

Struggles of authenticity

**Gays' and lesbians' experiences of being closeted
in the workplace during transition
to constitutional equality in South Africa**

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In loving memory of my sister Christine
19/03/75 – 01/01/98

For my family
with faith that courage will guide them

University of Cape Town

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Abstract

This case study aims to explore the experiential world of gays and lesbians who keep their sexual orientation secret from colleagues and superiors in the workplace. The study also considers the impact of the transition to constitutional equality for gays and lesbians in South Africa on the participants' occupational lives. Qualitative data were acquired from two sets of in-depth semi-structured interviews, conducted with four subjects in 1994 and again with the same subjects in 1996. Themes derived through phenomenological analysis are considered in the light of existential-analytic psychological theory. The exploration reveals that, within patriarchal work environments that remain homophobic despite the constitutional provision for gay and lesbian equality, openness about sexual orientation requires considerable courage. Findings suggest that in these environments, gays and lesbians may be classified as *dirty*, *diseased others*. Through discriminatory acts of distortion, patriarchy attempts to dominate such others, and, with ultimate contempt, even to deny their existence. Gays and lesbians internalise general societal prejudice and discrimination against them. In their response to homophobia in the workplace, participants employed elaborate measures to safeguard themselves and pass as heterosexual. Their passing elicited guilt feelings, an implicit recognition of inauthenticity, and other indicators of neurosis, such as increased loneliness, isolation and feelings of estrangement. These manifestations were the consequence of participants' distortive attempts to create security where none could be guaranteed because of the contingent nature of human existence. To the extent that their concealment failed to bring security and reduce neurotic anxiety, it could be considered a flight from freedom. Passing left participants feeling invisible and inaudible, so that they existed as counterfeit images of themselves in inauthentic relationships with their colleagues. In this way, gays and lesbians as a group already isolated contribute to their own marginalisation. Nevertheless, constitutional guarantees in some cases increased feelings of power and security in that legal recourse had become possible in the event of intolerable, blatant discrimination. It is clear that the victory of constitutional equality was merely the beginning of a long struggle towards achieving this equality in practice. The recognition of equality grants gays and lesbians freedom, but also implies responsibility to advance courageously. The opportunities offered by the Constitution therefore represent a call to authenticity.

Chapter 1: Introduction

On 27 April 1994, South Africa held its first democratic elections, which culminated in the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the country's first black president. On this day, a new constitution came into effect that made provision for freedom, human rights and dignity for all. Among the millions of people rejoicing throughout the country were the nation's gays and lesbians, who for the first time in world constitutional history (De Vos, 1995) were formally recognised by a state as equal to other citizens.

Before the country's transformation to democracy, the apartheid state not only sanctioned prejudice against gays and lesbians, but encouraged this by categorising them as criminals and using discriminatory legislation to persecute them (Cameron, 1993). This, as well as the antipathy towards them that was – and remains – widespread in society, drove many of them to lead lives of secrecy in which they hid their sexual identity from friends, family and colleagues.

This phenomenological case study examines such hidden lives in the workplace. It aims to explore the experiential world of gays and lesbians who keep their sexual orientation secret from colleagues and superiors. With the use of two sets of data, acquired from interviews in 1994 and 1996 respectively, the study also considers the impact of the transition to constitutional equality on the participants' lives. In particular, the focus is on gays and lesbians who have come out¹ in their private lives, but remain closeted² in the workplace for reasons such as fear of discrimination.

Section 1.1 of this introduction will sketch the constitutional changes that affected the legal status of gays and lesbians in South Africa in general (1.1.1) and in the workplace in particular (1.1.2), in order to provide the background against which the material of this study can be considered.

This will be followed in chapter 2 by a review of psychological literature, which will demonstrate a disconcerting lack of qualitative research on this topic.

As a result of the dearth of research and therefore theory about experiences of closetedness in the workplace, an established theory, that of existential-analytical psychology, was selected as a potentially useful framework for understanding these relatively unknown experiences. This framework will be briefly introduced in chapter 3, with mention of related theoretical ideas that proved useful for understanding the relevant phenomena.

As a further consequence of the under-researched nature of the field, this study was undertaken as an exploratory-descriptive venture. Chapter 4 provides an outline of the phenomenological method that was applied to do this in a manner that obtained psychologically rich protocols revealing closeted gay and lesbian employees' daily lived-worlds.

¹ The term *out (of the closet)* refers to a gay, lesbian or bisexual person who acknowledges his or her sexual orientation to others (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992, p. 248). Many gays and lesbians are out to only a few others, such as close friends, while other homosexuals may disclose their orientation more widely. *Coming out* refers to the process of acknowledging this identity to oneself and subsequently disclosing it to others.

² Being *closeted* refers to a person "who has, or who is thought to have homosexual tendencies, and who has not acknowledged them" (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992, p. 248) to him- or herself, and/or to others.

The findings of the study will be presented in conjunction with a theoretical discussion in chapter 5. Because the phenomena under discussion have not yet been described adequately in the literature, in this chapter particular emphasis will be placed on description by means of illustrative quotes from participants' protocols.

In conclusion, the most significant implications of the study for facilitating openness about sexual orientation in the workplace will be considered, as well as suggestions for urgent further study.

1.1 The legal status of gays and lesbians in South Africa

1.1.1 The Constitution

1.1.1.1 Constitutional provision for equality

The Constitution (Act 200 of 1993) that came into effect on election day 1994 was an interim measure. Subsequently, the democratically elected Constitutional Assembly (CA) conducted negotiations to write a final constitution. These negotiations built on the spirit of democracy and freedom embodied in the interim constitution and led to the adoption of South Africa's final constitution (Act 108 of 1996) on 8 May 1996.

The protection of fundamental rights, for which both interim and final constitutions provided, was a significant departure from the tricameral apartheid constitution (Act 110, 1983). One of these rights is the right to equality. An intensive lobbying campaign led by the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE), an affiliation of more than 74 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered organisations throughout South Africa, directly resulted in the explicit extension of the right to equality for all, regardless of sexual orientation (Jara, 1996).

A small number of activists lobbied political parties and members of the CA, mobilised 7 032 gays and lesbians to make submissions to the CA, and organised a petition with about 13 000 signatures in favour of inclusion of what became known as the Equality Clause (Hayward, 1996). Several prominent people sent letters of support to the CA, including the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Dr Desmond Tutu. Urging the CA to include the clause, he wrote, "It is indisputable ... that people's sexual nature is fundamental to their humanity" (Equality: News and Views of the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality, May, 1996, p. 3).

The clause, section 9 of the Bill of Rights in the 1996 constitution, states:

(3) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, *sexual orientation*, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth (*italics added*).

(4) No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3).

This crucial advance for South African gays and lesbians is part of a greater world-wide transformation. In only a quarter of a century, gays and lesbians have been transformed from "a people nearly universally pitied to a new political force" (Cruikshank, 1992, p. 190) with a group identity. It was 25 years ago, on June 27, 1969, that a police raid of a gay bar, the Stonewall Inn, "unleashed the fury of those no longer

willing to be victims” (p. 3). This was the symbolic starting date of the gay liberation movement, which, according to Cruikshank, is having a major impact on the dominant culture in the 1990s.

1.1.1.2 Legal reform

The adoption of the Constitution set in motion a process of massive reform to bring all the country's legislation into line with constitutional stipulations. However, despite the constitutional gains for gays and lesbians, discriminatory laws from the previous regime remained in effect at the time of this study. After the introduction of the Constitution, it still took four years for sex between consenting males in private to become legal. On 8 May 1998, Justice Jonathan Heher of the Johannesburg High Court declared unconstitutional a number of common-law and statutory provisions criminalising such conduct (Naidoo, 1998).

However, the Marriage Act (Act 25 of 1961), which does not allow members of the same sex to marry, remains on the statute books. As a result, gays' and lesbians' permanent domestic partnerships are not recognised for the purposes of partner benefits regarding, inter alia, immigration, tax, insurance and intestate inheritance, and gay people cannot adopt a child as a couple (Sawyer, 1998).

Events leading to the decriminalisation of sex between men indicate that other constitutional challenges aimed at achieving gay and lesbian equality – regarding marriage, for example – may fail. When the NCGLE and the Human Rights Commission initially brought the decriminalisation application before the court, the Minister of Justice opposed the application on what he called technical grounds (Botha, 1997). The opposition was eventually dropped, but not replaced with support. Subsequently, Justice Heher reserved judgement (Cape Times, 27 November, 1997). The acclaimed cartoonist Zapiro's comment on this development is depicted in figure 1 (p. 4).

The judge's hesitation alerts us to the possibility that apparently clear implications of the Constitution might not lead directly to scrapping of unjust measures. According to Unterhalter (1993, p. 564), “there is every likelihood” that our courts will find it attractive to decide cases “by having regard to the text of the Constitution, its structure and *society's traditional understanding* of the text” (p. 563, italics added). Reform of the bench is underway and South Africa now has a high-profile, openly gay judge – Edwin Cameron, who was appointed High Court judge under the new dispensation and now presides in the Industrial Court, the highest court on labour matters. However, most South African judges are still heterosexual, white males, who may be sympathetic to “traditional understandings” of issues such as morality, marriage and “family values”. In passing judgements on matters of equality, they are obliged to also take into account the Constitution's Limitation Clause (Section 36, Act 108, 1996), in terms of which rights may be limited to the extent that it is “reasonable and justifiable in an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom”. The chilling implication for gays and lesbians in South Africa is that attempts to combat discrimination on the basis of the Constitution may still fail as a result of “traditional understandings”.

Figure 1: Zapiro's Nib



Cape Argus, 27 November, 1997

1.1.2 The workplace

1.1.2.1 Legal reform in the workplace

The constitutionally driven reforms that are most significant for the current study are those aiming to bring legislation pertaining to the workplace into compliance with the Equality Clause. Such legislation includes:

- The new Labour Relations Act (Act 66, 1995), which came into effect on 11 November 1996. It stipulates that discrimination against employees or potential employees on the grounds of sexual orientation or marital status constitutes an unfair labour practice.
- The Employment Equity Bill (Government Gazette, 1390, 18481), which makes provision for a commission on employment equity and various codes of good practice.

The NCGLE, through its Equal Rights Project (ERP), drafted such a code pertaining to sexual orientation in the workplace (appendix 5) and has made a submission to government with the aim of ensuring that the bill contributes to the elimination of unfair workplace discrimination against lesbian and gay employees (NCGLE, 1998). The ERP has been actively involved in litigation and education regarding discriminatory employment policies and practices. It has also been lobbying government, employers and trade unions on this issue (Jara, 1996; NCGLE, 1997(b)).

These reforms and the Equality Clause mean that it is now possible to take legal action against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

In a landmark case, the NCGLE and the SA Police Gay Policing Network won a case against the SA Police Service medical aid scheme (Polmed) in the Pretoria High Court on 4 February 1998 (Langemaat vs. Minister of Safety and Security, 1998). A lesbian police captain claimed Polmed discriminated against her on the basis of sexual orientation by refusing to register her partner of 11 years as a dependent for purposes of aid benefits. The court found the scheme's regulations unconstitutional, thus opening the way for other gay and lesbian employees all over South Africa to claim their rights.

Earlier, on 27 October 1997, South Africa's first case of unfair dismissal on the grounds of sexual orientation started in the Labour Court in Johannesburg (Naidoo, 1997). The matter was eventually settled out of court. The claimant, who had sued for relief including 24 months' salary, said afterwards, "To every person who feels that they are being discriminated against in the workplace – for whatever reason – my message is that they can do something about it" (Uys, 1997).

1.1.2.2 Formal and informal discrimination

Despite such victories, discrimination may not always be easy to prove. Discrimination may take many forms, from extreme and explicit to subtle. Croteau (1996) notes the distinction made in most studies between "formal" and "informal" discrimination. Formal discrimination refers to institutionalised, official measures and policies that are to the detriment of gay and lesbian (prospective) employees. These include decisions about hiring, firing, promotion, increases, work responsibilities, and benefits. Informal discrimination refers to supervisors' and co-workers' unofficial actions and attitudes – such as verbal harassment and property violence – and reported loss of respect, credibility and acceptance.

Even formal discrimination, such as prejudicial withholding of promotion, may be hard to demonstrate in a court of law. Employers may easily find non-discriminatory reasons to support their decisions, which can discourage employees from initiating costly and traumatic litigation. This decreases the threat to those employers who continue discriminating in defiance of the law. Many gays and lesbians may thus remain subject to the negative psychological consequences of prejudice and discrimination in their daily lives, while others who have not experienced any direct discrimination live with anxiety about such a possibility. This will be considered in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: Review of psychological literature

This review aims, firstly, to provide the psychological background to gay and lesbian employees' experiences. To this end, reference will be made to well-documented evidence of societal prejudice against gays and lesbians (section 2.1), of workplace discrimination that occurs as a result (2.2) and of the incidence of closetedness in the workplace (2.3). The second aim is to present findings of those few studies that, like the current study, investigate the experiential world of gays and lesbians in the workplace (2.4) and the impact of legislative change on these experiences (2.5). Finally, a rationale is provided for the current research (2.6).

2.1 Incidence of prejudice against gays and lesbians

Despite the legal advances noted in 1.1.2, optimism should be cautious. As ERP Co-ordinator Mazibuko Jara says: "Changing the law is one thing. Changing attitudes is something else altogether" (1996, p. 22). This has important implications for this study, as it highlights a possible shortcoming of the constitutional safeguard and suggests that for many gays and lesbians little has changed in practical terms.

Prejudice against gays and lesbians – *homoprejudice*³ – and misinformation and ignorance about them remain widespread in society. For example, among the 6 000 submissions to the CA *against* the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Equality Clause, the majority incorrectly linked homosexuality with zoophilia and paedophilia (Botha & Lapinsky, 1995).

As far as could be ascertained, no studies have been published that document the extent of homoprejudice in South Africa. However, ample evidence of negative attitudes towards gays and/or lesbians has been found in international psychological research on this topic, which has been conducted mainly in North America (e.g. D'Augelli, 1989; Boor, 1988; Britton, 1990; Cameron & Cameron, 1988; Cameron, Cameron & Proctor, 1988; Duncan, 1988; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Levinson, Pesina & Rienzi, 1993; Roese, Olson, Borenstein, Martin & Shores, 1992; Russel & Gray, 1992). The study by Russel and Gray (p. 1 682), for example, showed that

when people indicate the likelihood that they would grant a small favor, the giving of change, to a stranger in the street, the likelihood is reduced if the stranger is described as wearing a T-shirt bearing a progay slogan.

The researchers came to the following conclusion (p. 1 685):

The well-documented antipathy towards homosexuals, particularly gay men, that can emerge as overt hostility can also manifest itself in lower-key, but not necessarily unimportant, ways. Prejudice of the sort seen here as disinclination to grant a small favor could clearly have a variety of significant implications for situations in which people help, teach, cooperate with and in other ways interact with others.

Homoprejudice results in stigmatising gay people. According to Herek (interviewed by Dadisman, 1991), it is similar to prejudice aimed at certain racial or religious groups. In a study of gay and heterosexual men, Simon, Glässner-Bayerl and Stratenwerth (1991, p. 252) found that "straight *and* gay men participate in the same network of stereotypes and consequently share the prevailing representations of straight and gay men" (italics added). The implication is that homoprejudice is not only present in heterosexuals – gays also internalise it.

While there are cultural and other differences between South Africa and the populations of these studies, there is enough in the history above – such as remaining inequitable law and court battles – to suggest that significant homoprejudice also exists in South African society. Pertinent to the current study is the ex-

³ The term *homoprejudice* will be used to describe anti-homosexual attitudes, in accordance with Logan's (1996) findings that there is little, if any, evidence to support the characterisation of such responses as a phobia. The popular term *homophobia* is a misnomer and "may be seen by society as implicit permission to continue the oppression of homosexuals, excused by its being the result of inescapable fear" (p. 32). Similarly, in their criticism of the term *internalised homophobia*, Downey and Friedman (1995, p. 435) point out that what is internalised in patients who manifest clinically significant "internalised homophobia" are in fact "object relationships that symbolically represent narratives expressing antihomosexual attitudes and values. This results in negative feelings about the self – primarily guilt and shame at being gay or lesbian or of experiencing homosexual desire."

tent of such prejudice in the workplace specifically and the degree to which those attitudes are expressed as discrimination, whether formal or informal. Relevant evidence will be considered in the next section.

2.2 Incidence of workplace discrimination

The ERP's work since September 1996 indicates that workplace discrimination concerning sexual orientation is still widespread in South Africa and that very few trade unions, employers and related institutions have understood and accepted sexual orientation as a workplace issue (NCGLE, 1997(a)). The NCGLE reported that in 1997, together with the Gay and Lesbian Legal Advice Centre, it had dealt with more than 50 cases of unfair workplace discrimination, harassment and hate crimes against lesbians and gays in the Gauteng province. In 15 of these cases lesbian and gay employees were either dismissed or denied benefits available to other employees and their spouses (NCGLE, 1998).

Such discrimination does not occur because old, unchallenged legislation (such as the Marriage Act, referred to in 1.1.1.2) still allows it. On the contrary, this discrimination violates the spirit, letter and purport of the Labour Relations Act (Act 66, 1995). Forfeited benefits include:

- medical aid and health-related benefits;
- group life assurance;
- pensions and provident funds;
- housing benefits;
- unemployment insurance;
- bursaries, training and study subsidies; and
- disability and accident benefits (NCGLE, 1997(a)).

The NCGLE's contention that this kind of workplace discrimination is widespread is supported by North American psychological literature. In an excellent integrative review of the limited amount of research on the work experiences of gay, lesbian and bisexual people, Croteau (1996) discusses 9 studies (Croteau & Lark, 1995; Croteau & van Destinon, 1994; Griffin, 1992; Hall, 1996; Levine & Leonard, 1984; Olson, 1987; Schachar & Gilbert, 1983; Schneider, 1986; Woods & Harbeck, 1992) conducted in this field in the 1980s and 1990s. Croteau states that it appears that "discrimination is pervasive in the workplace experiences of this population". This is supported by relevant legal case law (Siegel, 1991). The studies reviewed by Croteau found that between 25 and 66% of participants reported discrimination. Three of these studies indicated that participants who were out reported higher rates of discrimination than did closeted workers.

In Taylor and Raeburn's (1995) study on the career consequences for gay, lesbian and bisexual sociologists involved in activism in America, 71% of participants reported discrimination. Even of the participants who were not involved in activism, 35% reported discrimination.

There may however be great variability in the prevalence of discrimination across various careers, locations or countries, and time. For example, in contrast with the findings above, Friskop and Silverstein (1995) found in their survey of a very specialised group – Harvard graduate employees – that "the vast

majority” of the 100 people interviewed who came out at their workplace said they had never experienced discrimination in the workplace (p. 25).

A study with similar findings, undertaken in South Africa, found a much lower incidence of discrimination. Using qualitative and quantitative data, Kritzinger and Van Aswegen (1992) found only one case of actual workplace discrimination amongst a sample of 39 white lesbians. The authors, noting that this finding is surprising in the light of that of Levine and Leonard (1984), suggest that among their fairly homogeneous sample it was possible that participants had selected “gay-friendly” occupations. However, alternative explanations could be suggested: that there is less discrimination in South Africa because of lower public awareness of gays and lesbians, or that there is less discrimination against lesbians because superiors (disproportionally male in the South African workplace) feel less threatened by them than by male homosexuals. On the whole, the implications of the findings are unclear, especially since the non-random “snowballing” sampling technique was employed. This technique, based on networks of acquaintances, was necessary because of the obstacle of having to identify potential participants among a partially closeted population.

Findings pertaining mainly to white South African gay men differ dramatically from those of the Kritzinger and Van Aswegen (1992) study, but pertain to discrimination generally, not in the workplace specifically. In a criminological study Theron (1994) found that South African gays were subjected to the same degree of discrimination and victimisation as their American counterparts. Of the respondents, 67% reported verbal abuse; 39% threats of violence; 22% being punched, hit or kicked; and 22% sexual assault. Only a small proportion of the respondents (readers responding to a questionnaire in the gay newspaper *Exit*) were of colour and/or lesbian. As some readers buy the magazine off the shelf, disproportionately many of the respondents may also have been visibly homosexual and possibly at greater risk of abuse. The sample bias thus leads to doubts about the generalisability of the results.

In summary, the Kritzinger and Van Aswegen (1992) study was the only published study found with findings on workplace discrimination against homosexuals in South Africa. The results of this study and those of Theron’s (1994) are flawed and inconclusive. The true extent of workplace discrimination against gays and lesbians in South Africa is under-researched, but the experience of the ERP suggests that such discrimination is common. If this is indeed the case, the question arises of how many gay or lesbian employees remain closeted in order to escape anticipated discrimination. This question will be addressed in the next section.

2.3 Incidence of closetedness in the workplace

Within workplace contexts of discrimination and, by implication, homophobia, it is not surprising that many gays and lesbians choose to remain closeted. Croteau (1996) found a great degree of variability in the nine studies he examined. Schneider (1986, cited by Croteau) found the following figures in a study of 228 lesbian employees across various occupations: totally closeted: 29%; somewhat open: 32%; mostly open: 23%; totally open: 16%. Levine and Leonard (1984) reported similar results for a sample of 203 employed lesbians. However, Croteau and Lark’s (1995, cited by Croteau) study among 174 male and female

student affairs professionals found much greater openness: totally closeted: 6%; open to close friends only: 15%; open to some: 32%; and out to all: 47%. (It should be kept in mind that this type of setting, a tertiary institution, is traditionally more tolerant.)

In the only comparable South African study, that of Kritzinger and Van Aswegen (1992) reported above, a lower degree of closetedness was found among lesbian respondents than in the international literature. A total of 13% of those who were employed indicated that co-workers were unaware of respondents' sexual orientation (10% were unsure and 48% said all knew). A total of 48% of non-self-employed participants said management did not know and 15% were unsure about this.

The limitations of the South African study have been noted above. The degree of closetedness in the South African workplace remains unknown, but studies abroad suggest that this may be a common phenomenon amongst gay and lesbian employees.

2.4 *Closeted gays' and lesbians' experiences in the workplace*

If we assume that many gay and lesbian employees are closeted, it would be important to know how they experience this in their daily lives. This question is examined in the current research.

Croteau's (1996) survey indicates that fear and anticipation of discrimination among closeted gays and lesbians is pervasive. Levine and Leonard's (1984) quantitative study found that the work satisfaction of 60% of the (lesbian) participants was affected by such fears. While many participants were dissatisfied with being closeted because it caused anxiety and "mental anguish associated with living a double life" (p. 707), 59% were satisfied about being closeted because they thought this was the most pragmatic choice to maintain or further their careers.

These quantitative findings are echoed by those of a qualitative study by Boatwright, Gilbert, Forrest and Ketzenberg (1996). Employed lesbians in this study were constantly vigilant to avoid being "discovered". They felt the protection from being fired and from physical or emotional attacks offered by closetedness outweighed the dis-ease of vigilance.

Again Kritzinger and Van Aswegen's (1992) South African study of lesbians yielded a lower figure compared to international literature: only about 15% of their participants reported that they anticipated discrimination.

These studies all suggest that workplace closetedness is associated with anxiety. What then are the consequences of coming out in the workplace? In a quantitative study of self-identified gays and lesbians in California and Indiana, Ellis and Riggle (1995) found an association between job satisfaction and participants' degree of openness about their sexual orientation. Despite the possibility that causality could go both ways, the implication is that if companies facilitate work environments where gays and lesbians can be out, it may lead to higher satisfaction with job and co-workers. This was supported by findings in the same study about the job satisfaction of participants who were working for this kind of company.

The quoted studies provide some valuable clues to the experiences of closetedness, but not a richly textured description and an understanding of the lived-world of closeted gay and lesbian employees. Suggestions, for example, that about 60% of lesbians feared discrimination still reveals nothing about the

meaning of this fear. Most of the data quoted is quantitative. In quantitative research, research on an unknown population – gays and lesbians, who do not self-identify as such – also clearly implies sampling problems. Often participants are selected through networks of acquaintances and consequently the samples of most of the quantitative research cited are highly homogenised (lesbian teachers; sociologists, etc.). Findings may thus not be adequately generalisable. In particular, participants in these studies were homogenous in terms of race and class – in practically all cases they were white, middle-class and higher, and educated.

2.5 Impact of legal reform

Khayat (1990) investigated the impact of legal reform in Ontario on the lived realities of being a lesbian teacher. This is perhaps the most important available research in terms of the current study, as Khayat investigates the other central question of the current study, namely how legal reform influences the lived-experiences of gays and lesbians in the workplace. In a development similar to the adoption of the South African Equality Clause, Ontario passed the Equality Rights Statute Law Amendment Act in 1986, which added sexual orientation to the section on equality rights in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Khayat's participants made a distinction between the practical effect of the bill on their lives and the effect of its potential, should they ever need to invoke their rights. One of the teachers expressed it as follows:

I think it has not made any concrete difference in the sense that I haven't changed how I'm living. I haven't changed in any real way. Except maybe that's not true. It's made a psychological difference in the sense that I feel more protected, from the point of view that at least I know I would not be charged, or I would not be fired, if it were more publicly known that I was a lesbian. That's the key difference for me: a stronger psychological sense of security. And maybe that has affected my own comfort level in the classroom ... Since the Bill we can fight. Before, we couldn't have. Now we can say, "hey, we are good teachers, we are people, we are real, we are within the law" (pp. 188-9).

Khayat found that the potential of the bill was limited by the "attitudes of those in power to implement it and the acceptance of the society at large" (p.192). One of her participants observed:

Okay, so you won't lose your job, but you get all the shit classes; when you request something, the request doesn't get filled. All those sorts of things can still go on. You may have your job, but it might be very unpleasant for you (p. 192).

These comments are significant for the present study, and it was expected that the South African participants would have similar doubts about the practical effect of the Equality Clause. Whether this is indeed so will be examined in chapter 5.

2.6 Rationale for current research

The quantitative research presented in 2.1 to 2.3 provides evidence of a high incidence of prejudice against gays and lesbians, workplace discrimination, and closetedness. While this provides important background information, the current, qualitative study cannot aim to support or disconfirm these statistical findings.

The available research on closeted gays' and lesbians' experiences in the workplace (2.4) reports the high prevalence of fear of discrimination, the incidence of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with closetedness, and a positive connection between openness and job satisfaction. These findings are important, but the studies have the following shortcomings:

1. Most significantly: because of their predominantly quantitative nature, they are limited in what they reveal about the day-to-day *experiential* world of the participants.
2. The findings of the quantitative studies may not be adequately generalisable as a result of sampling problems. Qualitative research methods can overcome some of these problems, as they do not rely on a representative sample for relevancy (see chapter 4: Methodology). In this respect, Khayat's (1990) qualitative study is particularly relevant and useful in comparison with the current study.
3. There is a virtual void of South African research in this area and the few available studies quoted are also predominantly quantitative. It is unknown to what degree the findings of the foreign quantitative studies may be applied in this country.

In the light of this paucity, this researcher conducted a study during the watershed year of 1994 to examine the lived-experience of gays and lesbians concealing their sexual orientation in the workplace (Hattingh, 1994). This had been prompted by personal observations and experiences over a period of five years prior to 1994 in an occupational setting where some employees had been out in their private lives, but closeted at the office. There appeared to be a heterosexist⁴ assumption that everyone was heterosexual. Gays and lesbians did nothing to challenge this assumption, even when it was expected of them to bring a partner of the opposite sex to the staff dinner, when they were told to drop a news item about a gay issue "because we don't carry that kind of story", or when they witnessed laughter at homophobic jokes (and often laughed along).

In the previous study, information was gathered from in-depth interviews with two gay males and two lesbians, and analysed thematically. The study concluded that

the participants' hiddenness to a large degree constituted a neurotic mode of existence. It emerged, however, that in patriarchal work environments rife with the pathological symptoms of heterosexism and [homophobia], gay people are faced with a choice between an underground existence or the possibility of social ostracism and professional discrimination. While this presents a double-bind, gays' exclusion from the mainstream is also a call to authenticity, a challenge to choose between a life according to patriarchally defined "truths", or a life that is guided by self-constituted meaning (Hattingh, 1994, p. 42).

Since then, no psychological research has been published on the impact of the constitutional, legal, and social transformation in South Africa on the lived-world of closeted gay and lesbian employees. The current study therefore addresses this lacuna by examining the four participants' experience as it emerged from new interviews, conducted in 1996, and relates the data to those of the original interviews, conducted in 1994.

⁴ Heterosexism is the attitude which "views heterosexuality as the only acceptable, normal pattern for fulfilling human relationships and tends to view all other sexual relationships as either subordinate to or perversions of heterosexual relationships" (Hopcke, 1989, p. 139).

Chapter 3: Theoretical frameworks

After completion of the first set of interviews in 1994, the researcher allowed the phenomena under consideration, as described by the participants, to reveal themselves by thoroughly familiarising himself with the transcripts (see chapter 4: Methodology). The aim was to avoid approaching the material from the viewpoint of a particular theoretical framework, and rather to allow the material to suggest frameworks that would be useful for achieving a more textured understanding of the phenomena. As a result of the dearth of phenomenological research on the current study topic, there is also a lack of specific theory regarding the phenomena, and other, established theories had to be considered. Existential-analytic psychology emerged as especially useful, and although a number of other frameworks offered the potential of additional insights, these are not discussed due to space constraints.

The same method was followed with the second set of interviews in 1996. However, there was an inevitable bias toward selecting the same frameworks of understanding; after suspending this bias as far as possible, it appeared justified to repeat the initial choice of theory made in 1994.

3.1 *Existential phenomenology and existential-analytic psychology*

Existential-analytic psychology is a discipline that has its roots in existential phenomenology or, as it is popularly known, existentialism. This major philosophical movement of the 20th century and the psychodynamic theory that evolved from it can only be introduced very broadly here, with the aim of orientating the reader not familiar with these concepts sufficiently for the discussion in chapter 5. Existential-analytic psychology is a general theory, not devised specifically to understand homosexuality, closetedness and other issues central to the current research topic. It will therefore be outlined in general terms, while the discussion will show that the theory can be successfully applied to the specific issues addressed in the study.

In 1927, Martin Heidegger published *Sein und Zeit* (translated in 1962 into English as *Being and Time*), which brought about a dramatic change in the world of thought in Western Europe (Van den Berg, 1972). Heidegger's work was the principal influence in existential phenomenology, which is also associated with 20th century thinkers such as Karl Jaspers, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Samuel Beckett and Martin Buber. From existential phenomenology grew the branch of phenomenological psychology known as existential-analytic psychology, which has a strong focus on the immediate situation and what Heidegger (1962) termed *Dasein* (being-in-the-world). This study will draw on the work of those of the American humanistic psychologists who have a "European" existential orientation and may be included in this school of thought, such as Andras Angyal, James Bugental, Rollo May and Irvin Yalom.

3.1.1 The existential psychodynamic sequence

According to Yalom (1980), existential psychology is a form of dynamic psychology in which the basic Freudian dynamic *structure* is retained, but the *content* is radically altered. The old formula of

Drive → Anxiety → Defence Mechanism
is replaced by
Awareness of Ultimate Concern → Anxiety → Defence Mechanism.

This existential dynamic sequence will be explained briefly in what follows, using a scheme adapted from Bugental (1965) – who has drawn on the seminal ideas of Paul Tillich, Erich Fromm, and others – and Yalom (1980). This scheme is presented in table 1 (see p. 14). Because the discussion in chapter 5 will continually refer to the scheme, table 1 is also provided as a loose insert that may be taken out for easy reference (appendix 6, p. 192). Rows and columns are labelled alpha-numerically. All references in the format (A1) are to cells in table 1.

3.1.1.1 The ontological givens and existential anxiety

The “ultimate concerns” in existentialism arise from the four ontological givens, namely that we are finite; have freedom and responsibility; have choice; and are fundamentally separate from others (see p. 14, table 1, rows 1 & 2). Yalom (1980) states that awareness of these givens is the source of the core existential conflicts, as the givens are in opposition to our wishes (rows 3 & 4).

The most basic ontological fact is our mortality, or finiteness (A2). While death is inescapable, we wish to continue being (A4); this conflict gives rise to the existential anxiety about fate (or contingency) and death (A6).

A second given, according to Bugental (1965), is that human beings have the potential to act – even the decision to remain passive is an act. This is the given of freedom (B2), but it carries the weight of responsibility, because every act has consequences, and our decisions may have grave repercussions for ourselves and others. We rather prefer the safety of structure and groundedness (B4). This conflict with the given of freedom and responsibility leads to the anxiety of guilt (B6). Guilt is “the awareness that the actions we take express so much less than our full being. But guilt is also the appreciation that what we do matters” (Bugental, 1965, p. 37). The ultimate threat is that of condemnation, “the potential of overwhelming guilt”.

It is also given that we can each choose how we interpret our experiences and the world around us (Yalom, 1980). This means that we ourselves create meaning in our lives (C2). However, the fact that different people can create different meanings implies an element of arbitrariness that is anxiety-provoking, as we would rather seek absolute meanings (C4) that are offered us “out there” and onto which we can hold with certainty. We are confronted with the impression that our existence is essentially meaningless (C6) and we consequently experience nothingness. “the growing realization that our life leads to nothing possessing any absolute certainty other than death” (Spinelli, 1989, p. 114).

The fourth given is that of our separateness (D2; Bugental, 1965). There is a divide between us and others that can never be breached. No matter how close we get to people, we can never fully understand each other. We can never experience exactly that which another experiences; we can never fully communicate to another

(Turn to p. 15.)

Table 1: The existential dynamic sequence

	A	B	C	D
1	Awareness of the four ontological givens:			
2	Finiteness	Freedom and responsibility	Choice (to create meaning oneself)	Unbridgeable separateness
3	... creates conflict with our wishes:			
4	To continue being	To have structure and groundedness	To seek meaning	To be part of a whole
5	... out of which arises normal, or existential anxiety about the contingencies of:			
6	Fate and death	Guilt and condemnation	Emptiness and meaninglessness	Loneliness and isolation
7	With courage (authentic being) we can accept these contingencies and live with			
8	Faith	Commitment	Creativity	Love

However, we may experience our existential anxiety as overwhelming and attempt flight. This defence fails, and the anxiety returns as

9	neurotic anxiety (dread) about:			
10	Powerlessness	Blame	Absurdity	Estrangement
11	The rejection of the givens comprises an inauthentic response (non-being) , characterised by			
12	Resignation	Surrender of freedom	Alienation from self	Withdrawal from others
13	... which occurs through the defences of active distortion of being:			
14	Activism and manipulation	Blind rebellion	Destructiveness	Dominance
15	... and/or passive distortion of being:			
16	Fatalism and Embeddedness	Conformity	Apathy	Submission

Note: Adapted from Bugental (1965) and Yalom (1980).

the meanings we have created. However, we wish to be part of a whole (D4), of something bigger than ourselves. Out of this conflict arises anxiety about loneliness and, ultimately, utter isolation (D6).

The existential or “natural” anxiety (row 5) that we experience as a result of these conflicts is a fundamental part of human nature and a normal, appropriate response to the human condition, which is fraught with contingency, despite our efforts of establishing control. Bugental (1965) says

even the knownness of day-to-day living is, in a sense, but a phantasy, a wish more than an actuality. I do not know, I cannot know enough to be safe, to be secure, to predict with complete confidence from one moment to the next (p. 22).

3.1.1.2 Authenticity

As long as I recognise and fully accept this contingent situation, says Bugental (1965, p. 24), “yet recognise the potentiality of tragedy ... I will not know neurotic anxiety”. This is the authentic response to the human condition (see table 1, row 7). According to Bugental,

a person is authentic in that degree to which his being in the world is unqualifiedly in accord with the givenness of his own nature and of the world. Authenticity is the primary good or value of the existential viewpoint. The value of authenticity is postulated rather than argued. It is self-evident, at least to most existentialists (pp. 31–2).

When we live authentically, we think and behave as independent beings and accept our responsibility; the “authorship” (Yalom, 1980, p. 218) of our lives. According to Spinelli (1989, p. 109),

rather than reacting as victims to the vicissitudes of being, we, as authentic beings, acknowledge our role in determining our actions, thoughts and beliefs, and thereby experience a stronger and fuller sense of integration, acceptance, “openness” and “aliveness” to the potentialities of being-in-the-world.

Authentic being allows us (and demands) that we live in faith (A8), which is a confrontation of contingency with the declaration: “I am I. This is my starting place. This is my certainty, though there be no other” (Bugental, 1965, p. 329). Despite the terrors that freedom and responsibility hold, as authentic beings we respond with commitment (B8): “This I am; this I believe; this I do” (p. 338). It involves being fully in the moment, making choices in the moment, and standing by the consequences of the choices. As authentic beings, we can be creative (C8) in the face of nothingness. As authentic beings, we live in transcendent love (D8) – “participation in all Being ... so complete that the subject-object dichotomy is obliterated” (p. 353) – even though we will always be separate from others.

One can never be fully authentic, but can only strive towards ever greater degrees of authenticity. The more one “approaches the stage of letting go to the suchness of Being without striving against it,” (Bugental, 1965, p. 33), the more one will be attaining authenticity.

It is important to note that the concept of authenticity is not idealistic by any means. Quite the opposite: existentialism emphasises the vicissitudes of being and the fact that the achievement of authenticity is the great struggle of our lives. Nor does authenticity require of us to throw caution to the wind. Bugental (1965) provides the example of a man who lives on the tiny island of the known in the midst of the vast ocean of the unknown. He can work within the realm of the known, constructing a shelter and farming for food, but he cannot know what destructive storms may be brewing beyond the horizon. He may start look-

ing at the stars and read portents in them and so convince himself that he has nothing to fear from storms, because he will have adequate warning to avert tragedy. This is a distortion of reality in order to lessen existential anxiety; it is only an illusion. However, if the man studies the ocean currents and winds, he may be able to reduce his vulnerability. This is a constructive, creative response; indeed, not taking such measures would be a distorted response of fatalism. We only fall prey to neurotic anxiety when we try to convince ourselves of a certainty that denies the existential reality (row 9).

This brief outline clearly suggests that the concept of authenticity is appropriate when considering the lives of closeted gays and lesbians. With reference to Bugental's (1965, p. 33) definition of authenticity, one may ask to what degree is their being-in-the-world "unqualifiedly in accord with the givenness of [their] own nature" if they hide this nature? Secondly, should they announce themselves, to what degree are they in accord with the givenness of a world that, as we have seen, is prejudiced against them and may wish to retaliate? Evidently, authenticity demands the thoughtful and courageous resolution of such conflicts. When applied to the issue of closetedness, it would therefore be an erroneous simplification to equate unqualified coming out with authenticity. However, where a way of being is the result of defences against neurotic anxiety, it is symptomatic of inauthenticity.

3.1.1.3 Dread (neurotic anxiety) and inauthenticity (non-being)

Authenticity demands the honest acceptance and confrontation of the existential anxieties, but because these are such fundamental concerns, they may threaten to overwhelm us. The easiest response is a defensive one of repression, but this inevitably fails and the anxiety returns.

Instead of living with normal anxiety about fate and death, the person who defends against existential anxiety experiences its re-emergence in a neurotic form as anxiety about powerlessness (A10). According to Bugental (1965), someone who is preoccupied with powerlessness is saying, "Since I can't control everything that will determine what happens to me, I have no control at all" (p. 298). This sequence comprises an inauthentic response to the givens of life: the authentic response of faith (A8) is replaced by resignation (A12) from any attempt to confront contingency.

In the same manner, normal anxiety about guilt and condemnation returns in neurotic form as dread of blame (B10). Bugental (1965) holds that blame is a threat to the identity, as it implies a fault in the person, rather than the action. The inauthentic mode in this case is characterised by the surrender of freedom (B12), which offers a seeming protection against guilt and responsibility.

When we find ourselves unable to confront the normal anxiety about emptiness and meaninglessness, life may seem "a cosmic triviality" (Bugental, 1965, p. 306). This is the dread of absurdity (C10), which is either the denial of all meaning (this is not the same as the recognition of meaninglessness), or the unquestioning imposition of available human-made meanings on everything. The inauthentic response takes the form of alienation from the self (C12), as if the person says, "Since the world refuses to give my life meaningfulness, it has none, and I am uninvolved with my living" (p. 306).

Finally, separateness (D2) may evoke the neurotic anxiety of estrangement (D10), “the experience of being imprisoned in glass” (Bugental, 1965, p. 311). The inauthentic response is withdrawal from others (D12), the rejection of possibilities for real contact.

3.1.1.4 Distortions of being

Living inauthentically, or in what Sartre (1957) calls *bad faith*, involves conforming to the attitudes and morality of the prevailing culture (Spinelli, 1989). This compliance represents the masochistic response to domination (Adam, 1978): a willing submission to an *other* who is experienced as all-powerful and hostile. According to Bugental (1965), submission (D16) is a passive distortion of being in response to the dread of estrangement. But submission represents only the one, passive side of the distortion: dominance (D14) is the active side of this form of inauthenticity.

Bugental (1965) also describes the distortions that defend against the dread of powerlessness – activism and manipulation (A14), and fatalism and embeddedness (A16). They are mentioned here for the sake of completeness, but are of lesser significance for the discussion in chapter 5 and will not be elucidated further. However, defences against absurdity (C10) are relevant. When people fall prey to the dread of absurdity, Bugental (1965, p. 306) contends that the experience of choice becomes a mockery expressed in distortions of destructiveness (C14) and apathy (C16):

Through destructiveness the person who feels caught in an absurd world parodies his constructive and creative impulses. Destruction can be a kind of construction; destruction can serve as a kind of creativity ... the apathetic person, on the other hand, seems to have given up that battle and withdrawn all emotional investment.

Distortions to combat the dread of blame (B10) are important for this discussion. In the inauthentic quest to create certainty and security where there is none, we heed the alluring call of *das Man* (Heidegger, 1962) or “*the they*” – the anonymous mass. We then find that

we take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *they* take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as *they* see and judge; likewise, we shrink back from the “great mass” as *they* shrink back; we find “shocking” what *they* find shocking (p. 164).

Fromm (1969, p. 208) says that “the person who gives up his individual self and becomes an automaton, identical with millions of other automatons around him, need not feel alone and anxious any more”. However, the price of this *automaton conformity* is high: the loss of the sense of self (Fromm, 1969; May, 1975). Conformity (B16) is the passive distortion that occurs with the inauthentic response of surrendering freedom. The active form, according to Bugental (1965), is blind rebellion (B14) – rebellion for the mere sake of rebellion.

Although automatons may avoid *feeling anxiety*, Angyal (1982) points out that the lack of conscious experience of anxiety does not exclude the existence of neurosis. He emphasises that all neuroses are characterised by isolation; similarly, Van den Berg (1972, p. 110) defines psychopathology as “the science of loneliness and isolation”. According to Angyal there are two common features in neurosis: The first is “the prevalence of *fear*, the predominance of the negative over the positive motivation” (p. 81). There is a concern for protecting current possessions and past achievements (Arcaya, 1979; Kruger, 1988). The second feature is the

determining role of *fantasy*, “the predominance of the substitutive over the direct experience” (Angyal, 1982, p. 81). These indicators of neurosis – fear, fantasy and loneliness – are recurring themes in the inauthentic responses to the vicissitudes of life.

3.1.1.5 The key existential question: dread or courage

The basic existential issue is therefore whether life evokes in us dread (or neurotic anxiety) and responses of distortion, or whether we confront our existential anxiety with courage, or authentic being. This question and those mentioned above will be considered in chapter 5 when we examine the participants’ responses to the particular vicissitudes to which they are subject as gay and lesbian employees.

3.2 *Existential-analytic psychology and patriarchy*

It was noted above that authenticity requires being in accord with the givenness of one’s own nature and that of the world. However, the patriarchal nature of the world, which lies at the root of much of the homo-prejudice referred to earlier, exacerbates the dilemma of gays’ and lesbians’ struggle for authenticity.

According to Bleier (1984, p. 164),

patriarchy is the historic system of male dominance, a system committed to the maintenance and reinforcement of male hegemony in all aspects of life – personal and private privilege and power as well as public privilege and power. Its institutions direct and protect the distribution of power and privilege to those who are male.

The issue of domination is common to both the concepts of patriarchy and, as an active distortion, of existential-analytic psychology. In most organisations, white, privileged heterosexual men are dominant (Burrell & Hearn, 1989). They are what Minnich⁵ (in Lerner, 1993) calls the *generic human*. The generic human becomes “the defining center, the one whose partial and particular truths are generalized to the whole” (p. 212). The existence of this generic category is dangerous, because, according to Lerner, the generic human’s generalisations about what is “right or wrong, good or bad, normal or unnatural” (p. 215) erase other human beings’ experience. The existence of a powerful, dominating entity such as a patriarchal management that defines “truths” and “morality” can severely undermine individuals’ courage to live authentically, as management can punish employees for deviations from company norms.

Being inferiorised leads to having one’s “life chances” limited by the dominant group and to the creation of a class identified by the characteristic that is viewed as inferior (Adam, 1978, p. 8). Members of such a class discover themselves “as devalued *other*” (p. 15). This devaluation is created by the dominants as “truth” in order to justify the status quo (Adam, 1978; Lerner, 1993). Members of inferiorised groups – including women, gays, lesbians and blacks – internalise and live these negative evaluations. The presence of domination implies a degree of consent (Lears, 1971), so that gays and lesbians contribute to the continuation of the patriarchal hegemony.

⁵ Minnich, E.K. (1990). *Transforming Knowledge*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

An important way in which patriarchy inferiorises gays and lesbians is by categorising them through images of dirt. Douglas (1966) offers valuable anthropological insights into the manner in which patriarchy uses such images to express social order, while Lerner (1993) describes how women at the bottom of such hierarchies pander to patriarchy through everyday deceptions. She defines *pretending* as faking, yet not stating a lie (p. 117). This is experienced by the pretender as only a mild deception that “conveys the possibility – and sometimes even the wish – to fool not only others, but also oneself” (p. 120). This is most relevant in the case of closeted gays and lesbians, who pretend to be heterosexual in order to avoid patriarchal censure.

The concept of *otherness* links the ideas above to object-relations theory. According to Brice (1984, p. 122), “*Difference* provokes images of inferiority/superiority, more than/less than, good/bad only from within a fundamentally neurotic perspective.” The patriarchal hegemony should therefore not be viewed simplistically as a system in which one class benefits by dominating another and turning its members into injured victims. In neurotically positioning itself as good only and superior, patriarchy too falls victim to inauthenticity. Because non-being is pathological and unfulfilling, in the patriarchal-hegemonic system of mutual distortions, all suffer.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Transcendental phenomenology

Phenomenology was founded by Edmund Husserl (1859 – 1938). His work now forms part of one of the two major branches of phenomenology, namely transcendental phenomenology (the other major branch being existential phenomenology, in which Heidegger’s work was the principal influence). Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology forms the methodological basis for the current study.

Husserl aimed to develop “a science of phenomena that would clarify how it is that objects are experienced and present themselves to our consciousness” (Spinelli, 1989, p. 2). To do this, he developed the fundamental philosophical procedure that has become known as the phenomenological method. Phenomenology stresses the inter-subjective nature of experience. We never perceive only raw objects or so-called objective reality, in the same way we never perceive only mental phenomena, or “subjective reality”. Instead, phenomenology suggests that “our experience of the world is always made up of an interaction between the raw matter of the world, whatever it may be, and our mental faculties” (p. 8).

Husserl’s phenomenological method is made up of three interrelated steps that comprise the method’s basic rules. Spinelli describes the rules as follows:

4.1.1 The Rule of Epoché

The first step of this method is known as the Rule of Epoché, which

urges us to set aside our initial biases and prejudices of things, to suspend our expectations and assumptions, in short, *to bracket* all such temporarily and as far as is possible so that we can focus on the primary data of our experience (Spinelli, 1989, p. 17).

Phenomenologists have to be open to the possibilities of their immediate experience so that the phenomenon can reveal itself, rendering subsequent interpretations more adequate. As it is impossible to perceive objects completely objectively, the bracketing of habitual psychological biases and suppositions can never be complete, although it can be achieved to a significant degree. The mere act of making bias explicit makes it more conscious, enabling us to get closer to “the thing itself”.

In this study the interviews were conducted before any decision was made to interpret the data with the aid of existential-analytical theory. Likewise, subsequent data analysis involved repeated reading of the transcripts to allow the phenomena to reveal themselves, without trying to fit the data into any existing theoretical understanding.

4.1.2 The Rule of Description

The operative word in phenomenological research is “describe” (Giorgi, 1986). We are urged to remain initially focussed on our “immediate and concrete impressions” (p. 17) through carrying out a concrete, descriptive examination. Van den Berg (1972) says

the aim of psychology can never be explanation ... The aim of psychology is the rendering of a totality ... to observe, to comprehend, then to render explicit, to explicate clearly, what was at first seen vaguely in the first comprehension (p. 127).

If we were immediately to grasp for our preconceived theories in order to speculate about our experience, we would become removed from it. In accordance with the Rule of Description, in the current study great emphasis was placed on providing the reader with detailed descriptions of the phenomena. This was deemed particularly important because the literature review revealed that very little is known about the experiential nature of the world of closeted gay and lesbian employees; available information is largely limited to statistics. Thorough description of this research topic is therefore needed first. This requirement prompted this study to operate significantly on what Edwards (1991, p. 57) calls the exploratory-descriptive level of phenomenological research, where use is made of descriptive synopses of interview data and descriptions of themes arising from this material. At this level of research, the goal is “not to generalise to other cases or to develop theory”, but to “achieve an organised and coherent presentation of the phenomenon” that speaks for itself in a direct way and makes an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon possible.

The material suggested that the framework of existential-analytic psychology was likely to aid understanding. The descriptive results were subsequently discussed with reference to this theory. Putting the phenomena in dialogue with established theory thus placed the research on a higher level of research, the descriptive-dialogical level (Edwards, 1991).

4.1.3 The Rule of Horizontalisation

This third rule, also known as the Rule of Equalisation, states that we should not immediately impose hierarchies on the items in our descriptions, but give equal importance to all that we observe to avoid making misleading hierarchical judgements. Therefore, in this study, the participants' material is not organised like a branching tree that imposes different weight on each topic. Rather, material is grouped according to interrelated themes that stand next to each other, allowing each to be considered in its own right.

4.2 Method

In order to adequately combine and compare the data from the initial study (Hattingh, 1994) with those of the current study, the method of the initial study was replicated with only minor adjustments. The description that follows of the method for the current study is therefore very similar to that in Hattingh (1994). The method was devised by following the basic methodological principles, as described above. In addition, suggestions from modern phenomenological researchers, such as Fischer and Wertz (1979) and Giorgi (1985) – who have built on Husserl's basic tenets – were integrated into a method appropriate to the unique requirements of the current study.

4.2.1 Participant selection

Participants were selected early in 1994 through personal acquaintance and a gay and lesbian support organisation in Port Elizabeth. The requirements were that participants had to be homosexual and to some degree open about this in their private life, but to a degree covert in their workplace.

Because of the covertness required of participants it was particularly difficult to identify and recruit them. Four suitable participants were found – two lesbians and two gay men, all white. Attempts to find suitable closeted black homosexuals proved fruitless within tight time constraints that applied. Perhaps this difficulty indicates the depth of socio-economic divisions in the gay community in 1994. The invisibility of such candidates may also have been the result of greater closetedness in black communities, but this suspicion would need confirmation through further research.

Before data gathering, informed consent was obtained in compliance with Psychological Association of South-Africa (1987) standards. Participants were asked to choose pseudonyms for confidentiality. It was also hoped that the chosen names would be psychologically revealing.

4.2.2 Data gathering

Interviews were of the clinical, open-ended type described by Dapkus (1985) and Edwards (1991). A checklist of questions (appendix 2) was used to ensure that all vital areas of investigation were covered, but during interviews the questions served primarily as springboards to prompt participants to reveal their world. Each interview was thus flexible and generated its own questions.

Interviews started with informal conversation aimed at putting both parties at ease. With the first set of interviews, the researcher gave the participant some background information about himself, discussed the

aims of the research, and emphasised that it was “gay friendly”. Before the commencement of key questioning, participants’ involvement in the research subsequent to the interview was explained.

Interviews were conducted in venues of the participants’ choice (usually a home setting) and in their preferred language (English). Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed (appendix 3).⁶

4.2.3 Data analysis

Each participant’s interview material was condensed through editing, with the aim of “providing readers with concrete examples that reverberate with their own lives, thus intimating the full structure of the phenomenon” (Fischer & Wertz, 1979, p. 143). These interview synopses were written in the first person, using participants’ words almost exclusively, in order to render vivid accounts which are very close to the original in terms of content, but much shorter. They were derived by:

1. Familiarisation with the original documents by repeated readings in order to get a grasp of the whole, as described by Giorgi (1985) and Wertz (1985), while applying the Rule of Epoché;
2. Condensation by discarding repetitions and irrelevant data;
3. Deletion of intrusive speech errors (e.g. “erm”; “ahh”; etc.) and mannerisms (“you know”, “sort of”; “kind of”; etc., where these were judged to be relatively insignificant). Other errors were retained verbatim;
4. Reorganisation in terms of topics; and
5. The addition of headings for clarity.

Subsequently, each synopsis was read to answer the question “What reveals, is essential to, *this person’s* experience?” (Fischer & Wertz, 1979, p. 139). Occurrences of themes were noted, but not arranged hierarchically, in accordance with the Rule of Horizontalisation.

A number of themes occurred across synopses from the different years and participants. These are the “core” themes discussed in chapter 5. Following the primary phenomenological rule, the focus remained strongly on description, as opposed to interpretation, and therefore verbatim quotes from the synopses were used extensively in the presentation of the findings in chapter 5. The aim was also to provide a general description of that which was common to all the participants, and therefore the researcher occasionally paraphrased thematic observations.

4.2.4 Validation

As we “inevitably shape the phenomenon to fit a ‘fore-structure’ that has been shaped by expectations and preconceptions, and by our lifestyle, culture and tradition” (Packer & Addison, 1989, p. 33) – a tendency we try to limit by following the Rule of Epoché – the following steps were taken to ensure internal validity: preconceptions were made explicit (in the introduction and the rationale (section 2.6)) and rigour

⁶ During the 1994 interviews, for practical reasons one of the participants answered some questions in writing and was interviewed telephonically. This was the only participant whose first language was Afrikaans. Consequently, the interviews were conducted in Afrikaans and translated. Appendices 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 contain the Afrikaans transcripts, as well as the translations. Measures to ensure the internal validity of the translations are described in appendix 3.2.3. As the participant is also fluent in English, in 1996 this language was used for interviewing.

was applied (in chapter 5) in the “quality of the argument through which the material is linked to the existing theoretical discourse”, as recommended by Valle and King (1978, p. 16). As qualitative research does not rely on representative (random) samples, such rigour is needed to ensure that findings can be generalised, thereby overcoming some of the sampling problems of the quoted quantitative studies.

Copies of transcripts and synopses were returned to participants to check for accuracy and they were invited to comment and suggest changes. Some of the subjects suggested minor changes to faulty transcripts, and one subject added comments, which have been footnoted. Verbatim transcripts of all interviews and of the written protocol are appended (appendix 3) for inter-subjective validation, enabling the reader to verify the accuracy of synopses and analyses.

Chapter 5: Results and discussion

5.1 Introduction of participants

To help bring the participants to life for the reader, some details about each as they were in 1996 are summarised in table 2, after which some additional background information is provided. The researcher also makes his impressions of the participants explicit.

Table 2: Participants' biographical details

	<i>Artist</i>	<i>Exploited</i>	<i>Impatient</i>	<i>Richard Acton</i>
Age	29	30	37	29
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male
Occupation	Artist, various part-time	Senior journalist	Managing director in auto industry	Geographer
Location	Port Elizabeth	Confidential	Port Elizabeth	Cape Town
Out to	Family, friends, colleagues	Friends, lesbian sister	Family (some), friends	Friends, sister, half of colleagues

5.1.1 Artist

Artist (29, female) paints for a living and does various part-time jobs. She lives in Port Elizabeth.

Researcher's impressions: During the interviews, *Artist* was warm, open, lively, and thoughtful.

Relevant employment history: When interviewed in 1994, *Artist* had been working full-time as a layout artist at a small printing business, *Fastprint*⁷, for six years, while she was painting and selling her artwork part-time. She resigned later that year and subsequently worked as tattoo artist, manager for a take-

⁷ Naming the city where *Exploited's* newspaper is published may identify her.

⁸ Not the company's real name. Pseudonyms are also used for people mentioned by the participants.

away outlet and ornament-maker for a gay magazine. Currently she grooms dogs part-time and continues to produce and sell paintings, often with gay or lesbian themes.

Level of openness: *Artist's* family and friends know that she is lesbian. When she was working for *Fastprint*, two of her colleagues (her sister and a former lover) knew about her orientation, but she kept it secret from the others. In subsequent employment she has come out.

Choice of pseudonym: For the 1996 interview she kept the pseudonym she chose in 1994, when she said it related to her desire to be known as a (gay) artist, and to the freedom of expression that she was discovering through art work.

5.1.2 *Exploited*

Exploited (30, female) is a senior journalist at a daily newspaper and lives in a city.

Researcher's impressions: Through contact with *Exploited* prior to this research, the following pre-conceptions arose: She is known to the researcher as very popular. She is outgoing, a good conversationalist and has a keen, quick sense of humour, which she often uses to defuse conflict situations. Many people depend on her and turn to her for support, which she gives freely, although this sometimes involves sacrifice of her own needs.

Relevant employment history: *Exploited* occupies a senior editorial post at the Afrikaans daily paper where she has been working for 13 years. She was promoted in the time between the two interviews.

Level of openness: *Exploited* is out to some of her younger colleagues. She suspects that superiors know that she is lesbian. In her private life she is "boldly out" and has been openly gay since she was 18. With the exception of her lesbian sister, her family do not know about her orientation.

Choice of pseudonym: In 1994 she indicated that her choice of pseudonym reflected her perception that the hard work demanded of her was not properly acknowledged, financially or otherwise. She felt that this was still true in 1996, despite her promotion.

5.1.3 *Impatient*

Impatient (37, male) is a managing director in the automotive industry and lives in Port Elizabeth.

Researcher's impressions: As during the 1994 interview, *Impatient* was friendly, soft-spoken and eager to be of help. He spoke fast and often corrected himself – seemingly anxious about the value of his responses. It appeared he was over-worked and he indicated he would like to sell the business in the not-too-distant future.

Relevant employment history: Subsequent to the 1994 interview, *Impatient* was made managing director of his father's car-part manufacturing company. He has been in senior positions in the company for approximately 10 years.

Level of openness: *Impatient* is closeted at work, but wonders if some employees or people in the industry know that he is gay. Some of his family members abroad know, but not his father. He is out to his predominantly gay friends.

Choice of pseudonym: The pseudonym reflects his mood at the office, where he has a great deal of work and responsibilities. For the first interview he chose the pseudonym *Hurricane*, a nickname given to him at work, but he changed it in 1996 because he thought it sounded “immature”.

5.1.4 *Richard Acton*

Richard Acton (29, male) is a geographer from Cape Town.

Researcher’s impressions: *Acton* has a gentle manner, an engaging curiosity, a razor-sharp wit and considered the relevant issues in a critical, analytical manner.

Relevant employment history: *Acton* is a geographer. The research in 1994 concerned a period of two years during which he had worked as a sales assistant in an academic book shop in Cape Town in order to fund a thesis. At the time of the 1996 interview, he had left the bookshop and was working as a contract environmental researcher for a university department. He was about to resettle in London.

Level of openness: *Acton*’s friends and sister are aware of his orientation, but his parents and brothers are not. He is open about his orientation to about half his colleagues, but does not know if the others are aware that he is gay.

Choice of pseudonym: In 1994 he said,

I chose *Richard Acton* because Richard is a suitably butch name, and Acton was the name that Ann Brontë wrote under when she couldn’t reveal her identity. I think that’s suitably juxtaposed. Brontë’s writing was regarded as extremely scandalous and depraved at the time. I like the name because of the obvious links with freedom of expression. Also, there are the links to gender roles – how the scandal arose not just because of the material itself, but because of the fact that it was not “expected” to come from a “lady”.

5.2 *Five core themes*

The eight interviews, four in 1994 and four in 1996, provided a wealth of phenomenological information. Of the many themes that arose, five core themes are presented here. Firstly, throughout participants’ descriptions, the theme of homoprejudice in the workplace was prominent. The manifestation of workplace homoprejudice will be described and discussed, with a comparison between conditions in 1994 and 1996. Secondly, attention will be given to how participants internalise these prejudices against them. The third theme, that of passing⁹, concerns various strategies that gays and lesbians adopt in response to these anxieties in order to preserve a public identity of heterosexuality. However, as a result of this, they render themselves “invisible” – the fourth theme. Individually and as a group they remain unacknowledged for who they really are. Finally, participants spoke of the theme of empowerment. Greater power through personal changes, the introduction of the Constitution and socio-political transformation have enabled or may in future enable them to overcome some of the difficulties they experience as gays and lesbians in homoprejudiced workplaces. In the discussion of this theme, comparisons will again be made between material from 1994 and 1996.

⁹ Gays and lesbians pretending to be heterosexual, and being considered so by others.

5.2.1 The theme of *workplace homophobia*

The closeted participants of this study describe work environments in which negative attitudes toward gays and lesbians have remained widely held and expressed, despite the introduction of the new constitution. (The exception is *Artist's* descriptions in 1996. By that time she was self-employed, having removed herself from a work environment that she had experienced as homophobic.)

5.2.1.1 Patriarchal environments and the *other*

Exploited's description of her workplace captures the essence of company culture as experienced by the participants:

The company is controlled and dominated by terribly conservative white Afrikaner men (most of whom are outspoken members of the Broederbond¹⁰). The whole management is unashamedly homophobic. Most of the employees also regard homosexuality as an oddity and don't hesitate to make scathing remarks about it, or hurtful jokes ... The top ranks look down on women and gay men almost equally, distrust them equally and shrink equally from appointing them. They think gay men are physically and socially inferior; the same applies to women: they don't possess the ability to run the company in the same socially acceptable manner.

The corporate environment described by *Exploited* bears the hallmarks of patriarchy, as described by Minnich and Lerner (see p. 19). The generic human has firm control over employees' occupational lives and by defining what is good and bad, right and wrong, he undermines gay and lesbian employees' courage to live authentically. As highlighted by Croteau and others (see p. 5), potential patriarchal punishment does not necessarily take the form of formal discrimination. Informal discrimination, such as "scathing remarks", can be sufficiently harsh to convince employees to surrender their existentially given freedom and responsibility in exchange for the passive distortion of conformity (B16). It is by this existential dynamic process that patriarchy erases individual experience.

In *Exploited's* workplace, the kind that is a microcosm of contemporary Western society, patriarchal man maintains a hierarchical system that sustains his felt superiority. As in the broader societal sphere, patriarchy in the workplace looks down on the *other*, the category it constructs for those who do not belong to its *broederbond*, its fraternity. Within the patriarchal organigram, there is therefore little space for equalitarian concepts such as those embodied in the Equality Clause. This implies that patriarchal environments will resist the constitutional prohibition of discrimination against gays and lesbians and, correspondingly, that those employees will continue to expect discrimination in the event that their orientation became known, and therefore continue hiding. This expectation is supported by Khayat's (1990) findings that the attitudes of those in power limited the potential of the Canadian equality bill.

Exploited experiences the oppression of being *other* in two significant ways – being female and being a (suspected) lesbian. If females, as the "weaker sex", know their inferior place in the hierarchical set-up, patriarchy may still be placated. However, from a patriarchal point of view the position of the lesbian is

¹⁰ At the time, a powerful secret organisation exclusively for white Afrikaner men. It promoted career advance for members via secret networks and was a main force behind the apartheid government.

somewhat less tenable, as they are sexually independent from men. This is a threat to patriarchy and therefore lesbians have to be constrained.

Similarly, patriarchy attempts to expel gay men from the fraternity into *otherness*, often by constructing them as a special category of woman – “sissies”. Gay men threaten to make the patriarchal man into a sexual object, so patriarchy retaliates by subverting gay men to the category of “weaker sex”.

The contention that *otherness* is created flows from the basic existentialist tenet that “existence precedes essence” (in contrast with the Cartesian “I think therefore I am”). The existential given of choice (C2) implies that being in the world demands of us to create our own meanings. To the neurotic, this element of arbitrariness may seem absurd, so that he or she combats absurdity with distortions. Patriarchy therefore neurotically constructs destructive meanings in its approach to the *other*. In the face of this, the captive homosexual may give up hope of creating a meaningful self-definition and passively sink into apathy. Insofar as such a (non-) response is inauthentic, it involves an alienation from self. This is demonstrated by an incident during which great discrepancy arose between *Exploited's Dasein* (being-there/being-here) and her expression of her being towards others. During a meeting with colleagues, *Exploited's* editor dismissed a gay-positive news report as “trash”. This was her response:

I probably just looked up and sort of ... said nothing. It would have achieved nothing ... I showed little reaction, but I was enraged ...

5.2.1.2 Patriarchy, dirt and disease

If patriarchy constructs the *other* with the aim of destruction, how does it achieve this? The language used by co-workers in referring to homosexuality reveals the destructive patriarchal project. Images of dirt and disease recur. *Artist* says one of her colleagues made the following remark after a gay client had visited their office:

“Ooh, I must go and wash myself, you know he might have Aids.” ... She won't even look at him any more! Whereas before she knew he was gay she was so sweet to him ... For those few minutes, I dislike her intensely.

As noted previously (Hattingh, 1994), difference becomes equated with badness, or dirt. The images of dirt can be understood with reference to the anthropological concept of dirt being “matter out of place” (Douglas, 1966). According to Douglas, “some pollutions are used as analogies for expressing a general view of the social order” (p. 3). Gays and lesbians, who are felt not to belong within the patriarchal system, therefore become regarded as dirt. Douglas also refers to beliefs that one or both of the sexes “is a danger to the other through contact with sexual fluids”. In the age of Aids, the fear of sexual fluids is certainly more than ever based in reality, but this does not detract from the argument that “such patterns of sexual danger can be seen to express symmetry or hierarchy”.

Disease has been used in at least two pertinent ways to classify gays at the bottom of hierarchies, a process that is clearly taking place in the example above. Firstly, homosexuality itself is regarded by many as a disease (Adam, 1978), despite the fact that the American Psychiatric Association has not considered it so since 1973. Homosexuals have been subject to treatments such as aversion therapy and having electrodes implanted in their brain (Adam, 1978). According to Adam (p. 42):

“Cure” may never have been the objective of the therapists; insistence upon sometimes brutal “therapeutic” techniques does successfully perform one social function. Exploitation of the oppressive ideologies internalized by the oppressed themselves, contributes to the maintenance of a relatively quiescent and manipulable population.

Secondly, today gays are labelled as the bearers of Aids, although it is well known that it is spreading faster among heterosexuals.

The patriarchal characterisation of gay and lesbian *others* is thus a distortion that reveals the neurosis inherent to patriarchal hegemony. The meanings patriarchy assigns to homosexuality make domination (D14) of this group possible. The distortion of domination calls into being the counter-pole of neurotic submission (D16) by the “quiescent and manipulable population”. If gays and lesbians internalise the meanings of dirt and sexual disease, it creates shame and creates an obstacle to openness and authentic being. This problem of internalised homophobia will be taken up in section 5.2.2.

5.2.1.3 The patriarchal defence of domination

One way in which patriarchy maintains dominance in work environments is through regimentation. Norms are established from which people may not deviate, even if these norms are personally invasive. According to *Exploited* (1996),

two gay employees, both good workers, were called in by the personnel manager who asked them not to dress and walk in such a camp¹¹ way. They were both told to tighten up their wrists ... In other words, “You don’t adhere to company policy, you don’t look the way we want you to, or behave the way we would like to portray ourselves to the world, so clean up your act!”

From this extract a comparison can be drawn between the behaviour of the organisation and that of closeted gays: metaphorically, the organisation is partially gay (as it has gay employees), but closeted. It defensively disavows its upsetting, homosexual parts. In the same way that the South African nation wrote gays and lesbians out of existence in its former constitution, the macho company, concerned about blame from *das Man*, stays in the closet, maintaining its outward image of heterosexuality. Interpreting the suggestions of Sartre and Heidegger, Yalom (1980, p. 222) states: “Appearances enter the service of denial: *we constitute the world in such a way that it appears independent of our constitution*” (original italics).

Patriarchy thus enforces closetedness via the active distortion of domination. This inauthentic response to the existential anxiety of loneliness and isolation occurs once patriarchy has defensively withdrawn from the “bad” *other* (gays, women, the disabled, blacks, the poor), thereby splitting badness off, as described by Brice (see p. 19). Of course, as a neurotic defence, this is not effective, so the neurotic anxiety of estrangement remains widely felt in modern industrial society, where, according to Heidegger (1962), people are treated as objects. This suggests that patriarchs, too, are trapped by feelings of estrangement.

¹¹ “A person who dresses or behaves in a manner which advertises his homosexuality, also refers to extravagant or ‘kitsch’ decor, clothes, jewellery, etc.” (Isaacs & McKendrick, 1992, p. 247).

5.2.1.4 The patriarchal defence of denial

Patriarchy can also attempt to deal with gays and lesbians as the *other* by denying their very existence. A contemptuous annihilation by wish, this denial could be considered as domination to the extreme. The current study finds that participants link the homoprejudice in their workplaces to limited vision, a resistance to look at that which might challenge understandings. *Artist* says the homoprejudiced are people with “narrow lives”, living in “small worlds”. When *Acton* described his lover and his new flat to colleagues, they assumed it had two bedrooms once they heard he would be sharing the flat with another man. They were “blind” to the other option.

Clearly, the colleagues were in denial, a mechanism that restricts vision, as strikingly portrayed in Zapiro’s cartoon (p. 4) about the judiciary’s blindness to the Equality Clause. What one does not see, does not hurt or offend one. However, we will see in following sections how the participants’ experience of not *being* seen does indeed cause them psychological injury. *Acton*’s colleagues’ denial about his flat is an example of the heterosexist default, a symptom of patriarchy’s neurosis (Hattingh, 1994). According to Angyal (1982, p. 83), a characteristic of the neurotic is that he or she “continues to live partly in a world of fantasy” (original emphasis). The representative of patriarchy wishes all differences away, when plausible, and assumes that everyone is heterosexual, like him. The gay person is the enemy “with whom no communication, no understanding is possible: his main attribute is utter and absolute alienness” (p. 84). The patriarchal neurotic maintains fear and hostility “by refusing to learn to know as people those with whom they have some limited contact” (p. 84). Findings indicate that limited vision is also associated with conservatism in participants’ stories, frequently in the context of fundamentalist religious views. Bigotry is not, however, essential to religion *per se*: *Artist* says,

my very, very, very anti-gay colleague is very religious, *but she hates gays* (italics added).

Rather, narrow-minded conservatism is linked to religion practised with selective vision. *Acton* speaks of colleagues who are

white, conservative South African Christians of the worst order: “What a friend we have in Jesus, but fuck everybody who doesn’t agree with our viewpoint.” Grey-minded people. These people turn a blind eye when two of the little happy bunnies are committing adultery at the office; yet my committed gay relationship would not be approved of.

Patriarchy’s pathology here can again be viewed as a splitting off (see p. 19) of that which is experienced as evil and its projection onto the bad *other*. Love, which is central to religion and in existentialism an essential aspect of authentic being (or courage, D8), is reserved for people “who agree with our viewpoint”. Forgiveness is available, should they trespass, but for those who are *other*, there is only condemnation. This represents an inauthentic spirituality, where followers flee from their freedom. They take refuge in the rules and dogma of *das Man* that appear to soothe by expelling *otherness*, rather than embrace the *otherness* that resides internally. Perhaps Sartre’s concept of *bad faith* best describes this situation, where the individual’s being becomes encased in

a “must/should” moral order that achieves both a fragmentation in being and automaton-like behaviour. Individuals in the state of bad faith deny a vast range of potentials, claiming them

to be impossible as a result of the strictures imposed by society and biology. Class, culture, gender, parental upbringing, religious ideology – anything external to the individuals themselves – become worthy originating factors and excuses for their actions (Spinelli, 1989, p. 118).

5.2.1.5 Impact of the Constitution on workplace homophobia

The results indicate that the state of the work environment, as described above, has been changed little by transition. This impression was supported when participants were asked directly about the impact of the Constitution. *Impatient* has not given the Constitution “much thought”, but the other participants see it as a meaningful event. According to *Acton*

it is a very important time for this country with this transformation, because people are pressurised ... Even the most conservative pigs are forced to say the right things and to be seen to be leaning in the right direction.

All the participants point out limitations of change. *Acton* warns against a false sense of security, saying

constitutional equality is tenuous and was achieved because of the efforts of only a very, very small group of people ... and luck ... because there were other more important so-called debates going on at the time.

The facts support this contention. The lobbying campaign for inclusion of sexual orientation in the Equality Clause was conducted by a relatively small, but very committed group of activists, who deliberately followed a fairly low-profile approach in order to minimise opposition.

Participants all expect real change in the population’s attitudes to take many years, even generations. In the absence of attitude change and therefore real commitment, they expect most change to be superficial and the enforcement of equality to be difficult, because, in *Acton*’s words, “the basics stay the same – the goddamn fascist society. It has merely gone underground.” In *Exploited*’s workplace, the Constitution

has not had much of an impact ... because they [those in power] don’t feel threatened. As far as discrimination goes, no-one’s ever going been able to pinpoint that it’s being done.

Impatient agrees:

A [non-discrimination] policy is worth nothing. There’s lots of ways to get out of employing somebody who is gay. It’s very difficult to prove in a court of law that you didn’t employ somebody because he was gay. If you look at the courts, they can’t control what’s going on in the country, let alone worry about gay rights. [Minister of Justice] Dullah Omar called Pagad¹² “our allies”. Now they are the government’s allies in stamping out drugs, but are they going to be their allies in trying to stamp out homosexuality?

There is thus distrust of authorities’ commitment, both those in the workplace and in government. This pessimism about change is supported by Khayat’s (1990) finding reported in section 2.5 (p. 10) that the effectiveness of the Canadian equality bill was limited by the attitudes prevalent among both those in power and the general public. These attitudes may, however, change in time. Research in social psychology suggests that forced compliance, such as laws against discrimination, cause cognitive dissonance that leads to attitude change (Baron & Byrne, 1991). This implies that the apparent dishonesty of “politically correct”

¹² People Against Gangsterism and Drugs. This is a militant, fundamentalist Islamic group from the “coloured” townships on the Cape Flats, who claim that they want to wipe out gangs and drugs. They are also strongly opposed to any rights for gays and lesbians.

attitudes may eventually be replaced by attitudes and actions that are congruent. Indeed, one only needs to consider how dramatically the situation has changed for gays and lesbians since Stonewall (1969) to realise that attitudes may shift after a relatively short period of resistance.

5.2.2 The theme of *internalised homophobia*

The way in which patriarchal set-ups construct negative meanings about gays and lesbians was discussed above. The findings in the section below illustrate the powerful effect this has on gays and lesbians who are labelled negatively. Instead of creating their own meanings, they often identify with and internalise such “ready-made” negative labels – a passive distortion of being (see table 1, row 15). Once they have incorporated such negative beliefs about themselves, it becomes increasingly difficult to oppose patriarchal attempts at domination.

5.2.2.1 Relation to labels of homosexuality

The participants’ preferences for self-labelling of their sexual orientation reveal how attempts to establish a positive sexual identity can become entangled in a web of negative stereotypes – their own and those of heterosexuals, as described by Simon et al (see chapter 2, p. 6). *Artist* identifies with the term *gay*, and prefers to use this term when coming out to heterosexuals. Her preference suggests a concern that she may be viewed as the stereotype of a hyper-masculine lesbian:

It is neutral and softer than *lesbian*, a term I have always *hated*. *Lesbian* is stereotyped, in the way *queen* is for men ... It puts you in a box where you’re supposed to be very masculine and very tough.

Acton, however, rejects identification even with this allegedly more neutral label. He finds

such terms oppressive, because they are short-hand links to prejudice, far from being accurate descriptive categories. It’s a bit like the terms *black* or *bantu* as used in South Africa during (and after) apartheid – they’re “useful” generalisations at specific points in time, but eventually become recognised as codes for all sorts of assumptions and dangerous prejudices. Witness the success of movies in which same-sex partners are portrayed as foppish, hysterical and/or any other number of negative characteristics ... it’s extravagant, and just stupid. Gay people are always assumed to be extraverted, flighty, silly and even dangerous ... all men seem to be incredibly talented interior designers. There are virtually no films/books/stories where men in same-sex partnerships are ordinarily (stereotypically) masculine together – to the point of being clumsy, ordinary blokes.

There appears to be a never-ending battle of meaning over labels for same-sex orientation. As described by Jay and Young (1992), the *gay* label was adopted in the heady post-Stonewall era as a non-prejudicial alternative to *homosexual*. But the participants’ comments show how the word has nevertheless become infused with the pejorative connotations it sought to reject. This is not an unfamiliar phenomenon with stigmatised groups; one only has to think of the progression from “imbecile” to “retard”, “mentally handicapped”, “mentally challenged”, “learning disabled”, and to the as yet unknown next euphemism, in order to realise that a label does not erase prejudice and fear.

It is hard for someone attracted to members of the same sex to identify with a group under a banner that gets hijacked for pejorative meanings. Public identification with a label such as *gay* that acts as “short-hand to prejudice” can also make workplace coming-out a risky process. This has to be kept in mind when

thinking about internalised homophobia (popularly known as internalised homophobia). *Artist* and *Acton*'s rejection of labels such as *gay* and *lesbian* may be viewed as an attempt at being authentic by forcing others to look at them freshly, without the ready-made meanings attached to these labels. Yet such strong rejection of these labels may also imply some internal belief, or at least a suspicion, that the pejorative meanings are true. This would lead to a need to reject the labels. Indeed, in 1996 *Acton* acknowledged that he was still aware of a degree of internalised homophobia.

Despite these difficulties related to labels, a creative response is possible. The existential given of choice (C2) implies a call to create positive meanings out of slurs. Epithets such as *queer*, *moffie* and *dyke*¹³ have been daringly re-appropriated by gay and lesbian activists as proud labels, as if to say "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me". *Artist*, who identifies with the term *gay*, hopes that the negative meanings of this term too may be turned around. She refers to cinematic portrayals of gays, in the same manner that *Acton* does:

Even *The Birdcage*¹⁴ is unfortunate, because it is stereotyped. I think if the SABC and society on the whole could start viewing gays as just the person next door, it would be a lot easier when we do go for a job interview and say, "I'm gay."

5.2.2.2 Conformity

The material thus strongly suggests that gays and lesbians internalise negative meanings about themselves. How does this occur? Remarks by *Artist* shed light on how absorption of societal prejudice into gay identities occurs. With reference to her former colleagues having "narrow lives" and living in "small worlds," she recalled two years after leaving the company:

I realised I was being as small as *they* were. My gayness was becoming an issue to me ... whereas it was only a fraction of my life. They were making me feel dirty about it – they were *making* it an issue. And I didn't appreciate being sucked into their vacuum. I was almost reciprocating with my anger and yet they didn't realise why I was so angry. They've all worked with each other for about eight or ten years ... so you become like a family. You almost have one way of thinking and one way of dealing with things. They had become a small-minded *One*.

The pressures brought to bear by *das Man* – or *One* – can be very hard to resist, because *One* forbids dissent. In a company environment with its unspoken norms and culture, the responsibility accompanying the choices required for authentic, fully-fledged individuality may seem too overwhelming. Conformity (B16) appears to lessen anxiety about blame (B10) – from the boss, from colleagues – for the consequences of individualistic actions, but it remains only an illusion that we can escape our existential responsibility (B2). As *Artist* discovers here, giving up of identity makes the lived-world "narrow", a word choice that echoes the literal meaning of the German word *angst* – "being narrowed in". Neurotic anxiety re-emerges, because *automaton conformity*, in Fromm's (1969) terms, is a mechanism of flight from freedom. As re-

¹³ Respectively, homosexual or someone who does not subscribe to conventional gender divisions; gay man; and lesbian. All three terms can be used pejoratively or as "proud" label.

¹⁴ A Hollywood version of *La Cage Aux Folles*, a farce in which two gay men pretend unsuccessfully to be heterosexual. While the movie is gay positive in the sense that it shows up society's bigotry about this issue, the protagonists are stereotypically effeminate and outrageously "over the top" in their behaviour.

vealed here, conformity creates an emptiness, a vacuum that powerfully draws more individuals into the faceless, featureless *they*.

5.2.2.3 Submission

Another mechanism through which gays and lesbians internalise homophobia is the passive distortion of submission (D16). It follows from the given of separateness that authentic striving is a lonely struggle and so, in hostile environments, it may be very hard for gays and lesbians not to choose an illusion of togetherness with colleagues by structuring their lives "in terms of how others live" (Kruger, 1988, p. 88). But allowing ourselves to be sucked into the vacuum of *das Man* requires adopting their classification system. *Exploited* says,

there is no question of me being addressed over dress and manner, because my act is clean, and I dress correctly, and I behave absolutely impeccably.

In similar vein, *Impatient* says that when he thinks of a gay person,

I just see Aids sort of written in front of me. I think it's also one of the reasons why I steer clear of sleeping with people, because I like to think of myself as being clean, as being Aids free or HIV free.

These responses demonstrate that the participants think in terms of the patriarchal classification system, which, as we have seen in 5.2.1.2, operates in terms of dichotomies like good/bad, clean/dirty.

Once this system has been adopted, it takes little for gays and lesbians to doubt their own integrity. In response to the remark by *Artist's* colleague about the gay client who "might have Aids, you know" (p. 27), *Artist* thought of asking her, "If he's so dirty, am I just as dirty?" As we saw, *Artist* remained quiet, despite being enraged. Lurking behind her silence may be the dread of estrangement (D10), of being cast out of the occupational citadel if she reveals herself. In this instance, the challenge of authenticity, of being in accord with her own givenness and that of the world and people around her, may be too daunting. While such submissive distortion may prevent banishment, it renders her captive inside the patriarchal environment. Rather than providing togetherness (D4), *Artist's* silence about her true emotions constitutes a withdrawal from others (D12).

Once homophobia has been internalised through these conforming and submissive processes, prejudicial acts in the workplace may seem justified. With reference to the employees being addressed over dress and manner, *Exploited* said,

They are definite queens. Which they should have the freedom as far as I'm concerned to live out, but not *too* excessively. I mean, I can see that that could be a problem in any situation. You have to confront people from all walks of life in journalism and people could be offended.

5.2.2.4 Domination through identification with the aggressor

It is noteworthy, in the last excerpt, how the locus of determining meaning has shifted from within the participant to *das Man*, the “people from all walks of life”, to whom it is left to determine what is offensive (moral/immoral; clean/dirty; good/bad). It is only another small step to collusion with the oppressive figures of authority. In 1994 *Exploited* mentioned

laughing along, from sheer necessity, every now and then when they make scathing remarks about some well-known gay person that does *weird* things that do the cause [of homosexuality] much harm.

A chilling aspect of internalised homophobia is that it can evolve beyond mere collusion with prejudice to the commission of discriminatory acts. In 1994, *Impatient* admitted that he was biased against gays and reported:

If somebody had to actively tell me in a job interview that he was gay, I probably wouldn't employ him, because I'll feel threatened.

Reactions such as these of *Exploited* and *Impatient* can be understood as a mild form of identification with the aggressor, a phenomenon that in its more extreme manifestations led to Jews torturing fellow Jews in Nazi concentration camps (Adam, 1978). At its root is a defensive mechanism against estrangement. In an environment of little companionship and comfort, active withdrawal from others – domination – may paradoxically offer some seeming control over relations with them. In becoming somewhat like the internal representation of the dominating oppressor – the patriarchal, homophobic employer – the danger to the self is apparently lessened.

5.2.3 The theme of *passing*

5.2.3.1 Anxiety about consequences of coming out in the workplace

Homophobia and discrimination in patriarchal work environments, as described in chapter 2 (p. 5), activates powerful anxieties in gay and lesbian employees. These anxieties are obstacles to behaviour that could reveal their sexual orientation. The concerns are related to real risks affecting participants' livelihoods, their “unfolding life project(s) and self understanding(s)” (Kruger, 1988, p. 124). As “under-cover” gays or lesbians, closeted homosexuals have ample opportunity to discover colleagues' homophobia, and are therefore well aware that their relationships with colleagues may be put at risk if they came out.

Such potential relationship loss provokes anxiety, as expressed by *Artist* in 1994: “I think my biggest fear is that people won't like me.” She was concerned that relationships may suddenly be disrupted. One of her colleagues, with whom she had been working for six years,

always said we got on well and I'm a nice person, and she's always wanting me to baby-sit her children. Yet if she knew what I was, she wouldn't let me near her children. She may suddenly become my arch enemy.

The fact that coming out is not necessarily a single event, but an ongoing process, intensifies anxiety. According to *Acton*, coming out consists of

a hundred thousand pieces ... One has to make all sorts of adjustments when you come out, and I suppose one never ceases to do it, you can never cease to acknowledge all these things to yourself. You are always encountering new people.

In addition to anxiety about relationship loss, participants are concerned that their careers would suffer if they came out. A concern highlighted consistently is informal discrimination (see p. 5), because it would be difficult to prove yet could significantly affect career mobility and productivity. In 1996, *Exploited* said about the possibility of being overtly homosexual in the workplace,

How would anyone ever know if there was a silent form of discrimination going on? I cannot be fired, obviously, but I definitely have no doubt that there would be implicit little jabs ... My biggest fear is that revealing my orientation would hamper my chances for promotion because my sexuality does not conform to the broader plan my bosses have for their company.

Exploited was also concerned that coming out would decrease colleagues' trust in her, leaving her an outsider without access to information crucial for her occupational success. She referred to the example of a successful gay male colleague. If he came out, she was "absolutely sure" that their superiors would say, "How can you trust anything that a moffie says? He's prejudiced."

The first South African court case as a result of alleged unfair dismissal on the grounds of sexual orientation (see chapter 2, p. 5) underlines that *Exploited*'s concerns have a realistic base. There is an uncanny similarity between her suspicions about her employer's potentially decreased trust and the evidence in the court case referred to earlier (see p. 5). The claimant, a gay man, alleged that his boss had said, "I don't believe that a faggot¹⁵ can be trusted in a senior managerial position. You will never get anywhere in my organisation" (Singh, 1997).

Aside from discrimination that might affect career progress, participants raised concerns about petty informal discrimination that would make everyday working conditions unpleasant. In 1996, *Acton* was still anxious that colleagues would

go behind your back and just make life difficult in small, mindless, grey ways. There would be a more direct collision between people's prejudices and one's daily life, so that if Madame X finds out that you're gay, one has to be aware that there will probably be comments made, insidious jokes told, the general cooling of the atmosphere, radiation of disapproval, and just a daily look in the eye, like: "Oh dear, I suppose everyone is entitled to their own sick life-style."

Even in the case of *Impatient*, who in 1994 – as de facto managing director – could not be fired, the idea of coming out still evoked anxiety. He worried that being associated with a gay person would expose him and tarnish the company image, be used against him by his opposition, drive clients away and lead to decreased profits. On this level, the fantasies are about risk to livelihood and are therefore related to the existential issue of finiteness (A2). However, the anxiety is not experienced and confronted on the existential level. Rather, it appears in the form of a preoccupation about income and wealth. Thus, according to Arcaya (1979), suggests the presence of neurosis.

While some of these anxieties are therefore based on real incidents, the expectations often remain untested. Kritzinger and Van Aswegen's study (1992) suggests that, particularly in South Africa, the incidence of dis-

¹⁵ Derogatory term for a gay man.

crimination may be low. There remains uncertainty about the extent of the risk of coming out in the South African workplace, and should discrimination occur, legal recourse is now available, even if this may be an unpleasant route to take. Substitutive experience (see chapter 3, p. 18), or fantasy – an indicator of neurosis – appears to be a predominant factor guiding gay and lesbian employees in decisions to remain closeted. Careers may indeed be at risk, but in trying to prevent risk by remaining closeted, freedom – even if formally guaranteed by a constitution – is given up in favour of passing and conformity to what is thought to be acceptable.

5.2.3.2 Silence and self-censorship

The workplace is generally regarded as a public space and it is a common admonition “not to let your private life interfere with your work life”. Yet there is a regular, mundane flow of private issues into the workplace, which may translate into waves of anxiety for closeted gay and lesbian employees. This is indeed what the findings indicate. *Acton* said, in 1996,

I think heterosexual people don't realise the number of assumptions which are made about you every single day, going to office parties, and going to people's homes, discussing what you did on the week-end – all these things are very, very difficult.

These assumptions have the basis that one is heterosexual. Participants often maintain this assumption through passively not correcting heterosexist defaults and remaining silent in the face of expressed homo-prejudice. They justify this by saying it would be inappropriate to reveal private information in a work setting, yet acknowledge that keeping silent creates a difficult situation for them. When, in 1996, *Acton* told colleagues that he was buying a flat, an apparently everyday, public topic could suddenly become explicitly private if he challenged assumptions:

I was fascinated by people's default settings. What people came up with was: “*Acton* is buying a flat. He will be staying with another man and therefore this is a two-bedroomed flat. There is no other option.” I remember thinking, oh god! now I have said something about the flat, *now* what I am going to say? But within 10 seconds this wonderful, warm, social control had taken over and everybody had just redesigned the whole flat in their minds instantly, because the alternatives just weren't there. And then I just thought, if this is the way people want it, I'm not even going to say anything. What is the point, of saying, “Actually, there is one bedroom”? That's as good as saying ... I did feel a sense of risk and fear, but it soon changed to, “Well, that is the way it is. That doesn't make that much difference to me.” I just didn't want to deal with bringing that prejudice into a much closer space with myself. These people have no social context with me, so I didn't really feel that by embarking on a programme of revelation that anything would be gained. In fact, it would just infringe on my working environment ... It is like talking to a Ku Klux Klan member about gay rights. You get a very blank, white stare. What is the point? ... I suppose on some levels it was a defiance.

Participants appear to apply different norms to themselves than to heterosexual colleagues when they determine which private issues are appropriate for the workplace. It would not have been considered inappropriate if, for example, a heterosexual colleague had been talking about moving into a one-bedroomed flat with a partner. The sexual implication would have been there, but might not have been acknowledged explicitly, as it is simply an everyday assumption and not associated with dirt or the *other*. However, in a society that is biased against gays and lesbians, the sexual aspect does not automatically get taken for granted. Despite efforts through the use of terms such as *gay* and *lesbian*, rather than *homosexual*, to em-

phasise life-style and identity and de-emphasise sex, sexuality would immediately assume a prominence in the conversation that would place the interaction firmly in the private realm – and then with connotations of dirt.

Remaining silent or lying by omission may seem trivial, but holds painful emotional consequences. Participants reported particular stress in situations where they remained silent while others made prejudicial statements. In recalling such an incident, *Artist* said about the person talking,

I could shake her physically. And I could shake myself, because I get *so* worked up. I actually go cold. It's almost as though you're in shock. I feel panicky as well. And I sit there, and I just calm myself down, I count to ten. And by the time I find I actually have to go on with the job with her ... I'm trembling by then. And it takes a long time to get rid of that hot feeling ... I feel like a bit of a hypocrite. I feel I've betrayed my kind.

The intensity that these experiences of self-censorship hold suggests a need to reconsider participants' contention that they are remaining silent because issues are private and therefore inappropriate to be allowed to "interfere" with work life. It is more likely that they refrain from introducing even non-committal comments or criticism of homophobia because they need to allay powerful anxieties about the expected effects of coming out. *Acton* acknowledges a sense of "risk and fear" regarding the flat incident, but soon sheds the feeling. The idea of underlying anxiety gains more validity when one considers that participants often engage in a much more elaborate form of passing than just silence, namely pretending.

5.2.3.3 Pretending

In situations of awkward boundaries between the public and private, passing included the telling of partial truths to maintain the heterosexist default. Some participants had taken opposite-sex partners to work functions, or avoided association with gays or lesbians. *Artist*, for example, told the receptionist at *Fastprint* not to let people through to her in case they "looked very gay". The issue of partners emerged as especially problematic. In 1996 *Exploited* was "increasingly coming into difficulty" when she had to refer to her partner at work:

I had to speak to an editor about an article written by my partner and I immediately was confronted in my inner being as how to explain to him the relationship between me and the author. I would prefer to call her "my partner", and I have to keep referring to her as "my housemate". "The other half of my household" is a term that I have started using, to make it a little less of a denial. I do feel incredibly guilty that I deny my relationship ... I felt dishonest about myself and dishonest to the cause of being gay. Half of my colleagues know, and in what esteem do they hold us, as a couple, if they hear me refer to her as my housemate? It affects my self-esteem. The people who don't have any idea of the amazing relationship that I'm in would, probably, think that I have not been able to find anyone that I love, or who can love me. And I can't rectify the situation, I can't tell them, "I'm very happily married and I'm having a very successful relationship." So there's obviously a failure, a communication barrier between some of my colleagues and myself.

Many of these deceptions amount to *pretending* in the sense used by Lerner (see chapter 3, p. 19). Sometimes participants not only omit information, but actively engage in deceitful behaviour. *Exploited*, for example, flirts with men to confuse senior colleagues about her sexuality. This may seem relatively harmless, but has serious psychological implications: According to Lerner (1993, p. 122),

pretending is potentially the most serious form of deception because it can involve living a lie, rather than telling one. And we are least likely to catch ourselves in the act. When we tell an outright lie, we feel jolted. But pretending is imperceptibly woven into the fabric of daily life and so leads to the construction of a false self. We may not feel any jolts along the way, because we are, after all, “just pretending”. In time, we don’t notice ourselves doing it at all.

5.2.3.4 Inauthenticity and guilt

It is evident from the participants’ descriptions that their attempts to avoid being identified as gay or lesbian are not entirely effective in soothing their anxiety. Their behaviour provides temporary relief from an anxiety-provoking situation, but also maintains it, as similar interactions recur regularly in office settings. There is an ongoing, anxious vigilance to maintain covertness, for example through being self-conscious when conducting a telephone conversation. This can be expected to take a psychological toll – the expression *biting one’s tongue* illustrates the activity behind the ostensible passivity of remaining silent (Lerner, 1993). The participants defended against their ongoing anxiety by misrepresenting themselves – “distortions of being” in a fairly literal sense (see table 1, rows 13 & 15). While *Acton* may not have gained much by revealing the truth about his flat and might in fact have created an awkward situation for himself, his statement that it was a “defiance” not to tell colleagues suggests a measure of rebellion for its own sake (B14). As an active form of surrender of freedom (B12), this suggests the presence of a degree of dread (row 9).

Participants’ passing involves the distortion of conformity (B16), as discussed in 5.2.2.2. Gay and lesbian employees therefore become actors. As May (1975) observes, putting on an act results in the loss of the sense of self, so that the person lives as a “counterfeit image” (p. 85) of him- or herself. By creating personas of sameness to match the featureless *they*, the person “yields up [his or her] identity and wipes out [his or her] individuality for the seeming protection against guilt and responsibility afforded by undistinguished uniformity with the social code” (p. 85). Without individuality – authentic being – the possibilities of real relationships with others are also curtailed. While much of participants’ covertness is apparently aimed at avoiding greater distance, it is ironic that this defence achieves the opposite, as is evident in *Exploited’s* statement that a “failure” occurs and a “communication barrier” is formed between herself and her colleagues. The result of the inauthentic response is alienation from self and withdrawal from others (C12 & D12).

Understandably, participants do not foresee that coming out will necessarily result in more open relationships that provide for mutual growth and debunking of stereotypes. Rather, they are concerned that acceptance by colleagues would be insincere. In 1996, *Exploited* suggested that colleagues would remain covertly prejudiced, even if they made gay-positive comments to her in private:

One-on-one, people are fascinated, and that’s fine. But there’s a lot of danger in that. They ignore the fact that they were fascinated on a one-on-one basis when they get into a group with heterosexuals. They make scathing remarks and become aggressive.

This is significant, given the participants’ own covertness. They are anxious that their concealment of sexual orientation would be replaced by colleagues’ concealment of prejudice. The participants appear to prefer the former. This lack of faith in colleagues may be a projection of participants’ own strategies of

deception. However, it is also true that participants' concern is congruent with workplace homophobia based on fundamental attitudes of *das Man*, such as religious beliefs, that are resistant to change.

For all gays and lesbians to come out without considering their life situation as a whole would constitute an inauthentic response to the contingencies of life, necessitating distortions of being, such as activism for the sake of activism and blind rebellion (table 1, row 14). Indeed, in some cases *reluctance* to come out may be motivated by attempts at authenticity. *Acton* wishes to come out not through the blind rebellion of "grand statements", but through a process that is based on building relationships first and then coming out if deemed appropriate:

The politics of coming out I don't always like. I think all forms of coming out are relevant at one time or another, but the most radical gesture one can make is to come out through a far more integrated process, one of assimilation: If it's incidental, rather than deliberate. It's a politics of normality, rather than difference. My sexuality is just one part of me, and I would hate to meet people simply because they were gay. Sexuality is a very fundamental building block of people, yes, but it is not the way that I would like to interact with others. I would like to meet them because of other interests. If they are gay ... it is nice to know gay people.

An approach of relationships first, followed by disclosure if appropriate, has been followed by all the participants in homophobic work settings. Such an approach may avoid much of the trauma often involved in coming out. Yet, the greater degree of ongoing closetedness implies that the difficulties of being closeted, as described above, continue. It also means that those who are homophobic are least likely to be exposed to an opportunity to change their prejudices, which has implications for the power of gays and lesbians collectively, and/or politically. The biggest danger of continued closetedness, however, lies in the possibility that it may be the result of a common tendency to give priority to financial or professional success over personal integrity. According to Angyal (1982, p. 85),

If one cannot be loved, at least one can have fame, prestige, a reputation, titles, and other external trappings; the person [him- or herself] becomes an appendage of his [or her] badges.

The complex nature of factors needing consideration when coming out highlights that the mere fact of declaring one's sexual orientation is not a synonym for authenticity. Rather, achievement of higher levels of authenticity is a life-long project and each individual has to exercise his or her freedom to determine the appropriate manner in which to achieve this. Different choices will have different outcomes and this is a responsibility with which each person must grapple.

While there is much evidence of anxiety and distortive processes in participants' accounts, it is important to note how their being calls them to authenticity. Their distress about being "hypocritical" and "betraying their kind" is evidence of guilt (B6), a healthy awareness of the potential to act, or freedom (B2). In passing as heterosexual, real communication is blocked, and heterosexual colleagues are denied the chance to reconsider their prejudices in view of new information from somebody they may respect. Guilt experiences serve to remind people that their actions can change the status quo.

5.2.4 The theme of *invisibility*

5.2.4.1 The need for greater authenticity

Participants' pretending aims to hide an important part of themselves from public scrutiny. To the degree that they are successful, they become invisible. But is this really what they want?

Despite taking continuous steps to keep their sexual orientation invisible, the participants are all uncertain about the effectiveness of such measures and frequently contradict themselves when considering whether colleagues know or suspect their orientation. Participants mention gossip, their apparent single status and attending work functions alone as factors that might cause colleagues to make assumptions about their sexual orientation. *Exploited* said (in 1996):

I would think that very few people who have some kind of contact with me would have any doubts that I'm gay, because word spreads very fast. But I definitely confuse them, I still have that on my side! As I recall having said last time: my flirtatious attitude towards men, and women for that matter, throws them.

Yet the only sign of acknowledgement that she gets from superiors about possibly knowing her status is that they call her a feminist, which she denies:

I want them to actually call a spade a spade. And then I just leave a *wide* open gap of silence, so that they can sort it out for themselves – “Well, she's not a feminist, she doesn't really like men – she keeps saying negative things about men – then maybe she's a lesbian ... Oh my god!” ... I'm not going to state it to my disadvantage, but if they figure it out, then they have to cope with it. Then they've put it on their own plate. But if I sort of bombard them with it and walk in and give them the info, then it might actually boomerang on me.

Exploited's wish that her bosses would “call a spade a spade” suggests that she, apparently like the other participants, longs for relationships of greater authenticity with others, where there is mutual recognition of individuality. However, her ambiguous, confusing presentation of these aspects is mirrored by the ambiguity of superiors' knowledge of her orientation. In the face of real risk, *Exploited* flirts with her responsibility to act, sometimes revealing a little bit in order to satisfy her need for greater authenticity, and sometimes concealing to protect herself. In the final instance, she flees from freedom and hopes that her superiors will take the responsibility of naming her.

5.2.4.2 Increasing loneliness, isolation and estrangement

The ambiguous effectiveness of passing suggests that it fails to curb the dread of estrangement (D10). As discussed with reference to this theme, participants are integrated into the work environment and with colleagues as presumably heterosexual people, which is a distortion. Closeted gay and lesbian employees remain effectively excluded because significant parts of them remain hidden. Consequently, they feel unheard, unseen and misunderstood, as illustrated by *Artist's* comment, made after the introduction of the 1996 constitution, that she did not “appreciate still the way that society treats gays – they're very closed to the subject, they're very stupid when it comes to gays.”

Moreover, invisibility may create situations of extreme anxiety, as is evident in *Artist's* description in 1994 of an evening out with colleagues, during which the topic of homosexuality came under discussion:

I didn't add *one word* to this conversation. Thinking about it now, I'm even shaking. It was like being in a dream, and all these people are standing over you. [*Artist* makes silent talking movements with her mouth.] It's because I most probably feel guilty, or it's like they're talking *about* me ... and yet, they're not, because they think I'm one of them. It's like being an alien on a planet. Now I know what "fish out of water" means. Do you get up and run, or do you stand up and fight for what you believe in? And nine times out of ten, I rather get up and run. But very often I have to stay, and if I feel my back afterwards, I am *drenched* in perspiration, and I don't perspire easily. My whole body flushes this crimson. And I most probably get even more crimson, because I know that they can see that I'm blushing. I've got so many things I want to say to them – at *that specific time*. 'Cause they're all talking about "these bloody moffies", and I would *never* say, "Ja, I hate moffies." So I just rather keep quiet. But what I *should* do is stand up and say, "So what? They're great people." But I am cowardly.

Artist's description illustrates the alienation that results when participants render themselves invisible. As a form of non-being (row 11) it is so intense that she experiences derealisation, the loss of the sense of self that accompanies acting. According to Arcaya (1979, p. 167) emotions are "prime examples of how un-reflected experiences provide consciousness with implicit knowledge". Here the body acts as a "dimension of consciousness" (p. 180) that "seeks truth" (Lerner, 1993, p. 180). It communicates very strongly the unreality of *Artist's* being-with-others in this context, where her experience is not validated through recognition by others. The extreme anxiety of this situation renders *Artist* mute and she passively withdraws from others (D12).

Participants suggest that they do not disclose personal information to some colleagues because they choose not to associate with them for reasons of incompatibility. *Acton*, for example, says:

the issue of my flat separated my own social life from my interaction with people professionally. I realised that to bring people over from that level to a more intimate, personal friendship level would be much harder ... Now there really is a much greater distance between me and other people. On some levels it was annoying, because I created this bigger space ... but again it goes back to prejudice. Do you want those people as friends? I think at the end of the day, no.

We choose relationships that offer realistic chances of a true meeting and satisfaction. This inevitably involves forgoing some relationships. Such choices imply a risk of ruling out communication and the possibility of making relationships possible where previously they had seemed impossible. Withdrawal into invisibility becomes part of a vicious circle of increasing isolation. Invisibility limits the availability of social support at work, leaving the closeted employee feeling more alien. Loneliness, which appears to increase as a result, is a key indicator of neurosis, as described by Angyal (see chapter 3, p. 17).

Participants at times find it difficult that they cannot discuss personal matters in the workplace in the same way that heterosexual employees do. In 1994, *Artist* said:

I feel very frustrated, because if it's our anniversary, or my girlfriend's birthday, or if I hear a song on the radio, I've got to wallow in my own bit of knowing. You've got to pretend, you've got to become quite a good actress. We phone each other once a day, at least, and they'll say, oh, it's your flatmate. It really is difficult, it's very much a double life. I do feel I'm deprived at work. Because somebody will be having problems and their work goes down, and the bosses will say, "Well shame, I know her boyfriend has just moved out." But what about me! I could've had a helluva fight the night before, and spent the night on the couch, but I've got to go to work and pretend hey! this is fine!

Intimacy involves self-disclosure, even in the workplace, while hiddenness reduces intimacy to the point where participants find it impossible to have responsive, spontaneous and authentic relationships with colleagues. Ironically, the participants hide their orientation in an attempt to overcome their sense of isolation. Such attempts, which are not attuned to reality, are doomed to failure. Pre-emptive withdrawal aiming to avoid expected rejection gives rise to a spiralling process where those who are already marginalised contribute to their own ongoing marginalisation.

It can be particularly hard to come out to a person who is known to be prejudiced when the relationship has been consistent over time, and its loss or disruption is feared. In addition, coming out implies the admission of some degree of former deception. In other words, it involves the admission by both parties that the relationship has been inauthentic. This is an important clue to the nature of the anxiety that the closeted person experiences in such a situation. The relationship is, to a significant degree, only an illusion of a relationship. It does not offer true being-together, but rather an illusion of not-being-alone. This suggests that, to some degree, the anxiety is not existential, but rather a dread of estrangement (D10). This dread may surface as the result of an unsuccessful defence against the existential anxiety about loneliness and isolation (D6). Loneliness and isolation are unavoidable, and authentic being requires the courage to confront this fact.

Fortunately, the constitutional changes in the country may have created an opportunity for gays and lesbians to become more visible. This has implications for their experience of their own power, and indeed power and empowerment was a prominent theme of the interviews. This will be discussed in the next section.

5.2.5 The theme of *empowerment*

In the second set of interviews, all four participants reported being, to varying degrees, more open about their sexuality at work than at the time of the first interviews. Several factors may have contributed to this, all sharing the theme of empowerment.

5.2.5.1 Empowerment from relationships with significant others

Not surprisingly, developments in participants' private lives affected their occupational lives, and vice versa. While it can be assumed that personal psychological issues such as level of (gay and lesbian) identity development and relationships with significant others have an important bearing on the experience of occupational life, these issues have not been a focus of this study, due to space limitations. It is, however, important to briefly take note of these issues, as they have significantly influenced participants' experience at work.

Exploited's relationship with her partner appears to have aided a decrease in her internalised homophobia (decrease of such prejudice will be considered in section 5.2.5.5) and a deepening of *Artist's* relationship with her parents coincided with greater general openness about her sexual orientation. In the 1994 interview, *Artist* reported that her mother had been "devastated" when she discovered that *Artist* was gay, while her father avoided the subject. Two years later, *Artist* said,

My mom's immensely proud of me, which is quite a turnabout – it's been nice that she's been so supportive. I'm *very* much more open with my parents about my sense of who I am and what I do. As long as my parents are for and behind me, if other people don't want to be, that's their problem. No matter how old you are, it's important that your parents are behind you.

It seems likely that the affirmation and support gained from strengthening of significant personal relationships, such as reported by *Artist*, would bring a greater sense of well-being and personal power. It appears that support from her parents has empowered her to be less concerned about the possibility that others may reject her (“that's their problem”). Despite initial misgivings from *Artist's* parents, the greater honesty and openness has been associated with a more fulfilling relationship with them – signs of greater authenticity and courage, as pointed out by Spinelli (see chapter 3, p. 15). Importantly, in *Artist's* life the shift towards authenticity affected other significant relationships as well, including those with her partner and colleagues. In 1996, she reported that, if she felt “down”, she told her partner,

“I'm depressed today!” I don't cover it any more, I just find it better to tell people. I can't take hiding any more. And the new people I met since leaving *Fastprint* had a totally different perception of me. I was very raw with emotion at that stage and I showed them not what I wanted them to see, but who I was. And they got to see me very much for who I am. Which was nice and refreshing. I think that's made a very bonding type of friendship.

This is a clear movement away from conformity (B16) in accordance with the identity requirements of *das Man*. She faced the dread of estrangement (D10) with courage (row 7). Taking the risk of greater openness did not result in further estrangement, but rather in greater transcendent love (D8).

5.2.5.2 Empowerment from increased occupational status

Exploited links the achievement of more powerful positions in employment with an ability to be more open about her sexuality. In 1994, she relied heavily on pretending and silence to pass. In her silence, she felt frustrated, “because there are fights I can't fight.” Despite her internal “rebellion” against the policy of using the word *homo* in headlines in her newspaper, she

was too embarrassed to protest. I was surrounded by a bunch of totally straight people, and even though some tacitly knew I was gay, I would have made myself too visible, forcing my sexuality on them.

As discussed in 5.2.2.4, at times she identified with the aggressor. However, by 1996 she was considering taking her partner to a work function. She was now “head of the largest editorial set-up, the engine room” in her newspaper and “less fearful of being caught out, because I have now had the opportunity to prove myself.” Although she remained closeted, she was now outspoken against homophobia. She was successful when she personally approached the editor and insisted

that the newspaper start getting with-it and start using the word *gay* in the headlines, because *homos* was an offensive word, and it was archaic and I could no longer associate myself with the use of it. I was *far* more relaxed about the issue than I was probably when I last spoke to you. I feel less threatened as a lesbian in the company, *purely* because of the seniority that I've reached in the last year or two and my level of inner security. I don't feel threatened.

In this situation *Exploited* did not yet feel sufficiently unthreatened to explicitly speak as a lesbian. The danger of such silence in a situation where superiors may strongly suspect the truth is that it can reinforce their

notions of homosexuality as shameful and dirty. Yet, it is significant that *Exploited* spoke out despite the risk of discovery. Clearly, in a dramatic shift from former distortions of being, her courage had increased, taking the form of commitment (B8) – to the cause of greater equality, an important value for her.

5.2.5.3 Empowerment from dialogue and reflection

The interviewing process of this study appears to have had an impact on the participants, who all stated that it had made them reflect and become aware of issues. Two participants in particular related that they had been empowered through the process. In 1996 *Exploited* said the 1994 interview

made me reflect far more, or maybe for the first time, on my position as a *homosexual* being in my organisation. And it empowered me in a sense. I've reconsidered things that were said in my presence, I responded more to things that affected me. And I have since been far more alert to possible sexual discrimination on the grounds of my being gay, apart from me just being female.

At that time, the conversation – or even reading a gay-positive magazine – evoked an even greater call to authenticity for *Artist*. It made her

just suddenly feel like telling everyone ... You've asked me things that I haven't really ever thought of in *words* before. I've expressed feelings I didn't actually know had words. If I'm going to achieve anything by being gay, I've got to start to be a little bit more active in my gay life, and if I can help another gay person, I most definitely will. It's time to stop hiding.

The 1996 interview revealed that this burgeoning courage was real and the start of a fundamental restructuring of *Artist's* life:

I think the interview had a great bearing on my leaving *Fastprint*. It was very good for me to take everything out with you, put it in front of me, look at it, talk about it, dissect it, and make something. My life was broken down for almost two years after that conversation. But I've *never* regretted what I did. Because it's *made me make a change*. I used to take the summary of the interview to work, read it and think, "I'm not happy like this. This isn't me. I'm not giving the most. I'm participating in life, I'm not *living* life." Boy, have I been living life!

Artist's realisation that "this isn't me" is the crucial point of recognising the impact of automaton conformity (B16) on her life. She rejects non-being (row 11), embraces freedom and accepts the responsibility (B2) of making a major life change. She took up various jobs in which she could be openly gay:

It was wonderful. I felt liberated, compared to *Fastprint*. Not only was I in control of the situation, but my boss knew about me. I have a lot more confidence with people I don't know with whom I deal in work and there's little I will take from people in the line of nonsense. I'm proud of who I am and that I've kept myself going. My initial reaction to the people I work with is that I'm far more open to them. So when you're open to somebody, they're inclined to reciprocate. Things in my professional life have actually improved my relations with people outside of it ... my friends. I realised that with total strangers I could actually be honest and open with them, and they accept me and we end up making a good deal, and actually almost end up with a friendship. It made me realise that friendships can only become stronger through being honest and open. It's been good.

Artist's change in her relationships within her work context have been fundamental and a dramatic illustration of the greater integration and satisfaction that is possible through greater openness at work. The inauthentic withdrawal from others, based on a neurotic relationship of fantasy with her colleagues, has been replaced by a greater sense of authentic togetherness with others. In the place of submission and con-

formity, there are also signs of greater assertiveness, or commitment (B8), as expressed by the statement “This I am; this I believe; this I do” (see chapter 3, p. 15).

This finding about the significance of reflection and dialogue is important in the context of closetedness, which rules out communication about these issues in the workplace. It is possible that in an atmosphere of “don’t ask, don’t tell” it also becomes difficult for gay and lesbian employees to think about these issues, as if the censorship of speech in the workplace also occurs internally.

5.2.5.4 Empowerment from the Constitution

The Constitution has been a source of empowerment to two of the participants in ways that suggest its potential greater future impact on the experience of gay and lesbian employees. In 1996, *Exploited* said

I’ve had a surge of energy put into me by the Constitution. I suddenly feel that someone is out there looking after me. It feels safer in terms of my own personal space. I know exactly how much I can tolerate. Should I ever *really* feel discriminated against in a hurtful manner, should anyone say anything really scathing to me about my sexuality in my work context, I would have the freedom to say to them, “You are not allowed to say that to me. I will take you to court!” This is a freedom and an inner strength I have thanks to the Constitution and which I never before had the power to express. I am not fearful of going into meetings and social gatherings with my colleagues and walking into a trap. I don’t feel as exploited and raped as I have in the past, because I now have the option of saying, “No, I don’t like what you are saying.”

Artist felt similarly empowered, to the degree that she confronted men in a pub whom she overheard calling her and her friends “dykes”:

I knew I had the law behind me ... I do view myself differently. I view myself as a woman and not as a third-rate citizen.

These comments by participants about the effects of the constitutional guarantees support Khayat’s (1990) findings that the potential protection of such stipulations may lead to what one of her subjects termed “a stronger psychological sense of security” (see chapter 2, p. 10).

Artist emphasises how a change of not only the Constitution, but of the national power structure has led to a greater sense of legitimacy and personal power. She says,

Mandela is far more open to changes and to different people and different lifestyles – than any of these other antiquated dinosaurs we’ve had in power.

But while there has been such a changeover of power on a national level, the findings of this study suggest that the spirit of the Constitution may not yet really be reflected in office culture and structures. As found by Khayat (1990), the practical effect of the legislation may be limited by the attitudes of those in power. The implication is that on workplace level power also needs to be wrested from “dinosaurs”. This is supported by *Exploited*’s 1996 observations that the nature of the power structure of her organisation is problematic, with its

ageing Afrikaner male corps, a range of white males who have been brought up in the strictest sense of Calvinism ... As long as we are still under the management of these boys who are strict and staunch believers in Christianity as *they* see it, not much is gonna change. But new people, new influences, new church denominations come in with. I hope, more tolerance. And a wider approach to life and to gender *and* racial issues is siphoning in. So pa-

tience is the only thing that's gonna probably change things for me and for my immediate colleagues in the next decade.

Patience will probably indeed be much needed in years to come, but more than patience may be called for. As gays and lesbians now have an opportunity to test their newly acquired power, they may well soon be better placed to exert power in organisations. However, this will only be achieved by rejecting the passive distortions of fatalism (A16) and apathy (C16) and accepting responsibility to grasp opportunities of empowerment. *Artist* suggests that such opportunities now exist. Gays and lesbians are no longer dismissed in debates, such as those on TV:

They're actually listening to people now. I deal a lot with gay people. Their views are far more political than they ever were before – I found we actually used to stay away from politics, because there was nothing in it for us. We weren't getting anywhere anyway. Now people say, "You must vote for this, must do that, we're going to support this group." Society's attitude *has* changed a lot. I do feel more power for myself, and therefore I feel more obliged to do more for myself. And the more you do, the more you can do."

Artist's observation of greater political involvement certainly seems plausible and is reflected by recent coverage of gay and lesbian issues in the popular news media. These issues are also prominent in mainstream cinema, where several movies with gay themes, such as *As good as it gets* and *Wilde*, run concurrently at any given time. The suggestion is that official recognition of gay and lesbian equality has increased their freedom, going far to combat apathy (C16) and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. *Artist's* feelings of obligation to act also indicate her awareness of the responsibility that accompanies this freedom (B2) and of her courage to heed the call of authenticity. Official recognition has made it easier for the gay and lesbian community to respond with greater faith (A8) and commitment (B8) – authenticity – rather than with resignation to powerlessness and inability to affect their world (A10).

Visibility is a key issue. It was pointed out in 5.2.4 how distortions related to maintaining covertness rendered gays and lesbians invisible in the workplace; by contrast, constitutional empowerment has facilitated greater authenticity and, at the same time, visibility. But gays and lesbians need to take responsibility.

Acton says,

you literally have to take people and show them. And it's like a revelation. Particularly in South African society, people have not experienced anything outside, it's been a very closed and contained environment. Apartheid was very successful in perpetuating that ... I wish there was something like the equivalent of those Idasa trips to the townships in the 1980s, so everyone can stare out the window and say, "WOW! We had no idea gay people lead normal lives! Isn't that amazing!"

Metaphorical gay township trips hold the potential of opening up reflection and dialogue, with their potential for empowerment, as seen in the previous section. The participants agree that constitutional freedoms such as freedom of speech and the right to protest publicly make "the debate on sexual issues much freer than it was in the past" (*Exploited*). This insures greater visibility and makes it possible for people to share a common language about these issues, which *Acton* feels to be so lacking in his work environment.

While the participants feel there is greater public awareness of gays and lesbians, it is still an awareness of "an oddity". *Exploited* reports,

When I've not been at work, I've seen in the paper the next day the word "homosexual" and "lesbian" in italics or inverted commas, as if they're something from outer space, which I would not have allowed, had I been there. The straight people are not taking note of the fact that they're actually *surrounded* by homosexuals. Gay people still remain something far out.

This perception of "oddity", with its connotations of *otherness* and therefore negative values such as dirt, underlines that gays and lesbians remain a marginalised group in society, although continued visibility and awareness hold the hope of greater future integration. Further, visibility creates role-models, something for which both *Impatient* and *Exploited* express a need. *Impatient* says:

Even with the new constitution it's not going to be accepted. You need a few people to stand up and say, "Well, I'm gay and so what!" and perhaps if everybody stood up and said that, it might change things, it may take the stigma away from being gay.

Role-models can debunk stigmatised stereotypes and thereby help gays and lesbians overcome internalised homophobia. Successful, prominent role-models, such as Edwin Cameron, may also help counter fantasies about expected discrimination. This could facilitate a move away from the predominance of fantasy, a neurotic tendency according to Angyal (1982, in chapter 3, p. 17), toward a reliance on direct experience, as suggested by *Exploited* in 1996:

It's very, very difficult to say how likely discrimination would be if I came out, because I have no example of someone having come out within my company and being discriminated against. Not in a senior position. It's *really* difficult, I'm playing a part for which I've not read the script, and there is not a script available in my company.

Looking to a role-model to show the way holds the danger of avoiding responsibility and passively waiting to read the script in order to act another prescribed role. However, given the homophobic contexts described here, the existence of role-models can be of value by providing images of homosexuals with whom gays and lesbians can identify. One way of achieving this would be if more gays and lesbians litigated in response to discrimination, as in the case of unfair dismissal reported in chapter 1 (p. 5).

Companies have an opportunity – and a duty – to make it easier for gays and lesbians to come out at the office. Despite *Artist's* greater openness about her sexual orientation, in 1996 she still would not go back to a "mainstream" company where revealing her orientation would cause her to be viewed stereotypically. However, she

would join up with a company that was gay friendly ... I think it would help to have a company that actually came out. If you could get people that you knew were gay friendly ... maybe someone's wearing a little red ribbon and you know they're aware of Aids and problems, and they are obviously open to things like that. Or if the person who is interviewing you is gay, and you think, well, I can confide in him. Whether he tells anyone else, at least someone in the company knows – somebody with some clout.

In the same way that visibility is important for gay and lesbian empowerment, *Artist* suggests that companies must in turn become more visible to gay people as having a partial gay identity themselves. An important possible way of achieving this is the use of employment codes. *Exploited* suggests a public statement is needed

to say that we as a company want to state openly that we do not discriminate against people on the base of race, religion, or sexual orientation. We're free. We want people working here to be happy and able people, to be talented and hard-working, happy employees. They have the freedom to live their life as they want to.

This of course may hold some risk for companies, as it does for gays and lesbians declaring their identity. *Impatient* suspects that explicit identification with gay and lesbian issues might lose a company business, as does *Artist*:

Would you have people supporting that company? I think it's scary for a company to actually admit that type of thing.

As long as negative stereotypes about gays and lesbians are widely held, it will be important for companies to take the initiative of indicating that they can look beyond that and welcome gays. By acting as "role-models," companies can show that they, too, deviate from what is perceived to be the norm in employment. In this idiom, they have the opportunity to embrace their gay and lesbian parts and "come out" in their policy. If they do not do this, employees may expect by default that it would be safer for them to remain closeted.

5.2.5.5 Externalising of homoprejudice

In the discussion of the theme of internalised homoprejudice (section 5.2.2), it was pointed out how participants had come to agree with negative meanings *das Man* ascribes to homosexuality. It appeared that their experiences of being empowered as gays and lesbians coincided with a positive shift in the meanings they ascribed to homosexuality and the realisation that, while negative stereotypes exist externally in society, they deserve no place internally. During the 1994 interview, *Artist* said it felt like a "bonus" when people were nice to her. This gratitude suggests the degree to which she had internalised conceptions of lesbians as second-class citizens. Consequently, in 1996, she was surprised to have found people in her new work and social environments who did not fit the gay stereotypes. who were "cultured ... and have class". *Exploited* protested in similar vein against stereotypes, saying that the "average" homosexual was "straight looking" and that her own behaviour and dress were "completely normal."

This suggests that an extended gay community can play an important role in providing its members with positive images of homosexual identity. However, as *Acton* suggests, the gay community too deals in stereotypes excessively. This contention is supported by the research of Simon et al (1991, in chapter 2, p. 6) amongst gay and heterosexual men. There is thus a great need in both gay culture specifically and popular culture ("what you see on TV") to provide images that are both positive and a-stereotypical. This is a difficult demand, complicated by the trap of equating "normal" with "straight-looking", as *Exploited* does. Again we find the generic human, *das Man*, laying down the rules. The assumptions are, firstly, that one can see homosexuality and heterosexuality (i.e. the stereotypes are reified) and, secondly, that heterosexuality is normal and homosexuality abnormal. The conclusion is that at best gays can be "straight-looking", a situation that reminds one of that of Chinese people, who were classified as "honorary whites" in apartheid South Africa.

During the period covered by the research, *Exploited* underwent shifts in her relationship to the gay subculture and the associated labels. Until 1994 she did not identify as lesbian, but by 1996 she had "grown out of that" and "reclaimed" its use. She said,

the butch¹⁶ connotation does not bother me *as* much any more, as a result of having been in a relationship in which tolerance of others had a high premium. Having an umbrella term can make lesbians a force to be reckoned with ... I think the word *lesbian* is cool.

In September 1997, *Exploited* attached an addendum to the synopsis of her 1996 interview that indicated that her shifts in perception and authenticity were continuing:

I actually realise my former opinion was extremely bigoted and irritating. I now believe in socialising with whomever I please, wherever. A take-it-or-leave-it/in-your-face sort of thing in terms of society's acceptance.

As in the case of *Artist*, it would appear that growth mediated by a personal relationship has empowered *Exploited* in a way that coincided with greater openness in the workplace. She appears to have undergone shifts of internalised homophobia. Previously, the perception that the word *lesbian* had butch (read "bad") connotations in society was sufficient to cause *Exploited* to avoid such identification, presumably due to internalised agreement with and acceptance of these negative meanings. Now she has exercised her choice to create her own meanings. This in turn has enabled her to oppose the meanings imposed by *das Man* with a courageous "take it or leave it" approach, a closer connection to other lesbians and public attempts at combating prejudice. Again, a dynamic of neurosis – characterised by the distortions of conformity and submission, which occur during the internalisation of homophobia – has been transcended by greater authentic being, characterised by love and commitment.

As described in 5.2.2.4, in 1994 *Impatient* was unlikely to employ gays or lesbians for fear of being unmasked himself. By 1996, however, he had been promoted to the position of managing director, and was becoming increasingly aware of his own power vis-à-vis that of his ageing father, the owner of the company. *Impatient*, too, appeared to be less concerned about the possible outcomes should his family or those in his work sphere find out he was gay. However, clients' possible reactions to gay employees remained a consideration. About the possibility of a gay work applicant, he said: "I would probably employ him, at least I think I would, if it was somebody who wasn't obvious or somebody who could behave normally."

In summary, the empowerment theme is significant in all participants' accounts, perhaps specifically because of the workplace setting of this study. Work, as our livelihood, is related to the most essential existential given, that of finiteness (A2). When we do not confront this, a threat to one's career can activate neurotic dread of powerlessness (A10), as is evident in the frequently reported incidents where participants resign themselves to being unable to change their situations. However, various events appear to have facilitated empowerment, particularly the introduction of a constitution that offers the hope of equality. With this support, gay and lesbian workers can have greater faith and courage.

¹⁶ A lesbian or gay man who is regarded as masculine.

lieved that in the modern industrial world, where commodity is foremost, individuals treat themselves and others as objects (Zimmerman, 1981). As a result, authenticity is exceedingly hard to achieve.

In effect, successful attempts at passing left participants feeling invisible and inaudible, so that they existed as counterfeit images of themselves in inauthentic relationships with their colleagues. In this way, a group already isolated contributes to its own marginalisation. This is so because the dynamic between patriarchal work environments on the one hand, and gays and lesbians on the other creates a world of mutual fantasy or neurosis. Through employees' closetedness, organisations are allowed their comforting fantasy that gays and lesbians do not exist, while the employees live in the belief that coming out would lead to their own annihilation. Whether the effects of coming out would indeed be as negative as expected remains untested, so that the perceived threats and the so-called enemy remain partly imaginary. As Arcaya (1979, p. 180) indicates, "fear cancels out communication". Without communication, heterosexual colleagues are denied the chance of reconsidering their prejudices and there is little hope for the improvement of the situation for gays and lesbians.

Despite these difficulties, there was a general tendency among participants toward greater authenticity during the period of the study. Most notably, *Artist* took the courageous step of a complete change of employment that involved coming out fully, while there were signs that *Exploited* expelled some internalised homophobia and took greater risks in combating such prejudice externally in the workplace.

6.1 Recommendations

It appears that several factors empowered participants in the process of approaching greater authenticity. These factors are important, as they suggest recommendations for facilitating greater openness about sexual orientation in the workplace.

- The mere fact of taking part in research interviews appears to have helped closeted employees reflect and take courageous steps toward greater openness. The stimulation of debate, publicly and in companies, and steps to increase the visibility of gays and lesbians are therefore recommended.
- Participants indicated that they felt empowered by the Constitution. However, as reported by Khayat (1990) regarding a comparable transition in Canada, employees may distrust the practicality of fighting discrimination, for example through litigation. Human-rights bodies need to provide support to gays and lesbians so they may access the rights that have been extended to them.
- There are signs that increased occupational status in the workplace may empower employees to take greater risks with openness. The example of *Exploited's* ability to change homophobic policy once she achieved greater seniority suggests that more equitable policy would be promoted if more gays and lesbians attained such positions and felt sufficiently secure to take risks. This highlights the responsibility that companies have to facilitate greater sexual orientation equity in the workplace.
- Participants expressed the need for role-models. If companies enable openly gay, successful employees to rise through the ranks, this may decrease fear among other employees that openness would lead to informal discrimination.

- It can be taken for granted that big and powerful companies have a significant number of gay and lesbian employees. Companies have a duty to “come out” by establishing policies of non-discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and ensuring that the policies are applied in practice.
- As the participants indicated, the central stumbling block to coming out remains the general presence of homophobia. This situation may render paper equity policies worthless. It appears to be very important, therefore, to educate employers and employees generally about sexual diversity, for example by means of diversity workshops. The formation of support groups for gay and lesbian employees may also help employees to overcome internalised homophobia.

6.2 Further research

As indicated in the literature review, psychological research about the experiential world of gays and lesbians in South Africa is extremely limited. More studies of these phenomena need to be undertaken urgently, so that cumulative results may eventually form a body of so-called case law, in similar fashion to the development of case law in the legal profession.

In particular, it would be important to explore the experience of black gays and lesbians – an area that is even more poorly researched world wide. While on the one hand this is a shortcoming of the current study, even the inclusion of both male and female participants yielded such complex information that much had to be discarded to remain within the scope of the study. It may be more productive for future studies to focus on a more narrowly delineated participant group.

It remains virtually unknown what proportion of gay and lesbian employees in South Africa are closeted and/or experience homophobia and discrimination. Quantitative investigations are called for, as the results may help emphasise the need for change in workplace practices. Results may – perhaps – debunk common notions about high occupational and emotional risks of coming out.

6.3 A call to authenticity

It is clear that the victory of constitutional equality for gays and lesbians was merely the beginning of a long struggle towards achieving this equality in practice. Nor is continued progression certain. Contingency is unavoidable and what has been gained through the Constitution may vanish tomorrow. *Acton* refers to Margaret Atwood, who in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1987) sketches a disturbing picture of an ultra-fascist Christian fundamentalist regime in America in the not-too-distant future. It may seem unlikely that such a situation would arise, but one only has to think how the unthinkable came to pass in Nazi Germany or apartheid South Africa to be reminded that the struggle never ends.

Freedom is a central concept in both existentialism and South Africa's new constitution. The recognition of equality officially grants gays and lesbians the opportunity to act freely, without constraints from the state. This freedom also implies that they have a responsibility to take authorship of their lives and to act courageously. The opportunities offered by the Constitution therefore represent a call to authenticity.

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Appendices

1. **Consent form**

I hereby confirm that I willingly participated in a masters research project in which Charl Hattingh investigated gay people's self-expression in the work environment. I further understand that protocols I supplied to the researcher, information from telephonic and informal interviews, and observations made during the period of this research may be used for publication. Strict confidentiality will be maintained in this event.

Signature:

Date:

University of Cape Town

2. Checklist of interview questions

Key questions focussed on the following topics:

- Biographical information
- Experiences of coming out – in private and at work
- Extent of being openly gay – in private and at work
- Relationship to the gay subculture, for example friendship circles, organised gay social activities and attendance of gay bars and clubs
- The nature of their work setting and the general office culture and norms
- Position in the work hierarchy
- Experiences as a gay or lesbian person in the workplace

In the second set of interviews (1996) participants were also probed about:

- The impact of constitutional equality on their workplace and on them personally
- What would be needed to make it easier for them to be openly gay or lesbian in the workplace

Interviews were concluded by asking:

- If anything relevant had been omitted
- How the interview had been experienced

3. Transcripts

3.1 Artist

3.1.1 Transcript of 1994 interview

Interviewer: I'm gonna start by just getting some basic information from you. You're 27?

Artist: Hm-hm.

In: How long have you stayed here?

Ar: In PE? All my life.

In: And your occupation?

Ar: I'm a lay-out artist.

In: What kind of lay-out?

Ar: Basically magazines, any type of literature that's going around.

In: Oh really? I was in the same job as you are.

Ar: Oh!

In: I was a lay-out artist for Die Burger.

Ar: Oh really! You were doing lay-out!

In: Ja.

Ar: It's amazing! [Laughs] It's quite an interesting job, but ... I've doing it for, what? six years now. It's quite enjoyable.

In: Which magazines are you doing?

Ar: Ah, now you're asking me. We do all these school magazines and ... I don't think there's anything ... specific, we do a lot of like the naturalist, a lot of things for the Wildlife Society. We do a lot of printing for Dupli-Print, which originated in Grahamstown. So we do a lot of their printing, but we have to put their logo on.

In: Very interesting. One thing I'd like to ask you, just for confidentiality sake is to think of a pseudonym that I can use. And what I'd do, is I ask people to think of something that says something about themselves. Perhaps something like the kind of thing people use when they're writing to a magazine agony column, or to the letters page or something.

Ar: Never thought of that.

In: So if something comes to mind right away, you can tell me, otherwise we can come back to it later.

Ar: OK. I think we will.

In: To start with, before we look at your experience in the work environment, I'd just like to get a bit of broader picture about yourself and your attitude towards your sexual orientation, and that kind of thing. Firstly, how do you prefer to be referred to, in terms of a label?

Ar: As in "gay"? "Gay", not "lesbian". I find "lesbian" puts you in a box where you're supposed to be very masculine and very tough, and I find it unfair that men are referred to as "gay", and not "moffies", but women are referred to as "lesbians" and not "gay". I just ... it's one terminology that I can't get used to. It's most probably growing up, you know, hearing this [under her breath:] "She's a lesbian", and you don't want to

be referred to as a lesbian, even though I am one, I'd rather be referred to as a gay woman. It's a far nicer term. I don't know why, it sounds silly!

In: Could you tell me a bit about coming out? When you came out, how you came out?

Ar: I basically ... I went to a girls-only school, and I always had crushes on my teachers, who were all women. But to me it was all so natural, because they were the only role models I had at that stage. After school I dated guys – which was "normal", I mean you're supposed to do these things – I went out with guys, and whenever I'd go home with a guy, and we'd been out, he'd say to my mom: "You know, it's lekker going out with Artist, she always points out the nice girls in the crowd to me." [Laughing:] And I didn't realise what I was doing. I mean, I was sitting there with this guy that I was going out with, and enjoying his company, but far more ... finding these women so attractive and so appealing. And it was when I actually started ... I then started frequenting gay clubs, just to see ... I was very curious ...

In: How old were you then?

Ar: Nineteen. And the first time a woman kissed me, it felt so much more right than a man. And I didn't go home and think, [mocking mortification:] Ah! Oooh! I'm gay! I just thought oh well, this is great! This is obviously what my life is meant to be. And it just ... from then it blossomed, it was not a major crisis, or stepping stone or obstacle. It was so natural.

In: And with your friends and parents and that?

Ar: I lost a lot of friends – straight friends. I came from a very Catholic school. I went to a convent in PE – and they were very ... don't talk about gay, and you're not gay, and if you don't talk about it, it doesn't exist. And I lost a terrific amount of friends, straight friends. In fact to this day I can't say I've got one straight friend. [Artist's lover brings coffee.] I was most probably wrong in the way I approached people about being gay – my straight friends – I sort of clammed up, and I wouldn't talk about my boyfriends which I didn't have. I'd rather sit there in a group of straight friends and listen to what they had to say, when they asked me, well, what's going on in your life? I'd say, "Ah, nothing much!" I suppose I was most probably a total bore. Because I wouldn't tell them. Not because I was embarrassed, but just ... I knew those type of girls and that wasn't done ... it just ... was not done. So ... but to this day, I've since found girls who I was in school with who are gay, I've seen them in the

gay clubs. I mean, you realise that you are not alone. But it's just to find those girls, and to go out and be friends with them.

In: And your parents?

Ar: My mom was devastated when she found out. She thought out of my sister and myself I would definitely not be the gay one. She actually had a nervous breakdown shortly after that, she had a heart attack about a year after that – she couldn't accept my being gay. She lost a terrific amount of weight. But then my mom and I have always been so very close, and I think it was ... she didn't see it coming, and she couldn't forgive herself for not seeing it. She eventually ... she said to me to this day, she doesn't accept my life-style, but she loves me, so because she loves me, she has to live with it. She's learnt to live with it, but if she could change it, she would. At least she's honest. My father knows, because in a bit of a drunken stupor, he told me I just mustn't make a ... our family's name bad. But other than that, he's one of these men, who, if you don't talk about it, it doesn't exist. So we don't talk about it, but he knows about it, and he ... very much ... he likes *Sandra* [lover] very much. Every boyfriend I ever took home wasn't good enough for me, and suddenly now ... I mean, we've been together for five years, and he absolutely loves her. They sit there talking in the garage, talking about this, or talking about that, I mean, since I've met her, I actually get on better with my father than I ever did before. Which is quite amazing.

In: Right. Who knows what your sexual orientation is?

Ar: Well, my family, of course my sister, she frequented the clubs with me. I know there are many people who suspect, but they haven't got the guts to ask me. My gay friends ... basically not that many people. I do wonder what the neighbours think, of just two women living alone, and we seldom have male company, and if we do, it's normally males in ... as couples, who leave together and come together. I actually don't really give a damn what they think, 'cause I don't do them any harm, so they should actually leave me alone. Not many people know about me though. Not that I don't want them to. I mean I met a guy once – also from the Beeld – he was at a wedding. It was about two months ago, and I'd had about three or four more beers than I should have, and we got chatting. And he ... wasn't coming on to me, but he was really really chatting nicely, and he asked me to dance and I said, "No thank you," and he asked me again and he said "Why, what's your problem?" you know, "Where's your boyfriend?" I said "I don't have one, I'm here with my partner," and I pointed to *Sandra*. And he looked, he said, "You're gay?" So I said, "Ja." And it was surprising how well he took it. Oh he just looked around for a while, and he looked back and he said "Oh well," you

know. It's actually surprising how well people do take it. I think it's one's approach, though. You mustn't say I'm gay and make it out to be something bad. You must be positive about yourself.

In: How do you really feel about it?

Ar: About being gay? I'm very positive about it. If I was in a straight relationship, I would not be honest to myself. I would've been divorced by now, if I had been married. I most probably would've had a child and it would've been an unhappy child. Now, I wouldn't have made a very successful ... [laughing] ah-ah, no thank you! No, I'm far too ... itchy feet, and wouldn't have made a go of it.

In: And I get the idea that you are pretty involved with the gay subculture, since you don't have many straight friends?

Ar: Reasonably, ja, I must admit. It's difficult, I used to be very much involved with scuba diving and underwater hockey and things like that. But as soon as you go there once too often with another woman, the guys actually start saying, you know, "Here come the lesbians," and men are actually very cruel, towards women who are gay. Women accept women, far easier than men do. It's almost as though they feel their ego is being a bit, you know, they're not ... grown up.

In: Well, I think they've got the same kind of problem with men who are gay as well.

Ar: Yes, yes, but they ... actually I've been confronted in a bar and this guy asked me if I wanted to come outside so he can ... donner me up. You know, for no apparent reason. Just that I was there with a woman, and I wouldn't mix with the men, and he wanted to take me outside and ... "If you want to be like a man, be like a man," you know, and it's frightening sometimes.

In: Ja. I get the impression that you feel very much OK about being gay. How do you feel about yourself as a whole?

Ar: As a whole, I look at my life and I feel I haven't achieved much. But, then I look at my life from the aspect of what I can take with me when I die one day, and I feel I'm happy within myself, I feel pretty well adjusted. I don't have major swings in personality, or ups or downs. I try to keep pretty even about things, and I feel reasonably good about myself. I actually have been reading quite a bit of Louise Hay, I don't know if you've read many of her books, it's how to heal your life, and it's ... you got to say I love myself and be positive and ... it's very good, it makes you pretty assertive. It makes you want to get up in the morning and go to work, and if your boss makes you angry, you say, "He's a nice man, he's doing the best he can, with what knowledge he has," [Laughs] and, you know, just try to be positive.

In: And your relationship, can you tell me a bit about that?

Ar: With *Sandra*? We met at a dance. I spotted her across the floor and I thought she's pretty nice.

And I did some detective work and some tracking down, and I got hold of her phone number. Actually, I was doing a booklet for ocean divers, and her name was in there, because she was doing the underwater-hockey side, and her phone number, that's how I got hold of her phone number so I got a friend to phone her, 'cause I couldn't phone from work, because I was living with my ex, and my ex was working with me. So I couldn't phone *Sandra*, because she used to watch me on the phone, to see who I was phoning. And we met one week-end, and about two days after that I pulled out from my other partner, 'cause I hadn't been happy there for years – well, I was there for two years, and I had not been happy from the word go. And we had our ups and downs initially, because she was still getting over her ex, I was getting over the fact that I had just walked into a brand new relationship, and things just progressed. We first actually became friends, we learnt to get to know each other – and I think it's so important – before anything much else developed. But, I mean to this day – we celebrated our fifth year on Saturday – so, it can't be that bad, if it's five years down the line!

In: Well, congratulations!

Ar: Thank you!

In: I think we can move on to the kind of work-environment thing. If you can tell me a bit about what it is like for you at work, and what kind of situations you find yourself in at work as a gay person.

Ar: Well, I'm most probably in a different situation to anyone you've interviewed, because my father and my boss played basketball together – my father was an ex-Springbok basket-ball player. So have known each other for years. So I've got to be very careful in front of Barry, in case anything slips, or in case anyone phones me and the secretary says, you know, a female phoned to say *te-de-la-de-da*. So I've got to be *very* careful in that aspect. 'Cause even though my father knows, my father doesn't want anyone else to know. I mustn't make the family name "dirt". So, it's difficult for me there. I work with eight other girls. One is my sister, she's gay. The other one is my ex. I mean, my sister is there, my ex is there; I'm surrounded by gay people all day. The other girls are very curious, they don't ask ... they used to ask outright questions, until I just used to fob them off. I've never lied to them that there is a man, but I just say, "Ooh, I'm too busy with my sport," or "I'm too busy painting at night," or "I've got better things to do, as to settle down," and this is what *Anna*, my ex, and *Lara*, my sister – we all keep on saying this, but I mean *Lara* is 31 now, so, you know, she should have been making some or other progress, but I'm sure they know she's gay. She's very quiet in the office, she doesn't communicate much. I speak a lot, I don't care, really, I chat a lot, and I think one or two of the girls have put two and two together.

One of the girls is particularly anti-gay. If she knew I was gay, she wouldn't let her children come near to me. I would then be labelled as dirty, filthy, so I've got to be very careful around her. She's very religious (and she actually also comes from Grahamstown), but she's very very anti gays – hates gays. A guy coming in occasionally – he's a client – and whenever he leaves, she: "Ooh, I must go and wash myself, you know he might have AIDS," or ... and it's so ... unfair, I've often almost turned around and said, "If he's so dirty, am I also just as dirty?" and actually letting myself, you know, dropping myself in the dwang. Because she confesses that we get on well, and I'm a nice person, and she's always wanting me to baby sit her children. Yet if she knew what I was, she wouldn't let me near her children. So ...

In: I wonder what it is that actually stops you from doing that ... from saying, "Well, am I dirty too?"

Ar: You see, I can't just do that at work, because people – when I started working there – people knew that *Anna* and I were living together. If I drop myself, I'm dropping her as well. So I've got to be very careful. I would, in a shot, give my side away, because I think it's right that people should know where I'm coming from. But, I'm protecting her. So, I've often said to her, I'm just going to tell ... whoever, because she keeps on beating around the bush, and sort of asking weird questions, I'm just going to tell her one night that this is it. And *Anna* will say, "No please don't, you're gonna drop me in the ...," But just because we live together, doesn't mean that we necessarily had to have had a relationship. But because *Anna* doesn't have a boyfriend either, it makes it difficult for her, and she doesn't want anyone to know; she's paranoid about it. So I think she's silly in that aspect, but then she hasn't accepted herself as being gay. She's actually a bisexual. So, she's a bit of a turmoil in her life.

In: And what are the feelings that go along with that, for you?

Ar: Very frustrated, because if it's our anniversary, or if it's her birthday, or if it's a special occasion for us, I've got to wallow in my own bit of knowing. Or hear a song on the radio ... it's difficult, sometimes, to sit there and just ... oh well, you know ... You've got to pretend, you've got to become quite a good actress. Or if we've had a bit of a fight, which actually happens very seldom, and I'll be speaking to her on the phone, I can't put the phone down and sit there and have a good cry, like I feel like doing. You've got to just put the phone down and carry on with your work, and you actually almost are in jeopardy of becoming hard. But ... it's difficult, it really is, it's very much a double life. You're leading two lives. I feel I've done it very well so far, because I've been at that company for six years, and if my boss had to approach me and said to me, "Are you gay?" I mean I'm never ... if anyone

ever asks me, I'll never say no, because they are obviously ready to hear the truth. But I've got to be so careful of telling this one and that one, because then I drop *Anna*, and then I most probably drop *Lara* as well, it's difficult to know what to do. I actually wish I ... somebody would tell me what to do. 'Cause often we'll go out with the girls at night, and you have one or two glasses of wine and you get chatting really intimate chats, and it's so ... *there* – I just haven't said it yet.

In: Tell me a bit about that feeling of almost wanting somebody to tell you what to do?

Ar: Well, I've never known anyone ... the people I've known who are gay, don't want anyone else to know, even *Sandra* – she doesn't want people to know – especially at work – that she's gay. *Anna* never wanted people to know that she was gay. My sister doesn't really give a damn, either way, but then she's just got her own weird problems. I've just never actually had a role model, in knowing what to do, what's right. I don't want to hurt people, but at the same time I feel I'm actually being a little bit untrue to myself. Chatting to you, or reading an Outright magazine, or whatever ... I just suddenly get this bee in my bonnet and I feel like telling everyone, you know, I really, I'm in jeop... it's just ... there, it's just ... so close, and I always stop myself, 'cause I ... I'm always the martyr in the way that I think, oh shame, but I'll let *Anna* down, or I'll let someone else down. I should actually think about *me* ... what's right for me. And they can decide whether *Anna* is gay or not. In fact, I'm starting to make up my mind here [Laughs]. No, I ... it's right to tell people, I feel, except in that I work, as I said, with people from such vast ... the one woman is from England, and they are far more accepting. I mean, I've almost told her in a roundabout way, 'cause she said that there's a certain magazine that she wanted to loan me, but there were naked women in. I said, "I don't mind. Bring it!" [Laughs] You know? She said, "You won't be offended?" so I said, "Of course not! Go on, you know, what's wrong with a naked female?" And always talking along those lines, you know, and she said, oh well, she ... something about she can accept a gay woman far easier than a gay man. And we sort of dropped the conversation, because the boss walked in. And I most probably would've told her that day. She's the type of person I could tell. But then she goes and natters to this one who's anti-gay, and you don't know who's ... you know, office politics and the skinner that goes on, when if you want anything spread, you just tell the one and, zoom! it's gone. So it's difficult to know what to do. 'Cause sometimes I feel like just standing in the middle of the room, saying, "I'm gay! How are you?" You know? I'd actually love to see some of those expressions. I think ... maybe I'm saving it for the right day. When I really need it.

In: Tell me a bit about how you feel about this woman who's very strongly anti-gay.

Ar: I've actually got an idea about her. A feeling about her. You know how you are .. I don't know *you*, but I ... being gay in a room full of women, can often pick up if another woman is gay. She needn't tell me. Just certain little things. Whereas you can walk into a bar where there is men and women, but you can normally find that one gay man, somewhere along the line. You have a feeling about these things. Now, it comes around that *Sandra*'s one friend, *Jenny*, was actually at boarding school with this woman. *Jenny*'s gay, and she knows this girl as also being anti-men. She hates men. She's always hated men. But she got married eventually and had two children. I feel in my mind the reason why she hates gays so much is because she herself has tendencies which she has suppressed for years. I *think* – I could be totally wrong. But it's just such an abnormal hatred of a certain type of people, that to me somebody who calls themselves a Christian, should have that intense hatred for somebody else. So, I don't know if my analyzing or whatever has been wrong of her, but I truly do feel if I had to get in in the right time, and come on to her, she'd most probably fall for it. Because she hates her husband, she's told us outright she hates sex, I mean sex is taboo with a man. But she lives one hundred percent for her children. She types her fingers to the bone on that typesetting machine, because *Ralphie* needs a new cricket bat or *Louise* needs a new this, and those kids want for *nothing*, they have *everything* their hearts could desire. Because *mommy* works flat-out. And she doesn't have to work, because they've got a lovely home and her husband's got a very good job. But I think her children are her whole world, and she actually has become pretty gnarled about this marriage and she suffers from ... I mean she's 34, and she suffers badly from arthritis and to me, all this sort of aches and pains you get from withholding feelings – for years – would most probably come out as a gnarled type of person. I don't know, maybe I'm totally off the beaten track, but I just ... I feel she has a tendency, and that is why she *hates* gays.

In: And how do *you* feel, when, for example, she says something like what you mentioned, about ... when the gay man came in – how do you feel toward her?

Ar: I feel like ... for those few minutes, I dislike her intensely. I normally don't dislike anyone if I can help it. But for those few minutes, it's all I can do to bite my tongue and say nothing. I feel like saying, "Do you like me? Do you think I'm a nice person?" And I'm a hundred percent sure she'll say, "Yes, I like you, we get on well," and then to say, "Well, I'm gay, is that so bad?" I'm so dying to say that, but ... on the other hand, I think, why should I let her know? Why should I give her that bit of knowledge about me? She's

not worthy of it, because she treats other people like ... you know, like rubbish. And it's really not fair, because this guy who comes in, he's such a genuinely nice ... he's a lovely guy, I mean, really, I've got so much time for David, and she's ... she's a pig towards him. She won't even look at him any more! Now that she's found out he's definitely gay, she's - 'cause he's admitted it to her - and she absolutely, she carries on type-setting, and he'll have to go right up to her to say, "Hallo, Carol" ... "Oh, hello." She carries on. Whereas before, she was so sweet to him, until she found out, and I'm so scared, if she finds out about me, it's gonna be the same treatment. Absolute switch off. And in my work, I cannot have that. But at the same time, around her, I feel I'm being a bit of a hypocrite. 'Cause I'm nice to her and sweet to her, but as soon as she starts talking about gays, which she often does, 'cause gays just seem to be on her mind a lot, I'll turn around, walk out, and I'd rather not be there, than say something I might regret.

In: Tell me a bit more about that turning around and walking out? How does that feel?

Ar: I feel I've betrayed my ... my kind. I feel like a traitor. I don't know, I wish I could have the guts to ... I should phone her one night and chat to her or something, but I'd rather turn around and walk away, than stand there and make an issue, and be like a screaming queen, as they call it. I know, it's difficult to ... I've never really thought about why I turn around, but I physically do rather leave her alone. Most probably, I physically do it, rather than say to her, "Look here, you know, he's a nice guy."

In: How do you feel - if you can place yourself back in that situation - how does it actually feel physically, how do you experience it, in your body?

Ar: I actually go cold. It's almost as though you're in shock. I feel panicky as well. I know, because a similar situation happened the one night when we all went out for a drink after work. And the whole table started to talk about gays. And I didn't add *one word* to this conversation, I couldn't, I was starting to panic ...

In: Is this the work ...

Ar: The work's girls? Yes. I was absolutely panicking. I was frightened out of my wits. I mean, thinking about it now, I'm even shaking. I just ... I couldn't have ... it was like being in a dream, and all these people are standing over you [mimics their talking]. It's because I most probably feel guilty, or I *know* what I am, it's like they're talking *about* me ... and yet, they're not, because they think I'm a ... one of them. It's like being an alien on a [laughs] planet, it really is. Now I know what "fish out of water" means. No, it's actually quite a panicky situation. Do you get up and run, or do you stand up and fight for what you believe in? And nine times out of ten, I rather get up and run, than actually have a confrontation, and lose a friend at work, and then

have an uneasy situation at work. I'd most probably eventually have to look for another job. 'Cause I have to work very closely with her. That's most probably why I've left it all this time.

In: I think tell me a bit more about the things that you are afraid of - the things that might happen, the reasons why you don't confront people when a situation like that arises.

Ar: I think for me personally, my biggest fear - and it's wrong, because you're always going to have somebody who doesn't like you - but I don't like it when people don't like me. And I want to know why. And the one reason I know why people wouldn't like me, is if they found out that I was gay. So that's most probably the one thing I'll keep the most secret at work, to keep them liking me. But maybe if I really sat down and was truthful and I thought about it, they like me as a person, whether I'm a Hindu or a Catholic, or I'm gay or I'm straight, shouldn't make any difference, and I would just then pick out my friends from the ones who pretend to be the friends. I most probably am a coward. Because I'd rather be liked, and rather put up a bit of a front, and not be true to myself, than have this terrible turnaround at work, and after working with someone for six years, suddenly have them be your arch enemy. And I don't think I can take that stress and strain every day, being in a very stressful job anyway. So, it's most probably cowardice, just rather withdrawing and holding my tongue.

In: How does that feel?

Ar: Frustrating. I think a lot of times when I come home and I do art work, it's most probably pretty bold, dark, heavy work, not light and flowing and detailed. Very ... take your finger and stick it in a pot of paint and slap it on, because I most probably am lucky to have a release like that, where I come home, and I'll do something creative, yet I don't realise that a lot of the time - although I have been thinking about it a lot lately - a lot of my pent-up frustrations do come out in my art work. In just doing something physical to get rid of it. Because I can't sit here and happily watch TV and know that I've been true to myself the whole day, I haven't, I've actually been living a double life, and sometimes it catches up with you, especially when there's been an instance at work where gay has been brought up. Tonight on Agenda there's going to be a thing on gays in South Africa - it's actually what *Samantha* has phoned me about - tomorrow I can rest assured that those girls are all going to be chatting about it. 'Cause gay in our office is a big issue. And I'm gonna sit there again, nervous and panicky and wondering who's gonna point their finger at me and say, "What do you think?" I mean, because I don't know what to say, I actually start blushing. 'Cause they're all talking about "these bloody moffies" and this and that, and I can't add

... I mean if I had to say, "Ja, I hate moffies," I mean, I would *never* do that. So I just rather keep quiet. But what I *should* do, if I had the conviction, is stand up and say, "So what? They're great people." But I am cowardly, I just would rather than say nothing.

In: So what is it that stops you? What makes you "cowardly"?

Ar: I don't know, most probably, as I said, coming back to the whole issue of rather wanting to be liked. Than disliked, not liked and have friction in the workplace. I've most probably picked up that trait from my mother. She'd do anything to avoid an argument. And you sort of mirror your parents so much, that I'll do anything in work to avoid conflict, I'll even sometimes take the blame for a job that wasn't my fault, rather than say, "Oh, but she did it!" Because I know that, when the boss is out, whoever is gonna turn around and say, "Ja, thanks a helluva lot!" you know. Although they don't thank you for taking the blame for it, but I rather would! It's ridiculous, honestly. But my mother's always been a martyr, and I think you carry on the traits, until you learn one day to snap out of it. Which I've been *working* on lately, but it's not working very well sometimes! Not when it comes to being gay. 'Cause it's too big an issue. People *make* it such a big issue. They *make* it an *issue* in you *life*. Whereas I feel I'm no different from Joe Soap down the street. I just ... what I do in my private life, is different, but it has got nothing to do with them, because I don't do it to him. But *I'm* a normal human being.

In: Tell me – if you can place yourself again in the work environment, those kind of difficult situations – do you sometimes have fantasies about what you would like to do ... what you might like to do to a certain person?

Ar: At work? That's an *embarrassing* question! Fantasies as in sexual, or fantasies just as in how I'd like to tell them?

In: I was thinking specifically where there is a kind of confrontation, what would you like to do, what do you see happening in your mind's eye, what are the kind of metal images that come when you have ... when you're in a situation like that?

Ar: I've never really thought ... well, I most probably have often thought about it. You know, all I have to do is turn around and say, "Well, I am gay," I mean, I am actually craving to do that, but I'm almost waiting for the right opportunity, where all eyes are upon me. I think it's gonna be such a thrill. [Laughing] Really! It's either gonna fall flat, completely ... but I'd like to have a camera there when I do it! Because there's gonna be very big eyes. Although I'm sure lots of the girls suspect. I mean, you work with someone for five years and they haven't had a date, you know, really, they're going to all the work's dos, but they've got no-one with them. And there's no way I'm gonna drag along a gay guy with me to

be my date, because this is me and if they don't like me like this ... but I just don't tell them out-right. I can't say I've ever thought of telling Carol – the one who's so anti. I don't know if I really ever would, because I don't feel I owe her anything. I really don't. There's one or two others that I get on well with, who I'm sure would accept, who I would like to tell in time, but when I'm good and ready. I don't really feel I owe it to anyone at work, right now. Because they don't give me the type of respect that I feel I deserve, and if I told them I was gay, I might even find that the respect dwindles even more. So, I think my whole thing is to build up my own self image to such a point that if I tell them I'm gay and they don't like it, I'll say, "Well, you're missing out on something," you know, or "You're missing out on knowing someone who could be beneficial in your life." It's to build up one's own self worth before you can actually go and do something like that, I think. 'Cause I'm sure it will be thrown back at me. Some or other how. I also find being gay at work ... I try to perform just that little bit better than my straight counterparts. I don't know why, but it's important to me that if anyone found out I was gay, they'd see that "she's gay, but she's good at her job". I don't want to be chucked out because I'm bad at my job. I want to be an asset to the company. I've twice threatened to leave and twice my salary has been increased. So I can't be that bad a worker. It's very important to me to keep my work level very very high standard. So no-one can point fingers at me and say, "Well, what do you do after hours that you come to work and you look like, you know, the dog's breakfast?" 'Cause it's important to go again every day and be fresh and have a good attitude and be nice to all your colleagues and do your job and go home and try to leave your job at work and your home life at home.

In: How do you actually feel about work? What's your attitude to that, if you think of that whole environment, the whole thing as a whole? What are your feelings toward it?

Ar: I was going through a patch, about two months back, when I was ready to quit. I was ready to live on unemployment, for six months ... I didn't care any more, I had had enough. So what I did, is I had a bit of accumulated leave, and I took that off. I did a helluva lot of painting, I was working from early in the morning till late at night. And it did me the world of good, I released a lot of frustration and everything, and I went back refreshed and feeling good, and just telling myself, I'm going to make it work; this will pay for the rent for now, and I'm going to go on to better things. So I don't walk into the building every day thinking, ah! I'm here for the next twenty years, I think, I'm here, until better things come my way, which are going to happen.

- In: So I get that you don't feel all that positive towards ...
- Ar: My work. No. No. If I have to be a hundred percent honest, I'm not enjoying it at all. I drive to work on the freeway, and I'd rather look at the sea, and I often pull upstairs into the drive... into the parking bay, and I don't switch the bike off, I sit there for a while, thinking, "Shouldn't I just put it into gear and go for a ride?" you know. Most probably the stress of being gay and not being able to tell anyone and leading a double life, all the time ... and you go home and you got to lead a double life there, because your father won't talk about your being gay. My mom's OK about it. It eventually catches up with you – the stress of the job, the people around you, the way they treat you. It's weird, it's ...
- In: I want to come back to when you said you feel you don't owe them anything, and I was just wondering in terms of (when they don't know) the kind of things that they can say, and you can't say. 'Cause you mentioned that, that there are things you can't do and say. Do you feel that there are fewer restraints on them in that respect, and ...
- Ar: Definitely. I see the girls at work going through their ups and downs, going through their divorces and going through their boyfriend problems and getting flowers for their birthdays, and I feel sometimes that I'm left out in the cold. Most probably it doesn't hurt me quite that much, because my ex is there – she has the same problem – and my sister is there, and she has the same problem. So in that aspect I'm not such a sore thumb. I still have two other people on my side, who know about me and if it's my anniversary, my sister will wish me – and even my ex – will wish me, and say, "Hope things are going well." And we can chat, "Is there a dance tonight?" "Where's the dance?" you know, all this, and somebody will walk past and say, "Oh, what dance," and we'll say, "Don't worry! It's just for some people!" [Laughs] You know, you gotta like change the subject. And often, I'd be chatting to my sister, and I'd say, "You know, she bloody well woke up last night, and you know what she did?" And I'll turn around and there's somebody standing next to me, and I've got to sort of drop the subject and cough and splutter and walk to my desk. In that way it's very very unfair. And most probably, if ... it's difficult: If they knew about me, I wonder how they would respond then to hearing me talk about *Sandra*. Because they've all seen her. And they know she phones me, I mean we phone each other once a day, at least. I mean, when *Sandra* phones, the girls know her voice, and they'll say, oh, it's your flatmate, or your roommate or your ... you know, whatever they call her. But ... I do feel I'm deprived ... definitely at work. Because the bosses will ... somebody will be having problems and their work goes down, and the bosses will say, "Well shame, you know, I know her boyfriend has just moved out, and she's going through hassles." But what about me! You know? I mean, I could've had a helluva fight the night before, and spent the night on the couch, but I've got to go to work and pretend hey! this is fine! And it's not very fair. But maybe it's not fair because I'm making it not fair on me. If I told them, they'd know why sometimes I get miss... or non-communicative ... I just keep very much to myself for a while.
- In: How does that feel, you know, when you feel you're being left out in the cold, or it's not fair? What are the feelings that go along with that?
- Ar: I don't for a minute wish I was straight. I'll never go back to that way of life just to be accepted. I've always been a loner. I've always been out there ... groups at school – I've always had one special friend, I've never been a groupie. So, it doesn't affect me badly in that I think, oh, you know, they can all sit and talk about their children and husbands, and I can sit and say nothing. I mean, I'll chirp, I'll put my two cents' worth in, whether they want it or not, but I have got no personal ... from my life ... from my viewpoint, I talk very generally in the group. I think it's brought on by myself. If I was more open with people, I don't know, then maybe Carol will never speak about her husband in front of me, and she'd never speak about her children in front of me. You don't know what to do, actually. I'd rather leave it as it is, because it hasn't been killing me so far, and I've worked with them for five years, and if they don't know by now, then they're pretty thick. But then you get some people who just don't know, they genuinely don't know. They just think that that's the way you chose to live your life. Celibate, you know. [Laughs] Living alone.
- In: Ja, can you tell me a bit more about emotions that have to do with the other people, apart from this woman? How do you relate to the other colleagues?
- Ar: Reasonably well. I find that I watch what I say, a lot. I can never just sit and have ... one of the girls from work has met *Sandra*, because we went to a music thing together, where we used to sit and watch music. And she likes *Sandra* so ... [Tape change] ... No, she likes *Sandra* a lot, and they get on very well, but at the same time, I can't just say anything to her about *Sandra*, 'cause she'll most probably put two and two together. And yet she said to me once, confidentially, while we were sitting at her desk, she said one of her very best friends is a gay woman, and she said, "She's such a lekker person!" and she said she really accepts gays. It was like she was saying to me, "I accept you," but I didn't take up the challenge. I just left it at that. I once again didn't feel I wanted to – right then – say anything to her, because it wasn't the time and place, I mean, you're rushed at work, you haven't got

time to sit there and have an intimate conversation. So most probably if I ever did come out and tell them, it would be at a work function after hours, when you're more comfortable and you can chat properly, and you haven't got the boss walking among you. I don't know, I don't sit and analyze emotions at work ... much ... I just know that being around these women sometimes is more frustrating than not. I find I feel left out more than included. And when somebody is nice to you, it's almost like such a bonus, because ... and especially one of the girls who you think ... who I suspect know about me. I'll be as nice as I can to them, if they seem to be accepting me, and if they chat about *Sandra*, and things like that. But on the other hand, I'm so scared somebody is just gonna turn around and be a total bitch one day, and it's gonna knock me off my feet. I don't know. [Pause] That's ... I've never analyzed it before, actually I don't sit and think about these things – they just happen.

In: I get the idea that you get a lot of support, or it's a strong source of support for you, to have the other two gay women there.

Ar: Erm. It does help a lot. As I said, you feel like you've got backing. More so from my sister, because my ex, as I said, is bisexual, and she has the occasional man popping in, or phoning her, or sending her flowers. So the girls in the office are all most probably convinced that she's as straight as they come. ... if not a bit of a *losbol*, but she's straight. My sister's, unfortunately had some very bad run-ins lately with one of the girls she was going out with, and she ended up with a black eye, the one month, and now, few weeks ago, she ended up with another black eye. And that's most probably right now why I wouldn't tell anyone that I'm gay, because they know that a woman did that to her. And I don't want them to think that that is what women do to women, generally. I know it's a very big problem in ... with women, that a lot of women hit their partners, but I don't want them to think that that also goes on in my life, 'cause I certainly wouldn't. So, having my sister around is actually almost detrimental to my ever telling anyone. I'm most probably protecting myself, 'cause I don't want them to think that I'm like that. So in a way, it's bad having her work there, with me. I was actually chatting to Carol (this one who is so anti-gays) ... today we went for a ride to get something and on the way back I was saying to her, 'cause she said, "Oh! Your sister seems such a nice person," so I said, "But you haven't lived with her, it's just like me saying, 'Your husband is such a nice man' ... I don't live with him; people are so different when you live with them." So she said, "Why, are you having hassles with *Lara* still?" So I said, "Well, my mom and dad are." And she wanted to chat about it then, but I can't chat with her, because I don't know her intimately enough to chat about things like that, and

she would have then found out that *Lara* is gay, I mean, of course then I would be gay, and it would have all been ... spilt. I don't know, maybe she would be the one who would accept it ... the most, I don't know.

In: To what extent do you find yourself doing the things that are simply a bit "risky", in terms of the people maybe getting an idea or finding out? And to what extent are you very careful? If you can place yourself.

Ar: I'm very careful on the phone, because I'm sure they listen in. I make sure whoever phones me or whatever knows that the phone isn't there as a toy, because like Sarah will phone me and say, "Ooh! My wife cooked such a wonderful meal for me," and I think [exclamation] are these people listening in, or what's going on, because once or twice they have taped our conversations. I'm very very careful on the phone. I'm not very careful when I speak to my sister, because sometimes I'll be telling her this most involved, intimate story, and somebody will be standing right behind me, and she's making these eye movements and I don't quite catch it [laughs] and I'm talking away, and there'll be somebody, and I'll blush profusely and just think, well, if they know, they know, and I'll walk away, and I'll hope that nobody has put two and two together. So phonewise and the people I have coming to visit me ... I'm very very careful with that. I've told the receptionist, she's not under any circumstances to let anyone through to me – I will fetch them at reception. I invariably fetch them and walk them outside, because I don't want a ... somebody who looks "very gay" to come into my work, and then I have to explain it. 'Cause, as I said, once again I don't feel obliged to explain anything to anyone, about my life. So I'm very careful in that aspect. Making cards, writing cards, I mean, doing arty things, you *can* sit and make a card sometimes, and you've got to *skelmpies* write your little message there. You gotta be very careful with things like that. Other than that, when I chat to my sister, I chat very openly, when we chat about dances – we'll often talk about the most ... disgusting things that are gay related, and the girls don't know what we're getting at! I mean, we'll all chirp amongst ourselves, we'll call across the office, and these girls are absolutely not with us, 'cause there are certain little words you might use in the gay fraternity, that they're not used to.

In: Give me an example?

Ar: Oh, disgusting! [Laughs] I mean, the ... most probably, gay women's favourite expression is "fur burgers", you know, I mean this is now ... and I'll, or *Anna* will say, "Ooh! I feel like a burger tonight!" you know, across the room, and I'll say, "What type?" and she'll say, "One with a bit of fur on it," and the other girls really don't know what's going on! I mean, we sit there canning ourselves, really enjoying this – that's actually

nice, when you have this united bit at work. I mean, then you feel on top of the world, you really feel like you're *kaas*, until somebody comes up with, "Hey, did you see those moffies on TV marching down Johannesburg?" you know, down the street or something, and then you're all deflated again. Because, if we are really such bad people, would the boss have kept us there for five years, or .. you know? So ... it's just ... as I said, the skinner is *incredible*. And if you tell one, it's as good as telling everyone. And if you tell one of the girls, it's as good as telling the bosses, because it gets *back* to them, it's *incredible* how it spreads through there. If you ever want anything known in PE, you just let me know, and I'll tell them and they'll tell everyone else!

In: Tell me, the thing with the bosses – you mentioned that you were worried that it might get to you father – is that the only respect in which you're worried about things getting to the bosses?

Ar: Basically yes. My one ... I've got two bosses: one very short man, and one very tall man, the one is the MD, he's the tall one, he often has people there from Capab. And these guys from Capab are ... you can *see*, a mile away, I mean they just walk in the door, and they're flowing, and they're flowery, and they're so beautiful, these men, and he takes them to the board room, and he treats them so nicely, and he gets on *so well* with gay people. Amazingly well, he *likes gay men*. He feels comfortable with them, and he chats to them so nicely, and he won't have anyone say anything bad about them. And I feel that if I had to walk in there tomorrow and knock on his door and say, "I have something to tell you: I'm gay," it would most probably bring us closer. The other guy is very macho, you know ... He's not really very interested in anyone at work – as long as the work's done. So if I had to tell him, he'd say, "That's your *saak*. Don't let it interrupt with your work," you know, get in the way of your work. The only reason why I am scared of my boss finding out, is because he might just let it slip to the basket-ball fraternity, which is rather big, and who all know my father, and, as I say, you know, skinner does sort of – especially if it's something bad about someone – it seems to make the rounds. You do anything good, nobody else will hear about it, but boy do something that's bad.

In: Tell me a bit about this blushing? What happens?

Ar: I never used to blush, actually [laughing] until I left school. I find when the girls are speaking about gay and I feel panicky, and I ... nine times out of ten, I'll leave the situation if I can, but very often I have to stay there, because I'm in the middle of a job, and I'm sitting next to Carol at the typesetting machine, calling out something. And if I feel my back afterwards, I am *drenched* in perspiration, it can be as cold as it is tonight,

and I actually do often feel it ... it runs down my back, and I don't perspire easily. I mean, take me to a squash court, and I'm reasonably dry when I get off. I absolutely ... my whole body flushes this crimson. And I most probably get even more crimson, because I know that they can see that I'm blushing. It's a square circle that you're moving in, you don't know what to do. I want to get up and get away, and leave the situation, it's *very uncomfortable*.

In: Say a bit more about that "uncomfortable" and that square circle – what does it feel like, the actual emotions?

Ar: It feels like shouting something in your head, like you're in a dream and you're saying something, and nobody's hearing you. I've got so many things I want to say to them – at *that specific time*. But the timing isn't right for me to say to them right then. I don't feel a work situation is ever really the right time, to have something that's totally non-work related just thrust in. Maybe in a job that's mundane, but not a job that ... the job comes in today, it's got to be printed by tomorrow. You don't have time for personal conflicts and things like that. So when I am in a situation like that, I bottle it up, and sit there feeling very frustrated, very panicky, and getting very hot and very flushed – my whole body is hot, and I ... I'd ache to rather be somewhere else than there. But I can't, I've got to sit there. And normally I'm the one in the office with the biggest mouth, and at that stage, I have got nothing to say. And if somebody actually looked at me and realised what I was doing, they'd realise and put two and two together that she never ever comments about anything when gays are brought up, maybe there's something more to this. But those girls are so ... they just *sommer* see life, you know, going past them, they don't think deeper than anything else. I don't think [so] anyway, none of them seem to sit there and *ponder* life. They're all very normal girls, you know, with ... I've never known any one of them to have an emotional problem. They have break-ups with boyfriends and they wait in the toilet for half an hour, and then they're OK, you know, [laughs] they're amazing, I wish I could be like that! And I sit there with all these emotions, this intense dislike for the person who's saying what she's saying. I mean I could take Carol and shake her physically. And I could take myself and shake myself, because I get *so* worked up. And I sit there, and I just calm myself down, and I count to ten and I start all over again. And by the time I find I actually have to go on with the job with Carol, I'm trembling by then. And it takes a long time to get rid of that hot feeling.

In: And what's the voice inside the head screaming about?

Ar: It's screaming ... it's saying to Carol, "I'm gay. I'm gay! But I'm a nice person, I'm a good person. But I'm gay." It's saying that to her, it's on

the tip of my tongue, but I'm just not saying it to her in words. It's almost as though I'm thinking, if I'm hearing it so clearly in my head, why can't you feel it, or why can't she make it out? Or is she pushing me to the point where I will tell her? I don't know. Is she pushing something out of me that she can't get out of herself? It's difficult to know.

In: Tell me if you think towards the future, what do you see?

Ar: In terms of my work? I see myself very happily leaving there one day. It won't be an emotional upheaval to leave those people behind. I've never grown very attached to them, because I can't, because there's part of me they'll never know, so they don't know the whole of me, so they don't really know much about me. I'd be very glad to leave, because my sister's there. I'd be very glad to leave, because my ex is there. But that all ... put aside, I've got no real bonding with the girls, purely because I feel like I'm not one of them. So for me to be offered another job, or, as I plan to, do my own thing one day, that will bring in my own income ... I will most probably be so fulfilled and happy and relieved to actually leave there, and be gay more openly, because *Samantha* is wanting to do an article on me for the *Outright* magazine, on my art work, and she said to me, "What are we going to call you?" I said, "Put my name in there!" "But ..." I said, "Who is going to read that magazine? People who are gay." That's fine, they can know me and my surname, I don't mind. And that's why when you were asking me for what name could I go by – use my name! It's time ... to stop hiding, behind all these fancy little words. So you can use my name, if you want to. If you'd rather want to think of something more fancy, that's your prerogative.

In: I think just in terms of covering myself, it would be better for me to use a name, but I think it's important the fact that you are prepared to go under your own name ... So I get: what you're looking towards, is a situation where you'll be self employed, basically ...

Ar: Basically. And I can say to you, "You're welcome to come to my house and ..." I'd like actually to be known as a gay artist. An artist who paints subtle gay art, which I've been doing lately. Some of it isn't so subtle [laughs] ... that's for me to see, you know, *Sandra* says, "Who'd ever buy that!" That's my work, that's fine, if nobody wants to buy it, that's OK. I at the moment, am going through a sort of stage of discovery. And I really don't mind it being known as gay. If I leave ... if I was going to leave there tomorrow, I'd happily walk around and say to everyone, "I'm gay, I'm gay, goodbye, goodbye, I'm gay!" You know? I'd thoroughly enjoy it. I should most probably bring it up before I leave. I mean goodness, I could die in two days' time, and I've never told anyone there.

In: Just tell me briefly about your art?

Ar: Well, I've always painted and drawn and done my own thing. And I've always been very working in like a box. Somebody will say, "I want a picture of an eagle," and I'll go ahead and do this eagle and – to the best of my ability – and sell it and whatever. And I always basically worked on commission, you know, what people are wanting. One day I sat down and I thought, you know, I've never painted a picture for me. I've never really sat down and thought what do I feel like painting? So I took up my paints and took out my big piece of paper, and I started painting, and it was absolutely abstract – it wasn't a picture of anything. And the more I started to do works like this, the more I started to enjoy myself. And I can say I really ache to get to my easel, to do my work, because it's me that I'm splashing out on that canvass, and I'm not doing anything for anyone but me. It's very self-ish, but I'm thoroughly enjoying myself. I still do my commissions, but when I get the chance, I paint for me. Some people look at the work and they say, "Jeeze, that's lekker," you know, I just look at it and say, "Oh well," you know, "it's me." You bare your soul a lot, when you do paintings like that. But I thoroughly enjoy it nowadays. I'm *learning* to be more open. That's most probably why I said yes, I don't mind you interviewing me. Not only do I hope I can help you, but I might learn a little bit more about me, in the process.

In: I must just see if there's anything that I might have left out that I specifically still want to ask you ... if you can just give me a minute, because I've got some points jotted down that I ...

Ar: I think I'm making terrible noises in the microphone with this Coke, bubbling in my stomach!

In: Is there anything that *you'd* like to add, that maybe I've overlooked, or that I didn't ask you about?

Ar: I can't really think, I mean you've asked me things that I haven't really ever thought of in *words* before. Like, I've expressed feelings I ... didn't actually know had words, or ... but it's quite nice to ... say it. Now I most probably want to go and paint! [Laughs]

In: Can you tell me a bit more about how you experienced the interview? Just as feedback for me.

Ar: I couldn't actually believe that I had said yes to you. Because I don't normally ... I'd rather listen to people than talk. But you just ... you come across as a very calm, relaxing type of person, and I feel, if I'm going to achieve anything by being gay, I've got to start to be a little bit more active in my gay life, and if I can help another gay person, I most definitely will. So, if this has helped any, I don't know, it's for you to go home and decide.

In: It's definitely helped a lot ...

Ar: Thank you.

In: ... and I want to thank you, it's been a marvellous interview, I've really enjoyed it ...

3.1.2 Transcript of 1996 interview

Interviewer: How have you been doing?

Artist: Not well ...

In: No ... You told me on the phone that things had been hectic ...

Ar: Ja, things had been very hectic last year. And I got to a stage ... I think I have been wearing masks with a lot of people, a lot of my life, with my sister having major psychological problems when she was young, and I just got to the point where ... I can't take it, I can't take hiding any more. Now if I'm depressed and I'm down, I just find it better to tell people. But having had three suicides last year in my life – it wasn't conducive to a very good emotional state.

In: What happened?

Ar: My sister committed suicide in April; two weeks later my present affair's father committed suicide; and in December, a very, very close friend of mine – she was also gay – she committed suicide. A week before Christmas, so it was a lot of people close to me – all one on top of the other.

In: Whew! That must have been really, really hard ...

Ar: Mmm ... it wasn't very nice. And it almost gets you thinking along those lines – I think everybody, you know, starts thinking, easy way out, or ...

In: Ja ... And your relationships – what's been happening?

Ar: Well, I was involved with *Sandra* when you spoke to me last. Shortly after that, I can't remember what month we spoke in, but it was September of 1994 that I left my job, and it was sort of round about the same time that I left her. Because it was just a big thing in my life – I either break totally from both of those things that are binding me, or ... I mean it's no use leaving the one and not leaving the other. We just weren't getting on any more. I was not in love with her. I was just living with her. I mean I liked her, but it wasn't right. She was incredibly domineering – everything I wanted to do was not right. Which was just the way my bosses were treating me. They were also very domineering and on top of me all the time. So I pulled out. I thought either make it a drastic change or don't make any change.

In: So what did you do?

Ar: I went to stay at a friend's place, and we became – unfortunately – more than friends after a while. And that's sort of how it's progressed from there. And we've been together now for a year.

In: You say unfortunately?

Ar: Well, [laughs] I wasn't wanting a relationship! I mean I was concentrating on me then. I was worried about me, as selfish as it might seem. And we fell in love with each other – out of the blue. And that's how it's ... well, it's been fantastic ... but of course every relationship in the beginning is fantastic, so ... But I'm treating this one dif-

ferently. I'm not wanting things to happen that happened last time, and I'm very much my own person in the relationship. I've got a lot of space in the relationship, I'm very much me. And if I'm down and she walks in, I say, "I'm depressed today!" and I don't cover it any more. And if I don't tell her I'm down, she'll find out. She's very perceptive.

In: What made it possible for you to be more open about your feelings?

Ar: I'd hit a very low ebb in my life and I'd got to almost feeling nothing for my life. And it was a case of "Well, I don't care anyway." I didn't actually care – I didn't care about anything or anyone. It was a do or die situation. It was just, "Well, I'm going to hurt people and I'm going to hurt myself as well," but I actually didn't care at that time. I'd given up my job. I was doing what I wanted to do; I was making money out of it – and I was actually very selfish. But when I look back on it now, I had to do it.

In: Well, it sounds like you had to look after yourself?

Ar: Ja, I had to. No-one else was going to do it for me. No-one else can change your life for you. You're the only one who can do it. So I made drastic changes. I'm not a type of person to make a small change – I make a drastic change.

In: It sounds like it's really been a time full of changes and quite a traumatic time for you since last I spoke to you.

Ar: Major ups and major downs. As I said, I moved in with my friend. She was living with her ex-partner of eight years. This woman didn't take kindly to me. I almost thought I was losing it mentally at one stage. She pretended in company that we were great friends – but behind everyone else's back, she was the biggest bitch to me I've ever come across. I actually laid a charge at the beginning of this year, just before we moved out of the house where she was staying, because she took an electrical cord and wrapped it around my neck and tried to strangle me. And I was left with marks for days. But purely because I never would retaliate. I'd never fight with her and she couldn't get anything out of me – and it was actually traumatic.

In: ... In terms of the focus of this interview: Can we look at the work situation? You described to me the situation where you were and where you felt quite restricted in many ways. You were thinking of making a change as well. And now you've made that change. Can you tell me how that came about and what happened?

Ar: OK. I think your interview really got me thinking about that I was not happy there. I enjoyed my work, but work isn't everything. You've got to be happy in your surroundings. I was also having problems with my sister working with me and

her relationship was going down the tubes – as you know, it led to her suicide. So it was constantly dealing with that. And I just felt I didn't need it in my life. So I resigned in September. I took my pension money, I went to Cape Town, and I learned how to do tattooing. I bought the kit, and I got stuck in when I got back to PE. I stayed for a month with an old man who is a guru of tattooing, and I was making reasonably fair money. People I was dealing with – I didn't realise – would be, sometimes, not so wonderful. I mean you can't say to a person when they rock up there smelling of beer, "No, I'm not going to tattoo you!" Being a woman alone, it wasn't practical, it wasn't safe. The places on their bodies where they were wanting tattoos [laughter] weren't what I had in mind! I enjoyed it immensely though, but *Sandra*, the girl I was sharing the house with, she didn't enjoy it. She didn't appreciate the fact that I was using her house. She wanted extra money from me for rent. I mean, we were in an affair! I was giving her money for rent, but she wanted money for the other room I was using. She was very much a money-orientated, materialistic type of person. And some months I did well, and other months I wouldn't be doing so well. So I couldn't give her a set amount every month. Anyway, that added to one of the reasons why I left, but there had been reasons building up for years. I left her and I moved in with *Helen*, whom I live with now, and I carried on doing my tattooing. And then a woman approached me, a friend of mine who owns [a pizza outlet] and she said she desperately needs a manager. Would I consider? So I thought well, you know, I'm not really into this type of thing, but it's a steady income. So I did that for two months. I enjoyed it, but the working hours were long; the pay was not good; the responsibility was immense. It was working from ten to ten at night; doing the banking; locking up; seeing to all the casuals; employing and firing – it wasn't my dream job. And then I've got friends who own [a gay magazine] – I don't know if you've heard of it. They approached me and said they wanted to make little hydrostone figures. Don't I want to come in and help them build up stock? So I said, "Ja! it sounds like something to do and arty, and it's also steady income." So I did that – but I didn't quite realise I'd be making giant penis towel rails! [laughter] Anyway, I did that for three months – thoroughly enjoying working there, because where I was working at [pizza outlet], my boss is a gay woman, so it was fine. We were open with each other, and it was wonderful. I felt liberated, compared to *Fastprint* [previous job, described in 1994 interview]. Not only was I in control of the situation, but my boss knew about me. And of course, working for [gay magazine], *Graham* and them are all gay, so it was nice. It wasn't exactly the career I would have chosen, but it passed some time. And while

my relationships were floundering and going up and down, I had a steady thing to do, to keep my mind occupied and a steady income to keep myself living, which I needed then. I couldn't rely on moving into a person's house who didn't know me very well, and expect them to have all these weird people coming for tattoos. So I actually sold my tattoo set, which I'm not sorry I did, because I don't think I would ever use it again. And basically I've been selling pictures – I've been painting – at a gay bar, which unfortunately closed down two months ago. But it was making quite a nice added income. So I have got round to doing my artwork that I wanted to do. And I stopped working for *Graham* in December. My art work has kept me going. Reasonably well. And I just basically have friends – it's weird, when I'm low down on cash and I think, oh! where's the next cheque going to come from, somebody will phone me and say, "Don't you feel like helping me with such and such," and I'll do whatever. I'm helping a woman at the moment who breeds poodles – to groom them. I mean it's the furthest from art work that you can get, but it's money. And it's interesting, and I've learned ... I'm meeting new people. And I don't ... she doesn't know about my lifestyle, but I've been totally honest when she's says, "Where're you living?" I say, "With a friend – in a house – a girlfriend in a house." And as far as I'm concerned, she's not employing me; I'm just making money through her. She doesn't like it, then ...

In: If she asked you?

Ar: If she asked me, I'd be straight with her, I'd be honest. I know she's a Christian and she most probably would try to convert me, but let her try and I'll deal with it then. I'm not shy about it. It's a lifestyle I've chosen, and I'm a good person and that's as much as there is to be said about it.

In: But in your dealings with her, you'd prefer to avoid the topic then?

Ar: I feel I don't ask her about her marriage. I don't want to know if she's straight or if she's heterosexual, so I don't feel any obligation to get onto that subject of my being homosexual. I'm a person, she's a person, and as long as I do what I'm there to do, she really has no right asking me. And if she did ask me, I more than likely would try to avoid it for now, because I'm not that close a friend. I'd rather build up a friendship so she'd get to know me as a person, before she gets to know me as a lesbian or whatever you want to call it.

In: Do you think it might jeopardise your professional relationship?

Ar: No. I don't think so. No, I don't think so – no, I think she'd deal with me as the person she met initially. I don't think she'd judge me by my sexual orientation.

In: So your main source of income at the moment – is that making pictures, making paintings?

Ar: Paintings ... ja, basically that.

- In: Who do you sell them to?
- Ar: Actually it's been word of mouth. Well being at a club ... although it wasn't actually a club, it was more like a bar where they had a pool table. It was very nice and cultured, which you don't get very often, and I had a lot of pictures up there which I was selling regularly. A lot of people have had my cards, and then they'll see some of these paintings and say, "Ooh! That's something unique and nice!" And then I get a phone call and a commission, or I'll take my portfolio around to the people and show them and they invariably go for something.
- In: And so I gather that the kind of thing that you paint often does have a lesbian theme about it?
- Ar: More than likely, yes. It would have a lesbian theme, or a gay theme, or ... type of naked bodies, where you can't really make out one sex from the other ...
- In: But it's obviously not the kind of thing where your sexual orientation could be any kind of barrier? I mean it's part of the parcel you're selling to that kind of clientele.
- Ar: Ja. I don't only paint that type of thing. I do anything anyone requests – I did a painting for my Mom's friend the other day of a massive Indian's head – it was something she wanted. It just depends what people are wanting. If it's money, you'll do it, depending on if you want to. If I can do it, I'll do it.
- In: So what exactly would you say were the main things that made you move out from Fastprint?
- Ar: I think our conversation had a great bearing on that. Because I hadn't spoken about a lot of things I'd been thinking about for a long time – I think when you put things into words, the words become almost actions and ... I'd been sitting with these emotions, but I'd never really thought about it before. And the fact that my relationship was floundering. I had nothing really to grasp onto. If you have to be that ... you know ... depressed about life ... there was nothing binding me to Fastprint, there was nothing binding me to my relationship. I didn't enjoy the place I was living in in PE. It wasn't my choice of places to live in. To me it wasn't a nice suburb, a pleasant place. But I do think that our conversation had a lot of bearing on it – it made me sit and look.
- In: Can you perhaps say exactly what were the things that came out of the conversation ...?
- Ar: Well, I looked at the women I was working with. How narrow their lives were, how small their worlds were. And I realised I was being as small as they were. My gayness was becoming an issue to me ... whereas it was only a fraction of my life. Yet the way they were treating me, and making me feel dirty about it, they were *making* it an issue. And I never wanted it to be an issue because to me it isn't an issue. It shouldn't be an issue. One's sexual orientation should just be what is done behind closed doors. It shouldn't make you or break you. And I didn't appreciate being sucked into their vacuum. I was almost reciprocating with my anger and yet they didn't realise why I was so angry. So I thought, rather than make a scene – I mean my sister was still working there, this other woman that I know was still working there – rather than make their lives uncomfortable, I'd bow out graciously and leave them to their little natterings and carryings-on and they could do what they wanted to do. I decided to just move away from the negative and try to make my life far more bearable.
- In: So it seems like you were basically faced with the choice between going on as it was, coming out at work, or leaving altogether – you didn't come out to any of them?
- Ar: I didn't come out, I actually didn't feel that they deserved my honesty, to be honest with you. I was never that close, bar my sister and *Rosanna* that I worked with. I was never that close to any of the other girls, because I always had lived a double life in front of them. Why now suddenly admit everything? To me, it would have made things almost worse for my sister and my friend. Because they weren't ready to come out. But, with the way things turned out with my sister's break-up and then the suicide, everyone found out anyway that she was gay. But I do feel that it was very good for me to take everything out with you, put it in front of me, look at it, talk about it, dissect it, and make something. I mean my life was broken down for almost two years after that conversation. But I've never regretted what I did. Because it's made me make a change.
- In: Well, I'm very glad that something came out of it for you – that it was useful to you in some way.
- Ar: I do believe that things come along at certain points in your life when you most need them. And you were most probably the catalyst that made me sit up and say, "I'm talking to this guy and telling him how wonderful my life is, but actually it's not that great. It could be better. Now let me look at this properly." When you actually sent me the synopsis, I read it a few times. I actually used to take it to work and read it and think I've been reasonably honest with you – and I'm not happy like this. This isn't me. I'm not giving the most. I'm participating in life, I'm not living life. Boy, have I been living life! Not the best way, but I mean ... I've had some major downs, but it's been good. It's been a learning process.
- In: Can you tell me more about how are you feeling now after all of this that's happened. How are things for you at the moment?
- Ar: I actually phoned Lifeline two days ago. I've never admitted I've been depressed, to anyone, and yet when I think about it, I've been depressed for almost two years. Major, major ... I look at the car and think how would I go about putting a hose pipe in there. I mean really ... I've been at that point already. The only reason why I don't take the Golf is because the timing's out

and the bloody thing'll probably cut out on me [chuckle]. No, I chatted to a friend of mine ... she's, incidentally, also studying psychology. But I will not chat to her on the basis that I chat to you, because you're not part of my everyday life. She is. Makes it too personal. And she just said to me, "Get some help. For God's sake, just do something before you end up like *Valerie*, or *Ilse*, or one of the other people." And I phoned Lifeline two days back, and it's one of the better things I've done. I started to talk about it, had a good cry on the phone, and it was good for me. Because now I've got my job-cum-social side sorted out, I'm trying to get my emotional side the same, or as good as ... because that's important.

In: In what area are the difficulties that make you feel depressed at the moment?

Ar: I think it's not having a steady income. It's very stressful. There's a lot of things. I have always had a wacky family. And it's only now that I'm starting to talk about it and realise that I had a mother who was molested and raped repeatedly as a youngster – I only found out about that a while go. She was pregnant when she was sixteen and met my father. I don't know who's child it was – if it was my father's or her stepfather's – it's questions that I want to ask, but I don't know how to. I'm only finding out things now about my family that I never knew in the past, and it's been, on top of everything else, a traumatic year – always – so of course if you're depressed, it's going to be worse, but I've been doing a lot of work on myself. But you don't always have the tools you need to carry through a day sometimes, and you wake up the next day and you think, "Well, you made it through – I can't be doing that badly." It hasn't been easy.

In: Have you thought of seeing somebody regularly?

Ar: I wanted to. I phoned Lifeline; they can't let me see anyone more than twice. Because they don't want you to become reliant. I don't have the financial means to pay. So I actually don't know what to do. I've just decided that when I'm really down and really blue, I will phone Lifeline. But I wouldn't mind having a face-to-face with someone who can go into my past and all this rubbish that I'm most probably needing to talk about.

In: Perhaps you should approach the university, they often have their interns there, who see people. And then it's at a nominal fee.

Ar: Right, ja. I think it's a good idea. I actually did hear about that, but it's the thing of actually having to get into that car and go down there – that's the most difficult part.

In: It's a big step, ja ... To come back to the other business: so apparently the issue of you being gay does not cause many difficulties right now. That's been kind of solved by your move out of Fastprint?

Ar: Ja, very much so. Very, very much so. But they're very small-minded people. Even about

normal issues, they will latch on ... they're very much ... walk around like ... people with bags on their heads. But I think when you're in touch ... I mean they've all worked with each other for about eight or ten years ... so you become like a family. You almost have one way of thinking and one way of dealing with things. And then they had become one, and a small-minded one at that ... which is sad.

In: And the people you come into contact with now in your work? How would you describe them?

Ar: I deal a lot with gay people. Which doesn't make things any easier. I mean, they still ... I've got to give them a service and they have to pay for it. They're still people. I've realised that now, I mean, hell, we're all people! But people I deal with professionally – I've got a lot more confidence with people I don't know. Maybe it's because I'm older. I'll be hitting thirty soon, and I realise I'm not a kid any more – I'm not a teenager and I'm grown up and have got to do my own thing. And fend for myself. I think having had to fend for myself and bringing in my own income has given me so much more confidence as well.

In: How does dealing with a largely gay clientele impact on your being gay?

Ar: It's nice to meet a lot of gay people who are cultured ... and have class, because I think a lot of misconceptions about gays is that ... is just what you see on TV ... it's so stereotyped. I mean *even The Birdcage* is unfortunate, because they always show a screaming queen, and it's unfair to the gay community. I wish someone in the gay community had the guts to get up there – I don't know if you saw the movie called *The sum of us*, but that to me was a beautiful portrayal of natural gay life. *The Birdcage* ... once again you're getting into the stereotype. And if you can just get away from that. I deal with people on a day-to-day basis that I sometimes think, "I wonder if this person is gay or not?" you know. I sometimes even can't pick it up. I think it's great. But I'm only realising now how many, many gay people there are.

In: So, what's easier for you then about your current situation ... is it that you feel the people you deal with have a greater understanding of the whole range of gay experiences? Do you feel less stereotyped?

Ar: Ja, they see me as a person, first and foremost. And that's why when I meet people professionally, who don't know I'm gay, I don't feel obliged to tell them I'm gay, because they must see me as a person first. If they ever suspect I'm gay, and ask me, I will say, "Yes I am." But because I'm my own boss and earn my own money, if they don't like it, tough, then they must get out of my life and not deal with me.

In: But I think that's another aspect perhaps – your own sense of empowerment, whereas when you were working for a company, it was different.

- Ar:* Yes, if I tell them, if they find out, what will they do? Can they fire me? Will they treat me differently? Will they give me the jobs I'm used to? Will they give me nice jobs or will they suddenly give me all the really shit stuff to work with? Which they could easily have done. It was a lot of fear on my side, of ever coming out at Fast-print – much as I wanted to stand there and say, "I'm gay!" I knew I couldn't. I knew logically it wasn't the right thing to do.
- In:* How do you think it would be if you were still self-employed, but you were doing something that brought you into contact with more straight people?
- Ar:* I think I have grown up. I've matured to a degree over the past two years as though it's ten years, and there's little I will take from people in the line of nonsense. So as far as I'm concerned, if they don't like me for who I am ... I don't go in there and try to take over and say, "Well, my lesbian friends and I," and such and such, or go to a bar and invade the place with a whole bunch of lesbians. I'm proud of who I am and that I've kept myself going. My mom's immensely proud of me, which is quite a turnaround – it's been nice that she's been so supportive. I've been very much more open with my parents about my sense of who I am and what I do. I mean they come here and my dad helped me moved in, and he knows that there's only a bedroom upstairs, and he's so fine about it. He absolutely loves *Helen* to bits. They get on almost better than he and I get on. And I was always looking for his approval. And, whether I have it or not, I think my attitude is I don't care anymore. And it's with that attitude that he's almost giving me his approval.
- In:* When did that change come about with your folks?
- Ar:* After I'd moved out with *Sandra*. I became the person that they remembered. I was very much kept down with her and quiet, and if we'd go to a social event she'd always be the one to do the chatting and she'd always be the one to drive the car. I mean, just physically she was far more pushing herself forward than I was. And when I left her and had to do it for myself, I became almost more tolerable to them, because they liked to see me independent. They don't like to see me dependent on someone. Which is most probably right of a parent to view the child like that.
- In:* And so you feel that the greater acceptance from them, and support, has had an influence on how you experience yourself?
- Ar:* It definitely has. Because as long as my parents are for me and behind me, if other people don't want to be, then that's their problem. It does make a big ... no matter how old you are, it's important that your parents are behind you. It's nice to know you can always fall back ... and I almost had periods when I had to say, "Mom, I can't get this month's rent ... can you help me?"
- And I've been fortunate enough to be able to give her back everything she's ever given me, monetary wise. So we've become a lot closer. And I had to live there two months before I could move in here, *Helen* and I. And that brought us a helluva lot closer. I mean, she put us in the same bedroom together in the three-quarter bed, so ... we bathed together – it was wonderful. They were very understanding.
- In:* So would it be correct to say that this and your sense of greater independence through your work had positive consequences for your self-esteem ...
- Ar:* Definitely ...
- In:* ... as a gay person?
- Ar:* Definitely as a gay person. Yes. My depression and my some days not feeling so great has got nothing to do with the fact that I'm gay. That's totally from the past and my parents' side, and I don't feel any different being gay to, I think, a straight person feels to being straight. I'm beginning to realise it's not an issue any more. I'm very comfortable with that.
- In:* Another aspect: When we originally spoke, things had just started changing quite dramatically in South Africa as a whole, and in the past two years it's become quite a different country. And there have also been constitutional changes and the whole thing with ... I don't know if you're aware of the thing with gay equality being entrenched in the Constitution ...
- Ar:* ... yes ...
- In:* ... and I was wondering if that had any influence on you, that you're aware of?
- Ar:* I think it does ... because I was sitting at a bar once, and there was a whole bunch of guys sitting there, and they looked over and looked over again and I was sitting with a bunch of women that ... I mean I don't look very feminine and they didn't ... they're very sporty and active, and somebody said that we were dykes. And they were glancing over, and "dykes" came up again and I just got up to go to the toilet and I leant over and I said to him, "Have you heard of defamation of character?" So he looks at me. I said, "Carry on in that tone and you'll be hearing from my lawyer," and I went to the loo, and when I got back, they had left. To me now it was a stupid thing to do, because that was saying yes, we are dykes. But I didn't actually care, because I knew I had the law behind me. Yes, it has made a difference. It certainly gives you that little bit of empowerment and that little bit of feeling ... I'm not doing anything illegal. No, I actually haven't thought about this before. Once again ... [laughter] ... you're getting me to think of these things!
- In:* If in some way you were ever discriminated against in any really serious way, would you seriously consider taking legal steps?
- Ar:* Yes I would. Without a moment's hesitation. I would definitely. We went to the Grahamstown Festival last year and held hands the whole time

- we were there, because there's so many wacky people there, it's just the done thing. But then when we came to PE and we'd go along the boardwalk for walks, I'll hold *Helen's* hand, because she has told her mother about herself. Her mother's accepted it totally. Then her father committed suicide, so he's not an issue, and we hold hands. I'm not employed by anyone, I mean it doesn't bother me. And I love the way people do a double-take when they walk past. They look and look again, and I think, "Oh well, we could be sisters, we could be anything ... it's got nothing to do with anyone else." No-one's ever had the guts to ask us.
- In: Does it sometimes give you a bit of thrill, a bit of a scary feeling as well, or not?
- Ar: Yes it does, especially when say four or five men walk past, and they'll give you the look and you think that just now they tap you on the shoulder and say ... But then I'll just say we're sisters – I mean we look so similar anyway. The problem was *Sandra* was in a job where she was so worried all the time. She's working for the municipality. There's thousands of people that work there. If she's seen by anyone, it's a problem. Her mother didn't know. It was a problem. *Helen's* mother knows. She works for a company who all know about her, regularly tease her about it. And they call me her "goose" whenever I phone – it's wonderful! It is quite a thrill, as you say, to walk along. I almost do it deliberately. If we're in a coffee bar ... and people will look at us once too often, I'll just stretch over and stroke her hand, and squeeze it, and you'll see this old lady giving us this disgusting stare, and I think, "Oh look!" [laughter].
- In: What do you think are the stumbling blocks that could still make it difficult for you to take steps, should somebody tread on your toes? Are there still things that make it difficult for you to react?
- Ar: I think yes ...
- In: ... anxieties about what might happen ...?
- Ar: It's a difficult one ... look, the problem is that we're dealing with so many generations and so many different types of cultures; that I was brought up very much to respect my elders. My elders were brought up very much that gays don't exist. So I've got the fear of trying to respect people and not step into their privacy, because they don't want to know about gay, it's just not there. I'm not anxious about anything specific. I have told most of my family and my cousins that I'm gay. Shortly after I resigned, I just ... If people were around me and I felt uncomfortable with them, I'd say, you know, "I'm gay." I told a school friend of mine – not so long ago, that I was gay. And she said, "I know, I knew all along" and it was quite a shock to me that she'd known all the years and had never said anything to me. It shows people don't know about it or talk about it. I don't have any anxieties regarding things to come. I don't feel there's major stumbling blocks. No.
- In: That incident you described where you tapped that man on the shoulder – that's something you actually did. But I'm wondering whether these changes also affected the way that you feel about yourself, and how you view yourself?
- Ar: Well, it took three draughts to actually ... [laugh] ... most probably it was the draughts that was doing it, not me! No, I do view myself differently. I view myself as a woman and not as a third-rate citizen. And I'm equal to any man – we just have a different way of looking at things. I most probably do have a lot more personal confidence than I ever did have before. I had to. It's been a do-or-die situation.
- In: Is that more in relation to your personal life than to the gay ...?
- Ar: No, the gay ...
- In: I'm talking about the changes in the country – is it that that's played a big role?
- Ar: Yes. Yes, it definitely has. Ja ... and also you see more on TV and more movies, and they're making more people aware that there are more gays out there. And of course, you now and then hear gay activists on TV and things like that, and it's good that they screen that type of thing. And the debates aren't any more, "Oh, you're just a moffie, you must go back ..." They're actually listening to people now. I deal, as I said, a lot with gay people, a lot more than I used to. Their views are far more political than they ever were before – I found we actually used to stay away from politics, because there was nothing in it for us. We weren't getting anywhere anyway. Now people are far more: "You must vote for this, must do that, we're going to support this group," because people are far more interested.
- In: So, perhaps that's again the theme of empowerment coming up?
- Ar: Ja...
- In: And you've spoken about empowerment through being accepted more by your family and then being empowered in terms of your work ...
- Ar: ... right ...
- In: ... and it sounds like there's something there about adding some political power and being able to vote for ...
- Ar: Yes. Yes. Definitely. It has helped an immense amount, in fact, more than I have realised until now. But to have laws behind you, it does make quite a change in one's life. And I used to always say, "Viva Mandela!" I mean I used to sit there and watch the box and say, "This is my man!" because he is far more open to changes and things – and to different people and different lifestyles – than any of these other antiquated dinosaurs we've had in power.
- In: The other aspect that I think comes out is the greater exposure and the greater public awareness. Even if perhaps some of it may be around stereotypes like you've referred to in *The*

- Birdcage*. It seems like there is generally more awareness of something, among the general public.
- Ar: I find unfortunately though if people do not understand something, they almost prefer laughing at it. So maybe things like *The Birdcage* are easier for them to accept, because they have a good giggle, and a good look at the other lifestyle – but they're getting at least to see something.
- In: When I went to see *The Birdcage* it was absolutely packed, and that's nice. And it wasn't only gay people there, it was a lot of straight people.
- In: The same thing it Cape Town. It was booked out all over for a long time; it was showing at many places ... I want to ask you just some of the things we went over last time as well. In terms of your self-labelling as a lesbian or a gay person/homosexual, what do you choose now and what do you feel comfortable with, if any?
- Ar: I always have been *gay*. As you know, I've never been comfortable with *lesbian*, because it is stereotyped, as in *queen*. I'm just a gay individual.
- In: And for you that's a neutral term?
- Ar: That's very neutral. I find that the easiest to say to people. I mean if I want to say to someone I'm gay, I don't say to them I'm a lesbian, because they almost want to fall over on the spot. It's almost a softer term, and a more modern term. To me it breaks the news a little bit easier than to say, "I'm a lesbian." I don't know why, I've just always hated that term. So I just say I'm gay.
- In: How do you currently view the gay subculture, and how would you define that to start with?
- Ar: When I was first interviewed by you I was not mixing with many people. I used to have about a circle of five good friends, and that was it. With leaving *Sandra*, I basically left those people. I've gone on to a different type of person, also gay. I don't go clubbing any more – not that there's anything wrong with it – I'm more inclined to go to house parties and spend a lot of almost intellectual time with those people, and we really chat on a one-to-one level. It's been good and an eye opener. I'm beginning to see as a gay person that there are educated, cultured gay people out there. I always knew there were, and I've always told everyone there are – but I've never really met them. I'm meeting them. And it's wonderful. That gives me a new pride in myself as well. So to me the gay subculture depends on who you are mixing with at the time – that will be your impression, and right now, gays are some of the nicest, most educated, wealthiest people that I know. But then again, they are some of the only people that I know! But I choose rather to mix with them, because I'm far more comfortable in their company. You don't have to watch what you say, you can hold your partner's hand ... there's just a mutual understanding without having to say it. That's wonderful.
- In: It sounds like you've found a particular niche for yourself within gay subculture, where you feel more comfortable.
- Ar: I have, I have. I feel almost a need, because I have a group of people who come to me if they need to chat. We all get together in a group, but I'll never say anything – they'll sort of give me a wink on the side, because two nights ago they phoned me in a terrible state and chatted to me, but we never bring it up in the group. So we get together in the group, we have a few glasses of wine, and carry on like a bunch of imbeciles, and have a nice, relaxed time together. It's very pleasant.
- In: How big is the group of people that you come into regular contact with?
- Ar: Well, it's about eight of us that regularly join up ... one's a school teacher, oh, one's a permaculturalist ...
- In: A what?
- Ar: Permaculturalist! [laughter] It's to do with natural, indigenous plants and what's best to plant where ... natural growth. Just various walks of life. Very varied walks of life, and it's been entertaining, it's nice.
- In: What do the others do?
- Ar: Well the one's studying psychology, but she actually works at the air traffic – she's an air-traffic controller. Goodness, one sells insurance policies ... you know, it's just a mix-match ... a hotchpotch of people, and then of course there's me who's the housewife [laughter] ... always low on bucks. We get on well!
- In: What does *Helen* do?
- Ar: She works for Telkom. She's an engineer. I can afford to be a housewife; she doesn't want me to work, so it's actually been quite wonderful. Some months if I can't keep myself, she keeps me and I don't feel guilty, because I do housework and washing and the wifely things, and it's been nice for a change. Not that it's a stereotyped role, but it's been relaxing. I don't have to fight to put down my rent or whatever, because she doesn't make me feel guilty, or as though I have to. It's very comfortable. One month I'll buy ... I'll have the rent and I'll buy the food. The next month I'll say, "Look here, you've got to buy the food this month, I can't afford it." So we take it as it comes.
- In: I just want to clarify the term "gay subculture". What do you understand by it when I use that word? What's your definition of it?
- Ar: I'd say it's the ... not the stereotype ... It's almost the type of people that the straight people see – that is what I would view as a subculture ... it's your general gay group. I don't know how you want me to see it?
- In: [chuckle] I'm interested in how you see it – there's no right or wrong!
- Ar: No, no, no ... if you're wanting a different answer, then ... I just ... see a subculture ... [pause] I don't know ... it's a group of people

but you can't define straight people. I mean you can't have a sub-culture of straight people. You have either people who have an interest in this or an interest in that ...

- In: No, it's not a trick question! I just want to find out ...
- Ar: ... no ... I'm trying to work out in my own mind exactly how I view the subculture. I view it as the straight person would view gay people, and I think you have different subcultures of gay people – you have the club/party type and the homely, educated, other type ...
- In: And do you see yourself as part of that? As part of gay subculture?
- Ar: Yes I do, because I am active in my gay life. And I'm not shy to be gay, most of the time in public.
- In: You say the gay subculture is the group of gays as seen by straight people. And you are part of that, so would you say that your identity is partly defined by how straight people see you?
- Ar: I think everyone's identity is defined by how other people see them – whether they be straight or gay. Unfortunately, and that's what got me to a point where I was living according to what people saw, and I was carrying on a facade, whereas I don't any more. And I think it's because I don't any more that more and more people see I am gay. At the first meeting they know, they just seem to conceive of me as gay, even if they're straight. And it makes it a lot easier, because it is never a thing, "are you gay or are you straight?" I almost come across as quite a gay type of person.
- In: In what way?
- Ar: I'm not shy to speak about it. I don't know, I've never really had situations where I've had to say ... I think it's because I don't feel obliged to tell anyone I'm gay. I just assume that they will know. Because I walk in there with the kind of confidence that I have developed through being gay, through accepting it, through my parents' accepting it, and I just take it for granted that they know. In fact, I almost feel sorry for them if they don't know, because ...
- In: It's quite interesting, actually, that you feel that they probably know, while at the same time you feel you don't need to tell them. It seems to me you're not telling them verbally or anything like that – and yet you feel almost certain that they know. If you're not telling them, how do you think they know?
- Ar: I think it's the message one conveys by one's body language. I mean if I want to sit in company with my leg up like a man, I won't not sit like that just because I'm in female company. I will sit like that and let them see that I am ... not more masculine ... but if it's more comfortable for me to sit like that, I will sit whichever way I want and basically do whatever I please. I dress the way I want to dress; I don't dress the way I should. I mean I meet so many people nowadays ... it's actually so difficult for me to tell the dif-

ference. I just assume that because everybody around me knows about my lifestyle, they should know too. It's actually quite silly of me to assume that they should know.

- In: No, but I think it's an interesting thing that happens, that you get to that point where you just assume because ...
- Ar: Yes. I mean if a lot of people are to say, "Are you're gay?" I'd say, almost like, "Are you thick or something?" I mean if you haven't found it out by now, you're obviously just not reading me as a person.
- In: Do you feel that being a gay woman has got to with being more like a man, or ...?
- Ar: No, it doesn't, yet it does. I mean, I can open up the bonnet of my car and put oil in and things like that, whereas your average woman is so used to handing her power over to a man, that she doesn't even know how to open a bonnet – she doesn't even know where the clip is for the hood. I mean it's ridiculous! I think a lot of gays have been in do-or-die situations. They have to, because they don't want to give their power up, not just to a man. I find that gays are more independent individuals. If they can do it themselves, they will. I've got that attitude. I'd rather die than go to my father to help me open something or ... If it's movable, I will move it. If it can be opened, I will open it. I've got very much that attitude of ... before I approach anyone else, even another woman, I will try it myself. But I think gays learn from an early age – a lot of us do; a lot of them don't bother – but it's best to do things for themselves.
- In: I wonder if you are saying in a way that it's got more to do with being different from the kind of stereotype of straight women, than it is to being ...
- Ar: ... actually masculine. Look ... I see nothing wrong with lugging a 10-kg bag of fertiliser around. It's got to be done. It's got to be moved, it's got to be used. Why must I get a black man off the street and pay him money to do it for me when I can move it myself? I don't know why so many women hand their power to men. And I think the more women do, the less men will accept that there are gays and gay women in this world, because they're so used to "my little one" who does the shopping and the cooking. And that's wrong. It's very wrong. It's wrong of straight women to have got to that point, where they hand their power to their husbands or men.
- In: It seems to come back to the issue of power, and we've also spoken about empowerment in other areas. And that that's been an important part of your feeling OK about yourself?
- Ar: Yes. I feel power has a lot to do with attitude. And attitude has a lot to do with society's attitude as well. And it has changed a lot. With the new legislation and things like that ... it has definitely changed. And I do feel more power for myself, and therefore I feel more obliged to do

- more for myself. And the more you do, the more you can do.
- In: If you had to give me a brief description, how would you say you feel about yourself now?
- Ar: I'm proud to the degree that I've come as far as I have without anyone's help. I do know that personally for myself, emotionally, I have a lot of work to do. But at least I have come to that realisation and it's now something I can speak about, whereas before I always denied it ... [pause] ... I don't know ...
- In: It seems that in some areas you've made great advances and changes, but right now you're actually in a crisis.
- Ar: Ja.
- In: You spoke previously of feeling that you were being an actress – it seems like that's decreased?
- Ar: Ja, as I said, my mask ... and being what people perceived me to be. When I was living with *Sandra*, I was very much the underdog. Which was my own fault. I let it happen. When I left her, as I said, I had to do my own thing. And the new people I met had a totally different perception of me, because I showed them not what I wanted them to see, but I showed them who I was. I was very raw at that stage, and I think when you're raw with emotion, you don't cover it very well. And they got to see me very much for who I am. Which was nice and refreshing. I think that's made a very bonding type of friendship. Because they've seen me at my worst, and they've seen me at my best, and I've seen them through crises times ... it's helped us all become a very close-knit group.
- In: Off that topic: Would you consider working for a sort of mainstream company again? In other words, not a specifically gay-subcultured company?
- Ar: No. No. Not at all. I cannot, right now, at this time of my life, see myself doing that. I don't want to. I don't want to work for a boss. I don't want to work for a man. And that sounds like I'm stereotyping myself, but I don't ... I've kept myself going for two years. I've kept my head above water and I don't feel obliged to throw in the towel right now. I want to just give myself another few months, or maybe another two or three years. If I'm down and out and can't meet two or three months' rent, and can't buy food, then of course I'll have to do something logical, and maybe go back into mainstream work. I wouldn't appreciate having to do it. I've brought up my confidence on the fact that I can keep myself going. And I think once I hand over that power and say, no, I want to get back into ... not that there's anything wrong with that, but for me personally, it's good for me to *sukkel* along, do my own thing. Day by day I realise I'm carrying on, I'm putting petrol in my car, I'm getting there. That's important to me.
- In: So has the main reason you wouldn't want to go back got to do with independence and ...?
- Ar: No ... it's got mainly to do with the fact that I'm gay. And I don't appreciate still the way that society treats gays – they're very closed to the subject, they're very stupid when it comes to gays. I'm a sensitive person *per se*, whether I'm gay or straight, I'm sensitive, and I find people are insensitive, 99% of the time, to gays. And they always treat you differently when they find out you are gay.
- In: So the reason why you wouldn't go back to such a company has got to do with the kind of personal experiences you described to me in the previous interview?
- Ar: Yes, very much.
- In: The anxieties and the ...
- Ar: The anxieties and the double life you lead. The almost lying that you get used to doing. And I don't see why I should do that for anyone.
- In: Do you think that there's any kind of change possible or needed in our society – in the workplace – that would make it possible or attractive for you to go back to a company? In other words, on what conditions would you go back?
- Ar: Well, I would join a company if in the initial interview they ... I told them I was gay. I would join up with a company that was gay friendly, because you do get places that are gay friendly. I feel unfortunately with ... as soon as they have something on the news about Aids ... they will show the Mardi Gras or some weird people doing weird things, and one's interpretation of gay is forever "a screaming queen". I think if the SABC and society on the whole could start viewing them as just the person next door or the person down the road, it would be a lot easier when we do go for a job interview to say, "I'm gay." I feel that if I didn't get the job, I would say immediately it's because I told them I'm gay. And I don't feel right now emotionally I'd want to deal with that. I'm not ready for that ... not at all.
- In: So if it was an official company policy that they're gay friendly, would that change things for you?
- Ar: That would change ... it would be wonderful. If you could almost get people that you knew were gay friendly ... you walked in and maybe someone's wearing a little red ribbon and you know they're aware of Aids and they're aware of problems, and they are obviously open to things like that. Or if the person who is interviewing you is gay, and you think, well I can confide in him. Whether he tells anyone else, at least someone in the company knows – somebody with some clout. Because I have found in my general dealings, just with people, that gays are the better workers than straights. I think because they're so afraid of losing their jobs. If somebody is saying, "That woman's gay," and they say, "Oh, she doesn't work very well anyway." I think that's why we try harder than most.
- In: And if that threat of losing one's job is not there any more?

- Ar:* Well, it would be wonderful! but I don't think it's really forthcoming in PE for a long time. PE's very backward with things like that.
- In:* Would you say then that having the opportunity in terms of legislation to fight discrimination is not enough? That one would have to have a company that's saying, "It's OK to be gay if you are employed with us"?
- Ar:* I think it would help more to have a company that actually came out. But then would you have people supporting that company? You might have a loss in production or a loss in sales from that – it's so difficult. I think it's scary for a company to actually admit that type of thing. As much as legislation has helped, it's a slow process. It's not going to be an overnight thing. I'd say ten years from now ... or if I had a child who decided they wanted to go that way themselves, they'd have a far better chance than I will ever have in my lifetime. I truly believe that.
- In:* The last time we spoke, you chose a pseudonym. You chose *Artist*, and I just wanted to check whether you'd like to use that pseudonym again, or whether you'd like to use another?
- Ar:* I'd say that would be pretty apt, ja, still.
- In:* Is there anything that's been left out about the experience of being at work and the changes you've made to make things easier for yourself – or in relation to the whole change in the country? Anything that you would still like to say about the issues?
- Ar:* Not overly ... it's just ... I've just thought about it now. Even though my sister worked for the company that I left, I avoided at all costs going in there. It's as though I'm trying to eradicate the negatives so much that I rather don't even go near that place. I mean I was friends with those women for over six years. "Friends" in inverted commas. And it's one thing I was actually thinking about now, that I wanted to mention to you – that I don't even drive past. And I don't miss it ... and I don't miss them.
- In:* The people you come into contact with now, on a professional basis – your feeling towards them: do you feel closer, do you feel more engaged with them than ...?
- Ar:* Definitely, because my initial reaction to them is that I'm far more open to them. So when you're open to somebody, they're inclined to reciprocate. I find it important nowadays, having lost so many people, if I love you as a friend, I'll tell you. And I never used to do this type of thing before. And often my friends, before I put down the phone, will say, "I love you to bits," and I'll say, "I love you too." It's a good type of feeling. I have become a lot closer to a lot more people.
- In:* So did things in your professional life actually improve your relations with people outside of your professional life ... your friends?
- Ar:* I'd say yes. Yes. Realising that with total strangers I could actually be almost a one-on-one ... be honest with them and open with them, and they accept me and we end up making a good deal, and actually almost end up with a friendship after that. It made me realise that friendships can only become stronger through being honest and open. It's been good.
- In:* OK, I think that just about winds it up. How did you experience the interview?
- Ar:* I was actually quite nervous, because the first time before you came to interview me I had no idea of what it entailed. And, you know, if you don't know what's going to happen, it can't harm you! But I didn't sit and think, I must remember to tell him such and such. I just left it all and thought, you ask the questions now, and I'll just answer whatever comes to mind. I didn't want to have a stereotyped-answer thing. So I've been trying almost to not think about it. It's been ... I always enjoy chatting to you, because it puts, as I said, my thoughts into words ... and then normally into actions.
- In:* Right. And what kind of actions are you thinking about now?
- Ar:* I'm actually taking this year slowly. I think I've had enough last year to last me a lifetime. I'm living one day at a time, and I'm actually enjoying that part of my life. As I said, emotionally this year I must get myself into shape, so that my relationship can only become better, and all my relationships can get better. I think that's something for me to work on.
- In:* Thank you very much!

3.2 Exploited

3.2.1 Transcript and translation of 1994 written protocol

Onderhoudvoerder: Skryf asseblief vir my jou weergawe neer van die agtergrond wat ek oor die navorsing verskaf het.

Exploited: [Die navorsing handel oor] ervarings by die werk van gay mense wat tevrede is met hul seksuele oriëntasie, met spesifieke klem op ervarings wat beperkings sou plaas op dinge wat individue doen of sê by die werk, uit vrees dat dit sou impliseer dat hulle gay is.

On: Jou skuilnaam? [Ander name in hierdie transkripsies is ook verander.]

Ex: Exploited.

On: Ouderdom?

Ex: 30 (word op 28/4 31).

On: Beroep?

Ex: Assistent-nuusredakteur van 'n groot dagblad.

On: Sou jy jou kon vereenselwig met 'n stelling in die lyn van: "Ek steek dit nie heeltemal weg by die werk dat ek gay is nie, maar ek adverteer dit ook nie"?

Ex: Ja, beslis.

On: Hoe verkies jy dat daar na jou verwys word in terme van jou seksuele oriëntasie?

Ex: As gay, hoewel ek streng gesproke eerder biseksueel is. Ek verkies gay.

On: Wanneer het jy uit die kas gekom en in hoe 'n mate is jy nou uit (by die werk, maar veral privaat)?

Ex: Op 18, nadat my eerste gay verhouding in absolute geheimhouding op 16 begin het. (Ek was in daardie stadium in 'n streng konserwatiewe Afrikaanse meisieskool.) Ek is in my private lewe uitgesproke UIT; by die werk eeffe versigtiger, afhangende in wie se geselskap ek by die werk is.

On: In seksuele fantasieë, watter geslag feature die sterkste en hoe voel jy daaroor?

Ex: Dis nogal 50/50, maar ek sou sê mans feature sterker as sex objects. Ek het absoluut geen probleem hiermee nie – ek vind aantrekklike mans baie sexy.

On: Hoe sou jy jou seksuele verhoudings beskryf (wat kry jy daaruit; hoe close is jou verhoudings; watter soort verhouding soek jy)?

Ex: Die verhoudings waarin ek tot dusver betrokke was, was baie close, baie interafhanklik, baie verantwoordelik en baie involved. Ek verkies om my partner ten volle te ken en te verstaan word. Ek is dus baie eerlik in my benadering tot 'n lover (en mense in die algemeen). Ek hou van baie affection binne 'n verhouding. Seksueel verkies ek dat my partner in beheer is en ondernemend. Seks is nie vir my 'n prioriteit nie, en indien my

Interviewer: Please write down your version of the background I supplied regarding the research.

Exploited: [The research is about] experiences at work of gay people who are satisfied with their sexual orientation, with specific focus on experiences which would restrict what individuals do or say at work, for fear that it would imply that they are gay.

In: Your pseudonym? [Other names in these transcripts have also been changed.]

Ex: Exploited.

In: Age?

Ex: 30 (turning 31 on 28/4).

In: Occupation?

Ex: Assistant news editor of a big daily paper.

In: Would you be able to identify with a statement along the lines of: "At work, I don't completely hide the fact that I'm gay, but I also don't advertise it"?

Ex: Yes, certainly.

In: How do you prefer to be referred to in terms of your sexual orientation?

Ex: As gay, although I am, strictly speaking, bisexual. I prefer gay.

In: When did you come out of the closet and to what extent are you out at the moment (at work, but especially in your private life)?

Ex: At 18, after my first gay relationship had started in complete secrecy at 16. (At that stage I was at a strictly conservative Afrikaans girls' school.) In my private life I am boldly OUT; at work slightly more cautious, depending on the company in which I find myself there.

In: In sexual fantasies, which sex features most strongly, and how do you feel about that?

Ex: It is roughly 50/50, but I would say men feature more strongly as sex objects. I have absolutely no problem with this – I find good-looking men very sexy.

In: How would you describe your sexual relationships (what do you get out of them; how close are your relationships; what kind of relationship would you like)?

Ex: The relationships in which I have been involved thus far have been very close, very interdependent, very responsible and very involved. I prefer to know and trust my partner fully, and want also to be known and understood fully. I am consequently very honest in my approach to a lover (and people generally). I like a great deal of affection within a relationship. I prefer my partner to be in control and innovative sexually. Sex is not a priority for me, and if my partner does

partner my nie aandraai nie, verkies ek affection + tenderness bo attempted + failed love-making. Die bottomline is dat ek 'n exciting en intelligente, dog stabiele en betroubare mens as lover en lewensmaat verkies.

- On: Wat is jou verhouding tot die gay sub-kultuur, in hoe 'n mate skakel jy daarby in?
- Ex: Ek is betrokke in die sin dat ek besonder betrokke en bekend is binne die gay netwerk in [stad se naam] en elders (met groot getalle gay vriende wat dwarsdeur die land en wêreld scattered is). Ek is egter nie deel van enige georganiseerde aspek van die gay kultuur nie, omdat ek nie graag assosieer met die ekstreme voorbeelde van die subkultuur nie (dykes en queens). Gay organisasies is in die algemeen geneig om oorwegend dié elemente te lok.
- On: Hoe voel jy oor jouself?
- Ex: Ek voel fine. Ek word hoegenaamd nie bedreig deur ander mense se seksualiteit nie en leef nie 'n kategoriseerbare seksuele rol uit nie. Ek trek aan soos ek voel. Ek verwerp in geen opsig my vroulikheid nie en is doodgelukkig oor dié eienskappe waaroor ek beskik wat in sommige kringe as onvroulik getipeer sou kon word, soos praktiese handigheid, organisasievermoë, ambisie, fisieke krag, ens.
- On: Om 'n idee weer te gee van jou werksomstandighede, gee my asseblief 'n kort beskrywing daarvan en van hoe jy in die opset inpas.
- Ex: Ek beklee 'n taamlike sleutelpos in 'n reusemaatskappy wat heeltemal beheer en oorheers word deur erg konserwatiewe wit Afrikanermans (die meeste uitgesproke Broederbonders), wat uiters skepties staan teenoor die vermoë en deursettingsvermoë van vroue. Die hele bestuur (manlik, soos beskryf) is onbeskaamd homofobies, in besonder gerig teen manlike homoseksualiteit. Hoewel daar vermoedelik 'n effense toleransie is vir lesbinisme, beskou die bestuur en die oorwegende deel van die werknemers homoseksualiteit as 'n oddity en skroom nie om neerhalende aanmerkings daaroor te maak of kwetsende grappe nie. Omdat min vroue in die verlede lank genoeg in die maatskappy aangeby het om oorweeg te kon word vir senior poste, word mans ooglopend bevoordeel, ongeag hul bekwaamheid. Dit tel ook duidelik in 'n man se guns as hy one of the boys is: getroud, sportief, 'n jong pa, met 'n netjiese universiteits- (Maties-) agtergrond. Uitgesproke skeptisisme bestaan oor die staying power van 'n vrou, gay of straight, maar die indruk bestaan dat 'n vroulike vrou, dit wil sê iemand wat versigtig met die base flirt, meer uitrig as een met 'n butch, bedreigende benadering.
- On: Beskryf ervarings wat te doen het met die stelling: "Ek steek dit nie heeltemal weg by die werk dat ek gay is nie, maar ek adverteer dit ook nie." (Beskryf die betekenis van die ervarings en die impak daarvan op jou.)

not turn me on, I prefer affection + tenderness to attempted + failed love-making. The bottom line is that I prefer an exciting and intelligent, though stable and dependable person as a lover and life companion.

- In: What is your relationship with the gay sub-culture; to what extent are you involved in it?
- Ex: I am involved in the sense that I am particularly involved and well known in the gay network in [name of city] and elsewhere (with great numbers of gay people who are scattered throughout the country and the world). I am, however, not part of any organised aspect of the gay culture, because I don't readily associate with the extreme examples of the sub-culture (dykes and queens). Gay organisations tend generally to draw predominantly these elements.
- In: How do you feel about yourself?
- Ex: I feel fine. I am not at all threatened by other people's sexuality and don't adopt a role that can be sexually categorised. I dress according to how I feel. I don't in any sense reject my femininity and am completely happy about those characteristics I possess which would in some circles be typified as not feminine, such as practical skill, the ability to organise, ambition, physical power, etc.
- In: To provide an idea of your work circumstances, please describe them briefly, as well as how you fit into the set-up.
- Ex: I occupy quite a key post in a mammoth company which is controlled and dominated by terribly conservative white Afrikaner men (the most of whom are outspoken members of the Broederbond), who are utterly sceptical about women's abilities and staying power. The whole management (male, as described) is unashamedly homophobic, in particular opposed to male homosexuality. Although a slight tolerance of lesbianism is inferred, the management and most of the employees regard homosexuality as an oddity and don't hesitate to make scathing remarks about it, or hurtful jokes.
- As few women in the past have stayed with the company long enough to be considered for senior posts, men are visibly advantaged, regardless of their ability. It also clearly counts in a man's favour if he is one of the boys: married, sporty, a young father, with the "right" university (Matie [Stellenbosch]) background. Outspoken scepticism exists about the staying power of women, gay or straight, but the view exists that a feminine woman, that is, somebody who carefully flirts with the bosses, achieves more than one with a butch, threatening approach.
- In: Describe experiences that are relevant to the statement: "At work, I don't completely hide the fact that I am gay, but I also don't advertise it" (Describe the meaning of the experiences and the impact it has on you.)

Ex: Een scenario wat dadelik by my opkom, is 'n onlangse opmerking deur 'n manlike kollega. Dis somer. Almal is bietjie *getan*, voel lekker oor hulle lywe; kry warm. Ek dra 'n effens nou-passende, vrolike somersrok met oop sandale, die gewone oorbelle en ligte grimering, en doen my ding so vinnig en so efficiently moontlik by die werk. In die hitte van die stryd staan 'n heel-wat ouer kollega (manlik, wit, getroud met kinders, soos die meeste van my kollegas) eenkant en sê vir my, tot vermaak van die mans om hom en met heelwat instemming: As jy aanhou om só aan te trek, gaan jy mos een van die dae 'n man kry en die maatskappy verlaat soos al die ander vroue!

Dit net ter illustrasie van die naakte vorm van seksisme en die uiters verouderde benadering tot vroue in die werkplek (gay of straight, for that matter).

Dan, in die kantoor waarin ek werk en waarin die koerant saamgestel word, sal 'n vertaling uit Engels in Afrikaans skielik opduik waarin ons 'n vertaling vir gay moet kry. Almal val rond. Hou ons dit *gay*, of word dit *lesbiër*, of *homoseksueel*, of wat? "Homo" kom dit van die bestuur af. "Ons gebruik by dié koerant die woord *homo*."

Alles in my skop teen dié woord, maar ek is te embarrassed om dadelik luidkeels beswaar te maak. Ek rig my dus later, op 'n meer geleë oomblik, tot 'n senior kollega (straight maar simpatiek). Hy gaan na die bestuur, verduidelik dat die woord *homo* neerhalend en kwetsend is, en dat, sover hy weet, die gemeenskap die woord *gay* beslis verkies. Nee, wat, snork die bestuur. Nonsens. Dis Engels. Die woord in Afrikaans is *homo's*, en dis dit. Einde van die storie.

'n Paar dae later sit ek (enigste vrou, enigste gay mens en met omtrent 15 jaar die jongste in die vertrek) in 'n hoofredaksievergadering waarin besluit word oor die volgende dag se koerant en die nuus wat ons daarin gaan sit. Die mees open-minded assistent-redakteur, wat sowat 15 jaar van sy loopbaan in die buiteland deurgebring het, raak hysteries aan die lag en lê 'n kopie van 'n Sapa-berig voor [Sapa is 'n nuusagentskap, die Suid-Afrikaanse Pers-assosiasie] waarin gemeld word dat die Amerikaanse Gay Society of iemand 'n private skool vir gay kinders wil begin. Almal lag heerlijk. "Nou't die *moffies* ten minste 'n plek waarheen hulle van vroeg af kan hol!" roep die een uit. En toe die gelag bedaar, frommel die redakteur die Sapa op en sê: "Ag nee wat, dis regtig 'n klomp snert." Hy gooi die storie in die snippermandjie.

'n Paar jaar gelede doen 'n baie goeie biseksuele vriend van my (uiters intelligent, well socialized, Afrikaans en heel butch) aansoek vir

Ex: One scenario that immediately comes to mind, is a recent remark by a male colleague. It was summer. Everybody was slightly tanned, felt good about their bodies; was hot. I was wearing a slightly tight-fitting, cheerful summer dress with open sandals, the normal earrings and a touch of make-up, and was doing my thing as quickly and efficiently as possible. In the midst of the rush a much older colleague (male, white, married with children, like most of my colleagues) stood to the side and said to me, to the amusement of the men around him and with quite some agreement: If you continue to dress like that, I'm sure you'll agree you will get a man one of these days and leave the company, like all the other women! This just to illustrate the undisguised form of sexism and the utterly outmoded approach to women in the workplace (gay or straight, for that matter).

Further, in the office in which I work and where the newspaper gets put together, a story to be translated from English into Afrikaans would suddenly crop up and we would have to get a translation of *gay*. Everybody flounders. Do we keep it *gay*, or does it become "lesbiër", or "homoseksueel", or what? "Homo", comes the response from management. "At *this* paper we use the word *homo*."

Everything inside me rebels against this word, but I am too embarrassed to immediately protest loudly. Later, therefore, at a more appropriate moment, I approach a senior colleague (straight but sympathetic). He goes to management, explains that the word *homo* is degrading and hurtful and that, as far as he knows, the community definitely prefers the word *gay*. No, really, grunts management. Nonsense. It's English. The word in Afrikaans is "homo's" and that's that. End of story.

A few days later I (the only woman, only gay person and the youngest in the room by about 15 years) was attending a meeting of the editorial executive, in which decisions were made about the next day's paper and the news we were going to run in it. The most open-minded assistant editor, who had spent approximately 15 years of his career abroad, started laughing hysterically and presented a copy of a Sapa [the news agency South African Press Association] report which stated that the American Gay Society or somebody wanted to start a private school for gay children. Everybody laughed heartily. "Now the *moffies* at least have a place they can run to from an early age!" one exclaimed. And once the laughter had subsided, the editor crumpled the Sapa into a ball and said: "Oh no really, what a load of trash." He threw the story into the wastepaper-basket.

A few years ago, a very good bisexual friend of mine (extremely intelligent, well socialised, Afrikaans and quite butch) applied for a job with

werk by my maatskappy. Hy gee my naam as referent, en ek kry 'n oproep van 'n ander assistent-redakteur, wat vir my sê: "Dis 'n oulike mannetjie dié, goeie CV, baie goeie verwysings ens. Maar sê my net een ding – is hy nie dalk skeef nie?" My onmiddellike reaksie was om te sê nee – hy's verloof aan 'n meisie. Toe gaan ek verder en vra watter invloed dit dan op sy werkaansoek sou hê? Ek is nooit geantwoord nie, en hy het nie die aanstelling gekry nie. (Hy is nou 'n baie suksesvolle, hoë profiel persoon in die stad, wat toevallig op sake-vlak baie met my maatskappy te doen het.)

Hoewel ek 'n heeltemal oop benadering ten opsigte van my eie en ander mense se seksualiteit handhaaf, en nou en dan beswaar maak teen anti-gay sentimente by die werk, behoort hierdie paar voorbeelde in die eerste plek te illustreer hoe sterk die homofobiese ondertone by my werk is. En soos genoem, is dit hoofsaaklik anti-*moffie*, waarskynlik uit onkunde oor lesbiese verhoudings, en omdat gay vroue nie so identifiseerbaar is as gay mans nie.

Tesame met die homofobia, is [dit] die genoemde algehele wantroue teen vroue in die maatskappy, wat my posisie as gay, ambisieuse vrou in die middelorde (en met die vermoë om bo uit te kom) baie precarious maak. Ek probeer 'n oper benadering teenoor vroue, gay mense en swart mense versigtig laat insypel, sonder om myself te compromise in 'n seksuele kategorie wat my heeltemal onnodiglik en onregverdig sou diskwalifiseer van bevordering.

Vandaar my benadering om liever soveel moontlik te sluk, eerder as om (my) boot te erg te rock. Dit gaan net geen doel dien for the time being in my betrokke maatskappy nie. Miskien oor 'n paar jaar?

my company. He had given my name as referee, and I got a call from another assistant editor, who told me: "This is a neat youngster we've got here, good CV, very good experience, etc. [The word "oulik" in the sense it is used here, as well as the Afrikaans diminutive "mannetjie", are regrettably quite untranslatable, but reveal a highly patronizing attitude.] But tell me, isn't he perhaps bent?" My immediate reaction was to say no – he's engaged to a girl. Then I went on to ask what influence it would have had on his application? My question was ignored, and he didn't get the appointment. (He now is a very successful, high-profile person in the city, who incidentally quite often has business dealings with my company.) Although I am completely open-minded in my attitude regarding my own and others' sexuality, and occasionally protest against anti-gay sentiments at work, these few examples ought in the first place to illustrate how strong the homophobic undercurrent is in my workplace. And, as mentioned, it is mainly anti-*moffie*, probably owing to ignorance about lesbian relationships, and because gay women are not as easy to identify as gay men.

Together with the homophobia [it] is the complete distrust I mentioned regarding women in the company that makes my position as a gay, ambitious woman in the middle ranks (and who has the ability to get to the top) very precarious. I cautiously try to let a more open approach to women, gay people and black people filter through, without compromising myself by allowing myself to be placed in a sexual category that would disqualify me completely unnecessarily and unfairly from promotion.

Hence my approach is rather to stomach as much as possible, rather than rocking (my) boat too much. It will serve no purpose whatsoever for the time being in my company. Maybe in a few years' time?

3.2.2 Transcript and translation of 1994 telephonic interview

- Exploited:* Hallo Charl.
Onderhoudvoerder: Hallo. Hoe gaan dit?
Ex: Dit gaan goed, baie dankie! Moet ek hard en duidelik praat?
On: Nee wat, hierdie device wat ek nou hier opgerig het is nogal heel effektief.
Ex: OK.
On: Ja, OK, ek het nie 'n verskriklike shopping list van goeters wat ek jou spesifiek wil vra nie; ek wil net 'n paar goed eintlik 'n bietjie ophelder.

Ex: OK.
On: ... ja en ek wil net check, is jy OK om waar jy nou sit te praat, is ...
Ex: Ja, ek sit in die [X]-kantoor, so ek kan nou gemaklik praat, ja.
On: OK, nee dis fine dan. Ja, eerstens wil ek net 'n paar half tegniese goed opklaar wat in die ... net goeters wat nie deurgekom het in die faks nie, byvoorbeeld, en dan sal ek ingaan op die res. Die res behels basies dat ... die goed wat jy vir my gegee het is baie nice, baie konkreet en is 'n baie lekker basis om van te werk, maar ek wil bietjie meer net ingaan op half die effek daarvan en wat dit vir jou beteken ...
Ex: Emosionele aspekte, ja ...
On: ... uhm, ja.
Ex: Cool ...
On: Nou eers die goed wat nie deurgekom het nie: [dele van protokol wat nie per faks ontvang is nie, word voorts geïdentifiseer].
Ex: Maar ek kan dit vir jou ... ja ek sal probeer om 'n sinopsis daarvan, as ek min of meer kan onthou. Ek het gesê dat ek uhm ... ahh ... dat ek net mooi dink ... dat ek uhm ... [pouse, sug]
On: Wag vergeet wat jy ... jy hoef nie te sê vir my presies wat jy gesê het nie ...
Ex: Ja, ja.
On: ... jy kan die vraag as't ware van vooraf beantwoord.
Ex: Ja.
On: Uhm, en jy's heeltemal vry om te sê soort van ... wat jy sou sê in elk geval.
Ex: OK, ek het ... in breë is ek, omdat ek heeltemal eerlik is oor my lewenstyl in privaat (buite werksverband) is ek taamlik betrokke by die gay subkultuur, ek ken verskriklik baie gay mense – plaaslik, en in die land, en selfs in die res van die wêreld gescatter. Hulle ken *my*, ek is 'n taamlike verwysingspunt vir 'n hele paar of vir taamlik baie gay mense, maar ek is nie betrokke by enige georganiseerde vorm ... of fase van die gay kultuur nie. Uit vrye keuse, omdat georganiseerde dele van die gay kultuur – in my oë – hoofsaaklik ekstreme voorbeelde van gay mense lok, soos in dykes en soos in total queens, met wie ek nie graag assosieer nie, en wat ek nie
- Exploited:* Hallo Charl.
Interviewer: How are you?
Ex: I am very well, thank you. Must I speak loudly and clearly?
In: No, not really, this device I've rigged up here is quite effective.
Ex: OK.
In: Yes, OK, I haven't got a terribly long shopping list of things I want to ask you specifically; I would really just like to clear up a number of things ...
Ex: OK.
In: ... yes, and I would just like to check: are you OK to talk where you're sitting now, is ...
Ex: Yes, I'm sitting in the [X] office, so I can speak easily now, yes.
In: OK, that's fine then. Yes, firstly I want just to clear up a number of technical things that ... just things that didn't come through in the fax, for example, and then I will go into the rest. The rest entails basically ... the stuff you gave me is very nice, very concrete, and it's a very nice base to work from, but I want to just sort of go into the effect of it a little bit more, and what it means to you ...
Ex: Emotional aspects, yes ...
In: ... er, yes.
Ex: Cool ...
In: Now, firstly the stuff that didn't come through: [parts of the protocol that weren't received by fax, were subsequently identified].
Ex: But I can ... yes, I will try to give you a synopsis of it, if I can more or less remember. I said that I er ... ah ... just let me think carefully ... that I er ... [pause, gasp of exasperation]
In: Wait, forget what you ... you don't have to tell me exactly what you said ...
Ex: Yes, yes.
In: ... you can answer the question from scratch, as it were.
Ex: Yes.
In: Er, and you should feel completely free to say sort of ... what you would've said in any case.
Ex: OK, I have ... broadly I am, because I am completely honest about my lifestyle in private (outside the work set-up), I am fairly involved in the gay sub-culture; I know a lot of gay people – locally, in the country, and even some scattered around the rest of the world. They know *me*, I am quite a central point in the social network for a number or for a large number of gay people, but I'm not involved in any organised form ... or facet of the gay culture. Out of own free choice, because organised parts of the gay culture – in my view – draw mainly extreme examples of gay people, as in dykes and as in total queens, with whom I don't readily associate, and whom

- graag in my vriendekring ... of wat ek natuurlikerwys nie juis in my vriendekring aanhou nie. So ek hang nie soos in clubs ... of gay organisasies soort van ondersteun ek nie juis nie, om daai redes, maar in terme van taamlik goed gesosialiseerde, gebalanseerde gay mense is ek heeltemal betrokke in die gay subkultuur, ja.
- On: Sou jy sê dit is basies 'n geval waar jy daarby inskakel soos wat dit jou pas ...
- Ex: Ja, wanneer dit op 'n natuurlike manier my lewe kruis, skroom ek nie om deel te neem nie; ek het geen vrese om in gay crowds uit te hang of na gay partytjies toe te gaan of – verstaan jy? – om my stelling te maak dat ek gay is nie, maar sosiale organisasies, gay organisasies en sulke tipe goeters, is ek baie lugtig voor.
- On: Ja. En jou hele sosiale lewe bestaan nie net daaruit nie, maar ook uit ander interaksies met ...
- Ex: Ja, ek is heeltemal ...
- On: ... die hoofkultuur, as te ware ...
- Ex: Ja, ek het heeltemal 'n geïntegreerde, gebalanseerde sosiale interaksiepatroon; ek trek nie my lyne volgens seksuele oriëntasies nie, ek het 'n heeltemal ... 'n goeie, verteenwoordigende spektrum in my vriendekring.
- On: Ja. OK. En dan die kwessie van die kort ... soort van werksbeskrywing, dit het ook blykbaar in die slag gebly met die elektroniese transmissie ...
- Ex: Ahhh! Nee! Nee, dit was 'n lang ingewikkelde ding. Oe! Nee dit ... ja dit ... ek kan nie eers ont hou wat ek presies daarin gesê het nie, en ek sal verkies dat ek dit ... ek sal dit liewer weer vir jou faks ...
- On: OK! Dis fine! [Hierna is reëlings getref om dit te doen, en daar was 'n persoonlike kommunikasie rakende planne om mekaar in die vakansie te sien.] Om terug te kom na die seksuele fantasieë. Ek wil net 'n bietjie meer daar hoor. Jy het gepraat daarvan dat daar 'n 50/50 is en dat mans eintlik half sterker feature as sex objects. Kan jy 'n bietjie net vir my uitbrei in terme van jou verhoudings, jou actual verhoudings – wat hoofsaaklik met vroue is – en min of meer hoe dit inpas bymekaar?
- Ex: Die fantasieë by my verhoudings met vroue?
- On: Ja.
- Ex: Maar die fantasieë is tog heeltemal privaat en dit is op 'n ander *plane* as wat my verhoudings in reële terme is. Ek bespreek gewoonlik my fantasieë wel met my lovers en baie van hulle het in fact ... ek dink baie vroue het fantasieë oor die male sex object, meer as enigiets anders, omdat vroue nie eintlik sex objects is nie; vroue is emosionele liefhê-goete. As dit kom by *wild passionate love* – *imagined passionate love* – dan is vroue geneig om mans te objektiveer in die eerste plek; ek dink gay vroue veral objektiveer mans, en sien hulle nie as emosionele of
- I wouldn't readily ... or whom I don't by the nature of things include in my circle of friends. So I don't hang out at clubs ... or I sort of don't really support gay organisations, for those reasons, but in terms of fairly well socialized, balanced gay people I am completely involved in the gay subculture, yes.
- In: Would you say that it is basically a case of your slotting in as it suits you ...?
- Ex: Yes, when it crosses my path naturally, I don't hesitate to take part; I haven't any fears about hanging out with gay crowds or going to gay parties – understand? – to make my statement that I'm gay, but I'm very cautious about social organisations, gay organisations and that type of thing.
- In: Yes. And your whole social life does not consist just of that, but also of other interactions with ...
- Ex: Yes, I'm completely ...
- In: ... the main culture, as it were ...?
- Ex: Yes, I've got a completely integrated, balanced pattern of social interaction; I don't draw my lines according to sexual orientations, I've got a completely ... a good, representative spectrum in my circle of friends.
- In: Yes. OK. And then the matter of the short ... sort of work description, it seems that also got lost during the electronic transmission ...
- Ex: Ah! No! No, it was a whole long complicated thing. Oh! No that ... yes it ... I can't even remember exactly what I said in it, and I would prefer that I ... I would rather fax it to you again ...
- In: OK! That's fine! [Subsequently, arrangements were made for this, and there was a personal interaction regarding plans to see each other during the holidays.] To come back to the sexual fantasies. I would just like to hear a bit more there. You spoke of it being 50/50 and that men actually sort of feature more strongly as sex objects. Can you just elaborate a bit for me in terms of your relationships, your actual relationships – which are chiefly with women – and more or less how it fits together?
- Ex: The fantasies and my relationships with women?
- In: Yes.
- Ex: But the fantasies are after all completely private and are on a different plane from my real life relationships. I normally indeed discuss my fantasies with my lovers and many of them have in fact ... I think many women have fantasies about the male sex object, more than anything else, because women aren't really sex objects; women are things for loving emotionally. When it comes to wild passionate love – imagined passionate love – then women tend to objectify men in the first place, I think gay women especially objectify men, and view them not as emotional

geestelike wesens nie, maar bloot as seksuele objekte, en fantasieer dan oor hulle, omdat die seksdaad makliker voorstelbaar is met 'n man as met 'n vrou: met 'n vrou is dit 'n hele lang emosionele betrokkenheid, amper, met nie heeltemal so 'n kulminasie, so 'n maklik vaspenbare kulminasie, so 'n daad, as wat, jy weet, dit is met 'n man nie ... sou wees met 'n man nie. So, niemand het nog ooit 'n probleem daarmee gehad nie, *ek* het hoegenaamd nie 'n probleem daarmee nie.

On: OK, nee, ek het jou ja. Uhm, ja, hierso in die deel van jou beskrywing van jou seksuele verhoudings, is hier 'n stuk wat nie mooi deurgekom het nie: "Seksueel verkies ek dat my partner in beheer is," en dit lyk my asof hier staan en "dominerend"... of "ondominerend"?

Ex: Nee, nee: "ondernemend". Ondernemend!

On: Ja.

Ex: OK. Like new tricks in the book. [Lag] Ek haat boring lovers! Ek haat standaard-posisies!

On: [Lag] Ja. Goed, OK. Ja, ek dink dit het ook in die slag gebly: Het jy 'n stukkie geskryf oor hoe jy oor jousef voel, en spesifiek as gay mens en so aan?

Ex: Ja, en ek kan ook glad nie onthou wat ek daarvoor gesê het nie. Die oërriding gedagte is dat ek fine voel oor myself en my seksualiteit. Dat ek geen skuldgevoelens het daarvoor nie, en dat ek nie skroom om dit in situasies waarin ek veilig voel, jy weet, onbedreig voel ... om dit uit te leef en uit te spel, en te bespreek nie, selfs met totaal straight mense nie. Ek geniet dit om in fact in gesprek te tree met totaal straight mense, bloot akademies, oor my seksualiteit en verskille in seksualiteit ... ja, dis maar dit. Dis nie iets waaroor ek skaam is of wat ek probeer wegsteek of so iets nie, nee. Maar daar is meer, ek meen ek het meer geskryf.

On: Nee, dis fine, as ek dit net kan kry, dan's dit alles in orde, ja. Goed om nou net aan te beweeg na jou hoofding: Die insident wat jy beskryf het met die persoon wat vir jou gesê het as jy aanhou om so aan te trek, gaan jy een van die dae 'n man kry, etcetera ...

Ex: O, daar het nog een gebeur intussen ...

On: Ja, vertel?

Ex: Een van ons vryskut-fotograwe [identifiserende inligting uitgelaat] wat my baie lank laas gesien het, gryp my in die gang en sê vir my, "Luister, is jy getroud?" [Al twee lag] En ek sê "Nee," en ek sê "Hoekom?" en hy sê "Want jy't so skraal geword!" Toe sê ek vir hom "Maar dis nou interessant, Conrad en Steve sit net hier langs, jy moet vir hulle ook vra of hulle getroud is, want hulle het net vetter geword van die dag wat hulle getroud is, nou hoekom op aarde dink jy ek is getroud omdat ek skraler geword het?"

or spiritual beings, but only as sex objects, and then they fantasize about them, because the sex act is easier to visualize with a man than with a woman: with a woman it is a whole long emotional involvement, almost, with not so much of a culmination, such a culmination that can be readily captured, such an act, as it, you know, is with a man ... would be with a man. So, nobody has ever had a problem with it, *I* by no means have a problem with it.

In: OK, no, yes I've got you. Er, yes, here your in description of your sexual relationships, there is a part that didn't come through nicely: "Sexually I prefer that my partner be in control," and it seems as if it says here and "dominating" ... or "undominating"?

Ex: No, no: "innovative". Innovative! [The two words look very similar in Afrikaans.]

In: Yes.

Ex: OK. Like new tricks in the book. [Laughter] I hate boring lovers! I hate standard positions!

In: [Laughs] Yes. Well, OK. Yes, I think this was lost too [in transmission]: Did you write a little piece about how you feel about yourself, and specifically as a gay person and so forth?

Ex: Yes, and I also cannot remember what I said about it at all. The overriding idea is that I feel fine about myself and my sexuality. That I haven't got any feelings of guilt about it, and that I don't hesitate in situations in which I feel safe, you know, in which I feel unthreatened ... to live it out and to spell it out, and to discuss it, even with completely straight people. In fact, I enjoy it to get involved in discussions with totally straight people, purely academically, about my sexuality and differences in sexuality ... yes, that's more or less that. It is not something about which I am ashamed or that I try to hide or something like that, no. But there is more, I mean I wrote more.

In: No, that's fine, if I can just get it, then it's all in order, yes. Right, to now move on to your main thing: The incident that you described with the person who told you that if you continued to dress like that, one of these days you are going to find a man, etcetera ...

Ex: Oh, another one happened in the meantime ...

In: Yes, tell me?

Ex: One of our freelance photographers [identifying information omitted] who hasn't seen me for a long time, grabs me in the passage and says to me, "Listen, are you married?" [Both laugh] And I say "No," and I say "Why?" and he says "Because you've lost so much weight!" And then I told him, "But this is really interesting, Conrad and Steve are sitting just next door, you must ask them too if they got married, because they just got fatter since the day they got married, now why on earth do you think I am married because I've lost weight?"

On: Hemeltjie!

Ex: Ja. [Lag] So as 'n vrou becoming lyk, as 'n vrou vir 'n man aantreklik begin lyk, dan neem hulle onmiddellik aan dat sy óf 'n man in haar lewe het, óf probeer om een in haar lewe te kry. Dit feature nie in iemand hier se koppe dat ek dit dalk heeltemal vir myself doen of dat dit dalk 'n blote toevalligheid is, of dalk vir 'n vrou nie, dis hoegenaamd nie in hul koppe nie. Anyway ja, go on with your questions.

On: Ja, daai insident wat ek vroeër genoem het, ek wil net 'n bietjie meer hoor van hoe jy gereageer het. In die eerste plek: toe dit gebeur het, toe hy gesê het ja jy weet jy gaan een van die dae 'n man kry en die maatskappy verlaat, wat was jou ...

Ex: My onderliggende reaksie wat heeltemal verbloem was omdat ek so gesosialiseer is, in hierdie maatskappy, was woede, ek meen, die woede het gebly; dit is hoekom ek die insident onthou, maar waar ek 'n paar jaar gelede woedend sou uitgebars het en gereageer het – ten koste van myself, omdat die mans dan almal sou begin lag het en begin gekskreeu het met my oor my woede – onderdruk ek deesdae my woede en soort van lag dit af en ek maak 'n grap daarvan ... sê “Ag nee, natuurlik nie, hoekom sal ek nou die maatskappy wil verlaat? As ek trou bly ek,” en sulke tipe goed, hoewel dit absoluut teen my grein gaan, maar ek word gedwing – weens die omstandighede en die feit dat ek omring ... áltyd omring is deur mans wanneer so 'n insident plaasvind – word ek gedwing om so half dit te sluk, en my trots en my selfbeeld in my sak te steek, en eenvoudig te stomach wat hulle sê, hulle op hulle eie vlak te antwoord, eerder as om in woede te reageer. Ek het wel nou die dag in die straat, toe 'n man sy lippe vir my suig, na hom toe gedraai en vir hom gesê ek gaan jou piel afsny [lag], wat ek graag hier by die werk ook meer gereeld sal wou doen, maar ek kan dit glad nie doen nie! Die ou het hom doodgeskrik toe ek dit op die sypaadjie vir hom sê, maar anyway. [Pause] So dit is infuriating wanneer so iets gebeur, dis ... ek kry 'n gevoel van magtelosheid. Omdat daar 'n totale gebrek aan begrip is, 'n totale ... dit is, dit is 'n void, die moontlikheid dat 'n vrou nie noodwendig op mans ingestel is nie en haar hele lewe rig – privaat en professioneel – op die kry of behou van 'n man nie, daar *bestaan* nie die moontlikheid in enigiemand se koppe in my werkplek van so iets nie, en dis geweldig irriterend, en baie inhiberend.

On: En sê vir my, by nabetrugting is jou gevoelens daarvoor annerster as wanneer dit gebeur het, spesifiek?

Ex: Nee, by nabetrugting het ek meer tyd om my woede te verbaliseer vir myself, maar, nee, ek raak nie minder kwaad nie; ek raak net meer

In: Heavens!

Ex: Yes. [Laughs] So if a woman looks becoming, if a woman starts to look attractive to a man, then they immediately assume that she either has a man in her life, or that she is trying to get one in her life. It doesn't feature in anybody's head here that I perhaps am doing it completely for myself, or that it is maybe a simple coincidence, or perhaps for a woman, *that* does not enter their heads at all. Anyway, yes, go on with your questions.

In: Yes, that incident that I mentioned earlier, I would just like to hear a bit more about how you reacted. In the first place: when it happened, when he said yes you know you are going to find a man and leave the company, what was your ...

Ex: My underlying reaction, which was completely hidden because I am socialized that way, in this company, was rage, I mean, the rage remained; that is why I remember the incident, but where a few years ago I would've erupted in anger and would've reacted – to my own detriment, because the men would then all have started laughing and poking fun at me for being enraged – I nowadays suppress my rage and sort of dismiss it by laughing and making a joke of it ... I say “Really no, of course not, why would I ever want to leave the company? If I get married I'll stay,” and that type of thing, although it goes utterly against the grain, but I am forced – because of the circumstances and the fact that I am surrounded ... *always* surrounded by men when such an incident takes place – I am forced to sort of put up with it, and to swallow my pride and forget about my self-image, and simply stomach everything they say, and to answer them on their own level, rather than react in rage. However, the other day when a man in the street was smacking his lips at me, I did turn to him and tell him I'm going to cut off your dick [the Afrikaans word is much earthier] [laughter], which is what I would like to do more regularly here at work, but I can't do it at all! The guy got the fright of his life when I said this to him on the pavement, but anyway. [Pause] So it is infuriating when something like this happens, it's ... I feel powerless. Because there is a complete lack of understanding, a *complete* ... it is, it is a void, the possibility that a woman is not necessarily into men and is not organising her whole life – private and professional – around acquiring and keeping a man, such a possibility does not *enter* the head of anybody at my work, and it is extremely irritating, and very inhibiting.

In: And tell me, when you reflect about it later, are your feelings about it different than when it happened, specifically?

Ex: No, on reflection I've got more time to verbalise my rage on my own, but no, I don't become less angry; I just get angrier.

kwaad.

- On: En wat gebeur dan, as jy meer kwaad raak, en daaroor dink, wat is die volgende ...?
- Ex: Weersin, in heteroseksuele mans, wat opbou en opbou, jy weet dwarsdeur 'n mens se lewe. Dit word getemper deur my sosialisering, deur die feit dat ek nie graag die boot rock nie (van nature, nie net in my werkplek nie). My woede-reaksie word baie getemper deur my houding teenoor mense, maar die woede bou waarskynlik oor jare verskriklik op. In so 'n mate dat ek waarskynlik êrens in staat sou wees om iemand fisiek aan te rand, wanneer hy baie min gesê het, maar dit sal net 'n kulminasie van woede wat oor jare opgebou het, wees.
- On: Ja. Sê vir my, die hele besigheid van dat dit nie soseer net 'n kwessie is van 'n nare benadering teenoor gay mense nie, maar teen vroue, wat ook al hul seksuele oriëntasie is, wat is vir jou half die *link* en die ooreenkoms tussen die houding wat jy bespeur teenoor gay mense en die houding teenoor vroue, en in hoe 'n mate is dit dieselfde wat ...
- Ex: Wel, die houding teenoor gay mans en die houding teenoor vroue is dieselfde ding, kyk ek het ... wat vir my duidelik uitgekom het in my beantwoording van die vrae, is dat hulle baie min onderskeid tref hier tussen gay vroue en straight vroue. Vroue *per se* word verskriklik neglect, of op neergesien, en dieselfde geld vir gay mans, so daar's nie veel van 'n onderskeid tussen daai twee nie. Uhm, ja, uhm, wat is die original vraag? Herhaal dit weer?
- On: Ja, net in hoe 'n mate die houding teenoor gay mense en die houding teenoor vroue ... wat die ooreenkomste is, en die verskille miskien?
- Ex: Wel, daar's nie veel verskille nie. Ek dink die top-strukture, die bestuur van die maatskappy, sien bykans ewe veel neer op altwee, hulle wantrou altwee ewe veel, hulle huiwer ewe veel by die aanstel by enige van vroue of gay mans. Hulle sou eerder, en by uitstek, voorkeur gee aan 'n straight man wat voldoen aan daai goed wat ek genoem het: dat hy one of the boys is, dat hy getroud is, dat hy verkieslik 'n kind het, jy weet, dat hy uit die regte Afrikaner-agtergrond uitkom.
- On: So wat dink jy is dit wat in altwee – gay mans en vroue – aanwesig is wat vir hulle dieselfde houding gee teenoor daai mense; wat is dit wat hulle die probleem mee het, dink jy?
- Ex: Ek weet nie wat dit is wat hulle bedreig nie; hulle sien neer op hulle: straight, viriele sterk mans sien neer op homoseksuele mans, hulle dink hulle is fisies en sosiaal ondergeskik; dieselfde geld vir vroue, hulle is fisies en sosiaal ondergeskik, hulle beskik nie oor dieselfde vermoë om – dis nou in die oë van totaal heteroseksuele mans wat die maatskappy *run* – hulle beskik nie oor die vermoë om die maatskappy te *run* op dieselfde aanvaarbare – sosiaal aanvaar-
- In: And what happens then, when you get angrier, and think about it, what is the next ...?
- Ex: Repugnance, towards heterosexual men, that builds up and builds up and builds up, you know throughout one's life. It is tempered by my socialization, by the fact that I don't easily rock the boat (by nature, not just at work). My attitude towards people tempers my rage reaction a lot, but the rage probably builds up terribly over the years. To such an extent that somewhere I would probably be capable of physically assaulting somebody, when he has said very little, but it will just be a culmination of rage that has built up over the years.
- In: Yes. Tell me, the whole business of it not being so much a matter of a nasty attitude towards gay people, but towards women, whatever their sexual orientation, what do you feel is, sort of, the link and the similarity between the attitude that you detect towards gay people and the attitude towards women, and to what extent is it the same that ...
- Ex: Well, the attitude towards gay men and the attitude towards women is the same thing, see I ... what stood out clearly for me in answering the questions is that they distinguish very little here between gay women and straight women. Women *per se* are neglected terribly, or looked down on, and the same applies to gay men, so there is not much of a distinction between those two. Er, yes, er, what is the original question? Repeat it again?
- In: Yes, just to what extent the attitude towards gay people and the attitude towards women ... what are the similarities, and the differences maybe?
- Ex: Well, there aren't many differences. I think the top ranks, the management of the company, look down upon both almost equally, they distrust both equally, they shrink equally from appointing either women or gay men. They would rather, and as a matter of course, give preference to a straight man who conforms to those things that I mentioned before: that he is one of the boys, that he is married, that he preferably has a child, you know, that he comes from the right Afrikaner background.
- In: So what do you think it is that is present in both – gay men and women – that makes them adopt the same attitude towards those people; what do you think it is that they've got a problem with?
- Ex: I don't know what it is that threatens them; they look down on them: straight, virile strong men look down on homosexual men, they think they are physically and socially inferior, the same applies to women, they are physically and socially inferior, they don't possess the same ability – this is now in the eyes of completely heterosexual men who run the company – they don't possess the ability to run the company in the same acceptable – socially acceptable –

bare – manier as wat hulle dit doen nie. Hulle sal dit doen op 'n manier wat vir hulle onverstaaenbaar is, en miskien selfs *deviant* sou wees, wat ek natuurlik glad nie mee saamstem nie; ek weet dat gay mense, vroue en enige gay mense, net so goed, indien nie beter nie, iets kan *run*, omdat hulle meer empatie waarskynlik met ander mense het. Maar totaal straight mans in my werksopset beskou hulle as iets ondergeskiks.

On: Ja ... Om aan te gaan na die volgende beskrywing, die ene van waar daar gepraat is watter woord om te gebruik. Jy't gesê jy't gevoel jy wil beswaar maak, maar jy was half embarrassed gewees om dit te doen en jy het toe nie. Kan jy net meer vir my verduidelik hoekom jy embarrassed was?

Ex: Die social visibility aspek; die feit dat ek omring is deur 'n klomp intellektuele totally straight mense, wat, hoewel hulle stilswyend – van hulle – stilswyend weet en aanvaar wat my seksualiteit is ... sou ek myself te veel in die oog plaas, deur half ... myself op die voorgrond plaas, my seksualiteit aan hulle opdrag, as ek sou luidkeels beswaar maak ...

On: Ja. Selfs al is dit op onpersoonlike gronde, en eerder op goeie argumente gegrond ...?

Ex: Ja, omdat hulle weet ek is gay, is ek onmiddellik in 'n swakker posisie, dis hoekom ek gesê het dat ek eerder na my kollega, wat Bennie is in hierdie geval, sou gaan, wat ooglopend straight is, maar baie simpatiek is teenoor gay mense, en *hom* eerder my stryd laat stry, omdat niemand dit sou bevraagteken nie, maar as *ek* dit sou stry, ten aanhore van almal wat weet ek is gay, dan water dit onmiddellik my argument af.

On: Sê vir my in hoe 'n mate dink jy almal weet jy is gay?

Ex: Ek dink dat, kyk, baie min mense ... dis onbevestig vir die meeste mense, baie min mense het in fact al, my gesien saam met iemand, in a fisiese embrace, maar die bespiegeling en die spekulasie, die onderlinge geskinder en die networking van mense met baie baie ander mense wat dalk my al gesien het in 'n compromising posisie, maak dit so half 'n uitgemaakte saak; ek dink nie daar's veel mense by die werk wat in die duister is nie, veral in die laer range; ek praat nou nie van die hoër range nie: ek dink nie hulle spekuleer so veel nie.

On: Ja, maar ek neem aan dis half 'n kwessie van as dit nie bevestig is op 'n baie obvious manier nie, dan is dit so half non-existent ook in 'n sekere opsig?

Ex: Ja, hulle maak so half hulle oë toe. Hulle hoor moontlik hier en daar goeters, maar my gedrag is heeltemal normaal, wat hulle nogal gooi. My flirtatious houding teenoor mans, en vroue for that matter, gooi hulle nogal, my nou-en-dan saamlaggery (noodgedwonge, hoewel ek dit eintlik nooit doen nie – maar dit het in die verlede al gebeur) wanneer hulle scathing remarks

manner in which *they* do it. They would do it in a manner that is incomprehensible to *them*, and would perhaps even be deviant, with which I completely disagree of course; I know that gay people, women and any gay person, can run something just as well, if not better, because they probably have more empathy with other people. But completely straight men in my work set-up view them as something inferior.

In: Yes ... To proceed to the next description, the one where there was a discussion about which word to use. You said you had felt that you wanted to object, but you had been sort of embarrassed to do it and then you didn't. Can you just elaborate a bit more to me why you were embarrassed?

Ex: The social visibility aspect; the fact that I am surrounded by a bunch of totally straight people, who, although they silently – some of them – silently know and accept what my sexuality is ... I would make myself too visible, by sort of ... put myself on the foreground, force my sexuality on them, if I were to object loudly ...

In: Yes. Even if it is an impersonal level, and rather based on good arguments ...?

Ex: Yes, because they know I am gay, I am immediately in a weaker position, that is why I said that I would rather go to my colleague, Bennie in this instance, who is obviously straight, but very sympathetic to gay people, and rather have *him* fight my fight, because nobody would question it, but if *I* were to fight it, in the hearing of everybody who knows that I'm gay, then it immediately weakens my argument.

In: Tell me, to what extent do you think everyone knows you are gay?

Ex: I think that, look, very few people ... it is unconfirmed for the most people, very few people have in fact, seen me yet in a physical embrace with somebody, but the speculation, the surreptitious gossiping and the networking of people with many many other people who have perhaps already seen me in a compromising position, make it more or less a foregone conclusion; I don't think there are many people at work who are in the dark, especially among the lower ranks; I'm not speaking now of the higher ranks: I don't think they speculate as much.

In: Yes, but I assume it is sort of a matter of if it has not been confirmed in a very obvious way, then it is sort of non-existent also in a certain sense?

Ex: Yes, they kind of turn a blind eye. They possibly hear things here and there, but my behaviour is completely normal, which throws them somewhat. My flirtatious attitude towards men, and women for that matter, throws them somewhat, my laughing along (from sheer necessity, although I really don't ever do it – but it has happened in the past) every now and then when

maak teenoor een of ander gay persoon wat baie bekend is, soos Martina Navratilova, of sulke mense wat *vreemde* goed aanvang, wat die saak baie skade aanrig – dit gooi hulle, wanneer ek saam lag oor Martina se skeisaak, of die gekibbel oor eiendom en sulke tipe goed ...

- On: Dan weet hulle nie mooi waar om jou te plaas nie ...
- Ex: Ja, die gerugte word gereeld weerlê in hulle gemoed, deur my optrede.
- On: Ja. Ja. Daai ander insident waar, ek neem aan dit was Ferdie, wat die klein nuusberiggie daar aangebring het. [Inhoud van faks word geverifieer.] Weer eens, wat was jou reaksie daar, innerlik *en* uiterlik?
- Ex: Uiterlik het ek baie min reaksie getoon, en innerlik was ek woedend, en verskriklik teleurgesteld, en half magteloos en terneergedruk, omdat dit van dié spesifieke persoon gekom het, wat so half een bakermat was vir my van verligtheid, binne die beklemmende omstandighede waarbinne ek werk, en iemand wat van beter moes weet, of behoort te weet, wat fights fight vir byna alles, behalwe vir gay rights. Hy is absoluut homofobies; hy't vir my verskriklik teleurgestel, maar uiterlik, nee, het ek nie veel reaksie gelewer nie, ek het waarskynlik net opgekyk en so half ... niks gesê nie. En as ek dit sou verder voer, of in daai omstandighede iets sou sê, sou ek nêrens kom nie, jy weet, ek sou niks uitrig nie. Ek weet baie goed ... ek kan baie goed judge, wanneer ek iets sou kon uitrig, of wanneer nie, en dan's ek geneig om stil te bly, as ek my asem sou mors.
- On: Ja. Is dit iets wat soms – of dikwels – gebeur, dat jy teleurgestel word op daai manier in mense wat jy gedink het meer verlig is en dan sê hulle iets wat hulle ware kleure laat uitkom?
- Ex: Ja, ja, omdat dit 'n issue is wat en 'n onderwerp is wat so selde in die openbaar regtig bespreek word en waaroor mense standpunt inneem, moet mens maar gaan op jou instink en jou siening van mense, jou geloof in mense, byna uitsluitlik. Algemeen, nie net in die werkplek nie, moet jy maar gaan op wat jy voel oor mense, en hoop dat hulle simpatiek sou wees teenoor ... alle kleure, en alle seksualiteite, en, jy weet, allerhande goed wat vir jou belangrik is. En dan skielik, op 'n dag, kom jy in 'n situasie waar iemand in fact moet standpunt inneem teenoor 'n issue soos seksualiteit en dan is jy verstom, en teleurgesteld, oor wat hulle inderdaad sê, wanneer hulle gekonfronteer word. Dit is moontlik dat dit partykeer onder druk is van hulle peers, dat hy dit doen en sê omdat hy omring is deur al sy kollegas, dat hy 'n anti-gay statement maak, maar tog, dit word gemaak. En dit entrench anti-gay sentiments by die werk en dit is vreeslik frustrerend.

they make scathing remarks about some gay person that is well known, such as Martina Navratilova, or people like that who do *weird* things that do the cause much harm – that throws them, when I join in the laughter about Martina's divorce case, or the bickering about property and that kind of thing ...

- In: Then they don't know quite how to place you ...
- Ex: Yes, the rumours are regularly refuted in their minds, by my behaviour.
- In: Yes. Yes. That other incident where, I assume it was Ferdie, who arrived with the little news item. [Content of fax verified at this stage.] Once again, what was your reaction there, inwardly *and* outwardly?
- Ex: Outwardly I showed little reaction, and inwardly I was enraged, and terribly disappointed, and kind of powerless and dejected, because it came from this specific person, who had sort of been to me a champion of enlightenment, within the oppressive conditions under which I work, and somebody who should've known better, or ought to know, who fights fights for almost everything, except gay rights. He is absolutely homophobic; he disappointed me bitterly, but outwardly, no, I did not show much reaction, I probably just looked up and sort of ... said nothing. And if I were to take it further, or say something under those conditions, I would get nowhere, you know, I would achieve nothing. I know very well ... I can judge very well, when I would be able to achieve something, and when not, and then I tend to keep silent, if I were going to waste my breath.
- In: Yes. Does it happen sometimes – or often – that you are disappointed in this way in people who you had thought were more enlightened and then they say something that reveals their true colours?
- Ex: Yes, yes, because it is an issue and it is a topic that so seldom is really discussed in public and on which people take a stand, one almost exclusively has to be led by your instincts and your view of people, your faith in people. Generally, not only in the workplace, you have no choice but to go according to how you feel about people, and hope that they will be sympathetic towards ... all colours, and all sexualities, and, you know, all kinds of things that are important to you. And then suddenly, one day, you are in a situation where somebody in fact has to take a stand on an issue such as sexuality and then you are dumbfounded, and disappointed, about what they indeed say, when they are confronted. It is possible that it is sometimes as a result of peer pressure, that he does it because he is surrounded by all his colleagues, that he makes an anti-gay statement, but still, it is made. And it entrenches anti-gay sentiments at work and it is terribly frustrating.

- On: Dis half 'n deel van die hele kultuur ...
- Ex: Dis deel van die kultuur en dit wil nie weggaan nie, dit hou net nie fokken op nie.
- On: Ja. Wat dink jy, is daar enige oplossing daarvoor?
- Ex: Wel, stadig maar seker, dat well-socialized gay mense inbeweeg in hierdie spesifieke werksopset, en stadig maar seker opbeweeg in die ranks, en stadig maar seker die sentimente begin verander. Dit gaan nooit ... jy weet die maatskappy sal nooit swaai nie, hy gaan nooit publicly statements maak wat pro-gay is of wat sê dat hy vreeslik open-minded is nie, maar daar kan ten minste 'n stilswyende aanvaarding begin kom, oor jare – ek praat nou van dekades ... hopelik. Hopelik kan ek bydra daartoe.
- On: Sal 'n stilswyende tipe van aanvaarding vir jou aanvaarbaar wees?
- Ex: Dit sal vir my beter wees as nou. Die ideaal is dat ek in werksomstandighede werk waar dit openlik aanvaar word, maar dit is utopia; ek weet nie of daar sulke ondernemings bestaan nie, behalwe self ... jy weet, eie ondernemings, waar almal duidelik gay is en almal weet en alles is cool en alles is in die oopte. Maar as jy in 'n rigiede, jy weet, werksopset werk soos ek, en soort van die meeste ander werkgewers ... die opset wat hulle skep ... dink ek dis utopies om te dink dat dit openlik aanvaarbaar gaan wees; stilswyend sal al beter wees as niks.
- On: Ja, uhm, ja ... die ander geval, van die ou wat aansoek gedoen het vir werk, hoekom dink jy is daai vraag spesifiek aan jou gevra (of hy nie dalk "skeef" is nie)?
- Ex: Hy't miskien in body language iets gedoen of gemaak wat die moontlikheid daar gestel het, binne die onderhoudsopset, dat hy dalk nie heeltemal straight is nie; dalk het hy iets gesê – ek weet nie, ek was nie self daar nie – maar omdat ek by hom aangegee is as baie goeie vriendin en referent, het die hoofredaksielid aanvaar dat ek sou weet wat die ou se seksuele voorkeur is. Op grond daarvan dat ek én die applikant dit duidelik gemaak het dat ons mekaar goed ken, het hy die vrymoedigheid gehad om my dit te vra.
- On: En watse invloed het dit half gehad op jou optrede daarna en jou houding teenoor ...
- Ex: Dit het 'n radikale impak gehad. Dit was baie vroeg in my loopbaan, en ek het skielik besef hoe gevaarlik dit inderdaad is om uit te kom in die maatskappy. Die feit dat daai vraag aan my gestel is en dat die persoon pertinent nie die werk gekry het nie, hoewel hy 'n uitstekende aansoeker was, het my laat besef, to what lengths they would go to actually keep the company heterosexual. En hoe gevaarlik dit vir my en my loopbaan en my vordering sou wees as ek regtig sou uitkom. Ek het besef dat as ek ... ek moet versigtig met my seksualiteit omgaan, ek hoef nie weg te steek nie, maar ek moet defini-
- In: It is kind of part of the whole culture ...
- Ex: It's part of the culture and it doesn't go away, it just doesn't fucking stop.
- In: Yes. What do you think, is there any solution?
- Ex: Well, slowly but surely, that well-socialized gay people move into this specific work set-up, and slowly but surely move up in the ranks, and slowly but surely start to change the sentiments. It will never ... you know the company will never swing, it will never publicly make statements that are pro-gay or that say it is exceedingly broad minded, but at least a tacit acceptance can begin, over years – I am now talking of decades ... hopefully. Hopefully I can contribute to that.
- In: Will a tacit type of acceptance be acceptable to you?
- Ex: It will be better for me than now. The ideal would be to work in circumstances where it is openly accepted, but that is utopia; I don't know if such businesses exist, except self ... you know, own businesses, where everybody is clearly gay and everybody knows and everything is cool and everything is out in the open. But if you work in a, you know, rigid work set-up like I do, and sort of most employers ... the set-up they create ... I think it is utopian to think that it will be openly acceptable; tacit will already be better than nothing.
- In: Yes, er, yes ... the other case, of the guy who applied for work, why do you think you were asked that question specifically (if he is not perhaps "bent")?
- Ex: Perhaps his body language in the interview situation suggested the possibility, in the interview set-up, that he is maybe not completely straight; perhaps he said something – I don't know, I was not there myself – but because I was mentioned as a very good friend and referee, the member of the editorial executive assumed that I would know what the guy's sexual preference is. On grounds that the applicant and I had made it clear that we knew each other well, he felt free to ask me this.
- In: And what influence did it kind of have on your behaviour subsequently and your attitude towards ...
- Ex: It had a radical impact. It was very early in my career, and I suddenly realised how dangerous it indeed is to come out in the company. The fact that I was asked that question and that the person pertinently didn't get the job, although he was an excellent applicant, made me realise to what lengths they would go to actually keep the company heterosexual. And how dangerous it would have been for me and my career if I were really to come out. I realised that if I ... I must deal with my sexuality cautiously, I don't have to hide, but I must definitely not become outspoken about what my preferences are. I must in

tief nie uitgesproke raak oor wat my voorkeure is nie. Ek moet in fact goed doen en aantrek en make-up dra, jy weet, en sentimente uitspreek wat hulle verwar, eerder as om ooit *heeltemal* te bevestig wat hulle vermoedens is. Dit het my definitief verskriklik geïnhibeer ... dit het ... van toe af is ek baie versigtiger, en ek meen dit is omtrent my hele loopbaan gevolglik; dit het alles beïnvloed wat ek daarna gesê en gedoen het.

On: En jou gevoel teenoor die werkgewer, die half onpersoonlike Werkgewer, as soort van groot entiteit, watse invloed het dit daarop?

Ex: 'n Blinde frustrasie, 'n mate van dislojaliteit, dit het my in 'n mate laat wegstaan van my maatskappy, waar ek 'n vreeslik involved en eerlike mens is, en alles so half ingooi om, jy weet, 'n sukses te behaal, vir my werkgewer ... ek raak totally involved in wat ek doen ... het dit in fact gemaak dat ek 'n tree terugstaan. Ek is steeds involved, ek werk steeds my gat af vir my werkgewer, ek is lojaal teenoor my werkgewer, maar daar's net daai klein *gap* van: hulle's nie heeltemal cool nie; hulle's in fact baie gevaarlik – vir my spesifieke omstandighede, en vir baie mense wat vir my baie belangrik is se omstandighede, wat sou maak dat ek as ek voor 'n vuurpeloton moes kom, jy weet ... of ek my werkgewer verdedig of nie ... sou ek in fact nie; dit maak dat ek hulle nie tot die dood toe sal verdedig nie, want hulle is in fact *net* vir my goedgesind omdat ek maak of ek een van hulle is ... en dit is nogal disconcerting.

On: Sê vir my, net in terme van gewone interaksie, soos in half informele tipe van kommunikasie by die werk, sê maar oor etenstyd of so, kan jy vir my sê of daar ... in hoe 'n mate daar 'n verskil is (as daar 'n verskil is) tussen die tipe van onderwerpe wat jou kollegas, en spesifiek dié wat nie weet van jou seksuele oriëntasie nie – of dit nie bevestig het nie – die tipe onderwerpe wat hulle aanraak, en dié's wat jy aanraak, of nie aanraak nie.

Ex: Ja, daar is sekerlik, ja, ek sou dink daar is definitief 'n verskil. Die heteroseksuele mense is geneig, ek meen almal, alle mense for that matter is geneig om sexual jabs te maak of sexual verwysings te maak in 'n sosiale opset, en uit die aard van die saak, omdat ek in 'n baie groot organisasie een van die min, een van die absoluut enkele gay mense is, spesifiek in die nagkantoor-opset, is die gesprekke waarna ek moet luister – nie waaraan ek deelneem nie, maar waarna ek moet luister – is gewoonlik taamlik alienating. Die verwysings wat wel gemaak word, die seksuele verwysings, is byna uitsluitlik alienating, want dit is altyd baie seksisties, baie heteroseksueel, gewoonlik uit die mans se monde uit, verwysings na vroue en hulle liggame ... en foto's wat opduik in die nagkantoor, en sulke tipe goeters ... en al wat in

fact do things and dress up and wear make-up, you know, and air sentiments that confuse them, rather than ever *completely* confirm what they suspect. It has definitely inhibited me badly ... it has ... since then I have been much more careful, that is, for almost my whole career; it influenced everything I said and did since.

In: And your feelings towards the employer, the kind of impersonal Employer, as sort of big entity, what influence does it have on that?

Ex: A blind frustration, a degree of disloyalty, it made me to an extent distance myself from my company, where I am an extremely involved and honest person, and kind of throw in everything to, you know, achieve success, for my employers ... I become totally involved in what I do ... it has in fact caused me to take a step back. I am still involved, I still work my arse off for my employers, but there's just that small gap of: they are not cool; they are in fact very dangerous – for my specific circumstances, and for the circumstances of many people who are very important to me, which would mean that if I were to be put in front of a firing squad, you know ... whether I defend my employers or not ... I would in fact not; it means that I will not defend them unto death, because they are in fact kindly disposed towards me *only* because I pretend to be one of them ... and that is rather disconcerting.

In: Tell me, in terms of everyday interaction, as in kind of informal type of communication at work, say over supper, can you tell me if there ... to what extent there is a difference (if there is a difference) between the type of topics that your colleagues, and specifically those who don't know about your sexual orientation – or for whom it hasn't been confirmed – the type of topics that they talk about, and the ones you talk about, or don't talk about.

Ex: Yes, there certainly is, yes, I would think there definitely is a difference. The heterosexual people tend, I mean everybody, all people for that matter tend to make sexual jabs or sexual references in a social setting, and by virtue of the fact that I am one of the few, one of the really few gay individuals in a very big organisation, specifically in the night-office set-up, that the conversations to which I must listen – not ones in which I participate – are normally rather alienating. The references that are indeed made, the sexual references, are almost exclusively alienating, because they are always very sexist, very heterosexual, usually uttered by the men, references to women and their bodies ... and photographs that pop up in the night office, and that type of thing ... and all that happens in such situations is that I remain silent, or when I am

sulke situasies gebeur is ek bly stil, of wanneer ek gedwing word om te reageer, lag ek half verleë, en probeer so half die onderwerp verander, maar ek kry baie selde die geleentheid om heeltemal uiting te gee aan wie ek is en wat ek is, omdat ek moet cagey wees. Dit is dus wel baie inhiberend, socially, die feit dat ek moet in die closet bly, half, by die werk.

- On:** Ek neem aan dit beteken dat ... huislike faktore en so aan kan jy nie eintlik dikwels oor gesels nie, jy weet: huislike omstandighede en jou private lewe ...
- Ex:** Nee, nee. My private lewe kan glad nie ... ek het deur 'n moerse pynlike egskedding gegaan, soos jy weet [die einde van 'n verhouding van agt jaar met 'n vrou ('n mediese dokter), saam met wie sy 'n huis besit het], waarin ek baie swaar gekry het, persoonlik, en *geweldig* swaar gekry het om te cope by die werk, en niemand by die werk kon of mag geweet het nie; gevolglik kon niemand my ondersteun nie, kon niemand (soos in enige ander geval) vir my sê hulle is regtig jammer, en hulle dink aan my nie. Soos in 'n gewone egskedding-situasie, of wanneer jy iemand aan die dood afgestaan het nie. So nee, my huislike omstandighede word hoegenaamd nie bespreek nie. Wanneer ek 'n live-in lover het, soos ek gehad het, en verwys na die persoon, moet ek altyd praat van my "huismaat", en wanneer ek dit doen in die aanwesigheid van iemand op die redaksie wat wel weet dat ons lovers is, dan is daar altyd 'n *smirk*, jy weet, sal iemand opkyk en een of ander oogkontak met my maak wat my totaal uitfreak en my laat panic dat iets gesê gaan word wat vir my gevaar kan inhou, so dis like walking a tightrope, om my persoonlike lewe en my huislike omstandighede weg te hou van mense by die werk.
- On:** Sê vir my, hierdie soort van insidente waarvan ons nou gepraat het: is jy bewus van – wanneer dit nou gebeur byvoorbeeld – spesifieke fisieke reaksies; hoe jy dit liggaamlik ervaar?
- Ex:** Nee, nie eintlik nie, ek het net emosionele reaksies; ek toon nie vreeslike fisiese reaksies nie, nee. Tensy jy spesifieke voorbeelde kan opnoem.
- On:** Wel, ek dink ek verwys na miskien die manier waarop jy die emosie ervaar, met ander woorde hoe dit voel, jy weet, watter tipe gevoelens jy byvoorbeeld ... as jy sê "kwaad"; jy ervaar woede; dan neem ek aan dit moet op 'n spesifieke manier ... jy weet, daar's 'n spesifieke manier wat woede vir jou voel.
- Ex:** Ja, as ek heeltemal tegnies moet raak, ja, ek bloos nie, ek is nie iemand wat bloos nie, maar ek sou, sou, jy weet iemand sou kon bloos in sulke omstandighede; ek kry 'n slight adrenalin pump, of 'n verhoogde hartklop, vanweë woede, ek meen net 'n onmiddellike woede-reaksie laat onmiddellik my hart vinniger klop. Ek sou in ekstreme gevalle, wanneer daar 'n argument sou

forced to react, I sort of laugh in an embarrassed way, and kind of try to change the topic, but I very seldom get the opportunity to openly express who I am and what I am, because I have to be cagey. The fact that I to some extent must remain in the closet at work is thus indeed very inhibiting socially.

- In:** I assume it means that ... you can't really regularly discuss domestic factors and so forth, you know: domestic circumstances and your private life ...
- Ex:** No, no. My private life can't at all ... I went through a helluva painful divorce, as you know [the end of a relationship of eight years with a woman (a medical doctor), with whom she jointly owned a house], during which life was very difficult for me, personally, and *extremely* difficult at work, and nobody at work could or was allowed to know; consequently nobody could support me, nobody could (as in any other case) tell me they are really sorry, and they are thinking of me. As in a typical divorce situation, or when you lose somebody through death. So no, my domestic circumstances are not discussed at all. When I've got a live-in lover, as I had, and I refer to the person, I must always talk of my "housemate", and when I do it in the presence of somebody on the editorial staff who does know that we are lovers, then there is always a smirk, you know, somebody would look up and make some kind of eye contact with me which freaks me out totally and makes me panic that something will be said that can be threatening to me, so it's like walking a tightrope, to keep my personal life and domestic circumstances away from people at work.
- In:** Tell me, this kind of incident of which we spoke now: are you conscious of – when it actually happens for example – specific physical reactions; how you experience it physically?
- Ex:** No, not really, I only have emotional reactions; I don't show extreme physical reactions, no. Unless you can mention specific examples.
- In:** Well, I think I am referring to maybe the way in which you experience the emotion, in other words how it feels, you know, what type of feelings you for instance ... if you say "angry"; you experience rage; then I assume that it must, in a specific way ... you know, there's a specific way that you feel rage.
- Ex:** Yes, if I have to get completely technical, yes, I don't blush, I am not somebody who blushes, but I would, would, you know, somebody would be able to blush in such circumstances; I get a slight adrenalin rush, or an increased heart rate, because of rage, I mean just an immediate rage reaction immediately makes my heart beat faster. I would, in extreme cases, when an ar-

ontstaan waaraan ek nie kan deelneem nie, miskien begin sweet, maar nie drasties nie, nee, omdat ek myself gewoonlik uit sulke situasies uithaal fisies, of dit net aflag, en deur uiterlik dit af te lag, laat ek myself ontspan. Ek is nie 'n opvlieënde tipe persoon nie, so ek het nie vreeslike fisiese reaksies gewoonlik nie, nee.

On: OK, om net so half saam te vat, as jy die hele probleem wat jy daar ervaar moet definieer, en saamvat, hoe sou jy dit doen?

Ex: Uhh ... Ek ervaar my werkgewer se uitgesproke én onuitgesproke houding teenoor homoseksualiteit as bedreigend, en as erg inhiberend, en het gevolglik my uitleef van myself, aangepas om by my werksomstandighede in te skakel – sodat ek nie socially visible is as 'n gay mens nie, sodat ek socially aanvaarbaar is en professioneel aanvaarbaar is, op hulle terme. Want professioneel is ek beslis, in my aanslag, maar om te kan klim binne hulle opset moet ek vir hulle aanvaarbaar wees, en ek het my hele werks- en lewensbenadering, vir die helfte van my lewe – die helfte wat ek by die werk deurbring – het ek aangepas om in te skakel by 'n heteroseksuele uitkyk, of benadering tot die lewe. Wat natuurlik ... dit is inhiberend vir my. Dit maak dat ek nie die grappe kan maak wat ek normaalweg sou wou nie, dit maak dat ek nie die opmerkings kan maak teenoor mense wat ek normaalweg sou wou nie. Ek doen dit wel nou en dan, versigtig, maar, *baie* versigtig.

On: Ja, miskien om net hierby aan te sluit en dit 'n bietjie verder op te klaar: Wat sou jy sê is jou vrese in verband met die openbaarmaking van jou seksuele oriëntasie?

Ex: Hoofsaaklik dat dit my sou benadeel in my bevorderingsmoontlikhede. Dat ek sou beoordeel word op 'n vlak wat hoegenaamd niks met my werk verband hou nie, en dat ek benadeel sou word; dat my potensiaal en my talente oor die hoof gesien sal word, omdat my seksualiteit nie inpas by my base se breër plan vir hul maatskappy nie ... Dis my grootste vrees.

On: En glo jy dis gegrond?

Ex: Ek dink so ja, ek dink wel so. Die voorbeelde wat ek aangehaal het, is juis ter stawing daarvan, die fisiese voorbeelde is ter stawing van hoekom ek so verskriklik versigtig is. Want ek is baie ambisieus, en ek wil klim, and I have to do it playing the game according to their rules, and I did it.

On: Ja. Ja. *Exploited*, dit was fantasties. Is daar enigiets wat jy nog wil sê of byvoeg, in dié stadium?

Ex: Uhm ... waarskynlik nie.

On: As daar iets is: jy gaan mos nog vir my daai ander goeters faks, *jot* dit maar daarby ... en ja, ek het hierso nogal 'n hele klompie goed om aan te werk ...

Ex: Ja, jy moet maar werk, en as daar nog gate

gument develops in which I can't take part, perhaps start to sweat, but not drastically, no, because I normally physically remove myself from such situations, or just laugh it off, and by laughing about it externally, I make myself relax. I am not a short-tempered type of person, so I don't have strong physical reactions normally, no.

In: OK, just to sort of summarise, if you have to define the whole problem that you experience there, and summarize, how would you do it?

Ex: Er ... I experience my employer's stated and unstated attitude towards homosexuality as threatening, and as severely inhibiting, and have consequently adjusted my expression of myself to fit in with my work circumstances – so that I am not socially visible as a gay person, so that I am socially acceptable and professionally acceptable, on their terms. Because I am certainly professional, in my approach, but to be able to advance within their set-up I must be acceptable to them, and I have adjusted my whole work and life approach, for one half of my life – the half that I spend at work – to fit in with a heterosexual outlook, or approach to life. Which naturally ... it is inhibiting for me. It means that I can't make the jokes that I would normally have liked to, it means that I can't pass the remarks to people that I would normally have liked to. I do indeed do so now and then, cautiously, but, *very* cautiously.

In: Yes, and perhaps just to tie this in and clarify it a bit further: what would you say are your fears concerning revealing your sexual orientation?

Ex: Mainly that it would hamper my chances for promotion. That I will be judged on a level that has absolutely nothing to do with my work, and that it would do me harm: that my potential and talents will be overlooked, because my sexuality does not conform to the broader plan my bosses have for their company ... That is my biggest fear.

In: And do you believe they are grounded?

Ex: I think so, yes, I do indeed think so. The examples that I have quoted support it quite well, the physical examples substantiate why I am so terribly cautious. Because I am very ambitious, and I want to get ahead, and I have to do it playing the game according to their rules, and I did it.

In: Yes. Yes. *Exploited*, that was fantastic. Is there anything that you still want to say or add, at this stage?

Ex: Er ... probably not.

In: If there is anything: you are still going to fax me those other things, not so, just jot it down as well ... and yes, I've got quite a lot of things here to work on ...

Ex: Yes, do your work, and if more gaps develop,

ontstaan, moet jy maar vra. Ek het nie sulke sterk standpunte en goed nie, maar ek sal die vrae antwoord, enige tyd.

On: Uhm, nee ek dink jy het interessante goed gehad om te sê, en ek sal terugkom na jou toe met wat ook al hier uitkom.

Ex: OK sal ... jy't 'n ding gepos wat ek moet teken

On: Ja, dis nie dringend nie.

Ex: Ja, OK, ek sal dit pos, of jy kan dit kom kry, as jy dalk gaan opkom nou.

On: O ja ... ja, ek sal jou laat weet. Ek waardeer dit ontsettend baie hoor, al jou tyd en alles.

Ex: Dis 'n plesier, ek hoop dit kan help.

On: Dit gaan baie help!

[Later is die volgende vraag telefonies gestel:]

On: Hoekom bedank jy nie by jou werk en gaan soek elders werk nie?

Ex: Want my seksualiteit en die werk se houding daarteenoor is nie my eerste prioriteit nie. Werksbevrediging en intellektuele stimulasie en geldelike vergoeding is my eerste prioriteit. Ek kan nie 'n vergelykbare werksbevrediging- en vergoedingspakket kry by 'n ander publikasie in my taal nie. Ek is hooked op hoofstroom-journalistiek. En ek word baie goed vergoed daarvoor.

just ask. I don't have such strong views and things, but I will answer the questions, any time.

In: Er, no I think you had interesting things to say, and I will come back to you with whatever comes out of this.

Ex: OK will ... you posted something I have to sign

In: Yes, it's not urgent.

Ex: Yes, OK, I will post it back, or you can come and fetch it, if perhaps you are coming up.

In: Oh yes ... yes, I will let you know. I appreciate it very much, you know, all your time and everything.

Ex: It's a pleasure; I hope it can help.

In: It will help a lot!

[Later, the following question was asked telephonically:]

In: Why don't you resign from your job and find a job somewhere else?

Ex: Because my sexuality and the work's attitude towards my sexuality are not my first priorities. Job satisfaction and intellectual stimulation and money are my first priorities. I can't get a comparable package of job satisfaction and remuneration at another publication in my language. I'm hooked on mainstream journalism. And I get paid well for it.

3.2.3 Validation measures for translations

In the case of the Afrikaans-speaking subject, the translation was presented to a bilingual psychology masters student for validation, and a more accurate translation was arrived at through dialogue. The translation process, surprisingly, was an aid rather than an obstacle to interpretation, since it required the consideration of different possible meanings.

Nevertheless, the spoken nature of the interview complicated translation considerably, since spoken language often includes idiosyncratic elements. In order to remain close to the original it was essential to retain a sense of the idiosyncrasies. However, to do this by direct translation would have resulted in unidiomatic English. In contrast, *recreating* idiosyncrasy in an idiom closer to English carried the risk of imposing on the data. The final translation can be described as a collection of compromises, including deliberate language errors that reflect those of the original. Where it was felt that important nuances were lost, explanations were inserted in the translation.

3.2.4 Transcript of 1996 interview

Interviewer: I'm gonna ask you a lot of the same questions that I asked you last time, because part of what I'm doing is to trying to see what happens over a period of time – if things change, if they stay the same – and why.

Exploited: In all honesty I can't really remember everything that was asked or answered last time, so I would be interested too!

In: [laughter] Ja. It will work like last time – I will give you the stuff back to check if you agree and then if there's anything you want to edit, that's

fine. Before we go on: you used a pseudonym last time. I don't know if you recall what it was?

Ex: I recall the pseudonym being used, but I can't remember what it was, no.

In: You called yourself Exploited.

Ex: Oh! [laughter] I actually do feel exactly the same right now, so that's fine.

In: You feel the same?

Ex: Ja, I felt better a while ago ... [laughter] ...

In: So does that still relate to the work situation?

Ex: Yes, it does indeed.

- In: It's got something to do with the recent increases [mentioned before interview]?
- Ex: Indeed it has, and the lack of communication, which is the most frustrating thing I bump into.
- In: Last time I asked you some questions about how you saw yourself and felt about various things. I want to do that again. First of all, how would you label yourself, if you had to choose a word to describe yourself in terms of your sexual orientation?
- Ex: I'm most certainly *gay* or *lesbian*. I mean, I've reclaimed the use of the word *lesbian* and feel totally comfortable with it, so I have no problem calling myself lesbian.
- In: You say reclaim. What happened?
- Ex: I grew up in an environment where the term was fairly negative. It had connotations that I did not associate with – butch connotations, dykey connotations. I have this very strong and positive feeling about femininity and I've never wanted to be associated with anything butch or unfeminine, which is why I avoided the use of the word – I did sometimes use it, but in a negative way. I've since grown out of that. I've grown into a whole group of ... or my friends have grown with me into a group of thirty-something, settled, feminine lesbians, and we're happy to call ourselves lesbians. Homosexual women that I come into contact with who are not comfortable with the word ... I must rephrase that: when I do come into contact with women who are not comfortable with the word, I have long and interesting conversations with them to try and convince them to reclaim the word and make it theirs, and maybe then in that way make a distinction between the terms *gay* and *lesbian*. It makes it less complicated.
- In: Why do you think it is important for them to reclaim the word?
- Ex: Oh! To get a sense of self-pride. There's a lot of pride involved in gay marches and gay *men* are proud of what they do. Why should gay women not have a specific umbrella term under which they can group themselves and be a force to be reckoned with and to feel good about? And I think the word *lesbian* is cool.
- In: So, you feel that the word *gay* describes more the gay men?
- Ex: I think it does, internationally. Although I ... in publications the word *gay* or *gays* is used as an umbrella term for all homosexuals, I think, and with that I have no problem.
- In: You mentioned a butch, dykey kind of aspect of *lesbian* – does that still bother you?
- Ex: Not *as* much, no. I've moved a little way in that sense; you might call it that I've grown. I do not discriminate as much. I've also moved into a new relationship in which tolerance of others has a high premium, which probably opened my mind as well to accepting more very butch people into my life – that's absolutely fine. I've come to regard them – many of them – as really kosher people.
- In: So, although that's not something that you feel entirely comfortable with ...
- Ex: I'll tell you what I'm not comfortable with in terms of butch. It's the social visibility. I operate, as we all do, in a strictly heterosexual environment, and I love the idea of playing the game without them knowing. Only the select few know. I'm happy with only the select few knowing that I'm lesbian. And really butch people burst that bubble for me, socially, when they ... when I'm seen with them. And that is a bit of a problem for me. I like the sense of secrecy. Butch people just don't have that finer nuance of secrecy.¹⁷
- In: What is it that you like about this sense of secrecy?
- Ex: Being more subtle gives me much more power. It gives me an insight into both worlds, because I'm immediately regarded as being straight (when I dress and behave in a feminine manner) so I'm allowed into that world; there's no barrier, there's no social barrier, and I know what I know coming from the gay world, so I have the best of both worlds, and I don't like the idea of being discriminated against because someone can suddenly see or somebody saw me somewhere with a whole bunch of *really* dykey people or *really* socially distinguishable gay people. That would immediately put a barrier to my access to the straight world, and I need that info.
- In: So being identified as gay or lesbian, you feel that that does bring up the possibility of discrimination?
- Ex: Oh yes of course, I definitely think so. In group form, yes. One-on-one, people are fascinated, and that's fine. But there's a lot of danger in that. I mean they ignore the fact that they were fascinated on a one-on-one basis when they get into a group with heterosexuals. They make scathing remarks and become aggressive.
- In: So you're saying that you might meet somebody individually and it becomes known to them that you're lesbian, and it seems to be fine, but then later on you get negative fall-out from it?
- Ex: Yes, and in saying that I'm referring *far* more to my work environment than to my social envi-

¹⁷ Addendum, September 1997: *Exploited* was in agreement with the transcript of this interview, which was used for the purposes of this study. However, a year later she added the following comments with regard to her views about being associated with "butch" lesbians: "I think the discrimination I applied merely for social acceptance and "safety" or secrecy no longer applies. I don't think it – I actually realize my former opinion was extremely bigoted and irritating. I now believe in socializing with whomever I please, wherever. A take-it-or-leave-it/in-your-face sort of thing in terms of society's acceptance.

- ronment. I've not really come across much of that in my social environment. And the people who would behave in that manner socially I would just disregard. I mean if someone can't cope with my sexuality, I'd disregard them. I'm mostly referring to professionalism ... or my professional working role.
- In: So the kind of ambiguity that you bring in about your sexuality – does that occur more at work than in the social sense?
- Ex: Yes. Yes. No, most certainly. I think socially there's no question about whether I'm gay or straight. I have a very affectionate relationship, which means that I'm ... whenever we're together anywhere, we are usually physically together – like holding hands or hugging each other, and I have no qualms with that. I'm referring to ... definitely more to the work environment than to social. In my social world I'm fine.
- In: So what happens if – in a social interaction – you are with more kind of butch women, and you're seen with them? Does that bother you, or is it only if this happens in a setting where colleagues may be involved?
- Ex: Mostly the latter. I don't discriminate socially when I know that there's no fear of any outside influence coming in or someone walking in on us or ... someone seeing me and going back to work and *skinning* about it. I have no hesitation to associate and socialise with people who are clearly gay – clearly lesbian.¹⁸
- In: But Cape Town is quite a small place, and I wonder how often you can really feel that there isn't that risk, outside?
- Ex: Probably very seldom. Ja ... the situation I'm sketching is probably more in my mind than in practice. I would think that very few people who have some kind of contact with me would have any doubts that I'm gay, because word spreads very fast. And all my superiors at work have young children – I mean young as in twenties – who are ... most of them are colleagues of mine, and all of them have ears and eyes, eh? [laughter] And all of them go home and tell their parents. So I actually have no doubt that everyone knows. But I definitely confuse them, as I recall having said last time, the confusion factor, I still have that on my side! [laughter] ... because what they hear is not what they see and what they get!
- In: Ja. So you say all your superiors know – you're almost sure they know. But does this ever get acknowledged in the work setting?
- Ex: No. No, it increasingly gets acknowledged in the way that ... or their way of acknowledging it is increasingly expressed ... calling me a feminist – which I violently oppose, because they don't understand what feminism is about. I don't even know what it is about, and I want them to actually call a spade a spade. If ever it comes up ... whenever a feminist issue would come up, and they ... they'd refer to me and say, "Well, you're a feminist, so we expected you to oppose this or that." I immediately correct them. My usual reply is to say I'm most certainly not a feminist. And then I just leave it at that. I leave a *wide* open gap of silence, so that they can sort it out for themselves – "Well, she's not a feminist, she doesn't really like men – she keeps saying negative things about men – then maybe she's a lesbian ... Oh my God!" You know?
- In: Ja, so on the one hand you actually want them to figure it out, but you're also not stating it explicitly.
- Ex: I'm not going to state it to my disadvantage, but if they figure it out, then they have to cope with it. Then they've put it on their own plate. But if I sort of bombard them with it and walk in and give them the info, then I might ... it might actually boomerang on me, which I don't necessarily want to happen.
- In: So what is it about them knowing kind of implicitly, as opposed to it being said explicitly, that makes the former safer for you? Is it not dangerous also if they know implicitly?
- Ex: It might very well be, I wouldn't know. It's all such an abstraction that I would never know. How would anyone ever know if there was a silent form of discrimination going on? I don't know. It's my only ... it's all I *have* ... the silence and the secrecy about my sexuality is the only means of protection that I have. I definitely have no doubt that if I were to come out loud and clear, that it would not go down well. But I would still ... although I cannot be fired, obviously ... but there would be implicit little jabs and lack of promotion, and lack of trust and lack of being one of the group, which I don't really want to risk. So I'm just ... I prefer to live and be and work, without putting a label on my forehead that says I'm a lesbian. That shouldn't actually be at play and I'm not hiding it the whole time, but I'm just not carrying it on my sleeve. Merely for protection ... because I think that it would be safer.
- In: Ja ... Where does this feeling fit on the continuum from suspicion to being certain that it's a sure fact that you will be discriminated against in terms of promotion? How likely do you think it is, if they were to know explicitly?
- Ex: That's a very, very difficult question to answer because I have no example of someone having come *out* within my company and being discriminated against. Not in a senior position. There are two cases of juniors, both being male and both being quite camp and visibly gay ... of both not being promoted, not ever since they've started working there, which is between two and four years that they've been there and they're both good workers. And they have both been

¹⁸ See footnote 17.

called in by the personnel manager who asked them not to dress as campy and not to walk as campy ...

In: You're joking!

Ex: I'm speaking the truth – being *Gavin* and *Bennie*. They were both told to tighten up their wrists and – *Gavin* specifically – not to dress as outrageously. In other words, "You don't adhere to company policy, you don't look the way we want you to, or behave the way we would like to portray ourselves to the world, so clean up your act!" But there's no question of that ever being put to me, because my act is clean, and I dress correctly, and I behave absolutely impeccably. So it's really difficult to answer that. They have never been confronted by a woman who's come out. But my one superior is obviously gay. My one female superior, she's ... dykey gay, and she has been promoted. She's got an extensive amount of talent. She has been promoted, but now the difficult factor is: I don't know if she would have been promoted further with the loads of talents that she has, had she adhered more to company policy in terms of behaviour and dress and femininity. It's *really* difficult, I'm playing a part for which I've not read the script, and there is not a script available in my company. So I'm not playing the feminine ... the girlie part because I think that's the way that it should be – it's coming absolutely naturally for me. I'm not forcing myself out of a dykey predisposition into a feminine predisposition. I'm merely breaking the ground that is ahead of me naturally. I can't answer that. We don't have the luxury of the alternative, you know. If I had a colleague who was sort of on the same level as I who came out, I would love to see what happened.

In: I'm just wondering: how camp were these people, how camp was their dress?

Ex: The one that was definitely pointed out as being dressed too camp, I never had a problem with. He dressed fairly fashionably. He would wear linen suits in lovely colours – not the regular black suit or khaki suits you know, or khaki pair of pants – and lovely bright shirts and ... But he *was* a bit of a fairy, or he *is*, still. He's just like really ... he checks the way he walks now, but he was – both of them are – a bit flappy, they're not your average straight-looking homosexual, they are definite queens. Which they should have the freedom as far as I'm concerned to live out, but not *too* excessively. I mean, I can see that that could be a problem in any situation. You have to ... they have to confront people from all walks of life in journalism and people could be offended.

In: Are these both reporters?

Ex: Both reporters, yes. Who have to go out and dig out stories.

In: So they've actually changed after this?

Ex: They've cleaned up their act slightly, yes, and they are both doing well, but as far as promotion goes, I really don't think that they stand a chance. We have another *wonderful* situation – actually two – that have cropped up, of two totally straight-looking men on the editorial staff, who have come out to me, but who are *not* known to the bosses, and both of them are *highly* talented, and I've told both of them, "Just for the sake of checking what happens, please don't come out ... don't!" (I mean in terms of our superiors) "don't let on that you're gay, and let's see how far you're going to go." Because both of them, as far as I'm concerned, especially the one, can go right to the top. He has got our superiors like around his little finger. He's *so* talented. And he charms males, females, gay and straight, he's like really doing well.

In: So how did they respond to you saying that?

Ex: They're both very young – or in terms of the company set-up they're still fairly inexperienced and they just both listened. They took the advice to heart. Whether it's gonna work, no one would know, you know. Whether they're gonna be able to keep themselves in the closet as far as the work set-up goes, I'm not sure, no one would know. Things happen in life. And then we'll definitely handle it when we get there. But that would be most interesting, because we have the two poles now, we definitely have the camp ones and they're not making it, and the other two are so far making it – and they're not out.

In: And you don't think it would have been – possibly – a worthwhile experiment to see what would happen if these guys came out?

Ex: Very dangerous experiment, eh? Because they're going to make it – they're going to make it anyway. Just to refer back to specifically the one person who's still in the closet, whom I've just referred to. His opinion is held in such high regard. His political opinion ... and the beat, his field of specialisation, is of such importance at the moment in South Africa, and he's won such wide acknowledgement and awards for the coverage that he's given this specific beat, that I'm absolutely positive that the whole set-up at work would be thrown into disarray if he were to come out now. They would *suddenly* – and I'm *absolutely* sure of this – not think that they can trust him any more. They would suddenly not hold him in such high regard as they do, because he would be labelled as a moffie. "And how can you trust anything that a moffie says? He's prejudiced," you know? Whereas if he stayed in the closet, he could get all that information siphoned through anyway, and he could really be an opinion maker, which he is, and not be discriminated against. So I will most certainly not encourage him to come out. Not in the situation we're in. And that would probably be the situation anywhere, I'm sure.

In: So, although you can't be sure of what the risks of coming out are, it seems like you tend to view them as towards the higher side?

Ex: Of coming out, yes, I do.

In: That applies to you as well as to them?

Ex: Yes. Although I'm less fearful for myself, because I have now had the opportunity to prove myself. I've been given the opportunities within the company and I've gone with them. I've really done the job and I've done it well, I think. So I'm less fearful of being caught out, as it were, because I don't think that there's a big difference between where I am now and where I would be if I were caught out.

In: Do situations arise where there's a possibility that this issue is gonna come up in a way that's gonna expose you? Does it still happen occasionally?

Ex: It still does. I still have the problems of terminology coming up which I would find offensive. I've actually had the breakthrough of going to my editor and insisting that the newspaper start getting with it and start using the word *gay* in the headlines and not *homos*, as they insisted.¹⁹

In: Can you tell me about that meeting?

Ex: Ja. I first checked with our language editor, who works in my office. Just to make sure that I had her backing, linguistically, that she was happy with the use of the term, and that she also knew that was the word that was in use in the world, and she actually did support me in that. And once I had that, I went to my editor and said to him that although they insist on us using the word *homos*, I would like to make out a strong argument for the use of the word *gay*. I asked him whether we could please make use of the word *gay* rather than *homos*, because *homos* was an offensive word, and it was archaic and I could no longer associate myself with the use of it. And I have a responsibility to the readers and we most certainly have homosexual readers. And he acknowledged the fact and he said, "Fine. We can use the word in headlines, but rather make use of the word *homosexuals* and *lesbians* in copy, because that is the right terminology and we do have the space in copy. Which I also acceded to. We have since ... I have since made more ... made use of the word *gay* in copy, freely, and I've not been called in, or called on the red carpet, so I'm taking the chance, but I wouldn't have a problem were they to call me in, because the word *gay* is foreign to my language. It's foreign to Afrikaans, so if they had a severe problem, I would refer back ... I would go back to *homosexual* and *lesbian*. It's not a problem.

In: Do you think the objections against the word *gay* is that it's got too many positive connotations, or is it just because it's English, or ...

Ex: I would ... I can actually with a clear conscience say that I think it's 99% because it's English, and because the English word itself is a totally ridiculous word. You know, the term *gay* has very little to do with being homosexual. I know very many depressed homosexuals! [laughter] So it's actually a ridiculous word. I just wish there were a better word. I don't think that it's because it's positive. No, no. I've actually had discussions about this with the one possibly closeted senior that we have – totally closeted. I went and asked him about it specifically to put him in a difficult spot [interviewer laughs], and he gave me this whole *spiel* of the word being foreign to Afrikaans and also being a ridiculous choice of word in the English language, which I had to acknowledge.

In: But when you offered the argument that the word is offensive to gay people – *homos* – was that accepted or ...?

Ex: It wasn't questioned. It wasn't questioned at all. It was not brought in.

In: Wasn't responded to?

Ex: Ja, and the fact that I was speaking out of my own world as a homosexual was not brought into play at all. It was not suspected.

In: How did you feel in that meeting? What was it like to bring up this issue?

Ex: I was *far* more relaxed about the issue. And I was far more prepared to actually take it to task and have a whole academic debate about it, than I would have been a while ago, and than I was probably when I last spoke to you. I'm *far* more relaxed, I feel less threatened, *purely* because of the seniority that I've reached in the last year or two and my level of ... inner security. I don't feel threatened as a lesbian in the company. I'm still – and probably far more – threatened as a woman. Because I'm now coming into a class and level of seniority where I am *really* a threat to them. And they are really fearful of promoting me further than I am now. So my biggest fights now are not fights fought out of fear of being discriminated against as a gay person – be it woman or man – but being discriminated against as a woman.

In: Why is that such a big issue to them?

Ex: Purely because there's no example. There's no example ahead of me of a woman having been given an opportunity higher than where I am now, and having taken it and like really made a success of the job. They have not offered the position ... or a more senior position to a woman ahead of me. So they don't trust women.

In: Would you say that the situation as far as that is concerned has remained fairly stable since we last spoke?

¹⁹ Addendum, September 1997: I have gained so in confidence, that I always speak up now. Great diplomacy if I can help it, but I speak my mind. And it matters. (Usually.)

- Ex:* Fairly unchanged. There's been a little bit of a gap in that they offered me a more senior position, but out of town. I was offered a position in Port Elizabeth, which I politely said I'd go and think about. I immediately knew I wouldn't take it. And then I came back to them and said, "No thank you, but I appreciate the gesture." They then offered it to another woman who took it, but they offered it to a woman *far* my senior, and she was so foolish and took it. I said no thank you, because my predecessor in that position was far my junior – being a male, and I said, "I'm offended that you're offering me the position to follow in someone's footsteps who's far my junior, so no thank you. I shall remain where I am until you've offered me something which is to my liking and to my stature," if I may call it that. And I really drove the point home, and they said, "Thank you, we accept that, and we regard you as being the first refusal, so always remember that." But then they offered it to this very senior woman and she took the post. So they regard women as being balls that they can kick around. Whether they're being discriminated against, or not, the women take the positions, which is really a disappointment. In this specific case, this woman has twenty years experience, she's following the footsteps of a young man who had five years experience. I mean, Christ, you know, it should never have happened.
- In:* When you say there's been a slight change in the sense that you've been offered this position, do you feel that the attitude generally in the office and in the company towards women has changed lately, or not?
- Ex:* My answer would be fairly ambiguous. There's been some window dressing, in other words superficial attitude changes, but in practice, in the last two years, there has been just such a surge of middle-order women coming into ... well, not coming into the company, just moving up ... they're not being promoted, they've just become so powerful, they've really become the cornerstones of the infrastructure, and this has actually been said. This has been acknowledged by my editor – informally and formally – in the sense that he's actually praised it as ... Some woman complained about something and women not being promoted somewhere, and he said, "What are you complaining about? The whole company is being run by women! My whole organisation is being run by women!" So they're acknowledging it.
- In:* But it sounds as if they are not happy about it?
- Ex:* They're not entirely happy about the fact, and they're not giving them the positions. In practice, I can see that women are really going far. Whenever I have to refer people to someone else, or I have to phone someone to get information, I don't think of which woman to phone, but when I phone specifically and I need specific information, it's usually one of the hard-working and responsible people I phone, obviously. They are really running the infrastructure of the newspaper. They are points of reference to everyone, from junior to senior, so they are not going to be able to keep those women down, they're going to have to acknowledge that they do the job as well as – if not better than – a man.
- In:* And more generally, the atmosphere and attitudes, the culture, and also in relation specifically to homosexuality – how would you describe it now?
- Ex:* It's still alarmingly conservative, still very sexist. They still regard women in as little clothing as possible as being the front page pic and they still regard the macho image of the male as being the norm, or the thing to strive for. The sensitive male is still not being held in high regard, although more and more sensitive males are beginning to work there, or are actually making their mark, whether they are gay or straight. The attitude towards homosexuality, and I think in the sense of the more socially visible male homosexual, has not changed much. And all these problems are not gonna be solved in a couple of years, it's gonna be a generation. I'm absolutely sure. If these people who are there now, the gay people who are there now, who are actually coming into their own, becoming more and more important to the structure of the newspaper, if they *stay*, if they follow through and they *stay*, and they become the next generation of middle management, and top management, we are going to start seeing some attitude change. I don't see a sudden appointment of two hundred gay people in the staff, but we're gonna see a sensitivity, an attitude change, a tolerance that I ascribe to homosexual people, which is not there at the moment. It is *siphoning* in, and I am most certainly still doing my bit, *every day* that I am there, I am trying, *carefully*, to prod them into sensitivity and tolerance – of racial issues, sexual issues, whatever – and more and more gay people coming into the position where I am almost certainly will make things change. But in practice very little has happened. Their minds might have opened up slightly, but they, the senior staff, have probably had more to think about in the last three years than they've ever had to cope with. They've had to carry stories on human rights and gay issues and the Constitution, which they've never done, and abortion ... whatever. So it's like the process has started, but it still has a long way to go.
- In:* Well, I want us to talk a bit about the issue of the Constitution and the freedoms that are being offered by it, particularly in as far as gay people's rights are protected. Do you think that has had any effect on the environment that you're working in?

- Ex:* It's not had much of an impact on the working environment, no, because they don't feel threatened, they run the company as it should be run, soundly and profitably. As far as discrimination goes ...
- In:* You're saying that with irony?
- Ex:* I'm saying that sarcastically. As far as discrimination goes, no-one's ever going been able to pinpoint that it's being done. So they are absolutely fine. Personally, I've had a surge of energy put into me by the Constitution. I suddenly feel that someone is out there looking after me. I *do* know that in practice I will never be able to take my case up on the grounds of the Constitution. There should however be the possibility of bringing in such a case, but I will have no future within this company if I win such a case. I will be sidelined. I will be exploited and not be promoted. I would only be shooting myself in the knee. So in practice, for homosexuals in the company, not much has changed, although we all feel safer, at least we have the Constitution behind us, so thank heavens for that. I feel that it does make a difference.
- In:* Can you say more about that? How does it feel "safer" when you are definitely not going to be able to take any steps?
- Ex:* Just in terms of my own personal space. I know exactly how much I can tolerate, and should that ever be overstepped, should I ever *really* feel discriminated against in a hurtful manner, should anyone say anything really scathing to me about my sexuality in my working context, I would have the freedom to say to them, "You are not allowed to say that to me. I will take you to court if you ever repeat that," or "I am gonna take you to court right now!" which is a freedom and an inner strength which I have never before had the power to express, thanks to the Constitution. In the past I had to lie down and take whatever was said to me. Not that it has happened. All of us have had to ... have worked and lived knowing that anything can be said at any time which can be *really* cripplingly hurtful and we cannot stand up for ourselves. That has changed. Because we can. I am not fearful of going into situations and going to meetings and going to social gatherings with my colleagues and not being sure what they're going to say or of walking into a trap. I am not fearful of that any more, because I know I have the power of the Constitution behind me.
- In:* So while there's still a level of hesitancy to do anything that will explicitly identify you as lesbian ... are you saying that if something had to happen to upset you, you would do it?
- Ex:* No, I would have the power to. Whether I would necessarily is another matter. What I'm saying is that the inner knowledge that I actually do have the option now of calling out and saying, "No!"
- In:* Are you implying that your way of being has been validated as a legitimate way of being?
- Ex:* That's absolutely correct, yes.
- In:* But you are not sure that you would actually confront people on that, in practice?
- Ex:* No. I'm virtually sure that I wouldn't. But the difference to me comes in what happens spiritually. I would not feel as raped as I have. And I actually don't feel as exploited and raped as I have in the past, because I now have the option, at least, of saying, "No, I don't like what you are saying." And at least people are more sensitive and careful about what they say and what they do, because they know there's the Constitution.
- In:* What makes you say that?
- Ex:* Well, I am not referring to any specific situation or discussion that I've had, but just what I pick up amongst colleagues – the tolerance that I've picked up amongst colleagues. Just the general vibe is definitely more tolerant and people say much easier than they did in the past ... they object much sooner to jokes, to sexually or racially discriminatory jokes. I have much more freedom to, when someone starts telling a joke and I see or sense that the joke is taking a direction I don't really want to go, I stop them. I have much more of a say in what goes into my ears.
- In:* What is it that you say?
- Ex:* I say, "I know that I am going to be offended by what you say, so please don't tell me the joke, I'm not going to laugh." And I say that the whole time, and people actually stop telling the jokes.
- In:* Have there lately been any of these incidents where there has been reference to homosexuality?
- Ex:* Not really, I must say, it hasn't come up. I've not had any interesting stories and jokes about homosexuals come up. Martina Navratilova has disappeared off the tennis scene, so anything about her marriages and divorces ... interesting trials ... nothing like that has come up. The entertainment value of gay and lesbian relationships has definitely fallen by the wayside over the last year or two. Nothing strange has happened that I have been ashamed to put into the newspaper.
- In:* You must also have had some coverage of the whole debate around the Constitution and gay and lesbian rights – how was that handled?
- Ex:* I must say, so far strictly professional. They've sent out senior political staff members to cover debates on constitutional rights. They've not given excessive coverage to gay rights, not at all, they've taken note and it's been very factual stories. I could not fault them, and I check everything and if I find anything obviously offensive, I would remove it. But I've very often – when I do come across just a little remark in a story and find it sexually offensive – I do contact the writer of the story, at home, or wher-

ever, and say that "I've removed this, I would suggest that you think about it." Actually there is ... I phoned Atlanta, our one reporter in Atlanta, who wrote us a story about the traffic chaos, and how the media had been taken on a wild-goose chase in a bus that had been late, to start with, and to make things worse, it was "an inexperienced *female* driver" who took them on this ride to hell. Which I obviously removed and said it was an inexperienced driver. And I then phoned him in Atlanta and said to him that I find that offensive, and he would not have pointed it out if it were a man. I just said that to him, I said it very diplomatically, "Would you have pointed it out if it were a man?" and he said no. He also said to me, "The other guys here warned me that I was going to be in trouble about that sentence, and they said that you would be upset, and I didn't listen to them, so I apologise," which I found wonderful. And he has since been a bit more careful. We also have had an interesting – just as far as sexual discrimination and sex objects and things go – had an interesting situation where our Wimbledon representative wrote a story about the world's two sexiest female tennis players tackling each other on court, being the South African Amanda Coetzer and the Dutch Number 1, both being blonde and blue-eyed, in my opinion both fairly close to being butch, and I'm sure they are both lesbian. There was this whole *sexy* story about these two blonde chicks tackling each other on the court. And that made the front page! It was the lead, the main photograph as well. And there was a lot of opposition, from – I wasn't there that evening, I was quite shocked when I saw the front page the next day, I would not have allowed it, honestly – there was a lot of opposition, it has actually been put up a pin board, you know, the picture and the story. I don't know if you saw it?

In: No.

Ex: Big red-pen inscription, saying ... Oh, sorry, the story was first rewritten, by whoever was so upset, and the names were replaced by Wayne Ferreira and another male tennis player, saying how sexy they were and how tanned their bodies were and blue-eyed and blah, blah, blah, and that was printed out and put up. And there was an inscription that read, "Would this have made the front page? NO! Because Wayne Ferreira is too darn ugly!" and "NO! Because the other guy has too many freckles, of course it would not have made the front page" and then right next to it was put up the story that did make the front page with this big red inscription, saying "Well, this one *did* make the front page. Why?" And that I found very interesting, because not even I had put it up! [laughter] And the other interesting thing is that the editor, two days after it went up, walked past and stood there and read this,

and it must have made some impression – that there are people who are not happy with the slant, the sexist slant that is still very prevalent. It is archaic.

In: Have there recently been any situations where you felt anxious around the topic of homosexuality generally or your sexual orientation specifically?

Ex: Well, one instance that does come to mind, where I felt a bit uncomfortable, was when my partner wrote a feature for my newspaper, which was accepted. For it to be accepted, for it to actually reach them, I had to take it to the editor of that specific page and submit it to him and I immediately was confronted in my inner being as to what to say when I gave this to him, how to explain to him the relationship between me and the author of this feature's article, because I would prefer to call her "my partner", and I have to keep referring to her as "my house-mate". "The other half of my household" is a term that I have started using to make it little less of a denial. But that is becoming an increasing problem because I am definitely in a stable, possibly life-long relationship, in a marriage, more so than I have ever felt with anyone in my life, and I'm increasingly coming into difficulty with my reference to her. The next thing that is probably gonna come up in the next two to five years is I'm gonna go for one of our overseas posts, where there have only been males up to now and they've always had the luxury of taking their entire family with them on company costs. And should I get that position, which I'm sure if I really went for it, I would, I most certainly would insist on taking my partner with me. That is gonna be the big and interesting ground-breaker. Because I would then personally come out fully, and I would take them to task. And they are going to be in a difficult situation, because we're not married – whether it is a gay marriage or a straight marriage. So they're not actually gonna have anything on paper to allow me to take an unmarried partner with me, because they're gonna be digging themselves a great big hole. That's what they're gonna say and I can see that's coming. If they let an unmarried partner go along, they're going to have to do it with heterosexuals as well. And that would bring the next issue up: am I going to get married, because the Constitution allows me to? And my partner most certainly wants to, so we are heading for interesting times in my company and I'm not fearful of going ahead in the company. The time is definitely near for me to start tackling the issue.

In: That incident that you mentioned, the one with the article, how did it actually make you feel?

Ex: It upset me. It most certainly did. I do feel incredibly guilty that I deny my relationship and I must keep stating that it is a new situation, I've

never – although I have been in long, steady, lesbian relationships – I’ve never felt the loyalty towards my partner, or towards my relationship that I do now. In the past I was happy to refer to my partner as my housemate. Now, it jars ... it’s a jarring note to refer to her as my housemate, which she’s not. And it did most certainly upset me, I did feel guilty and I felt ... [sigh] ... I’m trying to describe what went through my mind when I stood there ... I felt ... dishonest about myself and dishonest to the cause of being gay. More so than I’ve felt in a long time, because I had spent a lot of time thinking about the issue, and I regret that, I regret having to feel that, I regret having to refer to her as my partner. This often comes up in my office, obviously. It’s less stressful, but which also bothers me, time and again: now half of my colleagues in my office know, and I feel guilty when I refer to her as my housemate, to their ears, you know, when I’m speaking to other people, because they all know, and what do they think, how do they regard my relationship, in what esteem do they hold us, as a couple, if I refer to her as my housemate? And I don’t have an answer to that quite yet. Because I have people from all walks of life, socially and intellectually, in my office and they most certainly won’t all cope with the idea of me being in a lesbian marriage, so I cannot just forge ahead and say, “Well, she is my lesbian lover, *en fok dit*.” I have to be sensitive. So I’m still sort of getting my way around – I don’t foresee having the freedom in the foreseeable future of referring to her as my lover in public.

In: How do you feel in terms of your closeness to your colleagues in the office? If they don’t know about your relationship, does that affect in any way your relationship with them?

Ex: It does in the sense that it affects my self-esteem. The people who don’t have any idea of the amazing relationship that I’m in would, probably, regard me as being single, which I would regard as being a secondary citizen, maybe a less – from their point of view – so it affects my self-esteem in that sense, that they would think that I’m single and have not been able to find anyone that I love, or who can love me, whereas that is not the case at all. And I can’t rectify the situation, I can’t tell them, “You’re actually making a grave mistake, I’m very happily married and I’m having a very successful relationship.” So there’s obviously a failure, there’s a communication barrier between some of my colleagues and myself. To my own detriment, I think. At the moment there’s not much I can do about it. I can’t really just barge in and tell them. So it certainly affects me in the sense of honesty. I don’t think that people in an office, colleagues, have to know absolutely everything about each other’s bedside manners – that I must say as well. I’ve never allowed each

and everyone who works with me into my personal space. It’s always been a matter of choice, whether they were gay or straight. People with whom I clicked have been allowed into my life. So that situation has always been in my life and probably arises in anyone’s life. It’s not exclusive to being gay, but it does make it more difficult when you’re gay, because you can’t just to refer to your lover in passing – it’s an issue.

In: So I imagine that bringing her to the office party is not an option?

Ex: That’s an interesting one, because I regard it as being an option.

In: Oh?

Ex: Yes. We’re sort of nearing the end of the year and there’s most certainly going to be an option – I will not hesitate to take her. And should we decide for some reason not to go as partners, we will go as partners of gay male colleagues. She will go as partner of one of my gay colleagues and I will take his boyfriend as my partner, so that we will be together. But that will be a cop-out, I prefer not to do that. I prefer to either go with her or go alone, as I have done in the past, which is definitely a statement. Because the way I dress and the way I operate at work, my bosses must know that I’m not single. I think that I portray an image of being sexually in contact with myself and with the world, and that is not the way a single person operates, so they must know that there’s somebody. So by going alone, I am making a statement – it’s not a complete cop-out. By going with a gay male I think I’m taking the easy way out. But I wouldn’t have done this two years ago, I wouldn’t have been as ... cocky, if I can call it that, as to consider taking my girlfriend with me to an office party. I’ve changed in that sense.

In: How and why?

Ex: Mostly because of what I have referred to already: my sense of security within the company, my sense of knowing that I can’t just be disregarded any more. Not in practice and not intellectually. I mean I know that they need me, so I feel much more secure. I have more leeway to actually force their minds open, although I still do it very carefully and diplomatically. Otherwise I’m just gonna cause more harm to the cause of being homosexual, than I would do it any good. It’s a matter of timing.

In: With the news coverage lately, is there a greater awareness amongst colleagues, and elsewhere in the organisation, of gays and lesbians as something that exists?

Ex: As an entity, yes. But as an oddity, it still remains. The evenings that I’ve not been at work, I’ve seen in the paper the next day the word *homosexual* and *lesbian* in italics or in inverted commas, as if they’re something from outer space, which I would not have allowed, had I been there. But, in other words, the phrases are

being thrown around far more – granted – but they're not coming home yet. The straight people are not taking note of the fact that they're actually *surrounded* by homosexuals. Every garden grows one – they're not coming to grips with that yet. Gay people still remain something far out. And when pictures of gay marches arrive at my desk, they're of the ... not of the average, straight-looking homosexuals in the march, they're of the oddest odds in the march, they're of the raving queens, the dykes-on-bikes, you know, they're always of the peripheral gay people, which means they ... it has not really hit home yet. But at least we've broken the barrier of words being used, references being made. It makes it easier for me to sort of slip in things here and there and to point out to people not to use a certain phrase in a certain context, because it's gonna cause an upset to the reader, to the possibly gay reader. It makes it easier for me because it is becoming more and more accessible, the phrases and the terminology. But no, it's actually still a bit far for them, they really don't realise that there are people around who might be gay.

In: Just for the record, if you don't mind – and you can phrase this with a certain degree of vagueness so that it does not prejudice confidentiality – where do fit into your organisation?

Ex: I'm the head of the largest editorial set-up within my newspaper. The editorial staff are divided in several different departments, such as the arts desk, sports and news. The department that I run is the largest. I have a staff of 19, varying in age from 21 to 49. And up until very recently also ranging in terms of religion from total agnostic to strictly Muslim and from very conservatively heterosexual to indecisive to very decisively homosexual. So there's really an interesting spectrum of people. And the office that I run is regarded as being the engine room of the organisation, so it's a very ... the output is of great importance and the way in which it is run is of great importance to the structure of the organisation.

In: Are any of the gay people in your office actually out?

Ex: Not openly, no. There are several homosexuals and they don't have any qualms about it, but they don't stand on their desks and shout it.

In: What do you think would be needed in this country and perhaps in your specific setting – maybe we should start there – in order for you to come out?

Ex: [Whistles] For me to come out in the office setting would involve everyone shaking off the shackles of Calvinism! [chuckles] Because the biggest problem at my work is that I'm surrounded and I'm managed by an ageing Afrikaner male corps – not "corpse" as in dead bodies, but a range of white males who have

been schooled and brought up in the strictest sense of Calvinism. Which prohibits them, in all fairness, from accepting homosexuals. The church says they are allowed to accept them, but they are not allowed to allow them to practise their homosexuality. So, the two are not compatible. And as long as we are still under the management in my set-up of these boys who are strict and staunch believers in Christianity as *they* see it, not much is gonna change. But new people come in, new influences come in, new church denominations come in with more tolerance, or less tolerance – I hope more tolerance. And a wider approach to life and to gender *and* racial issues is siphoning in. So, as I've said before, patience is the only thing that's gonna probably change things for me and for my immediate colleagues in the next couple of years, the next decade. The same goes for the broader spectrum, I think. The broader spectrum is less of a problem, because there are international influences. People are travelling more. Our new government is spreading its wings in terms of travelling and international influence, and tolerance will most certainly start siphoning in. Our Constitution is also a great, great improvement on what we've had. There's freedom of speech, people speaking out, there's a right to march, there's sexual rights. That's a great freedom that we have not had. It makes the debate on sexual issues much freer than it was in the past. And as soon as a debate starts opening up and the terminology starts becoming more known, people start throwing words around more and phrases around more. It's gonna become more of a household item, being gay.

In: So you're saying in terms of your specific set-up, what is needed is a change of power? A change of the kind of people who are in power? And I wonder if then on a broader scale that means that some kind of affirmative action is needed?

Ex: Affirmative action in terms of appointing gay people?

In: Yes.

Ex: That won't ... probably won't happen in my set-up and I don't foresee that happening in the broader economy. You don't need to appoint gay people to have a gay-friendly atmosphere. Not at all.

In: You would of course also be able to say you don't need to appoint black people to have a black-friendly environment. But that's being done and I think that one of the aims of that is perhaps to not only empower those people who are appointed, but to also give other black people in the organisation a form of recourse. That's why I'm wondering if that would be an opportunity to rectify policies.

Ex: That could. It would make an interesting debate. I haven't given it enough thought. I would think

not. I feel very similar to appointing gay people as I do to appointing black people purely for the sake of being black or purely for the sake of being gay. I think that harms the cause far more than it would if people were just appointed on merit and worked their way up and gay people and black people landed in senior positions where they should be, rather than pushing them in there if they can't do the job. I wouldn't like to see a total disaster of a gay person sitting in a managerial position making one big mistake after the other. I mean I would really be ashamed.

In: But then the dilemma seems to be that perhaps if you are being appointed on merit in your situation, you can't be openly gay, so ...

Ex: ... Ja, it's a Catch-22, I realise that. It's a very difficult situation. And only time will tell what we're gonna do if we really hit the top, the rest of my gay colleagues and I, the rest of my black colleagues and I. I don't know. We haven't had the opportunity and, as I said earlier, we've not read the script. We never had the opportunity in this country to actually consider making it to the top and then coming out. I've not had that freedom. Now I have the freedom because I have a Constitution behind me, should I choose to come out.

In: Do you think there's anything that professionals of various disciplines, like lawyers, psychologists, or people in the labour field – or government – can do to empower gay people to be able to be open about their sexuality?

Ex: I think all we need is a public statement to say that we as a company want to state openly that we do not discriminate against people on the base of race, religion, or sexual orientation. We're free. We want people working here to be happy and to be able people, to be talented and hard-working, happy employees. They have the freedom to live their life as they want to. That's all we need, we need one *small*, concise little public statement by each and every company. That's all I would need in my company. Then, I won't, the next day, walk into a news staff meeting and say, "Right, well, I just want to say today that I'm gay!" But as things progress and when things come up, I will have the freedom to say, "Well, I actually want to bring my partner, who's a woman, along to the next office party, will that be OK with you guys?" or "I am bringing her along," you know what I mean? We just need a little statement. And I'm sure that that is gonna happen sometime, if not in my specific company, in a broader spectrum. At least.

In: OK. Is there anything relevant about your experiences that has not been covered?

Ex: I think not. I think we've covered basically issues at stake.

In: The previous interview that we had in 1994, did that in any way affect you?

Ex: It made me reflect far more, or maybe for the first time, on my position as a sexual being in my organisation, as in a *homosexual* being in my organisation. And it empowered me in a sense. I've reconsidered things that were said in my presence, I responded more to things that affected me. And I have since been far more alert to possible sexual discrimination on the grounds of my being gay, apart from me just being female. So I've regarded my experience since my last interview with you as being positive, with regard to issues that I have not really considered, that frustrated me until then, but I had not actually ... I pulled them out of the fog to see them for what they were. So, it definitely did have an impact.

In: And how have you experienced this interview?

Ex: As interesting. I've once again discussed things and brought things to the surface which have been there, and I've rolled them around in my head, but not necessarily conceptualised them. I would actually like to see on paper what it looks like, and to see whatever I said in the broader context of what you're doing, because it is definitely a relevant issue and I do think that what's gonna happen – with me and in the broader context of our country in the next year or two – is gonna be of utmost importance and very interesting in terms of people's empowerment, homosexual empowerment and coming out and reaching senior positions and having the strength to actually state your case. It's going to be most interesting.

3.3 Hurricane/Impatient

3.3.1 Transcript of 1994 interview

- Interviewer: Ja, I think we can start with just the basic information, right, how old you are ...
- Hurricane*: Right, I'm 34 years old.
- In: And you stay here in Port Elizabeth ...
- Hu*: Ja, I was born here.
- In: OK. And your occupation?
- Hu*: Occupation? I'm director of a company; it's a family business. You want me to sort of embroider on these questions? OK. I've been working for the company for, oh, a very long time, part time, and after my studies I went back full time into the business, or joined the business full time; it must be for the last seven years or so. I've had a year off – I just walked out and went overseas for a year. I thought I'm not coming back into the same company, but on my return I went back into it, so I've been back for about five years now ... probably I've been here about eight years. I walked out after two, three years and came back and I'm enjoying it.
- In: Right, we'll come back to that. Can you ... I want to get just a bit more about yourself, and your sexuality. First of all, how do you prefer to be referred to? If you had to choose a label, what are you most comfortable with?
- Hu*: If I had to choose a label ... [cough] ... by whom? or I mean ... there are certain terms I would accept from certain people, and other terms I wouldn't accept from other people. If somebody at work had to turn around and call me a *moffie* or something I would certainly react to it very strongly, but if one of my friends had to turn around and call me that: different story. I don't find the word *moffie* offensive, I don't find the word *gay* offensive; I don't really find that terminology offensive to me. It depends who's using it.
- In: OK, how would you like me to refer to you in my writing?
- Hu*: [Chuckles] ... Well, you definitely, you wouldn't use the word *moffie*, or you wouldn't use the word ... what else would you use? You would probably use the word *homosexual* or *gay man* I suppose, I think that sounds better than *homosexual man*. Or *homosexual*; probably *gay man*.
- In: Why do you prefer the word *gay* above *homosexual*?
- Hu*: I think I prefer the word itself. I often think to myself I actually wonder if it's ... look I ... I am gay, there's no getting away from the fact ... I've had quite a few sexual experiences with women, but my first experience was with a guy, and I think probably ... I don't say that's what moulded me that way, I'm not saying that at all, but it's just I think I prefer to go out with a guy, or prefer to see a guy, than to actually see a woman. But, on the other hand, more women find me attractive than what guys do. If I wanted to get married or go out and find a girlfriend I'd have no problem, but I have a problem finding the right sort of guy ... I don't like many of the guys, I must be quite honest. There's – if I look around – there's no one I really actually, that I find sexually attractive or somebody that I'd even want to live with, there's no-one I know, there's always little things that put me off all the time.
- In: Do you think it has something to do just with numbers, or what do you think ...?
- Hu*: When you say "number", what do you mean "numbers"?
- In: Just the fact that there are probably fewer gay men around ...
- Hu*: No, I don't think so, I think erm ... OK, sorry, are you comparing PE say to Cape Town, or ...?
- In: No, no, I'm just asking generally, why you say you find it that there are few men that you are actually attracted to, what do you think the reason is for that?
- Hu*: I'd like to think that there's no difference between here and Cape Town, or here and Johannesburg. I think here in Port Elizabeth, I feel there is a difference. I don't think there's many, and I'm not being ... I am prissy, I'd be quite honest, I am prissy, I'm not snobbish, but I am prissy ... There's no-one here, that I'd actually like to get involved with, there's no – with the exception of one or two friends that I have, but when I look at them and how they live with one another, it's not the sort of life-style I would want either – but there's actually no-one in Port Elizabeth that I could ever think of getting involved with. Not that I'm better than them, but there's nobody here I'd actually want to live with, there's no-one I'd want to just go to bed with for a one-night stand, there's nobody here, that I'd actually want to say OK, well, meet somebody and fall in love with that person, or, there's nobody that I know that I would actually want to live with. There's a matter of principle involved; I'm not looking for a guy that's going to ... his work doesn't worry me, I want somebody who's ambitious, somebody who's strong, because if they're not, I'm gonna dominate them, and as soon as I dominate them, that's gonna be the end of it. I want to dominate them, it's exactly what I want to do, but at the same time they must fight back. I don't want someone who's going to go out of their way to do everything for me, I don't want it. Obviously they must be nice, they must have their freedom, they must be able to do exactly what they want to do, other than sex. Because that I won't tolerate. If they wanna go away, if they wanna go out, they wanna do this, they wanna do that, they wanna have their

- friends around, they must do that. I'm quite happy to accept that, because I know that I want to do the same thing, not that I'm saying that I want to do it without the guy, but if he doesn't want to come with me, or do something with me, he mustn't feel obligated to, but sexually, yes, you must feel obligated. I just haven't met anyone in this town that I ... I've met people, yes ... one-night stand. I haven't had a one-night stand for – I don't want to lie to you – probably three or four years. I haven't met somebody the first night and gone home with them. I've always been ... I'm very conservative with sex. I could tell you lots more ... I don't know [laughs] how much to say on tape though!
- In: Well, I think we can get back to that, because it's not necessarily really what I'm focusing on, so ...
- Hu: Alright ...
- In: What I would like to get back to is, just when you said the *word*, you like the word *gay* better than *homosexual* ...
- Hu: I think it's got a better connotation to it ...
- In: ... Ah ha? ... what's the connotation ...
- Hu: It *sounds* better to me ...
- In: ... what's the connotation for you?
- Hu: I think *homosexual* has more of a ... general term, or it has more of a ... term just for everybody ... I'm probably off on a wrong track, but I just prefer the word ... somebody saying that I'm gay rather than I'm homosexual.
- In: Oh, no it's important for me, you know, to find out what it is to *you*, so there isn't really a matter of a wrong track or a right track. I'm trying to find out what *you* like about it.
- Hu: I think the word itself appeals to me more than *homosexual*. *Homosexual* sounds ... not too general, it just sounds ... it doesn't sound like the right word to me ... Probably I'm coming across very stupid ...
- In: No, not at all ...
- Hu: If I had to listen to the tape, I'd be very, I would actually just wipe everything off ...
- In: No, you don't have to worry about that ...
- Hu: OK.
- In: And it's difficult to get to ... actually to the bottom of things and, you know, to have patience with yourself about that. Some of these questions are difficult, and sometimes you have to bang your head a bit to just find what it is ...
- Hu: Yeah there's a few words: *moffie*, *homosexual*, I suppose erm ... *rabbit*, I don't know ... erm ... and and *gay* really, those are about the only really words that I really know, and I think out of all of them I prefer to be known as a gay person, or somebody refer to me as a gay person and as a homosexual. It boils down to the same thing at the end of the day.
- In: When you say *homosexual* is more of a general term, what do you mean by that?
- Hu: I think it applies more to if you want to describe a group of people, or their habits, I would use the word *homosexual*. On the other hand, if I talk about a club, I talk about a gay club, not a homosexual club. I think *homosexual* has more of a negative connotation to me than the word *gay*...
- In: OK. Let's ...
- Hu: If I was to describe myself, if I had to go to my father and say to him I'm homosexual, or I'm gay, I'd rather say to him I'm gay than I'm homosexual.
- In: OK. Tell me a bit about your coming-out process, when it happened, and how it happened?
- Hu: OK. I had one experience whilst I was at school. When I say one experience, I had a experience with one person; whilst I was at school, at boarding school. And it carried on for about two years or so. And I never really thought very much of it; I also had a girlfriend, but she also wasn't very serious, and when I went to Rhodes, I met a friend who was in the same class as what I was in, and we became good friends, probably for about eight or nine months, we were very good friends, and I had my own car, but he used to come and fetch me from [residence name] and used to take me to lectures, and he used to bring me back, and he would always buy me chocolates and all sorts of things, and never made one sexual advance to me, and I never made any to him, and I did not really ... I *liked* him, but it never really ate away at me that I couldn't get anywhere with him, it didn't worry me, I never really thought along those lines. And one day, long time, you know it was eight, nine months, we happened to be in my room, and he made a pass at me, and I went, you know, I went along with the whole thing, and I enjoyed it, and the following day he ignored me. He didn't fetch me for lectures, nothing, I thought you know, what's wrong with me? But apparently, what I found out, probably six months later, was that this is what he used to do, he used to find somebody who he liked, or find somebody, and he would work on them, and he enjoyed the whole ... chase, and the whole ... thing leading up to, [clears throat] up to actual sex, and once he ... *had sex* with you, no matter how long it took, then he lost complete interest in you. That's what I discovered afterwards. And then after *that*, I met another guy at Rhodes, very nice guy, and he had a girlfriend and I had a girlfriend. And we used to go to all the balls together, and parties together and all sorts of things, and then would go and drop our girlfriends off and then we'd go back to my room or back to his room.
- In: [Laughs] And now, how out are you in your private life?
- Hu: Now? I am out, OK, in my private life. Your talking with my straight friends, or my gay friends?
- In: Tell me?
- Hu: First of all, I don't have many friends. I know a lot of people ... I used to have a lot of gay friends, and I used to have a lot of straight friends: this is going back, probably ten years

ago ... ten, twelve years ago. And I used to enjoy the whole dinner-party set, where I was young, and everybody would invite me around for dinner, and I might have four, five invitations a week out to dinner, and I'd go to all of them. And after about six months I got bored with this ... wasn't my sort of life, this going to dinner, and talking about other people, and listening, seeing the same old people, I just wasn't into that. I'd rather read, go to movies, or do my own thing. My straight friends: I don't have many straight friends left, I have very few straight friends left. I told one of my straight friends, who was at school with me; he was a year younger than me, and we used to always go to one another's houses, after – I was in boarding school but then I came out of boarding school – and when I came out, we used to visit one another at home, and he used to come to my house and I went to his house; I had a motorbike, and he always used to ride on the back of my motorbike, and we lived near the golf course, and I had another motorbike, which was bigger, and we used to go and scramble in the golf course, and I used to enjoy that, because he always used to sit behind me with his hands around my waist, and I never told him – oh, I never knew about myself at school – but I always enjoyed that, with him, and, I left school ... I think there's somebody here ... I left school ...

In: Can we just pause? [Pause while *Hurricane's* friend in whose flat we are comes home. After some talking, he leaves the room and closes the door.]

Hu: Remind me where we were, unless you can't remember. [Laughs]

In: We were talking about your straight friend, and ...

Hu: Alright, he was a very nice guy, his name was Gareth, and I maintained friends with him throughout university, and he studied here in Port Elizabeth, and I used to see him during the school holidays and everything, and the one school holiday, somehow I told him, I can't remember why, but I just felt that I wanted to tell him. And I told him, and he just like ignored me afterwards ... er ... he was, he couldn't accept it, he was very strange about the whole story. At the same time he had a girlfriend, and she was a very ... er ... manly type of woman, like, she was like a lesbian. And I remember one night we went out to one of the bars here, straight place, at the bottom of the Elizabeth Hotel, and he was inside there, and I walked past and I said, "Hi Gareth," and he just looked at me, he just ignored me. Probably about a year later, he phoned me, and he said to me he wants to come and visit me, so I said, "Come around". He came around, and he apologized, he said he's very sorry, but he couldn't accept it at the time, and our friendship started up again, although we ... aren't friends any more – when I say we aren't friends any

more: I haven't seen him, he's moved to Cape Town, and he got married, and whatever. But, our friendship continued, and probably about a year after he said to me he was ... that he apologized for feeling that way, and ignoring me and so on, he said to me that he really loves me a lot, and that if I was a woman, call it that, he would want to marry somebody like me! Well, you know I mean I don't ever intend to be a woman, but anyway. [Chuckles] But, I certainly think Gareth perhaps was fighting his own problems at that time. I certainly wouldn't have enticed him, or try to encourage him, it's his own ... something that he had to sort out himself. And he married that girl, who was – not the girlfriend he was going out with, but another girl – who was also a very *sporty* girl, very erm, also very manly: short hair, thin, and into her running and her tennis and whatever she was into, and I think that was also an indication, I used to think, you know, Gareth is sort of interested in a more masculine sort of woman, than a feminine woman.

I got a few other straight friends, not many, I don't have many that come and visit me any more, I've lost contact with a lot of the people I was friendly with, those who were at school with me, or those that I made friends with afterwards. And I think I've done it on purpose, basically, I haven't pursued the friendships ... I know quite a few people in my street for example, who may invite me over for a drink or something to eat. I do go, but it is not something that we discuss, although they do know ... *about* me, not from me telling them, but they have obviously seen – I live in a dead-end street, and my house is right at the end – so they sort of see all the cars that come by, or the cars that park there, and always guys getting out the cars. I had a lot of people over to lunch one day, during summer, and we were all sitting around the pool, and the neighbours dropped over, and of course saw everything, but it didn't seem to faze them, and they've been friendly, or just as friendly as what they were before, as what they are now.

In: And so I get it then that quite a big proportion of your circle of friends are gay people, gay men?

Hu: Yes, I would say a larger proportion of my friends – I would say 90% of my friends are gay, as opposed – even 95% – are gay as opposed to straight. I would mix, you know, I have got the one or two of my straight friends who do know ... it's not really an issue with them, I don't see them that often though, and I *would* mix it, I would mix the, ... my gay friends with my straight friends, if my gay friends felt comfortable. I wouldn't do it – if my straight friends felt uncomfortable, that would be their problem – but if my gay friends felt comfortable I would certainly mix the two together.

In: Does that happen?

Hu: I had one friend, who's gay, and he hates women ... and if you had, if you invite him around, and

you have a straight girl, visiting, he gets very offended, he gets very upset and he just wants to go home, he doesn't, well he doesn't relax, he can't sit back and relax and enjoy his evening; it seems to upset his whole evening. So I would be sensitive to that sort of thing, 'cause I know myself, I wouldn't like to, I would feel embarrassed – I'm gonna clarify it and I'm gonna contradict myself just now – but I know if I walked into a room full of straight people, and they all knew I was gay, I'd probably feel embarrassed about it.

In: Tell me a bit more about that?

Hu: I probably feel that it's more of a sexual ... nature. That they probably feel that you are, because you're gay, you sleep around a lot, you ... go camping, you go cruising, you pick up people ... like Kobus tried to pick me up [laughing; this is a reference to some bantering during the earlier interruption]. I wouldn't advertise the fact. If they knew and they accepted me, and I was invited there and they knew about it, I would go, yes. Sometimes I do feel embarrassed, sometimes I do, sometimes I'd be with some straight people, like we'll go out for dinner, and one of the women will say to me, you know, she'll say, "I think you're the most beautiful..." – she'd be a married woman, and she'll say, "It's a pity that you're gay, because I think you're one of the nicest men that I've seen," or ... another one will say to me as well, who's also married, will say, "I really think you are so good looking, and you're wasting yourself by being gay, you should find yourself a nice wife," and, my *first* reaction to that is, I'll say, "Well, I'm not good looking," because I don't believe I am, and I often say, "I wish I *was* good looking, but I'm not," and sometimes I *do* feel I'm wasting myself, erm ... not looking for a wife, and not finding a nice woman to live with, and having a family for example. But I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't mind having a family, but without having a wife.

In: So how *do* you feel when you're in a situation like that?

Hu: When I'm with straight people?

In: Yeah, when they say something like that, that you're wasting yourself, what does that make you feel?

Hu: It makes me feel uncomfortable. I was speaking to another woman I know, she's a psychologist, very nice woman, she's about 34 years old as well, she's married, she's got two children, very down to earth, she lectures, or does something out at UPE. And she's very into music as well. And we were invited, I was invited to the opening of a new restaurant here, and they were also there. And this restaurant is, was very – when I say "upmarket", they ... it's not an upmarket restaurant, but they invited everybody they thought would, ... they invited everybody that night they thought would ... would patronize, or *patronize*, listen to my English! would patronize their restaurant, thereafter. So it was all the people there

who were very snooty and all the priss-elegant people from PE, who were the last sort of people to go and patronize such a place – you know, it's a place like the King and Fox – that it was the very last sort of people that would sit inside there every single night, and hand out their money.

And we happened to be talking, and she said to me ... you know, she *asked* me, or she said to me, "Are you happy ... or are you unhappy?" Now that particular time, I was, actually I think I *was* unhappy, and I said "Sometimes, you know, I wonder what I'm doing with my life, I feel there's no point to it, all I do is I work hard, and I come home, and I've got nobody to share it with, and she said, "Have you ever thought of going straight?" or whatever, and I said, "Yes, I have thought about it, I'm sure if I met somebody whom I really liked, I probably could go straight," and, a week later I think to myself, but, saying this to her, did I actually, maybe that was how I felt then, but I don't feel like that a hundred percent of the time. I'm not confused about myself, I'm not confused, or I'm not torn between being straight and being gay, I'm not going to get married, and, and erm, subject myself to a straight life, just to make, say, my parents happy, or to make my friends happy, or to make other people happy. I'd rather fit ... I'd rather live on my own, or I'd rather look for some nice ... a nice guy that I can live with ...

In: But there is that kind of yearning, of perhaps it would've been nice ...

Hu: Look, it would be much easier, it would be so much easier – and I'll get back to that later in the work situation – but being single, and going to being invited out to functions, or being invited out to weddings, such as staff who work for you may have weddings, and you get invited out there, I don't always feel it's fair for me to phone somebody, to phone a girl and say look, I'm going to a wedding tonight, erm, oh next week, not tonight, you know – next week, next month, whatever – and say, "Please, would you come along as my partner?" I feel I'm not being honest with myself, I feel that I must either go on my own, or I mustn't try and lead ... I mustn't try and erm ... create a sham, by just schlepping some girl along just for the sake of her appearance. That's what I'm inclined to do; I don't like doing it.

In: Tell me a bit more about that. I think we can talk about the work situation. Tell me a bit about when that happens at work and how that comes about.

Hu: Well for example now, I get invited out to quite a lot of functions. I've got a function on next weekend, up in Johannesburg, one of the Sun hotels, and I'm supposed to stay over, well I'm booked in to stay over, but I've decided I'm rather gonna send one of my guys from the Pretoria office, and let him take his girlfriend with him, because every time I go to this particular

company's function, I'm always alone, and I always sit at the table, and I've got no partner with me. And everybody sits there and it's husband and wife, or whatever, and, you know, everybody says to me, "Where's your wife?" and I have been inclined to lie about it, not always, but the last time I went, I said, "No, she's gone overseas, she ..." and – I said my girlfriend, I said, "I'm not married, but we've been living together for five, six years," and I wouldn't have the guts to come out and say I'm gay. I suppose I could just leave it as an open-ended question as well, and just say, "Well, I'm single." If she wants to pursue it, if this woman wants to pursue it, the person sitting next to me, she could say, "Well, do you have a girlfriend?" and I suppose I could say, "No, I don't." I don't know whether people would go that far.

In: Tell me a bit, how did you *feel*, when you said that, or after you had said that, after you said that your girlfr...

Hu: Well, it worried me, because I thought am I gonna forget, and slip up and lie about it? you know, and I don't like to lie, I like to be honest and, and just be straight forward, because if you do lie, you always get caught up lying, or it catches up on you ... no, I felt very bad, because here it was a story, maybe I developed it in the back of my mind before I went in case I was asked, but, it just came out, and it's just what I said. I didn't feel comfortable about it.

In: Tell me a bit more about that, that feeling bad, what exactly? ... How did it feel bad?

Hu: Well, I feel like I'm lying, I'm showing a different side to me, which I don't like to show, I'd rather ... I've got these two, these two ... erm ... friends of mine, two gay guys, they're the two most unpopular people in Port Elizabeth, they're very prissy, very snobbish, they can be very unkind, they can be very nasty and ugly and say ugly things about people. They don't have any gay friends, they ... all their friends are straight, and I know a lot, quite a lot of their straight friends, who know about me, but I still like them. They have been ugly to me, but I still like them, they've also been very nice to me, and they've been very good to me as well, and they always tell me that they can see when I'm acting, and they're probably quite right, I change, and I know I change; I don't notice it straight away, I notice it only afterwards, obviously when I change back to what I normally am, that I can say oh! yes, you were different in that situation. I mean we're different in all situations, but I know that I do change. If I met somebody that maybe I liked, they tell me – I haven't picked up that part of it yet, but they tell me – that I change, which I don't notice. And I say in what way, and they say you become different, you become ... you're not yourself, you aren't natural, you become ... different, I can't actually explain it, I don't think they're able to explain it either, but they notice a

change in me. And I don't like that, I don't, I don't like to lie, I've been brought up not to lie, and I believe one must just say what you want to say, and I usually end up saying what I want to say. I don't like lying, it's it's it's foreign to my nature, but I have lied in the past about having a girlfriend, or ... or not being gay, I denied that as well, I denied that a few times [pause]

In: Tell me more about that?

Hu: Well, the last time I denied it, was when I was in America ... All my family come from the States, and it's just my father out here. And all my family that were here have all gone back, my sisters and so on. And when I went overseas, that's when I walked out of the office, when I walked out of work and I thought I had enough, I went to go and visit my family in America, and I stayed with – that was one of the countries I went to – and I stayed with my one aunt who I like very much, and who I get along very well with, and she ... we were sitting outside one morning having coffee, and she said she wants to ask me something, so I said well ask me, already knowing in the back of my mind, ja I know exactly what you wanna ask me. She said, "I just want to ask you one thing: are you ... are you gay?" So I said, "Well, what makes you ask a question like that?" She says, "No, because your father's worried that you are, and I don't believe that you are," and I answered her back and I said, "No I'm not!" And I regret it, I wish that I had actually said, "Yes, I am." [Pause] And not having denied it. [Pause] If she had to ask me *now* – I was there in December again, I visited my sister, and I also stayed with the same aunt – if she had to ask me now, I'd say, "Yes, I am." But they also know that I am, even though I denied it, they know I am, because I have a cousin over there – or not, it's not really a cousin, it's more of an adopted cousin, she's no blood relation, but she's lived with the same aunt for many, many years – and she's a lesbian. She had a girlfriend and she broke up with the girlfriend; she had another girlfriend, she broke up with that girlfriend. So of course when I was over there, they got this so-called cousin to try and take me out to all the clubs, and the bars, and those things, which I really wasn't interested in. Erm, I've been to one or two gay places in America, but I'm certainly ... I'm not interested in going, I ... it's, it's, erm ... look I could go, but it doesn't appeal to me. I'm certainly not going to pick somebody up there and take them home, firstly because of Aids, and secondly I wouldn't really know where to take them to, other than to go back to their place, and I'm just not into a one-night stand, so going to the clubs and the bars didn't appeal to me. Not at all. She never asked me – her name was Sarah – she never asked me if I was gay, or straight, just from the way she spoke to me, she just accepted that I was gay. I didn't hide it from *her*, I didn't – well, when I say I didn't hide it from her, I didn't

admit to it either, I just spoke to her as I'd speak to anybody, really, if she had asked me, I suppose I would've said, "Yes, I am."

In: Tell me a bit about ... [phone rings in another room] ... (do you think they're still here?)

Hu: Yes. [Somebody answers the phone.]

In: Tell me a bit about why you feel it is that you ... you tend to tell these lies?

Hu: To tell lies? Now it sounds like I'm a real liar, doesn't it? OK, I haven't been in that situation often. I've been in that situation once with my ... I can ... probably I've been in that situation four or five times, that I had to lie. Once with my father ... probably, probably a bit more ... once with my dad, once with my grandmother, with my aunt, and I'd say probably another two or three occasions, so it's probably about six occasions that I've - when I say lied, probably three occasions that I've said, "No, I'm not gay," and probably the other two or three occasions where I hadn't been asked if I'm gay, but I've lied, I've said, "Well, my girlfriend's overseas," or, "I used to live with a girlfriend, but we had an argument, and it lasted for a few ... we were together for a few years, and we didn't get along ..."

In: Were those things in a kind of work ...

Hu: Correct. So, so I haven't really lied very often. Probably I've only been faced with that question of - of not, a question are you gay? - a question of do you have a girlfriend? which I probably responded to in a lying manner, two or three, probably about three occasions, I wouldn't say it's more than that.

In: OK, but tell me, just tell me about what you feel makes you do that.

Hu: I think it's, I feel, probably I feel inferior ... by admitting to being gay, or admitting to be homosexual, I feel inferior, I feel ... erm ... that I'm not ... My work environment is very straight. We, in the motor industry, we deal with all the motor manufacturers in the country, and I have yet to meet, other than maybe one or two... - when I say "yet to meet", that's also a lie - erm ... probably one out of a hundred people I meet is gay in the motor industry. And I think it's that pressure on you, and I've been invited to functions, you get invited out, and it's always the guys with their wives, and the motor dealers are ... always enjoy partying - or not partying, but they enjoy drinking, and, you know, dancing with their girlfriends, and this sort of thing, and that's why I don't enjoy going to these functions, because I don't have a wife, or I don't have a girlfriend to take with me, so I always feel uncomfortable in those situations. But it's difficult, if I was in a different environment, if I was, say, working for Edgars, or for Truworths, or I was in the art business, or music, probably it's more acceptable in that sort of environment, to, with your colleagues - and, well, advertising. I think even in journalism it is quite a difficult situation that one could find oneself in as well. But I think in my envi-

ronment I find it very difficult. [pause] Extremely difficult, to ... I'm sure a lot of people at work ... I can't fool myself and say they don't know, or they don't suspect. Because my birthday I might get forty, fifty phone calls, on my birthday, and they'll all be ... 99% will be men, there'll be one or two women that will phone. It's always the guys that will phone me, very few women will phone me. Our receptionist, she's been with us for seven or eight years, she must surely know by now that everybody phones me, it's a guy phoning me, she doesn't know if it's for business or if it's personal, she doesn't know, unless, there're a couple of voices that she will recognise, Albert, or Jack, or whoever's voices she recognises, or Mark whatever that she'll recognise over the phone, but for the rest of it, no-one's thrown it in my face at work, no-one has, erm ... and I always believe well, I pay their salaries, so, if they don't like it, they can go. That's not the right way to look at it either ...

In: Ja? Tell me about that?

Hu: Got a very nice sales guy that works for us, he's a very nice guy, I really like him a lot. Not sexually, not at all, he doesn't appeal to me that way, but I really like him, you know, he's the kind of guy that I wouldn't mind if he was my brother, and it's gonna lead here - I've already lied to you now, because in stead of saying to you three times I've lied about having a girlfriend, I've lied to him as well. Not *lied* to him, I haven't lied to him, but we sometimes go away on trips together, and we were in George, February, and, I think we were in a restaurant somewhere, and there was a table of two or three gay guys or something, and one of our sales guys said something to me, and of course I laughed about what he said ... making as if I found it funny ...

In: Can you recall what he said?

Hu: It was something about, "Look at that table over there," and I said, "Where?" and I looked, or whatever it was, and I said something back to him, I must've said to him, "They look like *moffies* or something," or whatever. Erm ... and that, that I don't like, there, there I felt very bad afterwards. I employed a guy in Pretoria ...

In: Just clarify for me, before we go on to that: what kind of "bad" was that that you were feeling - can you describe it more closely?

Hu: Yes, I think I feel something in my stomach. Something down here, I feel - not sick, I don't feel sick about it or nauseous about it, but I feel ... I think it's more of a nervous feeling, in my stomach, more than anything else.

In: How often do you have that feeling?

Hu: Not very often. I wouldn't say I had it very often. I think I'm, if I had to walk into, say, a motor dealership, or had to go to Toyota, for whatever, and if they knew about me, and they said oh well, that's just another *moffie* or something coming in, then the other thing that they should also know, is that I'm also decent, and that whatever

their idea of a gay person is, is not necessarily the correct idea. I haven't made myself clear on that point ... you know I think you can go to the club or you can go to the bar, or you can go to wherever you want to go and meet gay guys ... [pause] That's also nonsense that I'm talking now ...

In: What were you going to say?

Hu: You meet gay guys that are such rubbish, or come across as being rubbish ... I don't put myself into that category. I look around here in PE, and I think how many gay guys are there in this town that have ... that are ... that have accomplished something, there's quite a few, but they're elderly guys, they're all 55 to 70 years old – where they've accomplished ... they've become attorneys, or become doctors, or they've somehow managed to maintain a good lifestyle by working hard, but if I look at the younger people – I probably fall into the middle age by now – but if I look at the younger guys that are maybe 25, 24 years old, I don't see much potential amongst them, I don't feel that they are achieving anything. When I look at the young guys around me, and I compare myself to them – I know I work very hard, I'm not just lucky or whatever, it's just hard work, that's all it is – and I feel I am achieving a lot more than what they are achieving. There doesn't seem to be ... when I get to 60 years old, I don't know if there's gonna be many of the people I know that will have achieved ... that will have achieved as much as say those that are at present in that age group now.

In: So what stops you, for example in that situation in the restaurant where the guy pointed at the other table ...

Hu: From saying I'm also gay?

In: Ja. What stops you from doing that?

Hu: OK, first of all I have a fear ... that ... that maybe our opposition ... find out, which is very easy. I would hate our opposition to find out. You know, there's sometimes trading of staff, it does happen, and maybe somebody who works for us resigns and goes and works for the opposition. And I just have the vision of somebody leaving us, who maybe I've told something to, I've actually said listen, John or whatever your name is, I'm gay, actually going across and saying listen, this is what *Hurricane* said.

In: Uhm. And what would that mean?

Hu: I would hate it. Because I can tell you right now, that ... erm ... th... we well we well, we have lots of opposition in this country, it's not as if we don't have lots of opposition, but I'd say there's probably about four of us, that are quite strong, a lot stronger than the rest, and, certainly, I think if I had to hear something about somebody at the opposition who was in a relatively high job, or whatever, or part of the company, I would be very quick to tell my sales people, "You know that one over there, ja, he goes ..." whatever, I'd

quickly spread the story around our own company, and they would do the same with me. I know for a fact they would ...

In: And what would that ...

Hu: Unfortunately we are continually biting at one another all the time, which is not nice, but ... there is a guy who works at our opposition, for one of their branches here at PE ... He doesn't have a very high-profile job with them, he's just a clerk or whatever he is there, and I discovered the other day that he was gay. I've never spoken to him, but I will certainly avoid him from now on. I don't want to speak to him either. I have more to lose than what he has to lose. I would hate our opposition to go around to all our customers here in town – because sometimes we share customers – and say, "Oh that guy over there, you know ... you know he's a *moffie* ..."

In: So what is it that you see that you have to lose?

Hu: I think the company. Not myself. I don't think ... I think if I was in a job ... [pause] It's very difficult. OK, let me put myself in a different situation. If I stopped working now, and I had two, three, four million rand in the bank, and I could sit back and relax and not work again, I think I would be quite inclined to ... it wouldn't worry me, who I told or who knew. I think it worries me in my present situation, that the company will lose business. [Pause] I don't know if it would, you see I can't put it to the test. I wouldn't want to put it to the test. [Pause]

In: Why not?

Hu: No, I wouldn't want to, no. I just wouldn't want to. We have about 140, or 160 people that work for us, I just wouldn't want to put it to the test, I just wouldn't want everybody ... everybody to know about it ... I would hate it, I would really, I would honestly hate it. If I was in a smaller situation maybe, if we were just five in the company, or something, maybe then I could accept it a lot ... might be able to tell somebody, or tell them about it, but I just find in my situation, I can't, I wouldn't like it at all ...

In: Can you tell me more why you wouldn't like it?

Hu: I would feel uncomfortable, I would feel as if I was perhaps ... inferior, and I wasn't capable of doing my job. I know what I'm telling you is wrong, what I ... not wrong, what I'm telling you doesn't make sense, because there's no reason why a gay person and a straight person, why a gay person shouldn't be *more* capable, in fact, a lot of the times they are more capable. I would just feel ... I'm a disciplinarian, I am, I know I am. I'm very soft, and when I say I'm a disciplinarian, maybe it's more of an act, maybe I myself have become to believe that I am strict, or I'm, or ... erm, or I have a lot, well I *do*, I have more authority than anybody in the company, but maybe it's part of the act and I'm just so used to pretending that I am very strict and I want to maintain discipline, and I want to do this because maybe I have a fear that if they find out that I am

gay, that a lot of that discipline is going to be eroded away, if I can put it like that, maybe they'll feel well he's weak, we can start taking chances with him, or ... it's a wrong way to build up respect, it's a wrong way to build up authority, I'm aware of that ...

In: So what you're saying, is that you feel that your authority is rooted in the perception that you're straight?

Hu: I would say part of it, yes. Not all of it, but part of it, yes. I think part of our success with the company ... is not rooted in the aspect that I'm straight, but I think if it was general knowledge that I was gay, you'd probably find that there may be quite a lot of people – because we have a lot of customers, we have a customer base of well over 5 000, 6 000 people, and every day we have a lot of different people dealing with us ... I don't know what their attitudes are like, I don't know, it's not something I would like to test, I wouldn't like ... I'd hate to lose business because someone said, "Well, why support that *moffie*, go to the opposition," you know.

In: And how does making that kind of sacrifice make you feel, on the other hand?

Hu: I think I push that kind of feelings back, I push them away from me. It hasn't upset me *too* much ... sometimes – I wouldn't say it *upsets* me – sometimes I just wish I was more natural, more couldn't-care-less really, they-could-think-what-they-want-to-think. Sometimes I think that, but I don't express it in my actions, or in my words, erm, you're going to hear erm, erm, erm on this tape ...

In: That's all right! Everybody goes erm, erm, erm!

Hu: And you also pick up you know, you know, you know, you pick that up as well on the tape.

In: Well, I'm going er, er, er all the time, so you don't have to worry about that!

Hu: As long as you don't think it's like a pig grunting in the background! I've gone a bit off the track here ...

In: No, what you're telling me is very interesting, and I think very worthwhile, so I'd like you to continue.

Hu: [Pause] I just think I feel better, everybody thinking that I am straight at work. If I was straight – maybe I say this because I am gay – if I was str... I say well you know if I was straight, I wouldn't discuss my sex life at work, or my sexual orientation, so why should I discuss it if I'm gay, but maybe that's only because I *am* gay, that I say something like that, maybe if I was straight, it would be different. We have a lot of good-looking guys that walk into our shop, we also have a different type of business, where young guys are attracted to it, and they walk in some days when I'm there, and I look at these guys, and I think, "Wow! Good-looking guy, what nice legs!" or whatever, but I can't say anything to anyone. [Pause] Where, if it was a nice girl walking in, one of the sales guys would say,

"Wow! Isn't she nice? Look at those legs!" or "Look at that boobs!" or "Look at her hair," or whatever the story is.

In: And how does that feel, when you can't actually express, you know, make that kind of comment when other people can ... Where does it leave you?

Hu: Well, I suppose with me voicing it inside, maybe it's a form of expression, I'm just not voicing it ... [Tape change] Getting back to feelings, I don't think I really have many negative feelings. I get very annoyed at work, I want things done my way, if people have got a better way, they must show me, you know they must prove it to me, otherwise they must do it my way until they come up with a better way. I think a lot of my feelings go back to when I was a child ... where I can put things behind me, or put things away, where I don't think they necessary ... maybe they *do* affect me, maybe I'm not aware of them affecting me, but I think I have the ability to put my own feelings ... I will get annoyed, I will get upset, but I think at the same time, myself, I seem to put my feelings second ... if I had to place the company and myself on an equal footing, I'd put the company up here, and myself down here, the company would come first, before anything else. I would put the interests of the company first, before I put the interests of myself first. If I was going away tomorrow, overseas, say, and I felt well it's better for me to stay a week longer, or not go at all because of the company, it wouldn't worry me, I would ... it's just, it's a silly example, but I would put the company first, and I realise that's not right, I realise if I was married, for example, and I did have children, that I couldn't work the hours that I work, I couldn't go away the amount of times that I do go away, and same as if I met a guy and I lived with him, I also wouldn't want to work the hours that I work, I also wouldn't want to go away the amount of times I do go away, and I would try and make an adjustment, although the company would still come first. If I had to go away, I would obviously have to go away, but I would try and ... I suppose maybe, maybe if I was happily – I'm also off the track now – but if I was happily living with somebody, with a ... if I was living with a gay guy, I don't know if I would take him to a function. I don't know *what* I would do; I certainly know if I lived with a gay guy, I would probably be a little bit offended if he didn't invite me along, or ... depends what sort of function. If he had something at the office, I might be a little offended, or maybe if he had a staff party at home, and said to me, "Well, get out, you know, for the evening, I've got all the staff coming around," *that* I wouldn't put up with. So, I suppose, if I had a staff party at home ... I suppose I just wouldn't have a staff party at home, I'd have it in a restaurant, in stead of having to make that decision, and saying to my

- friend, "Well I'm sorry, but you can't stay here tonight." I wouldn't want to do that, because I wouldn't want to have that done to me.
- In: So do you feel this affects your social life, and your relationships to people at work?
- Hu: Well, I much ... when you say affects my social life, I can tell you if I'm in Cape Town, I feel much freer than what I am here. In Cape Town I was very embarrassed the one day, I was at the Waterfr... I had been out to Woodstock, and I got into this little shop and I bought this little cap like that, is it a faiz, or whatever they call it?
- In: Fez, I think.
- Hu: Whatever, fez, ja. I put it on and it looked quite nice, I thought oh well ... quite ... it looks tootsie, so I thought I'm gonna wear it, you see. So nobody looked at me in Cape Town, 'cause nobody I think really gives a damn, they don't care what you look like. Next at the Waterfront, there was a whole group of us, and we were in the Walt Disney shop, at the Waterfront, and I was still walking with this on, and I was looking, and nobody was worried, nobody looked at me, from the time I got out of the car, to anytime. And I walked out the Walt Disney shop, and there was another friend of mine next to me, and past walked these four people, two children and two adults, husband and wife and their two children. The guy looked at me, I looked at him, and ... he said, "*Hurricane!*" and I said, "Yes, Gary!" and it was one of our customers, he's a dealer principal up in Pretoria, and I just went blood red in my face, I was so embarrassed you know, because I could see the look on his face, thinking, is this the guy that I do business with, in Pretoria, that comes into my office, and he's usually smartly dressed, and he's very ... business like, and he's ... erm professional – or at least I think I am – and is this the same guy who is wearing scrappy old jeans in Cape Town, and wearing this thing on his head, and ... whatever, and I felt very embarrassed about it, I felt I was extremely embarrassed about it ...
- In: Did you feel that maybe they thought you were gay?
- Hu: No, I just felt foolish, I just felt foolish, I felt I presented this completely different image to him in Cape ... in Pretoria, this sort of real business-like image, and here I am in Cape Town on holiday, looking ... at the other end, not looking ... I'm at the sort of the complete other end of the scale.
- In: So are you telling me this to explain maybe the different kind of people you are, at work and ...
- Hu: Yes. I would say I basically fit into ... well, I can't say two different people, but I suppose I *am* straight and I *am* gay, or I *act* straight, rather than I *am* straight, I probably *act* straight at work, I *do* act straight at work, I don't act like a gay person, or ... But I think even if I told everybody at work, I would still act straight, I'm not inclined to act ... I don't think I am, I don't think I'm camp, I don't think I'm gay looking, maybe I am, I don't think I behave, or walk in a ... you know, you can recognise certain people, or you can recognise, *one* can usually recognise a gay person. I don't think that, I certainly don't think that if a gay person walked into the office, that they would necessary recognise that I was gay.
- In: Tell me a bit about ... you said that some of the people you think suspect very strongly ...
- Hu: I've had one or two friends who come in at the office ... or I'll take you back to another story first. Before I started working, I had a friend who was at ... we weren't close friends, but he was a friend of mine, and used to stop around and visit me, and the phone rang, and it was he who was visiting me, he was very camp, extremely camp, is the smoke worrying you?
- In: No, not at all ...
- Hu: And I was about 21 years old or so. It was my father on the phone, he said he wanted to come around and see me. And then it's fine, so I went straight around to my friend and said, "Look I have to go out to my dad's house, it's quite urgent, I'm, you know, you'll have to excuse me." So of course he left, and I made a pretence of also leaving, because I was too embarrassed with him being there, and meeting my dad. I've had a few people who have come in to the office, not many, maybe two or three over the last five or six years that are ... that they have come in regularly, and, you can pick up straight away that they are gay ... straight away, I mean, the one guy, got very big hands though, but he talks like this all the time [mimics effeminate way of talking], but he's very effeminate, and he'll come and sit down at my desk, and I see the staff walk past my office, and they'll sort of look in, and I can just imagine what's going through their minds, but the one guy that comes in – I actually like him a lot – he's involved with another guy, and I just feel well, I'm never going to make him feel uncomfortable, because, I wouldn't like him to feel uncom... because I *like* him, and I don't ... it's not fair of me to make him feel uncomfortable at the office, or show that I'm embarrassed with his actions, and I've never spoken badly about him afterwards to the secretary, or anything like that, to try and cover up – that I haven't done. What they think, is ... or maybe I just know the person, and they like ... but they probably think, well, *Hurricane* is the same, it's probably what they think. But I think I'm ... I actually think if they had to find out about me at work, I think it wouldn't be too bad ... Or they probably know, I don't know, I'm confused about whether they know, or they don't know, or *what* they suspect, I really don't know what they suspect. But I *am* different at work, I certainly ... maybe at home I might ... I also ... well, I watch my language over the phone at work. 'Cause sometimes people are standing outside my office, and I know the switchboard can come in onto my

line to interrupt me, and maybe they could do it without me knowing it, although they're not allowed to. Their phone and my phone is the only two phones that can interrupt anyone. So, they wouldn't listen in to my conversation, I'm quite sure about that, but I'm very careful what I say, at work, over the telephone, or in my office to anyone. If it's a gay person.

In: Do you find that you're careful about a lot of things at work?

Hu: When you say a lot of things, what other things are you referring to? Just give me an idea?

In: You said that you're careful about what you say over the phone, and I just wondered – but obviously in relation to letting people know that you are gay – and I just wondered if you find that you often have to act carefully, in order to not let people know?

Hu: No, not really. No, I think I'm quite ... I don't think it's an act, I think I'm, I *am* straight ... in my, not in my outlook, I think I'm straight in my way of being, or straight-acting ... er, or ... it's a wrong word, "acting", I don't have to act straight at the office, I, well how I act at the office is how I act at home, or how I act in a different situation with business or whatever. OK, at home I will, I might be camp sometimes, but it's all on purpose, that is more of an act, me being camp or, or behaving like a *moffie*, that is more of an act at home with my friends that what it is at the office, what I sort of do at the office is really quite normal. It's my normal behaviour at the office every day.

In: It's got more to do with things you say, I mean, actual information, that's where you have the guard up, that you won't say things that ...

Hu: that would lead people to presume that I was gay ... or, yes, no I wouldn't say anything, definitely not.

In: Do you find that you have to be aware of that?

Hu: No. Not at all.

In: It just comes naturally?

Hu: Ja.

In: It's like a second nature?

Hu: Yes.

In: OK. Ja.

Hu: I don't have to watch my mouth at ... I have to watch my mouth at work, because sometimes I swear, and, you know, I'll say to somebody, "You fucking idiot!" you know, or I won't have to watch my mouth by using gay language, or letting slip that I'm gay ... that I don't have to do, I've got no ... no worries about doing that. I'm not concerned at all about slipping up that way, because I doubt very much that I would slip up, I'm not trying not to slip up, but I just don't think I ever would, it's not an act, it's just something ... If I had to sit here with these other two [the tenants of the flat who came home earlier] and you had to get to know me better, then you will see how I *can* act, because I know I can act, but it's all an act ... it's all put-on, it's ... I mimic them,

and I ... but I think no, I think my outlook is basically straight. I think so. I don't know what an outsider would think, but that's what I think ... I think if I come into contact with people, it's the last thing they'll think of, that *Hurricane* is ... gay, or whatever, I think they'll ... the thought probably won't even cross their mind, I doubt it. Maybe when they look at me and they ... maybe after ... if a supplier gets to know me quite well, and says to me, "Are you married?" and I say, "No I'm not" ... I've never lied to a supplier really and said I have a girlfriend or anything, I haven't done that, but they usually stop the question there, if you ... they say, you know, "Are you married?" or they say, "Do you have a family?" and you say no. I find it's more our customers who are ... once with customers they come in, that, sometimes speak to me, I don't know why they want to know, "Are you married?" "Do you have children?" "Why aren't you married yet?" and all this sort of nonsense, but maybe I'm just so stupid, maybe our suppliers all know, maybe all the staff knows ...

In: How do you feel about that possibility?

Hu: That doesn't worry me. Nothing has been stated, and if one of them had to turn around to me and say, "Well, so-and-so says you're a *moffie*," I'd say, "Well, where did they get that from?" and they said, "Well, your friend, Christopher," or whoever my friend may be, told them, then I must accept that, but if they said well they just believe you are or just think you behave like one, I'll say, well, that's their problem. They can think what they want to think.

In: How do you feel when people *do* assume that you are straight? How ... ?

Hu: It doesn't worry me. It doesn't worry me at all. I think I'm ... I'm there to do my job, they are ... they need me, to buy from them – the suppliers – and they must therefore, really, if they want to do business, they must accept me, they must ... whatever they think ...

In: Tell me a bit more about your feelings towards your colleagues, or the people who work for you, how do you *feel* towards them, what's the relationship between you?

Hu: Well, I upset the apple cart a few ... about a month ago, month and a half ago. There were quite a f... not a f... there were quite a – when I say a lot, there weren't. There were probably about three people, that were annoyed with me, and still are a little bit difficult with me at the moment, but the rest have accepted that I've got tired of them ... of, like employing a, say, a young sales guy, of maybe 21 years old, and he ... and I'll be in the factory for example, and he'll come across and say, "Oh [*Hurricane's* first name], what can we do here?" or something, and I got tired of that and I sent out a memo to everyone, I said they must call me Mr [surname], because I'm not [first name] to anybody here, you guys work for me, and it's a matter of respect,

it's not that you must respect me that you must call me Mr [surname], but, well I didn't say that really, but respect is something that you have to build up, it's not something that people ... well, maybe they could fear you, more than respect you, but I certainly think that most of the staff respect me, because I am fair, I am difficult, I usually say ... if I want to say something I will say it, because I'd rather get it out of my system, if I'm annoyed or upset with them, I will just say it, and see what they have got to say about it, but I had about two or three people that were unhappy with having to call me Mr [surname], but that's their problem. It was probably the wrong thing to do, on reflection, it was probably, it probably is not good towards building up staff relations, or relations between myself and the staff, but it's just I feel that's the way I want it done. It's probably the *worst* thing I could have done, it probably is the worst thing I could have done ...

In: Is that how you feel about it ... ?

Hu: Well you see I had half the people calling me Mr [surname], and the other half calling me [first name], and the problem is, we also had a lot of coloureds and blacks that work in the factory, and then I had a sweeper who'd come up to me and say, "[first name]!" or something, and I thought no ways! and I'm not accepting this. I didn't have a sweeper coming up and doing that, but, you know, I'd have a guy who, like a coloured guy ... er, it's ... I shouldn't bring race into it at all, because I *am* racialistic ... but I am not racialistic to the ex... I mean I wouldn't want to marry a black, but I'm not racialistic to the poi... they've got a life to lead like I have, and I believe they deserve all the rights, everything that I had, all the opportunities, but I just feel that, if a black customer came in, or a coloured customer, or a white customer, it doesn't matter who it is, if it was a young guy of eighteen years, nineteen year old; old guy of ninety, whatever, I will ... they ask me my name, I'll say it's [first name] – that's a customer, whoever they may be, but I think staff – I felt bad about it – staff, I felt, well should call me Mr [surname] ...

In: Did this apply to all your staff?

Hu: All the staff, with no exception.

In: I'm not sure if you clarified this during the interview, I just want to ... can you just clarify exactly what the structure is. You are ... managing director?

Hu: Well ... basically yes. I don't have the title. I'm a director of the company; my dad is the owner of the company. I've basically taken over the company. He still comes in every now and again, and sits at his desk and sniffs around and whatever, but he still comes in, I *want* him to come in, you know, I enjoy having him there, and when he does come in, he does a good job, when he has to do something, so ... erm, but I'm basically in charge ... and I look after, I'm in charge of all the

staff, the factory, our various branches, everything.

In: Do you make motor car parts ...

Hu: That's right, yes.

In: OK. Ja. So would you say that you have a fairly formal relationship with your staff?

Hu: I actually cut myself off from them, I know I do that. I think it's done on purpose, I mean like the one guy who works for us, he is a nice guy, he really is a very nice guy, and I'd like to, I'd actually like to make house friends with him. If I had to make friends with somebody, I'd like to make house friends with him, but I think because of the work situation – not because of the gay situation, but I think the work situation – I'd find it very difficult to make friends with the staff, as well as trying ... tries ... as well as trying and gain their respect, and try and issue them instructions or orders to carry out. I don't ... I'd have a great job there ... I *am* formal, and I'm also informal – depends how I feel. If it's ... like if I go away with the one sales guy, I enjoy going away with him, we go out, we might go away for three or four days, we go out for dinner every night, and I'll play jokes on him, I love jokes, you know I was like ... say to the woman it's his birthday tonight, you know, and they'll all come and sing to him, and it won't be his birthday, and he'll, you know, get all embarrassed and things, and I enjoy going out with him, but he's able to accept that, he's able to accept that I'm more friendly to him after hours, than what I am in the work situation.

In: I just want to get back to what your motivation is for keeping that ... erm .. sort of ...

Hu: ... distance ...

In: hierarchy and distance, what function does it have for you?

Hu: I think probably I look at it in the way of discipline. It's probably the wrong way to look at it, but I probably feel that by distancing myself from them, I'm going to probably end up getting more respect, which is probably quite wrong, probably the wrong way to look at it ...

In: Why do you say it's probably quite wrong?

Hu: Because, you know, I feel that I'm not gonna be too familiar with them ...

In: Just explain yourself there, please?

Hu: In other words, I'm not going to be on familiar terms with them, and I'll find it very difficult, and if I *was* on familiar terms with them, and I wanted to shout at one of them, or – not *shout*, but if I wanted to pick one out about something or other, I think I'd find it very difficult to pull them into my office and say, "Look you know what you've done is not right, and I won't accept it, and you do things my way, or don't bother to do them at all." I think I'd find it very difficult to pull somebody up, or say to him, "Well, you know the customer came in, you didn't treat him very nicely, this is what you did wrong, this is what you did wrong, and I had no respect for, or I had no ... I don't accept your behaviour, or your

attitude, or whatever.” I think I’d find that very difficult to – if I was closer to the particular sales person or staff, or admin person, or whatever it was.

In: And your being gay? How does that come into it?

Hu: [Pause] You say ... er ... you mean ...? OK, I know exactly what you mean, I’m just trying to answer it, by telling you the truth ... [Long pause] ... I’m thinking something in my mind here, and maybe it answers it in a way. I’m actually thinking, what sort of impression am I making on you, OK, whilst I’m sitting here. Which is probably not very important. And probably at the same time thinking *that*, I probably think what sort of impression do I make on the staff, at the same time. I’d find it much easier, I’m sure, it would be much easier, if they knew I was gay, or I went and told them, or they all found out. If they didn’t accept it, well that’s their problem. I would – if they were a good worker – I suppose I would ignore it. I don’t know for how long I could ignore it though, I would have to ... eventually I would have to say something, pull them in and say, “Look does it worry you?” but I don’t feel I’m in a situation where – and this is why I say as a gay person, I feel I wouldn’t discuss if I was straight with them – maybe I feel I’m not in a situation where I have to tell them I’m gay, it’s their ... I’d probably say well it’s their problem if they found out, where it’s actually not really ... it’s my problem, if I think about it. I haven’t answered you, have I?

In: You are answering me in a way. You said you were thinking about what kind of impression you were making on me, and what kind of impression you are making on your staff ...

Hu: Maybe I *am* worried about impression. I actually don’t – funny enough, you know – I usually say what I want to say. If I don’t like somebody, well, then I don’t like them. I sometimes find out afterwards I was wrong, and I realise, you know, your way of thinking, or whatever you thought about that person ... you were just acting very irrational, and you should never have behaved like that, but usually I say, if someone expresses an interest in me, or whatever, I will ... they will know straight away I’m not interested. I don’t like ... I hate ... I’m beating around the bush with one person at the moment, but there’s a whole long story to it, I actually – I don’t know if it really comes into this, but anyway. Usually I’m very direct and very straight forward. And I say what I want to say, and if I upset people, I don’t want to do it in a ugly way. Maybe I would, if they phoned to invite me for dinner, I would say, “No thank you, I really ... I’ve got something else planned,” or, if they persisted, I’d say, “Look you know I really don’t feel like going out”; if they really persisted, I’d say, “I really don’t feel like going out to dinner with you,” or something, but people do know me, I think people find me a lit-

tle bit strange, that I ... I get funny comments sometimes from people, people think I’m snobbish, or they think I’m prissy, or they think I’m ... I wouldn’t say not a nice person, I believe that I *am*, but I know that I am very difficult, and I just don’t, I just don’t make myself ... I just don’t open up to people ...

In: And how does that feel?

Hu: I think, you know, I could tell you something now which probably explains a lot of the way I feel. I often feel threatened in situations – not that people are going to use me or abuse me, because if they’re going to, I’m soon going to find out, I’m not a fool, it maybe takes me longer with one person than with another person, but I’m soon gonna find out if they’re using me. But I think I’m ... a lot of my way of thinking, and my way of cutting myself off from people, or being able to put things in the back of my mind, and just leaving them there to deal with at a later date – because I *will* deal with it at a later date, it may just take me maybe a few years to deal with it, but eventually I will get to dragging it out and dealing with it – is that when I was eight years old, my mother was murdered. And I know I suffered a dreadful loss with her going, and I just put in my mind that she was coming back and that ... you know, I couldn’t deal with it at that time, it was imposs... I couldn’t deal with it, and I think the only way I dealt with it, was by saying well she’s coming back. But, you know, as the years went on, slowly I started to deal with it, it was probably only ten years after she died that I actually managed to start ... that I actually started dealing with it. And I think I also cut myself off from people, emotionally, because maybe I’m ... it’s only now I’m starting to realise this, that maybe I feel I’m going to lose them one day ... And maybe the same sort of thing applies in work, I don’t want to get too close to people, I don’t want to develop too many friendships in work. Look, you know, the staff at work know that I like them. There’s one guy who, unfortunately, who works for us, who gets the bad end of the stick. The only day he didn’t get the bad end of the stick was on Wednesday, when it was his birthday, it’s the only day that I’ve never shouted at him, never in his entire career with our company that I have never shouted at him, and he gave us all birthday cake, and this cake came through and I said to the tea girl, I said, “And whose birthday is it?” and she says no, it’s so-and-so. So I said oh, and then when one of our sales managers came in, and I said, “You know what it means Dennis, it’s his birthday and I can’t shout at him today, you know.” And I said I wished I didn’t know it was his birthday. But he’s one guy that I ... maybe I ... I know I take a lot of my frustrations out on him, but they’re work related, they’re not personally related, or whatever, but I do cut myself off from people.

In: You said you weren't answering my question ...
So, would you like to answer it?

Hu: Do you want to ask me it again?

In: I was asking you ...

Hu: I talk too much, I get ...

In: No, you are saying very interesting things ... I was asking you how being a gay person fits in with your creating this ...

Hu: Barrier, or distance or whatever? [Pause] Maybe I feel threatened, perhaps I feel threatened that they are guys, and I'm also a guy, but they're all straight, and I am not.

In: Tell me more about that?

Hu: It's got nothing to do with sexual attraction, I've never had fantasies or dreams about anyone that works for us. I never thought well that guy who works over there, I've employed him because he's good looking or something. I've never done that. I've had other fantasies, yes, but not about the people at work. For example, if a gay person had to apply for a job, and had to actively tell me in an interview that he was gay, I don't know if I would – no, I won't say I don't know if I would employ him, I probably wouldn't employ him, because I'll feel threatened. I'm also deceiving you in a way, because I did employ one gay guy, in our factory, but I don't have very much to do with him, I put him into one of our stores, but he got himself involved in a dreadful story in town here, and he ended up without a job, and I knew his brother very well, who is also gay, and I didn't know this guy, I just knew of him through his brother, and he was in a lot of financial trouble, and I thought, well, out of the goodness of my heart, I need someone there, and I will employ him, regardless of his sexuality. Well I didn't make a mistake, because he's been with us for four or five years now, but I would never discuss anything with him, we are on two different levels, he is – this is now snobbish – you know we're not in the same social level, put it that way, I don't think we are, that's very snobbish, but we aren't, and I would never ... if Arnold had to say to me, "Well, come round for supper tonight, I've invited so-and-so," I'd say to him, "Well I'm very sorry, but I won't – firstly, he's staff, secondly, he's gay, thirdly, he's really not my sort of ..." It would just be a combination of ... it wouldn't just be because he was gay, or just because he was on our staff, or just because he wasn't on my social level, it would be actually a combination of all those three factors that would make me decline the invitation. If Arnold said to me, "Well, I'm inviting so-and-so to [supper]," and he was on our staff, I'd say fine, if he said to me, "I'm inviting somebody from ..." he's this sort of person ... and I thought well, he's low level or whatever – I know it's snobbish what I'm saying – I would come, and if they said to me he was gay, I would come, it wouldn't make a difference, but just a combination of those three points ... I wouldn't ... I would decline the invi-

tation. Who else have I employed that's been gay? I've had ... this guy here that I employed, he in turn had employed two or three guys, coloured guys, that were, I presume that they were gay, and he employed another white guy, who ended up as being our security guard, who I later heard on was going down to the beach front here, at night times, and all that. Well, they must've known about me, through the one that I employed, they must've known, there's no ways that they could not have known, but they could never point a finger at me, because firstly I don't go down there, secondly, they haven't ... I doubt, I've been to the club a few times, I don't think they've ever seen me in the club before, and the way I behave at work, it's not an act, it's just the way I normally behave, they wouldn't be able to pick up that I am gay, and I would certainly never let on that I suspect that they were, but I was ... uncomfortable in the beginning about it, especially when the security guard was employed and I found out afterwards where he was going, I didn't like that very much, I did feel threatened by that. But if a guy came to me and sat down for a sales job or an admin job or whatever job and he said to me he was gay ... if I thought he was a ... if he ended up on my short list ... or even if he didn't end up on my short list, if he ended up on whatever list, and I felt he was, I would try to ... if I felt he was a good candidate for the job, I suppose maybe I would overlook that, I don't know, I haven't been really faced with that situation. The only situation I've been faced with was when I had a sex change who came in for a job, and she never admitted to anything, or he didn't, and right at the end I said to him, "Is there something you're not telling me? because I feel you're keeping something back from me," and he said to me well he's a sex change, I said, "Oh." Then he said to me, "What are the chances are ..." He wasn't suitable anyway, he wasn't the right person for the job, but I said to him, "Your chances are just as good as anybody else," but I knew right back here that I should have said is that well, "I'm sorry but, you know, I won't employ you, not because you're a sex change, but because your capabilities aren't correct for the job," but I couldn't bring myself to say that either, because it would've been taken up the other way. I would feel threatened having a gay person working on the admin or sales side. Alright on the other hand, I've often thought, in one of our fitting shops, one of our finishing shops, of employing a lesbian woman, to manage the staff there, I've often thought about doing that, and that wouldn't worry me.

In: Why not?

Hu: I don't think I'd feel threatened. I don't think it would really worry me. I just don't think I'd feel threatened, I think I would actively, if I wanted a lesbian woman, I would actually put an advertisement in the paper, so that a woman who was a

lesbian, if she read the advertisement, and she was a ... she liked working with tools or whatever, she would pick up straight away that we were looking for a lesbian type of woman. That wouldn't worry me at all.

In: Why did you think specifically a person like that for that job?

Hu: Because I sometimes feel that women are better workers than men. And they are sometimes more reliable and more capable of doing a job than what some of these guys are that you employ as foremen or as supervisors, or whatever ...

In: Why a lesbian specifically?

Hu: Because it's quite a butch environment, and she'd have to work with ... it would have to be a hands-on position, it would have to be a position where it would be a lot of supervision, but it would be hands on at times, with small tools.

In: If you had to make an analogy of your situation, who you are at work and your situation in the work, how would you? If you had to describe it in symbolic terms, how would you see yourself?

Hu: I think I would find it difficult to describe it in symbolic terms, but I would describe myself at work ... [Pause] I see myself as being very fair, at work, I'm very responsible, and I know that I must set the example, or the examples that I set are certainly followed by a lot of our staff, because I see it in faxes and letters that get sent out, where certain words and expressions that I use keep on popping up, and if I, somehow, if I write a report to one of our sales guys to follow up on, you know, I write in funny things like, you know, "Why is East London branch crying wolf all the time about this?" and I'll see the same sort of thing come up in their dealings with other staff or whatever, you know, so certainly I think a lot of them do follow me, a lot of them do ... I think whatever effect I have in the place, or whatever they think of me, a lot of them do imitate or copy my actions, or copy my language, or my way of writing.

In: And if they had to find out you were gay?

Hu: They would probably have a good laugh about it. [Laughing:] I don't know, I really don't know. Also with the company, a lot of our staff have also been there a long time. Some of them have been there thirty years now, so it's only in the last maybe four years that I started employing my own staff to work with me, and replacing staff that had either retired or staff that had gone on to move on to other jobs, or staff that I hadn't been happy with, and had to call in and say, "Well look, I'm not happy with your work." So maybe you'll find that, maybe I would find that after a few more years with more staff that I start employing, and staff that like me, probably it may not affect ... it may not worry them, whereas maybe the older staff, that have been there maybe wouldn't like the idea, or maybe wouldn't accept it. Although they all listen to me, you know I have staff there who are 50, 55 years old

that all call me Mr [surname] – well I'm leaving my name on your tape, but that's also OK, it doesn't really matter ...

In: That's OK, because it doesn't ... I mean I get the copy of the tape, and it gets wiped after I have transcribed it.

Hu: It doesn't really matter. If the worst comes to the worst, so what?

In: Your father doesn't know, does he?

Hu: I had a party. I was studying, when I came back out the army, I was studying at the technicon here, and when I came out the army, I moved, I obviously went back to his house, and I was there for about a week, and he said to me, "You know, you live in this house, you live under my rules and conditions," and I thought, "Oh fuck you, I'm not gonna live under your rules and conditions" – not that I was gonna go out wild or whatever – and I found a house to stay in. I had enough money saved up, so I didn't need his miserable help, whatever – at the time I was very anti him – so I told him, well fuck off, I'm going. So I moved out. Anyway, it was very nice, he said well, what he said to me, "If you leave, you leave with nothing" – well fine. I started studying, he payed for my tuition again, and then I decided well, I didn't know enough guys in this town, so the first thing to do, is to have a big party. And I was renting a very nice house, a double-storey house, and the woman who owned it lived overseas for eight or nine months of the year, and the two floors were separate, so she gave me the bottom floor for R85 a month, and it was magnificent, absolutel... for R85 a month I had two double eye-level ovens, and it was really absolutely wonderful. That was cheap. And all I had to do was look after her place, so I thought that's fine. So I had a big party, about 150 people that I invited. And it was a fancy-dress party, and I had another friend I was very friendly with, a nice guy, but, you know, quite large guy, and I then had two outfits. The first one was like this ballerina outfit, you know – the first time ever ... anyway, so I wore it, and I had this wig, and I met everybody at the door. And then I changed afterwards into a more of man's outfit, whatever. And I hadn't invited my sister – she was still living here then. And she knew quite a few gay guys, which I did not really know about. I didn't know she knew them. And they had been invited. And of course they must've told her, and she was offended that ... or upset, or annoyed that she hadn't been invited. She never phoned to ask me where her invitation was or anything like that, but ... So, it was on Saturday night. And she used to work for my dad at that time. And I went of to lectures, and I got home that Monday, and I got a phone call: come down to the office – from my father. So I went down ...

In: How old were you at the time?

Hu: I was about 21 or whatever I was, 22, whatever it was. When I first went to Rhodes, I was 17, so I

was very young when I first got to Rhodes, but I turned 18 that year – I suppose I was about 22, 23 ... I was about 22, 23. And I went into his office, and he looked at me, and he's very, oh he's an awf... not an awf... I *like* him, but he can be an awful man sometimes, very strict and he's a disciplinarian or whatever, very authoritarian, that man, he says jump, you jump. So he says to me, pulls me in, "Close the door! I want to talk to you!" I said, "Yes, what about?" "How can you come to the office wearing shorts like that!" "But I was at home." He said, "Don't *dare* coming here wearing shorts!" "Fuck you" – that's what I said under my breath, you know. He says to me, "What's this I hear you being f... you're fucking arou... you're being fucked and you're fucking around?" So I said, "What do you mean?" You know? So he said, "You know exactly what I mean. You had a party and there you were standing in a white dress!" "That was just a party." He said, "And what's this being fucked and fucking around?" again. I said, "I'm not being fucked, and I'm not fucking around," and it was true, I wasn't being fucked, and I wasn't fucking around. But that didn't lie there, and he said, "Are you a homosexual, are you gay, or what are you!" He didn't use the word "gay", he used "homosexual" I suppose. So I said no. Anyway, I don't know what he said to me, after that, I can't remember, I was just so shocked, not shocked, nervous, I suppose, or whatever, but I denied it, anyway. And then ... I don't think he believed me, and he said to me, "I'm stopping your allowance." He was giving me an allowance at the time. So I said, "Well, stop it." You know. I had a car, which my grandmother had bought for me. So I said, "Well, stop it." I thought, you know if I had to go out to work, well, I must get a part-time job or something. I went to my grandmother afterwards. Not thinking she would help me, I just went to her, I was so upset about this whole thing. I was thinking the old man is so damn rude, and he's now stopped my allowance. Now she doesn't talk to him, she doesn't like him. She said, "Now don't worry about that, it's just typical of him, he's the type of person that would do that. Well, don't worry, I'll give you an allowance." So, she gave me an allowance. About two months later, you know, he phoned me and said, you know, he'll start my allowance up again. So I said, "Fine," you know, "start it up. I'm not worried." And, the other night, about ... must've been about January, February – a few months ago – I had occasion to go around to his house, my dad's house, my dad and my step-mother. I went around there, and I said to him, "How are you?" because he had been to the doctor. And, apparently – he's had lots of health problems, he's fine when you look at him, but he's got a weak heart and all this sort of nonsense – so I believe the doctor didn't give him good news about his heart or something. So he says,

"Not very well." And he looks and he says, "And when are you gonna get married?" So I said, "Pardon?" He said, "You heard me, I said, when are you gonna get married?" So I said, "What do you mean when am I gonna get married?" because I'm trying to think of something to say! So he says something, and I say, "Why do you want me to get married?" He says no, because he wants grandchildren. I say, "But you got grandchildren." Because he has, he's got grandchildren from his other son, and he's got grandchildren from my sister. So he says, "No, I want grandchildren from you," but I say, "but you've got grandchildren!" So he says, "You still haven't answered my question: When are you gonna get married?" So I said, "Well, I don't know!" you see. So he said, "What d'you mean you don't know?" I said "Well, I don't want to talk about it." Whereas I know I said to you earlier on that if my aunt said to me now, asked me, I would tell her the truth, but I still couldn't do it to my dad, four months ago, and I don't know if I used ... probably I used this, I thought to myself you know he's sick, he's been to the doctor, the doctor hasn't given him good news, and now he's getting all funny about things, and he wants to ... and I think I used that as an excuse, afterwards, to explain my answer to him, which maybe wasn't the right excuse to u... I know, I think I use that as an excuse for why I couldn't admit to being gay, because he was ill, and the doctor had told him sort of news that wasn't too good, but I don't think that's true. It's just an excuse, something I put into my mind to make me more accept what I really said to him. I didn't lie, but I was sort of trying to evade the topic.

In: Tell me, what do you see ahead in the future, and I'm talking specifically about at work – where do you see things going?

Hu: You mean about being gay? For myself, or in my work situation?

In: Ja, in your wo...

Hu: It's eventually going to get to the situation where I'm gonna be ... I'm 34 now, I gonna be 35 next year, and then I'm gonna be 36, and so it's gonna carry on. Eventually it's gonna get to the situation where I'm 40, or I'm 50 years old and I am still unmarried. Or it's gonna get to the situation where I'm ... now, I meet somebody, or next year, or the year after I meet somebody and they live with me. And people will find out *Hurricane's* approaching 40 and he's not married yet ... that's if they don't know already, or don't think so already, they will obviously start thinking in years to come, "Why isn't he married? Is he perhaps homosexual, is he perhaps gay?" Or, you know, "I had to phone *Hurricane's* house the other night because the alarm went off, or something happened and this other guy answered the phone." It happened to me the other day. One of the guys at the office came to me, dunno why he wanted to get hold of me, he said, "I phoned your

number" – 'cause it's the first year my phone number has been in the phone book – "so I phoned the number, but some other guy answered the phone". I said, "What you mean some other guy answered the phone?" He said, "No, there was another guy that answered the phone." So I said, "Well, where did you phone?" He said, "I phoned the number that was in the phone book." I said, "But I don't live there any more. I rented that flat out" – was the flat above here, so it's probably the tenant that answered the phone. So he said, "Oh, that might have been it." You know and I thought to myself, I wonder if when he phoned – because I don't know what the tenant said to him – I thought to myself, I wonder what he thought, "Is this *Hurricane*'s friend that lives with him, or what is this?" you know. So there will come a time when someone will want to phone me, and some other guy will answer the phone. I don't know how I see myself, in years to ... I can see myself in years to come, I can see myself working as hard as I'm working now. I actually see myself living alone – I don't want to, but I see myself living alone, because I'm very ... I'm too fussy to find someone, I know I am. You know, sort of, where do you find someone who's good looking, somebody who is a very nice person, someone who's intelligent, somebody who has a good body, someone who's faithful, where do you find lots of those things in one person? You don't, you find someone ... [Tape change] Maybe nobody finds *me* interesting, I don't know, maybe that's ... you know, it must do, because, you know, there are a few people that do phone and chase after me all the time, I just don't find them ... there's always something wrong, they're either not ... either they are a very nice person, but I find them boring, or they're not good looking, and they're a nice person, but they bo... I haven't found someone whom I find interesting and who's not good looking ... looks don't worry me that much. But, I haven't found somebody. And I don't know how I would react, if I did find somebody, how I would involve him in my work life, I don't know.

In: What do you think?

Hu: I suppose I would, because if I had to live with somebody, I wouldn't expect him to take me to his staff parties, or things like that, or if he was, say, a sales rep with a company, and they were having a function, and maybe his boss knew about him and said look, bring along your friend, I don't expect him to do that, I would understand it if he didn't. I would accept it if he didn't. But if he denied me in other ways, maybe his parents were coming in to town, and he said, "Look, I'm sorry but you must move out," or "You must move into your own bedroom in the house," I'd say, "I'm sorry, I'm not doing that."

In: So are you saying that you would try to ... not take him along to work functions?

Hu: No, I probably would. I think at the end of the day I would. I think at the end of the day, if he said to me, "Why, you're having this function, and your other guys are bringing their wives, why can't you just take me along as a friend?" And if I thought it was going to upset him, yes, then I would, because I think at the end of the day, that will probably be more important to me, knowing that I have somebody who I like very much, or who I love very much, and somebody who loves me, and we're working together, or we're working with one another, in whatever way, and if I had to go and spoil the whole thing, by excluding him, say, from my work life, I think at the end of the day, that probably would ... it might make me change my mind. It might make me think, "Well, my personal life is actually ... comes first before the company." But at the moment the company comes first, I'm not in that situation.

In: So you're saying that it's contingent upon, maybe your finding someone one day?

Hu: I think so, because I would hate to come second. If I was involved with someone, I don't want to play second fiddle. I don't want to think, well, I'm not good enough to be accepted by him a hundred percent, or be accepted by his family, that I must hide away when his family comes down. Certainly, if I met somebody who I like very much – it's not often that I have my parents around for supper or a braai or whatever I have in mind for, but if they didn't like it, at the end of the day, and they didn't want to come around because of my friend, well then that's *their* problem. At the end of the day it's not my problem. I think, at the moment, I don't have to prove anything to anyone other than myself. I don't have to ... not that it's the be-all and end-all that I meet somebody now and must suddenly change, but I think if I felt it was worth changing for, worth living with s... I'm not paranoid about meeting somebody and living with them and people finding out, I don't suffer from *that* sort of phobia, and that's not restricting me from ... that I suffer from being ashamed, by not going out and meeting somebody, or falling in love with somebody and letting them come and live with me. That's not stopping ... if I met somebody who I really like, yes, then I'll go out of my way, because hopefully I'll spend the rest of my life with that person.

In: Do you think you'd take that person to work or to parties and stuff – you know, work parties – as a friend, or as a partner?

Hu: I think initially as a friend. I think initially it would be as a friend. Yes, it would definitely be as a friend. Maybe ... I can't answer "as a partner", because I don't know what I would do in that situation. I would like to say yes, if I was in that situation, I would take him as a partner. That's what I would like to say, but I don't know if I would.

In: So there's something that's stopping you from saying that?

Hu: Ja. No, there is, because I don't know. Look, I suppose I have to say yes, I would take him as a partner, because if I was going to meet somebody and live with them, then I'll have to be a hundred percent sure that this was the right person, and that I was guaran... not guaranteed, but that this was definitely the right person for me, and I wouldn't be ashamed with him, that whatever happens in my life, if I embarrass ... not embarrass myself, but if people want to talk behind my back, then at least it's worth while. Whereas if it was a piece of rubbish, not a piece of rubbish, but it was someone not worth while, and I knew it was gonna last a couple of months, then I probably wouldn't worry about it.

In: In other words ... or what you are saying is that you'd need something pretty substantial to allow you to rock the boat at work?

Hu: Yes, I think I would. I wouldn't, you know, if I met somebody, and he wanted to come and visit me at work, or phone me at work – no problem. I wouldn't want him ... he could phone every day at work, but quick, he mustn't speak to me for ... want to speak to me for ten, twenty, thirty minutes a day. "Hi, how are you *Hurricane*?" "Hi, I'm missing you very much," "Ja, speak to you later," or something, that's fine. I don't want lovey-dovey conv... at home, yes, different story, but I don't want it at work. From anyone. Whether it was a woman, or a guy. I wouldn't want that sort of thing at work. I think if I met somebody, you know, I think at the moment ... my life *is* empty in a way, doesn't make me unhappy – sometimes it does. Maybe I might be more open, if I met somebody, I may just very well be more open.

In: OK, I think I just want to check, if you can give me a second, if there is anything we haven't covered ... [looking at notes] 'cause we have actually covered a lot of ground ... Ja, I'm just wondering why you are doing what you are doing, why are you doing that specific job?

Hu: Why? Because ... I can explain this ... I can also go into a lot of detail here. It's not something I ever wanted to do. I started off studying at UPE. I did a week there; I came home the one Wednesday or Thursday and I said to my dad, I said, "Well that's it, I'm not going back tomorrow. Don't even wake me up, I'm not going back." "Why not?" I said, "Because." – I was doing a B Comm – I said, "Because I think five out of my six subjects," – I was trying to do it a year shorter, whatever – "are in Afrikaans, and I just cannot cope with the Afrikaans." The text... you know UPE was quite different in those days to what it is now. The textbooks were in Afrikaans, and the lectures – maths and computer science, and everything was in Afrikaans – and I couldn't cope with it. So he woke me up the following morning, he said, "Look, well go to Rho-

des." Went to Rhodes, and looked around, and I said ja, OK. So that Monday, or Sunday, I was off to Rhodes. And, I started off doing a B Comm. I don't like this accountancy, I can't stand it, and I don't like all my other B Comm subjects. So I changed. I first changed to B Social Science. I was at Rhodes for like maybe two weeks, and I changed from the B Comm to the B Social Science. I had this B Social Science for about a month, and I thought, oh I don't like this B Social Science either. I was *young*, I was seventeen years old. And I thought, oh well, let me change *again*. So I changed to BA. And I think by that time he was annoyed with me. Anyway, so I, oh well, I must carry on, so I carried on, doing it, I thought, oh well, just do it. Now I came out, and when I went back to the Technicon, the same story started all over again. I started off, and I did company administration. And I did that also for about two weeks. It involved accountancy and all sorts of things. And I thought oh no, ah-ah, I'm not into this either, I changed to something else again. Then he started getting the accounts for my books and saw a whole different thing come up in the books again, and he asked me, "Well, what's going on?" So I said, "Well, you know, I was doing company administration, and I changed to something else, but now I don't think I've done the right thing, I want to change to marketing now." So he said that's it, he's not paying for my books. This is after he stopped my allowance. So I changed again, I thought, oh well, let me change again. Anyway, I changed, I thought well I must stick with it; still not the right thing I want to do. I was just very immature, I think, and couldn't make up my mind what I wanted to study. No problems making my mind up with other things, and ... so I stuck it out, and I did it. It's not something I would ever want to get into, I should've gone – two years ago or so, I realised what I should've studied: it's law. That's exactly what I should've done, and that's what I would like to do. In a way, it's too late to do that, I can't walk out of the company now, because there'll be no-one else to fill my position there. He would h... (my dad would have to) find somebody else who would be prepared to take it over, and I can't – he's seventy years old – I can't expect him to go through that, you know, he wants to retire, he wants to get out of it, he wants to start relaxing, he doesn't want to be bothered with all those things. And, ever since I was a child growing up, he's always got into me, you know, "You're gonna come and work there one day, you're gonna come and work there one day." Where my interest was more sort of psychology at that time, although I don't think psychology is something I'd want to do today, but my interest was more that route, than accountancy, economics, and so on. So basically, it's more out of an obligation that I'm working there. If ... I think

my life would be different today, if I could change it – which I can change, but I don't want to change it – if my grandmother died, and if my father sold the company, or we decided to sell it, I would probably pack my bags and I'd probably move to America. What I would do over there, I don't know.

In: Why would you go there? What is there for you?

Hu: I've got my sister there and her child is there, I've got my aunts who I like very much, and my cousins, who ... not all of them, but some of them I get along with very well. I also like America, it's a nice country. Look, I'm happy out here. Ten years ago, if my grandmother wasn't here – 'cause, she's got nobody left, the only one here that can visit her, or whatever ... she got lots of friends and that, but I just couldn't leave my grandmother, it wouldn't be f... I just couldn't do it, and it's probably too late to pack up and leave for America now, be... what am I ... it's a little bit late in life to start buying a house again and motor car and start settling down and saving money and everything else, whereas here, you know, I'm comfortable, I don't have to worry about not ... *so far*, I don't have to worry about those things, things can change overnight, but I am comfortable at the moment, yes.

In: I would like you to choose a pseudonym that I can use in my write-up, if you can take a minute and think of something that says something about who you are, maybe not a first name, but something like the kind of thing people use when they write to a newspaper or a magazine ... think up something that's meaningful to you.

Hu: Well, I can give you one word that, I think, may not be the right word, it's a word that some people have come to me at the office and said you know what your nickname is around here, and I laughed the first ... [the tenants of the flat interrupt] ... But I think in a way does suit me, it's the word "hurricane". Because they say when I walk through that building or the factory, it's like a hurricane coming through. And sometimes it is, you know, I'm very quick. Ja, I walk through and I know I will be all over that floor space, although I'm standing on this one side, I know that everybody feels it straight away. OK. That's, you know, the only word, it's not a word ... it's not my own choice of word, but I do agree with it.

In: How does it feel?

Hu: What, like that? I laugh about it, I find it quite funny. I suppose I must believe it, you know, otherwise I wouldn't find it funny, I wouldn't accept it, I wouldn't say to you if I didn't find it reasonable in it's assessment, because that's exactly what it's like. Not that everybody wants to get out of my way. But, you know, they know when I'm there.

In: Is there anything that you feel is relevant that you haven't said? Anything you still want to say? [Pause] Something I missed out maybe, something I didn't take up?

Hu: I still look upon myself as being immature sometimes. And as the years or months, or as the months and years go on ... I think what I did last month wasn't very adult like, or was a bit childish ...

In: What are you referring to here?

Hu: Well, I think we ... I certainly feel I'm growing and changing all the time. I don't like being set in my ways, I don't like knowing that I must go home at six o'clock, or I must have supper tonight, or I must do this, I don't like a regular routine like that, I prefer to have very little of a routine. I suppose I do have a routine, but I prefer not to have a routine. I sometimes perceive myself differently to how other people see me and usually I'm inclined to put myself down, because I had people who come into the office or some staff members who say things to me sometimes, and I say but do you really feel that way? And they say yes, you know, or I certainly know that if somebody's got a problem at work, I'm not talking about a personal problem, for a specific reason, they come to me with a personal problem, some of them, and I'll sort them out, I don't have a hassle doing that, but if they have a work problem, or this sort of problem, and, you know, I can sit back and I can think about it, and come up with a reply or an answer, or I can come up with a type of action plan that we should follow if, say, the opposition are doing something, I don't have problems with things like that, but I sometimes wish, I sometimes feel that I'm not clever enough, or I sometimes feel that I'm lacking in certain areas, such as maybe ... I *did* marketing, I sometimes still feel I'm lacking in marketing, I'm not lacking in accounts, or economics or anything, although I didn't complete that course, I have a very good understanding of it. So I don't feel that my knowledge is lacking there. I sometimes don't ... I think I put myself down, a lot of the time, perhaps because I feel that I am gay. For example, in the work situation, I would be very capable of doing anything, in any company, you could take me out of the company I am in, and I am quite confident that you could put me into ... as MD of Nissan, or MD of any big company, and I would cope with the job. I feel quite confident to do that, but put me into a company cricket match, and it's not that I'm useless at sports, OK, I'm not good at certain sports, like ball sports, I can play tennis and that, but I would lose. There's no getting away from the fact, I know my limitations, for example. That's probably not a good example. It's also contradictory when I say I put myself down. I also feel confident that I could do practically any job, run a company or whatever, I think I can, I think my experience that I've had. I still have a lot more to learn, there's a lot more that I can learn, which I will learn. But I'm quite capable of ... [Tape change] ... The other thing that I wanted to say to you which I forgot: In our company,

you asked how do I sort of see myself in the company, or what is my position in the company. When I first started working in the company, all I ever wanted was to become top in the company, and one day to inherit the whole company, and that changed about four years ago. I actually thought to myself, well, really, does it really matter if I don't, does it matter if my sisters or my brothers or my step-mother and whatever, also get a interest in the company. I felt as long as I got like a 60 or a 75 % share holding, I was gonna be happy, but I've changed. It's not important, and if my step-mother said something to me the other day, she said – oh, I said something about, you know, "I always have to work so hard, and sometimes I feel like I have no personal life or private life, or anything, I don't have time to myself" – said, "Oh, don't worry, one day we'll sell this company and you'll be wealthy," you know, and I said to her, "You know, to be quite honest with you" – look, it may not happen, things can change overnight, anything can happen – I said to her, "You know, to be quite honest with you, I couldn't care who inherited the company, I actually couldn't be bothered at this stage of my life." I'm not. And materialistically I changed a lot, since I was say 20 years old to 34 years old, I've changed. But I was very materialistic at the age of 20. I wanted this, I wanted that, I wanted this, I would ... I wanted money. It's not important any more. My values have changed, you know like, I was very comfortable living in this flat, or a flat I had here, very comfortable, it was nice, it was fine for me. Now I've got a house down the road, and ... it needs lots of work, and it needs lots and lots and lots of work, it really ... I bought it to renovate. And firstly I don't have the time to renovate it, and secondly, it actually doesn't really worry me any more. It's in a good area, but it's a run-down ... when I was 20, I would never dream of living in a house like that, it just wouldn't ... I would just think well, it looks so scruffy, although it's in a good area, you know, people say, "Where do you live?" you say, "[neighbourhood]," they say, "Oh wow! How can you afford a house there?" or whatever. But it's a scruffy old house, but I'm not embarrassed about it, it doesn't worry me.

In: I just want to clarify, you say that ...

Hu: We're off the topic of gay and business ...

In: I'm gonna come back to that now, because you say that your values have changed, and the company's not that important any more, and yet you say you're not being open about being gay at the company, because it's ... How does ...?

Hu: Hmm. I can't real... Maybe ... OK, I think my values, my expectations, or whatever, have changed, but maybe the way I perceive myself hasn't ... not, well I perceive myself in a different aspect ... hasn't changed. Or maybe one or two of the stages have catching up to do with the other stages, I don't know.

In: So you feel that the fact that ...

Hu: I know I said to you in the beginning that the company was the most important thing. Maybe if I had to really think very hard about it, already, you know, I said to you if I had to meet somebody I would try and make things work, or try and develop that side of it, and try and make that the most important thing. So maybe already – when I say the company is the most important thing, it probably is the most important thing to me, but I think I am prepared to change that, given the correct circumstances, or different circumstances.

In: To wind up with: Can you tell me how you experienced this interview, and you can be quite, you know, open about that ...?

Hu: OK. In the beginning I was nervous when I saw the tape recorder when I first walked in. And even when we were speaking and I didn't know if it was switched on or not, I could feel myself being quite tense. Then you said no, it's not switched on, and when you did switch it on, it didn't worry me too much. Although I'm still conscious of the tape recorder, I'm actually wondering like when you listen back, you maybe hear my heavy breathing, or I know I've got a slight chest cold, you're gonna like hear the wheezing of chest, maybe it's from the cigarette, or you're gonna hear certain things I keep on repeating myself. I feel comfortable with you, I know I'm not looking you in the eyes right at this moment, I don't know what sort of eye contact I've maintained, I think I have maintained a fair amount. I was conscious of putting my hands up in front of my mouth, because I did read somewhere that when you do that, you are lying ... is that true or not, or is that a ...?

In: How do you feel?

Hu: Well, I believe it to be true. And I know that when people tell me things, I always watch are they covering their mouth, or putting their hands up here, and if I think they are doing it, I don't believe what they are telling me. So I have made a conscious effort of keeping my hands down below here, but I haven't lied to you. That I know for a f... I've had no reason to deceive you or lie to you. Maybe I don't as a self conscious, or as an uncomfortable sort of move, maybe I felt I want to protect myself from opening myself up too much, I don't know. I used to – years ago – I used to, I worked for ... not worked for ... I helped Gasa, and I helped getting it going here, but I kept a very low profile. And I did a lot of work, and the only area that I exposed myself, was we wanted to get a magazine going, and I went out and I ... various companies where I used to buy things from as a student – and I always had enough money as a student, I was never in a sorry state – like clothing shops and that, and I all got them to give us advertisements, and I had to explain what it was for. It didn't worry me at the time – I wouldn't do it today, although it

didn't worry me at that time. I used to write quite a lot for the magazine as well, but always under a different name, it was never under my name. I would probably do exactly the same thing today. I would get involved with something like that, with Glac [gay and lesbian support organisation in PE] – I'm not involved with Glac, I haven't had the time to do anything, although I would like to. I don't think it's a matter of the older I get, the more ... [Pause] ... the less I want to be gay or something; I think I've just accepted the way of life, and I think even if I was straight, I would live like this, I wouldn't advertise – not advertise the fact – I think I would, I won't hide ... I don't think I actively try and hide anything, although I am, from my father I suppose, by not actually just going to him and just telling him, or just telling everybody at work, or if it slipped out, just said, "Well, it's just one of those things." But maybe I would do it, given a different set of circumstances, or if my circumstances changed. For me on my own, I don't have to

change, I'm quite happy with the way things are. I would like to meet somebody, I'd like to get involved with somebody, but he has to be the right person, and probably then I would be more, I'd be co... I don't want somebody who's effeminate, I don't want ... *then* I would be embarrassed to take him to the business. I would be. If I had ... well, I wouldn't normally be attracted to a very camp guy, I have no attraction whatsoever to a camp guy. So I don't have to fear taking him to the business, because I would never take him there any... I would never be attracted to one. So I don't have *that* worry, but it would have to be someone very decent that I would want to involve in my life and take to the ... if I was involved in the company life.

In: OK, I think that's ...

Hu: Does it answer some of your ...

In: Ja, it has, and thanks very much, you've been honest and open and it's been very nice talking to you. I appreciate it.

Hu: OK, no problem!

3.3.2 Transcript of 1996 interview

Interviewer: I thought I'd like to do basically the same as two years ago, because I'm interested to see how things change with people, how they stay the same, and why. So I'm going to ask you a lot of the same questions. We won't have to go into the whole coming-out process again. In the research, I'll be looking at how what we came up with this time compares with last time. And I'm going to be using the material in the same way: I'll be coming back to you with my summaries and my analyses of the data, and checking with you whether it's OK. Of course confidentiality applies again – your name doesn't get mentioned at all, and you can delete anything that you feel is going to reveal your identity. Ja, and I hope that what I come up with will be helpful to, for example, mental-health professionals, who have to help people who experience difficulties in this area – work, coming out, those issues – so that what I'm doing has some practical application. OK, that's the preamble. The first thing I wanted to ask you is: Last time we used a pseudonym you chose and ...

Impatient: I can't remember what it was ...

In: You chose *Hurricane*.

Im: Oh, OK, alright.

In: And I'd like to know if you'd like to continue using that one, if it still applies?

Im: I don't think it applies any more. If I would change, I don't know what I would use now. It probably has changed, that's one thing that's probably changed.

In: Well, do you want to take a bit of time and think of something new?

Im: Well ... I can think of something new. Maybe I don't have to tell you now?

In: OK.

Im: That's not gonna to make any difference, is it?

In: That's fine – we can talk about it afterwards.

Im: If I think of the word *hurricane* ... I can now think of *impatient*, because that's what I've become. At the office I've become very impatient. I'm not like a hurricane, I don't rush in and carry on and perform and ... now I'm more impatient: I sit at my desk and people come to me and I probably perform in my office now I suppose, not performing in anybody else's office ... No, I think ... there's probably change – but I'll think of something.

In: What has made that change?

Im: I suppose maybe I've got more work, more responsibilities, maybe I don't have time to ... rush in ... like into the factory ... and everywhere else where I used to. Probably I'm also going away a lot more. I was still going away a lot then. I haven't been away much in the last two months, but I'm probably going away a lot more now, so I'm not in the office as much as I'd like to be. When I *am* in the office, I'm stuck in my office getting all my paperwork done. I think what I do now, I really just speak to certain people in the various divisions, and moaning at them or ... letting out from them what I want done, or ... finding out from them what has happened, and so on, and working through them, and they're working through everybody else, whereas before I used to ... really just work through everyone, if you can call it that.

In: Ja ... ja ... OK ...

Im: I'm feeling it's a stupid nickname. I liked it back then, but not any more, do change it.

In: One's perception of oneself does also change ...

Im: Probably.

In: Why do you say it was a stupid nickname?

Im: It sounds stupid now. It sounds ... immature. It sounds like I haven't handled my frustrations ... or my temper. Although I don't have a temper ... but it sounds like I haven't handled myself correctly. That pseudonym doesn't seem to be ... very apt. It seems to be undignified and ...

In: Do you feel more controlled now?

Im: No I do. I would say so, yes. I think we change all the time, you know ... we hopefully grow more mature. What we did ten years ago we feel embarrassed about now, a few years ago. What we did yesterday, we feel embarrassed about, so I think ... I'm always feeling embarrassed about things that I did or said a day or two ago. I always think I'm growing up ... but I suppose we change all the time.

In: ... Last time we also spoke about how we label ourselves – and all the different words that get used for people of a homosexual orientation ... I'm just using that as one of the many words. What word would you now use to describe yourself?

Im: I suppose I'd say I'm a gay person. If you're looking at a word, *homosexual*, *gay*, *moffie*, whatever ... I think I'd probably say *gay*.

In: Do you feel comfortable with that?

Im: With the word *gay*?

In: Yes.

Im: Yes, I do feel comfortable with it.

In: Tell me a bit about that ... why?

Im: Well, I don't like, I won't like someone to say behind my back I'm a moffie. I'd prefer them to say, "He's gay". *Homosexual* is alright, I don't want to ... it doesn't strike a discord or it doesn't worry me. But I think if I heard people say, "No, he's a moffie," I think it would upset me more than what *gay* would upset me. Although it's not ... although if I was talking about somebody and I was being derogatory in front of my gay friends, I'd probably say, "Oh he was a real moffie," you know, but it's more of a derogatory term, I think, than ...

In: What are the connotations to *moffie*?

Im: Screaming queen I suppose ...

In: And *gay*? What associations do you have with that?

Im: Somebody who's more sensible. Somebody who doesn't really make any difference whether they are straight or gay. Somebody who's not making it obvious because ... he's not hiding it away and he's not advertising it. He's just being himself.

In: Ja ... Is that how you would describe yourself?

Im: I would say so. I don't think I'm ... I think I'm ... I sort of had an idea what you would do ... you'd sort of ... obviously you'd have the questions with answers from the last time we spoke ... and you'd want to see what change had taken

place ... I think change *has* taken place ... and also things have changed, and other things have remained the same.

In: Sure.

Im: I would think ... I've probably become more relaxed at work. We have this set-up at the moment where ... well, what happened was ... a position, a sales manager's position, was vacant in our company, and it was advertised and we went to a personnel agency and we also advertised ourselves. And I had one guy who came in, he seemed the right sort of person for the job, he was married and had a child and somebody else came in for the job ... and the second person got the job. And I was in the club one night – and somebody came up to me and said, "Hello there, how are you?" And I said, "Where do I know you from?" He said, "No, you interviewed me." That was the first guy ... and we spoke a bit, I've seen him once or twice afterwards – but it turns out that he's now got divorced from his wife. But the second guy that we employed, his wife works for one of the hotels here, and I know someone else who worked for one of the hotels here who subsequently moved to East London. And we had a staff function, we had a breakfast at one of the hotels over December ... because all my staff stayed there and we had a function there one weekend in December. And I got annoyed at the breakfast table – there might have been thirty or forty of us sitting there – and I got annoyed at the breakfast table because the coffee wasn't coming, and I'd asked for coffee three or four times, and there was just no coffee and the sales manager we employed, his wife happened to be one of the managers at this hotel, and she was sitting at our table. So she wasn't to blame and she came to me during the breakfast and said to me, "Is there a problem?" So I said, "Ja, there's a problem – we don't have coffee and I've been asking three or four times for coffee." Anyway, it was all sorted out and it wasn't a hassle. I went to our East London office, and I stayed in the hotel there and this friend of mine, who I know also works at the hotel, he said to me, oh! he was speaking to this girl in PE who is married to our sales manager and she was telling him about the performance that I threw at the hotel, you know. And I said, "Do you know her?" and he said, "Ja! I speak to her once a week or so." And so obviously her husband must ... they must communicate when they get home at night and she must tell him what she does during the day and I'm sure she's spoken to this guy in East London and he knows me and he tells her things about me – she must relay it back to her husband. But he seemed pretty eccentric – I'm sure he knows. We've never discussed it at all. He's always very friendly me ... a little bit too friendly at times. I wonder what his motives are ... if he's just trying to be friendly for the sake of making a good impression, or ... what his actual motives are. He's

always asking ... his wife went away and he asked me to go away with him for the weekend to East London because his parents live there.

In: When was this?

Im: This was about two months ago, when his wife was away somewhere for about two weeks, and he asked me if I would want to go with him to East London for the weekend, and I thought, no, wrong thing to do. And he's asked me out a few times ... and I believe don't get involved, it's not the right thing to do.

In: In what way? What makes you hesitate?

Im: Well, I think ... there was another guy who worked for us many years ago. I became friendly with him. A straight guy. It led to problems, you know, when you're friendly with someone after hours and you work with him as well. It's different if you're on the same level, it's not a problem, but when one of you is below or above the other, it can become a problem when you tell the guy, "Well, this is what I want you to do, and I want you do this." And he says, "Well, we have this friendship going and I'm not going to sit back and take orders like that." It can be a problem, and also I don't want to make an exception with our sales manager to become friendly with. He's a really nice guy ... you know, I like him ... if it wasn't for the work situation, I probably wouldn't mind being friendly with him. But if I'm to be friendly with him then I must get friendly with everybody else after hours and I don't want to be friendly with staff after hours and I don't want to mix with them after hours, I don't want to invite them round to my house. It's not because ... I don't want them to find out about me or anything like that, it's just that I don't want them here. Even if I was straight, I would have the same feelings. One doesn't mix with your staff and people you work with. That is a stupid thing ... maybe one should be friendly with them after hours, maybe one should do things together, maybe one should create more of a feeling of friendship between yourself and your staff - I don't know. I don't want to get involved with their problems, and friendships and any other problem at work and ... because of your friendship they expect more from you: they want you to be more lenient with them, or not pick on them, or not complain if you're unhappy about something. Because I believe if I'm unhappy, I want to talk about it, I don't want to keep quiet about it, I want to moan about it and I think if I'm too close to someone, then I'll find it difficult to complain about something.

In: So it's about your position ... being at the top, it is difficult to become personally involved?

Im: Yes, ja ... I would say it is ... I'd say it's very awkward to become involved with staff. Even my staff ... like our driver ... I don't even like my driver coming to the house to fetch something or do something, because it's none of their business. What happens at work happens at work

and it stays at work. What happens at home happens at home and stays at home. I just feel that even if I had a wife and children living with me here and I was completely straight, I still wouldn't want the driver coming here. Maybe if it was an end-of-the-year function, maybe it'd be different - I wouldn't mind having them around, but it'd be once only, and I wouldn't have them back again until maybe the following year again. So I don't want to get too ... you know, like this sales manager, the other day ... I like joking a lot, and I said to him - about two days ago ... this week, I think, this week or the end of last week - I said to him ... he answered his phone, I said to him, "Are you sitting down?" and he said, "Yes." I said, "You spend too much time sitting down, you're gonna have a big bum!" you know, so he said, "Are you looking you at my bum?" ... Of course, I didn't know what to say. [laughter]

In: What happened then?

Im: No, I just laughed. I said, "Well, you've got me there," you know, I didn't have a quick enough reply to him.

In: So do you think he's gay?

Im: ... I think so, but I would never ... I would never have ... I'm not interested ... really if he is or not. And if I saw him at the club, and he ... if he got divorced from his wife, for example, and decided he was gay, and he got divorced from his wife and he told me all about it, it'd be the same thing. I'd still treat him exactly the same. I wouldn't invite him round to the house now, as a special favour, or try and make a friend out of him or anything like that. I wouldn't be interested.

In: If he weren't an employee, would you ...?

Im: Ja ... then I'd ... Ja, I suppose I would ... I suppose I would think about it anyway. But it's not a situation that ... When he first started working for us, I didn't like him, because he was too cocky for himself, he seemed a bit too sure of himself ... a little bit ... not aggressive, but ... Mr Know-it-all. After about three weeks or so I spoke to him about it and I said, "Listen, I don't like your attitude. You may come from here or come from there, but you know very little what's going on here, you have to learn what's going on. You're in charge of x number of people and they've been here a lot longer than you've been here, and I suggest that you come down to earth and you start looking and seeing what is going on around you." I believe, you know, if you're unhappy with somebody, you must come straight out and say it, you mustn't beat around the bush. At least you know where you stand with the person. If they don't like it, well then too bad. I think the closer you are to someone the more difficult it is to get angry with them, or to pick them out about something that they're not going to be happy with. But no, we have a lot of guys who work for us, we have a lot of nice guys that work for us, we have nice-looking guys that work for us, but

if I'm not happy, I tell them straight out, "Listen," you know "I don't accept what you're doing," or I give them a job to do, I say, "When am I going to get it?" They look at me as if I'm mad, you know, and I say, "Well, today's Monday ... when are you going to finish this?" They say, "No ... I'll do it in a day or two." I say, "No ... tell me what day ... and what time." Now I make a note of it, and if they tell me Tuesday at 12 o'clock, I'll phone them at 12 o'clock and say, "Listen, where's my work? You said to me today, 12 o'clock. Where is it?" They come up with excuses and I say, "No excuses ... you could have done it last night at home, if you didn't have time, you could have told me this morning you wouldn't have it ready, but don't let me phone you and ask you for it." If they don't like it, too bad. It's one of those things.

In: Ja. Tell me, this sales manager that you didn't employ ...

Im: He wasn't the right ... I didn't think he was the right guy for the job. It was only a few weeks later that I saw him at the club and he came up to me and I couldn't place him for a moment. But I'm pleased, I wouldn't like to have ... he came round to visit me once or twice afterwards, you know ... there was nothing going ... you know, he had a wife – he had a child and ... I didn't want to get involved in complicated issues. I'm not interested in someone else's problems that way.

In: What if a situation like that had to arise where you did employ someone and bumped into him at the club? How do you think that would be for you?

Im: I suppose ... There's this one salesman ... I'll get back to this other sales guy first. We'd been away, I think once or twice ... we'd been to the office in East London or down in George ...

In: That's the one you employ now?

Im: Yes ... for nearly a year. He calls me by my surname. If we had to go away to Cape Town, for example, to get a new branch going, and we were there for two or three weeks and we were staying together at the same hotel or wherever we were staying, and we were like going to the movies in the evening or doing this or doing that ... I'd say, "Well, call me by my first name. In the office situation, we'll just revert back to calling me by my surname." I mean that came up two years ago, I said to you that's also stupid, I didn't know whether it's the right or wrong thing ... calling someone Mister or by your first name ...

In: How do you feel about that now?

Im: No, I do feel comfortable with it. I think I do feel comfortable with it, yes, with the majority of our staff. We employed an elderly lady the other day ... she calls me by my surname and I call her by her first name. She's old enough to be my grandmother, certainly my old mother. I would feel uncomfortable if I went out with a sales manager of ours in the evening and he kept on re-

ferring to me as Mister, Mister, Mister all the time, you know, I'd feel very uncomfortable. I'd tell him, "Listen, call me by my first name." You know. I wouldn't do that. In an office situation, when we get back to the office situation, they all call me by my surname. Now to get back to this other story: If I had to employ somebody and go to the club and find him there, well, I suppose I'll have a good laugh about it because ... Well, it'll depend, because one is talking about if I'd employed that guy, he got divorced and decided to go the alternative route – well, that's not a problem. But I think I still would have kept it a work relationship. It wouldn't have stopped me from going to the club. I don't go to the club very often anyway, very seldom do I ever go. I would have still kept it a work relationship. I wouldn't have become more close to him, or invite him round in the evenings, or anything like that. I know I wouldn't have done that ...

In: Would it not have worried you that an employee might then know about you being gay?

Im: No, I don't think so ...

In: Because if I think back – and correct me if I'm wrong – when I last spoke to you, it would have worried you.

Im: It would have worried me, yes. It wouldn't worry me now. In fact, there's a place here, a sort of a strange place, which has been taken over by the guys really, by the gay guys. I think it's gone very quiet now. But our factory manager ... his son worked for us for a while, but he wasn't really any good and after three months I said to him, "I'm not happy with your work, you're on probation and you're just really not the right sort of person that we want." And I told our factory manager. He's been with us for many, many years, our factory manager, but it's no use me lying to him, telling him that we don't have space for his son, or there's not enough for him to do. I said to him, "Your son's not suitable for our work we want him to do." But he left and he became a barman at this place. I saw him there a few times. And I heard a story about three weeks ago, that he had met up with another guy, and they've been staying with his parents, both of these guys were staying their parents. They met up together, and this guy who worked for us, who's now a barman, he took his friend back to his father's house, our factory manager, and introduced his friend as his lover or whatever. Apparently the mother and father threw him out of the house. And I believe the friend's mother also didn't want them to stay there and they moved in somewhere else together. And about a week ago this guy, the boyfriend, if you want to call it that ... I walked into our showroom and here this guy was sitting, and I said to him, "Hi, how are you?" and he said, "No, alright!" – I don't really like him, I must be honest, he's not ... I don't really like ... I think he's a miserable ... I would never be friendly with him. I just don't like him. I think

he's a common piece of trash ... but I do know him. So I said, "Hi, how are you?" He says, "Fine!" I said, "Is someone helping you?" He said, yes, he's been helped. I said, "Who's helping you?" He said, no, he's waiting for ... I was just being slow, I should have realised when I saw him sitting there, because I knew these two had got together. And I said, "Who's helping you?" So he said, no, he's waiting for our factory manager, you see. So I said, "Oh, no, does he know you're here?" He says, "Yes, no they've called him." I went back to my office and just saw my factory manager come through, and they were quite civil to one another and off they went through to the factory manager's office. And I thought afterwards, *ag* you know, whether this guy tells our factory manager, or not – it doesn't bother me a lot, I'm not bothered at all. So ... it's one of those things.

In: Well that's interesting, because it seems to me like a big change from how things were with you previously. Maybe we can talk a bit about why and how that's changed for you. But I just want to clarify something else first: I wonder, with me coming here two years ago and coming back now, if you feel there's an expectation that you should come up with some kind of growth and change?

Im: No ... no ... I don't think so. I think certain things change in your life – other things don't change. I've always been very conservative. All my life I've been very conservative and I don't mind saying it here: I regret now that I've never done some of things I wanted to do sexually. I regret it. I've never given anybody a blow job – never in my whole life. I regret it. I mean, I wouldn't do it now. If I was involved with somebody, but then I'd have to know that it was going to last for a long time. I mean it's not going ... meet somebody for a week or two and like them and give them a blow job. That's just the way I am. So I suppose what I'm really trying to say is some things change and other things don't change. I would say, no ... quite a lot has changed.

In: It sounds a bit like you expect that that's not going to happen – that you're not going to have the opportunity to do those things you want to do?

Im: I'd still have to meet somebody. I don't know why I'm still single. OK, I don't say that ... I don't know why I'm single, I know if ... I look in the mirror and I think are you ugly, or are you loosing too much hair, are you perhaps a bit fat? Are you ugly or good-looking? Some days: no, you don't look very nice. Other days I look into the mirror and I think ja, I suppose you look alright, you know. When I went to Cape Town, I went to the Brunswick, I went to The Bronx, I went to Manhattan [gay bars and a gay restaurant]. I wouldn't go to Steamers [gay bathhouse]. Three of us went, on Sunday night. They went to

Steamers, and I thought I don't like this Steamers, it doesn't appeal to me, I'm too conservative for that. So I thought, well, I'll go to the Brunswick, because I heard they were having those guys that sing ... The Follies ... so I went to the Brunswick and I walked in at about nine o'clock, and I think the show was starting at half past nine or ten o'clock. You walk up the stairs, you pay on the right. You've got a bar on the left and a bar on the right, so I went to go and stand at the bar on the right. And there weren't that many people up there. One person next to me kept on feeling me all the time. And then somebody came in and they sat at the bar counter – quite nice looking – and he kept on looking at me while ordering a drink. Then there was somebody in front of me that was also turning around all the time to look at me. Now he was with three or four friends and one friend also kept on looking, so I thought oh, kind of don't feel too bad here, I feel like I'm, like quite a hit, you know, not a hit, but sort of like ...

In: ... like you're getting some attention there ...?

Im: Ja, some attention, which was quite nice – in fact I was quite enjoying it. So I then just carry on and also just tease and whatever, you know. And the show finished and this lot carried on and I thought no, I don't really want to go to all the effort of talking to somebody and "chat, chat, chat," and one thing leads to another and you go home with him. I wasn't really into that. So I left and I went to the Bronx. And I got bored at the Bronx. I was there for about 20 minutes at the most, and I thought I'd rather go back to the Brunswick. So I went back to the Brunswick. And the three ones, they were all still there. So I went through to the toilet, because I hadn't been to the toilet the whole evening. And the one that was at the bar counter came through. He looked very nice in the club light, but in the toilet light it was a different story. No thank you. And I went back. And then the guy that was standing in front of me, he then came and spoke to me. And it turned out he was an estate agent, and I did an estate agent's course, and I've got a friend here who knows estate agents, so we had a nice chat. And I mean, we had a very nice chat. And I then said to him, "Well, why don't we go somewhere for coffee?" So he said, "Where?" So I said, "Let's go to that Cafe Erté or something," so he said, "Ja sure." So he'd got a lift with friends there, so I said, "Well, I'll meet you downstairs." So I went down and I waited for three or four minutes downstairs, and he came downstairs and said, well, he's got a better idea ... why don't we go back to his place? So he said he hasn't got a car here, he came with friends, so I said, "No, that's OK, I don't mind." So, he lived in Pine-lands. Very nice guy. We arrived – spoke a bit in the car and so on – we arrived at his house – he lives in a little townhouse there. He opened the door, and one little Maltese poodle ran out and I

sat down, he asked me if I wanted coffee, so I said sure. And he came back, and said, "Do you want it in a mug or do you want it in a cup, so I said, "No, I'll have it in a mug." And he brought the mug through and he had a cup of coffee – not a mug. He turned out to be a real old woman this one. You know? He was a old worrier. And he worried about everything and he was telling me why he had moved in a townhouse, because he had a double-storey thatched house in Pinelands and he was upstairs in his room. He had been away and had come back over Christmas or something, and three people ... an alarm went ... and three people had broken in downstairs. And he thought no, he can't live in that house any more, unless it was more secure, and he worried about this and he worried about that and it just irritated me. But he's a very nice ... I must say he's a very nice person ... I think he was a very genuine sort of person. So anyway, he's sitting next to ... we were on two chairs ... but his chair was next to the table between us and he keeps on touching it like this the whole time. Well, I can't ... not for me, you know. This is now about ... it must be about two o'clock, three o'clock in the morning. I said, "No, listen, I must go." So I left – we obviously exchanged phone numbers and all those things. Well, he keeps on phoning here all the time. I mean, we haven't even so much as kissed, or whatever. So you always seem to meet the wrong person. You meet somebody that *you* like that doesn't like you, or somebody likes *you*, but you don't like *them*, you know [laughter]. I often wonder now am I going to ever meet anybody? It's my only real ... but it's not a worry, I enjoy living on my own, but I would prefer to have somebody nice that I could live with, you know. It's nice having [housemate] here, it's like being involved, but we're not. So there's no complications between us. I don't want complications. I don't want to have somebody that I lived with and then there's trouble and there's jealousy. I don't know, I suppose there should be a bit of jealousy, but I don't want it to be ugly, it must not turn into swearing at one another, or shouting and screaming, it must be, you know, enough respect on both sides – things like that. And I'm a very jealous person, I'm extremely jealous and very suspicious, you know, like these two [housemates] go out and I go out with them, and we would be somewhere and I see one look that way and someone else look at him and the other one looks this way and he doesn't see what these one's ... what's happening. And I look at this and I think, now I wonder if he has noticed or he hasn't noticed. Whether he was feeling jealous or not – I would. I think jealousy's my biggest downfall ... would be in a relationship.

In: Tell me ... we were talking about the change that you've felt ...

Im: Ja ... I think if you do go back in your notes, I may have mentioned our branch in Pretoria. I've

got two friends up there, that I always stay with if I go up there and we have a lady who works for us and she is related to friends of theirs. And they're a straight couple, husband and wife, and his wife's aunt, who works for us – now I didn't know this at the time when I interviewed her – and I may have mentioned something to you last time, that it worried me a bit. It doesn't worry me today. They must think what they want to. You know I'm not going to go and advertise it, because I think if I was straight, I wouldn't have to advertise it, and if she wants to think of me as being gay, or if she wants to tell the other staff that I'm gay or she wants to say something to me directly – she must do it, it's fine with me – I don't feel threatened by it.

In: Why do you think that's different from how it used to be?

Im: I think ... one grows up, one changes. I hope one changes and grows a bit ... Living here, it's a very different to live Cape Town and Johannesburg. It is more ... what you do here tonight somebody knows about tomorrow. Basically. If you go to Cape Town, really, I don't know anybody in Cape Town, so I can behave how I want. The restaurant, a bar, a club – I can do what I want. Although there's always somebody that knows you, I suppose. I feel freer in Cape Town, put it that way, than I do here in Port Elizabeth. But I suppose, even if you were straight, you'd feel freer in a foreign city or different city than you would in your own home city. No, I don't think I'm particularly worried about it. I suppose you think, well people must really ... if they don't like you, or if they can't accept you for what you are or whatever, that's their problem, it's not your problem, it's their problem to worry about it.

In: Can you think of anything that has given impetus to this change – anything that's happened, circumstances that have changed, experiences that you might have had in the past two years or so?

Im: Well, I've never really been very open in front of my family at all. My father always thinks I'm gonna get married ... he always hopes I'm gonna get married. He pulled a stunt last year or the year before, when he was quite ill. He was in hospital and came out of hospital, and he was saying before he dies he'd like to see me married with a child and everything else. And then I went overseas in December. I went to go and visit my sister and her family. And I've got a lesbian cousin, and all they wanted to do was match-make me with the various friends that they have over there. Which I wasn't interested in. I didn't mind meeting them or something like that, but certainly nothing more. You know, they wanted me to meet somebody and go out and enjoy myself, and I don't know what else they thought I would do. They thought, well, let him have a night out or let him spend a night out and meet somebody nice and whatever. But ag no, I wasn't

interested. But I didn't say to them, "Listen I don't want to meet anyone, I don't want to go to these places." They took me on a tour of all the clubs and the bars and those sort of things, you know. It was fine; I enjoyed it. What I did over there, I'd do here, or what I'd do here, I would do over there. I didn't sleep with anyone overseas. I don't say it's going to be safer to do it here. I don't even want to take the chance here, I'm not interested. As far as I've changed, I don't know what ... I think maybe it's just the way you look at things, maybe ... I can't say its friends that have changed me or the work situation. Maybe it's just a whole lot of little things that make you change your outlook. I'm not embarrassed about being gay. Just about everybody I know I think probably knows it. I'm sure they must know at home. I think there must be people, certain of my customers, who must know it, or some of our suppliers who must know it.

In: What makes you think they must know it?

Im: Well I'm not married, I'm single. If I get invited to a function I always go on my own. You know, like to suppliers' functions or something like that. I don't ever get any invitations sent to me & partner - very seldom - it's always just to me. I'm sure that they *must* know. I talk about our opposition to our suppliers, only to one or two of them that we deal with all the time, and there's like a manager or whatever coming to see us, once a month or once every two weeks or whatever, and he will know what's happening to the MD of the opposition or something. I say something - I'm sure they probably do likewise as well, they *must*. I mean if I do it - I talk about them - I think they must do likewise about me. I think so, anyway.

In: If you are invited with a partner, would you take a woman, would you say it's your girlfriend or ...?

Im: ... Do you know, I did that. It was probably after you interviewed me. Where was I living? I'd just moved in here. And from here I moved to my house in Millpark, which I've sold. I did do that. I know a friend of mine who's gay. And I needed a date. The last thing I wanted to do was phone somebody and say, "Would you like to go out next week," or two weeks' or something, because then your putting them under a bit of pressure as well maybe, or false pretences or whatever. OK, that also sounds odd, because I don't really have many girlfriends that know whether I'm straight or gay, so I hadn't tried to hide it from them. It's just ... if you had to say to me now, tonight ... "Listen, we're going out next week, you must bring a girl along with you," I'd have trouble thinking of who to invite, because I wouldn't know *who* to invite. So anyway, this friend of mine, I asked his sister and we went out and she fell madly in love with me. I couldn't get her off the telephone, I couldn't get her to stop visiting me. There are more girls that fall for me than

guys that fall for me, funny enough. Well, no guys fall for me, but anyway ... where the problem came in, was one night we went out for supper. I was also to blame, you know, for ... I should perhaps have been quite honest from the very beginning, but I didn't ... I hadn't been dishonest with her. But anyway, one time we went out for supper and she said to me, "Tell me, do you think that my brother's gay?" So I said, "I don't know, I've never thought about it. I never asked him." Meanwhile I know that he is. But he doesn't want his sister or his family to know. So, how can I say to her, "Yes, he is." You know. And she apparently asked him the same question about me. And he said, "No he's not," because he didn't want to involve himself in it. But shortly after that, you know, I just ... every time she asked me, I said, "No, I'm busy" or "I'm going away" or "I'm here" or "I'm doing that." I didn't know what else to say to her, I couldn't ... I didn't want to say to her, "I don't like to you any more," because that wasn't true either. Maybe I should have come out about myself. I don't know. Maybe I should have told her and it would have been a lot easier. To have said to her, "Listen, I'm gay." You know, "Whatever you're looking for in me or a relationship, you're not gonna find it. I used you. We went out for a blind date, I'm sorry." You know. That's probably what I should have said.

In: And if you were invited to a work functions with a partner now?

Im: I'd go alone. I find it much easier to go alone, because I would hate for a lesbian girl to have to phone me, as a gay guy. Maybe not ... maybe if it was a lesbian girl who phoned me and said to me ... I would just hate to impose on somebody else and drag them to a work ... [tape change]

Im: What I've told you last, two years ago, about my sister - she went and she blabbed her mouth to all my family and I was very annoyed at the time. My stepmother told me that my sister had done this. My aunt asked me one day. We sat down when I visited her, she said she just wanted to know one thing, she wanted to ask me a personal question. I knew what was coming. She said, "Are you gay or not?" and I denied it. Nobody's ever asked me since on my family's side. If they asked me now, I would admit to it. You know, if they came straight out and said, "Are you gay, or aren't you?" I would say, "Yes, I am gay." Anyway, what made it easier in America is that my sister's obviously told everybody. Except, they don't talk about it. I've got this gay cousin, this lesbian cousin, who they all like very much. She and I had some nice chats together, and I was quite looking forward to speaking to her. My sister and her, they wanted to set me up with all sorts of different people that they knew over there, because my sister has a hairdresser who is a friend of a hairdresser who is gay, and they know people in the movie business because they

live in Los Angeles, and there's a lot of gay people in that sort of industry, and they know a lot of people in advertising. They always wanted to make these dates with me, which didn't appeal to me. What am I going to do? So I meet somebody in America who's very nice. What am I going to do? I can go to bed with them, maybe, and put myself at risk ... for what? You know? I perhaps see him in a year's time again, two years' time again.

In: And here, back at home, your relationship with your father?

Im: Well, each year seems to get better and better, or each week it gets better and better. We talk a lot more. But I think the reason for that is that my dependency on him is far less now than what it was a year ago, or two years ago. He's a very bright person, and he's always got a solution to a problem. And I just probably feel that I'm a much stronger person now, I'm not sure, perhaps I am ... I am younger, and he's getting older, so I suppose the older you get, the weaker you become. And I just feel I'm more in control of my life than I used to be. I probably feel that ... you know, if my father told me two years ago, "Jump!" I would have jumped. Now I won't jump. I won't. I'll just ... I do what I want to do and I say what I want to say, whether it's right or wrong. When I know what I'm saying is wrong, I'll still say it. With my father, we seem to have quite a lot of disagreements, although we get along better now than we used to.

In: Does he still expect of you to get married?

Im: For quite a while he hasn't mentioned the subject. I think the way he structured his company now ... OK, I am the MD now, but it also means bugger all – I don't think it means very much. And he said to me the other day, "I want you to be proud," or something. I said to him, "No, it actually means nothing to me, I couldn't care what my title is." He got a bit annoyed with me, he said, "How can you think like that, how can you think that being MD is nothing?" I said to him, "But it is nothing. I mean, so what? Big deal! It doesn't really make any difference!" Because it doesn't make any difference to me. I mean if I'm gonna walk in somewhere and someone says, "This is the MD of Nissan South Africa." So what?

In: What would make a difference to you?

Im: What would make a difference to me? If someone said to me, "This is So-and-so and he's worth R20 million," I'll also say, "So fucking what?" I'm really not interested. What would make a difference to me? Nothing! I'm not really impressed with ... It would take a lot to impress me. I don't think someone's position or title would impress me, I really don't. I'm not interested in that sort of thing. It doesn't bother me.

In: To come back to the your father and his position in the company: Does he still exert a presence there?

Im: Yes, he still does exert a presence there, he's still around and he will be around until the day he dies. But I'm happy with that. I enjoy him being there. It's nice ... it means that he's at the office, and I can get out. That I can do ... not what I want to do ... but I can get on with my job, and do my job the way I want to do it. When he's not there, like he hasn't been there for the last two weeks (he's been sick) I've been office bound. It's been a problem, because I've got all his work that I have to do, as well as my own work, and I'm just not keeping up to date.

In: You have described how things in relation to being gay have eased with your family and also your operation with your father ...

Im: ... What's made it a lot easier you know ... in fact, it was quite funny: Over Easter, I think it was Easter or a long weekend near Easter, my stepmother's brother came out from England and they're Afrikaans, but he emigrated with his wife and so on. And they all had a family reunion down here in Port Elizabeth. And my stepmother has a niece who's lesbian, she's about 27, and she's got a girlfriend who's about 48 or 49. And they were coming down to PE. And I don't think that they've got too much money, I suppose they struggling. And there was a lot of family down here, and my stepmother said to me ... I said, "Where are they gonna stay?" She said to me, "They're staying here." So I said, "Tell them to come and stay in my house!" And she said, "Are you sure?" So I said, "No, I don't mind, perhaps they'll be much happier here." Anyway, they came down. They were very happy here, and I went out with the two of them and her mother – so my stepmother's sister, and the niece and the girlfriend. And I took them to a lesbian bar here in town. There didn't seem to be any problems about it. When her brother came out, he came out without his wife and ... I never liked him, we were similar ages. I suppose maybe I was just jealous many years ago and I couldn't stand him or even talk to him. And when he came out now, I thought let me make the effort – you know, we're much older now. And we got along very well together. He said to me, "Will you take me out one night?" So I said, "Ja, it's no problem." So we made arrangements. I went round and fetched him, and my stepmother said, "Where are you going to?" I said, "Well, where do you suggest?" He said, "What about this new place that opened here in Camper Road?" So I said, "No, it's too noisy." I supposed the reason for us going out was so we could talk. It's not that you want to go and sit in a bar where you can't hear a thing. So I said, "No, I think the Gallery." So off we went. And it was a Thursday night. It wasn't very full, about six or seven people were there, and I knew the one barman there – he used to go out with a friend of mine. And he served us, and we talked and talked and so on. And as a matter of course I said to the barman, "It's quiet here

tonight, isn't it?" He said, yes, he can't understand it, because Thursday nights are the gay nights. This was news to me and I felt a bit embarrassed for a moment – I thought maybe this uncle, or step-uncle, whatever you want to call him – he's very good-looking – probably thinks I'm trying to ... I'm taking him to the gay places, which really wasn't the truth, you know. And the following morning, the Friday, I said to my stepmother, "It was so funny last night – we went out and this happened and she said, yes, but she could have told me that the Gallery was a gay place. So she actually knew more than I really knew. Which I just thought was odd, you know, that she knows about this place more than what I knew about it. Anyway, he didn't seem to be too fazed about it. And then of course these two girls stayed with me here. And they know I'm gay, I haven't hidden it away from them, I've been quite open about it. So when I went to my dad's house ... they arrived that night, and I went there to show them how to get here. And they're both vegetarians. And we all in the family were there. My father said to the one girl, to the cousin, "Now are you gonna convert *Impatient?*" And I thought what is gonna come out now? Then he carried on to vegetarian food, you know [laughs] ... I thought this is quite funny the way ...

In: You think there may have been a double meaning?

Im: Might have been, I don't know if my father uses double meanings. I don't know him that ... I don't think he does. I've never really picked it up. Maybe he uses ... I don't know ...

In: But it seems as if you feel more accepted by your family in terms of your sexual orientation than previously?

Im: Well, I do. If I look at my grandmother, she's been very independent. The last two years or so ... her health isn't very good. I've had to take over all her business affairs. She's got a company that somebody else is running, and it ran into trouble because this guy wasn't doing what he should have been doing, and so on. So, there was a whole legal thing, it cost a lot of money through the Supreme Court to get control of the company, because she'd handed control over to him, and to get control back and she had given him shares and everything else. I eventually got all that back and I sorted everything out, so now I look after all her financial affairs. And I pay her a salary every month from her company and I run the property and investments and I get all the rent coming in. So I sorted everything out, and she now gives me her telephone account, her water account, her burglar alarm account and her rates account, so now I'm sorting out all her accounts for her and I pay everything for her. I think she now has become more dependent on me as well. So no matter what I do, I think she now feels in a weaker position. And I think the same with my father, he also feels that he's reliant on me, he's

more dependent on me now, and maybe that's a change, maybe, you know, maybe that's made things change, because my father couldn't afford to say to me, "Just fuck off, get out of the business!" He couldn't afford to do that, he would be mad to do that. And I know that. Same as my grandmother, couldn't just say to me, "Listen, I don't like your lifestyle, I'll find someone else to do my things." I don't think she'll feel comfortable doing that, I mean, she feels happy knowing that ... I don't know, I ...

In: ... It sounds to me like you feel a greater sense of your own power at the moment, and ...

Im: ... Probably ...

In: ... and that in that way ...

Im: ... maybe that is it, maybe the stronger you feel, the better your position is. Well, if they don't like it, you're in a stronger position, so they can like it or don't like it, it's their problem. But that's how I do feel. I sort of really do feel that ... I suppose the older I get ... not that I *want* power, I mean I'm not interested in ... I suppose I am, you know, I suppose I always want to be the dominant one. I would think so. Even in a relationship I think I would be dominant. I would force myself to be ... not force myself, but ... I would force my dominance or whatever ... and hopefully whoever's with me is gonna be just as dominant, because if I do become more dominant I'm going to lose interest completely, I can tell you. I think so. You know, they must fight back, they mustn't put up with it. They must say, "Listen, I think you now have gone far enough, I'm going to put my foot down and that's it!"

In: Something else that I want to ask you about change concerns a wider area, the situation in the country. You know that now in the Constitution the equality of gays and lesbians is guaranteed ...

Im: ... It doesn't worry me ... I find it very interesting. I know there's all sorts of people that argue that we shouldn't have to fight for gay rights, it should be there, one shouldn't have to entrench it in the Constitution or so on. I'm not really interested. There shouldn't be any discrimination anyway. I discriminate against blacks. I don't know, I don't like to think of myself as a racist, but I think we *are*, much as we don't want to be. I don't want to discriminate against blacks, I don't *want* to, but we *do*. You know, I think it's a way in any country. I think everyone discriminates against one population group or whatever. I don't feel threatened that if we didn't have a Constitution that entrenched our rights I'd feel threatened. I don't feel in a better position now that our Constitution is going to protect us. If someone asks me to vote on legalising gay marriages, ja I'd vote yes for it. It doesn't worry ... I'm not terribly concerned about it.

In: It doesn't feel to you that it's going to make any practical difference in your life?

Im: I don't think it's making any difference in my life, no. I don't think if I had a child who was

- also gay, I don't know if it would making any difference in their life either.
- In: Can you elaborate a bit on why you feel it's not going to make any difference?
- Im: [pause] Now this is when I feel stupid, because I must now think of a sensible thing to say, but I think what I would like to say ... If you ask me why I feel it wouldn't make a difference ... [pause] You know, I think what would upset me, if it had something in the Constitution that said that one couldn't live with another man, or one couldn't be gay – I think that would upset me, that I wouldn't like, I'd have something to say about that. I think ... [pause] I haven't really given the Constitution much thought ... I have given it thought. I haven't read the Constitution, or seen small versions of it, or excerpts or whatever you call it from the Constitution. I don't feel I need to have my gay rights protected in the Constit ... you know, probably ... I suppose one ... perhaps one has to have it protected – I don't know. I think I have enough rights just as a person without having to worry about having gay rights or whatever. I think if I want to meet somebody and live with them, well I suppose, you know, if I had to employ somebody that was gay ... We offer medical aid to a husband and wife. If we had a gay person who worked for us and he had a boyfriend who lived at home, or also worked, I suppose he would also be entitled to medical aid benefits. I suppose if the problem was presented to me, I'll say sure. You know, he's been living with a guy for so long, and whatever and whatever. I suppose maybe there it might be important to a lot of people. If they've got a partner and a straight couple at work has medical aid and whatever, and they wouldn't let somebody else who was gay let his partner benefit from the same benefits. I suppose I would certainly like to vote in the favour of the gay couple having the same benefits as a straight couple. I don't know if that answers your question. I don't think it does really. I don't feel I've answered it properly.
- In: Well, I think what you're saying is that it's something that you felt didn't have any practical bearing on you, personally, and you haven't really considered it because it hasn't affected your life.
- Im: We've all spoken about the Constitution and everything else. If a Zulu king can have five wives, why can't I have five wives as well? You know, I mean if it's law in Zululand, or is part of their custom, why should somebody who lives here in the Eastern Cape be a bigamist if he has two wives? What should go for one should go for everyone else. I suppose it's a custom, it's accepted. We've said does this mean that if there's no discrimination against gays, can they now get married? And someone said yes, they could get married in court but not in a church. I don't say that's correct that they can get married in court –
- but if they can get married in court, why can't they get married in church if they wanted to?
- In: Would you like that for yourself, as an option?
- Im: For myself? [sigh, long pause] I think the idea sounds fine. I don't know ... in principle it sounds fine, and the idea sounds fine. Whether I would like to go and stand in front of a church and get married to a gay person ... maybe if it became accept ... well, not acceptable, but if it became ... if one *could* get married, you know ... I don't know if one can get married ... I really don't, I don't think two guys can get married in this country ...
- In: ... The laws haven't changed yet ...
- Im: ... I don't know if they're gonna be changed. I think they are, I don't know if two guys are going to be able to get married once the laws have changed, I don't know. Maybe if they'd changed and two guys can get married, and I met somebody, and the suggestion was made, I suppose I'd think about it. I don't know. I'd have to be in that situation. I don't think, if my two friends came to me and said, "We're getting married," and the one stood there in a dress, in a wedding dress, and the other one stood there in a suit – I think I'd find that a bit distasteful. If they both stood there in wedding dresses, I'd find that distasteful. If they both stood there in a suit, I would accept it, I suppose.
- In: If getting married was a legal, possible option for men, would it change whether you would be prepared to take a male to a work function, for example?
- Im: No, I think if I lived with somebody at home and there wasn't this option to get married, and I wanted to take them to this function, I would. If the option was there to get married – I would still take them. If I felt that way.
- In: Something else: If any issue of discrimination against you ever came up, would you be prepared to fight it legally?
- Im: Yes, I would. I think if an issue ... OK, alright, I suppose I could walk out of my job. I could sell the company, and I suppose I could go and work for another company, and if they discriminated against me because I was gay, yes, I would fight it. I would. I wouldn't do it in my company though. If my father had dismissed me because I was gay, I don't think I would fight my dismissal on the grounds of being gay ... I'd would ensure that I got a severance package or something ... I don't know if I'll do that, I'd probably walk away from it and say, "Well that's your problem, not mine." I don't know. But if I worked for another company and they discriminated against me for being gay, yes, I think I would fight it. I think I would, because, you know, life is short. It doesn't really matter what people ... it *does* matter what people think of you, but on the other hand it *doesn't* really matter what people think of you. I think as soon as you can get past that obstacle ... I think it's a matter of principle. I think

if I went and committed fraud, yes, I can understand people talking behind my back, because I've done something wrong, I've done something dishonest. I don't think being gay is dishonest. You know, if they want to talk about it behind my back, well that's their problem. I'm not terribly concerned what they think of me. I'm not worried about it at all. [pause] What I've often thought about ... I fantasise all the time. I love fantasising. And I enjoy it when I drive. I love driving to our branches. I don't ... I enjoy flying, but I love driving, because when I drive, I fantasise. I don't think there's anything wrong with it. I do live in a world of fantasy at times, I admit to it. When I say "world of fantasy", it's not that I go around telling people this and this and this and this and it's not true. I enjoy acting – when I say acting, I mean performing in front of friends, and I always have good lines, and they come up with stories and this and that. Anyway, when I drive, I always like to think, maybe fantasy/think, it's not just pure fantasy, and I often think it would be so nice if we could sell our company. We can see that it's a good company to sell. The balance sheet is always good, so we'd never struggle to sell it. And I've often said to my dad, "This damn company, there's too many people working here, there's always problems every day, it's stressful, I'm exhausted." If I go on holiday, I'll come back months later, I'm exhausted. I'm burnt out. That's how I feel at the moment, I feel completely burnt out from the last six months. I feel like just going away for a month, and coming back for another five months, and going on holiday for month – that's what I feel like doing. When I look at my father, I can see how he's been burnt out over the years, and I don't want that to happen to me. I've decided that – and I've spoken to my stepmother – if he dies, I might continue for a year or two, and that's it. I wanna get out. We've all got a certain amount of shares, my sisters, my stepmother and myself. And I think my stepmother would also like to sell it and so would I, but I'd like to carry on working for a year or two afterwards. I thought we're gonna sell the company and I'm gonna continue working for the company and there's gonna be this whole thing of discrimination against me, and I've always thought if that should ever happen, I would certainly fight it. I wouldn't sit back and accept it, or I wouldn't resign, or I wouldn't walk out, or whatever. I'll stick it out. No matter what job I was in, I will stick it out. As long as I was doing alright financially and I was happy in my job, I'd stick it out. If my employer wanted to discriminate and dismiss me or something, I'd certainly go to my attorneys and I'll fight back. Because they wouldn't be able to just terminate my services, my work, because I've never been sick one day in my life, that I've taken off from work. I'm good at my job – I think I am – I don't have any

problem doing what I do. If I'm in a similar sort of job, or any other job that I can handle, I'll be good at it, I know that for a fact. If they discriminate against me because I'm gay, well I would certainly do something about it. I wouldn't worry what my family thought if they were alive, what my grandmother thought – too bad.

[This session ended here and the interview was concluded at a later date:]

In: We ended off last time talking about the Constitution – whether that had any influence on you or not, and gay marriages. I want to ask you something that is related to that. At the moment you are still basically not out at work – what do you imagine would need to change in the country to enable you to come out?

Im: What needs to change in the country, for me to come out more at work? Well, I suppose a lot will have to change. I suppose the way everybody thinks. I think if I was in a different type of work situation; if I worked for an advertising agency; if I worked for a clothing manufacturer; if I worked for something related to art; or I worked for a different sort of company to I what work for ... I think the environment that our company is in – it's motor related – and I think the people we deal with, salesmen in motor dealerships, parts managers, spares managers and all the motor companies, they are a different sort of breed, they're interested in motor cars (which interests me as well), I think they're quite different to maybe ... If you're an advertising agency or you're an architect, maybe, you could ... I think I would then feel a lot freer, maybe. I think I find the confines of the environment that my job is in more difficult than, say, being an architect or an advertising executive or something. I think it is more accepted in those sort of fields, it could be more accepted in those fields, than the environment that I'm in. What would have to change? I think a lot would have to change. I don't think the change would take 20 years; it would take longer ... Am I worried about who would find out about me? I don't suppose so, I suppose there would be a bit of bad-mouthing from my opposition, I should image so, you know, "*Impatient* is a homosexual/a moffie/or a gay person/whatever he is". I don't suppose it would really make that much of a difference at the end of the day. I don't think it really matters, it's just a matter of, if people *did* find out, it would just take me some time to get used to it, I suppose.

In: When you say the way that people *think* would have to change, if you had to sum up: what it is that people *do* think, that needs to change? What do people think about somebody who is gay?

Im: Well, I'm also ... I'm biased ... I'm also ... not *anti-gay*, that's the wrong word ... I also have a good laugh to myself, or publicly, in our office,

you know, if somebody had to come in. We had one guy come in for an interview and, I think I've told you, I said this in one of the talks with you, he was applying for a job as a factory manager, and I asked what he knew about fibreglass, and he said, "It's like material, it's like cloth, you just cut it up like you would a dress or something." And I had a good laugh about that; I couldn't even help myself in front of him, and I even laughed about it afterwards with some of the other staff. So even in that way, I'm also, well I was ... I think I still would be ... if somebody walked in and he was gay, I would probably still ... I wouldn't be vindictive about it, but I mean I would still have a ... if he was openly gay, I would still ... I'm not expressing myself correctly. I would still find it funny ... maybe it's one's prejudices or biases or the way you were brought up that still surfaces, even though you are gay yourself, you still think in a biased way, or prejudiced way against people that are the same as what you are.

In: Yes, it is hard to unlearn prejudices with which we grow up. What do you think those biases and prejudices are?

Im: I suppose it's the way one is brought up ... family ... values ... I mean there's nothing wrong with the values, but it's still not accepted. I mean even with the new Constitution it's not going to be accepted, I suppose you need a few people to stand up and say, "Well, I'm gay and so what!" and perhaps if everybody stood up and said that, it might change things, it may take the stigma away from being gay.

In: What I'm wondering, is what you think that stigma is ... what are the thoughts about gay people that are problematic? What do people think about gay people?

Im: I must say I think the first thing that comes to my mind if I think of somebody who is gay now, is Aids. It's the first thing I think about, because I think it's so much on my mind ... and it worries me. It's the first thing I think of if I meet a gay person, I just see Aids sort of written in front of me. And that's as a gay person. I haven't lost any friends, I don't really know many people who ... I know a few who have died of Aids, but I didn't know them very closely or anything like that, so it's never affected me, it's never touched on my life, and hopefully it doesn't ever touch on my life, but I think it's also one of the reasons why I steer clear of sleeping with people, because I like to think of myself as being clean, as being Aids free or HIV free, or whatever. No, perhaps it's also the wrong way to answer it. [pause] I think when you really think of it, it actually really makes no difference what people want to think of you. I think we're here for such a short time, we should live how we want to live, we should do what we want to do, without worrying what other people think, but the way you were brought up, you're always worrying what somebody else is

thinking. Or you're always trying to do better than someone else is doing. So you always perhaps worry about everybody else's values, instead of worrying about your own. Does that sound stupid? I ... you know, I sort of ... tonight I feel like I'm waiting for you to sort of argue with me, or to say something back to me, but I suppose if you're not ... that's not what you are supposed to do, is it?

In: Well, I wonder if it feels that there must be a "right" answer and a "right" way to think about these things, because in the end people seem to have very different opinions about these sorts of things ...

Im: I think, you know, as I've said before a few weeks ago, the older I get, the more relaxed I become about it. I'm quite sure that in a few years' time I will be even more relaxed about it than what I am now. The older you get you probably realise that it's your life and people must accept you for what you are. It's just a matter of getting there.

In: Ja ... Do you think there's anything that can be done to make things easier for gay employees, say, by government, legal professionals, professionals in the mental-health field, or companies in their policies?

Im: I don't think there's anything they can do. They can try and do something like affirmative action. There's very little that can be done to enforce you to employ somebody who's been disadvantaged. It's easy to say you can't discriminate against somebody who's gay if you don't want to employ him because he is gay, but you can pick up lots of other reasons why you don't want to employ him. If you notice him being gay, you say well, somebody else who applied for the job is a far better-educated person, a far better calibre of person, or came across better in the interview, or you felt he could do the job better, or because he had wider background or experience. There's lots of ways to get out of employing somebody who is gay. It's very difficult to prove in a court of law that you didn't employ somebody because he was gay. You can not employ him for other reasons. I don't think there's much that the government ... well even if you look at the courts, take the people in court ... they can't control what's going on in the country, let alone worry about entrenching gay rights in the Constitution. I don't think it's possible to even worry about it or to do anything about it. They can *talk*, but there's nothing they can do to enforce it. It will take many years, it will take a hundred years or more for people's attitudes or values to change, for these feelings and prejudices to change ... that's what I believe. You know, if you wanted to take the Constitution to bring about a change in people's minds, it's like ... I was speaking to somebody in Cape Town the other day about this Pagad and they were talking about all these drugs and everything else, and this guy was saying -

- oh, I don't know if he was talking nonsense, or perhaps I think he was talking nonsense – but he says that once they've sorted out the drug problem, they're going to look at the gay people and do something about that, because they're very anti-gay. And there's a lot of Muslim gay boys, or guys in their own community, and have you heard anything about that?
- In: I think there is a valid concern, and it makes sense, what you're saying ...
- Im: I dunno, you know our Minister Dullah Omar, or whatever his name is, stood up and called Pagad "our allies" and so on. Well, so now they are the government's allies in stamping out drugs, but are they going to be their allies in trying to stamp out homosexuality?
- In: ... There's something that some of my other subjects mentioned: they said perhaps they might feel more able to be open if companies that stated openly in their policy that they don't discriminate in terms of race and gender also included sexual orientation and stated that publicly. What do you think?
- Im: I suppose it *could* help, yes. A policy is as good as the paper's worth it is written on – it is worth nothing. It can be a policy of the companies, but they don't have to enforce it or entrench it in what they do. I've employed two gay people, and I've never *liked* doing it. It hasn't been forced on me, but it hasn't ... I think there's two that have been employed in the past, that I've employed. I never felt threatened by them; if I felt threatened by them at that time, I wouldn't have employed them. You know, I've employed them knowing that my cover, if you want to call it that, is not going to be blown by employing them. I would also say, you know, that our company's ... we do practice affirmative action, and find the best affirmative-action candidates for the job, but maybe you don't find him, you find *her*. I can also say we don't discriminate against gays and so on, but I think one is still, I think even if you state it in your policy, I don't think it's gonna make a difference, I doubt it. It's just a paper, with something written on it, it's gonna make no difference. I think if you're looking at an ideal situation, thinking, you know, it's entrenched in the Constitution, it's entrenched in companies' policies ... people are spoken to, you've held seminars to talk to employers and try and impress upon them employ some of these gays ... I don't think it's gonna mean anything. I don't think so. It's not really the company that would be worried about it, you know, the company will say, well, employ someone who is gay, but then they will probably wonder about their customers, what will their customers think about it. Maybe every single company has a policy that they won't discriminate against a gay person, but it doesn't mean that the company is not going to ... I don't know ... it *sounds* good, but I ...
- In: ... You're sceptical of it ...
- Im: doubt it, ja ... Did your other candidates feel the same way, or not?
- In: Well, they all had different views about it, it was just something that came up while we were talking ... If you were faced with a gay applicant now, who you felt for one reason or the other might blow your "cover" in some way, would you rather not employ them?
- Im: [long pause] Well first of all, it's easy to get out of that question, very easy. If I knew somebody well enough, whether it was a straight person or a gay person, I probably wouldn't employ him anyway, because I wouldn't want to employ anybody that I knew. If it was somebody that I didn't know at all, or I had seen around, and I knew he was gay, yes, I probably would employ him, but if it was somebody I knew ... probably I'm looking for a way out of answering it, the way I want ... the way it should be answered. If I knew somebody well, I wouldn't employ him or give him the job, if it was a friend or whatever, I wouldn't be able to give him the job, because I know I would have an argument within a month or two and I would say you do it *my* way and no other way, unless you've got a better way.
- In: This must feel very much like a trick question! Perhaps you're a bit hesitant to tell me that if you felt the person was going to ...
- Im: ... threaten me ...
- In: ... threaten you, you might just perhaps find another reason not to employ ...
- Im: No, no I think if I look at someone to employ for job now, I do try and decide whether he is going to do the job the way it has to be done, and I think regardless of whether they are straight or gay, or whether you know they are straight or gay, I would rather try to employ the person that would be the best person for the job, because it is not just me, I mean it's the company, there's a lot of other people who work for the company, so I think one has to try and employ the best person to help the interests of the company. If it was someone who applied for the job and was very obvious and very open about it and who was going to sit at his desk with all the other salespeople, for example if he was going to be a salesperson, and say, "I'm gay, and so is *Impatient*," or "the boss is also gay" ... [pause] If I was an employee and someone who I knew very well was going to employ me ... I don't know if I will sit there, if I was very open about it, I don't know if I will sit there and say, "You know, your MD or whatever is also gay," so I don't know, I think ... [pause] I had one person that came in for an interview. She sat down in front of me, she applied for a ... we were looking for a lady. She sat down in front of me. Fur coat on and everything, and it was winter, but it wasn't that cold to be wearing this thick fur coat. And she was still speaking, and speaking and speaking. And right at the end, you know, I noticed that her voice was quite deep and she was very large, and I thought

there's something wrong here. And I said, "Isn't there something you want to tell me, something that you haven't told me?" She said, "Yes, I'm going through a sex change." I didn't employ her. I didn't want a sex change working for us. I just didn't feel comfortable having a sex change there. That was a few years ago, four years, maybe five years ago. I just didn't feel comfortable having somebody who was a sex change working for us. I mean, he or she promised that they would really work hard and they would do this and do that and they were struggling to find a job and – all this came out afterwards – nobody wanted employ her because of what they were going through. And I felt *sorry* for him, you know I *did*. I sort of really felt very sorry. It was one of those funny days, where ... I was in Pretoria and I had this one come to me, and I also had two very butch lesbians apply for the job just before that. And I thought, you know ... These three of them actually all came in one after the other, and we had customers there and I know the customers were also looking a bit skewly at these people as well. I thought, no, I don't even consider them for the job. If it was somebody who wasn't obvious or somebody who wasn't a ... somebody who could behave normally, you know in a situation, probably I would have ... no, I don't know if I would have employed him ... if it was a gay person who wasn't undergoing a sex change, and he told me he was gay in the interview, yes, I would have employed him. In fact, now that takes my mind back, I had an application for a sales position. From a guy, quite a few guys applied, and I like to speak to a person on the phone before I get them to come in to see if they are not going to waste my time. So my guy applied and I phoned him and I said, "You've been working at this job where you seem to have been quite a long time." He said, "Yes." I said, "Why do you suddenly resign your last job when you had nowhere to go to?" He said, "Well, let me be quite honest with you. I was having problems at work because I'm gay." I thought it took a whole lot of guts to come out and say that. And I said, "What sort of problems?" and he said, "No, I was being teased at work," and whatever. And he says he's not effeminate, but somebody found out and it just made his life miserable and he decided to rather resign than put up with it. So I said to him, "Well, I don't have a problem with that," you know, what else can I say? I said, "I don't have a problem with that, but come in for an interview." Now I meant that genuinely, but then he never turned up for the interview. Whether he was the right person or not, I would have employed him maybe. I felt sorry for him over the phone, you know, just like that guy that was undergoing the sex change, I felt very sorry for him, it must be a very difficult situation to be in. I think if somebody came in to me and they were gay and they

were looking for a job and they were the right person, I would probably now ... I would probably employ him, at least I think I would. I think if it was gonna affect our business ... if they started the job and you put them on probation for three or four months, you'd be able to know in a month or two if they were able to do the job or not, and if they weren't able to do it, or your customers didn't like them, well, then you must get somebody else.

In: OK. Is there anything relevant about the experiences that we haven't covered in these two interviews? Anything that you want to add?

Im: I often wonder – I'm talking about myself now – if I hadn't ... my first sexual experience was in standard four. It was with a friend of mine at school who wanted to show me how to masturbate. I had no idea. And one thing led to another and this ended up happening every second day, this nonsense, and I often wonder, if that had never happened, if I would actually be gay today, I don't know. At the moment I think I'm not confused about my sexuality, I prefer guys to girls. I haven't had sex with anybody for a very long time. I actually don't want to have it. I just don't want to meet somebody and ... ja, I do want to meet somebody, but I don't want to meet somebody like go to the club tonight or go to the bar and meet somebody and go home with them. I'm just not interested. There's too much of a risk and I don't want to come back the club one day and ... "Ch, ch, ch, ch, ch, I had that one, or I know that one." I don't think anyone can really speak behind my back and say things like that, because I can walk into any club or bar and I may know people there, but I don't think anyone can turn round and say, "I've had him," you know. I would just like to meet somebody nice. I think if I did, maybe it would make me relax more, maybe I would accept it more. But I'm not confused about it.

In: So do you sometimes wonder what things would have been like if things were different and you were straight?

Im: I don't want to be married and have a wife and have children. I don't think I want that. I don't want a child. I don't mind adopting a child that's maybe 11 or 12 years old, bringing a child of that age into my home, that I don't mind doing. I don't want to start off with little babies, and bringing them up. I mean, I don't want to do that. I don't mind somebody who is having a hard time, or somebody at an orphanage or a children's home, bringing them in and giving them a home. That I wouldn't mind doing. Those two who stayed at my house ... well that relationship, it's over. They're so silly about it, because, both of them ... Just their whole way of reacting to one another, it's so stupid. One is a bit older, he's 30, and the other one is about 24, 26 or whatever. You'd think they'd have a little more sense, you know, to last longer than for nine months or

something. I mean, if you can live together for nine months, why can't you live together for much longer?

In: Yes, relationships are probably very tricky – for gay *and* straight people. I guess we have to end off. One more thing though: If you think back to our first interview, has that affected you in any way?

In: I would say it has. I think sometimes I go through life with these blinkers on and I don't see what's going ... I see a lot that's going on

about me, but other times I shut my mind off to certain things, and I suppose talking to you has made me to think about it a lot more and about work. If I've thought about it, it's really about myself and the work situation. I would say it has made me think about it more, whereas if we hadn't spoken, I probably would have thought about it very little and would have just carried on and just behaved as ... ja, I have thought about it

In: OK, thank you for your time!

3.4 Richard Acton

3.4.1 Transcript of 1994 interview

Interviewer: If we can start with just some basic demographic information. Your age?

Richard Acton: 27.

In: And your area of permanent residence?

RA: Cape Town.

In: And your occupation? Currently and ...

RA: Currently unemployed, but geographer.

In: And the time that we are actually going to talk about, the period that you were employed ...

RA: That ended four months ago, and the period of employment was two years.

In: And that was as a ...

RA: Sales assistant.

In: Right. Now I just want to get some background about yourself, and your sexual orientation, just to put things in context. Firstly, how do you prefer to be referred to, in terms of your sexual orientation?

RA: I don't have any single categorisation which I find completely satisfying, or useful. I think I use the term gay as a form of convenience, and I don't really accept the term for all it implies, its kind of connotations. But I would say I'm prepared to accept the term gay for the purposes of the interview. But I'm sexually attracted to men, if that's the kind of ... only definition I can give, and I happen to be in love with a man, so ... homosexual also sounds ridiculously technical. Many other terms are just abusive, and heterosexual is certainly inaccurate!

In: Well, what is it about gay exactly that you are not happy about?

RA: It's more the kind of cultural connotations that go with it. I associate it with a very specific, overt form of homosexual culture, which I don't find very ... acceptable ... it doesn't relate to me directly at all, and I have my own kind of ... I think I have my own degree of internalized homophobia relating to the term, I associate it with the more extreme, camp politics of homosexuality. That's why I feel uncomfortable with it. There are certain aspects which I have in my life, which do relate to it, but overall I'm reluc-

tant to use it. It's more ... it's a term I'd use for brevity, rather than having to go through the same terrible process of saying, "Well ..." dot, dot, dot, you know.

In: Which are the things that you do feel are applicable, that you've just mentioned about the word gay, the connotations that you do ...?

RA: The connotations that are positive? Well, it's difficult ... I would say that I associate it with particularly valuable, intimate friendships between, for the most part – relating to my experience – between men, and a degree of intimacy which I find I don't get in other relationships at all. I certainly don't get it ... ja, I'd say specifically – it sounds a bit pedantic – but it's specifically relationships with other gay men. I certainly don't have anywhere near the degree of intimacy with heterosexual men that I have with gay men. Often because I'm so on guard, and defensive about it. OK, I would say a kind of intimacy with people, the friendships that it offers. And I'd say just, you know, the general things that go with knowing people. It's a very sort of broad satisfying category that I could fit into.

In: When did you come out, and how? And to what extent?

RA: OK. I think it would have been round about 1989, 1990, but that certainly was not a general coming out at all. That was specifically to one or two people. I would say about two years after that, I would become much more open and overt about it, but still even recently people have been surprised by the things I've said, and realised that ... I've realised that I've not actually said anything, which in a way I'm quite pleased about, because the politics of coming out I don't always like. I think one ... I think the most radical gesture one can make is to come out through a far more integrated process. You know, if it's incidental, rather than deliberate. I think all forms of coming out are relevant at one time or another, but that's perhaps the most radical

gesture I can make. It's a kind of politics of normality, rather than difference. To my parents I haven't come out at all, but I'm definitely considering it, and I'll probably do it within the next six months to a year.

In: And so how many of your friends do you think know?

RA: Most of my friends ... I would say almost all. I would be very surprised if less than ninety percent of them know. Of course there's a category of acquaintances that I know through business and work, and that's an entirely different story. I'd say if five to ten percent knew, I'd be very surprised. I mean I think they've got their usual bigoted assumptions, but that's their problem.

In: I'd be interested to hear a bit more about the politics you've been talking about, the politics of coming out, and specifically the kind of politics that you're not interested in.

RA: What do you mean?

In: You spoke about the politics of coming out and making a statement and, you know, very overtly and that. I'd just like to hear a bit more about what your thoughts are about that.

RA: Well, I always felt a bit ... trapped, by the whole concept of coming out. It seems to me to be a very ambiguous gesture and a very dangerous one, for the individual. I think it's very threatening, it makes one very vulnerable, and I'm not completely satisfied that it's the kind of way one should go about it. Amongst friends, it's kind of difficult to make such a bold, definitive step, with people that you know. I think because it involves such a changeover in identity, and often for people a kind of real surprise, that, you know, that the person they're talking to is not the person they thought was in front of them. So I think, as I mentioned earlier, I'm more interested, and more encouraging of the concept of assimilation. A lot of people I made passing comments to – and not even deliberately – I realise afterwards that they are comments which could only be construed as indicative of a gay identity. I think it's a very difficult, it's a very, very difficult issue to debate. There's no single answer, but I ... when it comes to things like outing, and to deliberately forcing people into a gay identity, I think that's only acceptable if people are in a position of power, and are abusing it. So if one can take it on a human rights level, or often if they are in those positions of power, and they are gay, and they are being hypocritical about it, then I think that's another category. I would be very resentful if people I knew forced me out to people like my parents, my brothers, my sister, you know, or very close acquaintances; I'd be particularly angry if it was in the work environment. Because there I believe one's professional identity comes first. One's sexual identity is for the most part something supplementary to it. And obviously there are all sorts of issues that one could debate

there, but first and foremost I view myself as a professional geographer, and thereafter all sorts of things like ... I'm into it, but, you know, those as I say are secondary. Ja, I think that's about ... those are the key things that I have to say about it.

In: OK. Ja, what is your relationship to the gay subculture?

RA: [Laughing] Almost zero! Zit! I have a very strange, ambiguous relationship to ... with it, but I'd say that I really don't get on with it. I have quite a violent, extreme reaction to it for the most part. The people that I know who are gay I have met either through work, or through friends, and I have never involved myself in mainstream gay culture, out of not just ... it's got nothing to do with being closeted, or being shy; it's out of sheer defiance. I won't. Because I think it's dreadfully hypocritical in many respects, and I think it's just not appropriate to my identity, first and foremost. Other people have found it very satisfying, they have found relationships through it, they've found fulfilment; I haven't, and it just actually makes me very angry. Because I think there are so many things that I despise about mainstream heterosexual culture, and there, in the kind of overt gay culture, I see the mirror image, and I think, well, why the fuck should I participate in this, when I have to deal with the kind of disgusting behaviour [laughing] in heterosexual culture, why do I have to put up with it there? And again it relates to my preoccupation with being integrated with people. I have no intention of ghettoizing myself, and I think it's a real danger. When I (I mean just to illustrate) when I was in San Francisco, recently, you know it's got a tremendous image of being sort of the gay capital of the world, but the most exciting part for me was the fact that there was a gay culture which was ghettoized, you could go to it if you wanted to, but the society had reached a kind of developmental level where things are so integrated that you had the choice. You could either take the path of just joining in with people, going to a book shop – any book shop – finding the books that you might want to read about homosexuality, or you could go to a specific gay night club, a specific gay book shop, a specific gay exhibition. So you had the choice. And I think ... I mean at this age and stage it's probably what people need. Rave, rave! [Laughs]

In: Could you elaborate briefly on the hypocritical aspect that you mentioned ... you said that part of mainstream gay culture is hypocritical.

RA: Ja, I think it's a particularly torturous process ... maybe "hypocritical" is quite strong, maybe it sounds too pious, but it's certainly a very torturous, very painful process for people to go through. Out of the people that I do know who have taken that path, I have not seen too much happiness emerging from it. One case in point,

you know, it's been extremely hard and painful. I think it's just the transient nature of relationships. Men kind of assume all the worst characteristics ... the stereotypical characteristics: they tend not to form particularly long-lasting relationships, they tend to have, well, shallow relationships, and, you know, there's a lot of ... I think it's hypo... I say "hypocritical", because I think there's a tremendous amount of rationalisation, that people get involved in it ... using all sorts of assumptions that all they're looking for is happiness, all they're looking for is something satisfying. But they never seem to find it, and I think they ... it's because they become trapped in a particular mode of expression, you know, that very physical, inarticulate mode, which is a kind of ... is very present in heterosexual society, and I think ironically becomes refined in gay culture. Because ... I mean, it's very sad, I think it's because they ... people are forced into that role, and they are isolated, so it is the kind of forum where you can find a partner. It, you know, it is difficult to meet gay people, it is difficult to find them, but ... and unfortunately, it seems to be not always the ideal. I do know people who have met under those circumstances, and who now having wonderful relationships, and hooray! good for them! but it's not something that I am very sort of ... relaxed about, at this point. And I don't actually think I ever will be, I think it's irrelevant, the degree of openness which I have, I think that's entirely incidental to my attitude.

In: How do you feel about your sexual orientation now?

RA: In what regard?

In: All of them!

RA: [Laughs] Do you mean do I feel contented with it?

In: For example, you know, you ... just what are your feelings regarding being gay?

RA: I think in many respects I'm quite happy with it. I've been very lucky as well, in that I was ... I've met the right people at the right time, I have very supportive friends. And in a way, ja, I think I'm at ease with it, for the most part. There are always times when I think, "Oh god!" you know, "Why did I let myself into this?" But it's ironed out a lot of internal contradictions in myself and I feel more at ease with my identity now than I did even two/three years ago. Partly through being in a long-term, stable relationship, which is why I kind of feel contented, but whether I would feel quite so contented outside I don't know! But it's, ja, it's ... one thing that I do find strange, is that I grew up in an extraordinarily right-wing, bigoted family, who were [laughing] religiously pious to say the least, and ... but the strange thing is that I've always had this kind of idea that ... I was always brought up to believe that gay people were weird, and somehow that kind of attitude stayed with me

for a long while, even though I was having sort of ... gay feelings, and I was sexually attracted to men, and it's simply because I suppose those attitudes were associated with overt gay culture. And I couldn't even identify with it. And, so, in a way, prejudice saved me, to a degree, [laughing] which is not something you're bound to be told very often, but there were certain spin-offs to it, and perhaps some of the fault-lines in my argument that I'm still trying to resolve. But that's why I still hold overt gay culture in contempt. But I think it's a bit more complex.

In: Can you just briefly tell me about your relationship?

RA: I've been in a relationship ... it started rather traumatically in about 1990, I think, and then it's been going constantly since 19... end of 1991, beginning of 1992. So it's about three years.

In: Ja. Just generally, how do you feel about yourself?

RA: [Eating] munch, munch! I think I'm a friendly, moderately outgoing person; I am very shy, as well. I find meeting people very traumatic, but once I've met them, then I get on with them very easily. I like a lot of socialising, I like going out and ... honesty is very important, I view myself as an honest person. And I'm relentlessly stubborn ... Those are probably the most prominent characteristics.

In: And how do you feel about yourself?

RA: How do I feel about myself? I feel kind of ... fairly satisfied, and integrated, in that way ... but I'm not quite sure how to answer this question ... and I think I have answered it in the process of getting here, so ... but I think I'm just an ordinary, normal, nice human being, and I'm satisfied with the kind of things I ... the kind of way I feel and relate to people. There are always, you know I think with everybody, moments when you just say, "Oh god! How do I relate to people?" and I feel very disconnected. But for the most part, things trundle along.

In: OK. I think we can now move onto the main issue, which is gonna be the work environment experiences. As I think I've mentioned to you before, I'd like to concentrate on the experiences ... what they mean for you personally ... not necessarily what they might mean to society or the broader context. Maybe we can start with you just describing the environment, and where you fit in in that environment, or fitted in ...

RA: In the work environment? Alright. It was a large book shop. There were two sections, one which was upstairs for mainly academic, technical subjects, and downstairs a sort of mishmash of arts and sociological subjects, and general fiction. And I worked in a team of I think twelve to fourteen people, presided over by a psychotic manager, and ... ja, no, and downstairs I worked with one other person, and there was an accountants' office down there. We all had vary-

ing degrees of no responsibility, and basically there was sort of ... it was a mundane routine job – which I did to fund my thesis. Ja, I think that's it. And ... ja ...

In: So basically there was sort of two levels of authority, like ...?

RA: Ja, our's was the much more public face of the shop, you know. We were the sort of up-front sales people. We dealt with all the sicko academics in [suburb].

In: Ja. Can you tell me about your experiences in that work environment, with the boss, being gay?

RA: Yeah, well I think for quite a while I didn't say anything to anybody. And then, I don't really know how it happened, I didn't really make any concerted effort, I think it was just the usual mentioning, in conversation. But, I mean it's interesting that I only really mentioned it to one person in a conversation, so I think obviously at some level there is a degree of monitoring going on in my head. Nobody else knew but for one person. The manager ... I think certainly the manager's wife might have known – she did make several comments, which I just thought were completely asinine ...

In: She also worked there?

RA: Every now and again, she was sort of temporary. But I never made a statement to people, never. I simply wasn't interested. And I didn't trust them. I think to say things to people, I need a fair degree of trust, and I think that's why I'd be a bit pissed off if someone did tell somebody else that I was gay. 'Cause it ... the bottom line is vulnerability, you know, it's not just about personal politics, there's a real physical danger to it. I mean particularly in South Africa gender politics is so backward. It's beneath contempt, and I think I ... a certain degree of self preservation made me cautious. But I did not view it as a contradiction, in terms of the way I felt about myself, I was quite satisfied, and I think it's my right to tell people, it's my right to let them know. And what they do with it is, you know, their business, and obviously impinges on my life, but first and foremost, it is a right.

In: So how many people did know?

RA: Did know? I'd say two, three at the most. And the others definitely did not know. I can definitely tell you they did not know.

In: How do you know that?

RA: Well, you know, it's kind of ... most conversations in life, there's always a heterosexual default setting, and if you never contradict it, no-one asks you. And I never did. And so I can tell you they didn't.

In: Can you tell me a bit about that kind of interaction?

RA: Ja, it's kind of ... I think I ... it's interesting, this whole issue, because I think what I did, to survive in this place, was omit a lot of details. I think that's what a lot of gay people do, it's not

... I think the real difficulty, the real stress for gay people comes when they're forced to lie – I think that's a whole different ball game, entirely, and ... So for the most part I'll involve myself in conversations, and they might mention that someone I knew was gay, or they might make a homophobic comment. If they mentioned someone who was gay, I might comment in a fairly constructive way, if they made a homophobic joke, I might criticise it, but in a gentle, non-confrontational way, which is generally accepted. But I never told them details about my personal life, and if they assumed that anyone of the people who came into the store was my girlfriend, I couldn't be bothered to contradict it. You know, it takes a lot of effort, it really does, it takes a lot of effort to kind of set yourself up in that identity, and if you're prepared to take the energy, the time ...

In: What identity are you referring to?

RA: ... oh, in a gay identity in work ... if you're prepared to accept it's gonna take energy, time and a lot of consequences, then I think it's fine, but work was stressful enough without dealing with that, so I'd rather not have. Downstairs, however, was very different. I was very up front with the person I worked with. And she was very open minded about it, which was really surprising seeing that she was Catholic. But she was quite good about it. Her husband was a complete fascist, but overall it seemed to ... she seemed quite cool, and we had quite extraordinary conversations. I don't ... I can't imagine myself having many conversations like that with other people, but it, you know, the kind of ... I felt that if I'm going to work with this person – and I liked her, she was a friend, and I worked with her for eight hours a day – and I felt that it was best for both that it was made known, and I certainly don't regret it. And I think if I ... it would've been really difficult for me now to claim her as a friend and not to have her know this identity. I think that would've been very unfair, to suddenly turn around and say, "Ooh, you know, I'm gay." I don't know what she would've thought. She probably would've ... couldn't have cared less, at this point, but it would've been ... I wouldn't have been fair to myself, had I not said it at that time. But ... and she ... I think she realised the kind of position I was in, and she certainly wouldn't ... I don't know that she ever mentioned it to anyone else and I don't really think so. I think she's fairly wise to these things.

In: I wonder what the feelings were that you experienced in those situations that you described, where somebody would make a homophobic joke, or, you know, that kind of comment?

RA: Depending on the degree of it, I could sometimes pass it by, but more often than not, I would actually stop it, and say something. I think I certainly felt a degree of annoyance, at

the kind of default settings that conversations would take. I always found it a bit odd, that people would assume that whatever woman came into the store was my potential girlfriend or my current one, and I think it's just ... it kind of ... I felt very constricted, you know, sometimes – other times I had to laugh at it – but there were times that I felt very very claustrophobic. I may be quite sad, that I couldn't be overt about it, but I think ... it made me sad to a particular degree, and thereafter I realised well, there are decisions one has to make in the work environment, there are kind of pragmatic choices that one makes about a lot of things. And certainly one's sexual identity is only one of them. So for that reason I was prepared to pass it by. I wouldn't for the most part like to have been friends with most of the people I worked with. They were nice, they were good colleagues, but I certainly wouldn't want anything more. So it wasn't a kind of disappointment, or kind of anger which sent, you know, drastic ripples through my psyche, but ... ja, maybe in another environment I would feel differently, maybe it would shock me more if my friends made that type of comment. What I did hate most of all was when these things became personal, and they were about people who had been in the store, that they would rip off. Then I would become incredibly angry, and in fact, those were the only times that I became really aggressive about it, and then I stomped it out. Just on a ... not even on a homophobic basis, but simply as a kind of respect for people. It used to make my blood boil. But it didn't often happen, and I think a lot of the people there were streetwise, they knew a fair degree about life. Except for one, actually, the one person I did get very very aggressive with, because ... he actually left after the first year, that's why I've omitted him till now, but he was very, very violent in his approach, and constantly aggressive, constantly making kind of camp insinuations to me. And it went on for quite a while, because I'm not the kind of person who confronts these things immediately. I kind of give people their due, and I think, "Alright, you're being an idiot, but it's just today," you know. But anyway, days turned into weeks, and weeks into months, and then I thought, "No, I'm not actually prepared to live with this," and I got really, really vicious. And it did stop. Granted, I am sure he still continued his little cheap thrills, but it wasn't around me, and I think generally ... there was a level of respect between staff that carried that, and I don't think they would've accepted that amongst themselves.

In: What did he actually do, and what did you actually do?

R4: Well, he'd make very kind of camp gestures, speak in a horrendously nasal voice, and generally just kind of ... I could feel myself generally

being dragged steadily into a kind of category that I ... that was so irrelevant to me, and which I didn't like anyway, and I eventually did ... I said to him that I just had enough, that I wasn't prepared to put up with it, I didn't know what his case was, and he knew nothing about me, I knew nothing about him; I thought we should keep it that way ... that was the gist of my argument. And ... he just was a foul and aggressive piece of work. And he, you know, sort of bonked about 24 women before his 18th birthday, half of whom were pregnant, and none of whom he was maintaining. So I kind of understood that he just was a bit of a pre-Cambrian individual, but apart from him, there was no obvious curtailment, there was no obvious suggestion.

In: Can you tell me a bit more about your feelings in those situations? With him specifically, and when he confronted you.

R4: Had I thought about confronting him, I wouldn't, [laughing] had I actually sort of ... "Well, oh well, you know, the time has come!" but I think I was just pushed over the edge at that point, and I just thought, "Oh fuck it!" you know, "I'm not prepared to put up with this any more, I can't actually deal with this, I can't continue coming to work and have this twit ruin my life." And I felt, when I was confronting him, you know, one gets this adrenalin rush and you suddenly ... in the middle I think, "Oh, what am I doing here? This is a bit odd!" But I felt very good about it afterwards. And again good that I confronted him on an issue of basic fairness, and basic decency. 'Cause I think that's what these issues are, it's prejudice; it manifests itself in the form of homophobia, so in that sense it's got a direct bearing on me, but it's just a rights abuse that one is dealing with. You know, I'm tired of ... I think one must acknowledge it as a homophobic comment, one must acknowledge it as bigotry against gay people, but at the same time I think one has to realise that these people are bigoted about all manner of things. They'd be bigoted about black people, white people, you know, young women, older women; anything with breasts, you know, they despise so much, that I viewed it as one of a myriad of things, and I thought well, seeing as this is my turn, I'm not gonna put up with it. But it was a very frightening experience as well, it was definitely ... I felt very threatened, 'cause I managed to keep the conversation on a fairly even keel. Had it suddenly swung over into gender politics, I don't know what I would have done. But ... I think I would've directed it straight out of there, because, ag you know, really, try debating gender politics with a creep like that ... it's really a waste of time, but I did feel very frightened, and it was a scary moment, but very satisfying, and I kind of realised ... that was my first major confrontation with homo-

phobia. And it made me realise that, you know, I can do a lot more, I can get out there and make a difference. I know I can put up with even less in future.

In: Have you done that, have you had an opportunity to ...?

RA: I have, yeah, but I mean more ... I've been ... a lot of the time it's ... strangely enough I think on a subconscious level people kind of realise – even if I don't say anything – that I am gay, and so often at parties, you know, I have this horrendous blunders that people say they just think gay people are a bit weird, you know. They're sweet, but as long as they're not in my space. And I sort of think, well, this is interesting, you know, obviously at some level, you know, it is a very strange process going on here. But depending on my mood. But depending on the circumstances, I might leave it, or I might confront it. I don't have any sort of ... policy on that, and it's far more circumstantial. If I feel that I'm never going to see them again, and they're not ... I'm not interested in them, I might well leave it, but then again I might sort of say, "Well, you know, excuse me," and make a comment, so at least it filters through to their brains. And it scars me when it's friends or close relations; then it's much harder, because then that fine line between omission and deception really comes to the fore. And I think when ... if you're asked something, and you have to deny it, or dodge, I think that's when the difficulty comes in, but those are very rare, those circumstances. Or they have been till now. I suspect as I get older they're going to become more of an issue. When you're 27 and single in the eyes of those people, it's fine. But I think as an older man, I think enquiries will start. They ... I don't know how to deal with those, but I'll have to see.

In: So you say that work is more the omission kind of thing?

RA: Yeah. Social set-ups are different, because there's more personal interaction, because people see you for longer, they see you with friends, you are bound in a way to intimacy. And I think that's where the difficulty comes in. The stresses are far greater in my ... in the personal, non-work life, than in my work life.

In: You mentioned earlier that you did feel restricted at work. Can you elaborate a bit on that?

RA: Ja, there were ... definitely moments like when Sam [his lover] is going off to another city, or I was ... you know, he's going away on holiday or something, or I was angry, or like particularly happy in the relationship, those were moments when it became an issue of self-censorship. They weren't things that I could share with people. That was one thing that did make me quite sad, because, you know, often there was a degree of intimacy amongst people, a degree of rapport relating to the relationships in the work environment ... talking about it in the work envi-

ronment. And I kind of missed that, I think that's one thing that I do think is difficult for gay people. They have to deal with things in particular time spaces. Unless they're prepared to make the effort, they do have to keep it to one side. And I know one's personal life should not impinge too much on one's professional life, but there are moments when there are obviously overlaps. So on those times, I find it quite difficult.

In: And how do you feel about the way that you handled that – in other words, that you tried to continue to omit that information ... which made it impossible for you to share those things?

RA: I think at that time, on the particular days, I kind of felt a bit down about it, but I did have support outside of work. I think the whole exchange, the whole hidden nature of the process, would have affected me much more if that job had been my career. I felt that I wasn't going to be there for any particular length of time. I'm going into a kind of official career now, and I think these issues are all going to become a lot more complex and difficult to resolve. But I think I didn't invest particularly much in that work environment, so for that reason I avoided a lot of the kind of internal flack for omitting those things.

In: So you ... I get the idea that you feel that that was the best kind of compromise for you.

RA: Ja, I think at the time it was. I think that there are certain things that one can't say to certain people. But it's not an entirely satisfactory state of affairs, it's definitely not, and it's definitely a compromise. But so saying there are a lot of other compromises one makes, and it's not always the sin of omission, it's actually sometimes just a sensible thing to do. And I don't know ... I've often thought, you know, if I was heterosexual, if I was involved in a heterosexual relationship, would I actually say things to people. And I don't know, I don't know if I'd actually divulge that much more. Just in the instance of the kind of physicality of my relationship: I'm not a very sort of ... I'm not very given to public displays of affection anyway, I don't like doing it, so, you know, they're all these kind of very personal space issues and public space issues, and it's difficult to know where the one would end and the other would begin. Sometimes afterwards I think, well, you know, I was just hiding that, you know, I could've done a lot more, and I realise there are a lot of rationalisations about these things. So for the most part it's a sensible choice, I think. I'm not an ... in the long term, I'm certainly not unduly unhappy about it.

In: How much do you do think that the whole thing about say public displays of affection is a cause or an effect of being inhibited about being gay?

RA: If only I knew! [Laughs] If only I knew, I would change it. Well, I think gay people, I know certainly I do, I carry around a lot of internalized

monitoring processes, I sort of ... I keep on thinking, "Oooh, if I touch this person now, I'm going to be beaten over the head with a stick," and I think a lot of it is an illusion; I think South Africans ... we can get away with a lot in South Africa, simply because everyone pretends that whatever is going on isn't happening. But I ... there is certainly, in this country ... having just been on holiday to other places ... in this country there's certainly a very, very physical, tangible threat to your safety as a gay person. Gender politics is really really fossilized here, and it scares me. There's a lot ... a tremendous amount of violence; I think people are very alienated ... [tape change] ... from themselves and I ... you know, things ... the sort of general condition of one rape every six seconds and whatever else goes on in this country, I think is really indicative of the fact that people are so extraordinarily out of touch with themselves. They are so inarticulate that this violence is inevitable. And I think, ja ... I think as a gay person, one has to be just downright clued up about what's going on. You know, one can do these things anyway, you can hold hands, you can kiss your lover in the park, but you just never know. People are very weird here, they are really weird. I think it's gonna change, I think things will change considerably now, because deep down inside people realise that there is recourse now, and I think people ... I anticipate that people will become a lot more cautious about expressing bigotry. They might well be as bigoted as they always were, but I think they're not going to be as territorial about their own space as they were. I think they're going to be a lot more sympathetic and accommodating. But certainly in the short term, I think there're good reasons to not be overt all the time. When it comes to friends, family, close relations, etcetera, I'm prepared to be more physical, more intimate with Sam, but again it's a negotiated thing. You know, we've grown up in an extraordinarily backward, colonial environment, so one is dealing with not just other people's feelings, but with one's own. But I would say right at the end of this rambling answer that one also ... to cross these thresholds is a very interesting experience. Once or twice when I have kind of ... touched - "Oh god!" - in public, you know, the amazing thing is that the sky does not fall on your head, and that often people are quite accommodating. I mean it's just sort of part of everyday life. I wouldn't try it too often around here, but certainly in London and elsewhere, it's ... you know, it just happens. It's kind of miraculous that you can carry on with your life. And you realise that a lot of the time you're not too sure whether the degree of threat is real. But I ... certainly in Cape Town I wouldn't want to find out, right now!

In: Could you tell me just a bit more about in ... specifically in the work context, what your fears

were, what were the things that prevented you from being open?

RA: Having to deal with overt prejudice, more often, you know. I was kind of wanting to get on with my work and do the things I had to do, but I think I was very scared of being categorized, it's one ... it's my great fear, that I'm going to be boxed and regarded as a creature with the following characteristics, rather than just me. I think it would've hurt me, if people had made homophobic comments directly about me. That was what I was trying to avoid. And that's what I ... I just could not have coped with at that point. I didn't want to cope with it. I probably would've got rid of them, and fought it off, but it would've been a strain, and it would've been a struggle. Certainly now in this job, I don't know how it's going to be, but I suspect it's even more of an issue for me, because if ... I do want to go far, in a world which is full of white, male heterosexuals, who are extremely aggressive about all three categories. It's going to be tougher, but ... ja.

In: What exactly were your fears about people making direct homophobic ... more of those kind of comments towards you? What about that experience ... [interrupted by phone ringing] ... about people making more homophobic comments directly toward you, - if they knew that you were gay - what about that is ... what it was that scared you about that happening?

RA: Most of all the fact that Cape Town is a very small place. Most of all the people in Cape Town for the most part are very conservative about these issues. And I think I was scared of being kind of socially categorized, in a small town, and not having any recourse. I was scared that all sorts of assumptions would be made about me. Generally, that I wouldn't be able to speak for myself, I think most of all. I was not particularly concerned about sort of comebacks to my parents, that ... they certainly lived so far away they wouldn't even know, but it just scares me, in a town like this, the kind of impacts and consequences that one can have. I mean, so on a small scale, they were the homophobic comments, the kind of ... just debilitating insinuations that one has to deal with, counteract, you know. All these things take energy. And on the larger scale, it was the kind of bottling that goes on in this city. It is a small place, it's only the white community, for the most part of it - it is small and it's very easy to become trapped.

In: Can you go a bit deeper than that, and tell me what about those, all of those things that you've mentioned, what about that is it that scares you? What scares you about things being "bottled", being categorized?

RA: I think the fact that it takes so much personal energy to counteract these things, it really it's a con... you know, a gay identity is a strange

thing. In one sense I feel satisfied, I feel content about it, but it is a constant process, it's a constant, well, battle sometimes, with people. I was ... I'm scared that I don't really have the energy to deal with that kind of thing. There are still issues which I am trying to resolve. There are still problems that I feel. And I don't ... I take things at my own pace, I think to be dragged any faster would be very, very difficult for me, very difficult. So I think that those are some of the underlying reasons for it. And it's a very scary, bewildering process, to know how to deal with that, it really is, and I like – in this whole process of coming out to people – I like control over a lot of it. Not because I'm a control freak! but simply because it is not something that you want to have spin out of your hands. I mean I'm constantly amazed at how far there is to go. You know, you reach a level and you think, "Oh, alright, I'm honest, I'm integrated, I'm OK," but in fact you're always ... like at the end of the next year you think, "Ooh whoa, you know, I've actually done a lot more, I could've done a lot more, and there is still a lot more to do," and that's a fascinating thing to me. I think I'm constantly aware of it in my head; that's why it's frightening, you know. And OK, if I lived in a big city, maybe like London, like San Francisco, I might feel differently about it. I certainly had a completely different identity experience in San Francisco, completely different. You know, I felt for the first time in my life, you know, there's the possibility of a sane society, that people do actually have the ability to understand. It was really really exciting to find something that transcended both the heterosexual politics here and the homosexual politics here. That was tremendous. But it's a difficult process, it really is, and I think one carries around a lot of ... you know, trying to deal with things on a personal level as well as on a public level is a real challenge, and I don't want to have people biting at my heels.

In: You mentioned earlier internalized homophobia. Can you tell me a bit about that?

RA: Yeah, internalized homophobia is a real problem. It's ... I think I've overcome a fair amount, but I know I'm ... it's one of these things that bubbles out in my mind. I find myself being particularly derisive of camp politics, and I know it's not just because it has nothing to do with my experience – a large part of it is because of that. But I think it's also because it just seems to be an unnecessary thing to do, it really ... it's extravagant, and it's just stupid. Gay people are always assumed to be extraverted, flighty, silly and just, well, even dangerous. And, I mean, still to this day, sometimes I'm taken aback when I see two men together – this is after like being in a relationship for three years – and I think, "Gosh! What are they doing?" You know? And then I realise, "Oh fuck!"

you know, the kind of society one lives in just reinforces this all the time. It really is a shock, it's a weird feeling, I think – being sort of open to myself about my gay identity for four years, and then to encounter this. So I sometimes ... sometimes when I sort of feel depressed or down, I kind of ... these things kind of come out, and I think, "Well, if only I wasn't, 'cause then this wouldn't be the case," but ... and those I think are incredibly destructive feelings, they really are, and ... yeah. I definitely haven't got rid of all of it, by a long way, and I think it's just an ongoing change that one experiences. And I think for a ... ja, you know, growing up in colonial society like I did, it's one of many, as I said before.

In: What effect do you think your experiences in that work environment had on internalized homophobia for you?

RA: I think if anything it made me think about things which I didn't have to consider at university. University was a very isolating experience, I could dodge most of the issues, but the work environment is ... it made me sort of take a strong stand on issues, and you, in trying to ... in arguing the logic of it, you had to kind of recognise, well yes, there are certain elements of this one carries around in oneself. You know, why ... you sort of go home thinking, "Well why, why do I have a sort of ... even slight sympathy for it?" You know, "Why does it irritate me so much?" And it's not ... sometimes it's because it's threatening, but sometimes it's because it's what you have in your own head, and you think, "Oh fuck!" you know, "I'm gay, I'm involved in this relationship, and I have this idea." And I think that's what, you know, often makes people incredib... made me incredibly angry, sometimes, about that.

In: What effect do you think did your being gay have on your social interactions at work ... your social conversations with colleagues, your relationships with them?

RA: Not much, in some ways, but it sort of ... it made me even better at deception than I was at school. [Laughing:] Maybe one reason why all this kind of ... omission, all these ... these by-roads and side routes that one takes as a gay person, have seemed less stressful than they might've, is simply the kind of schooling that I had in this country. You know, one learns to lie, one learns to put on whatever face is required of you, and if you want to you can be who you are. So I don't think it had particularly much effect in that regard, I think I just was good at deception anyway, so ... but there were definitely moments when I used think, "Ja, I can't put up with this, I really ... I don't want to," and it used to be incredibly irksome, but ... I can't say I was any less honest than I would have been with other people. I was no ... I was not particularly more or less honest. With people in that cate-

gory that I would've wanted that kind of relationship with, I think it's ... was quite satisfying. I don't ... it didn't lead to any major sense of alienation really. It's a kind of sporadic discontent. Because one must remember these are not constant barrages that one is dealing with, they are issues that pop up now and again, so I didn't have to confront it all the time. So it didn't mar my relationships with them by any manner of means, but still a degree of ... a greater degree of honesty would've been appreciated. It would've made me feel more content.

In: You mentioned the thing of constant monitoring ...

RA: [Amused:] Ah yes! Well, I ... this is something I feel very strongly about, I think one does, as a gay person, have this, and, you know, I always try to avoid these trite arguments that are so pervasive in South Africa, like "You haven't suffered as much as I have, oh god! you should have seen what happened to me under the Group Areas Act!" You know, I just think, people have been exploited, subtly in different ways, all of it hideous, and collectively incalculable. As a gay person I think it is unique to your identity in this kind of environment. I'm constantly aware, constantly aware of heterosexual interactions all the time, and I'm constantly made aware of the fact that I cannot express those things in public. And it's just something that never goes away. It's like something that's in my vision. And when I see people together in the park, when I see people holding hands in the street, every single time, it may not irritate me, but it is registered, so I kind of end up feeling [laughing] I think overall, just damn irritated and I just think, "Why the fuck have you got this right and I don't?" You know ... and it's something I feel very, very strongly about. But at the same time, one goes to a party, one ... you know, these conversations start, and you think, "Ooh err," you know, "what can I say? Should I mention this?" So there's an unceasing negotiation in your head, it's always there. And ... I think it's very ... it's quite good, because you are made aware, all the time, of who you are and, you know, and the way ... what people mean to you and how you relate to them. There are certainly days that I could do without it! [Laughing] But it does ... it makes you never let up on being aware of just the fucking injustices of what's going on around you. Ja ... self-monitoring becomes ... gets to the point of just outrageous defiance, and I just, I just think, "Ag, I don't care about these people, I'm going elsewhere," and I just remove myself or go into a kind of state where I'm prepared to challenge comments that are made. But it's not a nice thing to have to be aware of. It would be ... it wouldn't be horrible if you had a choice but it's appalling when you don't. So ja ... and like being in San Francisco, and not having to

monitor yourself, being able to say things to people, it's really nice. [Laughing:] But that's what holidays do to you! When you don't have to work in that environment, you'll say anything.

In: Don't you think these two things are a bit at odds though ...

RA: What?

In: ... you talk about this constant self-monitoring that's horrible; yet on the other hand you said that you don't think being gay and having to conceal that fact has a bad influence on your relationships – or had a bad influence on your relationships at work.

RA: I think it is a paradox. I think it definitely is a paradox, and I think it's something that one deals with at particular times. It's a kind of ... it's a frustration for me simply because I'm not able to express myself in public, and in that sense it is the monitoring. But when I'm dealing with people, I become less aware of it. It's when ... it's moments of intimacy where the other issue raises its head, you know, when I hear people talking about these things, when I see people kind of being intimate, that is when I think it is a paradox. But for the most part, on a daily basis, in personal interactions, I ... thank god I don't have to see these people snogging while I'm at my desk, working on my computer! That's when it would really piss me off, but, yeah, it's just ... it's circumstantial, I mean ... I'm not saying one goes around thinking about it all the time, but one is reminded of it, one is reminded that there are limitations, and I think in that sense you are faced with a choice, like what do you do. But it's ... ja. OK, they're all things that I've ... certain days, bright summer days, I think, I can do without it. [Pause] An interesting point to raise.

In: Ja?

RA: No, I just ... it is ... to me it's sort of at the heart of it all, this kind of ... this ... the fact that one can feel satisfied within one's own gay identity, and yet discontent with so many things that, you know, kind of are pin-pointed across that really ... they go right across that spectrum where the public blends into the private, and vice versa. Ja, it's ... I'll think about it a lot more. [Laughs]

In: Ja. Maybe if you can think a bit about what you think lies ahead for you, how you envisage things, especially with this new job coming up. What do you want, what do you think is going to happen?

RA: On a personal level I know what I do want – that's to come out to my parents and be quite obvious about it. My relationship with them – very recently – crossed a point where I just realized that a change had to occur. It crossed the point where, you know, either I stay as I am, and continue to build this elaborate nest of lies, or I tell them, and they have to deal with the consequences with me. But on a professional

level, it does worry me, as I say. I'm 27, I'm going into a career proper, and it's unfortunately ... environmental work is always saturated with really conservative people. I don't know if I want to stay in it, so I mean in that sense I'm keeping some kind of escape route open for me. But if I do stay in it, I think these issues are going to become very, very acute, and one has to deal with gay identity in so many ways, that I think heterosexual people don't realise the number of assumptions which are made about you every single day, you know, going to office parties, and going to people's homes, discussing what you did on the week-end – all these things are very very difficult, and they ... I haven't had to deal with them directly very much – might be interesting to see what happens, but I must say I'm more nervous about gender politics now that I'm starting a career, than I would be elsewhere. In one sense I think it ... my fears might not be so well founded, because I will be able to challenge these things. I will, you know, if I get fired – and I suspect it's on gender grounds – then I'll certainly make it very overt and fight it. But does one want to? You know, it takes a lot of energy out of one. It's an incredibly demanding path to take, and I think ... ja, I can see myself having to make greater and greater compromises – to the point where I'll call it denial, and ... in the future, and I might well leave the field because of it. It remains to be seen.

In: Or what about the possibility of being completely open?

RA: Not a policy that I ... [laughs] ... will think of pursuing for the next little while. I happen to know that somebody who I'm working with rather closely is a fascist, and I'm not prepared to make ... take that risk, you know. I mean, I'll be moving on and this job is a stepping stone for me, and so I'm prepared to make a pragmatic choice, but when it comes to settling down, and sort of really going for it, I don't know. I don't know how far I would go. I never ... I can't answer these things with any categorical certainty, because when ... it depends on the circumstances and the people. One other pe... I mean the other person who'll be working with me is a very generous, bright, tolerant woman, and I certainly have no fears about that. I know from her publications record her credentials are in order. But, ja, I don't know as to all the others.

In: Your fears in that regard, are they of a professional nature, or are you scared about things that you've been mentioning ... [inaudible] this small town, getting ... [inaudible].

RA: No, in this instance it's definitely more professional, that it might well limit my mobility. And I know a fair amount of people, and there are ways to get round that sort of thing, but South Africa just is unfortunately a really, really small place, and everybody in this particular field knows everybody else, so there's no ... you can

get away from it, but only up to a point, and then you will always have to deal with it. But I think for that reason the professional aspect of it is of far greater concern for me in this instance, it really ... it worries me, because I just don't look like your average game ranger from Botswana. I don't have rippling biceps, I don't drive a four by four, and don't have a bimchette hanging from my arms, so on three major counts I've blundered into this field, you know, and it's just not done. You really have to ... everyone wears safari suits, and rushes to the Heidelberg for a beer. [Laughs] It's just a really sad truth! But who knows? I don't know. I just have my suspicions, that it's ... I'm going to have to fight. I'm really going to have to fight.

In: Do you think there's anything that you'd like to add, anything that I've left out, perhaps?

RA: Ja ... [Thinks] ... [Ironic:] My mind is so buzzing with ideas! I was just going to say that I think one really must make ... a very ... one has to have it very clear in one's mind regarding this process of coming out, you know, it has this incredible vagueness about it, and I think it covers all multitude of complexities. And that's one thing that I've really found to be the case. You know, there are degrees that are appropriate, there are moments that are appropriate. And there are of course the consequences of it, and I think it's such a useless term, it really is, I mean one has to break it up into the hundred thousand pieces that it is, and deal with it in that way. Because if one does it, one ... out of necessity, one has to make all sorts of adjustments when you do it, and I suppose one never ceases to do it, you know, you can never cease to acknowledge all these things to yourself, you ... there are always new people, who you're encountering. I find gay identity very interesting, although I don't accept the concept of being gay. Having to deal with it on that kind of level, which I think is a bit ... kind of alienating from left and right wing politics. It's a difficult position to be in. But I wouldn't want to be in any other position. It would just irritate the shit out of me if I was. But it's ... all ... I'd say overall, but ... professional ... one's identity as a gay person in a professional environment is ... kind of ... I'm no... I'm sort of debating, as I'm saying this, whether I should say that it's more or less stressful than the personal side of things, you know, more or less difficult than coming out to parents and friends, and I'm not sure, I mean you set me thinking about it quite a lot. I think one has the ability to detach oneself in so many ways from the work environment, so maybe that's why it's less stressful. But it's constant, like everything else, it's constant, and I think in that respect it's a real challenge for me.

In: How do you think this whole issue influences your feelings towards work?

RA: Whether I like it less or more?

In: Ja ... the fact that you are gay and that you have to deal with it in the work environment, how does that bear on your feelings about having to go to work?

RA: Ah-ha. I'm glad you mention this, because actually it reminds me of several things. I think as a gay person in this culture, one is faced with similar issues that women, in general, have to deal with. I think one has to be a little bit better, pretend to be a little bit brighter, challenge things in shrewd ways, because you do have to be better than other people to get where you're going, simply so that you can appear on the same level. You have to make yourself noticed. I know that if I don't, I'll be trampled on. So there are extra pressures on me, and I ... those make me a bit scared sometimes, but I really ... I am a perfectionist, and I think in a way it has something to do with it. But I will have to just go that little bit extra than anybody else, simply to keep my foot in the door. I think that is undoubtedly true. But it doesn't ... it ... going to work at this other dump sent chills down my spine for a host of other reasons, including the sheer psychosis of the idiot in charge, but I've never felt particularly nervous, thinking, "Oh god, you know, will they know I'm gay?" [Laughing:] I actually don't care! I should maybe level with Zoë. I would deal with that as it came, but I don't ... it doesn't want me to back out of it. It doesn't make me want to rush into it either, forget that, I'm not interested in flying any little flag for anyone, but it doesn't hinder me in any way.

In: I wonder if you can perhaps think of an analogy for your situation?

RA: [Laughs] I don't know, sometimes I think it's sort of like if you're giving ... having a large banquet, and feeding a whole lot of people who think they're allergic to an ingredient, and having to tell them, "Well, actually, you know, I popped it in, and here I am!" I mean I know it makes me sound toxic, but [laughing] I said "thought they were supposed to be allergic", so in other words they're not. I don't know if there is a suitable analogy, I really don't. I'd be reluctant to formulate one, apart from the dubious one I've just mentioned! [Laughs] ... Yeah, it's really sort of being honest and I don't have one at the tip of my fingers. I suppose the one I've given is moderately appropriate.

In: Tell me, how did you experience the interview?

RA: The interview for the job?

In: No, this interview.

RA: Oh, sorry – was going to say, "A bit personal!" I enjoyed it, ja, it was great, it was not quite what I thought, I thought it would be a lot, sort of, more shocking [laughs] ... wasn't quite sure what I had to reveal. And it sent me thinking about a lot of things. I actually have, strangely enough, had some of these things in my mind

because of this new job. And it's nice to talk about them, it really is. It's nice to discuss them, because one often realises, you know, where you're standing, you know, and if you asked me even a year ago, I would've given quite different answers. It makes me feel good, being able to talk about these things to people. Because one doesn't all the time. One does monitor. So it's a kind of ... it's quite a therapeutic process.

In: I think that is it, unless there's anything else you want to add. But you must still get a ... still think of a pseudonym.

RA: Oh. You can use Peter Davidson.

In: I'd like to use not ... does that have a specific connotation for you?

RA: No, it doesn't. I just made it up.

In: Ja, it would be nice if we could use something that's a bit more revealing, something that says something about yourself, maybe not a real first name, but ... you might even think of something connected with your little analogy that you used.

RA: [Laughing:] I'd rather not!

In: The kind of thing you'd use if you wrote to a letters page, and you didn't want to use a first name.

RA: I think I'd choose Richard Acton.

In: Richard Acton? What does that mean?

RA: Richard is a sort of suitably butch name, and Acton was the name that Ann Brontë wrote under, when she couldn't reveal her identity. So I think, you know, I think that's suitably juxtaposed. [RA later supplied the following additional information about Ann Brontë: She was also a younger member of the famous Brontë clan, who today is seldom considered. She wrote two novels (one of which is *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*) which were regarded as extremely scandalous and depraved at the time. In keeping with the family tradition it is a tale of sexual anxiety, repression and the cataclysmic ways in which social conditioning leads to unrealistic expectations of marriage. All of the Brontës wrote under pseudonyms and Acton was the one chosen by Ann. I like it for a number of reasons. For one, there are the obvious links with freedom of expression. Also, there are the links to gender roles – how the scandal arose not just because of the material itself, but the fact that it was not "expected" to come from a "lady". Finally, I guess it sounds really gender neutral. Though on that point I could well be wrong.]

In: Thank you very much!

RA: Pleasure!

[The following comes from a conversation directly after the taped interview:] I feel remote from people, a distance and alienation, and I know it's directly related to having to detach oneself and having to filter these things all the time.

3.4.2 Transcript of 1996 interview

- Interviewer: So what I am going to do today is ask you a lot of the same questions that I asked you last time, but also some new ones. I am interested to see if things have changed for you over the past two years, and to look at how and why things have or have not changed.
- Richard Acton:* I hope you remember the questions, because I don't! You will have to refresh my memory.
- In: OK! First of all, last time you used a pseudonym. I don't know if you remember?
- RA:* Oh yes, I remember ... "Bell" ... no?
- In: No, it was "Richard Acton".
- RA:* Richard Acton. Yeah, that's right. It is all connected. The Bells of Acton ... Richard. Yes ... What about that?
- In: Would you like to choose a new one, or do you still feel comfortable with that one?
- RA:* No, that's fine. It is suitably absurd. [laughter]
- In: What are the "Bells"?
- RA:* Oh no, it is too long and complicated to explain, but it is all connected to the Brontës.
- In: OK ... Don't you want to tell me about it?
- RA:* Well ... in fact I can't even remember! [laughter] The Brontës wrote under various pseudonyms. One of them was ... the Bells, the Acton Bell, the whatever else Bells that they used. They were just non de plumes that they wrote under as an alternative identity, because what they said was too scandalous for the social era in which they lived. That was the only reason I chose that anyway. And Richard, I can't even remember why I chose it. I thought it sounded suitably butch.
- In: That's right.
- RA:* I thought that was my reason last time. It doesn't really stand, it sort of faded. It should have been Kevin, or Dave or Bruce ...
- In: ...or Chad! ...
- RA:* Chad, yes. But no, Richard will do. Actually no, it's hideous, so please change that, I've just remembered, maybe ... Well, make it something like ... Kevin ... No! ... or ... I don't know ... something! No ... leave it as it is - it's fine, really! [laughter]
- In: We spoke last time about if you had to refer to yourself in terms of your sexual orientation, what label you would choose and how you felt about that? What would you say now?
- RA:* I think in the interim, thinking about it and having read a bit more on the subject, this time in the history of gay identity ... It has just been an interest of mine over the last six or eight months. I think it has only left me feeling even more uncertain as to the suitability of any particular term or ... I think that the basic issues remain the same. There is a kind of division between what one would like to use for convenience and what actually describes one's personality and one's character, one's sexuality. I don't think that my opinion would have changed that much from what I said last time, except insofar as I have even less certainty as to what would be suitable. I would feel less happy with any particular label and ... I think what has come up very strongly and what I have sort of realised is very significant for myself is that the term is so mutable and it has been transformed in so many ways over the years and actually what one ascribes as heterosexual or gay or whatever else is so kind of subjective and time-and-place specific and socially specific that it is not really of much use. You know, it will be interesting to see, even moving from South Africa to England [*RA* was about to resettle], how gay identities differ and what people perceive to be a gay identity. I don't think any of these terms are really adequate for describing one's individuality and one's sexuality. Again, because what they are is so tied up with all sorts of social expectations, social conditions and the way that people would like to categorise one. At the same time it is useful to use the term. You actually end up putting yourself in a box all the time. In this interview I will probably use the term more than I would normally, simply as a kind of telegraphic point. But I don't like the term. Personally, it is not very useful. I think it is one of these endless problems of gender identity. I think it is just one particular category into which one falls, that isn't terribly useful, but is socially functional. So ... no greater clarity, but with a lot more confusion. Ja
- In: And your greater confusion has to do with the term being so context specific?
- RA:* Ja, it does not convey what I believe my sexuality is about. If there is something that was free of prejudicial associations. If it was free of negative cultural codes, then perhaps I could use it, but because it is so tightly defined and it means so many things to so many different people. If I say I am gay, what does that mean to somebody else? They will pick it up and they'll use it, they'll say, "Oh, X is gay," but what they are actually talking about is something completely different. It is not actually my experience and it does not actually define in its own specific form my sexuality, so it's because it is context specific, but also because it is ... so vague on one level and you are actually dealing with other people's prejudices and other people's perceptions, not with a quick term to describe yourself. So, yes, on a broad cultural level it is difficult, but it also because you are dealing with the specifics of the interpretations within that. And I think South Africa is a very interesting case in point, because I think the perceptions of homosexuality are even more negative in many ways.
- In: OK, we will get back to that ...

- RA:* Rave, rave, rave ... [laughter]
- In:* Who knows that you are ... well, let's call it then "gay" currently?
- RA:* In a work environment, or a personal environment or all environments?
- In:* All environments.
- RA:* In my family, my sister knows. My parents don't know, and my brothers don't know. I would say ... about 50% possibly, of the people in my workplace know. That I know they know is because I am very open about it to them. The rest I don't know whether they know and I am not open about it. On a professional level, when I interact with other companies and people from other organisations, I don't make a particular point of it ... I don't ... Ja. So they would not know. They might assume or whatever the other processes are that would lead them to various nefarious conclusions. I have not said anything. But on a personal level ... ja, friends have known, 100% of people know, I don't think there is anyone that does not know.
- In:* There was a time when you were really strongly considering telling your parents?
- RA:* Oh yes, yes, my father was deaf, on the day. I thought one day it would be very nice to tell my parents about the relationship I was in, but then ... ja, things got a little out of hand, because when I arrived ... the previous day my father had been bathing and had submerged his head in the water and – thank god! – had gone stone deaf, so [laughter] it made any revelations rather difficult and I don't think he would have heard a word of what I said. I sort of thought, well, these moments are awkward enough without having to boom them out over the house and possibly over the neighbouring wall, and ... ja, I just thought it would be too absurd to try and say ... Even if I did say, "I am gay," having this poor man saying, "What did you say? What did you say?" "No, I've been shopping at Pick 'n Pay!" and I just thought no! that I'm not prepared to deal with. There was a level of absurdity and the ridiculous which was exceeded, so I did not say anything at that time, and ... ja ... my parents have been terribly British about it. I think on some deep unconscious level, like level 52 in Anglo-Vaal's platinum mine, they've probably worked out I am gay, but on a conscious level they are being terribly sweet and denying everything and sending courteous enquiries about "that really nice young man" I stay with, but that is about it. I am still thinking about it, but I have not come to any real hard and fast conclusion about it. If it happens, it will happen, but so far there hasn't really been an opportunity and it hasn't been that much of an issue for me thus far. It hasn't ... you know ... there's certain levels ... ja ... of compromise which I have lived with thus far and I haven't really felt that it has made that much of a difference to my relationship with them. I think in the

next while ... I think these questions are going to become more pertinent now, because I am definitely entering that age where one passes from parental indifference to increased parental concern. Asking why I don't have a girlfriend, or why I am not dating. I don't have a fiancée and three kids and a house, you know, so it is easier to ignore. I think it has just been that age where ... in the twenties you are busy consolidating your career, well, you're trying to set out on your career (I don't have one [laughter]) and you try to sort out what you want to do in life and you try and make decisions about where you want to live and what major directions you are choosing, so I think in that sense it has displaced or ... ja displaced the priority of discussing that kind of relationship. I certainly think it is going to become more pertinent over the next year, or couple of years ... one to five years. I certainly intend to say something, but it has been a very tumultuous time in other ways so I have not really been able to say it with ... from a position of strength as well, you know, and decreasing risks in other ways, and coming from a stronger standpoint. That I have not been able to do and that is what I would like to do.

- In:* Decreasing risks in other ways?
- RA:* In other words, I think being more secure in other ways and having a secure economic platform and being confident in one's kind of profession, one's career and the choices that one has made. I think that those are the things that I would like to sort out. I think that when people are young, there is a risk that ... in the potential of rejection or denial or repression, or ... [laughter] confusion, guilt, etc ... that one ... there are risks associated with it, you know, in one's social position and I have ... one of the fears that I had, certainly when I was younger, was basically being stuck out on my own with having ... no economic support and no-one to rely on and no-one to turn to, and that was a risk. And I think that is one of the reasons why I did not feel that at the time it was appropriate for me anyway. I don't have that family network in Cape Town, so the possibility of things back-firing in a major way would have been serious. There have been other things, like careers, which have made it difficult to kind of feel satisfied. Ja, there are lots of other issues linked to my career and to people's perceptions. I have just been very, very frustrated in it and I have not felt that I've been in a position of ... control. I suppose that is really the word, ja, to actually risk that kind of thing.
- In:* Can we talk about that a bit ... What's been happening since we spoke last; what's your situation been in the past while; and where you are going?
- RA:* I think ... after the last interview ... I think I was just changing jobs.

- In: Yes, that's right. We were talking about the situation in the book store and you were just about to start out.
- RA: Ja, Ja. If only I had known then what I know now! No, well, I left the book store ... what did I do then? ... then I went on holiday for quite a while (about 4 months) and then I came back here and I got a job at that goddamn awful university and I have been in the department doing various contract research posts. It has all sort of ... been very ... tenuous in the worst sense of the word: one doesn't have tenure, one just has a tenuous job! The salary has been appalling, the working conditions disgusting. There is the way that people have treated me and fellow researchers and it has just been, ja ... I mean, it gives slavery a bad name. It really does. I mean rather than consolidating, as I thought it would, my career, it has actually thrown into rather sharp relief the fact that I would rather not be in that field at all. I am now doing various other courses. I don't intend to drop that work that I was in entirely, but I am certainly going into something more creative and more interesting. Ja. That has slightly more relevance to the planet as a whole rather than 2 000 boring academics.
- In: What kind of thing are you thinking of going into?
- RA: Well, I have always been very interested in writing, so that is what I would like to do. I am interested in doing a script-writing course and generally just doing something a lot more creative and a lot more fulfilling on a personal level. I decided that what is important is actually to gain job satisfaction on a personal level and I think ... what I have seen so far is just hundreds of people stuck in careers that they don't want to be in and I would like to experiment and see what the options are. And part of the reason I am leaving, in fact one of the main reasons, is simply career related. There are so few opportunities here for people to embark on career changes, especially the white male. The young white male. You know, there are only two levels open in careers at the moment for white males generally and that is right at the top and right at the bottom. So I just thought, ja, it would be ... I know that there is more out there. I am interested in seeing it, I'm interested in broadening my horizons and ja, I mean I find ... the work that I am doing now just bores me, it really does, and I don't mean to sound arrogant, but I think that there is a limit to the amount of stuff one can learn at a university. The topics are always diverse, there is always new knowledge, but it is the way in which the knowledge is handled, it is the way it is produced, it is the way it is disseminated and made accessible to people, and it is the level of ... the lack of imagination with that kind of career. It is completely ironic, because it is such interesting work, but it is the whole environment, the way it is produced and packaged. There is very little attention to making it ... useful to people and relevant to people's lives. I think I've got those skills and I'd like to merge the more creative side with the knowledge that I have got. I would certainly not want to actually leave it behind and I would like to do something more soulful and stimulating.
- In: What are your concrete plans for the next while?
- RA: Well, I don't know if there are any concrete plans. This is part of the great change. It all sounds terribly heavy, like, packing up my bags and heading for London with a suitcase and a top hat ... But no, I am going to see what the options are. For the first six months, probably, I am simply going to be doing some routine desktop-publishing work and I will be a night secretary. [laughter] Should I explain? It is not a euphemism for anything. I will be working as a night secretary and during those six months I would like to see what options there are. I would like to pursue some courses and, as I said, a script-writing course, and possibly others. Just get a general impression. Academia I am bidding a long and slightly bitter farewell. I think it's a treacherous and revolting environment. I mean, they always talk bullshit about going out into the real world – I actually can't think of any environment that is more poisonous and claustrophobic than academia. I mean it really ... It is revolting and I would never wish it on my worst enemy. Actually I would.
- In: And you are going with your lover?
- RA: He will be there for 2½ months and then he is coming back here. He will be there in London off and on for the next year. We are going to assess and decide what to do. He'll probably come over in August or September next year, ja. But ... Ja, I certainly won't come back here. We have had long and torturous discussions about it, but there is a point where one has to make a decision about one's sort of relationship and then a broader dementia which comes with living in this place. You know, certainly for me the career options and the lifestyles and the whole environment – I have just grown sick of it and I want something new. So, I am very committed to the relationship. I don't see the departure as a sort of termination or anything like that. In fact we have lived apart for almost three years of the relationship, so I suppose we are getting a bit cramped [laughter], we've been on the same continent and in the same hemisphere for over a year now – I think it is time to move on! So, yes, ja. We are certainly both very committed to it and I do not envisage it fizzling out at all, but it is not going to be easy, it is certainly a difficult thing again. You know, I don't like long-distance relationships and only e-mail kind of saves the day. That really does make a difference, because it is much more personal. I think

that if there wasn't e-mail [laughter] I think that the decisions would have been different.

In: So you envisage him actually coming ...

RA: I think he can go there. If he can't go there out of ... the negotiations reached [laughter] at the conference had been that I'd probably come and live in Southern Africa (in Namibia or Botswana or Zimbabwe) but I won't ever come back here. South Africa. I've done my time. I have done my social time. Free at last. Yeah!

In: Ja, and basically the big reasons for that are career related?

RA: Ja. They are mainly career related. Ja, there are other social factors, but I don't think they are really the main thing. You know, the conservative social environment against which I have railed endlessly for [laughter] 30 years, and people's bigotry, etc, etc, – well, I don't think South Africa is particularly unique. I think I'm just bored with this version of bigotry and I'd like to experience some other fascist behaviour ... [laughter] in a new country. Something which ... ja, I'd like to see what life is like elsewhere. But I think the conservative behaviour and the lack of tolerance of people's ... for different perspectives and viewpoints, they're just symptoms of a deeper conservatism, which has really shaped the lack of imaginative options that one has here. And you know, great! if people want to kind of contribute and broaden the imaginative horizons. I have nothing against that, but it is just not suitable for me at the moment. It is not what I want. So it is not the conservative nature per se, it is not the conservative perspective, but they are obviously part of the whole thing.

In: I think that you referred to it a bit when we were talking about the word *gay*, but how would you currently describe your relationship to the gay sub-culture?

RA: I don't think it is any different from last time. Last time I think I was using strong language about the gay club culture, but ja, I don't really associate with it, so it is not really all that different from what it was. I don't really go to clubs and sort of ... deliberately gay social spots. But I don't like that kind of thing anyway, so I wouldn't go to the clubs, etc, in the normal run of things. I think the relationship to the gay sub-culture is defined by the way it defines itself. I don't really have much, if anything, to do with it. And it also depends on what you mean by "gay sub-culture". If you mean, "do I know other people who are gay" – by definition in South African society they are part of a gay sub-culture. But if you mean "the mainstream gay sub-culture", no, I don't have anything to do with it. My interaction is with other gay people ... went through friends etc, but I have never ever gone out deliberately to look for gay people in a gay spot. Ja, I am still not particularly satisfied that it is a useful and constructive thing

in the long term. But, I am speaking from a personal perspective, you know. My reaction is based on my feelings on the subject and for other people it is important because it does provide them with a kind of window of opportunity. I think, you know ... it is hard to say whether my attitudes would have been different given different social circumstances. I was just very lucky ... I mean the process of kind of defining my own sexual attraction to men, I think that was fortuitously in the company of people who were very sympathetic and, you know, in a way there was not any need for deliberately going out and finding other people. Those are very specific circumstances which might have made my attitude different. I don't see that it would've. I am saying that as a kind of reserve clause, but I don't see that my attitude would've been very different, because basically I am not that kind of person who would enjoy that kind of social interaction. I would feel awkward in any context and so I don't know whether it would have actually been a viable route to follow. It is a difficult issue, but on a personal level ... I have problems with that kind of interactions that people have, I have problems with that kind of ... ja, physicality of it all, which I think is the main emphasis. Maybe if there were other gay sub-cultures, I would like it. You know, if there was really something else that I felt to be significant. But I don't feel that one's sexuality is everything. It's just one operational part of my life, if you want to put it really mechanistically. It just is one part of me, and I would hate to just meet people simply because they were gay. That's not really how I perceive and relate to sexuality. It is a very fundamental building block of people, yes, but it is not the way that I would like to interact with others. I would like to meet them because of other interests. If they are gay, it is nice to know gay people. In the South African environment it is unusual, and I think I've been very lucky in meeting lots of people. So there you are! I think it is a very complicated issue. It is a very complicated relationship.

In: In terms of yourself. How do you feel about being gay and how do you feel about yourself generally?

RA: I think I feel very satisfied on a very deep personal level, sexually, but I think what is difficult is simply not having the language and not having the tools to describe oneself and realising that one's identity, one's sexuality, is part of that identity, and one's experiences are on some levels so unique that it is very hard to find a common language of experience with other people, so you're not really dealing with the complexity of the issue. I don't think that this experience is unique to gay people. This is something that I have been thinking about recently. I think the complexity of sexuality actu-

ally extends way into the heterosexual culture as well. I think people struggle with having various social roles and duties to perform, which in fact don't have very much to do with their own identity and their own feelings. If anything, you know, the history of sexuality suggests that there is this kind of constant cultural control and definition of sexuality and monitoring, but always there are people who are squashed in the door and don't quite fit into any particular category. So, I think there are a lot of people wandering around without the language and clarity, without the opportunity to discuss things – not the opportunity, it is not quite reflective of what I am trying to say. It is like having a language without words. It is like having a society ... with blank spaces and it is not because people ... At some levels it is conscious censorship and, I think, on another level there is something much deeper. There's simply ... the actual tools for interacting on this level ... the chances of interaction are just not there. So it is frustrating on some level, when you're thinking about it ... you know, in certain contexts again, it is not frustrating uniformly. Again, it depends – on some days I feel more contented than others about it, other days, I don't. As a gay person I think one is unique in a gay identity. One is forced to confront these things more and the consequences of not having those opportunities are more extreme and that is really because there are more blank spaces around the kind of gay identity at the moment and, well, maybe they're not more, maybe it's just that there is other social support. The negative implications around gay identity are stronger. There's more social criticism of it, but it does not mean that the battle is any easier elsewhere. I mean, [laughter] the more I meet people and the more I hear of who they are and what their sexual experiences have been, etc, the more I realise that these conventions are very, very unrelated to what goes on. I think in a city like Cape Town there're a myriad of complicated and confusing and bewildering experiences that everybody has. I think gay people might've just become conscioutised to them more. So there is a stronger polarity of awareness coming out of criticism of ... loneliness and confusion, because of the negative pressures. Ja, but I think ... also just another messy field. I mean ... the more I ... think, I'm just becoming more aware of the mess around sexuality ... rather than actually becoming clearer about the issue. It's just becoming gloomier.

In: I want to move to the main focus which ... remains the issue of what it is like for you as a gay person in a work environment? We have spoken a little bit about where you work. Could you just describe that environment for me more fully, in terms of the hierarchy where you fit in? And what the kind of relationships were?

RA: At this new work environment?

In: Where you have been, yes ... You have been there the whole of the past two years except for the four months before that.

RA: Ja. Well, there're two departments. They amalgamated when I actually came to the university so long ago. And there were two professors in the department. One nearing retirement, which is very convenient for the other. He proceeded not to fill the chair, which eventually, because it had been unoccupied for very long, became frozen. The net result is that there is one fascist at the top of the heap who runs the entire show, with various sell-outs, prostitutes and lackeys beneath him and ... there is a permanent staff. I am not in that section either, I belong [laughter] ... Within the department there're also units associated with it. So now we are getting lower and lower, and in the units are also members of staff, some of whom are in contract posts, and I work for people who are in contract posts. So, ja ... I am sort of between the contract people and the waste pickers and they ... The researchers basically are employed on an ad-hoc basis, contract basis, and I think ... how did the university describe it? ... "A temporary, part-time, contract post with no benefits." [laughter] I think that sort of sums it all up. Ja ... I didn't work permanently ... well, full-time for any unit because of the contract nature of the work. I was doing little projects ... for little people.

In: And the size of the operation and the sub-units?

RA: The main department probably has about 14 staff. I am not sure, it is quite a generous estimate. Probably about 14. Then the units, they've got about eight ... the main unit, eight or nine people, and then the unit that I did a lot of work for is the smallest unit, which had one person on a three-year contract running the whole show and various what they call associate consultants, and I was an associate consultant. And there were about four associate consultants. But I was the main associate consultant.

In: You said earlier that about 50% of the people knew about you being gay. How did that work? Which people knew and which people didn't?

RA: Actually the people who knew were the people I made friends with and I saw them on a social level. I think people I did not see on a social level I never said anything to. So, in fact I think there is a direct correlation between them. If I didn't see people outside I did not bother.

In: Can you say a bit more about that? Was it a conscious decision to hide it or not to say anything about it, or how did it go?

RA: I think ... I don't know how to put this politely. [laughter] The majority of those people are ... they're not just heterosexual. They ... [chuckles] ... they are just, ja ... they're white, conservative South African Christians of the worst order, you know, sort of: "What a friend we have in Jesus, but fuck everybody who doesn't agree

with our viewpoint." And I think the only term (who used the term originally? ... I can't remember) ... "grey-minded people" ... I think it was a combination of having grey-minded people in bureaucratic positions, which they love, sort of teaching and administration, and just feeling that they were ... Ja, I didn't want to actually tell them because, I suppose at some levels it was a defiance, but on others ... You know, again that kind of ambiguity, because they're really vicious people. They're really vicious. They are the sort of people who would go behind your back and just make life difficult in small, mindless, grey ways. And ja, I am not actually sure of my motivation. I think mainly ... I was just very aware that they were deeply, deeply conservative people. So there was a bit of monitoring and self-regulation on that level, but had I known them socially, I might have said something to them. But I mean it is so unlikely that I would ever associate with people like that, because they're just, they're sort of ... Theirs is a kind of ... grossness which is just on a daily basis, that sort of self-satisfying smug glow. There are many things which I could tell you which enrage me deeply about that department, but I can feel on a professional level [laughter] I really would be at risk kind of divulging stuff here! But basically ... well, I will keep it really ... basically, what I will say is that I happen to know that two of the little happy bunnies were bonking each other's brains out in the department and I mean that did make me feel incredibly angry, because they are both married and they both go to church and they both lead the most wonderful little prissy lifestyles and have 2.3 children and fish on a Friday. And, you know, the fact that my lifestyle is ... my relationship would not be approved of, but it is OK for ... you know, and they'll make lots of jokes about Michael Jackson bonking 15-year-old boys in the tea room. But I thought, well ... it is rather bizarre and rather funny, but on a slightly broader scale there is an irony, a very dark irony on the fringe of the comments, where somehow everyone knows that the two little happy bunnies are fucking each other's brains out in the office, but that is alright, because we are human. And really, I mean it is a kind of mundane, daily Christian intolerance, which is inescapable and very insidious, because if you ... the basic logic goes something like: if you do something right, then it is because you are a good Christian and if you do something wrong, well, you know, God is sort of teaching you a lesson and it you can always be forgiven. It is not a kind of ... moral system which is carried through to its logical conclusion. They're basically supporting their own conservative viewpoints. If it is something that they don't like, ... greyness can be very, very dangerous. You can make someone's life a liv-

ing hell even if you are fucking someone's brains out.

In: What do you imagine the consequences would exactly have been for you if those people knew that you were gay?

RA: That is an interesting question. It is very interesting. I don't think on the level of direct disadvantage they'd be able to do anything, but that is only because it is a new South Africa and they are not allowed to. If they had a chance to slam me in a dungeon, I am sure they would love it, but "This is the new South Africa. We love homosexuals and blacks and communists and everybody else." So they can't do that. And there is a gender equity programme at [the university] and certainly if you got any hint that you were being discriminated against because you were a gay, you can embark on a very unpleasant process of justice. You would probably get what you wanted, but it wouldn't be very nice. But on that level there was a check. But there is another level of intolerance, which is quite different from that. It is a level of intolerance where one has to deal with a more direct collision between people's prejudices and one's daily life, so that, for example, if Madame X, who shall remain nameless for the whole interview, finds out that you're gay, and, you know ... it's just ... one has to be aware of the fact that there will probably be comments made, insidious jokes told, the general cooling of the atmosphere, radiation of disapproval, and just a daily sort of look in the eye, like: "Oh dear, I suppose that everyone is entitled to their own sick lifestyle." And I think that by not saying something I just put it at a distance. I could have said something, but I just didn't want to deal with that ... bringing that prejudice into a much closer space with myself. It might be because I just thought it is not worth it, you know. What I am dealing with is undigested crap and what is the point of dealing with that? I don't have to interact with these people, they have no social context with me, so I didn't really feel that by embarking on a kind of programme of revelation that anything would be gained, actually, and in fact, it would just infringe on my working environment. I would like to keep it at a distance. Ja, it actually just wasn't worth the effort. It is like ... some people, you know that by revealing things, difficult things, or saying something, you are actually going to get somewhere and you feel that you should, because they are worth it as a person. These people were just not worth it. They were actually just revolting. I would not say it. On so many levels it was just not worth the effort or the cost. I think that that second level of prejudice is very, very important and I think it is why a lot of gay people don't say something. It is one thing knowing that people are prejudiced but not allowing them the opportunity. It is almost an opening. You are

opening up something by doing that and you are bringing out prejudice. There is a certain level of decorum, of prejudice decorum, you know. It is kind of a British thing. If you don't say it, doesn't exist. But the sort of people who ... I think their insidious behaviour is such that they won't say anything until you give them an opening, and when you give them an opening, then it's *carte blanche*, then it is fun and games, and I just thought, I am not actually prepared to do that. I think on a conscious and a sub-conscious level those were the processes and thoughts that were working at the time.

In: So it really had a lot to do with the social consequences at work (in the office), the kind of day-to-day running of things, rather than ... ?

RA: I was so marginalised as it was. Really I couldn't have been more marginalised, unless I was standing at the edge of a plank on the 50th floor of a building. You actually can't get more marginalised than the position of a researcher in that department, and I just thought, well, it's so absurd, you know, I am dealing with so many issues, why deal with this when it actually has nothing to do with them and it would make no difference. It is like talking to a Ku Klux Klan member about gay rights. You get a very blank, white stare. [laughter] What is the point?

In: Did you feel that it would have professional or career consequences?

RA: Ag no, the people that I worked for were very nice ... but I mean really, that lot, in the global pond, are absolutely nothing, so I don't really feel it would have career consequences for me at all. Being prejudiced and disadvantaged by that department was actually a compliment. Your career will take off ... I am not sure what the career consequences would have been in other environments and other departments. That I couldn't say, but I think in universities, generally, there is a kind quirky, favourable prejudice for people who are more marginalised, so I think one would have had intellectual protection. I think in a university environment one is protected, but not necessarily for the right reason, but because it is kind of post-modern and trendy to be nice to ... the marginal. I don't think it is necessarily their own emotional or genuine commitment to it.

In: This situation that you have described, and these dynamics ... were there incidents in the past while, or since I last spoke to you about this, where it actually put you in a tight spot? Where you were aware of being in a difficult situation, and trying to protect some kind of identity or keep something hidden?

RA: Ja, I suppose there were one or two. I think when I was buying this flat, for example, that was an interesting case. Again, what I found so interesting ... what was very interesting about this, is it started off as an issue of compromise, but it actually changed into something much

more interesting and complicated, because when I said I was buying a flat, I was fascinated by people's kind of default settings. I began to realise that it's like ... there's a thing on computers, when one does desktop publishing – to use a ridiculous metaphor! [laughter] – there's a thing called a master page, where, according to what you want to design, you set up this kind of system of layout and columns and guttering and all the rest. Anyway, when I gave in this data it was like loading in a file and what people came up with was: "RA is buying a flat" ... then: "He will be staying with another man and therefore this is what the flat looks like." And I found that really, really interesting. It's like: "This is a two-bedroomed flat. There is no other option." And I remember thinking, oh, god, now I have said something about the flat, *now* what I am going to say? But within 10 seconds this wonderful, warm social control had taken over and everybody had just redesigned the whole flat in their minds instantly, because the alternatives just weren't there. I find that absolutely bizarre. And then I just thought, oh well, if this is the way people want it [laughter], I'm not even going to say anything. What is the point, you know, again? To say, "Actually, there is one bedroom." Well, that's as good as saying ... you know. Really, it was very, very revealing. It happens everywhere. You talk about ... There's that one famous thing, I think *Francis* showed you – that story about the surgeon and the surgeon's son.

In: Yes.

RA: Well, this is exactly the same thing. This is an example of what happens, these kind of gender default settings. I mean to me it that was very interesting, because you realise again this whole language of exchange doesn't exist. You actually have to create it. You are not dealing with something that is the same ... You are not dealing with a common dialogue. There is nothing there! You actually literally have to take people and show them. And it's like a revelation. But I think these things are very insidious, they are very reflective of all sorts of other problems, particularly in South African society, because I think many people have not experienced anything outside, it's been a very ... closed and contained environment. Apartheid was very successful in perpetuating that. So, white people don't know what's going on down the road, I mean people in my department are saying, "Oh god, isn't it amazing, you know I have been thinking recently that South Africa is actually a Third World country." And you think, "What have they been doing for the last x number of years?" you know. And I think it's similar in different communities, it is like a revelation that there could be a homosexual. They have led such incredibly blinkered lives.

- In: This thing with the flat – with these colleagues that made these assumptions about it – you speak about that with quite an amount of feeling and passion and I wonder what the experience of that kind of thing was like for you? If you could describe it?
- RA: Well, in fact ... ja, that's an interesting point, 'cause I think it separated my own social life from my interaction with people professionally. It made me realise that to bring people over from that level to a more intimate personal friendship level would be much harder, because basically their assumptions are now: "this is the way that everything is laid out". I think in that sense it made me realise, oh well, there is less of a chance for ... the stakes are high for revealing things now. I mean, how true that was – or is – I don't know. But certainly at the time ... Now there really is a much greater distance between me and other people. On some levels it was annoying, because I created this bigger space. There is that sort of paradox of being marginalised and then people marginalising themselves, but again it goes back to that kind of level of insidious ... or prejudice. Do you want those people as friends? and I think at the end of the day, no. I think in the short term ... I did feel a sense of risk and fear when I was trying to explain the purchase of the flat. But it soon changed to, "Well, you know, that is the way it is." That doesn't make that much difference to me. My parents – that's a different thing. They also had the same default setting. It was revealed in the course of conversation – my mother would say, "Oh, where is the flat? How nice! And how many rooms are there?" "Well, there is a very big lounge and there is one bedroom." And she'd say, "Oh yes, should we go out today to the Waterfront?" So it was just sort of erased. And now, when I said I'm going overseas, she said, "What are you going to do about your part of the flat?" And I suddenly realised that oh god! she has actually just erased the whole thing, so the mental Tippex is doing very well.
- In: Tell me, do you think, in this environment that you are fortunate to be leaving ... do you think you would ever have considered any legal steps, if you had been discriminated against in some way? Or disciplinary steps at a university level or anything like that?
- RA: Yes, I would have. There is no doubt about that in my mind. Because I think that is a violation of a very different magnitude. It's one thing dealing with petty jokes and swatting the bigoted horseflies [laughter], but it's quite another when it is loss of income and livelihood. I think that's just blatant discrimination and I would have fought it. I think the thing that's difficult is proving that it is sexual harassment and prejudice. The university does not have a scintillating track record in this regard. I mean, there was the case where some female lesbian lecturer ... well all the dirt was out, but there have been several male toads in that place who have harassed students and groped and fondled them and everything has been behind closed doors, etc. So ja, I'd have to see what would actually come out. Though they've got all the assurances on paper ... But I would still do it. I would still do it. I think it would be worthwhile. I don't think in that department it would have arisen. They would just have closed the door quietly, and made your life inconvenient to the point where you'd just love to go.
- In: And again on the hypothetical level: What do you think would be necessary to make it possible for you in a work situation to be entirely open about your sexual orientation? What would you look for or want?
- RA: That is a difficult question. It is a very difficult question. Because I think one's talking about careers on different levels ... On a professional level, I think ... There are always hierarchies, so one's dealing with different relationships, different environments. For example, I don't think on some levels ... the managing director of a company ... it would be futile to reveal one's innermost thoughts, but ... I'm not really sure. What does one come up with? A wish list? Like no prejudiced people or no people who are intolerant? One just has to read the situation ... Last time I was talking about the racial issue and the similarity of racial prejudice and I think it would be the same for black people in an affirmative action post, in a conservative white environment. You know, what it would take there for people to be honest, I don't know. I think specific circumstances, probably people ... a kind of interpretation/reading of the level of trust that you can have in people. But, you see, I think one has to be careful about wanting to reveal these things. I don't know whether it is actually always a good idea. Basically it had nothing to do with them in a professional environment. In one sense, the environment into which I went was slightly easier than the one before. Because the pressure ... I didn't want to socialise with those people and there were sharper boundaries between those that I wanted to know and those I did not feel like interacting with, so there was less of an ambiguity, but ja ... I can certainly see that the same things are going to arise again and possibly in a more complicated way. I think there are different work environments where it would have been much more pressurised. For example, the bringing-home-the-boss scenario, things like that. I don't know whether those are actually relevant to my situation, because I am not likely to be in a position where I would. I am not likely to be in career where I would be bothered about it. That's not my interest and I am not that sort of person. I would be in a more long-

distance-runner career. I don't like team things and board meetings and chatting with Mr Walrus upstairs. That is not really my scene.

In: Is there anyone in your department who is openly gay?:

RA: No.

In: When I asked this question to some of the previous people I have spoken to, two of them mentioned that they would find it helpful if companies came out with an explicit statement saying that they don't discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation. Do you think something like that could be useful to people?

RA: Yes, it might. But I think [the university] does have that environment now and I would not underestimate the importance of that. On some levels it is a bit of a wish list. It is kind of like wanting to, I don't know, allow black people into public swimming pools in the 1980s in a white area. It is kind of "wouldn't it be nice". But it's so incomprehensible. On some level it's like saying, "Would you like to give a filthy swine equity?" The one thing that I will say now though, is that it is a very important time for this country with this kind of transformation, because people are pressurised. There are very major changes taking place in this country, where even the most conservative pigs are forced to say the right things and to be seen to be leaning in the right direction. I mean it is really ghastly on some levels. Shame, [laughter] you see these conservatives really doing their thing and you know all they would love to do is just send everybody back to their homelands and lash political opponents and really just have a good old-fashioned time, but now they *have* to co-operate ... [ironic:] *Everyone* is socially democratic. *No-one* ever supported apartheid. But how far they would actually be prepared to commit themselves and do something, I don't know. The same people are still in power and they still have the same prejudices; they have not adjusted. I think all these things have gone underground. I think that's what one would have to be careful about, in saying that policy would help people and actually feeling more secure because of that policy. One would have to take a very close look and assess the way in which one is being prejudiced. Assess who it was, and what the implications are in terms of the whole hierarchy. Is there actually someone to appeal to?

In: The changes that have taken place in the South African constitution and all of that – do you feel that has made any impact on how you feel about these issues and how you experience being gay?

RA: No, not really. To use an extreme analogy, and a rather unfortunate analogy, but it is the only one I can think of off-hand: It is like the death penalty. You know that the death penalty is no longer sanctioned, but you know that 98% of people support it. I think the same thing goes for

gay rights. It is a huge step. But again, you've got to realise that the population is conservative. So I don't think on a personal level it has really made that much difference. It has not boosted my sense of security. I am not going to go down the road wearing my becoming little gay-rights New York T-shirt, because I don't think it will take much to spark people off. It is rather a pleasant irony that they probably wouldn't say anything now or they would tone it down. It is kind of a mental pressure, a very gentle mental pressure on people. So things are changing. Still, the basics stay the same – the goddamn fascist society. Just with new curtains in the window. I am just very cynical. I think it comes from one's daily life and listening to prejudices. The irony of living as a gay person in the new South Africa is that you know that at least you are still one of the [laughter] disadvantaged, because you're now in a uniform category where *everyone* can be prejudiced against you, regardless of colour or creed, so I suppose that's a great advantage! Now everyone can be honest and say they don't like it. And it's cool to say it. It's still cool to say it! You know, if you say, "isn't it strange that someone has big lips and a 'black nose'!" you really would be machine-gunned down. Because everyone knows that that is wrong. It would be very nice to see a gender struggle with the unbanning of various organisations and everyone having to tow the line. I don't know. I'd be very sceptical of there being any deep change. And those constitutional rights are there because of a very, very small group of people ... and luck, because they got in because there were other, more important so-called debates going on at the time. So one shouldn't be under an illusion as to why they got in. It's not as if there were 10 000 grannies in the platteland writing in saying, "Defend homosexual rights." Probably if there were 30, 40, a maximum of a 100 people out of 35 million, you are dealing with a lot. So it is a very tenuous thing.

In: Do you think the fact that it is there in principle will eventually change the kind of consciousness you have described?

RA: Possibly. Possibly. It is like, I suppose, what women had to deal with 25 years ago: "Huh! Huh! Huh! you've kept your own surname, huh! Huh! Huh!" I suppose one just has to endure it and eventually it becomes alright to just use *Ms* instead of *Miss*. Instead of having all these ridiculous comments about how we had been going for 35 years without a *chairperson*. So everyone just has to put up with it, with the really slow, agonising process. I think by having the rights you do set up an environment where it is possible, again, that whole language of connection. You actually mention the words *gay rights*, and sexual orientation is there, so you do raise awareness of it. That should not be underesti-

mated. But I have no illusions that these things are very ephemeral and they are here today and gone tomorrow. There is this wonderful sense of progression – it is often conveyed in gay literature and historical reviews, like we are marching to this greater awareness of sexuality. Well, that might be, but if history says anything it is like “tomorrow everyone could be lined up against the wall and shot”. One should be very careful about assuming that life is really becoming much rosier. It’s a bit like ... what’s that Margaret Atwood book? *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Like this particular women I was thinking about in my department. I’m sure given a couple of glasses of wine and a machete she would have a great time. It’s only thin threads of control holding people back. I’m still sort of lurking, looking [laughter] out of the corner of my eye, thinking, well, it is miraculous, but it is a miracle and miracles pop sometimes. If it lasts, fantastic!

In: We have touched on this in a way, but is there anything that you can think of that professionals in the human-resources field, legal professionals, policy-makers, people in government can do in order to make things easier for gay people in a work scene?

RA: I’m not really sure, I think maybe along the lines of a placement code or a protection code, sort of race, gender, creed, blah, blah, blah. Ja, I suppose maybe something on a level that’s functionally practical, like a workshop, or whatever. You know, like they’ve had with the police on how to interact with people. Maybe something as basic as that? ‘Cause I really think you have to lead people by the hand, and it is not being patronising, but seriously, the problem is that people have been isolated and I think in this country, and elsewhere, just by the whole thing, the whole social context ... the rules of the game. So by saying that, I’m not being patronising at all, but I really think it is a *revelation* to people. I suppose I wish there was something like the equivalent of those Idasa trips to the townships in the 1980s, so everyone can stare out the window and say, “WOW! We had no idea gay people lead normal lives! Isn’t that amazing!”

In: I don’t know if we should take them on bus trips to Angels [local gay club]!

RA: [laughter] No, that might be a bad start!

In: You were talking about walking down the street wearing your gay-pride T-shirt. Do you feel there is an actual, tangible physical threat?

RA: Yes. ... Yes. I think in an environment like the city bowl you probably wouldn’t have such a problem, but certainly, say, shopping in Tyger Valley on a Saturday morning or going down Voortrekker Road ... or just Fish Hoek! God! Really no! You would be in serious danger. People are very violent. One should never un-

derestimate the power of violence and the threat of violence.

In: Last time you were feeling quite strongly ...

RA: ... about everything! [laughter]

In: ... about the fact that heterosexuals had the kind of right to public displays of affection and all of that and you felt that you didn’t have that. How are your feelings about that?

RA: I still think it is a problem. I think one should have that right. Ja, I suppose it just is one of these things that is just a wish and there is not much you can do about it, and I think it really is that whole issue of physical safety. I think I mentioned last time the case of those two guys from LA who were in Rondebosch and it was only because they were 6 foot 5 inches high and 4 foot wide that no-one touched them – and that was because their physical threat was greater, you know! And that is the only reason why they got away with it. It really is. I mean certainly someone would have properly tried to attack them or whatever. Maybe also the level of physical threat is not the only thing that one is dealing with. One is also dealing, again, with that kind of daily monitoring, that second level of prejudice that we’ve spoken about. It’s like women going down the road and being whistled at and whatever, it is a similar level of harassment. But of course perhaps one feels less secure because one knows that one’s protection is that much less. I mean, as a woman you are going to get protection, but as a homosexual, they’ll probably think, “Oh yeah! Wish I had done that!”

In: Is there anything relevant about your experience that has not been covered by these questions?

RA: No, basically everything is there.

In: Our interview of 1994, did that impact on you?

RA: Ja. I found it very, very useful, because one doesn’t really get an opportunity very often to speak about things and to think about them. One often just sort of deals with them on a daily contingency basis. It is quite unusual to have this opportunity. It is interesting to see the differences and similarities with myself and what I have been saying.

In: Do you want to comment on that, anything specific that stands out for you?

RA: I think this time I feel much more strongly – [chuckles] if that’s possible! – than last time on a lot of issues. And I also think, in the interim, what was clarified by the first interview was how I feel about my own sexuality relative to other issues, because I hadn’t weighed it up in that environment. Although it is such a constant thing, you don’t always think about it. You kind of deal with your sexuality in the working environment in so many ways and so many little instances that you don’t see how it fits in and how one’s sexuality is linked to one’s professional identity. I liked that opportunity. It has not made it easier, but it certainly made it clearer.

4. Synopses

4.1 Artist

4.1.1 Introduction

Artist (29, female) paints for a living and does various part-time jobs. She lives in Port Elizabeth.

Researcher's impressions: During the interviews, *Artist* was warm, open and lively, and reflected thoughtfully.

Relevant employment history: When interviewed in 1994, *Artist* had been working full-time as a layout artist at a small printing business, *Fastprint*, for six years, while she was painting and selling her artwork part-time. She resigned later that year and subsequently worked as tattoo artist, manager for a take-away outlet and ornament-maker for a gay magazine. Currently she grooms dogs part-time and continues to produce paintings, often with gay or lesbian themes, for selling.

Level of openness: *Artist's* family and friends know that she is lesbian. When she was working for *Fastprint*, two of her colleagues (her sister and her ex-lover) knew about her orientation, but she kept it secret from the others. In subsequent employment she has come out.

Choice of pseudonym: For the 1996 interview she kept the pseudonym she chose in 1994, when she said it related to her desire to be known as a gay artist, and to the freedom of expression that she was discovering through art work.

Preferred label for orientation: She says that although she is a lesbian, she would "rather be referred to as a gay woman. I've never been comfortable with *lesbian*, because it is stereotyped, as in *queen*. It puts you in a box where you're supposed to be very masculine and very tough. I'm just a gay individual. It's very neutral. I don't say I'm a lesbian, because people almost want to fall over on the spot. It's almost a softer term, and a more modern term. To me it breaks the news a little bit easier than to say, "I'm a lesbian." I've just always *hated* that term."

Relationships: At the time of the 1996 interview, *Artist* had been in a live-in relationship with another woman for a year.

4.1.2 Parental support

(1994:) My mom was devastated when she found out, and had a nervous breakdown shortly after that. She had a heart attack about a year after that and lost a terrific amount of weight. But then my mom and I have always been so very close, and she couldn't forgive herself for not seeing it coming. She said she doesn't accept my life-style, but she loves me, so she's learnt to live with it, but if she could change it, she would. At least she's honest. My father knows, because in a bit of a drunken stupor, he told me I just mustn't make our family's name dirt. But other than that, he's one of these men, who, if you don't talk about it, it doesn't exist. But he absolutely loves [*Sandra (Artist's lover of five years, whom she left later that year)*].

(1996:) My mom's immensely proud of me, which is quite a turnabout – it's been nice that she's been so supportive. I've very much more open with my parents about my sense of who I am and what I do. I mean they come here and my dad helped me moved in, and he knows that there's only a bedroom upstairs, and he's so fine about it. He absolutely loves *Helen* to bits. They get on almost better than he and I get on. And I was always looking for his approval. And, whether I have it or not, I think my attitude is I don't care any more. And it's with that attitude that he's almost giving me his approval. As long as my parents are for me and behind me, if other people don't want to be, then that's their problem. No matter how old you are, it's important that your parents are behind you.

4.1.3 The work environment (1994)

I work with eight other girls. One is my sister, she's gay; the other one is my ex. The other girls are very curious. They used to ask outright questions, until I just used to fob them off. I've never lied to them that there is a man, but I just say, "I've got better things to do, than to settle down," or something. I speak a lot, I don't care, really, and I think one or two of the girls have put two and two together.

4.1.3.1 Why *Artist* kept quiet

I think my biggest fear is that people won't like me. It's wrong, because you're always going to have somebody who doesn't. The one reason why people wouldn't like me is if they found out that I was gay. But maybe if I really was truthful, they like me as a person. Whether I'm gay or straight shouldn't make any difference, and I would just then pick out my friends from the ones who pretend to be the friends. I most probably am a coward. Because I'd rather be liked, and rather put up a bit of a front, than after working with someone for six years, suddenly have them be your arch enemy. I don't think I can take that stress every day, being in a very stressful job anyway. So I rather withdraw and hold my tongue.

My sister has unfortunately had some very bad run-ins lately with a girl she was going out with, and she ended up with a black eye, the one month, and a few weeks ago, she ended up with another. And that's most probably right now why I wouldn't tell anyone, because I don't want them to think that that is what women do to women, generally, or that that also goes on in my life.

There's one or two girls I get on well with, who I'm sure would accept, but I'll tell them when I'm ready. I don't feel a work situation is ever really the right time, to have something that's totally non-work related just thrust in. Maybe in a job that's mundane, but not where the job comes in today, it's got to be printed by tomorrow. You don't have time for personal conflicts. So most probably if I ever did tell them, it would be at a work function after hours, when you're more comfortable and you can chat properly, and you haven't got the boss walking among you.

One of the girls, *Carol*, is very, very, very anti-gay. She's very religious, but she hates gays. I don't know if I really ever would tell her. I don't feel I owe it to anyone at work, right now, because they don't give me the respect that I feel I deserve. If I told them I was gay, I might find that the respect dwindles even more. So, I think I need to build up my own self image to such a point that if I tell them and they don't like it, I'll say, "Well, you're missing out on knowing someone who could be beneficial in your life."

When I started working there, people knew that *Annie* and I were living together. If I drop myself, I'm dropping her as well. And then I most probably drop *Lara* as well. So I've got to be very careful. I would, in a shot, give my side away, but I'm protecting her. I've just never had a role model, because the gay people I've known don't want anyone else to know. I don't know what to do, because I don't want to hurt people, but I feel I'm actually being a little bit untrue to myself.

I've got two bosses, and I'm scared the one will find out, because he knows my father. He might just let it slip to the basketball fraternity, which is rather big, and who all know my father, and *skinner* does make the rounds – especially if it's something bad. So I've got to be very careful in front of my boss. And if you tell one of the girls, it's as good as telling the bosses.

4.1.3.2 How *Artist* "passed"

I'm very, very careful on the phone, because *Sarah* will phone me and say, "Ooh! My wife cooked such a wonderful meal for me," and I think [exclamation] are these people listening in? because once or twice they have taped our conversations.

I'm very, very careful with the people who come to visit. I've told the receptionist she's not under any circumstances to let anyone through to me. I fetch them and walk them outside. I don't want somebody who looks "very gay" to come into my work, because I don't feel obliged to explain anything to anyone, about my life.

We have a client coming in occasionally, and when he leaves, *Carol* goes, "Ooh, I must go and wash myself, you know he might have Aids." For those few minutes, I dislike her intensely. I normally don't dislike anyone if I can help it. But it's all I can do to bite my tongue. I've often almost turned around and said, "If he's so dirty, am I also just as dirty?" and actually dropping myself in the dwang. Because she confesses that we get on well and I'm a nice person, and she's always wanting me to baby-sit her children. Yet if she knew what I was, she wouldn't let me near her children.

It's like you're in a dream and saying something, and nobody's hearing you. It feels like screaming in your head, "I'm gay! I'm gay! But I'm a nice person; I'm a good person. But I'm gay." It's on the tip of my tongue, but I'm just not saying it to her in words. I'm thinking if I'm hearing it so clearly in my head, why can't you feel it? Or is she pushing me to the point where I will tell her? Is she pushing something out of me that she can't get out of herself?

But why should I give her that bit of knowledge about me? She's not worthy of it, because she treats other people like rubbish. And it's really not fair, because this guy is such a genuinely nice, lovely guy, and she's a pig towards him. She won't even look at him any more! Whereas before, she was so sweet to him.

And I'm so scared, if she finds out about me, it's gonna be the same treatment. And in my work, I cannot have that.

I could take her and shake her physically. And I could take myself and shake myself, because I get *so* worked up. I actually go cold. It's almost as though you're in shock. I feel panicky as well. And I sit there, and I just calm myself down, I count to ten. And by the time I find I actually have to go on with the job with *Carol*, I'm trembling by then. And it takes a long time to get rid of that hot feeling.

Around her, I feel I'm being a bit of a hypocrite. "'Cause I'm nice to her, but as soon as she starts talking about gays, which she often does, I'll turn around and walk out, rather than say something I might regret. I feel I've betrayed my kind. I wish I could have the guts to phone her one night. I'd most probably eventually have to look for another job, 'cause I have to work very closely with *Carol*. That's most probably why I've left it all this time.

Tonight on *Agenda* [TV programme] there's going to be a thing on gays in South Africa – tomorrow I can rest assured that those girls are all going to be chatting about it. 'Cause gay in our office is a big issue. The one night when we all went out for a drink after work the whole table started to talk about gays. And I didn't add *one word* to this conversation, I was absolutely panicking, I was frightened out of my wits. Thinking about it now, I'm even shaking. It was like being in a dream, and all these people are standing over you [mimics their talking]. It's because I most probably feel guilty, or it's like they're talking *about* me ... and yet, they're not, because they think I'm one of them. It's like being an alien on a [laughs] planet. Now I know what "fish out of water" means. Do you get up and run, or do you stand up and fight for what you believe in? And nine times out of ten, I rather get up and run.

But very often I have to stay, and if I feel my back afterwards, I am *drenched* in perspiration, and I don't perspire easily. My whole body flushes this crimson. And I most probably get even more crimson, because I know that they can see that I'm blushing.

I've got so many things I want to say to them – at *that specific time*. I sit there feeling very frustrated. And normally I'm the one in the office with the biggest mouth. And if somebody actually looked at me they'd realise that she never ever comments about anything when gays are brought up. 'Cause they're all talking about "these bloody *moffies*", and I would *never* say, "Ja, I hate *moffies*." So I just rather keep quiet. But what I *should* do is stand up and say, "So what? They're great people." But I am cowardly.

I'm not very careful when I speak to my sister. Sometimes I'll be telling her this most involved, intimate story, and somebody will be standing right behind me, and my sister is making these eye movements and I don't quite catch it [laughs] and I'm talking away, and I've got to drop the subject and cough and splutter and walk to my desk. I'll blush profusely and just think, well, if they know, they know, and I'll hope that nobody has put two and two together.

4.1.3.3 Wanting to say, "I'm gay!"

If anyone ever asks me, I'll never say no, because they are obviously ready to hear the truth. 'Cause often we'll go out with the girls at night, and you have one or two glasses of wine and you get chatting really intimate chats, and it's so ... *there* – I just haven't said it yet.

Sometimes I feel like just standing in the middle of the room, saying, "I'm gay! How are you?" But I'm almost waiting for the right opportunity, where all eyes are upon me. I think it's gonna be such a thrill. [laughter] Or it's gonna fall flat, completely ... but I'd like to have a camera there when I do it! Because there's gonna be very big eyes. Although I'm sure lots of the girls suspect. I mean, you work with someone for five years and they're going to all the work's dos, but they've got no-one with them. And there's no way I'm gonna drag along a gay guy, because this is me and if they don't like me like this ...

My other boss, the MD, gets on *so well* with gay people, and he won't have anyone say anything bad about them. If I had to say, "I have something to tell you: I'm gay," it would most probably bring us closer.

Chatting to you, or reading an Outright magazine ... I just suddenly feel like telling everyone, I'm in jeop... it's just ... so close, and I always stop myself, 'cause I'm always the martyr in the way that I think I'll let someone down. I should actually think about what's right for *me*. In fact, I'm starting to make up my mind here [laughter].

If I was going to leave there tomorrow, I'd happily walk around and say to everyone, "I'm gay, I'm gay, goodbye, goodbye, I'm gay!" I should most probably bring it up before I leave. I mean goodness, I could die in two days' time.

4.1.3.4 On the brink of disclosure

I've almost told the one woman in a roundabout way, 'cause she said that there's a magazine that she wanted to loan me, but there were naked women in. I said, "I don't mind. Bring it!" And always talking along those lines, and she said something about that she can accept a gay woman far easier than a gay man. And we sort of dropped the conversation, because the boss walked in. And I most probably would've told her that day. But then she goes and natters to this one who's anti-gay.

One of the girls from work has met *Sandra*, and they get on very well, but I can't just say anything to her about *Sandra*, 'cause she'll most probably put two and two together. And yet she said to me once one of her very best friends is a gay woman, and she said, "She's such a *lekker* person!" and she said she really accepts gays. It was like she was saying to me, "I accept you," but I didn't take up the challenge. I once again didn't feel it was the time and place.

4.1.3.5 Being out in the cold

I feel very frustrated, because if it's our anniversary, or *Sandra's* birthday, or if I hear a song on the radio, I've got to wallow in my own bit of knowing. You've got to pretend, you've got to become quite a good actress. We phone each other once a day, at least, and they'll say, "Oh, it's your flatmate". It really is difficult, it's very much a double life.

I see the girls at work going through their ups and downs, going through their divorces and boyfriend problems and getting flowers for their birthdays, and I feel sometimes that I'm left out in the cold. I do feel I'm deprived at work. Because somebody will be having problems and their work goes down, and the bosses will say, "Well shame, I know her boyfriend has just moved out." But what about me! I could've had a helluva fight the night before, and spent the night on the couch, but I've got to go to work and pretend hey! this is fine! I can't speak to *Sandra* and put the phone down and sit there and have a good cry. You've got to just carry on with your work, and you actually almost are in jeopardy of becoming hard. And it's not very fair. But maybe it's not fair because I'm making it not fair on me.

Most probably it doesn't hurt me quite that much, because my ex and my sister are there and they have the same problem and are on my side. We can chat. We'll often talk about the most ... disgusting things that are gay related – like "fur burgers" – and the girls don't know what we're getting at! We sit there canning ourselves – that's actually nice, when you have this united bit at work. You really feel like you're *kaas*, until somebody comes up with, "Hey, did you see those *moffies* on TV marching down Johannesburg?" and then you're all deflated again.

This one who is so anti-gays was chatting to me about my sister, and she was asking me if I still had hassles with *Lara*, so I said, "Well, my mom and dad are." And she wanted to chat about it then, but I can't chat with her, because I don't know her intimately enough, and it would have all been spilt.

I've always been a loner. I've always been out there – I've always had one special friend, I've never been a groupie. So, it doesn't affect me badly in that I think, oh, they can all sit and talk about their children and husbands, and I can sit and say nothing. I'll put my two cents' worth in, but I talk very generally in the group. I'd rather leave it as it is, because it hasn't been killing me so far. I've worked with them for five years, and if they don't know by now, then they're pretty thick. But then you get some people who just don't know. They just think that that's the way you chose to live your life, celibate! Those girls don't seem to sit there and *ponder* life. They're all very normal girls ... I've never known any one of them to have an emotional problem. They have break-ups with boyfriends and they wail in the toilet for half an hour, and then they're OK, [laughs] they're amazing, I wish I could be like that!

When somebody is nice to you, it's almost like such a bonus, especially one of the girls who I suspect know about me. I'll be as nice as I can to them, if they seem to be accepting me, and if they chat about *Sandra*. But on the other hand, I'm so scared somebody is just gonna turn around and be a total bitch one day.

I try to perform just that little bit better than my straight counterparts. It's important to me that if anyone found out I was gay, they'd see that "she's gay, but she's good at her job". I've twice threatened to leave and twice my salary has been increased. So I can't be that bad a worker. If we are really such bad people, would the boss have kept us there for five years?

4.1.3.6 Painting the future

I'm not enjoying my work at all. A lot of times when I come home and do art work, it's pretty bold, dark, heavy work. I always worked on commission – what people are wanting. One day I sat down and thought, I've never painted a picture for *me*. So I started painting, and it was absolutely abstract. And the more I started to do works like this, the more I started to enjoy myself. A lot of my pent-up frustrations come out in my art work, in just doing something physical. Because I can't sit here and happily watch TV and know that I've been true to myself the whole day – I haven't.

Most probably the stress of the job and of leading a double life eventually catches up with you. About two months back I was ready to quit. I took leave and did a helluva lot of painting. And it did me the world of good, and I went back refreshed and feeling good, and just telling myself, I'm going to make it work; this will pay for the rent for now, and I'm going to go on to better things.

I've never grown very attached to those people. I can't, because they don't really know much about me. I feel like I'm not one of them. So I plan to do my own thing one day. I'd like to be known as a gay artist. I will most probably be so fulfilled and happy and relieved to actually leave there, and be gay more openly. I'm *learning* to be more open. That's why I said yes, I don't mind you interviewing me. Not only do I hope I can help you, but I might learn a little bit more about me. You've asked me things that I haven't really ever thought of in *words* before. I've expressed feelings I ... didn't actually know had words. But it's quite nice to ... say it. If I'm going to achieve anything by being gay, I've got to start to be a little bit more active in my gay life, and if I can help another gay person, I most definitely will. *Samantha* is wanting to do an article on my art for Outright, and she said to me, "What are we going to call you?" I said, "Put my name in there!" And that's why when you were asking me for what name could I go by – use my name! It's time ... to stop hiding.

4.1.4 The change of work environment (1996)

I think your interview really got me thinking about that I was not happy there. I think it had a great bearing on my leaving *Fastprint*. Because I hadn't spoken about a lot of things I'd been thinking about for a long time – I think when you put things into words, the words become almost actions and ... I'd been sitting with these emotions, but I'd never really thought about it before. And the fact that my relationship was floundering. I had nothing really to grasp onto. There was nothing binding me to *Fastprint*, there was nothing binding me to my relationship. It was very good for me to take everything out with you, put it in front of me, look at it, talk about it, dissect it, and make something. My life was broken down for almost two years after that conversation. But I've *never* regretted what I did. Because it's *made me make a change*. You were most probably the catalyst that made me sit up and say, "I'm talking to this guy and telling him how wonderful my life is, but actually it's not that great. It could be better. Now let me look at this properly." When you sent me the synopsis, I read it a *few* times. I actually used to take it to work and read it and think, I'm not happy like this. This isn't me. I'm not giving the most. I'm participating in life, I'm not *living* life. Boy, have I been living life! Not the best way, but I mean ... I've had some major downs, but it's been good. It's been a learning process.

I looked at the women I was working with. How narrow their lives were, how small their worlds were. And I realised I was being as small as *they* were. My gayness was becoming an issue to me ... whereas it was only a fraction of my life. Yet the way they were treating me, and making me feel dirty about it – they were making it an issue. It shouldn't be an issue. One's sexual orientation should just be what is done behind closed doors. It shouldn't make you or break you. And I didn't appreciate being sucked into their vacuum. I was almost reciprocating with my anger and yet they didn't realise why I was so angry.

They're very small-minded people. Even about normal issues, they walk around like people with bags on their heads. They've all worked with each other for about eight or ten years ... so you become like a family. You almost have one way of thinking and one way of dealing with things. And then they had become *one*, and a small-minded *one* at that ... which is sad.

So I thought, rather than make a scene – my sister and this other woman that I know were still working there – rather than make their lives uncomfortable, I'd bow out graciously and leave them to their little natterings and carryings-on and they could do what they wanted to do. I decided to just move away from the negative and try to make my life far more bearable. I didn't come out, I actually didn't feel that they deserved my honesty. Bar my sister and *Anna* [an ex-lover] that I worked with I was never that close to any of the other girls, because I always had lived a double life in front of them. Why now suddenly admit eve-

rything? To me, it would have made things almost worse for my sister and my friend. Because they weren't ready to come out.

So I resigned in September [1994]. It was about the same time that I left *Sandra*. I had to break totally from both of those things that were binding me. I've got a lot of space in my new relationship; I'm very much me. And if I'm down and *Helen* [*Artist's* partner for the past year] walks in, I say, "I'm depressed today!" and I don't cover it any more. I can't take hiding any more. Now if I'm depressed and I'm down, I just find it better to tell people. And the new people I met had a totally different perception of me, because I showed them not what I wanted them to see, but I showed them who I was. I was very raw at that stage, and I think when you're raw with emotion, you don't cover it very well. And they got to see me very much for who I am. Which was nice and refreshing. I think that's made a very bonding type of friendship.

I went to Cape Town, and I learned how to do tattooing. I bought the kit, and I got stuck in when I got back to PE. I stayed for a month with an old man who is a guru of tattooing, and I was making reasonably fair money. People I was dealing with – I didn't realise – would be, sometimes, not so wonderful. I mean you can't say to a person when they rock up there smelling of beer, "No, I'm not going to tattoo you!" Being a woman alone, it wasn't practical, it wasn't safe.

Then a friend of mine who owns [a pizza outlet] approached me and she said she desperately needs a manager. I was thoroughly enjoying working there, because my boss was a gay woman, so it was fine. We were open with each other, and it was wonderful. I felt liberated, compared to *Fastprint*. Not only was I in control of the situation, but my boss knew about me.

Then friends who own [a gay magazine] approached me and said they wanted to make little hydrostone figures. Don't I want to come in and help them build up stock? So I did that for three months, until December. *Graham* and them are all gay, so it was nice. It wasn't exactly the career I would have chosen, but it passed some time.

I'm helping a woman at the moment who breeds poodles – to groom them. It's the furthest from art work that you can get, but it's money. And it's interesting, and I've learned; I'm meeting new people. She doesn't know about my lifestyle, but I've been totally honest. When she says, "Where're you living?" I say, "With a friend – in a house – a girlfriend in a house." And as far as I'm concerned, she's not employing me; I'm just making money through her. If she asked me, I'd be straight with her, I'd be honest. I know she's a Christian and she most probably would try to convert me, but let her try and I'll deal with it then. I'm not shy about it. It's a lifestyle I've chosen, and I'm a good person and that's as much as there is to be said about it. I feel I don't ask her about her marriage. I don't want to know if she's straight, so I don't feel *any* obligation to get on to that subject of my being homosexual. And if she did ask me, I more than likely would try to avoid it for now, because I'm not that close a friend. I'd rather build up a friendship so she'd get to know me as a person, before she gets to know me as a lesbian or whatever you want to call it. I don't think it would jeopardise our professional relationship. I think she'd deal with me as the person she met initially. I don't think she'd judge me by my sexual orientation.

And I've been selling pictures – I've been painting – at a gay bar, which unfortunately closed down two months ago. So I have got round to doing my artwork that I wanted to do. My art work has kept me going. Reasonably well. I now sell my paintings through word of mouth. The bar was very nice and cultured and I had a lot of pictures up there which I was selling regularly. It would have a lesbian theme, or a gay theme, or type of naked bodies, where you can't really make out one sex from the other ...

Now I deal a lot with gay people. Which doesn't make things any easier. I mean, they still ... I've got to give them a service and they have to pay for it. But people I deal with professionally ... I've got a lot more confidence with people I don't know. Maybe it's because I'm older. I'll be hitting thirty soon, and I realise I'm not a teenager any more – I'm grown up and have got to do my own thing. I think having had to fend for myself and bring in my own income has given me so much more confidence as well. I've matured to a degree over the past two years as though it's ten years, and there's little I will take from people in the line of nonsense. I'm proud of who I am and that I've kept myself going.

My initial reaction to the people I work with now is that I'm far more open to them. So when you're open to somebody, they're inclined to reciprocate. I find it important nowadays, having lost so many people [three people close to *Artist* committed suicide], if I love you as a friend, I'll tell you. And I never used to do this type of thing. Things in my professional life have actually improved my relations with people outside of it ... my friends. Realising that with total strangers I could actually be almost a one-on-one ... be honest with them and open with them, and they accept me and we end up making a good deal, and actually almost end up with a friendship after that. It made me realise that friendships can only become stronger through being honest and open. It's been good.

4.1.5 Stereotyping (1996)

It's nice to meet a lot of gay people who are cultured ... and have class, because I think a lot of misconceptions about gays is just what you see on TV ... it's so stereotyped. Unfortunately if people do not understand something, they almost prefer laughing at it. So maybe things like *The Birdcage*²⁰ are easier for them to accept, because they have a good giggle, and a good look at the other lifestyle – but they're getting at least to see something. When I went to see *The Birdcage* it was absolutely packed, and that's nice. And it wasn't only gay people there, it was a lot of straight people.

But even *The Birdcage* is unfortunate, because they always show a screaming queen, and it's unfair to the gay community. I wish someone in the gay community had the guts to get up there – *The sum of us* to me was a beautiful portrayal of natural gay life. And if you can just get away from the stereotype. I deal with people on a day-to-day basis that I sometimes think, "I wonder if this person is gay or not?" I sometimes even can't pick it up. I think it's great. But I'm only realising now how many, many gay people there are.

The people I deal with now see me as a person, first and foremost. And that's why when I meet people professionally, who don't know I'm gay, I don't feel obliged to tell them I'm gay, because they must see me as a person first. If they ever suspect I'm gay, and ask me, I will say, "Yes I am." But because I'm my own boss and earn my own money, if they don't like it, tough, then they must get out of my life and not deal with me. At my previous work, I thought if I tell them, if they find out, what will they do? Can they fire me? Will they treat me differently? Will they give me the jobs I'm used to? Will they give me nice jobs or will they suddenly give me all the really shit stuff to work with? Which they could easily have done. It was a lot of fear on my side, of ever coming out at *Fastprint* – much as I wanted to stand there and say, "I'm gay!" I knew I couldn't. I knew logically it wasn't the right thing to do.

4.1.6 The changes in the country (1996)

The changes in the country have definitely played a big role. Also you see more on TV and more movies, and they're making more people aware that there are more gays out there. And of course, you now and then hear gay activists on TV and things like that, and it's good that they screen that type of thing. And the debates aren't any more, "Oh, you're just a moffie, you must go back ..." They're actually listening to people now. I deal a lot with gay people. Their views are far more political than they ever were before – I found we actually used to stay away from politics, because there was nothing in it for us. We weren't getting anywhere anyway. Now people are far more: "You must vote for this, must do that, we're going to support this group", because people are far more interested.

4.1.7 Empowerment

(1996:) Political power has helped an immense amount, in fact, more than I have realised until now. But to have laws behind you, it does make quite a change in one's life. And I used to always say, "Viva Mandela!" I mean I used to sit there and watch the box and say, "This is my man!" because he is far more open to changes and things – and to different people and different lifestyles – than any of these other antiquated dinosaurs we've had in power.

I can open up the bonnet of my car and put oil in and things like that, whereas your average woman is so used to handing her power over to a man, that she doesn't even know how to open a bonnet – she doesn't even know where the clip is for the hood. I mean it's ridiculous! I think a lot of gays have been in do-or-die situations. They *have* to, because they don't want to give their power up, not just to a man. I find that gays are more independent individuals. If they can do it themselves, they will. I don't know why so many women hand their power to men. And I think the more women do, the less men will accept that there are gays and gay women in this world, because they're so used to "my little one" who does the shopping and the cooking. And that's wrong. It's very wrong. It's wrong of straight women to have got to that point, where they hand their power to their husbands or men.

I feel power has a lot to do with attitude. And attitude has a lot to do with society's attitude as well. And it *has* changed a lot. With the new legislation and things like that ... it has definitely changed. And I do feel

²⁰ A Hollywood version of *La Cage Aux Folles*, a farce in which two gay men pretend unsuccessfully to be heterosexual. While the movie is gay positive in the sense that it shows up society's bigotry about this issue, the protagonists are stereotypically effeminate and outrageous in their behaviour.

more power for myself, and therefore I feel more obliged to do more for myself. And the more you do, the more you can do. I'm proud to the degree that I've come as far as I have without anyone's help.

(1994:) I'm reasonably involved in the gay subculture. It's difficult, I used to be very much involved with scuba diving and underwater hockey. But the guys start saying, "Here come the lesbians," and men are actually very cruel, towards gay women. They're not grown up. This guy in a bar wanted me to come outside so he can ... donner me up. "If you want to be like a man, be like a man." It's frightening sometimes.

4.1.8 Taking risks through being out (1996)

The Constitution does have an influence on me. Because I was sitting at a bar once, and there was a whole bunch of guys sitting there, and they looked over and looked over again and I was sitting with a bunch of women that ... I mean I don't look very feminine and they didn't; they're very sporty and active, and somebody said that we were dykes. And they were glancing over, and "dykes" came up again and I just got up to go to the toilet and I leant over and I said to him, "Have you heard of defamation of character?" So he looks at me. I said, "Carry on in that tone and you'll be hearing from my lawyer," and I went to the loo, and when I got back, they had left. To me now it was a stupid thing to do, because that was saying yes, we are dykes. But I didn't actually care, because I knew I had the law behind me. Yes, it has made a difference. It certainly gives you that little bit of empowerment and that little bit of feeling ... I'm not doing anything illegal. I do view myself differently. I view myself as a woman and not as a third-rate citizen. And I'm equal to any man - we just have a different way of looking at things. I most probably do have a lot more personal confidence than I ever did have before. I had to. It's been a do-or-die situation.

If I were ever discriminated against in any really serious way, I would take legal steps without a moment's hesitation. I would definitely. We went to the Grahamstown Festival last year and held hands the whole time we were there, because there's so many wacky people there, it's just the done thing. But then when we came to PE and we'd go along the boardwalk for walks, I'll hold *Helen's* hand, because she has told her mother about herself. Her mother's accepted it totally. I'm not employed by anyone, I mean it doesn't bother me. And I love the way people do a double-take when they walk past. They look and look again, and I think, "Oh well, we could be sisters, we could be anything ... it's got nothing to do with anyone else." No-one's ever had the guts to ask us.

When say four or five men walk past, they'll give you the look and you think that just now they tap you on the shoulder and say ... But then I'll just say we're sisters - I mean we look so similar anyway. The problem was *Sandra* was in a job where she was so worried all the time. She's working for the municipality. There's thousands of people that work there. If she's seen by anyone, it's a problem. Her mother didn't know. It was a problem. *Helen's* mother knows. She works for a company who all know about her, regularly tease her about it. And they call me her "goose" whenever I phone - it's wonderful! It is quite a thrill to walk along. I almost do it deliberately. If we're in a coffee bar ... and people will look at us once too often, I'll just stretch over and stroke her hand, and squeeze it, and you'll see this old lady giving us this disgusting stare, and I think, "Oh look!"

4.1.9 Stumbling blocks to coming out at work (1996)

I would not consider working for a mainstream company again. Not at all. I don't want to work for a boss. I don't want to work for a man. And that sounds like I'm stereotyping myself, but I don't ... I've kept myself going for two years. I've kept my head above water and I don't feel obliged to throw in the towel right now. Day by day I realise I'm carrying on, I'm putting petrol in my car, I'm getting there. That's important to me. The main reason I wouldn't want to go back has got to do with it that I'm gay. And I don't appreciate still the way that society treats gays - they're very closed to the subject, they're very stupid when it comes to gays. I'm a sensitive person per se, whether I'm gay or straight, and I find people are insensitive, 99% of the time, to gays. And they always treat you differently when they find out you are gay. I wouldn't go back to such a company because of the anxieties and the double life you lead. The almost lying that you get used to doing. And I don't see why I should do that for anyone.

The problem is that we're dealing with so many generations and so many different types of cultures, that I was brought up very much to respect my elders. My elders were brought up very much that gays don't exist. So I've got the fear of trying to respect people and not step into their privacy, because they don't want to know about gay, it's just not there. I'm not anxious about anything specific. I have told most of my family and my cousins that I'm gay. Shortly after I resigned, if people were around me and I felt uncomfortable with them, I'd say I'm gay.

As much as legislation has helped it's a *slow* process. It's not going to be an overnight thing. I'd say ten years from now ... or if I had a child who decided they wanted to go that way themselves, they'd have a far better chance than I will ever have in my lifetime. I truly believe that. It would be wonderful if there wasn't a threat of losing one's job! But I don't think it's really forthcoming in PE for a long time. PE's very backward with things like that. I think it would help more to have a company that actually came out. But then would you have people supporting that company? You might have a loss in production or a loss in sales from that – it's so difficult. I think it's scary for a company to actually admit that type of thing.

4.1.10 What would promote coming out at work? (1996)

I would join a company if in the initial interview they ... I told them I was gay. I would join up with a company that was gay friendly, because you do get places that are gay friendly. I feel unfortunately as soon as they have something on the news about Aids ... they will show the Mardi Gras or some weird people doing weird things, and one's interpretation of *gay* is forever "a screaming queen". I think if the SABC and society on the whole could start viewing them as just the person next door, it would be a lot easier when we do go for a job interview to say, "I'm gay." I feel that if I didn't get the job, I would say immediately it's because I told them I'm gay. And I don't feel right now emotionally I'd want to deal with that.

If it was an official company policy that they're gay friendly, it would be wonderful. If you could almost get people that you knew were gay friendly ... you walked in and maybe someone's wearing a little red ribbon and you know they're aware of Aids and they're aware of problems, and they are obviously open to things like that. Or if the person who is interviewing you is gay, and you think, well I can confide in him. Whether he tells anyone else, at least someone in the company knows – somebody with some clout.

4.2 *Exploited*

4.2.1 Introduction

Exploited (30, female) is a senior journalist at a daily city newspaper.

Researcher's impressions: Through contact with *Exploited* prior to this research, the following pre-conceptions arose: She is known to the researcher as very popular. She is outgoing, a good conversationalist and has a keen, quick sense of humour, which she often uses to defuse conflict situations. Many people depend on her and turn to her for support, which she gives freely, although this sometimes involves sacrifice of her own needs.

Relevant employment history: *Exploited* occupies a senior editorial post at the Afrikaans daily paper where she has been working for 13 years. Between the two interviews she was promoted.

Level of openness: *Exploited* is out to some of her younger colleagues. She suspects that superiors know that she is lesbian. In her private life she is "boldly out" and has been openly gay since she was eighteen. With the exception of her lesbian sister, her family do not know about her orientation.

Choice of pseudonym: In 1994 she indicated that her choice of pseudonym reflected her perception that the hard work demanded of her was not properly acknowledged, financially or otherwise. This was still true in 1996, despite her promotion.

Preferred term for her orientation: At the time of the 1994 interview she preferred to be referred to as *gay*, although she said she was, "strictly speaking, bisexual". This had changed by 1996: "I'm most certainly *gay* or *lesbian*. I've reclaimed the use of the word *lesbian* and feel totally comfortable with it. I grew up in an environment where the term was fairly negative. It had butch and dykey connotations that I did not associate with. I have this very strong and positive feeling about femininity and I've never wanted to be associated with anything butch or unfeminine, which is why I avoided the use of the word – I did sometimes use it, but in a negative way. I've since grown out of that; the connotation does not bother me as much any more. My friends have grown with me into a group of thirty-something, settled, feminine lesbians, and we're happy to call ourselves lesbians. When I do come into contact with women who are not comfortable with the word, I try and convince them to reclaim the word, to get a sense of self-pride. There's a lot of pride involved in gay marches and *gay men* are proud of what they do. Why should gay women not have a specific umbrella term under which they can group themselves and be a force to be reckoned with and to feel good about? I think the word *lesbian* is cool.

Relationships: *Exploited* and her lover have been living together for a year.

4.2.2 Exploited's position in the company milieu

(1994:) I occupy a key post in a mammoth company which is controlled and dominated by terribly conservative white Afrikaner men (most of whom are outspoken members of the Broederbond).

The whole management is unashamedly homophobic. Most of the employees also regard homosexuality as an oddity and don't hesitate to make scathing remarks about it, or hurtful jokes.

Few women in the past have stayed with the company long enough to be considered for senior posts. Men are visibly advantaged, regardless of their ability. It also clearly counts in a man's favour if he is one of the boys: married, sporty, a young father, with the 'right' university background. Outspoken scepticism exists about the ability and staying power of women, but the view exists that a feminine woman – somebody who carefully flirts with the bosses – achieves more than someone with a butch, threatening approach.

The homophobic undercurrents in my workplace are mainly anti-*moffie*, probably owing to ignorance about lesbian relationships, and because gay women are not as visible as gay men. However, women *per se* – gay or straight – are neglected terribly, or looked down on. I think the top ranks look down on women and gay men almost equally, distrust them equally and shrink equally from appointing them. They think gay men are physically and socially inferior; the same applies to women. They don't possess the ability to run the company in the same socially acceptable manner. I completely disagree of course; I know that women or gay people can run something as well, if not better, because they probably have more empathy.

(1996:) I'm head of the largest editorial set-up within my newspaper. The editorial staff are divided in several different departments, such as the arts desk, sports and news. The department that I run is the largest. I have a staff of 19, varying in age from 21 to 49, and until very recently also ranging in terms of religion from total agnostic to strictly Muslim and from very conservatively heterosexual to indecisive to very decisively homosexual. The office that I run is regarded as the engine room of the organisation, so the output and the way in which it is run is of great importance to the structure of the organisation. There are several homosexuals and they don't have any qualms about it, but they're not open about it, they don't stand on their desks and shout it.

Generally, the atmosphere and attitudes, the culture, and also in relation specifically to homosexuality – is still alarmingly conservative, still very sexist. They still regard women in as little clothing as possible as the front-page pic and they still regard the macho image of the male as the norm, or the thing to strive for. The sensitive male is still not held in high regard, although more and more sensitive males are actually making their mark, whether they are gay or straight.

The attitude towards homosexuality, and I think in the sense of the more socially visible male homosexual, has not changed much. And all these problems are not gonna be solved in a couple of years, it's gonna be a generation. I'm absolutely sure. If the gay people who are actually coming into their own now, becoming more and more important to the structure of the newspaper – if they follow through and they *stay*, and they become the next generation of middle management, and top management, we are going to start seeing some attitude change.

I don't see a sudden appointment of two hundred gay people in the staff, but we're gonna see a sensitivity, an attitude change, a tolerance that I ascribe to homosexual people, which is not there at the moment. It is *siphoning* in, and I am most certainly still doing my bit, *every day* that I am there, I am trying, *carefully*, to prod them into sensitivity and tolerance – of racial issues, sexual issues, whatever – and more and more gay people coming into the position where I am almost certainly will make things change.

But in practice very little has happened. The senior staff's minds might have opened up slightly, but they have probably had more to think about in the last three years than they've ever had to cope with. They've had to carry stories on human rights and gay issues and the Constitution, which they've never done, and abortion. So it's like the process has started, but it still has a long way to go.

There is a greater awareness amongst colleagues, and elsewhere in the organisation, of gays and lesbians as an entity. But as an oddity, it still remains. The evenings that I've not been at work, I've seen in the paper the next day the word *homosexual* and *lesbian* in italics or in inverted commas, as if they're something from outer space, which I would not have allowed, had I been there. The phrases are being thrown around far more – granted – but the straight people are not taking note of the fact that they're actually *surrounded* by homosexuals. Every garden grows one – they're not coming to grips with that yet. Gay people still remain something far out. And when pictures of gay marches arrive at my desk, they're not of the average, straight-looking homosexuals in the march, they're of the oddest odds in the march, they're of the raving queens, the dykes-on-bikes, they're always of the peripheral gay people.

But at least we've broken the barrier of words being used, references being made. It makes it easier for me to slip in things here and there and to point out to people not to use a certain phrase in a certain context, because it's gonna cause an upset to the possibly gay reader. It makes it easier for me because it is becoming more and more accessible, the phrases and the terminology.

4.2.3 Ambiguous outness

(1994:) Most of my colleagues among the lower ranks don't know for a fact that I am gay, but because of gossip it is more or less a foregone conclusion. Among the higher ranks I don't think there is as much speculation. They turn a blind eye. Rumours that might reach them are refuted regularly by my behaviour and dress. My behaviour is completely normal, which throws them somewhat. My flirtatious attitude towards men, *and* women for that matter, throws them, as does my laughing along, from sheer necessity, every now and then when they make scathing remarks about some well-known gay person that does *weird* things that do the cause much harm.

(1996:) I would think that very few people who have some kind of contact with me would have any doubts that I'm gay, because word spreads very fast. And all my superiors at work have children in their twenties – most of them are colleagues of mine, and all of them have ears and eyes, eh? And all of them go home and tell their parents. So I actually have no doubt that everyone knows. But I definitely confuse them, as I recall having said last time, the confusion factor, I still have that on my side! Because what they hear is not what they see and what they get!

I'm not going to state it to my disadvantage, but if they figure it out, then they have to cope with it. Then they've put it on their own plate. But if I sort of bombard them with it and walk in and give them the info, then it might actually boomerang on me.

4.2.4 How superiors react to ambiguity (1996)

But what my superiors know does not get acknowledged, except by calling me a feminist – which I violently oppose, because they don't understand what feminism is about. I don't even know what it's about, and I want them to actually call a spade a spade. My usual reply is to say I'm most certainly not a feminist. And then I just leave a *wide* open gap of silence, so that they can sort it out for themselves – “Well, she's not a feminist, she doesn't really like men – she keeps saying negative things about men – then maybe she's a lesbian ... Oh my God!”

4.2.5 The private spilling into the public

(1994:) Out of free choice I'm not involved in any organised facet of the gay culture, because it tends to draw mainly extreme examples of gay people, such as *dykes* and total *queens*, with whom I don't readily associate. When it crosses my path naturally, I don't hesitate to take part; I have no fears about hanging out with gay crowds. My circle of friends is integrated and not limited to certain sexual categories.

(1996:) I think socially there's no question about whether I'm gay or straight. If socially someone can't cope with my sexuality, I'd disregard them. My new relationship is very affectionate, which means that whenever we're together anywhere, we are usually physically together – like holding hands or hugging each other, and I have no qualms with that. Tolerance of others has a high premium in the relationship, which probably opened my mind as well to accepting more very butch people into my life. I do not discriminate as much [as at the time of the previous interview]. I've come to regard many of them as really kosher people. I have no hesitation to associate and socialise with people who are clearly gay/lesbian.

What I'm not comfortable with in terms of *butch* is the social visibility. Cape Town is small, and I probably very seldom can really feel that there isn't that risk of any outside influence coming in and going back to work and *skinnering* about it.

The situation I'm sketching is probably more in my mind than in practice. I operate, as we all do, in a strictly heterosexual environment, and I love the idea of playing the game without them knowing. Only the select few know. And really butch people burst that bubble for me when I'm seen with them socially. I like the sense of secrecy. Butch people just don't have that finer nuance of secrecy. Being more subtle gives me much more power. It gives me an insight into both worlds, because I'm immediately regarded as being straight (when I dress and behave in a feminine manner) so I'm allowed into that world; there's no social barrier, and I know what I know coming from the gay world, so I have the best of both worlds, and I don't like the idea of being discriminated against because somebody saw me somewhere with a whole bunch of

really dykey people or really socially distinguishable gay people. That would immediately put a barrier to my access to the straight world, and I need that info.²¹

4.2.6 Colleagues cannot be trusted

(1994:) An incident took place at a meeting of the editorial executive. (I was the only woman and only gay person present and the youngest by approximately fifteen years.) The most open-minded assistant editor started laughing hysterically and presented a copy of a report about an organisation which wanted to start a private school for gay children. Everybody laughed heartily. "Now the *moffies* at least have a place they can run to from an early age!" one exclaimed. Once the laughter subsided, the editor said: "Oh no really, what a load of trash," throwing the story into the waste-paper basket.

I showed little reaction, but I was enraged, terribly disappointed, powerless, and dejected, because this person had been a champion of enlightenment to me within my oppressive surroundings. He was somebody who ought to have known better, who fights fights for almost everything, except gay rights. I probably just looked up and sort of ... said nothing. It would have achieved nothing.

I am often disappointed in this way, because one often assumes people to be sympathetic even though one has never discussed homosexuality with them. Only once the person is forced to take a stand might he make an anti-gay statement. These statements entrench anti-gay sentiments at work. It's part of the culture and it doesn't go away, it just doesn't fucking stop.

(1996:) I definitely think being identified as gay or lesbian brings up the possibility of discrimination in group contexts at work. One-on-one, people are fascinated, and that's fine. But there's a lot of danger in that. They ignore the fact that they were fascinated on a one-on-one basis when they get into a group with heterosexuals. They make scathing remarks and become aggressive.

4.2.7 Likelihood of discrimination

(1994:) How would anyone ever know if there was a silent form of discrimination going on? But the silence and the secrecy about my sexuality are the only means of protection that I have. I definitely have no doubt that if I were to come out loud and clear, that it would not go down well. I cannot be fired, obviously, but there would be implicit little jabs and lack of promotion, of trust and of being one of the group. I prefer to live and be and work, without putting a label on my forehead that says I'm a lesbian. That shouldn't actually be at play and I'm not hiding it the whole time, but I'm just not carrying it on my sleeve.

(1996:) It's very, very difficult to say how likely discrimination would be if I came out, because I have no example of someone having come *out* within my company and being discriminated against. Not in a senior position.

There are two cases of juniors, both male and quite camp and visibly gay ... of both not being promoted, not ever since they've started working there, which is between two and four years and they're both good workers. And they have both been called in by the personnel manager who asked them not to dress and walk in such a camp way. They were both told to tighten up their wrists and the one specifically not to dress as outrageously. In other words, "You don't adhere to company policy, you don't look the way we want you to, or behave the way we would like to portray ourselves to the world, so clean up your act!"

The one that was definitely pointed out as being dressed too camp, I never had a problem with. He dressed fairly fashionably. He would wear linen suits in lovely colours – not the regular black suit or khaki suit, or khaki pair of pants – and lovely bright shirts. But he *was* a bit of a fairy, or he *is*, still. He checks the way he walks now, but both of them are a bit flappy, they're not your average straight-looking homosexual, they are definite queens. Which they should have the freedom as far as I'm concerned to live out, but not *too* excessively. I mean, I can see that that could be a problem in any situation. You have to confront people from all walks of life in journalism and people could be offended. They've cleaned up their act slightly, yes, and they are both doing well, but as far as promotion goes, I really don't think that they stand a chance.

²¹ Addendum, September 1997: *Exploited* was in agreement with the transcript of this interview, which was used for the purposes of this study. However, a year later she added the following comments with regard to her views about being associated with "butch" lesbians: "I think the discrimination I applied merely for social acceptance and "safety" or secrecy no longer applies. I don't think it – I actually realize my former opinion was extremely bigoted and irritating. I now believe in socializing with whomever I please, wherever. A take-it-or-leave-it/in-your-face sort of thing in terms of society's acceptance."

4.2.8 Advice to gay colleagues (1996)

We have another *wonderful* situation, of two totally straight-looking men on the editorial staff, who have come out to me, but who are *not* known to the bosses, and both of them are *highly* talented, and I've told both of them, "Just for the sake of checking what happens, please don't come out" (I mean in terms of our superiors) "don't let on that you're gay, and let's see how far you're going to go." Because both of them, as far I'm concerned, especially the one, can go right to the top.

He has got our superiors around his little finger. He's *so* talented. And he charms males, females, gay and straight, he's like really doing well. His opinion is held in such high regard. His political opinion, his field of specialisation, is of such importance at the moment in South Africa, and he's won such wide acknowledgement and awards for the coverage that he's given this specific beat, that I'm absolutely positive that the whole set-up at work would be thrown into disarray if he were to come out now.

They would *suddenly* – and I'm *absolutely* sure of this – not think that they can trust him any more. They would suddenly not hold him in such high regard as they do, because he would be labelled as a moffie. "And how can you trust anything that a moffie says? He's prejudiced." Whereas if he stayed in the closet, he could get all that information siphoned through anyway, and he could really be an opinion maker, which he is, and not be discriminated against.

So I will most certainly not encourage him to come out. Not in the situation we're in. And that would probably be the situation anywhere, I'm sure. We have the two poles now, we definitely have the camp ones and they're not making it, and the other two are so far making it – and they're not out.

4.2.9 Less fearful of being discovered (1996)

I'm less fearful for myself, because I have now had the opportunity to prove myself. I've been given the opportunities within the company and I've gone with them. I've really done the job and I've done it well, I think. So I'm less fearful of being caught out, as it were, because I don't think that there's a big difference between where I am now and where I would be if I were caught out.

There's no question of me being addressed over dress and manner, because my act is clean, and I dress correctly, and I behave absolutely impeccably. They have never been confronted by a woman who's come out.

But my one superior is obviously gay. My one female superior, she's dykey gay, and she has been promoted, but now the difficult factor is: I don't know if she would have been promoted further with the loads of talents that she has, had she adhered more to company policy in terms of behaviour and dress and femininity.

It's *really* difficult, I'm playing a part for which I've not read the script, and there is not a script available in my company. So I'm not playing the feminine, girlie part because I think that's the way that it should be – it's coming absolutely naturally for me. I'm not forcing myself out of a dykey disposition into a feminine disposition. We don't have the luxury of the alternative. If I had a colleague who was sort of on the same level as I who came out, I would love to see what happened.

4.2.10 Denial of sexual orientation (1996)

I'm increasingly coming into difficulty with my reference to my partner. I felt a bit uncomfortable in an instance regarding a feature she wrote for my newspaper. For it to be accepted, I had to submit it to the editor of that specific page and I immediately was confronted in my inner being as to what to say when I gave this to him, how to explain to him the relationship between me and the author. I would prefer to call her "my partner", and I have to keep referring to her as "my housemate". "The other half of my household" is a term that I have started using, to make it little less of a denial. I do feel incredibly guilty that I deny my relationship and I must keep stating that it is a new situation. Although I have been in long, steady, lesbian relationships, I've never felt the loyalty towards my partner that I do now. In the past I was happy to refer to my partner as my housemate. Now, it's a jarring note. And it did most certainly upset me, I did feel guilty and I felt ... [sigh] dishonest about myself and dishonest to the cause of being gay.

This often comes up in my office, obviously. It's less stressful, but which also bothers me, time and again: I feel guilty when I refer to her as my housemate when I'm speaking to other people, because half of my colleagues in my office know, and in what esteem do they hold us, as a couple, if I refer to her as my housemate? And I don't have an answer to that quite yet. Because I have people from all walks of life, so-

cially and intellectually, in my office and they most certainly won't all cope with the idea of me being in a lesbian marriage, so I cannot just forge ahead and say, "Well, she is my lesbian lover, *en fok dit*." I have to be sensitive. So I'm still sort of getting my way around – I don't foresee having the freedom in the foreseeable future of referring to her as my lover in public.

4.2.11 Effects of denial (1996)

It affects my self-esteem. The people who don't have any idea of the amazing relationship that I'm in would, probably, regard me as being single, which I would regard as being a secondary citizen, from their point of view. They would think that I'm single and have not been able to find anyone that I love, or who can love me. And I can't rectify the situation, I can't tell them, "You're actually making a grave mistake, I'm very happily married and I'm having a very successful relationship." So there's obviously a failure, a communication barrier between some of my colleagues and myself. To my own detriment, I think. At the moment there's not much I can do about it.

It certainly affects me in the sense of honesty. I don't think that colleagues have to know absolutely everything about each other's bedside manners. I've never allowed everyone who works with me into my personal space. It's always been a matter of choice, whether they were gay or straight. That situation has always been in my life and probably arises in anyone's life. It's not exclusive to being gay, but it does make it more difficult when you're gay, because you can't just to refer to your lover in passing – it's an issue.

4.2.12 Taking risks of revealing herself

(1994:) The situation is frustrating, because there are fights I can't fight. Once we were looking for an Afrikaans translation of the word *gay*. "At *this* paper we use the word *homo*," said an assistant editor. Everything inside me rebelled against this word, but I was too embarrassed to protest. I was surrounded by a bunch of totally straight people, and even though some tacitly knew I was gay, I would have made myself too visible, forcing my sexuality on them. I privately approached a straight, but sympathetic senior colleague. If he fought my fight, nobody would question it; if I did, in the presence of people who know I'm gay, they would consider my argument weak. He went to the assistant editor, and explained why many people prefer *gay*. No, really, was the grunted reply. Nonsense. It's English. The word in Afrikaans is *homo* and that's that.

(1996:) I still have the problems of terminology coming up which I would find offensive.²² I've actually had the breakthrough of going to my editor and insisting that the newspaper start getting with it and start using the word *gay* in the headlines and not *homos*, as they insisted, because *homos* was an offensive word, and it was archaic and I could no longer associate myself with the use of it. And I have a responsibility to the readers and we most certainly have homosexual readers. And he acknowledged the fact and he said, "Fine. We can use the word in headlines, but rather make use of the word *homosexuals* and *lesbians* in copy, because that is the right terminology and we do have the space in copy. Which I also acceded to. I have since made use of the word *gay* in copy, freely, and I've not been called on the red carpet, so I'm taking the chance, but I wouldn't have a problem were they to call me in, because the word *gay* is foreign to my language. It's foreign to Afrikaans, so if they had a severe problem, I would go back to *homosexual* and *lesbian*. It's not a problem. The English word itself is a totally ridiculous word. You know, the term *gay* has very little to do with being homosexual. I know very many depressed homosexuals!

I've actually had discussions about this with the one possibly totally closeted senior that we have. I went and asked him about it specifically to put him in a difficult spot, and he gave me this whole *spiel* of the word being foreign to Afrikaans and also being a ridiculous choice of word in the English language.

There was no response to the argument that the word is offensive to gay people, and the fact that I was speaking out of my own world as a homosexual was not brought into play at all. It was not suspected. I was far more relaxed about the issue. And I was far more prepared to actually take it to task and have a whole academic debate about it, than I would have been a while ago, and than I was probably when I last spoke to you. I feel less threatened as a lesbian in the company, *purely* because of the seniority that I've reached in the last year or two and my level of inner security. I don't feel threatened.

²² Addendum, September 1997: I have gained so in confidence, that I always speak up now. Great diplomacy if I can help it, but I speak my mind. And it matters. (Usually.)

4.2.13 Impact of Constitution (1996)

- The Constitution has not had much of an impact on the working environment, because they don't feel threatened. They believe they run the company as it should be run, soundly and profitably. As far as discrimination goes, no-one's ever going been able to pinpoint that it's being done. So they are absolutely fine.
- At least people are more sensitive and careful about what they say and do, because they know there's the Constitution. The general vibe is definitely more tolerant and people object much sooner to sexually or racially discriminatory jokes. I have much more freedom to stop someone when I sense that the joke is taking a direction I don't really want to go. I have much more of a say in what goes into my ears.
- Personally, I've had a surge of energy put into me by the Constitution. I suddenly feel that someone is out there looking after me. It feels safer in terms of my own personal space. I know exactly how much I can tolerate, and should that ever be overstepped, should I ever *really* feel discriminated against in a hurtful manner, should anyone say anything really scathing to me about my sexuality in my working context, I would have the freedom to say to them, "You are not allowed to say that to me. I will take you to court if you ever repeat that," or "I am gonna take you to court right now!" – which is a freedom and an inner strength which I have never before had the power to express, thanks to the Constitution. In the past I had to lie down and take whatever was said to me. Not that it has happened. All of us have worked and lived knowing that anything can be said at any time which can be *really* cripplingly hurtful and we cannot stand up for ourselves. That has changed. Because we can. Because I know I have the power of the Constitution behind me, I am not fearful of going into situations and to meetings and social gatherings with my colleagues and not being sure what they're going to say or that I might walk into a trap. My way of being has been validated as legitimate. I don't feel as exploited and raped as I have in the past, because I now have the option, at least, of saying, "No, I don't like what you are saying."
- I'm virtually sure that in practice I will never be able to take my case up on the grounds of the Constitution. I will have no future within this company if I win such a case. I will be sidelined. I will be exploited and not be promoted. So in practice, for homosexuals in the company, not much has changed, although we all feel safer, at least we have the Constitution behind us. I feel that it does make a difference.

4.2.14 What would be needed to come out? (1996)

4.2.14.1 Shaking off the shackles of Calvinism

For me to come out in the office setting would involve everyone shaking off the shackles of Calvinism! Because the biggest problem at my work is that I'm surrounded and managed by an ageing Afrikaner male corps – not "corpse" as in dead bodies, but a range of white males who have been schooled and brought up in the strictest sense of Calvinism. Which prohibits them, in all fairness, from accepting homosexuals. The church says they are allowed to accept them, but they are not allowed to allow them to practise their homosexuality. So, the two are not compatible. And as long as we are still under the management in my set-up of these boys who are strict and staunch believers in *Christianity* as they see it, not much is gonna change.

But new people come in, new influences come in, new church denominations come in with more tolerance, or less tolerance – I hope more tolerance. And a wider approach to life and to gender *and* racial issues is siphoning in. So patience is the only thing that's gonna probably change things for me and for my immediate colleagues in the next decade. The broader spectrum is less of a problem, because there are international influences. People are travelling more. Our new government is spreading its wings in terms of travelling and international influence, and tolerance will most certainly start siphoning in.

4.2.14.2 Constitutional effects

Our Constitution is also a great, great improvement on what we've had. There's freedom of speech, people speaking out, there's a right to march, there's sexual rights. That's a great freedom that we have not had. It makes the debate on sexual issues much freer than it was in the past. And as soon as a debate starts opening up and the terminology starts becoming more known, people start throwing words around more and phrases around more. It's gonna become more of a household item, being gay.

4.2.14.3 Affirmative action

Affirmative action in terms of appointing gay people probably won't happen in my set-up and I don't foresee that happening in the broader economy. You don't need to appoint gay people to have a gay-friendly atmosphere. I feel very similar to appointing gay people as I do to appointing black people purely for the sake of being black or purely for the sake of being gay. I think that harms the cause far more than it would if people were just appointed on merit and worked their way up and gay people and black people landed in senior positions where they should be, rather than pushing them in there if they can't do the job. I wouldn't like to see a total disaster of a gay person sitting in a managerial position making one big mistake after the other. I mean I would really be ashamed.

It's a Catch-22, I realise that. It's a very difficult situation – if you are going to be appointed on merit here, you can't be openly gay. And only time will tell. We never had the opportunity in this country to actually consider making it to the top and then coming out. Now I have the freedom because I have a Constitution behind me, should I choose to come out.

4.2.14.4 Public statements

I think all we need is a public statement to say that we as a company want to state openly that we do not discriminate against people on the base of race, religion, or sexual orientation. We're free. We want people working here to be happy and able people, to be talented and hard-working, happy employees. They have the freedom to live their life as they want to. That's *all* we need, we need one *small*, concise little public statement by each and every company. That's all I would need in my company. Then, I won't, the next day, walk into a news staff meeting and say, "Right, well, I just want to say today that I'm gay!" But when things come up, I will have the freedom to say, "Well, I actually want to bring my partner, who's a woman, along to the next office party, will that be OK with you guys?" or "I *am* bringing her along."

4.2.15 The future

(1994:) The homophobia and distrust regarding women makes my position as a gay, ambitious woman in the middle ranks (who has the ability to get to the top) very precarious. I cautiously try to let a more open approach to women, gay people and black people filter through. Hopefully at least a tacit acceptance can grow, over decades, which will be better than nothing. But I have to contribute to this by not allowing myself to be placed in a sexual category that would disqualify me from promotion. Consequently my approach is rather to stomach as much as possible. To rock the boat will serve no purpose whatsoever in this company – for the time being, at least.

All of this leads to a degree of disloyalty to my employers. To some extent I am now distancing myself from my company, although my natural tendency is to put every effort into my work in order to achieve success for my employers. I still work my arse off for my employers, but I will not defend them unto death. They are kindly disposed towards me *only* because I pretend to be one of them.

The ideal for me would be to work in circumstances where being gay is openly accepted, but that is utopia; I don't know if such businesses exist, except private businesses. I'm hooked on mainstream journalism and can't get a comparable package of job satisfaction, intellectual stimulation and remuneration at another publication in my language. These are my first priorities, not the attitudes at work towards my sexuality.

So, my biggest fear is that revealing my orientation would hamper my chances for promotion because my sexuality does not conform to the broader plan my bosses have for their company. For the half of my life that I spend at work, I have adjusted my whole work and life approach to fit in with a heterosexual approach, because I want to get ahead, and I have to do it playing the game according to their rules.

(1996:) There's most certainly going to be the option of taking my partner to the office party this year. I will not hesitate to take her. And should we decide for some reason not to go as partners, we will go as partners of gay male colleagues. She will go as partner of one of my gay colleagues and I will take his boyfriend as my partner, so that we will be together. But that will be a cop-out, I prefer not to do that. I prefer to either go with her or go alone, as I have done in the past, which is definitely a statement and not a complete cop-out. Because the way I dress and the way I operate at work, my bosses must know that I'm not single. I think that I portray an image of being sexually in contact with myself and with the world, and that is not the way a single person operates, so they must know that there's somebody. So by going alone, I am making a statement.

But I wouldn't have done this two years ago, I wouldn't have been as ...cocky as to consider taking my girlfriend with me to an office party. I've changed in that sense, mostly because of what I have referred to already: my sense of security within the company, my sense of knowing that I can't just be disregarded any more. I mean I know that they need me. I have more leeway to actually force their minds open, although I still do it very carefully and diplomatically. Otherwise I'm just gonna cause more harm to the cause of being homosexual, than I would do it any good. It's a matter of timing.

In the next two to five years I'm probably gonna go for one of our overseas posts, where there have only been males up to now and they've always had the luxury of taking their entire family with them on company costs. And should I get that position, which I'm sure if I really went for it, I would, I most certainly would insist on taking my partner with me.

That is gonna be the big and interesting ground-breaker. Because I would then personally come out fully, and I would take them to task. And they are going to be in a difficult situation, because we're not married. So they're not gonna have anything on paper to allow me to take an unmarried partner with me, because they're gonna be digging themselves a great big hole. If they let an unmarried partner go along, they're going to have to do it with heterosexuals as well. And that would bring the next issue up: am I going to get married, because the Constitution allows me to? And my partner most certainly wants to, so we are heading for interesting times in my company and I'm not fearful of going ahead in the company. The time is definitely near for me to start tackling the issue.

4.2.16 Reflection on previous interview

The previous interview that we had in 1994 made me reflect far more, or maybe for the first time, on my position as a *homosexual* being in my organisation. And it empowered me in a sense. I've reconsidered things that were said in my presence, I responded more to things that affected me. And I have since been far more alert to possible sexual discrimination on the grounds of my being gay, apart from me just being female. So I've regarded my experience since my last interview with you as being positive, with regard to issues that I have not really considered, that frustrated me until then. I pulled them out of the fog to see them for what they were.

4.3 Hurricane/Impatient

4.3.1 Introduction

Impatient (37, male) is a managing director in the automotive industry and lives in Port Elizabeth.

Researcher's impressions: As during the previous interview, *Impatient* was friendly, soft-spoken and eager to be of help. He spoke fast and often corrected himself – seemingly anxious about the value of his responses. It appeared that he was over-worked and he indicated that he would like to sell the business in the not-too-distant future.

Relevant employment history: *Impatient* is the managing director of his father's car-part manufacturing company and has been in other senior positions in the company for approximately 10 years.

Level of openness: *Impatient* is closeted at work, but wonders if some employees or people in the industry might know that he is gay. Some of his family members abroad know, but not his father. He is out to his predominantly gay friends.

Choice of pseudonym: For the 1994 interview he chose the pseudonym *Hurricane*, which was a nickname given to him at work. He said, "I think in a way it does suit me, because they say when I walk through the factory, it's like a hurricane coming through. I'm very quick. I will be all over that floor space; although I'm standing on this one side, I know that everybody feels it straight away." But by 1996 he felt "*Hurricane* is a stupid nickname. I liked it back then, but it sounds immature. It sounds like I haven't handled my frustrations or my temper. Although I don't have a temper ... but it sounds like I haven't handled myself correctly ... At the office I've become very impatient. I'm not like a hurricane – maybe I've got more work and responsibilities, so I don't have time rush into the factory and everywhere else where I used to and carry on and perform. I sit at my desk and people come to me. I probably perform in *my* office now, not in anybody else's!"

Preferred term for orientation: *Impatient* labels himself as *gay*: "I feel comfortable to say I'm a *gay* person. It sounds like somebody who's more sensible. Somebody who doesn't really make any difference whether they are straight or gay. Who's not making it obvious because he's not hiding it and he's not advertising it. He's

just being himself. I won't like someone to say behind my back I'm a *moffie*, it would upset me more than *gay* would. If I being derogatory in front of my gay friends, I'd probably say, "Oh, he was a real moffie." It sounds like a screaming queen. *Homosexual* is alright.

Relationships: Single (has never had a long-term relationship).

4.3.2 Impatient's position in the company milieu (1994 – 1996)

I'm director [managing director by 1996] of a family business. It's a company that makes motor car parts and the environment is very straight. We have about 160 people that work for us, and a customer base of well over 6 000. I've been working there for a very long time – the last eight years or so. My dad is the owner of the company, but I'm basically in charge. He still comes in every now and again, and sits at his desk and sniffs around. I enjoy having him there.

4.3.3 More relaxed at work

(1994:) We have about 140, or 160 people that work for us, I just wouldn't want everybody to know about it ... I would hate it, I would really, I would honestly hate it.

(1996:) I've probably become more relaxed at work. I found out that a friend of mine knows the wife of one of our sales managers and they speak to each other once or twice a week. I'm sure he tells her things about me and obviously she relays it back to her husband. But he seemed pretty eccentric – I'm sure he knows. We've never discussed it at all.

I heard a story that our factory manager's son had met up with another guy and took him to his father's house, and introduced his friend as his lover. Apparently the mother and father threw him out of the house. About a week ago I walked into our showroom and here the boyfriend was sitting, waiting for my factory manager. I saw my factory manager come through and off they went through to the factory manager's office. And I thought afterwards, *Ag*, whether this guy tells our factory manager, or not – it doesn't bother me a lot.

If I had to employ somebody and go to the club and find him there, I suppose I'll have a good laugh about it. It wouldn't have stopped me from going to the club. When we last spoke, it would have worried me that he then as an employee might know about me being gay. It wouldn't worry me now. They must think what they want to. I'm not going to go and advertise it, because I think if I was straight, I wouldn't have to, and if someone wants to think of me as gay, or if they want to tell the other staff, or want to say something to me directly – they must do it, it's fine with me. I don't feel threatened by it. I think one grows up, one changes. If people don't like you, or if they can't accept you for what you are, that's their problem, not yours. I suppose there would be a bit of bad-mouthing from my opposition: "*Impatient* is a homosexual/a moffie/or a gay person." I don't suppose it would really make that much of a difference. I don't think it really matters, it's just a matter of, if people *did* find out, it would just take me some time to get used to it, I suppose.

I'm not embarrassed about being gay. Just about everybody I know probably knows it. I'm sure they must know at home. I think there must be certain of my customers who must know it, or some of our suppliers. Because I'm not married, I'm single. If I get invited to a function I always go on my own. I very seldom get any invitations sent to me & partner – it's always just to me. I'm sure that they *must* know. I talk about our opposition to our suppliers. There's like a manager coming to see us, once a month or so, and he will know what's happening to the MD of the opposition. If I talk about them, they must do likewise about me.

After you interviewed me, I needed a date and I asked the sister of a friend of mine. She fell madly in love with me. Maybe I should have told her and it would have been a lot easier. But in the work context, I'd go alone. I find it much easier to go alone, because I would hate to impose on somebody else.

4.3.4 Family relations (1996)

I've never really been very open in front of my family at all. My father always hopes I'm gonna get married. He pulled a stunt last year or the year before, when he was quite ill. He was saying before he dies he'd like to see me married with a child and everything else. For quite a while hasn't mentioned the subject.

My aunt asked me one day and I denied it. Nobody's ever asked me since on my family's side. If they asked me now, I would admit to it. As I've told you last, two years ago, my sister blabbed to all my family in America and I was very annoyed at the time. But that made it easier in America when I went overseas to

visit my sister and her family. And I've got a lesbian cousin, and all they wanted to do was match-make me with friends they have over there. They took me on a tour of all the clubs and the bars and those sort of things. It was fine; I enjoyed it. But I wasn't interested.

What's made it a lot easier with my family and my being gay was a family reunion we had down here in Port Elizabeth. And my stepmother has a niece who's lesbian. She and her girlfriend stayed with me and I took them to a lesbian bar here in town. There didn't seem to be any problems about it. My stepmother's brother also came here, without his wife, and I took him out one night. The place we went to wasn't very full, and I said to the barman, "It's quiet here tonight, isn't it?" He said, yes, he can't understand it, because Thursday nights are the gay nights. This was news to me and I felt a bit embarrassed for a moment – I thought maybe this step-uncle – he's very good-looking – probably thinks I'm trying to ... I'm taking him to the gay places, which really wasn't the truth. And the following morning I told my stepmother and she said, "Yes, but I could have told you that the Gallery was a gay place." So she actually knew more than what I really knew.

These two girls who stayed with me here know I'm gay; I've been quite open about it. So when I went to my dad's house, he said to the one girl, to the cousin, "Now are you gonna convert *Impatient?*" And I thought, what is gonna come out now? Then he carried on to vegetarian food – they're both vegetarians! I don't know if my father uses double meanings. Maybe he does.

He still does exert a presence in the company, he will be around until the day he dies. But I'm happy with that. I enjoy him being there. It means that he's at the office, and I can get out and do my job the way I want to do it. The relationship seems to get better each year. We talk a lot more. But I think the reason for that is that my dependency on him is far less now than a year or two ago. He's a very bright person, and he's always got a solution to a problem. I just probably feel that I'm a much stronger person now. He's getting older, so I suppose the older you get, the weaker you become. I just feel I'm more in control of my life than I used to be. If my father told me two years ago, "Jump!" I would have jumped. Now I won't jump. I won't. I am the MD now, but it also means bugger all. He said to me the other day, "I want you to be proud." I said to him, "No, it actually means nothing to me, I couldn't care what my title is." He got a bit annoyed with me.

If I look at my grandmother, she's been very independent. The last two years or so her health hasn't been very good. I've had to take over all her business affairs. So no matter what I do, I think she now feels in a weaker position. She couldn't just say to me, "Listen, I don't like your lifestyle, I'll find someone else to do my things." I think the same with my father, he also feels that he's reliant on me, he's more dependent on me now, and maybe that's made things change, because my father couldn't afford to say to me, "Just fuck off, get out of the business!" He couldn't afford to do that, he would be mad to do that. I suppose I always want to be the dominant one.

4.3.5 The Constitution (1996)

I'm not really interested. There shouldn't be any discrimination anyway. I discriminate against blacks. I don't like to think of myself as a racist, but I think we *are*, much as we don't want to be. I don't want to discriminate against blacks, I don't *want* to, but we *do*. I think it's a way in any country. I think everyone discriminates against one population group. I don't feel that if we didn't have a Constitution that entrenched our rights I'd feel threatened. I don't feel in a better position now that our Constitution is going to protect us. If someone asks me to vote on legalising gay marriages, I'd vote yes for it. I'm not terribly concerned about it. I don't think it's making any difference in my life. If I had a child who was also gay, I don't know if it would making any difference in their life either.

Even with the new Constitution it's not going to be accepted, I mean I suppose you need a few people to stand up and say, "Well, I'm gay and so what!" and perhaps if everybody stood up and said that, it might change things, it may take the stigma away from being gay.

I think what would upset me, would be if it had something in the Constitution that said that one couldn't live with another man, or one couldn't be gay. I haven't really given the Constitution much thought. I don't feel I need to have my gay rights protected in the Constitution ... perhaps one has to have it protected – I don't know. I think I have enough rights just as a person without having to worry about having gay rights.

If we had a gay person who worked for us and he had a boyfriend, I suppose he would also be entitled to medical aid benefits. I suppose if the problem was presented to me, I'll say sure. I suppose maybe there it might be important to a lot of people. If they've got a partner and a straight couple at work has medical aid and whatever, and they wouldn't let somebody else who was gay let his partner benefit from the same

benefits. I suppose I would certainly like to vote in the favour of the gay couple having the same benefits as a straight couple.

We've all spoken about the Constitution. We've said does this mean that if there's no discrimination against gays, can they now get married? And someone said yes, they could get married in court but not in a church. But if they can get married in court, why can't they get married in church if they wanted to? I think the idea sounds fine; whether I would like to go and stand in front of a church and get married to a gay person ... maybe if it became acceptable ... well, not acceptable, but if it became ... if one *could* get married. I don't know if the laws are gonna be changed. Maybe if they'd changed and two guys can get married, and I met somebody, and the suggestion was made, I suppose I'd think about it. I'd have to be in that situation. I don't think, if my two friends came to me and said, "We're getting married," and the one stood there in a wedding dress, and the other one in a suit – I think I'd find that a bit distasteful. If they both stood there in wedding dresses, I'd find that distasteful. If they both stood there in a suit, I would accept it, I suppose.

4.3.6 Taking steps against discrimination (1996)

If my father had dismissed me because I was gay, I don't think I would fight my dismissal on the grounds of being gay, I would ensure that I got a severance package or something ... I don't know if I'll do that, I'd probably walk away from it and say, "Well that's your problem, not mine." I worked for another company, and they discriminated against me because I was gay, I would fight it legally. I think I would, because life is short. It *does* matter what people think of you, but on the other hand it *doesn't* really matter. I wouldn't worry what my family thought if they were alive, what my grandmother thought – too bad.

4.3.7 Obstacles to coming out at work (1996)

What needs to change in the country, for me to come out more at work? Well, I suppose a lot. I suppose the way everybody thinks. I don't think the change would take 20 years; it would take longer.

I'm also biased, I'm also ... not *anti-gay*, that's the wrong word ... I also have a good laugh to myself, or publicly, in our office, if somebody had to come in. We had one guy come in for an interview and he was applying for a job as a factory manager, and I asked what he knew about fibreglass, and he said, "It's like material, it's like cloth, you just cut it up like you would a dress or something." And I had a good laugh about that; I couldn't even help myself in front of him, and I even laughed about it afterwards with some of the other staff. If somebody walked in and he was gay ... I wouldn't be vindictive about it, but I would still find it funny, Maybe it's one's prejudices or biases or the way you were brought up that still surfaces, even though you are gay yourself, you still think in a biased way, or prejudiced way against people that are the same as what you are.

I must say I think the first thing that comes to my mind if I think of somebody who is gay now, is Aids. I just see Aids sort of written in front of me. And that's as a gay person. I think it's also one of the reasons why I steer clear of sleeping with people, because I like to think of myself as being clean, as being Aids free or HIV free. I think we're here for such a short time, we should live how we want to live, we should do what we want to do, without worrying what other people think, but the way you were brought up, you're always worrying what somebody else is thinking. Or you're always trying to do better than someone else is doing. So you always perhaps worry about everybody else's values, instead of worrying about your own.

I don't think there's anything government, companies and professionals can do. They can try and do something like affirmative action. There's very little that can be done to enforce you to employ somebody who's been disadvantaged. There's lots of ways to get out of employing somebody who is gay. It's very difficult to prove in a court of law that you didn't employ somebody because he was gay. You can not employ him for other reasons. If you look at the courts, they can't control what's going on in the country, let alone worry about entrenching gay rights in the Constitution. I don't think it's possible to even worry or do anything about it. They can *talk*, but there's nothing they can do to enforce it. It will take a hundred years or more for people's attitudes or values to change, for these feelings and prejudices to change.

I was speaking to somebody in Cape Town the other day about this Pagad and they were talking about all this drugs and everything else, and this guy was saying, once they've sorted out the drug problem, they're going to look at the gay people and do something about that, because they're very anti-gay. And there's a lot of Muslim gay boys, or guys in their own community. I dunno, our Minister Dullah Omar, or whatever his name is, stood up and called Pagad "our allies", and so on. Well, so now they are the government's allies in stamping out drugs, but are they going to be their allies in trying to stamp out homosexuality?

4.3.8 Employment of gays

(1994:) If somebody had to actively tell me in a job interview that he was gay, I probably wouldn't employ him, because I'll feel threatened. I did employ one gay guy, whose brother I knew very well, in our factory, but I would never discuss anything with him, we are on two different levels. He in turn employed two or three guys, coloured guys, that I presume were gay, and another white guy. Well, they must've known about me, but they could never point a finger at me, I don't think they've ever seen me in the club, and from the way I behave at work they wouldn't be able to pick up that I am gay, and I would certainly never let on that I suspect that they were. But I did feel threatened by that.

(1996:) A policy is worth nothing. It can be a policy of the companies, but they don't have to enforce or entrench it in what they do. I've employed two gay people, and I've never *liked* doing it. I never felt threatened by them; if I felt threatened, I wouldn't have employed them. I've employed them knowing that my cover, if you want to call it that, is not going to be blown. I can also say we don't discriminate against gays and so on, but even if you state it in your policy, I don't think it's gonna make a difference. It's just a paper with something written on it. The company will say employ someone who is gay, but then they will probably wonder what will their customers think about it.

I think if I look at someone to employ now, I do try and decide whether he is going to do the job the way it has to be done, and regardless of whether he is straight or gay. I would rather try to employ the person that would be the best person for the job, because it is not just me, I mean it's the company, there's a lot of other people who work for the company.

I had one person that came in for an interview. She sat down in front of me. Fur coat on and everything, and it was winter, but it wasn't that cold to be wearing this thick fur coat. Right at the end, I noticed that her voice was quite deep and she was very large, and I thought there's something wrong here. I said, "Isn't there something you want to tell me, something that you haven't told me?" She said, "Yes, I'm going through a sex change." I didn't employ her. I didn't want a sex change working for us. I just didn't feel comfortable having a sex change there. That was a few years ago, four, maybe five years ago. I mean, he or she promised that they would really work hard and they would do this and do that and they were struggling to find a job and – all this came out afterwards – nobody wanted employ her because of what they were going through. And I felt *sorry* for him, I *did*.

I had this one come to me, and I also had two very butch lesbians apply for the job just before that. We had customers there and I know the customers were also looking a bit skewly at these people. I thought, no, I don't even consider them for the job. If it was somebody who wasn't obvious or who could behave normally, probably I would have. If it was a gay person who wasn't undergoing a sex change, yes, I would have employed him. I think if somebody were the right person, I would now probably employ him, at least I think I would. If it was gonna affect our business ... you put them on probation for three or four months, you'd be able to know in a month or two if they were able to do the job or not, and if they weren't able to do it, or your customers didn't like them, well, then you must get somebody else.

4.4 *Richard Acton*

4.4.1 Introduction

Richard Acton (29, male) is a geographer from Cape Town.

Researcher's impressions: *RA* has a gentle manner, an engaging curiosity, a razor-sharp wit and considered the relevant issues in a critical, analytical manner.

Relevant employment history: The research in 1994 concerned a period of two years during which *RA* had worked as a sales assistant in an academic book shop in Cape Town in order to fund a thesis. At the time of the 1996 interview, he had left the bookshop and was working as a contract researcher for a university department. He was about to resettle in London.

Level of openness: "I don't think any of my friends does not know. My sister knows; my parents and brothers don't. I would say about 50%, possibly, of the people in my workplace know, because I am very open about it to them. The rest, I don't know whether they know and I am not open about it. They might assume or whatever the other processes are that would lead them to various nefarious conclusions."

Choice of pseudonym: In 1994 he said, "I chose *Richard Acton* because Richard is a suitably butch name, and Acton was the name that Ann Brontë wrote under when she couldn't reveal her identity. I think that's suitably juxtaposed. Brontë's writing was regarded as extremely scandalous and depraved at the time.

I like the name because of the obvious links with freedom of expression. Also, there are the links to gender roles – how the scandal arose not just because of the material itself, but because of the fact that it was not ‘expected’ to come from a ‘lady’.”

Preferred term for his orientation: *RA* categorises himself as *gay* as a form of convenience. However, in the 1994 interview he said he did not find any single categorisation of his sexuality completely satisfying: “I don’t really accept the term for all it implies. I’m sexually attracted to men – that’s the only definition I can give – and I happen to be in love with a man. I associate *gay* with a very specific, overt form of homosexual culture, which doesn’t relate to me directly at all. I think I have a degree of internalised homophobia relating to the term: I associate it with the more extreme, camp politics of homosexuality. However, I also associate it with particularly valuable, intimate friendships with other *gay* men. I certainly don’t have anywhere near the degree of intimacy with heterosexual men – often because I’m so on guard, and defensive about it.

In 1996 he said, “I don’t think that my opinion would have changed that much from what I said last time, except insofar as I have even less certainty as to what would be suitable. I would feel less happy with any particular label ... what is very significant for myself is that the term is so mutable and has been transformed in so many ways over the years. What one ascribes as heterosexual or *gay* is so subjective and time, place and socially specific that it is not really of much use. If there was something that was free of prejudicial associations, of negative cultural codes, then perhaps I could use it. If I say I am *gay*, what does that mean to somebody else? They will pick it up and they’ll use it, they’ll say, “Oh, X is *gay*,” but what they are actually talking about is something completely different. You are actually dealing with other people’s prejudices and perceptions.

Relationships: *RA*’s lover of five years would also be in London “off and on for the next year. We are going to assess and decide what to do. I am very committed to the relationship. I don’t see the departure as a termination or anything like that.”

4.4.2 Changes in work set-up (1996)

I left the book store. I got a job at that goddamn awful university and I have been in the department doing various contract research posts. It all been very ... tenuous, in the worst sense of the word: one doesn’t have tenure, one just has a tenuous job. The salary has been appalling, the working conditions disgusting. The way that people have treated me and fellow researchers gives slavery a bad name. It really does.

I don’t intend to drop that work entirely, but I am certainly going into something more creative and more interesting – that has slightly more relevance to the planet as a whole, rather than to 2 000 boring academics. I am interested in doing a script-writing course and generally just doing something a lot more creative and a lot more fulfilling on a personal level. I decided that what is important is actually to gain job satisfaction on a personal level. I would like to experiment and see what the options are.

4.4.3 The work milieu (1996)

I have been there the whole of the past 20 months. There is one fascist at the top of the heap, a professor, who runs the entire show, with various sell-outs, prostitutes and lackeys beneath him and ... there is a permanent staff. Within the department there’re also units. So now we are getting lower and lower, and in the units are members of staff, some of whom are in contract posts, and I work for people who are in contract posts. So I am between the contract people and the waste pickers. The researchers are employed on a ad-hoc contract basis ... how did the university describe it? ... “A temporary, part-time, contract post with no benefits.” I think that sums it all up. The main department probably has about 14 staff. The units have about eight or nine people, and the unit that I did a lot of work for is the smallest, which had one person on a three-year contract running the whole show and four what they call associate consultants, and I was the main associate consultant.

The people who knew that I’m *gay* were the people I made friends with and I saw them on a social level. I think people I did not see on a social level I never said anything to. I think there is a direct correlation. If I didn’t see people outside, I did not bother.

The majority of those people are ... they’re not just heterosexual. They’re white, conservative South African Christians of the worst order: “What a friend we have in Jesus, but fuck everybody who doesn’t agree with our viewpoint”. Grey-minded people. And I think it was a combination of having grey-minded people in bureaucratic positions and just feeling that I didn’t want to actually tell them, because I suppose on some levels it was a defiance. But on others ... that ambiguity, because they’re really vicious people. They’re really vicious.

They are the sort of people who would go behind your back and just make life difficult in small, mindless, grey ways. I think mainly I was just very aware that they were deeply, deeply conservative people.

So there was a bit of monitoring and self-regulation on that level, but had I known them socially, I might have said something to them. But it is so unlikely that I would ever associate with people like that, because theirs is a grossness just on a daily basis, that self-satisfying smug glow.

There are many things which I could tell you which enrage me deeply about that department. I happen to know that two of the little happy bunnies were bonking each other's brains out in the department and that did make me feel incredibly angry, because they are both married and they both go to church and they both lead the most wonderful little prissy lifestyles and have 2.3 children and fish on a Friday. And the fact that my relationship would not be approved of, but it is OK for ... you know. And they'll make lots of jokes in the tea room about Michael Jackson bonking 15-year-old boys. It is rather bizarre and rather funny, but on a slightly broader scale there is a very dark irony on the fringe of the comments, where somehow everyone knows that the two little happy bunnies are fucking each other's brains out in the office, but that is alright, because we are human. And really it is a mundane, daily Christian intolerance, which is inescapable and very insidious. The basic logic goes something like: if you do something right, then it is because you are a good Christian, and if you do something wrong, well, you know, God is teaching you a lesson and you can always be forgiven. It is not a moral system which is carried through to its logical conclusion. They're basically supporting their own conservative viewpoints. If it is something that they don't like, greyness can be very, very dangerous. You can make someone's life a living hell, even if you are fucking someone's brains out.

4.4.4 Coming out at work

(1994:) I think heterosexual people don't realise the number of assumptions which are made about you every single day, going to office parties, and going to people's homes, discussing what you did on the week-end – all these things are very, very difficult.

Coming out is such a useless term; one has to break it up into the hundred thousand pieces that it is. One has to make all sorts of adjustments when you come out, and I suppose one never ceases to do it, you can never cease to acknowledge all these things to yourself. You are always encountering new people.

The politics of coming out I don't always like. I think all forms of coming out are relevant at one time or another, but the most radical gesture one can make is to come out through a far more integrated process, one of assimilation: If it's incidental, rather than deliberate. It's a politics of normality, rather than difference.

(1996:) My sexuality is just one part of me, and I would hate to just meet people simply because they were gay. Sexuality is a very fundamental building block of people, yes, but it is not the way that I would like to interact with others. I would like to meet them because of other interests. If they are gay, it is nice to know gay people. In the South African environment it is unusual, and I think I've been very lucky in meeting lots of people.

(1994:) The gay people that I know I have met either through work, or through friends, and I have never involved myself in mainstream gay culture. It's got nothing to do with being closeted, or shy; it's out of sheer defiance, because I think it's dreadfully hypocritical in many respects. I say "hypocritical", because people get involved in the gay subculture on the assumption that all they're looking for is happiness, but they never seem to find it. It's because they become trapped in that very physical, inarticulate mode of expression, which is very present in heterosexual society, and ironically becomes refined in gay culture. It's just not appropriate to my identity. It makes me very angry, because there are so many things that I despise about mainstream heterosexual culture, and there in overt gay culture I see the mirror image. Why the fuck do I have to put up with this, when I have to deal with the disgusting behaviour in heterosexual culture! And again it relates to my preoccupation with being integrated with people. I have no intention of ghettoising myself, and I think it's a real danger.

Internalised homophobia is a real problem. I think I've overcome a fair amount, but I find myself being particularly derisive of camp politics, and I know it's not just because it has nothing to do with my experience. A large part of it *is* because of that: it just seems to be unnecessary ... it's extravagant, and just stupid. Gay people are always assumed to be extraverted, flighty, silly and even dangerous.

4.4.5 Consequences of coming out

(1994:) If I do stay in my new job, I think these issues are going to become very, very acute. I'm more nervous about gender politics now that I'm starting a career. I am nervous because I fear that my profes-

sional mobility might be limited. I know a fair amount of people, and there are ways to get round that sort of thing, but South Africa just is unfortunately a really, really small place, and everybody in this particular field knows everybody else. It worries me, because I just don't look like your average game ranger from Botswana. I don't have rippling biceps, I don't drive a four by four, and don't have a *bimbette* hanging from my arms, so on three major counts I've blundered into this field, and it's just not done.

I'm really going to have to fight. This job is a stepping stone for me, and so I'm prepared to make a pragmatic choice, but when it comes to settling down, and really going for it, I don't know how far I would go. I can't answer these things with any categorical certainty, because it depends on the circumstances and the people.

In one sense I think my fears might not be so well founded, because I will be able to challenge these things. If I get fired, and I suspect it's on gender grounds, then I'll certainly make it very overt and fight it. But does one want to? It takes a lot of energy out of one. It's an incredibly demanding path to take, and I can see myself having to make greater and greater compromises – to the point where I'll call it denial. In the future I might well leave the field because of it.

(1996:) I mean really, that lot, in the global pond, are absolutely nothing, so I don't really feel it would have career consequences for me at all if they found out. Being prejudiced and disadvantaged by that department was actually a compliment. Your career will take off! I am not sure what the career consequences would have been in other environments and other departments, but I think in universities, generally, there is a kind quirky, favourable prejudice for people who are more marginalised, so I think one would have had intellectual protection. I think in a university environment one is protected, but not necessarily for the right reason, but because it is post-modern and trendy to be nice to ... the marginal. I don't think it is necessarily their own emotional or genuine commitment to it.

But there is another level of intolerance, where one has to deal with a more direct collision between people's prejudices and one's daily life, so that if Madame X finds out that you're gay, one has to be aware that there will probably be comments made, insidious jokes told, the general cooling of the atmosphere, radiation of disapproval, and just a daily look in the eye, like: "Oh dear, I suppose everyone is entitled to their own sick lifestyle." And I think that by not saying something I just keep it at a distance.

I could have said something, but I just didn't want to deal with bringing that prejudice into a much closer space with myself. It might be because I just thought it is not worth the effort. What I am dealing with is undigested crap and what is the point of dealing with that? I don't have to interact with these people, they have no social context with me, so I didn't really feel that by embarking on a programme of revelation that anything would be gained. In fact, it would just infringe on my working environment. With some people you know that by revealing difficult things, or saying something, you are actually going to get somewhere and you feel that you should, because they are worth it as a person. These people were just not worth it. They were actually just revolting.

I think this level of prejudice is very, very important and I think it is why a lot of gay people don't say something. It is one thing knowing that people are prejudiced, but not allowing them the opportunity. It is almost an opening. You are opening up something by doing that and you are bringing out prejudice. There is a certain level of decorum, of prejudice decorum. It is a British thing. If you don't say it, it doesn't exist. I think their insidious behaviour is such that they won't say anything until you give them an opening, and when you give them an opening, then it's *carte blanche*, then it is fun and games.

I think on a conscious and a sub-conscious level those were the processes and thoughts that were working at the time. I was so marginalised as it was. Really, I couldn't have been more marginalised, unless I was standing at the edge of a plank on the 50th floor of a building. You can't get more marginalised than the position of a researcher in that department, and I just thought, it's so absurd, I am dealing with so many issues, why deal with this when it actually has nothing to do with them and it would make no difference? It is like talking to a Ku Klux Klan member about gay rights. You get a very blank, white stare. What is the point?

When I said I was buying this flat, I was fascinated by people's default settings. When I gave them this data it was like loading in a file and what people came up with was: "RA is buying a flat." ... and then: "He will be staying with another man and therefore this is what the flat looks like. This is a two-bedroomed flat. There is no other option." I remember thinking, oh god, now I have said something about the flat, *now* what I am going to say? But within 10 seconds this wonderful, warm social control had taken over and everybody had just redesigned the whole flat in their minds instantly, because the alternatives just weren't there. I find that absolutely bizarre. And then I just thought, oh well, if this is the way people want it [laughter], I'm not even going to say anything. What is the point, again, of saying, "Actually, there is one bedroom"? That's as good as saying ...

There's that famous story about the surgeon and the surgeon's son²³. This is exactly the same thing, these gender default settings. To me that was very interesting, because you realise again this language of exchange doesn't exist. You actually have to create it. You are not dealing with a common dialogue. There is nothing there! You literally have to take people and show them. And it's like a revelation. I think these things are very insidious, they are very reflective of all sorts of other problems, particularly in South African society, because I think many people have not experienced anything outside, it's been a very closed and contained environment. Apartheid was very successful in perpetuating that. So, white people don't know what's going on down the road. I mean people in my department are saying, "Oh god, isn't it amazing, I have been thinking recently that South Africa is actually a Third World country." And you think, what have they been doing for the last x number of years? And I think it's similar in different communities, it is like a revelation that there could be a homosexual. They have led such incredibly blinkered lives.

I think the issue of my flat separated my own social life from my interaction with people professionally. It made me realise that to bring people over from that level to a more intimate, personal friendship level would be much harder, because basically their assumptions are now: "this is the way that everything is laid out". I think in that sense it made me realise the stakes are high for revealing things now. How true that was – or is – I don't know. But certainly at the time. Now there really is a much greater distance between me and other people. On some levels it was annoying, because I created this bigger space. There is that paradox of being marginalised and then people marginalising themselves, but again it goes back to prejudice. Do you want those people as friends? and I think at the end of the day, no. I did feel a sense of risk and fear when I was trying to explain the purchase of the flat. But it soon changed to "well, that is the way it is". That doesn't make that much difference to me.

In one sense the environment into which I went was slightly easier than the one before, because I didn't want to socialise with those people and there were sharper boundaries between those that I wanted to know and those I did not feel like interacting with, so there was less of an ambiguity.

4.4.6 Acting against discrimination (1996)

I would have taken legal steps, if I had been discriminated against. There is no doubt about that in my mind. Because I think that is a violation of a very different magnitude. It's one thing dealing with petty jokes and swatting the bigoted horseflies, but it's quite another when it is loss of income and livelihood. I think that's just blatant discrimination and I would have fought it. The thing that's difficult is proving that it is sexual harassment and prejudice. The university does not have a scintillating track record in this regard. I mean, there was the case where some lesbian lecturer ... well, all the dirt was out, but there have been several heterosexual male toads in that place who have harassed students and groped and fondled them and everything has been behind closed doors. So I'd have to see what would actually come out, though they've got all the assurances on paper. But I would still do it. I would still do it. I think it would be worthwhile. I don't think in that department it would have arisen. They would just have closed the door quietly, and made your life inconvenient to the point where you'd just love to go.

4.4.7 Conditions that would encourage openness (1996)

[The university] does have the environment of a non-discrimination policy now and I would not underestimate the importance of that. But on some levels it is a bit of a wish list – "wouldn't it be nice, no prejudiced people or no people who are intolerant." I think it would be the same for black people in an affirmative-action post in a conservative white environment. It is like wanting to allow black people into public swimming pools in the 1980s in a white area. On some level it's incomprehensible, like saying, "Would you like to give a filthy swine equity?"

It is a very important time though for this country with this transformation, because people are pressurised. There are very major changes taking place in this country, where even the most conservative pigs are forced to say the right things and to be seen to be leaning in the right direction. It is really ghastly on some levels. Shame, you see these conservatives really doing their thing and you know all they would love to do is just send everybody back to their homelands and lash political opponents and really just have a good old-

²³ The riddle goes: A doctor is called in to do an emergency operation. Upon seeing the patient, the doctor says, "I cannot operate on this patient. It is my son." The doctor is not the son's father. Why did the doctor say this? Many people take a while to see the obvious answer: the doctor is the boy's mother.

fashioned time, but now they *have* to co-operate. [Ironic:] *Everyone* is socially democratic. *No-one* ever supported apartheid. But how far they would actually be prepared to commit themselves and do something, I don't know. The same people are still in power and they still have the same prejudices; they have not adjusted. I think all these things have gone underground. I think that's what one would have to be careful about, in saying that policy would help people and in actually feeling more secure because of that policy. One would have to take a very close look and assess the way in which one is being prejudiced. Assess who it was, and what the implications are in terms of the whole hierarchy. Is there actually someone to appeal to?

What it would take there for people to be honest, I don't know. One just has to read the situation ... a interpretation/reading of the level of trust that you can have in people. But I think one has to be careful about wanting to reveal these things. I don't know whether it is actually always a good idea. Basically it had nothing to do with them in a professional environment.

I can certainly see that the same things are going to arise again and possibly in a more complicated way. I think there are different work environments where it would have been much more pressurised. For example, the bringing-home-the-boss scenario. I don't know whether those are actually relevant to my situation. That's not my interest and I am not that sort of person. I would be in a more long-distance-runner career. I don't like team things and board meetings and chatting with Mr Walrus upstairs.

4.4.8 The Constitution (1996)

The death penalty is no longer sanctioned, but you know that 98% of people support it. I think the same thing goes for gay rights. The Constitution is a huge step. But again, you've got to realise that the population is conservative. So I don't think of a personal level it has really made that much difference. It has not boosted my sense of security. I am not going to go down the road wearing my becoming little gay-rights New York T-shirt, because I don't think it will take much to spark people off. In an environment like the city bowl you probably wouldn't have such a problem, but certainly, say, shopping in Tyger Valley on a Saturday morning or going down Voortrekker Road or just Fish Hoek! God! Really, no! You are would be in serious danger. People are very violent. One should never underestimate the power the violence and the threat of violence.

It is rather a pleasant irony that they probably wouldn't say anything now or they would tone it down. It is a very gentle mental pressure on people. So things are changing. Still, the basics stay the same – the goddamn fascist society. Just with new curtains in the window. I am just very cynical. I think it comes from one's daily life and listening to prejudices. The irony of living as a gay person in the new South Africa is that you know that at least you are still one of the [laughter] disadvantaged, because you're now in a uniform category where *everyone* can be prejudiced against you, regardless of colour or creed, so I suppose that's a great advantage. Now everyone can be honest and say they don't like it. And it's cool to say it. It's still cool to say it. If you say, "Isn't it strange that someone has big lips and a 'black nose'?" you really would be machine gunned down, because everyone knows that that is wrong.

It would be very nice to see a gender struggle with the unbanning of various organisations and everyone having to tow the line. I don't know. I'd be very sceptical of there being any deep change. And those constitutional rights are there because of a very, very small group of people ... and luck, because they got in because there were other more important so-called debates going on at the time. So one shouldn't be under an illusion as to why they got in. It's not as if there were 10 000 grannies in the platteland writing in saying, "Defend homosexual rights." Probably if there were 30, 40, a maximum of a 100 people out of 35 million, you are dealing with a lot. So it is a very tenuous thing.

It is like, I suppose, what women had to deal with 25 years ago: "Huh! huh! huh! You've kept your own surname, huh! huh! huh!". I suppose one just has to endure it and eventually it becomes alright to just use *Ms* instead of *Miss*. Instead of having all these ridiculous comments about how we had been going for 35 years without a *chairperson*. So everyone just has to put up with it, with the really slow, agonising process. I think by having the rights you do set up an environment where it is possible, that whole language of connection. You actually mention the words *gay rights*, and sexual orientation is there, so you do raise awareness of it. That should not be underestimated. But I have no illusions that these things are very ephemeral and they are here today and gone tomorrow. There is this wonderful sense of progression, often conveyed in gay literature and historical reviews, like we are marching to this greater awareness of sexuality. Well, that might be, but if history says anything, it is "tomorrow everyone could be lined up against the wall and shot". One should be very careful about assuming that life is really becoming much rosier. It's a bit like that Margaret Atwood book, *The*

Handmaid's Tale. Like this particular women I was thinking about in my department. I'm sure given a couple of glasses of wine and a machete she would have a great time. It's only thin threads of control holding people back. I'm still lurking, looking [laughter] out of the corner of my eye, thinking, well, it is miraculous, but it is a miracle and miracles pop sometimes. If it lasts, fantastic!

4.4.9 The way ahead (1996)

I don't know, maybe something can be done along the lines of a placement code or a protection code, race, gender, creed, blah, blah, blah. I suppose maybe something on a level that's functionally practical, like a workshop, like they've had with the police on how to interact with people. 'Cause I really think you have to lead people by the hand, and it is not being patronising, but seriously, the problem is that people have been isolated by the whole social context, the rules of the game. I really think it is a *revelation* to people. I suppose I wish there was something like the equivalent of those Idasa trips to the townships in the 1980s, so everyone can stare out the window and say, "WOW! We had no idea gay people lead normal lives! Isn't that amazing!"

4.4.10 Experience of interviews

I think this time I feel much more strongly – [chuckles] if that's possible! – than last time on a lot of issues. And I also think, in the interim, what was clarified by the first interview, was how I feel about my own sexuality relative to other issues, because I hadn't weighed it up in that environment. Although it is such a constant thing, you don't always think about it. You deal with your sexuality in the working environment in so many ways and so many little instances that you don't see how it fits in and how one's sexuality is linked to one's professional identity. I liked that opportunity. It has not made it easier, but it certainly made it clearer.

5. Sexual orientation in the workplace: policy proposals for a code of good practice

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INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) prohibits unfair discrimination on a range of grounds including **sexual orientation**. For the first time, lesbian and gay people in South Africa are recognised as equal citizens. There are, however, laws, policies, regulations and practices which still unfairly discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. Discrimination in the home, community, workplace and throughout the public sphere against lesbian and gay people also remains a daily reality.

The Constitution places a positive duty on the government to put in place measures which advance the provisions of the Constitution. Work and unemployment is central to the lives of millions of South Africans including lesbian and gay people. The proposed Employment Equity Bill is an important measure which addresses workplace discrimination.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR LESBIAN AND GAY EQUALITY

The National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality is a voluntary association of more than 74 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered organisations in South Africa. Formed in December 1994, the Coalition lobbied successfully for the retention of sexual orientation as one of the grounds of non-discrimination in the Constitution. The Coalition is mandated to work for legal and social equality for its members. Its work includes law reform, lobbying, litigation, advocacy, employment equity, leadership training and development. Major policy and interventions have been successfully undertaken by the Coalition notably on the issues of employment; the Equal Opportunity policy of the SANDF; and various SA Police Service documents and policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A CODE OF GOOD EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE

Sexual orientation is not generally considered a workplace issue in South Africa. The work done by the Equal Rights Project of the Coalition since September 1996 indicates that :

- Workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation is rife in South Africa: it includes harassment at work, unfair dismissals, unequal access to benefits and fear of discovery;
- Few trade unions and labour movement organisations have understood and accepted sexual orientation as a workplace issue;
- Few employers and employer-bodies have understood and accepted sexual orientation as a workplace issue;
- Policies and codes in the public sector also lack knowledge and understanding of sexual orientation as a workplace issue. A notable exception is the South African National Defence Force which prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and homophobia in its Equal Opportunities and Affirmative Action policy adopted by the Department of Defence and Parliament in 1997.

The National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality recognises that the closest co-operation between employers, trade unions, workers, government and civil society agencies is a precondition for the elimination

of unfair discrimination and homophobia in the workplace. Increased productivity, job security and employee loyalty as a result of fair and non-discriminatory labour practices will benefit the entire economy.

The proposed employment equity legislation is an important milestone in this regard. The Employment Equity Bill addresses affirmative action (on the basis of race, gender and disability) in the private and public sector but it also incorporates the elimination of unfair discrimination in the workplace. Sexual orientation is included as a grounds for non-discrimination in the proposed legislation.

The Employment Equity Bill also makes provisions for Codes of Good Practice to guide employers, unions and government on particular areas of discrimination or contention. The Coalition recommends the promotion, development and adoption of a Code of Good Employment Practice to guide employers and employees on how to deal with sexual orientation in the workplace.

Such a Code should be developed from the point of view of the equality principle of the Constitution and new employment laws which include the Labour Relations Act of 1995 (LRA) and the proposed employment equity legislation.

SUMMARY OF POLICY PROPOSALS

The Coalition has drafted policy proposals for a code of good practice on sexual orientation and the workplace. The policy proposals are recommended for all private and public sector employers. The proposals constitute a broad framework which can be adapted to meet the specific needs of a particular workplace (large or small).

Education and training of human resource managers, shop stewards, managers, benefit providers and other individuals in diversity management is central to the proposals. The development of the policy proposals into a Code of Good Employment Practice on Sexual Orientation would function as a guide for employers, unions and workers.

POLICY PROPOSALS FOR A CODE OF GOOD EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE ON SEXUAL DIVERSITY AND THE WORKPLACE

Definitions

In these proposals unless indicated otherwise, the following definitions apply.

“Employee” means an employed person, a job applicant, or, a former employee.

“Employer” means all employers in the private and public sector.

“Sexual orientation” means the sexual identity or preference of any individual or group of people and it includes heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered people.

“Homophobia” means the irrational hatred and fear of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered persons. This includes prejudice against same-sex acts or relationships.

1. Sexual Orientation and the Employment Contract

- 1.1 All employees have the right to equality on the basis of their sexual orientation. Gay and lesbian employees shall not be treated differently from other employees simply because of their sexual orientation.
- 1.2 Recognising past prejudice and discrimination, gay and lesbian employees shall be treated in a just and non-discriminatory manner.

- 1.3 Employers, employees and their respective organisations shall acknowledge that fair employment opportunities are necessary for all employees.

2. Recruitment, continued employment, and termination of employment

- 2.1 Pre-employment interviews and other examinations should determine the functional performance and ability of a prospective employee to perform the inherent requirements of a job. No employee will be denied employment because of their sexual orientation.

- 2.2 If an employee discloses their sexual orientation, it shall not be a basis for refusing to conclude, continue or renew an employment contract;

- 2.3 Gay and lesbian employees shall be governed by the same contractual obligations as all other employees;

- 2.4 No employee may be dismissed or have their employment terminated merely on the basis of their sexual orientation, nor shall their sexual orientation influence retrenchment procedures.

3. Promotion, Training and Development

- 3.1 Sexual orientation shall not be a criterion for a decision to promote, train and develop an employee.

4. Leave

- 4.1 Employees with same-sex partners and families shall be entitled to non-discriminatory family leave benefits currently enjoyed by married employees.

5. Benefits

Unmarried employees and their partners (gay, lesbian or heterosexual) do not have equal access to employment benefits which married employees and their spouses currently enjoy.

Refusing employment benefits on the basis of sexual orientation and marital status is both unconstitutional and unlawful in terms of the Constitution (Section 9(3),(4)) and the Labour Relations Act of 1995 (Section 1 of Schedule 7).

Employment benefit packages comprise a substantial portion of an employees' financial compensation. The denial of such benefits to employees who are in gay or lesbian partnerships, or to employees who are in heterosexual partnerships, means that these employees receive substantially less compensation than do their heterosexual married colleagues.

In view of this, a responsibility falls on employers, employees and the government to create a viable non-discriminatory approach to employment benefits.

The following steps are critical to protect employees' benefits and workplace rights:

- 5.1 All definitions of spouse, dependant or family in company policies, industrial bargaining agreements need to include domestic partners whether lesbian, gay or heterosexual. An employee's sexual orientation and marital status should not be a requirement for admission to any employment benefit schemes.
- 5.2 Employees with same-sex domestic partners and those in unmarried heterosexual domestic partnerships should have equal access to employment benefits.

- 5.3 Employers, the state, private and public institutions responsible for granting employee benefits such as :

medical aid and health related benefits
 group life assurance
 pensions and provident funds
 housing benefits
 unemployment insurance
 bursaries, training and study subsidies
 disability and accident benefits

can ensure that viable non-discriminatory policies are developed. This should apply to all employment benefits relating to spouses, children and/or partners and dependants.

- 5.4 In cases where an employer is unable to ensure that non-discriminatory policies are followed, the employer and trade unions should seek to ensure that the policies are changed, or should find an agency which provides the same benefits on a non-discriminatory basis.

6. Workplace Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

- 6.1 A gay or lesbian employee has the same rights and duties as other employees.
- 6.2 Where discrimination based on an employee's sexual orientation is alleged, the employee shall have recourse to the necessary mechanisms and remedies for redress.
- 6.4 A gay or lesbian employee shall be subject to the same disciplinary procedures as other employees.

7. Workplace Education and Training on Sexual Diversity in the Workplace

Employers, employees and their representative organisations can agree and develop education programmes aimed at promoting equality and diversity in the workplace. Such programmes should include equality on the basis of sexual orientation. Employers, employees and their respective organisations are encouraged to promote the implementation of such programmes in the workplace. Human resource and labour relations training should include sexual diversity as a workplace issue.

- 7.1 Education programmes should utilise strategies that are sensitive and that promote understanding, tolerance, religious freedom and respect for all employees.
- 7.2 Education programmes shall inform employers and all employees of the provisions of employment laws and codes on non-discrimination and the rights and duties of employers and employees. A Code of Good Practice on Sexual Orientation approved by the Department of Labour should be available in the workplace.
- 7.3 Where possible and appropriate, employers may assist in providing education and support systems for the dependants and employees who may have various problems related to their sexual orientation and which may affect their performance at the workplace. A list of counselling services on sexual orientation could be made available to human resource personnel.

8. Confidentiality

- 8.1 All employees have the constitutional and legal right to privacy about their sexual orientation. Because of the stigma and prejudice attached to being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered, many individuals choose not to disclose their sexual orientation to family, colleagues or friends. Voluntary disclosure should be welcomed and encouraged as a measure to create understanding and acceptance in the workplace.

- 8.2 An employee should not be obliged to inform an employer or fellow employees of their sexual orientation.
- 8.3 Confidentiality regarding all information about the sexual orientation of an employee must be maintained and respected, unless disclosure is legally required.
- 8.4 Trustees and administrators of benefit funds may not disclose the sexual orientation of an employee to an employer without the employee's written and informed consent.
- 9. Prejudices and fears of fellow employees, management and clients**
- 9.1 It is the responsibility of an employer in consultation with employee organisations to ensure that all employees are educated about sexual diversity issues in the workplace so as to minimise discrimination and homophobia.
- 9.2 The harassment (including sexual harassment) of any employee on the basis of their sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation will be regarded as a serious breach of the employment contract.
- 9.3 Education and counselling for an employee who is homophobic and refuses to work with lesbian or gay colleagues will be encouraged before taking any disciplinary action.
- 9.4 Refusal to work with an employee on the basis of their sexual orientation shall be regarded as a breach of the employment contract subject to a disciplinary procedure.
- 10. Dispute Resolution**
- 10.1 Employers, employees and their representative organisations are encouraged to develop and refine the proposals and to develop a Code of Good Practice on Sexual Orientation. This can be adapted into suitable workplace policies and programmes.
- 10.2 Any dispute between an employer and an employee in relation to or arising from the application of the Code should be subject to the provisions of the Labour Relations Act of 1995 and the proposed Employment Equity legislation.

6. Table 1: The existential dynamic sequence (removable insert)

This page may be removed to be used as a reference guide to the discussion in chapter 5.

	A	B	C	D
1	Awareness of the four ontological givens :			
2	Finiteness	Freedom and responsibility	Choice (to create meaning oneself)	Unbridgeable separateness
3	... creates conflict with our wishes :			
4	To continue being	To have structure and groundedness	To seek meaning	To be part of a whole
5	... out of which arises normal, or existential anxiety about the contingencies of:			
6	Fate and death	Guilt and condemnation	Emptiness and meaninglessness	Loneliness and isolation
7	With courage (authentic being) we can accept these contingencies and live with			
8	Faith	Commitment	Creativity	Love

However, we may experience our existential anxiety as overwhelming and attempt flight. This defence fails, and the anxiety returns as

9	neurotic anxiety (dread) about:			
10	Powerlessness	Blame	Absurdity	Estrangement
11	The rejection of the givens comprises an inauthentic response (non-being) , characterised by			
12	Resignation	Surrender of freedom	Alienation from self	Withdrawal from others
13	... which occurs through the defences of active distortion of being :			
14	Activism and manipulation	Blind rebellion	Destructiveness	Dominance
15	... and/or passive distortion of being :			
16	Fatalism and Embeddedness	Conformity	Apathy	Submission

Note: Adapted from Bugental (1965) and Yalom (1980).