

Chapter one

Queer Visibilities in Cape Town

Introduction

At the end of 2006 South Africa joined a very small, yet very special club. Indeed, this club was so special that, since its creation at the beginning of the new millennium, it had led to incessant discussion among many other nations. While very few other countries seemed particularly enthusiastic about joining its membership, several spent a remarkably large amount of time explaining why those who had joined were mistaken in doing so. Commentators in nations stretching from the Middle East to Eastern Europe to Africa all appeared to believe that membership must never be sanctioned and, if possible, should be actively legislated against.¹ The President of the United States even went so far as to suggest subscribing to the club's ideas might imperil the 'most fundamental institution of civilisation'.² This was therefore, in some ways, not only a special, but also apparently a rather dangerous club.

South Africa had decided to grant same-sex couples the right to marry. It joined the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Canada. The legalisation of same-sex marriage has helped position South Africa as the most progressive country on the entire continent. Nationally, same-sex marriage has been held up as one of the strongest examples of the country's move away from an intolerant past – a past now more associated with the opponents of same-sex marriage than with the current South African government. Some might fairly argue that such achievements have been well worth the hyperbole from 'less progressive' countries.

And indeed, the achievement of South Africa in this regard should not be underestimated. In just one and a half decades the country has gone from persecuting and arresting individuals with same-sex desire, to allowing them to adopt children and marry. No other country has so radically

changed its position towards queer individuals or the world's perception of itself in such a short period of time.

Yet while such achievements have indeed been admirable, the legal rights attained do not necessarily equate to daily improvements in the lives of many queer South Africans. While, *de jure*, queer citizens in South Africa now have the ability to marry, *de facto*, many still cannot. And while cities such as Cape Town are able to boast about their liberal and accepting stance towards queer individuals, the reality on the ground for many, even in Cape Town, may be considerably different. This book explores this gap between liberal law and the more dangerous reality for groups of queer men in Cape Town.

To understand this gap requires first an acknowledgement of the diversity of queer experiences in the country and, as this book will show, the diversity across urban space in one particular city.³ As researchers in other locations have shown, the variety of community experiences that make up queer existence across the globe is truly staggering (Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan 2002; Hayes 2000; Jackson and Sullivan 1999; Parker 1999; Patton and Sánchez-Eppler 2000; Reid-Pharr 2002). An attempt to understand any local queer community therefore requires a detailed exploration of the many issues that have affected, and continue to affect, it. Yet in a country such as South Africa, queer experiences are further complicated by the extraordinary way in which communities have historically been spatially regulated by the state. The use of 'race' as the basis of a system of discrimination has left the country with deep social, economic and political scars. Queer communities today have therefore also remained strongly influenced by the way colonial and later apartheid mechanisms compartmentalised, regulated and manipulated groups.

Indeed, while the regulation of difference based on 'race' has been well documented in South Africa, the direct effect it had on different queer communities has yet to be systematically explored. In large part this stems from barriers in gaining access to different communities. The legacy of apartheid makes it difficult to gain entrance and acceptance within communities historically segregated in the urban environment. Yet the lack of detailed cross-community research also perhaps signifies a greater problem, namely that of being able to explore the numerous nuanced ways different communities dealt with ideas of same-sex desire. By taking a geographical approach, this book will show how individuals from the three main historically and racially defined population groups in the city of Cape Town have come to understand and represent queer sexuality in remarkably different yet also related ways. It will be shown that in large part this is due to the different ways the apartheid state attempted to categorise and spatially contain them.

Only once this is achieved will it be possible to begin to understand why changes in South African law, while clearly laudable, remain marginal to

the vast majority of queer individuals in the country. As many commentators have noted, the ending of apartheid in South Africa has not meant an ending to inequality or discrimination (Bollens 1998a; Lodge 2002; Saff 1994; Turok 2001). To truly begin to explore different queer communities in South Africa today is therefore also to set out on a journey that examines the social and political interactions of these groups. So much of South Africa's past is based on different communities' perceptions of themselves in relation to other, often neighbouring communities. The same is true for queer communities.

This is therefore a book that will examine the way different, specifically male, queer communities have been able to lead open and free lives, the problems and possibilities of cross-community interaction and the way these subjects and events have been shaped by the unique history of the country. The remainder of this chapter reviews a number of studies of queer groups and argues that a different approach is needed for Cape Town queer communities if their lives are ever to be adequately understood.

A Question of Visibility

The approach used by this book can be summed up by the notion of queer visibility. At its core, this is a geographical concept that examines how queer groups are able to overcome the heteronormativity of particular urban spaces; the options that are available for them to do so; the perception of the decision to undertake certain visibilities by different members of their own community and those of others; and the problems and possibilities of groups interacting based in large part on these very divergent visibilities. It is therefore more than simply an exploration of queer public performances. Neither is it a study which presupposes that visibility by itself is a positive outcome.⁴ Rather, it is a study of how groups perceive themselves and each other in relation to their own community structures, the structures of others and the problems of social and political exchange.

In a city such as Cape Town, such visibilities will also be directly tied to the way communities were defined by artificial and arbitrary classifications of 'race'. As will be explored below, apartheid was at its core a spatial strategy, and as such, resulted in different 'racially-defined' communities being located at different points within the urban environment. If heteronormativity is viewed not as a monolithic entity, but as a type of regulative power dependent on other structures in society, then the options to overcome it must also depend on the factors that initially affect it. In Cape Town this means that queer visibilities will be strongly affected by the way apartheid's racial classifications impacted on different communities in different ways. What can be made visible to the wider community, and why it

can, depends in large part on the racial history of the country and of this one city. Equally, to understand how groups are able to interact with each other requires understanding how they view each other and how they view each other's interactions with heteronormativity. These interactions will also be directly affected by the very factors that led to the development of different visibilities in the first place. In this way, the successes different queer communities have in becoming visible within their own communities can also be tempered by their ability or inability to stay visible when interacting with other communities. As this book will show, the problems faced by some queer communities in Cape Town mean it becomes very easy for them to remain invisible when attempting group interaction. Such invisibility can have dire consequences.

An approach such as this one will hopefully also help move scholars beyond an impasse of either looking at 'global'/'Western' forms of queer expression or looking at 'local homosexualities'. As William Spurlin (2001) correctly argues, there is as much danger for scholars from the West in inadvertently homogenising sexualities elsewhere within an almost imperialist Western framework as there is for European or North American cultural modes of production to usurp those found elsewhere. A process whereby the global is understood through the local, where agency remains central, and where difference is seen to be relational will help limit the dangers correctly highlighted by scholars such as Spurlin.

It will also help limit the problems encountered by scholars such as Natalie Oswin (2005) who argue that it remains difficult and dubious to analytically prise apart 'Western' identities and identities found in Africa. While Oswin is correct to highlight the fallacy of assuming a monolithic 'Western' gay identity or a wholly knowable and separate 'African homosexual culture', it becomes decidedly problematic to argue, as she does, that there is no imposing Western queerness or resistant African homosexual culture in the construction of the very successful international marketing initiative of 'gay Cape Town'.⁵ As will be explored in more detail in the following sections, Oswin perhaps arrives at her conclusion as a result of the way she attempts to explore what exactly might be included within a category such as 'African homosexuality' or 'gay Cape Town'. A study of visibility initially shifts the focus of debate away from broader concerns over subjectivity or catch-all identity labels and their relationship to at times equally nebulous 'global flows', and instead first moves back to the core concern as to *how* groups have over time been able to position themselves in relation to their local heteronormative communities in particular locations in the urban environment. An attempt to find a direct comparison between Western queerness and African specificity amongst even a particular elite subset of a wider dynamic community without first excavating such histories runs the conceptual risk of sidelining the multifaceted,

contradictory and at times exploitative interactions queer groups can subsequently have with other queers in the city. This in turn runs the risk of marginalising the dramatically divergent effects that the representation of 'gay Cape Town' has had on diverse groups of queers and the way such a representation is worked with, contested or confronted. Overlooking such complexity therefore also runs the risk of being unable to see where exactly each community may find repeated tension (or solidarity) with any other.

As the following sections will discuss, queer visibility is therefore an attempt to explore why difference may or may not exist within and between communities and how visibility and appreciation of difference depends on the way groups have developed elsewhere. It therefore also initially shifts the argument away from 'the global' or 'the local' and instead focuses on how difference becomes possible when communities interact internally. It then becomes possible to see how within different areas of a city like Cape Town difference is represented *by the communities themselves* through an appreciation of their own history – linked to apartheid and their own understanding of communities elsewhere. There is, therefore, an 'imposing Western queerness', but one that is filtered through a local lens. There is also without any doubt whatsoever a 'resistant homosexual culture', but one defined by a centuries-old history, that was shaped by pre-colonial, colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid ideologies. Today, as this study will show, it represents itself as a set of distinct visibilities precisely because it sees what is made visible in different spaces in the city (for example, among those who frequent the city's gay village). There are no simple binaries of 'the West and the rest' but instead communities with remarkably different histories that partly depend on each other today to exist at all. These groups can draw inspiration from 'the West' *and* from communities in Africa (or South East Asia). They are, however, to follow the schema taken up by Natalie Oswin, resistant to each other precisely because of their histories and the at times antagonistic relationships due to those histories. To argue otherwise would be to ignore not only the history of these communities but also the importance of acknowledging and safeguarding the needs of diverse queer individuals in Cape Town.

Yet a book that sets itself on such a trajectory immediately runs into some serious epistemological, methodological and ethnic dilemmas. One of the most pressing is the issue of definition. Who, in other words, is this book meant to be exploring? And closely tied to that, how is the choice of subject justified? To put it another way, who is queer and how are they made visible? How can such terms be used for divergent groups in the urban environment? And how is a 'group' defined? To explore these questions, the next four sections will question and examine both the pertinent developments in queer studies and the formation of race-based discrimination in South Africa. The next section will briefly examine the trajectory of

queer geography over the past thirty years. This discussion will lead directly into some questions in the next two sections concerning what we actually mean when we talk about sexual identities, ideas of 'the closet' and the relevance of 'queer' in post-colonial environments when seen in relation to visibility. The last two sections will examine how issues of race and questions of visibility remain tied to each other in Cape Town and wider South Africa.

Questioning the Sites and Categories of Study

For much of the past two to three decades since the 1980s, sexuality studies, queer studies and particularly queer geography have been concerned with understanding and explaining the lives of individuals with same-sex desire in ways that illuminate both the reasons for particular types of classification, regulation and discrimination and the strategies to end concealment of particular desires due to such discrimination (Brown et al. 2007). As one of the founders of what came to be known as queer theory, Michel Foucault, famously explained, the development of nineteenth-century Western discursive power, tied intrinsically to regulative techniques, brought into being 'the homosexual' and along with it its medicalisation and methods of control.⁶ From this standpoint, scholars have been interested in unpacking how such control has evolved and how to confront or manipulate it. Historical studies such as Chauncey (1994), Houlbrook (2005) and Peniston (2004) on same-sex communities in major urban environments and more recent work on the evolution of Western forms of gay identity and rights-based political action tied to critiques of its essentialism (strategic, for example Armstrong (2002), Seidman (1993) and Wilchins (2004) or otherwise Nast (2002) and Schulmann (1998)) have all greatly enhanced our understanding.

Specifically from within geography, interest in 'gay spaces' has focused on a nexus of territory, transgression and identity (Binnie and Valentine 1999). In other words, what geographers have brought to the party is a foregrounding of the very spatiality of sexuality, its (re)production and regulation. For example, geographers have researched the politicisation, representation and contestation of sexual identity across different urban spaces and the transgression of nominally heterosexualised public and private spaces at a variety of scales (Aldrich 2004; Bell et al. 1994; Bell and Valentine 1995a; Phillips 2004). Manuel Castells was one of the first to bring together some of these ideas through his work on San Francisco (1983), where he explored the links between residential districts, voting patterns and social movements. By so doing, he created an early blueprint for examining the spatial and political dynamics of sexuality that remains

important (see for example Ingram et al. 1997). Geographers have therefore also gone on to explore how gay men have been viewed as an important element in urban regeneration, the gentrification of the city and as an element that could recreate parts of the city as new spaces of consumption and liberation (Bell and Binnie 2004; Binnie 1995; Chisholm 2005; Forest 1995; Knopp 1992 and 1998; Quilley 1997). In political terms, geographers have studied urban responses to AIDS (Brown 1997) and political transgressions 'outside' gay spaces, such as Pride marches and other interventions (Bell 1994; Brickell 2000; Davis 1995; Luongo 2002; Pourtavaf 2004). On a wider scale, sexual citizenship has been developed as a dynamic arena for relating issues of sexuality to the nation, state and globe (Altman 2001; Bell and Binnie 2000 and 2004; Waitt 2005). For Mitchell (2000) a central issue in this work concerns the sort of *spaces* where different sexual identities can develop and negotiate with others. Drawing here on Chauncey (1994), Mitchell explains a central theme running through much work on queer geography: 'like any social relationship, sexuality is inherently spatial – it depends on particular spaces for its construction and in turn produces and reproduces the spaces in which sexuality can be, and was, forged' (Mitchell 2000: 175).

But such studies have also been cast into relief by a growing body of work that examines the problems of relying on 'Westernised' gay communities and spaces as sites of study. While the importance of urban territories for gay-identified men has proven an important area of work, it does tend to ignore other groups who have not located themselves in such spaces (Brown and Staeheli 2003). Some of the earliest work in this field dealt with lesbian spaces through the city (Adler and Brenner 1992; Rothenberg 1995; Valentine 1993 and 1995). Other work has focused on individuals who live away from major urban areas, where attention has been paid to issues of rural lives and sexual identity (Bell and Valentine 1995b; Kramer 1995; Phillips et al. 2000; White 1980) and how the mythic space of the city acts as an important draw for individuals wanting to 'come out' (Brown 2000; Weston 1995).

Taking this a step further, increasing numbers of researchers are now exploring entirely non-Western and non-urban spaces in relation to same-sex desire. For example Byrne (2005), Hoad (2000), Moodie (1988 and 2001), Murray (2000), Spurlin (2001) and Patton and Sánchez-Eppler (2000) have helped destabilise many of the norms upon which 'traditional' gay and lesbian studies have been posited, shifting the focus away from 'metropolitan' environments towards the 'periphery' (Sinfield 1998). In these locations different configurations of sexuality and space start to materialise. Such configurations therefore also call into question the very way in which commentators have tried to categorise and rationalise the communities they study and the power that enacts on them. While the studies

outlined in this section have helped develop an important roadmap for understanding sexualities of difference, they have also been guided by certain assumptions that may not be applicable elsewhere. Consequently, for a study such as this one that includes numerous communities who understand sexuality in divergent ways, it becomes imperative to see how they may wish to subscribe to beliefs in ways both familiar and different to those traditionally found in queer studies and queer geographies. By remaining focused on a geographical approach to sexuality, it therefore becomes vital to unpack quite what we mean when we talk about identities and the limits and opportunities of expression associated with them in different spaces. Specifically, we need to be acutely aware of the histories behind ideas such as 'the closet', 'heteronormativity' and 'the queer' and how they relate to different spaces in very different yet compelling ways.

Questioning 'The Closet'

The more recent studies outlined above in new locations have allowed a re-evaluation of some of the fundamental tenets of the queer academy. Specifically, commentators have had to re-evaluate how 'the closet' has been viewed as the defining structure of gay oppression during the twentieth century (Sedgwick 1990). For a series of queer scholars schooled in post-structural thought in the 1990s, 'the closet' became an exemplary way of understanding how power/knowledge operates in society to regulate sexuality (Latimer 2004). As many of the works cited above acknowledge, an exploration of 'the closet' allows for a discussion of how the concealment and denial of homosexuality as a discrete sexual identity in society works to reinforce the heterosexual/homosexual binary and hence (following Derrida's (1982) concerns as to the unequal power relationships between different parts of the binary) the dominance of heterosexuality in society. For example, 'the closet' itself is continually maintained, since being 'out' of 'the closet' also requires the pre-existence of somewhere and somehow being 'in' 'the closet' too. Hence, the binary and the mechanism around which the binary functions are seen to be mutually reinforced. This powerful critique of the way modern society is able to regulate the hetero/homo divide also goes to strengthen queer political projects. Specifically, 'the closet' and 'coming out' have remained powerful mechanisms through which to engage political rights-based movements, both in the West and elsewhere (Hoad 1999; Human Rights Campaign 2004; Weeks 1990).

Geographically as well, 'the closet' has proved a powerful conceptual tool. While not necessarily always explicitly mentioned, it still forms the basis of much work on 'gay space'. After all, the regulation of space

generally as heteronormative allows for a study of spaces which are not. The most prominent study of this type is Michael Brown's (2000) *Closet Space*. The aim of this study was to explore how power/knowledge signified by 'the closet' must actually occur in particular places at particular scales. For Brown, it was therefore crucial to see how 'the closet' works as more than just a linguistic metaphor, but rather to examine how it has a geography. As Brown explains:

By its spatiality the closet is a material strategy and tactic: one that conceals, erases and makes gay people invisible and unknown. Because it is such a common, central term in gay and lesbian life, it implies a ubiquity and multidimensionality that suggests an exploration across a wide variety of spatial scales and locations . . . It simultaneously presented itself at several spatial scales from the body, to the city, to the nation, and finally to the globe. (p. 141)

'The closet' therefore has helped frame an understanding of how queer sexuality has been oppressed by examining the way the heterosexual/homosexual binary has been operationalised. From within geography, a primary concern has been exploring exactly where this oppression occurs and to see how the spatiality of power/knowledge itself goes to bring 'the closet' into existence in the first place (see also Knopp 1994). These are clearly powerful and relevant pursuits. Indeed, the continued framing of 'the closet' in personal 'coming out' narratives and more broad-based queer political projects points to the centrality of the term in the lives of many queer individuals. Yet as other commentators have explored, 'the closet' may not necessarily be relevant to a great many other queer groups.

As Seidman (1998) explains, one of the central beliefs on which much early work on 'the closet' was based, when seen in relation to its interface with issues of identity and community action, argued that there must already exist a formed sexual self. 'The closet' in much contemporary literature has therefore come to represent a barrier that needs to be broken through. Despite queer theory's warnings concerning unitary and fixed identity categories, the subject and their identity are thus often already seen to exist prior to their 'coming out'. This means that there still can remain an assumption that a 'coming out' represents the end of inauthenticity and self-alienation for the individual and the wider community. In turn, those that have yet to 'come out' can therefore easily be viewed as suffering from some sort of 'false consciousness' whereby they are yet to be saved by gay politics (Binnie 2004). In this reading 'the closet' tends overwhelmingly to manifest itself around a belief that all those with queer desire should be honest about their (already in existence) identity.

Even more problematically, this leads to the conceptually dangerous (and indeed in some instances, neo-colonial, see below) argument that those who do not free themselves of 'the closet' – and who do not do so in *particular ways* – are, quite simply, in denial and suffering from an 'outdated', 'pre-modern' and possibly secretive mode of sexual identity (Hayes 2000). For example, men who engage in sex with other men, yet who view themselves – and are seen by others – as heterosexual and do not see their identity as inauthentic fail to fit within 'the closet' schema (ibid.). To take that argument a step further, those men who do view themselves as homosexual yet overwhelmingly seek out sexual relationships with men who view themselves as heterosexual to sustain their own sexual identity are also skirting the borders of what would be 'acceptable' given the liberationist ideal associated with 'the closet'.

The root cause of this problem of the pre-existing queer subject searching for 'identity congruence' is that within much contemporary thought, 'the closet' *itself* remains based on the existence and the history of a particular type of Western European and North American queer subject – and one that can only exist with a particular rigid heterosexual/homosexual binary relationship. This subject persists in a strongly oppositional relationship to heterosexuality, whereby its own identity can only gain authenticity when placed in somewhat public and open opposition to heterosexuality. Any discussion of 'the closet' is therefore in danger of reifying a relationship between 'normal' and 'other' – in effect bringing that relationship and parts of the binary into existence and ignoring all others.⁷

'The closet' as schema for study therefore can become problematic when applied to communities that do not place such prominence on proclaiming a particular 'authentic' sexual identity located around a particular Western European 'closet' binary (Howell 2007; Quiroga 2000; Reid-Pharr 2002; Ross 2005; Wallace 2002).⁸ Different individuals will relate to heterosexual society/societies in different ways and therefore may choose to 'come out' but do so in ways that might not lead to unilateral ideals of sexual 'liberation' in direct antagonism to secrecy and oppression and a 'knowing by not knowing' commonly associated with 'the closet'. Relying solely on 'the closet' can cause conceptual harm to those who do not subscribe to its sometimes stringent effect on understanding identities, communities and political action and also cause harm to those who might relate to it in very different and at times conflicting ways.

Perhaps understandably therefore, scholars working in post-colonial contexts in particular have decided to err away from using 'the closet' as a way of exploring sexual identities of different communities. A great deal of this work has instead tended to focus on the uniqueness of particular forms of sexual identity in different racialised locations or on the way these identities are later affected by and in turn affect Western influences (see Jackson

2001). Works by commentators such as Moodie (1998 and 2001), Murray and Roscoe (1998) and Epprecht (2004) have tried to historicize the experiences of groups in places such as sub-Saharan Africa, in part to explain exactly why their understanding of sexual identity may be so different to those mostly studied in key sites in the West. Other work, such as Herdt's (1994), has explored effeminate gender identities and their relationships to forms of non-heteronormativity. Some of this scholarship has also therefore ended up calling into question whether it is even possible to call some of these groups 'homosexual'. Indeed, it again becomes increasingly apparent that 'the closet' and much of Western society's understanding of 'the homosexual' only work when played out in relation to each other. To refer back to Foucault, the creation of 'the species' of 'the homosexual' perhaps only works within a rather narrow epistemological framework. And that framework requires 'the closet'.

This, of course, is not to argue that in these new locations there is an absence of same-sex desire. Neither is it to argue that there is no naming of difference. In any community where same-sex desire is seen, as Halperin (2002) might term it, as 'a means of personal identification', then some reason must exist as to why identification should occur because of it. In other words, there must be some understanding of dissimilarity. What these new studies point out, however, are the remarkably different ways in which some variant of a heterosexual/homosexual binary formation plays out. This is not to assume that the 'creation' of a Foucauldian conception of 'the homosexual' exists. Rather it is to acknowledge that a binary of some sort must exist. In this light, 'the closet' becomes just one way of conceptualising this how this difference is manifest – and hence a Foucauldian concept of 'the homosexual' as a medicalised entity becomes just one way of naming that difference. (As described below, 'homosexuality' and 'homosexual' are therefore used in the following chapters only when discussing this particular way of naming sexual difference and not in other instances.)⁹

What can therefore be taken from 'the closet' is the way it initially forces us to examine how a particular heterosexual/homosexual binary has actually worked and is reproduced within a Western culture. 'The closet' is by definition directly caught up in the concept of personal identification. It therefore forces us to see how that identification is applied to individuals, by examining the power enacted on individuals to bring a subject position into being (and how subjects themselves can discursively reiterate such power). As described above, it can however tend to remain fixed into a particular narrative defined through a particular historically regulated interpretation of concealment and then a particular interpretation of openness. As such it has perhaps also narrowed the way in which researchers attempt to understand sexualised communities and cross-community interaction, normalising certain life stories, social structures and methods of openness

to the detriment of others. Consequently, this fixity can then result in an easy teleological developmentalist (and at times, neo-colonial) progression towards 'modern' gay identities and more lately 'queer' identities (Binnie 2004) (see below). These identities often remain knowingly or unknowingly anchored to ideas of 'the closet' and lead into particular ideas of sexual identity liberation, 'gay spaces', political representation in opposition to 'traditional values' and the development of civil society rights and legal rights such as 'gay marriage' without much appreciation for how they affect diverse communities in diverse locations. For researchers, it therefore can become easy to only look at the end result of such developments, and fail to see the historical specificity that allowed those developments to emerge. Once this step has occurred it becomes hard to fully conceptualise or appreciate how other groups located within different political histories in different places with different variations on the heterosexual/homosexual binary relate to this narrative.

What emerges, as a result, are three options. The first, as already mentioned, is an important acknowledgement that there are indeed different ways in which communities have appreciated sexual diversity and the naming of difference. As the studies highlighted above have explored, this has led to an appreciation that there is indeed difference 'out there'. At a foundational and key level, these studies repositioned Western studies of sexuality within a wider set of practices and discourses. Yet second, there has also been a concerted effort to understand how difference itself must relate to what is increasingly being referred to as the 'global gay' – the supposed exportation of a particular sexualised culture that originated mostly in North American 'gay spaces' to locations elsewhere in the world. For some, this has meant exploring how issues of commodification and its association with neo-liberal forms of citizenship work in new locations, creating sometimes hybrid forms (Altman 2001). Yet understandably, a variant of this body of work has questioned quite why such cultural, social and economic flows must always be only from the West to the rest of the world (Oswin 2006). Indeed, a focus solely on unidirectional cultural flows is in danger of reifying a neo-colonial gaze onto communities elsewhere. It is also in danger of reinforcing the supposed hegemony of sexualised identities located around a Western 'closet' structure. Therefore, third, there has also developed a growing body of work that has tried to be more self-reflexive about the relationships between different communities (see, for example, Bacchetta 2002; Jackson 2001; Manalansan 1995; Parker 1999; Puar 2002). At its best, this work has successfully shown the strategic ways in which local communities have selectively appropriated, re-imagined or reconstructed specific Western influences while rejecting others. This work highlights an egalitarian strand within work on cultural diffusion, showing us the ways in which knowledge is reproduced and re-articulated through

diverse social structures and human agents at a variety of scales. Yet while this work is important and vital, there are also two distinct dangers that at other times can emerge, both of which relate to a broader problem of failing to explore the geographical specificity of communities and taking as read the existence of a Western 'closet'.

The first danger comes, quite simply, by focusing at the level of representation and limiting an understanding as to how materialities that surround, limit and give opportunity to different communities can go to affect such representations.¹⁰ Looking only for hybridity or capitulation to particular Western global flows as an 'end point' is to completely miss out an understanding of the 'building blocks' that go to inform the idea of identities founded upon attraction to one's own sex in different locations in the first instance. Issues of concern here must surely include historical race-based discrimination and segregation, long-standing gross economic inequalities, spatial dislocation, the constant threat of HIV/AIDS tied to inequitable access to education and health care services, the effects of violent crime and contemporary racism. These factors must certainly be seen to work both in affecting material constraints and in offering specific avenues of change and development. For example, as Marlon B. Ross (2005) has explored, 'the closet' as an epistemological guide towards understanding identity and interaction fails to work in some inner-city African American and Latino communities precisely because of some of these factors.¹¹ Some men who engage in same-sex sexual relationships within such spaces have very little in common with those traditionally researched in studies of 'Western gay spaces'. Their identities are known about amongst themselves and some elements of wider heteronormative society and their anxiety or pride in their own identity function around a variant of the heterosexual/homosexual binary. And yet concerns to seek some form of 'authenticity' are far from their primary concern. Groups such as those highlighted by Ross (2005) have traditionally received relatively little research attention. This issue in turn leads to the second problem, which is an inability to focus down on the actual spaces in which different identities emerge and relate to each other. When conducting cross-community research, it is surely vital to explore the relational effect that spaces and the groups that live within those spaces have on each other in the same city. Therefore, it is also vital to understand and unpack how different communities with very different histories might have remarkably different variants of the heterosexual/homosexual binary (and hence readings related to, or very dissimilar from 'the closet') which go to inform their views of others and their position and understanding of themselves in relation to others. At an extreme, a limited acknowledgement of these issues can lead to the false assumption, even when only looking at a particular commodified subset of a wider dynamic community, that there is no direct 'resistance'

to global or particular cultural flows to begin with – or that too great acknowledgement of such local resistance on the part of researchers is to compartmentalise and ‘romanticise’ local cultures and their own agency (see, for example, Oswin 2005).

In other words, the local specificity as to how some variant of the heterosexual/homosexual binary – and hence heteronormativity – located around issues such as race and class and the spaces in which these issues play out may not always be sufficiently explored. This is strongly conditioned by an overzealous attention towards issues of representation without exploring the materiality that wraps around such identities. Concurrently, it seems that sometimes hidden behind a concern for acknowledging sexualised difference are the remnants of a very Western ‘closet’ schema – one that is looking towards, or searching first for, particular sexualised identities, without appreciating the diversity of histories that could lead to the development of different identities associated with different challenges to begin with. This in turn limits the view of researchers attempting to understand difference.

This book therefore suggests that a key step that must be taken when attempting to undertake cross-community research in a city such as Cape Town is to understand first the ways in which different queer groups relate to wider heteronormative groups within their own communities in particular historically racially-segregated spaces. Then it is to understand how such relationships are understood by, and go towards affecting, others. This is not to reify local difference and set it in stone. It is also therefore not to assume that a category such as ‘white gay man’ is neatly bounded. Rather, it is to understand how an appreciation of such differences by different communities *themselves* must be understood to contribute to and help render the ways each develops. In effect, this book is therefore calling for a greater geographical appreciation as to the options different communities have in overcoming the heteronormativity of particular spaces – to become visible in space – so as to better understand how they subsequently interact across space – and only then, how each might relate to, for example, global or transcultural flows. It is calling for a greater awareness of how queers have been able to relate to very different manifestations of the heterosexual/homosexual binary tied to different variants of heteronormative regulation in different spaces some of which are a far cry from Western ideas of ‘the closet’. When, for example, only gay commodification as an ‘end point’ is set to be explored, researchers may miss how the links that lead to the development of a unique commodity culture in particular Western spaces might come from a particular history of Western gay rights movements that themselves are based around only one interpretation of the heterosexual/homosexual binary focused most prominently on ‘the closet’ (chapters 2 and 3). Such a reading might ignore why some sexualised groups in a city

such as Cape Town might not overtly desire such a particular spatialisation of commodity culture to begin with, having formulated their relationships to wider heteronormative society and space in remarkably different ways – which are themselves located around particular racial, class-based and spatial challenges (see chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5). Failing to see resistance to a globalised gay commodity culture in Cape Town is therefore not to suggest there is no resistance at all, but rather to suggest that perhaps the wrong questions are being asked of a community in the first instance. Equally, failing to see the problems of very Westerncentric legal rights – themselves located powerfully within ideas of Western sexual liberation tied to a ‘closet’ binary of openness/equality and secretiveness/inequality – enshrined into South Africa law is perhaps to fail to see the specificity of local communities and the struggles that they themselves face (chapter 6).

As such, in a city such as Cape Town, the geography of the city must remain key. As later sections explore, it becomes vital to understand how a history of race-based spatial segregation has given different communities different opportunities with which to relate to wider heteronormative society. Consequently any exploration of a city such as Cape Town must also take into account the different ways such divergent relationships have been understood by and affected different communities. As will be described in the next section, such appreciation of difference by different communities makes for a decidedly queer reading of the city.

Recasting what is ‘Queerly Visible’

This book therefore proposes that the idea of queer visibility might be productively used to help position a lens through which different communities are studied. Both ‘queer’ and ‘visibility/visible’ here are used in very specific ways that draw on particular readings as to what can be made ‘queerly visible’.

First, returning briefly to issues surrounding ‘the closet’: As the above section argued, there is much danger of conceptual damage occurring when ‘the closet’ in a very Western sense is applied to communities elsewhere. This damage can also cause severe harm to communities located in Western centres. For example, Riki Wilchins (2004) has spoken eloquently about the problems transgendered and intersexed individuals have had in relating their lives within a broader ‘gay and lesbian’ political project. As such, queer theory has argued against the instigation of monolithic identity terms, looking instead at ways that categories of existence can be problematised and the power that is enacted to create them can be destabilised. As Donald E. Hall (2003) has explained, to be queer is ‘to abrade classification, to sit

athwart conventional categories or traverse several... [it] means that there is no *easy* answer' (p. 13). The term can therefore imply the action of disrupting, destabilising and problematising 'facts' held dear by heteronormative societies. To 'be queer' therefore is often framed as an endeavour to consciously and continually question regulative agendas that normalise within society and offer ruptures in discourse so as to allow power to coalesce in new and liberating forms.

Yet running parallel to such concerns is also a particular class-based reading of what queer is capable of achieving. As Cathy Cohen (2005) has argued, to 'be queer' often leaves unspoken the class- and race-based privilege that allows for such projects. At a very basic level, this can mean that queer only functions for those with the time, money, resources and community that allow for it. This is clearly a valid point. Not everyone can be queer or even wants to be queer. And even those that do perhaps cannot do so all the time. There is therefore perhaps rightful concern about overlaying a term such as 'queer' onto communities located outside of Western centres of privilege. For example, if being queer is often to be 'knowingly queer', then how can communities that are simply striving for basic survival against homophobia find the opportunity to playfully destabilise those structures that threaten their lives? Taking this issue further, despite the liberationist dimension of 'queer' in relation to 'gay', there is also rightful concern when exporting the idea of queer along with some form of teleological assumption as to the creation first of 'the homosexual', followed by 'the gay' leading eventually to 'the queer' (Hayes 2000). Again, the legacy of one particular reading of 'the closet' should not automatically be read into other communities elsewhere. Indeed, in post-colonial contexts there are hugely important political, ethical and moral issues both in using Western terms and in deciding how those terms relate to wider problems associated with modernist scales of 'development' (Robinson 2006).¹²

Yet it is also worth realising that positioning communities elsewhere as 'not queer' or unable to 'be queer' because of their different history to the West is also to assume that 'queer' can only emerge from communities that have a particular history and a particular reading of 'the closet'. It is also problematic to unilaterally assume that only the privileged can be queer. While the mechanisms for queer pursuits may be remarkably different in different locations, it would be unfair for researchers simply to assume that those elsewhere cannot be queer. One reason for deploying the term queer in this study when describing many different groups of men is therefore to frame these communities in a way that gives back to them the possibility of knowing subversion. As researchers we should not see these other communities as too poor, too uneducated or too constrained to be queer. The emancipatory dimension of queer beliefs should not be denied to communities simply because they have yet to fully engage with or have chosen not

to follow a particular path towards subverting power. Indeed, as the following chapters will show, the divergent strategies deployed by different communities show remarkably different attempts at confronting and questioning heteronormative regulation, all of which could be seen to retain some element of 'queerness' as a confrontation and anxiety for wider society. Further, not only do these methods highlight the contingent nature (and hence at times, fragility) of heteronormativity (and distance this discussion from simplistic ideas of a monolithic and intractable heteronormativity), they also highlight how Western notions of 'the closet' become decidedly 'queered' and questioned in a country such as South Africa. Indeed, Cathy Cohen's (2005) points about the class-based nature of queer are well taken and it is therefore precisely because this study does try to take into account issues of class- and race-based privilege that it chooses to focus on the diverse ways in which communities can be queer in sites away from Western centres. Yet to take this discussion further, it is also necessary to step back and explore this study's focus on visibility.

As Eric O. Clarke (2000) points out, visibility in terms of sexual identity and sexual politics is anything but a neutral term. Discussing communities in the West, he observes:

Over the past thirty years, lesbian and gay political and intellectual struggle has focused an enormous amount of time, energy, and resources on the politics of visibility, a politics that strives for greater access to and presence within diverse cultural, economic and political forms of representation . . . [The intention has been to] diminish the debilitating effects of homophobia . . . [The quest for visibility, however, has raised important concerns about the terms on which this visibility will be offered and in terms of which lesbian and gay men attempt to achieve it. (Clarke 2000: 29)

A frequent debate among commentators interested in understanding sexualised groups is therefore one that centres around who exactly is being studied and who is gaining most representation. Indeed, the quest to understand group visibility is in some ways a very old one for scholars. It is after all a quest that has its roots in the original founding of the gay and lesbian 'movement' in the 1960s (Armstrong 2002; D'Emilio 2002; Seidman 1993). Today it often centres on the term 'homonormative', and the problems that emerge through normalisation (quite often linked to an assimilationist agenda) of a social, cultural and political identity. Much recent geographical work on sexual citizenship has moved this debate forward in new directions, specifically Bell and Binnie (2006), Duggan (2002) and Stychin (2006). For many, the issue nonetheless remains one centred fundamentally between those who seek out 'inclusion' into heteronormative regimes such as 'marriage' and those who eschew any 'regimes of the

normal'. As Eric O. Clarke expertly points out in his work, visibility, and the achievement of it, is not an abstract term wholly separate from wider structures in society. On the contrary, in one interpretation to be visible is to have enmeshed oneself at some point within the system that allows for visibility and invisibility.

Yet in this study, the focus on visibility is also driven by a desire to understand the opportunities for group acceptance and, to follow Clarke's point, diminish the destabilising effects of homophobia. It does this by looking at the different ways queer groups have positioned themselves in relation to heteronormative regulation within their own community before looking at issues of, for example, homonormalisation. As such, it aims to bring back into focus the way different individuals with same-sex desire can make themselves known as such to the wider community – can become 'visible' – and the problems that such knowingness has for other queer men and the wider community. Therefore, it focuses down initially onto one particular element of same-sex identity – the way individuals relate to and become publicly known to heterosexual society. It is therefore concerned most strongly in understanding how variants of the heterosexual/homosexual binary work in communities with different racialised histories. It is also therefore heavily focused on the way space itself works and is made to work in the production of different sexual identities. Here, the concern becomes how groups are able to appropriate divergent heteronormative spaces to become visible across the urban environment. Issues here include how heteronormative space is itself conceptualised by different groups and the remarkably different ways they see spaces as safe or not. Such issues themselves can only be understood by appreciating the racial and spatial history of South Africa.

This stance, however, is not to argue that all sexuality takes place in the public realm. Nor is it to argue that visibility in the face of entrenched and deadly homophobia is automatically a 'good thing'. It is however a way of opening up and 'queering' an exploration as to how differences within broad identity labels (which Western researchers are already nervous about applying to other communities) function and how they relate to heteronormative spaces in very different ways. It is therefore a study that focuses on initial identity formation: it explores the 'whys' and the 'hows' that go to inform particular sexual identities.

Such an approach is also presupposed on the relational nature of different identities. So being, a focus on and use of the term visibility is also to draw attention to the way different communities view each other and how such knowledge goes to inform the production of their own visibilities. The use of the concept of visibility is therefore also to offer sexuality researchers a way of understanding how in any multi-community space, a production of a particular identity will be directly driven by the way a community's

awareness of difference elsewhere is understood.¹³ (Again, it is not arguing that the only way such communities understand each other is through public spaces – issues surrounding private erotics are not discussed directly here). In Cape Town research interest has focused heavily on studying ‘white gay space’ and, importantly, ways to deconstruct its meaning (Elder 2005; Oswin 2005; Visser 2002; 2003a; 2003b). Such work could perhaps be further enriched not only by spending more time understanding how the representation and bounded nature of ‘gay Cape Town’ can only exist because of the way those who represent that space see difference elsewhere in the city – and subsequently how they try and relate to and engage that difference in relation to their beliefs. Such work could also be enriched by exploring how those elsewhere in the city need to be understood in relation to the way they perceive both the discursive dimension and the materiality of spaces of privilege and those groups that represent those spaces.

Only once this is understood does it become possible to more fully appreciate the way communities may fight over the very issue of visibility. As the quotation by Clarke (2000) above [p. ••] helps us understand, since the 1960s, sexuality studies have been concerned with who is represented and by whom. As Riki Wilchins (2000), in the previous section pointed out, some sexual minority groups can easily become sidelined within essentialist rights-based agendas. In the post-colonial city, such issues need to be explored in light of the remarkably divergent ways same-sex groups may have come to reach points of safety within their own communities by appropriating heteronormative spaces in different ways. It then becomes important to see how different visibilities, together with the mechanisms that led to those different visibilities, may themselves keep some groups invisible when they attempt interaction. Such invisibility can have dire consequences in terms of political representation. They can also have severe consequences in terms of understanding and servicing health needs.

Visibilities can therefore remain constantly in tension with each other. As the following sections and the rest of this book will examine, the ending of apartheid has helped bring groups together and relate to each other in ways previously impossible. They have also caused communities to question and in some cases to re-evaluate the basis of their own identities, ideas and prejudices. When, as later chapters will explore, the appreciation of such differences – in terms of, for example, appropriating space, relating to wider society, constructing gendered and raced binaries, developing spaces of consumption, promoting national discourses of rights – is so stark, the effect may be to cause an anxiety and possibility of self-reflexivity (or not) on the part of the different communities in question. Diversity promotes appreciation or anxiety. The power of these different visibilities in relation to each other is therefore the ability of them to question the perceptions of

other communities or keep exclusionary perceptions rigidly enforced. The very visibility of different communities in relation to each other in the post-apartheid (and to a lesser extent, the apartheid) city is what gives them the opportunity of being queer. Queer visibilities among different groups of men therefore exist in a space where such diversity of sexual identity expression is possible and where such diversity is increasingly understood to exist (and then quite possibly strategically ignored) by different groups.

In the following chapters, different identity labels will at times be deployed at specific points to highlight the specificity of the group being discussed. However, for the reasons described above, each group in light of its at times contentious and controversial relationships with others – and in light of the need to ‘level the playing field’ so that no one community gains prominence over any other (academically, in terms of research focus and theoretical perspective or practically, in terms of community development) – is also designated to be most certainly a queer visibility. To explore this issue in more detail, the following section will examine how race has been constructed in South Africa and how it has directly affected the options of queer groups.

Yet lastly on this section, it must be stressed that this book is not claiming to have explored *all* factors that go to shape particular variants of the heterosexual/homosexual binary in different locations and hence *all* factors that condition different queer visibilities. For example, the issue of religion and the contrast between Christian Calvinism and Islam in the city, while woven into the following chapters, is not explicitly explored directly in relation to the perceptions each has of the other. Further, and as will be discussed briefly in the final section of this chapter, this study’s focus on gender is bounded to representing how masculinity and femininity play out among men – rather than looking more holistically at the way the gender binary and issues of racial patriarchy play out between men and women and go to affect same-sex communities. There is clearly a pressing need for further researchers to explore these issues – therefore the end of this chapter briefly examines the work that has already been conducted on gendered and queer sexualities in sub-Saharan Africa and offers a possible future direction for research.

The Construction of ‘Race’ in South African Urban Space

Geographers and anti-essentialists have a very long history exploring the social construction of race and racism (Barlett 1994; Delanty 1995; Mudimbe 1988; Wolff 1994). Through critical race theory, Stuart Hall (1993) has explored how binaries, be they around black/white or geographically around for example West/East essentialise the complexities of cultural

identity. Yet as with sexual identity, it remains the case that there is no essence to a race-based identity; instead identity is continually being produced within vectors of similarity and difference. Such a position allows scholars such as Stuart Hall to remove from discussion the simplistic notion of the 'black' subject. Indeed, Stuart Hall's work on articulation is useful here. The apparent unity of identity is really the articulation of different elements which under different historical and cultural circumstances could have been re-articulated in quite other ways. There is therefore no essentialistic or automatic connection between a race and a class or gender identity. As Butler (1993) would argue through her study of performativity in relation to sexuality and gender, iterativeness is a process that creates the effect of fixity over time. Those iteratives through performance are conditioned around discourses and materialities of power, which, as Hall would argue, are not primordial but rather occurred because of specific historical junctures in specific places.

Nevertheless, it would also be foolhardy to dismiss 'race' as nothing more than a social construction. Indeed, 'race' can also be seen as a necessary fiction for the way groups see themselves in the world (Appiah's (1995) and Hall's (1993) application of strategic essentialism is relevant here. See also Spivak (1990)). As with sexuality, constructions of race and racism are real concerns for many groups and go to condition the way different individuals and groups view their own place in the world. Bodies become raced by the way power acts on them. Geographically, races are therefore made 'real' by a series of spatial strategies designed to make race a 'fact'. Therefore, both from within urban geography and outside the discipline, much work has been carried out into understanding the way spatial segregation and geographies of minority groups have developed (Anderson 1991 and 1998; Cohen 1993; Davis 1990; Gilroy 1987; Jones 1996). Indeed as Bonnett and Nayak (2003) and Kobayashi (2004) make plain, race is often made 'real' precisely by being fixed in space. Because of this, work has also focused on the way the conflicting representational strategies that surround particular spaces can be deconstructed (Jackson 1988; Jacobs 1996; Smith 1989). For these commentators there is (as with sexuality) no fixed or immutable meaning to any one space or the groups who inhabit it. Further, as Kay Anderson, in her path-defining studies of Vancouver's Chinatown (1987 and 1991) points out, the processes of racial spatialisations are inherently historical and caught up in other webs of meaning.

It therefore also remains important to see how a race-based identity also relies at times on a sex- and class-based identity (and vice versa) to exist (Saad and Carter 2005). As both Ann Stoler (1995) and Anne McClintock (1995) have described in epic fashion, the creation and deployment of historical race-based, sexuality-based and class-based discriminations often

rely on the existence of each other for justification. To look at race is therefore also to look at sex and class. And further, to understand the power that is deployed to bring into being a sexed identity is also to look at the power that was used to bring into being a raced identity. With specific focus on queer sexuality, Siobhan Somerville's (2000) work has looked at how the very 'creation' of race was deeply implicated in the 'creation' of homosexuality in America. From a geographical perspective, such studies must subsequently point towards a need to see how the creation of particular spaces as sexed, raced or classed can help reinforce each other today.

Many of the above analytical frameworks can and have also been applied to South Africa and its history of racial designation, segregation and intolerance (Lester 2003). While the following chapters will outline in more detail the salient attributes of apartheid and earlier colonial regulation which go to inform queer visibilities, it is important here to first stress the enormous effect colonial and later apartheid policies have had on the citizens of the country in general. Many researchers in geography and from further afield have grappled with this issue, exploring, amongst other spatial topics, urban reconstruction and development post-apartheid in the face of apartheid segregation (Ashforth 1997; Bollens 1998a and 1998b; Christopher 1995; Robinson 1996 and 2004; Visser 2001), the great importance of the mining industry generally and the massive impact mining migration had on gender, capitalism, resistance and race (Campbell 2003; Crush 1994; Elder 2003; Hartwick 1998) and the strategies communities deploy in relating social memory and forgetting in light of draconian discrimination, violence and in some cases torture (Coombes 2004; Minty 2006; Nuttall and Coetzee 1998; Popke 2000). For many of these studies, the power of apartheid and its effect on people's lives was, and remains, its ability not only to define and name groups on social scales that placed fairer-skinned above darker-skinned individuals but also its ability to keep groups separated spatially, socially and culturally from each other. Clearly, there is nothing inherent about different individuals' places on such social scales. Instead, these categories were created through power and spatial regulation (Western 1981). Such power has continued to affect communities in South Africa today. In the South African case, space and spatiality therefore helped to make 'race' in the country, to the degree that race requires the separation of peoples into groups which in the process only went to reinforce ideological notions about race in the first place (Anderson 1987 and 1991; Mitchell 2000). As with different groups of queer individuals and their links to variants of heteronormativity, the creation of racialised difference has occurred through its very perception as distinct from the 'norm'. And as with queer individuals, communities today continue to feel the effect of the monumental lengths the state went to in attempts to legitimise itself and its race-based classifications and urban compartmentalisations.

Apartheid also operated at a number of scales. At the individual scale there was the regulation of (amongst others) buses, toilets and building entrances. At the wider urban scale, apartheid divided cities into different residential areas for different race groups (chapters 3 and 4). At the state level, 'homelands' were created for black Africans groups, which, together with the 'pass laws', helped regulate the settlement and movement of different racial groups around the country (chapter 4) (Bickford-Smith et al. 1999; Christopher 1994 and 2001; Western 1981). It was therefore this ability of apartheid planners to employ different spatial strategies at different scales that allowed the state to maintain formidable control over the different 'races' for such a long time. Indeed, as Jennifer Robinson (1990 and 1996) makes clear, apartheid was in large part able to exist because of its ability to *spatially* regulate its domination over different groups. Apartheid in this sense is an excellent example of how race and space work together. The hierarchy imposed by the state could only be maintained by its application through space. As Robinson points out:

The racial South African state survived for decades at least partly as a result of its ability to implement routine governance by means of what I have called the 'location strategy' . . . The power of apartheid, of the setting apart of racial groups, was therefore rooted in the spatial practices referenced in its very name: much more than simply an expression of a political order, the spaces of apartheid *constituted and sustained that order*. (Robinson 1996: 2, emphasis added)

Yet it is also telling that the South African state was very selective in the way it went about defining race. As chapter 2 will explore in more detail, 'English' and 'Afrikaners' were not always classified as different 'races'. Black African communities were however separated into different groups. This was part of a policy of 'divide and rule', separating black African communities into smaller groups to help maintain power with the white minority. Again, the artificiality of race, and Hall's attempts to deconstruct racial categories are highlighted. While there are linguistic and cultural differences between black African groupings, they were no more 'eligible' for different racial classifications than white groupings. Indeed, one need only look at the different political, colonial, economic, linguistic (and indeed spatial) histories of the English and Afrikaners in South Africa to see the grouping of 'white' as a highly artificial racial category (Deegan 1999; Douwes-Dekker et al. 1995; Dubow 1992; Giliomee 2003; Le May 1995; Welsh 1998).

Yet a debate about the construction of race as a category should not detract from the fact that it had real-world effects on groups in South Africa. As the following chapters will show, race has remained a defining

element in South African society, even after the end of apartheid. Yet in South Africa race itself has also always historically been strongly related to class (Elphick and Giliomee 1989; Worden 1985). And as Boraine et al. (2006) and Saff (1994 and 1998) point out today, political apartheid in South African cities in many cases has now been replaced with economic apartheid. This is apparent in cities such as Cape Town, where large numbers of individuals continue to live in the same environments they did during National Party rule. Some individuals, of course, have been able to move away from township locations and move into historically white-segregated areas of the city.¹⁴ These movements are indicative of a growing black African middle class in the major cities (Burgess 2002; Saff 1998; Southall 2004). Yet in Cape Town, the vast majority of black African and coloured individuals continue to live in the townships and certain areas of the Cape Flats (Bickford-Smith et al. 1999; Turok 2001; Western 2001).¹⁵ This study will therefore focus its attention on the overwhelming majority of black Africans and coloured queer men in Cape Town, who continue to live in the same spaces designated to them by the apartheid state. This is not to deny the real possibility of social change in South Africa – a change that would de-link (in Hall's terms, remove an articulation between) class and race in South Africa. Rather, it reflects that at present, the majority of black African communities in Cape Town are economically disadvantaged in relation to white communities, and spatially separate from the rest of the city (Spinks 2001).

Today in South Africa much emphasis is therefore rightly paid to attempts to address the social and economic imbalance between communities. Yet while conditions have slowly improved for many since the early 1990s, many others remain critical of the government's economic and social redistribution policies. In particular, concern has emerged over the lack of support for working-aged people trapped outside the formal labour market. Meanwhile white groups have continued to benefit from a massive human capital advantage (Seekings and Natrass 2005). The legacy of apartheid means that great effort will have to be applied for many decades if different communities are ever going to be able to interface with each other on anything approaching an equal footing. Indeed, even with continued attempts on the part of the ANC to bridge the economic and social gap between communities, concern and apprehension continue to linger (Lodge 1999 and 2002).¹⁶

The importance of queer visibilities therefore hopefully again becomes apparent. The quest to explore these visibilities is not merely one of queers' relationships to heteronormativity, but also of their relationships to each other. Race and sexuality combine here to offer two ways of examining these intra-group relationships. The first is an examination of the way different visibilities strongly associated with different racially-designated

communities were able to develop due to the way apartheid was able to compartmentalise and spatially contain groups. The second is an exploration of how these visibilities interface with each other and, at certain times and in certain spaces, come into conflict with each other. As already mentioned above, the quest for visibility is also affected by the way other groups have become visible. Some groups may inadvertently be kept politically or socially invisible while others gain visibility among heteronormative society. In a country such as South Africa, the legacy of racial classification and race-based discrimination, tied today to class-based discrimination, will directly affect the way group interactions augment or hinder particular visibilities.

Queer Visibilities in Cape Town

The complexities of such issues are well represented in a city such as Cape Town. As the nation's oldest city, Cape Town has come to represent a particular yet very important take on wider concerns within the country. A mixture of Khoi and San peoples, Dutch and then British settlers, black African labour and south east Asian labour have helped mould the area around Table Mountain and the surrounding aeolian sand flats into one of the most cosmopolitan and culturally diverse locations on the subcontinent. It is also an area strongly shaped by apartheid spatial planning. Even before the onset of formal apartheid after 1948, Cape Town had become concerned with housing and the locations that different communities could reside in within the city (Bickford-Smith 1995a).¹⁷ After 1948, National Party legislation such as the Group Areas Act, the Immorality Act and the Separate Amenities Act started to shape the layout of the city and the options 'white', 'coloured' and 'black African' communities had within it.¹⁸ While this was occurring throughout the country, Cape Town in particular was affected due to its large coloured population (chapter 3) and the pressing need of apartheid planners to attempt a reversal of black African urbanisation in the area of the country furthest away from any African 'reserve' (chapter 4). It was further conditioned by its historical image as the location of early European settlement and its strong ties to the British when compared to cities further north and east (issues that continue to uniquely define it in the present – chapter 2). Post-apartheid, the city has been tremendously successful at re-branding itself as one of the continent's premier tourist destinations – and as a city fully embracing its new image as a liberal and accepting paradise.

For many queers, Cape Town has therefore come to symbolise the most liberated and inviting location not only within South Africa but on the entire continent (chapter 2). But such imagery only goes to mask the reality

for the majority of those who live there. While Cape Town has pushed forward with new elite leisure and tourist developments such as the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront and the International Convention Centre, it also remains a fact that racial tensions and gross and enduring social, cultural and economic inequalities continue to define the city. A key justification for focusing on Cape Town rather than any other South African city is therefore the sheer disparity between popular representation of the city in relation to its liberated 'gay community' and the shocking reality for most of the queers who call it their home.

Indeed, it is also perhaps surprising that while detailed sexuality-based ethnographic studies have been conducted in other cities in the country, including some excellent work in Johannesburg (Donham 1998; McLean and Ngcobo 1995) and Durban (Louw 2001; Reddy and Louw 2002; see also the following chapters), no work has yet attempted to examine the complex and nuanced relationships between communities in one urban area. Further, while South African queer studies as a field has grown tremendously within the past several years, producing some excellent historical and political accounts of queer experiences of the lead-up to the political transition and its aftermath (De Waal and Manion 2006; Gevisser and Cameron 1995; Hoad et al. 2005; Krouse and Berman 1993; van Zyl and Steyn 2005) an attempt to read such experiences simultaneously through communities in one city has yet to occur. In Cape Town this is doubly troubling due to its continued representation as liberal and accepting towards diversity. Further, within Cape Town, besides the endeavours of William Leap (2003 and 2005), hardly any work has been conducted on the fastest growing group of queer men in the former black African townships. No research has attempted to examine black African queer intra-group dynamics in the city. The city's historical and geographical scars and contemporary dilemmas therefore represent fertile ground to see how communities understand each other because of apartheid and how they now try and relate to each other post-apartheid.

A study of queer visibility in Cape Town must consequently be seen both as a project that draws on geographical concepts of sexuality and race and also an attempt to offer a new perspective on work dealing with cross-cultural queer communities in post-colonial environments. It is an approach that draws inspiration from geographical studies that focuses on issues of transgression and appropriation of different environments. Yet it is also a study that moves away from some sometimes implicit assumptions about sexual identity, 'the closet' and somewhat unilateral ideas of development. At its core, it is a study focused most strongly on understanding how different groups have been able to overcome regulative ideas of sexuality associated strongly with variants of heteronormativity. Yet it is a study that does so by embracing the many different ways heteronormative regulation

manifests itself and the many different ways it can be overcome. In South Africa, this therefore also becomes a study of how racial classification affected different queer communities. It is of course not a study that attempts to reify these categories or to assume they are fixed. It is however a study willing to examine how communities themselves perceive the issue of race in the city and how they are willing to perceive each other. By taking visibility as a starting point, the project is therefore able to move in two different directions, both of which allow for broad appreciations of the factors that affect different communities. These directions are explored in the first and second parts of this book.

The first part of this book 'Visibilities', offers an opening up of ways of understanding different queer groups within the urban environment. Looking at visibility, and specifically the way visibilities are related directly to particular spaces, foregrounds the possibility of variation. In particular, it helps us to explore how racial classifications in the South African context may have helped these variations to develop. Further, visibility, as described above, includes an exploration of the way 'the closet' may or may not be implemented, but crucially, also allows for a broad contrast with identities that may relate to spaces in different ways than those traditionally posited on 'the closet'.

Each chapter in this first section will examine one of the three major 'race-based' communities in Cape Town today. As described in the last full South African Census, these communities are designated through the self-identifying terms 'white', 'coloured' and 'black African'. While, as discussed above, these terms carry with them a history of racial discrimination, they are nonetheless the most commonly used terms in South Africa and within Cape Town at present.¹⁹ Further, the (attempted) standardisation of these terms during apartheid directly affected the opportunities these queer communities had to develop both during and even after apartheid.

Chapter 2 focuses on white queer men in the city, examining in particular the important links between apartheid ideology towards 'non-whites' and discrimination against those implicated in the 'queer conspiracy' within the white community. It argues that this situation placed many white queer men in a uniquely handicapped position, both socially and politically. The inability, in particular, to develop a coherent political movement has helped keep many within the white queer community fractured in the years after the fall of apartheid. While Cape Town has been remarkably successful at developing its own urban 'gay space' in the 1990s, this space, in an apartheid-era white designated area of the city, has helped polarise white queer men. In particular, historical ethnic and spatial divides between 'English' and 'Afrikaners' have been augmented by the importation of a particular commodified form of queer expression with roots initially in urban spaces in Western cities which is itself directly related to issues of class. In such a

way, the visibility in urban space attained through the development of the De Waterkant gay village has gone to hide deep-rooted division amongst white queers. These divisions help call into question the popular representation of Cape Town as a liberated and accepting queer space – an issue that is returned to throughout this book.

Chapter 3 begins by exploring the historical development of the coloured community in Cape Town, travelling from the heart of the historically segregated white city to outlying areas of the Cape Flats – areas that are traditionally associated with apartheid forced relocation. It shows how the coloured racial category came to exist and how colonial and apartheid ideology positioned it between the ‘civilised’ and the ‘uncivilised’. It goes on to expose how these racist ideologies inadvertently gave working-class coloured queer men the opportunity to become visible within their communities through sustained and overt cross-dressing. The chapter also examines how gendered performances affect the construction of queer identities and compares cross-dressing queer men with the heterosexually-identified men that many of them have sexual relationships with. The precarious social position of coloured identity within South African society due to apartheid is further discussed in relation to the strongly enforced divide between middle-class and working-class coloured queer men. The historic aim of the middle class to ‘appear civilised’ and therefore remove themselves from a metaphorical and material space of ambivalence has led to a distancing from coloured cross-dressers. For many middle-class queer coloured men, cross-dressers were and continue to be a sign both of pre-modern sexual identities associated with cross-dressing and racially inferior social identities. This chapter therefore exposes how and why many middle-class coloured men look towards what they perceive as an overtly visible and commodified white queer culture in Cape Town as a model they should strive to emulate. However, this chapter goes on to critique the assumption that the type of visibility associated with the gay village in the city is supposedly sexually and racially ‘superior’. Both coloured cross-dressers and men who more readily frequent the gay village have achieved a ‘coming out’ within their respective communities. Yet the processes through which they have become visible represent different ways of appropriating hetero-normative space. These strategies are directly related to the way racist policies socially, politically and spatially positioned these two communities.

Chapter 4 explores the development of queer visibilities within the rapidly growing black African former townships in Cape Town. Focusing mainly on Xhosa communities, this chapter travels in a different direction out from the historically segregated white city, uncovering for the first time the unique strategies black African queer men have deployed to become visible and gain acceptance in sometimes hostile and dangerous environments. It begins by tackling current debates surrounding the ‘un-

Africanness of homosexuality' currently being propagated by black nationalist leaders. As supporters of Winnie Mandela have infamously stated: 'Homosex is not in black culture'. This chapter adds its voice to a growing body of work that argues that while a discrete heterosexual/homosexual binary (and certainly one located around 'the closet') cannot be uniformly mapped onto diverse African communities, visible displays of same-sex desire most certainly are and always have been in black African culture. Yet it also takes this argument further, by showing how apartheid ideology and spatial control not only limited the degree to which some black African communities could maintain a history of same-sex desire but also how the ending of apartheid has only increased homophobia within Cape Town's former townships. It therefore argues that the sudden ending of race- and sexuality-based discrimination in 1994 gave space for Xhosa queer men not only to become visible in particular ways but also that those visibilities, in turn, created widespread confrontations with the wider community.

This chapter then goes on to explore how current visible manifestations of queer sexuality in the townships have been influenced not only by continued homophobia but also by other communities in Cape Town. These visibilities are strongly geographically demarcated around 'social-nodal' structures, where individuals feel able to express themselves separately from a homophobic community. These visibilities were also directly influenced by post-apartheid interaction with other racially defined communities. When combined with sustained homophobia (which itself is often related to apartheid spatial and ideological controls) this chapter articulates in yet another way how race and sexuality are inextricably linked and how queer visibility interacts with diverse power relations in specific places.

The second part of this book, 'Interactions', focuses on the problems different queer communities might have in interacting with each other due to the different forms of visibility they deploy, or the underlying reasons why such visibilities may have developed. Concerns over social justice therefore now come more into focus. In some instances, these problems (and also queer possibilities) remain closely tied to issues of race-based classifications in the country and also to problems in the way some groups continue to view particular visibilities as the most progressive and 'enlightened' to the detriment of others.

Chapter 5 returns to the space of the gay village in Cape Town, first discussed in chapter 2, to see how other communities interface with it. While the space today is rightly represented as a relatively liberated space in comparison to, for example, some areas of the former townships, it also takes with it a history of race-based exclusion. These exclusions function both as a result of the way different communities have understood queer sexuality and been able to position themselves in ways that mark them out

as visible and distinct from heteronormative societies, and as a result of the factors that allowed different visibilities to develop in the first instance. These exclusions therefore help keep the diversity of queer life in Cape Town partially invisible. Further, the forcefulness with which these invisibilities are felt by some has led to calls of racism within the space of the gay village. This chapter therefore attempts to unpack the multitude of cross-cutting reasons that lead some to assume a racist undertone to this space. While this chapter does not attempt to deny the possibility of discrimination solely on the basis of skin colour, it also demonstrates how the situation is also a great deal more complex.

Chapter 6 moves away from purely social interaction and focuses both on political invisibilities and the possibility of queering the agendas of events and organisations because of increasing visibility of different communities. Taking the three examples of the local sexual health non-governmental organisation ‘Triangle Project’, Cape Town Pride and the recent same-sex marriage campaign, this chapter explores first the issue of community participation by laying out the different and sometimes conflicting needs various queer groups bring to Triangle Project and Cape Town Pride. Both the model of service provision traditionally offered by Triangle Project and the ideological history of Pride are shown not to mesh well with the needs of the vast majority of queers in the city. Questions as to how visibility itself has developed in the former townships – and how that visibility is understood by others – become central in understanding why this problem has occurred and how people are trying to solve it. As such, rather than simply ignore this issue, both Triangle Project and the organisers of Cape Town Pride have gone to great lengths to acknowledge not only diversity among queer groups but also wider unity. The unique methods deployed by both organisations over the past few years point towards broader solidarity and self-reflexivity among queer groups in service provision and Pride events than would appear to be the case socially in the gay village.

Yet while recent successes are indeed very encouraging, especially in light of the social isolation experienced just two decades previously, there are still distinct problems. The last part of this chapter therefore explores the issues faced by queer groups during the same-sex marriage debate – a debate that neatly epitomises many of the themes that run throughout this book. While successful, the marriage campaign also highlighted the deep-seated negative feelings among large sectors of South Africa’s population not just about same-sex marriage, but also queer lives in general. While many queer individuals are now permitted to marry, large numbers remain unable to, in no small part due to the very heightening of public feeling *against* queer life because of the marriage campaign. This chapter and this book therefore serve to point out not only the sheer diversity of queer lives and the sheer diversity of problems queers face – and the need for

researchers to take account of such diversity – but also the ease with which such diversity can become masked by the apparent freedoms queer South Africans are now meant to be able to enjoy.

Chapter 7 draws together the major findings of this book and attempts to show how many of them feed into a pressing need to examine these communities in relation to HIV prevention programmes. This final chapter therefore sets itself the task of exploring how an understanding of the diversity of queer visibilities in the city is vital to provide targeted HIV educational materials. The paucity of information specifically about the problems queer men face compounded with an inability to see how their identities are directly affected by the ways they have become visible in heteronormative spaces means that any education campaign is hampered in being able to directly address different groups' divergent needs. This is the ultimate cost of queer invisibility.

Some Notes on Methods

This book is the culmination of ethnographic and archive research begun in 2003 and completed in 2007.²⁰ It involved concentrated periods living amongst and getting to know different groups of queer men in the former townships, traditionally coloured areas of the Cape Flats and affluent areas of the historically white city. Over the course of several years I became known within these different worlds and found it possible to slowly come to understand how each community views itself and others. The description of the lives of individuals in the rest of this book are therefore the result of a long struggle to be accepted and trusted within different groups of men. The majority of interviews were conducted in English. However, where necessary, I was also assisted by a series of culturally attuned translators.

The choice of these communities and the choice to focus solely on male queer sexuality were not however arbitrary ones. The communities themselves were chosen due to the decision to focus on three 'typologies' of visibility, which are largely distinctive of developments within the three racially defined communities and the history of spatial location within the city. As the following chapters will explore, these three visibilities are conditioned around different appropriations of heteronormative space. It must however be stressed that these visibilities are not demarcated simply or neatly into different 'racially-defined' communities. Neither is this study claiming to have explored all forms of queer visibility among all groups of men in Cape Town. For example, I have not included men who self-identify as bisexual or transsexual men, among other possible topics. Instead, this study was driven by the desire to explore how difference is understood in

the different communities. Therefore, as Valentine (2005) would argue, the research findings in this study are *illustrative* of the way different groups understand male queer visibility, rather than *representative* of all types of visibility in all population groups.

Further, as numerous studies have shown, women's same-sex desires encompass a wide range of identities in different spaces and have been represented in different ways (Inness 1997; Rothenberg 1995; Valentine 1993). As mentioned above, work has focused on the sometimes different ways in which lesbians in the West have appropriated space and become visible. Other work has focused on the social, economic and political relationships between lesbians and gay men and HIV/AIDS (Gorna 1996; Patton 1994; Treichler 1999). All this work points to a complex set of intersections between the identities of queer men and women. In South Africa as elsewhere, such intersections remain strongly regulated through perceptions of patriarchy (Nast, 2002). As described above, I did not have the time or opportunity to do justice to this topic and hope that others can take up this important issue. There have indeed been some very intriguing and exciting developments within both queer and feminist scholarly work on women in South Africa (see Beffon 1995; Dirsuweit 1999; McClintock 1990; McEwan 2000 and 2005; Muthien 2005; Sam 1995; Swarr and Nagar 2003; Vimbela and Olivier 1995). There is therefore also a pressing need for future researchers to attempt a very important and indeed exciting study that explores the links between queer men and women in South Africa, both historically and in the present.

Notes on Form

The chapters in this study employ the following terms of definition:

- 'white', 'coloured', 'black African'

These terms are used to denote the different racially defined population groups in South Africa. They represent the terms used in the current South African Census.

- 'historically white city/CBD/City Bowl', 'coloured Cape Flats/outlying areas of the Cape Flats', 'black African townships/former townships'

These terms relate to the geographical areas under study in this book. As each chapter explains, these areas are not 'exclusively' the domain of one particular racially defined population group – and neither are they neatly bounded spatial regions. They further are not meant to imply a

re-inscription of binary oppositions between communities. Instead, they simply reflect the contemporary layout of the city, as illustrated in current census data. For simplification, these terms have been used to denote different groups and the communities they predominantly live in.

- ‘homosexual’, ‘gay’, queer’

As highlighted in this chapter, ‘homosexual’ functions directly as a very Western term in tandem with ideas of ‘the closet’. In this book it is therefore limited in use and referred to most often in terms of its application as a form of anachronistic identification – for example when discussing state, legal or nationalistic sanctioned discrimination against a ‘medicalised’ condition or state ‘threat’ or when exploring the argument that ‘homosexuality is unAfrican’. ‘Gay’ can be seen to work in a developmentalist framework as a ‘progression’ from ‘homosexual’ (see also chapters 2 and 3). As the following chapters explore, while originating within particular Western spaces (and still finding most purchase there) it also functions as a common (and sometimes ideologically un-tethered) word for broadly defined same-sex groups or projects. However its deeper ideological roots limit its application in this study among those with less overt links to the historical development of gay rights movements that emerged in certain sites in the West during the latter part of the twentieth century. As such, ‘gay’ will only be used when discussing such self-labelled entities as ‘gay villages’, ‘gay movements’, ‘gay rights’ or ‘gay pride’ – places, events or activities that clearly draw on this history (or when quoting individuals who use the term themselves as a shorthand for same-sex groups). As explained above ‘queer’ is used overwhelmingly to describe the same-sex groupings under study in this work.

- ‘heterosexual/homosexual binary’

The term is used to illustrate the creation and marking of sexual difference. This term should not be confused with the use of ‘homosexual’, above. It does not only refer to a Western construction of ‘homosexuality’, but rather the way different varieties of the binary can function and work to help regulate and reproduce variants of heteronormativity.

Interview extracts are indented in the following text, as are quotations and extracts from secondary data. For anonymous interviewees, a fictitious first name is given along with their real age at time of first interview. For example, ‘CRAIG/31’. This format, along with information about quotations provided in the following chapters, is intended to make it easy for the reader to distinguish between different respondents. For interviewees representing organisations or businesses, a full and correct name is given. A small

number of anonymous interviewees representing particular bars, clubs or events in Cape Town are listed with just a fictitious first name, for example 'MICHAEL'. My own questions, where deemed appropriate (for example, during focus group discussions as the conversation evolves), are labelled with my name, 'ANDREW'.

Lastly, where interview quotations have been truncated three full stops indicate the point of break in the conversation (. . .). Where a natural pause in the conversation occurred, either because the interviewee paused for thought or changed the direction of the conversation half way through a sentence, then a dash is used (-).