical scholars such as Epprecht and other scholars who study homosexuality in Africa and its associations such as gay language to glide over or ignore indigenous gay language forms. The reason behind this is that there is a great lack of knowledge and research into such indigenous gay sublanguages as *isiNgqumo*. However, it is still a sore area when such a well researched book does not include a discussion on a known gay register which is known and employed by black homosexuals, even in Zimbabwe.

Nevertheless, Epprecht (2004) uses Ken Cage's explanation of Gayle as an "overtly homophobic register in its terminology" (141). The term queen as a term that intensifies the stigma of the effeminate unmasculine homosexual men is one of the key and popular Gayle terms.

This means that heterosexual men are perceived as Kings, but homosexual men are perceived as queens. This is aimed to insult homosexual men, and create a sense of inferiority within them in comparison to heterosexual men. Gayle terms that denote a homosexual lover, such as *"piece, number, stuk, pomp, fuck"* (Epprecht, 2004: 141) are thought to be dehumanizing to gay men.

According to Epprecht's (2004) explanation of the reasons behind the employment of these terms, they reflect a self hatred that is informed by the internalized homophobia in many homosexuals.

As Epprecht (2004) points out, the homophobia is not only an external attack on homosexuals, but also finds its way into the internal landscape of may homosexuals. The social exclusion that homosexuals face in the societies, particularly in African societies, results in a creation of physical or geographical gay subcultures where they can feel at ease to express themselves and their sexuality without any fear. To put this in a more philosophical discussion, the gay subculture is also created and in existence in the inner landscape of homosexuals. This means that the social position and location that homosexuals are squeezed into results in the creation of that exact replica psychologically.

Therefore, Epprecht (2004) and Cage (2003) make the right and poignant point by stating that gay language also expresses an inner homophobia by gays unto themselves, in the form of self-hatred and self-loathing.

Transphobia- rejection of gay expression

Alongside the fear and the loathing of homosexuals, there is also the hatred that is felt by many homophobic heterosexual Africans. Towards male homosexuals this

fear and loathing can be explained in the following way, the loathing is of the sexual act of anal penetration and the mere sexual attraction to other males.

As it has been previously mentioned, to many heterosexuals who do not have a good understanding of homosexuality and its sexual activities, and those people who do not have any understanding at all, anal penetration is assumed to go hand in hand with male homosexual relationships. The fear is linked to the thought that male homosexual might seek to penetrate heterosexual men or seek to be penetrated by them. However, the hatred that is lashed upon homosexuals is a more complex issue.

According to Epprecht (2004) the hatred largely stems from the fear found in homophobia. But, it is not the same fear as that of being penetrated by a homosexual man; rather it is of public transgression of sexual norms in public. In other words, to numerous heterosexuals, homophobic or not, and some 'closeted' homosexuals as well the stereotype of homosexual men that has historically been popularized by satirical depictions of male homosexuals by comedians, is very shameful and embarrassing. Thus when such heterosexuals and homosexuals see such effeminate and stereotypical homosexual man in public being made fun of, it triggers a fear in them of being in that situation and being associated with such people. What makes this fear irrational is that the public transgression of sexual norms committed by these few effeminate and stereotypical homosexual men is

used to blanket all homosexual men as fellow transgressors: this fear then turns into a homophobic fear and hatred.

An important note to bear in mind is that the majority of homosexual men are not effeminate. Thus, when someone is known to be a homosexual, even if they have not done anything that can be construed as a transgression, they too will be grouped in the same group as the gay-identified and identifiable homosexual men.

Epprecht (2004:133) uses the term transphobia to explain this fear. He states that "such fear of public transgression of sexual norms (rather than of the sex acts themselves) is more accurately termed transphobia than homophobia".

Thus, what gay language protects the homosexuals who employ it is not from the confrontations triggered by homophobia, but in fact those triggered by transphobia. In other words, homophobic attitudes will exist whether one transgresses in public or not. Many homosexual men who are not gay-identified men and would be assumed to be heterosexual men fall prey to homophobic attacks once they have been found out.

However, some mild confrontations against homosexual men are not homophobic but are triggered by transphobia. The attitudes of Mr. Gezi and his rural constituents are not negative towards homosexuals because they hate them and

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are homophobic towards them, but are really transphobic in nature. As per the subsequent discussion of the discernment of Mr. Gezi's parliamentary statement, he and his rural constituents were rather baffled and curious about homosexual sexual activities, but not hateful, fearful or loathing of them.

Transphobia can easily be misconstrued with homophobia: but the confrontations and negativity that results from transphobia is as a result of the disapproving of the gender and sexual subversions displayed by some gay-identified homosexuals. This means, to the homosexuals who wish to express themselves and express their sexuality and sexual proclivities and 'accentricies', they face transphobia, which can be very oppressive and as negative. In most instances a transphobic attack will not result in violence, but rather a harsh disapproving of a public display of such homosexual qualities.

When a homophobic person sees a gay-identified individual he/she will connect them to the homosexual sexual acts and all he/she finds disgusting about homosexuals. Hence, in numerous occasions a person that is not gay-identified will be treated with respect and be thought of highly by homophobes until he is found out to be gay, than they will unleash the same homophobia on him as on all the other homosexuals, whether this individual performs homosexuality or not. Whereas a transphobic person only disapproves of the public performance and

expression of homosexuality and homosexual desires, but is not necessarily bothered by the sexual acts, in as much as they are curious about them.

According to Mr. Gezi and his rural constituents, if those homosexuals could maintain the restrictive "notions of matching physical sex to gender identity [the heterosexual male identity] to sexual orientation or conduct [conduct themselves as heterosexual men (historically heterosexual hegemonic masculinity has been perceived as the prima masculinity that all men should aim for)] they might be accepted. In addition, if they could be private and discreet about their homosexual activities, than they will be treated better and their transgression will be overlooked.

Chapter three: Theoretical framework and methodology

Communication is a necessity for human beings: as social beings and beings who ultimately crave social presence and indeed validation, the ability to express that desire and connect with other human beings. This is done through communication. The primary mode of communication that human beings employ is the linguistic mode. Although facial expressions and body actions can relate and transmit whatever is intended to be communicated as strongly as language, according to experimental psychologist, cognitive scientist and author of The Language Instinct: The New Science of Language and Mind Steven Pinker (2007) language is infact an instinct. This suggests that language is innate; it is as innate as emotions, thoughts, sexual desires and hormonal changes. According to Pinker (2007) the brain has a language domain within the domain of communication that a human baby is born with.

When this language domain is activated, it contains and triggers an instinctual reaction in the brain to process words. According to Pinker (2007) the brain has a mental dictionary that is similar to the dictionary that we use to look up words that is in physical book form. This dictionary records and stores all linguistic information that is received by the individual. This includes the grammar of whatever language is being spoken by the surrounding people to the individual and the meaning of the words. This process is innate and subconscious. This suggests that it is also treated

by the brain as a necessity: it becomes necessary for the individual to have access to these recorded "lexical items" (Pinker, 2007:127) and their meaning.

The instinct for communication is activated in the very early stages of a human child's life: by the time the child has developed into a level where the linguistic domain has been activated, the brain would have realized that language is primary means of communication. What than happens is that all that needs to be communicated is linked to the mental dictionary. When a need arises for a particular intention to be communicated, the brain will literally open the mental dictionary and pick out the words that coincide with the   intention   of   the communication.

According to Chambers (2004:9) the manner of use and expression of language is highly influenced by sociological and socio-cultural factors. Language as an entity is a vehicle that expresses the socio-cultural meanings within a particular society. According to Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) many social phenomena that occur in a particular social context have socially and culturally constructed and are as a result of or by-products of a socially constructed reality. Individuals who live with this particular society that has its own constructed meanings and reality will learn and be taught to react in a particular way to that constructed reality: they will be socialized into the ways and cultural norms of the that particular society.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that most social categories that exist in almost all human societies are universal; what makes them different in their appearance and practice is the individual and particular understanding of each society. This difference in the understanding leads to the construction of a kind of reality and behavior. Thus these socio-cultural factors influence the expression of language. Language as the primary means of communication expresses this in its lexical items and its manner of use. Inner group which practices the institutionalized and dominant cultural norms and practices the status quo will use language to express that status quo and that particular form of language will have features and lexical items that in turn become the linguistic status quo: the status quo expressed by the linguistic status quo.

In other words one of the things that make a particular form of language the dominant form is that that institutionalized and common form expresses the lexical items and the attitudes and lived experiences of the majority of the people in that society. So if most people in the society follow a similar pattern of lifestyle and subscribe to the same or similar ways of thinking and constructed societal expectations, they will also share the manner which coincides with those socio-cultural factors.

When individuals rebel against the constructed and institutionalized norm the language that they use or the form of language that they use will also indeed express that rebellion. Or, if the individuals are considered to be outsiders, and their lived experiences differ from those of the in-group and their lifestyle pattern differs from that of the majority of the people in that particular society, the from of language that they will use will express that kind of lived experience and it will differ from the language that is used by the in-group. A sub-society will usually have its own sublanguage. The way that the dominant culture reacts to the subculture will usually be negative and be accompanied by an attempt to squeeze the practices or contradictory understanding of realty and how it ought to be, out of the societal consciousness. If the sub-society remains within the dominant culture, their difference becomes highly pronounced. Sublanguages become one of the tools, protective mechanisms and by-products within the subculture.

Thus the subculture will then construct its own socially unifying and accepted reality: these sub-socio-cultural factors will necessitate a particular and different type of linguistic communication. All experiences are translated into the mental dictionary: when an individual has particular experience, there will often be a speech act or linguistic mode of making sense of the lived experience and use the primary mode of communication (language) to express that experience. Thus as an example, when children are raised and socialized in a heteronormative status quo, those heterosexual experiences are also accompanied by their own particular

speech acts which comprise of particular words. These are recorded and stored in the mental dictionary.

These social experiences are often repeated experiences that fall within the corpus of constructed socio-cultural patterns that are woven within the dominant structure of a particular society. These experiences and the social and cultural laws and expectations are repeatedly emphasized until the individual has been properly 'programmed' to think, react and expect in a certain way towards particular recognized experiences. Expectations are created to reinforce and force the individual to practice these socialized and repeated teachings. The individual's linguistic domain has no difficulty producing the necessary lexical properties and other linguistic features that are necessitated by the live experience and intention.

In other words, the linguistic domain will require new lexical items (words and terms) to express the unfamiliar and socially contradictory and sometimes rebellious lived experiences of that individual who operates from the subculture and the out-group (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

Within this linguistic domain there are linguistic variables that are part of the recorded and stored rules of whatever language the individual employs; these are stored in the mental dictionary alongside the lexical items and the grammar of that particular language. There are also non-linguistic variables which can be said to be

societal situations that provoke a particular kind of speech to be produced as a reaction to that environment.

In other words, a variable is that part of a language that varies or differs from the one linguistic environment and speech act to another. A variant may be a single letter or a certain combination of letters, e.g. [kr] [th] or even a whole word. Each variable has smaller variants: a variant is that small factor that makes a variable sound different from the common speech. Each variable must have a minimum of two variants.

Linguistic variants that form linguistic variables occur in certain places of an utterance where the linguistic environment in conducive. In other words a syntactic structure of a speech utterance will be governed by the grammatical laws of that particular language, which determine which word is placed where and how it should be pronounced. Thus grammar phonetics, morphology is the main linguistic factors that determine which linguistic variants and variables should be triggered to communicate the intention of the speaker properly. According to Chambers (2003) linguistic variants and variables will occur as a result of probability. This makes linguistic variables dependant variables.

Non-linguistic variants are found within the particular societal context of the speaker: these include style, class, sex, gender and other socio-culturally determined factors that act as variants to influence a particular reaction that produces a particular kind of speech utterance. In other words the socialization of an individual and the linguistic patterns that have been entrenched in the individual will have a great influence on the way that individual speaks and shapes their speech.

Thus, independent non-linguistic variants will trigger linguistic variants. This means that an individual's social context has great bearing on the type of speech that the individual produces. So, the central question in sociolinguistic theory that of how social variants relate to linguistic variants? The answer to this question is that social variants (independent variants that form independent variables) trigger linguistic variants (dependant variants that form dependant variables) depending on the social environment that calls for a certain variable to be applied.

This theory will be useful in understanding the social nature of *isiNgqumo* – as it explains the social and cultural significance of language practice and focuses on the crucial social variables namely social stratification, sex and age and the cultural significance of linguistic variation (Chambers, 2003).

As discussed by Gerald Corey (2009), social constructionist theory has two basic understandings: firstly that all human experience is constructed. A radical constructionist view believes that nothing is innate. Secondly, those human categories as sexuality and language are defined and mediated in the backdrop of the temporal and cultural factor. It is with this perspective focus on sexuality that *isiNgqumo* has been studied - as a linguistic manifestation of a kind of sexuality, homosexuality, a sexuality which is highly contested. Michael Foucault (1980) writes: "homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy into a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul with a language construct of its own. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species". This theory supports the study and understanding of *isiNgqumo* as a constructed linguistic form to facilitate the gay experience within the constructed understanding of reality within the *Nguni* gay subculture

Rastall (2006), employing Popper's views explains the nature of language and sublanguages in a context that gives rise to an adaptation of linguistic constructs to ever-changing human needs and priorities. Popper's theory distinguishes language as communication from language as system or pattern and from language as information. For the latter, the capacity to "arrest speech" and to consider it critically is central to understanding deviating languages and their role in 'linguistic mediation'. Popper's theory applies a rigorous ontological distinction between existing speech events in space, time and social circumstances and theoretically

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determined constructs that account for potentials for a specific kind of communication. It further explains linguistic potentials for meaning on one hand and socially constructed beliefs about language on the other. Popper's theory will thus be employed for my study in order to draw attention to the fact that *isiNgqumo* could be regarded as a linguistic variant that is a construct that caters for a gay people's neglected social need, a need that could be ever-changing and fluid.

Methodology

One of the most challenging aspects of any ethnographic study is the process of interviews: finding the participants, coming up with the right questions, finding the right environment to conduct the interviews and being able to observe a practical example of whatever the topic of the study is. However, another big challenge that a qualitative study presents is the researcher's obligation to consider the emotional and psychological well being of his/her participants during the process of that study. Such a topic as the one pursued in this dissertation evolves around a very sensitive issue: that of homosexuality in South Africa.

As a result of the homophobia that thrives in our South African society, the assumption that informs this study is that most of the *Nguni* homosexuals that were participants in this study had suffered some degree of homophobia. As a result of this assumption the nature of this study is very sensitive. One of the very

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important characteristics in ethnography is that during the process of data collection, observatory or in the form of interviews, the participants determine the pace and nature of the process: participants have the authority to decide how much information to give the researcher and how much access do they allow.

The participants in this study were 36 homosexual *Nguni* men. The *isiNgqumo* word for them is *skesana*. They are the sort of gay men that are gay identified and who are highly effeminate and feminine. This supports the assumption of this study: it makes it highly likely that they have been victims of public homophobic treatment. One of the places that I used to interview some participants was the Durban Gay and Lesbian Center located in 320 at the city centre. This was done between 2006-2007 over a period of seven months and fifteen days. However, it must be noted that at the beginning stages of this study, the *Durban Gay and Lesbian Center* was located at *Protea House* which is also located in the city centre. Thus some of the interviews were held there as well.

Sample

Only participants that reside within Durban formed the sample for this study. The participants were divided into two groups: township *skesanas* and city/suburban *skesanas*. Most of the *skesanas* were in their 20s with one participant being in his 30s. One older participant who is not considered a *skesana* is *baba Dlamini*, he is in his 50s.

Township	City
20 participants	16 participants + baba Dlamini
Age Below 25 Sixteen participants Above 25 Four participants	**Age** Below 25 Fourteen participants Above 25 one participants Above 30 one participants Above 30 one participants (at the age of 58)

The other location was *Metro Lodge*[5]: I conducted the other interviews there: I hired a room for each interview. This was done as a safety precaution, as the information that they would give me was very personal and sensitive.

The assurance to anonymity and privacy was important to the participants and to me as the researcher. This was integral to the agreement with the initial 9 participants: it was important to make them feel at ease with me and the study so as to help me get more participants. In fact, it was the initial 9 participants that introduced me to more homosexual gay men who were willing to be part of this study. Furthermore, those new participants invited some of their friends and acquaintances to participate in this study.

The participants also felt safe enough to show me their hangouts: I visited two gay clubs, in the *Point* area, and two *uMlazi* salons that are run by *Nguni* homosexuals. They felt safe to do this because I assured them that I will not interfere in any of their fun activities and connections with their lovers: I had to assure them that I would not talk to any of their boyfriends and *injongas*. I also had to assure them that I would not embarrass them by asking them questions when they did not want me to. In the area within *uMlazi* that these salons are located in they are know as hot-spots for and by *Nguni* homosexual men that live in those areas. The purpose of these visits was to observe the homosexuals employing *isiNgqumo* in those

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[5] Pseudo name of a lodge/motel located in the Point area.

environments: to hear *isiNgqumo* as spoken in places where the *Nguni* gay subculture can be observed. This served as an advantage to me as the researcher: it gave me the time to view the participants (those that travelled with me to these locations) in places that were their comfort zones.

Before we went to the gay clubs we first had group discussions: these were informal, they were done as the participants were getting ready for the clubs, they were gracious enough to speak in *isiNgqumo* and give some information about being *skesanas*. But these group discussions were not intended interviews: I counted them as casual conversations. So, the main method that was used in this study was to collect data was in-depth interviews. An interpretative approach which is qualitative in nature was adopted for this study. Education scholar Rita Berry (1999:3) states: "the central concern of the interpretative research is to understanding human experiences at a holistic level. Because of the nature of this type of research, investigations are often connected with methods such as in-depth interviewing, participant observation and the collection of relevant documents".

In addition to Berry's view assertions on qualitative research, authors of Beginning Qualitative Research: A Philosophic and Practical Guide Maykut & Morehouse (1994:46) state that:

The data of qualitative inquiry is most often people's words and actions, and thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behavior.

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The most useful ways of gathering these forms of data are participant observation, in-depth interviews, group interviews, and the collection of relevant documents. Observation and interview data is collected by the researcher in the form of field notes and audio-taped interviews, which are later transcribed for use in data analysis. There is also some qualitative research being done with photographs and video-taped observations as primary sources of data (see, for example, Erikson and Wilson 1982, Wagner 1979).

After I had recorded those interviews, with the permission of each participant, I then transcribed them. During the data analyses process I also took into account the field notes and all that I observed in the different locations. The process of data analyses is that which Seidel (1998) describes as that of noticing, collecting and thinking. This process basically evolves around disseminating the data that has been collected and then reorganizing it guided by certain themes.

Coding system

The themes that I used in my analyses, which will be highlighted in the presentation of the data are:

Sexual terms and words- **s**

Non-sexual terms and words- **ns**

Township- **t**

Suburban –**sb**

The corpus of *isiNgqumo* terms, words and expressions has been coded using the Qualitative data analyses coding method (Seidel 1998:1). The coding is necessary and significant in that it provides a tool to distinguish between *isiNgqumo* terms, words and expressions that are sexual and those that are non-sexual. Also the coding will distinguish between *isiNgqumo* terms, words and expressions which are employed by township *skesanas* and those which are employed by city/urban *skesanas*.

Method of data analyses

During the process of analyses these are the themes that reoccurred from the stories of the participants. The data will presented in two main categories which will include the coded themes

- First will be a corpus of expressions and words used in *isiNgqumo* – the lexicon and linguistic expressions will be presented as a set collected from *uMlazi* township participants and another set from participants that identify themselves as city *isiNgqumo* speakers. Within this section will be a presentation of corresponding *isiZulu* words. Corresponding English translations will also be provided.

- The second category will be data collected from interviews. Although this category will make constant reference to the lexicon category, it will mainly foreground the social aspects related to *isiNgqumo*. Consequently, this section will equally be a discussion seeking to present the participants' reasons for using *isiNgqumo* and kinds of social environment/s in which *isiNgqumo* is used and reasons behind the use of *isiNgqumo*.

This type of analyses can appear in different forms when it is presented. Moriel (2004) uses a similar form of coding in her study of gay speech in the Israeli gay subculture. This process gives the researcher an advantage: the researcher can fully extrapolate all the juicy information out of the data and make it even clearer fore the reader.

Research hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study is that gay subcultures only emerged in Africa as a result of the colonial entrenchment of homophobia. This homophobia had been non-

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existent in pre-colonial Africa. If there was negativity towards homosexuals in pre-colonial Africa, it was no more than a mild dislike. Therefore, when embarking on the data collection process I had to remember the homophobia that surrounds the *Nguni* gay culture. As previously mentioned, this meant that the assumption of the study had to be that most, if not all, of the participants had experienced some degree of homophobia.

Limitations of study

As previously mentioned, the literature around and about *isiNgqumo* and indeed the *Nguni* gay subculture is scarce. The study depended largely on the few literature sources that have already been mentioned and reviewed in previous chapters. The number of participants was also a limiting factor in this study: as the nature of this study is a very sensitive one, it was not easy to find willing participants. Also, as I was not familiar with the *Nguni* subculture, I did not have the knowledge prior to embarking on this study of the two gay clubs and the two salons that I visited.

Another limiting factor was the area of study: the *Nguni* subculture is not an easily locatable location as it is stratified throughout Durban in various gay hangouts. Thus I needed the participants to show me these places, which were not many as well. A very important factor which emerged as a highly problematic limitation as compared to all the others that I have stated is that of funds that this study needed: as a result of limited funds I could not visit all the *Nguni* subculture

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hangouts that exist throughout Durban. Also, I did not spend the amount of time that I wished for in the hangouts that I was able to visit.

<u>List of questions which were posed to the participants during each interview</u>.

- What is *isiNgqumo*? All the participants will be asked this initial question

  Siyini isiNgqumo? Wonke amaparticipants azobuzwa lomu buzo

- What is its significance in the gay community in Durban?

  Sibaluleke ngani emphakathini emphakathini wezinkonkoni?

- How did it originate

  Kungabe saqala kanjani?

- How do you use it? And where?

  Kungabe wena usisebenzisa kuphi? Futhi usisebenzisa kanjani?

- How well can you speak it?

  Kungabe ukwazi kahle kangaka nani ukusikhuluma?

- Can you speak it instead of another language?

  Kungabe uyakwazi yini ukusikhuluma esikhundleni solunye ulimi?

- What are the attitudes of non-*isiNgqumo* speakers when they hear you speaking it?

  Kungabe laba bantu ozwana nabo bazizwa kanjani mayelana nesiNgqumo?

- Why did you choose to learn *isiNgqumo*?

Yini eyakwenza ukuba uze ufunde ukukhuluma *isiNgqumo?*

• What is its significance in your life?

Kungabe sibaluleke kanjani empilweni yakho?

I was able to ask all the participants all these questions, however, the conversation with each participant raised other questions: such as their particular experiences with *injongas*, particularly their relationships outside the confines and privacy of the gay clubs. Hence, this led to some of the responses about the code of silence about the goings on within the confines of the *Nguni* gay subculture and other relevant and informative responses. Also the two participants whose hometowns and homes I visited shared with me more information that was not posed by these questions. For example, *Menzi* revealed to me the homophobia he faces in his family: he did this out of his own free will and initiative as we were enjoying our conversation.

Ethical considerations

All the names of the participants that have been included in this study are pseudo names. This means that according to my agreement with each participant, their real names have been kept confidential. This was one of the means I used to assure the participants of their anonymity and privacy. Also, when certain participants felt uncomfortable with being recorded, I switched the tape recorder off and I took

hand written notes. The names of the two gay clubs and two township salons are also pseudo names.

During the interviews and other casual conversations with the participants, I mostly spoke to them in *isiZulu*, but I code switched regularly with English, particularly during the interviews and casual conversations with the city/urban *skesanas*. However, almost all the participants had a good speaking and understanding ability in both languages. When they spoke in *isiNgqumo*, they translated this for me. But, this was left to each participant's linguistic preference. All participants code switched between *isiZulu* and English as they pleased and I then took the queue from their preference and asked the questions in a similar fashion.

Map of Durban provided by RoomsForAfrica.com : the study was located in the Durban area of *Point*:
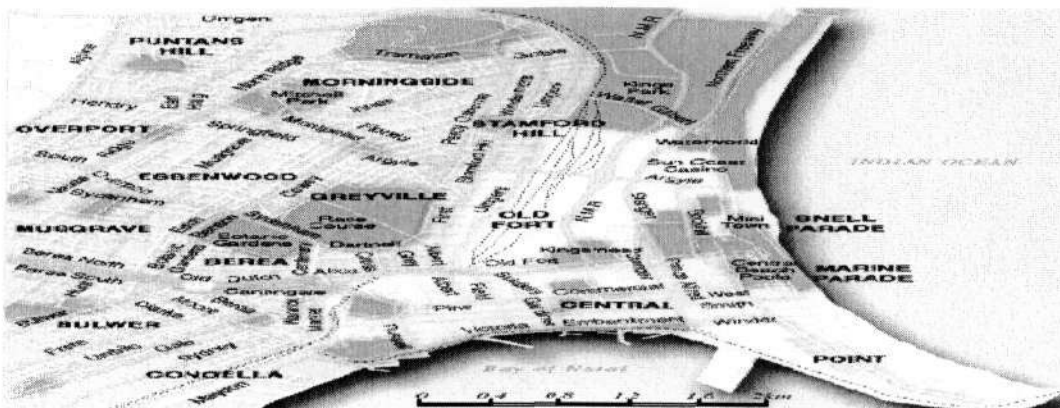
To be signed by participant

Title of project

IsiNgqumo: Exploring origins, growth and sociolinguistics of a *Nguni* urban-township homosexual subculture

Researcher: Mduduzi Ntuli

Contact details: cell number-071 380 4582

Email: mduduziilutn@yahoo.com

My name is Mduduzi Ntuli; I am currently enrolled for a Master's degree in Gender Studies at the University of KwaZulu Natal (Howard College). The topic of my research is *isiNgqumo.* Your participation in this research will be greatly appreciated: as a participant that will be interviewed you it will be your prerogative to give as much or as little information that you are comfortable with giving. If at any point you wish to exit from this project and no longer wish to be interviewed you may do so.

The interviews will be semi-structured. Which means that the questions will be open-ended questions, where you as the participant will be able to freely give your answer with no restrictions or limitations. Also if it is possible on your part I wish to interview you twice.

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By signing this form you will be confirming that you understand and accept the nature of this investigation and consent to the recording of the interview. If you do not wish to be recorded on tape you will not be recorded, however I will take notes instead. You will also be confirming that you understand and accept that your name and details will remain anonymous.

By signing this consent form you will be confirming that you understand and agree that you will receive no remuneration for your participation in this project.

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Signature of participant   **Date**

Chapter Four: Data presentation and analyses

5.1 Corpus of *isiNgqumo* terms, words and expressions

In this chapter, the corpus of *isiNgqumo* terms, words and expressions is presented. These terms, words and expression have also been translated into both *isiZulu* and English. The discussion that follows this corpus of *isiNgqumo* terms, words and expressions makes continuous reference to them and links them to the discussion on the interviews with the participants. The subsequent discussion on the interviews links *isiNgqumo* to the *Nguni* gay subculture and the activities therein. In this chapter both the linguistic and social aspects of *isiNgqumo* are highlighted.

The corpus of *isiNgqumo* terms, words and expressions has been coded using the Qualitative data analyses coding method (Seidel, 1998). The coding is necessary and significant in that it provides a tool to distinguish between *isiNgqumo* terms, words and expressions that are sexual and those that are non-sexual. Also the coding will distinguish between *isiNgqumo* terms, words and expressions which are employed by township *skesanas* and those which are employed by city/urban *skesanas*.

Coding system

Sexual terms and words- **s**

Non-sexual terms and words- **ns**

Township- **t**

Suburban -**sb**

IsiNgqumo	_IsiZulu_	English
1. Isikhenzi **ns, t**	fundekelayo	boring/weak link
2. Umsengo **s, t**	isidoda	sperm
3. Isifoza/umbhemo **ns, t**	ugwayi	a cigarrete
4. Ulayini **ns,sb**	kokeyini	cocaine
5. Amasi **s, t,sb**	amasimba	fesses
6. Umjovo **s, sb**	umthondo	penis
7. U-anti[6] **ns,t, sb**	-	a mature skesana
8. Ukubhameka **ns,t**	kulamba	to be hungry
9. Ukubhama/ukunkuna **s, t** kubhehba	to fuck
10.Amabhodwe esizulu **s,t**	zinqa	bums
11.Uswidi**ns, t,sb**	uthando	love
12.Is'khonde **s,t, sb**	amasende	scrotum sack
13.Umjampi **ns, sb**	umuntu ophaphile	hyperactive person

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[6] No isiZulu translation. The literal translation is [ubabezala].

14.Ukutriksa **s, t**	hungula	seduce
15.Umgodo **s, t**	ngqada/ingquza	anus
16.Umsengi[7] **s, sb**	-	lessdominant injonga
17.Injonga **s, t, sb**	iqenge	dominant gay lover
18.Smeshi/skesana **s, t, sb**	inkonkoni	passive/submissive
19.Imbube[8] **s, t**	-	versatile gay male
20.Umcedo **s, t**	kujola kwangaphandle	love affair
21.Ingevu **ns,t**	bhavubhavu	talkative person
22.Ukuqeqa **ns ,t**	ukuphuza	to drink
23.Ukufoza **ns, t**	ukubhema	to smoke
24.Ukubhedlela **ns,sb**	ukulala	to sleep
25.Ayina **s,t**	ukubhuja ezinqeni kokocansi	anal sex
26.Teksi **ns,t**	ukuhamba	to live
27.Uhlahla **ns, sb**	isihlahla	a tree
28.Khamela **ns, sb**	thamela	to busk
29.Umqhumo **ns, t**	umsebenzi	work
30.Umjuketisi **ns, t**	umfundisi/uthisha	teacher
31.Gweni **ns, sb**	mana/dali	darling
32.Ukuguza/ukushaya **ns,t**	ukuhamba	to go/to walk
33.Ukukala **ns, t**	ukubuka/ukubheka	to look
34.Udayi **ns, t**	umlungu	a white person
35.Mamburuza **ns,t**	umama/ugogo	other/grandmother

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[7] No isiZulu translation available. Literal translation is [the one who milks the cow].
[8] No isiZulu translation available. No literal translation available.

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36.Injubugane **ns,t**	ubaba/ikhehla	father/old man
37.Izimvakuzi **ns,t**	izingubo	clothes
38.Umngeni **ns, sb**	amanzi	water
39.Skomora **s, t**	ukushaya indlwabu	to masturbate
40.Ukuminza **ns, sb**	ukuntshontsha	to steal
41.Umhephula **ns, sb**	isoka	a player/Casanova
42.Injezo **ns, t**	inja	a dog
43.Ibobo **ns, sb**	isilonda/ubuhlungu	a wound/pain
44.Igeyila **ns, sb**	igeyila	gayle
45.Isidudula **ns, t**	imoto	a car
46.Nonkroyi **ns, t**	isifebe	bitch
47.Ingojo **ns, sb**	indawo yokuhlala	place to stay
48.Isibhomu **s, sb**	ubumnandi bokuchama	orgasm
49.Ubusomi **ns, sb**	umusa	kindness
50.Ulucayi **ns, sb**	isimo esinzima	a difficult situation
51.Iqhude s,**sb**	ndoda osolwa ngobonkonkoni	man suspected of being gay
52.Is'qeda **s, t**	ukumunca	a blow job

5.2 Discussion and analyses of data

The interview process included a visitation to two gay clubs in Durban, two township salons, a visitation to the homes of two participants and 36

participants which were all interviewed twice and one older participant named *baba Dlamini.*

Data from two gay clubs

Gay clubs like *G-zone* and *Chills* have become the modern hubs of the Durban *Nguni* gay subculture

G-Zone club

Participants who accompanied me to *G-Zone: James, Mcedisi, Qiniso, Bruce, Mlungisi, S'fiso* and *Sizwe.*

The first gay club that I visited was *G-Zone*, which is one of the most popular gay night clubs in Durban with a largely black male clientele. Like many night clubs it was dark and smoky inside. Seven of the participants took me to this club and we were later joined by some of their friends who are also black and homosexual. However, these friends refused to be part of the study, even though they are also *Nguni* and had a good speaking and receptive knowledge of *isiNgqumo.*

One of the key participants in this study, whose home I later visited, seemed to feel right at home in such an environment and was on the dance floor constantly, enjoying the attention from his onlookers. I named this participant James.

After we had settled in the club and bought some drinks, as it usually the instinctive thing to do when in such an establishment, I noticed numerous eyes staring at me. This was to be expected, as I was a new face in this environment and the five participants I was with had warned me ahead of time of this sort of attention. So I was not in the least uncomfortable with it. The purpose of the visitation to G-*Zone* was to experience the gay scene and that largely 'exclusive to male homosexuals' environment. Also, I looked forward to view the interactions between *skesanas* and *injongas* in an environment which they considered to be their territory.

It must be remembered that the *Nguni* homosexual men that were participants in this study regard themselves and are regarded by others as *skesanas*. In the Durban gay subculture it is largely the *skesanas* who employ *isiNgqumo*.

So I was hoping to study interactions not only amongst the *skesanas* in this environment, but also their interaction with the *injongas*. Although the skesanas employ *isiNgqumo* outside of such environments, they sometimes feel uneasy when they do so in the presence of heterosexuals who might be homophobic or irritate them with their curiosity. One of the participants named *Qiniso* stated that

Qiniso: *My friends sometimes stop me and hush me because I just start talking in IsiNgqumo even in the taxi. They don't like to draw attention to us.*

While I was watching the activities and interactions in the club, in the table behind the one we were sitting at I heard a soft girly voice, which I assumed was a *skesana*, saying: "*Akeve ewumjampi lo nonkroyi*" [this bitch (*nonkroyi*) is so hyperactive (*umjampi*)]. I assumed that they were referring to James.

The gossiping and back-biting seemed to be a common occurrence in the club. The *skesanas* seemed to be the most ones on the dance floor, perhaps strutting their stuff in front of their potential lovers. Certainly James was enjoying gyrating and performing his sexy dance moves for everybody to see.

It must be noted that there were no sexual intercourse activities that I observed taking place. As gay clubs form part of the gay subculture, they fall prey to the negative stereotypes associated with gay culture. In this modern context and how much gay culture has changed in Durban, the gay subculture is no longer confined in mine compounds and migrant hostels. In the modern gay subculture, particularly in the Durban gay subculture as it is the focus in this study, most of the activity

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takes place in gay clubs and other gay establishments. But, as far as I was told by the *skesanas*, no sexual intercourse activities take place in gay clubs.

Numerous people, including myself prior to embarking on this study, have the perception of gay establishments such as gay clubs, as similar to prostitution brothels or brothels themselves. However, that is not the case: that is a false and largely homophobic stereotype. Certainly it was not the case with *G-Zone* and the other gay clubs and establishments that I visited with the participants.

The kind of music that was being played in the club was mostly house[9] music and some *kwaito* music. Two of participants stayed with me at our table and the rest joined *James* on the dance floor. The two participants that stayed with me I named *Mcedisi* and *Bruce* began to gossip about other *skesanas* who were sitting at the bar, advertising themselves to *injongas*:

Mcedisi: *Saze savelelwa o-anti abazosminzela imjovo yethu [these old skesanas (o-anti) are here to steal (minzela) our men (imjovo)]*

Bruce: *Futhi bagcwele amasi nje laba ononkroyi. [and these bitches (ononkroyi) are full of feces [full of shit] (amasi).*

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[9] A kind of dance music with a fast or slow beat, usually mixed by a DJ.

Another *skesana* who was one of their friends came to join us and asked them for a cigarette: "*aningipha umbhemo lapho* [can I have a cigarette (*isifoza/umbhemo*)]. After he had begun to smoke we all started to crave a cigarette and so we all lit each of our own cigarretes and smoked. Most people in the club were also smoking. In such environment drinking and smoking have the tendency to go hand in hand. I watched James, *Sfiso* and *Mlungisi*, who were the other participants we came with, enjoying themselves on the dance floor. By now they had found interested injongas and were dancing with them and flirting with them by the bar.

As I watched the men in the club, I got the impression that they were trying to figure me out: they could not make out whether I was a *skesana* [submissive gay man] or *injonga* [dominant gay man] *imbube* [gay man who likes to both submissive and dominant/versatile] or *iqhude* [heterosexual-identified man who is suspected of liking other men] or something else. Both *injongas* and *skesanas* were seducing me with their eyes, but none approached me.

Many gay activists have asserted many times that gay relationships are not an emulation of heterosexual and heteronormative relationships. However, the interactions which I observed between the *skesanas* and *injongas* at *G-Zone* seemed to largely resemble those of heterosexual and heteronormative romantic interactions.

Most *skesanas* exhibit a heightened femininity, as most see themselves as females, behave as females and some even wish they were female. The *injongas* that I observed behave like regular men who would be assumed to be heterosexual. It seemed that they accepted and appreciated the femininity displayed by the *skesanas*.

The focus of this study is centered on *skesanas*, as it is them who employ *isiNgqumo*. However, *injongas* also play a significant place in the Durban gay subculture. Perhaps this is a topic that could be studied in another study.

The *injongas* see themselves and are perceived by the *skesanas* as regular men not separate from heterosexual men. In fact many *skesanas* consider *injongas* as heterosexual. Hence within the gay subculture the definition of gay or homosexual is different from that of the greater society. In the greater society a gay man is perceived as one who has sex with other men or who sexually desires other men. However, in the gay subculture the *skesanas* are the ones who are perceived as gay not the *injongas*. Even the *imbubes* are largely not perceived as gay, but just confused heterosexual men. When I raised this issue with the *skesanas* they all simply shrugged it off by saying that *injonga* are men who enjoy *ukunkuna* [to fuck] us "*they are our boyfriend. we can't fuck each other, we are not lesbians*".

Clearly this suggests that some *skesanas* see themselves as the women in their gay subculture. This is something that the *skesanas* are proud of. The *skesanas* that accompanied me to *G-Zone* were from the township and they also told me that most of the *injongas* were from the township as well. The type of music that was played at the club signaled that most of the clientele was from the township, as house and *kwaito* music is generally catered to an urban township demographic.

One of the purposes that a gay club such as *G-Zone* serves is to connect gay men and give them a place to mingle and socialize at ease. In the modern gay subculture of Durban, gay clubs serve as the networking places for gay men that find it difficult to approach one another in the outside public in front of heterosexuals.

Particularly the *injongas* find it difficult to openly socialize with other gay men in public, particularly those who are gay identified, such as the *skesanas*. This is part of the consequences of the shame that is brought about by the stigma of being known as a homosexual. This stigma particularly shames male homosexuals more than it shames female homosexuals. This is not to minimize the hardships and public and private pains and humiliation that lesbians go through, but it is not shocking to see two women hugging as it is to see two men hugging.

So, the *injongas* work very hard to maintain their anonymity and their heterosexual images and masculinities. This heterosexual image is also important to the *skesanas*, as it clearly identifies a potential lover. *Skesanas* are rarely sexually attracted to one another, and if it happens that they engage in sexual activity, it is rarely *uku-ayina* [anal penetration], they would merely indulge in some *skomora* [masturbation or to masturbate] with one another.

Not all *skesanas* are able to attract an *injonga*. So, during these hard times they rely on each other for a sexual helping hand. The excitement that engulfs a gay club when gay friends, *skesanas, injongas* and other gays meet can be deceiving: the homosexual experience can be very lonely one. Many gay men come to G-*Zone* to find some kind of relief from their lonely lives. *Skesanas* such as *James* reveal another side to themselves that they hide from other people outside *G-Zone*, but as soon as they come through the doors, they feel right at home.

James: *Here I can scream, shout, dance however I want and be myself. I can just be me. I don't have to watch my back, or worry about what people will think about my gayness.*

James' long dreadlocks add to his feminine image. He likes to swing them around as if he were one of the models on shampoo adverts. There is a difference between

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feminine *skesanas* and effeminate *skesanas*. Almost all *skesanas* are effeminate, but not all are feminine. The feminine *skesanas* see themselves as females and wish they were females.

James: *If I could I would have a sex change. Maybe when my father is dead I will have a sex change. And when a man is fucking me I try to hide my penis from him as far as possible, because it distracts him.*

One of the confusing things about the *injongas* is their attraction to such feminine *skesanas* as James. Many of the feminine *skesanas* can be so feminine that their image as males or females can be so blurred that they appear as neither male nor female. If the definition of gay is a man who enjoys *ukunkuna* [to fuck] other men or desires other men, what kind of men? Even the definition that exists within the gay subculture of what being gay means: that it is the *skesanas* who are gay not the *injongas*. The question is do *injongas* not view *skesanas* as males? As James pointed out, when an *injonga* is fucking him, he tries as much as possible to hide his penis.

The answer to all the questions is that, within the gay culture and subcultures there are several masculinities that are able to pair up and satisfy each other. But, also, one might say that there are also gay femininities that compliment such complex masculinities of such *injongas* like those who enjoy *ukunkuna skesanas* like James.

Effeminate *skesanas* do not see themselves as female and do not wish to be female. When two *skesanas* are engaging in sexual intercourse, which is usually involves masturbation, the effeminate *skesanas* will be the dominant partner and the effeminate will remain in the submissive position. *Qiniso* is an effeminate *skesana* and he stated that he enjoyed playing with his *umjovo [penis]:*

Qiniso: *Sometimes my boyfriend will allow me to come on him after he has finished fucking me. Akeve enobusomi [he has so much kindness (ubusomi)].*

This stratification within the context of *ubukesana* [the fact of being a *skesana*] gives rise to a complex structure of identities within the *Nguni* gay subculture. Within the *Nguni* gay culture there are two extremes that can be noted: the feminine *skesanas* on one extreme and the super-masculine *injongas*.

Some *injongas* can be confident of their masculinity as a result of their belief that they can 'sexually defeat' all men, even the most heterosexual men, that they can appear more aggressive and sexually driven than most men. When two masculine gay men are in a romantic relationship, one always takes the role of the *skesana*. Within the gay subculture such a man would not be considered as a *skesanas*, but

the role and submissive position that he prefers is that of *ubukesana*. The proper *isiNgqumo* term and 'sub-social' category for such a homosexual is *umsengi*.

Within the *Nguni* gay subculture, *skesana* is a socially acknowledged category that is associated with a particular image and patterns of behavior: it is one of the sub-social categories within the *Nguni* gay subculture that are used to create a kind of identity. An *umsengi* is not perceived to fall under this category, and the *umsengi* also does not consider himself to be a *skesana*. This type of homosexual may even be in relationships with women, but when in the context of the sexual interaction with his male lover he will prefer to be submissive. This gives the *injonga* that is fucking him a sense of great power and authority for sexually dominating a man who is as masculine as he is.

One of the interesting things about gay clubs is that not all the staff that works there is gay. There is female staff, but most of the staff is male and some of the men are heterosexual. I desired to speak to some of the heterosexual men, but decided against it as it might have brought too much attention my way. I did not want the clientele to know that I was a researcher as this might have brought numerous problems to my research. For instance, some of the *skesanas* that were sitting behind us conversed in *isiNgqumo* and in *isiZulu*, so I did not want them to know that I was eve's dropping on the *isiNgqumo* conversation.

I could not understand most of what they were saying to each other in *isiNgqumo*, but I tried to remember as much of it as possible so that later on I could write it down and ask the participants to translate it for me. However, I was able to ask *Mcedisi* and *Bruce* who set with me most of the time about the heterosexual male staff in the club. I wanted to know whether any *skesanas* or *injongas* have ever approached them with sexual advances:

Mcedisi: *abanye babo bangamaqhude, kodwa asinandaba nabo.* [We suspect some of them that they like other men, but we don't really care about them (we don't pay attention to them)]

There are strict rules from the management of the club which prohibit any of the staff to get involved with the clientele during working hours. Although some of the heterosexual male staff is suspected of being attracted to other men, they are left alone: however, this does not stop some of the participants to flirt with them.

It must be noted that *G-zone* is largely a place for homosexuals, particularly black homosexuals, to come and enjoy themselves and socialize. However, it also serves as a pick-up joint that can be described as gay heaven.

Point area is not a gay environment per se; there are numerous heterosexual clubs and bars around point and in the same building as *G-Zone* and ever so often a

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heterosexual will peep through the door in curiosity. Some of the *injongas* have the appearance of regular heterosexual-identified men who only visit *G-Zone* for the purpose of picking up *skesanas* to fuck:

Bruce: *some of the men just want sex, they'll even pay for it if you ask them to. But I never take money from any man, I'm not a prostitute. That one over there is such an injubugane [old man/father]. He's got a family, but I fucked him.*

In situations when *skesanas* are in near proximity outside the gay subculture with a man they have had sex with the use of *isiNgqumo* becomes a necessity as they talk about him and his secrets that the woman and the friends that he might be with do not know. There is a strict rule within the gay subculture that all *skesanas* and *injongas* have to adhere to: that what happens in the gay subculture must never be revealed to anyone in the outside community. This is an unwritten rule that is implied in all sexual encounters between *skesanas* and their male lovers. Even an acknowledgement is prohibited in most situations between *skesanas* and their lovers.

Bruce: *when I see him outside I must pretend as if I don't know him and he doesn't know me. The men have to trust us.*

Skesanas do not refer to their lovers as *injongas*, this is implied knowledge. They also do not constantly refer to themselves as *skesanas*. Mostly they will call each other *gweni* [dear/ dol/darling], particularly the feminine *skesanas*. The fact of them being perceived as the females within the context of the gay subculture is well known, so they simply refer to the *injongas* as men, the men or *abafana* [the boys], as heterosexual females would refer to their heterosexual male suitors. The effeminate *skesanas* usually call each other "O" [an *isiZulu* colloquial term for friend].

Most *injongas* who are closeted perceive feminine *skesanas*, and to some degree effeminate *skesanas*, a public embarrassment. If an *injonga* who is believed to be heterosexual by his community were to be seen socializing with skesanas, it might be a disaster for him. The employment of *isiNgqumo* serves the *skesanas* to freely discuss closeted *injongas* and *amaqhude* with ease.

As mentioned previously, it is mostly the *skesanas* who employ *isiNgqumo*; the *injongas* have no reason to employ *isiNgqumo*. Most of the terms that *skesanas* use to describe their male lovers are only known to them and not the *injongas*. Perhaps there will be those few *injongas* who have some degree of knowledge of *isiNgqumo*, but most are not even interested in it.

Gay clubs such as G-*Zone* have become the modern centers of the *Nguni* gay Subculture in Durban. As it was discussed in the introductory chapter, *Mkhumbane* is attributed as being the birth place of *isiNgqumo* and also the first hub of the *Nguni* gay Subculture. Although it is still in existence today, *Mkhumbane* is no longer associated with the *Nguni* subculture; and the *skesanas* who were the boy-wives seemed to have vanished with the old *Mkhumbane*. The boy-wives used *IsiNgqumo* to secretly communicate to one another about the different men that were in the *sheebeen*; they used this to pick the *injongas* that they desired.

This function of *isiNgqumo* has not changed even in the modern *Nguni* gay subcultures. The location has changed, but the protocols and rules of engagement between the *skesanas* and the *injongas* have not changed. *Mcedisi* and *Bruce* could not help themselves but talk about whoever picked their interest:

Mcedisi: *Ngivele ngizwe is'bhomu uma ngibimona leliyaqenge. Ngifisa angi-ayine. Awubheke lesi smeshi sesibhedlelekile.* [I just feel an orgasm when I see that guy. I want him to penetrate me. Look at him, he has fallen asleep]

Bruce: *Hhayi mina o sengibhamekile manje, sengizoguza phezulu.* [My friend I am hungry now, I'm going to take a walk up].

As they were talking in *isiNgqumo*, *Mcedisi* and *Bruce* were kind enough to translate for me so that I could keep up with their conversation. *Bruce* left to go to the *KFC* which was just around the corner to eat something and *Mcedisi* went to dance. It was a very uncomfortable time while I set there by myself with all the eyes now staring only at me. So I stood up and went to sit at the bar and bought a drink. If a *skesana* cannot attract an *injonga* by looking pretty, than he will dance for attention. *Mcedisi* had had enough sitting down.

At G-*Zone* almost all the clientele was drinking, *ukuqeqa* [to drink] and smoking *ukufoza* [to smoke]. This seemed to be part of the scene. This is one of the differences between *skesana-injonga* relationships and heterosexual male-female relationships. Most heterosexual men have the tendency to object to their girlfriends and wives drinking alcohol and smoking, it is mostly the heterosexual men who have the autonomy to indulge in such activities. However, *skesanas* have great autonomy in their relationships.

The submission that *skesanas* display is one that is negotiated: in most *skesana-injonga* relationships in the context of the gay subculture, the *skesanas* will usually be the dominant partners except when it comes to sexual matters. *Skesanas* choose to be submissive to *injongas* because they prefer to and enjoy to; not because that is the only expectation.

Since most of the *injongas* simply want to have sex with the *skesanas*, to satisfy their sexual appetites to male bodies, they place expectations on the *skesanas*. This kind of a relationship is largely based on an understanding between the two people, with an understanding of the anonymity of the relationship or encounter.

At *G-Zone* it seemed that it was the *skesanas* who approached the *injongas*. The *injongas* merely sat at the bar or stood by the dance floor watching for interested *skesanas*. The communication was mostly done with eye contact, then when the eye connection was established, the *skesana* would then approach the *injonga* to whichever part of the room he was in. This is the common practice in the gay subculture: *injongas* almost never approach, for the fear of being shut down or encroaching on another *injongas* claimed territory.

If a *skesana* is not interested he will not engage in any eye contact with any *injonga*. *James* has a boyfriend, so he was not interested in meeting anyone at *G-Zone* that night. He spent most of the evening on the dance floor; he danced till he was sweating- which might not have appealed to many *injongas* anyway. However, *Mcedisi* and *Bruce* did not have boyfriends and were on the prowl for an interested *injonga* to spend the night with, but halfway through the night they still had not found any interested *injongas*- perhaps it was my presence that deterred or confused the *injongas* who might have been interested. As mentioned previously, it seemed as though both the *skesana* clientele and the *injonga* clientele were

attempting to figure me out: as to the kind of relationship I had with the *skesanas* I was sitting with, particularly as I did not look and behave like a *skesana*. When we left *G-Zone Mcedisi* and *Bruce* did not come with us. They had found their injongas.

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Injonga-skesana relationships

It must be reiterated that within the *Nguni* gay subculture there are there sub-social categories that constitute the gender-subverted roles and identities: *Skesana* [submissive gay man], *injonga* [dominant gay man] and *imbube* [versatile gay man]. Within the category of *injonga* there is *umsengi*: in a relationship between two *injongas* or a sexual intercourse between two gays who subverted gender role and identity within the gay subculture is that of an *injonga*, the less dominant *injonga* is called *umsengi*. Also if anal penetration is done *umsengi* will be penetrated.

Gay clubs serve as a place of connection for gays within the *Nguni* gay subculture in Durban: *injongas* can go there to meet *skesanas*: it is regarded as a safe and anonymous place for any man who desires men to go to and they are guaranteed to meet someone. However, *skesana* and *injonga* connections are not just about sex: some result in long-lasting relationships. As noted previously the gay experience can be a very lonely one, so it becomes beneficial for homosexuals to maintain relationships and find companionship.

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Skesanas can no longer be regarded as boy-wives, as they were in *Mkhumbane*. The stark difference between the *skesana-injonga* relationships in the modern *Nguni* gay subculture is that *skesanas* can be of any age and *injongas* can also be of any age. A young *injonga* can have a relationship with an older *skesana u-anti* and an older *injonga* can be in a relationship with a younger *skesana*. *Skesanas* who visit *G-Zone* tend to prefer older *injongas* because of their material possessions such as *isidudula* [a car]. Older *injongas* also tend to have more control and know what they are doing. Whereas young *injongas* still need to be introduced to the gay subculture and be taught the ropes.

James: *Many injongas who don't want to be known that they have sex with us started as skesanas and than they realized they prefer to be injongas. Its all about what they would like to do in bed, to fuck or be fucked.*

This is a clear indication that these sub-social categories, such as *skesana* and *injonga* can shift and change. *Skesanas* are *skesanas* because they want to be such.

Mcedisi: *But I could never fuck a man, I prefer to be the woman.*

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Some *injongas* and *skesanas* are known to be *omahephula* [players/Casanovas] and have multiple partners. But most will always have a steady boyfriend. *Injongas* who are known to be heterosexual in the outside community will usually have a steady relationship with one *skesana* for a long period of time. The *skesana* will respect this *injonga* as his boyfriend, but might come to *G-Zone* and be attracted by another *injonga* only for sexual relations.

New *skesanas* who wish to join a group of *skesanas* and to learn the ropes in the gay subculture will usually also learn *isiNgqumo* as well. If later on a *skesana* decides he no longer wishes to be submissive and shifts to the role of *injonga*, he will have no use for *isiNgqumo* anymore and will distance himself from his old group. This is a matter of identity.

Within the *Nguni* gay subculture identity is fluid: it can change and be shifted as one wishes. To be known as a *skesana* connotes a particular identity: that of being the submissive partner. But, further than that it is a sub-social category that one belongs to and is associated with. So, when an *injonga* approaches a *skesana* identity gay or is approached by him, the intentions and expectations are clear. Also, the role of *injonga* comes with its own sub-social understanding. Thus these roles become the opposites that sustain the *Nguni* gay subculture. *Skesanas* tend to group together and form clicks that move together wherever they go. This is one of the instances where *isiNgqumo* is used. *IsiNgqumo* is not only used to hide

information from *injongas* and other people who do not understand it: although that was its primary function in its origin state. But, it also serves as an amusing aspect of *skesana* life.

Skesanas do not only employ *isiNgqumo* in the presence of *injongas* or when they are gossiping about someone in public, but they will also use among themselves as a communicative lingo. On the way to *G-Zone*, we were driven by one of the friends of the participants who had his own *isidudula* [car] the *skesanas* spoke in *isiNgqumo*. They relayed their plans for the night. Sometimes they translated for me, but sometimes they were so excited about what they were talking about that they became too preoccupied to translate.

IsiNgqumo involves much code switching, particularly with *isiZulu*. Some words and terms are re-appropriated *isiZulu* words, such as *iqhude*–in *isiZulu* it denotes a male chicken/cock[in *isiNgqumo* it denotes a heterosexual man suspected of desiring other men], *ayina*- in *isiZulu* it denotes to iron [in *isiNgqumo* it denotes anal sex] and *udayi*-which denote paint in *isiZulu* [in *isiNgqumo* it denotes a white person]. However, as in the dialogue examples above, when some *skesanas* speak in *isiNgqumo* they code-switch it with *isiZulu*: "*Ngivele ngizwe is'bhomu uma ngibimona leliyaqenge. Ngifisa angi-ayine. Awubheke lesi smeshi sesibhedlelekile*". [I just feel an orgasm when I see that guy. I want him to penetrate me. Look at him, he has fallen asleep]

Dealing with social shame

All gay men are aware of the shameful perception of being known as a homosexual. The homophobia that is unleashed on homosexuals can be so merciless that it could lead some homosexuals to commit suicide or retaliate violently against their some homophobes. Some homosexuals had previously led heteronormative lives and in fact participated in certain homophobic slurs against other homosexuals.

Many men who lead heteronormative lifestyles and have chosen to repress their homosexual desires shift from one extreme to the other: from being homophobic to being *skesanas*. According to Epprecht (2004):

> men's repressed homosexual feelings or self-hatred is deflected by public performances of homophobic rage, including the rape of women as a "cure" or the rape of men to show contemp. For some gay men, to be victimized by such rape, or even to overhear such merciless homophobia confirmed their feelings of self-loathing or hopelessness. Suicide and other forms of self-destructive behavior were ways to escape those feelings. To the extent that sexual orientation became known to the public as a contributing factor in the alcoholism or the suicide, it fed back into the public stereotype of homosexuals as an inherently weak link in the chain of being.

Within the *Nguni* gay subculture, there are numerous masculinities that give the subculture its diversity. As previously mentioned, there are also masculinities that are in fact kinds of femininities. Feminine *skesanas*, such as *James* and *Mcedisi*

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possess this femininity: a kind of male femininity. Because homosexuals are still perceived as males, with regards to their physical structure, they are still expected to behave like other men. In other words the heteronormative expectations expect physical sex to coincide with gender identity and sexual orientation (Epprecht, 2004, 133). So, when that link is broken, the unfortunate individual is seen as incomplete or abnormal: hence the reference to heterosexuals as 'straight' as opposed to the brokenness of homosexuals.

Skesanas are the most at risk of homophobic attacks and slurs. This is the most sensitive part of the study that as a researcher I had to be very careful. One of the participants, whom I named *Gift*, related to me his struggle for freedom from the torment of repression.

Gift: *I remember my matric dance very well. I was so nervous because I wished I was dancing with a guy instead of a girl. My real high school sweetheart was this boy in my class. But nobody ever knew it. I never had sex with my girlfriend the whole time we were together in high school. I saw her the other day and I was with my friends. I was so embarrassed.*

Numerous *skesanas*, such as Gift, have experienced both extremes: from being extremely heteronormative to being extremely homonormative. There are those

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men who have heteronormative lifestyles, but have sex with other men and assume the *skesana* role only during sexual intercourse, called *umsengi*, who do not adopt the sub-social category and identity of *skesana*, when these men eventually give up the heteronormative lifestyle and adopt an exclusively homosexual lifestyle; they adopt *ubukesana* [the identity of *skesana*].

The weakness that is attributed to homosexuality may in fact be the femininity that contrasts the physical sex in some homosexual men. As masculinity has historically been the standard of strength, femininity has historically been regarded as a weaker factor as compared to masculinity. This perceived weakness that is combined with the image of being sexually dominated by another male culminates into the shame that underpins the stigma of homosexuality.

Thus the humor that *skesanas* interweave into *isiNgqumo* helps to deal with the issues and embarrassment that comes with homophobic slues and attitudes. *Skesanas* have to get used to the stares and comments that people give to them in the general society. This kind of treatment makes the subculture an even safer and more appealing place to be in.

The *Nguni* gay subculture in Durban is located in pockets with the heteronormative largely *Nguni* society of Durban: these pockets are the gay clubs, such as *G-Zone*

and *Chills*. There are larger areas such as the point area that are sexually inclusive: where the gay subculture mixes with the heterosexual culture/subculture, but there are no strictly or largely homosexual communities in Durban that can be perceived as physical gay communities. *Mkhumbane* was such a community, where gay lifestyle was the norm and commonality throughout the whole physical landscape.

This means that *skesanas* must contend with living in a heteronormative society that makes it extremely difficult for them to live out their homonormative lifestyle, accept in the small pockets of safety, in the gay clubs. *IsiNgqumo* also becomes a helpful tool to combat this *ulucayi* [difficult situation]. As previously mentioned, within the heterosexual heteronormative society there is homophobia that is directed at gay people but there is also transphobia as well. *Skesanas* not only have to combat homophobic attracts and slurs, but also transphobic attacks. By employing *isiNgqumo* they can find some relief from these social situations.

Although *isiZulu* is a rich and strong language and can be very expressive, particularly when compared with English, the conservativeness and politeness that *Nguni* speakers have can prevent them from expressing their true feelings. These cultural and societal codes of *Nguni* ettiquate can also influence the phrasing of *isiZulu* and other *Nguni* languages in a restrictive manner (Turner, 2001). The blasé and abrasiveness and wildness of the *Nguni* gay subculture influences *isiNgqumo* to

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adopt the same expressive and uninhibited linguistic characteristics. Chambers (2003: 9) calls these influences sociological factors.

The perceived inability on homosexuals by numerous heterosexual to defend themselves in physical altercations with other men is untrue. Many homosexual men are has aggressive and as masculine as heterosexual men, if not more so, particularly *injongas*. As Epprecht (2004:136) points out heterosexual heroism is not just underpinned by the ability to sexually control women, but also the masculine qualities that are exhibited by men in public. The transgression of having sex with other men tarnishes this image and masculinity: even the *injongas* that tend to be hyper masculine, when they are known for engaging in sexual intercourse with other men they will not attain the masculine heroics granted to heterosexual men, "even if he [the *injonga*] took the masculine (inserter) role in the sex act, by virtue of his transgression of the heterosexual norm for sex object, he could not be truly masculine...As such he was not deserving of all the rights and privileges that that gender identity entailed".

In some instances, what might weaken a homosexual man in a violent altercation with a homophobic heterosexual man is the love that the homosexual man might have towards that man. Even the most aggressive and hyper masculine *injongas* love men and would rather love them rather than hurt them. One of the biggest misconceptions about gay men is that they all identify with females. This is untrue.

Certainly the feminine *skesanas* do identify with women, in fact all *skesana* largely identify with women, but, not all of them aspire to be women or be like them. Certainly *injongas* have very little or no identification with women and female qualities.

Injongas view other men similarly to how heterosexual men view women: when an *injonga* sees a man he is attracted to, whether heterosexual or gay, he feels and thinks what a heterosexual man would feel and think towards a woman he is attracted to. *Skesanas* on the other hand, as they prefer to be submissive, and in many cases penetrated, the feelings and thoughts they will have might be likened to those felt by heterosexual women.

Isibhomu/sexual pleasure

"Sex does not always involve *uku-ayina* [anal penetration]" *Mandla.*

Skesanas take pleasure in being submissive. The other extreme to the hyper masculinity of the *injongas* is the hyper femininity of feminine *skesanas*. One of the things I observed at *G-zone* was the freedom with which the *skesanas* performed their homosexuality and femininity. When compared to heterosexual females, the *skesanas* exhibited an exaggerated image of femininity. There were a few drag queens who were in their 'fabulous' female attires, but most *skesanas* were dressed in male clothes. However, their behavior was as exaggerated as that of the drag queens.

Some of the participants admitted that during sexual intercourse they do not ejaculate at the end:

Sizwe: *the point is to let the man enjoy himself, to make him happy makes me happy. I don't have to come.*

Because the submission that *skesana* display is a chosen and preferred one, they receive much sexual stimulation from being submissive and allowing the *injonga* to enjoy himself 'on them and in them'. However, in most sexual encounters *skesana* do ejaculate and receive great pleasure and *is'bhomu* [an orgasm]. Even those

feminine *skesana* who prefer to hide their penises from their *injongas* during sex do ejaculate. James was very candid about this subject:

James: *I have a small penis anyway so even when it is erect its easy to hide it.*

Skesanas do not usually engage in solitary masturbation. James admitted that he can only remember two instances where he masturbated:

James: *I don't like it. I don't enjoy it. I prefer to be fucked. So I don't see the need to masturbate.*

Other *skesanas* who do masturbate usually engage in group masturbation with other *skesanas*:

Mlungisi: *it's more respectable to do it as a group; it feels more respectable that way. If you do it by yourself, you might get used to it, and that's not good.*

Although the *skesanas* do not see themselves as boy-wives, some of them are not even aware of such a term; their behavior towards *injongas* resembles that of boy-

wives. Unlike heterosexual women, the submissiveness that is enjoyed by *skesanas* is much more heightened: there is naughtiness about it. Perhaps, there is a sense that of breaking the rules that intensifies the excitement of *injonga-skesana* relationships. There is a sense of *ukuminza* [to steal] that makes the act of submission even that much more pleasurable for *skesanas*.

The irony between *skesana* submission to *injongas* and heterosexual female submission to heterosexual men is that in heteronormative relationships, such submission may tend to become burdensome and oppressive, but in *injonga-skesana* relationships it is always a source of great pleasure and satisfaction.

The complex feelings and etiquettes that one finds in *injonga-skesana* relationships can only be witnessed within the safety confines of the gay subculture; where such relations are regarded as common and normal. In addition, at first glance one may not understand the desires and sources of satisfaction that underpin such relationships.

At *G-Zone skesanas* suffer no judgments for their homosexual 'performativity' to please their male lovers or to attract them. The *injongas* also feel no embarrassment from openly flirting and fondling with the *skesana*. In as much as all the homosexual men in the subculture are serious about their desires and

understand the profoundness of one man submitting to another, they also indulge in the humor that accompanies such relationships.

The naughtiness that underpins gay relationships becomes a great source of amusement, not only to the onlookers, but also to the *skesanas* and *injongas* as well.

Mandla: *Sex does not always involve uku-ayina [anal penetration]. There are other ways that we pleasure each other.*

Ofcourse in most cases where a *skesana* meets an *injonga* in a gay club, they will almost always have anal sex: there are numerous instances where gay men have one night stands with other men they had just met in the club. However, those who are in committed relationships or even just casual relationships do not always engage in anal penetration.

Another popular sexual act that many *skesanas* indulge in instead of anal sex is oral sex. Many *skesanas* admitted to immensely enjoying engaging in oral sex with *injongas*:

Busi: *I enjoy sucking men's cocks very much. Sometimes that's all they want.*

Is'qeda [oral sex] is one of the services that highly promiscuous *skesanas* will provide to men who are not looking to a relationship with a *skesana*, or who are not part of the gay subculture, but who merely want to satisfy a sexual urge towards another male. *Skesanas* will not just suck any cock, according to James:

James: *I have to like the guy, and I will suck him, but I will never tell my boyfriend. Only my boyfriend fucks me, nobody else.*

I ceased the opportunity to go even further with this topic and asked him what the protocol for such an interaction is:

James: *If I'm in the club and I see a guy I connect with, I'll go to him and ask him if I could suck him. Or he will call me over and ask me to suck him. One day I was at school [university campus] and I was watching gay porn on the computer, one guy walked past and saw me. When he was standing from a distance from he waved and lipped to me "ngicel' ung' sakhe" [can you please suck me (give me a blow job)], we went to his room and I sucked him. I never saw him again.*

These encounters seem to bring great amusement to James. Other *skesanas* who have relegated themselves to the gay subculture lifestyle pride themselves in the fact that they could get any man they set their eyes on. One of the beliefs held by

numerous *skesanas* is that most men, if not all, can be seduced if they show any sign of being intrigued by *skesanas*. Homosexual men who are *skesanas* place a lot of emphases in their appearance and on being sexy:

Senzo: *The other day we were at Paradise Lodge[10] and through the window some guys saw us and started talking to us. We invited them over. You have to make them laugh and entertain them so that they'll be interested in you. Each one had his own.*

This type of behavior and interaction between *skesanas* and heterosexual men feeds into the stereotype that numerous heterosexuals have about homosexuals: that they can be identified as females and are not men. Such an interaction resembles that of heterosexual men being entertained by females. To many heterosexual people all homosexuals, whether masculine or feminine, are grouped with the same image and stereotype that is popularized by *skesanas*.

<u>Chills club</u>

Participants who accompanied me to *Chills: Cedric, Mathew, Langa, Bheki and Thabo.*

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[10] This is a pseudo name for one of the lodges in Russell street located in the city centre of Durban.

The second gay club that I visited with another group of five *skesana* participants was *Chills*, which is also located in the *Point* Area.

Chills was very different from *G-Zone*: firstly it is an all inclusive club which comprises of an equally gay and heterosexual clientele. This meant that skesanas could not be as free to perform their 'homonormativity' as they were at *G-Zone*. *Chills* presented me with a bigger challenge than *G-Zone*: the rules at *Chills* were different from those at *G-Zone*. I felt I had to speak to the owners and inform them of my study before I went there with the participants.

This was done as a necessary precaution to not create any suspicion on myself from the management. *Chills* has a reputation for being a no-nonsense establishment. This is one of the reasons that *skesanas* cannot feel free as they do at *G-Zone*. One of the rules was that drinks were not allowed on the dance floor and no sexual misconducts would be tolerated.

The participants that I travelled with to *Chills* were very effeminate but were very different in the way they presented themselves. They were much less feminine than the *skesanas* that I travelled with to *G-Zone*. It must be noted that as a result of the demise of *Mkhumbane* where the *Nguni* gay subculture was largely concentrated, there has never been a particular location that could encampus the *Nguni* gay subculture to the extent that *Mkhumbane* did. Thus, the *Nguni* gay subculture is stratified in small pockets throughout Durban. However, it is larger in the townships such as *uMlazi*, point area and the city center.

In the township the places of fun that are considered hangouts are *sheebeens* and gay salons. But when *skesanas* from the township need a change of scenery, they come to gay clubs and gay friendly establishments in the point area. *G-Zone* is the most popular gay hangout in Durban by the *Nguni* homosexual men.

Also, there are *Nguni* homosexuals who live in the city centre and surrounding suburban areas who visit *G-Zone* and *Chills*. In my analyses of the data, I made a note of which participants accompanied me to which club, where they live and what the reasons for choosing to go that particular club and not the other.

City/suburban *skesanas* were the one who chose to travel with me to *Chills* and the *skesanas* that accompanied me to *G-Zone* 95% of them live in the township. The environment at *Chills* was more welcoming to the city/suburban *skesanas* than the one at *G-Zone*. One might say that *Chills* as an upper status than *G-Zone*.

More city/suburban *Nguni* homosexual men, including *injongas*, prefer *Chills* because the energy is not as wild as the one at *G-Zone*. Perhaps it is the presence of the numerous heterosexual couples and single heterosexual men who might be homophobic that prevents the township *skesanas* from fully enjoying themselves at *Chills*. This is no indictment on *Chills*: the sexual misconduct prohibitions apply to both the gay and heterosexual clientele. One of the participants stated that

Cedric: *Chills is not a pick-up joint like G-Zone is*

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The *skesanas* that frequent *Chills* did not seem as sexually desperate and as sexually driven like the *skesanas* at *G-Zone*. I also did not notice any *injongas* as I had been able to notice them at *G-Zone*. At *G-Zone* there were numerous men standing on the edges of the dance floor of sitting at the bar who were obviously and identifiably searching through the crowd for a *skesana* to make a connection with. Also, when a connection happened it was noticeable to everybody in the club.

I also did not notice any drag queens at *Chills*. What I did notice at *Chills* which I did not notice in my visit to *G-Zone* were the numerous lesbians. The music that played at *Chills* was also house music; the dance floor was more frequented by heterosexual men than by *skesanas*. When gay men made a connection at *Chills*, it was not as obvious and not as much of a spectacle as it was at *G-Zone*.

The gay men that were the clientele at *Chills* the night I was there were mostly young and less flamboyant. In many instances the distinctions between the one who is the *skesana* and the one who is the *injonga* were blurred at *Chills*. This suggests that the township *skesanas* prefer to be more flamboyant and are braver and proud. The city *skesanas* tend to be more masculine and less 'in your face' about their homosexuality.

Because township *skesanas* advertise themselves so openly, it tends to be easier for them to find men to have sex with. Numerous township *skesanas* engage in

sexual intercourse with *tsotsis* or *pantsulas*. Township *skesanas* also tend to engage in anal sex, more than the city/suburban *skesanas*.

The type of *injongas* that I noticed at *Chills* was much younger than those at *G-Zone*. They also frequented the dance floor and were not shy to approach a *skesana* and propose sex to him.

When examining the amount of data that I collected from the participants, township participants provided more information about *isiNgqumo* than the city participants. Also, after my analyses of the terms and words that I collected from the participants, it was clear that the township participants provided more of the sexual words than the city/urban *skesanas*. Out of the 18 sexual words, 11 came from township *skesanas* and only 7 came from city/suburban *skesanas*. But, also the majority of the non-sexual words (21) came from township *skesanas* compared with the 15 from the city/suburban *skesanas*.

In contrast to the strength and masculine quality that is found in *isiZulu*, *isiNgqumo* displays much more of a feminine quality. Perhaps this is reflective of the femininity that the *skesanas* who created it and those who continued to employ it and extended it to the 21st century possessed and expressed. As Chambers (2003) has pointed out sociological factors and socio-cultural factors have much influence on the manner of use of language within any particular society, this is inclusive to sub societies as well.

This is reflected in the varying vocabulary of *isiNgqumo* as it differs from that used by city/suburban *Nguni* homosexual men and township *Nguni* homosexual men. For example, the term *ulayini* [cocaine] which I found to be particular to city/suburban *Nguni* homosexual men and was never used by township *skesanas*. This suggests that there are different lifestyle activities[11] that distinguish city/suburban gays from township gays are reflected somewhat in *isiNgqumo*.

At *Chills* there were also more heterosexual females who were associated with *skesanas*. Heterosexual women tend to be the majority of the heterosexuals to befriend gay men. At *Chills* there were numerous groups of friends that comprised of numerous skesanas and one or two heterosexual females at the center of the group.

Two gay salons

Within the black community in South Africa, many people who live in the urban townships and suburban areas have some roots in the rural areas. Almost all township and city citizens that are *Nguni* have some degree of connection to the rural areas. The trend of urbanization gave rise to *Mkhumbane* in the 1950s and created a continuous influx of people from the rural areas who came to live in the different locations in the urban areas.

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[11] City/suburban Nguni homosexual men tend to use more cocaine alongside alcohol. Whereas township Nguni homosexual men prefer marijuana alongside alcohol.

Urbanization still occurs, even in the 21st century. Infact, the number of people relocating from the rural areas has increased as a result of the increasing modern lifestyle that many youth aspire to. Many *Nguni* homosexual s find much freedom when they come to live in urban townships. Life for *Nguni* homosexuals who live in the rural areas tends to be lonely and isolated. Infact rural life in general tends to be isolated and exclusive.

So, when rural gays come to the urban townships where the gay lifestyle is much more pronounced, they find a sense of freedom. They can connect with other gays much easier than they would in the rural areas, where even talking about homosexuality may be a taboo. There are several places in urban townships where homosexual men can express and perform their homonormativity. Besides the *sheebeens* and taverns that tend to be gay-friendly, numerous salons which are owned and run by *Nguni* homosexual men have been increasingly surfacing in numerous urban townships in Durban.

There are numerous of these salons that exist in *uMlazi* Township. Besides being places of business, they also tend to be hangouts for homosexual men in the areas of *uMlazi* where they are located. Alongside gay clubs in the city, these salons have also become hubs for the *Nguni* gay subculture. The two salons that I visited were *Hazel's* and *Bheki's*.

My main purpose for visiting these two salons was to witness *isiNgqumo* being spoken by *Nguni* homosexual men that have an extensive knowledge of it. The

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excerpt that I provided in the introductory chapter was a showcasing of the extensiveness that such *Nguni* homosexual men have with *isiNgqumo*. Many of the gay men that were participants in this study, city/suburban and township tended to explain *isiNgqumo* to me and employing a few *isiNgqumo* words in largely *isiZulu* sentences. However, the salon patrons primarily conversed in *isiNgqumo* and now and then spoke in *isiZulu*.

It must be noted that this is another difference between the city/suburban participants and the township participants: the use of English vs. *isiZulu* in the code switching with *isiNgqumo*. The city/suburban gays tended to use many more English words with *isiNgqumo* than the township gays.

The agreement that I had with the owner of each salon was that I would not make anyone feel uncomfortable by asking anyone any questions. What I was allowed to do was to sit and observe without being an intrusion and obstruction to anybody, particularly the customers. The first salon that I visited was *Hazel's*[12] in T section in *uMlazi*. Most of the hairstylists in this salon were *Nguni* gay men who were extremely feminine *skesanas*. These were the kind of *Nguni* homosexual men that fitted this study very well. I was not allowed to record the conversations or even take notes. I only listened and observed. The femininity of *isiNgqumo* was highlighted by the highly feminine actions and mannerisms of the *skesanas* in the salon. Also, the femininity of the *skesanas* was supported by the feminine quality of *isiNgqumo*.

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[12] Pseudo name for a gay salon in Umlazi

As it has been previously mentioned, There is much code switching that goes on but what determines the extensiveness of an *isiNgqumo* speech utterance is and the extent to which *isiNgqumo* may resemble a language independent from its mother-language *isiZulu* is dependent on, among other things, the *isiNgqumo: isiZulu* ratio employed: in a *isiNgqumo* speech utterance or conversation there is much code switching between *isiZulu* and *isiNgqumo* vocabulary amongst the township *skesanas*. However, even with this extensive code switching speakers of *isiZulu* (and speakers of other *Nguni* languages for that matter) would find it near impossible to understand what the conversation is about without knowledge of *isiNgqumo*, as I found myself being lost during most of my *isiNgqumo* conversations at Hazel's. *Menzi*, one of the participants that also works at *Hazel's* took pity on me and translated some words and conversations for me. This excerpt, which I also provided in the introductory chapter, serves as an example of the fluency that the *skesanas* at the salon have in *isiNgqumo*.

This was an especially constructed conversation for the purposes of the Ntuli and Rudwick (2008) study on *isiNgqumo*. This excerpt showcases a form of *isiNgqumo* that is considered to be deep *isiNgqumo*. However, some participants alluded to the fact that there might are *skesanas* who have an even deeper speaking knowledge of *isiNgqumo*:

BA: *Awu, dali, awukopit ucako akasalele kanje dali.*

[wow, darling, can't you see this cute guy, what a darling]

DA: *Ey, yo, ngiyakugcika, uma ngasa ngimgede, ngingayek' ukwentha dali.*

[Ey, yo, I tell you, if I could date this guy, I would not be fooling around anymore]

BA: *Asisethi kanje uphefu dali, kodwa imvelo ayisethi*

[It's so beautiful, his butt, darling, but it's just his perfect nature]

BA: *Kodwa ungathi ucako uyismesh, ngoba nje unompholiso.*

[But one could say that the guy is gay, because he is quite effeminate]

DA: *Hayibo, kala dol, ucako, esemonqolosa ubhovu unkanvule. Ungathi ufezela.*

[Hayibo, look doll, the guy is [French] kissing a woman. It seems he is straight]

BA: *Asiguze, dali, siya kuyena.*

[Let's go, darling, we'll go to him].

The *isiNgqumo: isiZulu* ratio in this conversation and the other actual conversations that took place in the salon leans more towards *isiNgqumo* vocabulary. At *Hazel's isiNgqumo* is employed as the lingua franca[13].

Most of the female heterosexuals who either worked at *Hazel's* or were clients understood some of what was being said in *isiNgqumo*. Some of them were even able to speak some of it. Places such as *Hazel's* are very important to the *Nguni*

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[13] A shared language of communication

homosexuals in *uMlazi*. They serve as social hangouts for gay men who would otherwise have to endure the loneliness that comes with the life of open homosexuality, i.e. the life of *ubukesana* [the fact of being a skesanas].

Although in many townships homosexual tend to be accepted, but acceptance and tolerance does not diminish the shame that has continued to be associated with being a homosexual. Thus, unless there are other homosexuals in the same area that one can befriend, they will have to endure the loneliness. This is a reality particularly for *skesanas*.

Numerous township *skesanas* indicated that they would rather live in the city than in the townships:

Samkelo: *Although the sex comes easy in the township, nobody wants to be your friend*.

At a later date I conducted an interview with *Menzi* at *Matrix Lodge*, during this interview he acknowledged that at *Hazel's* there are many *skesanas* who only became hair dressers or part of the help staff just to escape from being alone all day.

Menzi: *Hazel is perceived as an angel for these lonely skesanas who know very little about the gay life.*

Hazel's is a clean and non-sexual environment: there is no drinking even smoking is banned inside the salon. The clientele also comprises of heterosexual men as well. Some of the *skesanas* there are some which came from the rural areas and had to adjust to township life fast. Through spending time at *Hazel's* and familiarizing themselves with *isiNgqumo*, they were able to become part of the *Nguni* gay subculture.

In this salon that is one of the few areas in Durban where the *Nguni* gay subculture thrives, *isiNgqumo* is treated as way of entering the in-group. If a new *skesana* wishes to be accepted in the group he has to learn *isiNgqumo*. According to *Menzi*, *isiNgqumo* is not difficult to learn:

Menzi: *if you listen carefully and pay attention you will get it in no time. It took me three months to learn it.*

This is a very important point for this study: that of *isiNgqumo* as a means to attain acceptance and be welcomed in the *Nguni* gay subculture. This makes *isiNgqumo* not just the lingo that has been established within the *Nguni* gay subculture, but,

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also it makes it an integral part of the *Nguni* gay subculture. In fact, *isiNgqumo* becomes an integral part of the *Nguni* gay subculture as the bases for formation of relationships and an entrance into a kind of identity.

This suggests that at *Hazel's* and within the *Nguni* gay subculture as a whole, if a *skesana* does not have a good knowledge of *isiNgqumo* and cannot communicate in it, he is not considered to be a real *skesana*. The same as is an *injonga* was unable to perform his expected *injonga* duties during sexual intercourse, he would not be considered to be an *injonga* at all.

As previously mentioned some *injongas* also enjoy to be fucked, if this affects his performance as an *injonga* himself and he is not able to fuck, this will ruin his reputation among the *skesanas*. Hence, *skesanas* prefer not to know if an *injonga* is actually an *imbube*.

Although I could not understand what was being said in *isiNgqumo* at *Hazel's*, I sensed that there was some kind of hierarchy: the *skesanas* that are more fluent in *isiNgqumo* had bigger status than those who were struggling with it or those who could not speak it at all.

What became apparent was that the more fluent *skesanas* had better positions in the salon and those that were not as fluent had lower positions: such as cleaners and assistants to the higher *skesanas*. It became clear that learning to speak *isiNgqumo* and going through the process of being fluent in it goes hand in hand with learning the ropes in the salon and establishing lasting connections and relationships.

As in any environment, a newcomer is expected to learn how things are done in that particular environment and adapt. Each *skesana* that joins the salon has to find his place within the group and the subculture. Being fluent in *isiNgqumo* is seen as some kind of an initiation rite, which makes one worthy to join the group and share in the privileges of being one of the *skesanas* within the covenant of the in-group. At *Hazel's* and other gay hangouts in *uMlazi* the in-group member is known for being fluent in *isiNgqumo*.

Within the *Nguni* gay subculture, in all its hubs, *isiNgqumo* is not only the lingo that any homosexual who wishes to enter the subculture should learn, but to be part of the in-group that can help and teach a new comer survival skills that will enable them to grow and develop within the subculture, the newcomer has to be fluent in *isiNgqumo*.

This is particularly essential for young homosexuals that come from the rural areas: this group of homosexuals is usually naïve and innocent when they arrive from the rural areas. At first most of the rural *skesanas* try to emulate the experienced *skesanas*, but, in time they come into their own and establish themselves as an integral part of the group.

The acceptance that lonely *skesanas* and other gay men, find at *Hazel's* does not deceive them into thinking that the rest of the community will be as welcoming. In the townships such as *uMlazi* the *Nguni* gay subculture is much more extensive than in the city and suburban areas. Here physical locations such as *Hazel's* become a place of safety for many homosexual men who have no other place to go: for those skesanas who prefer not to hangout in *sheebeens* and taverns, *Hazel's* is more appealing.

It must be noted that not all *Nguni* homosexual men that I interviewed and those that I observed in the different locations during this study are promiscuous. The *Nguni* homosexual men that I observed at *Hazel's* seemed to live healthier and less promiscuous lifestyles that those of other *skesanas*. Many *skesanas* in *uMlazi* enjoy sleeping with numerous men, such as *tsotsis, pantsulas* casually: some of the township *skesanas* that I interviewed admitted to having being approached by *tsotsis* and *pantsulas* for sex.

The reasons behind the high levels of promiscuity amongst numerous township homosexuals maybe that of loneliness. Many of the *skesanas* are unemployed and rely on their family for support. This factor of unemployment and the loneliness that tends to accompany the homosexual existence in the township propels numerous *skesanas* to engage in risky sexual behavior. I asked Menzi if the *tsotsis* and *pantsulas* are considered as part of their gay subculture in the township and are known to have sex with other men:

Menzi: *tsotsis believe that if they fuck another man before they go on the job of stealing whatever they want to steal, the job will go well. They consider having sex with skesanas a good luck charm.*

This belief by *tsotsis* is not new. It has been reported that King *Shaka* Zulu would order his men to abstain from sexual intercourse with women and direct their sexual desires to young men in the battle camp. This was thought to increase the power and aggression in the soldier. That belief has also been associated in numerous sports as well. For example, in boxing, numerous boxers will abstain from sexual intercourse with their women in preparation for the fight ahead. The boxers do not have sex with other men though; this is thought to increase the levels of testosterone that the body produces.

This suggests that *pantsulas* and *tsotsis* form part of the *Nguni* gay subculture anonymously. They constitute part of the *injonga* population that enjoys fucking *skesanas*. However, not all *skesanas* find this sort of life appealing: *Menzi* admitted to have had sex with a group of *pantsulas* on two occasions:

Menzi: *We were walking home with a friend of mine, they just appeared out of no where and called us to them. We were nervous at first, but we agreed to go with them to have sex. But all we did was suck them. Before my friend left to go live in Jo'burg we had sex with them again, this time they fucked us.*

Many *skesanas* in the township eventually give up on finding a long-lasting relationship with an injonga.

Samkelo: *This is the problem that makes life as a skesana so lonely: if a man loves you and you love him, you can't enjoy it like other people [heterosexual couples] do, it has to be a secret. Many of the injongas that I know have families and don't want to be found out.*

So, this lives many *skesanas* no choice but to give in to the life of having random casual sex with *tsotsis* and *pantsulas*. Some of these connections between *skesanas* and *tsotsis* and *pantsulas* can be considered relationships: as some *tsotsis* and *pantsulas* tend to have sex with one particular skesana. These relationships can

sometimes be dangerous: *tsotsi* life is a very dangerous one and *tsotsis* can be violent at times even to their *skesanas*.

Injongas in the township are not considered as gays: within the *Nguni* gay subculture heterosexual-identified men who have sex with other men are not labeled gay, they are perceived as heterosexual men who have sex with other men. In fact as pointed out previously, the term for ay or homosexual in *isiNgqumo* is *skesana* or *smesh*. *Injonga* is not considered to be a homosexual category.

The *Nguni* gay subculture in the township is different from the gay clubs in the city. In the township there are *sheebeens* and several taverns that constitute the hubs of the *Nguni* gay subculture. After, we had left *Hazel's*; *Menzi* took me to his home, not very far away from *Hazel's*. While we walked to his home, where he lives with his mother and two younger siblings, he pointed out to me some houses that also functioned as *sheebeens*. He pointed out that it is in such places where one can always find a man to have sex with:

Menzi: *That's where all the perverts hangout.*

This statement by *Menzi* brings an important point to the light: that the homosexual lifestyle is not a perverted one. Meaning, there are numerous homosexual that are promiscuous and give in to the sexually promiscuous gay

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existence, but, there are also many homosexual men, in the township, who live decent lives. It was clear that that is what *Hazel's* provides: a decent life for township homosexuals, in particular *skesanas*.

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Menzi has no allusions about how people in this community feel about him and other *skesanas*:

Menzi: *My mother accepts me because I live a decent life and I don't hangout in the sheebeens, where all the corruption is. But my uncles don't accept me, it always uncomfortable when we go to family functions.*

As we were walking down the street I also had to contend with the stairs from the onlookers, who were probably wondering what our connection was. I got a sense of what *Menzi*, as a *skesana*, has had to come to terms with: as a gay-identified man, he is at much more risk of being at the receiving end of a homophobic or transphobic attack. What many homophobes and transphobes in the township tend to do is to disregard homosexual men: particularly *skesanas* are treated with an abrasive condescension that disregards them as men and people to be taken seriously. This comes through in the looks and attitudes that many heterosexuals display towards skesanas.

Varying kinds of _isiNgqumo_

There are varying degrees of _isiNgqumo_. As previously mentioned, there are _skesanas_ who are more fluent in _isiNgqumo_ and those who are not fluent. Some of the _skesanas_ that were part of this study were extremely fluent in _isiNgqumo_ and others had a limited knowledge of it. The _skesanas_ that work at _Hazel's_ are considered to speak deep _isiNgqumo_. This form of _isiNgqumo_ is the one that is closely associated with limited code switching. If a speaker code switches in this form, it is usually with _isiZulu_ words. Deep _isiNgqumo_ is largely found among the township skesanas.

There is also shallow _isiNgqumo_: this form is that which includes much code switching. City/suburban _skesanas_ are considered to employ this form. The use of _isiNgqumo_ is necessitated by the environment that a _skesana_ lives. The _skesanas_ that work at _Hazel's_ learnt and adopted _isiNgqumo_ as a matter of necessity. Many _skesanas_ who have lived the life of loneliness appreciate being part of a gay community that welcomes them and creates a sense of belonging in them.

As a result of the rejection that many of the _skesanas_ have faced, life in the subculture is pursuing and worth working hard for. For many of the surrounding heterosexuals, the gay life that they witness in the gay subculture is perceived to be of lower status, but, to those _skesanas_ who live in it, it is a safe oasis from the homophobic rejection lashed out by the larger society.

It is this mutual understanding that *skesanas* have toward one another that creates a sense of unity within the gay subculture. The larger heteronormative society rejects and isolates homosexuals, by doing so it creates an in-group out-group dynamic. As *Menzi* and I walked down the street to his house, it was clear that as a *skesanas* he was not seen as belonging to the surrounding community.

Thus, his ability to speak deep *isiNgqumo* gives him a respectable place in the gay subculture. Within the gay subculture this gives him a place in the in-group, which comprises of those *skesanas* who are fluent in *isiNgqumo*.

IsiNgqumo can also fall within the realm of being a political entity. The issue of homophobia in South Africa is a very political one indeed. The treatment of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community in South Africa as influenced the survival and employment of *isiNgqumo*. In its linguistic form *isiNgqumo* is a political expression of homosexual independence and rebellion. To the skesanas that employ *isiNgqumo*, it is something to be proud of and a kind of achievement.

The ability to express one's self in a secret way that excludes others is seen an important and empowering factor by many *skesanas*. This makes *isiNgqumo* not

just the lingo that *Nguni* gay men employ to express their particular gay desires that they would otherwise be unable to in *isiZulu*, but it becomes an important and irremovable aspect of a gay existence in the subculture. In other words, *isiNgqumo* is extricably linked to the *Nguni* gay subculture.

The activities and categories that exist in the *Nguni* subculture that have been constructed particularly to accommodate the identities and needs of the homosexuals within it have been underpinned by *isiNgqumo*. *IsiNgqumo* is not only the slang within the *Nguni* gay subculture, but it is part of what makes the gay subculture thrive.

Cameron and Kulick (2003) raised a poignant point in their study of the relationship of language and sexuality: they posed a question about the relationship between gay language vs. the fact of being a homosexual that employs that particular register. To the many *skesanas* who employ *isiNgqumo*, to them it is more than a gay register or a means of convenient communication. To the *skesanas* within the *Nguni* gay subculture, *isiNgqumo* forms part of their identity:

James: *IsiNgqumo is my language. I see it as a language.*

This is the belief of many *skesanas* who employ *isiNgqumo*: that it is a language. This emotional connection to *isiNgqumo* is indeed political. It is political in the sense

that these homosexual men feel that they have created something of substance that belongs to them. Although there are numerous heterosexuals who have a good understanding of *isiNgqumo*, particularly female heterosexuals, many *skesanas* feel it would not be wise to teach other heterosexuals *isiNgqumo*.

The *Nguni* gay subculture survives within a larger homophobic heteronormative society, particularly in the townships. Many *skesanas* enjoy their communication by *isiNgqumo* amongst the very heterosexuals that are often homophobic towards them. One of the things that *Menzi* found amusing about his living situation at home is that when he speaks in *isiNgqumo* nobody understands him and this allows him to express his feelings out however he pleases.

Particularly because *Menzi* comes from a homophobic family, this gives him a release to express his continuous frustration with homophobes. One of the inhumane aspect homophobia, and any prejudice, is that the people that practice the prejudice do not acknowledge the prejudiced. Many homophobes, particularly within the black community of South Africa, view being homophobic or disliking gays as a natural and expected thing.

Thus, when it comes to the identity of the *skesanas*, *isiNgqumo* constitutes a large portion of that identity. Within the *Nguni* gay subculture there are those gays who

do not employ *isiNgqumo*. These gays are usually the *injongas* and the *imbubes*. This is a common trend that is noticed by all the gays within the subculture. The majority of the gays that do employ *isiNgqumo* are *skesanas*. This is also a common trend noticed by all the gays who are within the *Nguni* gay subculture.

Thus when a homosexual within the *Nguni* gay subculture employs *isiNgqumo*, the assumption is that he is likely to be a *skesanas*. This may be used as an identification factor within the *Nguni* gay subculture. This may also be used to facilitate being welcomed into a particular group. Outside the realms of the *Nguni* gay subculture, it may also be used as a means of identifying another homosexual, particularly one who is a *skesanas*.

The other salon was *Bheki's* which is also located in T section. *Samkelo* was the participant that took me there. He was not employed there, but he is a frequent visitor. He also took me to his home. The environment that I observed at *Bheki's* was very similar to the one at *Hazel's*. The only difference at *Bheki's* was that most of the hair stylists were heterosexual women. However, there were numerous help staff that were *Nguni* homosexuals. So, this made *Bheki's* qualify for this study.

Although, most of the conversations were done in *isiZulu*, because most of the heterosexual women hairstylists did not understand much of what was said in

isiNgqumo, the type of *isiNgqumo* that was spoken can be considered deep *isiNgqumo*. There were several moments when the owner of the salon, *Bheki*, would instruct one of the helping *skesanas* to fetch something for him at the back of the salon. These were the interactions that I looked forward to. What was striking indeed was the clear difference between *isiNgqumo* and *isiZulu*. Although, *isiNgqumo* cannot be considered a language, in a formal linguistic understanding, when *Bheki* spoke in *isiNgqumo* and the *skesanas* responded in *isiNgqumo* it sounded like a completely different language.

As previously mentioned many certain participants passionately argued that *isiNgqumo* is their language and not a slang. Other research that has been conducted on other gay registers, such as those done with Polari have also asked the question, whether those registers are slangs or languages? What makes a language a language? are there any merits in the fact that most *isiNgqumo*-speakers, those at *Hazel's* and *Bheki's* and certain of the *skesanas* from the townships who were participant in this study refer to *isiNgqumo* as a 'language' and reject the notion of slang in reference to the variety? What linguistic term should rather be used in reference to *isiNgqumo*?

From a sociological perspective, one could argue that a linguistic variety turns into a language when the people who speak the variety understand it as such. Interviewees have unanimously claimed that *isiNgqumo* is 'their language'; in other

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words, that it is the language that captures their identities best and that it is the language they enjoy speaking the most. Skeptics may justifiably argue, however, that *isiNgqumo* is not a language on the basis of its linguistic merits.

Indeed, the most extensively researched gay linguistic variety (Polari) has been described as the 'most comprehensive extant form of British gay slang' (Lucas, 1997:85). Baker, who arguably conducted the most in-depth research on Polari, however suggests that 'as with language variety, the term sociolect is general enough to be applied uncontroversially to Polari' (Baker, 2002:13). "It is suggested that a test in determining whether Polari could be regarded as a 'language' is in to what extent it is mutually intelligible with English, which apparently is not always the case (Rudwick and Ntuli, 2008). Regarding grammar, it is questionable on the basis of the data collected so far whether *isiNgqumo* exhibits any significant linguistic properties that differ from the matrix language it is embedded in".

Perhaps, the linguistic term sociolect is better suited to define *isiNgqumo*? Perhaps it is not a language? Nevertheless, to numerous skesanas *isiNgqumo* is perceived and used as a language would be used and perceived. Throughout this paper *isiNgqumo* has been referred to as a gay register and a form of gay language.

Chapter five: overview and summary

This study examined *isiNgqumo* and the *Nguni* gay subculture by using a distinction between township and city/urban *skesanas*. I introduced the findings of this study by a discussion in the introductory chapter of the historical background of the emergence of gay subcultures in the African context. I argued that it was as a result of colonial homophobia that ultimately was entrenched in the minds of the colonized Africans that gay subcultures ultimately emerged. I also introduced the shift of numerous South Africans who began to aspire to the lifestyle of the colonialists.

Within this discussion I attributed *Mkhumbane* as the birth place of *isiNgqumo* and indeed of the *Nguni* gay subculture. The discussion than moved on to the modern *Nguni* gay subculture: which ultimately ended up being stratified into township and city/suburban domains?

Township _____ Suburban

- *Hazel's* and *Bheki's*   -*Zone* and *Chills*

- Deep *isiNgqumo*   hallow *isiNgqumo*

- Lonelier   not so lonely

- *Nguni* gay subculture more potent and   subculture less potent

- *Nguni* gay subculture more extensive   less extensive

- High degree of word coinage.   Less degree of word coinage

- *IsiNgqumo* is necessary   *isiNgqumo* is optional

- Emotional connection to *isiNgqumo*   no emotional connection to *isiNgqumo*

- Frequents *G-Zone*   frequents *Chills club*

- More flamboyant   less flamboyant

- *injonga –skesana* roles more pronounced   roles are blurred

- Believes *isiNgqumo* is their language   *isiNgqumo* is their slang

- Has more sexual terms and words   less sexual terms and words

- Has more nonsexual terms   less nonsexual terms

After the theoretical and methodological obligations had been met, the task was than to present the data that I collected in two ways: linguistic part of *isiNgqumo* and the social aspect of *isiNgqumo*. In the proposal for this research I stated that *isiNgqumo* would be studied in these two ways, as a linguistic and social phenomenon. This has been achieved. The presentation of the *isiNgqumo* words, terms and expressions fulfills this linguistic agenda of this study; and subsequent discussion based on the interviews with the *Nguni* gay men and one *baba Dlamini* fulfills the social agenda of the study. This discussion on the social aspects of *isiNgqumo* dealt with the relationship and dynamics between *isiNgqumo* and its

speakers. This discussion also dealt with the use of *isiNgqumo* by *Nguni* homosexuals to express the constructed sub-social categories within the *Nguni* gay subculture. These sub-social categories are: *skesana, injonga* and *imbube*. These constitute much the identity that the *Nguni* homosexual men who belong within the *Nguni* gay subculture identify themselves with.

The discussion centered on *skesanas*: as it is this group that the study also focused on. Also, it is this group which employs *isiNgqumo*. As previously mentioned I depicted two categories within this group of *skesanas*: township and city/suburban. This is an important distinction: as the location of the *skesanas* influences their relationship with *isiNgqumo*. In the township of *uMlazi* the *Nguni* gay subculture seems to be more extensive and part of everyday life; *isiNgqumo* is also included in this everyday/day to day lifestyle of the township *skesanas*.

Whereas the *Nguni* gay subculture is not as extensive in the city/suburban domain of the *Nguni* gay subculture. Although, it does thrive in the gay clubs that I visited which have also been credited with being some of the locations that are the hubs of the modern *Nguni* gay subculture, this domain of the *Nguni* gay subculture is associated largely with an entrainment aspect of the gay subculture. In addition, these clubs serve as places of connecting and socializing amongst the *skesanas* and their *injongas*. They are also the places where township and city/suburban *skesanas* meet.

An important point that must be mentioned here in this concluding chapter is that of the definition or understanding of the term gay or homosexual within the *Nguni* gay subculture. The terms same-sex or man-man sexual desires and activities, gays, gay men, homosexuals and homosexual men have been used interchachibly in the discussion as applying to all men who have sex with men.

When the discussion turned to *isiNgqumo,* specific terms were introduced which were applicable to the particular understanding of the sub-social terms within the *Nguni* gay subculture. This understanding is that: *skesanas* are the ones who are understood and considered as gays or homosexuals. The *injongas* and *imbubes* are not understood and considered to be gay or homosexuals.

An important point that was raised in the introductory the discussion about the data was that of *isiNgqumo* as language or a slang. This is one of the factors that further distinguish township *skesanas* from city/suburban *skesanas*: township *skesanas* treat *isiNgqumo* as their language while their counterparts in the city/suburban areas treat it as a slang. The manner of use by both groups justifies each treatment.

The *skesanas* I observed at *Hazel's* and *Bheki's* employed *isiNgqumo* as their common communicative language, this was apparent in the research participants from the township as well.

<u>Have the critical questions been answered?</u>

<u>What is *isiNgqumo*?</u>

Throughout this paper *isiNgqumo* has been termed a gay register. However, in the latter part of the previous chapter the discussion centered on questions of language. Township *skesanas* treat *isiNgqumo* as a language and perceive it as such. These same *skesanas* have rejected the notion of *isiNgqumo* being a slang. On the other hand, the *skesanas* from the city/suburban areas perceive *isiNgqumo* to be a slang and hold no emotional attachment to it. The final verdict of this study is that *isiNgqumo* can be divided into two: shallow *isiNgqumo* and deep *isiNgqumo*. Shallow *isiNgqumo*, which is spoken by the city/suburban *skesanas*, is a slang. Deep *isiNgqumo*, which is spoken by township *skesanas*, can be considered to be a language or at the least a very extensive slang and sociolect.

This may be a controversial answer, particularly to the numerous skeptics about the linguistic merits of *isiNgqumo*. Some of these skeptics are from the realm of formal linguistics, and they will argue that based on the data that I have collected and

even the impressive discussion on the affixation within the *isiNgqumo* vocabulary, *isiNgqumo* does not satisfy their linguistic definition of what constitutes a language.

But, whether *isiNgqumo* should be termed a language, sociolect, slang or sociolect, it remains clear that to those who employ it, it serves its intended purpose. To the city/suburban *skesanas*, *isiNgqumo* serves its slang definition: they employ in the particular situations where it is necessary and convenient for them, but, they have no emotional connection to it and they prefer to revert back to their chosen languages of communication. In this sense *isiNgqumo* remains a slang among the city/suburban *skesanas* and indeed other gay men who may choose to employ *isiNgqumo* for whatever reason.

The significance of *isiNgqumo* in the gay community in Durban?

The answer to the question centers more on township *skesanas* and their relationship to *isiNgqumo*: as it is this group of homosexuals that have an emotional connection to *isiNgqumo*. However, as previously mentioned, within the *Nguni* gay subculture, which is more extensive and potent in the township, *isiNgqumo* serves as more than just a secret communicative register. As documented in my visits at *Hazel's* and *Bheki's, isiNgqumo* serves as a means of attaining some kind of status within the township *Nguni* gay culture. To be able to speak deep *isiNgqumo* provides a *skesana* with some 'bragging rites' amongst the other *skesanas.*

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On a larger scale within the *Nguni* gay culture, *isiNgqumo* serves as a tool to define and establish the sub-social categories that have been constructed for the subculture. However, the emotional attachment that many *skesanas* have to *isiNgqumo* gives it its most significance in the gay community in Durban. Almost all *Nguni* gays in Durban have the knowledge of the existence of *isiNgqumo*, but, have an attachment to it as many Afrikaners have an attachment to their Afrikaans language.

History and development of *isiNgqumo*?

IsiNgqumo originated *in Mkhumbane*, Cator manor, west of Durban. The *skesanas* who lived in *Mkhumbane*, who were termed boy-wives, invented *isiNgqumo* for the purpose of being able to secretly communicate amongst themselves in the presence of their husbands or *injongas*. They also employed it in *sheebeens* to gossip and talk about their relationships with the men in *Mkhumbane*, men who were often within the same *sheebeen*. There was also a humorous aspect to their coinage of terms: such as *amabhodwe esiZulu* [three legged pots], which denotes a man's bums. The image of two legged cooking pots, which are usually dark black in color, is a humorous one indeed. After the dispersement of *Mkhumbane* the boy-wives took *isiNgqumo* wherever they went and continued employing it; in this way *isiNgqumo* continued to grow an ultimately expended.

It must be noted that *isiNgqumo* can be compared to *tsotsitall*[14], as stated by Rudwick *et al.* (2006:60):

> The language referred to as *isiTsotsi* often has the function of a secret language in a sense that the youth permanently coin new lexical items, which are at least initially only understood by a small group of people, in other words, the "insiders".

In as much as *isiTsotsi* speaking youth exhibit a kind of street wisdom, *skesanas* who employ *isiNgqumo* also exhibit a kind of street wisdom.

Places of *isiNgqumo* use and reasons?

As previously mentioned, in *Mkhumbane isiNgqumo* served as a secret code used by the boy-wives. However, in the modern *Nguni* gay culture *isiNgqumo* has come to perceived and treated as a language and slang by many *skesanas.* As a slang *isiNgqumo* serves as a secret communication, or/and a cool slang that city/suburban *skesanas* employ. However, amongst the township *skesanas isiNgqumo* is used and perceived as the language of communication. In addition, it is also used to define and establish the sub-social categories within the *Nguni* gay subculture.

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[14] Urban-township slang/language employed largely by young township males.

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City/suburban *skesanas* employ *isiNgqumo* in certain situations: gay clubs and other gay hangouts, particularly when they are hanging out with township *skesanas*. Township *skesanas* employ *isiNgqumo* almost anywhere: when they decide not to employ *isiNgqumo* in a particular situation or in a public situation with heterosexuals around the, it is because they do not want to bring attention to themselves. However, despite these few occurrences, they employ *isiNgqumo* almost anywhere and just about all the time.

Conclusion

This is study is an ethnographic study, so the why, what, when and where basic questions that are required to be answered in any study that employs ethnography as is methodology needed to be answered. These questions have indeed been answered. Another very important aspect of ethnography that any study that employs ethnography should respect is the well being of the research participants. In this study 36 *Nguni* homosexual men were used and an older participant in his fifties I named *baba Dlamini*: the well being of each participant was of the utmost importance to me.

All the names that of the participants that appear throughout this paper are pseudo names. The names of the two gay clubs and the two *uMlazi* hangouts are also pseudo names as per my agreement with each participant and each owner of the above-mentioned establishments. None of the participants were placed in any kind of danger during this study: particularly as it was assumed in this study that some

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of them might have faced some degree of homophobia, this was a very sensitive area that was treated with the utmost sensitivity. None of the questions that I posed to each participant involved their experiences with homophobia.

Although there are several heterosexuals who can understand and even speak *isiNgqumo*, particularly females who are close friends with the *Nguni* homosexual men who employ *isiNgqumo*, numerous participants admitted that they would prefer for *isiNgqumo* to remain a secretive 'language' within the *Nguni* gay subculture. Not only because they feel empowered by its secretiveness, but also because of the homophobia that still prevails. Hence some participants feel uncomfortable with speaking *isiNgqumo* in public because they do not want anymore heterosexuals to be further exposed to it. In this sense *isiNgqumo* continues to behave as a code as it was used by its first speakers in *Mkhumbane*. Not only secrete linguistic code from the heterosexuals but also from other homosexuals in the *Nguni* gay culture, namely *injongas*.

The continuous decriminalization of homosexuality even in post-apartheid South Africa, as argued by Reddy (2006), and the recognition of gay and lesbian rights and marriages, may possibly suspend the need for the members of the LGBT community to express themselves in a "secrete code" (Rudwick and Ntuli, 2008).

Most of the participants, namely the township *skesanas*, persistently argued that *isiNgqumo* is their language. This coincides with the fact that *isiNgqumo* originated and emerged as a type of language that offered concealment and secrecy since it catered for communication and interaction purposes that were practically illegal in the era of its inception.[15]

As it has been previously mentioned, most *isiNgqumo* words are based on *isiZulu*, it may be argued that this "could be related to the intensely patriarchal nature of Zulu society and the greater need for secrecy" (McLean and Ngcobo, 1995:184). Prevailing patriarchy and homophobia in KZN[16] and other South African regions explain why the majority of the interviewees of this study argued that a demise of *isiNgqumo* cannot be expected. Secrecy and concealment are still of interest to some black gay individuals in particular circumstances in some places. As previously mentioned, some participants indicated that they do no like to employ *isiNgqumo* in certain public places because they prefer to keep it an exclusive and insider code.

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[15] For more details regarding gay life in South Africa, see the collection of essays in *Defiant Desire* (Gevisser & Cameron, 1995), which represents the most comprehensive documentation of lesbian and gay experiences across racial and class boundaries during apartheid South Africa.

[16] For a recent article on the state of 'being gay and Zulu', see Tolsi (2006).

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