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15

The Problem of Identities The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Social Movement in South Africa

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IN 2000 A GROUP of lesbians was gang-raped as they left the official after-party of the Gay and Lesbian Pride march in Braamfontein. Euphemistically termed 'corrective rape', lesbians are often raped as a means of 'curing' them of their lesbianism. Recent research (Reid and Dirsuweit 2002) indicates that black lesbians and gay men in townships are particularly vulnerable to these types of corrective-rape incidents and may be subjected to them more than once in their lives. While the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) movement reacted with concern and condemned the crime, very little attention was given to the incident in the media. The most extraordinary aspect of the incident, however, is that it took place in a country that had just passed the most progressive constitution in the world with regard to gay rights.

These hate crimes are a critical hinge for this discussion on the LGBTI movement in South Africa for they highlight a number of factors that characterise the movement. The LGBTI movement in South Africa is small but has gained enormous ground with regard to the legal standing of gay citizens. At the same time, the movement has struggled to stabilise itself internally over the past ten years. LGBTI governance has not been exempt from painful exclusionary politics with tensions existing along race, class and gender fractures. However, together, this politics and a focus on getting the basic legal framework of South Africa aligned with its constitution has been of enormous benefit to those who have access to the institutions that enforce these rights. It has also meant that more vulnerable sections of the gay community have faced increasing

levels of violence related to their sexual lifestyle choices as the gay community becomes more visible. Recently, however, the social movement organisations (SMOs) that make up the movement have reflected on their position and value in poorer township communities and there has been a shift in focus to address the systemic violence that affects these communities on a day-to-day basis.

At the same time there are a number of lasting tensions that relate to how the LGBTI movement has been theorised: the conflicts between social consumption and political citizenship that have beset gay identity politics internationally have found their way into the LGBTI movement locally. This chapter will also explore tensions around the definition of the LGBTI movement in South Africa that respond to a theoretical question about how identity-based movements fit into broader-based struggles around distributional issues. The third lasting tension is exemplified in a comment made in an article by Jara and Lapinsky (1998: 55) that 'an authentic South African gay identity needs to be consciously constructed and that partisan choices need to be made'. The LGBTI movement, as with all identity-based movements, however, is marked by difference and how it deals with these differences is explored in this chapter.

Habermas (1981) first theorises a set of protest movements that do not fall within the ambit of traditional social protest motivated by distributional issues. Briefly, these movements do not have at their core issues of distribution, but rather are concerned with what Habermas terms 'the grammar and form of everyday life'. While Habermas writes very little on social movements, he has had extraordinary influence on the post-socialist left, particularly on issues of social justice and citizenship. At the core of these discussions is the call for the recognition of identity. A political and theoretical binary has evolved out of this call for inclusion of identity recognition as a means of understanding social protest. Often placed at odds with one another, the theoretical debate around recognition politics and distributional politics has raged. Fraser (1997: 3-4), however, critiques the split between recognition and distribution politics:

These, I maintain, are false antitheses . . . critical theorists should rebut the claim that we must make an either/or choice between the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition. We should aim instead to identify the emancipatory dimensions of both problematics and to integrate them into a single, comprehensive framework.

Arguing that 'economic injustice and cultural injustice are usually inter-imbricated so as to reinforce each other dialectically', Fraser (1997: 15) suggests that socialist economics combined with deconstructive identity politics provide a substantive model for the transformation of both cultural and social inequities. But Fraser also acknowledges that there is 'no neat theoretical move' that forms a critical theory of recognition and redistribution. She resolves the problem by presenting a *prima facie* match of the transformative politics of socialism with radical cultural deconstruction. Young presents a slightly different model of social justice that recognises both forms of politics, but emphasises that the acknowledgement of cultural difference is necessary to the promotion of social justice:

The achievement of formal equality does not eliminate social differences, and the rhetorical commitment to the sameness of persons makes it impossible even to name how those differences presently structure privilege and oppression (1990: 164).

Young suggests a radical democratic pluralism (which she is careful to clearly differentiate from liberal pluralism) that acknowledges and affirms social group differences as a means of ensuring their inclusion in social and political institutions:

Both liberal humanist and leftist political organizations and movements have found it difficult to accept this principle of group autonomy. In a humanist emancipatory politics, if a group is subject to injustice, then all those interested in a just society should unite to combat the powers that perpetuate that injustice. If many groups are subject to injustice, moreover, then they should unite to work for a just society. The politics of difference is certainly not against coalition, nor does it hold that, for example, white should not work against racial injustice or men against sexist injustice. The politics of group assertion, however, takes as a basic principle that members of oppressed groups need separate organizations that exclude others, especially those from privileged groups . . . In discussions within autonomous organizations, group members can determine their specific needs and interests . . . contemporary emancipatory social movements have found autonomy an important

vehicle for empowerment and the development of a group-specific voice and perspective (Young 1990: 167–8).

Fraser (1997) argues that while Young's model of social justice accounts for both aspects of the recognition-redistribution dilemma, it overemphasises the politics of recognition. In later work, however, Young (2002: 85), in taking issue with the notion that the politics of difference have 'splintered progressive politics into separatist enclaves', draws a distinction between identity and difference. Here she argues for a relational approach to social group differentiation – social groups are the sum of similarity and difference as they interact with endogenous and exogenous factors. In this way Young offers a definitional move that allows for a far greater potential to break down the binary between recognition and redistribution.

The recognition-distribution binary haunts the LGBTI social movement in South Africa and is confounded by the post-apartheid political landscape. Overwhelmingly, LGBTI SMOs in South Africa struggle between meeting both distribution and recognition needs and are profoundly ambiguous about how they are situated between the two. Gerald Kraak (1998: ii) summarised the dilemma soon after the inclusion of the equality clause in the constitution:

In South Africa, identity politics have been given impetus by the rights-based political culture that emerged after apartheid, and a constitutional order that protects a range of human rights. People have begun to organise to secure these . . . From a Marxist and socialist perspective, questions have also been asked about the effectiveness of identity politics because they minimise the importance of class struggle as a vehicle for change . . . This argument points to a potential contradiction of identity politics. In societies as divided as those of Southern Africa, can identity politics lead to change? . . . Marxists and socialists would argue that organisation based on identity is hostage to domination by the interests of the middle class.

The LGBTI movement is one of the few that can boast a pre- and post-apartheid history. Indeed it is this very history that forms the basis of many of the cleavages and theoretical tensions within the movement. The gay and lesbian lobby in South Africa found its roots in the mid-1960s. The subsequent history of the

LGBTI movement has become increasingly solidified in the accounts of gay activists (Gevisser 1994; Jara and Lapinsky 1998; Kraak n.d.); gay politics was dominated in the eighties by the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA). Gay and lesbian politics was firmly established as a white, predominantly male and middle-class form of activism (Gevisser 1994; Jara and Lapinsky 1998). A number of accounts exist of the bitter racial alienation experienced by black gay activists, notably in the case of Simon Nkoli, in predominantly white organisations and social spaces.

Thus, in the period leading to South Africa's political transition, the gay movement here was crossed by several persistent fault lines – the dominance of white middle class men (irrespective of political persuasion); a faltering black presence; and tension between organisations' social support and political roles (Jara and Lapinsky 1998).

Unlike gender, homosexuality failed to become a significant point of rally within the anti-apartheid movement (Gevisser 1994, 2000; Kraak n.d.). So a further fault-line should be added to Jara and Lapinsky's (1998) statement: while there were many gay anti-apartheid activists, gay politics came late to the political field. LGBTI issues eventually found a significant foothold within the ranks of the broad-based mass mobilisation of the anti-apartheid movement as exemplified by the United Democratic Front (UDF) and LGBTI rights were included in the ANC constitution in 1991. However, the long absence (or lack of recognition) of gay politics had an interesting consequence; while many organisations aligned themselves or distanced themselves from particular political discourse, apart from the small exceptional organisation (for instance, the Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Activists or OLGA), the LGBTI movement had not established a clear progressive political framework that could be considered, debated and revisited. Furthermore, the development of a complex debate on the positioning of progressive gay and lesbian politics in South Africa was further confounded by the general conservatism of the gay community.

Formed in 1994, the primary mandate of the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE) was the inclusion of the equality clause within the constitution. In the NCGLE leadership a number of anti-apartheid activists aimed to create an umbrella organisation to represent a broad band of lesbian

and gay (LG) organisations. For a time the NCGLE was enormously successful and many were awestruck by its greatest victory, ensuring the inclusion of gay rights in the equality clause of the constitution. At its peak, the NCGLE had over 80 organisations affiliated to it. After a number of victories in parliament and the courts, the movement turned its attention to the building and solidification of a LGBTI movement. It seems that at this point, the political expectations and the realities of lesbian and gay life were somewhat irreconcilable:

... the needs were to do with building a movement, a movement made up of cadres, made up of activists on the ground, addressing issues on the ground. We were not that. There were those expectations that we were that, but we were not that (Interview, Former Activist Leader, 2004).

Once it had achieved its primary mandate, the NCGLE began to encounter a number of difficulties. Many of the organisations affiliated to it were founded on the basis of a few social events. There was an enormous resource drain in terms of assisting organisations with funding and a competition to get funding developed between the different organisations despite the fact that 'it was never a consortium to feed the periphery with resources' (Interview, Activist, 2004). There was also a more generalised reason for the stresses on the organisation as 'South Africa experienced a massive imploding of the non-governmental sector' (Knoesen 2002). Many of the member organisations simply did not survive this process. Furthermore, a conflict within the movement about the political affiliation of NCGLE had developed:

... the NC[GLE] made a serious engagement to be as inclusive as possible. The range of organisations was from across the country, but what became clear over time was that such a coalition was really quite unsustainable. As the organisation grew, as it started developing networks and contacts with a whole range of progressive organisations that were not exclusively LGBT oriented, it reached a point where tensions were exposed. These tensions came out prior to the elections of 1999, in particular at an election forum organised by NC[GLE] in Pretoria which got quite heated (Interview, Activist, 2004).

In 1999, recognising that 'a more institutional approach within the progressive movement' was required, the NCGLE was restructured resulting in the Equality Project and the separation of the different organisations (Knoesen 2002, n.d.). Despite the problems of the NCGLE, LGBTI activists speak of the legal gains that the organisation made with deep respect. And as the older leadership of the NCGLE (many of whom are still prominent on the boards of the main organisations that make up the LGBTI movement in South Africa) gives way to a fresh set of leaders, the problems that the NCGLE encountered have been transformed into lessons:

I've heard from quite a few people that the coalition was too pushy as far as the politics go, and that that is not how an organisation should be. So I mean there were negatives to the coalition (Interview, Activist, 2004).

Post-NCGLE, one of the striking features of LGBTI politics is how few people are involved in them. Ironically, the inclusion of the equality clause in the constitution has resulted in a sense of lulled apathy within the LGBTI community.

Some of major battles had been fought and won . . . things were going quite smoothly, so there was a lot of apathy especially among people who thought everything was going fine for them (Interview, Activist, 2004).

Curiously, as the state continues to gain legitimacy within the LGBTI community with regard to its promotion of LGBTI rights, the everyday politics of homophobia have become secondary. A stasis has developed in the LGBTI politics worldwide in relation to increased acceptance of LG sexuality. It is a painful paradox that as the state introduces the institutions to establish and maintain gay rights, LGBTI members face increasing levels of homophobic violence. This violence, however, is more dominant in poorer communities and it is a bitter realisation for many that

. . . people aren't willing to go to rallies, to write letters, to do things because they think, well, I'm okay, so why should I bother. And the fact of the matter is I think those people are very narrow in their perception

of what their community is, because our community is much larger than what we see (Interview, Activist, 2004).

But the 'seeing' of this quote is critical for vulnerable LGBTI communities are also amongst the most hidden. In many instances apathy can be explained in terms of a lack of awareness. While there is some (scant) media coverage of corrective rape, following similar stories in the international media, online magazines and other media, they are saturated with stories regarding the recognition of LG marriages.

We're still in a situation where our rights are being advanced. So I think if we are ever in a situation where there was an attempt to push back those rights, then you would see the emergence of a social movement (Interview, Activist, 2004).

A more cynical view of apathy must, however, be entertained. This can be seen in terms of the LGBTI community being so fractured along lines of race, class, gender and sexual identity, and that one part of the community simply does not care what happens to other parts of the community.

Because of lots of legal successes in LGBTI issues, there is some sense of complacency, and it is not easy to mobilise people. Anger and opposition do wonders to bring people together, since there are issues to fight for, but these are now the very issues which divide . . . (Interview, Activist, 2004).

The Problem of Identities

Race

Racism has for a long time been a crisis within the LGBTI community. The experiences of racism of black gay activists in the eighties have continued to plague the gay community, particularly in social clubbing spaces where there has been a long history of racism. Nkoli related his experiences of alienation at the one white club that would allow him entry during the eighties (Gevisser 1994) and in April 1993 the Association for Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians (ABIGALE) picketed outside the club Strawbs in protest of their racist exclusions (Gevisser 1994). Recently, a club was taken to the equality court with regard to their racist entry policies by a group of Cape Town LGBTI members. The court

founded in favour of the group and the club was asked to apologise to the people concerned. The money that was given to the group by the club was used to set up a new organisation (*Siyazenzela*) in May 2004. In the July 2004 edition of the gay newspaper *Exit* yet another appallingly racist incident in the LGBTI community was reported. Furthermore, in many instances racism has a far more subtle manifestation:

... gay places are very dominated by white males. And even if it's not directly said that black people can't come in – the whole culture, the whole feel of it is extremely exclusionary. I feel excluded from it – it's not a free and open space for everyone (Interview, Activist, 2004).

There is this sort of underlying racism and I think when it comes to Pride that is extremely pronounced (Interview, Activist, 2004).

The response of the LGBTI movement has ranged from allowing the issue to turn the movement in on itself to an extracted apathy:

... the fact that race and class was an issue was denied by many. That was a very big problem (Interview, Activist, 2004).

While many of the interviewees described racism within the community, few could provide an adequate explanation apart from 'you can't expect the issues which apply to society not to apply to lesbian and gay society. But I think they do more or less apply everywhere' (Interview, Activist, 2004). Racism within the LGBTI community, however, seems to be particularly blatant and vicious and it is very perturbing that these incidents should be encountered in the social spaces of the gay community for these act as the 'bonding-agents of community – the sports clubs, counselling centres, religious groups, bars, clubs and social networks' (Gevisser 1994). Sexual identity in South Africa cuts across a vast range of difference and draws it into small social networks and an even smaller number of social spaces that not only reflect broader tensions in South Africa, but also make them more potent. What makes racism within the LGBTI community more poignant (and indeed may even explain the vociferousness), however, is that the general rejection and lack of affirmation most LGBTI people experience in broader society is re-enacted through racial prejudice.

Class

Coupled to race is the issue of class as a dominant weakness in the LGBTI community. Class prejudices have surprised many of the activists within the LGBTI community, but as the black middle class has grown in the past ten years so classist dynamics have appeared and become solidified.

But, we're at the point now where sexual orientation is no longer what unifies us. We're so happy that we are all gay, but after a while – there is a divide that is not only racial. When I look at the guys, how many choose groups to hang out at a social, students will be together – [they form groups around] race and class (Interview, Activist, 2004).

White clubs in Pretoria are racist, that you can know. Even to the extreme level of . . . if you are black and you have Diesel on you can come in but if you are black and you are a bit poorer it's a different issue (Interview, Activist, 2004).

. . . many black lesbians that won't assert don't have that power. The ones who do have the power tend to . . . kind of merge into the white lesbian community. So, you'll have your yuppie type, your educated, they have good jobs . . . But there's a divide between them and the lesbian who lives in Hillbrow or Yeoville or the townships . . . you have your type, your middle to upper/middle professional – educated – and they don't really mix . . . (Interview, Activist, 2004).

Class dramatically skews the experiences of LGBTI people:

I think there are huge numbers of . . . economically active, happy middle-class gay and lesbian couples, for example, who consider that they have all the rights they need and that there is no more to do. There is no more struggle, there's no more changes to be made . . . (Interview, Activist, 2004). . .

The experiences of operationalising gay rights in working-class and middle-class communities are different. In one of the interviews, an activist claimed that class also skewed the ways in which activism was perceived. Specifically, outreach strategies were criticised for being too superficial in their approach:

. . . they are liberals; declaring love to a black person is sufficient; or black people who are liberals themselves . . . (Interview, Activist, 2004).

Here the smoothness around the activist strategies described earlier in the chapter may indeed be less coherent than it appears. While the strategies of economically empowering poorer LGBTI communities are similar, the meaning and intention of empowerment in terms of class politics may be very different.

Gender

Women are well represented on most of the boards of the different organisations, but gender inequalities occurred at the intersection of race, class and gender. Black lesbians are not well represented on the boards of the different SMOs and lesbians from poorer communities are rare indeed.

There's visibility, which is another big issue for black lesbians. They're not visible in the movement. We're not visible in women's organisations and we're not visible in the LGBT organisation. So, that's a big issue (Interview, Activist, 2004).

Once again LGBTI social spaces were the focus of a number of exclusionary incidents:

All the clubs in Braamfontein are owned by white gay men. So, any kind of space that we could claim is controlled by white gay men . . . We don't want black women here; it's just that the posters that you have on the wall is the language that you speak, the music that you play, it excludes black lesbians, you know (Interview, Activist, 2004).

Strategically, two approaches emerged from the interviews. The Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW) emphasises the economic empowerment of lesbians coupled with an increased sense of confidence and entitlement.

. . . space, I think, is something that comes with power and black lesbians don't have power in South Africa, they don't have power in the LGBT movement. And that's power from a purely economic point of view. Economic I suppose, social power if you define social power as having

the self-confidence to go out there and claim things, which comes with economic power, it comes with education, it comes with independence. And many black lesbians that won't assert don't have that power (Interview, Activist, 2004).

The Equality Project endorsed this approach, but in line with their broader strategies emphasised the building of alliances with the broader South African feminist community:

On a very personal and basic human level, there is an opportunity for specifically black lesbians to form some kind of strong movement in this country with an alliance with other women's organisations – or other heterosexual women individuals who are working in these organisations – and I think there is room, and an absolute need, for that . . . (Interview, Activist, 2004).

One of the strengths of the LGBTI movement is its increasing recognition of and commitment to the needs of black lesbians. There is also a strong commitment to empowering working-class black lesbians and to, in the long term, increasing the presence and visibility of black women within leadership structures in the LGBTI movement. More importantly, these commitments find their way into the daily praxis of the different organisations through regular workshops, training opportunities and social events.

Sexual Identity

At the centre of the LGBTI movement are the rights of lesbians and gay men. The bisexual, transgender and intersex part of the movement, however, receives little attention. In alignment with international trends, the South African LGBTI community has recently added the intersex 'i', but there was little by way of lobbying for the rights of intersex people. Notably, the Equality Project was integral in reforming the law in terms of recognising transgender, transsexual and intersex people in the form of the Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act No. 49 of 2003 (Equality Project 2004). But apart from the odd support group for transgender people, there is very little by way of active organisation around these communities. Within the LGBTI community, these sexual identities are abjected by those who see themselves as the normal gay

majority. The response to media coverage of Pride (which generally focuses only on drag queens) is very often one of anger that more 'normal' gays and lesbians are not shown in the media more often.

At every single Gay Pride event there are our transsexuals that do parade and I have no problem with that . . . some people of the community might have . . . but there's place for all of us. It's the bisexual, lesbian, gay, transgendered and intersexed community . . . and the media has focused on the wrong side of the gay community . . . I mean that's not what we're all about (Interview, Activist, 2004).

. . . if we look at our mission, lesbian and gay comes first, transgender comes second (Interview, Activist, 2004).

. . . because I think that for anyone at the moment, in the organisation, to understand transgendered issues . . . that would be wrong. What needs to happen is transgendered people need to be brought on board in some sort of organisational way . . . (Interview, Activist, 2004).

A number of enclaves exist within the South African LGBTI community. On the face of it, it often appears that sexuality simply is not enough to weave these sub-cultures of the LGBTI community together. Indeed, should one even speak of an LGBTI community in the singular?

Identity is not enough, as a gay man I don't necessarily have much in common with others who share my identity as such (Interview, Activist, 2004).

However, in itself the existence of these differences within the community is potentially a strength. Enabling a cross-section of people from different communities to organise around a set of issues is a powerful political tool. But perhaps this vision of inclusivity is naïve:

Identity politics – the real issues are not so much identity issues, as access to services and resources, and about how do the poor get access to the law. These are not easy issues to fit into identity (Interview, Activist, 2004).

There is a powerful perception within the LGBTI community that there is a split between identity needs and socio-economic needs and the movement is actively shaping itself to meet the needs of the most vulnerable within the community. To a large extent, the politically active community has abandoned the issues of race, class, sexism and intolerance of sexual difference within the broader LGBTI community. However, there is a real danger that a culture of isolationism could develop within the LGBTI community. Examples of well-established LGBTI movements internationally show that LGBTI communities are beset with cleavages around these weak points. However, for the LGBTI movement to strengthen, a culture of inclusivity needs to be established. To go back to the introduction of the chapter, at the core of this issue of inclusivity is that both distributional and recognition issues are of equal importance. There is still an open theoretical discussion then as to how these two needs should be forged.

Consumers and Citizens

Both the international and local literature on LGBTI movements identify the tensions between the social and the political aspects of gay organisations (Kriesi 1995). In Gevisser's (1994) documentation of the emergence of the LGBTI movement in South Africa, this has been one of the key dilemmas troubling the LG movement in South Africa from its inception:

But while most white middle-class gay people stay away, so too do most black working-class gays and lesbians. And this points, most strongly, to the dilemma in which current progressive lesbian and gay politics now finds itself: its expressly liberationist ideology alienates the conservative white gay subculture while its expressly political profile does not take directly to the interests of recently unclosetted gay men and lesbians from the townships who need social space and support (Gevisser 1994: 82).

As the LGBTI community in South Africa has developed in a dispensation that promises legal freedom, and as it has been introduced to global trends, these politics have become far more complex. One of the defining (and certainly the most public) features of the LGBTI community has been a culture of conspicuous consumption of gay signifiers, hence the excitement over the potential of the pink rand. In this conspicuous consumption lies a conundrum about the form

and content of LGBTI activism. Activism in its more classical formation finds its expression in a series of advocacy and protest actions against the state and hegemonic structures. In gay politics, however, this form of political action is often less apparent.

In South Africa the state is clearly in alignment with the principle of ensuring LGBTI rights, and gay politics is increasingly about shifting homophobic hegemonic discourse. The face of gay politics in South Africa, however, is increasingly most visible in a series of spectacle events in which conspicuous consumption is displayed. Key examples of this are the Mother City Queer Project which hosts an annual themed costume party and the Gay Pride event which, like similar events in New York and Sydney, has increasingly shifted from being a political march to a festive Mardi Gras. This emphasis on the conspicuous consumption as a means of affirming identity, and by extension asserting LGBTI cultural identity, is the basis of a conundrum in which the politics of consumption and the politics of production and counter-hegemony jostle to achieve a similar political end. Aldridge (2003: 100) summarises the tensions within the conundrum:

Citizenship is presented as a means of escape from the evil of passivity. Citizens are actively engaged in public life, whereas stupefied customers wallow or flounder in private enclaves. Obsessed with their needy worries about service delivery, consumers are childishly ignorant of political and economic realities . . . What consumers want is a fix: a better service now. The citizen, in contrast, is aware that these symptoms have complex causes . . .

Nevertheless, within South African LGBTI politics, conspicuous consumption has drawn far more people into the project of affirming and asserting LGBTI identity. As Aldridge's (2003) quote suggests, this type of consumption has certainly split the LGBTI community into political activists and gay consumers (or as they are more commonly called: muscle marys). Similarly a divide has developed between those who apolitically consume and those who are politically engaged in the community.

A case in point is the transformation of the annual Gay Pride march from a political protest event to a commercial endeavour. Gay Pride is a key event for the gay community and provides a forum for activism as well as self-identification.

The first Gay Pride march left from Braamfontein in the inner city of Johannesburg on 10 October 1990. The first marches were clearly a forum for gay and lesbian activism, lobbying for the recognition of gay and lesbian rights in the changing political landscape of South Africa. With the inclusion of gay rights within the constitution, Gay Pride changed its name from 'march' to 'festival'. This transformation is not unique to South Africa; the politics of consumption has transformed Pride marches worldwide. Subsequently, LGBTI social movements have struggled with the ambiguity of Gay Pride. Pride in South Africa has been particularly fraught with a series of bitter politics and power struggles.

... when you read the papers the following Monday morning, and the lesbian and gay community is presented as the slim, beautiful, white gay boys. And that's all that people see. And it's just the wrong picture. The majority of people in this country are black – it then makes sense that the majority of lesbian and gay people will be black. And Pride doesn't bring that out. It continues on an exclusionary route that it has taken in terms of restricting people even to parties – after-parties for Pride (Interview, Activist, 2004).

The reason for this huge shift is that over the years there has been the enormous stress that Pride presents for the organisers of the event. Pride has consistently run at a loss, except in 2001. It also is a thankless task with bitter personal and political struggles amongst the members of the committee – many of whom leave, with only a few remaining to continue the organisation of the event. Interviewees also reported minimal interest and support from the different LGBTI SMOs. In 2002, an entrepreneur registered Pride as a closed corporation (Pride Communications) and began to treat the event as a commercial spectacle. With this change in organisation management, the route of Pride was shifted from the (poorer and much maligned) inner city to the affluent northern suburbs and has taken place there since. On the one hand, the shift was necessary for the promotion of sponsorship from a conservative business community. On the other hand, this was a moment when the power of consumption politics clearly overwhelmed the workings of community politics. The changing of the route has carved out the two spheres of the LGBTI community and placed them into powerful relief:

. . . I wrote some sort of letter to Exit, for a lot of people from township communities for example, they walk the streets of Soweto every day, taking a risk, because they face homophobia from their communities. And all we're asking people is to take one day to walk downtown, with 12 000 other gay people so the risk is minimal, but that is what they said. It was unsafe to go downtown. Well, its unsafe to be a lesbian or gay person living in a township community, you expect those people to do that every day, you can't do it for one single day to show your solidarity (Interview, Activist, 2004).

People may say that we go past businesses and we're not going past people we want to get the message to, but what is the message at the end of the day that we want to get across . . . (Interview, Gay Business involved in Pride, 2004).

For South Africa and the establishment of post-apartheid progressive politics, Pride is an extraordinary case study because it highlights many of the tensions that SMOs experience in terms of their role in the transformation of South African socio-economic dynamics into those that provide social justice to a broad range of interest groups. In this case, the crisis of legitimacy does not lie with the state; the state in many respects is highly productive in the delivery of gay rights. There is rather a tension between different parts of the community about who may speak for the community and where the power of the community lies. These tensions are raised within SMOs with regard to the terms upon which a social movement could legitimately represent the needs of the LGBTI community.

However, the politics of consumption may be a bit more complex. Aldridge (2003: 102) draws our attention to the political potential of the *radically conspicuous* consumption of culturally weighted signifiers, ' . . . consumption, for them, is a vehicle of liberation and self-expression . . .' Therefore, radically conspicuous consumption makes use of the power of the fun economy of late capitalism to achieve recognition and affirmation of identity through social networks (whether they be physical or virtual). At first glance, albeit unintentional, this is an ostensibly powerful form of activism. However, those who are excluded from or those who choose not to be a part of the economy are subsequently deeply peripheralised through a combination of a lack of

community acceptance, a lack of access to institutional justice, and economic constraints to entering consumption culture. Furthermore, in its current form, the social relations within the platforms of radically conspicuous consumption reinforce bitter racial, gender and class cleavages within the LGBTI community. There is, however, a complex discussion around legitimacy here for many seek the sense of community that the social spaces of consumption provide.

Movement Politics

Is this a Movement?

While the LGBTI social movement is young, it is apparent that some thought has gone into theorising the movement politically. A lot of this thought, though, has been centred on finding a defining model of social movements that the SMOs can work towards fulfilling, and while LGBTI politics fulfil Habermas's criteria for a social movement, many of the SMOs have sought to model themselves on a more classical Marxist model of coalition politics. Subsequently, many of the leaders in the movement do not define their organisations and the role of their organisations as that of being a social movement.

It took some time for people to realise you can't be in this work and not be political. The movement is moving towards the left. I think it is an emerging movement, I don't think it's ever been a movement. It may yet become one (Interview, Former Activist Leader, 2004).

At the same time it must be recognised that alliance-building strategies, while promoting the socio-economic empowerment of the most vulnerable portions of the LGBTI community, may result in the needs of the LGBTI community being peripheralised:

A movement is what you would see as a strict Marxist revolutionary movement. With some movements your goal is to create a majority. But some movements you can't, you'll always be a structural minority. You may get some support from that majority but you are not part of that majority, I don't think. I think that some movements sort of have a . . . populist movement . . . I don't know, this is a decidedly unpopular movement (Interview, Activist, 2004).

Establishing the LGBTI Movement

The key resource-oriented challenges that the LGBTI movement faces are leadership and funding. Many of the SMOs interviewed were well funded, but there was some concern about how to sustain funding in the long term, particularly since most of the funding was received from foreign donors. A small portion of funding was received from internal funding structures such as the national lottery, but very little funding was received from the LGBTI community itself. In the past, many of the organisations engaged in unhealthy competition to secure funding. However, it was noted that since SMOs received funds generously from funders, a lot of the tensions that had beset the movement had become diluted. Furthermore, many of the funding organisations also provided a development framework for the different organisations for SMOs that also had a positive effect on the way in which the movement was developing.

... the healthy component of that is that you need to look very hard at what you do and what is special about what you do. And grow that. You need to be selling, to some extent, a unique product, or if you're not, you need to be working in collaboration with others, rather than against others. And that is the healthy part of it, I think, you've got to continuously re-check yourself, you've got to be relevant, you've got to be doing what you do well and you've got to be able to prove it (Interview, Activist, 2004).

Funders have a lot of say in the way the LGBTI movement develops and for the most part the funders' vision and intervention was beneficial: 'What I would like to see as a consequence of the intervention is an actual, visible and organised black lesbian and gay community' (Interview 2004). While this type of clarity carried through the different organisations and their endeavours, sometimes activists expressed anxieties about the reaction of funders to increasing the scope of their organisations into economic development work and indeed this was the cause of some tension within organisations.

The dissolution of the NCGLE left a vacuum of well-connected, seasoned political leadership in the LGBTI movement:

... there's been quite a large shift ... when I first arrived there were some very heavyweight people working in lesbian and gay activism, with

very good connections to unions and political parties and government. It seemed a lot more solid (Interview, Activist, 2004).

There was no real leadership initiative, since the organisation was very tied to the individuals who were there and making things go (Interview, Activist, 2004).

Many of the leaders of the NCGLE sit on the boards of the different organisations, but see their participation in the different organisations as receding:

I think there is space for new leadership to emerge. Now organisations which are there, the subjective factor has to come in that way, whereby we get a core of comrades, who can think about where the movement should be going, about how the movement should be built. [Older activists] have a role to play but I think we need to give space to new people. Otherwise you end up with dinosaurs (Interview, Activist, 2004).

The new generation of post-1999 leaders have expressed a number of anxieties about their youth and their lack of experience, while at the same time recognising that their presence within the different organisations had freshened approaches to LGBTI activism, as well as providing the different organisations with a greater range of flexibility:

We're not all experienced. And I think that also if you look at current leadership in organisations, although the current leadership does have some history, we're very young – extremely young . . . If you look at the idea that these are the leaders within the actual NGO sector within a particular movement . . . There is a kind of an alarm bell . . . we're an extremely young group of leaders, facing a particularly difficult piece of work . . . (Interview, Activist, 2004).

In terms of strategising to continue establishing and growing the LGBTI movement, again there emerged two subtly different understandings of the roles of the SMOs and the activists in them. In the first instance there is an emphasis on the formation of an allied popular movement and drawing on this allied community as a means to strengthen the LGBTI movement:

LGBT issues are not hugely popular, and the way to become seen as legitimate is by how you get involved in other human rights struggles and how you position your work as part of broader issues. Pre-1994 was a lesson; there were broader issues which caused change. Now there is an isolationism developing (Interview, Activist, 2004).

For me the question is, is there a need for a movement? Speaking to some activist friends of mine, who are not necessarily from the lesbian and gay community, I have come to the conclusion that a strict lesbian and gay movement is not going to work . . . If any kind of social movement that will deal with sexual orientation issues will be formed, it's going to be much broader than homosexuality (Interview, Activist, 2004).

The second position is in general agreement with the strategy of alliance building, but approaches it from a position of needing to settle, strengthen and grow the LGBTI movement first. Another activist spoke of equating the issue of orientation with issues such as poverty, and even suggested that gay and lesbian issues should be presented as 'greater' than other issues (Interview, Activist, 2004).

Within this particular narrative of how a progressive LGBTI social movement should develop were also some concerns about how one maintains an inclusive culture drawing upon the richness of the LGBTI community:

. . . there is no one gay identity, though society often sees it as one . . .
(Interview, Activist, 2004).

We have to be less interventionist and rather allow it to grow . . .
(Interview, Activist, 2004).

. . . so I think it's very important that we start on a civil movement and an inclusivity campaign . . . (Interview, Activist, 2004).

There is strong agreement within the LGBTI movement around its objectives: there is a clear sense that the needs of vulnerable LGBTI communities have to be addressed. The LGBTI movement has moved past a simple call for recognition into a call for socio-economic justice. In order to achieve this objective, the

LGBTI movement has identified the need to form linkages with other social movement groups that are not primarily concerned with LGBTI politics. This may take the form of coalition politics or it may take the form of a looser set of strategic partnerships or consultative forums. Furthermore, some of the organisations within the LGBTI movement may make firmer alliances than others. While critical for the ongoing growth of the LGBTI movement, these linkages will effectively intensify the recognition-redistribution dilemma as the movement asserts its position within broader social movement politics, particularly since the recognition work of the LGBTI movement is not complete.

There are simply no clean political solutions to the messy matrix of LGBTI internal and external politics. These can only be managed in a responsive manner that allows for a flexible and relational accounting for changing exogenous and endogenous factors. In the last ten years the LGBTI movement has claimed a substantive political and social space within post-apartheid democracy. To maintain this position and to open up further space, there is one overarching challenge: the continued strengthening of the movement internally so that it is able to assert itself as an important actor in a stronger democracy.

But the measurements for that is not going to be in the number of counselling centres that we see around the country, but, in a general sense, how much pride we see in the gay and lesbian community. Movement: a sense of voices, that we see them in the media, that there's a sense of, presence . . . (Interview, Activist, 2004).

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Interviews

Research participants have been assured anonymity. No interview list is provided as a result of the sensitivity of interview content, and for the protection of research participants. This is to prevent any possibility of the speakers' identities being deduced by linking statements quoted in various parts of the text.