UNDERSTANDING SYSTEMIC VIOLENCE: HOMOPHOBIC ATTACKS IN JOHANNESBURG AND ITS SURROUNDS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Urban citizenship entails freedom to move, use and express identity in the city. Violence is an extreme instance of the curtailment of these rights. It impairs a sense of safety and restricts choice. In gay mythology, the city embodies an accepting cosmopolitan lifestyle. Young gay men and lesbians are drawn to Johannesburg from smaller towns within South Africa and from other African cities as far afield as Harare, Windhoek, Gabarone, Kampala, Accra and Dar-es-Salaam. They are attracted to the promise of a more tolerant society. South Africa stands alone in Africa in terms of its constitution, which expressly protects the rights of lesbian and gay citizens. Johannesburg offers well-developed social networks and a number of gay public spaces. And yet there is an undercurrent of extreme violence and trauma in the city.

In a climate of pervasive crime and profound fear, hate crimes are hidden within broad statistics. The South African government does not keep specific statistics on xenophobic, racist and homophobic crime. This has the effect of increasing the invisibility of gay men and lesbians. Homophobic victimisation is endemic in violent, masculine cultures and has extensive implications for gay men and lesbians. It profoundly affects the way in which the city is used in terms of movement and the use of social spaces. However, few research efforts exist around these issues in South Africa and those that do deal primarily with gay white men. The scope of this research is thus wide-ranging providing an overview of existing work on violence and broadening this body of literature to include the experiences of those who have not been acknowledged in research efforts in the past. This pa-

per places homophobic violence on the agenda of urban policy makers as well as informing future research around violence, fear and safety.

Theorising Homophobic Violence in an Urban Context

Valentine (1993) points out that while most people feel that sexuality belongs to the private space of the home, most public spaces are coded to be heterosexual. Furthermore, she points out that most feel that they have "no objection to homosexuals as long as they did not flaunt their sexuality in public" (Valentine, 1993: 396). She draws on Foucault (1988) and Butler (1990) to argue the opacity of heterosexual codification of public space. The power of this codification is to normalize a heterosexual hegemonic order to the extent that lesbians often feel the need to "pass" as heterosexual by conforming to a feminine identity (ibid.). The essence of Valentine's position is whereas "heterosexuals take for granted their freedom to express their sexuality publicly and therefore transcend the so-called public-private dichotomy", the onus is on lesbians and gay men to maintain the separation. The separation is subverted through the attendance of a publicly codified gay space (such as a gay and/or lesbian night club or a gay cruising ground) or through the overt assumption of signifiers of gay identity.

> To be gay, therefore, is not only to violate norms about sexual behaviour and family structure but also to deviate from the norms of 'natural' masculine or feminine behaviour. These norms change over space and time, and hence sexuality is not defined merely by sexual acts but exists as a process of power relations. (Ibid.: 396)

Gay-bashing is an instance where gays and lesbians are punished for subverting the taken-for-granted heterosexuality of the public. The majority of gay-bashing incidents occur in the public realm. Of the forty women Valentine interviewed, 75 percent had been verbally assaulted at least once and three had been chased, threatened and/or physically assaulted. In most cases women reported that the incidents had been triggered by a display of affection or by a lack of response to male sexual overtures. Homophobic violence is, hence, formulated in relation to the subversion of norms, particularly norms around masculinity. Namaste (1996) further explores the relationship between gender subversion and gay-bashing. Her research finds that men and women who assume signifiers of the opposite gender, for example through dress and speech, are at increased risk of gay-bashing.

Skelton (1995: 267) locates her work on homophobic elements in Jamaican ragga "within wider discourses that debate race, sexuality and masculinity". Drawing on hooks (1992), Collins (1991) and Harper (1993), she (p.

277) refers to the"...subject of black masculinity and its linkage with a lack of power within racist/sexist societies". In this formulation, Skelton (ibid.) argues that homophobia is related to the need to assert power through the trajectory of masculinity. Homophobia, in this case calls for the'crucifixion' of homosexuals, acts as"proof positive of their masculinity". This hypothesis relates closely to Vogelman's (*The Star*, 23 February 1995) formulation of violence in post-Apartheid South Africa (see Dirsuweit, this issue). He argues that the previous lack of full citizenship under apartheid left people with a deep sense of disempowerment. Coupled with an increasingly strained economy and high levels of unemployment, this sense of disempowerment has reached new depths. The desire to gain control and recognition motivates violence. In addition, South Africa is a sexist society and so violence is used to strengthen the one area in which men feel they have more power, their masculinity. This is exacerbated by the perceived threat of women's increased empowerment in contemporary South Africa.

Hate crimes directed at socially excluded groups are endemic to most societies. Statistics from governmental agencies such as the police are subject to some inaccuracy due to underreporting and the classification of hate crimes under headings such as grievous bodily harm and rape. In 1995, the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported 1 019 incidences of crime directed towards homosexual people with 1 266 offenses, 1 347 victims and 1 273 known offenders. The majority of these crimes were against gay men. Canadian statistics (Multiculturalism, 1998) report a total of 60 000 hate crimes for the year 1998. Eleven percent of these were committed against gay men and lesbians. The most staggering statistics are reported in the *London Free Press* (4 March 2000). In this report, 83 percent of respondents (aged 14-25 years) reported that they had been gay bashed. Interestingly, many of the perpetrators were not strangers, but family members and others known to the victim. In terms of perpetration, Franklin found that 25 percent of students surveyed reported that they had harassed people considered gay or lesbian. Of the men surveyed, 18 percent admitted to assaulting or threatening gays or lesbians and 32 percent had verbally abused gays and lesbians.

Valentine and other urban commentators insert the question of gay identity politics as part of a"New Urban Politics"(Brown, 1995). In this formulation, the politics of the body dominate discussions of sexuality. Young (1990a) contextualises homophobic violence within urban politics. She classifies homophobic crime as systemic violence and argues that it disallows gay men and lesbians full participation in the city. Ingram et al. (1999: 92) expand the point:

> How are denied access and limited freedom of expression enforced?...One of the most effective means of control is the threat of violence. For example, the

> threat of dyke and gay-bashing has had a tremendous impact on where we choose to live and to socialise...

Young (1990b: 320) proceeds to call for the development of "discourse and institutions for bringing differently identified groups together without suppressing or subsuming the difference". This call is particularly pertinent to understanding the different experiences of homophobic violence along the axes of race, ethnicity, age and gender in Johannesburg. To speak of the aetiology and the effects of hate crime on "the gay community" is to bury the experiences of those who do not fit into the more vocal white and male grouping in Johannesburg's gay culture.

2. HOMOPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Historical Context

The Second World War saw a proliferation of bars frequented by gay men in the city centre. It also provided new cruising opportunities. With this proliferation of gay spaces came homophobic violence. In 1941 an important case received considerable publicity: Two soldiers accompanied a gay man to his flat. He was later found severely beaten and strangled. He had also been robbed. This was one of the first cases in which the "homosexual panic" defence was used successfully and the assailants were given a suspended sentence. The judgement was clearly indicative of gross homophobia and serves as an early marker of the antagonistic relationship between law and security services and the gay community in Johannesburg which was to continue through the apartheid years.

There was a dramatic turnaround in 1996 when South Africa adopted a constitution that outlawed discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Political transformation extended to the police force and a draft policy document compiled by the minister of safety and security in 1994, highlighted the need for the police to "assist in fostering a human rights culture and in providing the climate within which development and reconstruction can take place" (Minister of Safety and Security, September 1994: 28). In a ground-breaking speech, the Gauteng Member of the Executive Council for Safety and Security, Jesse Duarte, called for better relationships between the police and the gay community. She announced that instead of harassing gay men, the police would patrol and protect well-known cruising areas in Johannesburg. In the mid-1990s, the South African Police Services career-planning department introduced a diversity training programme that included sexual orientation as well as racism and sexism.

The promise of political transformation was accompanied by an unprecedented growth of gay and lesbian political activism and social organisation. Never before had gay people been so visible in South Africa. In 1990, a few months after the release of Nelson Mandela, the first Gay and Lesbian Pride March took place through the streets of Johannesburg, accompanied by extensive media coverage. By 1995 the national umbrella body formed to lobby for the retention of sexual orientation in final constitution, the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE), boasted some 78 affiliated organisations, many of these based in Johannesburg and its surrounds. In the 1990s there was a proliferation of diverse community groups such as gay netball clubs, lesbian soccer teams, gay church communities, catering groups and lesbian social clubs. There was also a growth in public visibility through political activism and public events such as the annual gay and lesbian film festival, clubs, parties and gay beauty pageants. The media paid considerable attention through radio and television talk shows, documentaries and news items. Print media ran stories in magazines and newspapers on a regular basis. Books on gay and lesbian issues in South Africa started to be published, and for a few years there were three main gay publications produced in Johannesburg and distributed country-wide. Increased visibility, the political climate of the time and the promise of equality enshrined in the constitution, created an environment conducive to "coming out" and many people did so, sometimes in the full glare of the public eye.

It appears that increased visibility may have had another consequence, in the form of growing levels of gay bashing. It is difficult to gauge the exact extent of this violence as, despite fundamental changes in the law, underreporting of gay-bashing continues and it is estimated that in 1996, 91 percent of lesbians and gay victims of hate crimes did not report them to the police (Bonham et al., 1996). Reasons for underreporting were given as being in the closet; police indifference and hostility; and fear of sensational public disclosure. In 1994, a memorandum signed by twenty organizations was presented to the regional minister of safety and security, Sydney Mufamadi. The memorandum included the recommendation to institute an "anti-hate crimes" Act that included gay-bashing and to establish a formal police liaison to the gay community. In 2000, the "Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act" was promulgated. This Act is read in conjunction with the Constitution and precludes hate speech and the harassment based on "prohibited grounds," which includes sexual orientation.

Research on Homophobic Violence in South Africa

In 1995, the AIDS Law Project, University of the Witwatersrand, commissioned the Human Science Research Council to complete an

investigative report on South African public attitudes on issues concerning gays, lesbians, and AIDS. The survey took place at a time when the inclusion of 'sexual orientation' in the constitution was a hotly contested issue, serving as a rallying point for the South African lesbian and gay community and galvanising the small but vociferous Christian right under the banner of the African Christian Democratic Party. The report was based on a national survey (n = 2163). The study was the first national poll of its kind. The results were both predictable and surprising; predictable in that the public were opposed to granting equal rights to gays and lesbians, surprising in that a majority of South Africans wanted homosexuality decriminalised. Surprising too, in the narrow margins between those in favour and those opposed to a number of issues concerning homosexuality in South Africa. Public opinion was more evenly split than was perhaps to be expected in a country where homosexuality had been seen both as a threat to white civilization by the National Party government and as "un-African" by many in the post-apartheid order. In the survey 41 percent of Africans thought that homosexuality was un-African. The public were split on giving homosexuals equal rights in the constitution, with 44 percent against and 38 percent in favour. However, some 46 percent of the public opposed criminalizing consensual gay sex between adults, while 38 percent wanted it illegal. On an attitude index over all 8 questions, 48 percent of the public was rated 'anti-gay', 34 percent 'pro-gay', and 18 percent in the middle. The differences between the anti- and pro-gay groups were found to be socio-economic and religious, more than racial or political.

The study also provided rare insight into public perceptions of gay-bashing. Among the general public 5 percent had seen homosexuals assaulted, and 10 percent verbally insulted. According to the report, those likeliest to have witnessed abuse were tertiary educated, city dwellers, and whites. The proportion who had seen gays abused were substantially greater among those who actually knew homosexuals. In this group, 11 percent had seen gays or lesbians physically assaulted and some 28 percent (or over one in four) had seen them verbally insulted. Roughly half of the sample (49%) thought that if a gay or lesbian is beaten up, police will give them the same help as others, however just over one fourth (28%) thought that homosexuals would receive less help, while one fifth (20%) were not sure.

Other quantitative research shows a disturbing relationship between gay-bashing and sexual assault in South Africa. Theron (1994) reports that 22 percent of gay hate crimes involved the rape of the victim (see Table 1). Theron's sample is predominantly white. Theuninck (2000) presents the results of his surveys of white gay men under the rubric of post-traumatic stress disorder. Part of his argument is that gay men through various forms of gay bashing, ranging from verbal to physical, experience a fairly constant state of trauma. This has implications in terms of the literature on

Table 1

Two South African surveys compared to the average of seven surveys conducted in the United States between 1988-1991

Study	Average of seven surveys conducted in United States 1988-1991	South African survey (Theron, 1992)	South African survey (Theuninck, 2000)
N	397	611	329
Men	333	565	329
Women	230	45	0
Type of victimisation			
Verbal Abuse	85%	67%	75%
Threats of Violence	44%	39%	33%
Property Violence	19%	15%	16%
Objects thrown	25%	12%	18%
Followed or chased	32%	32%	31%
Spat on	12%	4%	8%
Punched, hit and/ or kicked	19%	22%	22%
Weapon assault	8%	8%	9%
Sexual assault	7%	22%	17%
Victimised by police	-	-	4%

fear of crime. Pain (2000) argues that lower level forms of violence such as harassment promote a higher degree of fear with debilitating effects on the manner in which people use the city.

No quantitative surveys have been completed within black, coloured and Asian communities. Qualitative evidence, however, suggests that gay bashing and the prominence of rape is not uncommon (Shelver, interview, 2002; Vimbela, 1994).

Phumi Mtetwa, an interim executive committee member of the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality who grew up in Kwa-Thema, reflected on gay and lesbian experiences of violence in former townships:

> Rape is quite common in the townships. ...The law might be promising us equality, but you're dealing with grassroots level radicals who don't know or care about the law. It is very hard for black lesbians to come out openly because of African culture. Once a group of boys suspects so-and-so is a lesbian she be-

> comes a target, often for gang-rape. ...If you are afraid to tell you mother you're a lesbian, how can you tell your story to a male policeman. (*Exit*, 70, 1995)

In Soweto, Beverley Ditsie, the first lesbian to publicly acknowledge her sexual orientation, recounts her experiences of coming out in her documentary 'Simon and I'.

> That first [Gay] Pride [March] was one of the best days of my life, but I was on TV that night. It was a religious show and the priest was saying, "these people should be killed". All of a sudden I was getting funny looks from people in the street. Oh oh...What have I done...two days later I was sitting in my room when I heard voices outside calling my name. I ran into the lounge and my granny opened the door and told me to hide. About twenty angry men were surrounding our house, demanding that I come with them so they could teach me a lesson. The worst thing was that they threatened to take my grandma if I didn't go with them...I was angry but mostly at myself, I shouldn't have made that speech. Now I put my whole family in danger. I was so terrified I couldn't leave the house for weeks...In terms of sexual violence and violence against women and the way women are treated here. As soon as you're anywhere, you got a dangerous element right there. You're always looking out for yourself, because anything could happen anytime. You know, rape, being beat up, just being treated like shit, you know things. But coming out as a lesbian is even harder because you are putting yourself in the firing line. ...Any angry man will use his machismo to try and prove to you that you are straight although he's proving absolutely nothing...I felt that the gay men, especially within GLOW were not really caring very much about what became big lesbian issues like lesbian rape which increased at a point, you know. Where lesbians would be targeted for rape...I was living that life of being afraid to be in the streets, to go anywhere.

Similarly, Mamaki (1993: 1) recounts a teenage experience of fear and humiliation at the hands of a gang of young men in Soweto:

> Being a girl in Soweto you play safe, find safe streets to use, and I had mine just like most girls. On my way to school and from school I turned a corner where most gangs hanged out, but for me it was still safe 'cause I knew some of the guys and it was near my place...But a time came when it was the most dangerous corner for me to turn and that was after one of the guys proposed to me, and after a long argument I told him I was gay. I knew I shouldn't have said it, but the whole thing was getting scary. The following day my lover and myself turned that corner just to hear our names and immediately they laid eyes on us it sounded as if a cassette of insults was being played. Some were promising to rape us and others were promising to beat us up...It was not very long afterwards that I was on my way home from school and I saw six boys I knew holding sticks. And somehow I knew they were coming for both of us. But I was alone, my lover was still at school playing chess. They came and made a ring around me and started using the sticks they were holding, and they were swearing. I didn't cry for help 'cause I knew that nobody was there for a 'sinner' and an

> 'Aids-bringer', as we were called. I didn't even try to fight or run. I just stood in the circle with tears running down from my eyes.

Bongie (Chan Sam, 1994) a member of the lesbian forum of the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) describes some of the trauma of coming out of the closet in Soweto.

> I do wish for lesbians to come out and say,'Yes, we are here!'I'm scared to do it for myself, but I see many young girls being confused and I want to help. But how? Sometimes these *tsotsis* (gangsters) and these Jackrollers (a notorious Soweto gang) go out in gangs and rape women. The Jackrollers go particularly for lesbians, and when they catch one they say,'We'll put you right.'So it's really dangerous for a young woman living in the townships to be open as a lesbian.

3. *TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOMOPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN JOHANNESBURG AND ITS SURROUNDS*

Methodology

It is exceedingly difficult to do research on homophobic violence particularly in the context of a culture of violence. Black gays and lesbians are under-represented in violence research. In interviews with staff from the Lesbian and Gay Equality Project, this reluctance to report was ascribed to the belief that police officials are often complicit with the perpetrators, if not perpetrators themselves. This was born out in a workshop on gay-bashing in Kwa-Thema where discussions around secondary victimisation indicated that hospital and policing staff often ridiculed gay-bashing victims and made derisive comments about their sexuality. Interviews were held with key informants from the Equality Project and with the former co-ordinator of the Equality Project, (who was also the convener of the Pink Panthers community policing group). Cases reported to the Equality Project were reviewed by Equality Project staff. Generalised survey questionnaires were used to maintain the anonymity of the complainants. Newspaper reports in the gay and mainstream press were reviewed. Finally, workshops around homophobic violence in Kwa-Thema were attended and follow up interviews were completed with 11 attendees. Ten more interviews were completed in Soweto. Both sets of interviews were completed in isiZulu, seSotho, and English with the help of two research assistants who were part of the lesbian and gay communities in each area. Where required,

interviews were translated into English. The interviews were then grouped into themes.

The Statistics

The South African Police Service does not collect statistics within the categories of homophobic, xenophobic or racially motivated hate crimes (Ina du Plessis, Crime Information and Analysis Centre, e-mail communication). Survey questionnaires (see table 2) completed by the Equality Project for the years 2001 and 2002 indicate a higher level of sexual assault as an element of homophobic violence. An analysis of these statistics must come with two caveats attached. Firstly, many of the communities most affected by violence do not report to the Equality Project because they are afraid of making any formal complaint, hence the interviews in township areas. Second, the sample size is small and therefore cannot be generalized. The statistics do open up an agenda for ongoing research of homophobic violence in South Africa.

There were a total of 25 incidents with 42 victims (see table 2a). Most of these were perpetrated against a single victim, but a substantial proportion (44%) involved two or more victims (table 2b). The number of perpetrators and victims in the incidents were evenly distributed between the categories of one perpetrator to one victim; and multiple perpetrators to multiple victims. Slightly more cases were reported with more than one perpetrator and 40 percent of the incidents involved four or more perpetrators. This would suggest that gay bashing often occurs in the context of gang violence. The bulk of victims were women (table 2f). The perpetrators of these incidents are predominantly men (table 2h). The following most dominant category is women on women violence (20%). The interviewees did not mention violence between women. This requires further research attention. Contrary to trends in other countries, violence between men accounts for only 12 percent of the sample. Violence against transgendered people makes up 20 percent of the incidents.

The majority of cases took place in the central business district of Johannesburg (table 2j) and in suburban areas (all areas outside of Johannesburg not located in townships). While many (28.6%) of the incidents took place at gay bars (table 2k) or in a space which was overtly identified as having gay people in it, a significant number (35.7%) of the cases occurred in spaces familiar to the victim; their own home or their family's home. The next important locational category is public space. Interestingly, none of the incidents were reported in the traditional cruising areas of Delta, Emmarentia, Zoo Lake and Rhodes Park. The statistic of 7.1 percent of the incidents taking place in the perpetrator's home reflects a flagrant disregard for any legal consequence.

In most cases there were multiple forms of violence perpetrated against the victim (table 2l). The form of violence in most cases was verbal abuse (92%). Scuffles, including the pulling of clothes, slapping and the pulling of hair made up 40 percent of the cases. Objects were thrown in 20 percent of the cases and serious physical assault took place in 20 percent of the cases. Disturbingly, 32 percent of the cases involved sexual assault. One of these cases was perpetrated against a man.

Table 2

Analysis of Survey of Cases Reported to the Equality Project 2001/2002

Table 2a: Number of incidents and victims	
Total number of incidents	25
Total number of victims	42

Table 2b: Number of victims				
1	2	3	4	5
14	7	3	0	1

Table 2c: Gender of victim						
Male	%	Female	%	Transgendered	%	TOTAL
5	11.9	31	73.8	6	14.3	42

Table 2d: Race of victim								
Black	%	White	%	Asian	%	Coloured	%	TOTAL
20	47.6	10	23.8	3	7.1	9	21.4	42

Table 2e: Number of perpetrators					
1	2	3	4	>4<10	Unknown
11	2	1	5	5	1

Table 2f: Gender of perpetrator				
Male	%	Female	%	TOTAL
50	78.1	14	21.9	64

Table 2g: Race of perpetrator								
Black	%	White	%	Asian	%	Coloured	%	TOTAL
23	35.9	24	37.5	0	0.0	17	26.6	64

Table 2h: Gendered composition of violence		
Female victim - male perpetrator	12	48.0%
Female victim - female perpetrator	5	20.0%
Male victim - male perpetrator	3	12.0%
Transgendered victim – male perpetrator	4	16.0%
Transgendered victim – female perpetrator	1	4.0%
Total number of incidents	25	100.00%

Table 2i: Number of victims and perpetrators		
Single victim - single perpetrator	10	40.0%
Single victim - multiple perpetrators	4	16.0%
Multiple victims – multiple perpetrators	9	36.0%
Multiple victims - single perpetrator	1	4.0%
Multiple victims – unknown number of perpetrators	1	4.0%
Total number of incidents	25	100.0%

Table 2j: Location		
Johannesburg CBD	11	44.0%
Former township	4	16.0%
Suburb	10	40.0%
TOTAL	25	100.0%

Table 2k: Type of location		
A gay bar	7	25.0%
Delta/Emmarentia/Zoo Lake/Rhodes Park	0	0.0%
Another park	1	3.6%
A place frequented by gay people other than a bar?	1	3.6%
Another public space	7	25.0%
At victim's home	6	21.4%
At perpetrator's home	2	7.1%
At family home	4	14.3%
TOTAL (2 cases multiple location)	28	100.0%

Table 2l: Type of attack			
Type of violence	No. of incidents	Percentage of overall number of incidents of violence (n = 55)	Percentage of total number of cases (n = 25)
Verbal abuse	23	41.8%	92%
Throwing objects at victim	5	9.1%	20%
Scuffle (pulling clothing and/or hair)	10	18.2%	40%
Robbery	3	5.5%	12%
Physical assault	5	9.1%	20%
Rape	8	14.5%	32%
Murder	1	1.8%	5%
TOTAL	55	100.0%	

Cruising for a Bruising: Gay Bashing in the Press

The relationship between cruising in certain parks and gay-bashing is well-documented in popular gay publications and the general press. The combination of casual sex and violence provides the material for sensational stories. For example, the gay publication, *Exit* (2001) noted that about ten cases of gay-bashing a month were reported to the Parkview Police Station, a figure that is seen to be grossly inaccurate. According to the head of community policing in the precinct:"They are easy prey and 99.9 percent of cases are not reported" (*Exit*, 70, 1995: 8).

Two well-known cruising sites, the Zoo Lake and Emmarentia Dam fall within the jurisdiction of the Parkview Police Station. Many men who frequent these areas are married or otherwise identify themselves not as gay, but as 'men who have sex with men'. These men are the 'soft targets' who are most susceptible to extortion and least likely to report an assault for fear of being 'exposed'. Three themes emerge in these articles: firstly, gay men are vulnerable to crime. Criminals view gay men as easy targets because they are regarded as weaker and are less likely to report the crime as it will publicly out them. Secondly, there are very few affluent people in Johannesburg who would frequent isolated areas after dark—gay men thus become lucrative targets for robbery. While these kinds of attacks are specifically directed at gay men, they are not necessarily predicated by homophobia. Thirdly, it shows the commitment of certain police stations to the gay community. There have, however, been vicious gay-bashing incidents in these areas, including the murder of gay men.

Cruising, Cottaging and Renting

Articles in the gay press in the last decade serve as warnings and, in some instances, morality tales about the risks of engaging in sex in public with strangers. Simultaneously they glamorise and eroticise danger "...the elements of danger and discovery seem to incite such risqué sexual behaviour" (*Exit*, 132: 5)."With the crime rate at the level it is, frequenting dark and unsafe areas is putting not only your health at risk, but also your life. However, boys will be boys" (*Exit*, 131: 1).

Articles are often accompanied by erotic pictures or illustrated with stories that have a salacious edge. As journalist Karen Lotter admits about her own article entitled"Boys of the Night":

> This story may sound like some sensationalistic piece of garbage dished up for a gay porn magazine. (*Gay SA*, 3: 3).

Photographs of men in provocative poses are juxtaposed with grim headlines such as "Gay Murders are You Next?", "Death Rap: Cruising Turns to Bruising" and "When is 'Rent' Safe?"

In addition, implicit in the articles is a judgement about the closeted nature of many men who frequent public spaces in search of sex. "What these men will have to live with, however, is the idea of having abandoned someone who may very well have suffered greatly because of their neglect" (*Exit*, 132: 5).

The gay press in South Africa has a predominantly white, male readership. The emphasis on cruising precludes a detailed analysis of the problem from different perspectives. Firstly, the focus on the relationship between public spaces and violent attacks by strangers denies the frequency of attacks by family and acquaintances. Furthermore, the problem of domestic violence is concealed. According to the Equality Project domestic violence is increasingly reported to them. Second, gay men cruise in Johannesburg and so the targeting of lesbians remains under-reported in the press. The emphasis on a particular readership reinforces the culture of silence in lesbian circles and in black gay communities.

Bashings in Kwa-Thema

Kwa-Thema, a township on the outskirts of Springs, east of Johannesburg has an established anti-apartheid and gay activist history. According to Paddy Nhlapo (Archival Source AM2894; Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa; Historical Papers; UWL), a gay man and youth activist during the height of apartheid,

> Some of the guys from the liberation movement wanted to start some kind of gay bashing campaign and I had to go through a harsh time of convincing people and lobbying people.

Paddy and other gay and lesbian activists who worked in political structures were able to convince the 'comrades' in the area that this would be counter productive. By the early 1990s the local gay community had organised itself into the strongest and most active branch of the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW). The organisation aligned itself with the anti-apartheid movement. However, subsequently an elder of the local gay community, British Sgxabai, was killed by a family member in a homophobic attack. Violence against lesbians and gay men in the area escalated until, in 2001, a public meeting was called by local gay and lesbian activists to address the problem. The local branch of the African National Congress, the South African Communist Party, the local gay and lesbian organisation, parents, representatives of community structures and social organisations met in the Kwa-Thema community hall to discuss the problem and seek solutions. Concerns raised at the meeting dealt with

lack of community support, inadequate social services and health care, police complicity and problems experienced by the parents and families of gay men. Ten attendees of the meeting were subsequently interviewed in depth.

Sexual Assault

A high number of the interviewees described their experiences of rape and attempted rape. When leaving a tavern, A (a gay man) was followed by three men who, armed with knives, accosted him. They noticed that he was wearing unusual shoes,"...unfortunately my shoes were ladies shoes."They made him strip to check whether he was a *stabane.* He was subsequently beaten and raped by all three perpetrators. As a survival strategy, the victim convinced two of the perpetrators to engage in thigh sex. The third rapist insisted on anal sex, but chased the others away.

In South Africa, the majority of sexual violence is perpetrated by someone known to the victim (*Rape Crisis,* 10 April 2002). This statistic was reflected in the interview with B (a gay man) who was raped by a childhood acquaintance during the day. As in the first case, the victim was leaving a tavern. The perpetrator offered to walk home with him and severely assaulted and raped him. Despite knowledge of the perpetrators identity, B's case was not taken seriously."...I took further steps because I knew where he was staying. I knew his parents, I knew everything. Then it happened that when I took further steps it was like I am playing or I am joking...the police...took it very light, very light."C (a gay man) was also assaulted and raped by someone known to him. While visiting the perpetrator at his home, he was locked in, beaten with an iron rod and raped in the bedroom. The victim only reported the incident to the police after he had been raped several times and the same man had raped his friend. The victim explains his reluctance to report,"...after he finished to rape me, I went to my place. I was scared to tell them what happened. I saw myself. I don't belong to the boy's life. What he did, it was nice that time."The victim experienced confusion around the perpetrator's culpability as he felt a degree of physical pleasure in the rape and subsequently came out to himself as being gay. F met a man at a party and went home with him. The man tried to rape him,'but he was not that successful'. The next day he escaped and went to the police.

Gang Violence

Lesbians are often victimised by gangs. D (a lesbian) had also been drinking alcohol at a shebeen (tavern). She was walking home with a friend when they were attacked by a group of thirteen men. Her friend was hit on the head and she was raped by twelve of the men. The thirteenth took her to

his house, but did not rape her. As in A's experience there is an element of gender subversion involved in the motivation for the attack. D stated that the perpetrators had called her a "soccer player" which has the connotation of a "masculine-looking" woman. E (a lesbian) reported that she had intervened in an incident where another woman was being sexually harassed. The harasser returned with a group of men who called them *stabane*, hit her over the head with a brick, beat her friend with a gun and physically assaulted both of them.

Police and Health Services Responses

Police responses in most of the cases were unsympathetic and are best described as secondary victimisation. Some respondents do not report incidents to the police because, based on what they have heard about other people's experiences, they did not expect to be taken seriously:

Interviewer: Why didn't you tell the police?
A: Who was going to believe that?
G [a gay man]: We didn't think of going to the police. It's just that the police don't take us seriously, they think that we are playing or that we look stupid.
H [a lesbian]: When you tell the police that you are gay, they don't help us, they just laugh at us.

The interviewees also reported that they feared reprisal from the perpetrators if they reported the crime to the police. In the case of E, she felt that the assailants would accost her at school if she spoke about the incident.

B describes a typical case of secondary victimisation. In the wake of a violent rape, the police in the charge office subjected the complainant to public ridicule:

> B: The other one say to another one; hey come this side, come listen to this. 'Oh! This is funny, repeat again what you have just said to me.' And that one went to fetch other police to come listen to this...Ja, you know when I left that police station, it was like I didn't know whether I had been raped or not...it was fun to them...

C had a similar experience after reporting his experience of repeated rape to the police:

> C: I just blamed myself. Why did I go there in the first place? After I left the place, they were laughing at me and making jokes about me.

In the case of F, who reported an attempted rape, the police thought that he was lying and the case was not followed up. At the public meeting an activist summarised the difficulties of reporting:

> We have four cases of rape at the moment. At the police station they just take your case and if you ask for privacy to report your case, they do not grant it to you. The way they assess your statement is that they ask if you are gay. If you say you are lesbian they ask you, 'why do you want to be a man?'

In one case a young man who had been raped had initially had a similar experience with male police officers. He subsequently sought out a woman inspector who took his case seriously and supported him.

Health service responses to rape associated with gay-bashing are disturbing. There is a high HIV risk with victims reporting that neither lubricants nor condoms were used. At the Kwa-Thema public meeting it was reported that anti-retroviral medication was not made available to victims at hospitals. Many of the victims show a lack of awareness of the psychological effects of the trauma they have experienced. In interviews, however, these effects were apparent. Many of the victims were reluctance to tell anyone, "It was like I didn't even tell anybody, I was so ashamed". E still feels the physical effects of her assault, "...as soon as I got injured, maybe I am mad. Because it's like I'm crazy. So that's why sometimes I get pains."

Responses

B characterises the resilience of many of the victims of violence. After being scorned by the police, B reconstructs himself as a stronger person. "No instead I was strong. I became a real woman in a certain way". A more positive experience of the police was reported when one of the victims was accompanied by a veteran gay activist. Lesbians have formed support groups and in some cases have formed defensive teams (*Exit* 70, 1995). In several cases of attempted assault, gays and lesbians have fought back physically. In one case, a woman beat her tormentor on the head with a brick after being called a *stabane*. Two lesbians who ran a gay friendly shebeen thwarted an attack by three men who had hidden in their house by beating and fining them five hundred rand in exchange for not reporting them to the police. When asked why they didn't report the case to the police, they replied, "...we better fight for ourselves".

Bashings in Soweto

In the late 1980s the first discussions around the formation of an inclusive gay and lesbian organisation were held at 'Mhlanga Rocks', a gay-friendly shebeen in Soweto. Today Soweto has become home to a number of gay and lesbian groups and social spaces such as lesbian soccer clubs and gay netball teams; shebeens; catering groups and lesbian political organisations such as Nkateko. Soweto also has a level of violent crime manifested in

high rates of violence against women. As no research has been completed on the effect of domestic and stranger violence against women on fear of crime, it is difficult to situate the results of this research. However, homophobic violence against women, cannot be separated from other violence against women. The intense and pervasive fear of violence that most women experience is compounded by sexual identity:

When you are a lesbian you fear as both a woman and a gay woman (Q).

Rape

Bev Ditsie comments that at one time lesbians were specifically targeted for sexual assault. As in the Kwa-Thema interviews, lesbians in Soweto indicated that there was a high level of threats of rape, attempted rape and rape in incidents of homophobic violence.

M: ...I met three men. They greeted and I responded. They offered to take me halfway, but I refused. One said I was being cheeky. One walked faster to overtake me. The other two were behind me. One burnt me with a cigarette on my arm while the other two were holding my hands tightly. They closed my mouth and started raping me. They all took turns. When they were finished, they walked away... Two weeks before my rape, I was on TV on the Take 5 talk-show. So many people in the location saw me and many people know that I am lesbian. So I believe these boys knew about me because they don't stray far away from home.

While travelling on a train from Johannesburg to Soweto, three lesbians and a gay man were confronted by a knife-wielding gang. K narrates the story:

K: Here in the township, mostly boys have a problem. They test us, by proposing love to us. They want to see our reaction. ...He called me a bitch. I was hurt, I asked him, who's a bitch? He said we annoy him because we think we are boys. They said they were going to kill the gay man and rape us. ...These boys saw us by our dress code that we are lesbians and the gay man had a hairstyle...

J: ...I visited my girlfriend. In the streets she wanted to kiss me and I stopped her. I knew that people were probably looking at us. Two guys approached us. I told my girlfriend to go back to her home. One of the guys said he was going to punish me because I think I am a boy. ...I escaped. I ran back to my girlfriend's home. I fought because I promised myself that if I ever get raped again, I will kill myself.

H: He was drunk and determined to prove a point. We started fighting. When things got hotter, I realised that I was being overpowered by the boys. I was hopeless because they are boys and they were may. Fortunately 10111 (police rescue) showed up and I ran away.

Lesbians as a Threat to Masculinity

A central theme emerges from the interviews, boys and men perceive lesbians as threatening to their masculinity. This manifested in two ways: (1) sexual rivalry and (2) punishment [lesbians were punished because they are more masculine-looking and because they are sexually unavailable].

H: In my location, a group of boys call themselves the 'top bouncers'. They have a problem about me dating girls. They propose any girl they think I'm dating. They are always after my case, but I ignore them.

N: When I was at school I was punched by a boy who thought I was going out with his girlfriend

J: One of the guys said that he was going to punish me because I think I am a boy.

L: ...they say I have two sexual organs

Q: Then he found out that I was a lesbian. And then he started, you know how men are, when they find out that you are a lesbian, especially straight men, when they find out that you are a lesbian, then they'll start saying things that, um, they can show you how you should be treated and then if you want the real thing and all that. Those are insulting statements. And they say you don't know what you are missing. Which they don't understand that you really don't need that.

R: This guy walks in he's a gangster he's a car thief, right. He comes directly to me and says to me and I don't even know him, okay. He says, "No I must speak to you right now, come." We go outside, we sit in front of the door, he says to me. "Why don't you leave my girlfriend the fuck alone? Because my girlfriend is the one you are with right now". ...[Later] I walked to the balcony [on the eleventh floor]...and he comes out onto the balcony and he says that this is going to be very painless. I am not going to shoot you, I am just going to ask you to jump.

Public Reaction

Sexual violence is so pervasive, in many communities it is normalised. Many of the interviewees commented on public apathy and complicity with the attackers.

J: I tried to run away to the taxis but one woman told the driver to leave me because I knew the guy [the attacker]. He tore my sweater and hit me with a fist.

K: They said they were going to kill the gay man and rape us. They left the coach. When they came back they were six. They took knives out, people left to the next coach. Nobody interfered or stopped them.

At times, however, the victims were assisted by the public. J managed to escape temporarily when a passerby distracted her attacker. K's experience was interrupted when an armed civilian boarded the train and intervened.

Police Responses

Police were viewed by all of the women interviewed in Soweto with deep mistrust and were generally thought to be inefficient, uncaring and homophobic:

> H: Police are the last people we think of in the location. They do not do their job. Even if you report a case, nothing will be done about it.

M had a mixed response with security services. She called emergency services after being raped by three men, but they failed to respond. Her pastor took her to a specialised rape unit in the inner-city the next day and they attended to the case. However, they were unable to provide her with anti-retroviral medication and she was advised to purchase it from the pharmacy. The state does not provide anti-retrovirals to women who have been raped and has actively discouraged non-governmental organisations from distributing anti-retrovirals to rape victims in state hospitals. She was unable to afford the medication.

Perhaps the most telling response was Q's:

> [*Incredulous silence; raucous laughter throughout*] Of course not! I go to the police and the police are going to make a joke about me. And they would just see that we are two woman, and they will say that we are wasting their time [*more laughter*]. So I never. You see with the system *and still* if you go to report the case you'll find two [police]men probably they'll be homophobic too, they'll be like lots of people are very homophobic, so they will not take your case.

Responses

The women reported four responses to the high incidence of gay-bashing in Soweto. Many took refuge in their family. Others suggested coping strategies such as walking in groups at night. In keeping with the responses of Kwa-Thema gays and lesbians, many called for public education. Lastly, since the police were viewed as weak and inefficient, a few of the women carried or wanted to carry weapons. We focus on two of these coping strategies in more detail:

Family

Many of the women reported that their families were very supportive. An unknown gunman shot at L and she was lucky to escape with her life when the gun jammed. She believed that the motivation for the unpro-

voked attack was her sexuality. Her grandfather is a traditional healer and she believes that he protected her.

L: My grandfather said he is the one who made the gun jam and I was saved...I did get support from my family, because I am the only child my mother has. She loves, protects and treasures me.

H mentioned that her"family supported me as always. They never blame it on me". J's family had a mixed response. On the one hand they said that the incident was a result of going out at night. On the other hand, she reports that"they were hurt that it happened. They never thought of counselling or talking to me about it". While there was some support for victims, there was also blaming. Q reports that her sister responded by saying that she should be extra careful and that she should know better than to flaunt her sexuality in public.

Public Education

Public education was seen by the majority of the interviewees from Soweto and Kwa-Thema as a panacea.

H: People must be taught about gay and lesbian lifestyles and issues.
K: People should not discriminate against us, we are human too...They need to learn acceptance and know that we are here to stay.
M: The community must be taught about lesbians. We have a right to live. Constitutional rights are just in papers, people do not know anything about them. There should be more education on TV and radio.
L: The community should be taught about gay and lesbian lifestyles and they should know that we are created by God.
O: The hate crimes piss me off. People need to be educated.

There has been an unprecedented proliferation of media coverage of sexuality in general and gay and lesbian issues in particular. While a number of gay people are positive in their response to television and radio talk shows, whether these have the effect of further stigmatising gay men and lesbians through a sensationalised othering or whether they are beneficial public education forums is debatable. While talk shows are often cited as a catalyst for coming out to family members, one of the respondents was gang raped shortly after appearing on a magazine programme on gay and lesbian youth.

Policing Hate Crimes in South Africa

In 1993, Glen Retief painted a bleak picture of gay-bashing in relation to gay men. Until 1998, a host of legislation concerning same-sex activity was

on the South African statute books. The most extensive powers vested in the police were in their dealings with the crime of sodomy. Sodomy was included as a Schedule 1 offence in terms of the Criminal Procedures Act (51 of 1977), along with murder, rape and fraud. In terms of Schedule 1 offences police were permitted to arrest, without a warrant, any person suspected of committing sodomy. Most chillingly, it also authorised the killing of a person reasonably suspected of having committed sodomy when that person could not be arrested or prevented from fleeing.

Gays and lesbians not only had to contend with a police force that would charge them if they reported a gay-related incident, but they were often subjected to police raids. Police were also known to frequent well-known cruising areas and to make arrests if propositioned. Gay men were often told that if they did not admit guilt, they would be exposed in the media. In the eighties, the South African media served to create a particularly homophobic climate with a number of homosexual paedophile stories. Finally, the use of the "homosexual panic" defence in several cases of murder of gay men and the subsequent leniency of judges serves as an indicator of the degree to which homophobic discourses were normalised at the time.

In 1998 the Constitutional Court declared all laws that criminalized sex between men unconstitutional. In this post-apartheid period, three distinct narratives about the police emerge in the media and interviews with gay activists and people who have been gay-bashed.

The Police as Heroes

"Join gay policing structures" urged GAY SA in 1997, announcing the formation of two formal gay and lesbian structures within the South African Police Services. When a delegation of lesbians and gay police officers from the South African Gay and Lesbian Police Network participated in the annual gay and lesbian Pride Parade in 1996, *Priscilla* (gay lingo for police) seemed to be finally redeemed in the eyes of the gay and lesbian community. No longer monitoring the march from the sidelines, they were participating in the parade, in uniform, as openly lesbian and gay police officers. In 2000 *Exit* newspaper proclaimed that "In one of the most positive examples of the spirit and freedom of the new South Africa, the SAPS and the lesbian and gay community are taking definite steps to tackle increasing numbers of crimes committed in well known cruising spots" (Issue 124, 2000: 1).

Hero status was accorded to the hardworking police officers of the Parkview Police Station under the headline "Straight Cop—Gay Hero" and there was much press interest in the launch of Pink Panthers. In a front page advertisement in *Exit*, cruisers were urged to join this initiative, "And if you are into Ornithology while at the same time doing you bit for the community, join the Pink Panthers..." Another police station stepped up

patrols in Rhodes Park in the eastern suburbs of Johannesburg and under the photograph of a handsome blonde and a uniformed police officer was the caption: "Sgt. Dennis Adriao stressed in a comment to *Exit* that men cruising should not be wary of the police patrols which were meant only to ensure their safety" (Issue 86, 1997: 1).

Recently, the Sunday papers carried the story of a police superintendent who had gone under-cover to apprehend a serial hi-jacker, 'the car-jack queen' who had targeted gay men at Emmarentia and Zoo Lake (both well-known cruising sites). The investigating officer enlisted his wife's expertise and emerged with "skin-tight clothes, big buckle rubber shoes and coy come-on lines to attract the gunman" (*Sunday Times*, 18 February 2001). While the story was sensationalised by the media, it showed that at a station level, an in particular the Parkview police station, extensive effort is being made to intervene in gay-related crime. In one of the interviews it was deeply ironic that the unconstitutional sodomy legislation was used to prosecute the rapists of a male victim who had been raped before 1998.

The Police as Victimisers

At the workshop held in Kwa-Thema, the issue of secondary victimisation was raised on several occasions. In many of the interviews discussed previously, police response to homophobic violence was extremely humiliating for the victim and amounted to secondary victimisation, which was often equally or more traumatic than the initial incident. Moreover, serious problems have been identified within the police services regarding the reporting of rape. A report completed by Human Rights Watch (1995) summarises the situation:

> Widespread reports of police mistreatment of rape survivors contributes to the low percentage of reported rapes. Raped women frequently have to relate their experience over the counter to busy, indifferent and often judgmental police officers in a crowded charge office...beliefs about rape victims include the assumption that rape is a "natural" masculine response...and that women must have done something to provoke such an attack.

In many cases police incompetence and corruption has led to low offender convictions. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that many of the victims felt that they would not report the incident because it involved both rape and sexual identity. Headlines such as "Police shield gay's assailants" (*Exit*, 1997) and "Wipe out the lesbians!" (*Exit*, 1997) pointed to a more sinister undercurrent within the police force. When lesbian mother Mrs Smith was assaulted by three men in her home, she went to the local police station in Carltonville (a mining town west of Johannesburg) to re-

port the incident. She was told "If I ever see you lesbians in this police station, I will kick you so hard under your arses that you will not find your way back to Carltonville. You are sick people and you disgust us" (Issue 84, 1997: 1). "Is this the 'transformed' SAPS?" asked the writer of the article, activist Zackie Achmat.

The Police as Perpetrators

With exceptions, police have traditionally viewed homosexuality with deep contempt. Despite diversity training, an acrimonious culture towards gay men and lesbians persists. The Equality Project reports a recent incident in a Johannesburg community where gays and lesbians requested an intervention from the Equality Project with the local police who had been victimising them for some time. S (a white gay man), reported an incident where he had been beaten in the parking lot of an inner-city gay club by a group of men who drove away in a police vehicle (identified by the registration number). He reported the case to the police services with the registration number, but was told that the investigation had dead-ended. The victim felt that not enough had been done to apprehend the perpetrators (interview, 2002).

Policy Issues

Several policy issues emerged in the research. The most primary and urgent is the free provision of anti-retroviral medication in cases of homophobic rape. This medication also needs to be administered promptly and efficiently. Police are not adequately trained to handle homophobic violence and rape is not receiving enough attention. Measures to alleviate the trauma of reporting, such a private space for statement-taking, are being ignored. There is clearly a need for further diversity training. In a similar vein to the specialised rape reporting centres, specific police stations should be identified as gay-friendly particularly in former townships. While attempts have been made to attend to these issues, many of these efforts are profoundly misdirected. While post-apartheid South Africa has sophisticated policy and legislation around sexual choice, these are not implemented with any consistency. For example, the lack of specific categories for hate crime reporting in national statistical surveys is disturbing. Furthermore, it is the task of government and gay and lesbian organisations to actively educate the public around issues of masculinity, rape and sexuality. Currently, there are no gay counselling services in Johannesburg. There are, however, a number of organisations that offer support services. Gay and lesbian groups should co-ordinate with these structures to ensure that they are widely utilised.

4. CONCLUSION

This research has much in common with the work of Valentine (1993) and Namaste (1996). A more public homosexual landscape has been enabled through the post-apartheid constitution, which subverts the heterosexual landscape of Johannesburg. Gay men and lesbians are victimised in response to this subversion. Lesbians who adopt masculine signifiers in dress and manner are actively targeted and punished for this subversion through sexual violence. This violence is intended to "teach" them what it is to be a woman and is a reassertion of masculine power. This is in keeping with Namaste's (ibid.) comments on the element of gender subversion in her analysis of gay-bashing patterns.

There are also important differences from the work of Valentine and Namaste. Firstly, interviews indicate that hate crimes committed in Johannesburg are exceptionally violent. In comparison to international figures, incidence of homophobic rape is much higher. This points to a difference in spatial context. Without essentialising or generalising masculine identities, the results of interviews suggest linkage to Skelton (1995) and Vogelman's (ibid.) work relating a lack of social and economic power to the need to assert masculine identity. Drawing on comments made in interviews, we hypothesise that the reason rape is more frequent in homophobic hate crime in Johannesburg is that rape is the reinforcement of masculine dominance. Lesbians are seen as threats to masculine power, which in the context of poverty, transition and structural inequality is the only power that many men feel they have at their disposal. It is clear, however, that configurations of masculinity require further investigation in a South African context. Johannesburg faces the challenge of turning around an endemic culture of violence. This requires further reflection on masculinity and its relationship to sexual violence.

Furthermore, men who are effeminate in dress and speech are viewed as women and are thereby relegated to an inferior position. Ironically, in evidence emerging in research on South African sexual identity (Reid, 2000), gay men with a strong feminine identity are often more integrated within local communities. However, this status does not protect them from violent attacks experienced by many women. Indeed their gendered identity as women relegates them to an inferior position and they are thus equally vulnerable to male violence. Future research on perceptions of the relationship between gender identity and sexuality in Africa will serve to explicate these findings.

M, a young Sowetan captured the complex irony of the public space that has opened up for lesbians and gay men in the wake of political transition: "Constitutional rights are just in papers, people do not know anything about them. There should be more education on TV and radio". On the one hand

there is a high level of legal protection and public visibility, on the other there remains a high level of violence. M reflects on the failure of the constitution to protect citizens, particularly in terms of the Bill of Rights. Yet she retains a belief in education, despite being gang raped shortly after appearing in a television talk show on gay and lesbian youth.

Despite the enormous legislative and social gains made by lesbians and gay men in South Africa, Johannesburg remains a homophobic landscape. This is evident in existing research and in the gay media. However, within this landscape of exclusion lie the further peripheralised experiences of less vocal communities. Extensive research which actively embraces difference is required for a detailed analysis of the many forms of homophobic violence in Johannesburg without drawing on "clichéd notions of victim and hero" (Ingram, 1999: 30). Rather these investigations need to be embedded in discussions of the complexity and suppleness (ibid.) of gay urban politics in Johannesburg.

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