

# **Keeping up with the Queers:**

*White gay and bisexual men's experiences of relationship intimacy and conflict in Cape  
Town, 1966-2008*



*Adam Elliot Kleinschmidt*  
*KLNADA001*

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Signed by candidate

Adam Elliot Kleinschmidt

*31 January 2020*

## **Abstract**

*Between 1966 and 2008, the social, political and cultural landscape of South Africa changed considerably for queer people living in Cape Town. This thesis intends to explore white gay and bisexual men's experiences of intimacies and conflict in their close relationships during the latter half of apartheid and early democratisation. Interviews and correspondence with eleven men that probed their personal developmental histories, their interactions with social institutions like education and the army, and their intimate relationship histories all revealed information that contributes towards three bodies of literature: firstly, that intersectional histories of race, class and sexuality can be found in social groups that have both privilege and oppression; secondly, that queer identity development is affected by families of origin and social institutions; and thirdly, the queer spaces in Cape Town are reflections of both the queer community and of mainstream heterosexist society. As a result of these findings, it can be stated with conviction that conflict and intimacy in close relationships is an amalgamation of social and personal developments, and that race, class and sexuality have informed the ways in which white queer men perceive themselves and their community. While this research was limited by the small case study size and by minimal archival work, the merits of this case study can be expanded by further oral history projects.*

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● <i>Alexander Price</i>	
● <i>James Le Roux</i>	
● <i>Percy Middleton</i>	

- *Benjamin De Beer*
- *Matthew Van As*

#### Addendum B: Correspondence

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- *Ashley Brownlee*

## **Introduction**

### *How to Keep up with the Queers*

It was 1966 in the leafy suburb of Forest Town, Johannesburg, and a group of queer men decided to host a garden party.<sup>1</sup> Loud, popular music that inspired dancing and mingling, alcoholic beverages that intoxicated the senses of any willing imbibers and a desire, perhaps subconsciously, to challenge the heteronormative norms of society, tucked behind a garden wall that was supposed to create a safe haven from outside intervention. However, on this particular evening, there marked the end of unrestricted gay activity in the white suburbs. With a single police invasion into a house party, the South African gay scene made itself known to the apartheid government.<sup>2</sup> It stood out as a threat to their ideological and moral standpoints as *die pienk gevaar*, or the pink danger: the fear of homosexuals and the deviant sexual identities that lurked among ‘social misfits.’ One simple house party, with men sharing dances and amorous exchanges, was a watershed moment for South African queer history as the government became aware of the overt queerness in the suburbs.

The academic reservoir on LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Bi-curious, Trans-sexual or Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex and Asexual)<sup>1</sup> history has developed gradually over the last century or so, with an abundant focus on the public face of sexuality. These developments have included protest actions like Stonewall in 1969, public Pride marches and the ongoing struggle for social, political and economic rights across the world. Queer<sup>3</sup> people have existed in a variety of historical contexts in varying conditions, and our contemporary

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<sup>1</sup> Glen Retief, “Keeping Sodom out of the Laager: State repression of homosexuality in apartheid South Africa,” in *Defiant Desire*, edited by Marc Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (London/New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Kevan Botha and Edwin Cameron, “South Africa,” in *Sociolegal Control of Homosexuality: A Multi-Nation Comparison*, edited by Donald J. West and Richard Green (New York: Plenum Press, 1997), 23-26.

<sup>3</sup> More on the lexicography will be discussed in this Introduction, under the ‘On Queerness’ section.

understandings of queerness should take note of sexuality being the “product of shifting historical circumstances”.<sup>4</sup> Extensive social histories have shown that queerness was present in human society long before it was pathologized and studied by psychologists and sociologists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and there is a substantial array of material that discussed the psychology, sociology and politics of the community.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, as far back as the Ancient Era in European history and in pre-colonial African society, some element of same-sex or gender-fluid activity was present in societies and was considered ‘normal’ within the confines of the context.<sup>6</sup>

### A Study in Pink:

#### Central research questions and literature

The expansive literature on South Africa’s gay rights activism, Pride celebrations and landmark legal challenges is a prominent source for any student of queer history, as it represents the public interests of the queer community as far as political, social and cultural rights are concerned. However, in many cases, there is little to no scholarly work on the home spaces and domesticities of queer people. What is not explored in many queer historical narratives is what happens behind closed doors. Whilst there is some literature on the matter, it is typically lacking in-depth analysis or is contextualised so far away from the experiences of people in South Africa that there is little to no scholarly connection. Therein lies the nexus to this thesis: how did white gay and bisexual men, between 1966 and 2008, experience intimacy and conflict in their intimate relationships in Cape Town?

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<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The regulation of sexuality since 1800* (London/New York: Routledge, 1981), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid; Rosemary Hennessy, *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* (New York/London: Routledge, 2000); John D’Emilio, “Capitalism and Gay Identity,” in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, edited by Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Peter Ackroyd, *Queer City* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2017), 7-9; Marc Epprecht, *Hungochani: The History of a Dissident Sexuality in Southern Africa* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006), 26-32.

### Intersectional histories

Race, sexuality, gender and class, as structures, were all critical to this thesis. To adequately examine these structures, an intersectional lens was used to assess how white, queer men had access to socio-economic and political rights, and what kinds of oppression and disempowerment they faced. This practice of ‘studying up’ on the rights of white queer men – and the oppressions they endured – played a fundamental role in clarifying South African queer history.<sup>7</sup> To truly understand how apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa treated various sub-sections of society, it was valuable to question and critique how multiple identities informed the private, intimate lives of these men, and how their place in history framed these identities.

In Laura Nader’s essay, *Up the Anthropologist*, the process of ‘studying up’ was deemed necessary to understand the “powers and responsibility [that] are exercised [by those with social privileges or power]”, with three primary reasons provided.<sup>8</sup> First and foremost was the necessity for students studying society and social groups to exhibit an understanding and desire for social redress and civil rights. Moral indignation with invisibilities in history and a lack of representation in society is critical to any social case study; the research must be aware of inequalities and distortions.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, ‘studying up’ presents the opportunity to ask questions in reverse as a means toward scientific rigour. For example, instead of asking why certain social groups are “poor”, why not ask why certain other groups are more affluent?<sup>10</sup> This would require the researcher to search deeper into the literature and examine all facets to an argument,

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<sup>7</sup> Laura Nader, “Up the Anthropologist – Perspectives Gained from Studying Up,” in *Reinventing Anthropology*, edited by Dell Hymes (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 284.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 284-285.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 289.

thus presenting a more credible thesis. Finally, Nader states that to foster a greater sense of democracy within social studies, the internal workings of the privileged, powerful and influential must be examined and publicly displayed so that the core democratic principle of access is abided by.<sup>11</sup> It is, therefore, necessary to consider this thesis as a form of ‘studying up’ on an intersectional social group in Cape Town (male and white with socio-economic access, while queer) that had a contradictory relationship with privilege and responsibility: male and white with socio-economic access, while queer.

In general, white, queer men had more access to economic and political rights in apartheid South Africa. Far more present than lesbian women, and black and Coloured queer people, white queer men had the greatest access to political voices when the apartheid government intervened in their affairs.<sup>12</sup> White society throughout apartheid was, without fail, at the top of the racial social hierarchy in South Africa. Though ‘poor white areas’ were of concern during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, by the Sixties, South Africa’s economy, despite sanctions and growing anti-apartheid sentiments, had boomed.<sup>13</sup> However, this was not to say that class barriers had been entirely broken down, as the issue of being poor and white persisted throughout the era and into South Africa’s democratisation.<sup>14</sup> This suggests an immediate nuance that needed to be considered in this thesis: how the element of sexuality and class intersected with a racial group that had, for many years, been socially dominant despite a numerical minority.

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<sup>11</sup> Laura Nader, “Up the Anthropologist – Perspectives Gained from Studying Up,” 294-295.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Gevisser, “A different fight for freedom: A history of South African lesbian and gay organisation from the 1950s to 1990s,” in *Defiant Desire*.

<sup>13</sup> Deborah Posel, “The Apartheid Project, 1948 - 1970” in *The Cambridge History of South Africa (Volume 2)*, edited by Robert Ross, Anne Kelk Mager and Bill Nasson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 361.

<sup>14</sup> Annika Teppo, “A decent space? Space and morality in a former ‘poor white’ suburb,” in *The Prize and the Price: Shaping sexualities in South Africa*, edited by Melissa Steyn and Mikki van Zyl (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2009).

As a demographic group that was historically privileged compared to other racial groups, women, and transgendered people, I identified that there was a pressing need to interpret the nature of the intersectional privilege which white, queer men possessed. The intersectional lens was critical to a thesis such as this, as it provided space to understand how different experiences and identities contributed towards a life. Furthermore, it helped to de-generalise the white gay and bisexual community to the extent that different experiences could be explained in better detail. What was critical to understand in terms of intersectionality was that the queer community was one that was disenfranchised during the apartheid regime, wherein queer sexual activity was criminalised and queer individuals targeted by political and social forces. However, the white queer community largely profited from white minority control, which allowed them some means of avoiding these forces thanks to an advantageous socio-political position in society, as compared to queer people of colour. In this way, Kimberle Crenshaw stated that it is important to not collectivise the experiences of a group into one homogenous identity.<sup>15</sup> Rather, the more appropriate and historically accurate method would be to investigate how elements of race, class and sexuality (in the case of this thesis) could have affected a person's decisions and abilities. Though Crenshaw's analysis was set around women of colour, the point applied across all identities and experiences.

What is important to consider here is the role masculinity and gender roles have played in this thesis, and how theories of masculinity lend themselves to the core questions on intersectional history. Critically, R. W. Connell states that when defining masculinity, it is important to note that creating an epistemological basis or definition is challenging: not only is there an institutionalised binary that has been created (with the masculine being an inverse of the

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<sup>15</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" in *University of Chicago Legal Forum* Vol. 1989, No. 8 (1989): 150.

feminine), but there is also a distance between what is considered “common sense” and what is argued as “psychological science”.<sup>16</sup> The “conflicting forms of knowledge about gender” have created several different approaches to studying how discourses on gender have evolved, and Connell, when contemplating queer men specifically, notes this difference.<sup>17</sup> In the political and social understandings of queer men’s masculinity, Connell notes that despite the forced assignment of queer men as ‘feminine’ (and conversely, queer women as ‘masculine’), this contradiction has been implemented in a blurred manner and thus ruptures the purported goals of hegemonic masculinity.<sup>18</sup> In context, this existential problem for masculinity is present in South African history between 1966 and 2008: Robert Morrell notes that the advent of apartheid in the mid-20th century led to a heightening of masculinity among all South African men that left white men with the expectation that they would maintain the system (economically, politically and, in some instances, on the battlefield), and men of colour as exploited manual labourers or resistance fighters in the fight for freedom.<sup>19</sup>

When the democratic transition began in the Nineties, the shape of the South African state and society shifted, and masculinity followed suit: however, this transition was not fluid and the divisions in apartheid society persisted.<sup>20</sup> Within the queer context, masculinity followed a similar pattern, wherein white queer society transitioned ‘out of the closet’ but faced similar forms of queerphobic prejudice that questioned the ‘masculinity’ of the individual and the community-at-large.<sup>21</sup> Connell does note that the construction of masculinity is often attached to a racialised hierarchy where, white men are not only viewed in terms of their relationship

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<sup>16</sup> R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 3-4.

<sup>17</sup> R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 4-6, 40.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 40, 162.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Morrell, “The Times of Change: Men and Masculinity in South Africa,” in *Changing Men in South Africa*, edited by Robert Morrell (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2001), 16-18.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 18-26.

<sup>21</sup> Graeme Reid, *How to be a Real Gay: Gay Identities in Small-Town South Africa* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2013), 13-17.

with white women, but also with men of colour.<sup>22</sup> Within queer relationships themselves, the entrenchment of masculine structures - principally the binary of 'feminine' and 'masculine' participant(s) - is one such feature that Graeme Reid notes.<sup>23</sup>

The intersection of race, sexuality and class was one that accurately covered a number of relevant issues that affected the intimacies and conflicts in white, queer men's close relationships during the latter half of apartheid. White, queer men during apartheid had a mixed series of opportunities and disadvantages. White men's privileges were numerous: they may have had a better education, broader access to the economy and political rights. At the same time, however, they also lived with the forced conscription by the South African Defence Force (SADF) during the South African Border War and were still subject to any laws that banned sodomy or interracial relationships. The ability to make a home in leafy suburbs, pay rent through good jobs, be able to move around with ease in a space that did not discriminate as actively against queerness, and to conduct meaningful relationships are all attached to the social, economic and political rights of the individual, which were limited for white queer men during this time. Apartheid, a system built upon oppressing queer and black identities, had a "discernible racial constitution of sexuality" that dated as far back as the election of the National Party (NP) in 1948, wherein sexual interaction between races was deemed to be morally inappropriate and was subsequently criminalised.<sup>24</sup> Histories of queer and/or black domesticity have been discussed in academia to some extent and are valuable to the substantive understanding of queer history overall. Texts such as Ruth Morgan and Saskia Wieringa's *Tommy boys, lesbian men and ancestral wives*<sup>25</sup>, or 'Five women: Black lesbian life on the

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<sup>22</sup> R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 80.

<sup>23</sup> Graeme Reid, *How to be a Real Gay*, 26-27.

<sup>24</sup> Kopano Ratele, "Apartheid, post-apartheid and post-apartheid sexualities," in *The Prize and the Price*.

<sup>25</sup> Ruth Morgan and Saskia Wieringa, "Chapter Six" in *Tommy boys, lesbian men and ancestral wives: female same-sex practices in Africa* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2005).

Reef, by Tanya Chan Sam in *Defiant Desire*<sup>26</sup>, are all valuable for shedding light on intersections of society that have been sorely misrepresented or made invisible. However, their value in this thesis would be either comparative or to add a clearer understanding of a privilege that is already clearly stated in most academic texts. Indeed, in a core text to this thesis, Andrew Tucker's *Queer Invisibilities*, there was a fundamental understanding of how a certain demographic – in this case, racial – groups develop differently from a queer perspective. In the context of Cape Town, the communities of colour belonging to Cape Coloured and Black African groups have been made less visible as compared to the English and Afrikaans white population groups during the colonial and apartheid eras.<sup>27</sup>

This thesis, by no means, would want to ignore the untapped archive present in the Cape drag scene, or the underground queer scenes in Cape Town's townships, as two examples. Rather, there is a benefit to examining how intersecting privileges and oppressions affected the white, queer, male community in their homes. These discernible rights and privileges that made existence for white men easier than simple subsistence, which itself is a privilege in the context of South Africa's vast socio-economic differences, is complicated, however, by their queerness. It is undeniable that until the Nineties, queer people were harassed by the apartheid regime.<sup>28</sup> Whilst it was possible for white queer men, through whatever means afforded to them by their privilege, to have avoided police intervention, the possibility of harassment would nonetheless have informed their understanding of self and their identity development. This is one contribution of this thesis: a case study on the intersectional histories of race, class and

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<sup>26</sup> Tanya Chan Sam, "Five women: Black lesbian life on the Reef" in *Defiant Desire*.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Tucker, *Queer Invisibilities: Space, Identity and Interaction in Cape Town* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> Glen Retief, "Keeping Sodom out of the Laager," in *Defiant Desire*.

sexuality among white gay and bisexual men in Cape Town during the latter half of apartheid and early democratisation.

### Queer identity formation

This intersectionality begs a further question on how identity development in queer men occurs, and how examining queer psychology and intersubjectivity helps in the study of private, queer lives. Apartheid was heterosexist by nature, and as a result of the public pressure on citizens to conform (or else be labelled as ‘deviant’), queer identities stood as yet another area of oppression through courts, politics, the media, the psycho-medical sector and socio-culture.<sup>29</sup> Judith Butler states in *Gender Trouble* that identities like sex, gender and sexuality are unstable through cultural norms and constructions.<sup>30</sup> However, these constructed identities are defined by their ‘disobedience’ to the norm. By this, Butler means that sexuality, gender and sex were placed alongside a series of corresponding expectations of each other and that the masculine was often seen as the universal condition.<sup>31</sup> This disobedience to the norm existed in historical queer contexts as queer people subverted traditional ideals or heterosexist norms, which is why the construction of identities like race, gender and sexuality need to be critiqued.<sup>32</sup> The change and development in identity were of critical value in the primary research of this thesis, as it was beneficial to consider how various periods of South Africa’s public history established a constantly-changing environment for queer identities.

To adequately study identity change, it was beneficial to consider the relationships between psychology and a queer individual’s mind. As an avenue for change in the view people had of themselves, psychology textbooks and journal articles have been a crucial area of study in queer contexts. When considering intimacy and conflict in close relationships, and in the context of

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<sup>29</sup> Glen Retief, “Keeping Sodom out of the Laager,” in *Defiant Desire*.

<sup>30</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 2002), 23-24.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 24.

<sup>32</sup> Kathleen Ritter and Anthony Terndrup, *Handbook of Affirmative Psychotherapy with Lesbians and Gay Men* (London/New York: The Guildford Press, 2002), 11.

an oppressive anti-queer state, psychology articles have suggested helpful indications of how to interpret stress, anxiety and confusion among queer people. In circumstances that are exacerbated, such as HIV/AIDS or mental health crises, these texts have proven helpful.<sup>33</sup> An example of this can be seen in a critical text by Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa* published in 1992, which shed light on specific male queer identity shifts and offered a theoretical background to men negotiating crises in their lives (such as close relationship conflict).<sup>34</sup>

When this thesis draws upon queer psychology though, it recognises that it has been a site of oppression for queer people. Michel Foucault, in his *History of Sexuality*, critiques the value of the pervading belief that public discourses on sexual topics were repressed before the 20th century and that this “repressive hypothesis” by pre-Foucauldian thinkers led to a belief that rejecting past moral condemnations allowed society a freer, broader basis for sexual discussion.<sup>35</sup> Foucault suggests that this is false: there had been a bountiful volume of discussion around sexual topics since the 17th century and it is acknowledged that even though some level of repression did occur in various contexts, this idea of a blanket repressive period of human sexual history is not epistemologically sound.<sup>36</sup> The initial increase in sexual discussion stemmed from the confessional culture in the Catholic Church, whereby sinners were asked to divulge detailed explanations of their sinful acts (which often included sexual acts and ideas).<sup>37</sup> In due time, this culture of confession was transferred to the realms of

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<sup>33</sup> Ayesha McAdams-Mahmoud, Rob Stephenson, Christopher Rentsch, Hannah Cooper, Kimberley Jacob Arriola, Geoffrey Jobson, Glenn de Swardt, Helen Struthers and James McIntyre, “Minority Stress in the Lives of Men Who Have Sex With Men in Cape Town, South Africa,” in *Journal of Homosexuality* 61, no. 6 (2014): 847-867.

<sup>34</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa: Identity formation, culture, and crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>35</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 2-8

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 10-13.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 21-26.

psychology and the legal state, whereby confession was used to create a truth about homosexuality that pathologized it into deviance against reproduction.<sup>38</sup> This was then used as a means of social control that promoted heterosexist structures of reproduction within the home, whereby sex should have only been for reproductive purposes and not for any ‘earthly’ or ‘immoral’ pleasures.<sup>39</sup> However, as a result of changes within the practice of psychology, affirmative psychotherapy – which enfranchises the contexts within which queer people live and experience their sexuality – has been a valuable addition to the academic reservoir that aims to understand queerness better.<sup>40</sup>

The historical archive on queerness has been enhanced in the past by the study and practice of oral history: the use of ‘life stories’ and qualitative analysis has afforded individuals the power to reflect their voice within the archive as they feel fit.<sup>41</sup> This is the methodological approach for this thesis that shall be dealt with later in this introduction in a section below entitled The Stories Within. In this way, intersubjectivity in the study of queer affairs of the home and the person is better enhanced, but it was necessary to delve deep into the personal developmental changes and challenges experienced by the men. This is further complicated when the challenges and changes involve intimacy and conflict within a romantic or close relationship. Intersubjectivity within relationships is something Jack Goody stated in a chapter of *New Dangerous Liaisons*: “the topic of love is not the domain of one discipline alone, but of a general debate, by sociologists, historians and psychologists as well as anthropologists.”<sup>42</sup> This was another notable feature to this thesis: by merging the disciplines of socio-politics, history

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<sup>38</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, 103-105.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Kathleen Ritter and Anthony Terndrup, *Handbook of Affirmative Psychotherapy with Lesbians and Gay Men*.

<sup>41</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 19.

<sup>42</sup> Jack Goody “Love and Religion; Comparative Comments,” in *New Dangerous Liaisons - Discourses on Europe and Love in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Luisa Passerini, Liliana Ellena and Alexander C. T. Geppert (New York/Oxford: Berghan Books, 2010), 21.

and psychology, there was a better sense for the identity changes in the men over time, and how specific influences over white and male society affected their intimate relationships.

*Queer spaces, both private and public*

The focus of this thesis lies in the private spaces occupied by queer white men in Cape Town during the aforementioned period and how they experienced intimacy and conflict in their close relationships. There is, to begin with, merit-worthy discussion about the context examined: Cape Town, affectionately known as the ‘Mother City’. Within the time frame – between the Forest Town Raid and a few years after the passage of the Civil Unions Act (No. 17 of 2006) – Cape Town was prolific in its public representation of queerness in South Africa, and as a site of protest and significant change.<sup>43</sup> However, the life-worlds of gay and bisexual white men, require some investigation. The queer community comes at an intersection of the public and private: a space where the actions of the state and the public affect those behind closed doors, and vice versa, an overlap spoken of in some sources within *Defiant Desire* and other texts like *Queer Visibilities*.<sup>44</sup>

The public sphere, as defined by Jurgen Habermas, is a focal point for discussing how queer people negotiate certain spaces, both public and private. As a product of shifting historical trends during and after the Enlightenment, the private sphere slowly distanced itself from the public as the industrial era bourgeois household formed into a predominant socialised unit.<sup>45</sup> As such, the private household was an influential structure in defining private affairs including

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<sup>43</sup> Edwin Cameron, “Unapprehend Felons: Gays and lesbians and the law in South Africa,” in *Defiant Desire*.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), 152.

those of sexuality and intimacy. However, as Jeffrey Weeks considered in *Sex, Politics and Society*, the influence of the Industrial Revolution on urbanisation and socio-economics meant that histories of sexuality in the public and private sphere were destined to change.<sup>46</sup> The bourgeois public sphere intersects with the private and thus the two concepts influence each other: the laws and protocols of a public sphere define how people are expected to act in public.<sup>47</sup> In turn, if there is a growing sentiment within the private spaces that certain behaviours are publicly acceptable (or unacceptable), then depending on their ability to make changes in the public sphere, these laws and protocols will change.<sup>48</sup> These changes are conditional to their social capital, socio-economic means, political influence and cultural power, and can act as a collective representation or can come from a select group of individuals. In the case of Cape Town's queer history, an important context to consider is the role of white queer male influence.

This theory of the public space relates directly to feminist and queer historiography, which points towards how spaces and objects like the public sphere were politicised in several different ways, including domestic violence, control of reproduction and other ways that disempowered queer people and women.<sup>49</sup> By this, there is a consensus on the public sphere that presented women, black people, queer people and other 'minority' groups (as compared to the dominant, Western, white, male narratives presented) as inferior or insignificant to the historical narrative.<sup>50</sup> By being invisible in the historical narrative, these groups have been deemed invisible in the public eye, but the rise in feminist, intersectional, black and queer historical writings has changed this. The specific focus on public spheres and spaces occupied

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<sup>46</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The regulation of sexuality since 1800*, 15-16.

<sup>47</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 28.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.

<sup>49</sup> Patricia Hill-Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (New York/London: Routledge, 2000), 32.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

by queer people, women and black communities helps to shed light on the diversity within publicness, and how oppression and privilege are interwoven through experiences of identity and social change.<sup>51</sup> The creation of queer, intersectional archives is the mission of these texts, as they seek to portray the past as a more representative and diverse context that includes more than the dominant white, male, heterosexist voice. This is the third place where this thesis adds value to the existing literature on the public sphere intersecting with the private: the cases where white queer men during the end of apartheid influenced or took advantage of changes to the public sphere. Furthermore, this thesis examines how the public sphere affected their relationships and sense of self-identification.

#### The Stories Within:

##### *The core questions and literature this thesis*

In this particular venture, being generous to the difficulty of the experiences was the first thing in mind when considering how to tactfully and delicately discuss interpersonal conflict. In the deployment of queer oral history methodology, this thesis acts as an example of examining histories of queer studies, socio-politics and psychology.<sup>52</sup> As a study of how whiteness and queer sexualities intersect with class and race within queer spaces and minds, this thesis used oral history interviews to examine the individual voices of a select group of men and how they experienced intimacy and conflict in their close relationships. In *Bodies of Evidence: the Practice of Queer Oral History* the authors Horacio N. Roque Ramírez and Nan Alamilla Boyd state that:

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<sup>51</sup> Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4-6.

<sup>52</sup> Horacio N. Roque Ramírez and Nan Alamilla Boyd, "Introduction: Close Encounters – The Body and Knowledge of Queer Oral History," in *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History*, edited by Nan Alamilla Boyd and Horacio N. Roque Ramírez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

“Queer oral histories begin with an agreement between a narrator and a researcher to record memories of queer genders, sexualities and desires. If there is not a narrator to claim that sexual space of queer historical being and its retelling, and a queer researcher to hear, record and draw out yet more details, desire, and meaning from it, no queer oral history is possible.”<sup>53</sup>

This was a critical consideration when beginning the research for this thesis: as a white, bisexual man myself, the onus was on me to provide a space whereby queer people felt comfortable in delivering their narratives to me. Queer oral history has feminist roots and requires the researcher to investigate how elements of gender, sexuality and sex, as Judith Butler describe, are elements that are constructed by the discourses Foucault cites in his *History of Sexuality*.<sup>54</sup> The point at which queer intimacies and white histories connect and intersect is where this thesis can be found, and oral history proved to be a fruitful tool in examining this intersection. This was mainly due to the intimate and sensitive nature of the queer oral histories that deal with private, domestic events, feelings and changes. I hoped to explore the life-worlds of the men I spoke to in this thesis, and in so doing recognise the limitations, benefits and caveats associated with oral history as a practice of historiography.

### *Methodological considerations*

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<sup>53</sup> Horacio N. Roque Ramírez and Nan Alamilla Boyd, “Introduction,” 1.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 2-7; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

Oral history is a study of both individual memory and memory within a broader social fabric that is constantly shifting and changing. The memory of an event, or a period of time, cannot be considered to be consistent at every time or have a clear narrative that fits the research goals of the interviewer or researcher. Rather, it is a narrative curated and produced by an individual that may have a specific focus or that draws on a number of different experiences.<sup>55</sup> The onus is upon the oral historian to take the narrative that is given and extract the information relevant to their research while respecting the individual who delivered the narrative and their integrity. These were my responsibilities when conducting oral history interviews: creating a safe space for interviewees, asking questions that allowed them to craft a narrative they were comfortable with sharing and was still relevant to the topic, and distinguishing important features to the interview that were taken in context and fit into the research questions I had set. These were my key priorities, as an oral historian needs to be aware of how people craft their narratives, to be able to bring forward questions that deal with the research specifically, and to allow for some disagreement or a lack of cohesion with the research goals.

Oral history does have limitations, and this is something a researcher needs to be aware of before conducting interviews. First and foremost is the volume of content that a researcher would need to examine that is not strictly relevant to the research questions. Kenneth Plummer considers this when stating that analysing stories and drawing conclusions “entails brooding and reflecting upon mounds of data for long periods until it ‘makes sense’ and ‘feels right’.”<sup>56</sup> This was the case of my interviews; with over 100,000 words of interview transcripts and email correspondence, the prioritisation of specific parts of the individual narratives did take time. However, in this process of prioritisation, it was also important for me to be aware of context

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<sup>55</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (New York/London: Routledge, 2010), 78-79.

<sup>56</sup> Kenneth Plummer, *Documents of Life 2: An Invitation to Critical Humanism* (London: SAGE, 2001), 152.

and additional information that added depth to the testimonial. Respecting the narrative was, after all, the priority for this oral history research, and while I needed to draw together different historical strands, these should be as close to the words of the individual as possible. What can be said about the volume of 'data', however, is that this is more of an opportunity than a weakness. With due diligence and careful analysis, a narrative can be gleaned from any volume of oral history interviews. The onus is, as I have stated before, on the researcher to conduct their interviews carefully and examine the transcripts with discretion and patience.

A second problem that exists in oral history as a method of historical research is bias. Personal opinions, outlooks and prejudices lurk within the personal narrative, for the individual delivering their story has a vested interest in projecting a certain view of the past that may be embellished, missing information, or even erases certain experiences. This is something that needs to be considered, as the consideration of historical erasure is already something noted in the literature reviewed for this thesis, such as Tucker's *Queer Invisibilities*, for example, and the lack of representation of black and Coloured queer people in social and political histories, as stated previously.<sup>57</sup> When facing bias in a historical narrative, however, it is valuable for the historian to consider the motivations for bias; a person may choose to lie to protect their identity, or from embarrassment, or even from something as serious as a crime. Alternatively, an interviewee may feel they know what an interviewer wants to hear and condition their narrative accordingly, either by omitting or embellishing details.<sup>58</sup> While I kept this in mind during the process, the frankness of the men in the interviews, both during the preparation phase and the interview, largely dissuaded me from believing anyone would adjust their narrative to the extent that it was false or riddled with inaccuracy. Furthermore, a reading of

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<sup>57</sup> Andrew Tucker, *Queer Visibilities*.

<sup>58</sup> Kenneth Plummer, *Documents of Life 2*, 155-157.

the story in comparison with others and with the established contextual facts within the framing of the thesis meant I was in a good position to understand where embellishments existed.

However, what could further complicate the oral history narratives presented during research is that the focus is on queer issues and queer oral history. As the focus of this thesis probes sensitive issues that relate to the private lives of queer men and that their narratives would inevitably include difficult emotions or references to oppression or socio-political disenfranchisement, this awareness was critical from the onset.<sup>59</sup> Even in matters that can be ‘fun’ to talk about, like sexual intercourse in intimate relationships, there are difficult memories and pain associated with the various kinds of experiences queer men could have had.<sup>60</sup> Experiences were varied, and the men I interviewed did have a multitude of experiences that intersected between positive and negative as their age and context had changed. Despite this, the men were comfortable with telling stories of assault, recrimination and feelings of confusion, self-hatred and the difficulty of being queer in apartheid South Africa.

As far as the fieldwork I conducted is concerned, the early groundwork lay in the series of questions I would ask. Creating categories based on age, my work intended to segment the lives of each individual over life stages, to create a chronology that would be easier to follow in the analysis work that would follow. After the family-of-origin section – where I explored family relationships, parental strategies and their memories of the home – came the introduction of institutions such as education and the army to better understand their integration into society

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<sup>59</sup> Horacio N. Roque Ramírez and Nan Alamilla Boyd, “Introduction,” 11-12.

<sup>60</sup> Jason Ruiz, “Private Lives and Public History: On Excavating the Sexual Past in Queer Oral History Practice,” in *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History*, edited by Nan Alamilla Boyd and Horacio N. Roque Ramírez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 123.

and the influence of public forces including apartheid-era heterosexism and the masculinity enforced by the SADF. Thereafter, the focus was on adulthood and maturity as a citizen of Cape Town: the social scenes, the politics and the changes that occurred between 1966 and 2008 in the city and the country as a whole. While interviews were scattered and did not always follow this routine, the ability to return to the chronology of life greatly helped me in the process of speaking to the eleven men.

The number of men was subject to who was available and willing to be interviewed. By using personal networks on social media and through friends, I managed to get in contact with people with a clear description of what I needed: white queer men who lived in Cape Town between 1966 and 2008 who had been in close relationships with other men and had experienced intimacy and conflict. Some individuals came forth willingly, whereas others referred me on to others. In some cases, the potential interviewees were quick to respond and set a time; others, because of time constraints, illness or work, were sadly unable to participate. Other interested candidates, unfortunately, did not qualify because of race, geography or age, and so these were rejected politely upon this basis.

Before proceeding with any interview, I briefed the men on the parameters of the thesis and allowed them time to consider the questions, while additionally allowing them time to ask questions. All but one – Ashley Brownlee – were able to conduct a verbal interview, either in person or through Skype. Ashley and I exchanged emails, which I collated. The transcripts and correspondence can all be found in the addenda. Five of the eleven requested anonymity and the ethical proceedings were kept in check throughout so as to protect the dignity of the individuals, as was my responsibility as an oral historian. The men were aware that I am a bisexual white male who grew up in Cape Town with a middle-class, English-speaking

background. After some of the interviews, I had the opportunity to speak off the record with some of the men, and during these times, I was asked to explain my thesis, my own background and discuss other avenues of study that I might be interested in pursuing. The limited numbers were not, however, a limitation on the strength of the contributions, and can be seen as an indication of my methods in selecting. While I did reach out to a variety of organisations and publications, I received little to no response. This was suggestive that my posts on social media did not have far-reaching implications, but also that some men perhaps felt uncomfortable coming forward with difficult, possibly traumatic memories and stories, and did not wish to participate as a result.

A further consideration in this thesis is the lack of sources aside from secondary literature, oral history interviews and two primary texts. Despite a trip to the Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action archive (GALA) at the University of the Witwatersrand in May 2019, little to no information was gleaned. GALA is an amazing repository of information on the public struggles and conditions in South African queer history, but it does not contain much information on the private lives of queer men in Cape Town between 1966 and 2008. Despite an extensive search, limited source material was found which I felt would serve this thesis much. Sources that capture intimacy and conflict in gay or bisexual men's relationships in Cape Town between 1966 and 2008, or any comparable context, are few and far between based on my survey of GALA and other local archives. While I could possibly have examined court records in Cape Town, for example, the focus of this thesis was not upon criminology or the state's pathological approach to queer conflict, but more upon the psycho-social histories of relationships in the white, queer community. The archive is the voice of the individual(s): the focus is on the ways in which individuals navigated conflict and intimacy, in their own words.

This thesis is not about the state’s decision to call it sodomy, or the activist and their political agenda.

Indeed, these men were not political, barring Matthew Van As who is an active participant in queer activism in Cape Town to this day, and their decision to not be political is a reflection of a sub-section of the community throughout the era. This is a case study on a selection of men who lived lives between 1966 and 2008 in Cape Town and experienced domesticity, intimacy and conflict in their close relationships. Oral history is no longer a method of research considered “anecdotal, unverifiable and subjective”: rather, it is a practice of examining memories, spaces and changes in the words of an individual.<sup>61</sup> With this in mind, I have a broader picture of the value of queer oral history and how it has contributed to the primary research of this thesis.

#### On Queerness:

##### *A short explanation on terms and labels*

Thus far in this introduction, the words ‘gay’, ‘queer’ and ‘LGBTQIA’ have been used to describe a loose collection of people defined by them not being heterosexual and/or cis-gendered.<sup>62</sup> As a result, experiences of persecution, stigma and identity crises fall under what has been referred to as heterosexism: in the eyes of affirmative psychotherapy, heterosexism refers to a series of institutions, mindsets and practices that aim to enforce heterosexuality and

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<sup>61</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 80.

<sup>62</sup> ‘Cis-gendered’ refers to a person’s gender at birth being defined by their assigned biological genitalia or sex composites, and commonly works on a binary between male and female. Cis-genderism often erases transgendered experiences.

cis-genderism, and actively reject those who do not conform to this model.<sup>63</sup> Terms such as ‘queer’, however, were not ahistorical and have had varying historical meanings and usages that have been deemed appropriate by both the heterosexist mainstream social fabric and the queer community itself.

The two terms most commonly associated with the group of men in question is ‘homosexual’ or ‘bisexual’, both being used in pathological settings during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century as a way to distinguish same-sex activities from the heterosexual ‘norm’.<sup>64</sup> These terms were also not static, and many have been used to describe men who have emotional, psychological and sexual interests that are not heterosexual.<sup>65</sup> Many of these terms, as stated previously, were offensive or aimed at defining the individual in a light that spoke to them deviating from the norm. Furthermore, the roots to words describing men with same-sex intention go back centuries, with terms such as ‘sodomite’ and ‘gay’ dating as far back as old Frankish languages, though it must be noted that ‘gay’ and ‘queer’ were formed predominantly in the American lexicography of the early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century preceding and after the Second World War.<sup>66</sup> Something that Peter Ackroyd specifically notes in *Queer City* is that the term ‘queer’ “signifie[d] defiance and a refusal to use Karl-Maria Benkert’s clinical neologism – homosexuality.”<sup>67</sup> It is in this sense that the term ‘queer’ is used in this thesis: it is a description for a social group that was defiant in its definition of sexual practices, social norms and realities of live-worlds. In this way, the word ‘queer’ allows for a broader definition of constructed identities.

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<sup>63</sup> Kathleen Ritter and Anthony Terndrup, *Handbook of Affirmative Psychotherapy with Lesbians and Gay Men*, 11-12.

<sup>64</sup> George Chauncy, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Modern Gay Male World* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 14.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>66</sup> Peter Ackroyd, *Queer City*, 1-4.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

‘Sexuality’ and ‘sexual orientation’ are referred to in different ways by the oral testimony and written responses from the interviewees, and it is necessary here to be clear about the terms used in this thesis. These terms are not synonymous but have an interrelated relationship when it comes to the study of sexual development among the eleven men. Critically, I have taken a Foucauldian approach: Foucault describes ‘sexuality’ as a ‘discursive element’ in a variety of different discourses (legal, medical, social and so forth).<sup>68</sup> The term, however, is often confused for several different phenomena, including sexual feelings and desires, erotic and/or physical pleasure, and personal identification. As per Haggerty’s *Encyclopedia of Lesbian and Gay Histories and Cultures*, ‘sexual orientation’ is defined as the sexual interests an individual may feel or act upon.<sup>69</sup> This does not necessarily refer to any eroticism or physical contact, however, and it must not be confused with biological sex, gender identities or the socialised sex roles for any given community or group.<sup>70</sup> Sexuality, thus, in this thesis will be referring to the structural discourses that are presented about matters of a sexual nature, unless otherwise stipulated by the interviewee. This allows a compromise between the strictest academic terms and the words of the interviewee, which is arguably the main contribution of this thesis.

### A View of this Thesis

The purpose of this thesis is clear: to explore the individual experiences of conflict and intimacy in the close relationships of eleven queer men between 1966 and 2008 in Cape Town. The historical conditions in their personal, intersectional identities helped to provide context to their

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<sup>68</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 11-12, 17-18.

<sup>69</sup> Shane S. Que Hee, “Sexual Orientation,” in *The Encyclopedia of Lesbian and Gay Histories and Cultures, Volume II*, edited by George E. Haggerty (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 2000) 1225.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 1234.

upbringing and introduction into the queer scene, which is the primary focus of Chapter 1: The Origins of Intimacies, which will chart the history from cradle to adulthood in a changing South Africa. This periodisation of each man's lives will explore their childhoods, schooling and introduction to adulthood responsibility, as each contributed differently to their identity development and their understandings of social spaces and behaviour. In Chapter 2: Cape of Queers, the points in this introduction about publicness and about how specific components to queer public spaces influenced the early development of sexuality, and how as the men took on adult responsibilities and privileges they were able to interact with the queer community, are explored further. In so doing, the formation of relationships was the focus of this thesis. Chapter 3: "You Tell Me Yours, I'll Tell You Mine" will delve into the specific instances of intimacy and conflict in the specific close relationships the eleven men had. These relationships were the product of a shared past between two (or more) men who had experienced different upbringings, privileges and responsibilities in the past, which in turn created the circumstances of the relationships.

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Origins of Intimacy:**

#### ***The role background histories played in personal development***

In many social relationships in the past, there was inevitably a difference in background or past lives between the individuals that affected the development, decay and identity of the relationship, and it always existed in relation to the past lives led by the participants. When assessing social relationships in the context of this thesis, it was essential to first establish the backgrounds to a relationship: where it came from; where the understood structure of a relationship was formed and developed; and how the conditions of a person's or society's past inform us of how the relationship began. To adequately answer these questions in the context of the white gay men in Cape Town who entered into a variety of social relationships, it is first important to assess where these men came from and the kinds of homes, backgrounds and domestic situations they were born into and in which they lived through during their developmental years. In doing so, it becomes evident that the earlier lives of the people who entered into intimate relationships affected the trajectories and identities thereof. A person's individual history should be explored in the context of a broader shared, public history. As was explored by the father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, human behaviour is the negotiation of personal histories, a lot of which are founded during infancy or early childhood.<sup>71</sup> This is the basis for the first chapter of this thesis: exploring the origins to intimacy and conflict in the early lives of the eleven men, and how they affected their intimate relationships later in life.

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<sup>71</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, 38.

A history of the queer intimacies is one where the historian focuses on the time that was spent between two men in their shared environments. It is one that was driven by a myriad of forces that drew together their respective experiences from birth until the commencement of the domestic and social spaces they crafted together as white adult men. How men experienced domesticity as very young children ultimately affected how they carried themselves in their future relationships. This was something that Matt Cook writes about with British queer historical examples, whereby any sort of queer household was judged against the heteronormative and masculine.<sup>72</sup> The sense of ‘normalcy’ is contextual, however, and it is important to critique what specific connections there were between men and the home in the gendered historical context of South Africa during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Further to this, if any conflict was experienced in the households of their family-of-origin, there was a definite connection between this and their own experiences of conflict later in life: In this chapter, which explores exact instances of conflict and intimacy in relationships, there will be a reference to specific periods of life such as early childhood, their school years or their time as a young adult.

To adequately explore those private histories of intimate relationships and interpersonal conflict, it is first essential to consider how a person was raised by their parents or guardians – or in sociological terms, how they were first socialised – and how they were originally introduced to intimacy and conflict in relationships. Cook used an example of a man whose childhood and early development was largely away from his birth parents as a way to show that the relationship between an individual and their family of origin was formative in their intimate relationships; instances of prolonged emotional or physical removal would produce

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<sup>72</sup> Matthew Cook, *Queer Domesticities – Homosexuality and Home Life in Twentieth Century London* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 6.

greater independence in the individual when they conducted intimate relationships.<sup>73</sup> There is a distinction between the psychological and sociological effects of parenting, in that they pertain to the different ways in which a person can develop. In many ways, parenting created the earliest overlap between the private and public spheres: social norms and ideals created mindsets that were acted out in private.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, it is crucial to examine how the interviewees were able to understand and reconcile, where possible, the early experiences of conflict they had during their development and their pre-adulthood life, both in their home environment and in their involvement in social institutions such as the education system of the day. While all may not have developed conflict coping mechanisms during their childhood, how they spoke about these experiences can shed light on several important factors that determined their experiences of intimacy and conflict in later life. These early developmental stages shaped their mindsets and are important areas to assess for their effects not only in terms of personal identity development but also of the intersecting private and public spheres. Sociologically, this intersection should be considered where the individualistic nature of people engages with significant social institutions that include race, gender and class that affect their day-to-day lives.<sup>75</sup> As the sociologist Carol Smart posited, the personal life is always “embedded in the social”, and it can be argued that the contrary is true as well.<sup>76</sup> The changes in personal relationships and identities were a testament to this: interactions with the public world around people created their narratives and connected them to the possibilities of new relationships.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 98.

<sup>74</sup> John J. Macionis and Ken Plummer, *Sociology: A Global Introduction* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2012): 234-235.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 633.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 643.

## The Home:

### *The merging of personal histories, parenting methods, and domestic relations*

Finding the beginning of a history of a person's understandings of intimacy, relationships and conflict is not a simple task. The earliest development of a person is affected and shaped by their parents or guardians, who themselves are shaped by preceding generations of parents, caregivers and other domestic actors. The backdrop to an individual's personal experiences go back very far indeed, and for the purposes of assessing the men interviewed for this thesis, it would be sensible to consider how the men themselves wove in the history of their family into their narratives. These backgrounds must, if anything, be read within the era they are situated, and not with the hindsight of someone writing in the present. While it is possible to critique the past, it is also necessary to understand what conditions were present in the first place that may have informed certain actions or mindsets. The 'negative' side to these conditions could be seen as the situations where parental strategies or methods resulted in lifelong problems with social attitudes, identity development or maintaining healthy relationships with others. Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick suggested that there are three commonalities in gay relationships: they emulated the heterosexual, they attempted to fulfil the need for intimacy, and they existed outside of the accepted social norm.<sup>78</sup>

That which is very relevant at this point was that, in many cases, two men in a relationship tried to emulate the experiences they had of their parents' marriage or relationship.<sup>79</sup> More will be said on the other two commonalities spoken about at different stages in this thesis, but all three were credible as far as queer relationships were concerned. Furthering the point of queer

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<sup>78</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, 84.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

relationships emulating heterosexual family of origin experiences, Kathleen Ritter and Anthony Terndrup state in their *Handbook of Affirmative Psychotherapy with Lesbians and Gay Men* that childhood conceptions of sexuality were largely socialised and constructed from parents and external social forces, and were connected closely to gender conformity.<sup>80</sup> In this way, we can see the importance of assessing the earliest roots of the parents' understandings of themselves and how they conducted their own lives and relationships, as it sheds light on how they raised their children.

In the instance of early domestic environments, the men provided both similar and divergent answers in regards to their relationships with their parents and their backgrounds. For starters, all men came from a typical heterosexual mother-and-father home that commonly had at least one sibling, and in some cases as many as three or four brothers or sisters. The general socio-economic demographic was middle-class, Afrikaans-speaking or English-speaking (or a mix of the two), with a split between rural towns and settings, and the urban hubs of South Africa, including Johannesburg, Cape Town and Bloemfontein, depending on employment options afforded to – or the whims of – the primary breadwinners in the family. The personal backgrounds of the parents of the eleven men come to the fore in a good example: Robert described his parents' marriage as “volatile” and especially referred to his parents' backgrounds when providing context.<sup>81</sup> Describing his relationship with his mother in conjunction with his parents' marriage, Robert describes how she allowed her personal history to affect her parenting style:

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<sup>80</sup> Kathleen Ritter and Anthony Terndrup, *Handbook of Affirmative Psychotherapy with Lesbians and Gay Men*, 51.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Robert Finlayson, 21 March 2019.

“I suspect from, due to her own broken family in childhood, [she had] sort of anger problems. Her family broke up and she had a pretty unhappy childhood. Her mother walked out on them and there was a wicked stepmother.”<sup>82</sup>

Elements of his story weave in hers: how she had an illegitimate child in an era where it was heavily stigmatised, and how she had moved from England to South Africa to be stuck in a farmhouse in the middle of the Boland area. These were all conditions that informed how she had behaved in their home during his formative years, and thus have become a significant part of the way he considered his past, for he would not mention it if it was not important to the connection between his mothers’ past and his. Benjamin had a similar outlook on how his parents’ upbringing affected his and spoke at length about the fact that his parents were both raised in Calvinistic environments:

“My parents were born in the thirties, so [they were] quite kind-of Calvinistic in their upbringing, which as we know has an impact on the way they bring up their kids – very formal, almost Victorian.”<sup>83</sup>

Here, he makes the connection between the kinds of intimacy and upbringing he and his parents experienced. His parents were raised in the thirties in South Africa – a time of economic collapse and political uncertainty – whereas the country was very different in the Sixties which were the heydays of the apartheid regime during a boom period for the South African economy, despite sanctions and international pressure. This speaks towards his own awareness of generational shift. Periodic differences between generations was an important thread to

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<sup>82</sup> Interview with Robert Finlayson, 21 March 2019.

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Benjamin De Beer, 19 June 2019.

consider when it came to explaining the intertwining relationship between public and private. His parents were subjected to different conditions at home when they were growing up, as the Great Depression affected families of all descriptions, whereas the early Sixties were a time of relative economic prosperity in the South African economy.<sup>84</sup>

Clifford similarly mentions how his father had a “diverse” background, this being somewhat euphemistic in the sense that his father was from a broken home with divorced parents.<sup>85</sup> His mother remarried, and he was raised half-English, half-Afrikaans, conditions which suggest he was subjected to strong disciplinary measures as a child with a new stepfather in place. By contrast, his mother was a “cut from the cloth” Afrikaner who was originally a primary school teacher in Cape Town before starting her own business in Malmesbury, making their parents’ approaches to parenting rather different from each other.<sup>86</sup> His father was far more “authoritarian” and laid down the law in the home without truly explaining them, whereas his mother spent time explaining rules and using her training as a teacher to enforce an entirely different kind of parental supervision.<sup>87</sup> In this way, the parenting structure of the Lewis household was defined by the instability – or relative stability – of his parents’ own formative backgrounds.

Finally, in the instance of Hennie, his mother’s conservative religious upbringing prompted her to refuse to file for divorce despite a turbulent marriage to his father, a marriage that caused issues for Hennie himself in his relationship with his parents. Owing to a number of conditions in the marriage – alcoholism and petty squabbling – Hennie believed that:

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<sup>84</sup> Deborah Posel, “The Apartheid Project, 1948 - 1970”, 361.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Clifford Lewis, 18 March 2019.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

“[T]he best thing that could have happened to my mom is him passing away, so she could free herself from that situation ... she also comes from a very shielded, conservative upbringing and she didn’t believe in divorce, so it was one of those things that she would never have done even if it was better for her to have left.”<sup>88</sup>

Hennie again pinned down the point of how the personal upbringing of a parent affected his own development in his early years. The inability of his mother to leave a disruptive marriage environment – and presumably take her children out from under the abuses of her husband – left an indelible mark on the way Hennie saw his mother – “*ek het my ma verwyf*” [I blamed my mother] – and how he, in turn, understood his childhood.<sup>89</sup> Thus, the connection between the family of origin backgrounds and personal development was made by both Hennie and myself: connections between generations that were influenced by the periods of time in which people were brought up and their respective understandings of intimacy.

*‘Go together like a horse and carriage’: marriages between parents*

In as far as how the men saw their relationships with their parents and their parent’s marriages, there is some diversity between those that saw them as stable, those who saw the intimacy and disputes that occurred, and those who noticed very little out of the ordinary. The exposure to parental intimacy or conflict was obviously dependent on how the parents expressed themselves within the marital home, and what kind of explicit and implicit hints were made at the multitude of emotions that their parents were trying to get across to their partner or children.

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<sup>88</sup> Interview with Hennie Geldenhuys, 3 April 2019.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

The marriages, though all shaped by middle-class, white, English-speaking or Afrikaans-speaking heteronormativity in mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century South Africa, were nonetheless varied. Ashley, for example, was a child whose adoptive parents were in their forties when he was born: “in apartheid Seventies South Africa, being single over 40 was social suicide.”<sup>90</sup> Though stating he knew very little of their marriage, he did know that his mother disapproved of his father’s drinking, an important thread in a few of the narratives made by the men. Both Hennie and Clifford also had alcoholic parents and introduced it as an explanation as to what happened during their developmental years. Hennie often linked his father’s alcoholism to many of the problems he had as a child growing up, as alcohol was often a catalyst for arguments between him or his mother with his father. Indeed, as he grew older, Hennie was able to fight back and shift his father’s mindset “from an abusive alcoholic to more a quiet alcoholic, like sitting in the corner sulking”, which he considered an important shift in their family dynamic.<sup>91</sup>

Substance abuse issues are of great importance when assessing historical families and households. In cases where the care of a parent is impaired by their consumption of alcohol or recreational drugs, it is often the case that abuse would manifest in a variety of forms.<sup>92</sup> Studies have determined that there are significant associations between paternal or maternal substance abuse and substance abuse among queer people throughout their lives.<sup>93</sup> Clifford similarly saw alcoholism as an impairment of his father’s ability to communicate effectively with the family and to accept his fault in situations that prompted disputes in the marriage, as his mother tried to remain as “poised” as possible to make up for her husband’s behaviour both in public and

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<sup>90</sup> Correspondence with Ashley Brownlee, 21 March 2019.

<sup>91</sup> Interview with Hennie Geldenhuys, 3 April 2019.

<sup>92</sup> Kathleen Ritter and Anthony Terndrup, *Handbook of Affirmative Psychotherapy with Lesbians and Gay Men*, 120-121.

<sup>93</sup> Curtis D. Procter and Victor K. Groze, “Risk Factors in Suicide among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youths,” in *Social Work* 39, no. 5 (1994), 506.

privately.<sup>94</sup> This point does beg the question of whether she was co-dependent on her husband and allowed his addiction to continue largely unfettered. The conflict itself caused Clifford anxiety, though he acknowledges this was more of a spatial problem. He did not consider himself to blame for the dysfunctions in the home, and in hindsight, using his education in psychology, he considered his reluctance to accept blame as helpful to his personal development.

Disputes and altercations in marriage were a normal feature: Matthew considered this in his interview when he thought of his parents. Because they married at the relatively young age of twenty-four, Matthew considered the situation as representative of where they were in their lives before they got married. He felt that when a couple or person has a child, “the maturing really stops because they’re not looking at themselves and growing because their focus is on their children” and though they may mature during the raising of a child, or children, the “the same sort of insecurities and fighting and temper tantrums” are present there.<sup>95</sup> However, Matthew also stated:

“I think with any relationship there is going to be fighting ... there’s one thing I learnt quite early from my parents is that if you’re not fighting, there’s something wrong, [because] then somebody’s lying ...”<sup>96</sup>

Some of the marriages of the men’s parents were largely ‘enriching’ ones, with Thomas, Charles, Percy and Alexander describing their parents’ marriages as ‘fine, stable, good ...’, ‘good’, ‘solid’ and ‘very happy’ respectively. In their words, there is either very little to

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<sup>94</sup> Interview with Clifford Lewis, 18 March 2019.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Matthew Van As, 21 June 2019.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

remember as far as intimacy or conflict, or vivid memories of how the two people in the marriage interacted with each other in public and in private. Thomas, not noticing anything “notable” in terms of conflict between his parents, described it as an “average” marriage. Despite being polar opposites, Charles considered his parents as having had a strong marriage that was governed largely by his mother with a very dedicated father in tow. Percy’s parents, in their nearly forty years of marriage, until his father passed away, were honest, open and free to express themselves within the home. This was something that Percy’s mother often did, given her objections to the social climate of South Africa in the Sixties and Seventies, where the disempowerment of women was a strong feature to the macho, “brutalist” culture of the day. Any conflict they had was in the open, and any intimacy between his parents was equally transparent. Alexander’s parents, similarly, lived a simple, old-fashioned life as a doctor and his wife, with his mother happy to put her career as a nurse on hold to help run the private practice and raise children.

The daily passage of time in each home was different between the men, with some homes, such as that of Ashley Brownlee, having been described as ‘erratic’, while others were simply “normal”, in the words of James.<sup>97</sup> However, while describing his childhood home as ‘normal’, he also let on that his father largely treated his mother as a “slave” with regards to her domestic responsibilities and her being an employee in the family business run by his father.<sup>98</sup> James similarly described his father as being a poor role model during his early development, with the only memorable contribution to his life being that he paid for James to attend university to become a teacher, something done begrudgingly because he wanted his son to continue the family business. In this testimony, we can see that there are nuances to how people see their

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<sup>97</sup> Interview with James Le Roux, 2 June 2019.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

past. On the one hand, James saw his experiences as ‘normal’, but he also was reflective on the harms of his father’s attitude towards the family as a whole. Again, this ‘normalcy’ came to the fore, but it was entirely dependent on the whims of the primary breadwinner, James’ father. Benjamin, similarly, had more of an absentee father and a “tempestuous” mother, and this marriage collapsed thanks to his father’s infidelity when he was still young, causing him to have intimacy issues with his parents for years to come.<sup>99</sup> What can be deduced from these fragments is that while a home could, from the outside and from a more general perspective, seem very conventional, it did have nuances: marriages fluctuated, household stability changed and, as a result, the young people in the home were forced to evaluate and challenge their previously held conceptions on domesticity. This, in turn, had a direct influence on personal identities: the interviewees who were forced to evaluate their conceptions about their home, the centre of their life, would also have needed to evaluate themselves in turn.

#### *Parental strategies: fairness, equality and discipline*

The individual standards and styles of each parent depended on the home and on their own backgrounds. This much was plain from the manner in which the eleven men came into the world and were taken through to adulthood. In order to adequately assess how these varying parenting standards affected the men, it is first important to assess the individual relationships between the men and their parents, and how the household treated discipline, sibling relations and the various factors that influenced parenting. Further to this, the beginnings of socialisation are highly important in informing us to how the men developed and became social actors during their early development, their time in the education system and the years where they ventured into the ‘big bad world’ while still in the confines of the home. Additionally, a final

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<sup>99</sup> Interview with Benjamin De Beer, 19 June 2019.

consideration is how parents did, or did not, discuss the identities and the developmental changes experienced by their children during their childhood. By assessing this, it becomes clear that there was a connection between the parenting styles applied by the respective parents and the formation of the men in question, both in their socialisation and in their early identity development.

Parents, as described by the men, were commonly in one of two distinct camps: however, to avoid this becoming a binary, it must be noted that there were instances of overlap or of households existing outside of these two camps. It is a pattern, rather than a binary, that proved to be consistent in quite a few of the men's narratives. One camp in the pattern was the parent as an active agent in the development and care of the child: the person responsible for basic domestic activities, ensuring that food and emotional support was provided. The other was the more absentee parent, either as a result of emotional disinterest or other contextual elements such as a full-time job or geographical separation; this parent was commonly not as invested or interested in the development of their child or children during the early days, and commonly into early adulthood. In most of the cases, the mothers were the most actively involved in their children's lives, while their fathers were only involved in the periphery. Robert, for example, described his parents' respective styles as a "classic kind of ... reserved father and then ... an overbearing mother", whereas Ashley saw his mother as the hands-on parent with his father being described as "short-fused" and "toxic", an element that obviously made him less than a reservoir of parental support and emotional candour.<sup>100</sup>

The one exception to the binary of 'one dedicated and one absent parent' is that of Charles Strachan, whose parents were both active in his and his two brother's development as young

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<sup>100</sup> Interview with Robert Finlayson, 21 March 2019; Correspondence with Ashley Brownlee, 21 March 2019.

men in the Sixties and Seventies. Describing both of his parents as “dedicated” and as having a “very strong relationship” with both, his home was somewhat idyllic, with a number of stories that furnished his testimony, with many discussing fairness in the home amongst the three children.<sup>101</sup> One example of his helps furnish the point about fairness being an important consideration in examining the past lives of the eleven men: when he started shaving, his father bought him a razor as a birthday gift. When his younger brother had received a razor on a separate, non-birthday occasion, his father came to him and said:

“You know, I just realised that I gave Bruce [his younger brother] an electric razor and, and I’d given you an electric razor for your birthday present, so for that reason I’d like to give you the money that is the equivalent of what Bruce’s [razor].”<sup>102</sup>

All of this was in the interest of fairness and equality in the home, something Charles considers important when he reflects on his earlier years. Alexander, however, had a different experience of parental equality and intervention: he was favoured above his sisters, something he noted: “I was favoured by my mother ... the girls resented me for it.”<sup>103</sup> This was something that continued to manifest in later life, whereby he was allowed free license, as opposed to his older sisters who were more rebellious and got into trouble for acting out. Though he had not been doing anything untoward or disallowed, his parents afforded him a lot more independence than his siblings, something he cited as important in his time developing into a young man, though he did acknowledge that his father was more absent than not during his childhood as a result of his heavy workload as a doctor and his involvement in civic causes. Benjamin, during his childhood in the small Cape town of Caledon, lived a similarly independent and free childhood:

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<sup>101</sup> Interview with Charles Strachan, 21 March 2019.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Alexander Price, 24 April 2019.

“We used to go downtown on our own in the afternoons without telling anyone where we were, or we would go and explore the bush on the periphery of town on the weekend with friends, it was very free.”<sup>104</sup>

The approaches to parental moral discipline are a final consideration of the parenting styles adopted, as they best inform how the conflict between a parent and child or the parental responses to sibling conflict influenced the ways in which it affected the men in question. Parental discipline, be it fair, unfair, or in the grey zone that relied on the personal interpretation of the person being disciplined, can help to examine what the firmer boundaries of socialisation were within the household, and what the individual understandings were before the child migrated into the broader social fabric seen in primary childhood education.

Corporal punishment was still legal during the childhoods of the men in question and featured in some of their answers to the questions around their parents and childhood homes. James, for example, noted that aside from his father mistreating his mother, he beat James and remained antagonistic towards him throughout his life, once referring to him as his ‘loafer son’ because of his decision to not participate within the family business and pursue outside interests. In the case of Hennie, his father’s alcoholism did cause physical abuse to occur, but this changed as he got older and was able to assert a more physical resistance to his father, the product of his body changing during and after puberty. It also was not the fathers who were using more aggressive means of parenting, as Robert experienced “[a] contrast of affection and care and

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<sup>104</sup> Interview with Benjamin De Beer, 19 June 2019.

then kind of uncontrolled rage ... which at times, I suppose, it bordered on abusive,” from his mother.<sup>105</sup>

In all, only Alexander and Charles were spared parental wrath in the form of physical violence or abusive verbal recrimination. Charles was caned during his time in high school, though that is a separate issue which is more indicative of the way the school attempted to socialise students towards their own interpretation of reasonable and acceptable public behaviour, rather than a reflection on his parents who abhorred corporal punishment:

“Somehow, I was blamed, and my dad said, “well, I know you’re not really guilty but I’m going to act like I’m punishing you,” and he took a strap and he hit the bed and I had to go out acting like I’d [just been beaten].”<sup>106</sup>

Another consideration regarding parenting styles is that of the formation of identity: the outlook a parent or guardian has on an identity such as sexuality is important, as it impressed upon the children of the household what was ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ before there was any outside social intervention or perspective. While nuances were eventually added by social peers, teachers and overt media input, the primary caregiver had established some boundaries for the kinds of sexual behaviour and attitudes the child would have considered ‘normal’. The identity reflects the “ways in which we see ourselves and how others see us,” and is of crucial importance to this thesis.<sup>107</sup> Kath Woodward discusses how identity helps to locate the ‘self’ in psychotherapy, which in turn helps individuals to tell ‘stories’ about themselves that they feel

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<sup>105</sup> Interview with Robert Finlayson, 21 March 2019.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Charles Strachan, 18 March 2019.

<sup>107</sup> Kath Woodward, *Understanding Identity* (London: Arnold, 20020), 24.

best reflect that particular 'self'.<sup>108</sup> Woodward considers Foucault's theories on sexuality as poignant when discussing how sexual identities are explored and understood: identities are a series of discourses that define what the 'homosexual' is, and Woodward argues that these discourses resemble stories that could be told of a person and their 'self'.<sup>109</sup>

Isaacs and McKendrick proposed a developmental method that assesses the various steps in a person's identity development as a queer man, something particularly relevant to this section: in the earliest experiences of childhood, a lot of the thoughts and emotions attached to same-sex or queer attraction are marred by confusion and anxiety, and especially so when there is recrimination from parents towards a queer activity, idea or conception of the world.<sup>110</sup> In many senses, Isaacs and McKendrick posited that in the early transactional interactions between parent and child, there was the strong possibility that the ego and mental framework of the child could have been damaged by negative responses.<sup>111</sup> These negative responses could be considered anything from avoidance to an outright casting of aspersion on anything queer through verbal, physical and emotional cues from parents. The nature of early socialisation was heterosexist, one that was built upon tendencies that favoured masculine-orientated heterosexuality and was passed down through generations.<sup>112</sup> The major downside to this heterosexism was that it produced negative reinforcement among the households that the men dwelt in as young, impressionable men.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 34-35.

<sup>109</sup> Kath Woodward, *Understanding Identity*, 89-90.

<sup>110</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, 12.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Kathleen Ritter and Anthony Terndrup, *Handbook of Affirmative Psychotherapy with Lesbians and Gay Men*, 91.

A good excerpt from the interview with Percy explored this point on negative reinforcement. Despite the household being more open and aware of the political situation in South Africa than the average home for the Sixties and Seventies, Percy still had intimacy issues with his parents, particularly when it came to the matter of sexuality and familial intimacy. His parents were overtly homophobic, and when his sexuality began to reflect in his mind and in his actions, he struggled to reconcile his mind and the world around him that had been manufactured by his parents. Similarly, Matthew, in his early development at home, stated that he was forced to live a dichotomy:

“[My mind believed that] this is right for me, and society is going, and what I’ve learnt and what I’ve been taught, and it’s not meant to be right ...”<sup>113</sup>

The dichotomy was confusing and was not helped by his parents coming from a more conservative background, where queerness was discriminated against. Alexander, whose parents adopted a more old-fashioned approach towards parenting, never spoke about any sex-related topic, something he noted as a distinct feature of their household. He described his mother as someone who opted not to speak about the specifics of private matters and not referencing issues of sexuality, despite her being close friends with a gay hairdresser. Alexander links it neatly to her and his father’s upbringing, which takes us back to the point made earlier about how the generational shift from parent to child is important to assess when considering the passing-down of social attitudes. Furthermore, it made him entirely unsure of how to approach his sexuality until much later in life than many of the other men, owing to a lack of exposure to any discussion or information on non-heteronormative practices or ideas.

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<sup>113</sup> Interview with Matthew Van As, 21 June 2019.

It is thus made clear that there is a link between how the men's parents considered important elements of identity and their own early understandings of identities such as sexuality.

The parenting styles that governed the eleven men are important in the context of their early psycho-social development, as the various ways they were parented later defined their entrance in broader society through education, the army and early employment and travel opportunities of which they took advantage. It is widely accepted that the home is a fundamental foundation to people's social understandings and the ways in which children are introduced to elements such as independence, discipline and affection help define how they understand these concepts – and others – as mature actors in society. It is thus quite clear that the men from more stable, attentive homes where either both or one parent was actively involved, without an antagonistic parent, were the ones more likely to make the successful leaps required within the social system of the school, as they were prepared for mature, rational thought that allowed greater social access.

### The Schoolyard:

#### *Primary education and the identities of young men*

As a site for primary socialisation in the development of people, the schooling system is one that can set out a number of historically relevant factors that influenced how people interacted with each other. In the case of the eleven men and their relationship with intimacy and conflict in their same-sex adult relationships, the connections lay within how schools and similar institutions such as an army barracks or training ground prepared them for a variety of interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, the schooling environment is one that generated and replicated broader social narratives that informed the opinions and identities of individuals who

passed through them. To adequately assess the impact of the schools these men attended upon their primary understandings of negotiating relationships and their identities, it is important to assess, 1) how the institutions conducted themselves in terms of educating, disciplining and socialising young people, 2) what methods were used during apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa with a rapidly-xshifting political and social climate, and 3) what the tangible effects were on the identities of the men as they negotiated the path to adulthood.

*The ABCs: the ideology behind educational practices*

The timeframe of the education received by the men spans close to half a century: James began pre-school in the mid-Forties, whereas Hennie, Matthew and Clifford only started their education in the late-Eighties, which pitches this discussion between two very different political, social and cultural landscapes. However, comparisons can be made about the approaches towards education and socialisation from a more general perspective, and this is the first area of discussion that needs to occur in order to contextualise the schooling environments the men faced during their early social and identity development.

The schools attended from the early childhood development sector (kindergarten, pre-school and creche) all the way through to matriculation at a high school all resemble a similar mould of whites-only (or previously whites-only) schools that catered to the middle-to-upper social classes of white South African families. There were obvious exceptions: Hennie, for example, who was educated in northern Namibia after the end of apartheid-era segregation. The likes of Rondebosch, Golden Grove, Marist Brothers, *Sentraal Hoerskool* and Swartland were all mentioned by the men, and a few distinctions make themselves present in the demography of the schools. For starters, the more urban schools were majority boys-only, whereas the rural

schools were commonly co-educational, though this was more a product of the rural economy that prevented single-sex schools in favour of a mixed-sex school for all students in the catchment area. In some cases, the men considered the religious, cultural and social backgrounds to their respective schools as very important.

Clifford, for example, noted that the Swartland schools were heavily informed by the Dutch Reformed Church, a Calvinist form of Protestant Christianity infamous for guiding the Afrikaner nationalist government and for offering a conservative, moralistic approach to life where any ‘sensuous’ or ‘wanton’ behaviour was treated as a deadly sin.<sup>114</sup> Robert, in his struggles with his sexuality during high school, tried to ‘pray the gay away’, an often-used practice adopted by many queer people in situations where they hope to solve the issue, as Robert did, of confused or ‘illicit’ thoughts. A final example of how the pervading ideologies behind schools influenced the thoughts and mindsets of their students is that of Alexander:

“It was a very old-fashioned school where I think we were getting Thirties education in the Seventies ... kids were having sex, but in my school, nothing ever happened because they were very strict, so people would be expelled if you were caught smoking a cigarette, so we didn’t drink, we didn’t smoke.”<sup>115</sup>

This environment – and that of his home life where his parents, as noted before, did not speak about sex and relationships – led to Alexander having a limited understanding of sexual topics, which created a situation where his sexual development happened considerably later than his peers and the other men discussed in this thesis. The school’s conservative nature prevented

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<sup>114</sup> Marc Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 52.

<sup>115</sup> Interview with Alexander Price, 24 April 2019.

his earlier realisations of his sexual attractions and thus detracted from his earlier identity development.

The academic and extra-curricular opportunities afforded to each of the men in many cases depended on aptitude and on their social situation. The quieter, more introverted types would move towards the creative arts such as music, singing and art, while some of the men were able to get by in more socially explorative sporting exploits that included swimming and rugby. In many cases, the choice of extra-curricular activities or the aptitude in academics defined the manner in which the men were judged by their peers. Hennie, for example, opted to do swimming instead of rugby at the age of ten, which caused “ramifications” for his social life, as “[he] just realised then that friend groups start splitting up depending on what their interests are.”<sup>116</sup> Social cliques formed themselves, and it was the same across the other men who found their own niches, something Hennie was forced into during his socially formative years, with mixed emotions attached.

Charles, as another example, got involved in the Observatory branch of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in his late teens. During this time, he was exposed to a very different social environment and a group of men from a very different socio-economic background. Furthermore, he found himself in the company of athletic, attractive men during his sexual development, something he noted as influential on his life:

“A lot of them were from broken homes and I was just completely knocked out by how attractive they were. I thought, ‘well, I could go back there a few more times, not just about the circus because there were good looking guys there.’ It was the

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<sup>116</sup> Interview with Hennie Geldenhuys, 3 April 2019.

first time that I actually started admitting to myself, well, you know, I'm definitely more into guys than girls."<sup>117</sup>

These different social group integrations and disintegrations help to shed light on how we can consider the social environments of schools as having been influential on the men and their perception of nurturing or degrading human interaction.

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<sup>117</sup> Interview with Charles Strachan, 21 March 2019.

*“Naughty or nice”: the role of teacher disciplinarian practices*

Discipline, punishment and social interaction were dynamic and very different across the eleven men, with each having had experiences of teachers, bullying and social interaction. As with the creation of social groups, a social hierarchy developed itself in the schools attended by the men, and in doing so, certain groups would find ways to exert power over others. There are nuances to this, as there was not always a model set of ‘bully’ and ‘bullied’ groups in a schooling environment, and, as many of the men conceded, these groups were porous. Furthermore, it can be argued that the students were not the only people responsible for bullying and for the persecution that the men experienced: in some cases, teaching staff were complicit in the intimidation and recrimination of the men.

The basic definition of bullying provided by the men was fairly consistent in its approach to how certain people treat others within the confines of a schooling environment. However, it can be argued that the implications of bullying could be felt in personal, private relationships and within broader society in other places, such as public spaces and employment opportunities. Ashley described it as “the act of wilfully robbing someone, usually someone perceived as vulnerable, of their human dignity,” while Thomas defined it as how people see differences between themselves and others and resort to picking out those differences or critiquing them unfairly.<sup>118</sup> Clifford, who has a background in psychology, referred to it as such:

“[Bullying] is intended to make the other person feel, experience distress or feel poorly about themselves ... an exercise in power or territory or making yourself

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<sup>118</sup> Correspondence with Ashley Brownlee, 25 March 2019.

feel better because you're hurting yourself ... a deliberate attempt at making another person feel bad or some form of distress.”<sup>119</sup>

In this way, Clifford spoke to a personal experience of working outside the bully/bullied dichotomy: referring to himself as a ‘mean girl’, he was both someone who was taunted for his ‘eccentricities’ and his unwillingness to play rugby or other more team-based sports and his weight. Clifford, however, resorted to verbal and social bullying against others he perceived as socially weaker than he was, as he was higher on the social hierarchy than they were. Benjamin, who was bullied at home by his siblings, acted in a similar manner: because of his own inferiorities at home, he acted out and was “horrendous” towards two other boys during his primary school years.<sup>120</sup>

The sense of difference was in many cases manufactured for ease of the institutional violence, something Ashley spoke about in his interview. He was at Rondebosch during the late Eighties and saw violence as inherent within the system and commonality throughout his high school experience. He was, for example, mercilessly bullied by teachers and peers alike who took exception to him displaying ‘homosexual type’ mannerisms:

“A string of verbal [and physical] abuse continued through the year. Faggot, *moffie*, girl, queer boy, fudge packer ... I felt depressed a great deal of the time. There was definitely a core group with an obvious leader, that had great pleasure in stripping me of all my dignity. The lowest point of 1986 though, was being called a faggot by a gym teacher at the school.”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Interview with Clifford Lewis, 18 March 2019.

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Benjamin De Beer, 19 June 2019.

<sup>121</sup> Correspondence from Ashley Brownlee, 25 March 2019.

These experiences scarred Ashley and his perception of self, which saw negative connotations attached to words such as ‘homosexual’. Ritter and Terndrup consider this influential when it comes to the internalisation of homophobia and the distortion of self in the men: the attitudes of peers became an ‘echo chamber’ of heterosexism if a person was not exposed to positive representations of queerness in their day to day lives.<sup>122</sup> Similarly, Thomas, though not on the receiving end of physical violence, was targeted with the same sorts of verbal assault, which caused him to feel shame for his more effeminate mannerisms and the fact that he was closer to his female friends.

In some cases, however, earlier bullying prepared the men for later school life. A car accident during primary school had caused Hennie to gain a lot of weight, which in turn prompted a wave of verbal attacks against him. He was forced, as a result, to harden himself against this and treat his bullies with disdain, which became helpful when he made the transition to high school and was able to withstand the bullying from the older students there, making him someone far more popular than he was in primary school. Others developed mechanisms to prevent the impact of bullying: Clifford kept himself ensconced in a large circle of people who could prevent him from being targeted day-to-day. Ashley, similarly, despite the raging homophobic targeting and threats of physical and verbal violence, managed to settle himself within a clique of people, who were all largely artistic and, in time, many came out as queer. These mechanisms are important to assess, as they suggest ways in which people would deal with conflict in the future. As an example of verbal and physical manipulation, bullying played a fundamental role in establishing the more ‘negative’ side to social relationships in young

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<sup>122</sup> Kathleen Ritter and Anthony Terndrup, *Handbook of Affirmative Psychotherapy with Lesbians and Gay Men*, 19.

men. Some, like Ashley, sought to align themselves with others in order to prevent a recurrence and minimise the effects. It is likely, based on this, that he would have adopted this same method in other instances of interpersonal conflict.

*Sex education: sensitivity and information on 'adult' topics*

The dynamic of prejudicial schooling is one that has persisted in South Africa but was more commonplace up until the mid-Nineties when changes began: racial integration, for example, was something experienced by Clifford and Matthew, and something Hennie was very used to in Namibia throughout his school. In the other eight men's stories, the schools were whites-only and in the case of boys-only were hyper-masculine, and they thus entered maturity with a radically racialised and gendered perception of the world, as compared to the more integrated situation faced in the later generation of men.

The racial dynamics in schools is a point which was raised by some of the men as a critique, not only of the society of the time but also of the schools in question. Percy, in speaking about the nature of South Africa during the Sixties and Seventies, when the façade of apartheid began to crack and the civil unrest was on the rise, noted how most people were shielded from the violence through a lack of exposure to people of colour and to news media. However, this did not stop his peers from emulating the racist sentiments of their parents and teachers, something Ashley also spoke of:

“My feeling is that my fellow pupils simply rehashed what they heard around their dinner tables and Sunday *braai*. Emulating what their parents and associated adults

said. Terrorist and faggot and communist were used parrot fashion against those that threatened the *status quo*.”<sup>123</sup>

Charles, who was similarly given verbal warnings as a child about the people of colour who lived in neighbourhoods bordering his, was confused by an occasion where, at the river dividing the neighbourhoods, he saw a group of naked boys of colour, which he found sexually interesting. In his words, “that certainly was a feeling that made me feel very different from most of the perspectives and most of the realities that I was presented as being ‘normal’.”<sup>124</sup>

One cannot, in the same breath, ignore the gendered element of many of the schools, and the nature of South African society throughout the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As already mentioned, many of the men were subjected to ‘queer-baiting’, a practice that aimed to use verbal and physical cues to try and cause someone to out themselves, or as a means to target someone perceived as queer. Using words such as ‘faggot’ or ‘*moffie*’ was a common approach adopted by the more outwardly homophobic students. This was consistent with the gendered nature of society that permeated from the top echelons of the apartheid government patriarchalism and nationalist political sentiments.

In the personal experiences of the men, aside from those mentioned during the section on bullying, there was also an awareness of how the topic of sexuality was dealt with by the schools in question. Without any doubt, all eleven men stated that it was an undiscussed issue, both at home and within the classroom, making it part of the socialised silence around sexual identities. Charles, in his interview, explored a very interesting outlook that Rondebosch took

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<sup>123</sup> Correspondence with Ashley Brownlee, 25 March 2019.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with Charles Strachan, 21 March 2019.

in the early Seventies. A school psychiatrist conducted a quiz in the classes, which asked questions such as ‘Do you make your bed, or do you leave it for your mom to make?’ or ‘Do you do the dishes or ... is there a servant or your mom to do your dishes?’<sup>125</sup> This was part of a general survey on how the young men participated in their domestic space. Charles, not being one to make it his mother’s responsibility to do everything, helped out where he could. A score was given, and upon reflection, it showed that those who did domestic tasks were more effeminate and should go and speak to the psychiatrist “if they were that way inclined,” which was treated as a joke by the class, something Charles found disturbing and confusing as he tried to understand his own gender and sexuality intertwining through something as commonplace as domestic tasks.<sup>126</sup>

The odd and cruel irony of the test, and the approach by the psychiatrist of the time, is that domestic tasks that included making a bed or sewing buttons back onto jackets were commonplace in the SADF during the Border War that was raging at the time, which the apartheid regime felt it could maintain by promoting masculinity and routine in its young men. Thus, in a simple example, we can see the inherent double standard of the masculine teachings of the school system and the enforcement of a different, more convenient masculinity in the military service. Furthermore, there was a definitive relationship between the teachings on gender at high schools, and the development of the social attitudes and identities of young men caught unawares by social stigmas. Some were aware of the implications, however: indeed, Percy connected the prejudicial nature of schooling to the nature of South African society at the time and how he was consciously aware, thanks in part to his parents’ approach to the political situation, of the problems with white society during the time:

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<sup>125</sup> Interview with Charles Strachan, 21 March 2019.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

“There were divides between white[s] and people of colour, there were divides between English and Afrikaans, there were divides between male and female ... it was quite a brutalist, masculine society.”<sup>127</sup>

Percy and Ashley, in the same vein of thought, considered the reason for this to be that South Africa was embroiled in a foreign conflict in Angola against the communist government there, and against civil insurgency across South Africa that continued to grow in strength during the Seventies and Eighties. The need for white men to be stereotypically masculine and able to withstand the influences of subversive elements that ranged from homosexuality to communism was tantamount to the apartheid regime and its ideological base in conservative, white nationalism.

Even after the war had ended and apartheid was being dismantled, the influences would linger on through schools, which would take on the time-consuming task of reforming their pedagogy and social tactics to match the shifting socio-political currents. Even men born in the dying years of apartheid experienced the same kind of patriarchalism that the older men faced, as Matthew put it about Rondebosch in the late Nineties and early Two-Thousands:

“It was a very Model C, Christian values school so if you didn’t fit that mould [of heteronormativity], it was a bit of a problem, and you had to sort of find your own way.”<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Interview with Percy Middleton, 11 June 2019.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Matthew Van As, 21 June 2019.

In this way, we can see a remarkable connection between the way the schools and institutions of the day treated political and social attributes as a composite to its own strength, and how this, in turn, would affect its approach to discipline and social punishment if a person or group of people strayed from the boundaries. There is little doubt that this social conditioning would have caused a person to doubt and attack their own identity as a result. The identity crises faced by the men in high school were based on a number of different conditions, but all aligned into a general feeling of shame, confusion and self-hatred. This was largely the result, as highlighted by the interviews, of the social pressures against what was not heteronormative and masculine, and the treatment of any ‘dissident’ attitude or attribute that suggested any deviation. The men’s personal experiences better demonstrate this: Percy, for example, saw it as endemic to a society that was not too dissimilar from other Western countries that fed themselves on male-driven brutality against minorities. The only way to survive, according to him, was to “disassemble” and fit into the boxes created by society.<sup>129</sup>

Robert, in trying to negotiate the toxic environment at Rondebosch during his time there, saw the time as ‘wretched’ and suffered from insomnia and depression as a result of the brutal violence he witnessed, the inappropriate touching he experienced by a member of staff at the boarding house and the general inability he had to reach out and speak to someone about the mental woes he had around his burgeoning sexuality. His struggles echoed those of Benjamin and Matthew, who both had to subsume their personalities and tendencies to prevent further bullying that had manifested as a result of their other eccentricities such as, in the case of Matthew, the desire to play music rather than any sport:

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<sup>129</sup> Interview with Percy Middleton, 11 June 2019.

“[There were] a couple of physical instances but more verbal and mental bullying [as a result of his mannerisms] ... that’s causing, sort of, hyper-depression as well, which I didn’t want to admit, and I gained lots of weight because I was eating my feelings ... I sort of made myself a target.”<sup>130</sup>

Ashley had a more damaging series of encounters with his sexuality in relation to his peers: in order to take advantage of the casual sexual opportunities afforded to him by his peers, he tended towards ‘severing’ the sexual encounter from his sense of self and public persona, in order to make his peers ‘feel comfortable’ around him:

“In order to install trust, I would cease to initiate any kind of sexual intimacy with them. Making [others] feel that my homosexuality was not a threat, I simply brain neutered myself. Surprisingly, this technique worked, but it set in motion some profound difficulties once I’d left school.”<sup>131</sup>

What this created, however, was a situation where he developed unhealthy and confused ideas about his sexuality and his sexual development at a time when he was being bombarded by hormonal, physical and emotional changes, something outlined in the section below. The connection between a high school encounter that caused problems in early adulthood and the broader framing of schooling largely relied on the fact that the school system bred the fears of homosexuality into students who wanted to experiment with same-sex sexual practices. This fear produced the same kind of dichotomy Matthew spoke about earlier: in the mind, it was

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<sup>130</sup> Interview with Matthew Van As, 21 June 2019.

<sup>131</sup> Correspondence with Ashley Brownlee, 15 April 2019.

perfectly normal, and yet there was an overarching social stigma that was reproduced within the home and within the schooling system.

## The Changes:

### *Puberty, socio-physical changes and personal development*

For the duration of a person's teenage years and often into the early twenties, the human body goes through the process of puberty as the human body prepares for full physical and sexual maturity. Puberty is a physical and psychological process, and over the many years of human existence has become attached to many strong social, political and cultural norms that are enforced through a variety of avenues. Isaacs and McKendrick stated that during this time, the fantasies begin to develop and entangle themselves with moral understandings of the world around them.<sup>132</sup> However, if the norms of society cause concern for the development of identities, it can cause some kind of internalised homophobia to develop.<sup>133</sup> The normative nature of puberty has caused concern for queer individuals, whose psycho-sexual development has not fit the mould of the heterosexist. As already discussed, one such avenue is that of the school, a place of socio-cultural normalisation that attempts to ingrain certain attitudes around how certain groups of society ought to act. The purpose of this section is to examine the broader implications that puberty and early sexual development has had on the men interviewed and how this early sexual development itself was influenced by outside sources. In doing so, it becomes clear that there is a strong link between puberty and both the shared understandings of social relationships and of the individual identities that people develop during their lives.

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<sup>132</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, 14.

<sup>133</sup> Kathleen Ritter and Anthony Terndrup, *Handbook of Affirmative Psychotherapy with Lesbians and Gay Men*, 114-115.

*“I’ve got a feeling”*: early attractions and affections

It is a challenge to try and quantify exactly when sexual feelings and emotions begin to reach the surface. Hormonal development is entirely subjective and does not happen all at once in every single human: some go through different development stages and psychosocial realisations at different junctures in their personal development. The interviewees stated this plainly when asked when they first experienced homosexual attractions: some saw it during pre-school, others during later primary school, while others were not entirely aware of anything until they reached adulthood. The earliest inception of ideas was described by Matthew and James, both of whom acknowledged they were attracted, or at least drawn, to men at an early age, as Matthew explained:

“I think it was just confused... in kiss-catch, boys would go after girls and girls would go after boys, for me it was not that way, and it was just what my attraction was ... that sort of early sexual exploration, which happens at that age, which is very normal from a child psychology point of view, I would want to go and play with the guys, rather, and that was just how I was hardwired for it.”<sup>134</sup>

In the interview, Matthew said that he considered as an adult that it was a perfectly normal way for him to express his sexual urges at an early age: this is what he wanted, this is what he would go after, there should be no real problem with that. Early crushes and attractions were common among many of the men. Charles, for example, described having a crush on a boy during primary school, and considers the end of their friendship when he was moved to a different high school from his crush as ‘tragic’. Other early attractions, before high school, were

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<sup>134</sup> Interview with Matthew Van As, 21 June 2019.

experienced by Clifford, who developed an attraction for the South African cricket player Mark Boucher after seeing him in a *Huisgenoot* (a popular Afrikaans magazine) centrespread in the late Nineties, something that he saw as a specific change in his identity. Hennie, who was exposed to swimmers a little older than him during primary school, similarly found attraction there:

“It was obviously difficult to peel your eyes off attractive boys with Speedos and then I guess that awakened the sort of fantasies that boys have.”<sup>135</sup>

Other than these, the majority of the other men saw their earliest attractions as something that coincided with their high school experience, for better or worse. Percy, for example, saw the time as a period of heightened libido, and describes the period as a waste of his time, for his high sex drive was a constant distraction that “really drove your actions.”<sup>136</sup> There was a further complication when the (albeit false) binary of choice in terms of sexual partner (i.e. men or women) was presented, as it caused some confusion to any person whose sexuality was not firmly rooted in one, both, or neither, as there is inherent fluidity in sexuality. Isaacs and McKendrick considered this a site where internal and external realities clashed the most: a lack of validation of the queer fantasy from the external world caused the internalisation of fears and attitudes that cast queerness as negative, one that feared discovery.<sup>137</sup> There have also been studies that suggest this kind of confusion is connected to various mental health problems faced by queer people as they get older, including “depression, character disorders, schizophrenia, and drug or alcohol abuse,” which refers back to the issue of parental substance abuse and

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<sup>135</sup> Interview with Hennie Geldenhuys, 3 April 2019.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Percy Middleton, 11 June 2019.

<sup>137</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, 15-16.

parenting styles.<sup>138</sup> In this way, we can see there is a line drawn neatly between the confusion and recurring identity crises.

Psychosexual gratification lies in what a prospective partner may turn out to be, and in the case of the eleven men, the confusion did present developmental challenges. Dichotomies of sexual attraction were pushed upon the men: boys like girls and girls like boys. In some senses, the men did manifest attractions and interest in women: James, for example, felt strong feelings for women and even took a fancy to the head girl at his high school:

“I was actually in love with a girl, but it was like you’re in love with beauty, not sex, I never even thought of that, I’ve never thought of a woman sexually.”<sup>139</sup>

James, indeed, acknowledged the complication in his interview, when he first fell in love with a similarly aged boy while on holiday at a young age: not remembering much, he still considered it to be his first love, and for him having very different ideas in his mind that did not necessarily correspond with the world around him, where he loved a boy in a queerphobic environment. These early attractions began the necessary journey of self-discovery, and the psycho-social implications were long-lasting in all eleven interviews.

### *The path to finding oneself: journeys of sexual discovery*

The feelings and associations of these men during this time are critical to understanding how it affected their development socially and in terms of their sexual identity, as a lot can be

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<sup>138</sup> Curtis D. Procter and Victor K. Groze, “Risk Factors in Suicide among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youths,” in *Social Work* 39, no. 5 (1994), 507.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with James Le Roux, 2 May 2019.

inferred from the early interactions with queerness at a developmental age. Where feelings were not expressly stated, reading between the lines sufficed in allowing a better insight into how private and public conditions affected personal growth and change.

Thomas and Hennie had relationships with women during high school, with Thomas having engaged in sexual intercourse with women and Hennie having dated someone to cement his social position within his high school, though he did acknowledge that she was his ‘beard’<sup>140</sup> and that the relationship was doomed to fail, as his ‘experiment’ with bisexuality was masking the interest he truly felt in homosexual encounters and relationships. In the case of Clifford, there was a similar kind of division between having a sexual attraction to men, and a romantic interest in women during his school years:

“I didn’t reconcile having both sexual and emotional feelings towards one specific group of people, there was that split for me, which I suppose was the result of external message[s] that what I was feeling was not okay, the sexual feelings that I was feeling.”<sup>141</sup>

A deep sense of shame and confusion persisted in Clifford which he felt tainted the feelings of attraction, and he knew at the time that he could not share his attractions. He further qualified this by referencing the social climate in high school and in Malmesbury when he was a younger man:

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<sup>140</sup> Beard: an informal North American word that describes someone who is used to divert attention from someone’s queerness in a social setting (commonly a woman accompanying a man): Paul Baker, *Fantabulosa: A Dictionary of Polari and Gay Slang* (London/New York: Continuum, 2002), 80.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with Clifford Lewis, 18 March 2019.

“If there was any mention of someone being gay, he’d be labelled as a moffie and *moffies* were deviant, they were child molesters, they wanna dress in women’s clothing, all of those various things being conflated into this one kind of label.”<sup>142</sup>

As a result, Clifford built up a form of a mental wall which he tried desperately to keep up, and these kinds of thoughts were common in him and others. Thomas was very young when he first felt attracted to men but acknowledged that for quite some time he did not have the language to explain how he felt. This is something important to note when considering how a person explained to themselves, and if need be to others, what their feelings were: a lack of words could trigger confusion, anxiety or disturb the natural understanding of the situation. This could have been augmented if there was existing lexicography that revolved around the homosexual attraction. What we know, contextually, was that there was a strong dialogue in South African society that revolved around institutional homophobia and a fear of the queer “deviant”, as it was often referred to.<sup>143</sup> Where there was no knowledge of positive queer experiences or role models, the overwhelming social narratives would assert their control over what was considered ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’, something experienced by a number of the men.<sup>144</sup> There were very few, if any, avenues afforded to the men to express themselves sexually in a safe, encouraging environment.

What this then prompted in many of the men was a period of suppression and fear of discovery. Matthew is a good example of this: during his primary and high school career, he spent the time trying to bring his ‘OTT’ (over the top) personality inside himself in an attempt to prevent more exposure of his personality to his peers. He was aware of his attractions and believed that

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<sup>142</sup> Interview with Clifford Lewis, 18 March 2019.

<sup>143</sup> Glen Retief, “Keeping Sodom out of the Laager,” in *Defiant Desire*.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*.

if he acted in an honest manner that reflected all of his character, it would out him in circumstances that had proven not to be conducive to someone being queer. Similarly, Robert, Hennie and Thomas restricted access to their inner personalities by avoiding certain school activities and social interactions and were wracked by guilt, fear and depression as their sexual attractions and non-conforming ideas continued to manifest. Percy found something similar in his experience of high school:

“I think [it was] fairly easy to spot that I was probably homosexual, so I was a bit vilified on that level, for some years of my life it was quite difficult for me, I tended to be quite insular.”<sup>145</sup>

Thus, there was a connection between the environments sponsored by the school’s ideology, contextual base and their approach to queerness among their students, and the kinds of identity development changes that occurred in the men’s lives. If a school did not approach queer sexual identities in a positive manner, then it was likely that students would not develop in the same manner as their heterosexual counterparts and would probably suffer some kind of psychological or social disorder in their lives. This, in turn, would have affected their development over time and influenced the way they may have considered themselves and the future relationships they may have or may not have entered into.

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<sup>145</sup> Interview with Percy Middleton, 11 June 2019.

## The “Big Bad World”:

### *The army, university and other adult responsibilities*

The last two institutions to discuss as a part of the early socialisation and identity development are the military and tertiary education institutions. Both were an extension of the environments found in the education system: rules, regulations and the inherent practices of an institution founded to bring people into the broader social system with a basic understanding of how to behave in public. However, the chief difference lay not only in the ages of the people who entered these institutions – commonly the men were of the age of majority when they enlisted or enrolled – and the implicit and explicit expectations of the soldier and the university student. As a distinct step away from the family home and into a sense of responsibility, these two sets of institutions played an influential role in the formation of people’s social attitudes, their understandings of the people and society around them, and the way that this, in turn, affected their identity formation at the early adulthood stage.

### *“Put your hard hats on”: The South African Border War*

During the Border War, the SADF had a policy of conscription which was signed into law in 1967, whereby all white men aged 17 to 65 were forced to do compulsory military or police service, with very few means of exemption or deferral.<sup>146</sup> While some people studied before they did their service, others left the country or registered as conscientious objectors and faced imprisonment for their objections to service. Ivan Toms and his role as a queer man in the End

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<sup>146</sup> “Military service becomes compulsory for White South African men,” South African History Online, last modified 21 November, 2019: <https://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/military-service-becomes-compulsory-white-south-african-men>

Conscription Campaign (ECC) was a notable example of this.<sup>147</sup> It must be noted that the conflict was based on ideological principles: that the communists of Southern Africa, and indeed the world, were aiming to undermine and end the capitalist, Christian regime of the NP. What can also be inferred, however, is that the war was one built on race: to protect the white minority government, which feared for the end of their regime at the hands of African nationalists, communists and other dissident forces.

Percy, Alexander, Charles, Robert and Benjamin were all affected between 1978 and 1988 as the war reached its final stages before the armistice signed with the Angolans and Cubans in 1990. The army was akin to the school on an institutional level: they were both influential in terms of having shaped early sexual ideas and experiences within a rigid, similarly masculine mould, but the army was a system built to inflict violence against others. The army, similarly, took the idea of forcing conformity towards a heteronormative, male-oriented world to a whole new degree of normalisation. It is thus vital to critique it for how it affected the social development and sexual identities of the men, both in general and in terms of their specific trajectories in life.

Queerphobic treatment of soldiers and those who resisted being conscripted by the SADF was a fitting representation of dissidence against the brutal masculine environment. The experiences of Ivan Toms, a leading queer anti-conscription activist in the Eighties, were a testament to this problem. Though he was resisting the policy of conscription, his homosexuality was used as a vehicle for the propaganda against him and his participation in the ECC.<sup>148</sup> Toms' service in the army during the late Seventies had shown him the brutality

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<sup>147</sup> Ivan Toms, "Ivan Toms is a fairy?: The South African Defence Force, the End Conscription Campaign, and me," in *Defiant Desire*, 258.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

of the regime, and caused him to be acutely aware of the oppression white society was inflicting on predominantly poor people of colour in the townships. As a result, “[he] felt that in some way [he] could understand what discrimination was all about, perhaps because as a gay man [he] had experienced it [himself].”<sup>149</sup>

This testimony provided two important insights. The first was that some white queer men took on a more holistic view of the oppression apartheid was inflicting on others, encapsulating an intersectional understanding of the socio-political situation in the Seventies and Eighties. The second was that Toms’ private life – with specific reference to his queerness and opposition to political oppression – was made public against his consent and for political purposes. This invasion of his privacy informed the way in which he acted against the conscription policy. Indeed, his decision to stand trial as a public challenge to the SADF was, in his words, “most certainly informed by [his] growing gay consciousness.”<sup>150</sup>

In the case of the five men, army service was a varied experience, both in terms of what branch of service they fell into and their own outlook during and after. The earliest to be conscripted was Charles, who went in immediately after high school into the entertainment unit, from 1978-79. Following that was Alexander (’84-’85) after his legal studies, Robert (’85-’86) after his drama diploma at UCT, Percy (’85-’88), who was a trained doctor, and Benjamin (’87-’88) who worked with the medics at the 1, 2 and 3 Military Hospital. Commonalities in experience lay largely in them all not having seen much active service and not having seen or engaged in much sexual activity during their time in the army, barring a girlfriend that Charles had back in Cape Town (and his clandestine sexual activities that are spoken about in Chapter 2). It must

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<sup>149</sup> Ivan Toms, “Ivan Toms is a fairy?” in *Defiant Desire*, 259.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

be noted, however, that at the tail end of his service, Percy met and had a relationship with another soldier, but this was largely conducted far away from the confines of the barracks or field hospital.

A common thread for Percy and Alexander was their shared distaste for the war and the severe depression that occurred during their service, with Percy having referred to it as “the low point” of his life that took him completely out of his comfort zone, mentally and physically:

“I went through a very severe depressive episode during my army service, during the State of Emergency, 1985, ’86, that was very much a low point for me, so my sexuality was all pulled up into that complete despair that I felt.”<sup>151</sup>

Alexander, similarly, felt that the two years were “horrible” and did his best to “switch off his mind” to try and escape the brutalism of it all, saying during the interview:

“I just sort of switched off and I started smoking a lot of dope [also known as marijuana] and cigarettes, which I hadn’t done before, you just sort of dulled your mind to the horrors of what was happening.”<sup>152</sup>

An interesting fact in Alexander’s testimony is that, despite him having not made any public statements against the regime, he was friends with Ivan Toms, but he did note that he was not politically active or invested, and most certainly not to the extent that Toms was. Alexander ultimately considered the military service as the end of his innocence.

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<sup>151</sup> Interview with Percy Middleton, 11 June 2019.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with Alexander Price, 24 April 2019.

Others viewed their military service in a more positive light, albeit in the case of them trying to make the best of a bad situation. Charles, for example, joined the entertainment unit out of Voortrekkerhoogte, Pretoria, and was pleased to note that many of his fellow soldiers in the unit were also queer in one way or another, and the unit helped him develop career options in the entertainment and circus sector in South Africa after he finished his service, allowing him to pursue a career as an entertainer, something he is still doing today in Las Vegas. Benjamin similarly had a good experience as he jetted between three different military hospitals:

“... Which I absolutely loved, I worked in the operating theatres, it really felt like civilian life because there were a lot of women who were not necessarily in the army, civilian[s] working there and we wore scrubs, so it didn’t feel like the military at all.”<sup>153</sup>

The one striking story is that of Robert, who joined as an infantryman and was asked during his conscription if he had any homosexual tendencies. At the time, he had already experienced an intimate homosexual relationship, and he ticked the box as affirmative. The following day, he was pulled out of line on the parade ground alongside “five of the campest queens you can imagine” who displayed the prototypical public queerness stereotypically associated with homosexual men.<sup>154</sup> They were thereafter sequestered for the duration of his service, something Robert was not entirely concerned about, as he had a strong dislike for the entire military operation and was flummoxed by the advances a ‘straight’ soldier made on him several times, mainly because he considered the army as “entirely unsexual”.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Interview with Benjamin De Beer, 19 June 2019.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with Robert Finlayson, 21 March 2019.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

The conclusion to be drawn from the army in South Africa during the Seventies and Eighties and its effect on the five men drawn by conscription into the conflict is that there was a continued pressure from the government through any institution possible to exert a certain set of social norms, which came across strongly in the men's narratives as one that was homophobic and racist if the underlying ideologies and contexts are critiqued simultaneously. Furthermore, there was an influence that military service had on the identities and mental stability of some of the men in question, though this is subject to their individual experiences and understanding of the broader war machine of the time.

*'Get smart': university education influencing personal changes*

Entering adulthood was a challenge to all of the interviewees, irrespective of how settled their lives were during the preceding years, but university did offer a minor reprieve from the strict routine of high school or the army. For most of the interviewed men who studied after school, they were within a society of like-minded people and they were now able to be more independent outside of the home and could define more of their lives without the supervision of a teacher, parent or drill sergeant, an important nuance as to how the men were able to behave. Though not all the men interviewed studied beyond high school, there were some commonalities in their experiences that can inform us on how the university environment was very influential on the identity formation and on their future relationships.

Of all the men, Charles was the only man to have not attended a university or tertiary education institution. This was mainly due to his interest in continuing his circus and trapeze work that he had spent time working on in his late teens and his army service in the entertainment unit.

All others attended university at some point between 1958 and 2008, a time frame that produced a long period of change both on university campuses and within South Africa. Indeed, James began and finished his degree before the scope of this thesis, with his teaching degree having concluding in 1961. His experiences at university were largely limited to the academic sphere, with him having noted no real awareness of any queer spaces or groups. He did, however, note in his interview that anyone suspected of being queer was forced to leave the university residences. Percy, similarly, in his medical studies at UCT, had a very limited set of sexual experiences or awareness during the time, but he did note the lack of people of colour at university while he was there in the late Seventies and early Eighties. What stood out to him was that he was only more aware of the outside world and gay sub-culture when he was out of university. Likewise, Alexander was rather unaware of the sub-culture until after his time at university. This general lack of awareness is understandable: in an era where access to open, queer information was rather limited and required being within the sub-culture, it was only through primary sexual experiences that these men would become more aware of the practices of the sub-culture.

On the flipside, however, there were men who became more aware of the world when they were studying. Robert, for example, entered his first relationship while in university, albeit while he was an extra in a film, and his relationship was with a man of colour who was not a student. This relationship and those following were subject to the racial stigmas and tensions of the Eighties, as his partners were men of colour and when they mixed together in white spaces or scenes, they were subjected to prejudice. Benjamin, similarly, had a series of early sexual and romantic experiences during his years at a chef school, and saw this moment as a reconciliation of the many years he had spent suppressing his sexuality for fear of discovery. However, he did begin to 'live a double life,' as only a few friends knew he was gay; his family,

for a while, were not aware of his sexuality. This internal conflict was only mitigated once he came out to his parents and made a more public assertion of his queerness in the circles that he felt comfortable in. Benjamin, during his graphic design degree between 1989 and 1991, didn't interact in the gay scene in Cape Town at the time and only began to step into the gay sub-culture when he was in London a few years later.

Hennie, Ashley, Clifford and Matthew, however, had more formative experiences during their time at university when it came to sexuality and social relationships. Hennie and Clifford were at Stellenbosch University doing Bachelor of Arts degrees, whereas Matthew studied music and Ashley studied drama at UCT. All four positively understood their university years as the time that they stepped out of the closet and into a strong queer sub-culture present at the universities at the time. Indeed, both universities had queer student societies and all three were involved in some part or another in these societies. Though they were studying at slightly different times to each other, there were some commonalities in their experiences and how they were formative in terms of their self-identification and their growing understandings of social relationships.

At Stellenbosch, the lesbi-gay society ran a support group, had movie nights and quizzes and encouraged students of all sexualities to attend their events, something both Clifford and Hennie considered as very valuable when they integrated into the sub-culture. Clifford, particularly, found that the university atmosphere helped him to break down the wall that was mentioned previously:

“Exposure to people that are different from me which I didn’t have growing up until the age of eighteen because I was definitely in a bubble; support from friends [was also helpful].”<sup>156</sup>

The environment of support was meaningful, as he was around people who did not judge him because of his sexuality and were not holding him to account to a certain social standard that had been imposed on him during his time in a small, rural town which was heavily rooted in conservative Afrikaans culture. Stellenbosch, despite being an Afrikaans-based university town that had conservative elements, was still a university town, one that could be compared to big city universities and liberal spaces. Universities were spaces that were more likely to challenge social norms and the kinds of ideologies that persecute or support identity groups, as Stellenbosch did for Hennie and Clifford regarding their sexuality. As the foundation to their entrance into the public queer sub-culture of South Africa during the early Two-Thousands, it was a positive experience.

At UCT, Ashley and Matthew both saw it as a time where they ‘came into themselves’. Even though Ashley had already stepped into the sub-culture as a waiter at a gay bar and Matthew had been to several gay bars since he was fourteen, both saw university as a distinct period of time from their experiences in high school. Matthew saw it as a time where people had more experiences of a romantic and sexual nature, all in an environment that encouraged people to behave without judgment of the overarching social stigmas, something mentioned above in relation to Stellenbosch. Cape Town was, and still is, considered a far more liberal space than the rest of the country and UCT was very much a part of the social dissidence that rejected

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<sup>156</sup> Interview with Hennie Geldenhuys, 3 April 2019.

conservative attitudes. The music school at UCT was a queer-friendly space and Matthew felt at home among his peers. Ashley felt a similar kind of ethos at the drama school:

“There were decidedly more openly gay men and women at the UCT art and drama campus, and I felt that I could be more open and authentic about myself than ever before. It wasn’t a huge leap of faith to express your sexuality, and I felt encouraged to do so.”<sup>157</sup>

A few conclusions can be drawn from this chapter on how the home, the schoolyard and other early institutional experiences informed a person’s identity development and their understanding of social relationships. It is important to note that while these structures did change over time, as political eras, social norms and cultural modes came and went, there were still elements to each that persisted, and their influences could be marked over time. These norms may have been challenged, and may have changed, willingly or not, but many would also have remained unaffected by the social, cultural and political turbulence of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

What this then makes plain is that the common experiences of the men make sense when we consider, for example, the ingrained queerphobia that monogamous heterosexual marriages, strict heteronormative teaching and anti-queer social narratives and how they could continually influence generations of young men who, in turn, treated their internal views of the world as different and, in many cases, deviant. Psychological wounds were made early in these men and many took great pains to rid themselves of the harmful dichotomies that shamed homosexual thoughts for fear of discovery. Furthermore, the foundations for their future relationships and

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<sup>157</sup> Correspondence with Ashley Brownlee, 15 April 2019.

understanding of self were in the experiences of recrimination, discipline and conflict that were rooted in the marriages of parents, the practices of teachers and drill sergeants, and the earliest introductions into the sub-culture. However, before the relationships of the men can adequately be assessed, it is necessary for this thesis to assess the public-private overlap spoken of here and how the evolution of the gay sub-culture in Cape Town, with its many influences and elements, would affect the future relationships of these men during the many different points that they entered into, and exited, same-sex relationships.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Cape of Queers:**

#### **Cape Town's queer community**

In 1966, the city of Cape Town was a thriving metropolis that drew on a diverse set of cultural, political and social groups. From the Afrikaans suburban Northern Suburbs, to the Cape Flats, to the township of Langa, to the string of Southern Suburbs beneath Table Mountain, Cape Town was a diverse city.<sup>158</sup> This racial segregation and socio-economic difference, however, framed the queer community between 1966 and 2008: intimate relationships, public cruising and protest action all played out in the same city across different locales and with different implications, making Cape Town a valuable site of analysis in the context of this thesis.<sup>159</sup>

In order to adequately assess the impact on intimate relationships that the Capetonian queer community conducted between 1966 and 2008, it would first be necessary to examine the conditions within the queer community that were relevant to historical social relationships and the development of personal identities in a shared context. This kind of historical analysis probes the overlap between the public and the private and requires some understanding of how this interplay affected people in each camp, and in-between. Furthermore, this private-public discussion helps shed light on the circumstances behind the intimate relationships that the men experienced in the city: their motivations in partner choices, the kinds of methods used to find intimate partners and the spaces occupied by partners in the city. This, in turn, reveals how the various queer components and spaces affected the men and their understanding of self during their adulthood.

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<sup>158</sup> Andrew Tucker, *Queer Visibilities*.

<sup>159</sup> Glen Retief, "Keeping Sodom out of the Laager," in *Defiant Desire*.

The “Pink Strip”:

*Queer communities and sub-cultures*

A queer community, as Isaacs and McKendrick described it in 1992, can be found within a “geographical location, a set of interconnected systems, structural arrangements for survival and adaptation, a development of interactive relationships, and shared ways of thinking, feeling and acting, all of which are internalized by the whole population”.<sup>160</sup> In simple terms, we can examine this definition of a queer community as one that takes on certain spaces, methods and ideologies to foster a ‘safe’ set of areas for queer social and political actions. In this way, the queer community was a result of a fight against heteronormativity and heterosexism in an urban space.<sup>161</sup> The queer community, as Isaacs and McKendrick explained it, was a ‘sub-culture’ to the broader socio-cultural fabric of South Africa, with a sub-culture being defined as a group that was purposefully excluded from the majority culture for whatever social, political, cultural or economic reason(s).<sup>162</sup>

A lack of positive understanding and acceptance of queerness created a sense of self-removal from the broader socio-culture within a queer individual and a queer collective. In this way, “[queer people] derive[d] both an identity from others and from the subculture of [queerness]”.<sup>163</sup> In many cases, this was a cause for celebration, as the sense of self outside of the heterosexist mould was celebrated and lauded for its potential as a difference from the commonly accepted.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, xiv.

<sup>161</sup> Andrew Tucker, *Queer Visibilities*, 3.

<sup>162</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, xiv.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>164</sup> George Chauncy, *Gay New York*, 4; Andrew Tucker, *Queer Visibilities*, 4.

The differences between the public and the private help to explore the nuances as to how a queer community was shaped by the people within the sub-culture, and how it in turn shaped those people. As Andrew Tucker has posited, the spatial reproduction of queerness in public and private spaces is the core to queer geographical and historical change.<sup>165</sup> Tucker's argument revolves around how queer communities and identities overcame heteronormativity and heterosexism in urban spaces, with his context being in Cape Town, and with a specific eye on not whitewashing the identities present in the multicultural city.<sup>166</sup> Further to this, when examining the intersection of the public changes in South Africa and the private events in queer homes and spaces, Tucker posits that core to queer 'geography' is the use of social and cultural spaces by queer individuals and groups.<sup>167</sup> Queer geography, in this case study, refers to areas, establishments and spaces where queer people are able to interact freely without fear of persecution on the basis of their sexual or gender identities.<sup>168</sup>

Clifford, in his interview, openly spoke of how the connection between the public and private helped lay the foundations of certain experiences and shifts in personal identity, and that certain social changes and dynamics made it easier for him to show his sexuality as a specific part of his identity. Spatial agency, in sociological terms, was the challenge for his queer development. Chief challenges lay in asserting cultural, social, political and economic agency in whatever areas possible within the sub-culture and broader society, both in public and in private. While this thesis focuses on urban Cape Town and surrounds, it is important to consider that there is a direct relationship between the rural communities in the Cape and the urban

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<sup>165</sup> Andrew Tucker, *Queer Visibilities*, 6.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*, 3-4.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*, 6-7.

<sup>168</sup> Annette Pritchard and Nigel J. Morgan, "Constructing tourism landscapes – gender, sexuality and space," *Tourism Geographies* 2, no. 2 (2000): 115-139.

dwellers across the peninsula.<sup>169</sup> Indeed, when considering the men interviewed, Clifford, Robert and Benjamin were all raised in rural environments, and though they spent their time as young adults in an urban environment, it nonetheless did influence their access to the sub-culture compared to the other eight men. Additionally, Clifford and Hennie attended Stellenbosch University, which lay in a small town close to the city with easy access via two national road routes.

This connection between rural and urban did beg a question on the access to the sub-culture: how did queer men who were raised outside major cities access queer culture and society? It depended on a variety of conditions that were largely contextual. In many cases, ignorance until early adulthood was connected to the social culture that had stigmatised the queer community, with a major side-effect being that access to positive queer role models and cultural outlets was very limited. All of the men were at least vaguely aware of the social stigmas against queerness, and this did affect the various ways in which they initially approached the sub-culture. James, for example, used to discreetly buy magazines with titles like *Modern Adonis* and *Body Beautiful* to explore his sexual fantasies and attractions to men. The use of men's health and bodybuilding magazines and media as an outlet for sexual exploration was not new in the Fifties and Sixties when James was experimenting: based on the research conducted by George Chauncy, interest in masculine performances of athleticism was common in the New York gay scene during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>170</sup> The changes over the 'ideal' male body formed the basis for many early sexual interests among queer men in New York and, as evidenced by his interview, in queer South African men.

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<sup>169</sup> Andrew Tucker, *Queer Visibilities*, 6-7.

<sup>170</sup> George Chauncy, *Gay New York*, 114-7.

This echoes the experiences Hennie had with gay-friendly television and film: media outlets, whether sexual-themed or just portraying a side of queerness, were influential on people as far as their personal identity development. Percy, furthering this idea, spoke about how his move from Kimberley to Cape Town helped him develop a better understanding of how to operate in queer social spaces, making him feel more self-confidence. It was not something he had even considered when he had been younger because of the kinds of spaces afforded to individuals in an urban context. This is an issue Matthew Cook and George Chauncy both speak of in their analysis of queer histories in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century London and New York respectively, describing how for young men working in and moving around a city, there was more opportunity to express sexuality more freely.<sup>171</sup>

In this way, it would have been easier to get a home alone or get into an intimate relationship with another without prying eyes, provided they were able to afford privacy in an urban setting. This issue of privacy, however, has been spoken of in the introduction: white men were comparatively more able to access a private home and spaces where they could explore their sexuality, as compared to the black and Coloured communities of Cape Town. This had major ramifications for a number of queer men. For example, the opportunities of being outside of the family home allowed people similar to Benjamin to get into long-lasting relationships and for people such as Alexander to indulge themselves in the hedonism of the party scene. Additionally, for a myriad of personal and shared journeys discussed in the thesis from this chapter onwards, the city atmosphere of Cape Town allowed greater freedoms.

There is thus a connection between the components of a queer community and the kinds of experiences queer men had as they developed their understanding of how they fit into queer

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<sup>171</sup> Matthew Cook, *Queer Domesticities*, 146; George Chauncy, *Gay New York*, 77-79.

society. The personal-private overlap can be explained as follows: individual experiences informed intimate relationships enough to reflect changes in the subculture. In turn, the social culture around the sub-culture influenced the ways in which such relationships were viewed by individuals and society-at-large. These relationships had direct connections to the personal experiences and changes in sexuality among the men interviewed, and these must be explored at length to understand how deep the public-private theory went.

*Composite parts in motion: the features of a queer community*

The social, cultural and political breakdown of the Cape Town queer sub-culture between 1966 and 2008, however, was not as simple as it may seem. Andrew Tucker speaks of social invisibility and the need to avoid homogenising queer communities, particularly when this is often done with a Westernised lens.<sup>172</sup> Rather than putting the various intersectional nuances of a queer community aside, they should be introduced to the analysis to generate a better understanding.<sup>173</sup> The invisibility of certain parts of the community was an issue during this period of time, and the common interplay was between race and class in the Cape Town context. In many senses, the queer space was dominated by white homosexual men who used the space for their own good with little consideration for the other identities and demographic groups in Cape Town at the time.<sup>174</sup> Race is an important social construction to consider in South African history, given that racial politics cemented a number of divides, and racialism was the bedrock to the apartheid regime.<sup>175</sup> While biological sex and sexual orientation were similarly used as a means for dividing society, race was the major underlying issue across all

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<sup>172</sup> Andrew Tucker, *Queer Visibilities*, 4.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 18-19.

<sup>175</sup> Andrew Tucker, *Queer Visibilities*, 22; Glen Retief, "Keeping Sodom out of the Laager," in *Defiant Desire*, 99-110.

of South Africa.<sup>176</sup> However, when political apartheid was dismantled during the Nineties, the economic impacts of policies such as the Group Areas Act – which forced segregation along racial lines, with favourable urban areas going to white people as people of colour were pushed as far away as possible for them to still be a part of the labour pool – were still felt by the majority of black and Coloured people.<sup>177</sup>

In the context of the queer community, this spatial segregation created a perception that the only visible queer spaces were ones occupied by white people. For example, the ‘gay village’ in Green Point was openly visible and boasted queer friendly restaurants, clubs and featured prominently in the early Pride marches and celebrations.<sup>178</sup> The problem with this was that it made the black and Cape Coloured communities invisible in queer terms and made it difficult or unlikely for the men interviewed for this thesis, all of whom were white, to interact with people of colour or understand their socio-economic or political problems. This, in turn, made the social relationships between racial groups within the queer sub-culture difficult and hard to come by. Robert, who dated several men of colour during his time living in Cape Town and in South Africa until he left in 1996, experienced this first-hand:

“I was Robert, the guy who was into black or Coloured guys and that would be the sort of thing that defined me, which I did struggle with, and often defined me in quite a negative light for a lot of those people.”<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Andrew Tucker, *Queer Visibilities*, 24.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, 38-39.

<sup>179</sup> Interview with Robert Finlayson, 21 March 2019.

In one particular story, he attended a dinner party during the mid-Eighties in Sea Point where a leading member of the arts scene in Cape Town – a scene Robert was in as an actor – referred to him a “*kaffirboetie*”, a derogatory word that refers to white people who prefer the company of black people and utilised language that was often used in conjunction with racial equality sympathisers during the apartheid regime.<sup>180</sup> What stood out to Robert about this story, aside from the fact that he had been targeted for his attractions, was that he saw the same person pursuing a ‘rent’ boy of colour on Long Street, revealing the hypocrisy within those who were happy to make derogatory comments about others’ sexual attractions.<sup>181</sup>

Robert’s specific experiences with race continued during a later residency in South Africa during the late Two-Thousands, albeit where he was the older man dating a younger Mswati man. In both instances, a somewhat older man was dating a younger, twenty-something man of a different racial background, and Robert was subjected to both racial and age-based form of discrimination from a variety of social and cultural groups, prompting him to adopt the following outlook:

“I just don’t wanna deal with that kind of shit anymore, I dealt with it on the one side, and now I was dealing with it on the other, and never the twain shall meet, really.”<sup>182</sup>

This outlook on interracial relationships and the role of age difference does speak to the way in which the prejudices of South Africa in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were pervasive and

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<sup>180</sup>“Kaffirboetie,” Dictionary of South African English, last modified 21 November, 2019, <https://dsae.co.za/entry/kaffirboetie/e03582>.

<sup>181</sup> Paul Baker, *Fantabulosa: A Dictionary of Polari and Gay Slang* (London/New York: Continuum, 2002), 50.

<sup>182</sup> Interview with Robert Finlayson, 21 March 2019.

challenged people on many fronts: race, age, culture, sexual identities, and gender identification. Robert admitted that he had a major issue with the hypocrisy and the lack of acceptance from both sides of his relationships, as it created a situation where he could not feel comfortable with himself or his relationships.

This is an important consideration when looking at the private-public overlap, as raised above, and is reflected upon by some of the other men interviewed. Comfort within a social environment – the public – did allow for comfort in a public setting. Clifford highlighted this when he spoke of the political changes in South Africa during his childhood and early adulthood, when apartheid was dismantled to some degree in the statute books. The authenticity and safety of the Constitution of 1996 and other laws governing same-sex sexual activity meant that people could consider themselves more at home in South Africa as the sub-culture became less of a site of persecution from the legal-political system and more of an avenue for social and political changes. What this also created was a situation where people were able to reflect more of themselves in the changing South African social culture:

“I think it creates a social context where one is able to make decisions or where it’s maybe a bit easier, where it feels safer for one to be more authentic and make choices that are authentic, I mean, you could be living in the most liberal society and some people might still choose to be in the closet but at least when you have legislation and regulation like that in place you don’t feel like you have to fight just to be yourself, just for the right to be yourself.”<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Interview with Clifford Lewis, 18 March 2019.

It is valuable to consider this, not only in light of being true to oneself in terms of identity, but also that the social and political changes within the community affected personal understandings of concepts such as queerness and what it was to be publicly queer. Robert's perspective added nuance to this view when he stated that the sub-culture did reflect the changes, or lack thereof, in the broader social fabric of South Africa, particularly during the Nineties and early Two-Thousands as society began to desegregate:

“The gay community in South Africa has always been a microcosm of the broader community and so the expectation that because gay men were oppressed or were legislated against, that they might be more tolerant of other gay people, though they might be of a different race and so on, it's not really been the case ... the gay community was sort of the same as the broader community, so it didn't really change people's attitudes that much ... did it change behaviours and attitudes? Maybe over time but not initially.”<sup>184</sup>

This spoke to an interesting point of comparison and discussion to be made that revolved around the changes that occurred in post-apartheid South Africa. Various pieces of legislation and legal challenges by queer individuals, collectives and legal action groups such as the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE) occurred between 1994 and 2008. The first was the *NCGLE v Minister of Justice and Others* (1998) ruling which overturned the sodomy clause in the Immorality Amendment Act (No. 57 of 1969), decriminalising sexual actions between same-sex couples.<sup>185</sup> Another notable ruling was that of *Minister of Home*

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<sup>184</sup> Interview with Robert Finlayson, 21 March 2019.

<sup>185</sup> GALA, AM2987 – Nichols, Chambalis & Associates, Box 7, “C – Litigation, Policy and Law Reform,” C1.1.1.1, “Applicants’ Heads of Argument,” 11-13.

*Affairs v Fourie* (2005), which stated that same-sex couples should have the right to get married, in line with the Constitution of South Africa.<sup>186</sup>

This flurry of legal challenges and legislative action had been bolstered by the liberal clauses in the 1996 Constitution, which provided for a legal environment that would protect and enfranchise queer people unlike the oppression faced under apartheid. The men interviewed did speak to this when stating their thoughts on the Civil Unions Act in particular. Hennie, for example, felt that the changes allowed for privileges and services that had been previously afforded to heterosexual society, and that these new rights were ones that made entering a relationship a more credible act, even though he had no desire to get married:

“I don’t necessarily have to do it to validate my relationship for myself, but I think there’s a very big role that the ritual plays in promising yourself to someone else in maintaining the relationship and also obviously the legal benefits of it.”<sup>187</sup>

Clifford, Charles, Ashley and Matthew were similarly complimentary of the effects the Civil Union Act had on their notions of queer relationships. Matthew, who was an active participant in the protest and lobbying process for the Act, argued that it needed to go further in the contemporary era to allow for broader social acceptance of civil unions on the same platform as marriage:

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<sup>186</sup> GALA, AM2987 – Nichols, Chambalis & Associates, Box 3, “B – Recognize our Relationships,” B1.1, Marie Fourie & Celia Bonthuys v Minister of Home Affairs & DG of Home Affairs.

<sup>187</sup> Interview with Hennie Geldenhuys, 3 April 2019.

“There’s actually very little difference, it’s just a word and I think that’s the problem, that they should just become the marriage act, it shouldn’t have to be a separate bill now, it’s just in the wording.”<sup>188</sup>

Matthew was heavily involved in protest action around the Act, to the extent that “in 2006 I was chaining myself to fences and doors and things like that, for the Civil Union Act ... that’s when I got my legs as an activist, as an LGBTI activist.”<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, his political stance was that, since marriage law was a defining intersection of an elected, public government and the private activities of citizens, it should be the fullest, most representative and inclusive policy possible:

“I think the Civil Unions Act is great, but it should just be marriage, there shouldn’t be a separate bill, you shouldn’t, as a marriage officer, have to write two different exams to be able to do it ... most government officials, [they] only have to write the marriage one, they don’t have to write the civil union part of it and I think that’s a huge problem within our government system, I think everybody should have to write the civil union marriage exam ... [During the activism for the Civil Unions Act] I think we were just wanting to get the right to marry, I think that’s as simple as it is, to go, ‘we want to be able to get married, we’re going to do it any way possible,’ because before that your partner, you couldn’t go and see them in hospital, because you had no legal rights to, you couldn’t be on the same medical aid, you couldn’t, you couldn’t do a whole load of stuff, you couldn’t bequeath anything in your will, there’s a whole load of stuff that you couldn’t do, until that

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<sup>188</sup> Interview with Matthew Van As, 21 June 2019.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

marriage act happened ... we were able to do all the things a straight couple could do and, at that point, can we just do this now, we need to be able to do this, we want to make the same mistakes as heterosexual couples do, we want to get gay divorced, that's what we want, we want that option to be able to do it.”<sup>190</sup>

Charles, who moved to America to pursue his work in the entertainment sector, was involved in the legislative battle for marriage equality in the state of Nevada. A big gripe for him was that if he had been heterosexual, he would have been able to naturalise as an American more quickly, and as a result of this, even though Nevada had ratified civil unions in 2014, he said to his partner that “we've got to wait until it's on a federal level because I don't wanna get married on a state level and then find that it's not legal on a federal level”.<sup>191</sup> While this fell outside of the scope of this thesis, it nonetheless indicates a certain mindset when it came towards the connection between legislation that governed the private lives of individuals – i.e. marriage law, inheritance law, naturalisation and citizenship policy, and so forth – and the ways in which queer people pursued relationships. Charles, in this vein, stated that it was also connected to one's feelings of self:

“When we got the real thing, it validated me as a person and my relationship more than you can ever imagine so I think that validation is really important, people ... always feel sneaky, like they do something behind closed doors, it's like being in the closet, lying to everybody, putting on a front, you don't feel good about yourself.”<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Interview with Matthew Van As, 21 June 2019.

<sup>191</sup> Interview with Charles Strachan, 21 March 2019.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

Marriage law, to Matthew and Charles, was justified as a ratification of the lives shared between two people, or in the word of Matthew when explaining how marriage equality had affected relationships:

“[Previously] we’re gonna get into this relationship, there’s no chance of marriage, so let’s have a bit of fun. Now, you’re going into a relationship where the option is on the table for marriage and that’s, I think you’d think a bit more cos if I’m gonna fall in love with this person, we can get married now so let’s think about this a little more closely.”<sup>193</sup>

On the flipside, Alexander, Benjamin and James all stated that they were not always terribly aware of the trends and changes in queer politics and society. While he had heard of the Forest Town raid in 1966, James was not entirely aware of the ramifications beyond what was reflected in the newspaper headlines. Alexander, while supportive of broader social and political rights thanks to the more liberal upbringing he had received, was very ignorant of the queer community until after he had served time in the army. Benjamin had not spent much time thinking about the constructs of gender, sexuality and queerness, and was not particularly interested in conforming to something akin to marriage which he had been denied throughout his life until he was in his forties. This, he believed, is also connected to his personality:

“I’m a little bit artsy and I’m a little bit left of centre anyway and I’m a little bit eccentric, I suppose so those things really don’t attract me.”<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Interview with Matthew Van As, 21 June 2019.

<sup>194</sup> Interview with Benjamin De Beer, 19 June 2019.

In this way, we can infer that marriage equality and social rights did not always connect closely with the mindsets and desires of all people in the sub-culture, adding nuance to how these communities can be considered historically. While there was a major partisan, socio-political and cultural shift in some parts of society, this was not the case across all parts of society. Indeed, violence against queer people of colour in townships has been a recurrent issue.<sup>195</sup> The root to this violence lay in the idea that queerness was “un-African”; however, as Marc Epprecht discussed, the queerphobia found in African communities in Southern Africa was inherited from European Christian attitudes pushed upon them during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>196</sup> Further complicating this ‘inheritance’ was the introduction of prejudice within the black African communities, many of which saw homosexuality as a bewitchment that was attached to gender or sex identity confusion.<sup>197</sup>

This situation, where there is a perception of legal protection undermined by instances of violence in some sectors of the community, could be considered a *de jure* legal and political framework, where the *de facto* social and cultural environment was not as forgiving and did not always take kindly towards queerness on the public stage. While the perception that queerness is “not African” has been put to shame by Epprecht, it has clearly been stated that queerphobia on a social and institutional level was often attached to the fears of interracial relationships among colonial authorities and thus pushed onto communities of colour through the courts and police.<sup>198</sup> The racial element to this paradigm cannot be ignored, and it should be considered that while the men interviewed in this project were white English or Afrikaans South African men, and were more removed from instances of persecution such as those faced

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<sup>195</sup> Thabo Msibi, “Not crossing the line: Masculinities and homophobic violence in South Africa,” in *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equality*, No. 80 (2009), 52.

<sup>196</sup> Marc Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 5.

<sup>197</sup> Andrew Tucker, *Queer Visibilities*, 113-114.

<sup>198</sup> Marc Epprecht, *Hungochani*, 68.

historically by queer people of colour and queer women, they nonetheless were subject to the same overarching patriarchy and heterosexism.

What is important to take from the discussion around queer communities and the specific components of the historic Capetonian sub-culture is that there was, first and foremost, a definite link between the broader heterosexist public understanding and interactions of queerness and the experiences of queer men both in public and in private. This link, in turn, had influenced their understanding of self and allowed for some important changes in their conception of future relationships and socio-political expression within broader Cape Town society. Furthermore, in the ongoing acceptance of queer identities in some sectors of society, there was a definite shift in the sense of self that contributed towards how the men considered themselves as queer in a society that slowly began to accept them.

*Scenes: where queer people went and what they did with whom*

When considering, then, the implications of the gay community on intimate relationships and self-realisation, two common threads in the early experiences become clear as sites for analysis: the clubbing scene in Cape Town (and other South African cities) and the pursuit of sexual intimacy in cruising areas that dotted the more affluent parts of the cities in which they were located. Both spaces have a deep history as the intersection between private, often sexual fantasies about being queer and the publicness of the spaces people sought to club and cruise in. This intersection was valuable to the men interviewed, as it allowed them to freely negotiate heterosexual and queer spaces with some element of discretion in both. Queerness, as a fluid construct, allowed people to not necessarily identify as such to interact within the scene, and queer people could interact within the broader social structure in a similar manner.

Isaacs and McKendrick saw the relationship with the sub-culture as one that young queer people commonly acted out during their later teen years, or even as late as their twenties: the exploration of identity involved active testing experiences in spaces considered accepting of a variety of sexual identities and expressions.<sup>199</sup> Furthermore, there was an element of integration and of isolation when it came to the sub-culture. While tolerance was a component to the sub-culture, there was still opportunity for intersectional levels of prejudice.<sup>200</sup> In this way, Isaacs and McKendrick posited that because oppression was the root to the creation of the sub-culture, there was an ever-present fear of being affected and thus was a possible determining factor of the ways in which white queer men conducted themselves.<sup>201</sup>

The clubbing and cruising scenes both offered a specific outlet for queer people: reasonably easy access to sexual gratification. While some early experiences that the men interviewed had had were of the bisexual nature, this only indicated that there was some trepidation towards acknowledging their queerness, which spoke to a certain level of internalised homophobia: while the thoughts and fantasies were present and often acted upon, the concept of considering oneself as 'gay' was a daunting prospect that evoked certain ideals and stereotypes. This does then reveal that there were certain nuances to the ways in which the men pursued sexual gratification and relationships through the cruising and clubbing scenes as a result of this internalised homophobia.

Sex was a major component to the queer community both in Cape Town and elsewhere: sexual fantasy and stimulation formed a prominent part of the various cruising areas and clubs that

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<sup>199</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, 15-16.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>201</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, 71.

were friendly to queer patrons.<sup>202</sup> Chauncy acknowledged that in the instance of the queer sub-culture in New York City, it was the place to experiment with sexuality and sexual acts away from the prying eyes of broader society.<sup>203</sup> Isaacs and McKendrick, in examining the constructs of sexual behaviour in the sub-culture, highlighted various sociosexual trends that included the “exploration of another person’s sexual fantasy, at the cost of their own”, “public sexual practices, like cruising” and “dealing with people as objects, not as individuals”.<sup>204</sup> What this spoke of, then, was a situation where sexual activity was the majority commodity and consideration for people interacting with the sub-culture in whatever manner they wished.

All the men interviewed had some interaction with cruising or clubbing during their lives, and it was a prominent feature of some of the interviews. The entry into the clubbing or cruising scenes were dependent on their ages, experiences and circumstances. Clifford, for example, went to clubs when he was able to arrange transport to and from the city. James, who only began to experiment with queer sexual acts during his twenties, would cruise bathrooms and public areas that were known among queer men in Cape Town and Bloemfontein. Knowledge of queer cruising areas was passed on through word-of-mouth or by exploration, as Charles mentioned when he described his experiences at the Rondebosch train station:

“I had noticed that on Rondebosch station there was a public toilet, but I noticed that we were sitting on the benches, there would be a lot of ... men sitting around and when the train came up, I would be the only one getting up and going on the train, and everybody else would stay seated and I thought to myself, ‘what’s that all about?’ ... and then I realised, they’re cruising and they’re going in and out of

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid, 76.

<sup>203</sup> George Chauncy, *Gay New York*, 36.

<sup>204</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, 78.

the bathroom ... people would go in there and act like they were gonna use the bathroom but in the meantime, they were checking each other out and doing whatever ... I realised that cruising didn't only happen at Rondebosch station ... almost any public area ... in Kenilworth Centre or Cavendish Square, you'd see lots of people walking around, just walking around, and looking at each other, and, and there'd be that sort of sexuality, that cruising going on."<sup>205</sup>

Percy, similarly, stated that he cruised popular areas such as train stations, beaches and main roads where many people were known to solicit casual sex, either for money or simply as a part of the cruising sub-culture. Charles was involved in cruising quite considerably during his time as a young man in the army and circus during his late teens and twenties and would often stop by Rondebosch train station after seeing his girlfriend at her home. After the ending of a particularly disastrous relationship with a woman who "tried to change [him]" in Johannesburg in his early twenties, he got more involved in cruising and casual sex in the clubs that were gay friendly and had facilities that included "dark rooms"<sup>206</sup> and catered to specific groups of queer people (i.e. older men, people of colour or lesbians). This experience was echoed by Alexander, who similarly sought the company of men after a relationship with a woman ended:

"I decided that it was time I went home with someone, the first nice person, the first reasonable person that asked me to go home ... a guy asked me to go home, he was ghastly, but I went home with him, anyway, because I thought it was time and he was a bit older."<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Interview with Charles Strachan, 21 March 2019.

<sup>206</sup> Interview with Charles Strachan, 21 March 2019; Dark room: a darkened room or series of rooms found in a gay bar, sauna, bath house or other social space. These rooms were commonly used for casual sexual activity: Paul Baker, *Fantabulosa: A Dictionary of Polari and Gay Slang* (London/New York: Continuum, 2002), 106.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with Alexander Price, 24 April 2019.

In time, while in a relationship lasting between 1986 and 2004, Alexander and his partner got heavily involved in a hedonistic lifestyle of constant partying and socialising. In the stories Alexander told of his clubbing experiences in Cape Town and elsewhere, a number of interesting points came to the surface. The first was that drug culture was a vital component of the party scene. Ecstasy, for example, was a big component during the Nineties to raves and other club scenes in which many gay men became involved. Furthermore, Alexander's nocturnal activities did include, at some points, bringing other people into their sexual activities as a result of going to clubs and bars, thus revealing a norm of sexual openness and experimentation that was facilitated by the clubbing scene and the state of the sub-culture at the time.

Matthew and Ashley had more specific experiences in terms of the gay-friendly clubs in Cape Town. During the final years of high school and his early years of university, Ashley worked at a bar called the Oasis, and considered it an important safe space for queer men to socialise and indulge in stigmatised sexual practices without too much fear of police or social intervention. This spatial safety is an important consideration: this different kind of basis to the safety experienced by queer men lends more clarity as to the power that sexual activity and clubbing had. Furthering this point, Matthew, as a very young man, managed to gain entrance to a gay bar and had his first experience of sex acts there, and while he did not go much again to clubs until he had left high school, he still saw it as a process of "getting it done" in a way of affirming his homosexual fantasies that he had spent time squashing down mentally and emotionally.<sup>208</sup> Benjamin explained the process of clubbing and pursuing prospective partners in these particular outlets of the sub-culture as a part of being older and more confident:

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<sup>208</sup> Interview with Matthew Van As, 21 June 2019.

“I experimented with sex and drugs and with partying and with just individuating from the parents, from the home in a big way, so I had many sexual and emotional experiences, loving, uh, experiences ... I think something happened ... where there was a bit of a seismic shift around confidence, self-confidence and I had far more confidence in London and there’s also a lot to be said for feeling really anonymous in a big city ... it just really expands your outlook and the way you see yourself.”<sup>209</sup>

However, as with any part of social culture, not everyone was involved as heavily in the clubbing and cruising scenes. Thomas, who described his outlook on dating and relationships as ‘traditional, was not the biggest proponent of casual sex or clubbing but made a disclaimer that he did not judge others who were interested in those activities; he simply preferred to know the people he slept with and dated intimately. Two other parts of his desire not to get too involved in the clubbing scene were that he was, by personality, very shy and that during his time in clubs during his mid-twenties he had indulged in drugs to “fake the confidence” needed to fit in, a lifestyle he did not consider desirable:

“There’s a part of me that’s judgmental of that because I grew up quite, I wouldn’t say super conservative but I’m very traditional, so there are certain things which are just gross to me ... there was a certain level of things that I would never do in gay culture.”<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Interview with Benjamin De Beer, 19 June 2019.

<sup>210</sup> Interview with Thomas van Breda, 4 April 2019.

There was thus an outlook that did not take to cruising and clubbing with open arms and considered it with distaste or apprehension. While Thomas did engage in sexual acts with other queer men and did stay connected to the broader sub-culture, he did not indulge in clubbing or cruising in any major way as a result of his perception of self and his desires to engage in a different model of relationships that was more ‘traditional’ and based upon how he had been socialised by his parents’ monogamous, heteronormative marriage.

Access to the sub-culture, however, was not always through the clubbing scene or as a result of the need for sexual gratification, so it was important to consider how some sought access through other means. As noted in the previous chapter, Clifford and Hennie also had early interactions with the queer sub-culture through the lesbi-gay society at Stellenbosch University, and Matthew and Ashley studied alongside a variety of openly queer people at different historical points, meaning that while we can consider clubbing and cruising queer sub-culture specific access points, they were not the be-all and end-all. What stands out about Hennie’s interview in the vein of clubs not being the only feature to the queer sub-culture is that he believed that, in 2019, there was no longer a need for queer specific clubs and spaces:

“I think Cape Town clubs have become so accepting that the need for an exclusive gay club became less important to a lot of people, I think it’s very important still to maintain clubs with a specific identity, but most of my friends hang out at popular clubs instead of just gay clubs.<sup>211</sup> I think [most older gay men], in my experience, have moved on beyond identity clubbing and they’re just going to popular spots.”<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> However, it is important to also consider that bars such as Crew Bar, Zero-21 and the Pink Panther are, as of 2019, still going strong in the city.

<sup>212</sup> Interview with Hennie Geldenhuys, 3 April 2019.

What can then be considered in looking at clubbing and cruising culture is that there was an overlap between the public spaces occupied by queer men in their pursuit of sexual and emotional outlets and the personal development of men. While not every queer person interacted as often (or at all) in the clubs, bars and cruising spots, they nonetheless played a role in developing certain ideas around intimate relationships. Furthermore, the sub-culture acted as a magnet towards men who felt the desire to act out on fantasies, and in many instances the clubs and cruising spots acted as beacons of possibility to those closeted during times of social stigma and state persecution.

*Exiting the closet: how queer men made their sexuality known*

Two final considerations must be made when considering the public-private intersection. The first, as will be dealt with in this section, is the nature of being ‘closeted’ and the nature of coming out as queer in Cape Town between 1966 and 2008. As a direct merging between the desire for privacy as a subjugated minority group and the growing presence of the queer sub-culture, the closet was an important social, political and cultural lens that helped explain the nature of queer identities and social politics during the latter half of apartheid and the democratisation of South Africa. During the early years of the 20th century, there was a rising trend of sexuality assignment along the binary of homosexuality and heterosexuality.<sup>213</sup> What is important to understand about this assignment by heterosexist socio-economic, political and cultural institutions was that it was another means of oppression and that it became the driving force behind the closet as “the defining feature [of] gay oppression in [the 20th] century”.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 2.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid*, 71.

By creating a structural divide in society between heterosexual people and queer people, queer people were subsequently forced to approach the publicness of sexuality as a final statement that must, in some way, be publicly displayed.<sup>215</sup> In this way, we can see how a crisis could have been borne out of this heterosexist requirement for openness in a potentially hostile public space.

Isaacs and McKendrick, in 1992, considered ‘coming-out’ as a principal crisis in queer identity development, a crisis in their definition being an obstacle that is considered “insurmountable” by the individual.<sup>216</sup> By this, Isaacs and McKendrick considered coming-out as a situation where external and internal conditions contributed towards a sense of doubt, fear or hopelessness in individuals seeking to legitimise their sexual fantasies and ideas.<sup>217</sup> This can be summed up as ‘crisis theory’: situations where there was an internal or external threat, or a series of threats, to personal identity are ones that test the preconceived or learned responses and can be considered a “break with equilibrium” that is normal, everyday life.<sup>218</sup> Terndrup and Ritter have seconded the consideration that a coming-out crisis is at the forefront of identity confusion and development during adolescence or early adulthood. Their statement is that it could be considered an opportunity for a person to be more objective about their future, both sexually and socially, and thus make some clearer identity decisions.<sup>219</sup>

The main experiences of coming-out crises were those with parents and close families, though these were commonly not the first individuals who were told. Commonly, closer friends or

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid, 72-72.

<sup>216</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, xiii.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>219</sup> Kathleen Ritter and Anthony Terndrup, *Handbook of Affirmative Psychotherapy with Lesbians and Gay Men*, 132.

other queer people were told before parents, siblings and other family members.<sup>220</sup> Clifford, Thomas, Hennie, Alexander, Percy, Ashley and Matthew all came out to close friends before approaching their families about their sexuality, and there was an overwhelmingly positive response from their peers in high school or university. The rest had somewhat divergent moments of coming-out: Robert was outed when he acknowledged his sexuality in an army form, Charles outed himself over the phone from the United States after a weekend-long camp that helped him to reconcile his HIV-positive diagnosis, Benjamin decided to come out to his mother shortly before leaving for London and James mentioned no instances of coming out in his interview, though his siblings were very familiar and comfortable with his sexuality. The context was key, but in the instances of a peer-first coming-out, this was helpful to the development of a safe social context in the minds of the men when they considered coming out to their close family members.

The reactions from the family were varied, from a very *laissez-faire* approach to the more punitive approaches. Thomas, who was accidentally outed by a letter to his lover that was discovered by his mother, was treated with care and love by his parents. Charles's parents, during an emotional phone-call, stated that they were concerned about his life because of the HIV-positive result but nonetheless said that they loved and cared for him. Ashley only came out to his mother after he had started dating his current partner in 1994, but the matter was not discussed at length. Clifford, during his coming-out, made specific mention of the social stigmas around queer people:

“I remember coming out to my mother, I specifically said, “even though I’m gay, I’ve no desire to touch children, I don’t wanna be a woman,” so I pre-emptively

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid, 295.

addressed those issues that are conflated in ignorance, in ignorant people's minds about sexuality and gender so I just didn't wanna be associated with that stigma."<sup>221</sup>

In this way, Ritter and Terndrup have made a specific point: many family members perceive homosexuality as a breach of the family values, expectations or codes, and often this involved recrimination or the revival of old struggles or conflicts that could lead to animosity towards the homosexual child.<sup>222</sup> This is enhanced by the story Matthew told: when he was sixteen, he came out to his parents, who had conservative, Catholic views, and as a result he was kicked out of the family home for a period of time:

"There was a door, which I left out of ... I went to go and stay with my uncles, and my aunts, my father just didn't want to see me ... [reconciliation] was more my mothers' doing, she said I must come back home, and my father just had to deal with it, he didn't speak to me for a long time."<sup>223</sup>

While Matthew did reconcile with his parents and has since grown close with them, it did, nonetheless, affect his perception of self, and while he was able to negotiate the crisis of coming out reasonably well in an environment of parental desertion, this was not always the case when it came to queer people expressing their sexuality in public. Isolation and exclusion, as was experienced by Matthew and Robert in their individual contexts, produced an air of antagonism towards their personal identity development as a result of external, public forces that included bullying. At a time when the acquisition of identity was so fragile, as seen by Isaacs and

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<sup>221</sup> Interview with Clifford Lewis, 18 March 2019.

<sup>222</sup> Kathleen Ritter and Anthony Terndrup, *Handbook of Affirmative Psychotherapy with Lesbians and Gay Men*, 297.

<sup>223</sup> Interview with Matthew Van As, 21 June 2019.

McKendrick, a volatile home situation did not make for a conducive acceptance of identity.<sup>224</sup> Thus, it can be deduced that the crisis moment, or moments, of coming-out in whatever context can affect the development of sexual identities and personal understandings of sexuality in a variety of contexts and outcomes.

*HIV/AIDS: 'gay cancer' and queer relationships*

A final area of discussion of the historical impact of the sub-culture on social relationships and personal identity is the role of the HIV/AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome) pandemic within the Capetonian queer community. As a recurring theme in queer history and as an intersection between a private disease and a public health and social concern, HIV needs to be examined for the historical influence it has had on the identities held by queer men, their perceptions of the queer community and how it affected social relationships queer men engaged in.

HIV/AIDS arrived in South Africa during the early Eighties as an off-shoot from the rising cases presented in the United States of America: what began as a supposed skin cancer started to spread globally during the Eighties and Nineties.<sup>225</sup> During the earliest years of the pandemic, the HIV infection rate among queer people specifically shot up dramatically worldwide, evoking an atmosphere of condemnation and stigma.<sup>226</sup> Referred to as the “gay plague” or “gay cancer”, the initial responses to HIV/AIDS were tentative, and were followed during the mid-to-late Eighties with a “moral panic”, wherein heterosexist mainstream society was able to bolster their existing prejudices with a moralistic stance against queerness: since it

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<sup>224</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, 167.

<sup>225</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The regulation of sexuality since 1800*, 380.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*, 381.

was the queer community being predominantly affected by the pandemic, and was responsible for spreading the disease, there was an obvious opportunity to shun and persecute queer people.<sup>227</sup> Queerness, as already stated, was under attack by the apartheid government at a time when social, political and economic turmoil was common, and the HIV crisis presented a further complication to the fragile fabric of queer activism and community involvement.<sup>228</sup>

What was often considered in the spread was that it required a person to be involved in a fluid sexual culture – as an example, the one used by the queer community in urban Cape Town, London or other major cities – that allowed for a variety of sexual partners to be commonplace in the socio-cultural context. As policies began to shift towards alleviating the crisis and preventing the spread among South African citizens, the HIV/AIDS problem was revealed to be more than medical, or in the words of Jeffrey Weeks:

“It posed difficult questions about personal behaviour and social policy (especially the priority that should be given to appropriate funding of the health services). It dramatized the debate about moral and ethical values that had rumbled on [in the United Kingdom] since at least the 1960s.”<sup>229</sup>

HIV was a major disturbance to the queer community during the Eighties and Nineties, wherein studies since the initial infections have suggested that the risk of HIV transmission in the queer community is higher than the heterosexual community.<sup>230</sup> Being an STI, it was passed more easily in sexually-transient environments – which the queer community had in some sense due

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<sup>227</sup> Carla Tsampiras, “Two Tales about Illness, Ideologies, and Intimate Identities: Sexuality Politics and AIDS in South Africa, 1980-95,” *Medical History* 58 (2014), 231-232.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*, 233.

<sup>229</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The regulation of sexuality since 1800*, 383-384.

<sup>230</sup> Andy Mprah, “Sexual and Reproductive Health needs Of LGBT,” in *African Journal of Reproductive Health / La Revue Africaine de la Santé Reproductive* 20, no. 1 (2016), 16.

to its divergence from heterosexual social and cultural mores – thus, the queer community was a prime site for HIV transmission.<sup>231</sup> While policies and approaches towards the HIV/AIDS pandemic did change eventually, it was piecemeal, and queer-specific healthcare responses by the South African government have been virtually non-existent. Further complicating this was the ongoing stigma within many communities.<sup>232</sup>

A major consideration that connected HIV – as a pandemic that did disproportionately affect white gay men in the early years – and historical social relationships is the nature of having a relationship with someone and sharing intimacies with them, be they emotional, physical or spatial.<sup>233</sup> The physical component is the first obvious concern. Being an STI, any unprotected sexual contact could result in infection, which would have had adverse effects until death unless proper medical care was received. The prospect of death – owing to an HIV-positive result of being infected with a disease without effective treatment or cure – was one that added nuance to personal relationships; a person who was tragically destined to die would have to break this news to their nearest and dearest, creating serious instability within the longevity of the relationship. This could be intimate partners, friends, family or those in the sub-culture aware of the individuals struck down by a disease that took many queer men in the period between around 1980 and 2008.

In the case of the men involved in this thesis, two are HIV-positive: Charles, since 1988, and Ashley, since 1992. Their stories formed a critical part to their interviews and reflected a serious change in their personal lives and their understanding of the world. Charles, who had

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<sup>231</sup> Edwin Cameron, “Unapprehend Felons,” in *Defiant Desire*, 59.

<sup>232</sup> Andy Mprah, “Sexual and Reproductive Health needs Of LGBT,” in *African Journal of Reproductive Health / La Revue Africaine de la Santé Reproductive* 20, no. 1 (2016), 18-19.

<sup>233</sup> Carla Tsampiras, “Two Tales about Illness, Ideologies, and Intimate Identities,” *Medical History* 58 (2014).

already left South Africa for the United States to pursue his work in the entertainment sector, spoke of the fact that while he “wasn’t full out of the closet”, his denial of his identity took on greater intensity when he tested HIV-positive:

“In those days ... people told you you’re gonna die really soon, there was no cure, it was a terrible thing to happen, and I was scared to death and I didn’t tell anyone for six weeks, I kinda blamed myself because I had a lot of sex and sort of thought it was gonna happen at some point and then it did, and then I told a good friend of mine, ‘well, I’m HIV positive,’ and my doctor had even said, ‘probably by the year 2000 you’ll be very ill and you’ll die, because there’s no cure,’ and at that time I thought about ending my life and I was so embarrassed.”<sup>234</sup>

Ashley had a similarly tragic story of infection:

“I contracted HIV/Aids on the night I lost my virginity. I was so in need of being loved that night, that even though there were condoms on the nightstand, I had unsafe sex. The person I was with had his own issues, and due to the stigma regarding HIV/Aids during this time, choose not to reveal his diagnosis to me. I was diagnosed HIV positive shortly before my 21st Birthday and given 9 months to live. I had the blood tests done at a gay men’s health clinic after my one-night stand urged me to go for a test. It took a huge amount of courage to submit to these tests, and I was truly frightened. I went alone. There was almost no treatment available. What was available was very expensive, and although initially relatively successful, very toxic and ultimately deadly. There was, as is now, no cure. I had

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<sup>234</sup> Interview with Charles Strachan, 21 March 2019.

to wait 10 days before the results came back. The first thing that came to mind after receiving the diagnosis, and this is a clear memory, is that this was not going to play out as a tragedy. I would choose to walk a path that made everything possible.”<sup>235</sup>

These two stories spoke immediately to a recurring theme: when issues affected the sub-culture and its survival, it often challenged the identities and personal perceptions of the people within it. Furthermore, it often caused stigma and fear to manifest as a result of what the broader heterosexist society felt and believed, causing a sense of instability in the lives of those affected. The consideration of how frequent sexual contact with a variety of people was also a feature to Percy’s interview, when he stated his concern as a medical doctor that was aware of the first few HIV cases in South Africa and how it caused him to adopt safer sex practices as a means of prevention.

Indeed, HIV-related stigmas were recurrent in the interviews. Clifford, for example, was subjected to questions on HIV during his coming out, as the idea of being HIV-positive was attached to other considerations that included dressing in drag, being a paedophile and other baseless queerphobic ideals. Benjamin, as he came of age during the early HIV crisis, saw it as ‘another reason’ not to be queer, as it was a context in which a person’s life and name would be mired in shame and guilt. Matthew, throughout his adult life, was acutely aware of how his activism in the queer community often involved dealing with stigmas around HIV and how queer-orientated groups and people were mired in these social perceptions that were largely without grounding in fact or rational thought.

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<sup>235</sup> Correspondence with Ashley Brownlee, 29 April 2019.

Beyond this, within the context of personal relationships, HIV did affect the relationships these men held. Benjamin, for example, balked at the idea of seeing a man he had been dating in London when he discovered that the man was HIV-positive:

“It was ’92 so the AIDS pandemic had been around for ten years and in the early nineties it was quite hard going, particularly in London, it was quite full-on, and I remember having a flirtation and a bit of a romance with this Brazilian guy and only ten days into the relationships did he tell me he was HIV positive, and I shat myself ... I ran away ... it was very traumatic for me, it was very, very frightening.”<sup>236</sup>

In his relationship with his parents, Charles feared that his coming out as gay and as HIV-positive would wreck his family and required considerable counselling at a getaway weekend in Los Angeles to confront his feelings:

“Someone said to me, ‘look, there’s this three-day course in Los Angeles, it’s called ‘The Experience’ and it’s predominantly set up for gay people to start loving themselves and being honest about who they are and what they believe in because the only way you can actually be loved is to love yourself,’ ... one of the first things I did was stand up in front of the group and say, when I was a child, I was really, really scared that people would find out that I was gay because it was very scary, and guess what: now I’m even more scared that people will find out that I’m HIV-positive ... they said, ‘now, we want you to tell your utmost secrets in this letter, write down everything about you that you’d really, would never share with them

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<sup>236</sup> Interview with Benjamin De Beer, 19 June 2019.

because it's too personal and too private,' ... and then they said, 'okay, now, well, what we want you to do is we're gonna divide you into these groups and we want you to read that letter to these people in the group with you' ... Well, I got halfway through the letter and, of course, I was bawling my eyes out.'<sup>237</sup>

This weekend, in turn, prompted a call back home where he came out as gay and as HIV-positive. While the result was positive from his parents, there was every possibility of rejection, as the social stigmas were robust, ingrained and fitted neatly into the heterosexist view that queer sexual and social behaviour was deviant and dangerous.

Ashley highlighted his social experiences with people of colour as beneficial to his considerations of self and his privilege within white society as the HIV/AIDS pandemic spread further and further. He described going to public health centres to try and medicate his HIV with the available antiretrovirals:

"I came from a world of deep Cape Town white Southern Suburbs privilege, where waiting was something other people had to do. I remember my first few visits, when I was completely overwhelmed by the amount of people and feeling entitled ... Slowly, very slowly, like the queue I was expected to sit in, I started a journey that has had a profound effect on my life. I started to talk to the people around me, started to listen to their stories. Horrible stories of living with HIV/AIDS in townships, of violent discrimination, of fevers in shacks, of waiting [to die] ... no matter your age, your race, your gender, or your sexuality ... I also found comfort in the most unexpected of arms ... Many of them are probably dead by now. I know

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<sup>237</sup> Interview with Charles Strachan, 21 March 2019.

they are. Because they were black and poor, and the help didn't come soon enough."<sup>238</sup>

What is important to take from this discussion around a specific element of the sub-culture that affected the personal relationships of the community is that there can be very present threats from the public sphere that affect the private, and vice versa. The widespread HIV infections among queer people rippled through the lives of those who lived and died with the disease, and their personal politics, relationships and integration within the community indicated that there was an indelible connection between HIV and the ways in which queer men conducted themselves in pursuit of relationships. Furthermore, the attached stigmas and fears of HIV manifested themselves in the minds of men who considered it as an additional factor of identity instability in a queerphobic world.

#### The Foundations:

##### *The explanation behind how queer relationships were formed*

At this juncture, it becomes important for this thesis that the relationships between the men are discussed in order to analyse how their individual experiences were affected by their backgrounds and the context of Cape Town during their adulthood. Furthermore, it makes sense to discuss the foundations of these relationships and various factors including their choices in partners, how they operated in public and private spaces, how relationships negotiated important elements such as sexual intercourse, domestic tasks and public representations of queerness. This can help us to adequately assess the implications that social contexts and identity development had on these men. In turn, it is essential to assess how individual

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<sup>238</sup> Correspondence with Ashley Brownlee, 29 April 2019.

relationships and relationship histories as a whole affected the men's perceptions of social relationships and their own identities.

*'Had me at hello': the beginnings of an intimate relationship*

A basic premise to intimate relationships is that they create a sense of interdependence between the two or more individuals in the relationship: in some way, all individuals in the relationship rely on the other(s) in order to advance their goals and prospects.<sup>239</sup> This interdependence depends on various contextual factors in the relationships: the spaces occupied, the actions allowed or disallowed, the mindset that permeates through each individual and their social context, and the kinds of expectations each individual had.<sup>240</sup> Expectations of interdependence were borne, in psychological terms, from the earliest forms of care: a child needed attention to be sated, and as the child matured into an adult, they were expected to provide attention for others.<sup>241</sup> As with any relationship, the pace was defined by the individual sets of goals and attitudes, and intimacy was in some way achieved based on a compromise between the two (or more) individuals.<sup>242</sup>

The importance of intimacy cannot be overstated. A variety of conditions – for example, the continuation of social cohesion, the mental and physical health of individuals in some cases, and the widening of socialisation as part of a universal human experience – all depend on intimacy in relationships, and their continuation as a means towards studying public and private

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<sup>239</sup> Thomas N. Bradbury and Benjamin R. Karney, *Intimate Relationships* (London/New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 7.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Beverley Fehr, "A Prototype Model of Intimacy Interactions in Same-Sex Friendships," in *Handbook of Closeness and Intimacy*, edited by Debra K. Mashek and Arthur Aron (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2004), 11.

<sup>242</sup> Thomas N. Bradbury and Benjamin R. Karney, *Intimate Relationships*, 8-10.

human social development.<sup>243</sup> Both queer and heterosexual individuals relied on preference and personal history to decide on what they wanted in a partner, how they pursued their partners and how they and their partners coexisted in relationships.<sup>244</sup> There was an obvious contextual difference between heterosexual and queer couplings among white South Africans, in that queerness has historically been treated with social stigma and persecution in white South African society, making the access to dating spaces comparatively more challenging and the ability to have a public relationship something that was not always possible.<sup>245</sup> Further to this, when the intersectional history lens is used, it is important to avoid over-emphasising commonalities in experiences, and to examine each experience of queer intimacy both for the nuances and for the commonality it shares with other queer men.<sup>246</sup> The focus is on white, male queer voices from a privileged background, but there was nuance to the eleven voices.

*Choices: the conditions informing partner selection*

This section of the chapter now turns to the question how the interviewees are attracted to people, and how they went about gaining the attention and affections of said people in their given social and cultural contexts. What is important to understand, from the onset, was that there were several bases to attraction that relied on elements that included personality, their similarities of experiences between individuals, the shared understandings of the world, the desire for attraction to be reciprocated, and a nuanced physical-social element of attraction.<sup>247</sup> In this, it can be inferred that any intimate relationship require some kind of physical, social or

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid, 11-34.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid, 189.

<sup>245</sup> Kathleen Ritter and Anthony Terndrup, *Handbook of Affirmative Psychotherapy with Lesbians and Gay Men*, 312.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid, 1-3.

<sup>247</sup> Thomas N. Bradbury and Benjamin R. Karney, *Intimate Relationships*, 203-211.

emotional connection that went beyond the everyday interactions between humans and allowed for closer ties between the two or more individuals. Physical appearance was, in many cases, the primary basis for attraction, but it was not the fundamental base to long-lasting intimacy: it offered the initial background to the attraction and, as per human psychology, it initiated a number of subconscious and conscious decisions about individuals based on the individual's psychological history.<sup>248</sup> Distinctions could obviously be made based on the original premises of the relationship – i.e. what motivated the commencement of the relationship – as this would have been the foundation to the relationship from the onset. In simpler terms, it was worth examining whether the relationship was grounded in a primarily sexual encounter through cruising, the club scene or other spaces where casual sex was the order of the day. Alternatively, the examination of the relationship's commencement would come with a more emotional or social implication, with the intention (whether successful or not) necessarily more than physical. In this way, we can view the onset of the relationship as a critical foundation to understanding the relationship: why did it start in the first place, and what was in the mind of the individual when the relationship began?

In the instances of the men interviewed, as far as the selection of their prospective partners goes, there was some variety in their answers, but the general sense of attraction was that it was contextual (i.e. who was present where) and relied on their goals (i.e. why were they there at that time). The attractions of men were varied, and these points of diversity were valuable to consider in how the context of apartheid and post-apartheid Cape Town's queer community interacted in certain spaces. A primary area of attraction dealt with in some part by the first chapter of this dissertation was that of the men being attracted (in some part) to women, and how the enforced dichotomy of attraction provoked confusion in many of the men. Aside from

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid, 211-228.

the dichotomy being bi-phobic and being a representation of heterosexist tendencies on how sexual choice works, the sexual and emotional experiences the men had with women were indicative that they had different ideas of themselves over time. James, as noted previously, fell in love with the beauty of the head girl when he was at school, but it was never a sexual kind of attraction; rather, it was emotionally grounded.

*Fair lady: when queer men dated and bedded women*

The men's experiences with women were varied. Hennie, for example, only dated a girl as a means of protecting his sexuality. This could be considered more of an opportunistic relationship that was not entirely rooted in physical attraction, but more in a social expectation. Ashley referred to his own sexual experiences with women in high school as a non-sexual attraction:

“I think it was primarily an attraction to the romance of it all. We dated for no more than a year and a half, with mostly awkward fumbling sex, which wasn't very often. She was two years older than me, and definitely loved me more than I loved her.”<sup>249</sup>

Thomas had sexual experiences with women during high school and his early adulthood but found comfort, as will be discussed, in his sexual experiences with men, whereas Alexander and Charles had more long-term relationships with women during their early adulthood. While Hennie and Thomas' experiences were valuable, they were not as sustained and internally influential as those experienced by Alexander and Charles, and these did merit further discussion in terms of how these early relationships affected their later trajectories in life. Alexander, who had begun to see a woman during his latter high school years, saw it as a coming of age experience:

“I dabbled in sex with a woman before a man and quite liked it but, you know, plainly it wasn't going to last and at some point, I was about twenty, I started to sort of think along the lines, maybe I'm gay, when I was already at university, I

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<sup>249</sup> Correspondence with Ashley Brownlee, 15 April 2019.

was about twenty and, one drunken night, I fumbled into bed with my best friend, which was a huge flop, so much so that I wondered, ‘maybe I was wrong,’ because I really didn’t like it, anything about it or everything just felt wrong, it had been better with the woman, so everything went on hold for about two years.”<sup>250</sup>

The negative primary sexual experiences with a man in this case caused confusion and frustration within Alexander’s conception of self, causing him to doubt his ideas and move away from queer activity. He blamed this early indecision on him being comparatively “sexually backward” compared to contemporaries, and this early ease of sexual gratification and realisation of physical attraction to women was a part of him delaying his greater integration into the sub-culture.<sup>251</sup>

Charles had a somewhat more nuanced and interesting take: while in the army, he was in a relationship with a girl in Cape Town whom he would see when he was not on active service:

“I’d come home and I’d be sort of going out with Karen and there’d be times [when] I’d go back to Karen’s house, but her mother and father were there, so I would get somewhat worked up ... but the parents were always knocking on the door ... so then I would stop at the Rondebosch station on the way home and pick up some anonymous sex on the way home, and anonymous sex was a big part of my life in those days because I couldn’t really admit that I was that way, I would always try and keep the front that I was, I’ve got this girlfriend and that’s what it is.”<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Interview with Alexander Price, 24 April 2019.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Interview with Charles Strachan, 21 March 2019.

In this way, there was a situation akin to Hennie: a socially acceptable relationship, with the queer desires submerged beneath as a result of contextual expectations. What was different was that Charles was involving himself in a prominent feature to the sub-culture: the cruising scene. In this way, the intersection between the public persona or façade produced by Charles and the private desires he satiated at cruising spots were indicative of internal conflict: he could not be his true self, but he could not entirely step into the heterosexual world with ease.

*Conditions: why certain people chose other certain people to date*

Beyond the experiences with women, other contextual elements played into the minds and actions of the men. The articulation of attraction in the men's experiences was never entirely clear, and the claim of 'not having a type' or being attracted to one specific type of person was the general idea put forward. Race was an obvious contextual element to South African society, whereby segregation across the colour bar was a fundamental building block to the spatial, social and cultural foundation of Cape Town and was a feature to overt and passive socialisation. What was interesting to note in the interviews was that the men were unafraid of stating the diversity in their sexual partners, and how many did not see it as issue that they had had sexual and, in some cases, more evolved romantic or emotional relationships with men of colour. Robert, Charles, Percy, Benjamin and Clifford all stated openly that their attraction was to men of all racial descriptions, and all considered it normal to interact socially, sexually and romantically. These attractions, though seen as negative by the heterosexist logic of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, were realised in the lives of the men interviewed and, in their view, they in no way contributed negatively to their personal development. In many cases, it was highlighted as a healthy way to understand other people in society from who they had been cut off during schooling, university or day-to-day life. Indeed, Percy and Alexander were quick

to note that they had little experience of people of colour during their time at UCT in the Eighties, either in a social setting or in any sexual setting: Percy noted, for instance, that there were a few Asian or Indian students at UCT while he was studying, whilst Alexander only really saw people of colour during law clinics he assisted in during his time as a law student.

In other contexts, such as education, physical or sexual prowess, accessibility in sub-culture spots that included bars and cruising areas, and the personal connections that were developed by close exposure – i.e. in the case of Hennie and Clifford during their time in the Stellenbosch University queer circles – were all influential conditions of attraction. The instances of cruising highlighted by Charles and Percy indicated a certain sense of availability being the only necessary condition for a sexual liaison: if a person was willing and able, it was enough to justify an experience of intimacy, albeit one that was anonymous and sexual in nature. While all men did acknowledge their attraction to ‘conventional’ masculine attributes that encompassed a muscular physique (Charles and the gymnasts at the YMCA) and sporting prowess (Clifford and his early attraction to the Protea cricketer Mark Boucher), in many cases attraction transcended physicality and exposure to other queer individuals in a social setting. Alexander made an interesting point about his own life and his affinity towards certain individuals, in amongst his own diversity of attractions and his inability historically to be single:

“I haven’t limited myself to type, I’ve done fat, thin, muscles, skinny, twink, whatever, not a lot of daddy but okay, one or two, I’ve tried ‘em all, I’m now trying with Tony, this guy that I’m kind of seeing in a very light-hearted way, he’s my age ... cos they were always younger, and they were always troubled, I’m trying to form a connection with someone my own age who’s got their own life and isn’t

troubled, but it's not going so well, in that Tony's also troubled, so I've always been a leaning post for other people because ... people have always seen me as more stable than them, which I usually have been, they've been totally unstable, and I'm attracted to these unstable kind of people ... I like people who've got a dark side."<sup>253</sup>

A number of points come across from this. First and foremost, while he did not have any distinct physical or social 'type' of person to whom he was more attracted to, he did have an attraction to a certain personality type within people that was in contrast with his own attributes. It lends credence to the old saying that 'opposites attract', but beyond this, it affirms the fact that attraction was nuanced and cannot be cast down to a simple number of conditions or attributes in one partner or the other. From this analysis on the point of attraction and how the men selected their prospective partners, it can be inferred that while the sub-culture and broader society did inform attraction, and that there was some connection to attributes such as physical appearance, social exposure and the reciprocity of interest found in certain parts of the sub-culture, attraction was far more nuanced and lent itself differently to each individual relationship.

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<sup>253</sup> Interview with Alexander Price, 24 April 2019.

## The Dates of our Lives:

### *The context behind how people met and courted*

The point about meeting people was a fascinating one within the interviews, and at this juncture it is helpful to begin discussing the individual relationships of the men in question. The meeting places or spaces the men occupied were varied but do align with being largely within the public domain. The period of 1966-2008 was the time before online dating became more of a norm, a time before dating applications on smartphones such as Tinder and Grindr, which have allowed for the dating scenes to migrate off the streets and on to a more removed setting such as a bedroom or sitting room. While specific stories did include mentions of online dating websites – Hennie and Clifford noted using Gaydar while at Stellenbosch – these are very much in the minority of cases. The elements to the sub-culture mentioned above – clubbing and cruising – were major contributors to the early meetings and experiences the men had, but these are not the only sources. The social clubs, groups and circles occupied by predominantly queer individuals are similar in nature, but require an even further sense of exclusivity, in that you would need to know someone in the group to gain entry. Further to this, when considering the intersections of race and class, access became a greater issue for other social groups in Cape Town. It would be helpful, however, to examine these points of entry, for they would in some way have affected the trajectories of the relationships in question.

When looking at the men's experiences of relationships, it would be more useful to examine the specific intimate relationships they mentioned either by name or instance. The generalised statements of their more casual encounters only reveal that the cruising and clubbing scenes did generate sexual and romantic partners. However, owing to the sexual partners being frequent in nature, abundant in number or not as memorable as the more long-term

relationships, it was revealed that the value they had in comparison was different from an emotional perspective. The more long-term or sustained a relationship was, the more influential it was on the person's perception of themselves and of social relationships within the sub-culture. Thus, while there is a consideration of casual encounters, these were analysed only as a result of them being notable in the minds of the men interviewed, and thus the best representation of their own personal histories. The initial meetings in the more long-term relationships did vary, but most happened either in public settings unconnected to the sub-culture, direct outlets within the sub-culture or through more private social groups. It is worth examining each of these individually, for they all contributed differently to the initial meeting, the manner in which the meeting went and the ramifications of said meeting.

*Out in the open: the publicness of relationships*

In public, the 'net' for prospective partners was arguably the widest, as there was no clear social or cultural distinction as to whom the men were mingling with. The diversity of social settings emerged in the interviews: Robert met a partner of his on a television film set, while Clifford met one at a friend's wedding. Percy, during military service in Durban, met and fell in love with a fellow soldier. Matthew, during his later high school years, dated another high school boy from a different school. In these relationships, the context often defined the relationship in terms of its longevity and 'contents', or the way in which the relationship flowed. The high school relationship between Matthew and the other schoolboy was a 'juvenile' one, destined to have a cut-off date at the end of their schooling career and the conflict in it, as will be explored in the following chapter, was described by Matthew as young and immature, based on their proximity to each other and their mutual desire to survive the heterosexist environment of same-sex high schools in Cape Town. Percy, in a similar vein, had a relationship that did

have a foreseeable ending. He knew he would be leaving South Africa as soon as he could after his military service to travel and to get away from the toxic environment that was South Africa under the late Eighties State of Emergency. While he may have felt sadness when he returned and found his partner was dating someone else, he saw it as a necessary relationship to further his personal identity as a young queer man.

Robert met a man of colour in the mid-Eighties on a Dutch colonial period television film set where he was a British soldier and his future boyfriend, a Cape Malay hairdresser, was an extra as a slave. He experienced a very positive relationship with this boyfriend that helped shape his sexuality and public persona that broke away from his rural background into the sub-culture that was so entirely different. This initial relationship, when he spoke about it, was influential in that it also gave him insight into how a relationship began a process of interacting with different social attitudes that helped him develop:

“He came from a fairly devout Cape Malay family, a background in which there was very little if any judgment, he was accepted for who he was, he was kind of lauded for who he was and so he was quite a sort of stable and focused person and didn’t allow me to act up too much in that relationships.”<sup>254</sup>

This progress was a result of the private and public merging: aside from the racism he experienced as a result of this relationship and the one that followed, which was also with a man of colour, his own personal development was pushed forward by the community he interacted with (i.e. the Cape Malay community, and its social views) and by the relationship he had that had come from a public outlet. In a similar manner, Clifford’s first kiss with a man

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<sup>254</sup> Interview with Robert Finlayson, 21 March 2019.

was followed by a period of uncertainty in between the kiss and the beginning of a relationship with the same man. This confusion made this first experience doubly interesting, owing to a shared confusion about identity which did create a psychological distance between them. This was primarily a reflection, again, of the merging of public and private, where public stigma influenced private confusion, causing public and private distances. When the relationship did occur, it was a public one and was described by Clifford as “a joyous exploration of self and body.”<sup>255</sup>

In a not-so-pleasant story, Ashley met a partner through university, another frequent location for the formation of relationships among the men. As previously mentioned, the exposure to queer circles in university classes, societies and social groups was beneficial, but it did come at some cost to the men. While these spaces did attract queer people, not all of these people were willing to accept their queerness or interact with other queer people in an entirely healthy manner. Ashley, sadly, faced the brunt of another man’s inability to reflect his queer desires in public:

“We could be as thick as thieves one day, and the next he was off the radar with one of his conquests. We would organise to meet, and he wouldn’t show up. Our sexual dalliances were to remain secret, so that his heterosexuality would remain iconic ... It would be fair to say that I spent most of my time at UCT in a state of being a “hot mess” ...”<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Interview with Clifford Lewis, 18 March 2019.

<sup>256</sup> Correspondence with Ashley Brownlee, 29 April 2019.

While more specifics on the nature of the conflict between the two will be dealt with in the following chapter, the encounters with the aforementioned partner still spoke to certain relationships that did, or did not, occur in the public realm, despite being rooted firmly in public spaces. In the university space, Matthew saw a considerable overlap with the sub-culture, and how there was an interesting shift between one-night stands and more long-term relationship, in his own experience:

“I think it’s that whole, “what does a gay person do on their first date,” it’s sex and then you figure out what their name is, it was that sort of vibe, it was those sort of vibes, it was just people sort of meeting, having that sexual encounter, and then afterwards going, ‘and your name is?’ and then, “do you wanna swap numbers, let’s chat,” and that’s how a lot of them started.”<sup>257</sup>

This, in many ways, mimicked developments in the heterosexual realm of casual dating and sexual encounters among mostly young people present in South African society during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>258</sup> This was something Alexander specifically mused on in his interview and is present in a reasonable reading of the era that was after the so-called “Summer of Love” in the Sixties.<sup>259</sup> There was thus something to infer from the publicness of the relationship and the trajectory it followed. While there was variety in each individual intimate situation, the broader social context informed the methods adopted by queer people, over and above anything the queer sub-culture produced.

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<sup>257</sup> Interview with Matthew Van As, 21 June 2019.

<sup>258</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The regulation of sexuality since 1800*.

<sup>259</sup> Interview with Alexander Price, 24 April 2019.

*The sub-culture, continued: the direct influences of the community*

This segues neatly, then, into the discussion around how the relationships that began in the sub-culture were influential on the men within them. A variety of relationships began within queer-orientated or queer-specific spaces, and it is important here to draw the comparisons between the analysis above on the influence of the sub-culture on the men interviewed and their actual relationships. In so doing, it is worthwhile to examine how these areas and spaces affected the manner in which the relationship began, was pursued and how it was dissolved or maintained over a longer term. In many cases, the men indulged in casual romantic or sexual encounters at bars, train stations and other sites. These were, as previously stated, with the intention of sexual gratification or of some assuaging of personal loneliness, and many were casual encounters that only served as short-term physical or emotional releases.

Meetings in the conventional sub-culture spots afforded to white queer men were common in the narratives presented by the men. Charles met most of his sexual partners in Cape Town, while Benjamin, while in a gay club, met a partner that he dated for a year and half, and considered the relationship to be ‘wonderful’ and ‘clueless’, for he had been a young man without a lot of experience in dating. The relationship also coincided with times that he was spending in clubs, where, as stated, there was a reasonable abundance of sexual partnerships that allowed for a removal from monogamy or emotional investment on his part. Another example is Alexander: while being in another relationship he became used to him or his partner introducing a third man to their sexual – and sometimes domestic – environment as a result of the clubs in Cape Town. While neither was actively interested in bringing people into the relationship, Alexander considered it as something connected to how he and his partner were not sexually compatible at all and should rather have been friends. The introduction of a third

partner would have, in his mind, made the sexual encounters more interesting. An important context of this relationship was that both Alexander and his partner were heavily involved in the sub-culture through the clubs and drugs scene, living a somewhat hedonistic life during their eighteen years of dating and living together.

Meetings in the sub-culture could often be outside of the clubbing-cruising space. Ashley, for example, met his current partner of over twenty-five years at a Queer Theatre festival being held in Cape Town, and considered it a fundamental moment in his early adulthood:

“Andre and I met at a Queer Theatre festival I was performing at, at Jazzart (when it was still in Jarvis Street). He’d taken a job as a barman that morning, when the booked barman took ill. We each have two very telling stories ... I saw Andre across the room, and it felt like I’d stepped into a blinding light. I instantaneously knew I’d be spending the rest of my life with him. Andre remembers the tight black jeans I had on, and that he thought I was really hot.”<sup>260</sup>

What was interesting about the sub-culture, and a point that has not been discussed yet in this thesis, was that it was often the sub-culture that informed the creation of even smaller social groups that could be areas where people could find prospective partners. A person could meet someone on the dancefloor or at a train station, and owing to them developing an initial rapport, could have been introduced to the social group(s) that the other person was privy to. What this was then was a further nuance to the private-public overlap and spoke to the levels of integration a person could possibly go through in the queer community to find prospective partners. This did, in some manner, mimic heterosexual society and did reflect the issue of

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<sup>260</sup> Correspondence with Ashley Brownlee, 29 April 2019.

social proximity that Bradbury and Karney spoke of: “the power of proximity may be to limit the field of eligible partners.”<sup>261</sup> Alexander met his first partner at a bar called the Wine Barrel, though he did note that even though the person was “ghastly” he still dated him for a period of time before going on to date his friend, and interesting overlap with the social group meeting spaces.<sup>262</sup> This story alone revealed the overlap between public sub-cultural relationships and those gained through closer relationships with other queer individuals.

*Dinner parties and soirées: the inner workings of social circles*

In the dining rooms and parlours of the many houses and social spots that have been occupied by queer couples and social groups, relationships were formed and maintained. As a microcosm of the broader sub-culture, and of South Africa as a whole, these social spots and groups became a valuable space for people to find prospective sexual and romantic partners. What is important to assess from this, however, is how the relationships that were pursued through these avenues were either in line with or against the general fabric and considerations of the sub-culture, and how these private spaces affected the personal development of the men involved. In many instances, partners were met through previous partners and were already a part of the social group when they began to date within said group. Robert and Alexander, from their first male long-term partners, were both introduced to social circles and began dating others in the circle when the first relationship ended. As the group was predominantly Coloured men, he faced similar stigmas that were present in his other relationship, something that caused him to embrace the more-welcoming nature of the community that surrounded his partner.

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<sup>261</sup> Thomas N. Bradbury and Benjamin R. Karney, *Intimate Relationships*, 233.

<sup>262</sup> Interview with Alexander Price, 24 April 2019.

Thomas' dating history is the best indication of what it is to date purely from social groups. Owing to his more 'traditional' set of ideas when it came to seeing men in a romantic or sexual light, he was only likely to meet people meaningfully through these private networks that existed as a result of him developing a relationship with people he trusted. Indeed, his first partner was one he met through a friend at college who tragically passed away. Thomas went on to date his partner for two years, and though the relationship ended when Thomas left the country to pursue his modelling career, it was rekindled for a short while when he returned. While more on the ending of relationships will be spoken about in the next relationship, an important note on this relationship was how he retained a lot of feelings after they broke up:

“I really, really, really loved that person, we're still friends, we're still very good friends now, I went to his wedding and he's married now to somebody else ...”<sup>263</sup>

Subsequent to that, there was a relationship between 2006 and 2008 that was the inverse of his previous one; where in the first relationship Thomas had been the younger, he was now the older of the two in the relationship. What was important to reflect on then in wrapping-up the consideration of the onset of each relationship considered notable by the men and how each contributed to their understanding of the world was that there was a clear connection between the spaces used to pursue partners, the kinds of bases of attraction that existed in the minds of the men, and what these bases and spaces did to the ways in which the men carried themselves. Whether it was risking attention in a train station bathroom or flirting over a glass of wine at a dinner party, the ways in which relationships began and were formulated in the minds of the men had indelible links to their personal development

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<sup>263</sup> Interview with Thomas van Breda, 4 April 2019.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **‘You Tell Me Yours, I’ll Tell You Mine’:**

##### ***Intimacy, conflict and conflict resolution methods***

A point at which the sub-culture, personal development and the foundations of the aforementioned relationships met lay in intimacy and in conflict. These are two overlapping and essential components to any intimate relationship. It is thus critical to assess these two components in how they were informed by the histories of the respective men involved, and the ways in which they affected their lives after each relationship. In order to adequately assess these two concepts and their implications, it is important to consider how intimacy was achieved largely in the private sphere and which factors – such as shared spaces or domestic tasks – were involved in the intimate domesticities of the men interviewed for this thesis. Beyond that, the instances of conflict that punctuated the relationships are worthy of examination, for they informed a narrative of the individual and their shared proximity to other queer men in terms of personal development and social perceptions. Finally, the aspects of resolution through various outlets, avenues and psychosocial processes will be discussed.

#### **The Intimacies:**

##### ***How the men experienced intimacy, and how it affected their lives***

Within specific contexts, the kinds of intimacy shared between the men did vary, and for the purposes of this section, it is sensible to discuss the more long-term established relationships. This is not to say that relationships that take casual forms of physical intimacy are not as legitimate or credible, but rather that the kinds of development gained, and understandings gathered, from casual sexual or physical encounters, have been dealt with in the sub-culture

discussions of Chapter 2. Furthermore, the specific kinds of intimacy spoken about in this section weigh the experiences of conflict in those relationships as equally as possible.

*Keep it together: factors defining longer-term intimacy*

An initial point to discuss is the longevity factor in any relationship. The length of the relationship, despite where it began and its trajectory, was an important consideration. In the case of a few of the men, there were relationship endings based on the duration or pacing of the relationship, where the cause of the relationship's conclusion was a result of intimacy being achieved too early. Indeed, Hennie, Benjamin, Matthew and Clifford had a string of shorter relationships, many of which were subjected to concerns of the relationship advancing too quickly. In Hennie's own words:

“I think it was very easy to protect myself by going out with this guy and seeing how it goes and when it doesn't work out, I dump them ... I had a good eight or nine boyfriends in three years that lasted, like, a month or three, but every time it progressed to a point where we'd either have to, or want to, have sex or they would want to say, 'I love you,' then I would freak out, then I would just run away.”<sup>264</sup>

Benjamin, in a similar vein, considered the length of a relationship too long if it presented the possibility of some kind of conflict or disagreement with which it was not strictly necessary for him to engage: an example of this was when his partners developed unreciprocated emotional attachments to him. Considering it a case where he would “head it off at the pass”, Benjamin's behaviour presented a useful tool for analysing the kinds of relationships in which

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<sup>264</sup> Interview with Hennie Geldenhuys, 3 April 2019.

the men entered.<sup>265</sup> Matthew had a similar outlook – where casual sex would be followed by one person attempting to get to know the other – and this general shortening of relationships was because of the concerns related to intimacy. This then raised the question of how people moulded their motivations based on avoiding certain kinds of intimacy in favour of others. Commonly, this happened where physical intimacy would supersede emotional or romantic interest in the other person. What it also suggests is that intimacy was a daunting prospect for some people and at certain stages in their lives – which, in the case of Matthew, Benjamin and Hennie, was during the early adulthood – where they were either unwilling or unable to commit themselves to the relationship. Intimacy, in this sense, should not be taken lightly as a concept that can cause internal conflict and confusion with regards to social roles and relationships.

The times and spaces shared between couples should also be considered. Whether it was over a dinner table or in the kitchen, the times shared were indicative as to the level of commitment and the kinds of emotions that were brought forward by each partner. Among the men, there was a spectrum of types between those who decided to live with their partners quite soon after meeting – Ashley, Alexander and James – and those who led separate lives but shared domestic spaces if and when they saw their significant others – Percy and Benjamin. Percy justified his living alone and not getting involved in actually living with two of his partners as follows:

“I’ve always been a very independent person ... even though I had a close and loving family I was not particularly comfortable in the family set-up ... I don’t think I’ve actively ever looked for a relationship but been in spaces where relationships seemed to have been reasonable and appropriate and they had happened ... I’ve never had a yearn to be partnered ... I always had my own

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<sup>265</sup> Interview with Benjamin De Beer, 19 June 2019.

domestic space, and I purchased property quite early on in my career, it was just a thing I always wanted, I wanted my own home and he also bought a flat, and then a house ... [a partner] was very distraught when I bought my second house, I didn't invite him to move in with me ..."<sup>266</sup>

What this already points to is a distinction between those couples that had a closer domestic connection and shared spaces regularly and their level of intimacy, and those that kept their partners at a so-called 'arm's distance'; the latter invariably had some kind of hindrance to intimacy. Though it will be spoken about more as a source to the conflict in the relationship between Percy and the aforementioned partner later in this chapter, Percy used the prejudices held by his partner to bolster the independence he had sought since he was younger, which was a response to his desire to live a life outside of a home environment. Benjamin, to the same effect, used his own attitudes towards conventional modes of living – as mentioned above in reference to marriage – to justify his living alone for most of his adult life. Benjamin was in a relationship that began in a gay club that lasted one and a half years; they didn't live together but did share domestic spaces by travelling to each other's homes and spending nights together cooking and sharing time. He referred to it fondly, but also as 'clueless' because of his own immaturity as a twenty-something year old.

In the instances of relationships where people lived together, these were the relationships that lasted quite long. Most notable among these were the relationships Ashley and James have with their current partners, which have lasted twenty-five and forty years respectively, and the relationship Alexander had with his partner between 1986 and 2004, a "turbulent, eighteen-

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<sup>266</sup> Interview with Percy Middleton, 11 June 2019.

year relationship”.<sup>267</sup> These were all relationships within a settled, domestic environment, and in these relationships, intimacy was spoken about with ease: cooking, cleaning, dinner parties and social soirées were commonplace. Both Ashley and James spoke about the delegation of roles in the household. While both partners were bringing money into the house in their own capacity, there was always a clear ‘domestic’ person in the house (i.e. the person who would do the majority of the cleaning, cooking and other domestic tasks that were not done by another person employed to do so). James, interestingly, shifted roles between his first major relationship and his current one. In the first relationship, when he lived with a male architecture student, he was the primary domestic person, whereas his current partner does the majority of the cooking and helps them both maintain their vegetarian way of life. Ashley, in his own capacity, is the primary cook and cleaner in his relationship with his partner, but does not consider it a set feature to their relationship, believing it to be a more organic, natural and mature relationship:

“The past decade we’ve spent almost exclusively in each other’s company. Andre has always been the breadwinner, while I manage the household, although we both have had independent jobs that support us financially. This is not to be confused with traditional male/female roles, as neither of us see each other as anything other than male, and we have never considered the work we do as indicative of gender. We do what comes to us naturally and use what personal strengths we have to share responsibilities. For many years we were lip locked and inseparable, but with the passing years our moments of intimacy have developed into something far more dependable i.e. making food together, going on holiday together, watching movies, etc ... we can finish each other’s sentences, and pretty much instinctually know

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<sup>267</sup> Interview with Alexander Price, 24 April 2019.

what the other is thinking. We are a well-oiled machine, operating without having to negotiate each other's feelings.”<sup>268</sup>

Alexander and his partner were more the hedonistic type, with what he referred to as an “indulgent” lifestyle that involved hard partying, drugs and vibrant social circles that were constantly in need of socialising.<sup>269</sup> This, he did admit, took a toll on their lives:

“We also entertained a lot, when I say ‘entertained’, we used to have dinners, I used to cook, not him, but dinners, all the time, every Saturday night, people for dinners, he was working for the media at that time, various glossy magazines, and he used to get invited out to parties all the time ... media parties for book launches, product launches, whatever they were, there would be parties and there would be all the glamorous sort of society people would be there and openings of restaurants, I met everyone, we were out all the time, so I think about ten years later we burnt out ... in the meantime I was working in a top law firm, working very hard, and I didn't really have time to think about what a good life we were having, we just had it and we started travelling overseas quite regularly, overspending, always spent more than we earned ... wine, coke here, cocaine, ecstasy, acid, and that's the life that we lived, you know, and we thought it'd go on forever but, of course ... you kind of burn out eventually and not only did we burn out, we burnt out with each other as well ...”<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Correspondence with Ashley Brownlee, 29 April 2019.

<sup>269</sup> Interview with Alexander Price, 24 April 2019.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

In the aftermath of the relationship, Alexander took great pains to distance his former partner from his domestic setting, and even paid him to start off a life elsewhere. The nuances to the conflict in their relationship will be dealt with in the following section of this chapter and will better explain why Alexander sought a space of his own so specifically. In a subsequent relationship with a different man, his earlier partner became a part of their household despite not being in the intimate relationship. Indeed, after Alexander's mother passed away:

“... my father started coming for dinner, then my father met another woman and she started coming, so we had our own funny little family of outcasts that used to come and gather here for dinners ...”<sup>271</sup>

This adds some nuance to intimacy, in that it was possible to be shared along non-romantic lines and could form outside of relationships that had ended or relationships that were driven by familial connections. Indeed, Alexander and his experiences lend credence to the fact that intimacy was more than people sharing domestic spaces or living together: it relied on a level of connection that could transcend break-ups and physical distances.

*Past becomes present: when historical conditions informed contemporary intimacy*

The influences on personal understandings of intimacy of any relationships or encounters with other people in a physically, emotionally or romantically intimate manner cannot be understated. It is necessary to consider these effects as beyond the physical spaces, as the changes experienced by the men were also understood as metaphysical, emotional and psychological shifts that necessitated a difference in who they were as people. Clifford, in using

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<sup>271</sup> Interview with Alexander Price, 24 April 2019.

his psychologist mindset, stated that he saw the early fruition of his attractions to men as a way to reflect himself more in society, and that in an early romantic partner relationship:

“[The partner] represented that release and that convergence of sexuality and emotion and being more of a whole person rather than, because before that I didn’t have an ideal, the ideal before that was a wife, and ‘two and a half children’ and the white picket fence ... if I look at the guys that I’ve dated they are all very different physically, emotionally and intellectually, so ... when people ask me, “what’s my type,” I’ve never really had a type.”<sup>272</sup>

The socialised model of heterosexual monogamy with domestic stability in a nuclear family is the reality that made itself obvious to Clifford. It was only until he was able to actualise his internalised desires and attractions that he was able to produce a shift in his mind that would legitimise his actions. In this way, there was a connection between the way past experiences of intimacy – which, in many cases, did stem from the early home life stories and memories – affected future understandings and impacts upon the image of self. A number of the men conceded to the fact that they or their siblings made definitive steps to avoid or replicate their childhood homes because of the turbulence or stability it had offered. Ashley and Robert, for example, in referring back to their foundational understandings of intimacy and domesticity, took great pains to avoid repeating the past. Robert stated that he and his siblings had discussed the parenting they had received from their mother:

“We all feel that in some way it affected how we, how we grew up and our view of the world ... my sister made a very, I mean, I remember her before she had children

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<sup>272</sup> Interview with Clifford Lewis, 18 March 2019.

making a sort of vow to herself that she would never, she would not bring up her children in the same way but it did affect us all in very different sorts of ways, and she hasn't, which I admire her for, she's made a, she's sort of done the polar opposite to what my mother did and I think her kids are pretty well balanced because of it."<sup>273</sup>

Robert's mother, as stated in Chapter 1, had adopted emotionally unstable parenting methods that caused her to behave in a manner that was borderline abusive. Ashley, in a similar mindset, sought to treat his relationship with his current partner with a "strong sense of humour and firm belief in the strength of our relationship," so as not to repeat the instances of toxic domesticity that he experienced as a child.<sup>274</sup> His father had been an unpleasant man who did not treat his wife or adopted children with much care and had resorted to alcoholism and verbal recrimination to assert his authority. The kinds of intimacy and domesticity that children from unstable households experienced affected their way of handling parenting or domestic disputes or other major components to sharing a home with a significant other.

The effects of intimacy went beyond this, however: in some instances, there had been definitive identity effects on the men. Clifford, as mentioned before, had built up a wall during his adolescence that had attempted to dissuade his queer thoughts and motivations. His first kiss and first experiences of dating acted as a way of reconciling his feelings with actions, but also created a negative sense of attraction and attachment. This, unfortunately for him, caused an eventual realisation of unreciprocated love, requiring him to spend time in therapy as part of the lesbi-gay society. The intimacy he experienced, though helpful in resolving a long-standing

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<sup>273</sup> Interview with Robert Finlayson, 21 March 2019.

<sup>274</sup> Correspondence with Ashley Brownlee, 15 April 2019.

issue of his, did also result in the manifestation of distressing feelings. Experiences akin to this were similar to those that Benjamin and Charles had; either as a result of doubt in the attraction to men or their fear of stigma of being ‘branded as gay’, both men were concerned about the kinds of pity and revulsion many gay men faced. While intimate relationships of various forms with men did reconcile these ideas to some extent, there were overarching concerns until later in their respective lives.

### The Conflict:

#### *Theories, sources and experiences of intimate relationship conflict*

Relationships were not always about the intimate clinking of wine glasses or the tender moments shared in the various spaces afforded to queer male couples. Instances of conflict were, as in any social relationship, punctuation points in the day-to-day lives of the men. To properly do justice to the experiences of conflict in the intimate relationships these men had, it is first necessary to examine theories and understandings that govern the study of interpersonal conflict and collect the analysis produced throughout this thesis that discusses the basis to conflict before delving into the specific origins, occurrences and outcome therein.

When considering conflict in relationships, it is first important to recognise that it is a common experience in any social relationship. Be it between friends, co-workers, lovers, partners, enemies or social acquaintances, conflict is an everyday feature to human social interaction and should not be considered entirely negative or as an anomaly. In the instance of an intimate relationship, conflict was a simple disagreement of goals or decision-making measures between

the two or more individuals.<sup>275</sup> The greater the intensity of difference, the more complicated the fight would be, and these differences in goals or decision-making measures would have been determined by the lives led before.<sup>276</sup> In many ways, this echoed what Isaacs and McKendrick spoke about in their crisis theory: when the normal means of resolution are disturbed, discarded or don't work, then a crisis situation is created within the mind and circumstances of the individual, making conflict in intimate relationships an important intersection of the individual's past and present circumstances.

An important consideration for this section of the thesis was that idea proposed by Isaacs and McKendrick in *Male Homosexuality* around crisis theory: as a response to external (or internal) pressures and forces, conflict in relationships could be considered as a 'crisis' in a queer relationship.<sup>277</sup> A crisis tested the conventional response mechanisms of a person, often pushing them past their normal psychological, social or mental responses into a state of existence where they were forced to face two different types of crisis: situational crises and maturational (or developmental) crises.<sup>278</sup> These types of crises revolve around the concept of "loss", either as a result of an unexpected problem such as death, illness or disaster, or as a result of a so-called "passage of life" being disrupted by the loss of something, someone or the loss of a state of mind.<sup>279</sup> What made queer crises different from heterosexual crises, and something that related specifically to conflict in relationships, was that they were often articulated by the marginalisation that the sub-culture is subjected to, that suppression of the crisis often caused developmental issues in identity, and that it often precipitated an exit or

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<sup>275</sup> Erich Kirchler, Christa Rodler, Erik Hölzl and Katja Meier, *Conflict and Decision-Making in Close Relationships: Love, Money and Daily Routines* (Hove: Psychology Press Ltd, 2001), 69.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid*, 70.

<sup>277</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, 41.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid*, 43.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid*, 44.

removal from the sub-culture, with successful resolution of the crises allowing reintegration.<sup>280</sup> Crisis theory was, therefore, helpful as a tool to consider how conflict, as a crisis that was either situational (for example, an unexpected fight between partners) or maturational (where a relationship was disturbed by developmental problems in one or more of the people involved in the relationship) was a point in the men's lives that merits study.<sup>281</sup> The manner in which the men defined, explained and endured conflict spoke to their specific backgrounds, their previous experiences in conflict and their attempts at resolution, all of which borrowed from the past and from their instinctual reactions to the situation at hand.

The men defined conflict in different ways and through different narrative devices. In many of the definitions, the point about two people having conflicting ideas came across as fundamental to interpersonal relationships. Ashley saw this as a difference being irreconcilable, whereas Thomas considered it rooted in disagreement over the issue being contested. There was, however, always a depth of meaning to conflict as defined. Clifford, with his background in psychology, stated that:

“I would say when the individuals involved in said conflict have different opinions or viewpoints or underpinning value systems and that becomes apparent, and there is some difficulty in reconciling them ... typically they would compete for the same resources or air time or consideration and there's some challenges with reconciling the differences and then obviously you can go from there and say “well, conflict is good because sometimes, if you manage it correctly, it can lead to self-discovery

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<sup>280</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, 55-63.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

and innovation and blah blah blah,” but essentially that’s what I would say conflict is that it’s not necessarily good or bad in itself, it’s just differences.”<sup>282</sup>

Two points are important to glean from this statement. The first, that human conflict revolved around the issues within the individuals participating in the relationship. Other men interviewed did define conflict in a similar light: Thomas saw conflict as based in disagreements but saw some discomfort with the idea of interacting with conflict, whereas Alexander saw conflict as either emotional or sexual: you either got on sexually or emotionally, not both, and the discrepancy in the one caused problems for the way both partners considered the relationship. The second point made by Clifford was that conflict was a common and socially inevitable part of human relationships, an idea shared by Matthew when he stated that he considered any conflict in his life as an expected outcome when people of different backgrounds, outlooks and contexts merged. Furthermore, in his own life, he had seen that age is a defining feature to the ‘natural’ components of conflict:

“The older you get, the more complex your arguments and fights get, because you’ve got more opinions and you’ve got more understanding of the world.”<sup>283</sup>

There was further nuance in the addition by Charles in that he considered conflict as a merging of the external and internal forces that interacted during relationships, a fitting reference back to the public-private overlap that has been referred to throughout this thesis. Charles contextualised this idea as a result of a friend of his who was killed during a fight in 1983: the friend in question was a man of colour, with a white girlfriend, and a white man in Hillbrow,

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<sup>282</sup> Interview with Clifford Lewis, 18 March 2019.

<sup>283</sup> Interview with Matthew Van As, 21 June 2019.

Johannesburg, had taken offence and punched him, prompting him to knock his head on the sidewalk late at night. While the relationship was not a queer one between two men, it was nonetheless indicative of social stigmas that were persistent during apartheid when Charles was still living in South Africa.

A lot of these views were developed as a result of lived experiences and are tied back to a number of conditions in the past experiences and social conditioning the men had undergone. Ashley, specifically, noted that his definition of conflict was based upon his 25-year relationship and what he had experienced at home as a result of his father's toxic behaviour. Thomas, similarly, based many of his ideas around conflict, relationships and his more 'traditional' outlook on dating off his parents and their marriage. Benjamin, similarly, considered conflict entirely influenced by 'trauma' from previous disagreements or in the ways that people had considered important issues in their past lives.

*The starting points: the foundational 'causes' to conflict*

When considering what caused conflict in the relationships between the men, the general sense of disagreement or the prevailing influence of a past life were far too simplistic measures to look at when it came to understanding and representing the experiences of conflict that the men went through. What is beneficial to this thesis then is a necessary breakdown of a number of overarching conditions behind specific instances of conflict and how each was a representation of the past in each individual life and their perception of social relationships.

What can be gleaned from this particular analysis is that different 'sub-sources' to conflict had pulled from different areas in terms of personal history, and as a result each had specific kinds

of effects on the people involved. When discussing the themes, it is pressing to consider that there were instances of overlap, and that some liberty needs to be taken in deducing a central source of the conflict.

1) The uncertainty of identity and personal development: Identity, as discussed through this thesis, was an issue of particular importance when it came to queer men forming relationships. As discussed, Isaacs and McKendrick considered identity maladjustment to be a particularly critical issue when crises occurred in the personal lives of queer men.<sup>284</sup> In some men, the fears of being outed as queer or leading a queer life led to active rejection of queer labels or close associations with queerness of any sort, despite a physical-sexual interest in same-sex intimacy. Charles saw this kind of externalised fear of queerphobic violence merge with his perceptions of self, the internal fears that came of leading a quasi-double life, and in some of his intimate encounters he faced conflict as a result of a sexual encounter in a train during his army service:

“I ended up giving him a blow-job [oral sex], there were six people in the compartment ... The moment he came, he woke up the whole compartment, ‘oh, that fucking circus guy, he just sucked my dick,’ and everybody’s laughing about it, and I’m sitting there, thinking, ‘oh shit, they’re gonna beat the crap out of me’ ... I was also scared that someone might beat me up. I personally think that he enjoyed the blow-job, he was definitely into it, but he felt guilt after he came and then he decided to just make a big deal out of it.”<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, 44.

<sup>285</sup> Interview with Charles Strachan, 21 March 2019.

Ashley, similarly, had a ‘disastrous’ relationship during his university years that involved a lot of manipulation and emotional abuse that rested mainly in his partner, a closeted bisexual man, having issues with his public persona. Owing to his desire not to be seen as queer by anyone in public, he was an unpredictable and unfaithful partner to Ashley.

The damaging effects of the relationship became clear when reading the testimony provided by Ashley: despite good moments, the overarching elements of his partner’s identity caused deep divisions in their public relationship and created circumstances where the private development of Ashley’s sense of self and sexuality was marred by his partner’s personal identity issues. Not too much reading between the lines was required to see that there was a direct correlation between the personal identity and the harmful interactions between Ashley and his partner of the time. The refusal to accept sexuality or, at the very least, acknowledge the intimacy and attractions within a relationship was also a problem for James when he first moved to Cape Town in 1967, evidenced in his recollection of dating a student for a period of time:

“We moved in together about three months [after meeting] and we lived together for four years ... he told me, ‘he’s not gay,’ he said he’s going to get married when he comes back to Cape Town and it actually happened, he came back, and he married one of my best friends, and then what happened, they moved to Amsterdam a few years later and he died of AIDS ... I was completely in love, but I think I tried to give everything, I just gave the whole time, I never received anything back, but I didn’t question it, I never questioned things ...”<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Interview with James Le Roux, 2 May 2019.

Deep psychological and developmental issues reared during other relationships: for example, in one that Alexander was in during his early twenties, insecurities and substance-abuse issues were present throughout their relationship, and he was often at the receiving end of violence and verbal abuse. Despite sharing a home and trying to create some kind of spatial intimacy, conflict persisted:

“No, the conflict was very simple, he felt insecure, I think he felt insecure in everything in his life, but I was only twenty-two and I wasn’t very experienced in anything, especially not relationships or sexual things ... so, firstly, I was university-educated and so were my best friends. He had dropped out of school before matric, so he had a huge inferiority issue with that, that my friends looked down on him, which they started to do because he behaved so badly, and he also had this thing that he wasn’t worthy of me, therefore I was cheating on him, which I wasn’t, ... he’d had too much to drink and pick a fight and I was late coming home from somewhere, then I’d been with somebody else, or whatever...”<sup>287</sup>

At the end of the relationship, Alexander was eventually pushed by the continuous insecurity and assault on his character to fight back – “I threw him, he fell through a window and there was blood spurting ... he bit my arm, there was a scar there for about ten years” – and he paid his partner to leave him alone, as a means towards trying to remove the negative influence on his own life.<sup>288</sup> This instability was a direct result of the perceived inadequacies his partner had with himself and manifested in assaults on Alexander’s character and identity.

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<sup>287</sup> Interview with Alexander Price, 24 April 2019.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

In some of Robert's relationships, racial insecurity was a notable thread that echoed the experiences of two people from two different socio-economic classes. Owing to misunderstandings between their respective racial groups as a result of people not mixing over the colour bar during the apartheid era, there was often insecurity and antagonism because of the racial stigma and inferiority complexes. Indeed, Robert considered this 'normal' in relationship conflict: that hang-ups, perceptions of inferiority and self-esteem problems were common causes of conflict in his and others' relationships.

Uncertainty and insecurities manifested in other relationships: Clifford, in his first relationship, found that the shared confusion about queerness caused him and his partner to try and distance themselves from each other before and after the relationship. This was a result of them both being unsure of what to expect from each other and themselves in a queer, monogamous relationship. Owing to a lack of role models and heterosexist socialisation they both endured as young people in high school and at home, they were unsure of what a 'meaningful' queer partnering was. Matthew, in his early relationships while he was still in high school, saw a similar problem: the kinds of inferiority complexes, jealousy and the confusion of being a teenager with a developing understanding of sexuality saw maturational instances of conflict based on petty squabbles and issues that had little to no real meaning other than to the two involved in the relationship. Another feature to conflict was the issue of communication, which tied into the ways in which the men reflected upon their identities and goals in the relationship: if any individual in the relationship didn't explain themselves clearly or put across their views, or feel comfortable doing so, it created conflict. There is overlap with this and the second theme of conflict around personal ideology or background, but the critical point taken from this was that conflict from poor communication often stemmed from internalised issues or confusion of identity. This was something Matthew cited as important, where circumstances of guilt,

jealousy and confusion often prompted minor instances of conflict because of naivety or youthful inexperience.

2) Fundamental differences in attitudes or upbringing: In the instances where identity crises were present in relationships, there was often a connection to the historical backgrounds of the men in question. In connecting back to the point made throughout this thesis about the influence of identity histories, this was a point of frequent contestation between partners in the relationships experienced by the men: how their respective family backgrounds, relationship histories and identities clashed directly or indirectly.

A common cause for concern was the clash of social ideology: where one partner held more socially conservative views about race, gender politics, class or other attributes held by their respective social circles, the other would have a more nuanced or progressive approach to social integration. This was mostly portrayed as a binary by the men: one person had, for example, a more prejudicial view on race, whereas the other did not consider it a problem. A perfect case of this was Percy, whose second notable partner was very conservative about race relations that made him anti-social in certain contexts and justified his decision not to live with his partner as such, describing how his background and attitudes merged into an unpleasant mixture:

“He was fairly racist, across every level of life, anti-Semitic, as well as racist on a racial level, on every which way, he was very volatile, artistic temperament, one could charitably describe it, which I didn’t enjoy, I didn’t like the fact that he became a nasty person when he became angry, I mean, I believe people should have anger and that they should express their strong emotion but I do think there’s

a way and means of doing it ... the words 'hate' and 'disgusting,' those words come very easily to his mouth so I found that very off-putting ...”<sup>289</sup>

In another relationship that was slightly later in his life, Percy faced a similar situation where he and a student from Stellenbosch University dated quite seriously, but had different backgrounds and interests based on their differences:

“He was the first partner I introduced to my mother as my sexual partner, and she liked him a lot, the relationship didn't last, mainly because we were from very different backgrounds ... he was very much a dyed in the wool, straight-looking Afrikaans boy who I wouldn't for a minute think was gay, very much had those pursuits, he liked to *braai* and go and watch rugby and *kuier* with his friends, whereas I was far more interested in a whole lot of other, maybe more snooty pursuits such as classical music and singing and opera ... we didn't blend on that level and we had very little to talk about on an intellectual level, it was very nice to do things, he was very nice to spend time with and sexually was very compatible and he was very kind to my mother and she liked him a lot but that's not enough to build a relationship on, and I didn't see it going anywhere so I ended it, which was painful, for him and for me.”<sup>290</sup>

This discordant difference in background created a situation where their social interactions and interests created distance in the relationship. Indeed, Clifford saw a similar situation where a partner came from a conservative and reserved background that caused issues in the

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<sup>289</sup> Interview with Percy Middleton, 11 June 2019.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

relationship when the partner got frustrated with Clifford's occasional trips to clubs and bars, and at one stage ended the relationship temporarily. The general outlook on life that the partner had clashed with Clifford's, and because neither would budge on their principles, the relationship was not destined to last. The conflict that emanated thus took on a personal and social aspect, merging their public interests with private practices.

This was something Robert also considered: while the underlying racial frustrations in his relationships was not a cause for concern, the hang-ups in the differences between his socio-political standing and that of his Coloured partners meant that there was an underlying sense of anxiety and volatility that was further exacerbated by the nature, particularly in his second relationship, of the 'head over heels' kind of love. These insecurities did result in strong verbal and sometimes physical exchanges that played out mostly behind closed doors and did involve some instances of a breakdown in communication. The communication factor was similarly important to Matthew and Thomas, who saw it as a feature to their more immature or unsettled relationships which were a result of the hang-ups they or their partners had respectively around the relationship itself.

Matthew, similarly, considered worldview as a feature to how people conducted themselves in relationships and how it affected the conflict within relationships. He saw this as a case of age and experience, something that has been mentioned before in this thesis: "the older you get, the more complex your arguments and fights get, because you've got more opinions and you've got more understanding of the world."<sup>291</sup> In some instances, however, the backgrounds and personal development of people meant that there was no conflict in the relationship. Barring some difference already outlined between him and the two notable relationships he was in

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<sup>291</sup> Interview with Matthew Van As, 21 June 2019.

between 1967 and 2008, James felt that conflict was not a part of his life because of his lifestyle. Putting it down to being a Gemini, an astrological condition that made him upset for a short period of time and then at ease with the situation, James considered his life, especially as an older man, to be a tranquil, non-confrontational time. He did, however, have the following to say for the relationship:

“It’s a strange relationship, he’s very religious, and it’s also Seventh Day Adventist, which makes things much more difficult, it’s like the Jewish sabbath which starts on Friday evening until, so, but the thing is, at the same time, from seventeen years, I would be working during the day and sometimes, in the evening, so in the evenings, he was a computer programmer, so in the evenings he would be free, so it was strange, and we never really had anything in common.”<sup>292</sup>

There is a direct connection between James’ sentiment on age and what Matthew said about conflict over time: it matured with the people in the relationship, depending on the ways in which they wished to conduct themselves.

3) The sexual and physical attractions: In the cases of sexually intimate relationships, the matter of sexual intercourse and preferences did come forward as a matter of concern and a cause for conflict in some of the relationships. Largely, this came down to preferences and senses of self: by this, men considered their sexual partners or themselves as lacking in some way or another, and either ended the relationship or created circumstances from which conflict blossomed.

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<sup>292</sup> Interview with James Le Roux, 2 May 2019.

Benjamin, Clifford, Hennie and Alexander all highlighted sexual attraction as an important feature to a relationship. Benjamin ditched a partner because he had gotten bored, Clifford and Hennie believed they could do better than their respective partners and Clifford considered the size of his third partner's penis – which was too small for his liking – as a condition for ending the relationship. Alexander considered his first boyfriend ghastly and felt that while his long-term partner between 1986 and 2004 was someone with whom he got along very well on an emotional and intellectual level, despite the sex being bad. Indeed, a cause for the relationship ending was that Alexander had a sexual affair with a younger man without his partner knowing, suggesting ways in which he had taken the point of their sex life being lacklustre to an extreme. A further nuance that Alexander added when considering sexual attraction and conflict was that he often struggled with his attractions and the instability of relationships:

“I had this huge sexual attraction for him, and I couldn't distinguish the two, it took me a while to get there, because my life experience was so limited, I didn't understand that he was, that you could not be suitable for someone that you were sexually attracted to, I did not understand that but, of course, I grew to understand that.”<sup>293</sup>

A final point on the issue of sexuality and sex was the instances that a relationship struggled with the negotiation of sexual intercourse. Hennie, in many of his earlier relationships, was forced to cut the dating short after a few weeks or months after what he considered the inevitable pressure to engage in penetrative sex. This was coupled with the need for some kind of chemistry or compatibility in bed, and the pressing requirement of ‘position negotiation’ – i.e. the ‘top’ (inserting) or ‘bottom’ (receiving) to the sexual intercourse – made sex and

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<sup>293</sup> Interview with Alexander Price, 24 April 2019.

sexuality a concern in his earlier relationships. Hennie, indeed, faced separation from these partners that often involved “the silent treatment” as a challenge to Hennie to establish where he was in regards to his comfort with sexual intercourse and the relationship itself.<sup>294</sup>

4) Other contextually-driven problems: Discordant relationships were often as a result of personal development issues coming to the fore, and in the instance of a few men this was found in substance abuse problems, a cheating partner or other contextual barriers like geographical distance. The other contextually-driven matters that prompted conflict within the relationship are difficult to distance from each other, or from the three other broader categories outlined, but are nonetheless important when considering the implications of conflict upon the men.

Alexander, Matthew and Percy all examined the matter of relationships being affected by alcohol and recreational drug use. Alexander’s third major relationship between 1986 and 2004 merged a number of issues in personal background together as a reason for why they were never destined to have a longer relationship and how they eventually ‘burnt out’. Two major problems were that the partner was suffering with bipolar personality disorder and alcoholism. This is consistent with Alexander saying he had an affinity for ‘damaged’ or otherwise troubled men but did concede to the fact that he felt that he and his partner would have made better friends than lovers or partners, as they had frequent verbal conflict that emanated from their sexual incompatibility, their personal issues and, eventually, Alexander’s affair. Substance abuse also formed a part of Matthew and Percy’s narratives: both were recovering addicts, and Percy described a period of his life where he used substances more frequently than he should have, in his own words:

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<sup>294</sup> Interview with Hennie Geldenhuys, 3 April 2019.

“I turned to substance abuse for a few years, which was very destructive and then I had to pull myself out of that, so I had a cocaine habit, which became, sort of, I won’t say it got out of control but it became a serious problem for me ... so I instituted some very clear measures, first of all was breaking off contact with the people who were mainly around that sort of habit, secondly, I went into five years of full psychoanalysis, and I put in certain physical, things, activities to ensure that I didn’t stray from that.”<sup>295</sup>

While he did hedge this particular part of his confessional as part of his coping mechanisms, the substance abuse was also a part of his relationship as a result of his exposure to drugs through other individuals in the sub-culture, something that Matthew echoed:

“I think my major, major fights, definitely, like, around alcohol and drug abuse, definitely major ones are that; like, I’m a recovering addict now ... twenty, twenty-four, there was a lot of drug usage and alcohol-dependency because of my self-worth, a whole lot of other things and genetically, addiction runs in my family as well, like homosexuality runs in my family, so they’re two lovely genetic things that I’ve picked up hand in hand, and so I think a lot of those arguments were based around that and, because I used to pick partners that were also, who would drink a lot and use drugs and those fights would all fiddle around there.”<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Interview with Percy Middleton, 11 June 2019.

<sup>296</sup> Interview with Matthew Van As, 21 June 2019.

Another major contextual element to some of the relationships was the decision by some of the men to end relationships for geographical reasons. By deciding to leave South Africa or Cape Town for a protracted period of time, there was a situation of the relationship being strained and, in some cases, ended as a result. Clifford, in his fourth relationship, put this down to a lack of communication and physical presence that made him feel that the relationship was over. Thomas and Percy, similarly, left South Africa to advance their careers and expand their horizons, at the cost of two emotionally valuable relationships back in South Africa. Hennie, similarly, saw the strain of this in the first relationship in which he had sex:

“I met this boy from Pretoria who was there [in Cape Town] visiting before he went to the UK for two months and he was different to most of the guys I’d met, he was very intelligent and he was funny and was a Disney freak ... and we kept contact on Facebook ... and then when he came back to South Africa in March I found out that he was coming to Cape Town to do the Argus [cycle tour] ... he was studying graphic design in Pretoria ... he did the Argus and stayed with me for another week and I soon discovered the joys of sex ... and then he unfortunately had to go back to Pretoria, it was a very bad time in his life because he stopped studying as well and his parents were divorcing. Of course, I didn’t really care because I just fell in love so I spent all my savings flying him down to Cape Town and spending time with me for about four, three or four month and then June, July that year, he just said that he couldn’t, he can’t carry on like this, he doesn’t have money, he doesn’t have a job, um, his dad’s putting pressure on him and I had to let go, because I couldn’t make it work either because I can’t afford to fly him down every month as well.”<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Interview with Hennie Geldenhuys, 3 April 2019.

The logistical and distance-based issues of the relationship came to the fore in ways that caused them to drift apart and both, in the end, needed the relationship to end, indicating yet another site of conflict in the men's lives.

#### The Coping Mechanisms:

##### *The manner(s) in which conflict was dealt with by the men*

In returning to the point made by Isaacs and McKendrick earlier in this chapter, the crises reached a necessary conclusion or resolution point in all instances of conflict. What was then important to assess was how the various resolution methods played into consistent measures that were dependent on their backgrounds and contexts. This is echoed by Terndrup and Ritter who argue that the basis to resolving conflict connects to them challenging the inherent heterosexism that many queer people bring into relationships.<sup>298</sup> By this, they refer to how elements of shame, confusion or unresolved developmental problems can cause them to not understand meaningful ways of resolving conflict.<sup>299</sup> In examining the responses by the men to the conflict they experienced, it is worth considering the relationship or conflict that was being responded to and the generalities that could be gleaned through the specific conflict resolution methods.

What Isaacs and McKendrick considered important from the onset was that there were certain 'poor', or negative, outcomes to undeveloped or poorly understood resolution tactics.<sup>300</sup> The

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<sup>298</sup> Kathleen Ritter and Anthony Terndrup, *Handbook of Affirmative Psychotherapy with Lesbians and Gay Men*, 315.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*, 44.

first major negative outcome included a denial of the issue or an entire avoidance of the problem at hand, largely seen as a way to remove responsibility from the self until the matter had passed.<sup>301</sup> Hennie, Thomas and Benjamin all considered this as the most reasonable response to the conflict that arose in their intimate relationships. Benjamin ultimately blamed this on his own maturity levels and his own view of the world:

“I think part of my conditioning is that if you get ready to rumble you’re gonna come off second best so I think, you know, over my childhood and all those lessons, it’s become quite ingrained and I didn’t feel like I had a leg to stand on, I didn’t feel I would ever get the upper hand in any kind of conflict so I guess that’s partly what informed my inclination to just avoid.”<sup>302</sup>

What added nuance to his perspective was that he felt:

“[Conflict] was often handled by not being handled, it was handled by just avoiding or not talking about it or waiting for [it] to blow over, there weren’t histrionics.”<sup>303</sup>

By cutting relationships short, something Hennie did when he felt pressured into sexual intercourse, Benjamin was able to avoid greater exposure to conflict situations. This was a defence mechanism of sorts and operated as a means of protecting the individual from the effects of others. In some of his own relationships, Matthew behaved, in his own words, like a “doormat” who was motivated by his fear of abandonment:

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>302</sup> Interview with Benjamin De Beer, 19 June 2019.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

“If I carry on with this fight, they’re gonna leave me because who wants to be with someone who’s fighting with them all the time ... it made me feel worthless ... I was just, like, ‘this is what a dutiful partner should be, they should be accommodating and, like, [a] Stepford wife,’ and not realising how much it was to the detriment of myself and that only came with a lot more age and experience.”<sup>304</sup>

On the flipside, conflict resolution was also treated in a healthy manner by some of the men, or, at the very least, in a manner that dealt with it with some sense of maturity and rational thought. These methods worked in a variety of ways. For example, Clifford, Alexander and Percy found it beneficial to speak openly within a conflict situation. While he had no exact mechanism for dealing with conflict, Clifford saw the impact of speaking your mind:

“My strategy was always to just get it all out there, never leave anything unsaid, so I wouldn’t say that I have specific mechanisms for that because I always made sure that I get everything out and also, in addition to that, also, expectations of what is to happen now: ‘you’ve said what you wanted to say, I’ve said what I wanted to and now, what now?’ So, it wasn’t, I didn’t really have, not that I can think of, right now, any specific mechanisms for dealing, like, post conflict, interaction, because I deal with it and then it’s dealt with and then we move on.”<sup>305</sup>

Alexander, similarly, believed in the benefits to rational, sensible discussion. However, in his second relationship, the one where Alexander had endured physical violence and false

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<sup>304</sup> Interview with Matthew Van As, 21 June 2019.

<sup>305</sup> Interview with Clifford Lewis, 18 March 2019.

accusations of being unfaithful, one that finally resulted in him ‘snapping’ and fighting back, the ability for the two of them to have a rational conversation was impossible:

“It was conflict on the most, like, Jerry Springer kind of level, no sophistication, you couldn’t have a debate about something, and I’ve always liked robust debate or discussion, if you’ve got a problem with me, tell me about it and we’ll sort it out, but you couldn’t with him, you couldn’t, because he was just, like, so fucked up.”<sup>306</sup>

What was important about this was that Alexander, despite his preference for concise and directed conversation which he based upon his education as a lawyer and his upbringing in a stable home, was undermined by his partner who had family issues and was unable to consider conflict as anything but violent or accusatory. There was a further problem in that his partner at the time also resorted to consuming alcohol before and after fights, something Percy experienced in one of his relationships. There were similarities between Percy and Matthew in their respective stories: an educated background, an appreciation for discussing feelings and issues in the relationship, and a partner that refused to see their side of the argument and instead resorted to recrimination and violent tempers. Thomas, as another person who preferred open communication with his partners, nonetheless did try to avoid conflict situations where he felt uncomfortable, making him an overlap between the point of being clear in conflict situations and escaping conflict where possible.

Another means of resolving conflict that was raised was the matter of speaking to others, either in their social circles or families, or professional counsellors on relationship matters. This had

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<sup>306</sup> Interview with Alexander Price, 24 April 2019.

varying levels of success. Charles, for example, when in conflict with a woman he was seeing in Johannesburg during his early twenties, spoke to his brother, which in turn allowed for some clarity in his mind about his relationship with the woman, and his sexuality, as he had, in some ways, been hiding his attraction to men behind the heterosexuality of the relationship. Robert sought the help of friends and professional psychotherapists, but had a particularly bad experience with a few that he spoke to:

“I went to see a very eminent gay psychologist who was also a lecturer and had a few sessions with him, didn’t realise that he actually knew the guy I was seeing and carried his own little torch for him and ended up disclosing everything I told him in confidence in order to try and discredit me in the relationship ... subsequently I saw a gay woman therapist when I was in Johannesburg for a few sessions and she was much better and more reliable therapist ... my parents sent me to ... this archetypal sort of Afrikaner in a suit and a tie and horn-rimmed glasses in this house full of hunting trophies who showed me Rorschach tests and pictures of naked farmers and things like that ... Clearly, he didn’t have any desire to see me ...”<sup>307</sup>

When considering his friends, however, Robert was more positive about their input:

“Relying on friends who, one friend, the one friend in particular who was not judgemental and would just listen to and had a sense of understanding of some of the stuff I was feeling which other people just couldn’t get.”<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Interview with Robert Finlayson, 21 March 2019.

<sup>308</sup> Interview with Robert Finlayson, 21 March 2019.

Benjamin, at time, also confided in friends and family. However, Matthew and Thomas, in contrast, preferred to keep their private lives to themselves, preferring not to ‘air their dirty laundry’ in public (as Matthew put it). Thomas was clear to mention that he did keep his private life to himself, and this was, interestingly enough, reflected in the manner in which he interacted with me during the interview process, something that makes sense as a reflection of his comfort in discussing his private affairs.

What stood out as an afterthought in the experiences of conflict and conflict resolution was the influence of backgrounds and attitudes on conflict. Clifford and Charles, for example, both saw a person’s identity and their grasp on their sexuality, sense of self and personal confidence as fundamental to how they pursued or negotiated conflict. Clifford even went onto quote RuPaul, the famous drag performer, whose show *RuPaul’s Drag Race* ends each episode with:

“If you can’t love yourself, how in the Hell are you gonna love somebody else, can I get an amen up in here?”<sup>309</sup>

In simple terms, by having a firm grasp on one’s identity as a queer man and accepting oneself and the conditions of stigma, heterosexism and the difficulty of being a part of the sub-culture, then one would be able to love and care for someone similar to oneself. Failure in that developmental journey resulted in conflict within the relationship and the person themselves. In this way, some conclusions can be drawn on how intimacy, conflict and conflict resolution methods all reflect the historical change within the individual men as a result of their upbringing. The motivations for the men to pursue intimate relationships was a reflection of

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<sup>309</sup> Interview with Clifford Lewis, 18 March 2019.

their desire to explore their sexuality, and their connection to their attractions defined how they sought out the company of other men. In the instances of them deciding on prospective partners, their own perspectives on race, culture, class and physical attraction drew them to some men as opposed to others. In instances of intimacy, the experiences were varied and defined largely by context, the manner in which the relationship was pursued and the level of commitment either partner gave to the relationship. The inevitable conflict that surfaced was the result of a variety of contexts, but generally depended on different opinions on how the relationship was progressing. These instances were initiated and dealt with by the shared understandings of self and the relationship, and this could have resulted in physical or verbal exchanges. The resolution to the conflict was another example of how backgrounds informed adulthood actions. In this way, we can see how this thesis has analysed the eleven men's respective pasts and has described the ways in which they engaged with their sexuality and relationships during adulthood, with their decisions being informed by their respective childhood development.

## **Conclusion**

The personal stories of each of the men did not end in 2008, but the preceding 42 years informed a lot of the discussion present in this thesis. It would be apt to draw these together to give a final resolution to the many strands, stories and sentiments expressed within the preceding three chapters. Critically, this conclusion will serve to draw the final points out of the quotes, analysis and discussion to explain how this thesis's contribution to the three major areas of literature – intersectional histories, queer identity development and queer spaces – were all examined. Furthermore, it will highlight the methodology's appropriateness to this case study, how the findings were extracted to form a succinct argument, and where this thesis could be extended upon in future research. Throughout this, the limitations of the study will be discussed and reflected upon.

The core argument of this thesis is that the conflict and intimacy experienced by white, queer men in their close relationships was the result of historical conditions in South Africa both in the public sphere and in the development of their sexual identities since birth. This answers the question of which historical causes contributed to intimacy and conflict in close relationships between queer men in the established context. In the simplest terms, the ways in which the men were brought up by their parents and experienced heterosexism in public institutions like school and the army were highly influential on their perceptions of self and of their surroundings. Furthermore, intimate relationships combined these experiences for two or more people, and these shared moments created intimacy in a variety of forms. Conversely, discordant upbringings and different perceptions of the world generated conflict and disturbances in the close relationship. The thesis contributed to three major areas of literature – intersectional histories, queer identity development and queer spaces – in way which will now be described

Intersectional history requires a study of oppression and privilege in relation to a variety of identities that collect in social, cultural and political worlds. This thesis examined the intersection of race, class and sexuality: white, queer men from Cape Town, with a historical privilege as a result of colonialism and white minority rule driving apartheid, were nonetheless subjected to oppression as a result of their sexuality. What is important to gather from this intersection, however, is that it was not as simple as saying these men were privileged or oppressed. These men were able to maintain good jobs, live in better suburbs and avoid the socio-economic problems evident in the poorer areas, while Black and Coloured Capetonians were unable to do this. This allowed the white men in this study more opportunity to experience same-sex private intimacy and household formation during apartheid and conduct their intimate relationships in relative peace, provided they did so with other white men. However, the government still had laws against queer sexual activity and would prosecute where it was able to.<sup>310</sup> Additionally, the overarching attitude of heterosexism in South Africa during apartheid ensured that queer men experienced some level of socio-cultural and psychological oppression at the hands of the queerphobic social norm. Furthermore, this internalised fear and self-hatred created circumstances of instability in relationships where people felt uncomfortable starting relationships or going public with their queerness in such a way that would threaten their existing privileges as white men.

This then leads neatly into the additions this thesis makes towards the literature on queer identity development. Whilst this matter has been discussed in texts like *Male Homosexuality*<sup>311</sup> and other psychology texts, the point must nonetheless be made that sexual

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<sup>310</sup> Mark Gevisser, "A different fight for freedom: A history of South African lesbian and gay organisation from the 1950s to 1990s," in *Defiant Desire*.

<sup>311</sup> Gordon Isaacs and Brian McKendrick, *Male Homosexuality in South Africa*.

identity changes over time affected the ways in which the men experienced intimacy and conflict in their relationships. In this thesis, there is a clear relationship between these men's early upbringings and the ways in which they envisioned and entered relationships. Furthermore, it affected the ways in which they pursued intimacy with other men and how conflict played out in these relationships. Specific elements to personal upbringing – like the internalised homophobia borne from social institutions or the confusion of identity when confronted with early sexual opportunity – often prompted conflict that caused further development within the identities of the men.

The context of South Africa during late apartheid and the period of early democratisation provided an ample series of spaces, both private and public, for this conflict and intimacy to play out. For starters, there was a clear answer to the question around how the private-public overlap informed and influenced the understandings the men had of their own identities and of intimate relationships. In examining the stories told by them, it became clear that there was a relationship between what happened in the public sphere, be it in legal practice, the political nature or the social culture of the time, and what happened in private – at the kitchen table, over a drink at a discreet bar or in the tender words shared beneath the sheets. The private was influenced by developments in the public sphere, and vice versa. There is a clear connection between how people felt about their lives as a result of their socio-political and cultural context, and the nature of queer, white, male relationships in Cape Town between 1966 and 2008 are no exception. Through shifting social understandings of sexuality and same-sex relationships, the identities and understandings of these men were moulded by the context of a heterosexist society.

This thesis is a case study which used oral history interviews with men of a specific social group and their very personal experiences within close, intimate relationships. The use of oral history methodology was specifically implemented as a means towards examining the individual, personal stories of the ten men interviewed orally, while the single email exchange was conducted as close to an oral history interview as possible. This thesis relies very little on primary written texts for two primary reasons. The first reason is that this thesis is meant to be a personal, narrative-driven analytical discussion of the ways in which queer men in the given context understood and explored instances of deeply sensitive and emotive topics such as conflict and intimacy in their close adult relationships. Furthermore, the focus was on how they, in their own words, considered the influences of public spaces, private changes, identity changes and spatial histories upon them.

The second reason is somewhat more methodological: oral history has a distinct manner in which it probes the personal voices of individuals, as opposed to archived sources, of which there is a sparse availability for Cape Town between 1966 and 2008. This is a limitation that has already been explored in the Introduction, but the point remains that the oral archive is able to make up for the lack of material captured in the written archives such as GALA, which is an otherwise useful source of information on queer history in South Africa. Oral history was appropriate to the research questions of this thesis, probing deep and sometimes difficult memories that were easier to explore through personal narratives that allowed for some embellishment, adjustment or inferences. The onus was on me as the researcher to read between the lines and draw the various narrative ‘strands’ together into a succinct analytical discussion.

### Chapters

When considering the findings of this thesis, the chapters stand as three individual narratives on how intimacy and conflict can be affected by historical change. When examining the men's narratives in Chapter 1: The Origins of Intimacy, the fabric of their personal history came to the fore when tracing their families and homes-of-origin from the discussion around their grandparent's parenting styles to the eras relevant to their parents. An example of this was the case of Benjamin's parents, who grew up during the economically stagnant Great Depression. The men interviewed for this thesis were all cognisant of how broader social influences challenged and changed parenting standards and styles. This background of the men's own upbringing was important, as it formed the bedrock of their understandings of intimacy and domesticity that they took with them later in their lives. This was influential in two different ways. First, it provided them a definition for 'relationships', a modular form of understanding in terms of how mature adults shared a domestic space and, commonly, a sense of intimacy. Second, it would have given them an opportunity in later life to reflect on how their own development had been affected by their upbringing and whether they wished to replicate their earliest experiences of intimacy (and in some cases, conflict) in close, adult relationships.

Marriage and family life are but two of the many institutions critically discussed in this thesis, and in looking at the so-called 'origins to intimacy' (and conflict), the next logical step was to critique the school and other disciplinarian institutions such as the army and university. As institutions socialised and brought people into contact for a purpose that served the broader socio-political sphere, schools, armies and university spaces all moulded the men in a similar manner to the household of origin: with a firm set of ingrained attitudes and ideologies, the institutions were sites of change and exposure to ideas about identity and personal relationships. There were, of course, differences between the three: the army was the clearest example of brutal disciplinarian tactics that aimed to enforce conformity across the entire

structure. Crucially, context is key when considering the SADF: with engagements in conflict both inside and outside of South Africa, and with the violence being based in maintaining the white minority government within conservative, nationalist tendencies, it was difficult to have dissident views. It was even more challenging to be a queer man in an environment that promoted dominant modes of masculinity and attacked any perceived threat. Though less persecutory, the school environment, in many instances, also promoted modes of masculinity and queerphobia. Across the schooling experiences of the men, there was a general sense that being openly queer at school was ‘social suicide’, or at least a risky venture. By contrast, however, university spaces were often more inclusive ones that encouraged freedom of expression and often had outlets for queer men to first explore their sexuality. The institutions listed were thus influential in the personal development of the eleven men.

The final area of consideration in this chapter was that of puberty and the early sexual development the men experienced: as the hormonal shifts began and many of the earliest attractions began to form, the public and private clashed. On the one hand, the public primarily condemned queerness as something that was deviant, a contextual problem that affected the men for the duration of their lives. On the other hand, the private, personal urges to pursue same-sex attractions presented themselves. It was a struggle for some of the men to confine these urges to the backs of their mind, and while some did entertain these needs as best as they could, either in the schooling environment or as younger men growing up in the city, it was nonetheless challenging to do so in the context of queerphobic persecution. The psychological implications were made plain in the interviews: the clash between the public and private sphere caused insecurity, confusion and often a sense of fear about what would happen if their more clandestine sexual ideas or actions – such as same-sex attraction, or queer sexual acts – were made public.

Many of the above changes, institutions and experiences occurred in Cape Town, the geographic location of the near-half century of the narratives presented in this thesis, as Chapter 2: Cape of Queers explores. The queer community was a sub-culture of the broader Capetonian society, and as a result was built on a difference that came from it being rejected by the heterosexist majority. Due to this, participating within the sub-culture made for a specific public-private overlap that was explored in the discussions around social institutions such as the family, the school and so forth.

The queer community was subjected throughout the apartheid era to a series of laws, government action and social stigmas that bred the idea of it being deviant, against the norm and a danger to society. As a response, the community largely submerged itself and asserted agency in whatever way it could; in bars, along cruising spots and within the confines of private homes, queer lives unfolded. As the eleven men matured and grew out of their childhood homes, these private homes were spaces that were lived in. The initial steps into the queer community were formative in all of the eleven men: as their first actualisation of their queer ideas, they were formative in how the sub-culture interacted with attraction, the pursuit of partners and being open about sexuality. Though the various coming out stories and narratives on the queer scenes did differ – with some being welcomed into the spaces, and others not necessarily embracing it in full – the impact was nonetheless influential in moulding a model for pursuing a prospective intimate partner, or partners, and providing a better insight as to how queer people lived within a heterosexist society. When challenges presented themselves – for example, the HIV/AIDS pandemic – the community rallied itself and acted in ways to either defend their ways of life or augment them with broader social rights, as seen in the protest and lobbying action in support of the Civil Unions Act. However, there was a privilege to being

white in South Africa, irrespective of sexuality: despite being a disempowered group, white, queer men in Cape Town nevertheless held onto considerable power politically, socially and economically. The HIV/AIDS challenge was an existential and political problem that combined the prospect of death with a government that used the pandemic as ammunition against the sub-culture, labelling the crisis as ‘the gay cancer’. This governmental assault, in turn, made queer relationships fraught with the additional stresses of someone in the relationship being affected by the disease. In these challenges, however, the queer community did rally: the passing of the Civil Unions Act (in amongst other legislative and legal battles) was a watershed moment for South Africa, as it enshrined the legal right to a privilege that had been denied up until 2006.

Chapter 3: You Show Me Yours, I’ll Show You Mine explores the connection between the backgrounds and institutional contexts of the men, and their experiences of intimacy and conflict in close relationships. This chapter served to connect the overarching histories of intersectionality, spaces and identities into a clear representation of how a certain case study can tap into narratives on these personal matters. In the instances of relationships, intimacy and conflict, the clear descriptions of incidences, motivations and the aftermath of relationships were told through individual stories of partners and generalised sweeps on the respective relationship histories. The intimate spaces occupied by the eleven men were as diverse: all were reflections of their socio-economic contexts, their upbringings and how they had pursued different men for different reasons. Be it in a casual, sexual relationship, or a case of two or more men sharing a living space or bed for a prolonged period of time, the experiences of intimacy were rich with detail in how queer men used their own understandings of self and their past to build and change their relationships. When the personal motivations of participants clashed and collided in these intimate relationships, the conflict was similarly moulded by past experiences. If a person came from a background or outlook that promoted aggressive or

assertive behaviour, conflict management played out as such. Those unwilling to deal with conflict ‘dealt’ with it in that way: by not addressing the sources of the conflict, or the conflict as a whole. This thesis is but a micro-representation of the many histories of queer people in Cape Town, and though limited in scope, the point made in the introduction nonetheless stands: the historical backgrounds and upbringing of individuals – through childhood, family homes, school, the army, university and the sub-culture – all informed their experiences and understandings of self and of relationships.

#### *Limitations and further areas of study*

I have already conceded how the lack of written sources in South African archives and the small size of my sample population have limited the analysis presented in this thesis. It is true that, with sufficient time and more resources, I could have examined more data by reaching out further to queer media sources, non-government and non-profit organisations and to other social networks to get more people involved in this thesis. As already noted in the Introduction, I did approach some organisations and publications with little success, but in future research, I would apply myself to creating a succinct and appealing media campaign that these organisations could be means to finding more respondents. Additionally, while my thesis relies on oral history sources, in any future research I would consider a deeper examination of the possible written sources captured by a wider variety of archives (like newspapers, magazine columns, court records and so forth). This could further be augmented by gaining access to individuals with smaller, more personal archives. While people like Alexander and James mentioned they had letters, photographs and other sources, I did not feel it appropriate at the time to request access to these sources given the limited time I could have used to examine

them. In future, however, I will include it as part of the briefing document I would send to all prospective interviewees.

There is an abundance of opportunity in Cape Town's queer scene for future research opportunities. The political lens was largely subsumed by the socio-cultural in this thesis, but it would be interesting to consider the political history of Cape Town – the local elections, the partisan shifts and queer people in the public eye – in conjunction with the growing openness of the queer community during apartheid and democratisation. Likewise, the court records of the magistrate courts across the city and the Western Cape High Court would be interesting to analyse. There have been notable instances of queerphobic violence, domestic abuse or homicide in queer couples, and other queer-related criminal and civil cases that have not been examined to the extent that they inform the historical relationship between the law and the queer community.

From my own research, I would be interested to examine how queer people develop their early sexual education from sources like pornography, conversations with people in the know, the media and from the actual experience of sexual acts. In the age of online dating, smartphone access and new learning technology, it would be an interesting historical exercise to examine how queer people over time have educated themselves on sex, sexuality and intimate relationships. Online dating has become prolific in the last decade, and the wider acceptance of the queer community can be seen to some extent in the public sphere. This growing acceptance can be seen in legal changes (like the rising number of countries allowing same-sex marriage and queer equality policies), more media acceptance (with more queer main characters and queer-friendly media), and in social norms (where the use of gender-neutral pronouns has become more widespread and the fluidity of sexuality is more readily

acknowledged). However, there is an important proviso to make: this is not as widespread as to allow queer people in all contexts to live free of queerphobia, violence and subjugation. Anti-queer laws in countries like Uganda and Russia have made headlines for many years, hatred and bigotry is commonplace on social media sites like Twitter, and beneath the surface there are still many queer people who suffer from mental health problems, domestic violence, abhorrent corrective practices and other social ills.

### *Keeping up with the Queers*

1966 and 2008 were two distinctly different years. The former was during the heart of the Cold War which, for South Africans, meant that apartheid was still very much the socio-political system of the day. The latter was a year of a different type of turbulence, as President Mbeki was ousted by his party and the global financial markets continued their collapse from the year before. Whatever their age, geographic location or occupation, the eleven men interviewed for this thesis pursued their lives after 2008 with vigour: Charles got married in Nevada, Hennie began to pursue a relationship (with his mother as their “biggest cheerleader, she wants us to get married as soon as possible”), and so forth.<sup>312</sup> Alexander got into a relationship that ended tragically in 2018 when his partner passed away, Clifford got his doctorate in psychology, Thomas continued his modelling career, James and Ashley lived in domestic bliss with their respective partners, Percy lived a wilfully solitary life and Matthew got more involved in Cape Town Pride, in time becoming a Regional Director for the African continent.

The heart of this thesis lies in three core areas and states the influences historical change had on intimacy and conflict in close relationships between white gay and bisexual men in Cape

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<sup>312</sup> Interview with Hennie Geldenhuys, 3 April 2019.

Town between 1966 and 2008. A primary site of influence lies in the intersection of race, class and sexuality: these are all identities that mattered in queer intimate relationships and household formation. To ignore the privilege of being white, male and middle-class, or to avoid discussing the specific oppressions faced by queer men in an urban environment, would be to avoid analysing the specific experiences of men living with socio-economic power at a time where they were subjected to legal, social and political pressure. Furthermore, the personal identity development of these men came to the fore when they entered into intimate relationships. Their home-of-origin upbringing and early interactions with social institutions like school all informed how they negotiated social relationships, and this overlap between their private understandings of self and the public influences over personal development all helped to craft the experiences of intimacy and conflict. By using methods of queer oral history, this thesis was able to explore the underexamined themes of intimacy and household formation among a relatively privileged social group in South Africa, and as a result, meaningfully contributes towards queer historiography. A person's past informs their present and their future in and out of their context, and there was no exception in the eleven men interviewed for this thesis. Through exploring their childhoods, schooling experiences, early sexual and identity development, their interaction with the shifting public sphere of South Africa between 1966 and 2008, and in their private, intimate relationships, I was able to keep up with the queers.

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## Addendum A: Interview Transcripts

**Name of the Interviewee:** LEWIS, Clifford [CL]

**Name of the Interviewer:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam [AK]

**Date of Interview:** 18 March 2019

**Place of Interview:** Cape Town, South Africa and Johannesburg, South Africa [via Skype]

**Number of tapes/recordings:** 1

**Transcribed by:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam

**Date Transcribed:** 1 April 2019 – 11 April 2019

**00:00:00:** Introductions

CL: Hello?

AK: [Pause] Hi, Clifford?

CL: Uh, yes ... let me just ... oh dear, what's happening ... can you, oh, there we are ...

AK: Ah, fantastic, hey!

CL: Hi, uh, just hang on, I had to put you on my phone because for some reason my ... my computer doesn't, um, like it.

AK: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that, um, is this convenient for you?

CL: Yeah, this is fine, uh let me just quickly check my battery, uh, no, we'll be fine.

AK: You good?

CL: Yeah, sorry to be messing you about, be-, uh, because it's just one of those days.

AK: Yeah, that's cool, life gets in the way [laughs]

CL: Yeah.

AK: Okay, cool, um, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed, I'm just gonna go through a few, just, background before we get to the questions, um ...

CL: Sure.

AK: Cool, so, first of all, which is the premise of the project, um, so the title is 'Keeping up with the Queers', uh, it's a discussion around, um, conflict in intimate relationships between white gay and bisexual men in Cape Town, 1966 till 2008, um, so, that's the basic premise and the basic flow of the questions, just discussing some family backgrounds, your education, that sort of thing, and then looking at, sort-of sexuality, gender, conflict throughout your adulthood, um, and that sort of thing.

CL: Sure.

AK: Uh, so, quick, just a few bits and pieces as far as the ethics of this project are concerned, if at any point that you feel you are uncomfortable with what you're talking about, if you wish to redact information, or if you would like for this entire interview to be confidential, there's a consent form that I'm going to give to you, I'm not going to use any of the material and will attach anything that you said to me until that is signed. Additionally, if you want us to stop the recording at any time or if you want to recant any information or if you want to anonymise a person's name or whatever, I can do that. I can adjust the recording in due time, so if you decide to do so in two weeks from now that you want to, uh, remove certain information, or you want to add information, we can do that, um, and if you have any questions at all, please feel free to stop me, um.

CL: Um, I'm pretty, just off the bat, I'm pretty fine with you using everything, I'm just not going to, uh, name anyone else but in terms of using, uh, my responses and my name and everything else, that's not a problem, um, I'm just not going to refer to any specific [clears throat] um, I understand it's about ... there might be, uh, a discussion around, like, boyfriends and exes and all of these things, so in those cases, I'm just not going to name the person. Otherwise, you don't have to worry about anonymity from me, I'm comfortable with you using the, uh, the information as it is.

AK: If you do decide to change or if you want to ... accidentally use someone's name, I can always adjust that so we can figure that out as we go along.

CL: Okay, cool.

AK: Do you have any questions?

CL: No.

AK: Okay, cool, perfect, um, then...

**00:03:28: Family background**

AK: ... Beginning from the top, when and where were you born?

CL: I was born in Cape Town in, um, May of, the third of May 1984, uh.

AK: At the time, who were you living with when you were born?

CL: Uh, both my parents, uh, uh, a heterosexual, um, couple. Uh, my mom and dad.

AK: Okay, cool, and do you have any siblings?

CL: I have a younger brother, he's five years younger than me.

AK: Okay, so born in 1989.

CL: Yes.

AK: Okay, cool, um and what sort of work did your father do?

CL: Um, okay, so, my father at the time, he was a, uhm, mmm, I don't wanna say engineer cos he, he's not a qualified engineer but he was working in the technical field ...

AK: Mm-hmm.

CL: ... And [sighs] before my brother was born he moved into education, so, uh, in the, in the field that he was, in the technical education, so training, uh, oh, Lord, I don't really know, training people how to work with engines and stuff.

AK: Okay, cool.

CL: And, then, after that, um, I didn't grow up in Cape Town, I suppose you might have a question about that later on, but when, when we moved out of Cape Town, he worked in agriculture, also in a technical capacity, so I suppose if you put engineer, that would cover him.

AK: Um, when did you move from Cape Town, how old were you?

CL: When I was, when I was five, when my brother was born, we moved to a town called Malmesbury.

AK: Malmesbury, that's in the Western Cape if I remember correctly?

CL: Yep.

AK: Cool, and when did you move back to Cape Town?

CL: Yeah, it's about forty-five minutes from Cape Town.

AK: And when did you move back to Cape Town?

CL: [pause] Uhm, I didn't move back to Cape Town, I grew up in Malmesbury, uh, uh, until high school, and then I was in Stellenbosch for five years...

AK: Okay...

CL: Uh, which I suppose is Cape Town ... and then I was in England, no, I was in England before for a gap year between high school, so in 2003, I spent a year in England and then I was in Stellenbosch for five years, so from 2004 to 2009.

AK: Okay, cool, um.

CL: Yeah.

AK: Cool, and your mom, what work did she do?

CL: Okay, so she was, before I was born, she was a primary school teacher and then, after I was born, she still worked in primary education but in an informal capacity from home. She had, uh, what the, what she referred to as, um, a *spiel-skool* [Afrikaans: play school], uh, like a, it's not a creche, it's, um, it's like, it's like Grade R, its more formalised now, but before, no, no, Grade RR, sorry, before you start Grade 1, so Grade RR and Grade R, uh, she had that, she

had a business like that from home, um, because at the time I don't think it was as formalised within the education system as it is now. And when we moved to Malmesbury, she had a bakery.

AK: And was that [the bakery] from home, or a separate, uh, facility?

CL: From home.

AK: Okay cool, um, and then just describing, uh, how would you describe your father's parenting sort-of approach?

CL: Um ... Very, uhm, I wouldn't say, I wouldn't say absent because he was very physically there, um, but it wasn't, um, kind of, authoritarian, so, not, um, not like, okay, "let's discuss, let's discuss the situation," it was very much, "my rules, this is how it's gonna be," um, I remember, I actually have a memory of him saying, "don't do what I do, do what I say," so, kind of, I suppose, authoritarian, an appropriate description.

AK: And your mother's, by contrast?

CL: Uh, more, um, not necessarily collaborative because she also was, enforced, she had rules and the rules were enforced, but it was very much more, um, making sure that my brother and I understood why rules are there and explaining consequences if we transgressed the rules and if we received any kind of punishment, uh, we understood why and what could happen if the rules weren't in place so, that kind of approach, so I would say more of a, suppose her educational background, um, being a trained primary school teacher, um, played a part in that approach.

AK: Okay, and how would you describe, uh, when you were growing up, your parent's relationship with each other?

CL: It was ... fine, I'd say, uhm, if, if there, if they had any kind of, um, disagreement or fight, I distinctly remember that their, they, I think it was a sort of conscious decision as well, they would never have verbal fights, um, in front of my brother and I, so, uh, it would always be very much between them, um, I think they had a pretty good, think they had an average relationship, uh, with some ups and downs, and if there were any, any issues, they would try to not expose my brother and I to it but, it, at some point you start picking up on some non-verbal cues and behaviour and stuff like that so we'd be aware that there was something going on, it was never, it was never like a public display. Um, my mother was very much, even though I would describe her as a, uh, a, a strong-willed, um, relatively independent woman, she saw herself as the traditional, uh, being subservient to my father, like, even though she had a business and, he had a, and he had a job as well, she made sure that there was food and the house was taken care of and that my brother was taken care of so very much taking up both

roles as someone that brings in income into the household and also taking care of the household, so she had, like, dual roles, um, I suppose that had an impact on her and my father's dynamic with each other.

AK: Okay, you mentioned verbal and physical cues that you would pick up on as you got older, what sort of cues were they?

CL: So, um, whenever we would, so I would immediately notice that the way that they interacted with each other, that they would maybe speak less to each other, um, kind of the 'silent treatment' at time, uhm, we had this one couch in the lounge, in the TV room, that was a two-seater, and they would always sit next to each other on that couch, and I could tell that sometimes that there was something going on, the she would, that my mother would either not be in the room with us or she would not sit on the same couch next to him, and then I knew there was something going on, um, yeah, like, uh, a sort of coldness towards each other which wasn't always the case because there were certain things that they always did, uh, like, uh, kiss each other when they greeted each other, uh, uh, stuff that they say, like, after a meal, he would say "thank you for the meal" and, you know, stuff like that.

AK: And, how did these periods of coldness make you feel as a child of the family?

CL: Uhm ... I would say [chuckles] as a psychologist, you'd think I'd be able to, be in a better position to put words to my emotions, uh, I, um, it was distressing, it was upsetting, but I don't know exactly how to, to, like, attach a specific word, a specific emotive word to it, um, I never felt that it was my fault, in any case, in, in any of those instances, but, uh, it did cause, it did cause some distress, yeah, it didn't make me feel very happy.

AK: And do you know any of the root causes to some of the, um, coldness?

CL: Uh, well, the root causes of some of the disagreements is my dad did drink quite a lot, he did not drink to an extent that where he would, um, where he would become abusive ... or it, *ja*, he, *ja*, he wasn't abusive, he didn't, uh, not go to work, but it definitely impaired his ability to interact and have a, you know, a healthy marriage and a relationship with my mother, and, uh, my mother, to this day, I don't think has ever been drunk. My mother has always been very sort of poised, she's very controlled, she's very intentional and deliberate in everything that she does. I remember her saying that when they go to a party, she would wanna look as pretty at the end of the party as she did when she went to the party, so she would never lose control whereas my dad would and, so that was definitely a cause, um. I think my dad's, um, unwillingness to admit fault, although now that I'm older, I realise that my mother was, uh, relatively, uh, guilty of that as well as, as, since she's quite strong-willed as well, although I think my dad's ability to engage and have an open and frank conversation about his emotions

and, uh, why he drank and why he wasn't willing to stop, I think that also played a role. But this is all obviously in retrospect, um, I didn't realise it at the time. Uh, yeah, I think drinking was probably one of the biggest things and, uh, an unwillingness to communicate openly and, and, um, frank-ly, with her.

**00:15:44:** Schooling years

AK: Okay, um, and then moving forward slightly, uh, you said that you were in Malmesbury when you started attending pre-school?

CL: Yes, I started, uh, um, I was in pre-school with, my mother had a very, uh, so I, I did pre-school, I did pre-school when I was, um, still in Cape Town in the suburbs and my mother was very deliberate that she didn't want me to only attend her pre-school, so I had some days with her and then some days I was, uh, in a different public or private pre-school, um, somewhere else. Don't have many memories of it, I have some memories of it, uh, so, and then when we moved to Malmesbury, I was in, I started Grade 1, so that was in a normal, standard school.

AK: Okay, what was the school, if you don't mind me asking?

CL: How do you mean? What's the school's name?

AK: Yeah.

CL: Uh, it was Swartland Primary...

AK: And then high school?

CL: It was Swartland High School.

AK: Okay, um, then as far as pre-school and primary school, um, what was your social circle like?

CL: So I didn't do any sports, both primary school and high school, I, no, okay no, sorry, that's a lie, I, I didn't do, um, very, uh, mascu, like I didn't play rugby, I did, like, one semester of cricket, uh, but sports that I would do would be stuff like tennis and, um, at one point I was doing athletics as well, but, so I wasn't part of the, the jocks, uh, my social circle was very much the, the creative kids, the drama kids, um, I was quite social, I had quite a lot of friends. Most of the time, friends came over to my house as opposed to me going over to friend's houses, uh, dunno what, what specific information about my social circles would you like to know about.

AK: Just a general outlook as you just gave, um, and was the school you went to co-ed?

CL: Yes, both.

AK: So, both high school and prep school?

CL: Yes.

AK: Okay, um, and sort-of looking at the sex ratio of your friends, was it fairly equal, was it mostly male, mostly female?

CL: In primary school, I would say it was pretty mixed, um, and then in high school it was definitely more girls than guys.

AK: And then, using your own words, how would you describe 'bullying'?

CL: Bullying?

AK: In the context of schools.

CL: In general?

AK: Yeah.

CL: Uh ... well I would say ... any act, whether it being physical or verbal, that is intention, is intended to make the other person feel, experience distress or feel, uh, poorly about themselves, mm, for whatever reason the bullying ... an exercise in power or territory or making yourself feel better because you're hurting yourself but I would say in essence a deliberate attempt at making another person feel, feel bad or some form of distress.

AK: And would you say that you experienced bullying at some point?

CL: I did, but I was also a bully.

AK: Okay, do you mind elaborating on that?

CL: So, um, I, because I was, uh, quite eccentric, unapologetically so, and didn't do a lot of boy sports like play rugby and chose to do drama and art and these types of things, I was called a '*moffie*' quite, quite frequently, even though I tried to, uh, deny it, uh, poorly. Um, and so, so that was definitely, I would say, and I was, I've always been on the bigger side, to varying degrees, I've had, like, weight issues, like, most of my life, um, I've been quite big and I've been quite skinny, uh, but I was, especially in primary school I was quite bullied, I was bullied because of my size as well, but then in high school, I was what you might refer to as a 'mean girl', so even though I didn't physically bully people, I would, like, say mean stuff or give people mean nicknames and gossip about people and, and these types of things, which at the time I didn't consider bullying, but in retrospect I realise was definitely me being a bully as well to other people, who I considered to be, uh, weaker than me or lower in the social hierarchy.

AK: And do you remember the kinds of feelings that you had during that period?

CL: To ... with regards to what?

AK: To being bullied or being a bully, as you described it?

CL: Well I didn't really have any feelings about being a bully, because I didn't consider it bullying, uh, as a naïve teenager, insecure teenager, I didn't consider myself a bully at the time, I didn't really have any feelings of significance, um, if anything it was entertaining to, you know, be able to gossip and giggle and poke fun at other people, uh, being bullied, uh, it wasn't very, it wasn't to the extent that I felt like I didn't want to go to school or that I was, that I felt threatened or unsafe in any way, so the, so that instances where I were bullied or something was said that was, you know, what that could be considered as being bullied, it was pretty shitty at the time I would feel ... bad about myself at the time, but they were definitely ... isolate incidences, it wasn't like an everyday thing.

AK: Um, and at this particular time did you interact with your parents regarding bullying or that sort of thing?

CL: No, no, I, I was quite, it's weird, it's quite, uh, a bit of a paradox because I was quite popular, uh, in high school, uh, within, within a specific group of kids, so, I suppose that made me feel like the bullying, when it did happen, it wasn't such a big of a deal, because I did have a, quite a large group of people who I would be considered popular within and then there was a very small group of individuals that would, you know, uh, practice or exhibit bullying, kind of behaviours, so it didn't, it didn't get to a point where I felt that I had to discuss it with my parents or that they needed to intervene or that it was affecting my life to the extent that they would have to be aware of it.

AK: Okay, um, how did your high school and prep school deal with issues of, uh, sexuality and gender?

CL: Sorry, just repeat that.

AK: So how did your high school and prep school deal with issues of sexuality and gender?

CL: Uh, well, it was [chuckles] I was in Grade 10 in 2000, so, uh, not very constructively.

AK: Cool ...

CL: Uh, 'boys were boys' and did boy things and dressed in boy clothes and said boy things and were interested in boy things and the same goes for girls. So, um, and ... being gay or anything but hetero, fitting within the heteronormative standard was not really spoken about or considered. If anything, if it was spoken about, it was ridiculed. But it was ... wasn't really deal with in, in any way other than being, being discredited, discredited or disregarded or ridiculed or condemned even, in some instances, so, yeah, ... very heteronormative. Anything that didn't fit that was either wrong or deviant.

AK: And what would you say informed that kind of background or attitude?

CL: Well, definitely religion. I was, uh, I was brought up 'NG' [Dutch Reformed Church] and many of my friends were also NG churchgoers. I remember there was, there was one Jewish family in town and, uh, in the mornings, if we did, if we started the day in register class with Bible study, the, the Jewish kid, I had one of the kids were in my, in my grade, were excused from the session, which even at that time I thought was a bit fucked up, because, they, you know, they were being excluded from a group activity but obviously that was because of, that was on, on the request of the parents because that wasn't in line with the family's religious beliefs. So, I would definitely say religion is important in that, also, um, Afrikaner culture, sure. The Afrikaner culture is obviously, as you must be aware, very heteronormative and very, uh, you know, anything that doesn't fit the mould of being middle-class, white, cis, straight, was a considered a no-no so there was some cultural, some Afrikaner cultural influences, religion, yeah.

AK: Um, would you describe yourself as coming from an Afrikaans background?

CL: Oh, yeah, I'm one hundred percent an Afrikaner.

AK: Okay, um, are both your parents Afrikaners?

CL: Yes, well, my mother is, um, my dad has a, a bit more of a diverse, uh, background, he, he's from a, from what one might refer to as a broken home ... parents were divorced, his dad actually died before I was born, um, so, and his, but they were divorced before his, before his death, um, his parents, and, um, his mother, my grandmother, remarried, and so the man that I know as 'grandfather' on my dad's side was my dad's stepdad. Uh, and, yeah, so there was, and he was from Germany and he was raised half-English, half-Afrikaans but he definitely identifies as being Afrikaans as well but maybe not an Afrikaner. So, yeah, so my dad has a bit of a more of a diverse background whereas my mother is solely, like she's from Springbok, uh, they're all, her name was Petronella [sp], they were very much, their surname was, her maiden name was Van Wyk, so, very much Afrikaner.

AK: Okay, um ...

CL: And ... subscribed to all of the norms that go along with it.

AK: Okay, um, and then looking, just finally, at your high school and prep school, how did they interact with issues of race and class?

CL: Uh, poorly [chuckles] uh, words like, I distinctly remember I once ... rollerblading was quite a thing at the time, so one Christmas I got rollerblades and the guy that had one of the sporting goods ... I think the only one, um, in the town, he did, he had like a, um, a rollerblading hockey team kind of a thing, so, because I have the rollerblades I thought that might be a cool sport to do because you play it with, uh, the same like, uh, hockey stick that you use in ice

hockey and I remember my, um, my mother having a conversation with a friend of my mother, uh, where they said they were concerned that, um, myself and my friend who also got rollerblades recently, participate in this roller-hockey club because it's not part of the, sort of, the school extra-curriculars, it was this guy that has the, the sporting goods store, and, um, from my friend's mother's assessment, uh, the low class kids that were doing the sports and the town was also very much segregated into more affluent areas and, and, less so and that was very much aligned with class structures as well and it was very explicitly referred to as, uh, low class people, uh, you know, high class people, and we were considered, my mother would consider us high class people and there were certain low class people and low class people did certain things and when you associate with certain people then there is an expectation that you are also, by association, low class. Race was a big no-no, um, in '94 when I was in primary school, I remember my, uh, my parents being obsessed with how many non-white, because at the time the school was a white school but then after '94, the school became integrated. They were obsessed with how many black or Coloured children I had in my class, and, um, were I sitting next to any of them. I remember writing exams one year and sitting next to a Coloured girl and intentionally not telling my mother about it because I knew she was, like, freak-out about it. In high school, when it was more, it became more integrated, cos it was now a couple of years after '94, I had, I had Coloured friends who were in my school and in my grade and in my class, who I would wanna invite to my parties, if I had, like, a party at the house or if I had a birthday party, and I remember my mother and my dad not being, uh, cool on that idea at all but I, I [chuckles] I invited them anyway because I knew that my mother would not make a scene because she's very much about public appearance and, you know, making sure that she saves face, so even though that I would get flak for it afterwards because I was told explicitly that I am not allowed to invite any children that aren't white, um, I invited two, a boy and a girl, two Coloured friends to my one birthday party and my mother gave me a little bit of shit afterwards that I just thought "oh well, they're my friends", so I would rather take the shit from my mother afterwards, than having to face this person at school, uh, knowing that I had a party and didn't invite them, so yeah, no, class and, class and, and race was also very much, segregated and, uh, there was a, a perception or a construction of hierarchy and not mixing with the hierarchy.

**00:33:40:** Early sexual development

AK: Okay, and then moving forwards, do you remember when you first kind of hit puberty?

CL: Um ... late primary school, like grade sev, grade six, grade seven, I'd say.

AK: Okay, um, and do you remember the first sort-of time that you started to experience, uh, attractions towards men?

CL: Um ... [laughs] I don't remember when this was, if this is still, uh, uhm, primary school, oh, now I don't remember, it was a, it was a cricket tour, wait, let me quickly Google, um, think it was Mark Boucher, uh, there was, my mother used to, yes it was Mark Boucher, my mother used to buy the, uh, *Huisgenoot* and he was, basically they would always have a middle, like a, a centre-fold poster and he was, for some reason, when did he play for the side, for the Proteas, I'm not sure, but anyway, he was a centre-fold. It was either late, it was either around then or very early high school, he was a centre-fold and I was just beguiled by this man in the centre-fold of the *Huisgenoot* so pretty, pretty much early on when puberty hit. The thirst, the thirst hit as well.

AK: And do you remember, sort-of, how those early attractions, how they made you feel?

CL: Um ... hmm ... Well I definitely knew at a cognitive level, I definitely knew that this wasn't something that I could share, I knew, uhm, uh, I thought that it was wrong but I [sigh] mm. I was never at a point where I considered taking my own life, um, because in my mind, I felt that I could, I could keep it under, under wraps, like, I could keep it on the down low, so I had, like, girlfriends all the way until first year in university, um, I came out in second year of university, so ... I don't wanna say shameful because I don't think I did feel shame, um, but I knew ... well, I knew, I thought at the time that what I was feeling was, was wrong, and that, I, I, I could not express it publicly, I had to keep it to myself.

AK: And how would you describe your sexual orientation?

CL: Um, oh, I'm a gay man.

AK: Okay, um, and what does it mean to you to be gay?

CL: [chuckles] Uh, to [clears throat] to be attract-, to be sexually attracted to, uhm, er, cis men

AK: Okay ...

CL: Who present as such.

AK: And how would you describe your gender identification?

CL: Cis, cis male.

AK: And what does that mean to you?

CL: Uh, um, having the same gender identity as the I was assigned with at birth.

AK: Okay, um, and then looking at, uh, as you moved from early attractions to men, uh, you mentioned that you had girlfriends, did you, were you attracted to women at the time?

CL: Um, no, um, I kind of, it's interesting now I actually, now that I think about it, I had this split, I had this split in my mind where, um, I thought that I could, uhm, the sexual, the sexual feelings I would assign to men, like I have sexual attractions to men, but I would have an emotional attraction or an emotional, dunno how you would describe it, a relationship with women. So, the girlfriends that I had, I genuinely did care about them, um, and one can debate what, what is love and what does it really mean being in love, so I would, I would totally see myself as, you know, one day getting married and, and all of that but um, I never, at the time, well, at the time I didn't reconcile having both sexual and emotional feelings towards one specific group of people, there was that split for me, which I suppose was the, was the result of, um, external message that, what I was feeling was, was not okay, at least the sexual, uh, feelings that I was feeling was not okay.

AK: Thank you, and then, during high school, uh, did you ever enter into any physical or sexual relationship with other men?

CL: Uhm, yes, there was, there was this one friend who, um, I lost contact with and then eventually, um, saw him again and then he also came out of the closet, um, who, we, I suppose you could, you could call it, um, uh, 'experimenting'? But it was very, like, the occasions were very, um, rare, it was very small, it wasn't really significant, and also in my mind I didn't, I, I dunno, I probably didn't process it properly, properly, but I didn't consider those interactions as being 'gay' per se. Um, uh, um, and those interactions weren't very, um, it didn't go very far, it would be, like, things like, uh, uh, dunno, what do you call it, jacking off next to each other, it's not mutual masturbation, because we weren't masturbating each other but there was definitely a lot of, like, seeing each other's bits and ... playing with ourselves in each other's company, that kind of thing, but there was no, there was no, physical, like, there was definitely no penetration or anything like that [clears throat] yeah, so, so, very, very, very little and that completely, I think that completely stopped by, like, Grade 10, nothing, nothing after that, I think when I became more aware of what something that actually means, um, or says about me, says about myself or the other person, um, I kind of had this mental block, so nothing like that happened after that, it was kind of early, early on.

AK: Okay, um, it didn't develop into kind of any emotional or romantic relationship?

CL: No, uh, no, no

AK: Okay, um, and then nothing happened until you left high school?

CL: Yes.

AK: Um, where did you go for your gap year?

CL: London, and interestingly enough, uhm, one would think that, now I, now the world is my oyster, and now I can, you know, go explore my sexuality to my heart's content, but not one single instance of that, I don't remember if it ... if it ever was an option, and I just didn't um, didn't want to do it, or if I was just ignorant and I didn't know what was out there. Um, at the time, um, I turned nineteen while I was in London and at the time I wasn't aware of, sorry, can you hear me?

AK: It's just my headphones.

CL: Okay, I wasn't aware of things like, um, bath houses or, um, online hook-ups, I wasn't, I was quite, um, because at this point I've completely built-up a wall, so I was denying that part of my identity completely, um, so I didn't actively seek it out, I, I, in fact, I actually just wanted to bury it so I think that's why I probably didn't explore even though I definitely can imagine, could have, um, I didn't.

AK: Okay, um, you mentioned this 'wall', um, and then the denial, what do you think created the wall?

CL: Um, my, well, probably, a fear of rejection, um, fear of, um, stigmatisation, persecution, um, because up until that point, if, if there was any mention of someone being gay or not, or a man not being masculine enough, you know, he'd be labelled as a *moffie* and *moffies* were, you know, deviant, they were child molesters, they wanna dress in women's clothing, all of those various things being conflated into this one, into this one kind of label, um. I remember coming out to my mother, I specifically said, um, "even though I'm gay, I've, you know, I've no desire to touch children, I don't wanna, I don't wanna be a woman," so I kinda pre-emptively kind of addressed those issues that, that are conflated in ignorance, in ignorant people's minds about sexuality and gender so I, I, I just didn't wanna be associated with, with that, with that stigma.

AK: And what do you think helped deconstruct that, uh, wall?

CL: Well, a lot of small things, like being exposed to people that are not from Malmesbury, so definitely when I went to university and I saw, "oh wow, not everyone looks like they do in Malmesbury," or behave and act in the same way, like, things like that and there's ... when I started uni there was a lesbi-gay society in Stellenbosch so, so definitely exposure but also I would say friends because, um, in my, in my first year, I remember telling my one mate who's actually getting married now, um, in November, a straight guy, uh, we became friends in my first year. He was from Durban and I, don't remember, we were obviously very drunk one night and I dunno, remember what the trigger was or why I decided that this was now the time, um, and I told him that I was gay but I have no interest in, in living as a gay man or living that lifestyle he was like, "okay, sure, buddy, whatever you're, you wanna do," and then I remember

telling a female friend as well and she was also, like, “okay, well, whatever you want or whatever you think is gonna make you happy, I’ll support you regardless.” So, I would say, exposure, definitely exposure to people that are different from me which I didn’t have growing up until the age of eighteen because I was definitely in a, in a bubble; support from friends, but then the big one, the kicker was actually kissing a guy for the first time, so the other stuff that I mentioned, it’s very much, like, playing with our dicks, like, horny, uh, a pubescent teenager does. I remember I was in my second year, I kissed a guy for the first time and now it was kind of this ... reconciliation of emotion with sexuality and I was just, “okay, this is it, I’m coming, everybody’s gonna find out and this, this is now my life.” So this big thing is when I kissed a guy for the first time, um, I actually, so weird, I randomly saw this specific guy on Grindr, like, a couple of weeks ago in Joburg, because this was in Cape Town and, um, and I was thinking how different my life would have turned out if, if he didn’t, cos he, he made a move on me and, um, *ja*, how different my life may have been if he didn’t actually do that, that night, um, and I saw him on Grindr, because he was up, up in Joburg, um, we didn’t really chat, just said ‘hi’ and whatever, so, yeah, that was pretty much, and then everything just came down and then I started people, I started telling my friends first and my family later on.

AK: And what was the reaction from your parents and from your friends to you coming out?

CL: Okay, so friends, everyone was, like, “yeah, dude, we know,” [laughs] um, and “it’s cool, don’t worry about it.” Um, my brother is totally fine, he actually, um, I told my friends, basically, effectively immediately, um, I didn’t post, like, a massive, uh, billboard about it but I very, very quickly told most of my friends and then I started dating before I told, before I told my, um, family and my brother who was still in high school at the time, um, was on campus with me. So, at this point, um, I’m sorry, I’m skipping ahead a bit, but this gives context to the answer of how people responded, um, I was on campus, so, I’ve come out at this point to my friends and I was dating, and I had some gay friends as well and then my brother was walking with me. For some reason, he was in Stellenbosch, I don’t remember why, we were walking on campus and we ran into one of my gay friends and then, um, and the friend was very, very camp and flamboyant and I said to my, uh, brother that, “oh, by the way, this dude’s gay,” and my brother was, like, “*ja*, I could see, but, like, it’s not an issue because I’m not a homophobe,” and now, in retrospect, thinking of, when I was in high school, when I was his age, in high school, like, I wouldn’t even, like, think about, I would actually have told my older brother, “ew, why are you friends with him, or with, you know, people like him?” but now that I think about it I think he probably knew that I was, you know, gay and was, and that was an attempt at him saying that it’s okay because when I eventually did come out, um, he was totally fine.

My dad was, um, just concerned for my wellbeing, so his first, first reaction was “okay, don’t get AIDS, don’t get gay-bashed, but, you know, you do you” and my mother’s response was very, very, very bad, um, we still, to this day, do not talk about it, um, she, uh, she tried, she was grasping at, at straws and she tried various attempts at, um, convincing me not to be gay, her first response was, “well, can you get therapy or anything like that?” I said no because there’s nothing wrong with me. Uh, she tried the religious angle even though we did go to church and I was raised *NG*, I wasn’t, like, staunch Christian, you know, that kind of thing, like we didn’t pray before meals or anything like that, um, and if my brother and I didn’t have Sunday school we’d skip church as well, so we were those, those kinds of Christians but when I came out, like, she tried the whole, uh, Bib, uh, the whole religion angle and, uh, she asked me if I wanna be this way, and how terrible it is and she’s failed me and, but luckily I was strong enough in myself at the time and with my training as a psychologist I realised that it wasn’t about me, it was about her so I didn’t internalise any of the stuff that she, that she said, and later on, like, years later I tried to, um, bring up this subject again and she said she doesn’t wanna talk about it, I know how she feels about it, so, she knows but till this day we still, we still don’t acknowledge it, we don’t talk about it, um, and as a result I’ve not told my extended family either, I think it’s pretty obvious at this point but like any good Afrikaans family we just don’t talk about it because if we don’t talk about it, it doesn’t exist. My brother, he’s cool, though.

**00:53:41: University years**

AK: Okay, um, so guessing that you went to Stellenbosch to study psychology?

CL: I what?

AK: You went to Stellenbosch University to study, uh, psychology.

CL: Yes, industrial psychology.

AK: Okay, um, was that a BA with honours or what?

CL: Um, it was a BComm, uh, the course was called BComm Psych, and then I did the honours BComm Psych there as well and I did my M [master’s degree] at Tuks [University of Pretoria].

AK: Okay, um, so did you go straight from your honours to masters?

CL: Um, I tried but I didn’t get in Stellenbosch, so I started working and then I applied the following year, so I had a, I had a year in-between.

AK: Okay, cool, this was all after 2008, correct?

CL: Yes, um, yes, I did my, I finish my honours in 2008, actually, no, 2009, yes, 2008, I finished my honours in Stellenbosch in 2008 and then in 2009 I started working Pretoria and then I reapplied to start the M there, so I started my M, 2010, so 2009 I was working, um, and not studying.

AK: Um, and in terms of your movements during your Stellenbosch University time, was it, did you come to Cape Town quite often or were you mostly spending your time between Malmesbury and Stellenbosch?

CL: Uhm, most definitely most of the time in Stellenbosch and then sometimes I would go to Cape Town, do the whole Bronx thing, I dunno how old you are, if you ever, if you're still aware, but I, I was going to Bronx when it was still in the previous premises before it was in the premises when it got demolished so I was doing Bronx and then on the other, on the other corner there was Crew Bar, something, anyway, so yeah, so I would do ... but, um, not that often, every now and then, oh, and we'd also do *gat* parties, we would actually do quite often, do they still do *gat* parties?

AK: Not that I know of, but I have read about them, um, stuff like that.

CL: Yeah, yeah, so, yeah, I did *gat* parties quite, quite, like we'd go as, as a group from Stellenbosch and we'd, we'd do *gat parties*.

AK: And where would those happen?

CL: Hmm?

AK: Where would the *gat* parties normally happen?

CL: Um, in Milnerton, I think it was at the, uh, at some sports, uh, sports club, clubhouse, uh, thing, um, it was in Milnerton

AK: And during your time as a student at Stellenbosch, was there much of a gay scene in terms of clubs or societies or bars or whatever?

CL: There was a, um, there was a lesbi-gay society and they, annually that *Ag Mei* party which I thought was pretty cool, like, reclaiming [sigh] reclaiming, you know, stuff that was used to break you down so that it removes the power of the, the person using it and, um, I went to quite a few, I, I randomly saw an old photo the other day of me attending because it always had a theme and I was, um, Johnny Bravo at this one, it was when I was still buff, uh, and other than that Stellenbosch didn't really have a scene, no, um, I attended a gay support group because the, the guy that I mentioned, the first guy that I kissed, uh, I, as a baby gay, obviously fell in love with him and wanted to marry him and have his gay babies but that didn't, but that didn't happen and my entire life imploded so I started seeing, um, a therapist, a university therapist because obviously I wouldn't be able to pay for therapy myself and, um, I couldn't ask my

parents for money for therapy because they'd ask questions and, God forbid, so, and then this therapy referred me to, uh, what they also, so they had this student wellness centre, you're at UCT, right?

AK: Yes.

CL: I assume you probably have the same thing so student wellness kind of centre which also, so they did therapy and they did group therapy and so she referred me to this group, uh, group therapy for gay men and so I joined that and that was quite helpful, I met quite a few guys there who I'm still very good friends with, Mathew [a common friend] was one of them and, um, yeah, so that's pretty much it, so I had, like, I had, I'd have my group of gay friends on campus and in Stellenbosch but there wasn't really a scene if, if we wanted to do gay scene stuff we'd go to Cape Town where we'd do Bronx or we'd do *gat* party or something.

AK: Okay, um, what sort of issues did this therapy group deal with, what sort of issues were they dealing with, with Stellenbosch students who were gay?

CL: Um, I don't really remember anything specific but it was pretty interactive so they would have a facilitator who was one of the therapists at the centre and then you'd pretty much go around, you'd meet once a week and you would just go around and talk about something that was pertinent for yourself over the past week that either related to ... explicitly your sexuality or something that was indirectly related to that, so it, so it was pretty, pretty broad, you could bring anything to the group that you felt you wanted support with.

**00:59:50: Partner selection, domesticity and defining conflict**

AK: Okay, um, and then, looking at, you mentioned that with the first man you kissed, you sort of created, I guess, uh, you wanted to marry him and that sort of thing, um, had you created an image of a perfect relationship or a fantasy partner or something like that in your mind?

CL: Uh, no, he was it, he was the perfect guy, uh, because it was such a, because, and now I'm saying this with my psychologist hat, he, he represented, uh, a massive, a fundamental change in how I saw myself and how I saw myself in relation to society and the relief that that brought and the, um, the freedom that that brought and so, um ... that is very much, you know, he's super cute but that's pretty much why I think I completely fell in love with him because he represented that release and that convergence of sexuality and emotion and being more of a whole person rather than, because before that I didn't have an ideal, the ideal before that was a wife, you know, and two and a half children and the white picket fence, so, so no, I, I haven't and if I look at the guys that I've dated they are all very different both, um, physically and, um,

emotionally and intellectually, so, um, I've never really when people ask me, what's my type, I've never really had a type.

AK: So, would you say that you've had a diverse set of partners in your time?

CL: Yes.

AK: And mostly based off what? What sort of characteristics would you consider different?

CL: Well, what they look like, uh, what they studied, um, hobbies, um, I dated an engineer, someone that was in drama, uhm, had a, the first guy I kissed he was, like, in, studied something technical at that time because he was a student as well, uh, yeah.

AK: And big differences in terms of age?

CL: No, they were all pretty much my age or around my age.

AK: And differences in terms of racial background?

CL: I've never dated a, a guy that wasn't white, uh, but I have had sex with everyone but I've never [chuckles] but I've never, um, but I've never dated a guy, well I haven't, I haven't had a boyfriend since ... 2008, since Stellenbosch ... yeah.

AK: Um, and then just looking at, uh, before we sort of get to discussing your relationships in detail, um, two just sort of quick things: how would you describe, um, the kind of perfect or sufficient domestic scene for you?

CL: The what?

AK: So, a perfect or sufficient domestic environment, how would you describe that?

CL: Uh, one where I'm left alone, and I have someone to all the stuff I don't want to do myself.

AK: Okay, cool, um, and what can you say informed that kind of understanding?

CL: Uh, okay, let's just backtrack quickly, my, um, ideal domestic situation for myself?

AK: For yourself, yeah.

CL: Is that the question? For myself, okay, yes, um, I dunno, I, um, as I've grown older, I've, I've realised that I'm very much an introvert and what I thought myself to be extroversion and what other people thought to be extroversion or extroverted, uh, [indistinguishable noises] was all [indistinguishable noises] to control and cope with social situations so at the moment I very much, my ideal situation is to just be alone, um, I have absolutely no desire to have a boyfriend ...

AK: Sorry, could you just repeat that, your connection was broken a bit ...

CL: Yes, um, uh, which part?

AK: Uh, sorry, just the last sentence ...

CL: Where did you ... yes, so I don't date ...

AK: Okay.

CL: I have no desire to have a boyfriend or a husband, um, socially, I go out from time to time but my ideal domestic situation would be to just be, like, extremely rich and have an opulent house that I just have to myself with my dogs and, um, have enough money to get the most exquisite rent boys that I could possibly afford and several servants to do the work that needs to be done around the house so I don't have to do it myself, definitely not with a partner or children, oh, Christ, no children.

AK: [Chuckles] um, okay, and then finally, looking at the main theme of the project, how would you describe conflict in your own words in the context of an intimate relationship?

CL: Conflict?

AK: Mm, the word 'conflict', yeah.

CL: Uh, when, um, well it's, conflict is very broad, it could be, um, but now I'm going to give you a textbook, a textbook definition and not my own interpretation, which is what you probably want, um, I would say when there are, when the individuals involved in said conflict have different, uh, different opinions or viewpoints or underpinning value systems and that becomes, uh, uh, apparent, and there is some difficulty in reconciling them.

AK: Okay...

CL: Or, uh, yeah, *ja*, I would say, so there's difference in opinion or, uh, value systems and, and typically they would compete for the same resources or, or air time or consideration and there's, there's some challenges with reconciling the differences and then obviously you can go from there and say "well, conflict is good because sometimes, if you manage it correctly, it can lead to self-discovery and innovation and blah blah blah," but essentially that's what I would say conflict is, that it's not necessarily good or bad in itself, it's just differences.

AK: Would you associate any kind of attitude or mindset with conflict?

CL: Well, yes I do think certain, uh, certain mindsets and certain personality types or certain attitudes are more prone to conflict because just by their very nature of they engage, how an individual with said attitude engages with others, so some people are more open to new and different opinions if they hear something that is different from theirs, they might internally consider it and go, "well, actually, yeah, no, um, I wasn't considering it appropriately and I'm adopting that other person's opinion, uh, whereas other people that are maybe more strongly willed, uh, might have a higher likelihood of conflict, so, yeah, I would say so, definitely.

AK: Um, and what sort of actions or behaviours would you associate with conflict in a relationship?

CL: What, as a result of or resulting in?

AK: Both. So, what actions or behaviours could perhaps trigger conflict, or could be a part of conflict, or could be as a result of the resolution of conflict?

CL: Okay, so, so in causing conflict, uh, behaviours and attitudes of a lack of introspection [clears throat] or a lack of ability to appropriately articulate your own views or feelings, uh, an inability or, uh, a lack of or an unwillingness to consider the full extent of someone else's views could all lead to conflict, uh, different backgrounds, so were you, if you are two fundamentally different persons, and I'm assuming where conflict is between two people, and not a group, not within a group, if you have fundamentally different upbringings and value systems and beliefs, that also increases the likelihood of conflict just because you are very different, and then the result could either then be positive or negative, you could either grow from the conflict if you, if you are more agreeable or open or considerate or able to communicate in a, uh, not positive, uh, productive constructive manner, um, so that you could grow from it or it could be destructive if neither parties are able or willing to engage constructively.

**01:10:46: Relationship history**

AK: Okay, um, and then going back to your early relationships, when would you say that you first, uh, were in a romantic or emotional relationship with another man?

CL: Um, well, okay, so the guy that I kissed, the first guy that I kissed, we had, I wouldn't say that he was my boyfriend, but we had, like, a few months of a thing, we had, like, a thing ...

AK: Mm-hmm ...

CL: ... Where we saw each other regularly. He was in Cape Town, I was in Stellenbosch, so he'd come over to Stellenbosch or I'd go that side, um, so, that was probably the first one, sorry, I forgot the question.

AK: Um, no, that's, that's a good start, um, and then after that relationship ended, first of all, what caused the end of that relationship?

CL: Well it was a bit complicated because, uh, I, so he made the move on me and he was very open about his sexuality because even after, um, he, uh, we made out because we were both dates to, uh, we were both plus-ones to a wedding and we went out after and that's when it happened and I ended up staying over in Cape Town at his and he, um, [chuckling] he had to take me to Malmesbury the next day and in the car ride, uh, it wasn't awkward, it was just a very, um, sort of, maybe confusing is not the right word, it's a bit, I think it's a bit, it has negative connotations to it but he, he asked me "so, like, what's your deal, like, are you gay?" and I was like "I actually don't know," even though I have had a conversation with friend's

before that I think I'm gay, and ... so my assumption was that he had his shit together in terms of his sexuality and he was more sure of himself, but it turned out that it wasn't the case at all, he was also going, going through stuff and still figuring out his identity, his sexual identity and then he kind of, he ghosted me, and, so, that's pretty much what happened and then later on we kind of started talking again and then he said, "well, sorry for doing that," but, uh, he was also going through some stuff and my expectation or assumption of where he was in terms of establishing his sexual identity was not nearly what I thought it was, but it kinda just fizzled.

AK: Okay, um, and then during this relationship did you ever experience any kind of conflict as you defined earlier?

CL: No, no, it was just ... it was just a joyous [clears throat] exploration of self and body.

AK: Cool, um, and then between that relationship and your next, what was the time period? How long did it take till you were in another relationship?

CL: Uh, no idea, uh, but it would probably be a couple of months, it was a few months because when that didn't work out, then my life fell apart and I started seeing the therapist and then started doing the group and then I found out about, like, online dating stuff that you can do and then I started dating someone that I met on Gaydar, the website. Uh, but the actual time in-between I, I don't remember.

AK: And how long did that second relationship last for, do you remember?

CL: Um, it was a few months, it wasn't very long, it was a few months.

AK: Okay, um, and was that emotional, quite physical?

CL: Yes, both.

AK: Okay, um, and then what caused the dissolution of that relationship?

CL: [Chuckles] I broke up with him because I thought I could do better.

AK: Ah, I see, was that because of your perception of him and who he really was, or what?

CL: Uh, no, no, I was just, um, a conceited asshole who thought I could get a hotter boyfriend.

AK: Okay, and do you remember how that sort of made you feel in the post break-up situation?

CL: Um, I felt kinda bad, but, um ... not that bad.

AK: Um, do you remember how he experienced the break-up?

CL: Uh, definitely way worse than I did, um, he was more upset about it than I was, but we still maintain contact and we still, like, exchange, still to this day, every now and then, a 'hey, how's it,' uh, he's happily married now, like, um, no, like, definitely affected him more which is to be expected because I broke up with him.

AK: And what were your tactics in terms of finding a partner, online or did you have other avenues to find a new partner?

CL: I really don't remember active or deliberate tactics, I would just, like, use whatever was there and was available, um, meeting new guys through gay friends that I've met, um, online, um, who was my boyfriend after that? ... Um, yeah, oh dear [chuckles] then I started dating someone from the support group ...

AK: Okay, and what happened there?

CL: Um, he was ... he was not as social as I was at the time, he was also very reserved, very, uh, conservative in some instances, uh, and he didn't like some of my preferences in, you know, partying and getting drunk and going out. I remember we had a huge fight about me smoking weed, um, not habitually but on occasion and he was not keen on that and I was like "um, but, you know, it's not that bad" and then one night we went out, he didn't go out with us, we went out to Bronx, we did a Cape Town trip, a bunch of us and then I got quite wasted and then he just heard in conversation from someone else that was there how drunk I was and then he broke up with me because he didn't want a boyfriend that was, like, partying that hard and I was like "okay, cool, whatever" and then we tried again, um, and then, so he broke up with me, but then I think eventually I broke up with him, yeah, I broke up with him because he wasn't, he wasn't social enough, he was a bit of a stick in the mud.

AK: Um, so with the initial conflict you had regarding, sort of, partying and your first relationship, would you say, was that the main prompt of the conflict, that he was more socially reclusive, and you were more likely to go out?

CL: Yes. Definitely, uh, yes, uh, but he was also very, yeah, uh, I think it's more fundamental than, than that, I think it's, uh, as a result of his general value system versus my value system. He was very conservative even though it's, I suppose one could say 'ironic' because he was a gay man. He was quite conservative in, in his general belief system so he wasn't, I would swear and, you know, say whatever comes to mind and he wouldn't like it if I swore, um. I would call another gay friend "gurl" or "*meisie*" and he didn't like that at all, so I think it was, it was because I had a more, say, liberal value system whereas he had a very more conservative value system and neither of us were willing to, to budge on that.

AK: And would you say that your differences were as a result of your upbringing and your outlook on life?

CL: No, because my upbringing was pretty similar to his, um ... no, uh, outlook on life, yes definitely, I think we wanted different things in life and we had different beliefs in terms of how one would go about achieving that ... but, yeah, we just essentially, fundamentally different people that was just not compatible.

AK: So, what is your relationship status ...

CL: Also, he had a bit of a small dick which I wasn't feeling at all.

AK: Ah, I see, some aesthetic or physical differences?

CL: [Laughs] yes.

AK: Would you say that those physical or aesthetic differences are a problem to, a reason for people to break up?

CL: I can't speak for other people but for me, uh, it's changed. I was less focused on the physical earlier in life whereas I am way more focused on the physical now, um, but I, I, I can't speak for other people, I don't really know, um, what the deal breakers and the, the most important aspects of staying together or breaking up are but for me it, it definitely has changed over time, I think it's also the result of me wanting a relationship earlier in life whereas at the moment I, and for years now, I have had no desire to have a boyfriend or husband. Uh [clears throat] my focus is less on the, less on the emotional-intellectual and more on the physical, although there was, there was a, uh, an element of that earlier on as well.

AK: And then ...

CL: As I've said, I, I dumped my first boyfriend because I thought I could do better and then the second one's dick wasn't big enough, so ...

AK: Cool, and then your third partner, um, what happened there?

CL: Er, that was probably the longest relationship I've ever had, we were together for, like, over a year? And everything meshed, he, physically, I found him very attractive, sexually, um, we were very compatible, he was socially outgoing, both of us had big, uh, friend, friendship circles and he got on very well with my friends, I got very on well with his friends, he's still friends with my friends, um, but then he left and then we tried to do the long distance thing for a while and then that just didn't work out. Yeah, that was probably the longest, most significant relationship I've had [clears throat] like I've met his mother, um, yeah.

AK: Um, sorry, before we continue, I should have asked this earlier, how many relationships would you say you had between when you started dating and 2008, roughly?

CL: Four. Everyone I've mentioned up to now, plus one.

AK: Okay, um, so with this third relationship, what made it so emotionally and sexually significant? And physically as well, I guess?

CL: And what?

AK: So, *ja*, emotionally, sexually, physically, and let's add socially [chuckles].

CL: Okay, *ja*, socially, uh, we, we liked the same things, we liked going out, we got along very well with each other's friends, uh, we were both quite ambitious and career-driven so intellectually that was, like we both wanted to be really successful, so we were, we worked

hard on, you know, starting a career, well, even though it was quite early on, but still, and I found him intellectually stimulating, so we were, we could have good, good conversations, we shared the same value systems in terms of, uh, equality and diversity and, um, those type of things. He, I think, very significant part of why our relationship worked was he [clears throat] to put it bluntly, worshipped the ground that I walked on, and I need that in a relationship, should I have one, uh, and I got that from him. The sex was really good, um, yeah, what else is there?

AK: Um, that about answers it, um, then just looking at your third relationship, did you, again, asking the same sorts of questions, did you experience ...

CL: Actually, of significance is I came out to my family when I was dating him, the significance of that relationship was the prompt to come out to my family.

AK: Okay, um, and then would you consider this as a sort of foundational relationship if you think about your life retrospectively? So, every relationship you've had since then, have you based on this relationship?

CL: Maybe not based upon but definitely compared to, no, for sure.

AK: And during this relationship did you, again, experience any kind of conflict that you outlined earlier?

CL: Uh, not really that I can remember, the conflict started, sorry, I'm just trying to lie down because I'm sitting quite uncomfortably ... uh [clears throat] the, the conflict, the conflict started mostly when he, uh, he went away and we tried to do the whole long distance thing ... there I felt he wasn't doing enough from his side to contact and communicate and ... I think that speaks to my, my need to get everyone's attention all the time, the whole time, and I felt that that changed when he wasn't physically around and that was probably one of the biggest reasons why we broke up. He wasn't able to keep up the, the worship

AK: Um, and, then looking at your fourth relationship, what happened with that, as far as, how did it start and what happened in the relationship?

CL: Um, how did we meet? ... I actually don't remember how we met, um, he was a med student so I actually, it was probably through a mutual friend, um, and that was quite, that was quite turbulent, I'd say, that was very much, very, very focused on the physical, that had a very strong physical focus, um, which I think wasn't sustainable, and then that kinda fizzled as well.

AK: Okay, and how long would you say that relationship lasted, roughly?

CL: Uh, couple of months, three, four months.

AK: And in-between, uh, these four relationships that you've outlined, were you engaging in sort of casual sex or relaxed dating or ...?

CL: Yes? Um, from the second one.

AK: Okay, um, and did that, was that quite consistent or did it go in ebbs and flows?

CL: Consistent or?

AK: Ebbs and flows. So, some days good, some days bad.

CL: Well, this [chuckles] sex with the first one wasn't that great, um, but from there on out it was pretty consistent, uh, pretty, um, good, uh, I've always, I don't remember, um, having a negative experience and then not feeling free or open enough or comfortable enough to say, like, you know, that, that's not working for me, uh, so, yeah, that was pretty, pretty good since then.

AK: Um, and then looking at the sort of spaces that you might have, say, conflict with your partner, was it mostly public or mostly private?

CL: Private.

AK: Mostly private, was there every any incidence of you in public or in a shared social setting?

CL: Uh-uh, no, in fact, I've, I've always found that very, uh, off-putting, um, I had this one couple friend who would constantly be fighting in public and when we would go out, it was kind of a given, when we go out these two fuckers will be fighting and, um, I always found it very off-putting, so, no, I never, we never did that in public.

AK: And in private settings, um, you don't need to do it play by play but how did these conflicts manifest?

CL: Mm, it depended on the reason for the conflict, it was very much, it was very much contingent on the, the reason and the specific situation and context, um, yeah, there wasn't a specific way, I think, that it usually manifested.

AK: And when it came towards you dealing internally with the conflict afterwards, what sort of mechanisms did you employ?

CL: Oh, my strategy was always to just get it all out there, um [clears throat] never, never leave anything unsaid, so, um, I wouldn't say that I have specific mechanisms for that because I always made sure that I get everything out and also, in addition to that, also, expectations of what, of what is to happen now, like, you know, you've said what you wanted to say, I've said what I wanted to and now, what now? So, it wasn't, I didn't really have, not that I can think of, right now, any specific mechanisms for dealing, like, post conflict, interaction, because I deal with it and then it's dealt with and then we move on.

AK: And this would be through verbal resolution?

CL: Yes.

AK: Okay, um, did any conflict ever get physical with your partners?

CL: No, I've never *moered* any of my boyfriends.

AK: Um, and as far as emotional conflict, first of all, what would you consider emotional conflict?

CL: Uh, when one party does something to cause emotional distress in the other and they're either not aware of it or, no, that's not right. When the one party causes distress, emotional distress, in the other and that then leads to differences of opinion, like, you did something to make me feel a certain way and, um, they might not feel that they were in the wrong.

AK: And would say that that ever manifested in any of your relationships?

CL: With the second boyfriend, yes, because we had such differing value systems, so, um, I'm sure I caused him emotional distress because I was living my life in a way that he didn't see himself having a boyfriend acting as such and, um, vice versa, his expectations of me were unreasonable, which obviously made me feel a certain type of way and then, uh, with boyfriend number three, um, his lack of responsiveness and, um, attention that I required caused a certain emotion with me that would result in conflict and eventually, the end of the relationship.

AK: Um, and then, sorry, lost my train of thought there, one second ... cool, then just a final section I'd like to just deal with, pigeon hole a few things, um, if you look at sort of the progression of South African politics and law and society during your time, uh, between 2001 and 2008, would you say the approach to gay rights has changed?

CL: Oh, one hundred percent, um, I, if I look at how I, how I felt in high school where I could not, could not express my sexual identity to the extent that I created this psychological split between sexual feelings and emotional feelings and directed it towards different groups of people, um, whereas my, whereas my straight friends, and still to this day I felt, I feel kinda cheated in my own development, because, well, my friends were able to, you know, experiment and have boyfriends and girlfriends and develop from those, those relationships, I, I couldn't have that in high school, to a point where, um, boyfriend three and I could walk down the street holding hands in Stellenbosch, um, and not feel, not feel in any way threatened or in danger. In fact, we were walking down the street one evening and we were holding hands and two guys in a *bakkie* drove past and, uh, shouted '*moffies*' at us and our immediate reaction was looking at each other and laughing about it because we thought it was absolutely ridiculous, um, and going out to a bar in Stellenbosch, uh, and being with my boyfriend and being affectionate in public and not feel threatened or, um, feel that should we be threatened, we had the support of the group we were with, that should it escalate we, we would have support, so there was definitely, um, I mean even just from my high school to university, there were massive

progressions so I can even imagine what the progression must be from, you know, when I was born to, to 2008.

AK: And if you think about the changes, um, sort of, towards the end of *apartheid* and then as you were a young man during the transition, how would you describe the transition and how you identified yourself in terms of the effects on society, did it affect your early self-identity?

CL: Uh, yes, but it's a mixture of external, external stimuli and influences and messages and ... and also internal dialogue and processes, so as I mentioned in, in, in high school, there was these constant messages that anything that is not heteronormative is wrong or deviant or somehow not right or normal and when I kissed that guy for the first time, that wasn't, and then, and then, my, one eighty change to deciding, well, I'm not going to suppress this, I'm going to live my life authentically, that wasn't because of any external messages, that was because of a personal decision, so it's definitely a combination of both context but also personal choices and personal experiences, and, um, how one chooses to process that and act on that.

AK: Okay, um, and then looking that kinds of legal and political changes, so, if you think about the Constitution of 1997, the Equality, uh, equalities Clause in the Constitution and the Civil Unions Act as three major pieces of legislation in amongst other court cases, would you say these have had an impact on queer identity in South Africa?

CL: Um, yes, because it makes it safe, it makes you feel like, like you have the right to not be, uh, persecuted for just being yourself. I mean, I am absolutely living for [indistinguishable].

AK: Living for?

CL: Um, having to ...

AK: Sorry, you were living for what, sorry?

CL: I'm absolutely living for, living for the most recent, um, judgement against the *NG Church*.

AK: Okay, cool, yeah.

CL: Uh, for, um, for having to extend the same privileges to their, to their gay members, um, not that I want to get married or want to be associated with the *NG Church* [indistinguishable] which they perform, at that, the government has that this is unacceptable behaviour. Definitely, I think it creates a social context where one is able to make decisions or where it's maybe a bit easier, where it feels safer for one to be more authentic and make choices that are authentic, I mean, you could be living in the most liberal society and some people might still choose to be in the closet but at least when, um, when you have legislation and regulation like that in place you don't feel like you have to fight just to be yourself, just for the right to be yourself.

AK: And would you say that that's, how that sense of self is valuable when it comes to relationships with other men?

CL: Um, definitely, um, you, um [sigh] if you don't have that sense of self, your, um, your relationship will always, I think, you would always frame your relationship as something that you need to maybe not hide but, as something that is tainted with, with shame or, or, in some instances something you need to hide, or [indistinguishable].

AK: Sorry, could you repeat that last bit, something after needing to hide? Connection is a bit funny.

CL: Sorry?

AK: The connection is a bit funny, you said something about something you would need to hide, something about that that I didn't quite catch.

CL: Oh, yeah, I just said that if you aren't able to, uh, regardless of the context, if you aren't able to have an authentic sense of self then the relationship that you form will always be tainted with either shame or the, the need to hide it, or, um, to amend, uh, to quote RuPaul, "if you, if you can't love yourself, how are you, how are the Hell are you gonna love somebody else?" So ...

AK: "Can I get an amen?"

CL: [chuckles] "Can I get an amen?" So, that's a bit of a cliché but you, um, but you can't be authentic with someone else if you can't be authentic with yourself because that has a ripple effect to your relationships.

AK: Um, that's just about it, is there anything else you'd want to say on the topic?

CL: No, um, I think your topic is really interesting and, um, I wish you all the best.

AK: Thank you! Um, do you have any questions?

CL: I did qualitative work myself so, uh, in my research so good luck with all the transcription, I cheated, I paid someone to do the transcription for me even though I was supposed to do it myself, so I would recommend, if you have the means to do the same because you will go insane.

AK: [laughter] We'll see how it goes. Cool, um, then I think that concludes everything, I will send through the forms to sign, if not now, then as soon as possible and I'll be in touch regarding the finished product and I'll send through the transcripts before they're published, um.

CL: Oh, no, please don't worry about that, that's totally fine, what, um, what are you using for your analysis? What software?

AK: Uh, analysis in what sense?

CL: Um, analysing the data?

AK: Um, so it's ...

CL: Atlas or Nvivo or something like that?

AK: Um, so the data I'm working with is purely testimony and that sort of thing so it's more just like, uh, general kind of assessment that's framed by research questions that I have from my research proposal, I'm not doing any number crunching or general kind of ...

CL: Oh, no, but you know that there is software that you can use for qualitative analysis as well?

[At this point, AK's mike cut]

CL: Sorry, say that again, I lost the sound ... oh, there's no sound ... there's no sound ... nope, yup, no sound ... but I can't hear you ... it's, don't worry about it, it's fine, I just wanted to say that you could, um, there is, there is software packages, are you doing, uh, thematic analysis? ...

AK: [thumbs up]

CL: Okay, you can use, you can use, um, Atlas TI or Nvivo. It's, um, Atlas TI is just 'atlas-dot-ti' and 'N' and then 'V-I-V-O' and it's amazing, um, for qualitative analysis, it'll like highlight quotes and generate themes and, um, yeah, okay, okay, well, uh, thanks for letting me participate in your work and all the best, kay, kay, bye

### **Interview Description**

**Length of Interview:** 1 hour 46 minutes 11 seconds

**Recording Equipment:** Lenovo IdeaPad [and Skype]

**Copy and Access status:** signed release form; interviewee has stated no restrictions on material.

**Name of the Interviewee:** STRACHAN, Charles [CS]

**Name of the Interviewer:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam [AK]

**Date of Interview:** 21 March 2019

**Place of Interview:** Cape Town, South Africa and Las Vegas, United States of America [via Skype]

**Number of tapes/recordings:** 1

**Transcribed by:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam

**Date Transcribed:** 18 April 2019 – 3 June 2019

**00:00:00:** Introductions

AK: Hi there?

CS: Hey, Adam, how's it going?

AK: Very well, and yourself?

CS: Good, I'm sorry I missed your call, I was actually in the other room and I didn't hear the phone ringing.

AK: It's all good, it's all good, I know that it's quite late for you over there [laughs]

CS: Yeah, well, it was a pretty long day, I actually had a flying trapeze class this morning that I caught at, uh, nine o'clock and then I was meant to catch one at six o'clock, but the weather got terrible and, uh, it was rained out.

AK: Oh, I see, that's rather unfortunate.

CS: *Ja*.

AK: I'm sorry to hear that, um ...

CS: It's okay.

AK: Are you still able to do, like, an hour and a half or is that a bit too late for you?

CS: No, sure, uh, I mean, I'm not sure about an hour and a half, um, do you have a lot of questions?

AK: Um, not a helluva lot, like, it's, so just to, essentially looking at, first of all at your sort of background and early life and so on, and then the time between, sort of, when you, uh, started sort of sexualisation until when you left in 1985, um, so because it's only about, I'm guessing you were about 25 when you left Cape Town, it's a fairly short period of time.

CS: Sure, sure.

AK: Cool.

CS: I'm in no hurry to get to sleep, it's quarter past eleven here at night and I normally get to bed at about two or three in the morning, that's just the way I am, I'm a night owl.

AK: [laughter] Cool, um, awesome, we can always segment it if needs be so just let me know.

CS: Let me just tell Ricardo, um, uh, what I'm doing because he doesn't know and I haven't mentioned it, give me one minute.

AK: Sure.

[Silence from 00:01:43 until 00:02:15]

CS: Okay, cool, sorry about that, yeah, I'm just telling him what's happening.

AK: Okay, cool, perfect, um, right, so shall we get started?

CS: Sure, absolutely.

AK: So just a few things, um, so technicalities before I start, so, um, first of all, if you'd like this to be confidential or ... anonymity or if you want to change information that you've said for the duration, just need to let me know and I can change the audio, um, this can be fully confidential, if you want to use your name you can or other people's names if you want to. If you'd like to stop the interview at any time, please let me know or if you decide in a couple of days from now that you'd, "oh, actually I said something I don't really want on record," then I can change that or remove that or whatever, um, if you're uncomfortable with the questions, just let me know, uh, yeah, if that makes sense.

CS: That's a sort of disclaimer, really, uh, um, in American terms. And, yeah, I'm not uncomfortable with anybody knowing anything, uh, um, my life is a complete open book...

AK: Okay, cool.

CS: And, uh, when my parents were alive I had a few years where I didn't want them to know things about me, uh, because I hadn't revealed that stuff and I thought there was an appropriate time or place, but at this point in my life, especially being fifty-eight years young, I feel like, you know, there's nothing to hide, so, there we go.

AK: Okay, well, thank you, so, ja, it's, as I said, confidentiality, it's part of the ethics of the project, and it's to make sure you feel comfortable giving your story.

CS: Sure, absolutely, well, thank you for that.

**00:03:44: Family background**

AK: So, first things first, when and where were you born?

CS: I was born in, uh, um, actually I was born in Mowbray, but I lived in Rondebosch ...

AK: Okay ...

CS: The actual hospital where I was born, and I was born by Caesarean birth, uh, was in Mowbray and I was born at five pm on the eighteenth of July in 1960, and I happened to share the eighteenth of July with Nelson Mandela ...

AK: Oh, wow!

CS: Although he may have been a few years before me.

AK: [laughter] Only slightly, um, and who did you live with when you were born and as a young child?

CS: Uh, I lived with my mom and dad and my elder brother, David, and then I had a younger brother, Bruce.

AK: Okay ...

CS: And, uh, we lived in Rondebosch, we were very fortunate, we lived in a nice house in a middle, in a middle-class neighbourhood.

AK: Okay, and what is the age difference between you and your older and younger sibling?

CS: Um, my older brother was born, um, a year or so, a year and a few months before I was and my younger brother was what they called a *laat lammetjie* in South Africa, he was, he was almost an afterthought, he was, uh, almost two years later.

AK: Okay, I see ...

CS: I was the middle one.

AK: Okay, and then, uh, looking at the work, so what work did your father do?

CS: My father worked in the bank, and, um, I've got to be honest he didn't exactly love the job, but, uh, it was a way to make a living, and he was really dedicated, he went to work every day, he had three boys to support, so, uh, you know, he, he worked really hard in the bank, and, um, there were times where he was under a lot of pressure because my mom was a housewife, you know, raising three boys and, uh, until later on she got a job with a church, working at St. Paul's Church as a secretary for thirty years, um, but my dad loved, you know, he, he, he worked in the cash depot so there were times when, uh, he got permission to bring us all individually as children and I remember as a child, going into the cash depot where they destroyed all the money that was going out of circuit and I remember one time he gave me ten thousand Rand to hold in my hand and as a, and as a six-year old or something, or seven-year old, that was just the most unbelievable thing.

AK: Um, so then looking at your relationship with your parents, uh, with your father what was your relationship like?

CS: Uh, I would say it was exceptional, I definitely, um, loved both my mom and my dad and they had quite, um, well, when I said it at their fiftieth anniversary, the way I described was I said, you know, uh, I thought everybody had a relationship where a mom and a dad loved each other and that they had loving children and that they all worked together to make a happy life, uh, but how wrong could I be because most people don't have that, you know, and most cases, the, the father's having an affair with people in Europe and the mother's, you know, uh, spending all his money somewhere, you know. We were very fortunate, we were raised, my mom was definitely dominant, uh, she was the one in many ways the one who wore the pants in the family, uh, she was the one who wrote all the cheques and controlled all the money, because early in my life my dad had shown that he didn't have any, any skills when it came to taking care of bills and all that stuff so she just took over the reigns and she handled all the finances, uh, even though, um, my dad was very, very, uh, loved and cared for, he was definitely an recessive personality to some extent.

AK: And how involved was he in your upbringing and your schooling and stuff like that?

CS: Uh, very hands-on, uh, I remember when there were times that my dad had, you know, being three boys, of course, we had, we had conflict, you know, at times, and, um, uh, my dad knew that I was the goodie-goodie and my older brother was always the troublemaker and then, of course, my younger brother was the one who got spoiled rotten because they had a little more experience and a little more money when he, you know, was growing up, um, I'll never forget one time where something had gone wrong and somehow I was blamed and my dad said, "well, I know you're not really guilty but I'm going to, um, act like I'm punishing you," and he, he took a strap and he hit the bed and I had to go out acting like I'd, you know, upset because I'd just got, you know, two cuts with a, with a strap, but, uh, the, my parents really didn't believe in corporal punishment, you know, at Rondebosch Boy's High School they did, I mean, I was caned, um, two times in my school career because I really was a goodie-goodie, but my older brother must have been caned, you know, fifteen or twenty times for doing all kinds of crazy things like smoking under the bridge and lying and pushing prefects in the pool and everything you could imagine, my brother did.

AK: And then looking, in contrast, to your relationship with your mother, uh, what was your relationship like with her when you were growing up?

CS: Uh, it was a very strong relationship, I felt like, um, I bonded with my mother even though I thought I took after my father but I bonded with my mother on many emotional levels, I mean, we could talk about almost anything and, uh, I used to always help her doing the, the dishes and I used to make my bed and I used to take the rubbish out and, you know, and do all the

things that most of my brothers didn't do, you know, and my mother would constantly say things like, "well, I'm in a house full of bloody males," because she was the only woman [chuckles] and she would say that over and over, she was the only woman, you know, and I always knew that I was, you know, probably had some, some female characteristics, being gay and all that, uh, and so in many ways I related to my mother better than both my brothers.

AK: Okay ...

CS: Although I'm not exactly a screaming queen, you know.

AK: And again, sort of, how involved was she in your schooling, upbringing, that sort of thing?

CS: My mom was pretty involved, uh, she definitely, uh, made sure that everyone did their homework and did the things that they needed to do and if they didn't do it she'd complain a lot, you know, she was, she was definitely more of the, the one who wore the pants, you know, she, she would always say, "have you done your homework", uh, "have you done the things you need to do?" I remember, I was in the church choir and, and there were times where the weekend would go by and I knew that I had had a project or something that had to be turned in on Monday and, but I was also in the church choir and a certain time on Sunday I used to have to go to the evening service and go sing in the choir and I remember thinking, "oh I haven't started my maths problem," you know, and I've gotta have this done by Monday morning and, uh, I get that sort of nervous stomach, you know, and my mother would always soothe me and say, "you know what, when you come back from choir, you know, just, just go in your room and just take care of what you need to do," you know, "you should have done it on Friday evening, but it's okay, just take, you know, get it done, and then you can eat dinner later on or whatever," you know, so she was very understanding and, but she was also encouraging, I was very fortunate.

AK: Um, and then would you describe in your own words your parents' marriage?

CS: It's funny, because in my own words I would say it was, it was wonderful, it was, it was love from the word 'go', they were polar opposites, uh, in personality and that's part of the reason why it worked so well, um, my older brother would describe it as "my mom taking over the role of my dad's mother," uh, "my mom kinda stepped into the role of running the household and my dad stayed in the child role in some ways," that's the way my older brother would describe it but I didn't always agree with him on that, I thought that my dad did very well, you know, going to work and taking care of things but my mom definitely held all the purse strings, so I would say overall if I was gonna sum it up in a few words I would say it was a very loving, healthy, uh, uh, heart-warming relationship. They truly loved each other.

AK: Okay, um, then just quickly looking at your relationship with your brothers, older and younger, what was that like, uh, just the three of you boys?

CS: Um, my older brother was extremely dominant, he, uh, being the first child, you know, he would play loud music in his room and drive my parents crazy, he, um, uh, was the first one to get a car, he would, uh, um, he was constantly getting in trouble, uh, I remember one time, uh, my father had bought a Sad Sack comic for me, for children to read and my brother read it and took his time because he knew I was waiting for it and the moment he was done reading it he ripped it up into little pieces and, and my dad was blown away that he would do such a terrible thing, because he knew I wanted to read it as well, it was for all of us, but he decided to destroy it and my dad make him take tape and tape it all back together before giving it to me, um, my parents were very fair, there was a time that my, uh, my dad had, um, bought me a gift, I think when I turned about fifteen, he bought me a little battery-operated electric razor, you know, to start shaving with and when you're fifteen, that's quite a big deal cos now suddenly you're starting to shave and, um, uh, a few years later, when my brother, uh, got to that age, my younger brother, uh, he brought a razor for him but he didn't give it as a birthday gift, he just gave it to him, and then my dad came to me and said, "you know, I just realised that I gave Bruce an electric razor and, and I'd given you an electric razor for your birthday present, so for that reason I'd like to give you the money that is the equivalent of what Bruce's one cost so that you can still feel like it was a gift given for a birthday, that's how wonderful my parents were or my dad particularly. Always fair, always, always, um, thinking about the emotions of, of their children.

**00:14:09: Schooling years**

AK: Um, and then looking, sort-of, at your schooling years, uh, where and when did you attend pre-school, um, when you were, like, five or six?

CS: Actually, uh, I went to pre-school and I was born in July, and they normally took pre-school until June but for some reason they decided that I was allowed to sneak into that year so I was the youngest in my class, uh, and I went to Arden Gardens, um, Primary School, which was like a church kindergarten, uh, and then went to Bishops [Diocesan College] in Sub A and Sub B, which was Grade 1 and Grade 2 in this modern language but we called it Sub A and Sub B and then I went to Golden Grove, uh, Standards 1 through 5, which I suppose is Grade, um, uh, 3 through 7, or whatever; anyway, and then I went to Rondebosch Boys High School from 6, Standard 6 until 10, to matriculate or graduate or whatever language you use nowadays.

I think South Africa has become quite American, they use the word graduate now instead of matriculate, right?

AK: Matriculate is still there, um, so ...

CS: Oh, still?

AK: Your Grade 12 class is your matric class, um, *ja*, okay, and then first of all looking at your pre-school, uh, what was the social environment there like?

CS: Well, I remember, it's sort-of funny because I can actually remember the very first day I was taken along to Arden Gardens nursery school and I remember that feeling of fear and I remember it distinctly, um, and I'm not sure if I remember it from, from my parents telling about how I responded or how I acted, uh, or by teachers telling me because people did tell me the story afterwards, but I remember this intense feeling of fear because suddenly I was going to be left alone in a strange place with strangers and, um, my mom brought me there and I remember crying and, and hugging onto her leg and all this, and eventually the teachers wrenched me away and took me inside and the first thing they did, they gave me some, um, play dough, you know, and I remember it was a bright blue colour and it had a very distinct smell, I think it was just dough, I don't think it was the same as, plasticine we called it in those days but I remember as a child smelling that and playing with it and getting some sort of comfort out of that, uh, and I was very much a shy kid, in those first couple of years, although I did make some friends, um, but eventually I got used to going and, you know, part of, part of the routine but I distinctly remember the fear on the very first day of school and, uh, I can't remember whether, whether my nursery school was co-ed, I imagine it was but when I went to Bishops it was boys only and then Golden Grove was boys and girls and then Rondebosch High School was just boys, you know, so it was an interesting, uh, diversity and I think also I was at the stage where I was becoming, uh, maturing and coming of age, uh, I was surrounded by attractive-looking guys instead of girls because I was in an all-boys school although I don't think that necessarily had anything to do with my attraction to guys because I think I'd felt that even during the time I was in Golden Grove, uh, I had a very close friend, uh, his name was Conrad Fuller and him and I became best of buddies and I remember there was feelings of sexuality right there in about Standard 3, or something, so, uh, I told you a lot in one question, I hope you don't mind me waffling on.

AK: No, no, not at all, I appreciate it, um, and then looking at the transition between, when you changed schools, so from Arden Gardens to Bishops to Golden Grove to Rondebosch, did you experience those same sorts of feelings that you had?

CS: You know, I don't, I don't truly remember, um, Arden Gardens nursery school going to Bishops, uh, although I know my brother was a year ahead of me, so it was somewhat comforting because when I went to Bishops, Sub A and Sub B, which is pre-school really, um, my older brother was in the same school so at least there was one familiar face and my, my mother and father would manage to take us to school at the same time so there was a little comradery there, you know, at least I had someone else in the school that I knew and, uh, even though he was in a different class cos he was a year ahead, uh, that sort of eased me in, uh, to, through that, um, preparatory school; and then going from, um, uh, Bishops, Sub A and Sub B, I remember that my grandmother was very upset because she was a bit of a British snob and, and she really believed that going from, from, um, Rondebosch, I mean, not Rondebosch, from Bishops, going to Golden Grove was a big step down, uh, you know, because Golden Grove wasn't such a class school as Bishops and we really should have stayed in Bishops and I remember my mother, you know, getting really angry with her, it was really my father's mother, um, so she was an in-law, you know, um. Going to Golden Grove was a, was a much easier transition because we lived literally across the road, you know, the trip down to Bishops Preparatory School was, it was quite a drive. We lived on Gambonia (sp) Road and, and Bishops [meaning Golden Grove] was right on Stuart, we lived literally right across the road, I could literally walk out of my back gate and walk across the road to the school, and then as a child also played in that school ground after hours and gone to, to, you know, after hours we'd jump over the fence and, and we go fly kites on the lawn and swim in their pool and do all kinds of crazy things, uh, so I was much more comfortable with the environment at Golden Grove, um, I made this really good friend, I didn't have a lot of friends but I made this really good friend with Conrad Fuller, as I say, he was my, my boy crush when I was probably about, in Standard 3 or 4 or something and, um, when we eventually left Golden Grove his father got transferred up to Johannesburg and I remember being absolutely devastated because now I was going on to Rondebosch Boys High School and I knew nobody and my brother had already gone on ahead the previous year and had created so much chaos in the school that, uh, one of the first days I was there somebody said, "oh, you're a Strachan boy, are you, oh, oh we know all about you," and, um, sort of started picking on me because I was David's brother, you know, because they knew David was a troublemaker so they assumed I would be the, cut from the same cloth. We were vastly different in personality so I, I suppose, to answer your question in a nutshell, going from Sub A to Golden Grove was easy, because it felt like I was going home, and going from Golden Grove to Rondebosch Boys High School was tragic because I lost a really good friend who I had a major crush on, uh, at that stage of my life and suddenly I was

thrust into an environment where my older brother had tarnished the, the field that I was gonna play in, you know, by being a bit of a jerk and that built up a bit of a negative reputation already.

AK: And those feelings that you had towards, uh, Conrad Fuller, how did they make you feel at the time, you would have been, what, eleven or twelve years old?

CS: Uh, nervous, extremely nervous, because I knew that, that first of all it wasn't talked about, and, and, uh, nobody ever, I'd never met somebody consciously that was actually, you know, of that persuasion, I didn't know anybody of that kind of, well, I suspected that my godfather actually was because he had this very good friend, his name was Harold, and my godfather, Uncle Ivan, used to play the piano and he had Harold as a, as a room-mate, you know, was a good friend of his, and, but my parents have never said, 'well, you know, Harold and Ivan are, are a couple,' even though they knew, they never divulged that, they just didn't talk, not even to Ivan or to Harold. They just loved them, but they never talked about it, nobody spoke about anything about that, so, so knowing that I had these feelings towards Conrad, uh, was, was pretty scary, but on the other side of the coin, well, I'll be kinda graphic, I was sitting in assembly in Standard 5, and we were watching movies, and Conrad opened my fly and played around with my, with my genitals in the back of the hall with other people next to us but it was dark, you know, he actually did that to me, I never, ever touched him, but he touched me in the dark, at the back of a hall, watching a movie, you know, and it was thrilling, it was exciting so I knew that he had some sort of feelings as well, even if it was an inquisitive feeling, uh, a number of years later I was in Johannesburg after I'd finished high school and I was working a juggling comedy act, you know, in a theatre in Johannesburg and I had a boyfriend who was one of the waiters in the show and I went to a concert and, and I remember my brother, my older brother, being the rebel that he was, had these cookies and I didn't know that these cookies were actually made out of *dagga* (marijuana), you know, they were dope cookies and I was hungry and so I was just chomping away on these cookies and before I knew it I was higher than a kite and I had never done any drugs before. In the meantime, I took my boyfriend Hennie down to watch this concert and, uh, and I remember in the middle of this concert, the sun's going down and the spotlights are coming up and it was just the most beautiful feeling I could ever imagine because I was higher than a kite and up walks Conrad Fuller and I hadn't seen him in six years and he came up to me and I couldn't believe it, you know, uh, here he was and I gave him a big hug and then the next minute he was gone and that was it and I've never seen him again, and then he moved to Australia, you know, so I never saw him again, um, I'm telling you a lot of stuff [laughs].

AK: [laughs] I appreciate it, thank you. Um, okay, cool, um, and then just looking at the environment, the sort of social climate at, um, uh, Bishops, Golden Grove and Rondebosch, what was it like in terms of making friends, um, and interacting with people your same sort of age?

CS: Um, I didn't have a tough time really when I was at Golden Grove, uh, I even had a, um, a little crush on a girl by the name of Patsy Heyns mainly because Conrad had a crush on her too and we were all in that sort of experimental stage and she was in the, the school choir and I was in the school choir and Conrad was in the school choir so there were times when Patsy, Conrad and myself sort of hung out together and I remember I even kissed her, I never kissed Conrad but I kissed her, um, and Conrad had kissed her, I knew that, so there was that little thing, you know, but it was like a friendship thing, it wasn't really a sexual thing, um, and I had various other friends, um, uh, Rory Stilton and, I can't remember too many other than, another gentleman by the name of Andre Viljoen, those are the names that come to, that come up, but I wasn't close friends with them, I didn't really associate with them much out of school, uh, I didn't play sports, I wasn't very good at sports and I always felt embarrassed in group sports, uh, and they, of course, played cricket and rugby and, I was good at swimming, and I enjoyed swimming classes because there was naked guys there [chuckles] but I used to play racquet ball and I was quite good at racquet ball and tennis, I was good at individual sports but I never enjoyed the pressure of being in a group, um, so I didn't have that whole social thing after school playing sports, like a lot of the other school mates had, you know, they'd all go play rugby together and then, of course, they'd all, you know, had a lot to talk about and they were, so I was somewhat of an outsider except for the a few close friends and the fact, also, that I lived right across the road, means when Golden Grove school was finished I just walked home, I wouldn't be standing around waiting for a ride like some of the other people, so I didn't really have too many people that I spoke with or got very close to.

AK: Um ...

CS: Of course, I was in, part of the church choir during my school, my, uh, junior school days as well, and I had some friends from the church choir, you know, guys and girls that sang in the church choir and I still have pictures of all of them, you know, and there was another guy in the church choir, Gordon Fenner-Solomon who I had a little bit of a crush on as well, no doubt about that and, uh, uh, and we used to go on trips together and sometimes we would go to the beach and things like that which was quite nice but I never shared any of the, the feelings that I had for him, not even with him, although I got a feeling he kinda knew but, but I never talked about it, you know, it was what it was.

AK: So, what, you mentioned racquet ball and other extra-curricular activities other than church choir and that did you do?

CS: Well, I had a next door neighbour and we had bicycles and at that time, the area behind the, the school, they hadn't built that N1 or N2 freeway, you know, there's a highway there now, um, so we used to go down to the river and climb trees and make rope swings and do just crazy things that people did and, you know, riding bicycles and skating on skateboards and getting into clay fights with the various people down at the river, that was a big of my, you know, my, uh, childhood, and I think a part of a reason why I enjoyed, um, uh, being physical was because I really good, you know, at climbing trees and really good at swinging and jumping over things and, you know, I had too much energy as a kid, and might have been part of the reason why I went into flying trapeze and doing other things later in life because I just had that untapped energy that instead of funnelling all of it into sports I funnelled it into, into, uh, climbing and jumping and circus-ing.

AK: Um, when did you start doing trapeze and circus sort of work and stuff like that?

CS: Well, it's because my parents had always talked about, um, this actor, Robert Kirby, he, uh, I dunno how famous he was or, um, anyway, he was an actor and my parents had heard the name and he used to act at the Baxter Theatre or something and he was somehow involved, anyway, he was someone they knew and I met his son, Robert Kirby's son, I can't even remember his name now, but he was the one who first took me to the YMCA in Observatory and the YMCA in Observatory, now this was later, this was probably when I was about sixteen or seventeen, uh, my parents had always spoken about the Circus Oslo, which was a youth circus, and, and they'd always spoken about it, and I'd actually even seen a performance or two of it, you know, the kids, they were a bunch of kids that got together and did things, like the Cape Town Festival or whatever, and there were trapeze acts, you know, circus unicycles and all this stuff, you know, and, um, I always wanted to be come part of that, I felt a natural drawing towards that sort of performing arts things but I'd never met anybody, I never knew how to get involved, and then I met this Robert, this, um, Martin Kirby, his name was, uh, anyway, I met this kid and he said, 'oh, I know where the youth circus is, I'll take you there,' so he took me there when I was about sixteen, or seventeen, in the final years of my high school and when I got to the YMCA and there was all kinds of young people there jumping on trampolines and walking on tightropes and riding unicycles and having sleepovers and, you know, a lot of them were from broken homes and I was just completely knocked out but how attractive they were, you know, and most of them are muscular and, you know, they were hanging out on the trapeze and lying in the sun and most of them were straight, you know, of

course, but, but, beautiful looking guys and for that reason I thought, well, I could go back there a few more times, not just about the circus because there were good looking guys there and, uh, it was the first time that I actually started admitting to myself, 'well, you know, I'm definitely more into guys than girls,' uh, I definitely find them more attractive, um, so I went to the YMCA, I used to get on the train from Rondebosch and take it town to Observatory station, get off the train at the station and then, um, walk to the YMCA grounds where they had all the circus stuff and there was a man that ran that whole thing, his name's Keith Anderson, and, uh, unfortunately there was, uh, well, there was a lot of stories that went around about Keith Anderson liking young boys and there's no doubt about it, he was a paedophile, um, he's dead now, you know, but, but, he, he really liked young guys and he took advantage of a lot of young guys and, you know, I don't think he ever made anybody do anything against their will but he sexually abuse young boys who didn't really know what was going on or didn't really care and I was one of those boys in that category and he was one of the first guys that gave me tequila when I was about sixteen and got me a little drunk and I ended up spending the night there and he, you know, took advantage of me at a very young age, but I knew what was going on and I just didn't care, you know, I wasn't into him by any means, I was much more into the guys that used to hang out around the YMCA and the circus but, but, he definitely stepped over the bounds of what's legal, you know, I would, I would equate it with the Michael Jackson story that's very relevant right now, you know, I dunno if you've seen the documentary, uh, on Michael Jackson; Michael Jackson, there's no doubt about it, he wasn't spending the night with young girls, he was into little boys, no doubt about that, um, but both, both those young boys who are grown up in the documentary said they almost felt guilty, you know, telling on Michael Jackson at this stage because they, they really cared about him as a human being, because he was a decent human being but needless to say he had abused them sexually right from the word, get, right from the get-go, you know, which is against the law, so he's a paedophile, you know, and Keith Anderson was in the same category, you know, a very loving and caring man, would never force anyone to do anything against their will or whatever but he took advantage of young boys, you know, got them a little drunk and took advantage of them sexually, uh, so that was somewhat alarming for me, um, having an older man interested in me when I was really interested in the guys my own age hanging out at the YMCA, uh, but of course I couldn't admit to any of those guys that I was really interested in them because I was scared to death, I was scared of any retaliation or whatever, um, then we had a, uh, a situation come up where Keith Anderson arranged that the youth circus was gonna go up to Johannesburg for the school holidays and this was in my final year of high school, it was 1977, and he took, he actually

took eighty kids from Cape Town up to Johannesburg and we all took over a hotel called the Alba Hotel, I dunno who paid for all of it or whatever and put on a, um, a circus show in, uh, a permanent circus building called the Thorne Trust Arena up in Johannesburg, and so suddenly I was in an environment where I was, um, away from mom and dad, away from my brothers, travelling with all kinds of young guys, you know, and in a situation where I was away from home and, uh, I was a very daring but also very, um, uh, shy person I was very attracted to some of these guys and I knew that some of the guys, this one guy, Victor, was in the room next to me, and we were up on the ninth floor and Victor and I were very close and we joked around a lot and, I, you know, but he wasn't sexually aware of the fact that I was sexually interested in him, but I remember climbing out the window in the middle of the night, walking along the balcony that, you know, the little railing along, climbing in his window and then going and touching him while he was sleeping, in the middle of the night, which is incredibly insane, because if any of his roommates had woken up or they'd caught me doing that, they would've probably beaten the crap out of me, you know, uh, and then Victor would have done the same, um, but I remember, it was so exciting, it was incredibly thrilling but it was like forbidden fruit, you know, it was one of those things where I knew if I got caught I'd be in trouble but it was, it was a major excitement and it was probably one of the first times that I was that bold, and then, um, a few weeks later, uh, I was sleeping over the YMCA when we got back and Victor happened to be sleeping in the same hall and our sleeping bags were next to each other and, uh, uh, I'd messed around with him a little bit, and he was awake, and he was somewhat into it but he, the moment he realised what was happening, after he'd already, you know, after the deed had been done, then he freaked out and then suddenly, 'oh, that fucking moffie,' you know, 'he's fucking touching me,' you know, he freaked out, he made a big scene about it which, of course, threw me into, you know, I was very nervous about it because, sure, I was into him, and sure, I had touched him, and all of that, but, suddenly for him to turn on me and be so negative about it, I dunno if it was guilt, um, but then it happened with Victor later. Of course, then, I ended up travelling with him in Europe and all that so there was more than one time, so he definitely had that sort of tendency, so, uh, I've told you a lot of things, you might want to ask another question.

AK: [laughs] Um, okay, cool, then just quickly, last two questions, regarding your, um, mostly just focusing on high school, I'm guessing its sort of more, as you were more mature, how did Rondebosch Boys High School, when you were there, I'm guessing between sort of 1973 and 1977, how did they deal with issues of sexuality, gender and masculinity?

CS: Uh, I'll give an example of how poorly it was handled, uh, we had a psychiatrist by the name of, um, Sollie Kapinsky, he was our, our, you know, psychiatrist and we used to go to these, you know, private or whatever, he used to do psychiatry and, I think, once a week we used to have a psychiatry meeting. Well, one time he handed out this, this standard, uh, questionnaire, and he wanted you to fill out all these questions and everybody in the class was given a copy and they all had to fill out, you know, and it had questions like, uh, 'do you make your bed or do you leave it for your mom to make,' you know, 'do you do the dishes or do you, is there a servant or your mom to do your dishes,' um, uh, those kind of general questions, and, and I remember going through the test and answering the questions quite honestly, you know, I always made my own bed, I would always put my own, uh, clothes in the laundry hamper, you know, uh, I always helped with the dishes, um, uh, if I had a button that came off I would pick up a needle and thread and I would sew it back on myself, um, and I suppose this was a way of gender stereotyping, and, and when it came to the end of the test, I remember him saying, um, 'so, now I want you to add up all,' because, like, number A, B and C would be one, two and three, and so you add up three and a two and a one and all that stuff, you know, and then you'd get a grand total at the end and I remember my grand total was, was, um, uh, a certain number and I was, like, way below the number that he said, if you get, like, twenty or lower, you should come and see me and I think I had, like, a twelve or something, so I remember changing the one into a two, so it looked like twenty-two, so that I'd be on the more masculine side, uh, and I thought that was a very, at the time, I thought to myself, 'what a ridiculous thing to do because here he was saying, because I do my own dishes and because I make my own bed and because I pick up a needle and thread and sew my own button on, that I had more feminine characteristics than male characteristics, that's really the essence of what I got out of that test and I was embarrassed when I got that number that was twelve and it should have been twenty or above, um, and then of course he made a big joke out of it, he didn't actually say it in any way that was pleasant, he didn't say, 'well, if you got twenty or less, and you feel like, and you feel so inclined, please come and talk to me, because, you know, maybe we can talk about some things,' he made a joke and said, 'well, if anybody's got twenty or less, you know, then, maybe you're a woman, you'd better, whatever,' and then, of course, the whole class laughed, you know, and here I am, you know, surreptitiously changing the one into a two so it'd look like I wasn't, you know, and that was a huge thing for me as a child. Nobody ever discussed sexuality or gayness, uh, or femininity, I mean, anybody that had any feminine characteristics, and there were a few, uh, were scorned at, and laughed at, and made to be the butt of every joke, uh, and some of them didn't care, and they had a strong personality and they

would stand up and they wouldn't care, but I was, I was, always considered myself to be masculine in appearance but sensitive, you know, so, uh, it had quite a traumatic effect on me, uh, knowing that I couldn't be honest, uh, to my teachers or to my classmates for, for what might happen. Then, of course, I got, all my circus friends, a lot of them decided that we would just leave the country instead of doing their National Service, so they went off to Europe to, uh, uh, to go and join professional circus instead of going to their military service and, uh, and I got transferred into the military and, uh, uh, I got sent off to, um, the infantry battalion in Potchefstroom, 'three-assai' I think it was, and, uh, course, in the army, we were told quite blank, 'if you're a *moffie*, you know, you're gonna be put into detention and you're gonna be sent off into a certain thing and, you know, it's illegal to be a *moffie* so you couldn't be a *moffie*, you know, so I was living in fear in the military but, of course, after basic training I got into the entertainment unit and I was around a bunch of *moffies*, so it didn't really matter, you know, we all lived in a big house and, you know.

AK: Um ...

CS: So, uh, anyway, it wasn't a nurturing environment, let's put it that way, Rondebosch Boy's High School was definitely a scary experience because I was always scared of being found out to be who I was.

AK: Um, so then looking again at Rondebosch and environment, and then I guess also with the military, how'd, how was social class and race treated?

CS: Well, race wasn't even a factor because I was in an all-boys, all-white school and, and, uh, in the military I was in a all-white, all boys army, you know, we didn't have people of colour, uh, I wasn't even, it's funny, because in my neighbourhood, kids from my neighbourhood would say, 'oh, no, you've got to be very careful if you go over the other side of the river, you know, you'll be down towards Athlone and that's very dangerous down there, you can't go down towards Athlone because that's very dangerous, because that's where the Coloured boys live,' and they used the word 'Coloured' in those days, which nowadays, of course, is a big insult, especially in America, I couldn't use the word 'coloured' without being looked at almost as a racist, you know, just not a good word, um, I would say people of colour, you know, that's more respectful nowadays, but, anyways, I was always told by my next-door neighbours and by family and friends: 'don't go down there because, you know, if you go down in that area, you know, that's the Coloured area and they'll attack you, you know, it's very dangerous down there, they'll rob you, you know,' but meanwhile I used to go and play in the river, which is where that freeway is now, down, behind Golden Grove, and there would be boys of colour, um, down at the river, playing down there and, and I remember one time walking over this, this

hill and seeing a whole bunch of naked boys of colour, you know, swimming in the river, they were all butt-naked, and I remember being quite turned-on, quite interested in it, you know, to me, I was very attracted to people of colour, I didn't have a problem, race didn't make any difference to me, they were cute, young-looking guys, you know, with good bodies and, uh, um, and that certainly was a feeling that made me feel very different from most of the perspectives and most of the realities that I was presented as being 'normal'.

**00:44:52:** Military service and cruising

AK: Um, how long was your military service for?

CS: It was two years.

AK: Two years, okay, and then did you ...?

CS: It was mandatory, you didn't have a choice, I was, I was drafted out of high school, I mean, I could have gone to university, uh, and they would have deferred it or I could have just skipped the country like some of my circus friends did but I decided I'd might as well just do it and, actually it was a, it was a good grounding for me in the entertainment business because after basics, I got into the entertainment unit and I was touring with, um, a couple of professional bands and we had, you know, I don't know if you know any of these names but we had this guy, Flippie van Vuuren, who was an Afrikaans, uh, music, uh, guy and we had Sonja Herholdt periodically who used to sing, and various others, you know, that were associated with, George Hayden ran a military band and all that stuff and, um, I was around professional entertainers, mostly musicians and originally I was put in that entertainment unit because of my special skills but I was really just a roadie to carry their equipment and help them build and break down things and all that, and then later on they realised that I had a little bit of talent, I could do juggling and fire-eating and all this stuff, and they had this, this song called Circus Rents, which was a xylophone solo and, um, uh, they said, 'hey, when we're playing this xylophone solo you ride your unicycle across the stage,' so there I was in my full military outfit, you know, riding across the stage on a unicycle and then the, the captain came to me and said, 'look, the audience just loved it, you know, you riding across the stage, why don't you walk across the stage juggling, then ride across the stage on a unicycle, and then ride across the stage juggling as the, as the final thing,' so I did that, and it brought the house down, people just loved it, you know, so then after a while, the army guys got pretty smart and they said, 'hey, you know, you guys, you and your friend Colin Underwood, you guys have quite a lot of talent and quite a lot of skill, why don't you guys do a little act,' you know, so we put together a little five minute

act with magic and juggling and ended it with fire-eating, and, uh, and we ended up doing a little act, and then we got to tour with them and became part of the show, you know, as a speciality act, so it was a great grounding for me, and, of course, in the military, uh, most of the guys who lived in the Johannesburg area, because I was, I was actually in Voortrekkerhoogte which is outside Pretoria, uh, we all had this big house where, where the entertainment unit was, uh, and most of the guys who lived in the neighbourhood or in Johannesburg, they used to go home every night but there was a few of them that were left behind, uh, I don't know if you ever heard of a singer by the name of Eddie Ramie, he's an opera singer and he was, he was quite, he was on television a lot in South Africa, he passed away unfortunately, um, uh, I think he got liver, liver cancer or something but he died, but he, um, he was in the military with me, but he was gay, and, and he was one of the gay guys that was in the entertainment unit with me and it was funny because, because all these serious army stuff was going on during the day and then at night time it turned into a big party, you know, and a bunch of gay guys hanging out, talking and, you know, hanging out, there wasn't a lot of sex going on, really, but it was, it was, we were comfortable being who we were, uh, because most of the guys in the entertainment unit were somewhat, uh, uh, theatrical and quite open about being gay, so it was one of the first times that I could start relaxing.

AK: And how did that make you feel about your sense of sexuality?

CS: It was nice to know other people who were in a similar situation, because in high school I felt very isolated, I felt like I was one, the only one that way and it was somehow very wrong and I was embarrassed about it but when I got in the army and I actually met other people who were like me, um, who were proud of who they were, uh, suddenly I started feeling a whole lot better about myself and, and, uh, I still wasn't, wasn't feeling good enough to tell my parents, uh, hadn't told them, hadn't, hadn't, uh, still even had the token girlfriend, you know, just to please the folks, you know, had, uh, I was set up by my cousin and my cousin had married this man and she, and he had a, a sister, so my cousin said, 'oh, well, why don't you and Karen come and join us on a double date,' you know, and suddenly Karen was my, was my girlfriend, you know, and I remember during those days, you know, in the army, I'd come home and I'd be sort of going out with Karen and, uh, there'd be times where we'd all go out and hang out or whatever, and then I'd go back to Karen's house, but her mother and father were there, you know, so I would get somewhat worked up, physically, because, you know, kissing and hugging and that stuff but the parents were always knocking on the door or making sure that nothing was going on and, uh, so then I would be, you know, when you're sixteen, seventeen, I must have been about seventeen, eighteen even at that stage, um, you know, you get very

worked up and so then I would stop at the Rondebosch station on the way home and pick up some, you know, some anonymous sex on the way home, you know, and anonymous sex was a big part of my life in those days because I couldn't really admit, you know, that I was that way, I would always try and keep the front that I was, you know, I've got this girlfriend and that's what it is.

AK: So what sort of places would you go to, to find people to have sex with?

CS: Well, it took me a while to realise that there were actually places where you could go and pick people up and, and have anonymous sex, uh, I lived in Rondebosch and so there were times that I went to the station to get on the train and I had noticed that on Rondebosch station there was a public toilet, you know, and, and there was one for the whites and then there was one for the non-whites, back in the days of *apartheid*, you know, it actually said *blankes*, non, uh, *nie blankes*, you know, whites, non-whites, and, but I noticed that we were sitting on the benches, there would be a lot of, you know, sometimes older men even, you know, sitting around, and when the train came up, I would be the only one getting up and going on the train, and everybody else would stay seated and I thought to myself, 'what's that all about?', you know, cos I was off to the circus, you know, or whatever, I was off to Observatory, and all these guys would stay there, and then I realised, oh, they're cruising and they're going in and out of the bathroom, you know, they're going in and out of the toiler there, and then I realised that, of course, Rondebosch station was a big place where people had sex and they actually had stalls where the doors would close and people would go in there and act like they were gonna use the bathroom but in the meantime they were checking each other out, and doing whatever, and then sometimes they would even go in the stall and lock the door, and so when you're sixteen, seventeen, and you realise this, it's, you know, it was quite unreal, so it would be a, uh, a way to meet somebody. Then, of course, I realised that cruising didn't only happen at Rondebosch station, in fact, Rondebosch station is probably one of the more dangerous places to cruise because police would periodically show up and go check out the bathrooms to make sure, because sometimes, you know, they'd arrest people or whatever, for public indecency so it was pretty dangerous. That was part of the thrill as well, but then I realised that, that anywhere, almost any public area, you know, in the shopping mall, in Kenilworth Centre or Cavendish Square, when you're walking around, you'd see lots of people walking around, just walking around, and looking at each other, and, and there'd be that sort of sexuality, that cruising going on, and, uh, then I discovered, uh, there was a book that came out, uh, this, nowadays, you've got apps on phones and stuff, you know, but in those days, there was no, you know, smartphones or any of that stuff, and, and there was a book that came out once a

year, printed by, um, I think it was printed in Europe, but it had, it was called the Damelin Gay Guide, and in it, in the Dameline Gay Guide it named all the bars that were gay bars and all, and it even had a cruising area, so whatever town you went to or wherever you went, you could look up, you know, if I looked up Krugersdorp, for instance, you know, I look up Krugersdorp, it'll say, 'there's a bar in Krugersdorp called,' and of course I don't the name of the bar, I never went to Krugersdorp, but in the book they named the bar and they'd say, 'it's not really a gay bar but a lot of gay people go there and cruise and meet each other and whatever,' and then, as time went by, they'd even get more graphic and say, 'well, there's a bar in, in, for instance, in Johannesburg,' when I, when I went to Johannesburg, there was this placed called, uh, um, Harrison Reef Hotel, and there was a, um, uh, a bar in that Harrison Reef Hotel, just for some reason I can't think of it now, can't think of the name, but it would say things like, 'it's a gay bar, and you will find older men and younger boys and some of them will even be rent boys,' which means, you know, they were getting paid for sex, um, 'and in the back there's a dark room where people sometimes have sex,' and it would actually mention that, you know, mention those things, or it's a bisexual bar, you will find men and women in that bar, uh, but they were gay friendly, and it would put things like 'gay friendly', you know, so in this little book, that was gold, you know, of course I never wanted my parents to see the books or anybody that didn't know I was gay, you know, but it was the only way to find out about where you could meet some people. And so, for a number of years, I would order the Damelin Gay Guide and, of course, I'd keep it in a brown cover, so nobody could see what it was, and whenever I travelled I would pull it out and go, 'okay, well let's check out where the nearest gay bar is.' Course, now everything is online, you know, so people have, you know, Grindr and I don't know how many apps they can meet people.

AK: Um, so when you were engaging in these relationships, um, sorry, first of all, when did you leave Cape Town completely, like, you never came back to stay? When did you stop living in Cape Town?

CS: It really was in 19-, so I came back to visit but when I finished high school I went straight into the army, I spent two years in the army and then I, um, uh, came back to Cape Town but got transferred up to Johannesburg because my brother was working in Johannesburg and then I went on Boswell Willkie Circus Tour, you know, I went to Europe, sorry, let me think of the time-frame. I finished high school in '77, 78, 79, I was in the army, so I wasn't in Cape Town, so really I left Cape Town in 1977, never really came back to live, but then I, um, I, I spent two years in the army and then I went to Europe for a year, travelling around Europe in a circus, the youth circus, we were now two years into it, and then, um, came back to South Africa and

travelled for two years in Boswell Willkie Circus around South Africa and then ended up in Johannesburg, settled in Johannesburg, so I never really went back to live in Cape Town, although I visited on occasions because my mom and dad lived there and, you know, and I had cousins and family there, so I'd come down for a week or two, you know, a couple times a year or whatever.

**00:56:19: Conflict and early adulthood**

AK: Okay, um, sorry, lost my train of thought there, give me just a second, uh, cool, then how would, when you look at the relationship between people in, in any intimate relationship, how would you define the word 'conflict'?

CS: Conflict, did you say?

AK: Yes.

CS: Um, you're talking primarily in gay relationships, right?

AK [mumbles] Any relationship, straight, gay, whatever.

CS: Well, okay, let me tell you a story, there, there was massive conflict in a friend of mine in the circus, uh, he was in a relationship with, with a lady, he was straight, his name was Benito Holmes and he was a man of colour, he was, as we called it in those days, he was a Coloured guy, um, his birthday was the day before mine, I remember that, he was a little younger than me, but he had a white girlfriend and, and everybody on the circus knew that he was with this girl and, and I'd actually known Benito from circus days and he'd gone on to be part of the [indistinct] with me when we left the circus as well, so I knew him very well, but, uh, there was a lot of conflict in his life because he was dating a person out of his race because he was guy of colour and he, and she wasn't only a white girl but she was a pale white girl, she was, she was almost anaemic and she had long, blonde, white hair, so the two of them were quite a couple, I mean, they really were and Benito was the kind of guy that, that, that didn't really care what people thought, so, you know, he would go out in public and, and have his arm around this girl and, and there would be Afrikaans, racist or whatever, not just Afrikaners but there were racist people in South Africa, who would take offence at the fact that he was with a white girl and, and when we were in Johannesburg and I'm talking about, I'll give you the year, uh, '77, '78, '79, '80, '81, '82, 1983, we were travelling in, in the circus or wherever in Johannesburg and he went down to Hillbrow and, and he was in the Hillbrow area, there was this area called Fontana and they had these hot chickens you could buy in the middle of the night, people would go out the bars and stuff and whatever and they would have a few drinks

and then come out and get a hot chicken and they'd literally eat it on the sidewalk in newspaper and he was sitting there with his girlfriend, I wasn't there, but I heard the story, and apparently he had his arm around a girl and some guy came up to him and said, 'what are you doing with that white girl, you, uh,' you know, using a horrible word, um, and he said, 'no, it's my girlfriend,' and he said, and the guy punched him and knocked him out and he fell backwards and his head hit the pavement and, um, he was knocked out, so his girlfriend, of course, was screaming and, and, uh, they called an ambulance and in those days I think they had, uh, um, a certain amount of racism going on because ambulances wouldn't always pick up a person of a different race, you know, white ambulances or a black ambulance, I'm not sure how technical that was, but all I know is, the ambulance didn't rush over there and, and he ended up dying, you know, before they got him to hospital, he was punched and his head hit the sidewalk and, and he died, and that was because there was a lot of conflict in his life, because he lived, uh, a very fearful existence with this girl that he truly cared about, and she really cared about him, um, I never had an open gay relationship in South Africa, um, that I did publicly, I always, I never believed in, um, public forms of affection, being a gay man, I was always cautious. Now, of course, inside a gay bar, you know, I would walk in to a gay bar, I would put my arm around someone, I would even go in the back room and have sex with them, you know, cos in those days there were back rooms and dark rooms and all that stuff but I would never take it outside in the street because I always thought it was looking for trouble, so I was, so there was a lot of conflict in my mind. Then also on the other side of the coin, I wasn't a 100% sold on the whole gay concept, because I had a girlfriend for two and a half years, uh, when I was in the circus, you know, really, falling in love with this girl, Meryl Borofski, I'm still in touch with her today, and we travelled together, what, two and a half years we were together, and we even ended up getting a flat together in Johannesburg and we worked in the musical [inaudible] together and she knew I was gay and she knew I liked guys and, and, but she sort of thought she would change me, I think, and I really liked her and, and we had sex and, but I mean, I have to be honest, I would walk down the street holding her hand and be looking at guys, you know, it was just, just the way it was. There was a lot of conflict in my life because I knew what I was feeling inside was real, but I didn't feel that it was right, and I didn't feel that it was accepted, and I didn't feel that it was normal

AK: So, was there conflict in terms of your personal identity?

CS: Not really, I mean, I was doing what was considered the right thing and I was doing because I cared about Meryl as a person and I always said to Meryl, 'I love you dearly,' and we had a sex life and I could've even had children with her and I could've married her and I could've

probably shut up the whole side of me that was lusting after, uh, beautiful looking guys but I, but I didn't and, and actually, she ended up, uh, dating someone else, uh, and, and she ended up seeing this guy Mark Brown, uh, and he was, he was kind of on television and he was substituting for Paul Ditchfield on one of the TV shows and, um, she was spending a lot of time with him and then I said to her, cos she was living with me, you know, we were living in an apartment together and, and, a flat, as they called it, and, and I said to her, 'look, you need to make a decision because, you know, here I am, you're with me, but you're spending a lot of time with him, so obviously there's something going on,' so I said, 'you know, you need to make a decision, either you've got to stop seeing him or you've got to, uh, you've got to go live with him,' and she left, and she went to live with him, and it absolutely devastated me because, here I was, you know, denying the side of me that I knew was very evident, you know, the gay side of me, um, but she broke my heart in that day because she left that day and then my brother came over the next night, it was so funny, because I was in a very emotionally, uh, very emotional state, I was very, very upset that she'd gone and, uh, broken-hearted and my brother came over and said, 'hey, listen, you know, you've got to really consider where you're at, you know, she's using you, she doesn't have somewhere to live right now, she doesn't have a job, you know, you were the one paying,' I was the one paying the bills for the flat and all that stuff, you know, and she wasn't really working, we'd come out of the circus and she didn't have a job and he said to me, 'now, you need to make a decision and, uh, cos she's gonna come, she's gonna come back, because Mark doesn't really want her, he just wants to have sex with her, you know, and once that's over, she'll come running back, so you've got to make a decision of what you're gonna do, you know,' and so, and my brother was right, it was less than a week later, she came knocking back on the door, crying, saying she's so sorry and all that and I said to her, in the meantime, I'd gone out to a couple gay bars and gotten laid, you know, so, so, I'd gone and done what any, you know, young, virile guy did or would do, you know, um, and so I was taking my brother's words to heart and I, and I just, I said to her, 'Meryl, you know, if you really love me, if you really care about me, you know, go stay with your sister for a while and then let's see each other and we'll take it from there, you know,' um, cos I was wounded, I was really wounded by the fact that she left but then I had also enjoyed the little bit of freedom that I'd had, you know, and the little bit of gay sex that I'd had, for the first time, because I was faithful to her in those two and a half years, um, so there was a lot of conflict going on there particularly and, uh, and then she just, she just left and she never came back, she actually went and joined a touring circus show and, and I never saw her again, you know, for a, God, no, seventeen years or something went by and, uh, uh, by that time I was off, you know, to greener

pastures. And then, of course, I got the offer to go and travel to America and when I came to America, I still wasn't fully out of the closet, you know, I still was in denial, um, and then this part gets a little personal but in 1988 I tested HIV positive, uh, that's thirty years ago now, and, and, uh, in those days it was a, eh, it was a, basically people told you you're gonna die really soon, you know, there was no cure, it was a terrible thing to happen, uh, and I was scared to death and I didn't tell anyone for six weeks, um, I kinda blamed myself because I had a lot of sex and, and, you know, sort of thought it was gonna happen at some point and then it did, um, and then I told my, a good friend of mine, I told him, 'well, I'm HIV positive, you know, and I'm,' and my doctor had even said, 'probably by the year 2000 you'll be very ill and you'll die, you know, um, because there's no cure, you know,' and at that time I thought about ending my life and I was so embarrassed and all of that and then someone said to me, look, there's this three day course in Los Angeles, it's called 'The Experience' and it's predominantly set up for gay people to start loving themselves and being honest about who they are and what they believe in because the only way you can actually be loved is to love yourself, so I said, you know, it's a hell of a lot of money to go on this three day course but I said, you know what, I'm going, and I paid the money, I think it was two thousand dollars or something crazy, you know, but I paid the money, I drove down to L.A. and I remember for three days I didn't sleep, I was down there with a whole bunch of gay guys and one of the first things I did was stand up in front of the group and, and say, you know, when I was a child, I was really, really scared that people would find out that I was gay because it was very scary, and guess what: now I'm even more scared that people will find out that I'm HIV positive because that's a whole lot more scary, and for me to stand up in 1988 and to say that in front of a bunch of, a lot of them were very attractive gay guys, you know, that was pretty much saying, I'm not going to have sex with any of them, you know, and that was a, uh, a very difficult thing to say but I was very proud of myself for doing that, I'm getting emotional now, but, uh, they divided us up into groups and made us, um, write letters to people we loved and, and I chose my mom and dad and I thought, I'm gonna write a letter to my mom and dad and they said, 'now, we want you to tell your utmost secrets in this letter,' um, you know, 'write down everything about you that you'd really, would never share with them because it's too personal and too private,' you know, so I wrote this letter and I said, look, uh, I'm gay, I've always been gay, I've always know I'm gay, it's not negotiable, this is not a phase, it's not something that I'm just going through, it is who I am. I've been this way ever since I can remember, you know, I had a crush on Conrad Fuller and had plenty of anonymous sex and all that throughout my life, um, it's who I am [pause] but there's more. [pause] In 1988, I tested HIV positive and then I, you know, of course

I was balling, balling my eyes out when I was writing this because, you know, it's a death sentence, you know, it really, really was considered a death sentence in those days and, uh, I wrote out that I tested HIV positive and that I'd met this German doctor and I'd actually paid him twenty five thousand dollars and I had cash in those days, I was doing very well financially and he was giving me this, this very controversial treatment, it was ozone, intravenous ozone injected into your bloodstream and, and I'd read about it and apparently what ozone does is it, uh, it's actually, um, it's  $O^3$  instead of  $O^2$  so it's, what it does is, when it hits your bloodstream it doesn't create bubbles in your blood it creates  $H^2O^2$  which is hydrogen peroxide and then there's a free radical oxygen which gets sent off into your bloodstream and that free radical of oxygen goes into your blood stream and it breaks down all the carbon bonds between things like viruses and pathanoids and, and bacteria and all those things, and basically oxygenates the hell out of your bloodstream, so it scrubs your blood, you know, clean up all kinds of things that can make you sick, and there's no doubt about it, people with a very high oxygen level in their blood are very healthy but fat people who are overweight, who don't have good circulation, they get sick a lot, and so for that reason I ended spending all this money on this very controversial treatment and, uh, and I remember sitting there in this doctor would go [makes bubbles noises] with all this, I mean, a gas going into my bloodstream and, anyway, so I, I'd written in the letter that I'm going for this treatment and I'd spent all this money and all this stuff and then they said, 'okay, now, well, what we want you to do is we're gonna divide you into these groups and we want you to read that letter to these people in the group with you and for me that was incredibly difficult because here I was, writing very personal stuff in this letter and I never thought I'd have to read it to anyone but they said, you know, we want you to read the letter to the people in your group. Now, you don't know these people, but read the letter. Well, I got halfway through the letter and, of course, I was bawling my eyes out, I mean, it was incredibly difficult because, you know, I was basically telling them that I was going to die and, you know, I was doing the best I could to stay alive and then, uh, you know, I got through the letter eventually and, of course the whole group, they comfort you and, of course, I was comforting other people who were, you know, doing all this stuff, but it was a way to become honest and to become real and, um, then they said, 'now, if you really, truly love those people, that you were writing this letter to, you should send them the letter, or better still, you should meet with them and read them the letter. Now my mom and dad were in Cape Town, South Africa, and I was in L.A. and I'd been up for three days and I had to drive six hours back to Las Vegas but I drove, I drove six hours back to Las Vegas, and, um, I was so hyped up and, and, um, in a high from the three days that I thought, you know what, I could never mail them

the letter, I could never mail it to them and let them, have them get this letter in the mail and just read all this stuff about me, I could never do that to them, I said, 'I'm gonna call them up on the phone,' and I called them up on the phone and I said, 'look, I've got to tell you the truth, I've just spent three days on a, on this incredible course about being honest in life and there's a whole bunch of things I've got to tell you, and I'm gonna read this letter that I wrote,' and I read them the letter, and I remember when I told them, you know, 'I'm gay, it's not negotiable and this is not a phase,' and all that stuff, eh, uh, I remember my mother and my father both saying, 'well, if you're happy, that makes us happy, you know, we're very happy that you are happy, we actually kinda knew, uh, we saw the signs over the years, we kinda knew but, um, what makes you happy makes us happy and,' but then I said, 'there's more,' and my mom said, 'oh, no,' and I said, 'yeah, unfortunately I tested HIV positive, you know, and, uh, doing all this intravenous stuff and,' you know, and told them the whole story, and actually I had already bought tickets for my parents to come out to America to visit and I'd paid for them to come out for a six week trip, you know, to visit me and, uh, and I said to them, at the time, I knew it was a stupid question but I said, 'if this has changed your opinion and you feel like you don't want to come out now, I'll understand,' and my dad said, 'don't be ridiculous,' he said, 'don't be absolutely ridiculous,' and my mother said, 'no, we love you and, and of course we're coming, you know,' so I was very fortunate that I had supporting parents, and then a few years later I found out that my oldest brother had been listening on the other line, you know, he'd heard the whole conversation, so, you know, I'd not only come out to my parents but to my oldest brother as well, you know, and then, of course, the whole world knew because he just told everybody but it didn't really matter at that stage, so, I'm sorry, I'm going on a long

AK: No, no, I really appreciate, thank you for telling me all those very personal details, I really do appreciate it, um, I think I just have one or two final question, so throughout the relationships, well, the sexual relationships that you had in Cape Town, was there any point that you experienced any kind of conflict with those people or as a result of those people?

CS: You mean like someone beating me up because I'd tried to have sex with them, or...?

AK: *Ja*, or [mumbles] however you would define conflict between you and another person, did that ever happen as a result of those sexual relationships?

CS: Well, one thing springs to mind, let me tell you this story, it's part of the reason why I was so conflicted as a young person, uh, I couldn't even admit that I was gay, I was in the army, I, uh, had got a weekend off and I got on a train to come down to Cape Town to spend the weekend in Cape Town, or whatever it was, a few days pass I'd got, and in those days we travelled in these compartments where there were six bunks, you know, three bunks on each

wall and those bunks, basically, two rows of chairs, so we were in this compartment and I'm in this compartment and there's this really good-looking guy, I mean, he's cute as can be, absolutely adorable, we're having this wonderful conversation, I'm smiling at him, he's smiling at me and I'm thinking, oh, he totally knows that I'm into him, you know, and so, but I could never really, know, admit that I was gay, so, the moment when people started falling asleep, I was on the bottom bunk and he was in the middle bunk, so I reached up in the middle bunk and, you know, he had a hard-on and I ended up giving him a blow-job, with five other, I mean, there were six people in the compartment, you know, I mean this was how crazy it was, um. The moment he came, he woke up the whole compartment, 'oh, that fucking circus guy, you know, he just sucked my dick, you know,' and everybody's laughing about it, you know, and I'm sitting there, thinking, oh shit, they're gonna beat the crap out of me, you know, and we were pulling into Cape Town station that morning so this was, three or four o'clock in the morning when this had happened and so I thought to myself, I'd better get my bags and I'd better go, go into the, take my bags out of the room, before everyone woke up, cos I was embarrassed, you know, and I was also scared that someone might beat me up, um, I personally think that he enjoyed the blow-job, you know, uh, he, he was definitely into it but he felt guilt after he, he came and then he decided to just make a big deal out of it, you know, um, so that was an incredibly embarrassing moment and then, so I remember being on the station platform, I'd come out of the train with my suitcase and I was standing next to my mom and dad and the next minute, these guys from the compartment are walking by me but fortunately they didn't see me because all I would have needed was for them to say, 'well, that fucking queer guy,' you know, uh, cos that was my biggest fear, you know, that they would've, you know, outed me to my parents, so, yeah, there was that kind of thing and there was, there was times, um, in the youth circus, one time I was in the back of a truck and I ended up giving this guy a blow-job. It was cold, and he climbed in my sleeping bag and, and after he came he did the same thing, he suddenly was like, 'oh, what are you doing, what are you doing, what are you doing,' you know, I mean, I wasn't into raping people in their sleep but he was definitely very much awake but made out as if he was, you know, as if I'd taken advantage of him, afterward, because I think he had that sort of guilt and a lot of guys that are on the fence about their sexuality, you know, will have sex and then they have immediate guilt about it, and for that reason they might react violently or, or aggressively, so, um, those are my, those are the stories that come to mind when you say 'conflict.' I was never conflicted, really, about what I wanted and who I was, sexually, although appearance wise I was conflicted because I knew it wasn't the norm and,

and sometimes I wanted to appear like I was in the more heterosexual lifestyle, but I always knew really what I was ever since a young age, so I hope I answered that question.

AK: No, no, a very good answer, thank you. Um, and then finally, just looking at, sort of, the situation in South Africa while you were living in Cape Town and in Johannesburg and travelling around, um, what was the sort of social attitude and legal attitude towards any kind of public homosexuality, queerness, whatever?

CS: It was actually a joke, I mean, because everybody in Cape Town knew that Rondebosch station was where all the *moffies* went to hang out and have sex. When I got older, they would make a joke about it, they'd say, 'oh, why don't you go to Rondebosch station and get your dick sucked,' you know, they would say things like that, they literally would and, I mean, even straight people knew and then, to add, to add another dimension of weirdness, I was on Rondebosch station one day, cruising, and one of my Golden Grove teachers, Mr Geezy, who always used to hang out with Mrs Greenwell, Mrs Greenwell was obviously a lesbian, and Mr Geezy was obviously gay, and he came cruising at the same bathroom at Rondebosch station where I was, and, of course, he didn't know who I was cos I was now more grown up, you know, and when I said to him, 'oh, Mr Geezy,' and he went, 'oh, are you one of my students,' then he realised, you know, I'm sure he'd bumped into students before but, uh, I didn't want to embarrass him, you know, but I knew exactly who he was and I always knew that he was probably gay and he always hung out with this very masculine woman, you know, and the two of them were best of buddies, so, um, uh, that was another thing, so, the, the general consensus was it was a joke. People would make uncomfortable jokes about it, but it wasn't really acceptable, but then my parents, when I was, um, uh, after I'd finished army and I was back at home, my parents ended up, uh, telling me, 'oh, you know, you're uncle Ivan's gay and, you know, of course, he's with Harold, you know, and, uh, and so, of course, eventually they had the conversation with him and then also they worked with the Kenilworth race track, cos my dad had been a banker, when he retired he ended up working for the Kenilworth race track and they would count all the money and do all the banking for the, the race day, you know, and, um, my mom, uh, and my dad said, 'oh, no, we work with this guy,' and I can't remember his name, but, 'you know, he's one of those,' my mom would say, you know, 'he's one of *those*,' you know, and she would put her hand like this [shows a limp wristed gesture] you know, 'but he's very nice and everybody loves him, but he's one of *those*,' you know, she would say that, so, and she would use the word 'queer' even, she would say, 'well, you know, he's queer, you know, he's queer, but he's a lovely, he's a lovely guy, everybody loves him,' and then I had a priest, um, who's now deceased as well but he was actually the priest of our, uh, Christ the

King Church in Rondebosch and, uh, he also was a, a substitute priest down at, um, St. George's Cathedral, I think it is, in, in downtown Cape Town and he used to do mountaineering and he always used to like going up the mountain and he'd have young boys go on mountain hikes with him and stuff like that and, uh, and I always knew that he was a gay priest, um, but he was very respectful and, and he would take me and my brothers canoeing out to Elgin, you know, where the Appletizer farm was, out to Ceres and Elgin and, uh, I remember, you know, you'd be out for the day and had to go and pee and, of course, you can't go in the lake or whatever, whenever I used to go and pee, he'd always follow me and he'd pretend he was peeing at the same time so he could look at me and so I knew he was a gay, I knew he was a gay priest, um, but he was also very respectful, he never ever tried to push himself on me or anything like that, so even that man was, you know, from a previous generation, he was, you know, extremely cautious about his attractions and, you know, it definitely was considered abnormal and I still consider it abnormal when it's an older man looking at a young boy, you know, I consider that, I mean, I can look at a sixteen year old and say, 'oh my God, he's, he's adorable,' but would I wanna have sex with him, no, not in a million years, you know, I'm fifty-eight years old now, uh, I might look at a thirty-five year old who's incredibly handsome but I'm not gonna waste my time, you know, running after someone like that, I'm, Ricardo's, uh, two years younger than me, you know, he's fifty-six, uh, and we got married, actually, ten years to the day that we meet, and we've been married now for three years and we live together in a house and life is good, we just paid our house off, we couldn't be happier, I don't know if you've done a little research about me on Facebook but I've, um, um, did you look at that, uh, that gay marriage in Nevada by 2011.

AK: I did, looking in comparison to, sort-of, that information about, like, marriage equality in America and the whole, sort-of, prequel, I didn't go over the details but I, yeah.

CS: Yeah, no, it's nothing dramatic, it was more like a documentation of Ricardo and our lives, you know, and what we went through to get marriage equality, uh, domestic partnership, to get that legalised and then when we eventually got married, equality, it was a huge thing, it really was, I mean, we literally waited ten years before we were legally allowed to get married, from the day we met, ten years and if I'd, if I'd been heterosexual and I'd met Ricardo I could've married him one or two years after meeting him, and I could've become an American citizen by, by naturalisation through the marriage process but because I was gay I was denied that, you know, we weren't legally allowed to get married so, you know, we missed out on all of that so, it's, it's, but it's funny how the world's changed, but now, of course, President Trump is making things go backwards but, you know, what can I say, let's not get into politics.

AK: [chuckles] Um, so you'd say then that legislation, like, marriage equality, civil unions, that sort of thing is quite influential in forming gay relationships and queer relationships?

CS: Absolutely, you know, having that legal piece of paper made all the difference in the world and actually, I've got to be honest with you, South Africa did it way before America did it and when I heard that South Africa became the rainbow nation where marriage equality was, you know, people of the same sex were allowed to get married, I was, like, jumping for joy and I was going, 'oh my God, can't believe it's happened,' you know, I just couldn't believe that I was living in a state, cos various states got it in America before we got it and it wasn't pretty legal on a federal level, you know, the states, I think Massachusetts was the first one and then various others got it, and they slowly started getting it and then it got faster and eventually Nevada got marriage equality where we would've been allowed to get married but I said to Ricardo, I said, 'we've got to wait until it's on a federal level because I don't wanna get married on a state level and then find that it's not legal on a federal level and I don't want to get, um, a, a cheap substitute, marriage, you know, domestic partnership didn't give you all the benefits and legal ramifications of marriage, you know, marriage is a contract between two people, it saves you hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees that ties you up legally in the event of one person getting sick or dying or whatever, all those things are taken care of, now, I think there's two thousand and something laws that are affected by the contract of marriage that we were denied and when we were allowed domestic partnerships, it took care of some of them but not all of them so I always said to Ricardo, you know, it's great to get domestic-partnered, but we really need to keep fighting for the real thing and when we got the real thing it, it validated me as a person and my relationship more than you can ever imagine so I think that validation is really important, you know, people, people don't feel like they, they always feel sneaky, like they do something behind closed doors, it's like being in the closet, you know, lying to everybody, putting on a front, you don't feel good about yourself, it's only when you can say, 'okay, I am who I am, and I'm proud of who I am, and I'm very deserving,' that's when you can actually have a real relationship.

AK: Um, I think that's about it, is there anything else you can think of, anything else you wanna ask or ...?

CS: No, sorry, I've probably talked your ear off, I've given you whole pack of information and as I say, I have no problem with you using any or all or none of it, you know, I hope I've helped you a little bit.

AK: This has been really helpful, thank you so much, I really appreciate it. Um, I will send through, it's just a consent form just to sign-off in terms of what it is, uh, that we spoke about today and thank you so much, Charles, I really appreciate it, thank you.

CS: My pleasure, you take care.

AK: Okay, you too and cheers, all the best.

CS: Cheers, cheers.

### **Interview Description**

**Length of Interview:** 1 hour 26 minutes 55 seconds

**Recording Equipment:** Lenovo IdeaPad [and Skype]

**Copy and Access status:** signed release form; interviewee has stated no restrictions on material.

**Name of the Interviewee:** FINLAYSON, Robert [RF]

**Name of the Interviewer:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam [AK]

**Date of Interview:** 21 March 2019

**Place of Interview:** Cape Town, South Africa and London, United Kingdom [via Skype]

**Number of tapes/recordings:** 1

**Transcribed by:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam

**Date Transcribed:** 4 June 2019 – 19 June 2019

**00:00:00:** Introductions

AK: Hi, Robert?

RF: Hi, Adam.

AK: Hi, how's it going?

RF: Uh, well, I'm just trying to activate my camera, ah, there we are...

AK: Fantastic!

RF: I can see you, can you see me?

AK: Yes.

RF: Okay, now I can't see you.

AK: You can't see me?

RF: No.

AK: Uh, that's, I can't see anything wrong on my side, uh, uh, should be popping up, can you see me?

RF: No, I did see you briefly, for a second, and then you disappeared.

AK: Oh, um, well hopefully it shows up soon, let me just try that, any luck?

RF: Okay, I can see you now.

AK: Fantastic, hi, how are you?

RF: Good and yourself?

AK: I'm very well, thank you, um, cool, thank you, sorry about the whole power thing, uh, the other day and ...

RF: But you've got power at the moment?

AK: Yes, I'm actually quite lucky at home that I'm on the same grid as a hospital so they can't shut us off, um, at least for the time being, who knows what they'll do in the future but, uh, *ja*, um, cool, so shall we jump straight in?

RF: Sure, sure.

AK: Okay, fantastic, before I get to the actual questions, just a few bits and pieces about confidentiality and that sort of thing, um, first of all, if you wish to remain entirely anonymous throughout this process, uh, you're more than welcome to, I can use your name, uh, the same applies to any of the names or details that you give, uh, throughout your testimony. If you would like to redact any information at the end or you decide a couple of weeks from now, um, that you've decided, actually, there are certain things that I didn't really want to say, I can redact that information, um, I'm gonna send you a consent form in the next day or so, which will sort of explain that a little bit more detail, um, *ja*, do you have any questions?

RF: No, so, um, I lost the beginning of that where you were talking about names, uh, you dropped out, um, I lost the audio.

AK: Okay, so, essentially, if you would like to remain anonymous or if you wish to redact your name or redact people's names later on, so [mumbles] if you said someone's name by accident, I can alter the, the recording if needs be. Are you wanting to remain anonymous?

RF: Um, I don't think so, no, I don't, no, let's see, uh, no.

AK: Well, if you change your mind just let me know and I can adjust it, I'll also send you the final transcript after, uh, I've done that and written it up, so you can see if there's any information you'd like to omit, um, *ja*, so we can take that as it goes.

RF: Okay.

AK: Do you have any further questions?

RF: Mm, no.

AK: Okay, cool, let's jump straight in ...

**00:02:31: Family background**

AK: Uh, first of all, when and where were you born?

RF: I was born, uh, near Stellenbosch, um, I was born in Stellenbosch actually at the hospital, I lived near Stellenbosch as a kid, uh, in 1963.

AK: 1963, okay, and who did you live with when you were born and while you were a child?

RF: Uh, with my parents and my sister who was eighteen months younger than I was.

AK: Eighteen months younger than you were, okay, um, and what work does your mother and father do?

RF: Um, my mother was a housewife and helped on the farm, and my father, essentially a farmer, uh, a wine-maker and, uh, he has cattle which are sort of his hobby.

AK: Okay, do they still have the farm today?

RF: No, no, they retired.

AK: Okay, I see, um, and then first of all, what was your relationship like when you were a child with your father?

RF: Um, it was, uh, distant, I think, um, my father, I, I remember, have some early recollections of, of playing games with him, but, um, he, he did sort of take a backseat, um, and, well, I don't know how accurate this is, I don't really have a, a, a recollection of him being sort of affectionate or physical with me so he was sort of classic kind of, you know, reserved father, uh, and then, uh, an overbearing mother, which I'm sure we'll get to.

AK: On that vein then, uh, what was your mother like as a parent? What was your relationship, should I say?

RF: Um, uh, strange relationship in that I was the eldest of, of three children eventually, um, and so while I think she's always had a sort of, a special relationship with me as the older child, um, she, she had a lot of personal issues and, and I suspect from, due to her own broken family in childhood, um, uh, sort of anger problems and so, it was a weird sort of, contrast of, of, uh, affection and care and then kind of uncontrolled rage and, and, uh, um, which at times, I suppose it bordered on abusive, though if I were ever to level that at her I'm sure she would be appalled but, in retrospect, that's how it seems, she was quite, she was quite volatile.

AK: What do you think prompted the volatility, her background or other conditions?

RF: I suppose a combination, um, her background, uh, she, she came from England and, so her family broke up and she had a pretty unhappy childhood I think, her mother walked out on them and there was a wicked stepmother and things like that and then, um, uh, I dunno, this is not something I think I would, for her purposes, um, she had an illegitimate child when, when she was eighteen which back in the late fifties, early sixties was sort of unacceptable and I think that caused her a lot of distress and then she came out to South Africa and found herself living on a farm, very isolated, um, didn't really get on with her step-parents, uh, um, and so a combination of all of those things I think, um, and perhaps, you know, would have helped her if she had got to speak to someone or had some counselling in those days but that didn't really exist back in the early sixties in South Africa.

AK: Um, and do you think that this perhaps affected your, uh, parents' marriage?

RF: It did. I mean, they're still together, although, uh, I'm, I'm not sure, I'm not sure that they perhaps should have stayed together but they did, um, it, it, yeah, in the marriage, there was a lot of sort of, there was a lot of sort of, um, there's a lot of fighting and, and, uh, it, it, it wasn't the most, it didn't appear to be the happiest marriage and I think, I think, as a, as a child I became, kind of, um, hypersensitive to, to that kind of, uh, discord because it was quite

discordant and I think, as an adult, certainly in my earlier relationships, you know, that was the sort of model that I saw, so, relations are full of drama and fighting and, um, and so on, and, um, perhaps part of that is due to the fact that it was a pretty, pretty, uh, tempestuous household when I grew up.

AK: Do you remember what caused the conflict between your parents? Like, specific examples or behaviours or things like that?

RF: Um, I'm not sure, I know, I know that my mother struggled with my father's mother in particular so it was a classic case of, you know, stepmother or mother-in-law, not stepmother, mother-in-law kind of tensions, uh, I think being isolated, um, and my father tends to be quite passive and she, she could be a bit of a bully so it was just part of their dynamic, bully, henpecked husband, and, uh, that was part of it.

AK: Um, and is this something that you discussed with your siblings, at all?

RF: *Ja, ja*, when my siblings, we have discussed it and we still do occasionally, um, and, you know, we all feel that in some way it affected how we, how we grew up and our view of the world, um, both, my brother's a little bit more like my brother, my sister made a very, I mean, I remember her before she had children making a sort of, a vow to herself that she would never, um, she would not bring up her children in the same way but it did affect us all, um, in very different sorts of ways, um, and she hasn't, which I admire her for, she's made a, she's, she's sort of done the polar opposite to, to what my, what my mother did and, um, I think her kids are pretty well balanced because of it.

AK: Um, do you mind if I ask how you think it affected you personally?

RF: [sigh] Yeah, I mean, I think, I think it did, I think there's a sort of strange, uh, situation where, as a young child, one struggled, able to completely trust the, the person, the caregiver, the person one was closest to because, because there was this, she was so volatile so she could kinda go from being quite sweet to rage in, in a very short time, um, there was quite a lot of, there was quite a lot of physical, uh, uh, in retrospect, violence, in those days it was just good old-fashioned punishment but it was, quite often the punishment was, was not measured and there were times when it became uncontrolled so I think it affected, um, I think it has affected my quite significantly, it's quite hard to, to admit it but over the years, um, you know, the word 'abusive,' I mean, it's, you know, there's a scale of abuse from very negligible to extreme, it's not extreme but it's, it's somewhere on a, on a continuum, and, *ja*, I think it has affected me, it's taken me quite a long time, uh, I sort of, I had quite a lot of anger with myself, um, had sleep issues at a very young age and I've sort had those throughout my life, um, and then subsequently when it came to things like disclosing my sexuality, um, you know, uh, it wasn't

initially, well, for years, really, the issue wasn't supported or understanding, um, she was part of a generation which had had a problem with it, um, so I think that kind of, kind of goes right back to, to early childhood.

**00:11:37: Schooling years**

AK: Um, and then moving towards your school years and that sort of thing, first of all, uh, where and when did you attend, like, pre-school, kindergarten, something like that?

RF: I went to, uh, uh, Rhenish Primary School for what was Sub A and Sub B back in those days, um, and then for my junior school I went to Paul Roos, uh, Primary, it was a dual medium school in Stellenbosch and then for high school I went to Rondebosch Boys High as a boarder, um, so that's my schooling, and I think junior school, although it was, I kind of found my sort of niche there, part of it was that, I, I, I, like, I enjoyed acting, I, I did this thing where I started telling, uh, the class stories and it ended becoming a daily event, I would sort of make up these stories, every day, at the end of, end of class for about three years and that sort of gave me a kind of status. I ended up becoming Head Boy, um, and, uh, it was, although it was quite an Afrikaans school I sort of had a, had, uh, an outlet for my creativity, um, and my creativity, you know, got me a degree of sort of status in the school. Then I went to boarding school, to Rondebosch Boys High and, um, that was just crushed, any attempt at being, kind of, um, yeah, that, bringing with me a slight precociousness, I suppose, and it was just kind of knocked out of me. Boarding school was, was a pretty brutal experience, um, and in retrospect, looking back, I dunno, uh, if it was, you know, I dunno if, uh, if it would've been a different experience had I gone to a, uh, a day school but it was harsh, it was kind of, you know, that time, um, when I guess we were all being geared go into the army and there were a lot of, a lot of guys from Afrikaans backgrounds in the boarding school, there was a tradition of, of Afrikaans families sort of, uh, sending their, their boys to boarding school and I dunno whether that was it but, whether it was kind of, uh, part of the, just fostered by the housemasters but it was pretty brutal, um, and I think a lot of that sort of physical violence was supplemented by sexuality or it was channelled in a very inappropriate way so the first three years at, at boarding school were pretty wretched really, and that was also the time that I was kind of realising that I was, you know, my sexuality and, and struggling with that, so the combination of the two, um, eventually, in my last two years, I kind of found a way of managing it and dealing with, um, making some decisions which then made life a little easier. I was never picked on because I was, you know, overtly effeminate or anything, I dunno, I sort of, I was neither one of the lads nor kind of one

of the nerds, I was somewhere in-between in my own kind of world, bit of an outsider but I could kind of fit, which maybe sort of sums up my life generally.

AK: Um, so then, looking at the, the change-over from Paul Roos to Rondebosch Boys High, um, that change from day school to boarding house, what specific sort of day-to-day changes stood out to you, stand out to you?

RF: Um [pause] well, I, not, not being at home, um, the sort of shocking of finding someone in dorms of twenty, twenty boys, um, I think it was, I think it was, it was also just a quite a, just a kind of brutal environment, you know, there was a lot of initiation and it was all physical stuff, it was all, um, I mean, *ja*, in retrospect, looking back, it was really unhealthy, um, and it's interesting seeing that some of the stuff is still going on in schools in South Africa, Park Town Boys and stuff. Also, in the junior school, uh, in the junior boarding house, it was run by this guy called Professor Tinkie Heyns who was the Dean of the Faculty of Education who definitely had paedophile tendencies and, um, uh, you know, he was kind of, hallowed, he was a Springbok and he trained Springbok Rugby Players but he was a paedophile and, uh, kind of inappropriate, um, and inappropriate to me a couple of times, uh, nothing, nothing seriously overt but, but once again, for a kid that was kind of, kind of hypersensitive and hypervigilant and I'd kinda brought that hypervigilance, you know, from home, I was suddenly back in an environment where I was hypervigilant and, and, you know, this guy, I dunno, he probably sensed something as I think paedophiles probably do and, you know, so there was sort of, you know, rubbing of the butt in the middle of the night because I wasn't sleeping, I ended up in my first year, not sleeping at all, having very chronic insomnia, um, so, you know, that, that probably played into it as well, just feeling uncomfortable, um, and not being able to do anything about it, not being able to speak to my parents, my parents were going through their own issues, they had to move and they had to move from a family business which collapsed to another farm where my dad was working for someone else so, so they had their own kind of crises and, um, I didn't feel that I could actually share any of this precious information, I felt pretty isolated plus this secret of this kind of emerging sexual, sexuality realisation that I struggled with, um, for, for most of my high school career.

AK: When would you say that you first started to experience being sort of, uh, attractions to men?

RF: Um, well, I know I can actually kind of recount the day and it was towards the ends of Standard Six and, um, I had been, I'd been a little obsessed, uh, in junior school, in my final year in prep school, I'd had this girlfriend who wasn't particularly interested in me but I was quite, quite focused on her and then, um, there was a kid in the dorm and I just remember sort

of just before we were going on, on school holidays so I was probably just about to turn fourteen and I remember looking across and thinking, 'wow, he's, he's much more attractive and appealing than, than, she ever was,' and it was, it was that moment, it was kind of a single moment. My mother subsequently, when we've, on the occasional, few times we've had any real discussion about, about my being gay that didn't, that wasn't a fight, um, said that she thought I was gay when I was six because I'd had a friend in junior school who, six or seven, and she'd seen us walking hand in hand down the, you know, down the road and she'd suddenly thought, 'that's strange for boys to be doing,' um, I don't know whether it is or not but, yeah, just before I turned fourteen.

AK: And do you remember the kinds of feelings that you had in those early days of being attracted to men?

RF: Um, I was, uh, very, quite frightened by the feelings, I, I thought, I felt that they were inappropriate, I was terrified that someone might find out or be able to see through me, and you know, thirteen, fourteen-year-old boys, um, constantly sort of touching one another, play fighting is often, got quite a sexual nature and everyone was doing that in boarding school, um, but I remember on one occasion one of the boys who was a year older than me, it was just Standard Sixes and Sevens in this junior, and kind of turned around and accused me to my face of doing something that everyone was doing, I think we were grabbing one another's privates and he, he, he'd been doing the same thing but he basically said, 'you're a moffie' and you shouldn't be doing that and I just remember being absolutely chilled that someone might have seen, this was really my, my bent and, you know, I went through a phase where I tried to be religious and 'pray the gay away,' that didn't last long, and then just kept really quiet about it, um, but I think it, I think it caused me, um, quite considerable distress, uh, and, um, I sometimes wonder whether I was borderline depressed at that time, um, but it was simply something I didn't see anyone that I could talk to, until my final year at school when I did actually, there was a teacher that I could, could share the information with and, and disclose, I knew he was gay, although he was married, um, um, and, so I kinda felt that I could speak to him. He's also quite exceptional, one of those quite exceptional teachers who ends up becoming someone that you could confide in and trust and ...

AK: And how would say that, uh, Rondebosch Boys High treated issues of sort of sexuality, gender, masculinity, those sorts of things?

RF: Well, back in those days, um, you know, it was, it was a pretty homophobic, I mean, this, this was in the seventy, late seventies, up till 1981 when I matriculated and it was, you know, it was part of the nature of the country, it was geared, you were going to go to the border, you

were going to go to the army, um, the, the, I don't think there was any acceptance of, perhaps, you know, with the exception of, of this one teacher who was, who, who, some years later was kind of driven out of the school, um, he'd been falsely accused of something and the, um, parent teacher association was run by a kind of cabal of, of evangelical Christians and the headmaster was an, um, a pretty serious hardcore Christian so he was run out of the school, um, but, *ja*, I, there wasn't, I mean, now I think things are very different but at the time, at the time, um, you know, coming out as gay and the few boys who were effeminate got a really hard time of it as well, they got bullied and, and, uh, I don't think there was anyone looking out for them.

**00:23:29: Early sexual interaction and early adulthood**

AK: Um, cool, then just moving on, first of all, how would you describe your, uh, sexual orientation?

RF: Uh, I'm gay.

AK: Okay, and what does being gay mean to you?

RF: Um, gay means that, uh, I am, I think, uh, so, sexually and physically attracted I am, perhaps, defined better by being emotionally attracted to, to men, um, I have had the occasional sexual experience with women, I was, you know, way back and it was fine, um, but, but I think it's more a kind of emotional attraction than, than anything else really.

AK: Okay, and how would you describe your gender identification?

RF: Um, uh, well I mean, uh, um, male, um, male gay, as opposed to male cis, I'm not sure of the exact, uh, terms are, I don't know if that answers your question.

AK: It does, um, then, just looking at, so, your first sort of sexual experiences with other men, when did that sort of start?

RF: Uh, so there was none of that in boarding school, I mean, I think, I think that, uh, I think that, I subsequently found out that there was stuff happening at the boarding house but it seemed to me that a lot of it, it just didn't happen, I was too scared and, and certainly never happened with me, I had crushes on boys, um, uh, in boarding school but never, never, never told them or never admitted to it so my first sexual experience was when I was nineteen, um, and I was at university and I was working on a, I'd gotten a job as an extra on a TV series which was being shot in the middle of nowhere, um, and there were, there was some guys in Cape Town, they were, um, Malay guys, it was a period piece, they were playing the slaves, they were all hairdressers and I was a soldier and, kind of, these were the first, like, openly,

unashamedly, quite clearly flamboyantly gay men that I'd ever encountered, I mean, there'd been one or two at school but they were, it was also kind of, like, the race thing as well which was intriguing, I suppose, um, and, uh, I agreed to stay in touch with one of them, and, uh, then eventually after several weeks back at university in Stellenbosch I contacted him and arranged to go through to Cape Town and met up, uh, with him and he and I had a, uh, he was my first sexual experience and we had a relationship for about a year, um, and, you know, it was quite mind-blowing I suppose, I sort of, being on a farm, suddenly I was in Woodstock at Galaxy night club and, kind of, you know, experiencing a world which was in every respect, you know, different to what I'd experienced thus far, um, so that was my first sexual experience.

AK: What did you study at Stellenbosch?

RF: Um, I started doing a BA teacher's diploma and then, second year, I added drama to that and then, then decided I wanted to do drama and Stellenbosch, being a predominantly Afrikaans university, it wasn't really going to suit me, so I auditioned for UCT and went to drama school there for another two years.

AK: Okay, and did you study further after that?

RF: Uh, no, no, I finished a performance diploma at UCT and then, many, many years later I studied again, I studied, eight, seven, eight years ago, I did a postgrad, um, qualification here in London.

AK: And how long was your military service?

RF: Two years.

AK: Two years, and was that straight after you matriculated, or did you study first and then do your service?

RF: No, I studied first and then, and then went into the army.

AK: Okay, so you would have been in the army in, what, the late eighties, or mid-eighties?

RF: Uh, mid-eighties, *ja*, '85, '86.

AK: Okay, sorry, just noting that down, and during your time in the military did you ever experience any kind of, sort of, homosexual experiences or stuff like that?

RF: Um, well, when we got, when we got to Voortrekkerhoogte, the camp I was in, um, we got given a whole sheath of forms to fill out and one of the questions was, you know, do you have any homosexual tendencies, have you acted on them, and I ticked, I ticked 'yes,' uh, on these boxes and then the next morning, about six names were called out and I was one of them and, on the parade ground, and, standing in this line, not knowing, you know, it was all very new and quite disturbing and then, kind of looking down and it was myself and five of the campest queens you can imagine, I mean the guys were outrageously, um, sort of flamboyant and over

the top and clearly had no qualms about anyone seeing and I suddenly thought, 'oh, God, you know, I've kind of, I've really, uh, um, everyone will see that I'm, that I'm gay now,' um, and we were all marched off to a welfare officer and she was quite good, she wasn't military, she was civilian and, I guess she was concerned about our wellbeing, so, there was that, uh, uh, that group got bigger, uh, I was in a bungalow, uh, there was a very, a couple of gay guys in the bungalow. They then subsequently moved, uh, to another bungalow which was all gay and Jewish, um, I ended up, for some reason, staying where I was, um, I found the army pretty unsexual, um, I found, perhaps because I disliked the whole, certainly the whole, um, basic training was, hated being there, hated everything about it, hated what it was for, was unhappy that I'd allowed myself to even be in that situation, um, so a couple of times I had, I had, uh, a guy who was under the radar, so he wasn't one of the gay group but he obviously realized I was and, and he made a couple of unsolicited and un-, un-, un-appreciated passes, including one night, I woke up to find him kind of touching me, which was, you know, annoying, um, but basic training, I mean, I just wasn't really interested in any way, other people I know who were in the army had more sexual experiences, I suppose.

**00:30:41: Relationships and conflict**

AK: Okay, um, so, beginning then, actually, before that, uh, in the context of an intimate relationship, how would you define the word, uh, 'conflict'?

RF: Conflict?

AK: *Ja.*

RF: Um [pause] well, uh, I suppose, oof, that's quite a broad question, um [pause] for me, uh, conflict arose, uh, around the relationship, very often because quite a lot of my, quite a number of my relationships have been with people of colour, that has been a primary source of conflict, um, sometimes within the relationship but more so because that relationship existed in a world that, that has not been accepting of it, so it's kind of been okay behind closed doors but the minute that relationship has, in South Africa at least, had to engage with the outside world, um, uh, people were challenging of it, not understanding of it, it often defined, um, how people saw and perceived one, um, it created conflict between myself and my family, um, sometime between myself and other friends and, and so I suppose, I suppose the pressures of the circumstances very often created conflict and also because, because my model about, of relationships was, you know, you scream and shout and have tantrums, which is the way my parents would behave with one another and so I didn't really know any better, uh, and then you

add the kind of additional pressures and, and conflict of, of wanting to be open and then people sort of, not accepting the fact that one was being open and then, and then being conflicted about how open you could be, um, and sometimes just not managing any of that and occasionally in relationships, but, you know, physical violence wasn't a big part, but occasionally it would spill-over into, 'we're not managing this,' and, and it would occasionally become physical and I think, when I was younger.

AK: Um, so, in the instance of the first relationship you mentioned, um, which was the year with the, I think you said he was a music performer.

RF: No, he was actually a hairdresser, but he was working as a, as an extra on a TV series.

AK: I see, um, what, first of all, about the relationship, how was the relationship, what was it like?

RF: Um [pause] well, we're still friends today, and, uh, he's, he's quite an exceptional person in that he has a different view and, and he came from a background, although, although he came from a fairly devout Cape Malay family, a background in which there was very little if any judgment, um, he was accepted for who he was, he was kind of lauded for who he was and so he, he was quite, quite a sort of stable and focused person, I think, I think and didn't allow me to act up too much in that relationships, I don't know, I liked him very much, I don't know that I was kind of, you know, madly, uh, in, in love with him, I think, I think it was some, if I'm honest, although as I said we're still great friends, somehow it was a way of kind of escaping and, and kind of finally engaging in a, in a life that I, and identifying, um, by my sexuality, um, through him I, uh, I met another, another, my second partner and that was a long relationship, he was a dancer and that was kind of a obsessive, head over heels, crazy, uh, far more volatile relationship, um, that went on for about six years and he and I also remained friends until he died, um, so, that first year was actually quite, quite a sort of stable, but that was largely due to him because he had such a sort of even, I struggle with it, I struggle with the fact that I was involved with someone of colour, I struggled with the fact that I was concerned what people would think and, uh, what people were thinking, um, so, you know, I wasn't sort of hiding in plain sight, the point is, and I think this is always the issue with my parents that they would have dealt with it better had I come home with someone that looked like myself, you know, make it kind of, pass it off as, 'oh, he's just Robert's best friend,' but my relationships are, often been in sort of way of, it's quite obvious that there's, that the relationship is something other than that to, not only to people who know me but to complete strangers, um, so, that, that became a challenge for, for many years I think.

AK: Uh, do you remember the year this relationship happened?

RF: Um, 1982, '83.

AK: Okay, so just after you left, um, high school, when you were in university?

RF: *Ja*.

AK: Okay, um, was there an age difference between you and your partner?

RF: Uh, there was, I think, about, um, about six years, six or seven years, so that was the other thing, I think, and then my, my, my long-term, first long-term relationship, he was ten years older than I was, so there was some of this unspoken thing in the gay community, they fear an old white guy, you could have a young Coloured or black boyfriend because that's what you were gonna get and here I was, ten years younger, living with, um, uh, a partner of colour and, you know, they were, they were older than I was and, and, um, I didn't know anyone else like myself and I'm sure there must have been but it seemed to be fairly, fairly novel thing.

AK: And, during this first relationship, the one year one, was there any kind of incidence of conflict?

RF: Um, well I think I was, I was temperamental, uh, and so, uh, but I think he, he, because he was so kind of, ultimately kind of sure of himself and, and quite stable, uh, I couldn't, I couldn't act up too much, he, he had the ability to kind of calm things, I, I, I did some foolish things as one does at that age and, um, I ended up sleeping with, with a friend of his, um, which subsequently I kind of regretted and I think, so that was conflict, but even in that situation he handled it, um, with a sort of, he handled it pretty well and, with a kind of maturity that belied his age, even then.

AK: Um, and then, looking then at the gap between your first relationship and your second relationship, was there a long gap between the two relationships?

RF: No, I mean, in a sense I kind of walked out of the one because I wanted to go into a relationship with the other, I had, I had, uh, met Christopher, um, they, they were, they knew one another and so, I'd met him somehow, and then I was working, uh, working in a show, um, at the theatre and the ballet company were performing there and rehearsing there and so I met Christopher and I kind of, I kind of went from, so I went from, because I was, I felt affectionate towards, um, Irfan, but I didn't, I wasn't sort of obsessed or love him, uh, and I think I was pretty obsessed with, with Christopher so, you know, it was an entirely different kind of relationship, uh, and, and far more volatile and there was a lot more conflict within that relationship, I think, uh, partly because of his issues, uh, which were more, you know, he had, uh, more insecurities and more hang-ups and more issues with his background and my background and, and so that was just a, a, altogether more, more loving, more passionate but more volatile as well.

AK: So, what then would you say are the causes of that [mumbles] volatility? Sorry.

RF: Um [pause] I, I guess, I guess we just, we were both, both, there's a lot of, even today, young gay men have hang-ups about, you know, our own sexuality, hang ups about insecurities, about, uh, I think he thought I was, um, constantly, he didn't, he didn't entirely trust me, um, with some, with some reason, I suppose, although I was, although I had, uh, I was kind of committed to the relationship I was also, uh, at that age, quite intrigued by other people, so that, that was probably, uh, an area of conflict and then, then, similarly, we briefly broke up and he got involved with someone else and I, I became very jealous, so, jealous, insecurities, um, issues around self-esteem, um, and once again, um, we were living together so, uh, it was quite, within the sort of arts community it was public knowledge and, and, just dealing with, with that, I think, in the early, early-to-mid-eighties in, in South Africa, um, it, I didn't feel fully kind of, uh, at peace with those choices and it, and it, you know, it, people challenged it, um, friends challenged it, strangers challenged it, you know, uh, the numbers of times I was asked, you know, 'what's your problem?' People making assumptions, why I was with someone like that, um, there was a lot of that, uh, people, uh, demeaning one because one was with someone of colour, uh, even to the point that, uh, over the year, people were violent and it happened a couple times where I was physically attacked because either someone, a black person or, or, uh, or a white person was deeply offended by the fact that I was in an interracial relationship.

AK: And did this conflict between you and your partner play out in public or in private or a mixture of both?

RF: Um, a mixture of both, *ja*, a mixture of both, I think.

AK: And then looking sort of, first of all at the kinds of conflict in public, how or why did it play out there?

RF: Um, well it would usually be sort of tantrums and, and, you know, uh, an argument in public, I think it only, it only once ever, uh, turned into something physical and he had assumed that I had gone off to an event, uh, because I was interested in someone else which was not the case and, um, had lost his temper and, and slapped me in a public place but otherwise it was generally in private.

AK: And was it different in public than in private?

RF: Um, it was, I suppose it was, in public, you know, one was trying to keep a lid on it and, and not, not display, um, so, one tried to be a bit more polite in public, I suppose, um, so quite often it would involve one or the other kind of leaving the situation and just going off, uh, and

leaving the other there, um, and then meeting up later at home or wherever we were meeting and then kind of, sort of, arguing it out or, uh, so, so, it was more contained in public, sure.

AK: Okay, um, and then what caused the end of that relationship?

RF: Um, I suppose part of it was that I went to the army, um, although we continued the relationship on and off in the army, it just, the army sort of ended everything really and then I was in a different part of the country for a while and, so we, we saw one another occasionally but by that stage I think, I think there was also some sense that, um, he was ten years older than I was and I'd kind of, it kinda felt like the relationship, sort of, had outgrown it, grown, what it was and wanted other experiences, um, and also did want to, I think he wanted something that was far more kind of permanent and I think I just realised that I didn't.

AK: Um, and so after that relationship, did you enter into a relationship straight after or was there a period of time where you were single?

RF: There was a period of time when I was single, *ja*.

AK: For how long, do you remember?

RF: Mm, um, maybe a couple of years.

AK: Um, and did you engage in any sexual or casual relationships during that time?

RF: Oh, *ja, ja*, plenty.

AK: Um, in those kinds of small relationships, how did you initiate them?

RF: Um, they were usually initiated, uh, in clubs, meeting people in clubs or, or bars.

AK: Okay, um, would that be sort in De Waterkant area, in Cape Town, um, in the City?

### **00:46:27: Leaving Cape Town**

RF: No, by then I was, I was in Johannesburg.

AK: Oh, I see, okay, um, and did you ever move back to Cape Town, or live in Cape Town, um, subsequently, or, when did you leave Cape Town? That's the best way to ask it, sorry [awkward chuckle].

RF: So I left Cape Town in, I was back down there in the army, in, uh, I left in 1988, um, and, and while I would travel back and work in Cape Town, depending on the theatre work that, I was working in Cape Town quite a bit but, but really living, living in Johannesburg from then on, um, and, yeah, I mean, I lived in Johannesburg then came overseas ...

AK: When did you leave South Africa permanently?

RF: 1996.

AK '96, okay, and was that for London, or have you live elsewhere since then?

RF: London, lived briefly in New York, um, for half a year, and then, but London, back to South Africa in 2006, for four years, spent some of that time in Cape Town because I was touring and working, so.

AK: Um, and were you in a relationship in the time that you were in South Africa in the mid-2000s?

RF: Uh, yes, so I had a brief relationship with my current partner who lives in South Africa and, um, and then that ended, it, sort of, and then I had a relationship for three years after that.

AK: So that would have been two-thousand and?

RF: 2007 to 2010.

### **00:48:16: HIV/AIDS**

AK: Okay, um, okay, sorry [mumbling] okay, cool, um, so, then going back to the eighties, um, at the time, obviously, HIV/AIDS, becoming a big thing, did that affect, first of all, your sense of self as a, as a gay man?

RF: Yes, I mean, I, I, I have sort of recollections of, of reading those first *Sunday Times* and this would have been 1980, '81, I think, *Sunday Times* had a couple of sort of lurid headlines, you know, 'gay plague, people are dying, first, first couple of patients in South Africa,' and, um, I remember being quite struck and fearful, uh, and clearly the tone of those articles was, was, you know, full of dread, um, and, but I didn't think it necessarily applied to me, I didn't know anyone, uh, personally, who, uh, had HIV, um, or AIDS or GRID as it was known in those days, so it was, it was just something that was starting to kind of, on the periphery, it was only a few years later, probably, probably in the mid-eighties, maybe when I went up to Johannesburg, that I started, I encountered the first few people, we knew people who were HIV-positive or dying and then, uh, I think in 1989, uh, I was doing a production and a group of decided we were going to raise money for an AIDS hospice, they'd shut down an AIDS hospice in Brakpan or Boksburg because the locals were scared their dogs might get infected and, and so there was funding and we raised, I mean, it was, that was actually put in, the dogs were infected and they didn't like the fact that there were black nurses coming into their neighbourhood to look after these people that no one else would look after, so that started, um, what is called 'being alive' and we all raised funds for hospices and I met Edwin Cameron at that time because it was my job to get the keynote speakers and get all the performers on board and he came to give that, the keynote person, you know, I've known Edwin ever since as a result of that.

**00:50:52:** Political and social changes in South Africa

AK: Okay, um, and then looking more towards, sort of, nineties, end of *apartheid*, that sort of thing, um, when you sort of look at the fact of the inclusion of the Equality Clause and, uh, the new constitution of '96, do you think that changed the environment for gay people in South Africa?

RF: Well, to a degree. I mean, the fact that it was there, I suppose, um, was, was encouraging, um, I don't know how much change, changed things on the ground, I mean, I, you know, clubs and bars in, in Johannesburg, I remember, um, black gay friends going to a bar in, in Johannesburg and kind of being ignored or turned down or just not served, um, which really, which, the gay community in South Africa has always been a microcosm of the broader community and so the expectation that because gay men were oppressed or were, um, legislated against, that they might be more tolerant of other gay people, though they might be of a different race and so on, it's not really been the case, I think, and, the gay community was sort of the same as the broader community, so, um, it didn't really change people's attitudes that much, I mean, I dunno, did it change my parent's attitudes, probably not, I don't think it registered, I don't think it probably registered on most people's radar, your average, your average straight citizen wouldn't have known much about it or cared, I don't think, if you were gay, it meant something, sure, but did it change behaviours and attitudes, I dunno. Maybe over time but not initially.

**00:52:47:** Coping mechanisms

AK: Um, and then thinking of the conflict you experienced in relationships you've highlighted so far, um, what sort of coping mechanisms did you employ to deal with the conflict, either with your partner or by yourself?

RF: Um, well I had a few people that I, I had a few people sort of that I, that I could confide in, I suppose and, uh, one of whom was the teacher at school who became a friend and, uh, he's a, a very wise person, so someone that I could, and, someone I could go and talk to, um, I did, I did, uh, have, um, a bit of therapy, probably not nearly enough, first experience, uh, when I was in Cape Town, when I was in the army in Cape Town, I was at the Castle, um, I had a, a relationship, when was that, confused, getting confused with the dates, anyway, um, someone I've not mentioned, I had a relationship with a, I went to see a very eminent gay, uh,

psychologist who was also a lecturer and, um, you know, just, had a few sessions with him, didn't realise that he actually knew the guy I was seeing and, and carried his own little torch for him and ended up disclosing, um, everything I told him in confidence in order to try and discredit, discredit me in the relationship which, so, so, very, first experiences were, very negative experience in terms of trying to find support, um, subsequently I saw a, a, a gay woman, uh, therapist when I was in Johannesburg for a few sessions and she was much better and more reliable therapist, but I never, they were fairly short periods of time, my parents sent me to, uh, and this has always been, I suppose, I kind of laugh about it now but it also makes me a little angry just because it showed their kind of, perhaps, insensitivity, they did the best they knew how but they sent me to the ex-State Criminal Psychiatrist from the Bloemfontein Supreme Court who was this archetypal, you know, sort of, Afrikaner in a suit and a tie and horn-rimmed glasses in this house full of hunting trophies who showed me Rorschach tests and pictures of, you know, first naked farmers and things like that and, though I just told him, I just made up these outrageous kind of stories, which, you know, at the end of it all, he said, 'I suppose, I suppose you are a homosexual and if you want to see me again you can.' Clearly, he didn't have any desire to see me, he said [in an Afrikaans accent], 'I'll send your parents a report,' you know, um, so, so those are my attempts at official help, or being sent to help, but, uh, *ja*, relying on friends who, one friend, as I said, the one friend in particular who was not judgemental and, and, uh, and kind of would just listen to, and had a sense of understanding of, uh, some of the stuff I was feeling which other people just couldn't get.

AK: Okay, um, so you'd say it'd be helpful in some instances to have social circles around you to help deal with the problem, or at least, understand the problem better?

RF: *Ja*, I mean, I think, you know, the, the biggest help would've been a family that was supportive but, um, while I wasn't, I was never rejected or, sort of, cast out, um, they, they couldn't understand and didn't really want to, or wanna talk about it and when there were discussions it was usually, uh, pretty, pretty, uh [mumbles] and often quite unpleasant.

AK: And then finally, the brief period of time that you were in South Africa before 2008, I think you said, 2007 and 8, um, in the relationships that you experienced then, do you think things had changed after the Civil Unions Act had been passed?

RF: Well, things definitely had, you know, I've sort of was sitting in Rosebank in Johannesburg and suddenly I see, uh, two young black gay guys kind of walking hand-in-hand and I thought, 'wow,' you know, you hadn't seen that sort of thing and so you realise that, that, certainly the younger generation were kind of out there and, and the person I got involved with was much younger than I was, um, so, things had changed but in a sense almost the flipside had happened

so when I was living in Cape Town as a young, in my early twenties in those relationships, you know, I found myself, uh, sort of, sort of ostracised, I mean, typically I would have entrée to the sort of smart, uh, Atlantic Seaboard gay set with their dinner parties and cocktail parties and stuff, but it seemed, because it was known that I was involved with Christopher and that was that, and I had an occasion when people were kind of pretty, pretty rude to my face about it, um, and then, years later, having lived in London I kind of came back and then had this relationship with a much younger, um, guy who was, who was, um, um, Mswati, and, um, and his friends kind of treated the relationship in the same way that white gay men had treated and kind of had issues with it and had issues with the fact that he was involved with a white guy, an older white guy, more kind of, quite, quite, negative and disruptive and, I think, uh, and because he was that much younger, um, I think, had a negative sort of influence so, there was a part of me that kind of, really, by the end of that I kinda went, 'you know what, I've had, I'm bugging off back to London, I just don't wanna deal with that kind of shit anymore, I dealt with it on the one side, and now I was dealing with it on the other, and, and, um, never the twain shall meet, really.'

AK: So, would you say then that as far communities of gay men would often base things upon race?

RF: I think so, I mean, I might have a very, a very one-sided view of it because of my own experiences but, um, yeah, I mean, uh, perhaps, perhaps both race and age and so there's something about kind of, the sort of ageism there as well, um, but, yes, I think so, I mean, for my early, my early, sort of, gay life, my early twenties, um, I really did sense that I was defined, you know, I was an actor, Cape Town's a small acting community, uh, I was known by, you know, by, uh, people that worked in the press and, and people who reviewed productions but that sort of became my, you know, I wasn't, I wasn't Robert the Actor, I was, oh, Robert, *he's* the guy who's, who's into black or Coloured guys and that kind of very often would be the sort of thing that defined me, which, um, which I did struggle with, um, and, and, and often defined me in quite, I suppose, quite a negative light for a lot of those people, there's a lot of hypocrisy, I mean, remember going to a dinner party when I was at university and, uh, there's a famous and flamboyant gay guy who was very well known in the arts community in Cape Town and, you know, he effectively, in front of this, of a bunch of people who were much older than I was, mostly, and, and sort of influential and known, um, he called me a, basically, a *kaffirboetie*, that was sort of, and it was a joke, it was all very funny, and I just remember being kind of, um, crushed with embarrassment and shame and the next day I was driving back to where I lived, driving up Long Street and back in those days all the rent boys would be lined

up along Long Street, it was summer and I saw, I was trying to get past, there was this great big Mercedes kind of cruising up and it was clearly cruising and sort of stopping and window going down and I drove past and it was the same person that had kind of, uh, and he was talking to a young black guy, you know, getting into his car, so, so that kind of hypocrisy really, really always grated with me, and I have a, I have a real issue about, um, that kind of hypocrisy and injustice related to that sort of hypocrisy.

**01:02:34: Wrapping up**

AK: Um, well, thank you, I think that's just about it, is there anything else you'd like to add?

RF: Uh, no, no, if that's, kinda covers your...

AK: It does, thank you so much, I really appreciate the testimony, *ja*, I'll be in touch soon, uh, with the consent forms and all that sort of stuff, uh, and thank you very much, Robert, I appreciate it.

RF: Okay, my pleasure.

AK: Cool, thank you and all the best and enjoy the rest of your afternoon.

RF: Thank you, you too.

AK: Cheers.

RF: Bye-bye.

**Interview Description**

**Length of Interview:** 1 hour 3 minutes 5 seconds

**Recording Equipment:** Lenova IdeaPad [and Skype]

**Copy and Access status:** signed release form; interviewee has stated no restrictions on material

**Name of the Interviewee:** ‘Hennie Geldenhuys’ [A]

**Name of the Interviewer:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam [AK]

**Date of Interview:** 3 April 2019

**Place of Interview:** Montague Gardens, Cape Town

**Number of tapes/recordings:** 1

**Transcribed by:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam

**Date Transcribed:** 2 July 2019

**00:00:00:** Family background

AK: Right, uh, um, first things first.

A: [claps]

AK: [chuckle] uh, when and where were you born?

A: I was born in a small town in Namibia call Keetmanshoop when it was South West Africa, part of South Africa, um, 1985, 4<sup>th</sup> of October.

AK: Okay, cool, and at the time who did you live with when you were born?

A: Uh, my mom and my father, my mom and dad, *ja*.

AK: Cool, and do you have any siblings?

A: Yes, I have one sister, biologically sister, two years younger than I am but my dad, uh, a previous marriage so I have three half brothers and a half sister that are considerably older than I am.

AK: Okay, cool, um, and then, first of all, what did your parents do?

A: Both teachers.

AK: What sort of grades and subjects.

A: My dad, history, and my mom, English.

AK: Okay, um, and, high school, pre-school?

A: Um, pre-school was, we moved to a small town called Tsumeb up in the north of Namibia, primary school was Francis Galton Primary and then high school was Etosha Secondary School.

AK: Cool, um, and then first of all, your relationship with your father, what was that, that like when you were growing up?

A: Well, it depends, um, growing up as toddler and as a primary school kid, it was fine, um, my dad was the sport head of the school and, of course, being a gay man, unfortunately, sometimes you don't have the, uh, inclination to do sports as well as you'd like or as, or, like

rugby, wasn't really, um, interesting for me, so we started clashing, like, with that and my dad was an alcoholic so that was also very difficult. I think, growing up, when I reached the age of ten I started realising, um, the complexities of the familial relationship and, um, the reasons why it was so difficult and, how, the effect of alcoholism had on our relationship, *ja*.

AK: Um, and how involved was he in your upbringing?

A: Um, relatively, the thing is, I went to school, in the same high school my dad was so we saw each other a lot, um, there was, we didn't have any animosity when he was sober, it was most just when he was drinking.

AK: Um, and then with your mother in contrast, what was your relationship like?

A: Much better relationship with my mom, but, um, when, when I was in high school I started, um, what is the word, um, rebelling, um, I, uh, in Afrikaans you'd say, *ek het my ma verwyf* [I blamed my mother], which means that, um, I, um, I was angry at her for allowing certain things to happen, um, like allowing him to drink and because of that, um, my relationship with her drifted until I went out of high school, came to study at Stellenbosch University and then I, you know, with maturity, started realising things are much more complex than things seem and, uh, we became much more close, um, I also came out in that period, which, um, put further strain on our relationship once, after we got together again, um, she's very religious so, um, it took two or three years for her to also come to terms with that and my dad, when my dad died, then that was the last sort of stumbling block in our relationship, now we're very, very close.

AK: Do you mind me asking when you dad passed away?

A: Uh, 2009, May the 13<sup>th</sup>.

AK: Okay, um, and then your relationship with your siblings, how has that evolved over the years?

A: Um, well, was very close to my sister, my biological sister, my half-brothers and sister until, um, they all lived in various parts of the country and some in South Africa, um, but, while I was in the family unit we made an effort to see each other for Christmases and birthdays but, um, that all changed when I came out in my, at the end of my second year at university and, um, I come from a very conservatively religious, um, uh, family, especially my half-brothers and half-sister, and, um, today I'm lucky if I get a 'happy birthday'.

AK: Um, and when you say religious, is it *NG Kerk* or ...?

A: Uh, no, no, we grew up *NG Kerk* but they are, my immediate family, my mom and my sister are *NG Kerk*, but my half-brothers and sister, they are part of a more charismatic church movement.

AK: Okay, um, but it is still more in line with the kind of traditional Christian value type set?

A: Well, *NG Kerk* is much more, uh, approaches these things from a more academic point of view so dissent is allowed, whereas in a charismatic church it's more like what the pastor says, goes, so if the, the church is, the *NG Kerk*, for example, would have, one church would be very gay-friendly, the other church might not be gay-friendly, whereas this is, you're either gay or you're straight, and if you're gay then you're in the wrong, basically.

AK: Okay, um, and how would you describe, when you were growing up, uh, before his passing, your parent's marriage?

A: Uh, not very good, um, they were always bickering and I think alcohol was just a, um, a catalyst, um, and, uh, I think the best thing that could have happened to my mom is him passing away, so she could free herself from that situation because she also comes from a very, um, shielded, um, upbringing, conservative upbringing and she didn't believe in divorce, so it was one of those things that she would never have done even if it was better for her to have left.

AK: Um, and would you say that that was perhaps the alcohol, was that a source of conflict?

A: Yes, yes, um.

AK: How did that play out, if you don't mind me asking?

A: Um, you mean when I was a kid?

AK: *Ja*.

A: Uh, well, um, abuse, um, uh, I think I reached the point when I was thirteen or fourteen that, um, I started fighting back and that changed the dynamic and at one point I didn't even go away evenings to visit my friends because I didn't wanna leave my mom alone so I sort of became her protector, um, and it was a very difficult thing for me to leave the house when I was studying and to leave my sister in that space as well, but my dad had also, um, went from an abusive alcoholic to more a quiet alcoholic, like sitting in the corner sulking by the time I left, so, um, that made it a little bit easier for me to leave but I still felt very guilty.

AK: Um, so would you say that the feelings you had at the time, how would you describe them, as, before you left home, what sort of feelings did you have about home and about your parents' marriage and that sort of thing?

A: Um, frustration and anger, I guess, I mean, I was angry at my mom because she didn't leave my dad, I was, um, frustrated because I didn't have the power to change anything, I was just a kid and I had to do what was told to me, um, leaving the house gave me the first, um, taste of emancipation which, um, allowed me to also have a voice, that mattered in the family as well.

**00:06:51:** Schooling years

AK: Um, and then moving through to school years, just very quickly, um, all of your primary education and high school education was in Namibia, correct?

A: Uh-huh.

AK: Okay, um, first of all, with your primary school, what was the sort of social environment like there, do you have any memories of that?

A: Pre-school, is that kindergarten, not primary school?

AK: *Ja*, so everything before Grade 1, or Standard A.

A: Um, it, memories, it was a typical Afrikaans, um, uh, pre-school where I think there were two or three classes and each class had a colour and an animal related to it and, um, my parents were ironically progressive in the sense that they put me in a, uh, Namibia was a very different country to South Africa in the sense that it's a lot more inclusive, colour and culture wise, so I grew up from kindergarten with brown and black kids, um, and there was Afrikaans and English but it was mainly the typical Afrikaans look and feel of a kindergarten.

AK: Um, cos if dates serve, you would have been living in, in Namibia when it became Namibia ...

A: Yes, yes.

AK: An independent country ...

A: An independent country ...

AK: Um, and then looking just sort of, your primary school, again, what was that like?

A: Primary school was, I really enjoyed primary school, the first three or four years, um, doing, I loved swimming, I loved tennis, I remember very specifically, um, in Grade 3 when it was the, when you sort of became a more, the middle school part of primary school, um, where you weren't being, um, treated like a child anymore but more, given more opportunities, um, all my males friends went to rugby and my best friend wanted to play tennis and I didn't know what tennis was and I knew what rugby was and I didn't like it so I followed my best friend to play tennis and I didn't realise what ramifications that would have on my social life in primary school.

AK: Um, what sort of ramifications were they?

A: Just, um, from Grade 3 onwards I just realised then that friend groups start splitting up depending on what their interests are, so, um, the friends that I used to hang out with, they were still friends but they formed their own clique, um, the rugby clique and the netball clique, um, but in a way it was mitigated by the school being very diverse, I mean, I had so many different friends that were interested in very different things, we, the school made a very big effort to,

um, to place an emphasis on everything, not just sports, so I felt included in other places where the sport didn't really make feel that included so it wasn't such a big deal.

AK: Um, what sort of spaces would that be that you felt more included?

A: Uh, like library media prefect, uh, the library was a big sanctuary for me, um, and also playground, we had two or three breaks and then you weren't forced to sit with people that had one certain way of thinking, you could spend time with other friends, um, and do things like play, um, marbles and shit like that, yeah.

AK: Um, and then in the context of schooling and primary education and stuff like that, before you went to university, how would you define the word 'bullying'?

A: Well, when I was, um, in Grade 3 I was involved in a car accident and because of that I, I picked up a lot of weight so I went from a very skinny swimmer to a very fat boy who, and my voice also only broke very late in Grade 7, Grade 6, Grade 7, so Grade 4 and 5 I became overweight and my voice was quite high and that did illicit some unwanted, um, uh, queer-baiting, I guess, from, um, more senior kids at school, calling me, you know, the typical Afrikaans '*moffie*' word and I didn't understand what that was but I knew that it referred to an effeminate guy who didn't really enjoy playing sport at, you know, rugby and 'touchies' (touch rugby) at break, because it was never really, I guess I withdrew into myself because of that, um, ironically that changed, um, over the course of, in the middle of the year we have a two or three month holiday between Grade 7 and Grade 8, which is then high school, um, I was eventually cast as an outsider at the end of primary school but I lost a lot of weight and grew very quickly in those three months so when I went to Grade 8, um, which is a different school with a lot of people that didn't know me, I was so used to, um, the typical Matric approach to, um, uh, treating Grade 8's with disdain that I took it in my stride and I ended up becoming very popular in high school because I took everything as it came and I didn't have a chip on my shoulder like my friends who bullied me in primary school so, um, it went, basically, from a very bad Grade 4, 5, 6, 7 experience to a fantastic Matric, uh, high school experience, um, even though I knew, I've known I was gay since I was, I could remember, but that was something I sort of pushed out in my mind, I knew I was gonna deal with it later, I just didn't know when.

AK: Okay, so would you say that you had, how would you describe your high school experience?

A: High school was great, my dad was the sport organiser and one of the main, um, senior teachers at the school, um, and he was known to be very strict, um, so there was already a sort of, like, a bullseye on my head when I went to high school but because I took the, the name-calling and stuff not as seriously the Matrics liked me and that meant that I could hang with

them as a Grade 8 during high school which didn't really go well with my previous bullies and they sort of re-evaluated my relationship with them and they sort of included me in the fold, um, but I didn't trust them since, from there, so I still don't have any, uh, I wouldn't say I am friends with anyone from high school, I have acquaintances, I keep contact now and then but, um, it's not your typical 'best friends since Grade 3 and still keeping contact' cos I felt betrayed, um, and I knew that high school was just, um, a period in my life that I needed to get out of until I can become who I know I'm going to be and make the friends I know I'm gonna have for the rest of my life, um, but high school was academically fantastic, I did very well, um, and, uh, and I focused most of my energy on swimming and tennis and academics.

AK: Um, and then finally, just, first of all, how did your schools deal with issues of gender, sexuality and masculinity?

A: Okay, well, we had, looking back on it now, I think our school was quite progressive for a public school, I treated itself more like a private school, um, we had very sensitive teachers, um, mostly that would take you out for one-on-ones if they saw something, um, I had several teachers who took me out of class or of situations when they saw me feeling very negative or depressed, just to talk about, because everyone knew my dad was an alcoholic and, um, it was very comforting but also quite scary knowing that, when you're a teenager you hope that these things are private and no-one sees it but when someone comes to you and offers support then it's nice; on the other hand, you realise, 'oh, shit, everyone knows,' and then you start feeling, withdraw into yourself even more. Um, from a sexuality point of view, it, it's was an undiscussed topic but we had two or three gay, um, people in our school, um, not necessarily having coming out but it was sort of a known fact that they were gay, um, and they had friends and there was, in high school we had, we had a big drive against bullying, um, that I think was mostly successful but it wasn't an atmosphere that was conducive to being completely out, um, with regards to, uh, gender identity, I think, um, I think our school was quite progressive, we had a lot of people express gender identity very differently, uh, girls and boys, um, it was easier for the girls than for the boys.

AK: Okay, um, and then finally how did would you say that your school interacted with, uh, issues of race and social class?

A: My school was ninety percent black and, um, it was, um, sort of the go-to school in the northern part of the country, um, I would say that it handled race very well, um, we had very good representation, also, just to give context, Namibia is a very different socio-political animal compared to South Africa, so, um, the people, um, approach things very differently there, um, there is very little, um, uh, antagonism in terms of race, um, I think class was a bigger issue,

um, I remember being in high school, class, there being issues with, um, people not being able to afford books and, and, uh, school clothing, um, and that was probably the most negative things that I can remember but, um, our school also did help, I guess, in a way that they had little book sales and stuff and clothing sales and, um, I think, looking back on it, I think the school was probably a bit more progressive than, than I remember it being at the time.

**00:15:58:** Early sexual experiences

AK: Um, right, and then, moving forward, do you remember, I think you said you started puberty late, what sort of age was that?

A: Yeah, about eleven, twelve-ish, which I think is about a tad later than kids these days anyway.

AK: And what sort of changes stood out to you at that particular time?

A: Oh, the typical secondary sexual characteristics [laugA]

AK: Um, and then how would, first of all, describe your sexual orientation?

A: I am, on the spectrum, like, probably put myself a good nine, ten being gay-gay, and, um, I think I went through a phase where I was hoping that I was bisexual but I always knew that I was attracted to boys, um, but I was never at one point sexually attracted to girls, um, I did, however, do the 'beard thing' in high school because my parents put a lot of pressure on me to become a prefect and I eventually ended up making the *faux pas* of having, of dating the hockey team captain for three months during the election process and then we both dumped each other when we realised that I didn't really kiss her [laugA] and she found out, well, to be honest, I was probably a bit of a dick anyway and didn't realise, when, when these things happen in your head you don't really realise what you were doing to the other person that you are inviting to be in a relationship with and it's only when you're a bit older that you realise that gay men can be really selfish sometimes in the coming out process, not necessarily a fault of their own but it's a situation that makes it difficult and, um, they do hurt especially girls in that time because you're giving off mixed signals because you don't even know what you want.

AK: Um, and how would you describe your, um, first sort of attractions to men?

A: Um, I don't necessarily remember being sexually attracted to boys in primary school, I just remember being quite in awe of them, um, but I never really had the, 'oh, look at the Grade 7 boys, they've got hair, they've got, you know, pecs and six-packs,' I never really had that, it's maybe because I developed a little bit later but, um, in high school there was definitely, when

I was swimming it was obviously difficult to peel your eyes off attractive boys with Speedos and then I guess that sort of, um, awakened, uh, the sort of, um, fantasies that boys have.

AK: And you say you didn't experience that towards, uh ...?

A: Girls, uh, no, no, not at all, I did have very strong emotional feelings towards girls that I thought was the start of that and then when I tried to pursue it I realised that it's not really, not really for me, *ja*.

AK: Um, and then during high school and that sort of period were you ever engaged in any physical or sexual relationship with another man?

A: No, well, in primary school there was this, my dad was a golf player and at home he had a, um, a golf team member whose son was my age and we would hang out while our parents played golf and he, I remember him trying to brush up against me once, like, it was like a very rudimentary docking, if I could it put it that way, um, uh, and I was shocked, I didn't know what the Hell was going on, I sort of just, um, ran away but I don't think I understood what was happening, I think only later on I realised, maybe that was what he was trying to do but by then he had moved out of town so ...

#### **00:19:25:** University years, coming out and early relationships

AK: Okay, um, so, then you left Namibia for Stellenbosch, that would have been in 2003 ...

A: 2004.

AK: 2004, okay, um.

A: I was, my birthday's late in the year so I was only, I only went to school in the following year.

AK: I see, I see, um, so, at that stage, had you come out to your parents?

A: No, um, part of the reason that my dad wanted me to go to university at Potch [Potchefstroom], um, because I could get a full ride at Potch for three years, but, um, my dad and my, my half-brother went to Stellenbosch University and the Western Cape was the only province I'd never been to in South Africa and also it felt like very far away, um, I'd read of, when I was sixteen, things got so bad at home that I, I remember buying a, um, I can't remember what the magazine was called but it was sort of like a gay magazine in another town so no-one could see me, um, and then I read that there was this rent boy thing in Pretoria and Stellenbosch, I mean, Cape Town and at one point I almost took all my savings and bought a bus ticket [whispers] so I could become a rent boy [chuckles] ahh, I can't believe, it was a very desperate moment but luckily it passed very quickly, um, and then, uh, I decided to go to Stellenbosch, I

didn't get all the financial benefits that I would've gotten at Potch but it was a very good choice because it was a very diverse, very liberal, very welcoming, um, environment, um, I went to, to res in my first year, um, I partook in almost everything in the first three montA until I realised it's basically a rehash of high school and it's not what I want so I, um, withdrew from res activities and chose to live privately and the moment I did that, on that day, I joined the lesbian-gay organisation at Stellenbosch University, I made gay friends, um, and basically came out, I didn't come out to my friends at the time, I just felt like it was the next transition and I didn't owe coming out to anyone, until, um, 2007, um, so that was actually three years, *ja*, in my third year, sorry, my third year I, someone told me that, um, it's very obvious that I'm gay on campus and there are a couple of Namibia people studying there and I should probably come out to my parents before, um, word reaches them, um, which I duly did, I didn't expect to do it when I did, it just happened, um, so I only came out two or three years after actually deciding to sort of exit my shell and become who I am at Stellenbosch, *ja*.

AK: And what was the reaction from, uh, from your parents, first of all, and your family?

A: So, so I told my sister first, um, a couple of montA prior and, um, she was very excited, she quoted Karen Walker from 'Will and Grace' and I was quite shocked, um, that she was so excited but I'm very glad that she was excited because it made things very easy for me, um, she then immediately wanted to tell me about her sex life and I told her, 'that's not how this works,' [laugA] um, and, um, that was about June of 2007, and then, um, couple of montA later, I think, was it, I can't even remember anyway, um, I came out to my mom and she was quite shocked, um, and said that I shouldn't tell my dad, we must just wait, um, and then three days later she told my dad, um, ironically my mom, who's the more conservative, religious one, she didn't take it as good as I thought, as well as I thought, she was very shocked and, um, 'shook,' um, and took a while to talk about it again, whereas my dad, ironically, um, took it very well initially and told, even came up to me and told me that, um, because I was working at a mine during the December holidays, um, as a HR assistant and my dad picked me up at the, at the mine and told me that I'm in good company because the majority of people that have changed the course of history were gay or had some kind of bisexual flair about them, um, which was very, very nice and helped me quite a lot, but then that was the only time he ever spoke about it again so, um, I'm not quite sure, maybe he was just fronting to mask how he really felt but we never discussed it again until he died and my mom then, didn't take it so well initially, she progressed through the stages of denial, and then acceptance and then finally, about three or four years later after sending me an SMS and telling me that God has a plan for me and that there's a woman out there for me, even though I was dating someone who I'm still

dating, um, she came around and now she's our biggest cheerleader, she wants us to get married as soon as possible.

AK: Um, okay, so then, during your time at Stellenbosch, uh, did you pursue any physical or sexual relationships with other men?

A: Oh, yes [laugA]

AK: Um, and first of all, how did you initiate these sorts of relationships?

A: So, um, I became a part of an organisation called, um, Lesbi-Gay, um, and there was another group that, um, was quite famous at the time among Afrikaans people, um, we call it *Groepie*, um, it was led by Dominee Carel Antonissen (sp) who was an antagonising force in the *NG Kerk* during *apartheid* and he started a lesbian and gay, um, chats at his house once a month on a Monday, um, that was always accompanied by tea and Zoo cookies, um, and, um, and it was during these events, Lesbi-Gay events and the other events at the dominee's house where we would discuss everything under the sun, but also our gayness and how it affects our spirituality, um, where I would meet a lot of people and through them I realised that I could be attracted to people and actually, you know, go on dates and stuff, um, and the third way of me meeting people was on Gaydar, which was, um, South African dating website which I'd heard of through these two groups and I created a profile for myself and, um, I never really went on dates in this group, um, this, this, uh, gay dating website, my first date was via a friend, um, who, who, uh, set me up with a, a geology honours student and, um, and I'd never kissed a boy in my entire life and, uh, and we kissed and it wasn't that bad and then he wanted me to do other things immediately and was like, 'oh, honey, I don't think I can do this,' and he was quite pissed off with me because we went to the movies and I only kissed him and he dropped me off and I didn't understand why he was so angry and then after two weeks of trying to explain to him, 'you did nothing wrong, I just, I wanna do these things, I just have to pace myself,' he invited me over for dinner at his place, second date and then, um, uh, how does one term it lightly, um, uh, we went to the second base [laugA] uh, oral sex, yeah, um, which was quite shocking because he had a Prince Albert [a cock ring] ...

AK: Ah, I see.

A: For my first penis [laughter] and, uh, *ja*, so I then was shocked and I told him, 'thanks, but no thanks,' afterwards, though, I mean, I did finish the job, um, and, um, and then I sort of refrained from dating for a couple of montA while I was gathering my thoughts and I thought that every gay man, like, got a gay card and got a Prince Albert at one point, which was very stupid, I know.

AK: Um, and then did the same sort of approach continue with your other casual relationships?

A: Um, yes and no, um, I think I floated around quite a lot in serial monogamy for those, for my undergraduate career after that experience, my first year, um, dating a guy for maybe one or two months and then before it got serious, uh, I would end it, um, I was quite popular if I do say so myself, so, um, but I'd never lost my virginity, um, I think I was a bit scared about that, I think it was very easy to protect myself by, um, going out with this guy and seeing how it goes and when it doesn't work out, I dump them and then, I had quite, I wasn't dating one after the other, but I had a good eight or nine boyfriends in three years that lasted, like, a month or three, um, but every time it progressed to a point where we'd either have to, have to, or want to have sex or they would want to say, 'I love you,' then I would freak out, then I would just run away.

AK: Um, and what attracted to you, what attracted you to these particular men?

A: I didn't really have much of a type. I guess, now, looking back, it was a bit of a, like, English, tall, dark, handsome, but, um, so you're not safe [laugh] I'm kidding, um, but, um, uh, I think, I mean, I crossed the, the, the gender identity line, I crossed the racial line, several times, um, Afrikaans, English, I think I did very healthy experimenting in that time, um, in terms of, um, everything else except for full-on sex and relationships, um, until I fell in love for the first time.

### **00:29:15: Relationships and conflict**

AK: Um, when did you first fall in love?

A: Yes, um, it was at the end of, uh, 2007, there was this party called *gat* party in Milnerton, just down the road, it was a twice a month, um, *sokkie*, um, that was very inclusive towards gays, lesbians and straight people, um, and I'd heard of it and a friend invited me to go there, right after exams at the end of November, um, this was 2007, so it was second year, end of my second year and I met this, this boy, um, from Pretoria who was there visiting before he went, um, to the UK for two months and he was different to most of the guys I'd met, he was very intelligent and he was funny and was a Disney freak, I dunno, it was very strange, because it wasn't exactly the set-up where you'd meet someone and get to know them so quickly, um, and we kept contact on Facebook, that was when everyone started adding, going onto Facebook, 2007-ish, um, and then when he came back to South Africa in March I found out that he was coming to Cape Town to do the Argus [cycle tour], um, he's two years older than I am, and, um, he was studying graphic design in Pretoria and, um, I told that, listen, if he wants to come through I'd love to hang out, um, and he said he was looking for accommodation and then I said, 'well, a friend of mine is going away for a week, to East London, um, he gave us

his flat and his car,' and, um, I remember making him, driving him around in the car, it was very, very cool, it felt very surreal, um, and then that night I helped, I made him a pasta meal to carbo-load for the next day, and, uh, I lost my virginity that night and it was very unplanned, I was very quick [laugA] um, but it was sober and which was nice because I've always wanted my first time to be sober and to have experienced everything and, um, he did the Argus and stayed with me for another week and, um, I soon discovered the joys of sex [laughter] and, uh, *ja*, and then he unfortunately had to go back to Pretoria, it was a very bad time in his life because he stopped studying as well and his parents were divorcing. Of course, I didn't really care because I just fell in love, I think, so I spent all my savings flying him down to Cape Town and spending time with me for about four, three or four montA and then June, July that year, um, he just said that he couldn't, he can't carry on like this, he doesn't have money, he doesn't have a job, um, his dad's putting pressure on him and I had to let go, because I couldn't make it work either because I can't afford to fly him down every month as well, um, and then we realised is what it was, a long distance relationship, I just felt more strongly, should've been more different, but, um, *ja*, so it took me a good two weeks of crying every day to start getting out of bed and, uh, *ja*, and then I finally realised what I might have done to other people and then I was basically single for two years after that because I felt a bit ashamed of how I treated people I was in casual, well, it wasn't casual relationships but I felt I treated it like a casual relationships, where other people invested more than me and I realised that this could happen, this, I've now got the receiving end of it, so, *ja*, I got a healthy respect for people, other people's, um, emotions after that.

AK: And in the, looking at sort of, the relationships before 2008, so, the short-term ones and then this particular, um, romance that you had, would you say that you, uh, actually, sorry, first of all, sorry, um, how would you define the word 'conflict' in the context of an intimate relationship?

A: Um, I think conflict has many, um, ways that it can be experienced, um, from subtle conflict where, um, the one partner very clearly knows that the other partner doesn't want things done in a certain way but then, without verbalising it, um, enforces their will upon the situation anyway, um, other conflict is, I think, um, sex can be conflicting, um, especially when, um, you know, the top-bottom, sort of universal, um, um, that can be, I think, quite a conflict, um, especially if you're not very versatile, if you prefer one above the other one, but then you might be forced because your one partner is slightly more aggressive, um, it might, uh, start feeling disdain for sexual intercourse, um, conflict in terms of, I'm basically an old married man now, so conflict in our relationship, my partner of eight and a half years is mostly with the small

things, we don't fight about the big things, it's small, you know, it's, a little bit about money but it's not major things, it's literally taking out the trash, washing the dishes, um, I feel like we have the things covered now but back then, when you asked pre-2008, um, I would've defined conflict as, um, sex and, um, *ja*, I'm not quite sure how to answer the question actually.

AK: [mumbling] That's, that's a good answer, thank you, um, so, if you don't mind me asking then, with regards to your sexual relationships with these men, did these conflicts stem from the choice of position or was there other nuances towards conflict?

A: No, no, I think if you talk about pre-2008 I'd only had sex with one person, um, and that actually came quite easily, quite smoothly, I just meant how I would define conflict in an intimate relationship but in my own personal experience, um, I, I only, um, the only conflict I had was because I didn't wanna have sex [laugA].

AK: So, was there a lot of pressure from your partners at the time?

A: Yes, yes, they wanted to fuck all the time and I just did not really feel like it was something that I wanted to do until I met the guy I fell in love with and then I wanted to do it five times a day [laughter].

AK: Um, and how did that pressure manifest, how did they express that pressure?

A: I think it just, uh, I think it was just, um, that, um, un, um, it kills the mood, it kills the happy mood when you're like, 'no, I don't wanna do that, I'd rather wanna do this,' and then the disappointment, um, manifests in them sort of blackmailing you, um, emotionally afterwards, you know, not replying to texts or, um, saying they're busy when there's an event going on, um, and I think that's probably why I ended those short relationships quickly because I wanted to stop it before it became an issue and it became my fault.

### **00:36:08:** Gay spaces and politics

AK: And do you remember how that made you feel about yourself?

A: Oh, crap, very crap, but I only realised it later, um, at that point it was just so much fun meeting new guys, meeting new people, um, also, um, I was part of a, um, there was another group I was involved in called, um, it was a gay group at the Stellenbosch, um, uh, called the *SSVO*, in Afrikaans it was *Studente, Stellenbosch Studente Onverkling en* something else, and we had a, a clinical psychologist meet with us once a month as well and we talked a lot about STDs and HIV and I was, I was so scared, um, I think probably one of the reasons why I didn't have sex was because I was just scared in general, um, *ja*.

AK: So, would you say then that HIV and STDs affected your ...

A: Completely, *ja*, growing up from a, you know, conservative upbringing, um, like, very big fear of sex until, um, when I did first have sex I became much more, um, um, casual with regards to my, uh, protection.

AK: Um, what do you mean by that, sorry?

A: Um, it wouldn't be such a big deal if I didn't use a condom.

AK: Oh, I see ... um ...

A: But, now, looking back, I was quite stupid and very lucky, um, but we also had one or two people in this group that I was talking about that had HIV which, um, brought it home very, very often that, you know, it might be fun now but this guy also thought it would be fun and then he did a casual, um, ILISA (sp) test at Stellenbosch on the Red Plain and he didn't get the answer he was hoping to get.

AK: Um, and was there a gay scene at Stellenbosch during the time that you were there?

A: Yes, there was, we had several, um, groups of gay students, um, but the main group that organised most of our events was the Lesbi-Gay, uh, group, which was, uh, official Stellenbosch organisation, like the debating society, and they would hold once a month meetings, they'd have, um, uh, trivia nights, it was, it was a lot of fun, it was never a case of, um, meeting people to have sex with, it was, although some people probably did use it to get new meat, um, fresh meat for the grinder, but, um, it was really a very nice open space and we had a lot of non-gay people, uh, a lot of girls, uh, and their boyfriends that joined us and it was a very positive, um, group, um, at one point I think we had more than a hundred, um, people, of which only half of them were gay, um, because we had amazing parties, um, and we did cool things and we watched queer cinema which was very important for me, um, queer cinema was actually, I thought I might mention, um, when DSTV came out in Namibia in 1995, it was the Rugby World Cup and my dad immediately got DSTV and at that point there were only twenty-eight or thirty channels, one of them was, um, Carlton Select and there was the 'Golden Girls' and Julian Kerry was a cross-dressing comedian and as a kid I would watch this, not really knowing that later on it would become a very defining, um, cultural icon in the gay society, uh, especially Julian Kerry in 'Golden Girls' and, um, I found myself in high school reading through the DSTV magazine where they would make descriptions, writing descriptions of movies coming up that month and then realising that there was gay subtext to the description and then I would make a note to watch the movie because the movies were always, um, on a Saturday night at three o'clock in the morning or something like that so, and my sister and I used to watch the movies together and she never, you know, questioned me about it but she was also interested in gay cinema so, um, I had a very healthy, I think, for someone in the closet

in Namibia, um, an indication of what gay adult life could be, um, so by the time I started watching gay cinema with the Lesbi-Gay group, um, I could make suggestions and I could, I was very actively involved there.

AK: And do you remember the kinds of associations that you felt or had with the cinema that you watched at home?

A: *Ja*, well, it was, I think if you were growing up in conservative bubble like I was then you could live, portray was life would be like, it was almost the reason why I think I decided to live in this, um, to have this mask on in high school and not come out earlier, um, because I knew what life could be like because I saw all of these gay movies, um, uh, and I just realised if I could just get out of high school then I could be those people and live my life lie that, um, and I realised how powerful it was because it gave me hope, um, and that's why I think, um, I still, my goal as a television director is to, um, create gay cinema as well.

AK: Um, and were there sort of safe spaces and gay friendly spaces in Stellenbosch when you were a student there?

A: Yes, I mean, I remember maybe once or twice where I felt a little bit unsafe, um, I was maybe where someone would scream '*moffie*' or something, but that was very rare, we didn't really have, all, at my time in Stellenbosch only once did I hear of a gay-bashing, um, and that was also only on the Halloween party, at Mystic Boer, when a friend of mine was attacked but he was wearing, I'm not saying it was fair, but, um, there was context to the attack because he was wearing stilettos and a corset and was walking in the middle of the street next to a boys res so, um, I can understand how him being placed in that situation could, um, increase the risk of an attack; it's still not his fault but it could increase the risk of an attack but normal people in terms of normal interactions, um, on campus, I never felt unsafe, um, and in terms of safe spaces, yes, I mean, MFM, the radio station, half of them were fags, um, and the debating society was basically Lesbi-Gay 2.0, um, and, uh, there was never a case of all the gay friends would hang out in a circle during lunchtime on the Red Plain in Stellenbosch and they'd be a centre of attack for straight people, it was very immersed and integrated and I felt like that was very nice. I had a lot of straight friends as well, but I did end up having a majority of gay, especially gay male friends because of the various groups I belonged to, I had older gay male friends, um, in their forties and fifties, I had, I became friends with gay lecturers at Stellenbosch, I became friends with younger adults in their thirties working in environment, ugh, in the area and then obviously gay students as well, and I think that also made me feel very safe in Stellenbosch because, um, I had several levels of support, um, being a new fledgling gay man.

AK: And did you ever come to Cape Town and interact with the gay scene here?

A: Oh, yes, *ja*, uh, I didn't have a car but friends of mine did have a car so, or cars, so we would maybe once a month drive down to, there was a club called Cruise which was where the old Spar is now, um, which was very, very amazing, um, I remember after Pride, um, in 2006, was the year that gay marriage was legalised in South Africa and before that, the Lesbi-Gay society was involved with petitioning people on the streets to give in signatures sent to, um, parliament to show that there was a mandate for from, um, the public that the ANC should vote in favour of gay marriage, or at least changing the wording of the Marriage Act, um, and, um, we were walking around Stellenbosch and Cape Town in high heels and getting people to sign things and that year I also took part in Pride wearing high heels, um, and the reason why I'm mentioning this is because this is, I actually walked to that club that evening with high heels and I made out with the hottest guy there and he told me that he thought it was so cool that a guy could feel so comfortable to wear high heels in a very, um, hetero, uh, macho environment like a, like a gay club like that, um, anyway, so we went to gay clubs and we, *ja*, *gat* party, um, not as often as we'd like because we're student, we don't have money, um, but enough to have said that I could, that I'd experienced the, the last bit of the Cape Town gay club heyday, before it all went downhill.

AK: Okay, um, what do you think caused it to go downhill?

A: Um, not anything negative, I think, um, Cape Town clubs have become so accepting, um, that the need for an exclusive gay club, um, became less important to a lot of people, I think it's very important still to maintain clubs with a specific identity, um, uh, but, um, most of my friends, uh, hang out at popular clubs instead of just gay clubs, the only club that still really remains relevant these days is Crew and that's just, um, mostly as an afterthought in my group of friends, um, I think it's very popular amongst young gay guys, um, and I think it's very popular older gay men but people in my age group, mid-to-late twenties to early forties, I think they, in my experience, have moved on beyond identity clubbing and they're just going to popular spots, um, but I do think it's important to have those places though, like Beefcakes, I know, is a big issue amongst my friends, we call it 'Fishcakes' because, um, it isn't a gay bar anymore, it's a place where people feel, gay people sometimes feel objectified, um, which is the irony of the reason for the place because of hen parties and you get groped and fondled by straight women that think that all gay men are there for public display and for them to comment on, um, and I find it ironic because that's exactly what they're trying to run away from in straight men, but, uh, it's not really an issue now, for me, now, I don't go to gay clubs anymore [laugA].

AK: Um, and then just a few last little bits and pieces, um, first of all, would you say then that the changes in South Africa's political history, think the Constitution, think the Civil Unions Act, stuff like that, do you think that's shaped the way that people enter relationships and experience intimacy?

A: I don't think necessarily experience intimacies, intimacy but definitely experiencing relationships, I think, um, my partner is almost ten years older than I am, so, um, he often, he and his friends who are older than me often, um, they're not necessarily married but they've been in long-term relationships, monogamous relationships mostly, um, and there's no push on their side to get married, because it's almost like they've resigned themselves to their fate that, um, you can still be an independent, gay person without having to enter marriage to validate yourself or your relationship whereas I'm a slightly more idealistic, um, I don't necessarily have to do it to validate my relationship for myself, but I think there's a very big role that, that the ritual plays in promising yourself to someone else in maintaining the relationship and also obviously the legal benefits of it. I think it has affected gay relationships, at least in my circle, um, but it depends on what age.

AK: So, would you say that there's a different age shift between generations?

A: Yes, completely, completely.

AK: What do you think creates that difference?

A: Um, I come from a coming out, younger and support network-based, um, era, whereas people ten years older than me plus come from a, um, witch-hunt, um, uh, cruising in bars and parks, you know, sort of, gloryhole type thing, background where being gay was seen as dark alley, you know, shadowy, um, experience, um, so I think I view being gay much more optimistically and much more positive, in fact, I often tell people, um, unwarranted, that, um, being gay is the best thing that ever happened to me, it's made me introspective, um, and it's made me have empathy for people that are also marginalised, whereas I think the older groups of gay men, they can still be found to be very racist and, um, slightly, um, you know, male-centric in their view, um, and even sometimes unnecessarily clinging to religious dogma even though it clashes with other parts of their life. Younger people, in my opinion, um, just have more tools to deal with that quickly before it gets set in stone in there, you know, inside, I think, just my opinion.

AK: No, no, that's what we're here for, um, is there anything else you'd like to add, anything else you can think that would be worth mentioning in terms of your past relationships, or, um, your experiences of being gay or anything like that?

A: Um, only thing that I would maybe like to add and it's just something that I've been working on with a friend because we've noticed that the safe spaces for people to come out has migrated mostly online, um, and, uh, the guys my age are realising that that invites, um, a lot of heartache because going online creates a certain persona, almost like I remember feeling like I was untouchable when I was on Gaydar, I mean, I've never been on Grindr, but I know that a lot of people think they're untouchable on Grindr, um, you can just swipe left, right, or not choose to date someone and you can swear them on Grindr if they don't, you know, go follow your advances, um, and I think that the community feel is slightly lost, also because of the loss of gay clubs and that community feel, so I think some of my friends are seriously considering starting, um, uh, counselling groups for, um, young gay people that are coming out so that they can feel more, um, included in a community because that's the biggest threat, I think, at the moment, we've become so diverse that we've lost the community feeling amongst gay people, um, we only see each other during Pride or MCQP (Mother City Queer Project) and then for the rest of it we all fade away into, into the general society and, um, being a marginalised group you do need, um, you need some form of support and unfortunately with gay people, um, we can't very easily be recognised on the street because we're not black, we're not female, uh, we're not disabled, um, we blend in too well and that's actually our problem, yeah, that's it.

AK: Um, so would you say that perhaps queer people need to make more of an advance towards creating community and making themselves more known ...?

A: Yes, yes, I wouldn't say making themselves more known, I think we are doing very well on that, I just think that, um, spaces in the community need to be, um, made available and used by a community more often, I think, um, I think what I'm getting at is actually more like a mentor type of relationship, let knowledge of previous generations of gay people and their struggles be passed on to the younger generation because I think the younger generation often, they're coming out at fifteen, thirteen years old, which is fantastic, um, but, um, you know, it does also have it's issues and I think that that would be quite nice.

AK: Cool, anything else?

A: That's it.

AK: Right.

A: *Dankie*, good fifty-two minutes.

AK: *Ja* [laughter]

A: Doesn't feel like an hour

### **Interview Description**

**Length of Interview:** 52 minutes 38 seconds

**Recording Equipment:** Olympus

**Copy and Access status:** signed release form; interviewee has requested anonymity.

**Name of the Interviewee:** ‘Thomas van Breda’ [B]

**Name of the Interviewer:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam [AK]

**Date of Interview:** 4 April 2019

**Place of Interview:** Cape Town and Hermanus

**Number of tapes/recordings:** 1

**Transcribed by:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam

**Date Transcribed:** 8 July 2019

**00:00:00:** Introductions

AK: Hello?

B: Hi, Adam? I’m just waiting for it to open up.

AK: Should be working shortly ... ah, there we go, hey, how’s it going?

B: Hey, I don’t see you, though.

AK: Ahh, hopefully that changes in a moment, mine’s on, uhm, might just be the connection, *ja*, it says poor connection, so it might take a while.

B: Okay.

AK: Uh, just [mumbling] try again.

B: Ah, good morning.

AK: Ah.

B: I can see you, hey.

AK: Cool.

B: Nice to meet you.

AK: *Ja*, you too, um, albeit over the Internet [laughs] um, cool, so, shall we jump straight in?

B: Sorry, just getting myself together, getting comfy, got some coffee, yes, okay, I’m good. Excuse me, I’m in a nightgown still, I’m, like, I’m semi on holiday in Hermanus so I’m not, not getting dressed unnecessarily.

AK: No, of course [mumbling] um, cool, first of all, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed, um, before we jump in, ah, this is confidential, um, I will send through some form in the next couple of weeks just to sign-off, I’ll also send you the transcript once I’ve written that up, so if there’s any information you want to change now or later, or before I submit my dissertation next year, just let me know, if you decide you want to remove or add later on, just let me know, I’ll be in constant communication regarding that, um ...

B: Okay.

**00:01:39:** Family background

AK: Cool, so then, let's start off the questions, when and where were you born?

B: Um, 30<sup>th</sup> of October 1980, um, in Cape Town.

AK: Okay, cool, um, and who at the time did you live with?

B: My parents.

AK: Do you have any siblings?

B: I've got two brothers, uh, older and younger.

AK: Um, what sort of age difference is there between your brothers?

B: Older brother's three years older than me, and my younger brother's ten years younger than me.

AK: Okay, cool, um, and then first of all, what did your parents do?

B: Um, my dad is now retired, and he worked in, um, he, like, he worked in computer procurement for a big corporation.

AK: Okay, cool, and your mom?

B: My mom was a housewife, she didn't have to work.

AK: Okay, cool, um, and then first of all, with regards to your relationship with your father, uh, what was that like when you were growing up?

B: Um, growing up he was not, uh, very available, he, um, he was, like, not very emotionally available, he worked a lot, um, so he was just sort of around, um, *ja*, I didn't have a close relationship with him, I have a close relationship with him now.

AK: Okay, um, what's changed since then?

B: Um, I decided when I was about twenty-one that I wanted to be friends with my dad so I, I changed it. He grew up in a generation and with a father who didn't know how to, so he, you know, he didn't learn, so ...

AK: And then in contrast, what was your relationship like with your mother when you were growing up?

B: Um, good, *ja*, good, easy, *ja*, close relationship with my mom.

AK: Was she very involved in your upbringing?

B: Was she very involved?

AK: Yes, *ja*.

B: *Ja, ja*.

AK: Okay, in what sort of ways?

B: Mm, I don't understand the question?

AK: Um, so was she very involved with sort of taking care of you at home, or when you came home from school, or, like, being involved with your education?

B: Oh, yeah, yeah, my mom was very involved, like, she did, *ja*, my mom was the primary caregiver when it came to, like, emotional support and, you know, doing stuff and homework and school and that sort of stuff, *ja*, yeah.

AK: Um, and how would you describe your parent's marriage when you were growing up?

B: Um, fine, stable, good, *ja*.

AK: Um, and did your parents ever experience any kind of conflict in their relationship?

B: Um, I don't think anything ... nothing memorable at all, so nothing out of the ordinary.

AK: Okay, um, what is your relationship like with your siblings, as a child?

B: As a child?

AK: Yeah.

B: Um, well my older brother and I are closer together so we, we, you know, fought like normal brothers do, um, my younger brother, being such an age gap, like, I was often like a caregiver to him because he was ten years younger so I would babysit him and look after him a lot, um, so we only became sort of friend brothers more when he got, like, older, when he arrived at like, twenty.

AK: Oh, I see, so when you were more mature adults?

B: *Ja, ja*.

### **00:04:53: Schooling years**

AK: Okay, um, and then looking at your schooling years, uh, where and when did you attend pre-school?

B: Pre-school? Um, I went to pre-school in the area, I grew up in the same neighbourhood my whole life until I finished school, um, which is in Edgemean, in the Northern Suburbs in Cape Town.

AK: Um, and ...

B: I went to pre-school there, primary school there, and high school there.

AK: Okay, cool, what was the, uh, primary school and high school, sorry?

B: What about them, what were they called?

AK: What were they?

B: Oh, it was Edgemean Primary and Edgemean High School.

AK: Okay, cool, um, and then first of all, your pre-school, what was that like, do you have any memories of it?

B: Um, *ja*, I do, normal, kids playing [laughs] *ja*, normal, fine.

AK: Okay, um, and what was the sort of social scene, social environment like at the pre-primary?

B: Um, again, I'm not a hundred peBent sure exactly what you mean, it was normal kids, you know, I had normal, not kind of strange, just, you know, normal playing kids, it was, it was nothing out of the ordinary.

AK: Um, and in the context of sort of school and education, how would you define the term 'bullying'?

B: How would I define the term 'bullying'?

AK: Yup.

B: Um, in what [breathes out] as in, what I would call it or what I experienced in my own way?

AK: Both.

B: Both. Um, well, I suppose bullying could be, like, physical and verbal, emotional abuse, um, I never experienced any physical abuse when it came to bullying, um, but I definitely experienced, like, verbal abuse.

AK: And how did that sort of manifest, if you don't mind me asking?

B: No, no, it's fine, um, well that only came in primary school, um, you know, cos when you're kids, when you're small then you're sort of just kids, um, and then I think there's an age group, there's an age somewhere where sort of you become more self-aware, um, and people start separating into sort of different groups and noticing that you're different and that's when they start picking on someone that might be different or calling out differences, um, just, sorry, what was the question, when, or where, or what? [laughs]

AK: Um, so [mumbling] do you remember how you felt about being bullied in pre-school, sorry, primary school?

B: Oh, no, no, yeah, it only started in primary, um, yeah, *ja*, of course, I felt like shit, um, people started calling me, like, um, girly names, definitely, there was definitely like the gay, like, because in primary school I would have sort of, move towards having girl-friends, um, I'm trying to think, sorry, think age, um, so I'm gonna go around, like, eleven, ten, eleven, um, having more girl-friends and the boys would start, you know, saying, calling me girly names or 'fag' and things like that.

AK: Mm.

B: ... It felt really, like, it felt really, um, shameful.

AK: And where do you think that this, uh, name-calling stemmed from, uh, just your friendship with girls or are there other things that you think this stemmed from?

B: Um, I'm not really sure, *ja*, probably, friendship with girls, I mean, maybe I might have been more effeminate.

AK: Okay.

B: [mumbles] For me to say objectively.

AK: And, uh, did this continue to high school?

B: *Ja*.

AK: And, again, was it the same sort of conditions, would you be friends with girls or display characteristics that people would just target at?

B: *Ja, ja*.

AK: Okay, and similar sort of feelings, associations, as you grew older?

B: Absolutely, *ja, ja*, it's just, you just feel like, um, you know, self-worth, shame, um.

AK: And did you ever speak to your parents or teachers about this?

B: At the time? No. Um, no, no, no, no, no, no, cos then, cos by that time, I mean, especially by high school time I realised that I'm gay, that's not an option, ha, it's not an option to talk about, it's more about how can, we hide this away as deeply as possible, so, no, never spoke to anybody in school.

AK: And then during your time at school, did you ever engage in extra-curricular activities?

B: Um, you mean, like, sports and stuff?

AK: *Ja*.

B: *Ja*, uh, um, in primary school I, I swam, and I was in the choir and I, um, did piano lessons, um, in high school I became much more, um, what's the word, um, introverted, um, so I stopped doing everything.

AK: Um ...

B: Like, when I got to high school, I stopped doing sport, I stopped doing music, I stopped doing anything.

AK: Okay, um, do you, so, do you know why you became so introverted?

B: Well, because if I expressed honestly then I would get, um, noticed more and, and picked on more, so, it was safer to ...

AK: To be ...?

B: To hide it, to hide it.

AK: Okay, um, and then just finally with regards to schools, uh, first of all, how did your school, both pre, primary and high school deal with issues of sexuality and gender?

B: Um, I think, I don't think there was, they did deal with it in a very old-fashioned way, you know, boys were boys, girls were girls, and that was that, um.

AK: And where would you say that outlook stemmed from?

B: What do you mean?

AK: So, where do you think that the school based it's 'boys are boys and girls are girls' from?

B: Oh, I think it's just the, the way it's always been.

AK: Um, and then similarly, how did they view issues of race and social class?

B: Um, I don't know if there was a lot of social class issues because, you know, most of the people that came, that went to school where I went to school all came from the same place, like, it was the same people all the way through, so, I didn't think that was an issue, um, in my school years is when, is when race started to change at school, like when I was in primary school there was, well, in the beginning of pre-school and the beginning of primary school there was only white kids, um, and then, sort of towards the end of primary school, um, we started to have, like, more integrated races come into our school, like, they did in high school there were black and white and Coloured kids, um, but that was new.

AK: Mm, okay ...

B: *Ja*, cos 1993, I was 12, so it was, like, in the middle of everything.

AK: Okay, and, um, when did you matriculate, that would have been 1998?

B: Yeah.

AK: Okay, cool, um, what did you do after Matric?

B: Um, I studied to be a chef.

AK: Okay, uh, where did you study, through a private school or what?

B: I went to Cape College in the, in the city.

**00:12:37: Early sexual experiences**

AK: Okay, um, and then first of all, just looking sort of at your sexual experiences and things like that, do you remember when you first began to experience puberty?

B: Uh, what do you mean, define?

AK: So, when, sort of the traditional experiences of puberty, from voice changing, uh, hair on your pubis, um, muscular growth, that, that sort of thing, do you remember when you first experienced that?

B: I don't really remember, I would, you know, say around eleven, twelve.

AK: Okay, cool, um, and do you remember how old you were when you started to experience attractions to men?

B: Um, not, like, specifically, but I remember liking boys from, from when you're a little kid and you like someone, like, from, like, seven or something, you know, uh, yes.

AK: Do you remember how those associations made you feel?

B: Well, when you're young, I didn't have, I didn't have, um, language or judgment about it, it was just, that's just how it was and then somewhere along the line later, then obviously one learns that those things are not, well, that they're wrong so then you change yourself accordingly.

AK: Um, first of all, sorry [mumbles] how would you describe your sexual orientation?

B: Um, how I describe ... homosexual? Gay.

AK: Cool, cool, and what does it mean to be gay to you?

B: Not really much, um, it just means [laughs] it just means that I have a boyfriend and not a girlfriend, you know, that I'm sexually attracted to a man, I wanna have a relationship with a man, not a woman, um, *ja*, that's about it.

AK: Have you ever experienced any attractions to women before?

B: Well, when I was younger obviously I tried to foBe that, um, and, so, like, I'd be, like, maybe I could, maybe I, um, *ja*, more trying to convince myself to, so, you know, in high school I kissed girls and stuff, and I had sex with a girl when I was seventeen, because I was, like, 'I need to try this,' um, *ja*, but I could, if, if, if I grew up in a different situation I would not have done those things.

AK: Okay, um, what would you say of the situation geared you towards experimenting with girls?

B: Um, social norms, you know, trying to fit into the world.

AK: Okay, um, and then looking, so do you remember the first, uh, interacted, physically or sexually with another man, or, another man, *ja*, do you remember when that happened?

B: Yes, very clearly, *ja*.

AK: How, then, was that, if you don't mind me asking?

B: Uh, I was nineteen years old.

AK: Okay, um, and what were the ciBumstances?

B: I got my first job as a chef, somebody that I worked with.

AK: Okay, um, and what were the ciBumstances of the particular encounter?

B: Uh, ciBumstances?

AK: So, how did it happen, how did you initiate, how did it make you feel?

B: Oh, well I mean, he was older, um, when I say older, probably, like, twenty-six, and I was, like, nineteen, um, and so he, and so he was, you know, comfortable and open and everything so he, *ja*, he was more, initiated things, um, but *ja*, was very, like, was very, I was thinking, ‘thank God,’ you know, it was such a relief to, like, kiss a boy and being my normal, be normal [chuckles].

AK: Um, and how did that sort of make you feel about your own sense of self and identity?

B: Uh, it felt good, it, it didn’t you know, it, I didn’t feel confused or anything, I was, I felt relief and I felt happy and I felt, *ja*, I did feel, I did then have, I started living, like, a double life, you know, where I was, you know, like, it wasn’t all cloak and dagger or anything, but it was, like, you know, I had friends, um, who knew I was gay, and, like, family and stuff who didn’t.

AK: Okay, um, and then, so, did you come out to your parents at that stage or did you remain closeted?

B: Well, um, you know, I think, I think I came out to my family, only found out when I was twenty, so, like, a year after that, um, they, I didn’t come out, I was, I could never have been able to, my parents, my family is not very, not very homophobic and it’s never been really a big issue, um, but I wouldn’t, but I never felt like I could, I could say, ‘oh,’ like, sit anyone down and say, ‘I’m gay,’ I think I only did that with my two best friends, girl-friends that I grew up with, um, I was very happy that they found out, I was, like, ‘thank God,’ so people found out and I was, like, ‘it’s over now, like, everyone can move on with their lives,’ but I didn’t have a big coming out moment and then of course there wasn’t really that much drama because, *ja*, no one really, everyone was, like, totally fine with it.

AK: Um, they found out, how did that happen?

B: Um, my mom, my mom read a letter that I’d written to, she’d found a letter that I’d written to a guy I liked, or something.

AK: Oh, I see, okay, um, and [mumbles] how was the initial reaction from your parents?

B: Um, fine, like, my mom was, like, ‘oh, did it, like, did you think that we wouldn’t love you, like, like, it’s all, *ja*, it was all fine.’

AK: Okay ...

B: My dad never really said much cos he was never really a big talker.

**00:18:42: Relationships and conflict**

AK: And then, going from there, how did you [mumbling] um, between 1999, 2000 and 2008, uh, what sort of relationships did you experience with other men, was it casual, or was it ...?

B: No, for some reason, I'm very, like, somehow very traditional so, um, uh, then I had a long-term relationship with somebody, um, we went out for two years and then, and then we split up cos I was, I was, started modelling just after I finished studying and then I travelled a bit for two years and I travelled overseas and then I, so we broke up and split up for about year and a half and then I, when I came back we got back together for, like, another two years, so, I was very into, like, monogamy, long-term relationship, I'm not very, like, promiscuous, um, person, I mean, I don't wanna say that I'm, I don't wanna make it sound like I've got judgment towards that, I don't, but especially then I was very, like, I just wanted to be in one monogamous relationship.

AK: Do you remember when this particular relationship began, what sort of year or age were you?

B: Oh, when I was, like, twenty.

AK: So, like in 2000, 2001?

B: Mm, mm, *ja*.

AK: Um, and then, first of all, do you remember how you initiated the relationship with this guy?

B: Oh, it's very weird, um, it's, he, his boyfriend was my best friend at college at the stage, studying to be a chef and then he died, and we got really close after he died and then got together.

AK: Um, and did you live separately, did you live with him or, what was the living arrangement during that time?

B: Yeah, yeah, I moved in with him, um, cos, *ja*, I was twenty and he was twenty-nine so, so older, um, and then, *ja*, moved in with him and we lived together.

AK: Okay, and just the two of you or other people live with you?

B: No, we lived in a, in a house, we lived in a house with, it was a big house and the owner of the house was a friend of his and we rented, house-shared with him.

AK: Whereabouts was that?

B: It was in Goodwood.

AK: Um, and then describing that relationship, first of all, when you think of the term 'conflict', how would you define that in the sense of an intimate relationship? Your own personal definition, essentially.

B: Um, well, I suppose conflict is, is, um, when you have different, well, essentially, it's, like, what, fighting, different ideas of, of, of how things should be, um, *ja*, any sort of, like, confrontation, comes to mind, that's all I can think of right now.

AK: What sort of actions or behaviours would you associate with conflict?

B: Um, what sort of actions or behaviours ... when it comes to myself, in, myself?

AK: Any sort that you can think of, so it's either or ...

B: Um, oh, gosh, okay, um, conflict, uh, I would think of, I, it's uncomfortable for me and it's always something that I have to push through, um, I think of confrontation, I think of, um, discomfort, I think of, uh, that's all for now ...

AK: And where do you think your sort of perception of conflict, so, your understanding of conflict in intimate relationships come from?

B: Probably from my parents, um, *ja*.

AK: Cool, um, so, then in this particular relationship that you had for two years, the gap in the middle and then for ...

B: We were always seeing each other, I kind of, sorry, just to be clear, I kind of feel like we had a six-year relationship and, because we did, in between, we did, you know, we were always communicating and, like, when we did see each other in between that space we'd still, like, sleep together and stuff, so, um, it was over that six year period.

AK: Mm, okay, and would you say that you, I hope you don't mind me asking, but did you experience conflict in that particular relationship?

B: Um, sure, *ja*, of course.

AK: Do you mind if I ask how that happened?

B: Um, uh, so, first of all, mostly, I mean, that wasn't, like, the, that wasn't the, the main part of the relationship at all, it was a very wonderful relationship, um, and if I hadn't been as young as I was I might have chosen to stay in that relationship forever, um, conflict, like, one that I can remember is, like, um, in that time that we were separated, um, I remember he had seen somebody else, um, that, that I didn't like, um, and that really upset me, cos also he'd lied about it so then when I found out I was like, I was really disgusted and hurt, uh, so we, like, repeatedly discussed it, and, we had a nice relationship and spoke and spoke and spoke and spoke, so, like, we'd speak through things and eventually, like, you know, break through, that was one that sticks out.

AK: What kind of coping mechanisms did you adopt when you experienced conflict with him, aside from communicating with him, did you have a network of people or, like, a means of coping?

B: Not that I can think of.

AK: So, you didn't, like, see a counsellor or speak to a friend, or do stuff like that?

B: Oh, no, I'm, I'm actually, like, quite private when it comes to, like, my primary relationship and so, I mean, there's more a chance of me talking about it, like, I'll talk about things now, then, definitely not, I wouldn't speak about things like that to anybody else.

AK: So, would you say then that you were very discreet during your relationship with someone about the details of that relationship?

B: Correct, *ja*.

AK: Um, and then in your shared spaces at home, how did you experience, um, intimacy, how did you enjoy each other's company. Like, what would you do, would you, like, have meals together, or go on dates or stuff like that?

B: *Ja*, I mean, I think it would be described of as normal, you know, watch TV, um, um, cook, eat, go out, shopping, or at home, home spaces, you know, normal stuff.

AK: Did you ever consider getting married or getting into a partnership?

B: I did, I did, at that time, um, because, also because that's what I grew up with and so I, I was very, *ja*, at first, I did think, 'I'll get married and do that,' um, but that changed.

AK: Do you mind if I ask how it changed, or why it changed?

B: Um, well, like, as I was getting older I wanted to experience more of the world so, like, I'd grown up pretty sheltered, living in the same area where I, um, went to the same school, um, and then I was, like, in a relationship with, like, one person and then it came to the point where, like, I wanted to travel and I wanted to experience things and, um, *ja*, and it was just, it was, it, I needed to break free, I need to, like, get out and move to the city and travel the world and do drugs and just, you know, just do other stuff.

AK: And was that the cause of the end of that particular relationship?

B: Yes.

AK: Um, do you mind if I ask what the break-up was like?

B: Um, it was terrible, um, because I was, I really, really, really loved that person, we're still friends, we're still very good friends now, um, I went to his wedding and he's married now to somebody else, uh, so it was, it was, I, I needed to get out of that relationship so I found somebody else that I liked, um, and then, you know, so then I found somebody and then a week later I told, um, that boyfriend, 'no, I want to break up, I want different things,' um, he was devastated, I mean, I was the one who broke up with him, I think it took me like two years to get over him, um, it was, *ja*, it was really, like I said, I really, really love that person and it's just, the lifestyle was just not gonna work, um, so I needed to end it, it was horrible, it hard, it was very hard.

AK: Um, cool, uh, sorry, just quickly ... so, during then that period after, that would've been, you ended the relationship in 2007? Or 2008, roughly?

B: Wait, no, no, no, no, um, started when I was twenty and then ended, it was six years so 2006.

AK: 2006, okay, um, between 2006 and 2008 did you experience any other long-term relationships or anything like that?

B: Yes, actually, the guy that I left him for, we saw each other for about two years.

AK: Okay, um, and how was that relationship different from the previous one?

B: Um, well, he was, he was younger than me, but closer to my own age so we had, um, so, like, whereas before it was, like, the first one was older, so he was more settled, and, like, you know, happy to do the whole marriage kind of life, whereas this person was younger and was more about having fun ... you know, doing twenty-six year old things.

AK: Okay, um, and, uh, do you remember how that difference sort of made you feel about yourself or the relationship, was there a big disjuncture or distinction, should I say? Was, was it quite a big change, sorry, that's a better way to ask the question?

B: Um, *ja*, it was a big change, um, and it was great, it was good, we also had a really lovely relationship.

AK: And, again, same sort of question, did you ever experience conflict with that partner?

B: Um, yes, I don't remember, I'm trying to think of a certain part of something specific, um, I don't really remember specific things, but I do remember being more frustrated with him because he wasn't, like, a very good communicator. Like I said, in the first one we, like, spoke, spoke, spoke a lot, um, whereas as that one wasn't, like, really good at speaking about his feelings and stuff so that was more frustrating.

AK: And do you remember the kinds of feelings that you had, with that frustration in the relationship?

B: Uh, I dunno any, besides frustration, um, *ja*.

### **00:30:51: Queer society and politics**

AK: Okay, cool, um, and then just finally, looking at sort of, the context of things like the Civil Unions Act in South Africa and the inclusion of equality clauses in our constitution, do you think that's affected the way that gay men, bi men, queer people have formed relationships, to the best of your knowledge?

B: Yeah, yeah, yeah, um, well, I've got some friends who are now, you know, who are married, got friends who are married and have adopted kids, um, I, I love, love, love that it, that everyone

can do what they wanna do, I think that it's, I think it definitely makes, validates people's existence and feelings, just having those, um, that things be available to people, um, uh, *ja*, I think there are some people who definitely want to do that and some people who don't wanna do that and that's also fine.

AK: Would you count yourself as someone who wants to get married or adopt children?

B: Um, that, that changes, like I said, when I was young I definitely wanted to get married and have children, um, then as a I got older that went away, um, now, again, I think I would get married, um, I don't think I'd do kids.

AK: What do you think caused that shift in your mind between yes kids and marriage to not so much to maybe at this stage, what caused that sort of shift in the time, do you think?

B: I think just personal development, personal growth and, like, you know, like, what I want in my life, um, so when I was younger I would, I think I just wanted to, you know, as, as a lot of heterosexual kids do, like I see in all my cousins, um, with as little judgment as possible but there is judgment involved, like, just, do what your parents did, you know, get a job, get married, have children, do it over again, so I think, I grew up with that and, and that's kinda what I wanted to do, then I kind of, as I've formed as my own person I've realised I actually don't wanna do those things cos they would tie me down from doing anything, they might tie me down from doing things that I'd want to do, um, and, but I have always been, like, traditional when it comes to relationships so I do like the idea of, um, of maybe being married, um, I don't think I'd wanna do children because I'm, essentially I'm too selfish [laughs] it's a lot of work and a lot of money and I'm not really interested

AK: Mm, okay, um, I think that about wraps it up, oh, sorry, last, last thing ...

B: No, that's fine.

AK: As far as the sort of, when did you begin to interact with the gay scene in Cape Town?

B: As in, like, the clubs and stuff like that?

AK: Any social ciBles or stuff like that.

B: Yeah, no, I did, when I got to, not, not early, like, you know, like, I suppose, like, normally, like, when they get, they start clubbing after school and I only kind of entered, when I was younger I was very shy, incredibly shy and I'm quite, um, quite tall, I'm two meters tall so I stick out which is difficult to be shy when you're so big, um, uh, I only, so when I got to twenty-four, twenty-five, then I really wanted to, like, *ja*, go out and, like, be confident in, like, the gay culture, gay, like, make that my place so I did go clubbing a lot, but I only started when I was, like, twenty-five, um, so, yes, I was very, and I was there every weekend, I mean, I'd go out, I

lived in, I moved to De Waterkant and lived where all the gay clubs were in town so I was there all the time, but I did take a lot of drugs to fake the confidence because I was very insecure.

AK: And, first of all, what sort of memories did you have of that particular gay scene in De Waterkant?

B: Um, good ones, it was fun, it was fun, *ja*, um, it was, you know, like, it's so funny, like, in my lifetime things have changed so much, um, like, thing, uh, I suppose, especially when it comes to technology, um, like, like, so, even during that time, like we didn't have all the gay dating apps that exist now, um, which are now such a normal part of gay, the gay scene or gay culture, um, and they weren't then, um, so it was different, there was definitely still things happening, like, uh, um, but it didn't exist in the same way, um, I remember having a lot of fun, there were obviously seedy aspects, but I avoided those.

AK: What were those seedy aspects to you?

B: To me?

AK: Yeah.

B: That's important, um, to me seedy aspects are, um, like, gay, like, um, Hot House, like gay bathhouses and group, group sex and, like, drug-induced sexual experiences and, um, and I suppose I just, *ja*, like I said, when I say 'seedy,' like, there's a part of me that's judgmental of that because I grew up quite, um, I wouldn't say super conservative but, you know, I'm very traditional, um, so there are certain things which are just, like, gross to me, um, and also then, also then, there was disease, like, people getting AIDS and stuff and, and I was judgmental of that so I would, there was a certain level of things that I would never do in gay culture.

AK: Would you say that HIV and sort of the cultures around drugs and casual sex, would say that's affected how you've interacted with other gay men?

B: Yes.

AK: Okay, to what extent?

B: Um, well I wouldn't just, I would never just sleep with anybody, um, I could never do, like, one-night stands and stuff like that, um, I think I tried once and it was incredibly uncomfortable and I like to have sexual relations within the, within some sort of relationship, I mean, not that I have to have a long-term relationship but it has to be, kind of, dating, get to know you, like some sort of comfort level to be established and then, I, like, I don't exactly when I started but I've always been pretty open about discussing, like, you know, diseases and stuff like that, I mean, if I were in a relationship right now everyone's getting tested before we have sex.

AK: Um, I think I asked this earlier, just last question, um, are you or your parents somewhat religious, or ...?

B: Oh, um, I'm not at all, um, my parents, my father is not, um, my mom grew, she went to, like, a Catholic school, um, you know, like, with nuns as teachers and stuff like that, she grew up in Sea Point, um, so she doesn't go to, no, she does go to chuBh here, now, in Hermanus, um, she's, I would say she's, she is Catholic, um, she definitely asks a lot of questions, you know, like, not devoutly anything, my parent's are quite open-minded and, um, liberal.

AK: And, uh, when did your family move to Hermanus?

B: Uh, they moved here when I was 21, so, after I was grown up and moved, I was out of the house.

AK: Okay, cool, um, is there anything else you'd like to add, anything you'd like to ask or ...?

B: Not really, I don't, um, I mean, I don't feel like I've given you a ton of information.

AK: No, no, it was very valuable, I appreciate it.

[Video cut out at the end]

### **Interview Description**

**Length of Interview:** 38 minutes 55 seconds

**Recording Equipment:** Lenova IdeaPad [and Skype]

**Copy and Access status:** signed release form; interviewee has requested anonymity.

**Name of the Interviewee:** ‘Graham’ [G]

**Name of the Interviewer:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam [AK]

**Date of Interview:** 24 April 2019

**Place of Interview:** Three Anchor Bay, Cape Town

**Number of tapes/recordings:** 2

**Transcribed by:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam

**Date Transcribed:** 9 July 2019 – 13 July 2019

Recording 1 of 2

**00:00:00:** Early musings

AK: Cool, then, just starting off with the basics, first of all, when and where were you born?

G: I was born in Cape Town in, 24<sup>th</sup> of May 1960.

AK: Okay, and who at the time were you living with?

G: Who at the time was I living with, I was the youngest of, I was living with both parents, I was the youngest of three children, two of them were sisters and I was the youngest and I had an, a very ordinary, middle-class family, um, my father was a doctor and my mother had been a nurse, they met at Groote Schuur Hospital, had a hospital romance and they were, when she eventually had children she gave up her work and became a mother and a doctor’s wife and, you know, I grew up in the suburbs and it was a harmonious, uh, chaotic but harmonious kind of a, uh, *ja*, nice parents so nothing, nothing to tell you about that, I went to school, uh, at a Catholic school, I had family that was sort of mixed faith, we were, the Jews intermarried the Christians and I can’t tell you, that’ll take hours but I was brought up in the Church of England, um, sent to a Catholic school and had a fairly unremarkable, um, childhood in so far as, it was very innocent, um, I didn’t have any childhood, any, sort of, experiences at school, I didn’t do drugs at school, I didn’t do sex at school, I just had friends and it was, like, another time, you know, when nothing really exciting seemed to happen, um, *ja*.

AK: Okay.

G: When I went to university, I saw a slightly older woman for a time who I liked very much and we had probably what I would call my first relationship but it was, it wasn’t, I mean, we weren’t doing everything but we were doing some stuff so I dabbled in sex with a woman before a man, um, and quite liked it but, you know, plainly it wasn’t going to last and at some point, I was about twenty, um, I, I was quite sexually backward in my view in that when I hear

stories of my friends and, um, younger and older and what they did at school and all that, I mean, I did nothing, you know, there was no, there was no sex life, I didn't have a girlfriend or a boyfriend, I wasn't molested, nothing happened, um, I just lived, sort of, in the suburbs growing up and studying for school but I, I started to sort of think along the lines, maybe I'm gay, kind of thing, um, when I was already at university, I was about twenty and, one drunken night, I fumbled into bed with my best friend, um, which was a huge flop, so much so that I, I wondered, 'maybe I was wrong,' because I really didn't like it, anything about it or everything just felt wrong, um, it had been better with the woman, so everything went on hold for about two years, studying, growing up, socialising, but not doing anything and about two years later, um, I went to a, a, I was taken to a gay club in town called The Wine Barrel which no longer exists, it was a very well known establishment at the time, people used to go there on a Friday night, there was a bar downstairs, there was a sort of a disco upstairs, there wasn't anything really rough going on but people were smoking joints on the back stairs and getting drunk and there were lesbians playing pool in a pool lounge, it was that sort of a place, probably never been to one, I don't think they exist, but anyway, um, it was quite good fun and I decided that it was time I went home with someone, the first nice person, the first reasonable person that asked me to go home, bearing in mind that I was still living with my parents, um, so I couldn't really take anyone home, I could but I wasn't going to, um, and somebody asked me home, um, I don't think the first time, after a friend and myself, we were going here quite regularly but we hadn't necessarily put ourselves in any boxes yet, we just liked going there and, in fact, quite a lot of straight people used to go there, girls and boys so it was, you know, it wasn't a hundred percent, anyways, a guy asked me to go home, you know, he was ghastly but I went home with him, anyway, because I thought it was time and he was a bit older and I saw him for a couple of months, once a week, whatever, then I realised, 'no, I can do better,' and, um, I took a big fancy to a friend of his, a serious fancy, and I first broke up with the first one and I chased the second one quite hard, uh, and he didn't make it easy for me, he was twenty-nine, thirty, and I was twenty-one, twenty-two, um, but, anyway, I got him in the end, uh, the worst thing that's ever happened to me because we ended up spending the next three and a half years together, um, and he had big, big psychological issues, um, from a bad childhood and bad parents, his mother was had abandoned them when he was in nappies literally and when he was twenty he found out she wasn't dead, she actually lived one mile away with second husband, anyway, um, he was prone to drink, drinking, um, too much and he'd beat me up on occasion so it was a baptism by fire, um, but, uh, we had a very good sex life together so that sort of kept us together for a while but eventually I realised, um, I have to get rid of him, it was extremely

difficult because he was very possessive and he didn't, he didn't wanna let me go, I literally had to buy him out, I had to borrow money from the bank and actually pay him to, pay him to go away, um, he, I subsequently found out that at that time, I was really naïve and I didn't know about things, I thought that you had a boyfriend and that's what you did but apparently he slept with the whole of, we were in Johannesburg for a while and he slept around a lot and, and I didn't know that and I was always under accusation but, of course, the accuser was the one who was the guilty one, you know, you accuse other people of being unfaithful, but I didn't know those things yet, I learnt them later. Anyway, he subsequently contracted HIV after leaving, after I bust up with him and we didn't know about, um, safe sex in those days because we didn't know what AIDS was, uh, it was something new we read about in the papers that was happening and, so it was one of my first sort of rushes with death and that I had unprotected sex with a number of people over the next year or two after that until the awareness came home who died and, you know, you think, 'why am I still alive?' I don't know, I'm negative to this day, touch wood, it's not an issue now, like it was then, it was a very, it was a very scary time because we were all playing Russian roulette, we all knew something funny was going on but we didn't want to give up our sex lives either, um, so that was a time that I lived through ... I'll stop and wait for the next question [laughs] that was relationship number one, I don't count the first one, the very short one, I don't really, in my mind it doesn't count because it was just, like, I wanted, I wanted some sexual release and in those days there was no Internet, okay, there was no steam bars, all I'm saying, if you wanted to get sex and, you know, I'm sure we all do at the age of twenty or twenty-five, you know, it was quite hard work to get it, so, you know, in my mind, the easiest way to get it was to get somebody that was gonna be around, you know, because I, I was not one, I didn't really like going and cruising in public places or toilets like some people, I was too prissy, so, um, *ja*, so the first one was just, like, he taught me a bit and I got rid of him when I realised I didn't really like him at all. The violent one, the second one, I really liked him, but he was crazy, but I always had a predilection for, for troubled men, it's a, it's a lifelong curse, it follows me to this day, um, I don't like people who are predictable and straight-forward and dreary, I like people who are crazy, so I find that sexy and it's been my curse in life to find several.

AK: Um, do you mind if I backtrack slightly.

G: Yes.

**00:09:39:** Family background

AK: Cool, um, so, then just quickly going back to your parents, so your father was a doctor and your mother was a nurse.

G: She had been a nurse. By the time I came along, in fact, I think when my older sister was born she basically retired, she didn't retire, she became a doctor's wife and my father went into private practice, he'd been working in hospital when they first met, um, and he went into private practice and struggled quite a lot at the beginning and she was a, a professional doctor's wife, she took the calls, she handled the patients, um, *ja*, and she, you know, brought up three young kids, um, you know, was a housewife, mother, whatever, it was those days when women put their own careers second, she was quite happy to do it and she did it very well, they had a good, they were very good together.

AK: And where in the suburbs were you staying, at the time?

G: We stayed literally here [Three Anchor Bay], I was conceived here, very, three blocks away we had a house which is now a block of flats and then ten years later when money got better he sold there and we moved to Fresnaye, upper Sea Point, very nice part where we, those were the sort of golden years, the Fresnaye days, *ja*, as far as my parents were concerned, *ja*, that's, uh, *ja*, only upper Sear Point but never far away.

AK: And how would you describe your relationship, first of all, with your father?

G: Uh, I had a wonderful relationship with my father, um, but especially when I grew up, um when I was young, um, my father was a very evolved man for his time, very ahead of his time in that he was very anti-*apartheid* in days when not everybody was and very pro-poor and, and helping other people, um, he did a lot of civic, public work, he was on the city council, he was on hospital boards, on charities, um, and he was a wonderful man, when we were very young, I think he's just working so hard so I didn't, we didn't see as much of him as we wanted to, um, we sometimes felt he was too busy for us but he was working, um, in latter years and especially after my mother died which was, like, five years before, um, we really grew close and we were very similar in a lot of ways except our sexuality but we really understood each other and, um, you know, my father came out to me as an atheist at the age of about, when I was about fifty, he said to me, 'I've always been a fucking atheist,' he never swore while my mother was alive, he never talked about sex in front of her but once she was gone, cos she was the prissy one, you know, everything opened up and so we had a wonderful relationship and I miss him very much, he was very popular and very nice and everybody loved him, my friends, *ja*.

AK: Okay, and on the other side, how was your relationship with your mother?

G: My mother, my mother fell in love with me the day I was born and, and, you know, it was always, I was the baby in the family and the youngest son and what we used to call a *laat lammetjie*, I came, apparently, unexpectedly, four years after my next sister and it wasn't a, it wasn't expected and I was favoured by my mother, um, I believe, uh, which I didn't really like because the other two, the girls resented me for it, I think, for a long time but, no, my mother and I were like this [crosses fingers] you know it's no wonder that I'm gay because she asked me what to wear and what curtains to buy and, you know, she never asked them, nothing, never, but the two of us, no, we were, so, my parents and I, you know, we didn't talk about private things, my mother, especially, was very old-fashioned, it's not that she didn't talk about gay, gay issues, she didn't talk about anything sexual at all, you know, um, she was from that generation and it was, like, keep everything polite and under the surface so that's how we grew up but she always said, 'darling, whatever makes you happy is fine with me,' I think that's as close as she could say, you know, if she knew and I think she did know later on, um, I mean, she was best friends with her hairdresser who was gay, you know, so she plainly didn't have a problem with gay men but she wouldn't have actually categorised them or thought about what they did, um, because, *ja*, that's the way she was and my father was a little bit more worldly, *ja*.

AK: And how would you describe, uh, your parents' marriage?

G: They seemed to have a very nice, they seemed to have a very happy marriage in that, I believe my father married his mother, in that my mother was a very similar kind of woman to his mother, uh, and, um, what they were, they were very old-fashioned even by their time so they really were, um, they looked after their husbands, I wouldn't say physically but in terms of, they put themselves second, they brought up the children, they made sure that everything ran smoothly, they were like the, the second in command and my father earned the money, paid the bills, you know, so it was really that old, those old kind of days and not only did she do it, she was quite happy to do it, you know, and she went out of her way to keep him happy and when he died now, um, only two months ago, I had to go through all the drawers, I mean, I found love letters between them, so plainly, um, it was a very, it was a very good but old-fashioned marriage, I mean, my mother was very bookish, into literature and I think if she'd been young today she had this particular interest in Jane Austen and the Bronte sisters and those, and she used to read, I mean, she probably would have loved to have gone and done English lit or whatever at university but she came from a family where there wasn't money for that and besides, especially not for the girls, you know, not, I mean, the boys, *ja*, the girls must get married and, so, um, she may have had a very different life if, if she'd been, you know,

younger today, um, but in those days you had to become a nurse or a teacher or a typist, I mean, if you didn't have money to study that was what was open to you.

**00:16:31: Schooling years**

AK: Um, right, and then moving forward to your, uh, schooling years, you mentioned you went to a Catholic school, was that all the way from pre-school to high school or?

G: Um, no, it was, it's, it is the school round the corner called Reddam now, it used to be called Christian Brothers College, CBC, and it only started for boys in Standard 2, and I was sent there, Standard 2, I don't know what grade it is now.

AK: Grade 4.

G: It's all very confusing, I was sent there because my father was sent there, my father and his brothers were sent there because they grew up in the Great Depression and my grandmother, who had married a Jew but she was a Church of England, wanted to send the boys to Bishops, which of course is and was the best school for churchy people to send their children to but they couldn't afford to, didn't have the money and they lived here so by default they went to Catholic school which was round the corner and, and I was sent to the same school, it was a very old-fashioned school where I think we were getting 1930s education in the 1970s and I, I didn't have a bad schooling or any bad experiences but we did get caned, um, that was the order of the day and you had to play rugby, cricket, swimming, athletics and I was not sporty, I was musical and there was no, not much open for people who were interested in anything arty, you know, you had to play rugby unless you couldn't, so I hated that thing, but, uh, there was no deep scarring, you know, and I got thwacked plenty of times, never by my parents, never ever, they never raised a hand to us, um, because they didn't believe in it but at school, you know, you got caned, um, and it wasn't done to complain about it, um, and, you know, we just accepted that, that was the way it was, um, today, you know, people will go to court but, *ja*, I can't think, I didn't come out of it deeply scarred, I just, you know, it was just the way life was.

AK: And would you say that the attitude of the school, um, was quite conservative?

G: The school was very conservative and life was very tame, I mean, you know, I don't know what went on, I mean, I was in high school in the 1970s, late 1970s, which was quite a, a time of change, I think, for many in that, you know, some people were doing drugs and, and smoking a lot of dope and, and, and some of the schools like Camps Bay High and Cape Town High, I mean, you know, kids were having sex and, you know, whatever, but in my school, nothing ever happened because they were very strict, so people would be expelled if you were caught

smoking a cigarette, never mind a joint, a cigarette so we didn't drink, we didn't smoke, I think till matric, right at the end we started drinking for the matric dance and that thing, drank too much and vomited like schoolboys do but basically, nothing dramatic happened because, well, there was a slight culture of fear, I think, you know, if you did anything like that you were gonna get caned or expelled or humiliated so you didn't do it but it, it, it wasn't a terrible punishment because nothing terrible happened, you know, if you did your homework and you went to school every day and, and, you had to keep your hair short, that was the other thing which wouldn't have been a problem later but in the 1970s everybody wanted their hair long, you weren't allowed long hair, um, *ja*, and I don't think, you know, because it wasn't, it was a single-sex school, um, you know, you didn't get to meet a lot of girls. Now, ironically, even though I'm gay I, I, I like girls, I've always liked them, and I would've like to have been at a co-ed school, I think I would've enjoyed my schooling more and matric dance time was difficult finding someone to invite because I didn't exposed to girls, you know, but anyway, I found somebody and, *ja*.

AK: Um, and then just quickly, the remainder of your high school years, did you, what sort of, you mentioned music, did you do sort of other extra-curricular activities did you get up to?

G: *Ja*, I was involved in school plays, okay, and, um, I played the piano, I learned classical piano, I did quite well at it, um, I was in, I developed, I was always interested in the movies, I went to a lot of movies, I was interested in, my family was quite musical and cultural so I, I got exposed to a bit of theatre and a bit of the arts, I didn't like sports, I was not interested and my father was very nice about it, because he had been very sporty and captain of the first teams and all sorts of things but he never, he never made me feel bad about it, I must say to his credit, um, you know, I'm sure I must have been a bit of a disappointment in that way but he never made me feel bad about it and I was, I was never, my parents were very free and easy with me, not that there was any reason not to be because I wasn't, my older sister was very wild and out of control, had a very bad time with her with seeing boyfriends and sleeping with men and smoking *dagga* but I didn't do any of that stuff, you know, so I probably was a dream child so, but in return, um, I was particularly limited, I went wherever I wanted to go, which wasn't anywhere but I, I, I did have this sort of girlfriend before I finished school and she was older than me and I used to gay and stay over the night then, they never said, never asked me where I was or what I was doing or when I was coming home, um, they just left me to do it so, um, I couldn't complain about them, they didn't, didn't discuss intimate things or, never told me the facts of life when I was young but, but that didn't stop me from doing anything either, I mean I could have been with boys for all they know, but actual fact I was with a woman, so.

**00:22:59:** Army service and university

AK: Um, cool, then, uh, sort of towards the end of high school, did you do any military service?

G: Yes, no, I did, well, not towards, I went to university first.

AK: Where did you go to university?

G: UCT, I did a BA LLB for five years, I passed every year to my own surprise cos I did the minimum of work, um, and I really enjoyed UCT, um, it was just a little bit broader than growing up here because there were people of other colours and people of, you know, from different parts of town and when you grow up in a suburb all your life, especially then, you didn't meet people from different walks of life really, everyone was kind of the same or not too different from you, some were richer or poorer but, um, UCT was a bit more varied and so we all thought it was very cool, um, and I enjoyed it, um, but I didn't really, I wasn't a wild student, I was a fairly serious student and, not very clever, um, so I had to sort of study to pass, you know, and go to tutorials and go to the lectures so I didn't bunk out, um, but I had a nice five years, I met quite a lot of people, a few of whom I know to this day, you know, and, um, tried to get involved slightly in student politics and the Rag and NUSAS [National Union of South African Students] and law clinics in the, in Coloured townships where you went to give legal advice and the first time I went to [laughs] this clinic an Indian man tried to get me to pull my trousers down, I was so shocked, I didn't know, you know, and here's me trying to do the community thing and trying to be socially aware, um, you know, so it was part of growing up but nothing, nothing shocking happened, it was all fairly dreary if I look back on it and when I finished that, then, it was, like, people either left the country if they could cos no-one wanted to go to the military service, none of us wanted to, it was the day we dreaded, um, but I went for two horrible years and got through it, you know, but I didn't, I didn't really, I just sort of switched off and I started, I started smoking a lot of dope, um, and cigarettes, which I hadn't done before, I did nothing before, uh, you just sort of dulled your mind to the horrors of what was happening and I managed to get myself a sort of a clerical job in a backwater somewhere in Pretoria, I wasn't sent into townships cos although I wasn't very political I was definitely opposed to the regime, um, but I've never been an activist so I wasn't, you know, going to go to jail, I mean, I subsequently had a friend, years later, called Ivan Toms who you might know, he was famous, he was a doctor and he was one of the, the famous conscientious objectors and, I mean, he went to jail and everything but, I mean, I wasn't big enough for that, I was just.

AK: The so-called 'Ivan Toms is a Fairy' ...

G: *Ja*, I knew Ivan Toms, I got to know him very well later and I admired him but I was, um, I wasn't brave, I didn't want to be an activist, I made myself as invisible as possible, just, I didn't make any noise, I just quietly got through the two years as best I could, um, and I luckily never got sent into active combat, as I said I had a clerical job, um, and, um, but I hated it, I absolutely hated it, it ended, it ended my innocence, if I had innocence, that was the end of it, it was like a, so, *ja*, as they, you grow up when you go to the army and it's true because, I'd grown up in the suburbs with my parents, you know, I'd never made a bed before or ironed my clothes or polished my shoes, I did nothing, um, cos my mother did all of that, um, so, *ja*, it was a rude awakening that, you know, that life's not a bowl of cherries but, again, nothing terrible happened except that I got incredibly fit, I mean, people used to try and find injuries in those days, used to go for these examinations and hope that they'd find that you had a heart condition or something because then you were gonna be classified, there was nothing wrong with me and, um, I hated sport but I was running for ten miles with a log on your back from trees, you know, and looking back at the photographs, I mean, I looked, I looked at good as I'm possibly ever going to look, you know, we were fit and strong, um, but it wasn't by choice, you know, it was by fear because in the army they used to use a fear technique and, like, you know, 'if there's a whole platoon of people and you, Adam, don't make your bed properly, then everybody else has got to run ten miles with a, with a log on their back,' so of course, you know, um, you don't wanna be unpopular, *ja*, so it was a horrible time, really, it was a horrible time.

AK: And then after that, uh, what work did you do?

G: After that, I came back to Cape Town, I got, I got articles of clerkship at a law firm and I, *ja*, that's sort of where life began, really, as I know it now, um, in that, um, I've been working ever since, I'm still working, I'm still doing much the same work, I took one, I never got a gap year but I took what I planned to be a gap year, sort of, about two years later, so mid-to-late twenties and I thought I'd go and travel Europe for a year but being me and money ran out after two months or three months and I couldn't get work anywhere so I ended up coming back, unemployed and penniless and, what did I do then, then I claimed unemployment for one month and then I got a job and I've been working ever since in various law firms, *ja*, that's what I've been doing.

**00:29:54:** Hedonistic experiences

AK: Um, cool, then, first of all, how would you describe your sexual orientation?

G: My sexual orientation? Oh, no, fairly early on, with number two, the one that used to beat me up and was difficult, um, you know, we had great sex together, he'd, you know, I learnt, okay, um, how to do stuff, um, so I had no, I had no, um, doubt about my sexual orientation, absolutely none, and I had very little, I had surprisingly little issue with it, um, in that I wasn't particularly in the closet compared to many, many people I know, it was, like, I didn't talk about it at work but I never denied it to anybody who asked me, but nobody really ever asked me, all my friends knew, my sisters knew and my parents, I gather, got to know at some point but they didn't ever talk about it, um, but, *ja*, my sexual orientation, well I'm, you know, not bisexual, I'm gay and I like men and that's that, um, which men, well, that was sometimes an issue but, um, *ja*, I, I didn't, I didn't have a tortured coming out of the closet process at all and I've never, well, being an atheist, I didn't have, sort of, religious issues which also helps, I wasn't tortured by the fact that I was going to burn in Hell, uh, I never thought that, um, and I had a slightly, I had a slightly rose-coloured view, I think, at the beginning, you know, settle down and be happy and all that but I also had, I also had a hedonistic streak which came out only later in my life because when I was in my twenties and at university and then the army and then articles and earning little money, whatever, I was fairly serious because there wasn't too much time to, um, if you were gonna get through this and pass and do all the things you were supposed to do, there wasn't too much time to be wild or whatever, when I got to about thirty, and I started to earn a bit of money, um, there was a fairly big change, um, and I entered into the hedonistic period of my life, a bit later than everyone else, um, and there were various reasons for that.

AK: What were the reasons?

G: Um, bit of confidence, there are three reasons: bit of confidence was the first one. The second reason was I had, I had this thick, black hair, piles of it, curly, black, horrible hair, always, okay, and it started to recede, so I went to the barber one day and I cut all the hair off, all of it, to, like it is now [bald], um, and my life changed overnight. My popularity soared immediately, for reasons I cannot account for and reason number three, which is the worst reason of all really, and that was when I was thirty-four, Herman and I, and we were together at that time from 1986, you know, you know, turbulent, eighteen-year relationship, um, yes, um, I took him overseas when he turned, when he turned thirty, I was thirty four, um, and we'd been pretty hard up until then. I decided that we were gonna go overseas, now we, I'd been overseas before and so had he before he met me, we didn't really afford it, I went to the bank and I took a big loan, I said we're going to New York and to London for your thirtieth birthday, which we did, in a life-changing holiday for both of us and when we got to London,

um, which he didn't want to go to, he wanted to go to New York, but anyway, I said, 'you're going to both,' um, got to London and ecstasy has just hit all the clubs there, well, it hadn't just hit, but for us it has just hit and we'd never encountered this before so everybody was going out to these huge, huge nights out, they don't even exist anymore, this was, like, the nineties, nineteen nineties, and popping pills on a Saturday night and dancing for seven hours and taking all your clothes off, well, not all your clothes, you took your shirt off and you're dancing with two thousand people now, um, and having the best time of your life, anyway, this is what changed everything, um, cos I suddenly felt, I'm okay, you know, I always felt like I'm an ugly duckling and I'm not sexy and I'm not interesting and I'm not anything, suddenly, like, all these men were, like, looking at me and groping me, anyway, I thought it was the best thing ever, from that time, and when we got back from this holiday, suddenly ecstasy hit Cape Town for the first time, it hadn't been here and they started having all these raves all over the place in Paarden Island, in the docks in warehouses and all that and we used to, there were girls and boys but, you know, nobody cared who was what, we used to go party out, so those were, we had ten long party years of going out a lot and a lot of promiscuity attached to it because we went, we went into an open relationship, we decided that we were bored with each other, um, so that we could either sleep with other people or sleep with other people together which we did with unfailing regularity, um, I dunno how we did it, um, but it just, like, it just was very easy and I was, first and foremost, the propagator of this because he was a bit lazy about meeting people, he used to, like, he'd say, 'oh, you go, you do it,' I'd bring someone home, one night he brought someone home, they stayed for four months, we were in a three-way relationship for four months, now, I woke up to this, I was not consulted. All that I'm saying is, you know, looking back on it now, we were quite decadent, you know, um, and between all the sex and all that and the clubbing, whatever, we also entertained a lot, we used, to when I say 'entertained', we used to have dinners, I used to cook, not him, but dinners, all the time, every Saturday night, people for dinners, um, he was working for the media at that time, various glossy magazines, and he used to get invited out to parties all the time, when I say parties, not gay parties, just party parties, media parties for book launches, product launches, um, book launches, whatever they were, there would be parties and there would be, you know, all the glamorous, sort of, society people would be there and openings of restaurants, I met everyone, we were out all the time, you know, so, I think about ten years later we burnt out, um, but there were stories, like, I mean, I can't even tell you all the stories, it would take a month to tell you some of the weird and wonderful things that, that happened to us and, um, in the meantime I was working in a top law firm, working very hard, you know, and I didn't really have time to

think about what a good life we were having, we just had it and we started travelling overseas quite regularly, overspending, always spent more than we earned, um, always had boys visiting here, wine, coke here, cocaine, ecstasy, acid, um, and that's the life that we lived, you know, and we thought it'd go on forever but, of course, well, not of course, you're too young to know but you kind of burn out eventually and not only did we burn out, we burnt out with each other as well, so, I need another drink before I can go on ...

AK: [laughter]

G: ... with this sordid tale.

AK: Go ahead.

G: Switch it off.

### Recording 2 of 2

#### **00:00:00:** Early sexual attractions

AK: Um, cool, uh, so, very quickly, do you remember the earliest time that you experienced attractions to men, when your kind of sexual, uh, desires?

G: I think it was in my late teens, um, not early teens like everyone else, I didn't seem to be, very sexually aware in my early teens so I would say, you know, definitely not before the age of fifteen and, and even then it was, I was, I was not sure about it, it's like, you know, I wanted to experience life, um, but I didn't really know what I wanted to experience, I think I wasn't ever interested in schoolboys so it wasn't gonna happen at school for me, um, but I didn't necessarily, you know, there wasn't porn on the Internet in those days and, you know, so, there was very little exposure to anything, we didn't really know what there was, um, you know, and it took my quite a long time to actually find that out, um, there wasn't a big gym culture then where, where you could open a magazine or newspaper and there were, you know, sexy men with torsos, I mean, everybody looked like Hell, nobody looked nice, I don't think, um, so it was all a bit fuzzy but, you know, I would say when I got to about nineteen or twenty, then I, I, I realised, okay, I was seriously interested but I didn't really know what I wanted, um, because I hadn't done anything and I'd never seen a porn movie, um, cos there weren't such things around for us so, you know, it was very much trial and error, you know, it was, like, think you look nice but, you know, I hadn't seen that many naked men, you know, or women, really, so it was a period of ignorance and, you know, trial and error, that's what it was.

**00:02:10:** Conflict in relationships

AK: Um, then looking at your, so you had a first experience and you had a first quite turbulent relationship?

G: Yes.

AK: Okay, um, before we get into those, how you define the word 'conflict' in the context of a relationship between two men?

G: Well, in my, I've had a couple of relationships now, I dunno, I would say four, serious ones, um, and the issue is always there, for me there have always been two issues and that is the emotional connection and the sexual connection and unfortunately, um, the two don't necessarily correspond. In other words, you, um, in my experience you can get on very well with someone sexually and not get on with them on an emotional or a friendship or a love level or whatever you wanna call it and vice versa, you know, it's very difficult to get both and I'm sure it's the same for everyone and we all have this expectation of Mister or Missus Right or whoever it's gonna be, the perfect person, but it's very difficult to find everything that you want or everything, to be everything that somebody else wants, you know, so, um, and that is the conflict for me, because there's always one person you feel, and it was always me, I always thought I wasn't getting enough sex, um, or, in the case of my second boyfriend, like, the, the, the man, the crazy one, like, that I couldn't give him enough confidence or love or support when I actually never cheated on him and, and really tried my best so that, that's the conflict. Then I had Herman, my third or second, what, boyfriend, and we had a crap sexual relationship but we have a, we had a fantastic headspace, to this day, you know, we should have been best friends, we shouldn't have been together but, um, you know, we can click into humour, we can talk about literature, movies, art, all sorts of things, and we really, you know, we really are, he's like the brother I always wanted that I never got, a bad brother, um, and he'll get very cross with me if I say this, he does get very cross, but I say we shouldn't have been, we shouldn't have been partners, we should have been best friends cos we didn't have a, we didn't have a romantic connection at all but we had a very good something else and we still have it to this day, um, as good as ever, um, and he's probably the closest, he's one the closest people I'll ever be with but we did not hit it off well in bed, um, which is why we went into an open relationship because I don't think either of us were interested in the other one and yet we stayed together for so long, it was an enigma, really, um, in some way.

AK: Um, so then, looking at the turbulent relationship that you had, you mentioned that there was some conflict there, do you mind telling me what happened there?

G: No, the conflict was very simple, he, he felt, um, insecure, I think, he felt insecure in everything in his life but, I mean, I was only twenty-two and I, I, I wasn't very experienced in anything, especially not relationships or sexual things, so I, you know, we didn't talk about things I would now, as, as, well, you know the way people do now, um, there wasn't Oprah Winfrey, there was nothing, it was a different, I can't explain to you what it was to live like then, it was just an age of, you know, people didn't know stuff that you hadn't done, so, firstly, I was university educated and so were my best friends. He had dropped out of school before matric, um, so he had a huge inferiority issue with that, that my friends looked down on him which they started to do because he behaved so badly, um, and he also had this thing that, you know, he wasn't worthy of me, therefore I was cheating on him, which I wasn't, um, no, so there was this huge conflict, like he'd had too much to drink and, and pick a fight and I was late coming home from somewhere, then I'd been with somebody else, or whatever, it was, like, crap, just absolutely, it wasn't, it was conflict on the most, like, Jerry Springer kind of level, no, no sophistication, no, you couldn't have a, a debate about something and I've always liked robust debate or discussion, whatever, if you've got a problem with me, tell me about it and I'll, we'll sort it out but you couldn't with him, you couldn't, because he was just, like, so fucked up, you know, and I had this huge sexual attraction for him, um, and I couldn't distinguish the two, you know, it took me a while to get there, because, you know, my life experience was so limited, I didn't understand that he was, that you could not be suitable for someone that you were sexually attracted to, I did not understand that but, of course, I grew to understand that.

AK: Um, and did you share a home together?

G: We did, for about two years, *ja*.

AK: Um, and what was that domestic space like?

G: Um, no, it was bad because, you know, um, we had a few, we had, some of our friends in common that we got on with but generally it was his friends and my friends and, you know, he, you know, my friends didn't like, they didn't like mixing with him, um, and I thought his friends were stupid and dull so it, it, it was a strain, it was a strain and it became apparent to me quite early on that I had to get out of this, um, and he didn't wanna, he didn't wanna let go and he threatened to expose my sexuality to my, to my parents and to my employers which was huge thing at that time so I was scared he was capable of doing something and he beat me up a couple of, on a few occasions and in one final, terrible night, he provoked me to such an extent that I beat him up back, not that I'm violent by nature but he pushed me over an edge and there was blood, literally, um, I threw him, he fell through a window and there was blood

spurting and you cannot believe and he bit my arm, there was a scar there for about ten years and, you know, a human bite is more dangerous than a dog bite, um, so it was, like, incredibly sordid, incredibly sordid and I realised I had to get out of this, um, and I paid him out, I went and borrowed money and I said, 'listen, you have to get, get away from me and I'm giving you money to go and start somewhere else, go to Joburg,' and I think he realised that he'd fucked it up, you know, that night, um, because I called a girlfriend of mine, I said, 'you've got to come help me, I'm in big trouble, I mean, there's blood here and I don't know what to do, you've got to take us to Somerset Hospital or something,' um, I don't want my father to know, I don't want my parents to know, and that was a sort of turning point, he realised that he'd gone too far, um, *ja*, and I realised I couldn't, I couldn't go on with it, I couldn't go on pretending that I was happy, um, because I was pretending I was happy and that this was sort of working because there were good moments but, *ja*.

AK: Do you remember how you coped with the feelings that you had at the time?

G: No, I was in a terrible state after that night, I mean, it's like it reached a, it climaxed on that night, uh, I was in a very bad state, I was very nervous, because I hadn't qualified yet with my attorney's admission, I was doing articles, I thought, if he goes mad and, cos, who knew what he was capable of and phones my boss and tells him I'm gay or I'm this or I've smoked *dagga* or I've done whatever, you know, I was completely, I was overwrought, you know, and I felt trapped, you know, that was the main thing, feeling trapped and, um, *ja*, and some of my best friends, um, were not over sympathetic and didn't really want to be part of it, um, they said, 'he's always been a piece of trash and we told you that and why did you, you insisted on doing what you did,' which was absolutely true, I did, you know, um, I didn't listen, you know, to other people's advice and they said, 'you know, get rid of him,' um, until it was, you know, it wasn't too late. Anyway, uh, he subsequently contracted AIDS and died so, um, on his deathbed he wrote to me and the days before, you still wrote, you didn't all have email, so long ago, but, anyway, it was quite a long time after we'd, and I even have to look up dates because I can't remember but anyway, he wrote to me and he said, you know, basically he was on his deathbed, he didn't say what it was, um, and would I come and see him, he was back in the Eastern Cape with his own family and I, and I wrote back to him and I said, 'no, I'm not coming.' Anyway, I was with Herman at the time, we were a few years into the relationship, he said to me, 'he needs you to go, he said you must go.' I said, 'I'm not going, um, for me he's been dead for a long time already and I'm not going,' and then I got a phone call from his sister about a day or two later saying, 'she found this letter from me and he's dead,' um, uh, it was a bit of a, I had, I blotted it out for a long time, the whole thing, um, my reaction and

everything else and about ten or fifteen years later I started dreaming about him at night so plainly it, you know, we can't suppress things, they, they come up and there was a reasonable amount of guilt on my part in that I think he was seeking forgiveness, um, and I didn't wanna know, I wanted to leave that chapter behind me, I didn't want to revisit it, um, and I subsequently lost two, or three, other friends to AIDS, it was that time when people died of it, one of them a very good friend and, and, and I saw it, I never saw him, on his deathbed, I wouldn't go back, and, and Herman chastises me about it to this day and I said, 'you know, now, now, if it happened now, um, I might have done something differently, but you, you change, you know, um, and you forgive a lot of people,' but I was, I was very, I was very angry with him, he caused a lot of shit for me, you know, and, or maybe I was angry at myself that I picked him, I saw him and I thought, I want you, and I got him and he was a nightmare, he was a nightmare but my God did I grow up.

AK: Um, so then looking at your relationship with, um, Herman, you said it was eighteen years, from about 1986 ...?

G: A few interruptions in-between but it's too complicated to go there, *ja*, it was.

AK: And I think it's from about sort of 1986 to 2004 ...?

G: 1986, right at the, thirtieth of December, 1986, just near New Year's Eve, so I asked him out for a date on New Year's Eve after we'd, we'd had sex immediately upon final meeting, immediately, um, there was no, that's the way he was, um, and I said, 'do you wanna go out tomorrow, it's New Year's Eve,' so he said, 'yes, I wanna go out,' so he was working in an ice cream parlour to earn extra money and, and I went to fetch him, he double-dated on our first date, he brought somebody else along, anyway, it became apparent to me that this wasn't a friend of his, um, and as good or bad luck would have it, it seems that I won and say to this day, it's only because I had a car, uh, and the other one didn't, he won't even tell me, 'who was that person, what was he doing there,' um, but, *ja*, we were together with breaks, on and off, for eighteen years, and if, forgetting about what happened afterwards, we'd been, we're still together after thirty-three years, because, you know, he's now living here all over again but not, we're not a couple, he doesn't sleep in my bed and, um, I'm at pains to have a separate life to him, I try very hard.

AK: And did you live together at all?

G: We lived together for about eighteen years, kay, alright, I have to just explain what happened, so, it was eighteen years, then I had a midlife crisis which happens to men when they turn forty-ish, okay, and I really, I mean, I had, like, so much *kak* from everybody, he wasn't like the first, I mean, the previous one, he was like, I dunno what he was, um, I met a

boy in the lift when I went to work, a twenty-four year old boy and I had an affair behind his back, um, which was much better than life with him actually, I think, uh, and he didn't even notice but when it ended I came clean because I couldn't keep this inside me anymore, I told him, he went completely apeshit, um, and we ended up splitting and then having a reconciliation and then splitting, but the damage was done, you know, but I'd had enough as well, I'd had enough, you know, I can't, I can't, I can't talk about Herman cos that would take another year but, you know, he was a very difficult person, um, he was the worst and best combined in one, in that he's probably the most loyal person to me, I've ever known in my life, he's devoted to me and we have a connection that goes back so far, cos my father brought him into the world, coincidentally, so ...

AK: It's a small world.

G: Very old connections, we were, you know, destined to be part of each other's lives and we became part of each other's families and everything else, but, I mean, you know, he never did anything that I wanted, ever, you know, he was always on his own pluck, for want of a better word, um, *ja*, you know, he was the first one to cheat, not me, um, unapologetically, I mean, he brought a boy home in the early years who stayed for four months, you know, he always did his own thing so when I had an affair twelve years later, you know, he was very indignant but I think, you know, what do you expect?

AK: Um, so, then, first of all, your domestic kind of environment, what was it like living with him?

G: We had, I, we had this very social life, we fought, we fought a lot and always have but we don't mind that, um, he kind of, the family I came from, my mother and father, it was, like, you know, don't air your dirty linen in public and don't do it front of the neighbours and keep this a secret and all that stuff, everything was kept very much, then I had this turbulent first relationship, then I met Herman who is very vocal and, and swore a lot and was, our relationship, I learnt to let it all out, um, and we fought constantly over the years, over everything from toothpaste to which movie to see or what we were gonna do, we had a very, we had a very, well, we used to call it a Latin relationship, you know, as opposed to an Anglo-Saxon, we were very loud but we were very social, we had loads of friends who went out all the time, we entertained, um, we travelled and we had a lot of fun together so it was, you know, but he was very, he was a very difficult person, I've always said to him, really one of the most difficult people in that he suffers from bipolar disorder two, um, which means, I think without meaning to, and he's an only child, and an illegitimate child, so he's got his own issues, which I don't have, so, you know, he's both overconfident and insecure at the same time. He's very

protective of me, overprotective, um, he gets threatened by abandonment, he's got all sorts of issues of his own, um, and he's an alcoholic so, you know, and was a drug addict, at time I had to put him through rehab, blah, blah, blah, so, you know, we went through, but we remain like this and, you know, when you're with some, when you've been with somebody for so long it's like, it's like family, I don't know if you have close family or not, some people do, some people don't, I do but, I mean, it's, like, people can't explain, people can't understand the kind of relationship we have, they can't understand it at all, um, and I don't really, I'm not really able to, explain, except that Herman is my family, you know, and, um, my sisters love him, and then, after the ill-fated affair, just to give you the last chapter now, cos I have to condense it, I had one last boyfriend, after Herman and after the, after the boy in the lift, I'm, I bust up with Herman and I decided to be on my own, I moved him out of here, I said, 'you've got to go on your own,' helped him financially, he had a good job, um, and by all accounts he was pretty miserable on his own but I was still in touch regularly, and then I met somebody else, who was completely, who was as mad as he was, the one in red in the photograph there and he, he died a year ago.

AK: My condolences, I'm sorry.

G: *Ja*, so we had twelve, we had another twelve years together and he was a different, he was another crazy person but completely different, completely different in every way and, um, it was also, he also had a lot of his own troubles but he was very different to Herman in that he, he was utterly, utterly devoted to me in every way possible, um, cooked and did everything I wanted, Herman was utterly disagreeable in everything, you know, if I said I wanted to go out, he'd say, 'go on your own, I'm not coming,' uh, and Athan was the opposite, he used to say, I said, 'I'm going to, for dinner here,' and he's coming, 'I'm going to Checkers,' 'I'm coming,' everywhere I went, he was there, like a puppy and he was fifteen years my junior and he absolutely, for his own reasons, worshipped me from the day we met until the day he died, he said, when I met him, he said, 'you're never gonna get rid of me, till the day I die,' and it's, and he died, so, um, in that time, not straight from the beginning, he got to meet Herman because Herman never would leave me alone, ever, and the three of us sort of became, not a threesome, we weren't a threesome, but an extended family, Herman adored him, um, or grew to and used to spend more and more time here and eventually moved back in here when he was homeless and then my father, my mother died and my father started coming for dinner, then my father met another woman and she started coming, so we had our own funny little family of outcasts that used to come and gather here for dinners and Athan would cook very well and, *ja*, he and I were like this [crosses two fingers] we were very, nice relationship but he also had

a drinking problem and he suffered from bulimia of all things, I mean, I didn't know what it was but, he, I always thought he'd die young, he died, we found him in bed, dead, um, February a year ago, fourteen months ago and, so, the last chapter of this sordid saga has been extremely traumatic because I'm not gotten over it yet and was really my favourite of all of them, you know, um, I think he was the one that I'd, he was the one I'd always wanted, so, um, and he was a strange, strange person, he was six foot five, tall and skinny and lanky and he used to run marathons and I hated marathons, I hate sports, I hate marathons, but, you know, he, we had nothing really in common and yet, you know, he was the loved one that gave me the love I'd been wanting, unconditionally, so, um, chapter seventeen, which is now, I've been single for a year, for the first time in all those years cos there'd been all these people, never seemed to be able to stay single, there's always some lame dog that was attaching themselves to me, I drew them, and I am now trying to learn to live life as a single person, I'm turning fifty-nine next month so, you know, it's quite late in life, um, to learn, and I lost my dad as well and my sisters' husband died a few months earlier, so it's been a year of death, everybody just died, um, so I'm trying to, like, learn to be a single person again and, of course, I'm absolutely useless at it, don't like it, got Herman trailing around in the background but, um, I'm determined to make a life outside of him, so, then there's another, and then the last chapter, there's another guy that I knew many years ago, he came to condole and now he's back in my life and he and I, we're not really in a relationship but we're not, not in a relationship either, we're not having sex together but we see each other, um, and maybe we will be in a relationship sometime but I dunno, I just seem to be hopeless at being single, and that is, that is the end. In-between, if you want to know about intimacy, I'm not boasting now and I'm not saying it with pride or shame, I'm just telling you, I've slept with about three hundred boys, I would say, I haven't kept count, during the relationships between them, after there were always, always been people and I've always had safe sex and I've always been very careful about, but, I mean, there's been lots of them, um, and I haven't limited myself to type, I've done fat, thin, muscles, skinny, twink, whatever, not a lot of daddy but okay, one or two, um, I've tried 'em all, um, I'm now trying with Tony, this guy that I'm kind of seeing in a very light-hearted way, he's my age, uh, I've decided, cos they were always younger, they were always younger and they were always troubled, um, I'm trying to, I'm trying to form a connection with someone my own age who's got their own life and isn't troubled, um, but it's not going so well, in that Tony's also troubled, um, so, I've always been a leaning post for other people because they've always, people have always seen me as more stable than them, which I usually have been, they've been totally unstable, um, and I'm attracted to these unstable kind of people, I don't

like, I dunno why, you know, like, I don't, I, I like people who've got a dark side, I don't like people, but there we have, that is my life.

**00:29:00:** Marriage, children and gay rights

AK: Um, thank you, there's just a few, short ...

G: *Ja* ...

AK: ... things here and there, did you and Herman ever consider marriage or children?

G: There wasn't, marriage wasn't legal in the time we were together, um, but we were always vehemently, and his successor, were never interested in marriage, we were never interested in marriage, never, ever, uh, and my point of view and, you know, if anybody, if any of them had wanted to marry I might have rethought it but my point of view is and remains that, um, being a legal man, that a piece of paper can't cement a relationship so, you know, it's either gonna work or it's not, um, some people I know or a lot of people I know have got married, now that it is legal, for tax reasons, for estate duty reasons, to get passports to other countries or whatever and, you know, I would have no problem with that but I, I never had this illusion of a white picket fence and a marriage and I don't think it's gonna make or break a relationship so the answer is no, um, nobody ever wanted to marry me and I never really wanted to marry anybody. Children, I never wanted them, I'm not anti-children, I actually love children, um, and I've got a lovely nephew and niece that, you know, I've, they're now grown up but, you know, um, *ja*, but I'm not, I never had this thing, 'I want to adopt a child,' or whatever, I was never interested, um, I don't view myself as a particularly good parent, um, in that, things like religion, sex, drugs, all these things are very confusing to me, even now, in that I, you know, I did a lot of things that I wouldn't want my children to do if I had them, which presents moral dilemmas, you know, so, *ja*, the answer is no, I never wanted children and no, I never wanted to get married, but did I ever want to be close and intimate to someone, yes, you know, and if anybody came along and it really meant something to them and I really liked them, I'm not saying never but I don't think it's gonna happen, I don't think so, *ja*.

AK: Um, cool, and then just looking at, sort of, over the course of your lifetime, the face of gay politics and law and that sort of thing, has changed quite a bit ...

G: Yes.

AK: ... Um, would you say, thinking of between 1966 and 2008, which is sort of the scope of this study, and growing from the age of six years old to forty-eight years old, yes, um, how

would you say things have changed broadly in Cape Town as far as gay rights, visibility, that sort of thing?

G: It's difficult to say because, I suppose, I was so busy living my life or just doing what came my way, I wasn't really politically aware in that we didn't think about gay rights in the early days cos there weren't any, you know, sodomy was illegal and this was illegal and at the same time, I didn't live, and I think, probably living in Cape Town as opposed to Beaufort West or, or anywhere in the country, it was a comparatively liberal space so we pretty much just did what we wanted to do but when things came along like gay pride parades which started to come along, not right at the beginning but, round about 1990, I remember Herman and I were in Johannesburg on a holiday in our quite young days and there was the first official gay pride parade in South Africa, um, in Johannesburg and we, I felt, like, let's go march in this parade and if anyone sees us on TV, who the fuck cares, so I was not, and I've always participated in those sort of things, not wearing pink tutus or anything, just dressed whatever I would wear, just showing, I felt it was, it was important to present to, um, the world or society or TV or anything, that not everybody who's gay is a drag queen, not that there's anything wrong with being a drag queen but some of us are just ordinary people living our lives, you know, with a male partner as opposed to a female and we don't look that outrageous or whatever, we just wear T-shirts and jeans and flip-flops or whatever people wear so I've always been keen to participate and did and Herman lost interest, he didn't come afterwards, um, but we went to gay pride parades all over the world, including Sydney Mardi Gras and all that, and, um, and, you know, I tried to be, I try to be out and proud as much as I could be in that I'm never, I'm never, apologised to, for my sexuality and, you know, I've never been, I've never denied it to anybody and I also, in the days when we used to sleep around and do stuff, I also never denied the fact that I had a partner, I felt that was very important, to say that, 'okay, I'm, I'm not cheating on the side, I'm cheating openly, well, I'm not even cheating,' I didn't like the word cheating, I'm just saying, you know, 'this is our life, it's not necessarily a heteronormative life, we live a monogamous life,' we lived a different kind of life and I never, I never apologised for it, um, but, *ja*, I never went to jail for it either, you know, it's, if I lived in, um, Bangladesh or Bangkok or somewhere else, you know, I probably would have lived a very different life but it wasn't necessarily, um, it was quite a safe life, I didn't ever get beaten up on the streets by thugs or, it's all very well to say, 'I was out and proud,' um, but, *ja*, I, I, I never apologised for what I was doing and I never particularly hid it away, um, but I wasn't a political activist, I didn't, I didn't go to jail, um, what was his name, Peter, this guy in the UK, chains himself up, anyway, you know, the other people who have done, like, a lot to forward the cause but I,

I just took a view, it's, it's our lives, it's a parallel life, and I live it fairly openly but I'm not a huge activist so I was aware of the politics and when gay marriage came in and became an issue and all that, um, I was pleased but I never needed, I never felt the need to get married, um, but I also, well, for those that want to get married, well, it's nice and I went to weddings and I continue to do so, um, but, *ja*, maybe if someone proposes to me I'll get married one day but, up till then we live in hope.

AK: Um, I think that's about it, is there anything else you'd want to add.

G: No, no, you've got enough.

AK: Um, well, then, thank you, that's ...

### **Interview Description**

**Length of Interview:** 38 minutes 50 seconds [Recording 1] and 36 minutes 38 seconds [Recording 2], total of 1 hour 15 minutes 28 seconds

**Recording Equipment:**

**Copy and Access status:** signed release form; interviewee has requested only his first name be used.

**Name of the Interviewee:** 'Alexander Price' [C]

**Name of the Interviewer:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam [AK]

**Date of Interview:** 2 June 2019

**Place of Interview:** Greenpoint, Cape Town

**Number of tapes/recordings:** 1

**Transcribed by:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam

**Date Transcribed:** 20 July 2019

**00:00:00:** Family background

AK: Then, starting off, uh, when and where were you born?

C: Bloemfontein, 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1939, so I'll be eighty next month.

AK: Okay, fantastic.

C: It's a weird, weird feeling.

AK: I can imagine, being born at that particular time.

C: Just before the war.

AK: Exactly, um, and who did you live with when you were born?

C: With my parents.

AK: Okay, cool, um, do you have any siblings?

C: Sister, brother.

AK: Okay, older or younger?

C: I was the eldest, my sister is six years older, uh, younger than me.

AK: Okay, and your brother?

C: Nine.

AK: Nine years, okay, um, and at what point did you move to Cape Town?

C: When, when I was fifty, sorry, what am I talking about, about fifty years ago, 1967.

AK: 1967, okay, so you would have been twenty-eight years old.

C: Yes.

AK: Okay, um, so when you were a child, when you were younger, what work did your father do?

C: Um, he was a wood and coal merchant.

AK: Wood and coal merchant, okay, and your mom?

C: Um, well, she helped him in the office, a housewife mostly.

AK: Was it a family business?

C: Uh, *ja*.

AK: Um, and first of all, when you were younger, until, I dunno, I assume your father is not still alive?

C: No, he died many years ago.

AK: Um, when he was alive, what was your relationship like with him?

C: Not good at all.

AK: Do you mind explaining why?

C: Um, I was a teacher, um, I, um, in Bloemfontein I became a teacher, taught Afrikaans and English, moved to Cape Town and, but in Bloemfontein I had started taking singing lessons and I was, um, became a, well, I was a freelance opera singer at that stage, moved to Cape Town, I was still a singer and, uh, then I decided to stop, stop teaching and for five years just sang, and my father, just, I'm his loafer son, I was good-for-nothing, and yet I was already becoming quite well-known at that stage, and that also, as a child, I often got beatings, and, of course, it wasn't a good relationship at all.

AK: And how involved was he in, um, with your schooling or with your upbringing, anything like that?

C: Say again?

AK: How involved was he in your schooling?

C: Not at all, ever, he paid for me to go to university, that's about all.

AK: And then, on the flipside, what was your relationship like with your mother

C: Well, good you, a warm relationship.

AK: How involved was she, um, with you as a child and when you were growing up?

C: No, I think she was, she was always proud of me as a son and even when it went on, when I became well-known as a singer and a writer and photographer.

AK: Um, and then, looking at your current relationship with your siblings, what's that like?

C: Very good, I've actually, um, my sister came from Canada about three weeks ago and they hired a place in Stilbaai and, so my brother came from Bloemfontein and so we were all three together for a whole week, no, I've got a very good relationship, uh, with my sister and my brother both, especially with my sister.

AK: Where is your brother living at the moment?

C: Bloemfontein, and my sister in Canada.

AK: Oh, okay, um, and when you were growing up how would you describe your parents' marriage?

C: I remember once, my mother said she would love to get a divorce, and that's all I know, I didn't, I don't, my father treated her almost like a slave. When she, she would get up at four o'clock in the morning, do the housework, then she would go work at, in his business, and my father would never do anything, I recall, 'bring me water, do this, do that,' so, I mean, very strange relationship.

AK: And what sort of memories do you have of your home or domestic setting when you were a child, what sort of memories do you have of the house or things you would do as a family or things like that?

C: I think I was always a happy child, so, uh, *ja*, I think I was actually quite bright and happy, so I didn't the relationship affected me so much, I was so aware at that stage.

**00:04:13: Schooling years**

AK: Okay, um, where did you attend pre-school?

C: Pre-school?

AK: *Ja*.

C: Also, in Bloemfontein.

AK: Also, in Bloemfontein, okay.

C: Everything in Bloemfontein.

AK: And what high school and prep school did you attend?

C: I went to Willem Postma Primary School and then I went to, um, Sentraal Hoërskool in Bloemfontein, I actually did very well at school, cos I remember my mother, as a child, she would ask me every single question and then when exams came around, I think I was first in the class until about Standard 9.

AK: Okay, and what sort of subjects did you do when you were in high school?

C: Afrikaans, English, maths, geography, history, science, book-keeping. Book-keeping, because my mother and my father wanted me to go into business, and, I mean, I was the last person to do that kind of thing, I think that's why he was so disappointed in me as a child, or as a person.

AK: Um, and did you get involved in any extra-curricular activities, so sport or music or art?

C: No, no, no, played a bit of, oh, I, I realized I had a voice, so I sang in the school choir and the teachers, they told me, you must take singing lessons, if they didn't say that I would never have started taking lessons and later became a full-time opera singer, I played a bit of tennis but I was never interested in sports.

AK: Okay, and as far as the, the friends that you made and the social environment at prep school and high school, what was that like?

C: I think I had very good friends, I actually wrote a book about my childhood, it was [redacted: 5:53 – 5:57], so the book's about a boy growing up in a certain street and I mean, it's not autobiographical but it can be, actually, so, I mean, I had a good relationship, lots of friends and those that would play in the streets and you would know the person next to you and the people across the road, which is very different from today.

AK: Mm, okay, and would you say you ever experienced some kind of bullying in high school?

C: No, never.

AK: Um, and then when it came towards your high school, how did it deal with issues of sexuality and gender?

C: We never talked about that, I remember once, when I had a friend and once we were walking down the corridors and he says, 'I think you're, um, you're also interested in men,' that was actually the only time, I don't actually realise that, I mean, I was Standard 7, I didn't even know that, of course, I fell in love with a boy but that was Standard 8.

AK: Mm, okay, and at the time, how did it deal with, uh, race and social class?

C: I don't think we were actually even aware of it, that is the black people, they work in our house. I remember, at nine o'clock, in the evening, they would have a siren and all the blacks had to be out of town, but we never questioned this, for some reason we just accepted this part of life.

#### **00:07:10: Early sexual encounters and early adulthood**

AK: Um, cool, I think that's it as far as high school is concerned, uh, then, first of all, how would you describe your sexuality?

C: How do you mean?

AK: Like, gay, bisexual ...

C: I'm gay.

AK: Okay, yeah, um, and what does it mean to you to be gay [laughter] I know it's a weird question, but in the sense of, what does it mean to you, is it just based off, like, um, an emotional attraction, a physical attraction, how does it ...?

C: Well, um, when I was younger it was a physical attraction, but also, I mean, I would fall in love quite a few times.

AK: And, um, then, sort of, looking at your early sexual development, do you first of all remember when you started to experience puberty?

C: Well, I remember, I was in Cricket Street until I was about Standard 6, about twelve years old, I mean, you would start masturbating with your friends but, I mean, you didn't take it seriously, it was just a quick wank.

AK: And then, um, do you remember when you started to feel your first attractions to men?

C: In Standard 8, which is now Grade 10, we went on holiday to Durban, and there was a boy from Northern Rhodesia, from Ndolo, and I fell madly in love with this boy. Then, I suddenly realised I was in love with somebody, and I remember we spent days together on the beach. At night I would go back to where I thought we lay on the beach and I would gather the sand and put it in an envelope and take it back home, it was very, it's just, I fell in love.

AK: And whatever happened, did anything happen physically or emotionally with ...?

C: Nothing, no, it was just, he didn't even know that.

AK: And how did that make you feel, that revelation of, that you fell in love with this boy? Do you remember how it made you feel?

C: I can't even remember, I just remember I was in love [laughter].

AK: And when you went back to Bloemfontein, did that affect how you saw other men and boys?

C: Um, well, nothing happened after that, actually, when I was in Standard 10, I went to Durban again and I knew that they were going to visit Durban, and I thought that I must tell him that I'm in love with him, but I never told him at all, I don't think that he ever realised that I was in love with him, but I don't think anything happened in Bloemfontein, between friends, I had school friends, I fell in love with a girl, I was madly, madly, madly in love with a girl, she was the head girl of the school, she got six distinctions in matric, she was beautiful and, I mean, she would be in the newspapers every two weeks and I would cut out all the photographs, still have them after sixty years, I've still got all and I'm still in love with her, I mean, I was actually in love with a girl, but it was like a, you're in love with beauty, not sex, I never even thought of that, I've never thought of a woman sexually.

AK: Um, and did you ever interact, when you were in high school, with, in physical relationships with other men or women?

C: With other men?

AK: Or women.

C: No, oh, well, um, a boy that I met in primary school would come and visit, and we moved to a farm, he would often visit me on the farm and we would just masturbate together, we would

go out in the *veld* and just masturbate, but we didn't, I dunno how, it was a strange thing, we weren't in love or anything, it was just masturbation.

AK: Okay, um, and then, when you left high school, you mentioned you went to university, where did you go to university?

C: Bloemfontein.

AK: Okay, um, and what were you studying?

C: Um, BA with Afrikaans and English.

AK: And did you do a teaching diploma?

C: Teaching diploma after that.

AK: And where did you go to teach after that?

C: In Bloemfontein [laughs] everything started in Bloemfontein.

AK: And you say you taught there until you were twenty-eight?

C: Twenty-eight, and then I decided to come to Cape Town.

AK: Okay, so that's 1967.

C: '67.

AK: Okay, cool, and during your time at university did you ever interact with physical relationships with other men?

C: No, never, nothing happened, I mean, it is only after, was it, *ja*, no, no, no, only happened afterward, when I was twenty it started.

AK: Okay, um, so, during your time at the university in Bloemfontein, were you ever aware of any gay people or gay circles or gay social clubs, or things like that?

C: There was one person I suspected might be gay, but in those days, you didn't think about this, and then also I heard about a chap being kicked out of one the hostels because he had, uh, relations with another man, but I didn't question it and that was that.

AK: And, during your time in your twenties, did you ever have to do military service?

C: Mm-mm.

AK: Not, okay, um, so I'm guessing it was pre-Angola.

C: *Ja*.

AK: Okay, um, and what motivated the move from Bloemfontein to Cape Town?

C: Um, I actually wanted to move to Johannesburg, and my father said, 'ah, no, Sodom and Gomorrah,' but he didn't know about Cape Town [laughter] and, uh, we came on holiday and I thought, but Cape Town is the most beautiful place that I've ever seen, I want to live, and then I, I, uh, applied for a job in Pretoria and I actually got it, and then I realised I don't want

to live in Pretoria, I actually want to live in Johannesburg, but then I thought, I'm going to apply for a job in Cape Town.

AK: And what job did you apply for here?

C: Teaching, I taught at Cape Town High School.

AK: And what sort of grades were you teaching?

C: Pardon, uh, high school.

AK: High school grade, okay, and Afrikaans I think you said?

C: I taught Afrikaans as second language, yes, in Bloemfontein I taught English, as a second language.

AK: Okay, um, and when you moved here, did you live alone, or did you live with friends.

C: Um, I lived alone, but I met somebody, I moved in January '67 and in April, on Good Friday, I met a chap, and a relationship started, we lived together for four years.

AK: ... For four years, okay, so, when you, when did you start to, um, think more about your, uh, attractions to men, what sort of age did you start to think about it more?

C: Well, in Bloemfontein, I suddenly realised, there was a word, 'homosexuality,' so you take out a magazine, *ag*, books from the library and the word 'homosexuality' would just jump out at you. At the C&A you would buy magazines, um, *Modern Adonis* and *Body Beautiful*, men all posed in just, but that was the sexual excitement you had, but suddenly now I realised this was wrong, I was scared about this, and I would go and buy a magazine, but at the same time I would buy a comic and give them both.

AK: Okay, um, so when did you have your first ...

C: Sexual experience?

AK: Yes.

C: Um, I met somebody in Bloemfontein at the swimming pool, and became quite good friends but we didn't even speak about homosexuality or something, I mean, I went on holiday to Johannesburg and then he said, 'oh, but you're gay,' and then I had my first gay experience, sexual experience.

AK: How old were you, do you remember?

C: Um, about twenty-one.

AK: And do you remember how that sexual experience made you feel?

C: Confused, completely, oh, I remember, um, when I was about sixteen, I actually thought of suicide because I'm the only person in the whole world who was gay, that's what you believe, you didn't think there was anybody else, but the only people were the people you saw were incredibly camp but the thoughts of death were incredibly, actually very sentimental, *ag*, not

sentimental, what's the word, I would lie in the bath and think, well, wouldn't it be wonderful for life if you could just drain me away [laughter].

AK: So, did you have any other experiences before you left Cape Town, left for Cape Town, uh, from Bloemfontein?

C: Oh, *ja*, I think I had quite a lot. In those days, I mean, how do you meet people, I met a few people in Bloemfontein who were gay, but, uh, I was never sexually attracted to them.

AK: Um, and how did you go about meeting these men?

C: In Bloemfontein, in those days, the only way to meet people would be to go to the public toilets, unfortunately that was the only way,

AK: So, were there specific places that people cruised or ...?

C: *Ja*, that was the cruising, I mean, in Bloemfontein there was the central square, and there was a toilet there and people would drive around the square, around and around the square and you would be waiting for somebody to arrive.

AK: Okay, and did you ever have, what sort of associations did you have with that, um, public toilet?

C: Um, I think I met a few people, but then we would just go somewhere and have a quick wank in a car or something.

AK: Um, and were you ever concerned about, um, being caught out or ...?

C: No, I wasn't, but what happened, the day I left Bloemfontein to come to Cape Town, it was on the Sunday, and the Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Rapport*, it had another name then, headlines, six people were arrested in Bloemfontein, with their photographs on the front page, they were all arrested at the Hoffman Square, and, I mean, that was the day I moved to Cape Town and I remember my father stopped buying the newspaper because of that, he must have known that I was gay, I've never confessed to my parents, but, so, there was this side to my father that I didn't really understand.

AK: And did you ever hear about the Forest Town raid, the one in Johannesburg?

C: Oh, yes, I heard about that.

AK: What did you hear about it, if you don't mind me asking?

C: Just, I heard, I read in the newspapers afterwards. I don't think I actually heard people mentioning it to me.

AK: Do you, what sort of, what was the *apartheid* government's stance on homosexuality at the time in what would've been the, what, late sixties, mid-sixties?

C: You know, I've always lived in a world of my own, I was never really aware of what was going on around me.

**00:17:33:** Relationships in Cape Town

AK: Okay, um, cool, so then, when you were in Cape Town you mentioned you met a man in April ...?

C: In April, we moved in together about three months afterwards and we lived together for four years, he was, uh, a, he was studying architecture, and, in his fourth year, um, he was the best student, so he went to Amsterdam for a, for six months [redacted, 17:57 to 18:36].

AK: Um, so with this first relationship, this person that you lived with, did you live with the architecture student?

C: He was in Amsterdam [redacted, 18:46 to 18:56] and he told me, 'he's not gay,' he said he's going to get married when he comes back to Cape Town and it actually happened, he came back, and he married one of my best friends, and then what happened, they moved to Amsterdam a few years later and he died of AIDS.

AK: Oh, oh dear, um, so with this relationship that you lived in, so you lived with the architecture student?

C: For four years, *ja*.

AK: Um, what was it like living with him?

C: Well, I was completely in love, but I, I think I tried to give everything, I just gave the whole time, I never received anything back, but I didn't question it, I never questioned things ...

AK: And what was your shared domestic space like, did you do household chores together, did you eat dinner together, what was that like?

C: It was a two-room flat, I did all the cooking and things, and I can't remember what he did actually.

AK: And do you know why it was that you did all the cooking and cleaning?

C: Well, I did everything, no, I've very seldom questioned things in my life, it's very strange actually.

AK: Um, and then in the context of a relationship, how would you, uh, describe the word 'conflict'?

C: Conflict?

AK: Yes.

C: Sho, I don't know exactly what you mean by that?

AK: What would you think, if someone says, there's conflict in a relationship, what would that mean to you?

C: Any conflict?

AK: Yeah.

C: I don't think I've ever had a relationship where there was really, a big conflict at all, I mean, people are different, of course, I mean I've never taken it so seriously, I mean, I'm a Gemini so, I mean, I would be upset for about two minutes and then everything changes again.

AK: Okay, so, would you say that you ever had any physical altercation or verbal altercation or emotional altercation with someone else in a relationship?

C: No, no, no, not at all.

AK: Okay, um, so what caused the end of your, then, your first relationship?

C: He got married.

AK: Okay, so he got married, um [redacted, 21:11 to 21:54] um, so, then, after that, were you single for a while?

C: Well, that was 1971, um, in '73, no, I was still teaching, and, uh, well, I was in Cape Town, as a teacher and in the evenings I would sing opera and I got quite a lot of, um, opera roles, it was always smaller roles but, I mean, character roles, humorous roles, and one evening, I think, 1971, 1972, I was, uh, on stage in Cape Town and suddenly I realised, but I'm good, as an actor, I thought, I'm the best actor on the stage, because often, opera singers stand around, looking beautiful and singing and, and I decided to give up teaching and do freelance work, so for five years I did freelance work ...

AK: So, from 1973 ...

C: From 1973 to '78.

AK: And was that freelance work in theatre, television, oh, opera?

C: I mean, I travelled all over, over the country.

AK: Okay, um, and during that time did you have any, um, experiences with other men, sort of, sexually, emotionally ...?

C: I can't even remember ... Oh, I haven't even mentioned the big love of my life [laughter] not I'll come back to that later ...

AK: Well, the big love of your life?

C: No, when I was twenty-one, I went to Durban, and I met a chap there, was my age, on Christmas day, and I felt madly, madly, madly in love, I've still got all the letters I wrote and he died a few years ago, I don't know if he died of AIDS, that I don't know, when I saw him last he looked very gaunt, but in any case, I'm on the five years, I don't think anything really happened, maybe occasionally, I would pick up somebody.

AK: Okay, um, so then after you'd done the five years, in 1978, what happened then?

C: What happened, that's, I was in Bloemfontein, singing an opera and one day, I stayed with my parents, the performance was in Bloemfontein, and I remember my father then said, '*ju's my loafer seun*,' [you're my loafer son], then suddenly I had this thing that, he didn't accept what I was doing because he wanted me to go into business, take over the business, and it was the weirdest thing, there was an X-line nearby, and I thought, at the moment, I could kill my father, I mean, the thought was so terrible that I just jumped in my car and I drove into town, I've never had that type of thought again, that suddenly I'd kill my father.

AK: And what, how did that affect the way that you moved forward in your life?

C: Hmm?

AK: How did that affect the rest of ...?

C: No, I think my father died a year later, but then, what happened, in '78 I again, um, went to Bloemfontein to sing in a role and my father had died a few years before, and my mother said, 'you can't carry on singing, there's, you'll die of hunger,' you really don't get paid much in the arts, and my mother actually forced me to go back to teaching and here, I mean, I'm a creative person, in the five years that I, after I left teaching, I took my photography very seriously, I had photographic exhibitions, in Cape Town, Bloemfontein, and then I realised, but if my creativity disappears, I mean, that is the end, and suddenly I had the most terrible depression, it was really very, very bad, and I was on my last opera tour and I remember, we would sing from Straubert, um, 'Old Man River', and I would sing, 'I'm tired of living, but scared of dying,' and I had the same feeling, I came back to Cape Town, and I had a breakdown and a friend said, 'you must go to hospital,' and he took me to hospital, so that was the beginning of a depression, so from '78 I have periodic depressions, then I went back to teaching and I was quite happy for two years, but then I realised I'm actually a creative person and, uh, somebody said, 'why don't you apply for a,' they had the Cape Town Opera Chorus, permanent chorus, but I've always been a soloist so I thought it'd be a come-down to go and sing in a chorus but I applied for it and I got it, so I was teaching, for the next seventeen years I was in the chorus, but I still did solo roles and suddenly my creativity, I mean, I started writing books, I mean, from '84 to now I've published about thirty books and, I mean, it was a very creative period, and, I mean, photography, I had photographic exhibitions all over town and other parts of the country.

AK: Were you writing fiction or non-fiction?

C: I'll write nonsense poetry, mostly, but I also write fiction, and, uh, and I write in both Afrikaans and English, mostly in Afrikaans.

AK: And what sort of material are you writing about?

C: Nonsense, I can show you one of my books, just to give you an idea.

AK: Please, that would be great, thank you. Um, so, then, during this sort of period of time, what was your relationship history like, let's call it that?

C: Oh, 1980, so that was, when I was, that's when I started singing again, in the permanent chorus, one evening I went out, to the Cape Town station, unfortunately that's the only place where one could meet people in those days, you'd go into the toilet, and I saw a chap there, but later he went into the Golden Acre, and we started talking, and that was the beginning of a relationship, we've been together for thirty-nine years, it's fortunate I didn't meet him in the toilet [laughter] it does sound terrible, but we met in the Golden Acre.

AK: So, have you been, is this the same partner you're with now?

C: *Ja*.

AK: So, you've been together since ...

C: Since 1980.

AK: 1980.

C: So, next year will be forty years.

AK: Fantastic.

C: It's a strange relationship.

AK: And, um, when did you start living together?

C: About four or five months after I met him.

AK: And you've lived together ever since?

C: Ever since, no, it's quite strange, last night, when my sister was here, I looked, she always asked me to keep the letters that I've written to them, so I gave her the letters and there I discovered a letter that Peter wrote to me, um, a month after we met and he thought, he didn't know if he should carry on with the relationship, you know, I've still got the letter, I read last night, and we carried on, it's a strange relationship, he's very religious, and it's also Seventh Day Adventist, which makes things much more difficult, it's like the Jewish sabbath which starts on Friday evening until, so, but the thing is, at the same time, from seventeen years, I would be working during the day and sometimes, in the evening, so in the evenings he was a computer programmer so in the evenings he would be free, so it was strange, and we never really had anything in common.

AK: What do you think, then, keeps the relationship together?

C: I sometimes wonder, he's very good to me, and there is an affection between us but, thirty-nine years is a long time.

AK: And as far as living together, how have you decided who does the cleaning, the cooking, taking care of the dogs.

C: Unfortunately, he does most, most of the things, I feel very guilty sometimes, but he's a very good cook and we're vegetarians so, I mean, he's very good at vegetarian cooking and sometimes I feel that I do too little.

AK: And, as far as, sort of, actually, no, never mind, sorry, never mind, um, so you've been together for the forty years, um, did you move around from different house to house?

C: *Ja*, well, we first moved together in a flat, then we bought a house in Tamboerskloof, and then this house, and we've been here for about twenty-five years, and we've got a dog, why didn't she come out, TOFFEE! I'll introduce her.

AK: And, um, as far as that period of time in the eighties, uh, were you ever thinking about things like HIV and AIDS and things like that?

C: I was aware of it, things have always passed me by, it's a very strange thing [redacted, 31:00 to 31:28]

AK: Um, and did you know of people at this time who were affected by HIV or whose lives were affected by HIV?

C: No, I'd just read in the newspapers about this one has died and that one has died but I never really knew friends who had died.

AK: And do you think it affected, um, okay, so the better question to ask, did you have a circle of gay friends or acquaintances that you knew, when you were dating, when you were a younger man in Cape Town?

C: We have a small group of friends and I think we're quite close to one another, I've never had a huge ...

AK: And how did you and your partner resolve disagreements about anything?

C: I don't know.

AK: Well, I mean, did you have disagreements, did you ever have things that you disagreed about?

C: No, not that, well, we'd be annoyed with one another for two minutes, but never really big disagreements, I've always found that, I mean, I'm not religious at all, but he really is ultra-religious, and I mean, I found it really strange at the beginning, but in the end you just accept it.

AK: So, you've never fought about religion or ...?

C: No, not really ...

AK: ... the house, or about anything like that?

C: No.

AK: Okay, so a very calm, melodious ...

C: He is quite short-tempered, sometimes, but I mean it lasts for, it was never really anything big. He's not here this morning, unfortunately, he had to go to one of his flats, he bought five or six flats, and something went wrong, otherwise he would've been here.

AK: Um, is here from Cape Town?

C: Um, he's from Zimbabwe.

AK: Zimbabwe, okay, and, uh, okay, and you say he's a computer programmer?

C: He used to be, when he was fifty-five, he, uh, took out his pension and he bought about eight flats, so, I mean, that's the main income now.

AK: Okay, um.

C: He works very hard, I mean, he's busy from the moment he gets up so.

AK: Is there a big age gap between the two of you?

C: Um, he's sixty-seven, so thirteen years.

AK: Okay, thirteen years age difference, okay, um, are the two of you married?

C: No, we've wondered, well, it's our fortieth anniversary, whether we should get married.

AK: Um, what do you think has, um, made you consider not getting married?

C: Never really thought about it, we don't really know what the advantages of and the disadvantages are.

AK: Um, but do you think that it's good that gay people have the right to get married?

C: Yes, of course.

AK: Um, do you think it's affected the way people have gotten into relationships?

C: Affected the way they ...?

AK: They've gotten into relationships, do you think it's affected gay men, have decided that, they want to have a relationship with another man or, just, remain single or something like that?

C: You know, I don't really know gays at the moment in relationships, but strangely enough, I always, when I think of gay relationships, something that last for, three months, I've had quite a few friends who've been together, um, I mean, I have a friend, he died two months ago, he was together, they were together for thirty-nine years, my singing teacher, he was together with his friend for thirty-five years, another friend, they were together for thirty, more than thirty, so I know quite a lot of people who have been, gays who have been together for many years.

AK: And what do you think keeps people together in a relationship?

C: I don't know [laughter].

AK: Well, what do you think has been the, um, the cause for success in the longevity of your current relationship?

C: I have no idea why I've been, been together for so long, there's one friend of mine, he's also very well-known, but he and his friend, they had the most tremendous arguments and yet they stayed together for thirty-eight years or whatever, so I dunno what, I often, why have I stayed in this relationship for so long, I think I've lived, so often in a dream world of my own.

AK: Um, and then during the progress of your relationship, um, with your current partner, did the end of *apartheid* affect it in any way?

C: No.

AK: Not at all, so you didn't feel that you were affected by the end of *apartheid*, or the changes in South Africa ...

C: No.

AK: Okay, not, okay, um.

C: And I've never experienced homophobia, at all, from anybody, I was a teacher for so many years, and it's strange, it's never affected me.

AK: Okay, um, and then just finally, have you and your partner ever considered getting children?

C: No.

AK: Okay, um, cool, I think that's actually about it, um, is there anything else you'd like to add?

C: No, I can't think of anything at the moment.

AK: Okay, fantastic, thank you!

C: Our TV has been stolen so I can't play that, *ag*.

### **Interview Description**

**Length of Interview:** 36 minutes 47 seconds

**Recording Equipment:** Olympus

**Copy and Access status:** signed release form; interviewee has requested full anonymity with some omission.

**Name of the Interviewee:** 'Percy Middleton' [D]

**Name of the Interviewer:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam [AK]

**Date of Interview:** 9 June 2019

**Place of Interview:** Cape Town [via Skype]

**Number of tapes/recordings:** 1

**Transcribed by:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam

**Date Transcribed:** 14 July 2019

**00:00:00:** Introductions

AK: Hello?

D: ... Turn my sound up, it's very soft, just wait a second, right there we go, can you hear me?

AK: I can hear you, can you hear me?

D: Yes, hi there.

AK: How's it, how are you?

D: Alright, thank you.

AK: Cool, cool, um, thank you for making the time, um, right, I should do a bit of, just, clarity on the project, before we go into it, if that's alright?

D: Right, perfect.

AK: Um, so, the project is for my Master of Arts at UCT, I'm focusing on, uh, intimate relationships between white gay, bisexual men between 1966 and 2008, focusing on intimacy, conflict, that sort of thing, um, as far as the protocol is concerned, if you are wanting this to be anonymous or if you don't want me to use your name, please let me know now or at a later stage so I can, uh, do that going forward, um, do you want to be confidential?

D: I prefer, *ja*, I do, just because of the nature of the work I do.

AK: Okay, cool, I won't use your name and if I accidentally mention your name or you accidentally mention your name, or someone else's name which you're not comfortable with, I can adapt the audio-recording and the transcript, I will also send that to you for your approval at the end, um, with a, uh, release form, just so that I'm covered from an ethical perspective.

D: Cool.

AK: Um, do you have any questions about the project?

D: Um, no, I mean, I think you've explained it both in email and now again today, so that's ...

AK: Okay, cool, um, if you are uncomfortable at any point or if you are not feeling comfortable with the questions or anything like that, please just let me know, I can stop the recording, I can stop the call, I can change things now or later, whenever it is, um, so please just let me know via email if anything changes.

D: Excellent.

**00:01:51:** Family background

AK: Cool, um, then, jumping straight in and ask, first of all, um, with some family background questions, when and where were you born?

D: Um, I was born in 1960 and I was born in Johannesburg.

AK: Okay, and who did you live with when you were born?

D: Um, I lived with my mom and dad.

AK: Okay, um, whereabouts in Johannesburg were you based?

D: Well, we, I was born in Johannesburg with my, we were based, um, my father was a mining engineer, so we were based, I think, it's vague memory because I was very little but somewhere in the west, West Rand area, my first year or two of life.

AK: And when did you move to Cape Town?

D: I moved to Cape Town when I came to university, which was in 1978.

AK: Okay, um, and, uh, did you have any siblings when you were a child?

D: I have two younger brothers.

AK: What is the age gap between you and them?

D: Um, two years and seven years.

AK: Okay, so you're the oldest of the three?

D: Correct.

AK: Okay, um, and you mentioned your father was a mine work, mine engineer, what work did your mom do?

D: My mom was a homemaker when I was little and then she, um, worked part time in, when I was bit older.

AK: Okay, um, and then looking ...

D: I'm not sure, it was something like that, at a school.

AK: Okay, um, and then looking at your relationship with your parents, first of all, uh, when you were growing up what was your relationship like with your father?

D: I mean, I would say it was a typical relationship of the sixties, um, white, middle-class, English-speaking type of relationship, um, it wasn't particularly intimate, um, it wasn't, I mean, my father was not a particularly difficult man, he wasn't aggressive or, or abusive so, I mean, I grew up in a very comfortably, we weren't a wealthy family but we were, we were privileged, I suppose, um, I grew up in the height of *apartheid*, um, so we were relatively very privileged,

uh, family, we were white and my father had a job and a salary, um, but we weren't, we weren't, sort of, um, upper middle-class, I would say, we were pretty middle for those day and my father was great, I mean, he was, he was relatively involved but not overly involved in, definitely in the first two children, he was very much closer to my youngest brother, he was born quite a bit later.

AK: Okay, I see, um, and then in contrast what was your relationship like with your mother?

D: Um, my mother, once again, similar thing, she was a bit more tempestuous, so, um, I would say that, uh, I was the oldest son, I was terribly, uh, well-behaved, generally, and very, um, I was very ambitious, I think is possibly not a word I'd use for a child, but I was a very keen kid, I was very, um, but I was also quite an unwell child from the age of three so, um, *ja*, I had, um, a good but tempestuous relationship with my mother. I think that's the best way to describe it, in that she was the tempestuous type of person, she was, *ja*, she was, you know, she was quite, uh, um, up and down emotionally, I think, a lot to do with, a lot to do with how we grew up and in the times that we grew up where women were a little bit disenfranchised and I think she was a bit frustrated, um, being, you know, being, you know, being a typical white, middle-class housewife, I think it's not exactly the most fun.

AK: Um, and do you think that affected your parent's marriage?

D: Um, my parents had a fairly solid marriage, um, there were typical periods of fighting, my mother, as I say, was quite vocal and so she wouldn't, um, she was definitely not a browbeaten woman, um, in fact she could be quite, um, difficult generally and, I think, gave my father quite a hard time, um, from time to time, but their marriage lasted until my father's death and they were married for almost forty years, I think, thirty-something years, before he died.

AK: Okay, um, and did you, did you ever sort of experience or see your parents, um, engage in any kind of conflict, sort of verbal or anything like that?

D: *Ja, ja*, I mean we were the sort of family where, um, most things were pretty much out in the open, um, when it came to how we lived our lives, my parents were very, um, *ja*, I mean, they didn't particularly try and shield us from the realities of, of family life, um, my parents were also not, my mother, in particular, was not particularly, you know, if they, we used to have one bathroom, um, so we used to share the bathroom and when my mom was in the bath, you know, one of us would go to the loo or if we were in the bath my mother would go to the loo, um, can't remember my dad doing that but, you know, and she walked around, you know, maybe with just her underpants on when she walking from the bathroom to the bedroom to get dressed so, uh, and my father was pretty much the same, I mean, they weren't a uptight sort of family, uh, they weren't uptight people, um, I think I was a far more uptight child, far more

private than they were, I mean, they were, so, so the conflict happened and good things happened and, um, my mother was a very, uh, demonstrative woman, um, so she would demonstrate her, her affection for my father when she was, when she was in a good mood, she would demonstrate her irritation and anger when she wasn't.

**00:08:34:** Schooling years

AK: Um, then looking more towards your schooling, uh, first of all, where did you attend, uh ...

D: Sorry, your sound has just gone down quite a lot ...

AK: Quite a lot? Okay, um, I dunno what's causing that, uh, can you still hear me?

D: I can hear you now but it's not, it's not as loud as it was.

AK: Okay, sorry about that, um, I'll turn up the volume as much as I can, if you can't hear me just let me know.

D: Okay.

AK: Um, cool, so then, just looking at pre-school and early childhood education, do you remember where you went to pre-primary?

D: I went to play-school when I was about, uh, three or four, um, it was just around the corner from where we lived and we'd moved to KwaZulu Natal by then, um, and then my primary school was, my first three years were at a convent because I was brought up as a Catholic and my mother wanted me to be educated as a good Catholic boy and, so for my first three years until my first Holy Communion I went to a Catholic convent in the little town we lived in.

AK: Okay, um, and then, from there, what was your primary and high school?

D: So, that was for my first three years and then after that we, my father was transferred, um, initially to the Free State for a year and then on to Kimberley and I went to primary school in both of those, I, my parents, when I was in Standard 7, I think, 6 or 7, we were in Kimberley, they relocated to Johannesburg, um, and I stayed on at boarding school in Kimberley.

AK: Okay, and that was all they way then through to matric?

D: Till the end and then following that I came to down to Cape Town.

AK: Um, did you do army service before you got to Cape Town?

D: I did my military service after I qualified as a doctor, so I did, uh, six years at university and a year of, um, internship and I then did, um, three years of military service.

AK: Um, looking then towards your, uh, pre-primary, primary and high school education, how would you describe the social environment at those particular schools?

D: Well, the social environment in South Africa then was, um, was of its time and very, uh, you know, when one looks back, very weird, it, it never felt normal to me, um, not that I was 'conscientised' particularly, um, one was aware that there were discrepancies and, um, there were divides every which way, I mean, there were divides between, uh, white and people of colour, there were divides between, uh, English and Afrikaans, there were divides between male and female, so it was very, the business of society with a lot of issues that go around, it was quite a brutalist, masculine, um, there was quite a brutalist, masculine ethos, um, and I ended up at a male, all-male boarding school which was very much driven along those lines, um, so that was the pervading, uh, issue, obviously in the seventies the regime became very repressive, um, we were a little unaware of that, I mean, we only got television when I was fifteen in '74, '75, um, I was at boarding school, we were allowed to watch TV twice a week, um, as, at boarding school which was 'Pop Shop' on a Friday, and I can't remember, there was another programme, we didn't get to watch news programmes or anything like that, um, we were aware of the '76 riots, I mean, that was big news, I think everybody knew about that, I was sixteen then and very shielded from it all, um, being tucked away in a smallish town at a boarding school but, um, that I was aware of and I think the general feeling amongst my peers was either terribly racist or rather fearful, um, I mean, we lived in a very racist era and that's as much as I can really say about my schools, school days.

AK: Um, and in terms of your own personal interactions with your peers, did you find it easy to make friends or did you struggle with that particular venture?

D: Um, I was, I was a, a high achiever, um, at school, um, both academically and sports-wise, um, I also was, I think, fairly, um, easy to spot that I was probably homosexual, even as a kid, so I was, I was a bit vilified on that level, in fact I was, you know, for some years of my life it was quite difficult for me, I tended to be quite insular, I had a few sort of close friends at school, um, but I generally worked very hard academically and I played a lot of sport so I just kept busy and kept my head down, um, I can't say I was, I definitely was, sort of, one of the main *manne*, as they would say at school, I was one of the central guys, but I was, I was the class swot, I suppose you would call it, I was the person who came top every year, and, you know, I played first team rugby, first team tennis, second team hockey, um, not that I went to a big school, it wasn't difficult to play that but I was a good rugby player, I was, uh, picked for Craven Week selection, um, I didn't get into the Craven Week for Gryphon West but I was a reserve so I was, you know, I was a good sportsman, I was fairly strong, I was quite shy and quite intimidated by my sexuality and I think that kept me, um, fairly quiet.

**00:15:16:** Early sexual ideas

AK: Do you remember the kinds of feelings you had about your sexuality as a young man?

D: Well, I went to a Christian school, um, and Catholic school and, um, so the feelings were, uh, not good, I mean, there was a very negative connotation towards being homosexual in the sixties and seventies and even into the eighties, um, my parents were homophobic, um, and it was difficult, I mean, painful, I sort of hoped it would pass, um, I think like most, I had a very typical South African white gay male upbringing of that period, um, where I was closeted, I was not out and, um, it was difficult, you know, and you just, what you just did was try to survive as best you could.

AK: What do you think informed that kind of background of homophobia or fear or hatred, uh, in your parents and in your school?

D: Homophobia of?

AK: Um, homophobia at your school and in your parents and that sort of thing, where do you think that came from?

D: It was just endemic, um, of that time, um, and, and of that society, I mean, as I said, it was a, very much a, uh, patriarchal, male-driven, brutalist type of society that we grew up in and homophobia was very much part of that, um, there, I would say, I wouldn't call it central to it, only, but it was, it was an angry, aggressive sort of ethos that we grew up in and I think it wasn't dissimilar to many English-speaking Western countries, um, there might have been little bit more give, possibly in places like the UK or, but even, I'm not so sure, I mean, if I talk to friends of mine in England, depending where you grew up, you grew up in a big metropolitan area it was obviously easier and similarly in the United States, I mean, I think, unless you were in New York or the West Coast, big cities, if you come from a small town, um, you faced the same challenges in those years, so I don't think it was particularly unique to this country but I think there were unique overtones.

AK: Um, what unique overtones do you think exist in South Africa?

D: I think the whole, the whole fact that this country was, was so divided, um, I think any which way they could cut and divide people, they did, and so, if it was your, your language, your skin colour, your, your gender, um, your religion, um, your social strata, um, and your sexuality, I mean, all of that would have come into play as being just another way of putting you in a box so I think it was fairly powerful. It definitely was to me, you know, very noticeable, you learnt to disassemble and, and fit in as best you can, um, I was not a confrontating, confrontatory type of person, I was not a particularly courageous type of person, um, in fact, I would say that I

was opposite of courageous, I wouldn't call myself a coward but I definitely didn't, I didn't, I didn't stand up and say, 'this is who I am, and I'm quite comfortable with it,' because I didn't feel I had support on any level, definitely not from my family and definitely not from the society I moved in, um, and I was rather afraid that it would, it would jeopardize my future more than anything, um, I had a fairly clear game-plan and, um, I knew what I had to do to achieve that.

AK: And finally, before we move on from your schooling years, did you engage in any other extracurricular activities aside from sport?

D: I engaged in, um, we were involved in things like, we did operettas or plays at school, I did a little bit of that, we had a debating society, um, I played, I played league tennis outside the school, I was at boarding school but I was allowed to play adult league tennis, um, on a Saturday so on Saturday afternoons I was allowed to go off to a private tennis club, where I played, because my parents had played before they left Kimberley and so I played league for them, um, which sometimes also allowed me to travel out of the city and go to smaller towns where the league took place around where I grew up, so, that's about as much as we did, um, it was a very, uh, it was a very, sort of, white male boarding school, you lived your life in the boarding school and I quite enjoyed the boarding side of things, to be perfectly honest, um, I found it very easy, regimented, and a disciplined way to get around and because I was busy with academics and sport, it was almost easier to be a boarder than to be, you know, a day boy.

**00:20:57:** University and the army

AK: Okay, um, then looking towards young adulthood, um, you mentioned you did university in Cape Town, internship and then your military service, is that correct?

D: Correct.

AK: Okay, um, was it a medical degree that you got at UCT?

D: I got a medical degree, I did, uh, six, yes, seven years, seven year medical degree, six years at university and seventh year was the internship which I did in Johannesburg, um, is a while back, so I did that in Cape Town, I was, *ja*, I came down to Cape Town and I was in residence for three years, um, in those days the university was fairly, uh, white, um, medical school was a little different in that there was a little bit more of a mix in the medical classes, um, but the residences were strictly segregated, in fact, I don't think there were any residences for, for people of colour, I'm not, I don't even recall one. I think if you were Oriental, Chinese, possibly, or Japanese you might, I think Chinese people were allowed into residence but it's very vague. I don't recall that so well.

AK: And then, after internship, did you serve in the army medical corps or in the army?

D: I did, *ja*, I went, I went up, uh, so I did my internship in Johannesburg and, at a, hospitals were still, a lot of them were segregated, uh, during my first four years at university at Groote Schuur Hospital was fully segregated, um, and then, against the Nationalist government edict, we, it was declared a mixed hospital, um, but hospitals up in the Transvaal, where I did my internship were segregated so I was at a white hospital, um, which is not the Helen Joseph Hospital, it was then called the J. G. Strijdom Hospital, which is in, uh, Auckland Park, Johannesburg, and then I went to the medical corps.

AK: And that was for three years, you said?

D: It was for two years, um, uh, and that was probably the low point of my life.

**00:23:21: Sexuality and early adulthood**

AK: Um, moving on a little bit, uh, haha, um, how would describe your sexual orientation?

D: When?

AK: Um, actually, that's a good question [laughter] um, then let's start at when you were a young man?

D: I, I, um, I thought you wanted to put it in a place and time, um, I'm, I'm a, a male homosexual, and that's been so ever since I can remember.

AK: And had you at any point, have you come out, should I say?

D: Yes, but that was fairly, that was in my mid-twenties when I, when I, you know, coming out is a, is a, I mean, we didn't have coming out parties in my day, um, but, I mean, my close friends knew as, you know, maybe not initially but, you know, as I, I've still got friends I have had from, had from my first years of university, who are still my closest friends, um, so they, they all knew about me and, um, I have two younger brothers who are both gay, who both also knew, I told them, and then I told my mother, um, when I was in my, probably about twenty-four, twenty-five, um, because it was, it was causing conflict, that she didn't know, um, she was being, uh, obnoxious, um, because I think she suspected and she was being rather nasty about it all so I just laid it all out there, um, because I just, I was, I won't say I was angry but I just felt it couldn't proceed, so, that was the only coming out I've ever had to do, was to my mother, I, my father, I never came out, I don't know whether my mother ever spoke to him, I have a feeling probably not, um, he died, trying to think, when I was in my late-twenties, early-thirties, I mean, we never, we, we, we, sort of, lost any closeness when I went to boarding

school, um, I wasn't particularly close to my father and we didn't discuss anything of, of consequence. I mean, we were friendly, but we were not close.

AK: Do you remember the first time, or first sort of times, that you were attracted to men?

D: Oh, *ja*, that was way back as a child, um, I mean, I remember as a little boy, maybe of five or, I can't remember, being attracted to a young boy, not quite understanding why I was so intrigued by him, um, and, *ja*, I mean, so it goes back then and then, you know, as I grew up was aware that there were certain men who, you know, who had an effect on me, um, I would not be surprised, it's difficult to know, but I had a feeling, my father was quite sexually attractive to me, um, he was a fairly good-looking, he was very good-looking, fairly masculine sort of man, um, I think it was part of me that was attracted to him, I, I don't think it ever crossed into sexual fantasy, but I think it, you know, if, if I think about, that was, would've been real.

AK: Um, do you remember how puberty affected, uh, your sexuality?

D: Um, *ja*, it just became more intense, um, you, the, the physical drive, um, the, you know, the whole libido just, just escalated dramatically and, I mean, that was so right into my, my late forties, I had a very high sex drive, um, and, thank God, has abated over the last five or six years to some extent, um, but it was a very, I would say, cross to bear, um, because it really drove your actions and not always, not always in the most, um, time, time-useful, what's the word for it, so, you know, it seemed to me, even at the time, to be a lot of time-wasting, trying to get sex, you know, just, wasn't easy when I was younger, it was quite difficult, quite furtive, spent a lot of time, you know, sort of, cruising, and trying to, you know, trying to find, um, that sort of thing, which took up a lot of time that, I think, would have been better spent, so I resented it at the time but I was, it was out of my control.

AK: Do you remember when you had your first, um, physical encounter with another man?

D: Mm, sexual encounter, yes, I think I can probably be fairly clear on that, um, *ja*, I do remember it.

AK: How old were you?

D: I was probably eighteen, seventeen or eighteen.

AK: Um, and was that similar, was that a kind of casual interaction or is someone that you knew very well or ...?

D: It was, it was a, a surprising attraction, um, although I think, probably, I mean, one has to remember that back in those days I had absolutely no access to gay friends, I had no friends who I knew were gay, nobody had discussed it and there was very little in the way of, of, uh, supporting literature that one could get one's hands on, I mean, the Internet didn't exist

obviously, and libraries were quite, um, you know, books were redacted and, uh, you know, they were all, you know ...

AK: Censored ...

D: ... So, you know, there was very little for me to go on, I sort of had a feeling there was something out there that was so-called homosexual life, I mean, one heard the term, it was mainly used in a derogatory way, um, it was usually portrayed in the sort of camp, uh, effeminate, um, screaming type of queen or a drag, cross-dresser type of thing, so there was very little to go on and I, I, my first sexual encounter was sort of accidental, um, in that I, I might have thought I had something like that was happening, because I was a fairly, um, wide-eyed and curious person and still am, uh, but very much so when I was younger, obviously just looking out for any sign of anything, um, and so that sort of happened, um, without me, sort of, expecting it to and it was exceptional but also a whole load of guilt that goes with those encounters that occurred, um, I can't say it was particularly satisfactory but I don't regret it, um, I don't think I really regretted it at the time but I, I felt, you know, there was overlaid, strange emotion.

AK: And then, during your time at university, did anything similar kind of encounters?

D: So, that was probably, because I came to university at seventeen and I would say that was, might have been just before, when I used to travel home for holiday, um, from boarding school and might have happened in one of those, so I was sixteen, seventeen, and I came to university at seventeen, um, and I did have a sexual encounter in residence, um, and that was also very surprising, somebody hit on me, he, um, one night, um, subsequently somebody who has become a friend, um, we don't discuss it, um, well, I'm not quite sure if he is the friend or his identical twin brother, I could never quite tell [laughter] um, so, *ja*, I mean, that was my, I suppose, my first sort of, *ja*, I had some sexual experiences during my university years, I had quite, I, and it escalated as I got older and became more, um, more in-tune with, uh, you know, I understood that there was a gay world out there and knew how to negotiate it to some extent.

AK: And what made the leap between you being unaware of the gay world and being able to navigate it, what changed in your life?

D: I mean, coming to Cape Town, um, you know, I lived, basically, in small towns, and when I was in Johannesburg I was visiting my parents, it was, um, they lived in the West or, in the West Rand, in Krugersdorp, um, which was sort of a small town next to Johannesburg in those days, um, I didn't have access to nightlife and I didn't, there wasn't really, you know, apart from Hillbrow, which wasn't a thriving gay world that I was able to see, but when I came to Cape Town, um, you know, that became a little more prominent and there were, obviously, uh,

I was still fairly closeted, I suppose, when I came here, I didn't, um, seek it out particularly but, I, you sort of bumped into it and then I met friends who were gay and they, sort of, came out of the closet and, sort of, pulled me a little bit out of the closet and along to gay bars and stuff like that and that's really how it sort of unfolded, um, and I found some of the cruising spots by accident, most of the time, and, you know, you had Rondebosch Station was a very active gay cruising ground, um, and I happened to be at res and go down to the station because we used to use the trains in those days and, um, you'd be cruising and it opened up a world for me that I hadn't known before.

AK: And, during this time, um, so university, then you went to the army, what sort of interactions did you have there of that nature? Was there interaction of a gay nature in the army?

D: *Ja*, I think, I think there was quite a lot in the army, um, for me personally it, um, it was fairly limited, I went through a very, uh, emotionally difficult time in the, during my army years, I, um, I ended up in the army, sort of, without thinking about it, um, and it was only once I was in it that I realised what I'd let myself in for and was incredibly, so I went through a very severe depressive episode during, in my army service, during the State of Emergency, 1985, '86 was declared, um, and that was very much a low point for me, um, so my sexuality was all pulled up into that complete despair that I felt, um, and as I say, it was extremely, extremely low point, psychologically, for me, um, dangerously so, um, and somehow I survived it, um, I had a bit of a fling, in fact, I had two, in fact, my first boyfriend I met in the latter part of my army, when I was doing sort of community service type work, um, I met somebody who was also in, in the medical corps, in the army, in Durban, and we had a, *ja*, fairly intense, probably my first real love affair, so that happened, I forgot about that, um, until I left the army and went, I left the country the minute I finished my army service, I left three days later, never to, never to come back.

**00:36:05: First relationship**

AK: Um, and, uh, how did you meet your partner, the one that you met in the army service?

D: The fling that I had, the boyfriend, *ja*, um, I met him at a gay cruising beach in Durban.

AK: And, where did it go from there?

D: Well, we got chatting, he happened to be in the military corps, I happened to be in the military corps, he was in Durban, I was, I was based just north of Durban and, um, it was fairly easy to meet and, uh, we spent quite a lot of good times together, he was a fair bit younger than

me, I mean, I was twenty-five, six, and I think he was eighteen or nineteen, straight out of school, um, but very mature guy. He came from a wealthy, well-to-do, um, family had gone to private schools, um, was very much more world-wise and had travelled overseas, although I had, at that point, also travelled overseas, um, but, you know, for an eighteen year-old, he, or nineteen year-old, he was very, uh, you know, he was, he knew the ways of the gay world far better than I did, he could negotiate them far more, far more easily than I did.

AK: Um, and, before then, sort of asking about the relationship, how would you define conflict in the context of a relationship?

D: Um, I don't recall us having conflict, um, it was a, it was a sort of, felt, even then, felt like a young love, innocent love, it was fun, I mean, we spent good times together, um, but I think the conflict only happened when I came back from overseas, I left, I came back expecting to continue where we'd left off, which, I think, was all a bit silly on my part, and he'd moved on and I found that difficult but there wasn't really conflict, it was just heartache, um, we had no real conflict that I recall, I mean, we never, I don't recall anything angry or, in the relationship, it's a good memory.

AK: Um, so how long were you away from South Africa?

D: I was away for eighteen months, um, eighteen months or two years, I think, it was a fair amount of time, I mean, I kept in touch, and, but you know, um, nineteen to twenty-two, whenever, when I came back, that age difference is quite big, um, and we'd moved on, he'd found somebody else, um, I wasn't aware of that and went to visit him and I found out, I was a bit hurt, um, but, sort of, I suppose, you know, even then, I mean, I was old enough, I was twenty-seven or eight, I think, came back and he, you know, I wasn't a kid and by then I was very much more, in-tune with my, with my homosexuality and much more comfortable, um, and, sort of, you know, living, uh, a fairly, I wouldn't call it completely open, gay life but a fairly, hmm, normal life as a gay man.

AK: Where did you go for the two years?

D: I went to Canada.

AK: And were you working there or ...?

D: I worked as a GP, yeah.

AK: And then, when you moved back to South Africa, where did you settle?

D: Where did I settle? Um, let me think, I think I, no, I came straight back to Cape Town, I got a job down here, that's why I came back, um, I wasn't going to come back, I started to, I got a special, specialisation job in Canada, um, and I was about to start that and then just decided that I really hated being away from South Africa, um, came back and I got this job that I've

had applied for years before and I came back and moved down to Cape Town, so I pretty much, since I left school, apart from a couple of years here and there, um, lived in Cape Town.

**00:40:22: Relationships in adulthood**

AK: Um, and between now and then, sorry, between 2008 and when you returned to South Africa, did you ever interact in any, get into any relationships, with other men?

D: Between 2008 and now?

AK: No, sorry, between 2008 and 19, would have been 1988 or 1989, I think.

D: Um, so we're going backwards, I'm trying to get the dates right, *ja*, I've had relationships, I've had both, um, uh, casual, casual, sexual relationships as well as a couple of romantic relationships.

AK: Okay, um, firstly looking at the, uh, sexual, casual relationships, uh, were those the sort that you would get through cruising or gay bars and stuff like that?

D: Yup.

AK: Okay, um, do you remember, sort of, how you went about finding men in those specific instances and who you were looking for, what was the sort of person you were looking for?

D: *Ja*, it is a sort of a vague memory, are we talking between when I came back to South Africa, which is the late eighties, and 2008, are that the sort of days that you're basically ...?

AK: Shouldn't have worked backwards [laughter]

D: Sorry, I just got a bit confused about where we were at, um, well there were a number of known places, obviously there were gay clubs and gay bars, we would go and, I was, when I was younger I lived a fairly clean-living life, um, when I was a intern up in Johannesburg I dealt with the very, the very first HIV/AIDS patient in South Africa, um, he was so-called [indecipherable] South Africa HIV/AIDS patient, I immediately became aware that, so that was in the early eighties, of this disease that was a disease mainly of homosexual men in those days, um, and I knew about transmission of Hepatitis B and I had absolutely no doubt that HIV was transmitted mainly through anal, anal intercourse and sex so I knew that from, I knew that before they even said that was how it was passed on because it just made sense to me, um, and so I became incredibly, uh, cautious about unprotected sexual activity, so, having said that, I still did a lot of, I still had a lot of casual sex but it was fairly safe and I was never a drug user, in those days, well, definitely in the, up into the early nineties I didn't use anything apart from party drugs such as ecstasy, occasionally, um, so, you know, I'd meet people in different scenarios, it would be clubs, bars, um, Sandy Bay, cruising on the beachfront, Rondebosch

Station, as I mentioned, there were, there was, you know, depends where I was and what mood I was in, um, it's just sometimes you bump into someone that you liked and they liked you and off it went, so it was, I didn't have any fixed pattern but it was pretty typical of the time, there was no other way of meeting people, there was no Internet or Gaydar or, if that still exists, I dunno, um, what's the other one, Manhunter or what people use now, so I, um, I, uh, *ja*, that's how I found my sexual outlets.

AK: Were you looking for a serious relationship at that time?

D: I don't think I've ever really looked for a serious relationship, actively, um, I've always been a very independent person, I, as a child, I was very independent, I think, as I mentioned, um, even though I had a close and loving family I was not particularly comfortable in the family set-up, my brothers stayed at home until their mid-twenties, I couldn't wait to leave, I would've left at ten, if I could have, I asked to go to boarding school, so I've always been a terribly independent sort of person, I don't think I've actively ever looked for a relationship but been in spaces where relationships seemed to have been reasonable and appropriate and they had happened, um, and that's the only way I can describe it but I've never had a yearn to be partnered

AK: Um, when was your first serious relationship after the fling you had in Durban?

D: So, the relationship in Durban was, I would, maybe I called it a fling but I'd like to retract that, I, it was, it was, uh, it was a relationship, it was a sweet relationship that was short-lived, probably all of six, seven, eight months, um, but it was more than just a fling, it, you know, we cared for each other and we looked after each other and it was, it was good and, um, you know, he mattered to me and I've had contact with him over the years, on and off, um, and still somebody I like, um, so, following that, my next one was in the early nineties, maybe late eighties, early nineties, I met somebody who I had a relationship with, that was very tempestuous, um, uh, I'm still friendly with him, um, it lasted, on and off, probably for about five, six years, we never lived together and I think that was probably the issue for him, I was never ready for that, um, there were certainly issues around him that I found difficult to deal with, um, *ja*, so that was my first relationship but that lasted, it was more intense in the first two, three years, um, and then became a sort of on-off, rather difficult relationship, um, for maybe another three, four years after that, we remained very friendly once he got a permanent partner, um, he was diagnosed with HIV at a certain point after our relationship and I, in fact, had to break the diagnosis to him because he couldn't get hold of a doctor, um, and that was a difficult time, um, he quite soon after that became involved in a relationship that he is still in, he's married, um, we had a, a good friendship for quite a few years after that and then, um, we

stopped talking when he emigrated, he was very, um, *ja*, he just, basically, um, when he wanted to emigrate he, um, he cut all ties with people in a rather obnoxious way and I just felt that was unfair and, but in the last five years or so we've, we've regained contact and we're fairly friendly, I travel with him and his husband every few years, we do a trip overseas, they come visit me when they come out here, so we, we're back on friendly terms, um, so that was my first relationship.

AK: Do you mind if I ask what issues prompted you not to want to move in with him?

D: Um, oh, *ja*, I'm happy to discuss them, um, he was, uh, he was fairly racist, uh, across every level of life, anti-Semitic, uh, as well as racist on a racial level, so, on every which way, um, he was very volatile, um, artistic temperament, one could charitably describe it, um, which I didn't enjoy, I didn't like the fact that he became a nasty person when he became angry, I mean, I believe people should have anger and that they should express their strong emotion but I do think there's a way and means of doing it, um, it's been a long journey for him and I think he's gotten a bit better at that, I have, being a bossy person, I have tried to coach him but the words 'hate' and 'disgusting,' those words come very easily to his mouth so I found that very off-putting, losing tempers with people who, you know, so there was a lot of that and, um, also a lot of entitlement, um, which I felt was unjustified, um, he had no more entitlement than anybody else did, so, um, or I do, so, um, those issues always stopped me from really wanting to take him on as a, when I say take him on, really, allow myself to be completely, permanently partnered with him, you know, so that was the issue, mainly, um, *ja*, I think those were the big issues ... I mean, I'm quite judgmental, I try and keep my judgment to myself.

AK: Um, did you, even though he didn't move in with you, did you share a domestic setting or domestic space?

D: *Ja*, you know, I mean, I always had my own domestic space, um, and I purchased property quite early on in my career, um, it was just a thing I always wanted, I wanted my own home and he also bought a flat, I think, um, and then a house, um, so we, you know, we used to shuttle between the two of them, he was very, I think, distraught when I bought my second house, I didn't invite him to move in with him, he was renting a flat at that point and then he bought a little house, um, and I think that was very painful for him and, uh, you know, I was aware of that but, uh, it just wasn't something I wanted and I, you know, I try to be as true to myself as I can be, um, I don't always get it right.

AK: Would you say, um, I hope you don't mind me asking, that you have any conflict outside, of, uh, verbal conflict with this partner?

D: So, you mean physical problems or ...?

AK: Physical, emotional, anything like that.

D: Well, emotionally I didn't feel he was, um, he was mature, I felt he was immature emotionally so, yeah, that was a problem for me, um, I felt, and that's being judgmental, but, I mean, just the way he reacted to stuff was, um, immature in my opinion and seemed to indicate issues that I felt needed, uh, dealing with, um, so there were, there were, I mean, I, we were, I don't, we were never physically abusive, um, we never were emotionally abusive to each other that I can recall, apart from when he was abusive to me, uh, just before he left overseas and I cut ties with him because of that, and I was not aware of any sexual infidelity, I mean, I did sort of live in the world of people in a relationship being monogamous, um, at that time and I think, to some point, I still do but, um, I definitely was not, I don't recall ever cheating and I, I was not aware of him, at the time, cheating, although possibly that did happen that I was aware of, um, I've never really explored that and, you know, it, I'm, I didn't have cause to doubt.

**00:52:58:** Politics and society

AK: Um, then, in the nineties, to take a slight tangent, um, with the end of *apartheid* and the beginning of democracy, would you say that those changes affected your sense of sexuality?

D: Yeah, um, definitely, I mean, it had a profound effect on homosexuals in this country, I mean, we, we, I was very involved in the, uh, Mother City Queer Project right from the very beginning, one of my closest friends started that and I was very involved in that whole, uh, movement, um, in a non-political way, in a very much pragmatic, practical way, um, supporting a friend who was involved in the political side but I was very informed by his politics, the whole queer, queer politics and I had read a lot around that over the years, um, and started to become more 'conscientised' by that and so once we had the new dispensation, new constitution, and it was no longer criminalised, um, that made a huge, a huge difference to the way that one viewed oneself, the way I viewed myself, um, the comfort that one felt, um, in that, that one was protected by law, um, even if you weren't protected by society, I mean, that was a very profound change and I think it, um, it only increased my libido, I mean, I, no, I'm, I'm joking but, I mean, it freed things up a whole lot and, so it was easier in some ways to, to move in gay circles and feel very comfortable without feeling furtive and dirty and criminal, um, you know, criminalising anything always makes it sort of exciting but also, depending on your type of personality, can make it quite difficult, I'm of the type of person that's not particularly excited by doing something that's, um, you know, I was never a shoplifter or someone who got a thrill of that sort of shit, um, you know, breaking the law did not thrill me,

so I was never thrilled by that, um, but I, you know, um, so that, that, *ja*, had a profound effect on me and I think on gay society generally in this country but generally, definitely for me and for, you know, and for people living in big cities in particular.

AK: Have you ever desired to get married or to adopt children?

D: Um, first answer, no, and I have still no desire to marry, I mean, I am not averse to it but I'm not desiring, no desires of it, um, I think there's a place for it, my brother's married, I have close friends who are married, um. Adopting children, that's a difficult one, I can't say a complete 'no,' I've thought about it, I've been through broody patches in my life, um, but they've usually been short-lived and, um, so it's never been something that's driven me, I admire people who do it and I support people who do I, um, in whichever way I can, I do know a few people who have done that and I have, you know I, I am supportive of it both, you know, as a friend and whichever, which way I could, really just leave it at that, I you know, I am supportive of it and I think it's a great thing to do, but I have never, I've always thought that people who adopt are very brave, um, um, but I also think it's a great, a great act of kindness and also I think it's a two-way street, obviously, I think, people I know who adopted often got great joy out of their, their doing that, um, I have to say I'm a little more selfish, I think that if I ever wanted a child, I wouldn't want one of my own, I did go down that road, when I say, mentally, sort of, anyway, tried it and I did think about finding a surrogate mother, um, for a child, and there is a possibility that I am a father, although that's very difficult, I've never pursued discovering that because I had a relationship with a woman when I was twenty and she was a lot older and she, um, went back to the UK after telling me that she missed two periods, she said she was going to go back home to have an abortion, because you couldn't get them in this country and I never had further contact with her so whether that did indeed happen or whether the child was born or whether she was indeed pregnant, I dunno, it's always been something I've sort of wondered about, I decided, if she wanted me to be involved by now she would have let me know, um, and if I really wanted to know I would have made ... to find out, so, I just left that be, but there is a chance that I have a child.

**00:58:27:** Further relationships

AK: Um, and then looking between the mid-nineties and the mid-two-thousands, uh, did you interact in any, um, more long-term relationships like the one you described earlier?

D: So, let me just get my dates right, um, I had, I had a couple of other relationships, short-lived ones, um, I then had a slightly longer one, which was a very nice relationship with, with

a boy from Stellenbosch, man from Stellenbosch, um, which lasted three or four years, uh, we never lived together, once again, he lived in Stellenbosch and I lived here, we used to shuttle between the two, um, he was introduced to my mother as, he was the first partner I introduced to my mother as my sexual partner, um, and she liked him a lot, um, the relationship didn't last, mainly because we were from very different, uh, backgrounds and I don't want to use the word 'intellectual,' uh, 'levels,' but intellectual interests, I suppose, um, he was very much a, dyed in the wool, straight-looking Afrikaans boy who, you know, who I wouldn't for a minute think was gay, um, very much had those pursuits, I mean, he liked to *braai* and go and watch rugby and, um, *kuier* with his friends, whereas I was far more interested in a whole lot of other, maybe more snooty, pursuits such as classical music and singing and opera and stuff like that, so we, we, we didn't blend on that level and we had very little to talk about on an intellectual level, it was very nice to do things, he was very nice to spend time with and sexually was very, compatible, um, and he was very kind to my mother and she liked him a lot but that's not enough to build a relationship on, and I didn't see it going anywhere so I ended it, which was painful, for him and for me.

AK: Would you say then that, in finding relationships and forming relationships, that compatibility on a number of different levels is important?

D: *Ja*, I mean, I did find, I suppose, there had been, you know, the very first relationship was love, I still feel a warm feeling when I think of him, the one I described in the early nineties, I think it was a bit of an infatuation, um, there might have been a little love involved but I, you know, my feeling is now a friendship feeling, um, with the one I've just described, I can't say I was ever in love with him but I liked him a helluva lot, um, but I have fallen in love, desperately, with somebody who ticked a lot of the boxes that, um, that I find important, and that is someone who comes from a similar background, possibly, not entirely, but has similar intellectual, um, rapport, I suppose is what is said, but, somebody who is well-read and, you know, has a bit of knowledge of the world, even though he was a lot younger than I was, fourteen years younger than I was, I think, um, but he was a very, uh, world-wise, worked, had studied overseas, so that was a, that was a, a relationship where I've felt that this was one that could be, you know, more long-term, and it did last a fair amount of time, but unfortunately it broke down due to issues of substance abuse and, uh, sexual promiscuity, et cetera, which, um, I won't say I was completely, uh, it was only on one side, but it, it was problematic and the relationship was, was, became based on things that ended up being very, uh, destructive and I realised I had to walk away from that, and that was a very difficult decision on my part.

AK: Um, looking then at the times in your relationships where things were difficult, and then the ends of these relationships, what sort of coping mechanisms did you adopt?

D: Well, the first ones, um, really until the last one were all quite easy, I mean, I decided that, you know, that, and I say 'I' and because I've, the very first one, I didn't end, that was difficult, I was unhappy but I understood, I just used my intellect, I just used rational thinking and understanding, and understanding that I was hurt and that it would get better, um, a bit like you do with a loss of a friend or a family member, a death or somebody who disappears overseas or whatever, um, or a break-up of a friendship, so that I got over, um, the other ones, I, two major ones, I realised they weren't going anywhere and they were not suitable so that was easy, I didn't have to cope, um, I had to cope on their behalf and deal with their fallout, which I didn't find so easy and then the last one was very difficult and I didn't cope well with that at all, and that took me a lot of, uh, heartache and, um, I turned to substance abuse for a few years, which was very destructive and then I had to pull myself out of that, so I had a cocaine habit, um, which, which became, sort of, I won't say it got out of control but it became a serious problem for me, um, I then put in place, I never went to rehab, I didn't believe in it, I don't really believe in it, you've gotta make changes and want to get up yourself, personally, um, so I instituted some very clear measures, first of all was breaking off contact with the people who were mainly around that sort of habit, secondly, I went into five years of full, uh, psychoanalysis, um, and I put in certain physical, um, physical things, uh, activities to ensure that I didn't stray from that and, *ja*, all that together meant that quite quickly I got myself back on the straight and narrow. I was also under a lot of stress in my business, I had a very busy private practice, um, and I gave that up.

AK: Um, cool, thank you for telling me that, um, is there anything else you'd like to add?

D: No, I think, conflict I had in my last relationship, but that's probably post-dated, that was, sort of, after 2008, that that relationship wound up, trying to get my dates right, *ja*, I mean, it was, it was a conflicted relationship, um, it was one where I felt head over heels in love and put up with stuff that I would never have put up with in, with anybody else and there, I, you know, I just realised now that, when I look back, I think the warning signs, I knew the warning signs were there from the early on, really, from day one, just about, and I, you know, falling in love is a dangerous thing, I, I don't recommend it [laughter].

AK: Um, thank you so much for everything, I do appreciate it, um, I will send through the form to you as soon as possible, um, with the transcript, um, *ja*, if you could pass this on to anyone you know who might be interested in being interviewed, please do, um, otherwise, thank you so much.

D: Pleasure.

AK: Thank you, um.

D: Thanks, Adam.

AK: And enjoy the rest of your day!

D: You too. All the best with your dissertation.

AK: Thank you very much, thank you, and cheers, bye-bye.

### **Interview Description**

**Length of Interview:** 1 hour 6 minutes 51 seconds

**Recording Equipment:** Skype [via Lenovo Ideapad]

**Copy and Access status:** signed release form; interviewee has requested full anonymity.

**Name of the Interviewee:** ‘Benjamin De Beer’ [E]

**Name of the Interviewer:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam [AK]

**Date of Interview:** 19 June 2019

**Place of Interview:** Wynberg, Cape Town

**Number of tapes/recordings:** 1

**Transcribed by:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam

**Date Transcribed:** 17 July 2019

**00:00:00:** Family background

AK: Uh, let me pop that there, right, um, so first things first, when and where were you born?

E: 16th November 1968 in Caledon, hundred and fifty k’s east of here.

AK: Okay, cool, and who did you live with, at the time, when you were born?

E: I was the youngest of five, uh, so four siblings and two parents.

AK: Okay, cool, um, and what work did your parents do?

E: My dad was the, a local GP and my mum was, uh, a stay at home mum.

AK: Um, and then, first of all, with your relationship with your, uh, parents, what was your relationship like when you were growing up with your father?

E: Um, appalling [chuckles] uh, classic absent father, uh, sort of, quite Calvinistic, Afrikaans, um, emotionally unavailable, all those clichés, um, *ja*.

AK: And, in contrast, with your mother?

E: More clichés, I’m afraid, um, close, uh, I thought close, anyway, I was the baby, so I was kind of more mollycoddled, possibly spoilt, uh, but, *ja*, affectionate, close.

AK: Um, and how were each of them involved in your upbringing?

E: Well, I mean, you know, it’s, I’m quite a lot older than you, so it’s probably almost a whole generation gap, so they were, you know, these people were born in the, your parents were probably born in the sixties, my parents were born in the thirties, um, so quite kind of Calvinistic in their upbringing, which as we know has an impact on the way they bring up their kids, this was very different as well, um, very formal, almost Victorian, so mum was, not exactly hands-on, uh, we had full-time, uh, housekeeper slash cook slash nanny, um, so, and dad was just busy working, dad was really, kind of, absent, we’d see him in the evenings, um, and so I wouldn’t say very hands-on, from mum, enough, uh, enough affection and, and, and good feeling but, but not, not very hands-on, especially by today’s standards.

AK: Were both your parents Afrikaans?

E: Dad, Afrikaans, mum, uh, English slash Irish.

AK: Um, was your mother born in South Africa?

E: No.

AK: Did she move down when she was a child or ...?

E: They met in Europe and got married.

AK: Um, and how would you describe your parent's marriage when you were growing up?

E: I think it fluctuated quite a lot, uh, when I was, when I was about fifteen, my mum moved out, uh, because my dad was, uh, unfaithful and it had, it wasn't the first time and she had had enough or was trying to prove a point so she moved out, so, I suppose fifteen years isn't a long time, um, so I think there was a lot going on for them but I think we also were privy to, uh, a lot of affectionate encounters between the two of them and, uh, there was, I think there was a fair amount of feeling secure in my parent's marriage, as well as it kind of falling apart.

AK: Um, did your parent's divorce?

E: They did.

AK: How long after she moved out?

E: Uh, two years.

AK: So, you would have been seventeen ... did either of your parents remarry?

E: My father did, my mother didn't.

AK: Okay, um, and then finally, when you were a younger child, how would you describe your domestic setting?

E: I think I had a great childhood, uh, we lived in a small town, we had a lot of freedom, it was secure, we used to go downtown on our own in the afternoons without telling anyone where we were, or we would go and explore the bush on the periphery of town on the weekend with friends, it was very free, um, and, *ja*, and we used to go and spend Saturdays on neighbouring farms, it was, it was lovely.

**00:04:36: Schooling years and the army**

AK: Um, and then moving to your schooling years, uh, first of all, where did you attend pre-school?

E: Pre-school, in Caledon, *ja*.

AK: And do you remember what that was like?

E: It was wonderful, I got more attention than I had ever gotten before, I've got my old reports, actually, I looked at it the other day, uh, 'Patrick refuses to sing along unless he is sitting on

the piano stool with teacher,' 'Patrick spends a lot of time in the dress-up corner,' 'Patrick won't play with the other kids except maybe Ingrid and Ian,' um, but I was in nursery school for two years and, uh, I obviously felt quite safe there, I liked the teacher, she was sweet and she was, uh, she was a soft place to be.

AK: Um, and prep school and high school, where did you go?

E: Uh, Caledon, to the primary school in Caledon and then to boarding school, to Rondebosch [Boys'] High School.

AK: Um, and then looking at the social environment at, um, Caledon Prep and Rondebosch Boys' High, uh, what was it like there in terms of making friends, were there any instances of bullying, things like that?

E: Uh, I was happy in primary school, uh, I was fairly popular, I, uh, I had an older brother, I was bullied, I think, a fair amount at home, uh, which meant that I was the bully at school, um, and I remember one or two instances that I just, I shrivel in shame thinking about it, I was a, I was a, I was a horrendous bully at primary school to, to two boys, that I can remember, um, I mean, I wouldn't define myself as that throughout my primary school career but, but, uh, those two come up. Apart from that I felt, I felt, I felt comfortable, I felt, just, regular, I, um, I did athletics, I was okay at that, I was average size for my age, *ja*, it was quite well-adjusted, and in high school, for the first year of high school those things still applied, except I didn't bully, I was just, now, out of my comfort zone, even though I liked it, um, it was quite new and, not intimidating but almost and, and then I think I started hitting puberty in the beginning of the second year and, no, I'm talking rubbish, uh, I'm a very late developer so everyone else hit puberty and, and I started becoming very small for my age and so I wasn't as good at athletics or sports or, or didn't feel as confident, um, and then felt like a bit of shrinking violet and a bit of an underachiever for the next, for the remainder, for the rest of high school.

AK: Um, and did you involve yourself in any other, like, extra-curricular activities, music, drama, art, that sort of thing?

E: Well, art was very much intra-curricular at that, at that stage, it wasn't, it wasn't extra-curricular as such, um, you know, the usual kind of, you know, playing the rugby in the under fourteen 'D' team and just that crap that didn't mean much, um, extra-curricular, I mean, we had an arts and drama club, back then, but it wasn't, you didn't have to do anything, you just to a play every now and then, you know, um, ballroom dancing lessons with the Rustenburg boarders, at one stage, uh, theatrical productions at other schools, that's about it.

AK: Um, did you have any of your older, uh, siblings at Rondebosch when you were there?

E: My brother.

AK: Um, what's the age gap between you?

E: Uh, eighteen months, so he was two years ahead of me, academically.

AK: Um, and did you get along during school, when you were in boarding ...?

E: In high school?

AK: *Ja*.

E: Uh, we were never in the same house, so we didn't see much of each other, um, he didn't pay me much attention which was quite a typical, I think, for that era, sibling, uh, kind of relationship where he didn't want, you know, I was gonna cramp his style and he didn't want, I mean, we had contact, I don't remember even wanting that much, he was also a late developer and was also very small, even smaller than me for his age so it didn't feel like he was someone who could support or protect me so I didn't look for it from him.

AK: Um, and in terms of, in, kinda, prep and Rondebosch High, how did they engage with issues of sexuality, gender and masculinity?

E: Good God, I can't spell those words [laughter] I mean, primary school was, you know, *Laerskool Overberg*, so it was Afrikaans. We were in the English medium, but it was also the seventies, so, uh, so, I, absolutely nothing, there was no awareness in those days amongst kids, amongst learners of, of those things, read me those words again.

AK: Um, so sexuality, gender and masculinity.

E: *Ja*, you know, those things aren't so overt, they weren't for me anyway, so I was, in, from '82 to '86 I was in high school and I was a boarder so, so nothing is overtly taught or instructed or, uh, or discussed, um, and so, you know, the journey is one's own kind of journey that you, that you follow. I mean, even boarding school wasn't particularly sexualised, it wasn't, uh, you know, it, I mean, you know, one of the guys at school was considered 'off the wall' and we had a pool table in the common room at boarding school and he used to, to put his opponent off he used to put his cock in a pocket that the guy was aiming for at billiards, um, and that was hilarious, you know, that wasn't, we didn't frame things as sexual or masculine or, masculinity, or anything like that, it just was absolutely absent for me.

AK: Um, and then the same sort of thing around race and social class, how did those two schools deal with it?

E: Primary school, again, I think primarily due to my just lack of awareness around, uh, around class in particular, um, they, as a school, certainly didn't address it, it wasn't something, it wasn't their mandate, um, obviously in those days it was a, it was a white-only school, um, but also, kind of, predictably, you know, in a farming environment, you know, you're brought up playing with kids of all races and, you know, employee's kids and things like that, so, *ja*, so

kids don't know stuff. High school, um, it was too long ago, in that sense, it wasn't an issue, uh, class, no, it just didn't come up for me, you know, it could've been because I was just too unaware, but we never had issues in those days about class or about so-and-so's parents are rich or so-and-so's parents aren't, or, just especially at boarding school because you were, you weren't going home every day, you weren't listening to your parents gossip which is where I think a lot of kids get their so-called opinions, so, no, nothing much.

AK: And then after 1986, did you do service in the army?

E: Two years.

AK: Um, where did you go for your army service?

E: I went, I, I was accepted by the medics, the medical service, so I went to [clears throat] uh, basic training in Potchefstroom, after which, six months at 1 Military Hospital in Vootrekkerhoogte, Pretoria, which I absolutely loved, I was, I worked in the operating theatres, which felt like, it really felt like civilian life because there were a lot of women who were not necessarily in the army, uh, civilian women working there and we wore scrubs, so it didn't feel like the military at all, uh, and then six months in, uh, 3 Military Hospital in Bloemfontein, and then after that six months at 2 Military Hospital in Wynberg.

AK: Um, so no active service on the border or anything like that?

E: No, nothing like that.

AK: Um, and then after, uh, your military service, guessing would have been '87, '88, did you go to university?

E: I didn't, I went to, uh, the technikon, Cape Tech and I did, uh, graphic design diploma, three years.

### **00:13:50:** Young adulthood

AK: Um, cool, then, moving on to, uh, sort of, your younger adult years ...

E: The neighbours call hear all of this [laughter].

AK: And, sort of, early sexual experiences, first of all, how would you describe your sexuality, sexual orientation?

E: Now? Um.

AK: *Ja*.

E: Homosexual.

AK: Okay, um, and when would you say that you first began to interact with your attractions to men?

E: Uh, late high school.

AK: Um, do you remember the kinds of feelings that you had when you, when you started to be attracted to men?

E: Um, at high school it was purely, it was purely above the belt, it was a lot, it was very emotional, very tense, very emotional, uh, feeling attraction, uh, *ja*.

AK: Did you, um, sorry, let me, uh, [laughter] do you, did you experience attractions to women?

E: Not in the same way, um, and if I were to answer 'yes' to that question I would have to say it was probably just out of curiosity and, and, and, uh, a desire to engage socially.

AK: Um, and then when would you say you had your first physical encounter with a man, roughly?

E: I'd say, second year of army.

AK: Um, what happened there?

E: Uh, we'd been out at night and, uh, I think it was just a bit of a, a bit of a fiddle in a car after having been out on the town and a bit pissed.

AK: And you remember how that encounter made you feel?

E: Uh, I think I was excited, but it was also quite, uh, challenging territory and it was, I do remember I, you know, after a bit of a fiddle, it was, I backed off, I backed off, it was something to back away from.

AK: Um, why would you say that?

E: Uh, because, because of the, because of the, the stigma and the discomfort of branding oneself 'gay' in those, days, uh, you know, when we had absolutely no role models and when the only thing we kinda knew about gay men was that they were to be pitied or feared or that they, you know, hung around public lavatories late at night so it wasn't was something one was really comfortable, um, uh, identifying with at all.

AK: Okay, um, seeing as it's the mid-eighties when this was happening, mid-to-late eighties, um, were you aware of HIV?

E: *Ja*.

AK: Um, what was your sort of take on HIV and its relationship with the gay community and being gay?

E: Well, I think it was just an additional, an additional reason to be, to be terrified and to, to, to, to feel discouraged and to feel that it wasn't something one wanted to pursue or indulge in, you know, I remember reading about it in, in the *Huisgenoot* in those days, in the library at school, so I was aware of it, it was quite, uh, quite chilling.

AK: And then, after you finished your diploma at Cape Tech, what work did you go into?

E: I did a little bit of this, a little bit of that, um, I was a photographer's assistant for a while, I worked designing, as part of a team designing educational handbooks for a while, um, uh, not much, uh, pretty soon after that I, uh, I went to live in London and did my, what the New Zealanders call your OE, your Overseas Experience.

AK: Um, how long did you spend in London?

E: Uh, three years.

AK: Um, do you remember the three years?

E: Uh, '93 till '96.

AK: ... through to '96, okay, um, so then you would have returned then during democratic South Africa, um, what were your, um, okay, did you have any interactions with other men while you were working in London?

E: [laughter] there's an understatement, *ja*, no, I came out in London big time and I, uh, I experimented with sex and drugs and with partying and with, uh, just individuating from, from the parents, from the home, uh, in a big way, um, so I had many sexual experiences, um, and emotional experiences, loving, uh, experiences and all those things you associate with someone in their twenties, uh, moving to London, basically.

AK: And what prompted them, the change in mindset from your first sexual experience to what you experienced in London, um, at the time?

E: I think something happened in between those two dates where I, uh, there was a bit of a seismic shift around confidence, self-confidence and I, I had far more confidence in London and there's also a lot to be said for, for feeling really anonymous in a big city and also, you know, rubbing shoulders with people from many, many different countries and it just really expands your outlook and really expands the way you see yourself and I was sought after, I was popular, I was not quite pursued but it wasn't difficult to find romantic interludes, at all, I wasn't saying no to any of them.

**00:20:20:** Conflict in relationships

AK: Um, then in the context of a relationship, of any description, casual, intimate, whatever it may be, how would you describe the word ...

E: Sexual relationship?

AK: Can be sexual, it can be emotional, romantic ...

E: We're not talking siblings here?

AK: No, no, no, so, specifically in the context of, *ja*, two men, or more, uh, if there are more people involved in a particular relationship, how would you define the word 'conflict'?

E: How would I define the word 'conflict'?

AK: Yes.

E: I suppose some kind of trauma that results from, from disagreements or seeing things in different ways, well, just, uh, *ja*.

AK: Um, and what kinds of actions or behaviours do you think could possibly create conflict between people in a relationship?

E: How much time have you got? [laughter]

AK: As much as you need to describe.

E: What kind of situations, sorry, what was the question?

AK: So, any kinds of actions or behaviours or ...

E: All of them, I'm quite serious, all of them, I mean, we are, you know, we are, we are that different, all kinds, all kinds of situation cause conflict, um, people have different values, people have to, you know, go into relationships assuming we all have the same values, chances are slim and, I think, pretty much any disagreement or, or, or lack of, of understanding can cause conflict, *ja*, I'm sorry, it's quite, I'm finding it quite a vague ...

AK: It's just sort of a general sort of framing, um, then, uh, I can try and narrow it down, then, uh, if you think of the, uh, relationships you had then, uh, after leaving the army and then in London, so those two time periods, uh, would you say that you experienced conflict in any of your sexual relationships or romantic encounters or any of those things?

E: Yes, but, uh, but I think the way, because of my immaturity and my age, I think they way they handled, uh, is very different from how they would be handled now. I think, looking back, I would, I would just avoid, just avoid, walk away from the relationship, don't phone, I would just avoid, I think, and I suppose, I suppose to some degree I didn't allow conflict to happen, I kind of head it off at the pass, you know, I just, it's also a way of avoiding, to, just not to let it happen, see the signs and go, 'okay, cheerio, I'll be off then.'

AK: Um, and how would these conflicts, uh, come about, would it be, um, verbal altercation, physical altercation, what kinds of things would happen, these instances of conflict?

E: Just the London days, the early days?

AK: London, or in the time after you finished the army.

E: Uh, well I didn't have any kind of romantic entanglements, uh, here, after the army, um, I had a couple but that was, like, the week before London so it was an obvious part of me going,

you know, preparing myself for what, and those were just casual sort of, uh, liaisons, they were a couple of days, maximum, um, what was the question?

AK: Um, so, okay, while you were in London, how would these conflicts come about, what would happen?

E: *Ag*, how do they ever happen, it's, uh, misunderstanding, assumptions, not getting your expectations satisfied, partner not wanting to go out or not wanting to go where you wanted to go, um, uh, there were very few, I was too immature to have real conflicts then, I think.

AK: Um, and then, when you moved back to South Africa, uh, did you, assuming you settled in Cape Town ...

E: Yes.

AK: ... Um, what did you do to pass the time, and did you seek employment or?

E: *Ja*, I found work, almost immediately.

AK: Um, and then between, which would have been 1996 and 2008, uh, did you engage, first of all, in casual sexual relationships?

E: Oh, yes.

AK: Um, how would you go about finding your partners, um, in Cape Town at that time?

E: Uh, the clubs and bars.

AK: Okay, um, are there any ones that stand out to you that you went to?

E: Bronx, and Angels, and, God, I can't remember their names, I mean, the place, you're probably too young but there was, the buildings where the clubs were, they turned over every so often, the names were changed but they were still exactly the same place.

AK: Is this all in the city, in De Waterkant, that sort of area?

E: [nods]

AK: Okay, cool ...

E: Somerset Road.

AK: And did you become part of a sort of, a group of similarly-minded gay men at the time who became your friends?

E: Not really, I'm not one for, kind of, hanging out in a gang, I would have a couple of very close friends, um, and I would generally, we would just go around, we would go as, in twos, usually just a friend and I and it would be a friend that I was, uh, very close to, not emotionally, not, not romantically, um, and, *ja*, and like that.

AK: Um, and then, again, during the sort of same time period did you ever enter into any more long-term relationships with other men?

E: Before '98, you say?

AK: Uh, no, so between '96 and 2008.

E: Yes, uh, I had my first, what I consider my first proper long-term relationship, which wasn't that long-term, but it was for, um, and 2008, so I'd been to, uh, I lived in Spain as well in that period.

AK: When were you in Spain?

E: So, I was in Spain from 2005 to 2007.

AK: Okay, cool, um, so then between '96 and 2005, yes, you mentioned a relationship, how long did that last?

E: A year and a half-ish.

AK: Okay, um, how did you meet your partner?

E: At, uh, at one of the clubs in Cape Town, gay clubs.

AK: Um, and did you ever live together?

E: No.

AK: Um, and how was that relationship, how would you describe it?

E: Uh, it was wonderful, in hindsight, um, it was wonderful, I was very happy, uh, I was, *ja*, I was clueless, looking back, but I was, I was very happy, uh, do you want me to elaborate in any direction?

AK: Um, well, first of all, like, did you ever share a domestic setting, like, did you ever make dinner together or spend the night.

E: *Ja*, often, often, we would spend, uh, a significant amount of time in each other's homes and take turns to stay over and would definitely stay over and make meals and, uh, watch TV and, uh, those kinds of things.

AK: Um, and did you experience conflict, as we spoke about earlier, did that pop up, anything significant?

E: Nothing significant, uh, again, similarly to the London experiences it was, um, it was often handled by not being handled, it was handled by just avoiding or not talking about it or waiting for to blow over, um, there weren't histrionics or ...

AK: Would it have been the more day-to-day kind of things?

E: [coughs] God, it was so long ago [laughter] um, *ja*, I think it was the day-to-day kinds of things, it was, uh, I think it was often also just emotional things, people like they're not respected or not being given enough attention or not being appropriately, uh, valued or things like that.

AK: Um, and then, uh, during any kind of sort of conflict, uh, what were your sort of coping mechanisms, both during the time you were in London and in this particular relationship?

E: Avoid.

AK: Avoid. Uh, did you ever confide in anyone else or speak to people about it?

E: I must have, I must have.

AK: Did you ever seek any professional help or counselling or stuff like that?

E: [shakes head]

AK: Not, um, did you ever come out to your family?

E: I came out to my mum, um, uh, like a week before I left for London, so that's '93, I was twenty-four, twenty-five, um, *ja*, but it was on the telephone, it wasn't, uh, it wasn't comfortable, I wasn't comfortable, um, dunno why I did it actually, I just wanted to let her know, I think, and I came out in an extremely oblique way, which made her, kind of, forced her to guess and to say it.

AK: Do your siblings or father know, um, and what was their sort of reaction?

E: Uh, father, there was never a reaction, there was never, discussed or talked about, it was never referred to, um, uh, siblings, I have to say, it was over a progressive period, um, I, you know, from the very beginning I knew that they knew, I knew that it was not an issue to them, I knew that I was no less accepted then than I had been before, uh, but it wasn't, it wasn't something that was discussed, we didn't have that kind of intimacy in the family, uh, it was better just not mentioned, um, and then, only now, in the last ten, twenty years, have we got to a place where it's, like, we can joke about it or make fun of it or ...

AK: Um, and then after the relationship that you mentioned, the year and a half one, do you remember what caused the end of that relationship?

E: I got bored and I just wanted to move on, I wanted different, more.

AK: Um, and then, in the time between that relationship and 2008, again, were you in any long-term relationships?

E: No.

AK: Not?

E: No.

AK: Nothing you can think of?

E: No, no, I certainly wasn't, what I'm thinking about is that I was in relationships that I certainly would have wanted to be long-term relationships but they didn't happen, um, I came back in 2007 and I had a relationship which was all of six weeks, um, but it was huge for me, I really, I was devastated when it ended, I didn't end it and I really wanted that one, I would have liked it to continue, um, but it didn't, uh.

AK: What made you want that relationship, or those relationships, to continue?

E: I just thought it was, I just thought we were a good match, I thought we were a good match, I felt safe and comfortable and attracted, uh, you know, all in sufficient quantities, it just felt good, um, and in Spain, also, I had, uh, it was more difficult there, uh, because the cultural differences and just because of the lifestyle, it's so very different and also the Latin versus the, uh, Anglo-Saxon kind of background and values, um, but also, not for lack of trying, not that I didn't want to, I really did, I was constantly looking for a, for a relationship.

**00:33:11: Social and political changes**

AK: Um, cool, then just a few broader questions before we wrap this up, uh, have you ever wanted to get married to someone or have a civil union with someone, or would you want to, if you met the right person?

E: Well, I'm in a relationship now, which happened since 2008, obviously, um.

AK: When did that start?

E: A year and a half ago, *ja*, um, sorry, not much conflict [laughter].

AK: No, no, it's fine [laughter].

E: I mean, I do, you know, I dunno if this is relevant or anything but when I lived in London it was, you know, it was '92 so the AIDS pandemic had been around for ten years and in the early nineties it was quite hard going, particularly in London, it was quite full-on and I remember having a flirtation and a bit of a romance with this Brazilian guy and only, sort of, ten days into, into the, into the relationship, romance, whatever, did he tell me he was HIV positive, and I shat myself, and, I mean, I don't know if that qualifies as conflict but, um, I ran away, again, avoided, I ended the relationship, I made all the right noises, it was very traumatic for me, it was very, very frightening for, um, so what was your other question?

AK: Um, and ... so, in terms of recent ...

E: Oh, marriage, marriage, uh, I wouldn't use the word 'want,' I don't see, I don't see a difference, I don't see, I'm not the kind of, I think it's very personality dependent, I'm not the kind of person who, to whom it's important to conform or to have what's been denied me all these years or, or to conform to society's, you know, like, up till now heteronormative, I'm a little bit artsy and I'm a little bit left of centre anyway and I'm a little bit eccentric, I suppose so those things really don't attract me.

AK: And then the same thing regarding the adoption of children, what's your feeling on that?

E: For me personally?

AK: For you personally, *ja*.

E: For me, or my attitude in general, of it?

AK: Um, both, I guess.

E: *Ja, ja*, I think it's a wonderful thing, I don't think I'll ever do it, uh, my sister's adopted, uh, I'm very proud of her and I'm extremely fond of my nephew and, and it's jolly, it's lovely, I love it, I think it's great and I think it's, I think it's a wonderful thing to do, um, I personally, it's too late now, I don't think it's realistic to have children, adopted or otherwise, if you're single, if you can help it, and I, you know, I've only been in a relationship for a year and a half and, you know, we're in our fifties for God's sake so, just, it's not gonna happen and I'm totally okay with that.

AK: Um, cool, I think that's about it, is there anything else you'd want to add, anything you can think of that might be ...?

E: No, there's nothing, I mean, unless you, there's a lot, but it's up to you ...

AK: Um, no.

E: If you want me to elaborate on anything or give you more ...

AK: Um ...

E: Give you more material ...

AK: I think I'm maybe a little more curious, sort of, the, I guess two things, the first is you mentioned avoiding the problem would solve the problem, that's the one thing, if you wouldn't mind elaborating on that.

E: No, I didn't think it would solve the problem, I didn't care, I was just, it was just too uncomfortable, and, um, and I suppose you know, as the youngest of five, I think part of my conditioning is that, if you, if you, you know, if you get ready to rumble you're gonna come off second best so I think, you know, over my childhood and all those lessons, it's become quite ingrained and I didn't feel like I had a leg to stand on, I didn't feel I, I would ever, uh, get the upper hand in any kind of conflict so I guess that's partly what informed my inclination to, to just avoid, and also London's a big city, it was, you know, and you can, you can have a one-night stand with someone and quite literally never bump into them again, without changing your, without changing anything, you know, it's an enormous city and that anonymity is another whole subject one can go into, so, *ja*, I think one's inclination to, to scrap is directly, uh, proportional to, to your self-worth and your sense of yourself in the world.

AK: Um, and then, with the kinds of people that you were seeing in both casual and romantic relationships, was there a sort of subtype that you were looking for? What type of person that you were looking for, that you were very attracted to or that you got on very well with, is there a type of person or various types of people, um, could you describe them?

E: I had a bit of a [pause] I had a bit of a split of, you can edit this as you please, it's my last three and a half years of therapy talking, um, where I would have a type, physical type that I was very attracted to which, sadly, didn't translate as a, something that could sustain a relationship, somebody I was fiercely attracted, you know, short, dark, hairy, Mediterranean types, the Italians and the Spaniards, um, and so, so, that, and I suppose I have to add that I did become aware of, I had a relationship with a tall, dark, Jewish American boy in London, that was, I was, that's the one that got away, um, and so I suppose, to answer your question in a more succinct way, uh, I got a place where I was very cocksure of myself and quite cocky I always used to say, uh, 'Jews and Americans love me, and Jewish Americans love me more than anything,' so I think what I'm saying there is that, uh, the attraction, whether I was aware of it or not, then, is to a vaguely kind of cerebral, academic, uh, witty, clever, uh, socially adept, um, person who's good at communicating, who's expressive, who has a brain in his head, who has a frame of reference to, um, has some kind of breeding, some kind, I think that's it, really, that's as close as it got to, to discovering a type that worked, as opposed to, as opposed to a type that was just a fetish.

AK: Um, I think that's about it then, thank you very much!

### **Interview Description**

**Length of Interview:** 41 minutes 9 seconds

**Recording Equipment:** Olympus

**Copy and Access status:** signed release form; interviewee has requested full anonymity.

**Name of the Interviewee:** VAN AS, Matthew [MVA]

**Name of the Interviewer:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam [AK]

**Date of Interview:** 21 July 2019

**Place of Interview:** University of Cape Town [Upper Campus]

**Number of tapes/recordings:** 1

**Transcribed by:** KLEINSCHMIDT, Adam

**Date Transcribed:** 16 July 2019

**00:00:00:** Family background

AK: Um, first things first then, when and where were you born?

MVA: Okay, so, um, I was born in Cape Town, yay, and, *ja*, when, in 1984, 24<sup>th</sup> of April 1984.

AK: Okay, cool, um, and at the time that you were born, who did you live with?

MVA: My parents.

AK: Okay, um, do you have any siblings?

MVA: I have a younger sister.

AK: What's the age gap?

MVA: Two years.

AK: Okay, so she's born '86?

MVA: Yes.

AK: Okay, um, and what work did your parents do?

MVA: My dad is an ammunition specialist and my mother is a fashion designer.

AK: Okay, um, and then looking at your relationship with your parents, first of all, with your father, what was that like when you were growing up?

MVA: Um, distant, very, very distant, I think. That's changed, um, over time, but as a child very different, distant and different, I think, because of my sexuality, I think, was also very, that was very obvious, it wasn't, so there was no common, commonality, in it.

AK: And what do you think created the shift from distant to what it is now?

MVA: I think, oh, that's a very interesting question actually, um, I have a very answer to that, it's something I do talk about quite often, I think it's the realisation that my father is just a person, he is another human being floating around the planet and once I took that shift of, this person in this huge role as, meant to be my guardian, and my protector, and what a father should be, um, and realising he's just a person who hasn't really grown very much since he had children because what I've found is that once you've had children they sort of stop growing,

maturity wise, cos their goals are somewhere else, so he's literally just a twenty-four year old man and once I realised that a couple of years ago, I was like, I can relate to this person, and I'm relating to a person, not to someone who has a hold over me.

AK: Um, and how involved was he with your upbringing?

MVA: He was more there as a disciplinarian, that's about it.

AK: Um, then in contrast, what was your relationship like with your mother?

MVA: Pretty good [laughter] um, bit of a momma's boy, and, yeah, she's always been one to coddle me and, um, that sort of love and things but also, also there was brief moments of, like, because of her faith, that used to get in the way, and couldn't really understand me as a person, well, she saw me through the eyes of the Catholic Church, rather than me as her son, so, I mean, there was a bit of a rocky road when I was sixteen but now, once again, it's the same idea with, with my father. My mother is just a person, um, and that's the type of relationship I have with them.

AK: Um, and is your father religious as well?

MVA: Um, no, well, sort of, sort of, like, he has ideas but not as, sort of, my mother is Roman Catholic so it's very staunch, he was, um, born in the Church of England and the *NG Kerk*, so it was very confusing ...

AK: So, would you say your parents have more English, more Afrikaans, more mixed kind heritage?

MVA: Definitely more English, definitely more English.

AK: And did they bring you up, or your sister up, Catholic or Christian?

MVA: *Ja*, we were raised Catholic, lots of fun.

AK: Then, how would you describe your parents' marriage when you were growing up?

MVA: Um, stable, then unstable, then stable, then unstable, I think that's the easiest way to explain it, I think, as I said, it's a maturity thing, so I think, uh, very strongly, that once people have children, the maturing really stops because they not looking at themselves and growing, because their focus is on their children, so that when they have children, that's the mentality that they're stuck with until those children disappear and I think that's the thing, that, growing up, you could see that this was the mentality of a twenty-three, twenty-four year old, um, with the same sort of insecurities and fighting and temper tantrums and all the same things a young person would be having, so, *ja*, but it was definitely, I mean, they're still together and I think with any relationship there is going to be fighting, um, there's one thing I learnt quite early from my parents is that if you're not fighting, there's something wrong, cos then somebody's lying, yeah.

AK: Um, what then would you say would have caused the instability in your parents' marriage, that kind of immaturity or other?

MVA: It's a lot of things, I think, um, I think a lot had to do, um, there's a lot of fighting between my parents about me and understanding my sexuality and things like that, um, also, trying to understand where I'm going to, what's happening with life, things like that, also with my sister, my sister was a bit of a rebel, um, and trying to understand her and I think then also, of course, the normal stuff: financial stuff, relationship strains, all those sorts of things.

AK: Um, when you were growing up, what was your relationship like with your sister?

MVA: Terrible. Ha! Pretty terrible, now we're as thick as thieves.

AK: Why would you have said that it was terrible?

MVA: I just think we didn't understand each other, I think we were on very different pages in our lives, I think she was more the social, back then, she was the socialite, the people-person, uh, the rebel, and I was the more conservative, trying to hid everything that I had and trying to pack it away, and not be too OTT (over the top), so I was always a reserved, buttoned up, sort of, like, fourteen going on forty type of child, so seeing my sister, sort of, rebel, and do all those things, things that I couldn't do because it would just release all my secrets, I think that's the idea, and she just saw this person that was so clammed shut and that used to irritate her.

AK: And what would you say changed in the relationship over time?

MVA: I think we, once again, we're just two people, and, I mean, we work together now, which means we see each other every single day of our lives and I think that's where our relationship really started growing, it was only about six or seven years ago, we started working together, and we really sort of understood, started to understand each other, cos we saw each other every single day and we had to work with each other and that's where, well, we wanted to work together.

AK: Okay, um, and then finally, regarding your background, uh, how would you describe your domestic setting at home while you were growing up?

MVA: Domestic setting, could you ...?

AK: Um, so, what was it like to be as a family when you were a young child?

MVA: Um, I think it was pretty idyllic, if I think back to it, I think, if you take away, if you put on the rose-coloured sunglasses, you'll see, it was my mom, my dad, my sister and myself, we used to go away for holidays and there was always food on the table, there was always clothes on our backs and I think, it was a pretty, sort of, Southern Suburbs upbringing.

**00:07:25: Schooling years**

AK: Okay, um, cool, then moving on to your school years, uh, where and when did you attend pre-school?

MVA: Um, I went to the Mulberry Bush [clears throat] um, which was sort of the feeder school into Rondebosch Boy's junior, it was on the same property, the side of it, not there anymore, um, ooh, must have been, like, 1990? Was it ...? *Ja*, somewhere around there, 1989, around that time, '89, 1990.

AK: Um, when you were a child did you live in the Southern Suburbs area?

MVA: Uh, no, actually we lived, um, 'Plum-stantia' area, so that side, so more, uh, Plumstead, Constantia, those two areas we moved between.

AK: Um, and then where did you attend primary and high school?

MVA: Uh, Rondebosch Boys' junior, Rondebosch Boy's High.

AK: And then I'm guessing you matriculated in 2002?

MVA: Yep.

AK: Okay, cool, um, then looking at, uh, sort of, pre-school and primary school, what was the social environment there like?

MVA: Mm, I think it was, I think at that time there was a lot of change happening in South Africa, um, I think there was, cos I think integration was starting to happen in schooling at that point, um, and it was a very, if I, I actually saw the picture of my pre-primary school photo, from my pre-primary school and it was a very mixed, very, very mixed class and I think it was also just very chilled, I think it was more about education and they sort of knew where you were going, because most of the girls there were going to Rustenburg junior, and most of the boys were going to Rondebosch, that's how it sort of worked, or Oakhurst, I think Oakhurst was a feeder school from there.

AK: Okay, um, and did the same apply with the Rondebosch Boys' primary school?

MVA: Yeah, it was also pretty, yeah, the thing is the same, we're moving from a, a, sort of, co-ed primary, uh, kindergarten, pre-school, to a boys only school, I think that was also a bit of a change, because I think the majority of my friends in pre-school we female, definitely not male, um, and that was just because, even back then I had weird feelings, I was more attracted, like, you know, in that sort of kiss-catch game I would normally go after the guys, not the girls, it would be very strange, so, I know it's not strange, it's, they found it very awkward.

AK: Do you remember the kinds of feelings that you had, um, with those kinds of feelings, those early attractions to men?

MVA: Um, I think it was just confused, I think it was a very, because the social norm was that, in kiss-catch, boys would go after girls and girls would go after boys, for me it was not that way, and it was just what my attraction was, I think that's what it was and I think that, even that 'doctor-doctor,' that sort of, like, early sexual exploration, which happens at that age, which is very normal from a child psychology point of view, I would want to go and play with the guys, rather, and that was just how I was hardwired for it, so, that was interesting.

AK: Um, during pre-school and prep school, did you ever experience any kind of bullying or exclusion?

MVA: Oh, yes, I mean, I was pretty OTT, like, I was , and I think I was trying to find the balance there, and I still hadn't found how to pack all my homosexuality away, and, you know, like, those sort of mannerisms that somehow, I know now, were generic, it's gonna happen, um, and I just found that I couldn't, so there was definitely a lot of bullying, so I was always the quiet child, I was always slightly different, I'm a ginger in a very non-ginger world, so, and my, my interest were completely different, so most kids are, like, 'I'm gonna go play rugby, I'm gonna go play hockey, I'm gonna go play cricket, I'm gonna do swimming,' me, I'm gonna go sit in the music room and that's what I'm gonna go do, I'm gonna be that strange child that hung out in the library and the music department, that was my thing.

AK: And in terms of your, sort of, friends, and social circle between, uh, prep school, sorry, pre-school and prep school, um, did you struggle to make friends, did you find it easy to make friends?

MVA: Very difficult to make friends, very, very difficult to make friends, I mean, I would say that I didn't actually have friends until I got to university, I had acquaintances that I would see at school, and talk to, but they weren't people that I would go to their houses with or things like that, it was more, literally, I think for me, I felt ashamed of who I was and that automatic response is to push people away, um, yeah, is to push and, um, I think that's why I just had acquaintances, and when the comparison with my family is that my sister had friends, me, I was more, like, I'm just going to just superficially engage with people but not actually let them in, so, *ja*, same thing.

AK: And then, in terms of the leap to, uh, the high school, when you were thirteen, fourteen, how was it, do you remember what that experience was like?

MVA: Um, I think it was more interesting, I think, because there was a change in, um, there was a change, cos there was a change of students and there was a change of people, um, also puberty is hitting in, those sort of things, those feelings are now getting real but also coming across people that were similar to me as well, so going, 'okay, well these, these are definitely

gay guys in my high school,' and also seeing guys that are older than me that are just, that are letting it all hang out and that for me, there was maturity change, but that sort of very, very strong, um, boundary of going, 'I don't actually wanna let anyone in here,' so, *ja*, that was my, my vibe.

AK: Okay, um, what was the social environment like at your high school, at the time that you were there?

MVA: Uh, it was, uh, it was definitely more on the side of, like, popular kids, sports, sports, those type of people and the rest were all sort of lumped into little corners, so it was very, 'you're the outcasts, you go there, the rest of us are going to play on the rugby field and we're gonna hang out there, and don't, don't really come here because that's not where you're wanted.' 'Exclusionary' is the word.

AK: Um, and in terms of academics and sport and cultural things like that, uh, how did you fare on those fronts?

MVA: Uh, academics, pretty good, um, other than maths, maths was never my thing, everything else was great, uh, culturally, was involved in everything, so music, drama, art, everything, whatever cultural thing was there I was there, um, and I was very, very involved in that, and that was my safe space, that's where I excelled and that's what I, *ja*, that's what I, that's where I excelled.

AK: What instruments did you play?

MVA: Uh, flute, piano, organ, what else, bit of clarinet, saxophone, oof, what else ...? That was it, that was in high school.

AK: Quite heavily involved in the music department?

MVA: Yeah, yeah, I was very close with, I think, my music teachers could, definitely knew, well, they knew I was gay and they created a space where I could be, if I was having a problem, I could always just literally go there and they would let me sit there, they would let me bunk classes, they would just be there for me, they created, they created a space for me, just to be me.

AK: Um, and then in terms of high school, did you experience any kind of bullying there?

MVA: Of course [laughter].

AK: Um, what sort of experiences ...?

MVA: Not that many, there was, a couple of physical instances but more verbal, verbal and mental bullying, definitely, because, once again, like, I think, the barriers and the [unintelligible] and the homosexuality and, sorry, I'm banging on the table, and, and also that's causing, sort of, hyper-depression as well, which I didn't want to admit to and I, sort of, gained

a, lots of weight because I was eating all the time, eating my feelings, and it was all those sort of things that, like, so I'm, made myself, like, made myself a target but I was a target because of all those things that I was going through.

AK: Um and was this specifically targeted at you or just a general kind of bullying environment?

MVA: Oh, I definitely think there was a big general bullying thing but there was a lot of targeted, specifically targeted bullying.

AK: Um, and then looking at, um, how all three schools treated issues, how did they treat issues of sexuality, gender and masculinity?

MVA: Um, pro-masculinity, um, gender, sexuality was something that just wasn't talked about, whatsoever, I mean, I knew who all the gay teachers were, and they knew who I was, well, let me just use LGBTI teachers, because there was multiple, multiple genders, um, and they knew who I was, I know who they were, um, but it wasn't something that you talked about, there was no classes on talking about LGBTI issues, there was no safe spaces for LGBTI students, um, and I mean it was just a very conservative school, like, it was a very Model C, Christian values school so if you didn't fit that mould, it was a bit of a problem, and you had to sort of find your own way.

AK: And then the same sort of thing around race and social class?

MVA: Um, I think, *ja*, that's a difficult question, I think, once again, I think, as you were moving up in the grades and I think there was definitely, race, there was definitely a mix in the school, but not as much as it should have been, I think it was still elitist in that, in that sense, I think they could have been more people of colour within the school, um, but I think there was, there were different barriers for how much it would cost, those sort of things, and I think and also, I think that's one of the things as well, cos it wasn't a cheap school to go to, I think there was, you had to be a certain social, socio-economic level to be going there, I mean, I'm lucky, because, because I lived in Constantia, Plumstead, that wasn't the school I should have gone to, the only reason I got into Rondebosch junior because I was, my uncle was a teacher there, and that's only why I could go to that school, even though I should have been going to a worse school further down the road but because he was a teacher at Rondebosch junior and by the time I had gone up in the levels he had left, so I didn't have that contact with him but that's how I got into Rondebosch junior and Rondebosch junior feeds into Rondebosch High School, so that's the only reason that I was able to get in there, almost the same thing with my sister, because all my female cousins went to Rustenburg, um, and they vouched for her, to get her

in, and that's the only reason why she went through that side, so we would have had to go to schools in the south, not, this way, yeah.

**00:19:41:** Early sexual experiences

AK: Okay, um, then looking towards, sort of, early sexual experiences and things like that, um, first of all, how would you describe your sexual orientation now?

MVA: I'm cis-gender, gay, white male.

AK: Okay, and what does that mean to you?

MVA: That means that I am, well, I am cis-gendered in that I am male and I'm happy that I'm male and I'm born in the male, born in my male body and I'm really happy with all my bits and pieces, and being gay is that I'm attracted to the same sex and I'm male, that's, sort of, I'm a guy [laughter].

AK: Cool, um, and then do you remember when you first began to experience puberty?

MVA: Yes, I do remember puberty, I remember attraction, to guys, um, and I think that's where, I think, where all my barriers came up because I knew that was, that it was 'abnormal,' inverted commas, you can't see it, it was abnormal, and that I shouldn't be and, but the weird this is that the other guys going through the same thing and experimenting and I think sexuality was an idea of, I dunno, there is, at an all-boys school, there is experimenting, and, because that's what the round, and, that sort of thing, *ja*.

AK: Um, so, how old were you when you began to experiment a bit more with your, uh, attractions to men?

MVA: Um, I realised I like it and that, that it felt right, but society was still not going, 'that's not right,' so I think there was that dichotomy once again of going that this is right for me, and society is going, and what I've learnt and what I've been taught, and it's not meant to be right, um, and I think the limited amount, I mean, the Internet was still on dial-up, things were slow and you, resources were very limited, so, I think that's where things were, *ja*, and I knew that was the right fit for me but I didn't know who to speak to, I couldn't speak to anybody about it.

AK: Um, how old were you, um, when you had your first, sort of, physical experience with another man?

MVA: Um, thirteen, oral, fourteen, penetrative.

AK: Okay, and was this with people you went to school with?

MVA: Um, thirteen, yes, fourteen, no.

AK: Um, how did you meet the person that you had, uh, the oral experience with?

MVA: Um, that was just a random guy in band, uh, late night after, well, it wasn't band, it was chamber choir, and, because that was late night practices, and, at that point in my schooling career, they knew that I was gonna be in the music department, I had keys, because I used to lock up at, that sort of vibe, so, *ja*.

AK: And do you remember, the feelings, were they on that same kind of dichotomy you said?

MVA: Um, it's going, 'this is wrong, but this is right,' and going, 'is, well,' because, I think, with more sort of carnal pleasures, is that in the moment you're not really thinking about it, afterwards your mind starts spinning going, 'who is he gonna tell, what's gonna happen, what's the consequences of these actions,' I think that's where that dichotomy comes in as well.

AK: Um, and was this a once-off occasion?

MVA: Um, it went on for a little bit ... for a little bit, not for very long, couple of months.

AK: And then with the, the sexual experience that you mentioned, that was more, um, penetrative, how did you meet that person?

MVA: I snuck out of my house, I went to Bronx, I met a guy in the bathroom and that's when it happened, yeah, so my first sexual experience was in a bathroom in Bronx.

AK: What do you think prompted you, at the time, to do that?

MVA: To be completely honest, I have no clue [laughter] um, I was just, like, I was there, I snuck out with somebody I met on, was it MXit or, I don't even know when was that, ended up going to a gay bar, like, probably was one of my first experiences, well, actually no, it wasn't, I, the Old on Broadway used to, was a gay bar and I used to go with my uncle, who is also gay, um, but my first going to, like, a gay club and because I was bigger and, like, I was tall at fourteen and I looked like I was eighteen and I could get in and a guy thought I was definitely eighteen, um, and, *ja*, I don't know why I said, why I agreed to it but I think it was just, like, I think in my mind I was, like, I need to get this over with, I need to see what this is about, and see what, *ja*.

AK: And did you carry on after that, going out to gay clubs?

MVA: Um, not after that, I think the next time I went was sort of when I was fifteen and when I started doing musicals with other schools and getting to know older gay guys in those schools so then they would, like, pick me up and, I'd be lying to my parents and saying I'd be going to their houses but actually we were gonna go out and things like that.

AK: Um, and did you have physical experiences with people from other schools?

MVA: *Ja, ja*, yes, yes.

AK: Um, and it would it be those sorts of means of finding them and interacting with them and similar sorts of actions?

MVA: Yeah, and, I mean, they were also the somewhat nerdy, somewhat, sort of, like, band geeks, um, and, you know, choir boys and all those sort of things, those were the sort of people I used to hang out with, and there were, I mean, that's where I realised that a lot of your LGBTI people would be in those safe spaces, in the creative spaces.

**00:25:51:** Early adulthood and relationships

AK: Um, and did any of these relationships, uh, during high school turn into more emotional or attached or more romantic relationships?

MVA: Um, one did, it was a guy from SACS (South African College School).

AK: Um, how old were you when that happened?

MVA: Sixteen.

AK: And how long did it last?

MVA: Till I was seventeen and a half, I think.

AK: Um, was it a similar way of meeting, as you've mentioned?

MVA: *Ja*, choir and things like that.

AK: And what happened in that relationship?

MVA: Um, I think it was more of, I was aiming for the, you know, that idyllic sort of, like, movie relationship and it wasn't that, I mean, um, it was two young people that just really didn't know what they were doing and I think that, that experience of actually not understanding of what's happening in a relationship and it's just this, sort of, like, trial and error, I think that's sort of where the fights would happen and that sort of thing, it was a lot more, sort of, like, I'm gonna see how this goes but not actually being mature enough to have a relationship.

AK: Um, how would you define conflict in the, sort of, context of an intimate relationship?

MVA: Conflict is differences of opinion, or a different view, I think that's what it is and I think, for me more, about, there's a misunderstanding somewhere, is that, a process of going through it and rectifying that.

AK: Um, and in this first relationship that you highlighted, what, would you say that you experienced conflict?

MVA: Um, *ja*, because we didn't know what we were doing, so it's lots of miscommunications and not understanding and, I think, also, it wasn't those mature, conflict, conflicts that you

would normally get, like, the older you get, the more complex your arguments and fights get, because you've got more opinions and you've got more understanding of the world, so, yeah.

AK: Um, so what were the sort of things that you two would have fought about?

MVA: Um, like, not being able to see each other because distance, um, not making time, um, those sorts of things, like, 'why didn't you call me, 'that sort of vibe, so very, not immature, quite immature things to fight about.

AK: And what caused the end of the relationship?

MVA: Um, matric? I think both of us were just, like, no, we can't do this, can't think about this sort of thing now.

AK: Um, and when you left high school, what did you do?

MVA: Um, came here [laughter], UCT.

AK: Uh, what did you study?

MVA: Music.

AK: Um, four-year degree, BMus?

MVA: Yip.

AK: Okay, um, and then, after that, what did you do?

MVA: Um, then I went into teaching, um, no, so I did a lot of different things, so, um, so I was dance instructor for a bit and then I found EFL [English as a foreign language] education, and that's where I sort of landed myself, I've been doing it ever since, so English as a foreign language education.

AK: Okay, gotcha, um, cool, uh, then as far as your experience at UCT, uh, first of all, was there a prolific gay, um, or, sort of, LGBTI ...?

MVA: It's the music department, yes, lots and lots and lots and lots.

AK: And was there a lot of presence on campus of, uh, queer people?

MVA: Um, *ja*, I think there was, I think there was a lot more, I think they were a lot more open, um, I think it was a lot more experimenting as well, ah, and, well, that's just bi-erasure I'm doing right there, um, I think there was a whole lot of people going through a whole lot of experiences.

AK: Um, and at this point, had you spoken to your parents or your family about your sexuality?

MVA: Yes, I had come out already, before that, and I had been chucked out of the house and had come back already, and that whole sixteen to eighteen, there was shit happening around there, but, *ja*, my sexuality was open, everyone knew what was going on, um, yeah.

AK: When did you come out to your parents?

MVA:

MVA: Sixteen.

AK: And what was their reaction?

MVA: There was a door, which I left out of.

AK: Um, do you mind telling me what happened where, after you'd been kicked out of home?

MVA: Um, I went to go and stay with my uncles, and my aunts, um, my father just didn't want to see me, and it was that sort of thing.

AK: Um, and then at what stage did you reconcile with your parents?

MVA: That was more my mothers' doing, she said I must come back home, and my father just had to deal with it, he didn't speak to me for a long time.

AK: Um, and did you ever come out while you were in high school?

MVA: Um, to certain guys, *ja*, and certain teachers, yes, but I wasn't going around with my big sort of gay flag, emblazoned on my chest as I would be doing now.

AK: Um, and then, during your time at UCT, did you ever, uh, sorry, bleh, did you ever pursue, um, casual relationships or casual sexual encounters?

MVA: All the time, *ja*, so lots of casual sexual experiences, uh, one or two, sort of, further relationships, one or two, not long-term, but, relationships in general.

AK: Where would you go to pursue these relationships?

MVA: Um, I think, to be honest, the music department was a cesspit of horniness, really, at the end of the day, um, so there's a lot of opportunity there, I started going out to clubs more often, um, lots of alcohol, drugs, all that sort of thing, sort of played into that idea of, *ja*, sexual encounters.

AK: Um, and, sorry, lost my train of thought there, um, at that time, when you'd left high school, you're obviously seeing more of the world, did you have, sort of, the ideal mate, in inverted commas, that you would look for?

MVA: Um, *ja*, I think it was, I think it was someone that was intelligent, but fun, um, that was definitely more of a hippie sort of vibe, that was my thing, and, and *ja*, that sort of ideal mate that I was looking for, I mean, that, not ideal but ideal, in that age.

AK: Um, in the relationships that you mentioned, the more long-term ones, um, how did those become, how did those more from casual to more long-term?

MVA: I think it was more, like, it was casual, casual, casual, until casual was seeing each other every day and it sort of organically moved into a relationship, less, like, formal, it's time to have a relationship.

AK: And how many of those, would you say, that you experienced between your arrival at UCT and 2008?

MVA: Um, how many relationships did I have? Um ...

AK: Roughly.

MVA: I dunno, seven or eight?

AK: Seven or eight, okay, um, and were they all in a similar sort of way that you would start them, or initiate them?

MVA: I think it was always, I think, I think it's that whole, what does a gay person do on their first date, um, *ja*, well, it's, like, sex and then you figure out what their name is, it was that sort of vibe, um, but, meh, um, it was those sort of vibes, it was just people sort of meeting, like, having that sexual encounter, and then afterwards going, 'and your name is?' and then, sort of, like, do you wanna swap numbers, let's chat, and whatever, and that's how a lot of them started.

AK: Um, and how long, on average, was each relationship?

MVA: I would say anywhere between three to six months, um, I think in the later, sort of, okay, so I would say 2006 is, like, where the long-term relationships started happening.

AK: Um, and in these particular relationships, did you ever live together with your partner.

MVA: Yeah! I mean, I, I think a lot of the time we would end up staying over at one of each other's places for extended periods of time.

AK: And what was it like for you to share those kinds of domestic settings?

MVA: I think, because I'm a people-pleaser, at heart, I would always give in, in my earlier years, I'm a different creature now, but I always, that people-pleaser thing was always what I used to do.

AK: Um, and, again, questions of conflict, did conflict arise in some of those relationships?

MVA: Of course, of course, so, I think those sorts of years where jealousy started happening and the possessiveness also started happening, 'are you sleeping with someone else,' and those sort of immature arguments, having conversations going, 'where are we at in our relationship,' instead of going, like, 'you're sleeping with someone else,' and so on, trying to, alienating oneself from friends and all that.

AK: What do you think motivated those feelings?

MVA: Uh, fear of abandonment, definitely, all of the ideas of, I wanna be left alone.

AK: Okay, um, and when it came towards dealing with, the kind of conflict in these relationships, what sort of coping mechanisms did you apply?

MVA: Um, I used to be a doormat, basically, um, I would start an argument but then I would back down completely and let them walk all over me, that was the way.

AK: And why do you think that is?

MVA: Um, cos the fear of abandonment, like, literally going, if I carry on with this fight, they're gonna leave me because who wants to be with someone who's fighting with them all the time.

AK: And did that affect your perception of self and perception of your gay identity?

MVA: Well, it made me feel worthless, and I think, *ja*, and then, and my identity, well, it didn't affect my LGBTI, well, my gay identity, because I was just, like, this is what a dutiful partner should be, they should be accommodating and, like, you know, Stepford wife, and not realising how much it was to the detriment of myself and that only came with a lot more age and experience.

AK: Um, did you ever speak to friends about this or seek professional help?

MVA: No, no, no, because it was, like, one of those things you're told, you don't air your dirty laundry, that's what you hear, that's, keep that quiet, um, I mean, the fights used to happen at home, behind closed doors and, you know, those sorts of things.

AK: Um, and was there, was the conflict purely verbal, was there emotional or physical conflict that happened?

MVA: Lots of verbal, um, couple of tussles, nothing, you know, shoving past, those sorts of things, nothing physical, but lots of verbal, mental, sort of abuse.

AK: And in those relationships that you mentioned, are there any things that stand out to you as specific fights or specific things that caused fights or anything like that?

MVA: Um, oh, there's a lot, um, I think, I think, my major, major fights, definitely, like, around alcohol and drug abuse, definitely majors ones are that, like, I'm a recovering addict, now, but for a very long time, eleven years this year, so, those early relationships, like, twenty, twenty-four, there was a lot of drug usage and alcohol-dependency because of my self-worth, a whole lot of other things and genetically, addiction runs in my family as well, like homosexuality runs in my family, so they're two lovely genetic things that I've picked up hand in hand, and so I think a lot of those arguments were based around that and, because I used to pick partners that were also, who would drink a lot and use drugs and those fights would all fiddle around there.

AK: Okay, um, so none of the conflicts that you had with your partner were ever in public?

MVA: No, everything behind closed doors, everything.

AK: Um, were your friends or family ever aware of the conflict you had with your partners?

MVA: Like, my mother used to, like, mother's sixth sense, going, they know there's something wrong and they keep on asking and, 'what's going on, what's the problem, what's happening here,' and so, *ja*, like I think they would pick up on the issue but, I think I would always deny it, it's fine, it's cool.

**00:39:07:** Social and political changes

AK: Um, then looking at the sort of historical and political changes in South Africa between when you were born and 2008, um, first of all, when was your first experience of public queerness?

MVA: 2003.

AK: What was that?

MVA: First year of university, where I could just be myself, you know, strap on those high-heel boots and off we go, um, and I think, cos I had never had the space to, to find out who I was, so that first year was just about exploring who the Hell I was, and where I fitted into that whole world.

AK: And what sort of avenues did you go down to explore your own queerness?

MVA: Well, I think it was more about, so, I mean, okay, I was the more, how do I put it, so, a bit of drag, a bit of, sort of, lots of bars and clubs and that sort of thing, I mean, it wasn't, sort of, anything highbrow, like going to poetry readings or anything like that, it was all very dirty and grimy.

AK: Um, and do you remember how that made you feel about being queer, those experiences?

MVA: It made me feel like I was going to end up alone, somehow, because where I was going, it was these old people that were always alone, that had never found a partner, uh, it was just that sort of vibe and the people I was hanging out with, they weren't young people, they were much older than me, cos somehow I had an affinity for older people, I got on better with an older crowd, um, and they were all just alone and sad and I think that's, *ja*, that's scary, a scary thing.

AK: And as far as political and legal rights in South Africa, how aware were you during your younger years and high school, university, of rights in South Africa?

MVA: High school, I knew nothing, I knew sodomy was illegal, because at that point sodomy was still illegal, um, other than that, once I got to university, sort of started to figure my way out but definitely by 2005 I was hyper-aware, because in 2006 I was chaining myself to fences and doors and things like that, for the Civil Union Act and things like that, that's when I, like, that's when I got my legs as an activist, as an LGBTI activist.

AK: Um, so then, between that period before 2008, what sort of causes did you involve yourself in?

MVA: Pride, Pride was one of my major ones, um, I sort of got dragged into there by a partner and said I was gonna help out and I sort of got involved, meeting activist-y people, um, and then, *ja*, I think, that's the sort of causes, that's was it, and then I sort of, like, then, the Civil Unions Act and things, that's when I started to really, sort of, like, I was out there protesting with the rest, with everybody else and doing those sort of things and was at the first marriage and, you know, that sort of thing.

AK: And how did those sorts of experiences make you feel, as a gay person in South Africa?

MVA: I mean, I'm a part of history, I think that's the nice thing, it's going and, I played my part in doing something for the rights of LGBTI people in South Africa.

AK: Um, what is your perspective on HIV and AIDS role in the gay community in South Africa?

MVA: Ooh, okay, that's a big question, okay, so I think, as, in high school, there was not very much information about it, it was just, 'use a condom,' off you go, 'don't get anybody pregnant,' I'm like, I'm not gonna do that anyway, um, but they didn't really explain to me what the epidemic was like, you know, I mean, that ran on, I would say, right up until the early two thousands, there was rampant, um, within the LGBTI community, not just the LGBTI community, it was in the heterosexual community as well, but just my experience was in the LGBTI community and watching people die and realising something needs to be done and that's, around the two thousands, well, the early two thousands, when these campaigns started coming to South Africa, for safe sex for gay men, and it was quite a big thing.

AK: Um, do you know anyone who has died or has been infected by ...?

MVA: Lots, lots, lots, lots, lots, lots, um, died, I would say about thirty or forty people, easy, um, I know a lot of people with HIV now, presently, um, I don't believe in pushing the stigma, um, um, one of my previous sexual partners was HIV positive, um, and undetectable viral load, so he was pretty safe, um, so, *ja*, I don't believe in pushing the stigma like that, like, it's not, it's something that somebody has, it's like diabetes now or anything else, it is controllable, so that's just the way it is.

AK: And were you ever involved in HIV/AIDS activism, or care, or volunteering?

MVA: Um, pre-2008, for maybe a year or two, yeah, from about 2007, 2008, very much involved in that sort of activism, sort of, going to get tested, walking around with condoms, throwing them out wherever, going out to clubs, giving out condoms and lube, that was my favourite thing to do.

AK: Okay, um, and then you mentioned your involved with Pride, was that as an organizer, as a participant ...?

MVA: As a volunteer, I started when I was lowly little volunteer.

AK: Um, when was the first Pride that you volunteered for?

MVA: Um, it must have been in two thousand, ooh, here we go, um, I think it was 2007 or 2008, around there.

AK: So, you've been involved for just over a decade?

MVA: Yeah, it think it's going to be my eleventh year now.

AK: And what would you say your experiences have been with organising Pride and attending Pride?

MVA: Um, it's changed completely, I think it's changed from a very, sort of, like, very cis, white, gay event to a diverse, experience, um, that includes, sort of, activism, and health, and having fun, and social awareness, I think that's where it has changed, I think, as I've gotten older, it's something that has changed because I've grown as a person so my view on things have changed, um, this year February, I was made regional director for region sixteen of Interpride, which is, I'm the regional director of Africa for Pride worldwide, um, and I mean that's just that, having that recognition of, your movement is a making a better experience on the African continent and your abilities to be able to change things, we're going to entrust you with a continent, here we go, off you go, make it better, so, I mean, that's a lot of work, so, *ja*, that's where it is.

AK: Um, would you say there is a difference between what's represented in Pride and more public, sort of, queer expressions of sexuality, and what happens behind closed doors?

MVA: Um, yes, I think Pride is a, is a time of exuberance and OTT-ness and being in your face, but I think there's a normalisation to the queer lifestyle and that it is at home with your family and your, Pride is just one time of the year that we get to be a little bit more OTT, we get to be a little more visible, we get to get together in large numbers and spaces and still feel safe, um, but I think, behind closed doors, or just at home, it's a very normalised experience.

AK: Um, and pre-2008, would you say that Pride had been in some way exclusionary or ...

MVA: *Ja*.

AK: In what sort of ways do you think?

MVA: I think accessibility, um, definitely, I think it was marketed very much for one thing, and one thing only which was a very much party-orientated experience so, *ja*, I think it was a little bit exclusionary.

AK: Um, and then, finally, if you look, sort of, at the struggles that people faced, both today and back before 2008, what do you think these struggles, sorry, let me rephrase this, do you

think the struggles, in terms of public and private struggles, have changed between, uh, when you were born and 2008 and now?

MVA: Well, I mean, in general or within the LGBTI community or ...?

AK: Within the LGBTI community.

MVA: Okay, so I think struggles have changed, I think there are a lot of things that we have won, and I think the Civil Unions Act is great, but it should just be marriage, there shouldn't be a separate bill, you shouldn't, as a marriage officer, have to write two different exams to be able to do it, um, everybody should be able to marry an LGBTI person and that should just be your right, um, I think acceptance has done a lot, has gone a long way and normalisation, oh, I hate using that word, normalisation of the queer body has become a lot more within television and media and all those sort of things, it's become normalised but I think there's a lot that still needs to happen, especially on the African continent with, sort of, like, cultural misconceptions of what it is, especially in the African community and I think there's a lot of work that still needs to be done but I think that's a lot of work that needs to be done from within a, their own communities, because that's where the information needs to come from, uh, what I always say, me, as a white, gay male coming into a township and going, 'don't do that,' it's never gonna work, because this is just me, it's learning from the community itself and I think that's where change has always happened, I think it has to come from within the community, we're coming up to the fiftieth anniversary of Stonewall, in a couple of days' time, and that came from within the community, there was an uprising from within the community and that's where change happens and that's the only time, when you get, hit that critical mass, that things do need to change, it is going to change, so, *ja*.

AK: Um, then just finally, you mentioned it now, reminding me, thank you, um, two things very quickly, first of all, what is your opinion on adoption, and would you ever adopt children?

MVA: Uh, that's such a difficult question, like, um, I would like to adopt at some point but, here's the big but, I'm too selfish, like I live a very selfish lifestyle, my partner and I, I mean, it's very much that, like, when I want to go and travel, I want to go and travel, when I want to go and do something, I want to go and do something and I think that is something, as a person, you need to be very honest about, like, I mean, at this point in my life, like, I'm getting on in age, if I wanted to adopt it would be in my forties. I mean, that's when I sort of, I'm a thirty-five year old twenty-two year old, if I wanna put it that way, like, I've very much involved, I'm a social butterfly, I'm always going out and doing things and so, it's one of those things, if, I would love to and I think I would be a great father but also, I know, I don't know that I can give a child the best life possible with full-on attention and things like that.

AK: Um, and then you mentioned that there's a sort of disparity, um, between civil unions and marriage, do you mind, sort of, going into why that is?

MVA: So, the Marriage Act is between a man and a woman, civil union is between anybody, okay, and as a marriage official you have, there's two different exams that you write, you write one to be able to do civil unions, which is a combination of the marriage one and the Civil Union Act, and then you get a marriage one, which, that's one exam, so most government officials, you only have to write the marriage one, they don't have to write the civil union part of it and I think that's a huge problem within our government system, I think everybody should, um, have to write the civil union marriage exam.

AK: And what are the differences between, in, well, based on what you know, between a civil union and a marriage?

MVA: There's actually very little, there's very little difference, it's just a word and I think that's the problem, that they should just become the marriage act, it shouldn't have to be a separate bill now, when we fought for it, yes, cool, that was in 2006, it's now 2019, they should have been put together by now and, but there isn't any difference, really, absolutely, as far as I know, there's no difference whatsoever and I've written both exams so there's no major difference, it's just in the wording.

AK: Are there any sort of practical, financial, legal differences between the two?

MVA: No, you have to have the same documents from your lawyer, you have to have the same ID book, the same photos, you have to put in the exact same information.

AK: So, do you think it's purely based on social or cultural differences?

MVA: Exactly, exactly, it's a way for people to go, 'well, I'm not gonna marry you because I only believe in marriage, and marriage is between a man and a woman,' and I'm, like, that's a bit exclusionary, especially in South Africa.

AK: And was that a major issue during the campaign for civil, uh, for civil marriage act?

MVA: I think we were just wanting to get the right to marry, I think that's as simple as it is, to go, 'we want to be able to get married, we're going to do it anyway possible,' because before that your partner, you couldn't go and see them in hospital, because you had no legal rights to, you couldn't be on the same medical aid, you couldn't, you couldn't do a whole load of stuff, you couldn't bequeath anything in your will, there's a whole load of stuff that you could do, until that marriage act happened, and once the marriage act happened we were able to go and see our partners in hospital and we were able to do all the things a straight couple could do and, at that point, can we just do this now, we need to be able to do this, we want to make the same

mistakes as heterosexual couples do, we want to get gay divorced, that's what we want, we want that option to be able to do it.

AK: Would you say that the Civil Unions Act has affected the way that, uh, queer people go into relationships and experience relationships?

MVA: Yes, I do think so, I think, now that there is an option, we do think about it because before we're, like, we're gonna get into this relationship, there's no chance of marriage, so let's have a bit of fun. Now, you're going into a relationship where the option is on the table for marriage and that's, I think you'd think a bit more cos if I'm gonna fall in love with this person, we can get married now so let's think about this a little more closely.

AK: Um, I think that's about it, is there anything else you'd like to add?

MVA: No, I think I'm pretty happy about that.

AK: Okay, fantastic, uh.

### **Interview Description**

**Length of Interview:** 54 minutes 44 seconds

**Recording Equipment:** Olympus

**Copy and Access status:** signed release form; interviewee has stated no restrictions on material.

## **Addendum B: Correspondence**

### **Collated Responses of Correspondence with Ashley Brownlee**

21 March 2019 – 29 April 2019

[Note: there has been some editing for spelling and grammar]

#### **1) Birth, Family Backgrounds and Early Life**

a) When and where were you born?

I was born 13th July 1971 at the Vincent Pallotti in Cape Town to an unwed mother and was instantly put up for adoption. I spent 6 to 9 months at Child Welfare in Claremont, before being adopted by the parents that raised me.

b) Who did you live with when you were born, and as a young child?

The first 15 years of my life I spent with my adopted parents in Jefferson Rd in Claremont. Two years after I was adopted, my parents adopted a baby girl. Although I consider her my sister, we are not related.

c) What work did your mother and father do?

Before getting married, my mother was the first female purser with the Union Castle Line. My father was a welding engineer. My father was previously married, now divorced, with a daughter from his first marriage. This was also my mother's second marriage, having lost her first husband to cancer. They were both in their early 40's when they married each other, so I grew up with "elderly" parents. My father remained in his profession, and my mother became a housewife. My father was disabled, having lost his leg after an injury in a Western Province badminton tournament shortly after his 21st birthday.

d) What was your relationship like with your mother and father?

i. Were they involved in your upbringing and if so, how?

My mother was a very hands-on parent, responsible for caring for me as a baby, and subsequently carting me around to nursery school and play dates and children's parties. We didn't have any domestic help in the house, so my mother was often consumed with chores. She was a terrible cook and remained a terrible cook right until she passed away. She was known to store cook books in the oven, but never cook anything in the oven. My father was a rather toxic man during my formative years, and for the most part, I was deeply afraid of him. I remember him being violent and short-fused, and unfortunately this is my abiding memory of him during my childhood. There were regular beatings for no apparent reason, but now with an older man's wisdom, I realise that he was an alcoholic with some severe anger issues. He could be gentle though, which would indicate that perhaps he was undiagnosed bipolar ... it's just a hunch. One excellent memory I have of my father while growing up, was of bed time stories. Because of his disability, and perhaps because of his inebriation, he seldom tucked his children into bed at night. What he did do, and it is completely genius, is that he wired to house for sound with speakers. Using a reel to reel sound effect and music machine, he would broadcast bedtime stories to us. The material was a hodgepodge of "stories" ... anything from the tales of Narnia, to 'Day of the Triffids' and 'Cosmos' by Carl Sagan.

My mother was incredibly supportive of my interest in acting and theatre, but my father never came to see me perform. I think he would have preferred me to have been sporty, but I also think that without the access for those with disability to public spaces in the 70's and 80's, that he simply couldn't see a way. Rather sad actually, as I think that he would have been a great special Olympics athlete.

ii. What is your current relationship like with your mother and father?

My father improved later on in life, especially when my parents retired to Swellendam, and he grew vegetables. Our relationship remained strained though, and I never attended his funeral, which was some 20 odd years ago. My mother and I remained close until she passed a few years back. I cared for her in her final weeks and was present at her death bed.

We had a really small family while I was growing up. My father's family cut off all ties with him when he remarried and adopted children, and my mother only had one sister. Her sister, my aunt, converted to Judaism before I was born and adopted a son of her own. My granny,

my mother's mother, was a delightful little Victorian lady. I remember her fondly. I have never met any of my father's family.

e) How would you describe your parent's marriage when you were growing up?

My parent's relationship is little understood to me. What I do remember is that they never had private or public shows of affection. They shared the same bed, but I never once saw them hold hands or share a kiss. I believe they had an understanding of what they had signed up to, and in *apartheid* 70's South Africa being single over 40 was social suicide. The adult goings on were not evident to me as a child, but I know that my mom disliked my father's drinking, often curtailing his consumption ... which would result in arguments. With all of this though, my parents were quite progressive ... I remember that they voted PFP [Progressive Federal Party], or so they told me, and I had gay god-parents that lived across the road from us in Claremont.

f) What was your relationship with your siblings?

My sister and I remain close. She lives in York in the UK, with her second husband. We were best of friends growing up, and even though we were both adopted, we have a really special bond to this day. Perhaps it's having lived through a rather eccentric childhood.

iii. How involved were either of you in each other's upbringing?

We were very supportive of each other during these formative years, although my sister adored my father while having an unsteady relationship with my mother. I recall a great deal of dressing up, mini theatre productions, practical jokes, and roller skating.

I do have a step sister, my father's child from his first marriage, but for the most part they remained estranged during my childhood. My mother and my father argued greatly about her.

g) How would you describe your household when you were growing up?

I grew up in a rather erratic household. It was eccentric and magical but could also be overwhelming and frightening. It was decidedly middle class with upper class aspirations. I was taken to speech therapy to sound more posh. It was a modest home, with grubby furniture,

and hand me down clothes. My nutrition consisted of packets of Nick Naks, and fish fingers, with an occasional Sunday *braai* with heavily salted lamb chops. My parents rarely had friends around, but once in a while we'd have dinners with odd ball celebrities that my mother would hook up with through theatre connections... Mimi Coertse and Gordon Mulholland were regular visitors. On a whole it was quite a delightful childhood, but the veneer was fragile...

## **2) School Years (circa 3-18)**

a) Where and when did you attend pre-school?

I attended Busy Bees pre-school, which was situated in Palmyra Rd in Claremont, opposite the below station Woolies. It is no longer a school

b) What was the social environment like there?

My time at Busy Bees felt supportive and enthralling. My memory, and we must remember I was 4 or 5, was of wonderful teachers and engaging social activities and learning. Finger painting rocks, and I remember hearing 'The Snow Goose' for the first time on an LP... and crying like a baby. I was also an active participant in the end of year Nativity, working my way from playing Gabriel (chief angel) to playing Joseph in the two years I was in attendance.

i. How would you define 'bullying'?

Bullying is the act of wilfully robbing someone, usually someone perceived as vulnerable, of their human dignity.

ii. Did you ever experience any instances of bullying in pre-school?

I do not recall being bullied at pre-school.

c) Where and when did you attend primary school?

I attended Golden Grove Primary School in Stuart Rd, Rondebosch.

d) What was your social environment like there?

It was the 70's, so Golden Grove was a co-educational school for white children. Classes were small, and facilities good. Christian Nationalist education. For the most part, social environment was strict but supportive.

i. Did you ever experience any instances of bullying in prep school?

The bullying came mostly from teachers, with a side order from fellow pupils. It was obvious that I was different, probably evident by a curious mind that got bored by the curriculum. I was shuffled between classes, spending most of my time in a remedial class, and at one point I was sent to the Mary Klein School for the deaf to establish whether I was hard of hearing. I felt mostly bullied by older male teachers, although they were probably not that old, just nationalist fascists throwing their weight around. Moustached and threatening. Corporal punishment was readily handed out, although I was never on the receiving end thankfully. It was just an ever-present threat.

I guess, due to *apartheid*, we were all somewhat bullied by the education we given. There is more to be said about what was hidden from us, than what we were taught.

e) Where and when did you attend high school?

I attended Rondebosch Boys' High School 1984 through 1989.

f) What was the social environment like there?

i. Did you ever experience any instances of bullying in high school?

To answer the questions about my time at RBHS, I provide the following essay, which I wrote for the Bosch LGBTQI and Allies FB page recently. If you would like me to elaborate, I'd be happy to, but I think it covers the basics:

There was a state of emergency in South Africa.

'Wake Me Up Before You Go Go', by Wham, was in the charts.

I had previously attended Golden Grove Primary, a co-ed school in lower Claremont. I was accepted into RBHS because my father and his brothers had attended, as it was certainly not because of any particular academic or sporting potential.

I cycled to RBHS from my home in Jefferson Rd, which took me along Avenue de Mist, and in through one of the top gates near the swimming pool.

I was pretty certain at this age that I was gay, as I'd had consensual "experiences" with older boys that I'd been drawn to, although I'd never actually spoken the words.

RBHS was intimidating. I'd never seen so many German model motor vehicles in one place, systematically disgorging young men back to school. The obvious affluence was visible, particularly in the manner of confidence which these young men strode into the school with. They wore brand new uniforms, with crisp blazers and starched white shirts, and their satchels were fresh off a rack from Henshilwoods.

My uniform was a hand me down. The only thing new on me, was my ill-advised mid-80's haircut.

It took less than one day for me to be labelled a "wanker", and for the bullying to begin. It was a rough year, in which I was called names on a daily basis, and in some cases physically pushed around.

Midway through the first year, while I was eating my lunch on the steps of the Rugby A field, I had a half brick thrown at me which gashed my leg open. It was followed up with the word "faggot".

A string of verbal abuse continued through the year. Faggot, moffie, girl, queer boy, fudge packer, etc... made walking between classes a complete nightmare, and I became introvert and anxious. I felt depressed a great deal of the time.

Not all boys treated me badly, but there was definitely a core group with an obvious leader, that had great pleasure in stripping me of all my dignity. I still remember his name, and I still can see his face.

It was only towards the end of 1986 that things started to improve, but this was only after I'd begun to find my tribe of misfits and started to assert myself in the fields of cultural expression.

The lowest point of 1986 though, was being called a faggot by a gym teacher at the school. Twice to my face.

My message to all those entering RBHS this year, is that you may be overwhelmed by a world you didn't know existed until now. A world you might not feel entirely comfortable in. Don't let it get you down. It can and will get better. Remain true to yourself, and true to those that display kindness to you. Do not be afraid of grabbing the opportunities you'll find at RBHS, as your light will shine in abundance once you've found your authenticity. This may be in the field of academics, or sport, or culture, but persevere through the darkness.

Stand up. Be counted. Be visible.

Fight the good fight. Be the better person.

And never be afraid to ask for help.

g) Did you participate in any extra-curricular activities?

I shied away from most extra-curricular activities, especially sport. It was never fun being chosen last, which in its own way is a form of bullying and left me feeling un-wanted. The sports teachers perpetuated this system. I was an active participant in both drama and choir groups, which provided me with a wonderful sense of belonging.

h) How did your school engage with sexuality, gender and masculinity?

i. Where would say these ideas came from?

Sexuality was hardly discussed, due in part to the stringent focus on heterosexual sex education. Our resources were basic children's illustrated books with snappy titles, and characters like Vanessa the Vagina and Sammy the Sperm. We also had religious instruction, which was tantamount to ensuring we remained loyal followers of Christ, and certainly promoted nothing but heteronormative behaviour ... anything else was condemned by God.

Interaction with member of the opposite sex was limited to female teachers and inter school social gatherings. Since there was no exposure to the concepts of inappropriate behaviour towards members of the opposite sex, I'd say that much was hit and miss stumbling in the dark of school discos and would probably be considered as sexual assault today. There was no mention of gender fluidity or non-binary ... having a "girlfriend" was of most importance, and "getting laid" was the stuff of legends and locker rooms.

Due to the State of Emergency, masculinity was highly toxic. Boys were expected to be ready to fight at any given moment, and this was promoted by mandatory activities such as weekly cadet training and twice weekly Physical Education. Any sign of weakness, such as crying, was seen as vulnerable and dangerous to your masculinity.

These ideas were mostly rooted in the Christian Nationalist Education model, and any wavering from it was subject to suspicion.

Here too I can provide you with an essay I wrote for the Bosch LGBTQI and Allies FB page, which may help illustrate the ethos of the time:

Being bullied is not confined to the realm of pupil on pupil violence. Sometimes teachers can be bullies too.

I have clear and lingering memories of such occasions.

At Rondebosch I did a fair amount of public speaking. Parachute debates, promo's for upcoming theatrical productions, stand-up comedy, etc. ... Some of these I did in drag, which is a long-standing tradition at all boy's schools. Or so I'm told.

At one of these in-front-of-the-whole-school speaking engagements, I used the words "pissed off" as part a monologue, to express some or other emotional state of being. I thought it was funny. A punchline. It got a laugh.

Needless to say, it didn't go down well with a certain staff member. This teacher, a science teacher, was a conservative nationalist educator. He was trained to be that kind of teacher, and he believed in his own message. He was well respected by the faculty, and senior in position. His brother taught at the school, and his sons attended the school. And it came to pass that he seriously did not like me. And now he had a reason to be "pissed off" with me.

Directly after the debate, or whatever it was, he pulled me aside. He pushed me into his classroom and began to tell me in no uncertain terms how deeply offended he was by me. He used the word aberration. He demanded an apology for the language I had used, which was offensive in his opinion. He demanded that I apologise, in public and in writing. He also wanted

me to personally visit him in the boarding house (where he was house master at the time, and I was a boarder), and privately apologise to his wife, as she had been even more offended than he had been.

What was a boy in a frock to do?

I do recall slipping into a deep sense of shock. Crying probably, which is what I usually did when people in authority screamed at me.

A day went by, then two, during which time my shock turned into fear. I became afraid. Afraid to walk past his classroom. Afraid of getting out of bed in the morning. Afraid he might call me out at boarding house meal times. Sick really. Sick with fear. Knots in the stomach.

This man, that had called my character into question, was un-touchable. A teacher surrounded by all the protection Bosch could give. His self-righteous anger, his misuse of power, his zealot like demeanour, could not be reported. To anyone.

There were certainly no avenues available at that time to report my crippling fear. No posters advertising steps that could be taken. No zero-tolerance policy. No safe space.

On the third day after the attack, just when I felt like I was going to have a nervous breakdown, I was accosted again by this teacher. Again, he demanded apologies. He frightened me, really. To the core. I promised I would come and apologise at his home that night, which I did, under duress. Sweating bullets and with jelly knees.

The room smelt old and dusty. Claustrophobic. The furniture was upholstered in busy floral patterns. The drapes were heavy. The windows closed. There was no air.

The teacher's wife was present, sitting in a high-backed chair. The teacher stood beside her, his hand on her shoulder. The teacher's sons, still dressed in their school uniforms, stood at attention behind her. All of them, facing me.

With voice close to breaking, I apologised.

Minutes of clock ticking silence passed between us all.

It was like being in a vacuum of humiliation.

I have never felt more brutalised in my entire life.

I was led to the front door.

He thanked me.

And then he forgave me.

He forgave me.

- i) How did your school engage with race and social class?
  - i. Where would say these ideas came from?

Regarding race and social class. This was a bit of a mine field. RBHS was obviously a school for white children. It was in a suburb for white people, and essentially in a country for white people. The first time I ever mixed socially with people of colour, was during an awkward meet up with pupils from a “disadvantaged school” during some kind of social at RBHS. Basically, we walked around showing POC [people of colour] around the school, and how amazing our lives were. The intention was good, but the execution was terrible. There was no guidance as to handling social inequality at the time, and we certainly had no real idea of our privilege.

I learned about *apartheid* from a small handful of progressive teachers at RBHS, and already feeling like I was on the outskirts of society, I took to radicalism like a duck to water. I joined the End Conscription Campaign, and the UDM [United Democratic Movement], and became their conduit for getting propaganda pamphlets into the school. I distributed these into satchels of fellow pupils, and into lockers around the school. When I suggested the Nelson Mandela should be freed, I was called a terrorist. It was the least horrible thing I was called while at RBHS.

My feeling is that my fellow pupils simply rehashed what they heard around their dinner tables and Sunday *braai*. Emulating what their parents and associated adults said. Terrorist and Faggot and Communist were used parrot fashion against those that threatened the status quo.

It needs to be pointed out, that many of the progressive teachers I felt kinship with, were LGBTQI or LGBTQI friendly. Strangely enough, although these teachers were subject to the rules of the land at the time i.e. Civil Servants could be fired for being homosexual, they managed to foster in me a great deal of social consciousness. I will forever be indebted to those educators that were willing to stick their necks out for me. Sadly, there were far too few.

### **Follow-Up Questions:**

1) The incidences you highlighted in your bullying a RBHS, was this commonplace throughout or did it ebb and flow? Did the nature of bullying change or evolve into something else? Do you remember how it made you feel in the years shortly after leaving high school?

The worst of the bullying was definitely between standard 6 and 8, beginning as a rather constant barrage of verbal and physical torment, but diminishing slowly as I grew in confidence. The nature of the bullying did change though, for example – one day I opened a desk which I sat at in an Afrikaans class, to find some or other scratched graffiti under the lid of the desk referring directly to me. On another occasion, there was a written statement in some or other work assignment math book which had I assume had randomly been assigned me, which expressed some bodies disgust at me being a faggot. I didn't report any of these, nor did I report any of the other bullying. By the time I left school I was a much more confident person, more comfortable in my skin and more assured of my place in the world, so I didn't pay it much thought ... although I guess the experienced sat around waiting to become a whole new set of issues regarding how I would, in the future, feel extremely anxious when faced with groups of heterosexual white men.

2) In the choir and drama groups, was there a sense of separation from your peers? Were any of the other participants also queer, and if so, did knowing that change the environment?

Being involved with drama projects and choir groups allowed me to be as close to authentic a person I could be. I felt part of, and welcomed, into these groups. They were also the magnet for other queer boys (and teachers), and although it was never discussed, it was certainly a much more comfortable environment due to this.

### **3) Young Adulthood (13-30)**

a) When did you begin to experience puberty? What changes stood out to you?

I was a pretty early bloomer, so puberty was already playing tricks with my body and mind by the time I was 13. The most evident change was that I was much taller than most of my classmates, all legs and arms so to speak, and I had entry level pubic hair by the time I entered high school ... which made for some awkward gym showers. A great many of my classmates, on the other hand, were babies.

b) How would you describe your sexual orientation?

i. What does it mean to you to be gay?

I have always been very comfortable calling myself gay, or homosexual. It is the group I most clearly identify with. My desire is for men, and except for a few very rare occasions, I am not aroused by people of the opposite sex.

ii. Have you ever needed to 'come out', and if so, when did you do so?

The first person I came out to was myself, and I did so at a very early age. I became self-evident to me very early on as to why I felt different i.e. that I was gay. The consequences of being gay in a predominantly heterosexual world, would only arise later. I came out to my best friend at RBHS, well, we came out to each other in about 1987. I think we'd just gone to see the movie 'Maurice' together, at the then Rosebank Cinema. It helped a great deal to have this partner in crime. There was never any inclination towards intimacy between us, and we're still great friends some 3 decades later. Incidentally, we were best friends back in junior school, which make him my oldest friend. I came out to various other people along the way, including some heterosexual school friends during my time at RBHS, and felt nothing but support from those I shared with. It was a finely selected group though, and again, many of these school friends

remain close friends. I only came out to my family once I met my present partner, which I did so by coming out to my mother. She told my father. My father and I never discussed it.

c) How would you describe your gender identification?

i. What is it to be male?

I strongly identify as male, and although I err towards a softer more recognisably characterful and camp range of mannerisms, I have enjoyed being male and the privileges the gender has brought me.

ii. Have you ever needed to 'come out', and if so, when did you do so?

I have never had to come out as male.

d) Can you remember how old you were when you experienced your earliest attractions to men?

i. How did these attractions make you feel at the time?

My earliest recollection of being attracted to men is from pre-primary, when I had what can only be described as a crush on a fellow classmate. We would play doctor-doctor together, as a way of exploring this "relationship", but it never developed any further. We met up again at RBHS, although I don't think he has any memory of this pre-school encounter. He certainly now identifies as heterosexual, and we remain fond friends ... although we've never spoken of the play dates. I have never thought of this incident as anything other than a natural extension of something that was fundamentally me. I guess it gave me the warm and fuzzies.

ii. Can you remember any attractions to women?

I've always been drawn to women, but never sexually. When I did have a girlfriend in high school, I think it was primarily an attraction to the romance of it all. We dated for no more than a year and a half, with mostly awkward fumbling sex, which wasn't very often. She was two years older than me, and definitely loved me more than I loved her. I'm Facebook friends with her, but our lives no longer cross paths. We both have fond memories of our time together, but we have long since moved on.

iii. How did your attractions to men compare to your attractions to women?

Since I've always considered myself to be homosexual, in the same way I know that I'm adopted, these attractions at an early age merely confirmed the knowledge.

e) During high school, were you ever involved in any relationships with men or women?

i. Were these relationships easy to initiate? How did you do so?

Once I was at high school, I'd had a fair amount of explicit intimacy with other boys (usually older than myself). It quickly became clear to me at RBHS, that following my instinct was going to be counter-productive. In order to secure friendships with other boys, I would ultimately need to sever the sex from my sexuality. Making other boys feel comfortable being around me, and in order to install trust, I would cease to initiate any kind of sexual intimacy with them. Making other feel that my homosexuality was not a threat, I simply brain neutered myself. Surprisingly, this technique worked, but it set in motion some profound difficulties once I'd left school i.e. that amount of control takes a great deal of time to undo. The small group of close male friends that I made, which grew larger when I was at boarding school, consisted of buddies that accepted me because I was not a sexual threat to them. It was okay to be homosexual, just not homosexual on them. For the most part, I'm still good friends with these school mates, most of whom are heterosexual ... although a fair amount of my inner circle was, and remain, homosexual. It was never discussed, and it was always platonic. I certainly had a crush or two on class mates, but apart from an extra glance in the shower, I never acted on my attraction.

ii. How did they make you feel? Did you ever disclose your relationships to your family, friends or community?

This neutering felt like the correct thing to do, although I may have missed out on a fair amount of sexual growth. I guess I'll just never know really. By the time I was in matric, and by now a boarding house prefect, I'd achieved my goal of finding a family of sorts. I knew where I stood in the social network, and had friends from various branches of this, a mix of drips and drops from the cigarette smoking graphic art dept and from the testosterone fuelled jocks from the first team rugby. I could chameleon at the drop of a hat. The final months of standard 9,

and then until the end of my matric year, I started working every 2<sup>nd</sup> weekend or so at a gay night club in the city of Cape Town called The Oasis. I would slip out at night from the boarding school on Friday and Saturday nights, and be a flamer (pouring drinks at the bar really) at The Oasis until the wee hours of the morning when I caught a train back to Rondebosch in time for wake-up call. It was easier when I was a prefect, and nobody would seek me out during the night. Responsible young adult and all...

[Side-bar: you mentioned in your essay response to my second round of questions that you'd "had consensual "experiences" with older boys that I'd been drawn to." On this, what drew you to them, and what were these experiences? At what sort of age did these happen? How did they make you feel?]

My relationships with older boys happened entirely while I was at junior school, between the ages of 9 and 13. The older boys were in standards higher than myself, or in high school – probably 4 years my senior. I guess I was drawn to these older boys because I felt that I was older than my own age group. I felt more sophisticated, and more mature, than the boys my age. Again, this felt natural, and extension of myself. It was certainly secretive, as even though it felt natural, I knew intrinsically that it was considered “bad” by others’ standards of morality. So, quick encounters behind bicycle sheds, swimming pool lockers, etc I did have a few overnight sleepover experiences with the son of a family friend, when he visited my house during a certain summer, and stayed in the caravan that was parked in our garden. Physically these encounters were for the most part just genital explorations, and oral sex. I don’t think it occurred to me, at that age, that anal penetration could be part of the experience.

f) Where did you pursue higher education, and what did you study?

I attended UCT drama dept from 1990, graduating with a Performers Diploma in Speech and drama in 1992.

i. Was there a gay presence on campus? What was that like?

There were decidedly more openly gay men and women at the UCT art and drama campus, and I felt that I could be more open and authentic about myself than ever before. It wasn’t a huge leap of faith to express your sexuality, and I felt encouraged to do so. I had a rather disastrous

relationship with a young man in my class over the three years at UCT. He was a narcissist, and alcoholic in training, and bisexual. I was obsessed with him, and he took every advantage to manipulate my emotional state of being, leaving me pretty scarred for many years after.

ii. What was your social circle like during your university times?

My social circle was essentially those that were studying with me. I almost never socialised with people that I'd attended school with, preferring to run with those that now shared my interest in the performing arts.

g) What work did you do after you graduated from high school? What motivated this particular career choice?

After graduating from UCT, I worked as a freelance actor. I was for many years relatively successful at this, but since work was often thin on the ground, I finally made a move into a office position with an actors agency. This move was partly financial, as I needed to afford HIV medication over and above my daily expenses. I have been the manager of a guest house in the Klein Karoo for the past 10 years.

h) How would you define 'conflict' in the context of an intimate relationship?

I would define conflict in an intimate relationship as a period when both parties have incompatible opinions about something which they both feel strongly about.

i. What would you say has informed your definition?

My definition is formed from my 25 years of being in a relationship with the same person.

ii. What kinds of actions or behaviours do you think generate conflict in intimate relationships?

These conflicts are generated by miscommunication, or lack of communication. They are often the result of some underlying tension or stress, such as health or financial issues.

- iii. What kinds of mindsets or attitudes do you think generate conflict in intimate relationships?

Strong personalities with strong opinions will often clash, but for reasons I cannot explain, my partner and I have had a relatively blissful 25 years together. We hardly ever raise our voices to each other, finding less combatable ways of talking things through. We have lived together for almost all of these 25 years, and have for over a decade now, been in each other's company 24/7. It is a rare occurrence for us to argue.

- i) Did you pursue any physical or sexual relationships with men or women during this period of time?

I have been in a committed relationship with a man for 25 years. We have been engaged for over a decade, with no plans of getting married. Any conflict with my partner, which has occurred during this time, has been resolved with minimal effort through listening and communication. Conflicts have always upset me, bringing back memories of dysfunctional parents, and I tend to become sullen. We have, due to a strong sense of humour and firm belief in the strength of our relationship, managed to always find a way through. We have learned, and practice, the adage: to never take oneself, or others, too seriously. If, and when, we do have tiff's; they take place privately at home. As a general rule of thumb, we can resolve these issues quickly, before anything becomes too heated or messy.

- j) Did you ever engage in committed relationships during this time?

I believe I have covered this question in previous answers

- k) Did your self-identity in terms of sexuality and gender shift during this time?

My sexual identity has remained 100% homosexual. I still identify as male.

**Follow-Up Questions:**

- 1) You mentioned working for a gay club called the Oasis during the latter years of your high school career. What was the club like in terms of clientele? What did it mean

to you to be at a 'gay club', and were there others that you knew of in Cape Town? Did you ever go to any other gay club or work in any other 'gay' industry or business again?

The Oasis was situated a block away from the intersection of Strand and Long Street, in Long street. It was accessed through an office block and was on the top floor. It had plush carpets, a “disco” dance floor, and was peppered with 1980’s fake metallic palm trees. The clientele were mostly white men, but lesbians were also welcome. It was the only gay club I knew in Cape Town and was pretty lively over the weekend. It was all quite a revelation to me, and I found a family of friends there quite easily. It felt wonderfully safe, and supportive, and I guess it was the very first time I felt truly at home. Other big clubs at the time were Cats and The Playground. After Oasis closed down (I’m unsure of its actual history), I was already at UCT. Bigger clubs were on the rise, with the granddaddy of them all being Angels in Somerset Road, where House Music and Ecstasy were the language of the day (and night) and following day. There were a handful of more intimate gay friendly club venues scattered around the city, such as Rhythm Divine, The Function and The Boiler Room. The club scene during this time was huge, and one could quite literally spend an entire weekend moving from one venue to the next. Glory days. After leaving UCT I worked consistently with Andre Vorster and Andrew Putter on the first decade of MCQP [Mother City Queer Project] Parties, a queer initiative.

2) During your time as a student, you had "a rather disastrous relationship with a young man in my class over the three years at UCT." Do you mind me asking how he manipulated you emotionally during this time, and the ways in which you dealt with the feelings and influences during and after the relationship?

My relationship with A.B. while at UCT was a kind of bromance on steroids. He was, I would find out, a heap of damaged goods. I was desperately in love with him, but apart from the sex, the feelings were never reciprocated. He had relationships with women, and he would use these relationships to make me feel un-loved and un-wanted. We could be as thick as thieves one day, and the next he was off the radar with one of his conquests. We would organise to meet, and he wouldn’t show up. Our sexual dalliances were to remain secret, so that his heterosexuality would remain iconic. Narcissist sociopaths can be extremely charming, but very difficult to break away from. It would be fair to say that I spent most of my time at UCT in a state of being a “hot mess”. My sleep patterns were always erratic, since I spent so much of my time walking the streets of Gardens in Cape Town, hoping to find evidence of where he

was. He would be all over me when he was drunk but could not pay me the light of day when sober. I was his best friend and worst enemy, which resulted in me seeing myself as this too. I took me a few years, after we all left UCT and he moved to Johannesburg, to rectify my inability to trust any intimacy. When I did see him, which was on and off when he travelled to Cape Town, I was anxious and un-nerved. He absolutely knew what power he wielded over me and seemed to delight in this knowledge. Now, decades later, I still have fond memories of him.

3) You mentioned needing HIV medication, do you mind telling me your HIV story? When you were diagnosed, did it affect you and your family and friends at the time, and how it made you feel to be someone with HIV? Has it affected your life in any way since diagnosis, and if so, how?

I offer this essay to answer your question regarding HIV/AIDS, which I wrote from a friend's blog last year:

My name is Ashley Brownlee. I have been living in the Klein Karoo for over a decade now and have found a great deal of peace amongst the big horizons and in the arms of the Milky Way.

There was a time though, and it's a difficult time to talk about, when life was not so filled with any kind of future. I hope that my story will inspire you to choose life.

I contracted HIV/Aids on the night I lost my virginity.

I was so in need of being loved that night, that even though there were condoms on the night stand, I had unsafe sex. The person I was with had his own issues, and due to the stigma regarding HIV/Aids during this time, choose not to reveal his diagnosis to me.

I was diagnosed HIV positive shortly before my 21st Birthday and given 9 months to live. I had the blood tests done at a gay men's health clinic after my one-night stand urged me to go for a test. It took a huge amount of courage to submit to these tests, and I was truly frightened. I went alone.

There was almost no treatment available. What was available was very expensive, and although initially relatively successful, very toxic and ultimately deadly. There was, as is now, no cure.

I had to wait 10 days before the results came back.

The first thing that came to mind after receiving the diagnosis, and this is a clear memory, is that this was not going to play out as a tragedy. I would choose to walk a path that made everything possible.

I spoke to close friends about the diagnosis, but not immediately to family initially, and this certainly took a great deal of the load off. It felt like I had a team on my side from the get go.

Speaking to family is a huge hurdle, and I only did this once I began to feel and look visibly ill. I was also in financial difficulty, as the treatment available was beyond my means. I needed help. I had expected much crying, and emotional over compensation, but what surprised me was the tenderness. The enveloping of me into my mother's arms, and the deep silent hug of my sister, was incredibly moving.

I am lucky to have been gifted this family. Many are not so fortunate. It is imperative to understand that family can be chosen, and as Kahlil Gibran so wisely points out, "Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you, yet they belong not to you."

It will be hard, to be rejected from your family, but it does not have to be. Families can be made from the ground up.

Since then I have seen more needles than you can possibly imagine, enough "test" medication down my throat to sink a ship, and I've watched too many friends pass away. There was a two-year period in the late 90's in which I lost close to 9 people in my immediate circle of friends, including the person that had infected me. It was completely horrific.

I also finally found true love, and my partner and I have been together for close on two and a half decades. Choose love.

Having a partner in my life has made the world of difference.

I'm now in my late 40's, a plague survivor, and certainly the longest living person with HIV in my immediate circle of friends. Being a survivor comes with its own issues and is well documented by people that have survived catastrophic air crashes and natural disasters, and especially in people that survived the Holocaust. Being a survivor comes with its own weight.

Know your history.

Whether it's Simon Nkoli, David Ross Patient, Zackie Achmat, Ryan White or Rock Hudson. The struggles of the living and the dead create road maps. The history of HIV/AIDS is both crushing and inspiring. The stories are can be small and personal, or angry and full of activism, but there is a common thread that speaks of acceptance and compassion. Love does conquer all.

What I'd really like to express is the importance of finding spirit when faced with chronic illness. I do believe that it is the single most important choice you need to make, and one that has without doubt contributed to my longevity.

I choose to love rather than hate. Happiness over sadness. Joy over despair. Laughter over tears.

I know that many people living with HIV/AIDS are not in the privileged situation that I am in, and that finding the time to find spirit when you're living hand to mouth is an almost impossible, but you'd be surprised where compassion and empathy are to be found. Do not turn away. You deserve the love.

Remember to always be kind to yourself. Show yourself some respect.

You will make mistakes. Some of these will haunt you for the rest of your life.

For a while, during the dark time of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, a young woman lived in my house. She was an old girlfriend of my boyfriend. She arrived with full blown AIDS and a young son. For an entire year she stayed with us, and every day I walked her son to school. It's

the closest I've ever been to being a dad. Towards the end of her stay, on a particularly hard day for both us, she requested me to fetch something innocuous for her from the kitchen. I was moody, she was dying, we were both just fed up. I'd reached my breaking point, and from my bedroom I screamed at her – "Shut the f#@k up. Just shut the f#@K up. Just die already"

The moment the words came from my mouth, the second they travelled out of my body, I knew I'd never get them back. HIV/AIDS is a horrible gig, and it will push you to places of vulnerability and fear that you've never thought possible. You will make mistakes.

It's okay to be angry. Forgive yourself.

Less than six months later our friend passed away in a hospice, leaving behind her son in the care of her sister.

Nothing can prepare you for having to watch the people you love slip away. HIV/AIDS are insidious and will reduce a once strong life force to a small defeated frame of bones. You need to steel yourself against the horror of it all, but you also need to be present.

Death comes for us all in the end, but it's not something you should have to endure in your 20's. All the dying was pretty overwhelming back then, and it unfortunately hardened me too many years before life should have done so.

My journey has been a wild ride, with great loss and enormous lessons. I'd like to share with you a story of a particular time in order to illustrate how important the role of spirit is.

There were 18 months of my life upon a time, when I have full blown AIDS and no medical aid, when once a month I sat in a queue at the Robbie Nurock Clinic for ARV medication. Arriving early was essential, and patience was required. I had never had to wait for medical treatment before. I came from a world of deep Cape Town white southern suburbs privilege, where waiting was something other people had to do. I remember my first few visits, when I was completely overwhelmed by the amount of people and feeling entitled ... felt extremely miffed at the hours it took to see a doctor. I simply had no idea that that was the norm, naïve as I was.

Slowly, very slowly, like the queue I was expected to sit in, I started a journey that has had a profound effect on my life. I started to talk to the people around me, started to listen to their stories. Horrible stories of living with HIV/AIDS in townships, of violent discrimination, of fevers in shacks, of waiting. Waiting to die.

And then there was the singing. To pass time, to show camaraderie, to voice but not to cry, there was singing. Beautiful singing. Soul singing. Singing that filled the grimy corridors, brought life into wrecked and ravaged bodies, and offered hope to everyone ... no matter your age, your race, your gender, or your sexuality. Singing.

And I cried. I cried a lot. But I also found comfort in the most unexpected of arms. In the arms and hands and words and love and friendships of strangers. Strangers in those dark gloomy corridors waiting to die. Lifted me. Filled me. Opened my eyes.

Many of them are probably dead by now. I know they are. Because they were black and poor, and the help didn't come soon enough. I am grateful and thankful beyond imagination for the care they took of me on my journey.

For every day I live, I live for them. I live in the love of those whose brightness was snuffed to soon. I will never forget.

HIV/Aids changed my life. It changed the lives of some of the most creative and beautiful people I've even know. It robbed us of all that incredible potential. Since the beginning of the epidemic, more than 70 million people have been infected with the HIV virus and about 35 million people have died of HIV.

There have been huge strides in treatment, and I'd certainly be dead without the medication I take every day of my life. The viral load in my body is undetectable, and it's very seldom I fall ill. The future is bright.

The epidemic galvanized the LGBTQI community into a powerful and united advocacy force, but the simple truth is this. Above all that has happened.

I'd really like my friends back. I miss them so very much.

4) How did you meet your current partner, and what is the story of your relationship in terms of domesticity? What is a normal domestic scene for the two of you, what do you do to share intimacy and how do you delegate responsibilities in the household?

Andre and I met at a Queer Theatre festival I was performing at, at Jazzart (when it was still in Jarvis Street Cpt). He'd taken a job as a barman that morning, when the booked barman took ill. We each have two very telling stories ... I saw Andre across the room, and it felt like I'd stepped into a blinding light. I instantaneously knew I'd be spending the rest of my life with him. Andre remembers the tight black jeans I had on, and that he thought I was really hot. We went for drinks after the show, to a gay venue in downtown Cape Town, and immediately over shared our stories. About two weeks later, during which time we flirted over the phone, met for drinks, I cooked him a dinner of scrambled eggs and viennas, etc. ... we hooked up at the first MCQP Party "The Locker Room" at the River Club. A week after that I moved in with him in Camps Bay, a month later we rented a larger home in De Waterkant, and within a year we had bought our first home together. I was in love with a man with a beach buggy, a dog, and a hippy background. Now, some 25 years later, it's difficult to describe how we operate domestically. The past decade we've spent almost exclusively in each other company. Andre has always been the bread winner, while I manage the household, although we both have had independent jobs that support us financially. This is not to be confused with traditional male/female roles, as neither of us see each other as anything other than male, and we have never considered the work we do as indicative of gender. We do what comes to us naturally and use what personal strengths we have to share responsibilities. For many years we were lip locked and inseparable, but with the passing years our moments of intimacy have developed into something far more dependable i.e. making food together, going on holiday together, watching movies, etc ... we can finish each other's sentences, and pretty much instinctually know what the other is thinking. We are a well-oiled machine, operating without having to negotiate each other's feelings.