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Seeking Solidarities: A Feminist Analysis of the Discourses On Solidarity Between Activists Interested in Transforming Masculinities

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Social Science.

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This work has not been previously submitted in whole or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: _____

Date: December 05, 2012

"Solidarity is not a matter of altruism. Solidarity comes from the inability to tolerate the affront to our own integrity of passive or active collaboration in the oppression of others, and from the deep recognition of our most expansive self-interest. From the recognition that, like it or not, our liberation is bound up with that of every other being on the planet, and that politically, spiritually, in our heart of hearts we know anything else is unaffordable."

- Aurora Levins Morales

University of Cape Town

Thank you to all the feminists in my life for teaching me that it is only through solidarity that we can make liberation within our lifetime a reality.

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Abstract

The interests of this thesis lie in the way in which solidarities are imagined within the South African feminist movement, one which is deeply conscious of the intersectional nature of gender and of the politics of sexuality as part and parcel of any analysis of social justice concerns. Theoretically informed by the work of Castells, Hassim, and other theorists exploring the dynamics of 'movement building,' the thesis focuses upon the discourses of solidarity used within one particular feminist organisation as it imagines new alliances. The organisation (Sonke Gender Justice Network) concentrates on the work of transforming violent hegemonic masculinities and plans to develop programmes working with new partners whose work focuses on justice and the lives of transgendered, lesbian, gay, and intersex people and communities ('LGBTI'). The research draws on qualitative data drawn from interviews with Sonke staff and on the researcher's own experience as an intern within the organisation, and analyses the material in order to explore the shape and implications of discourses on new alliances. The conclusions of the thesis speak to the complexities of imagining solidarity across differences of theory, identity, and experience.

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MASTERS THESIS

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The notion of “solidarity” begins for me at a very personal level. As a lifelong activist with a passion for social transformation, my motivations for doing research come from the desire to pursue strategies to improve the “doing” of transformation. The popularity of the word “solidarity” began this journey for me, as my interests for my honours projects came from a curiosity of how differently gendered activists worked together (or didn’t work together). Locating these spaces where there is tension, disparity, or allegiance and solidarity can hopefully lead feminists to build better, more cohesive, stronger and more effective movements for transformation. Central to this research project are feminist discourses of transforming masculinities, where I analyse the possibilities of solidarity between Sonke - an organisation that works with transforming particular forms of heteronormative masculinities – and LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex) activists. By interning for three months at Sonke, I intended to entrench myself within the organisation to better understand how Sonke operates. My positionality as a researcher deeply embedded in the research data is also something that will be critical to contend with in this research project – the ways that I embody solidarity through my work at Sonke informs the ways in which I hope to consider the possibilities of solidarity.

My honours thesis foregrounds my research this year by opening up a number of theoretical spaces where I engaged with the politics of doing research in a location where I was constructed as foreign, as well as opening up spaces where I explored the very surface of the gender politics of doing LGBTI activism in South Africa. This master’s thesis contends with the ways that solidarity is imagined by activists interested in transforming current gender and sexual dynamics. The discourses that bring together activists interested in transforming heteronormative masculinities with LGBTI activists will reveal different nuances of solidarities which lead towards the pursuit of social transformation. Related to the discourses of solidarity is Manuel Castells notion of agency in social movements as collective, not individual. Castells contends that the very notion of social “movements” which produce social change is premised upon collective agency (Stalder, 2006:77), thus contending with the ways that alliances and solidarities can or can’t be formed is critical to the establishment and perpetuity of transformative social movements.

Sonke Gender Justice Network has recently indicated an interest in integrating LGBTI issues into their programming and also at the organisational level. By using Sonke as a case study I attempted to evaluate discourses of the possibilities of solidarity between Sonke and LGBTI activists - through an organisation that is at the very cusp of imagining organisational transformations (to integrate LGBTI issues into their work). By contending with the ways that these organisational changes are imagined, I analysed the significance of these changes to discourses on solidarity. As part of the broader gender movement, how are organisations concerned with gender pursuing non heteronormative sexualities and genders into their work? How does this fit in their long term goals and ideologies? These are some of the questions that I hope will reveal parts of this notion of “solidarity” that premises my interests in social movements.

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CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Discourses on Solidarity

My relationship with the word “solidarity” began my interest in this discourse, as I spent the last few years being annoyed at this term because I cynically constructed it as naïve and presumptive. The popularity of the term “solidarity” and the common deployment of the term (in my activist circles) made me question how this word solidarity takes shape. If everyone is in solidarity with everyone else, then why is the work *not* being done? Transnational feminist discourses add nuance to this conversation by contending with how we can be in solidarity with people across different contexts. Since the #Occupy movement, and myself moving to Cape Town, I’ve spent a lot of time interrogating how I am positioned to broader global movements, and also how I am positioned as a feminist with other feminists and LGBTI activists in the South African context. Alongside my passion for doing social change, interrogating the ways that I form solidarity with different actors in various social movements has sparked my research interests in solidarities. This thesis intends to investigate discourses on solidarity. Some of the questions that started this project included: When we say “solidarity” – what does this mean? What does this mean in terms of our relations to one another? What does this mean in terms of engaging with privilege and positionality? What does solidarity between feminists across different genders and sexualities look like?

Judith Butler implied a discourse on solidarity when she challenged the (Western) feminist construction of the representation of “woman” within feminist discourses. Who is this “woman”, and is this identity within the discourse of feminisms exclusionary (Butler, 1999: 3 – 7)? Butler argued that indeed, this construction unnecessarily excluded queer/othered bodies, and in her postmodern critique of the essentialisation of the constructed identity of “woman”, she deconstructed identity politics and contested whether representational identities were plausible within the feminist movement. Under this discussion of identity politics is representational politics, and the power (and privileges) embedded within the representation of ‘Woman’ in feminism at the time (in the West) (Butler, 1999: 3 – 7).

Chandra Mohanty also offers a critique of Western feminist homogenisations of the category of ‘women’, suggesting that western hegemony silences the voice of women in the Global South, and rearticulates colonisation through hegemony (Mohanty, 344). Mohanty contends that while the categorisation and generalisation of ‘woman’ may appear to be useful to problematise patriarchal oppression, by marginalising the voice of women of colour and women in the Global South, white western feminists rearticulate some of the oppressive power structures that they also seek to deconstruct. Mohanty contends that western generalisations of women’s experiences are problematic, and that local contexts of women’s agency and patriarchal oppression need not to be ignored. She argues that representational politics are loaded with

discourses of colonisation and privilege, which inform the ways that these politics are articulated in feminist activism (Mohanty, 333 – 336).

In the face of postmodernism however, activists – and here I argue that feminists – are faced with a dualism that requires constant reflexivity. While Butler argued that representational identities – which feminists utilised to build solidarity (i.e. “we are women who share a common oppression because we are women”) – was exclusionary, other theorists argue that the overemphasis on deconstructionism leads to nominalism, which is arguably unproductive and denies the possibility of solidarity (Min, 2005: 824). Using the political theory of Hannah Arendt, Amy Allen suggests that Arendt’s analysis of solidarity as a modality of power can lead us away from the impasse of nominalism that she argues postmodernism has constructed (Allen, 1999: 97). Allen also (reflexively) problematises Arendtian political theory within a discourse of sexual politics, since Arendt particularly “rejects the possibility of a politics of sexuality” (Allen, 1999:98). However, using her framework of solidarity as a modality of power, Allen argues that Butler’s implicit rejection of group solidarity “fails to confront the possibility that non-repressive group identities could be forged out of shared political commitments and that solidarity could be achieved through collective political action, rather than assumed in advance” (Allen, 1999:98). Allen suggests that perhaps the *site* of which solidarity emerges is/can be *through* political action – as opposed to a prerequisite to legitimise ‘membership’ to the collective (Allen, 1999: 102).

Allen suggests that this collective action – solidarity – is a mode of power. She uses Arendt’s example of how the Danish resisted the Nazi anti-Semitic genocide by not identifying as a Jew, but rather, they identified with a shared commitment to attain a common goal (Allen, 1999: 112). It is this idea of a ‘community of action’ that is most relevant here for this proposal – the idea that we can share an affinity with one another for a common purpose, and through that affinity we can build solidarity. In regards to feminism, Allen proposes that Arendt’s work allows us to “shift from thinking of solidarity among women as the power of sisterhood to thinking of solidarity among feminists (women and men) as the power of those who pledge to work together to fight relations of subordination” (Allen, 1999: 113). Allen offers an intervention to mitigate the potential for nominalism that the postmodern critique may adhere to, that solidarity premised on action as opposed to common identity can be a mode of power for a political act of resistance.

Allen also uses Joanne Cutting-Gray’s analysis of Arendt to emphasise “the centrality of difference as a fundamental part of our human condition, and that “alterity” reconceived in terms of multiplicity opens the possibility for the community of plurality, a coalitional politics based on difference (1993: 41)” (Allen, 1999: 104). Anselm Min also offers a critique of ‘sameness solidarity’, arguing that there is no singular definition for “woman”, and no fixed identity, therefore, what motivates feminist solidarity should be premised *against* the notion of exclusion (Min, 2005:824). Jill Stearns conflates this notion of solidarity against exclusion with the idea of “inclusive solidarity” (Stearns, 2007: 729). She uses bell hooks to refer to feminist discourses about supporting diversity (2007:737), and suggests that feminist solidarity can be built on common support as opposed to common representational identity.

Central to his claims for feminist solidarity is his vehement criticisms of the hegemony of postmodernism, particularly the postmodern critique of essence, which he contends leads to nominalism (Min, 2005:834). He recontextualises the postmodern concept of difference, by using Derrida's notion of '*differance*', in which he criticizes the postmodern ignorance of the importance of coherence and solidarity in both semiotics and social existence (2005:834). Using a semiotic analysis, he argues two major points: that difference is essential to meaning (Derrida) and the signification is possible because of these differences (2005:834). Critical to this analysis is a coherence that must be premised prior to the deconstruction of the context. He uses the example of two people having a conversation, and how these people must have some sort of shared identity to share a conversation (2005:835). Min argues that all forms of social existence require a coherence - a mutual order - which is essential to a solidarity of the different (2005:835).

Min offers an analysis of the theoretical implications of postmodernism to the manifestation of these philosophies - in other words, *putting theory into action*. He argues that semiotic reductionism reduces human existence to "the thinker, the knower, the signifier", while reducing the world to "thought, known and signified" and eliminating the difference between an objective reality of the world and the world as semiotically constructed by human beings (Min, 2005:836). He argues that "we may live in the world of signs and discourses, but we do not live *on* signs and discourses; we live in a world *on* real food, real cognition, real meaning, however mediated these may be by signs and discourse" (Min, 2005:836, emphasis added). This critique offers a balance between the seemingly reductionist strategies of the postmodern discourse and reality. Min warns of exaggerating the use of postmodern deconstruction as *more* than an epistemological apparatus. Deconstruction is an epistemological tool that allows us to examine environments where truth can permeate - it is not an ontological state of being, or way of life or action. Min's vehement sublation of postmodernism indicates to the discourse on feminist solidarity the dangers of unquestioning the tool of deconstruction. While Butler's post structural analysis of feminist identity politics effectively criticizes the exclusionary measures of *representation*, the manifestation of this activism is built upon a solidarity premised upon a common goal and (as Min argues) an identity against exclusion. Identity is not an irrelevance to activism, rather it should be recontextualised away from representational identity to an identity of *action* and commonality of *purpose*.

Finally, Min adds this useful concluding thought on postmodernism, which contextualises the usefulness of the postmodern episteme:

"Postmodernism calls for a heterological imperative as an essential condition of living in a multicultural pluralistic world...the willingness to subject all our convictions to the challenge of others, their views, their needs, their identity, not in the sense of giving up our convictions and beliefs as condition of dialoguing with others, as some pluralists tend to argue, but in the sense of a culture of readiness to live in tension between our own ultimate beliefs and the challenge of those who differ, with the willingness to modify our views and behaviours if necessary and otherwise always to take the other into consideration." (Min, 2005: 833).

Min suggests that manifestations of postmodernism in a lived reality is a cognition of difference and tension - a willingness to contend with, and the willingness to shape our convictions with the challenges of tensions brought about by different interactions with different spaces. Min and Allen challenge the reliance

upon postmodernism that feminism appears to adhere to. Rather, they suggest that using deconstruction does not (or should not) compromise the need to form solidarities across differences for a common purpose.

So far, I have outlined some of the literature that challenges postmodern deconstructionism, however, excluding deconstruction from a discourse of feminist solidarity would marginalise a critical component of the feminist movement. Cressida Heyes' article "Feminist Solidarity after Queer Theory: The Case of the Transgender" attempts to give a barometer reading of what new solidarity spaces opened, since *Gender Trouble* was published in 1990. Heyes' examines how Butler used subversion to deconstruct – to fracture – feminist solidarity premised upon identity lines (2003: 1093), and examines the possibilities of new feminist solidarities, within the paradigm of post-identity political solidarity. She contests several western transgender theorists' assumption that all gender expressions should be tolerated within feminist discourses, because she argues that this presumption negates privileges and power attached to particular expressions of gender. Heyes' argues that gender is relational and hierarchal, and thus, the expression of gender from trans individuals does not mitigate the notion of hierarchal gender relations.

Heyes' analysis argues that despite the marginalisation of particular genders, all genders exist within power relations, and these locations affect solidarity. She asks rhetorically, "If we are all individuals making normatively equal gender choices, then where is oppression?" (2003: 1117). She argues that perhaps it is not a rejection of identity, but an *interrogation* of our identities that is needed for feminist solidarity. Heyes' opens up an important discourse, which suggests that even within social movements, hierarchal power relations based upon gender continue to permeate. Gender – like power – is relational, and perhaps feminist solidarities can be built upon interrogating our own identities, and negotiating power relations.

Discourses of Solidarity in South Africa

The theories used in the above analysis of solidarity are rooted in the West, and it is important to ground "solidarity" within the context in which I will be engaging my research. I want to begin first by offering a brief critique of the context of the above analysis, and suggest some contextual implications that are relevant to this proposal. Firstly, Butler's critiques of the construction of the representation of "woman" comes from some of the hegemonic Second Wave Feminist politics that were prevalent in the Global North in the 1960's – 1980's. Butler's critiques marked what some of the authors above have called the Third Wave, or "Post-Feminist" movement, again in the Global North. The term "Post-Feminist" term comes from the postmodern critique mentioned above, where certain feminist politics contended whether the term "feminism" was necessary, or if it was counterproductive to use the term because of the backlash against feminism in the West. I mention this discourse here because I want to reject this idea of "Post Feminism" for several reasons. First, in my opinion, there is no "post feminism" unless there is "post patriarchy"; and since I will continue to identify as a feminist throughout this research project, I want to reject this term "post feminism" because is problematic in contextualising my identity as a researcher, and the research that I set out to do. Secondly, since this thesis hopes to locate the work that organisations are doing around masculinities within a feminist research

methodology, I cannot ignore the implications of patriarchy within the discourses I will be exploring; therefore the term “post-feminist” is problematic. Lastly, the term “post-feminist” comes from a Western context that for this research project is problematic because I will be exploring the work of gender organisations who do feminist work – in that they consider patriarchy an important aspect of their work – and therefore contextually, the term “post-feminist” is problematic, as my research is located in South Africa, which has its own history and relationship with the term “feminist”. As a feminist from the North, this discourse is something that I will be engaging with further as I take on a research project in this context.

Within this brief attempt to locate my theoretical underpinnings in the South African context, I will also consider the notion of “solidarity” in the South African context. The first notion of solidarity within the South African context that I want to offer is on the *solidarity against the apartheid regime*, and solidarities forged for nation building. This has many different nuances, including solidarity during the struggle, and solidarity in the movement to build the new constitution. One example of solidarity against the apartheid government was in the organising of trade unions (Dekker et. al., 2009: 2 – 8). Trade union organising has had a long history since the industrial revolution, where groups of labourers banded together to support each other against unfair treatment from bourgeoisie factory owners (Dekker et. al., 2009: 2). Similarly in South Africa, trade unions banded together, largely upon racial lines, to protest unfair treatment in factories and mines. What is unique about the South African situation is that the trade union ‘actions’ were largely influenced and directed at ‘external’ systems from the actual workplace, such as the apartheid government (Von Holdt, 2002: 291). By external, Von Holdt refers to the literal lines of responsibility and power within the factories themselves. While the laws that implemented racial hierarchies did extend into the workplace, the focus of the organising and the protesting centred around external relations, such as the relations between the state and the community, as opposed to “internal relations and contestations” (Van Holdt, 2002: 286). Because of the intensive restrictions placed upon the mobility and human rights of particular racial demographics under the apartheid system, solidarity and collective identity was concretely build upon the identities formed outside of the workplace (Van Holdt, 2002: 286).

Van Holdt also refers to some of the divisive identity politics that affected solidarity pre-democracy. In regards to trade unions (and here, Holdt uses the example of Highveld Steel, and it’s relationship with COSATU, and COSATU’s consequent relationship with the tripartite alliance and the African National Congress), Holdt describes how differences between migrant workers versus urban workers created some disparities in building solidarity (Van Holdt, 2002: 288). “Migrant workers faced different labour market opportunities and constraints, frequently had different jobs in the workplace, and were segregated in strictly controlled hostels in the community. Many retained links to rural productive resources, and their engagement in the urban economy was a strategy to preserve their ‘rural integrities’.” (Moodie, 1994 in Van Holdt, 2002: 289). Apartheid policies drove divisions between the Zulu urban locals, and the Pedi migrants, which thus also affected solidarity between these two groups (Van Holdt, 2002: 289). Holdt uses the example of *kgoro*, which is a word in Pedi referring to a meeting place (for men) – a word that was appropriated from their home traditions into the new context to retain a system of collective discussion and dispute resolution (Van Holdt,

2002: 289). The usage of *kgoro* created deep crevices in trade union solidarity because often, Pedi migrants would refer to dispute resolutions through the *kgoro* system, whereas locals would go home and discuss this with their families and their wives (Van Holdt, 2002: 289). These nuances in South African trade union solidarity help locate some of the context in which we speak when we describe solidarity in the South African context. While solidarity against apartheid was the paramount identity on which solidarity was constructed, apartheid policies also created rifts between different identity groups.

Post 1994, Holdt suggests that these solidarities again shifted upon class formations. The changes in opportunity for some individuals who had access to economic mobility meant that the foundational aspect of solidarity being collectiveness was shattered, and that a more capitalistic individualism emerged (Van Holdt, 2002: 294). Dekker also refers to this idea in her article on social security in South Africa, as the reluctance (in attitude) to contribute to social security largely comes from lack of earnings and class mobility (Dekker, 2009). The vast disparities in class also contribute to social exclusion – the lack of participation in society – such as homelessness, poverty and criminality (Dekker, 2009). These class divisions also present a case for a fragmented notion of solidarity along lines of socioeconomic status and privilege, which continue to be based upon racial lines, though no longer enforced through the apartheid system.

Discourses of Feminist Solidarities in South Africa

The history of the women's movement sheds some important nuances to the idea of solidarity in South Africa. Julia Wells' documents women's political organising in the 1913 resistance in Bloemfontein against the extension of urban residential passes in the Orange Free State (1983: 56). Using a Marxist analyses, she describes how women from across racial lines formed solidarity against the extension of the residential passes, with the formation of the Orange Free State Native, Coloured Women's Association, and with the support of the South African Natives National Congress (SANNC), the African Political Organisation (APO), and a group of white women (1983: 56). The implementation of the pass system in Johannesburg saw a similar women's resistance, along with the Coordination of Documents Act in 1952 (Meintjes, 1996: 53) with the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL) and the umbrella to which it belonged, the Federation of South African Women (FSAW) strategizing together resistances (Wells, 1983: 56).

Wells' suggests in her article that the implementation of these passes "reflect[s] the growth and evolution of white domination over black labour in general and the economic incorporation of black women in particular" (Wells, 1983:59). She frames these resistances as a "struggle against full proletarianization" (Wells, 1983: 69). The pass system would enforce a programme which would severely hinder affected women's ability to balance family responsibilities with generating income, since the informal sector and part-time wage sector would be affected the most (Wells, 1983: 69). Sheila Meintjes also adds that the migrant labour system placed greater responsibility on rural women to support the family and provide subsistence (Meintjes 1996: 53). The pass law system also further entrenched the control of white people over black labour, as the mobility of black domestic workers became constrained (Wells, 1983: 60). The pass laws would encourage domestic workers to

live on the employer's premises, and create obstacles for leaving jobs with bad working conditions (Wells, 1983: 60). Wells' argues that solidarity and mobilisation for these issues were largely *economically* motivated, as the pass laws created severe problems in terms of economic options for women of colour. Hassim & Gouws suggest that many of these mobilisations at this time were arguably political and economically motivated, but not necessarily feminist in that they didn't necessarily challenge the foundation of patriarchal power that underscores women's oppression (Hassim & Gouws, 1988:57).

Racial divisions enforced by apartheid had subsequent influence on the issues that women in different racial categories under apartheid were mobilised against. The pass system is one such example, as the economic restrictions to black and coloured people (entrenched by the pass system) privileged and benefited white people. While apartheid laws affected most women negatively, the system of privileging white over black and coloured made the experience of apartheid oppression different, therefore the activism of "women" differed as well. While some (according to Meintjies, non-Afrikaans) (1996: 53) white women were mobilising since the late 1900's for enfranchisement, black and coloured women (for example) were also seeking freedom from the restrictive pass system, which also culminated to forced removals (of black and coloured people).

Another notable moment of solidarity at this period was The Black Sash, and the Transvaal Rural Action Committee (TRAC) (Meintjies, 1996: 55). Meintjies describes The Black Sash as a group of predominantly white women who campaigned against coloured/black people who were affected negatively by apartheid laws (1996: 55). The Black Sash was known for "assisting communities under threat of removal" (Meintjies, 1996: 55), which is how they became involved with the TRAC (Meintjies, 1996: 55). Alongside The Black Sash, the TRAC helped establish the Rural Women's Movement, which support(ed) the needs of black rural women not only from apartheid laws, but also "advocating for the rights of women to inheritance and to land ownership" (Meintjies, 1996: 55).

In *Gender, Social Location and Feminist Politics in South Africa* and *The Gender Pact and Democratic Consolidation: Institutionalizing Gender Equality in the South African State*, Shireen Hassim describes the state of the women's movement during the transition to democracy to 2003. In *Gender, Social Location and Feminist Politics in South Africa*, Hassim suggests that the women's movement was largely mobilised for national liberation/racial equality, however, this mobilisation of women did not necessarily challenge patriarchal power relations (1991: 65). In fact, Hassim argues that in many ways, the mobilisation of women during the national liberation struggle reinforced patriarchal relations:

"A women's movement can be defined as women organising, taking up issues that they consider important. A women's movement can contain within it conservative elements that organise women from a particular social base but do not seek to question the power relations within that base, let alone within society more generally. Feminism, on the other hand has direct political dimension, being not only aware of women's oppression, but prepared actively to confront patriarchal power in all its manifestations." (Hassim, 1991:72)

Here, Hassim distinguishes between some of the democratic and anti-apartheid organising, and feminist attention to power relations – in particular, patriarchy (Hassim, 1991:72). She contends that a "women's movement" does not necessarily challenge women's position in society, whereas feminists challenge the construction of power that relegates women to a lower stratum (Hassim, 1991:72). This is an important

distinction to make, as it speaks to a discourse on feminist solidarity. While women's organising may not necessarily be feminist in that they do not challenge the foundational power relations that underscore women's oppression (i.e. patriarchy), solidarities formed between groups of women premised under national liberation goals reveals nuances to the discourses on solidarities between women in South Africa. One of the examples that Hassim uses is the Inkatha Women's Brigade, which she argues, grounded themselves in deeply patriarchal roots, which they actively sought to replicate (Hassim, 1991: 75).

Hassim further explains this distinction between a feminist movement and a women's movement as she describes the transition period and the formation of the Women's National Coalition (WNC). She indicates how the WNC was incredibly successful in putting women's interests into the formation of the democratic state of South Africa (Hassim, 2003: 505), but she argues that the institutionalisation of gender issues, coupled by governmental bureaucracy, disparities between activism, what was happening on the ground, and politics, led to the eventual dissolution of the WNC. She describes how gender activists maximised their opportunities during the "atmosphere of equality" during the transition period to "drive a process of transformation" (Hassim, 2003: 505), however this momentum faced some obstacles that led to shortcomings.

The WNC formed as a banner organisation for various women's political and activist groups, and was successful in pressuring the ANC government to include gender commitments to the formation of the new government and the new constitution (Hassim, 2003: 505). However, Hassim's main argument is that without a sustainable and autonomous feminist lobby in civil society to pursue transformative politics (as opposed to mainstreaming gender issues), many of the changes that the WNC had hoped to achieve fell short of its goals (Hassim, 2003: 507). These sorts of gender mainstreaming techniques (Hassim, 2003: 507) had roots in international treaties and discourses around gender, particularly in the wake of the UN Decade for Women which ended shortly before South Africa became democratic (Hassim, 2003: 507). The new government of South Africa implemented many of these gender institutions in an effort to integrate gender issues into policy. Some of these organisations included the Office on the Status of Women, the Joint Standing Committee for Improving the Quality of Life and Status of Women, and the Commission for Gender Equality (Hassim, 2003: 509).

Hassim suggests many factors that led to the ineffectiveness of solidarity between these government bodies, women politicians who were a part of the WNC, and gender activists in civil society. As part of the peace settlement, bureaucracies in government continued to be organised based upon the apartheid era government, where many apartheid era civil servants maintained their posts and were resistant to affirmative action policies implemented by the ANC (with pressure from the WNC) (Hassim, 2003: 511). Hassim contends that many of the posts set aside to deal with gender issues were given to bureaucrats with little or no interest in anything to do with gender (Hassim, 2003: 512). In her article *The Gender Pact*, she describes how gender policy bureaucrats found themselves lost and confused between the international gender policies (i.e. The Beijing Platform), how they were implemented in the government body, and the actual outcome/work (Hassim, 2003: 512). One of the major failures Hassim contends is "the failure of the OSW in particular and the machinery as a whole to develop a broad framework within which specific policy demands could be politically

legitimated and against which internal government advocacy could take place.” (Hassim, 2003: 512-513). She argues here that the lack of coalescence between various government bodies rendered the national gender machinery less effective than anticipated. Hassim references Barbara Klugman and Shamin Meer, when she suggests that the lack of analysis of the impact of women’s oppression on health status and economic empowerment, and the absence of a strategy to prioritise transformative interventions led to many of these gender initiatives falling short of their intentions (Hassim, 2003: 513).

However, despite some of the shortcomings of the national gender machinery, the women’s movement (during the Golden Period) achieved several major successes. In the development of the new South African Constitution, the discrimination clause was built in to particularly to protect discrimination “against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth” (from the Constitution of South Africa). “Marital status”, “pregnancy”, “sex”, “gender”, “sexual orientation” – these particularities offer protections that are directly related to women. Alongside the development of the new constitution, the legalisation of abortion, the criminalisation of violence against women and the criminalisation of maintenance payments defaulters were also three major laws that were passed that protected women (Hassim, 2003: 513). Hassim credits women’s movement mobilisation and their alliance to the ANC which helped pass these laws, particularly the Termination of Pregnancy Act. Hassim argues that in fact, the Termination of Pregnancy Act was made possible largely by the fact that ANC leadership (to which the women’s movement was aligned) used coercive action to ensure MP’s voted in favour of the legislation (Hassim, 2003: 513). The ANC’s Freedom Charter had explicit clauses which stated the importance of women’s equality (Cock & Bernstein, 2001:142). The effectiveness of women’s solidarity – particularly solidarity with the new ANC government – during the transition period allowed for women’s lobby groups to pursue legislation that prioritised issues pertaining to women.

Hassim attributes the collapse of the Women’s National Coalition to a number of reasons, the biggest one being the growing distance between women in government and activists (Hassim, 2003: 516). Hassim describes how women in government faced many obstacles. Firstly, because of affirmative action and proportional representation policies, women in government faced tensions from their colleagues as they were assumed to have gained their posts without the same merits (Hassim, 2003: 510). Second, as mentioned previously, the peace agreements from CODESA prevented the dismantling of the apartheid era bureaucracy, so much of the apartheid era “system” remained in place, which Hassim argues created challenges for new politicians pursuing gender transformation. Hassim suggests that this change of atmosphere for both the old and new civil servants had tension (Hassim, 2003: 516). The ineffectiveness of the “national gender machinery” frustrated the issues that women activists were fighting for on the ground, and the failure of solidarity between women’s movement, feminist organising and politicians is what Hassim attributes to the collapse of the WNC (Hassim, 2003: 523). Hassim argues that without solidarity between the women’s movement outside of government on the ground and government officials who are mandated to implement

gender policies, the intended transformations from gender oppression cannot be sustained (Hassim, 2003: 524).

Since I earlier differentiated between “women’s movement organising” and “feminist organising”, the following will outline some of the discourses of solidarity within the feminist movement in South Africa. Cheryl de la Ray reveals that racial disparities within the feminist movement in South Africa raised some obstacles to solidarity in the movement¹. The dominance of white voices and the reluctance of white feminists to engage with race politics frustrated solidarities in the movement (de la Ray, 1997: 7). Politics of representation were also embedded in this argument against the hegemony of white voices in feminist discourses in South Africa, which de la Ray suggests stems from the rejection of gender essentialism which raised concerns about representational politics within feminist discourses (de la Ray, 1997: 7). These representational politics are further complicated by the fact that not only does white feminism dominate discourses, “white gaze” places the examinatory lens on other bodies, leaving the white norm unexamined (Steyn, 1998: 47).

Cheryl de la Ray also argues that some of the debates around identity politics, and the importance of “shared identity” and subjectivities that were argued in the first section of this literature review, were also relevant to discussions around solidarity in the South African context (Mama, 1995 in de la Ray, 1997: 8). Gay and lesbian organisations in the Western Cape in South Africa raised some of these concerns in regards to representational politics within feminism (de la Ray, 1997: 8). “That people who are most exercised about the issue of identity in terms of political and personal power relations are all people who have been repressed and marginalised” (Bannerji 1995:20, in de la Ray, 1997: 8). Debates between (the oppression of) race, gender and sexuality raise some identity politics that have shaped the solidarity of feminists in South Africa.

The “shape” of “indigenous” feminisms in South Africa was one of the issues that were raised, as the hegemonic discourses from the West continued to dominate popular theory (Hassim, 1991: 65). Pamela Ryan argues that “A South African feminism should accordingly, learn to live with its contradictions and surrender the impulse to create a truly ethnic or indigenous criticism by endorsing an interaction between European/American cultural discourses and indigenous subversions of them” (Ryan, 1990: 28). Ryan argues for a “radical appropriation” of foreign discourses that can achieve transformation (1990:28). Other (South African) scholars argue that feminisms continue to emerge from the ground, and differ from the hegemonic white, middle class, heterosexual Western feminisms (Steyn, 1998: 43). Ramphele and Cock contend that feminisms need to be attune to the differences between South African feminist theorising in privileged academic circles, as opposed to feminisms that emerge from the ground (Steyn, 1998: 44). Cock argues that given the history of South Africa and the politics of institutionalising gender, there is a need to pay attention to what is happening on the ground (Steyn, 1998: 44). This echoes the historical account of women’s organising during the transition period that Hassim suggests above; one of the struggles that affect the solidarity of South African feminists is the way in which to engage the grassroots with policy, and with activism (Steyn, 1998: 44).

¹ This is not to imply that racial disparities didn’t affect the “women’s movement”, however Cheryl de la Ray refers specifically to the feminist movement.

Economic policies imposed by the African National Congress post 1994 have also affected the solidarity between activists and feminists. After South Africa achieved democracy, the ANC government implemented a series of neoliberal, macroeconomic policies that were meant to maximise economic performance². Beginning with the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), followed by the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programmes, the ANC effectively minimised social services in order to optimise the economy for the global economic system. “Gender activists were hopeful that the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP), which had been formulated prior to the 1994 elections with the intensive participation of feminists within the ANC, would provide the macroeconomic framework which expenditures necessary for the achievement of substantive equality could be justified to the Ministry of Finance” (Hassim, 2003:515). This did not happen, as these neoliberal, voluntarily-imposed structural adjustment programmes (as opposed to structural adjustment programmes imposed by the International Monetary Fund and/or the World Bank) put constraints on social services, which had dire consequences for women on the ground living in poverty (Hassim, 2003:515). RDP and GEAR deemed women as a “sector to be developed”, as opposed to building the capacity for women’s liberation through providing adequate services (Hassim, 2003:515). Hein Marais points out that GEAR provides no targets for reducing inequality (in Hassim, 2003:516). These economic policies have subsequently created further disparities for women, as unemployment continued to increase; social services and service delivery were constrained by the neoliberal emphasis on economic growth.

Globalisation and the emergence of South Africa into the global community impacted the way that feminists formed solidarities as South Africa signed various treaties and entered into international agreements particularly regarding sexual and reproductive rights:

“The transition era also included a number of other fundamental changes in South African history, a major one being the alleviation of global sanctions, and the shifts that happened as South Africa became fully integrated into international discourses, particularly around gender, sexual health and sexual diversity. As South Africa transitioned into a democratic state, the international community lifted sanctions, and South Africa transformed from being a pariah state, into a participant in the international community (Barnes, 2008). Immediately after the apartheid state was dissolved, several major international treaties were signed and/or ratified by the new South African state which has implications for South African civil society. In 1994, the outcome of the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo contained many direct provisions for women’s health, particularly sexual and reproductive health. In 1995, South Africa ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). CEDAW indicated that discrimination included “...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field” (CEDAW). These legally binding provisions also affected the way that the South African state had to begin to engage with discourses around gender and sexuality. Finally, The Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace in 1996 in Beijing also bolstered the “gender mainstreaming approach” of development, which again, affected the way that South Africa engages with gender and sexuality. These treaties played an important role in South African civil society, as the state now became legally bound to follow these treaties and conventions.

The ratification of these treaties and inclusion of the South African state in these conventions and conferences directly impacted the women’s movement in South Africa. For example, the ICPD conference in Cairo opened up discourses on women’s sexual health and reproductive health, which one could argue opened a space for women’s reproductive rights groups in South Africa to lobby for the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act. Even though civil society was very much opposed to this act being passed, “[...] feminist were able to frame the demand within the more acceptable terms of health, rather than as an overt right to bodily integrity” (Hassim, 2004: 12). Cooper et. al. argues that “civil society organisations active in gender and women’s health research and programmes also lobbied for the creation of locally appropriate reproductive health policies that were in tune with the emerging international emphasis on human rights and gender equity” (2004: 71). The combination of emphasising South

² The intention of these policies was for many reasons (i.e. neoliberal ideology that a liberalized economy would “fix itself”), but it is important to note that the apartheid government left the new democratic government of South Africa a massive national debt

Africa's inclusion in these international conferences related to gender issues, as well as lobbying the ANC government opened up a space to engage with sexual health and women's sexuality – a space that was marginal prior to the end of apartheid." (Ng, 2011: 63)

Here we can see again how international discourses concerning women affected the sexual and reproductive rights movement in South Africa. The emergence of South Africa as a democratic state, and the emergence of South Africa as a more integrated member of the global community had direct connections to the solidarity of feminists involved in the sexual and reproductive rights movement.

Gay and Lesbian solidarity during the transition period

Similarly to the women's movement, the gay and lesbian movement during the Golden period used strategic solidarities to pursue legislation that would be inclusive of sexual orientation. Several researchers argue that the construction of the solidarity within the LGBTI 'movement' was strategic, in that the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE) constructed this solidarity to push an agenda for discrimination based on sexual orientation to be addressed in the formation of the new Constitution of South Africa:

"In *The Inevitability of Same Sex Marriage in South Africa's Post-Apartheid State*, Pierre De Vos discusses the history of gay and lesbian activism in South Africa within the context of advocating for gay rights in the post-apartheid era, and in particular, the creation of the new South African Constitution in 1996. Vos' article, Jacklyn Cock's article in *Sex and Politics in South Africa*, as well as Sheila Crouchers' article discuss the 'political climate' in which the new Constitution was being formed, post-apartheid, where the 'atmosphere' of 'equality' was running high, and the goal of building a 'diverse, pluralistic society' was a major goal of the majority of activists and politicians at the time informed by apartheid (Hoad, Martin & Reid, 2005:189). Vos also suggests this previous notion: That legal preservations in the Constitution with regards to sexual orientation were essentially won under the context of post-apartheid equality goals (Vos, 2007:438). Vos suggests that "activists were able to present the oppression and discrimination of gay men and lesbians – as epitomised by the criminalisation of same-sex sodomy – as being sufficiently similar to other forms of oppression and discrimination associated with the struggle against apartheid" (Vos, 2007:438). Vos here suggests that the oppression of gays and lesbians was constructed in solidarity with other oppressions that they felt should be included in the new constitution.

Vos also offers a critique; that there is a disconnect between the legal equality provisions in terms of protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation, and the experiences of most gay men in South Africa in reality. This is important because it complicates the idea of solidarity in the gay movement in South Africa. While the legal 'image' of South Africa may present itself as a progressive without discrimination based on sexual orientation and allowing same-sex marriage, the realities that many LGBTI people may be far different. Vos alleges that the grassroots movement building in terms of LGBTI was ignored, and instead, a 'GL' (gay and lesbian) united front was put on (in the form of the NCGLE) to get protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation in the Constitution (Vos, 2007:438)." (Ng, 2011: 5)

Vos here echoes part of what Holdt suggests previously about social class disparities that affect solidarity between individuals. He argues that the socioeconomic status of many LGBTI people in South Africa marginalises them from being able to access the legislation that is meant to protect them. While the constitution may have enshrined important legislation to protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation, the implementation of these new policies and privileges become accessible based upon economic feasibility.

Ubuntu

Another aspect of solidarity in South Africa is this idea of *Ubuntu*. In the development of democratic South Africa, the philosophy of *Ubuntu* was also endorsed by the new government, and has been vocalised by prominent leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu. The concepts of *Ubuntu* also provide nuance to

this idea of “solidarity” in the South African context. Kamwangamu describes *Ubuntu* as a “core African ontology: respect for any human being, for human dignity, for human life, *collective sharedness*, obedience, humility, *solidarity*, caring, hospitality, interdependence, and communalism.” (1999: 26, emphasis added). Kamwangamu largely bases his definition of *Ubuntu* as the contrast between individualism and the collective. *Ubuntu* describes a philosophy where the success and status of the individual is necessarily dependent (and defined) upon the success and status quo of the collective (Kamwangamu, 1999: 26). *Ubuntu* is framed here as stressing the importance of the collective and speaks towards solidarity in democratic South Africa because it emphasizes the collaboration between different individuals, as groups who were separated under apartheid are no longer separated. Solidarity towards nation building is implicit in this utilisation of *Ubuntu* as a philosophical concept for building communities.

He relates this idea of *Ubuntu* (in democratic South Africa) to Emile Durkheim’s comparison between mechanical solidarity and organic solidarity. Durkheim suggests that organic solidarity is how people hold together in modern society, as many people specialise in so many diverse areas, whereas mechanical solidarity relates more to *Ubuntu*, where shared beliefs and common understandings that are shared between people build collective consciousness (Kamwangamu, 1999: 30). These concepts are central to an understanding of solidarity in present day South Africa, as many economic and social policies have been constructed based upon these principles. Kamwangamu even describes how the notion of *Ubuntu* has bled into the business sector, where new business management techniques (for example) have been based upon these principles of *Ubuntu* – building collectiveness upon working together as a group, particularly between individuals across race groups that were unable to interact together during apartheid (Kamwangamu, 1999: 25).

Globalisation and Solidarity

New technologies and globalisation have opened up new possibilities of solidarity across different spaces. The increasing interconnectivity in the world due to globalisation also translates into increased relations across borders, creating opportunity for interaction and dialogue. Castells’ theory of “communication power” is premised on the idea that in the future, national borders – which for a time, limited the mobility between spaces – would be relegated less and less a hindrance to solidarity. He suggests that when we talk about “societies”, these are not communities that share values and interests. His focus is on communities that share solidarity on any given issue or purpose. Castells’ suggests that globalisation has reconfigured state power, and that power (which is relational) comes from the ability to forge alliance across “networks” (Castells, 18).

These ideas open up new possibilities in regards to activist spaces, where restrictions to collective empowerment and solidarity are lessened due to the increasing connectivity of the world. I believe that this locates activists in a nearer proximity to each other, bringing an exchange of information, knowledge and resistance to heightened levels. Castells’ refers largely to the power of communication (or “communication power” as he calls it), where the ability or inability to operate in the digital age amplifies intersectionalities of

class, race and gender (Castells, 2009: 57). He locates communication as a locus of agency where the possibilities of solidarity and resistance are premised upon the access to communication power. We can also deduce that lack of access to communication power, in addition to the interconnectivity of the world due to globalisation, increases the relations of power between individuals across the globe. One of the most simplistic examples is the access to cheaply manufactured goods and services. Having access to buying cheap, sweatshop made clothing brings my personal relations to the child in the Global South who made my clothing much closer³. In other words, the relationship between privileges and oppression increasingly surpass the confines of geographic borders. Castells' suggests that states have less and less network power as technology and globalisation increases, unless states band together (Castells, 2009: 51).

As proximities become closer in terms of power relations, technological advances heighten the transfer of knowledge and increase accessibility. An example of the exchange of knowledge and "global" solidarity, is the LGBTI movement in South Africa, and how marginalised LGBTI groups in South Africa were able to form solidarities to bolster support in their own contexts:

"The technological advances brought by the advent of globalisation bolstered global solidarity, particularly in the activist realms where different special interest groups had increased 'access' to each other. The sharing of ideas included discourses on identities, and subsequently a discussion on labels and sexual diversity. Globalisation crosses language barriers, and thus, activists across the globe who were working on like-minded work struggle(d) to find adequate language to address these nuances in work around sexual diversity. For example, what the Global North/West LGBTI movement calls "transgender" has many similarities in South Africa, however the term "transgender" in its linguistic definition may not necessarily be fully inclusive of what the sexuality in South Africa actually is. Harper Keenan discusses this in the introduction to his article *They Call me 'Umfowethu'* in his description of "murumkadzi" and "mukadzirume" ("man-woman" and "woman-man"). "*Murumkadzi* took the role of a man in the relationships with women." (Keenan, 2006:17). Whether this translates properly into the English, Northern context of "transgender" is a contentious issue. However, the advent of globalisation encouraged solidarity across these gender variances at a global level, and thus, the emergence of globalisation can be seen as contributed to the 'emergence' of transgender identities, post '94. While this is not to suggest that these identities were 'created' by the emergence of solidarity with the North/West LGBTI movement, however, the transfer of knowledge that was encouraged by globalisation stimulated the solidarity between gender variant communities in Southern Africa, and the global transgender movement." (Ng, 2011:63 - 64).

These changes in global solidarity also speak to the transformation of reflexivity for researchers and activists as well. While the sharing of commonalities and knowledge increases due to globalisation, the contexts and positionalities remain pertinent aspects in regards to relations between people, activists, and researchers. As communication increases the possibilities of solidarity across the network system, the negotiations of power that come with an increased interaction implies a transformation in discourses of activist and researcher positionality. As we clothe ourselves with new technology, the awareness of our positionality remains unchanged – in fact, we need to consider them more, as interactions increase.

Another aspect of globalisation and communication is the impact of new technologies and social media to activist solidarity. In this new paradigm of (communication) power and resistance, those who have the ability to *constitute* networks (Castells' calls them "programmers"), have the power to encourage social change (Castells, 2009: 45). For activists, what I found was interesting about Castells' framework is that while economic status continues to play a fundamental role in who can "constitute networks", different "social

³ This is not to negate the connections that were already there before (in regards to colonization and Western privilege) however globalization and the prevalence of multinational corporations who utilize cheap labour in the Global South for the benefit of the Global North brings the connection much closer in proximity.

actors/individual citizens around the world are using the new capacity of communication networking to advance their projects, defend their interests and assert their values” (Castells, 2009: 57). This era of communication power opens new avenues of mobilisation and resistance. The Arab Spring and the use of the social networking site Twitter is one such example. Twitter, which limits the user to 140 characters has been used by activists to communicate, mobilise and connect people for social change. The reason I believe noting this new paradigm is important is that this new era of communication affects the way that activists form their solidarities – borders do mean constrained resistances – the proximity to those oppressions between individual actors across the world is increasingly closer and closer. To follow on the Twitter/social media example, the Green Revolution following the Iran elections in 2009 was a milestone in social media activism across global solidarities. The media crack down and censorship was largely bypassed by the use of twitter. Censorship police and the *basiji* were soon tracking activists who were using Twitter to organise demonstrations. One of the actions that activists (myself included) were encouraged to do was to change our Twitter account locations to Tehran and retweet posts from activists in Iran, so that the censors would be forced to do longer and more complicated IP address searches (to track and arrest the “real” activists), as opposed to a quick location search. This relatively simplistic action demonstrates how new technologies not only bring people closer, but also increase the *possibilities* of activism, and solidarity. Castells’ suggests that new technology transforms the relations between individual actors (and activists) across the world (Castells, 2009: 57). As this research project intends to analyse discourses of solidarities that has implications for the feminist movement, Castells’ contextualisation of social movements reveals different perspectives in which we can evaluate the gender movement.

Discourses on Masculinities

I preface this research project with a discussion on masculinities and patriarchy, in order to set a feminist framework in which I plan to do my research. In my research project, I consider the possibilities of activist solidarity between diverse masculinities interested in transforming current gender and sexuality dynamics. The following will look at nuances in “diverse masculinities” that may emerge in my research of activism around masculinities.

“Hegemonic” Masculinities

A body of theory and literature that I want to explore for the purposes of this proposal regard the construction of “hegemonic” masculinities. From my own experiences with this term, “hegemonic” has come to be constructed as “The” problematic, heteronormative type, of masculinity which “Feminism” is opposed to. However, this generalisation is insufficient, and silences the multiplicity of masculinities and hegemonies that occur in different contexts, different spaces, and different power relations. I will explore some of these in the following.

Jeff Hearn also offers a critique of hegemonic masculinities. He suggests that the construction of a singular hegemonic masculinity lies within a framework of “Critical Studies on Men”, which claims to recognise the role of power relations, as opposed to “Men’s Studies”, where it is not (Hearn, 2004: 49). Critical Studies on Men (CSM) include what he calls “pro-feminist” discourses, as opposed to Men’s Studies, which “imply a false parallel with Women’s Studies...at worst it is anti-feminist” (Hearn, 2004: 50). CSM include a focus upon questions related to power, specifically gendered power, and patriarchy (Hearn, 2004: 50). Hearn describes hegemonic masculinity as construction as opposed to subordinated forms of masculinity that are complicit and marginalised (Hearn, 2004: 55). Therefore, hegemonic masculinities are plural and are contextually relevant to power relations.

One of the examples that he used was in sport culture, where the social importance of sports, the emphasis on the practise and experiences of taking and occupying space, holding the body tense, and skill, as well as size, power, force, strength, physical development and sexuality (Hearn, 2004: 56) all contribute to a standard of masculinity, valued in certain relations which constitute a hegemonic gender construction. He also refers to Connell’s paper “Men’s Bodies”, which suggests that certain psychological and social dynamics also reinforce patriarchy. He offers the idea that patriarchy is embedded in psychosocial dynamics that are entrenched in society, as opposed to only institutionalised or systemic patriarchal oppressions. Hearn points out though that these constructions of hegemonic masculinity are historicized, and located within a “set of circumstances which power is won and held” (Hearn, 2004: 56). Therefore, hegemonic masculinities are context specific, and like power, are relational.

“There are also persistent question marks around what is actually to count as hegemonic masculinity. Is it summed up in the stuff of heroes? Is it toughness, aggressiveness, violence? Or is it corporate respectability? Is it simply heterosexist homophobia? Is it the rather general persistence of patriarchal gender arrangements?” (Hearn, 2004: 58). Hearn criticises the simplistic generalisation of “hegemonic masculinity”, because the emphasis of singular and generalisable changes due to context and differing power relations. He denies that he is refuting the term “hegemonic masculinities altogether, rather his criticisms lie in the way that “hegemonic masculinities have been deployed. He argues that the focus on masculinities is too narrow, and that feminists should consider the “hegemony of men” as opposed to the current deployment of “hegemonic masculinity” discourses, which he argues is too constrained (Hearn, 2004: 59).

“Hegemony is taking one way of seeing things, and convincing people that this way of seeing things is natural, that it is ‘just the way things are’. This sense of ‘naturalness’, including ‘naturalness’ about men and the way men are, may itself be becoming increasingly subject to globalising social forces and processes” (Connell, 1980 in Hearn, 2004: 61). What Hearn suggests is that the “hegemony” of men lies in the power of masculinities to naturalize and privilege masculine gender constructions as the norm. The hierarchisation of gender relations is premised upon the power to be the standard of the norm. Hearn constructs patriarchy as the locus of power which grants power and privilege to certain masculinities. The hegemony of men, he argues, is what validates, authenticates, and privileges hegemonic masculinities.

Discourses of Masculinities in South Africa

Sonke Gender Justice Network

My research project will involve an internship at a non-government organisation (NGO) in Cape Town called Sonke Gender Justice Network. My exploration of the discourses on solidarity within an NGO that is interested in diversifying their work with masculinities will be located within the work that Sonke does, and thus I will need to consider within what discourses of masculinities Sonke is situated. Sonke's mandate is to work particularly with men in the prevention of gender based violence and the prevention of HIV/AIDS. "Founded in 2006, the Sonke Gender Justice Network is a South African-based NGO that works across Africa to strengthen government, civil society and citizen capacity to support men and boys in taking action to promote gender equality, prevent domestic and sexual violence, and reduce the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS" (from the Sonke website). Through media campaigns and community based workshops with men and boys, as well as other public ventures, Sonke's work focuses on particular discourses on violence, gender inequality, and HIV/AIDS which I will explore in the following.

Discourses of "Manliness"

Sonke's work is located within discourses that consider some social constructions of masculinity to be problematic for several reasons. The work that these NGO's, like Sonke, do is premised upon assumptions of socially constructed norms, community norms, and gender norms, which they seek to transform. I will outline some of these constructions in the following. The coveted reputation of "manliness" is constructed by a number of different characteristics including "norms of masculinity that encourage men to put their own and their partners' health at risk" (Grieg et al., 2008: S35). These assumptions are largely based on the idea that a particular form of masculinity is "normalised" and generally accepted in society, and that these attitudes and "masculine norms" are the causes of gender based violence. These constructions of societal attitudes towards gender norms also have assumptions on race and class as well, which I will explore below.

Deconstructing power dynamics are also central to this analysis of masculinities. The unequal distribution of power is fundamental to this discussion on gender dynamics. There is particular emphasis on "social expectations and appropriate behaviours of men and women" (Grieg et al., 2008: S36). Male power is constructed as problematic, where male privilege operates in tandem with the subordination of women (Grieg et al., 2008: S36). This discourse is also attached to the assumption that these attitudes are community norms, and wide spread acceptance of these norms are particular to specific communities (Grieg et al., 2008: S37). These discourses are reliant upon heteronormative binary assumptions, which construct "hegemonic" masculinity as patriarchal, heteronormative, with particular characteristics that endow men power over women. Dominant discourses around problematic masculinities also include violent homophobia, because queer masculinities are constructed as "unmanly", and thus are socially policed (Grieg et al., 2008: S36).

Other “social norms” that are assumed in this discourse is the social attitude that men have “uncontrollable desire” (Jewkes, et. al. 2005: 1814). Therefore, the onus of responsibility to “prevent” these dangerous men (from raping/acting out violently), is placed upon the woman (Jewkes, et. al. 2005: 1814). Essentially, the misogynist attitude that rape victims “ask for it” by taunting, teasing or emasculating men (particularly in the case of masculine women or butch women whether they are gay or not), is assumed to be prevalent and normalised in society (Jewkes, et. al. 2005: 1814). Jewkes describes this presumption of men’s insatiable and uncontrollable libido in tandem with the “men are dangerous” construction, which assumes that violence is an innately masculine characteristic (Jewkes, et. al. 2005: 1814). These assumptions on the social acceptance of misogyny, violence and rape implies notions of victim “consent” in that women also internalise these gender norms. These problematic constructions are also relegated to particular race and class groups, as the communities that “need the work” are also constructed by NGO’s who locate themselves within this discourse.

Part of the work that Sonke Gender Justice Network does is around HIV/AIDS, where they seek to mitigate the reasons why men choose unhealthy sexual behaviours. One of the theories that emerge around men and HIV/AIDS is the fact that formal reproductive-health services are constructed as “less manly” (Mehta et al., [no date]: 91). Masculine strength is constructed as not “needing” professional health services unless the situation is exceptionally detrimental, or painful. However, there appears to be a distinction made in literature between seeking professional (or “formal”) health services and the health services of a traditional healer (Mehta et al., [no date]: 91). The avenue of help from a traditional healer seems to be “more manly” than formal health services, which are the very last resort for a “strong man”.

Another aspect of reasons for men’s problematic behaviours around HIV/AIDS is this idea that reproductive health services are geared almost exclusively to women (Mehta et al., [DATE]: 91). Men are “forgotten” in reproductive health services, or the notion that reproductive health care facilities are predominately spaces geared towards women. Health care delivery organisations are implored by theory and international pressure to “pay attention to men”, “reach men”, and make service delivery “male friendly”. Approaches to mitigating the fact that men are “alienated” from health care services include “reaching men where they are” (Mehta et al., [no date]: 98), by making services, health care materials relevant to the location of target (male) demographics (Mehta et al., [no date]: 98). Similar theories have emerged regarding male violence as well, where an emphasis to prioritise working with men has mounted upon NGO’s and service delivery organisations.

Why are men violent, and “who” are these men?

Beginning with the “why” question – in why are men violent or “bad” – one of the dominant discourses that emerge from discourses around masculinities that “cause violence” is the notion of “emasculinisation”. This is the idea that because male power is challenged or minimised, men reassert their male privilege through violence (Abrahams et al., 2006: 261; Grieg et al., 2008: S36). In other words, when male privilege is

threatened, men “lash out” and express their power and frustrations by inflicting violence. One of the theories on ways that men are emasculated is through economic marginalisation, and essentially that poverty makes men violent by frustrating their ability to provide for their families (Jewkes et al., 2002: 1612). “Violence against women is normalised as men lash out at women they can no longer patriarchally control or economically support” (Jewkes et al., 2002: 1612). Theories have also emerged that correlate male unemployment, economic status differences between partners, and poverty to violence (usually against women) (Jewkes et al., 2002: 1612).

Connected to this idea of poverty is access to life options, particularly through education. Having access to quality education is one of the aspects of socioeconomic status that scholars have indicated play a critical role in the behaviour of men (and women) because it provides opportunity (Grieg et al., 2008: S39). Essentially, that economic opportunities are made possible largely through education, and that lack of quality education leads to lack of economic opportunity, which leads to poverty, which emasculates men, which therefore causes them to lash out, act violently and “problematically”. “Education is a cornerstone of gender equity and empowerment of women. Education provides a basis for economic empowerment, access to political power, access to information about HIV, and knowledge and ideas that can be used to change attitudes and make independent life decisions.” (Grieg et al., 2008: S39).

The constructions of race in theories around violent men also raise some pertinent discourses around masculinities and how interventions to the ‘masculine problematic’ are constructed. While (curiously), these theories do not explicitly label or use the word “black” (except in cases to connect race with economic marginalisation), almost all literature refers to or implies that it is *black* men who are violent, *black* men who are poor (which causes them to be violent), *black* men who are raping *black* women, and *black* men who are emasculated by racial discrimination – which causes them to be poor, which causes them to be uneducated, which causes them to be violent and rape (black) women. These above theories (Jewkes, Grieg, Abrahams, etc.) imply that the particular form of problematic masculinities is, in fact, *black* masculinity.

Homophobic violence against black lesbians also speaks to discourses on masculinities, particularly black masculinity and black sexualities. In *Crimes and Corrections: Bride Burners, Corrective Rapists, and Other Black Misogynists*, Madhumita Lahiri argues that the term “corrective rape” (along with bride burning and dowry deaths) is used to perpetuate the fetishization of black sexuality. “It is used, moreover, exclusively for attacks on black women by black men” (Lahiri, 2011: 122). Lahiri suggests here that the construction of the black body as sexually deviant, out of control, and especially homophobic is appropriated and reinforced by the popular deployment of the term “corrective rape”:

“The condemnation of corrective rape in the international media fetishizes the corrective motivation, and it thus feeds into multiple, highly problematic discourses. By explaining spectacular incidents of violence through a purportedly African mythology, “corrective rape” naturalizes such violence as well as the misogyny and homophobia involved in it, by rendering a function of cultural belief of “African men”. The prevalence of “corrective rape” is often explicitly attributed to “African culture” – it’s homophobia, its patriarchal structure, it’s crisis of masculinity – with little acknowledgement that these attributes are hardly unique to Africa. By ascribing to the African men who perpetrate such violence a supposed belief in sexual peculiarity, “corrective rape” perpetuates a long-standing belief in African sexual perversion.

[...]

The discourse around corrective rape produces the figure of the “corrective rapist”: an African man, of uncertain education, mired in sexual ignorance who believes somehow that his penis, forcibly applied, can cure lesbianism...One mythology of correction, purportedly deployed against black women, [...] becomes the occasion to justify another purported correction, the punishment of black men” (Lahiri, 2011:123 – 124).

Lahiri argues that the term “corrective rape” is loaded with constructions of black masculinities (and femininities), which are then appropriated to fetishize and marginalize black sexualities.

These constructions feed into discourses around masculinities, particularly the forms of masculinity which NGO’s seek to deconstruct and do work with. The emphasis on working with men to mitigate violence is also situated within discourses that are rooted in international treaties which indicate the importance of working with men. Dean Peacock (from Sonke Gender Justice Network) lists several international commitments to working with men and masculinities that South Africa is a signatory to:

“International commitments to involving men and boys in achieving gender equality:

A review of international legislation and UN declarations presented at the **fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2007 reports that** “Equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of international law established in the United Nations Charter” and cites the following commitments:

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development affirms the need to “promote gender equality in all spheres of life, including family and community life, and to encourage and enable men to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behaviour and their social and family roles.”

The Programme of Action of the World Summit on Social Development (1995) and its 2000 review also addressed the role of men, in particular with regard to sharing family, household and employment responsibilities with women.

The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) restated the principle of shared responsibility; and argued that women’s concerns could only be addressed “in partnership with men”.

The twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS (2001) recognized the need to challenge gender stereotypes and attitudes and gender inequalities in relation to HIV/AIDS through the active involvement of men and boys.

An expert group meeting on the role of men and boys was convened in 2003 in Brasilia by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW/DESA), in cooperation with ILO and UNAIDS to inform the CSW at its forty-eight session.

At the 48th session, the UN CSW adopted agreed conclusions calling on Governments, entities of the United Nations system and other stakeholders to, inter alia:

- promote reconciliation of work and family responsibilities;
- encourage the active involvement of men and boys in eliminating gender stereotypes;
- encourage men to participate in preventing and treating HIV/AIDS;
- implement programmes to enable men to adopt safe and responsible sexual behaviour;
- support men and boys to prevent gender-based violence;
- implement programmes in schools to accelerate socio-cultural change towards gender equality.

In the ten-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action, Member States emphasized that changing men’s attitudes and behaviours required a range of strategies including: legislative and policy reform, the implementation of programmes, the involvement of educational systems and the media, and partnerships with NGOs, the private sector and leaders from all segments of society, including religious leaders.”

(Peacock, *Sonke Gender Justice and the One Man can Campaign*, [No date], 2).

These international treaties indicate that there is a particular interest in men and masculinities in eliminating violence against women and interventions to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The recognition of the importance of working with men, transforming gender stereotypes and pursuing gender equity is reflected in

the agreements signed at the international level. The “work with men” that NGO’s participate in is situated within these discourses that stem from encouragements by international commitments to work with men.

The identification of the “masculine problematic” in mitigating HIV/AIDS and violence against women is also bolstered by notions of what is the “new man”, or the “man” that civil society organisations that work with masculinities seek to “achieve”. Some of the dominant discourses in literature around what, and who this “new man” is include the importance of the (re)construction of fatherhood. Cronje describes the “successes” of the reception of the “new father” as opposed to the “new man”, because it affirms the “approved” heteronormativity (Cronje, *A Colourful Hierarchy: Masculinity and Fatherhood in South Africa* [no date]: 2). She describes how the “new father” retains “masculine strength” through his constructed opposition to what Cronje describes as the “global trend of the new man” within Western cultures which is softer and more emotional (Cronje, 2). The masculinity of the “father” cannot be denied because he retains his strength through being heterosexual, being able to provide for, and as the head of the patriarchal family.

The approach that NGO’s (including Sonke) take around working with fathers is situated in ideas around being positive role models. Breaking the “cycle of violence” is fundamental to a lot of the work that NGO’s who work with men do (Peacock, et al., 2006: 76). The “lack of positive role models” that clients report has encouraged NGO’s to approach masculinities by working with fathers to construct the responsibility of being a good role model to their families. In *Men and gender activism in South Africa: Observations, critique, and recommendations for the future*, the authors recognise the spaces of opportunity in their work to address other problems with other forms of masculinity and fatherhood, particularly with wealthy white families (Peacock et al., 2006:79), which are not exempt from patriarchal oppression. They indicate that middle to upper class (predominately white) families also require attention to the gender inequalities that occur in those lived experiences (Peacock et al., 2006:79).

Another approach that emerged from literature regarding working with men is the appropriation of apartheid-struggle era masculinities to build solidarity between men. “The strategy applied [here] builds on the long history of anti-apartheid activism, which lends itself well to an approach aimed at mobilising men, and in the process galvanising a groundswell of men willing to take a stand on gender equity” (Mehta et al., *Men As Partners: lessons learned from engaging men in clinics and communities* [no date]: 93). This is an interesting approach which speaks to the history of solidarities of men located in particular spaces, which has now been utilised to mobilise men to work together to end violence.

The relationship between these organisations (that do work with masculinities) and the women’s movement and feminism appears to be an ideological allegiance and solidarity. International agreements also indicate the importance of working with the women’s movement to end violence against women and mitigate the spread of HIV/AIDS (*The Rio Declaration: Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys on Achieving Gender Equality*, 2009: 2). Policy briefs found on Sonke’s website also reflect this idea that working with masculinities and men is part and parcel of the broader gender movement, and that working with the women’s movements is a fundamental part of Sonke’s approach. Being “pro-feminist” is a position towards the women’s movement

that some of the NGO's like Sonke take, which Michael Flood (in Peacock et al., 2006:72) describes in the following quotation: "Feminism is a movement and a body of ideas developed primarily by, for and about women. Men can never fully know what it is like to be a woman. If we call ourselves "feminists", we run the risk of colonising feminism or looking like we're saying we've got all the answers." (Peacock et al., 2006:72). Because of the anxieties around male privilege, Michael Flood avoids giving the label of "feminist" to "men who are sympathetic to feminism". Sonke, along with other NGO's who do work with men and masculinities are situated within these discourses of allegiances and solidarities with the feminist movement.

Discourses on "NGOization" in South Africa

Another part of Sonke that is linked to the history of social movements in South Africa is the advent of "NGOization" in South Africa (and also elsewhere on the African continent), where (particularly) in post-conflict situations, issues (such as delivery of services) that were pushed by civil society and activists became the "work" of non-government organisations. I alluded to this discourse in the section about the women's movement pre-1994, and how women's activism shifted into government bureaucracies. While the discourse of NGOs in Africa has other major theoretical underpinnings (which I will address in the following), this notion of theorising around post conflict activism that shifted into NGO's, runs parallel with the movement of activists into government agencies. In the South African context, post-1994, many women's activists moved into government gender departments, or moved into the NGO sector. As an NGO (that particularly does gender work), this is a discourse in which Sonke Gender Justice Network is situated in.

One of the major theoretical underpinnings in this discussion on NGOization is on the hegemonic economic implications that "donors" have on civil society in South Africa. Julie Hearn critiques the Western spheres of influence, which she argues are implicit upon the role of the "donor" (Hearn, 2000:815). Under the shroud of "democracy assistance", hegemonic powers from the Global North monopolize upon the need of donor funding from developing countries by providing funding to these countries, which shifts foreign policy engagements between the North and South (Hearn, 2000:815). Stemming from the rise of neoliberalism – particularly in the 1970's – organisations like the World Bank and the IMF hijacked the economies of many developing countries by offering massive loans, with the condition of the imposition of structural adjustment policies (Manji & O'Coill, 2002:567). Popularly known as the "Lost Decade of Development", the imposition of severe austerity measures in the form of structural adjustment policies has left deep economic scars on many developing countries. The effects of these neoliberal austerity measures left social services almost non-existent (Manji & O'Coill, 2002:579). Funds that had been set aside to mitigate some of the effects of the austerity measures (by providing social services), were readily available for the NGO sector to take on (Manji & O'Coill, 2002:579). This discourse infers that neoliberal economic policies stemming from the structural adjustment policies of the IMF and the World Bank were implemented in order to perpetuate the economic hegemony of the Global North (at the cost of the Global South).

Another aspect of Northern hegemony on the South vis a vis the NGO sector is the power that these Northern agencies have through their funding programmes. For example, the Ugandan anti-homosexuality bill has been linked to evangelical Christian NGOs from the West who promote a particular ideology of sexual behaviour⁴. Similarly, NGOs are funded based upon the work that they do (and reputations), and especially whether their ideologies reflect what issues/activities the donors want to fund (Manji & O’Coill, 2002:580). NGO funding – which is reliant on donor grants – also infers that NGOs must apply for grants that suit them (Hearn [NO DATE]: 20). For example, if a donor is an evangelical Christian organisation from the West that is homophobic, then organisations that do “pro-LGBTI work” would more than likely be excluded from those pockets of funding. The popularity of certain theories or scientific studies also contributes to what sorts of projects donors are interested in. For example, we could probably assume that scientific studies that have “proven” that circumcision reduces the transmission of HIV for men by 60% probably contributed to HIV/AIDS philanthropic agencies who are interested in doing HIV prevention in Africa. As I have eluded to before with the international commitments that Sonke lists on their website regarding the participation of men in prevention of GBV and mitigating HIV/AIDS, these international commitments also inform the popularity of certain types of work that are being promoted, and therefore funded (Hearn [NO DATE]: 4).

Sonke fits into this discourse, as they are an NGO that is funded by many donors. As mentioned previously, their interests in working with men can be correlated to the international commitments to “working with men”, which have been popular with international donors who seek to fund these initiatives.

What I hope to have provided above is a brief snapshot of the different flavours within the discourse of solidarity which I will be working with. Starting with myself, as a feminist interested in building social movements, I locate my own solidarity with the feminist movement and activists interested in transforming current gender and sexual dynamics. My work with Sonke, and the solidarity that they are pursuing with non-heteronormative masculinities is located within a particular historical and political space, which has its own history of solidarity, rooted in apartheid struggle, solidarities and women, feminist, sexual and reproductive rights movement solidarities. What will hopefully come out of my research project will be an indication as to how we can build more cohesive and solid social movements, so that we can perhaps achieve the transformation that we dream of.

Discourses on LGBTI masculinities in South Africa

There are several discourses of LGBTI masculinities in South Africa that are important to consider at this proposal stage of my research project. The “concept” of LGBTI is nuanced and is embedded in discourses on race, class, geographical location, and North/South hegemony. When analysing the possibilities for solidarity between activists interested in transforming masculinities, it would be important to include the nuances under the umbrella of LGBTI in whichever context this analyses are happening. While I will particularly seek to avoid “othering” LGBTI in South Africa, I will describe below some of the context of LGBTI

⁴ http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/04/world/africa/04uganda.html?_r=1
David Ng

in South Africa which are pertinent to this research project. As Lahiri points out, even feminists have the tendency to use geographic-specific labels in order to locate context, but at the same time reproduce a process of othering (Lahiri, 2011: 122).

Scholars point out that the LGBTI “community” in South Africa is affected by a history of racial segregation and stratification, which has implications on class and socioeconomic mobility (Tucker, 2009:65):

“Given the history of apartheid, one can assume that the issues of race and class play a large role in the experiences of LGBTI people in South Africa. In *Queer Visibilities*, Andrew Tucker describes how space was deployed by the architects of apartheid to segregate the population (Tucker, 2009:23). Tucker argues that since apartheid entrenched a system of racial segregation which privileged some groups over others, this history creates barriers to larger group solidarity (Tucker, 2009:65). While his book concerns the *visibility* of gay men in Cape Town, Tucker raises some pertinent issues regarding LGBTI in South Africa. Firstly, he begins by suggesting that the ‘Western commodified queer culture’ that is often adopted in affluent urban centres is not necessarily representative of the experiences of the majority of ‘gays’ in South Africa (Tucker, 2009:20-25). We can argue that the experiences of gay men in South Africa is largely affected by the system of racial segregation entrenched by the apartheid state. Tucker’s book describes how gay men in affluent areas who are able to access the privileges of marriage and visibility have a different experience of ‘gay’ than men living in marginalised areas such as in some townships. Starting with the notion that experiences of visibility vary based on how the population was segregated/privileged, Tucker describes how different groups of ‘gay men’ experience sexuality differently.” (Ng, 2011: 3).

As indicated in my honours thesis on gay activism in Cape Town, the context of the South African gay community is complicated by the fact that those who are privileged have different accessibilities to social mobility. Therefore, the experience of LGBTI masculinities for a privileged individual will most likely differ compared to the experience of masculinity and the construction of masculinity to someone who is located economically and racially on the periphery. Other discourses on queer masculinities also pertain to race politics as well; including the idea that homosexuality is “un-African”. This homophobic attitude will obviously affect gay non-African men more than it affects “African” men.

How we define “homosexuality” or “queer masculinities” has contextual implications as well, as “homosexuality” or “gay” has influences from hegemonic Western discourses as well. “Gay” as a sexual identity is also in many respects a *political* identity as well, as it is an *identity* that someone takes on. Some men who have sex with men (MSM) may not take on this political identity, so the presumption that MSM is “gay” is inaccurate and loaded with discourses on hegemonic gay political identity. Marc Epprecht has done extensive anthropological research on this issue, in his work on the history of MSM in the African context. Andrew Tucker refers to his work as Tucker describes MSM in South Africa that is separate from the identity of “gay”. Tucker explains that (mostly migrant) men working in mines in South Africa may take male “wives”, sometimes even going through formal “lobola” processes (Tucker, 2009:78). The political identity of “gay” is largely irrelevant and inaccurate in this particular context, as these men would largely reject this label (Tucker, 2009:78). Tucker also describes a similar situation in prisons, where male prisoners have sex with other male prisoners, and may also take a “male wife” in prison (Tucker, 2009:97). These examples are important to consider as I think about the context of masculinities in the context which I am researching.

Marc Epprecht describes how hegemonic discourses rooted in the West construct African sexualities as primitive or pathologize “constructions of Africaness” (Epprecht, 2009: 1259). He talks about how “Western Gay Imperialism” constructs sexualities on the African context under hegemonic Western discourses, which are inaccurate, and have racist undertones (Epprecht, 2009: 1259). This discourse of sexuality and the confluence

of discourses on sexuality implore myself as a researcher (from the North) to integrate this in the research process. Literature even in this literature review section that I refer to are informed by these hegemonic discourses which provide context to the discourses of solidarity that I investigate in this thesis. As this research project contends with the way that Sonke envisions integrating LGBTI issues into their work on masculinities, these discourses on MSM, gayness, and LGBTI will be critical to engage with. Discourses on solidarities will thus be immersed in these contextual nuances that need to be considered for my research project.

CHAPTER THREE: Research Methods & Research Question

Research Question

What can discourses on activist solidarity reveal about the politics of organisationally-based NGO work aimed at the transformation of current norms regarding gender and sexuality?

Research Methodology

Methodological framework

This research project contends with discourses on solidarity through analysing how Sonke Gender Justice Network – as a self-professed “pro feminist” organisation that currently works to transform certain types of hegemonic masculinities – imagines the organisational shifts required to integrate LGBTI issues into the organisation. It is through contending with the significance of how these organisational shifts are imagined that I analyse the possibilities of solidarity. Central to this research project is the feminist notion of challenging power relations. Hassim and Gouws contend that feminist social movements challenge the fundamental underpinnings of power relations that underlie social relations (Hassim & Gouws, 1988:57). Underlying this research project is this notion that transforming patriarchal power structures is fundamental to work that is deemed “feminist”. As an organisation that is “pro feminist” and interested in integrating LGBTI issues, contending with how Sonke does its alleged transformations of patriarchal gender relations – and the implications of this approach to discourses on solidarity – is something that played a significant role in this research project.

Through interning at Sonke and working directly at helping Sonke integrate LGBTI issues, I analysed solidarity through several different methods. Firstly, the ways I lived and experienced solidarity with Sonke as an intern allowed me to use my positionality as part of the research data. Ann Oakley argues in her article on qualitative feminist research methods that the relationship between the researcher and the research data is important to consider. “The hierarchal situation – the position of the researcher as expert knower – invalidates any data that come out of the research process. Just as hierarchy produces data that are by definition invalid, so it is contended that where non-hierarchical relationships between researcher and researched exist, the resulting data are intrinsically more valid.” (Oakley, 1998:711). Oakley raises a point about the role of the relationship between researcher and research process as a way to enrich the data that is being researched. This is the notion that “conscious partiality” adds nuance to the data that is being researched. In this research project, my relationship with Sonke allowed me to consider how solidarity was forged with me, and thus my experiences with notions of solidarity with Sonke offers a way that I can consider how discourses on solidarity are embodied through my lived experiences with solidarity with Sonke.

Theories on feminist qualitative research methods fundamentally underpin this research project. Oakley describes the feminist episteme rooted in qualitative research methodology as grounding theory

contextually in the concrete reality of people's lives (Oakley, 1998: 713). Oakley's assertion that "everything begins with everyday life; all concrete experience, and all abstract knowledge" (Oakley, 1998: 713) suggests that lived experiences reveal knowledges about social relations. The ways that knowledge can be learned from lived experiences is critical to the methodological framework of this research project, as the bulk of my research data came from in depth interviews with several colleagues at Sonke.

As my research project contends with discourses on solidarity in South Africa, by investigating lived experiences through in depth interviews, I was able to elicit responses that allowed me to include a process of contending with political histories. Bhavnani contends that research is a historical process, and that a feminist analysis that allows for a process to contend with the political nature of knowledge production allows for an engagement of social relations (1993:96). As my research project fundamentally contended with discourses on solidarity – which ultimately has implications on the social relations between activist working towards transforming masculinities – asking questions about lived experiences allowed for my participants to discuss their experiences as well as theorise on ideology, which provided a way for me to contend with the political nature and history of my research project. Through asking how my participants theorised around integrating LGBTI, I interrogated how these organisational changes are imagined, and the implications of these changes to solidarity with LGBTI activists.

Kum-Kum Bhavnani asserts that the approach of qualitative research allows researchers to ask questions such as *why* a certain issue is investigated at a particular time. As research is located within political histories, qualitative research allows for a process of contending with the political economy of how knowledge is created (Bhavnani, 1993: 96). As feminists are ultimately concerned with discourses of power, the qualitative research methodology employed in this research project allowed for a process to grapple with the positionality of the researcher. Bhavnani's argument for qualitative research methods which contends with the politics of knowledge production suggests that "objectivity and truth come to be seen as concepts which are historically situated and situationally specific" (Bhavnani, 1993:96). My role and experiences as a researcher and intern at Sonke revealed critical contextual, *historical* and political nuances that situate my research project.

My positionality turned out to play a heightened role in this thesis as the ways that I embodied solidarity with Sonke provided a way for me to triangulate my evaluation of discourses on solidarity. As a feminist and LGBTI activist myself, Sonke forged a solidarity with me to help with integrating LGBTI issues into the organisation. The notion of being "consciously partial" was not only a methodology which allowed me to contend with my relationship as a researcher to the research data – my positionality became part of the data that I analysed. In other words, an important part of my analysis of discourses on solidarity to some extent came from researching *myself* and analysing my own embodiments of solidarity.

Data Collection

My internship at Sonke provided a basis on which I could collect the data used in this analysis. I interned at Sonke for three months in the communications department and the international programme. One of my assignments was to write policy evaluations and recommendations for Sonke's LGBTI integration – which also makes up part of what I researched in this thesis. As mentioned previously, contending with my positionality (particularly the ways that I embodied solidarity through my relationship with Sonke) played an important role in how I triangulated the analysis of discourses on solidarity – thus my positionality made up part of the data I “collected”.

The bulk of my research data came from the interviews I conducted with seven colleagues at Sonke. The interviews were in depth, and lasted between an hour to two hours each. The notion of using in depth interviews as qualitative research data contends that “the emphasis is on accurately portraying or ‘giving voice’ to people's experience” (Cassian, 1992:626). Diversity across my interviewees allowed me to obtain richer and fuller data, as a range of experiences and range of different voices reveals more perspectives to which I contend with the discourses on solidarity.

The participants I selected ranged from various racial backgrounds, and also from different positions at Sonke. I interviewed people from different racial identities, and from different positions in the organisation – ranging from managers, to workshop facilitators. The diversity of my participant selection is important to consider because Sonke works with certain types of masculinities, through discursively constructing certain types of masculinities as problematic (namely, poor, black, heteronormative men who live in townships); therefore, engaging with how masculinities are *experienced* in tandem with how working with masculinities (that are constructed as problematic) are theorised reveals the discourses of masculinity that Sonke is embedded in – which revealed a starting point where I could contend with how changes are imagined to integrate LGBTI issues.

I interviewed mostly men, which allowed me to consider how discourses of masculinities are embodied. I interviewed one woman who revealed how she experienced “being gendered”; she revealed aspects of how “women were supposed to act” (which was constructed from how “men were supposed to act”). Also, as a self-identified lesbian who grew up as a “tomboy”, my woman participant also revealed her own relations with “masculine norms”.

My participants also grew up in variety of different places. While most of my participants were South African, I had one participant from Scotland, and one from Zimbabwe. In the interviews I pressed the two participants who didn't grow up in South Africa about their lived experiences with masculinities (which offered contextual nuances). I also asked them to theorise on the discourses of masculinities that they are working with in the South African context, which allowed me to engage with how they theorise around working with masculinities and how they experienced masculinities.

The interview questions also asked about the integration of LGBTI – who is the “new” target constituency, why integrate LGBTI, and how did they imagine the integration to take shape. This allowed me to elicit responses about how organisational shifts to integrate LGBTI are being imagined, which thus allowed me to contend with how these changes have implications to solidarity with LGBTI activists.

Data Analysis

This research project investigates discourses on solidarity through analysing the ways that organisational changes are imagined by an activist organisation that currently works with particular forms of hegemonic masculinity and is interested in integrating LGBTI issues into their work. Through analysing the significance of how organisational changes are imagined to the possibilities of solidarity with LGBTI activists, I analyse a moment in solidarity making. The notion of doing analysis based upon contending with lived experiences (Oakley, 1998: 711) allowed me to contend with the social relations that inform the discourses on solidarity that I am analysing. Through analysing in depth interviews, I considered the ways that solidarity is possible through the ways that discourses of masculinity (and masculinities as politics) are lived through my interviewees, and how they imagine the organisational shifts required to integrate LGBTI issues at Sonke.

One way that I analysed discourses on solidarity is through how target constituencies are constructed by Sonke – particularly how is “LGBTI” being constructed by Sonke? Foucault suggests that power is attached to “speaking roles” (Foucault, 1978: 52). This notion was relevant to consider in my analysis, as the ways that LGBTI integration was spoken about – which I contended with through an analysis of the verbs used to describe integrating LGBTI – suggested that LGBTI was constructed as the “other”. Through analysing the ways that LGBTI was spoken about, I considered the social relations and political subjectivities that underpin the discourses on solidarity that I investigated.

Hearing silences was also an analytical framework that was important in this research project. The notion of listening to silent voices – including spaces of discursive confusion revealed through inconsistencies in the research data – allowed me to contend with the implications of silences to discourses on solidarity. Oakley suggests that qualitative methods are best suited for hearing these silences (Oakley, 1998:708), as an intimate encounter with peoples lived experiences provides opportunity to interrogate discourse.

Another way that I investigated solidarity was through contending with the “role of *discourse*” in solidarity making. Because I am ultimately interested in solidarity in social movements, I used Manuel Castells’ notion of social organisation as a communicative process between multiple individuals and organisations. Castells’ suggests that the means of communication are important to the communicative process (Stalder, 2006:196). This research project fundamentally considered the role of how discourse is engaged with and prioritised in solidarity building. By utilising Castells’ theory of the importance of the means of communication for social organising, I evaluated the role of being conscious of discursive positionalities to the social relations, which underpin the possibilities of solidarity.

As mentioned previously, another way that I analysed solidarity was through the ways that solidarity was forged with me as a feminist LGBTI activist interning at Sonke. I employed feminist notions of researcher reflexivity to not only contend with the political implications of my relationship with Sonke, but I also used reflexivity to evaluate the ways that solidarity was embodied by myself through my internship at Sonke. “Feminist research, which originated in opposition to traditional social science, continues to take a reflexive, critical stance, questioning the conventional assumptions of feminists and non-feminists and analysing how the research process is shaped by the gender, race, class, and sexual orientation of the researcher, and by the broader social and cultural context. Influenced by postmodernism, recent work has focused especially on critiquing conventional categories that legitimate relations of domination” (Cancian, 1992:626). Contending with how I was constructed in the interviews allowed me to investigate how I embodied solidarity through my relations with Sonke. The way that I was spoken to, for example, revealed facets of my relationship to Sonke, which I analysed as part of the discourses on solidarity I set out to interrogate.

Methodological limitations

I formed this research project on discourses on solidarity through engaging intimately with Sonke as an organisation. Engaging with the intended constituency of the solidarity making (i.e. LGBTI activists) would have given a richer context to the data. Since these discourses on solidarity have “lived” implications (because they affect the LGBTI community and thus LGBTI activists), I could have included the voice of LGBTI activists who would ultimately be affected by Sonke’s integration of LGBTI issues. By only speaking to Sonke staff, and engaging with my embodiments with solidarity, I am only contending with how organisational changes are imagined and the implications of these imagined changes to solidarity. By talking to the implicated constituencies of these organisational changes (i.e. LGBTI activists), I could have explored more of the social relations, and political context which informs the discourses on solidarity I am analysing through the point of view of LGBTI activists.

Ethical considerations

As I so intimately analysed Sonke “from the inside” as an organisation, and the fact that my thesis revolves around my engagements with Sonke, the critiques that I offer in my thesis (which is a public document) may have repercussions for my participants, for myself, for Sonke, and other activists who are affected by discourses of solidarity that I am investigating. For example, I criticise Sonke’s lack of consciously recognising their discursive position – the fact that I am making these criticisms public has ethical ramifications. The way that I explore and *expose* my relationship with Sonke in this research project is important to consider because of the implications to the social relations that this research project affects.

The ethical framework that was very important for me to consider was Nodding’s assertion that “relations, not individuals, are ontologically basic to ethical decisions” (Priessle, 2006:518). My research and professional

relations with Sonke are ultimately social relations, which deserved ethical considerations. While notions of “not harming participants” are relevant, Priessle suggests that since feminists are interested in social relations, contending with the ethical implications of our research to those *relations* is vital to consider. The notion of a “feminist ethic based in relationship[s] that challenges the principled ethics of rights, justice, [and] consequences” (Priessle, 2006:519) insists that ethical considerations in research have deeper implications than simply discourses on consent and not harming participants. The importance of considering the implications of my research to the relations between *people* – relations between Sonke and myself, Sonke and other activists – reveals fundamental ethical considerations that I had to consider in this research project.

The fact that I was so proximally close to my research participants – as an intern at Sonke, and researcher doing research at Sonke – I had to consider that my critiques and analysis in this research project would be about peoples livelihoods – if they said something in the interviews that I critiqued in the analysis, this could affect my participants negatively. Because of this I opted to use pseudonyms, and I also obtained informed consent by outlining to my participants the purpose of the interview (for my thesis), and that they could skip any questions at any time, and stop the interview at any time. I also had consent forms signed by each participant.

Sonke also had some ethical considerations that they wanted me to follow. Wessel, the intern manager, requested that I asked the supervisors of the people I was wanting to interview for permissions in order to ensure that I wasn't taking away time from people who had more pressing priorities. Lucinda, my international programmes supervisor helped me schedule the interviews, and I received upper management permissions to interview people.

I used the notion of being reflexive of my position within the research data as a way to begin my final analysis of discourses on solidarity. "Our own frameworks of understanding need to be critically examined as we look for the tensions and contradictions they might entail" (Lather, 1988:570). As I mentioned earlier about how I analysed how I experienced solidarity with Sonke, reflexivity helped root parts of my analysis in my own lived reality as an intern at Sonke. My interpretations of my interviewees responses are informed by my own political subjectivities, and thus, being reflexive played a vital role in contextualising my research through locating my positionality.

CHAPTER FOUR: Findings and Analysis

My analysis on the possibilities of solidarity centred around my internship at Sonke Gender Justice Network and their intentions to integrate LGBTI issues into the organisation. By theorising around the organisational shifts and changes imagined by Sonke in order to integrate LGBTI, I can consider how solidarities can be possible for an organisation that is at the very beginning of forging solidarities with LGBTI activists. The bulk of my thematic analysis will be from the interviews that I conducted with people employed at Sonke Gender Justice Network. In chapter five, I analyse the current discourses that Sonke is currently situated, in terms of masculinities and working with masculinities. The experiences with normative masculinities will reveal discourses that will allow an analysis of how masculinities are experienced, versus how they are theorised. This beginning point will then allow an understanding of how discourses of masculinity as politics are constructed to justify the approach of “working with men” that Sonke takes. These discourses reveal that Sonke’s approaches to working with men indicate that they work with a narrow set of discourses which construct particular forms of hegemonic masculinities as problematic. Discourses of emasculation for example, produce and problematise certain bodies and “types” of masculinity, which offers an organisation like Sonke opportunity to address these “problematic masculinities” through particular discourses. However, some discourses that justify certain approaches also appear to be contradictory, such as the construction of patriarchy as men holding inappropriate power over women, yet simultaneously being victimised by patriarchy (through homophobia). These discourses reveal where Sonke is situated and provides a foundation of the analysis.

In chapter five, I begin to theorise how Sonke imagines the shifts required to integrate LGBTI. The ways that Sonke imagines the shifts will be critical in considering the sites to which solidarities can be imagined. By theorising the ways that “changes” are imagined, I can evaluate the political spaces that can shape (or not shape) solidarities. What has emerged as critical to consider in this analysis is an investigation into the silences. There was an overwhelming amount of discursive instability, largely revealed through silences and inconsistencies across the interviews. While certain discourses were pushed consistently to justify integrating LGBTI issues, there were also many inconsistent responses as to how and why to integrate LGBTI. These discursive incoherences will play a crucial role in the analysis, as they ground the foundation to my analysis of discourses of solidarity. The role that being conscious of and engaging with discursive positions plays in forging solidarities will underlie the analysis that emerged from this research project.

Discourses of solidarity can also be analysed through different aspects of the research data. My internship at Sonke also reveals a critical portion of the analysis. The ways that Sonke “formed solidarity with me” – as an intern working on LGBTI issues – allows me to analyse the ways that I embodied the discourses of solidarities that I am also researching. Also, my work at Sonke involved contributing to the process of integrating LGBTI into the organisation, and thus my positionality played a fundamental role in the outcome of the research data. Contending with both my “lived experiences of solidarity” with Sonke, as well as my location within the research data will reveal richer nuances for an understanding of the possibilities of solidarity. The

notion of positionality within feminist research is heightened in this research project, as my political subjectivities and lived experiences are a part of what I am researching. Not only is my location important to consider, it is ultimately part of what I am researching, which increases the prioritisation of notions of reflexivity.

Through contending with the ways that Sonke grapples with their discursive positionality, I consider the role of discourse in the forging of solidarities towards doing transformation. The prioritisation of co-driven discourses is a concept that I hope to investigate through my engagements with Sonke Gender Justice Network. By triangulating my positionality in the research data, a thematic analysis of discourses of masculinities and the changes imagined by Sonke to integrate LGBTI into the organisation, I hope to analyse discourses of solidarity.

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CHAPTER FIVE: Discourses on Masculinities

In this chapter, I will present and analyse the representations of masculinities that emerged from the interviews. Through employing a content analysis to investigate discourses of masculinities in the interviews I conducted, I intend to provide a foundation for analysing the ways in which my participants – as part of the larger body of Sonke as an organisation – theorise about the approach that Sonke takes in working with masculinities. Through contending with the discourses of normative masculinities that were revealed in the interviews, I intend to conceptualise the different dimensions of masculinities as politics which converse with the embodiments of masculinity that were presented by my participants. These dimensions will reveal the discourses of masculinities that Sonke is embedded in, which will indicate the sites at which to interrogate the possibilities of solidarities with LGBTI activists. Through using an analytical lens to investigate the encounters of representations of masculinities that emerged from my interviews, I intend to consider experiences of masculinities as grounds for theorising activism around transforming masculinities.

The participants that I interviewed in order to elicit these discourses on masculinities are a diverse group, which individually hold various positions at Sonke – the diversity of their positionalities will reveal the contours of the discourses of masculinities in which Sonke is embedded. Sonke Gender Justice Network is an organisation made up of multiple individuals from multiple locations and spaces, and therefore, examining the diversity of experiences with masculinities and theorisations on masculinities will contribute to an understanding of where the organisation is rooted. As an organisation that has most of its staff employed within the borders of South Africa, this notion of theorisations of masculinities is embedded in discourses of personal engagements with masculinities, and in relation to their engagement with South Africa. Locating participants and their relations to the theoretical context in which they are engaging their work around masculinities is therefore fundamental to the discourses of solidarities in South Africa that this research project seeks to investigate. Participants' positionalities affect their material (as reflected in their interviews), and my data analysis: different constructions of and intersections between race and class in relation to experiences of gender are revealed in the interviews. The consistencies, inconsistencies, and silences that emerged from the interviews indicate diverse representations of masculinities that are related to the spaces that my participants come from.

By asking participants to discuss their experiences of “normative” gender construction, I intended to reveal their individual experiences with masculinities, as well as allow space for them to theorise about normative masculinities in the South African context. This first subtheme engages with my participants' experiences of masculinities (and normative gender constructions), and will indicate discourses of gender “norms”, and how my participants theorise around the various dimensions that construct these “normative” gender scripts. The ways in which these gender constructions are embodied by my participants will also inform how my interviewees theorise around gender transformation, and the politics of doing this gender transformation. As “men” who have interacted with various discourses of masculinities and are actively working towards a particular form of gender transformation (i.e. transforming hegemonic, heteronormative,

masculinities), the ways in which my participants embody masculinities, as men, will nuance our understanding of how these men engage with masculinities. This concept of embodiment is critical to contend with here, as one of my participants was a woman, and so it would be inappropriate to generalise “embodiments of masculinities” to all my participants. Her voice as a self-professed “tomboy” and lesbian diversifies the body of data I received, as her engagements with masculinities adds nuance to discourses of “masculinities” in the South African context that can be experienced and lived.

Masculine norms are also discourses that are experienced by women, who experience constructions of gender norms through the gender binary, which informs the construction of “woman”. The oppositional binary between what is constructed as a “woman” and a “man” informs the way that women experience normative gender. Although the embodiment of gender that the woman participant experienced will be a departure from the *embodiments of masculinities* that my male participants presented, her constructions of gender norms will offer a different angle for the analysis of gender norms that are crucial for this research project. My woman participant was also the only participant who identifies openly (in her interview) as queer, so her perspectives on sexuality and LGBTI, as someone who identifies as a lesbian, will add nuance to the analysis.

Another subtheme that emerged from the interviews was discourses of masculinities as a politics, which inform the way that the participants present the approach that Sonke takes in working with masculinities. The ways in which certain forms of masculinities are problematized fundamentally shapes the way that Sonke chooses to do its work, therefore engaging with the discourses of masculinities as politics is critical to an understanding of Sonke as an organisation that seeks to transform masculinities. Which masculinities does Sonke construct as “needing” to be transformed? Who are these men, and why work with them? In the interviews, the differences between the discourses of “who” and the “why” raised some contradictory notions: particular forms of masculinity were constructed as holding inappropriate forms of power, yet the reasons to work with these masculinities were constructed as inherent vulnerabilities that men face through patriarchy. If these men hold inappropriate power, where do discourses of vulnerability fit within this space of power – particularly in relation to *women*? If we consider the power relations that patriarchy constructs within the *binary* of men and women, how does the construction of men’s vulnerability and victimisation from patriarchy fit within notions of patriarchy that enforce male privilege through the oppression of women? How does it fit with discourses of heteronormativity, and the LGBTI movement?

The following will connect some of the themes from the interviews that indicate theories on masculinities, and experiences with masculinities which are rooted in the locations of each of my participants. This will provide a basis for a further analysis on how masculinities as politics were presented in the interviews. Revealing the ways in which power and privilege are constructed is fundamental to an analysis of how Sonke Gender Justice Network constructs the reasons why they need to transform masculinities, and which bodies these “problematic masculinities” are embodied in. This will inevitably inform how Sonke “does” the work around transforming masculinities. These discourses of normative masculinities and masculinities as politics provide the entry point to which we can consider the possibilities of solidarities with queer

masculinities. How my interviewees who work at Sonke present constructions of masculinities, masculine power and reasons to work with men, inform the reasons why they are intent on integrating LGBTI issues into their work. These discourses of masculinities provide the basis of which I can (in the following chapters) contend with the changes imagined by Sonke to integrate LGBTI. The significance of the ways that these changes are imagined will offer a site of analysis on which I interrogate discourses of solidarity.

Subtheme 1: Constructions of normative masculinities

I began my interviews by asking my participants about their personal experiences with masculinities, and gender. The majority of my interviewees were men. However, I decided not to completely exclude women because women also work within Sonke as an organisation, and women also experience normative gender constructions as noted previously. I did however opt to interview mostly men, as the *embodiment* of theorisations on masculinities provides a significant insight as to how these identities engage with “the work” of working with masculinities (which is what Sonke does). The relationship between the ways that masculinities are lived, and the ways masculinities are theorised reveals a richer analysis of discourses of masculinities. Experiences with masculinities is also critical to an understanding of discourses of masculinities which Sonke is situated in, and Dawn, the woman that I interviewed also talked about her own experiences with gender, being gendered and thus, masculinities. Despite the gender difference, Dawn reiterated similar constructions of normative masculinities from the other participants.

One of the most consistent themes to emerge was that of a dominant, patriarchal masculinity, which constructed “the” masculine norm to be strong, rigid, unemotional, occasionally violent, a breadwinner, and heterosexual. Differences between the constructions of this “dominant” form of patriarchal masculinity varied between the participants, which I will also address. Also, the ways that normative masculinity were constructed through a *set of connections* was a consistency that emerged across the interviews. Rugby playing, braaing, normative domestic gender roles, and the use of a father figure were constructions that were consistently used to profile experiences with masculinities.

Beginning with individual consistencies that emerged, one of these dimensions was the overwhelming idea that South African men are supposed to be strong, rigid, unemotional, and heterosexual. These “masculine” characteristics were consistently constructed with a number of other “signifiers” including the construction of masculinities through (particular) sports, constructions of femininity, and constructions of a father figure:

“[...] I was not really gender conformative, so I didn’t...I never played rugby – as an Afrikaans boy that’s really...not normative, and my folks allowed me to do that, it’s not like my dad was disappointed or anything.”
(Jordan)

“[...] I remember a fight I had with my folks because my mother wanted me to sweep my room, I don’t know if it was gender linked because it was actually my dad was saying that I need to clean my room, and I was like, freaking out, more about testing my boundaries, you know as a teenager, that it’s unfair to sweep the room, so there’s an actual clear example of my dad supporting a kind of so called female normative task of cleaning, so yea I don’t know, it’s quite recently like when I said when I arrived, when I was 28/29, started exploring stuff that other male friends have lived with their whole lives, so for me it’s actually very interesting to watch a rugby game now, it’s a new thing...So I’m exploring it now, you know watching the rugby game and being the one who handles the braai you know, making the meat on the...so I’m like, I can braai!” (Jordan)

The above quotations demonstrate how Jordan deploys specific descriptives which operate to delineate the multiple dimensions that make up his experience with normative masculinities. A nuclear family structure is described in order to assert notions of normative domestic household roles and responsibilities that were attributed based on gender. The normative responsibility for women in the home is constructed as sweeping the floor and cleaning. He conceptualises “normative Afrikaans masculinity” as embodied by the rugby player,

and considers his experience with masculinity as non-conformative to this construction (of normative Afrikaans masculinity). Because Jordan wasn't interested in playing rugby (which is constructed as normative masculine behaviour), was instead interested in the arts, and sang in the choir, he constructs himself as non-normative. The deployment of notions of the nuclear family, gender roles in the home, rugby playing, and braaing, orchestrate the way in which Jordan conceptualises his experience with normative masculinity.

Jordan's identity as a white Afrikaans South African played a role in how he engaged with his masculinities. He spoke in great detail about his "ignorance to privilege" particularly in regards to how he engages with his black colleagues in the organisation, but also in terms of his engagements as a white Afrikaans South African in the post-apartheid era:

"As a white man, in a politically aware diverse organisation, I couldn't handle it, I didn't realise the political significance of it as well. A white man asking a black man to do something for him from a position of seniority of power is problematic in South Africa today. Now I have the maturity and Sonke has the maturity too, that so now when I ask my black colleagues for stuff...but at the time I hadn't even thought about it, and I was surprised that people were pissed off at me asking them for stuff they should be doing anyways....but I didn't have the lens of living on at the time. I was completely blind to whiteness, that's another fascinating conversation so I've been aware of whiteness [...]" (Jordan)

"[...] yea, political awareness I think sums it up really well. Becoming politically more aware, um and being aware of power disparities of being aware of how I'd known that quite academically, investigating like complex systems and power, you know the visceral and psychological impact of power and privilege I've really become sensitive to that, through being at Sonke and how language is kind of the it kind of went from these abstract academic concepts of language, and power and privilege to really living it and experiencing it, so I think that that I don't think it's a lesson I've learned, it's just I'm becoming aware of that space and I think that I find that really invigorating, and engaging and tiring and difficult, but it feels like it's a real privilege to engage with that so closely." (Jordan)

"[...] I had been building tension about this, and I think a lot of the negative feedback that was coming my way because I'm a white Afrikaans man in a senior position that I was not engaging with...but that I was taking on, and not speaking about it, it was just pushing me out of the organisation I didn't realise it at the time." (Jordan)

Jordan was very clear about his journey in terms of grappling with his positionality as a white, Afrikaans, South African, and how he has learned to engage with that in the workplace. He constructs his political awareness as being conscious of his white privilege – which he indicates as something that he has been "newly aware" of the need to be explicit about (in regards to his engagement with his own privilege).

This idea of having his "consciousness" about white privilege being "revealed" through working at Sonke is also quite interesting because of how it constructs the "normality" of white privilege – particularly in the South African context. Despite a history with centuries of racial segregation and oppression, the normalisation of white privilege continues to be perpetuated to present day. Jordan's honesty about how he had only recently begun grappling with white privilege suggests that the privilege of whiteness continues to be assumed as a norm, hence to problematize white privilege shifts the stability of the norm. Through the narrative of a tension he experienced at Sonke (that involved race), Jordan indicated that he wasn't politically aware that the role of race, and his embodiment of particular forms of privilege played a fundamental role in the interaction(s) that he had with his colleague. These discourses of race clearly affect the interactions between different people at various hierarchies at Sonke, and thus a consideration of race politics is warranted.

Mark also engaged with his experiences of being a white South African in his interview. Like Jordan, Mark also indicated that rugby playing was an important association to masculinity, as it was deemed a "dirty game" – which implies that these "dirty games" are macho and masculine. He also mentions how running, for

example, was not considered a macho sport, which further emphasises the notion that “normative” masculinities have particular traits that are exemplified through participation in particular forms of sports. Running is not masculine, yet a full body contact, team sport – that involves a ball – is constructed as masculine:

“[...] that’s kind of the story of the ways that I was socialise, so boxing, rugby, water polo, so I played all those sorts of dirty games, and was good at them, and I was also was a very good runner, so I stopped a lot of those things because it affected my ability to run, and running is quite different you know much more, solitude and kind of, there isn’t all that stuff, so being a runner wasn’t associated with being macho and when I left rugby to run, there was sort of questions about what kind of “man” I was and even if it wasn’t framed in those ways, you know the sissy who would rather run than play rugby so yea” (Mark)

This comparison between “dirty” sports such as rugby and boxing to “non-dirty” sports such as running is pertinent to discourses on masculinities, because it implies that physical contact and violence in sports are characteristics that make up a “masculine” sport. The construction of masculine norms, or ideal masculinities, is embodied in the “dirty sport” player, which Mark later implicates into other normative, or acceptable behaviours for men that potentially lead to violent behaviours. Mark positions himself as abiding by this construction of normative masculine behaviour, as he describes his participation in these “dirty sports”.

He also spoke in detail about growing up as a white South African, in an environment where the use of violence to defend oneself was accepted and even encouraged:

“[...] [There] was this thing that if someone does something to offend and slight you, one of the responses that you should consider quite quickly is being aggressive, and so on the rugby field, and like, most white suburban kids in that era, and probably still today, I was on the A-team for a while, I was definitely one of the kids, that if there was a fight, I was quick to the scene, and that stuff around learning violences around a slight or perceived slight that was very real and I think quite internalised for me. We lived in Canada for a year when I was 10, strange name, red hair, funny accent...And again there, if kids tease you, beat them up, and in fact I remember my parents saying if you come home and report a fight, we’ll give you a dollar, and you know what is that like now, that was 35 years ago, so that’s more like \$20 now, it was a real incentive for a kid, so I would go home and exaggerate the fact – but again the message was clear.” (Mark)

While Mark indicated that his home environment was not actually violent, he describes how violence was condoned as a form of retaliation against people who were antagonistic towards him. It was not only condoned, but he also describes how this form of violence was encouraged. This form of violent masculinity is something that Mark constructs as being part and parcel of the violent society (of apartheid era South Africa) which was accepted and internalised. The internalised violence from apartheid is theorised here to have manifested in various other forms of violence, such as the militarised environment that Mark also refers to in his discussion on violent masculinities he experienced (and embodied) when he was younger. Also, like Jordan, Mark’s narrative on his experiences with normative masculinity connects notions of “whiteness” with rugby playing, aggressive masculine behaviour, and his narrative later also includes his father. These figures of description in Mark’s narrative on normative masculinities are consistent through the rest of the participants as well.

Mark also talks about how he grappled with his “whiteness”, as a white South African in South Africa, but also as a white South African living abroad, and getting interested in doing social justice work:

“[...] when I moved to Berkley and started dating an anarchist from Nicaragua, and quickly graduated to the most radical student group I could find, so a small newspaper collective, which I then worked at for 2 or 3 years, and we, and I think a part of that, was distancing myself being a white South African to perceptions of white South Africans...” (Mark)

“[...] I got interested in working with men through 3 – 4 different pathways, so one was political interest, so struggling as a white South African how I can make a political contribution so I could do central American solidarity work, I could do work to stop the war in Iraq, and I did that, or work to stop social service cuts in San Francisco, but I was always the outsider, as a white South African man, working a lot with activists of colour, who said, hang on a sec how do you fit in this space, so working with men, and in...the moment we have problematic notions of masculinities that are common, so this is a community that I claim to belong in, and I think that was important, that was that kind of political trajectory [...]” (Mark)

In terms of grappling with being a white South African in South Africa, Mark discusses his privilege of growing up in a white suburb during apartheid. He also engages with his socioeconomic status by describing his family life, which included a father who was a neurosurgeon – which he describes as being a respectable profession in his community. The part of the narrative where Mark most engages with his “whiteness” is when he was beginning to get involved with social justice work in the United States. He describes how some of the political spaces he was active in – particularly the anti-racist spaces – challenged his positionality as a white person, and particularly as a white South African. He discusses how his embodiment of a “White South African” caused him to experience scepticism and judgement from other activists particularly in spaces of anti-racist organising. This discussion implies that the stereotype (in the USA) of the “White South African” was a person who enjoyed and condoned the racist policies of the apartheid regime.

He also does not hesitate to engage with his own experiences as a white person attempting to do anti-racist work, and experiencing tension and resistance from people of colour who challenged him to engage with his positionality. He indicates that this process of “finding his place” in terms of activism contributed to his engagement with organisations who “work with men”. His experiences with working in organisations that rehabilitate violent men led him to subsequently do work around mitigating gender based violence through working with violent men. This eventually led him and several other activists to form Sonke Gender Justice Network. Mark locates his activism around working with men through a journey of being an “outsider”, and trying to find a space where he could “do” the work that he wanted to do, while being more of an insider. His location as a white South African who also learned and developed much of his politics working in San Francisco in the United States, in addition to being a part of some of the mobilisations in South Africa during the struggle against apartheid indicates the multiple spaces where Mark’s experiences with masculinities, and working with masculinities emerges from. These particular distinctive experiences of “Whiteness” that were illustrated by Jordan and Mark emphasise the importance of including race politics into the consideration of the South African context.

However, despite the politics of race, and the discussion on racial divisions that Mark and Jordan engaged with particularly, there continued to be consistencies in regards to engagements with normative masculinities that emerged from men who self-identified as black South Africans as well. Danny and John’s descriptions of their experiences with masculinities had many similarities with Mark and Jordan’s, though there was a particular emphasis on day-to-day gender scripts, like domestic duties and breadwinning. Similarly to Jordan and Mark, much of what they said about masculine “norms” as embodying strength, being less emotional, and breadwinning also resonated with the rest of the participants as well – however, I am deliberately drawing out a discussion between experiences that Danny and John had around masculinities as

black South Africans that live in Khayelitsha, compared to Jordan who lives in Stellenbosch and Mark who lives in Cape Town.

Like the rest of the participants, Danny presents his experiences with masculinity through his childhood, in which he describes the gendered power dynamics within the home. His socioeconomic status also played a fundamental role in his experiences of masculinity (and femininity), as he describes how he was forced to perform the “traditional” roles for women because his parents were absent. His experiences as a person from the Eastern Cape with low socioeconomic status, was a crucial factor in his experiences with performing these domestic roles:

“I grew up in eastern cape, it was me my two brothers, younger sister and one nephew, I grew up at a time in a difficult type of living because our parents were here in Cape Town, and I was the one who was taking the responsibility to make sure there is something to cook and eat, and make sure there is something to clean, and on a daily basis, so I was taking the responsibility to do those things, so at the time I didn’t have time to have friends because I was having this responsibility of being a...woman, actually of being a mother to my brother a sister as well and my nephew as well” (Danny)

Because of his economic and family situation, Danny had to assume domestic roles, which were constructed as “women’s work”; hence his experiences of masculinities and gender are affected by his economic situation. The notion of the oppositional gender binary is relevant here, as the construction of women’s roles are described in opposition to what are men’s roles. Women are supposed to clean, men are not supposed to clean. Men are supposed to fix the house, women are not. Danny positions himself in this construction of the binary, and describes his experience as outside of the “norm”. His economic situation at home led him to take on what he constructs as “women’s roles”. Danny constructs men’s roles in opposition to women’s responsibilities, and includes responsibilities such as fixing gates and household construction, as parts of what are masculine responsibilities – emphasising the physicality of masculinity.

Like the other participants, Danny reiterates that masculinity is constructed in *relation* to femininity. Engagements with binaries formed much of the construction of masculinities that the participants reiterated to me during the interview process. Joey and Danny explain that boys were not supposed to do what girls were “allowed” to do. “Girls’ behaviour” was constructed as “soft” and emotional, which was exemplified by fact that girls are “allowed” to cry, while boys are not. Jordan indicates a similar construction when he describes doing domestic work, such as sweeping a floor. He indicates that normative gender expectations for a woman would be to perform household duties, and that the fact that his father asked him to perform a household duty was “non-conformative” (of his father). Again, masculinities are constructed in a binary relationship to femininities, alongside a nexus of ideas, which together form a presentation of the ways masculinities are experienced.

The construction of binaries is critical in this analysis of masculinity because it situates the power relations that are embedded within these constructions. Constructions of normative behaviours form the basis of an understanding of power relations, which underlie the reasons why there is a need to transform normative gender scripts. If normative behaviours privilege particular genders at the expense of others, then the need to transform normative gender scripts is legitimised. The constructions of *whom* holds this inappropriate power (assumed to be attributed on the basis of gender) affects the transformative approach that is undertaken by Sonke as an organisation who seeks to undo gender inequality through working with men. Sonke’s interest in

solidarity with the LGBTI movement includes this understanding of power relations since integrating what is “queer” masculinities is premised upon what is “not-queer” or what is constructed as a “norm”. The construction of normative masculinities reveals certain constituencies who are constructed as holding inappropriate forms of power at the expense of those who exist outside the constructed “norm”. Sonke’s solidarity building with the LGBTI movement is, as will be analysed in a later section, premised upon the notion that there is a need to transform masculinities because hegemonic norms rely on the oppression of *women* (and thus may be implicated in the oppression of non-normative, “queer” masculinities).

Like the narratives presented by Mark and Jordan, particular descriptives were deployed to illustrate the various dimensions that constitute engagements with normative masculinities. Particular sports, domestic duties, a (nuclear) family, and heteronormativity, were some of the consistent ways that John and Danny described their experiences with normative masculinities. The narratives they presented bore similar threads to Mark and Jordan’s, where experiences with normative gender roles were explained through particular paradigms. For example, John strings together sports and heteronormativity in his discussion on how he engaged with normative masculinity:

“[...] there’s a guy that we used to make jokes about, he wasn’t playing ball, so there was sort of things with him, “wrong” things, but even though now I realise I was wrong at the time, he was living his life, but I think growing up you know now you need either to play soccer or cricket or rugby, these games are you beginning to play as a man, so at the same time I think that is where even now you, you start making jokes about each other if someone say doesn’t have a girlfriend as guys, because now we are in high school and all of those things, so yea” (John)

This correlation between masculinity and a physical sport (that usually involves a bit of physical contact or violence) reveals some nuance to the “norm” of masculinity. Jordan’s “non-conformity” was determined by the constructed norm of the Afrikaans boy that is supposed to play rugby, whereas Mark implies that he was indeed conformative by participating in rugby. Similarly, John indicates that acceptable masculine behaviour fundamentally involves the participation in particular sports that are deemed macho – sports that he indicates usually involve a ball. Though John does not explicitly locate himself in the actual sport playing, he indicates that in his younger years, he had experiences with “normative” masculinities, as he had participated in the “making jokes” or teasing individuals who did not conform to these gender scripts. John presents his experiences with gender and masculine norms through several different angles. He indicates that playing sports, particularly sports with a ball like soccer, cricket or rugby, demonstrate normative masculinities. As he narrates his response to the question of his experiences with what was considered “appropriate” or “inappropriate” masculine behaviour, he also presents the importance of heterosexuality and having a girlfriend as being a part of normative masculinities. Sports, heterosexuality, and coercive socialisation towards people who do not “fit the norm” are all together consistencies that emerged from the discourses of masculinities that were presented by the interviewees.

Joey’s interview also reflects much of what Danny, John, Jordan and Mark reveal about normative masculinities. The similar narrative thread of sports, nuclear family, heteronormativity, and the father figure were also presented in his interview:

“[...] For example, you know when you are a kid you grow up playing with the balls, you do lots of fun and games to entertain yourselves, yea, and uh, if for example if I wanted to do something that my sister used to do, it was

questionable, you know, no you are not supposed to do that, why can't you do this and that you know as a boy you know, that is for girls, no, this is too soft for you, so I was a little bit, ah but I love to do it, but why are you stopping me, that's what I feel comfortable with [...]" (Joey)

"[...] A lot of issues around the socialisation process between boys and girls, starting from the schools starting with the family itself to say no, you are a boy, you are supposed to be strong, be like your Dad or be like your brother, be like this person you know all the strengthening reinforcing issues around you know typical masculinity in a boy-child you know, to say, you are not supposed to cry you're not supposed to behave like a girl, you are not supposed to be too soft, and so forth, so I use to see all those kinds of things, but that also pushed me to get more interested in understand what do we mean at the end of the day is it fair, because there were certain things that I really wanted to do, but because of societal expectations and peer pressure I could do those things" (Joey)

His engagements with normative masculinities are presented through playing with sports - like John, he specifies that the sport involves a ball (which implies a competitive team sport). His narrative about masculinities also includes mentioning a father figure, which was also mentioned consistently by other participants as well. This consistency implies the construction of the father-patriarch as an important conceptualisation of masculinities. The consistency of the father figure in the narrative raises a conversation about the link between the noticeable mention of the father in engagements with normative masculinities, and the emphasis from Sonke in regards to working with fathers. The "father" has appeared through the interviews to be fundamental to discourses of normative masculinity.

The emphasis on fathers was further expressed by Jeffrey, in response to the question, "What are things that South African men (and boys) are facing today":

"[...] I think also there has been a huge lack of involvement of fathers, I think again it's been well documented that there is a lot of single mother households, where there is no connection with the father, those are not having a relationship with the father...I would argue that not that mothers can't be great parents, but I think doesn't provide the child additional father figure or supportive person, I think you have the culture within South Africa around what it is to be a man, and I think, in South Africa, though it's changing it's quite a patriarchal society so I think that puts pressure on men and older men to be the breadwinner and but also as South Africa society that tells him that they are in charge they should be making decisions and it's not necessarily a culture, that I feel that I was fortunate to grow up in [...]" (Jeffrey)

Jeffrey suggests here that fathers play a pivotal role in a child's development, and he describes this through the binary construction of a mother and father. Though he sidesteps the implication that mothers can't be great parents, he does emphasise the importance of the father figure, or secondary support figure. However, it is important to point out that there are strong indications of the importance of a father figure that embodies *masculinity*. He links together notions of normative masculinity and patriarchy with fatherhood, and suggests that fathers contribute to the normative socialisation of "men". The implication is that without the father figure to perform such a contribution, there would be challenges to normative socialisation. This construction of normative socialisation through the nuclear family is important to consider, as it is heteronormative, and leaves out not only the possibilities of other forms of socialisation that could be deemed normative, but it also leaves out non-heterosexual family "units".

Asides from fathers and fatherhood, Jeffrey also had some interesting things to say about other aspects of his experiences with normative masculinities. Since Jeffrey is not South African, I asked about the differences between his experiences with normative masculinity where he grew up, and his experiences with normative masculinity in South Africa. Jeffrey reiterated the idea of forces that pressure young boys to behave a certain way, as he contends that it was his environment growing up outside of the home that he noticed pressure

towards him as a young man to behave a certain way (which he implies is different than the pressures from his environment at home):

“[...] I think contextualising my background, I think I was very fortunate to having two loving and supporting parents, who were very respectful of what I did, and irrespective of what sexuality I expressed myself they were very supportive. We didn't have a lot of money it was quite a difficult financial context that I grew up, we didn't have a lot of money, but there was a lot of support there was a lot of love, there was lots of kinds of aspiration amongst my parents for me and my brother, so personally there was an acceptance of you can be a boy but you can express yourself, you can be emotional you can cry you can talk about your feelings, so I think my household was quite open to being a young man in a range of ways, I think the world outside me because of the area that I lived in, which had problems of crime and drugs and other issues I think there was definitely a social pressure on young men to be mischievous to be involved in crime to be taking drugs etcetera, and also a kind of accepted norm that you'd be a heterosexual young man, there wasn't much space in terms of the discussions I had growing up...it was just assumed that's what you'll be so there was pressure to have a girlfriend, and at an younger age it was do you have a girlfriend, but as you get older it became did you have sex, so I think the norms of masculinity were definitely there, being a risk taker, violent...” (Jeffrey)

Jeffrey's comment here about how socialisations of normative masculine behaviour are not exclusive to the home but to various forces echoes the model that Sonke takes (as described by Mark), which understands that there are many forces that shape problematic masculine behaviour. In order to “fix” masculinities that are deemed problematic, Sonke's approach is to address all the forces. Jeffrey reflects this belief here, as he narrates his story of being socialised by different forces outside of the home as well as inside of the home.

Another “force” outside the home that was described as affecting the socialisation of gender was the urban or rural setting of the individual's upbringing. Joey mentions that he grew up in both rural and urban settings, and suggests that this affected his experiences of masculine norms. He suggests that the fact that he grew up in both settings diversified his experience with masculinity, and he implies that if he had only been brought up in a rural setting, his experience with masculinity may have been different. Joey refers to the diversity of urban settings which subverts “traditional” gender constructions that are more prevalent in rural settings. Diversifying gender roles is an attribute that appears to be constructed with the urban environment, in a binary to “The Rural”. These aspects of Joey's positionality inform the ways in which he theorises about the South African context in which he currently lives and works.

Jeffrey's positionality as a person who was raised in Scotland and “got involved” with “working with men” (to prevent or mitigate gender based violence) in Toronto also reveals some pertinent aspects of his location that are important to mention in this analysis. Because he was not “from” the South African context, I deliberately asked questions about how his experience with masculinity growing up in Scotland differs or is similar to his encounters with masculinities here. Jeffrey suggests that there are many similarities between his experiences with masculinities in the United Kingdom, and what he perceives as what people encounter with masculinities in South Africa, but he also notes some differences:

“I think the norms are...I think they remain the same in South Africa, as I said the pressure of young men to prove themselves...and I think that if you look at the communities in the UK and in South Africa there are similarities in terms of challenges...I also see though in South Africa that is different that you have a history in a country which is well documented in research that is showing that the violence was in South Africa institutionally and collectively as a whole through the apartheid regime, and that had an effect on the violence that people often use (today) – and we know that if as South Africa young man you've experienced violence as a young person, you are more likely to use violence in your interpersonal relationships later in life, so I think that there has definitely been an added level of violence that has influenced the South African context [...]” (Jeffrey)

Jeffrey contends that there are pressures on young men in both the UK and in South Africa, and many of these pressures are similar. He suggests that there are gender scripts that men in South Africa are expected to follow, which are similar or run parallel to some of the expectations that he is familiar with from his own experiences in the UK. This acknowledgement of patriarchal gender scripts that exist in various contexts indicates that Jeffrey feels that there are consistencies in the masculinities that he has experienced in Scotland and with the masculinities that he encounters in South Africa, and particularly in his work at Sonke. As a person who is not South African but doing work in South Africa, his positionality adds nuance to the diversity of politics of individuals that make up Sonke as an organisation.

Jeffrey also observes some of the “heightened” levels of racial tension and violence in South Africa, stemming from a history of apartheid, and he refers to theories that hypothesise that this history of violence informs the violences that occur in post-apartheid South Africa. He also references the high rates of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, as something that he believes affects young men’s sexuality in South Africa more so than young men in the UK. He infers that due to the higher statistical rates of HIV/AIDS in South Africa, this is something that, in his opinion, that affects young men in South Africa differently than it does in the UK. Internalised apartheid violence and high risks of HIV/AIDS were described by Jeffrey as being particular characteristics of the South African context that he has encountered that is pertinent to his understanding of masculinities. To clarify, Jeffrey refers to the idea that the violence stemming from the apartheid era has traumatised society in a way that affects men’s behaviour in post-apartheid South Africa. This point is particularly important to raise because it locates some of way that Jeffrey’s experiences with masculinity in the UK context engages with his understanding of the South African context, and thus how he engages with his work around masculinities as well.

It is important to point out that throughout all the interviews, there was a way that “normative masculinities” were *theorised*, in coalescence with the way they were *lived*. For example, as mentioned previously, Jordan constructed himself as a young man as non-conformative, by constructing what is in fact (in his opinion) normative. Jeffrey constructs what is “normative masculinity”, and describes his upbringing as not necessarily eliciting pressure to be conformative to those norms. Danny also describes his experiences with constructions of normative masculine behaviour – that being not cooking or cleaning. He positions himself in these experiences of gender norms by indicating that he was forced to perform “women’s” or “mother” roles (which were to cook and clean) for his siblings because he lived in a situation where he didn’t have parents to perform these responsibilities. Because I had asked what things were considered appropriate or inappropriate for girls and boys growing up and their experiences with these norms, from the interviews emerged constructions of what is normative masculinity, and how my participants experienced being gendered in tandem with their understanding of normative masculine behaviour. As men, these embodiments of masculinities in relation to experiences of normative masculinity inform the ways in which they interact with discourses of transforming masculinities. The ways that masculinities are lived through my participants is critical to my analysis, as the embodiments of masculinities reflect the ways that discourses of transforming masculinities are grappled with.

One of my participants, Dawn, is not a man (and did not identify as one). Her experience with being gendered as a woman – and with her experience as a lesbian woman – reveals a different nuance to discourses on normative masculinities and gender roles that are being lived and engaged with in the South African context. Dawn describes in detail how she experienced constructions of feminine norms, which speak to what it means to be masculine. In this part of the analysis, I rely on discourses of the gender binary to describe how masculine norms are constructed *through the construction of feminine norms*. This binary is evident throughout the interviews, as participants speak about hegemonic gender scripts which inform the way that gender is socialised. The comments generated regarding the gender binary were in response to my interview question which asked specifically about their experiences as a man or woman (and norms for boys/girls, men/women), so in this way, I may have already inferred the assumption of the gender binary. However, Dawn’s comments about being a tomboy, a lesbian, being pressured to dress a certain way as a woman, reveals an interesting nuance to experiences of masculinity, gender and being a woman:

“Well my experience was actually quite interesting because I was actually a tomboy, and um, you know, I sit back and think about this quite a lot, in my family I guess, my family wasn’t that hectic, interestingly enough, you know there were moments where they said what boys had to do what girls had to do, but I was very energetic, I only played with boys, I found girls terribly boring, just boring! So I was very much in the field, with guys, wore guys kind of clothes, and when I think back on it I’m just amazed at how my parents just allowed me to do that, interestingly enough, I figured they thought ahh she’s a child it’s a phase, she’ll grow out of it, but there was no real pressure to really conform to wearing dresses until I became a teenager, but they also just left me to do my own kind of thing [...]” (Dawn)

“Well there was a lot more pressure around being a girl like, especially in terms of what you wear obviously, and you know when I was, end of primary school high school where I...oh god, discovering my sexuality or whatever you want to call it. You know and I realised that I was actually attracted to women, and this was an extremely difficult period...oh god, it was difficult, high school, high school was horrible! And having to have a boyfriend and supposed to be interested in boys, but I was like, no, and plus, and obviously thinking like, oh my god, I’m supposed to be attracted to boys something is wrong with me. And so yea, high school was difficult and I obviously tried to conform to it like, be more ladylike, be more girly, wear more make up, but god I just wasn’t interested!” (Dawn)

Dawn speaks about her experience of growing up as a girl who wanted to do “boy stuff”. She includes in her description of “boy” things; running around, playing sports, whereas “girl” things included wearing dresses – something which she did not like to conform to. The notion of “normal” was also defined as heterosexual, which is something that came out of all of the interviews, and had particular emphasis in Dawn’s interview. Dawn describes that growing up as a non-heterosexual identifying woman was an extremely difficult part of her life, suggesting that non-conformity to gender and sexuality norms created challenges.

Though Dawn is not a man, her experiences with gender and being “gendered” suggests that there are particular ways that men are supposed to act; and the ways that men are *not* supposed to act, are constructed as feminine. Similarly, the reverse could be considered as well: The idea that the way women *are* supposed to act, infer that men are probably *not* supposed to act in this way. For example, Dawn describes how she was not really into “girl” things, so instead she was into boy things which she described as playing in the field, running around...etc. In this way, gender is consistently being described within an oppositional binary. The participants who were men also described gender norms within this binary as well, as “acceptable” masculine behaviour was for example, strong, rough, not supposed to cry, which implied that feminine behaviour was soft, emotional, and allowed to cry. Dawn’s description of her experience as a woman compliments these constructions of gender within this oppositional binary.

Like the other participants, Dawn's experiences with the socialisation of normative gender roles is premised upon the notion of the oppositional gender binary, which enforces patriarchal gender roles. Through a distinctive narrative thread, the participants deployed specific beacons of description to illustrate their experiences with normative masculinities. The family unit, the father figure, the construction of masculinity in tandem to femininity, team sports, and aggressive, macho behaviour were "signifiers" that were employed by the participants to illustrate the contours of discourses of normative masculinities. These norms inform the way that the participants understand masculinity as politics, which will in turn inform the sites to which Sonke's current understanding of what it means to "work with masculinities" can engage with solidarity with queer masculinities.

University of Cape Town

Subtheme 2: Masculinities as Politics

In this section of the analysis, I will look at theories of masculinities as politics that emerged from the interviews that I conducted. By “masculinities as politics”, I refer to how my participants theorise around notions of “working with men”. This discussion focuses upon discourses of working with men to mitigate violence against women and the spread of HIV/AIDS. This discussion is also informed by discourses of patriarchy, women’s oppression, and male privilege which will in turn affect the ways in which approaches to “working with men” are realised. As discussed in the literature review, Sonke’s work is located in discourses of masculinities and patriarchy which suggest why it is necessary or productive to work with men to mitigate violence against women and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The ways in which particular forms of masculinity are problematized is fundamental to an understanding of the approach that Sonke takes in order to transform those said masculinities. The bodies that these problematized masculinities are linked to reveal some of the ways in which theories of “masculinities as politics” become praxis. Why is it important to work with men? And who are these men that embody the masculinities that “require” transformation?

This section will outline some of the discourses around the work that Sonke does with masculinities. How these participants engage with masculinities as a politics will inform this research project by revealing a more intimate understanding of the discourses of why people and some NGOs support “working with men” approaches to mitigate gender based violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Locating how my interviewees theorise working with men, and the approaches in which to engage gender transformation will reveal underlying questions on the possibilities of solidarity with LGBTI organisations interested in working with masculinities. Which groups of men need to be transformed – and what needs to change in order to include this “new” constituency (LGBTI)?

Beginning with investigating discourses of masculinities and thus, working with masculinities I can begin to consider entry points for questions of solidarity within currently very differently grounded “work on masculinities”. As will be seen, the ways in which Sonke imagines “new masculinities” may not lay a ready platform for working with “masculinities” lived through self-identification as gay, transgender masculinity, or queer – as LGBTI movements do. By grounding my research in discourses of masculinity and masculinity as a politics I can begin to frame which layers of gender, men and masculinity are implicated by the discourses that emerge from the conversations with my participants. Ideas about possible solidarities with LGBTI activism will be explored as discourse in the upcoming section. By investigating in the current section about why my participants believe it is important to transform current masculinities and heterosexual dynamics, I attempt to locate some of the political and theoretical underpinnings which will inform the possibilities of solidarities with LGBTI activists in South Africa.

Who is working with men?

Several of the questions in the interviews were geared towards understanding how my interviewees theorised around masculinities as a politics and how they engaged with the approaches that Sonke takes in terms of working with men. By investigating the reasons why they think this work is important reveals nuance to this question of why Sonke works with men. The differences and similarities between the answers to this question of why Sonke works with men will show different angles as to why individuals that work at Sonke participate in or affirm the approaches that Sonke takes in working with men. Also situated in the discourse of why Sonke works with men are questions about why other organisations work with men, and where Sonke is situated in tandem with these organisations. This is an important distinction to make, because as Sonke is (and professes to be) a pro-feminist organisation that works alongside the women's movement for equality and social justice, other organisations that work with men are not aligned with these notions of solidarity (with the women's movement). The following will elaborate on this discussion of masculinities as politics, and allow discourses of working with men, masculinities, and masculinities as politics to emerge.

Jordan and Joey open this discussion by detailing the differences between organisations that are doing work with men for social justice, versus "men's movement" mobilising – the latter which is or can be a departure from doing any sort of social justice work:

"[...] I think it's going back to the Iron John, Robert Bly, kind of engagement with masculinity so there's the *Mankind Project*, that I was telling you that does the initiation into manhood. Um, I think there are also don't know if you can call them extremist, but they are definitely polarized men's rights groups. So there's a guy called Bafana Tubaku (sp?), who's got a fathers group, but it seems quite polarized like, black men only welcome, and only black men welcome in their group and their quite strong about that network. It's hard to speak about organisations working with men I mean there's men's health...who focus on MSM and gay men, but I think it's sort of the South Africa version of MHC I guess." (Jordan)

"And mixed in there is the fatherhood stuff. So there's an organisation called the *Fatherhood Foundation*, they are a parents centre that works with fathers, but that's very focused on parenting, and not really located in a space of social justice. So our fatherhood programme is very much focused on gender equitable parenting. Whereas that is news to most of the people working in parenting, it's like oh wow...or it's not news but they don't see how it is implied in what they do. Especially if they're working towards non-violent parenting...in academia there is obviously focus on men research, and then it's hard to find one that's not driven by Sonke. *Brothers For Life* is a huge network, but it's coordinated by Sonke, the program that I use to run at *Hope Worldwide* was the other programme. And we were doing Men as Partners, so I went from provincial manager to national manager of the Men as Partners programme at *Hope Worldwide*, so hope was huge we had 12 offices across the country and employed 600 people..." (Jordan)

Jordan refers to a part of the "working with men" sector that "reforms" men to be more in touch with themselves, and their emotions. Jordan makes many references to the Robert Bly and Iron John movement, as Bly is considered the founding father of this movement. Jordan explains that Bly's book, *Iron John: A Book About Men*, uses the Grimm Brothers fairy tale "Iron John", to theorise around healthy masculine development. Throughout the fairy tale, the main character in the book encounters several characters – each of which teaches him something. Iron John is the name of the "wild man" in the Grimm Brother's story, and Bly alleges that due to industrialisation, men today (he can be assumed to be making references to Northern discourses here), have "lost touch" with the "wild man", which has caused men to not properly develop into emotional beings. Bly attaches this theory to psychosocial development, and correlates men's problems in their interpersonal lives with both women, and other men, to not being in touch with the "wild man". From this theory, a movement for

men's "healthier" social development (or redevelopment) emerged, where various organisations would take groups of men into facilitated discussions and activities meant to engage with the "wild man".

This "men's movement" or "men's (emotional) rehabilitation movement" is also present in South Africa, and Jordan refers to the *Mankind Project*, which is the South African equivalent to the Robert Bly Iron John workshops. Jordan also refers to his involvement with the *Mankind Project* as one of his earlier experiences with organisations "working with men", which eventually led him to his current job at Sonke. Jordan distinguishes the work from Robert Bly's Iron John workshops to the work that Sonke does. As mentioned previously, the Iron John workshops were developed to essentially counsel/workshop men to be more emotional, better fathers and husbands, and to be more caring. These projects operate as a sort of "men's rehabilitation", or as Jordan calls it "men's initiation"; where groups of men (whom I would argue also belong to the middle to upper classes due to the extraordinarily high fees that these projects cost in order to participate) go to camps and workshops to transform their attitudes and behaviours. Jordan describes how some of the activities of these workshops include running around nude in the forest, primal screams, and holding each other's heads in each other's hands and looking into each other's eyes. It seems as though the intention of these activities appears to be counteracting "hegemonic" norms that have marginalised the "wild man". For example, (heterosexual) men aren't "supposed" to be intimate with each other in physical ways, so the holding of each other's faces is meant to counteract those fears of emotion and sentimentality.

When asked about what other organisations that work with men are doing, some of the participants responded by insisting that Sonke is not a "men's" organisation – which implies that other "men's organisations" are constructed as doing work that is categorically separate from what Sonke is doing. This seemed to be an important point that was raised – that Sonke is not a "men's rights" organisation or a "men's organisation". Instead, the alignment of Sonke with the women's movement or the "gender movement" is a point of consensus from all the participants. In terms of specific women's movement or women's organisations that work with men, Joey and others also mention how there are in fact women's organisations that do work with men, but at a much smaller scale:

"[...] yes other organisations are doing this work, at a small scale...why at a small scale because we have to establish what kind of methodology or models they use to engage these groups of men and boys in different communities and also the issue with this kind of work is just like integrating it thus seeks to engage men and boys, probably there might be women's rights organisations who maybe or services organisations but they have men as a small component to engage men and boys, but it is not explicitly clear that they need to, that they have interventions that they need to engage men and boys more of these activities, they try to integrate but they don't have that expertise and skills to effectively engage these groups of people [...]" (Joey)

"One of the things that I think is really important when we present Sonke is that we don't say that Sonke is a men's organisation, and it think that's important because you can't just work with men separate to working with women, transgender groups, you need to work with them in the context of the societies in which they live, so if you, I think to affect longer term more meaningful change and behaviours and attitudes if you try to work comprehensively, so in the work that we do we seek to work with men and women, and I think that in the work that we do we need to be working more with transgender, LGBTI communities, but what I think we specifically say is that in terms of targeting it HIV preventing, preventing GBV, promoting human rights, you need to target men...and I think that the reason why we do this is because **I find that there are a lot of organisations out there that are only targeting women, and I think we felt it was important to say that you can't just achieve comprehensive change by only working with women, and you can't do vice versa change with women by only working with men so we do strive to, to be comprehensive**" (Jeffrey)

What is suggested here is that Sonke is not the only organisation that is doing work with men through challenging patriarchy – women's organisations are doing similar work, but at a much smaller scale. It is

implied that women's organisations aren't doing as much as Sonke (in regards to working with men), and there is opportunity to work with men to transform current gender and sexual dynamics in order to mitigate gender based violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS. This gap in working with perpetrators also operates to legitimise Sonke's existence, as the demand to work with perpetrators, in addition to the gaps in terms of organisations that are doing this work indicate that Sonke's work is necessary because no one else is doing this work.

Why work with men?

This theme of masculinities as politics underpins notions of how Sonke justifies working with men. Why is it important to work with men in order to mitigate gender based violence? What underlies this conceptualisation of "why work with men" are discourses of why certain forms of masculinity are problematic, and how to alleviate them. This question of "why work with men" indicates the current status of the approach to working with men, which will allow us to analyse what needs to change in order to forge solidarities with the LGBTI community. What changes are required in the current model of working with men, in order to include issues faced by queer masculinities? Understanding the discourses which underpin the reasons why Sonke chooses to work with men will offer some insight as to the sites of possible solidarities with the LGBTI movement.

One of the "reasons" to work with men is this idea that current models of hegemonic masculinity are "bad for men". This is the notion that claims that various social forces that contribute to the shaping of hegemonic masculinities are detrimental to the well-being of men. For example, John indicates that Sonke's approach to working with men is to shift negativity around men in order to encourage healthier behaviour, and more equitable relationships:

"Okay, Sonke is working with men and boys, one thing changing their behaviour their teachings and learning when to take action against gender based violence the spread of HIV/AIDS because when you go to our communities there are a lot of negativity that is being put on men. And not most of the men are bad, there are some good, just that you want to belong tend to shy away from expressing ourselves, you can see that what we are doing is bad, but we just want to belong we want to be seen as a man. But I think what Sonke is doing is trying to change those behaviours." (John)

John speaks to this idea that there are forces of socialisation that bad for men. The lack of capacity to "express their emotions" is seen as something that is oppressive to men, as it constrains their ability to act equitably and honestly. Instead, men are "coerced" by "negative" forces to behave in ways that abide by the gender scripts attributed to men. This is related to the notion that Mark mentions about how patriarchy is not just a system that oppresses women, but patriarchy is "also not good for men" either. This discourse contends that patriarchy is a system that is bad "for everyone", and that it is in men's best interest – as it is for women – to be liberated from patriarchy.

Mark outlines this notion more succinctly:

"[...] if you understand patriarchy to be not just of men's oppression of women, but also of notions and understanding of manhood that are bad for men, and that put men, that put pressure on men to behave in a whole range of ways that are bad for women and are bad for men, and that patriarchy isn't just a system that grants men power privilege over women, but a system that grants a few men significant power over lots of other people, to the

detriment probably of everyone including those men, you know, so the understanding, Mbuseylyu, so he talks about toxic masculinities, and I think that's an interesting way to put it..." (Mark)

One of the silences that occurred in the interviews regarding this notion that patriarchy "as a system that is oppressive to men as well as women", involves notions of privilege (particularly male privilege). The implication that everyone is oppressed by patriarchy obscures the fact that women are oppressed *by* the privileges which accrue (differently) to people gendered as masculine, within a patriarchal system. The (feminist) idea that patriarchal oppression is complex, and assumes masculine superiority, and that power is *relational* was largely avoided by all of my participants. From the interviews, it appears that Sonke is an organisation that works with men alongside the women's movement; however, the silence within my interviewees' discourses around the relations of power between men and women suggests that oppression by patriarchy is being constructed in a particular way that excludes men's responsibility for women's oppression. The construction of oppression from patriarchy as being something that happens at the detriment of "both men and women" levels the field and *implies* that men and women may experience patriarchy in the same ways.

While it could be said that the gender scripts that men are coerced to perform by patriarchy are in fact oppressive, it is important to articulate that the system of power of which patriarchy is derived is premised upon men's domination of women. The silences in regards to the latter suggest that the framework to which Sonke is abiding their approach is based upon this idea that patriarchy oppresses *all*. As Mark mentions in the above quote, the reason why working with men is necessary or needed is because men are oppressed by patriarchy (too), thus it is healthier and beneficial to men to be liberated from patriarchy.

John's earlier reference to "negativity that is being put on men" runs alongside the discourses presented by Mark about patriarchy being oppressive to men, as it resists the categorisation as "men as perpetrators of oppression". These discourses coincide by shifting the responsibility of transforming masculinities *because men hold inappropriate power*, to working with men *so that they aren't oppressed by patriarchy* (which somehow connects to alleviating men's oppression over women). These contradictory notions reveal the discourse of which Sonke's work with masculinities emerges.

Joey indicates a different answer to the question "Why work with men". His analysis of the approach to work with men in order to mitigate HIV/AIDS and gender based violence is based within a broader human rights framework:

"[...] basically our approach is to address broader issues in the broader sense, of course we seek to work with men and boys to create gender equitable lifestyles, to create just and democratic societies, so our work is quite broad in the sense that we need to engage with men we need to understand how men behave and how men see themselves as taking a leading role in redefining masculinities but also engaging other men to see the benefits in doing this work, whether it is in South Africa or in different communities across the globe, so we need men to take that leading process, but we need to do this work in partnership with women, feminists, women's rights organisations and so forth so that they complement each other in terms of taking this work to scale to say how best do we come up with a frameworks that seeks to leverage all our activisms, advocacy work, that's why we are doing this work, also looking around aspects around leadership to say how best do we address issues around leadership, and also human rights issues to say how best do we then redefine some of the important institutions that actually come up with frameworks that seeks to protect human rights, whether talking about laws policies talking about institutions...how are these institutions you know how are these institutions linked and to come up with you know just conscious frameworks that seeks to protect human rights in that broader sense." (Joey)

Joey mentions several points here in regards to “working with men”. He contends that it is important to work with men in order to create more just and democratic societies. Changing the current dynamics of men’s gender and sexuality roles allows spaces for positive transformations towards more equitable societies. He also mentions men’s leadership in “redefining masculinities”, which suggests that he is affirming the responsibility of men to transform their problematic behaviours, and the systems of power which oppress others (which men benefit from). He recognises that it is men’s responsibility to work with men and masculinities around issues of gender based violence and HIV/AIDS. This is particularly pertinent because working with issues of gender based violence is often assumed to be women’s work; however, Joey asserts that men need to take responsibility for men and masculinities. I make this assertion about the “work” around gender based violence as assumed to be women’s work because it is in my experience that it is mostly women’s organisations (and often queer organisations) that run shelters and programmes for survivors of gender based violence. I have also heard (too) many times that women’s organisations “should” focus more on men, and that gender liberation can’t be achieved with “only” working with women – which implies that *women’s* organisations shouldn’t “just” be working with women, and that they *should* be focussing on men. Joey implies here a counterargument – that it is men’s responsibility to work with men and masculinities, and that men should be taking more leadership roles to do this work.

It is important to state that there were no direct questions about the women’s movement, and the participants did not explicitly talk about the women’s movement. Rather, relations with the women’s movement, and opinions from the women’s movement emerged through implications mostly from the ways that the solidarity with the women’s movement was described. Jeffrey’s earlier statements about “not being able to pursue comprehensive change” without working with men is one example that was earlier mentioned of how women’s organisations are being constructed in a certain way (i.e. not being able to achieve the transformation they seek by only working with women). Another way the women’s movement was constructed was in the way that the women’s movement is hostile to Sonke:

“[...] the obvious set of alliances that we’ve really had to pay attention to and deliberate about is with women’s rights organisations and you know it’s still contested terrain, so I think there are fewer and fewer people in South Africa and globally who are automatically quite sceptical and almost hostile to the idea of men being involved with gender equality work, but it’s still there, and understandably, and the same way that people of colour are sceptical of white people who are involved with anti-racist work, it’s kind of inevitable so you know we’ve been quite deliberate about whose been our board of directors, how do we get our materials vetted, so a lot of our materials even still women’s rights organisations review, and kind of give us feedback on.” (Mark)

“it’s not going to be easy I know this because ...and you know I guess if I think about traditional LGBTI or women’s organisations, so I guess I understand, yea, there might be some resistance, so you know because there is this, you know there is obviously this trust issue like hello you are this men’s organisation speaking for us so obviously there is things around that, who gets to speak for who so why this sudden this attention from Sonke...and people see it as a men’s organisation so I don’t think that there is this real understanding of what Sonke is about when it comes to gender equality issues, and so yea and so....first thing is Sonke doesn’t have the right to speak about LGBTI issues – I’m not saying this is true for me I’m saying it’s a challenge, also working with women’s rights organisations, you have all these resources so there’s a protection of ..you know you’re coming to take away resources from us.” (Dawn)

Mark and Dawn point out that women’s rights organisations have been resistant to Sonke participating in what was previously work that was dominated by women’s organisations, as Sonke is being constructed as a “men’s organisation”. It also constructs women’s organisations as only being hostile to Sonke because they are a “men’s organisation”, without contending with other reasons that may be reasons for resistance. Dawn

explicitly mentions the alleged ignorance of women's rights (and LGBTI) organisations who don't have a "real understanding" of what Sonke is about when it comes to gender equality issues. These notions of hostility and resistance from the women's movement are particularly interesting since most of the participants also indicated that Sonke is in solidarity with the women's movement. The ways that this solidarity is imagined also reveals some interesting ways that the women's movement is constructed.

The references to the problems caused by patriarchy for women and for men, alongside the notion of being "allied" with the women's movement, constructs the women's movement in particular ways. These notions of solidarity with the women's movement also reveal some contextual relevancies for my research interests in solidarities, especially since nearly all of the participants indicated that solidarity with the women's movement is fundamental to Sonke. While I do not seek to investigate Sonke's solidarity with the women's movement (this would not be possible with my data anyway), I believe there are some points to be raised in regards to this conceptualisation of solidarity with the women's movement. Going back to the idea that patriarchy is a system that oppresses "us all" is the first contention that is raised. If oppression from patriarchy is the locus to which solidarities are being forged with the women's movement, a construction of how that oppression is experienced by the different constituencies who are affected by patriarchy and solidarity with the women's movement must be considered.

The idea that patriarchy is a system of power which privileges men over women must be central to this discussion of solidarity, prior to the reductive assertion that patriarchy constructs roles for men that are also oppressive (to most men). The gender binary is essential to patriarchal oppression, and thus the *privilege of men* is fundamental to an understanding of patriarchal oppression. By side stepping this notion of patriarchy, and emphasising the latter construction of patriarchy as also oppressive to men, as it is to women (and we must therefore be in solidarity with the women's movement since we are seeking the same goal), the critique of male privilege over women within this discourse of patriarchy is marginalised. This is evident in much of the conversations that emerged in the interviews, where there were gaping silences in regards to talking about male privilege as fundamental to the *functionality* of patriarchal oppression. This is not to deny that indeed, patriarchy does coerce all people of all genders to behave a particular way that may be deemed oppressive. However, it is important to consider the fact that patriarchy functions as a system that privileges men over women – to negate or silence, or marginalise this conceptualisation would be problematic because then it wouldn't really be "patriarchy" anymore. Negating the notion that patriarchy is a system that privileges men over women would also completely redefine patriarchy to the point where the solidarity with the women's movement would shift quite radically. The notions of the women's movement as seeking liberation from male dominance over women would be in conflict with a conceptualisation of patriarchy as a system that oppresses everyone, men and women.

How patriarchy is conceptualised is critical to the work that Sonke does, as an organisation that seeks to work with men to alleviate violence against women, and purports to be in solidarity with the women's movement. If the desire to "work with masculinities and men" is predicated on the notion that patriarchy oppresses both men and women, and there is a need to work with men because men are oppressed – this

fundamentally shapes the approach that Sonke, as an organisation takes in their work around gender. In comparison, the “men are victims of patriarchy” approach as opposed to the “men have privilege” approach would theoretically be quite different in the way that it informs the actual work that an organisation working with men does. The former is useful to justify workshop materials that focus on the idea that these “privileges” that are ordained under patriarchy, are in fact detrimental to the well-being of the target constituencies. For example, “manly” behaviour that encourages risk taking and violence is unhealthy for men, because: A) men are killing each other, and B) men are contracting (as well as spreading) HIV. What this formulation leaves out though, is the idea that the subjugation of women stems from male privilege, which systematically places women in a subordinate position under men.

An approach that begins with looking at male privilege as central to the work that needs to be done is largely silent in this discourse of “men are victims of patriarchy”. The idea that men are victims of patriarchy, and therefore there is a need to convince men that patriarchal attitudes are unhealthy for men – does not consider the fact that alleviating patriarchy will (allegedly) cause men to lose privileges that they may be reluctant to relinquish. This is related to discourses of male privilege and patriarchy, and how gendered power dynamics are *bound* to the gender binary, which is fundamentally linked to men’s relationships *with women*. In other words, using masculinity as a way to address the politics of gender dynamics is informed by the approach that Sonke – and my participants – are engaged with. The social change that happens through considering masculinity as a political platform to work with gender dynamics is realised through the discourses of patriarchy and male privilege.

Men’s victimisation, Patriarchy and masculinity

Another concept that emerged regarding experiences with masculinity (in South Africa) is around men’s relationships with patriarchy and men’s victimisation. Though there are many links to the earlier discussion on men’s oppression from patriarchy and male privilege, the “men’s victimisation” discourse extends towards other forms of oppression as well. Central to this is the notion that men are oppressed by various forces. For example, poverty was indicated by several participants as a major issue that affected men. This connection between poverty and experiences of violent behaviour is interesting because it raises alleged correlations between forces of emasculation and the assertion of violence to compensate. Jordan begins the conversation by discussing how poverty is a major issue that South African men face today:

“So the two groups that we were specifically focusing on were Xhosa black men, living in Khayelitsha, so poverty is a major issue. And lack of resources, housing sanitation, lack of everything, so a typical experience that a shack dweller would have [...] They live in a poverty driven context where they every single cent that they can get they have to fight for.” (Jordan)

Jordan suggests in this first paragraph that poverty plays a critical role in the socialisation of people’s behaviours in South Africa. Here he particularly refers to a group he worked with in Khayelitsha, where he nearly had a falling out with the group because he wasn’t able to pay them on time for a project he was

managing. He attaches the situation to experiences of poverty, where poverty creates environments where individuals may be more particular about the delivery of paid wages.

Another notion of experiences of masculinities that emerged from the interviews was the idea that as women are empowered, this destabilises men's (privileged) position in society:

"[...] same with gender issues, where societies grappling with this change of women becoming more empowered – what does this mean for men, plus then dealing with human rights of LGBTI, and it's clear that you know society is really struggling with that in terms of things like radio shows and TV shows about it, and the kinds of homophobia would come out you know the kinds of talks and issues when people would speak out against women's empowerment...so yea." (Dawn)

"[...] We know these things are difficult, but let's also talk about the real issues, let's not sweep this under the carpet you know but at the same time trying to understand that from a man's experience of what it means, I think those are the big shifts, what it's like to be like a man to walk around with that sort of power, but you know, not all men walk around with equal power, also what it feels for men to be disempowered if that's the word you want to use, so I think those are shifts um that's a big shift for me attitudes, the shift was already happening when I was at Sussex doing work around men and masculinities, but being here and being around men all the time....I think the other big shift is being opened...and not about my sexuality because everybody knows and I don't shy away from it, and also because I worked for an LGBTI organisation, so that obviously opens up a space...um...and also yea, I think the biggest shift is to know that there are men who are open, and men who are not these hard-core macho dudes you know [...]" (Dawn)

Dawn suggests that in post-apartheid South Africa, as women were becoming more empowered, South African society struggled with this change, and that people were speaking out against women's empowerment. This is important to consider because it suggests that there are hostilities towards women's empowerment. This is particularly interesting coming from Dawn, who earlier referred to her experiences in the transition period to post-apartheid South Africa, where women's rights were gaining more and more successes. Dawn affirms that she felt empowered as a woman and as a lesbian in the post-apartheid era, as queer social spaces in the city were becoming more and more public (she specifically refers to the gay clubs in Greenpoint). She affirms that she felt more empowered as a woman, because more and more opportunities opened up for her that were made possible through affirmative action and other equality measures. However, she also considers her experiences with the post-apartheid rights that were gained for women, as being related to some of the resistances from men that she has witnessed, who have openly spoken out about women's empowerment. This is a particularly interesting point that she makes, as some scholars have gone even further to suggest that women's empowerment has caused men to act out violently to reassert their "masculinity" and "loss of power".

Related to this discussion on the relationship between patriarchy and masculinity is this idea that patriarchy is bad for men. Discourses on masculine norms, and how the construction of normative gender roles is negative for men were also linked to discourses on patriarchy. There were instances where interviewees spoke about how patriarchy is a system that "also oppresses men":

"[...] if you understand patriarchy to be not just of men's oppression of women, but also of notions and understanding of manhood that are bad for men, and that put men, that put pressure on men to behave in a whole range of ways that are bad for women and are bad for men, and that patriarchy isn't just a system that grants men power and privilege over women, but a system that grants a few men significant power over lots of other people, to the detriment probably of everyone including those men, you know, so the understanding, Mbuseyulu, so he talks about toxic masculinities, and I think that's an interesting way to put it..." (Mark)

"[...] one thing changing their behaviour their teachings and learning when to take action against gender based violence the spread of HIV/AIDS because when you go to our communities there are a lot of negativity that is being put on men. And not most of the men are bad, there are some good, just that you want to belong tend to shy

away from expressing ourselves, you can see that what we are doing is bad, but we just want to belong we want to be seen as a man.” (John)

“[...] in my view there are parts of masculinity that are positive that can be supported, but the social construction of manhood, masculinities can often be quite problematic, can lead to risk taking and can be a contributing factor to HIV, violence against women, and to inequality to relationships, and if you want to take it to the most extreme sense into institutions which are patriarchal you know and run by men and just thinking about a traditional patriarchal masculine perspective so I think that we want to part our messages that you can behave differently you don't have to behave this way...” (Jeffrey)

The most striking parts of the interviews that emerged revolved around these specific theorisations on patriarchy and men's “oppression”. Constructions of patriarchal oppression focussed around how patriarchy actually places pressures on all men to behave a certain way – and that these narrow gender roles “also oppress men”. This was a consistency across many interviews, where men were constructed as also being victims of patriarchy, and that addressing patriarchal gender roles is fundamentally important to mitigating problematic behaviours which leads to the spread of HIV/AIDS and gender based violence. This idea that men are also victims of patriarchy as opposed to only a system that oppresses women is contentious in that it treads a problematic interpretation that equates men's oppression with women's oppression (from men). This idea of patriarchy as a system of men's oppression of women “as well as” a system that oppresses all men as well as women negates a conversation of privilege – particularly male privilege. Instead, patriarchy was constructed in the interviews as a system which subjugates everyone (or most people) negatively, and that the alleviation of patriarchal oppression would benefit men (as it would benefit women).

Mark refers to discourses which consider patriarchy as not just oppressive to women, but also oppressive to men. He alleges that patriarchy is in fact a system that oppresses both men and women, and implies that the assumption that it only oppresses women is not entirely true. Men's experiences with patriarchal oppression also create narrow roles for men, which also oppresses men. Jeffrey refers to this discourse from a health care delivery perspective, where patriarchal masculinities lead to risk taking behaviours and violent behaviours (particularly against women) – which are unhealthy for men. Therefore, transforming these narrow gender roles that are problematic for men's health is considered as an important approach to take to make men's behaviour healthier.

This discourse of men's victimisation raises some pertinent contestations with what was earlier raised about men's relations to patriarchy. If men are holding inappropriate amounts of power (over women and other men), then how do discourses of men as victims coincide with the notion that men hold too much power? If men are too powerful, how are they victims? Or vice versa: if men are being victimised by patriarchy, how are they holding too much power that is granted by patriarchy? From the interviews, what appears to be the construction of patriarchal power is that patriarchal power is actually not beneficial to men, in fact, this “power” is constructed as illusory, as it harms men. The risky behaviours that are encouraged through patriarchal gender scripts cause men to not practise safe sex and use drugs, which is bad for men. What is problematic is that this notion constructs patriarchy as a mythical entity that oppresses all people, and that the notion of “male power” is actually false, because men are harmed from patriarchy too. This inherent contradiction is an underlying problematic that persists throughout the interviews. If men have too much

power, how do notions of men's victimisation fit in – in regards to notions of patriarchy as a system of power that privileges men over women?

This discussion on men's oppression would be incomplete without a discussion on race in the South African context. Throughout the interviews, Mark and Jordan particularly referred to their own situations growing up as white South African's, and how their experiences growing up were located in their positionality as white men growing up in South Africa. Jordan refers to "white Afrikaans masculinity" and Mark also speaks at great lengths about his white, patriarchal family upbringing. In this discussion about race and masculinity in South Africa, Jordan spoke a bit about his experiences with constructions of black masculinity. He refers to the male "initiation" processes, which place values and pressures of breadwinning and fatherhood to young boys:

"[...] I think they face poverty for one thing, all of them have been through traditional initiation, so all of them, according to their culture, men. At the time I didn't really understand the significance of that, so a white guy talking to them about teaching manhood to young boys, is completely incongruence actually, we didn't have the language to do all that, if I were to do that now I would think about other ways of doing it, but having said that, it was younger boys and it wasn't about turning them into men, it was just being role models, so they face poverty, and I don't know if one can say they "face" initiation, but they have been through initiation. They were cast in, or they are performing the breadwinner roles...but not all of them but some of them support a family by singing in a choir. So that kind of I guess is a normal male role, or normative male role?" (Jordan)

Jordan infers here that the roles and responsibilities that are attached to masculinities constructed through "initiation" (which Jordan refers specifically in this part of the interview to black, Xhosa men), creates narrow and negative categories for men. Throughout this interview, he criticises norms for constraining acceptable behaviours for men and women, and he continues his critique here, while attaching (black) male initiation practices as being part of a process that creates negative normative roles for black men.

Race is a critical concept within the discourse of which groups of people "contain" the masculinities that Sonke has defined as problematic, and is attempting to transform. It is mainly poor, black, masculinities that are problematized within discourses of "why work with men". Poor, black, heterosexual men who live in townships tend to be the specific group of people that is the attention of the work that Sonke does. The interviewees do indicate that there are other forms of masculinity that are problematic – Jeffrey mentions blue/white collar, boardroom masculinities that are problematic as well – however, it is overwhelmingly poor black men that is the "target" of Sonke's work. Thus discourses on why it is that poor and black masculinities are constructed as problematic and need to be transformed are necessary in this discussion of "who" Sonke is targeting. While this is not to imply that Sonke explicitly excludes white and privileged men from their target audiences, the "target" of transformation is discursively produced through multiple discourses. Discourses on HIV/AIDS, apartheid, and socioeconomic status contribute to the construction of the "poor, black, heterosexual masculinities" that becomes the target of attention in order to mitigate gender based violence and HIV/AIDS.

Conclusions

This chapter reveals how certain discourses of masculinities create a platform for Sonke's approach to work with particular groups of men and in relation to particular versions of hegemonic masculinities. The ways in which the interviewees described how masculinities were experienced provides a foundation to understand how their lived experiences with masculinities inform their politics around working with men and masculinities. On the other hand, investigating how masculinities as politics were constructed indicated the ways in which certain discourses were deployed to justify Sonke's work, as well as the approach that they take in working with men. By beginning with locating how Sonke is situated now in terms of transforming masculinities, we can contend with the political and organisational shifts that are imagined in order to integrate LGBTI issues into Sonke. These "shifts" offer a site of analysis of the possibilities of solidarity by contending with the ways that Sonke imagines partnerships in the process of designing these shifts. How my interviewees theorise on the changes required and the processes needed to "add" LGBTI issues into Sonke as an organisation will inform the ways in which I consider the possibilities of solidarity with LGBTI activists.

What was revealed in this chapter was that there was some discrepancy between the ways that patriarchy was theorised, and the discourses that justified the work and approach that Sonke takes. Patriarchy was constructed as men's inappropriate and oppressive power, which was revealed through the experiences of masculinities in which the participants theorised on normative masculinities. When asked about the reasons why they believe Sonke justifies working with men, and the approach that Sonke takes to work with men, discourses of men's victimisation from patriarchy persisted. These constructions of patriarchy hold interesting contradictions. Patriarchy is being constructed as men holding inappropriate power, yet simultaneously victimised by patriarchy. The discourse of patriarchy as men holding too much power which is oppressive is utilised to understand how patriarchal power is related to discourses of gender based violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS (the notion that patriarchal masculinities encourage men to rape and perform risky behaviours such as not using condoms). However at the same time, discourses of men's victimisation from patriarchy are deployed to justify the approach that Sonke takes – which is essentially that the risky and violent "masculine" behaviours encouraged by patriarchy are ways that men are themselves victimised by patriarchy (because through risky and violent behaviours men hurt each other, and also are more susceptible to contracting HIV/AIDS).

This discursive position opens up a wide range of political possibilities, through which an NGO like Sonke can position itself towards a very broad number of political interests – including LGBTI issues. For example, the discourse of patriarchy as "victimising men" can be "extended" to the ways in which masculine norms constrain the "acceptable" performances and/or presentations of gender, which influences homophobia. The interviewees revealed a large spectrum of discourses which Sonke appears to be deploying to articulate their connection to a variety of different movements and different issues. This notion of "homophobia as affecting heteronormative men" is a critical discourse that speaks to the ways that Sonke imagines solidarity with LGBTI activists. This discursive position informs the ways in which we can consider the possibilities of

solidarity, since in order to theorise around the ways in which solidarities can be imagined with the LGBTI community, contending with the current connections to the LGBTI community would be necessary. Also, in order to consider the possibilities of solidarity, the process of adding LGBTI issues into the organisation is premised upon where Sonke is currently located politically, and how they imagine the process to integrate LGBTI people's social justice agendas.

CHAPTER SIX: Integrating LGBTI

At the heart of this research project is an attempt to interrogate the possibilities of solidarity between activists interested in transforming masculinities. I am using Sonke Gender Justice Network as a case study to investigate these possibilities. Prior to my internship at Sonke, the organisation had already voiced an interest in integrating LGBTI issues into their work. This intention from Sonke provides an opportunity to consider the ways in which solidarity can be imagined – something which entails theoretical discourses on the meaning of political work. This chapter will explore the reasons why Sonke is integrating LGBTI issues into the organisation, and how they plan to move forward in this direction. The theoretical questions that underpin this investigation are: what are the new discourses to which Sonke is moving towards? What shape does this integration take? How does Sonke intend to move forward with this integration?

My internship at Sonke played a pivotal role in the research data as well. I was responsible for evaluating the current status of their workshops and human resource/employment policies around LGBTI issues. These evaluations and recommendations are intended to provide the organisation with a synopsis of their current engagement with LGBTI issues, which would indicate where they need to move towards. The question that is critical here is; where does Sonke intend to move towards regarding LGBTI issues? In the previous chapter, I analysed the current work that Sonke does with transforming masculinities, which constructs “problematic” masculinity as heteronormative, embedded in poverty, notions of “blackness,” and disempowered masculinities. This chapter will present the discourses within the interviews on the meaning of LGBTI and the politics of creating a “transformational” agenda which could include these issues.

According to the interviews, the integration of LGBTI issues is currently happening at two dominant levels. The first space is in the workshop materials, and the second is at the organisational level, specifically in Sonke’s human resources and employment equity policies. A major part of Sonke’s work is through workshops that they conduct in various communities primarily in South Africa. These workshops are overwhelmingly geared towards men in townships – namely poor, black, and heterosexual men in townships. Through various workshop modules, the intent of these workshops is to use various methods of education and exercises to have the men “buy-in” to the idea of not taking risky behaviours that lead to the transmission of HIV/AIDS, and also to have men relinquish inappropriate power that leads to violence against women. Sonke’s flagship workshop, called “One Man Can”, is a prime example of the approach that Sonke takes to work with men. As described in the previous chapter, discourses around men’s disempowerment and the notion that “patriarchy harms men” underlie the approach that Sonke takes in encouraging (certain) men to change their problematic behaviours. The way in which notions of ‘LGBTI issues’ are integrated into these discourses will play a fundamental role in the possibilities of solidarity with the LGBTI movement.

In this analysis of the discursive approaches to integration that Sonke is taking, an attention to the silences in the interviews will also play an important role in the final analysis. For example, lack of responses to questions about how this transition should or will take shape speaks directly to the ways in which solidarities with LGBTI activists can be forged. If an organisation is attempting to integrate particular issues

because – through deductive reasoning, they conclude it is necessary – yet they deny the ability to formulate a tangible process to do such an organisational transformation, then perhaps this inability to address a process negatively affects the possibilities of solidarity. Similarly to silences regarding the “new” constituency that an organisation is attempting to integrate; silences regarding the denial of the ability to construct the “new” constituency also affect solidarity building with the new movement or constituency that an organisation is attempting to ally with. I will investigate these discourses in the following analysis.

Subtheme 1: Why Integrate LGBTI?

The reasons as to why Sonke feels that it is important to integrate LGBTI issues are fundamental to my analysis of solidarities. The interviewees' presentation of discourses of feminism, masculinity, and LGBTI – and how they are constructed to meet and intertwine – reveals how my participants envision gender transformations that include the LGBTI community. If the previous chapter addressed how Sonke currently envisions transforming current models of masculinity, this chapter engages with the changes that Sonke is attempting to move towards in order to integrate LGBTI, and forge solidarities with the LGBTI movement.

The first way that some of the participants justified the relations between the current models of transforming masculinities and queer liberation involve the notion that homophobia is fundamentally linked to the work that Sonke is currently doing around unravelling patriarchal oppression of men. The inability to divorce the oppression of LGBTI people through heteronormativity, with patriarchal oppression, is one of the primary ways in which my interviewees saw the link between LGBTI issues and the work that Sonke is currently doing:

“[...] you can't deal with patriarchy and masculinities if you don't challenge homophobia – If you don't assert LGBTI rights, you know and so you know as a boy growing up if I didn't throw that punch what would I be called? Some version of a faggot, right? And so homophobia functions as a policing mechanism that keeps me from stepping outside of the very narrow confines of what's allowed and so if you don't at a minimum equip men who do this work, mostly straight identified to challenge homophobia, you're going to be severely constrained in what you can achieve” (Mark)

“[...] it's not just about understanding what is lesbian, what is gay, because that is the approach we are taking yes, it is important because people have those questions, but hello, when we're talking about patriarchy and we're talking about privilege and power that's what we should be talking about because that is what Sonke is working on – patriarchy, power, privilege – so we also have to think about what that means in terms of LGBTI, power privilege, homophobia, transphobia, and so I guess the common goal in Sonke is working towards gender equality, working towards women's rights” (Dawn)

“I think it's a neglected area for us, I think the classic exercise we do in our kind of introduction of our theory of social construction of masculinity, [which we call] “Act Like a Man”, in a workshop context [is] that we draw all the normative behaviours of men on the flip chart and ask people as a young boy when you got hurt, your dad said 'act like a man', what do they mean by that [...] there's this binary of thinking male and female, and like, there are more ways to be male than it's kind of hard to find words to describe the complexity of it, but I'm quite invigorated or relieved to think about the various dimensions or levels of biological sex, your physical sex, gender, sexual orientation and how those are not aligned in normative ways, like we think, so I think there's real scope to stretch its thinking to both the biological level which turns out to be not as binary as one thinks, intersex people are more prevalent than we think, and so called male female physically sexual is just a level of oestrogen and testosterone and how it physically manifests, but it's the same basic biology so we haven't really thought about that you know, and I think there is scope for us to stretch our thinking around that” (Jordan)

From most of the interviews, there was definitely a clear correlation between patriarchy and homophobia. This idea that patriarchy operates through the enforcement of the gender binary, which determines gender norms, was a consistent theme that emerged from the interviews. Patriarchal gender norms dictate the particular ways in which men and women are supposed to behave. The gender binary is reinforced by compulsory heterosexuality, which coercively enforces heteronormativity. Heteronormativity reinforces patriarchy by reinforcing the gender binary – the notion that there are only “supposed” to be two genders who are “supposed” to form sexual relations. The policing of any deviations from these norms are heavily policed by patriarchy, as the survival of patriarchy is dependent on these norms, which complement

each other. It is in this paradigm that homophobia is understood as a policing mechanism, which operates to perpetuate the functionality of patriarchy.

“Narrow gender roles enforced by patriarchy” is a common notion that runs through much of Sonke’s workshops, and was also a consistent theme that emerged from the interviews. This is linked to the idea that patriarchy produces gender scripts that are oppressive to women, but also to men. These gender scripts are correlated to homophobia, in that deviations from any norm are heavily policed and chastised through normative socialisation. For example, as Mark points out, homophobic terms such as “faggot” are targeted towards men who step outside of the masculine norm. The logic here is that to unravel patriarchy fundamentally involves deconstructing these gender scripts which operate to reinforce patriarchy. Diversifying what is commonly considered “normal” would alleviate the pressure on men to behave a particular way, or treat people who do not fit in the ascribed norms negatively.

Again, what is recognisable here is this idea that men are oppressed by patriarchy. Following Mark’s example is the notion that when men step outside of particular gender norms, they face homophobia. This is important to point out in that the target constituency that continues to emerge is heteronormative identified men. Changing the homophobic attitudes of “these” heteronormative and homophobic men is revealed as the goal of this discussion on challenging homophobia. This can be further reduced to the idea that homophobia needs to be eliminated because it reinforces patriarchy, which is bad for everyone. In other words, the way that solidarity that is being attempted to be forged with the LGBTI movement, is around the idea that homophobia is something that concerns the current constituency (of poor, black, heteronormative men), because they too are policed by gender and sexuality norms – thus we need to also work to eliminate homophobia. This is not the only discursive reason for the need for solidarity with the LGBTI movement that emerged from the interview process, but it was definitely one of the most frequently raised.

Another dimension to the possibilities of solidarity with the LGBTI movement comes from some participants’ comments on “new” models of masculinity within the current workshop materials, particularly the One Man Can workshop modules. Jordan, for example, recognises that the current workshop models at Sonke are overwhelmingly heteronormative, and there is a need to expand the workshops in order to diversify the ways in which gender is spoken about:

“I think Sonke needs to challenge its own prejudices or norms or constructions a bit more, it’s funny we’ve reconstructed to heteronormative males out there, and patriarchal males, we’ve reconstructed masculinity, but we might have reinforced other lenses that we are unaware of [...]” (Jordan)

Jordan affirms that the current model of working with men revolves around heterosexual-identified men and their relations to women and other men, and that this model is restrictive because it currently excludes queer bodies and sexualities. Jordan warns that without integrating ideas about LGBTI, or diversifying the models of gender within the current workshop modules, the workshops could in fact be replicating the oppositional gender binary, which in turn reinforces homophobia and patriarchy. He points out that in the workshop materials, if Sonke does not disrupt the binary, the workshops will only “reproduce” a “new man”, which doesn’t necessarily challenge heteronormativity. In regards to the restrictions in the current

model, Jordan and other participants also voiced concerns specifically about the binary model of gender that continues to be replicated in the current workshop modules:

“So we present to the world a different type of masculinity, and we’re so use to that that we might be stuck in that, and that’s become another normative...so the principle of remaining open and questioning, and observing something that may not align with your perception, but that’s something that you’re willing to engage with, we might be stuck in what we are thinking” (Jordan)

“[...] we haven’t really thought of that, so for me it’s a relief – I sat in a sexuality course where we did gender values verification [...] for me it was like oh wow I wasn’t aware how stuck my thinking was until I have a wider postmodern complex thinking about sexuality and sexual orientation” (Jordan)

“[...]I don’t think we have a very clear road map yet, it’s like when we’re thinking about gender equality how do we expand that through LGBTI, and maybe not just LGBTI, but queer politics...and how...because right now, gender is about men and women and it’s about heterosexual men and women, so how do we expand that and it’s about privilege power patriarchy in relation to, and make those dots and those connections, yea I think that’s the direction we need to take” (Dawn)

Dawn echoes what Jordan refers to earlier about the current model of workshops at Sonke being heteronormative. She raises the point that the organisation is confused about its relationship with LGBTI issues, as currently, Sonke’s workshops are heteronormative. Without diversifying the “new man” to include discourses of sexuality and gender diversity, Jordan suggests that this “new man” reproduces gender and sexuality norms, which could be counterproductive to the goals of eliminating gender based violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Without subverting heteronormativity, homophobia can continue to operate to police deviations from gender and sexuality norms, which reinforces patriarchal power.

Linked to this underlying motivation to work with LGBTI issues because “it’s related to our work”, is around human rights discourses – in other words, “we should work with LGBTI issues because it’s the right thing to do”:

“For me it’s like, my brother, that, we include those issues around that in the organisation, we work with men and boys, and if we say by saying that we are excluding the LGBTI community, it means that you are not working with everyone in the community, we are still stigmatising those people as like the rest of the community, so if we are working on a human rights framework as an organisation it means having doors for everyone, so we need to work with that community, with the LGBTI community and find ways within their organisation to talk about those issues to challenge each other, and for the same time it would be great for us, to really work with that community so that we can support them, there’s a lot of hate crimes that are happening to lesbians in our communities, what is it about that as an organisation that we can do? There’s a lot of stigma and I would say, even at a small scale, hate crimes are being done to gay, what does this mean to us as an organisation we say we are working with men and boys, what do we need to challenge when working with those men and boys secondly, do we talk about sexual orientation, so I think we really need to find ways and have our feet firm instead of trying to work to an end of an action” (John)

“[In South Africa] I think a lot of people justifiably feel worried about our direction we are going in terms of commitments to human rights. We saw it yesterday at CONTRALESA the council of traditional leaders in South Africa saying that they wanted to do work to ensure that the bill of rights excluded LGBTI rights, and CONTRALESA has power, so we’re seeing a steady attack on the constitution on human rights orgs and so I think as Sonke we say, you can’t assert human rights in isolation from other human rights, if we’re going to do work on gender equality on the rights to health services that has to be done in with a clear understanding that you have to relay a human rights culture and the LGBTI rights are absolutely central to that on “canary in the mines rights”, if LGBTI rights are under attack a whole lot of other rights are going to be under attack [...]” (Mark)

“[...] on the issues of LGBTI even if they can come along all of them, I don’t have any problem, I don’t see any problem, that will also give us some experiences that we don’t know that we might need to know that we might need to understand so that we can do this education in the community because our mission is to be able to change communities a positive community. Like other communities like Hout bay, like in Hout bay we don’t really express the same workshops that we do in the townships...yea like we experience the ignorance of people like of taxi drivers, people in shebeens, they say oh that’s a gay you know and we need to educate them so that they understand the LGBTI issues” (Danny)

Throughout all the interviews there was a sense that integrating LGBTI issues into Sonke's approach to transforming masculinities was "right" as a direction that Sonke should be heading towards. However, when pressed about why this direction is appropriate, and how this direction should manifest, there were many silences. Like John and Danny, many of the participants reverted to the use of very broad and general human rights discourses to explain the importance of LGBTI rights. This general idea that everyone should be treated equally, and that discrimination and stigma is bad was a very common response that I received for questions asked about why LGBTI issues should be included in the work that Sonke is doing. These responses however, indicate some of the gaping silences that emerged from the interviews as well. In the above quotations, John states that LGBTI rights should be upheld because of the prevalence of hate crimes, while Mark states that if LGBTI rights are not upheld then this would be a chain reaction that would threaten other rights, and Danny suggests that LGBTI rights should be a part of the goal to create "positive communities". These are some of the vast discursive inconsistencies between all of the participants. This discursive instability is important to note because it reveals the ways that Sonke is currently positioned to LGBTI discourses.

Some of the interviewees suggested that if Sonke is mandated to uphold and fight for human rights, the issue of gender based violence in the LGBTI community cannot be excluded from the work that Sonke is doing – this was something that was consistent in the interviews. In other words, Sonke "should" be working with the LGBTI movement because queer people face human rights violations due to their sexuality or gender. Fighting for the human rights of LGBTI people therefore is constructed as being part and parcel of the work that Sonke does:

"I guess the high levels of gender based violence I think towards gay men that heteronormative men might not really, but you know it's not to say that heterosexual men don't face violence because we know they do but it's a different kind of violence, but I like think towards trans men, it's violence, it's verbal abuse...I think what's there's a deep fear a deep fear between heteronormative men towards gay men and even more so trans men, deep fear, and sometimes you can see it in the organisation" (Dawn)

Dawn contends that heteronormative men are fearful of gay men, which she implies could lead to homophobia/homophobic violence. It could also be assumed that Dawn is referring to the heteronormative constituency that Sonke targets in their work. So if the heteronormative constituency that Sonke targets are the "perpetrators" of homophobic violence, these heteronormative constituencies need to be considered in terms of the elimination of homophobic and gender based violence. She also distinguishes between homophobic (male) violence and violence between heteronormative men, and infers that homophobic violence requires particular attention.

Another aspect of homophobia that emerged from the interviews emerged through discourses of fatherhood. The oppression and exclusion faced by homosexuals (specifically homosexual men) was something that Jordan thought was an issue that is important for Sonke to consider in terms of integrating LGBTI issues. Gay men may want to adopt a child, but there is a heavy stigma around queer people raising children, thus the integration of LGBTI issues at Sonke should include attention to diversifying the family unit:

"Yea, big one is parenting, so when we're talking about men specifically, a male couple, or a single gay dad, might want to adopt or foster a child, and our message about fathering is that we live in extended families, and it's a thing now in South Africa there's no such thing as the nuclear family. It's the norm is extended families, so there's

always another partner or another single mom or single dad, or an uncle or granny or there's children grow up in a network of parents, and we the men care campaign, the fatherhood campaign it's advocating for men to be more involved in caring roles. Um, there's a distinction that my colleague Mbuyiselo uses and that's the biological father and the social father, and I don't know if it's that useful but the point is you don't really have to have been the biological father to be a father to a child, so we're presenting a gender equitable, and human rights aligned and social justice aligned image of fathering so not patriarchal, in a feminist...well I don't know....patriarchy is just bad...so that's the men care campaign in all of its messages" (Jordan)

Jordan makes an interesting correlation here; he contends that the oppression against non-nuclear families is contradictory because most families in South Africa are non-nuclear – in that they involve extended families – therefore, there is no reason why queer people shouldn't be able to raise children. Jordan refers to the power of socialisation and social constructions of the family, which reinforce the norm of the nuclear family by excluding and marginalising the possibilities of queer family units. He draws out this site of solidarity through alleging that the discrimination against LGBTI people who want to adopt children (because they are not "normal/nuclear") is contradictory because most families in South Africa are in fact "queer" (or "not nuclear"). Sonke's work with fathers and families are emphasised here as a related issue that pertains to the LGBTI community, thus offering a potential site of solidarity through issues of queer families.

However, in the earlier chapter on masculinities, Jeffrey constructs the importance of fatherhood as a man figure (as opposed to a woman) – which is contradictory to Jordan's claim that LGBTI issues are relevant to Sonke's discourses on fatherhood. Jeffrey earlier implied that a father figure that is a man is important, which rearticulates heteronormativity, whereas Jordan suggests that the heteronormative nuclear family needs to be subverted. This is another indication of the discursively incoherent positionality that Sonke currently has in regards to LGBTI.

One of the more coherent discourses that emerged in regards to Sonke's position to LGBTI issues was regarding Sonke's prison programme. Through discourses of HIV/AIDS, and Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) in prisons, several participants contend there is a pertinent connection with the LGBTI movement:

"In prisons you cannot run away from it. There are gay men in prison, and that's where sometimes you find difficulties because the guy who call them these bad names, and you need to protect those people because they are all participants. This workshop to teach one another...so but within our communities, I think we haven't made a room for gays or gay men to come within our workshop, I don't know, probably the way we mobilize people to the workshop I think it's something that we need to change within our organisation, to say, I don't know sort of have a workshop work with the LGBTI community organisations, to sort of, can you is there are there any gay men that you know that are staying within these areas because we are having a workshop so that some of those attitudes they can come out and they can be iron out, they can be challenged" (John)

"[...] when you look at HIV rates in prison, we know that the reasons are because men are having sex with men, they may not identify as gay but they are having sex with men, and we also know that in South Africa and in the region that married men with women, who are "heterosexual" are also having sex with men outside the home, so often passing the infection that they already have onto men from their relationships etcetera, or the other way passing it onto women, so we know that that is also a driver of the epidemic, so for those reasons and for principled reasons around our celebrations of diversity that we have a stronger stance on this" (Jeffrey)

There are several points that are raised about this alleged connection between working with men in prisons to alleviate gender based violence and HIV/AIDS, and the LGBTI movement. As Jeffrey points out, some MSM may not actually identify as "gay", and may only have sex with men while they are in prison. He deploys sexual health discourses to contend that men who do not use condoms while having sex with men in prisons are at a high risk of contracting HIV, which in turn may bring the virus back into their communities when they are released from prison. The participants use the issue of MSM in prisons to contend that "LGBTI" issues

cannot be ignored in the prison project, and argue therefore, LGBTI issues pertain to the work that Sonke does (in prisons).

Another reason “why” my interviewees believed it was necessary to integrate LGBTI into Sonke’s work is from the apparent demand for LGBTI workshops from donors and from constituents:

“[...] we had a seminar at the end of January with the Swedish government who wanted us to organise it and talk about LGBTI issues [...]

“[...] for instance the Swedish government would then come to us and say listen, would you like to organise this thing [...]” (Dawn)

“[...] so we had a workshop in Joburg in the last year it was with Engender Health that was really focused on heteronormativity, homophobia and LGBTI and we invited the men who had gone through our workshop, because we had a very active Men As Partners network that sadly we weren’t able to really build, and we invited people who had been through workshop processes and who were quite active so it wasn’t like we were reaching new people and because of the topic and the small space, we told people we can only handle 30 people, we can’t handle any more people, 60 people showed up on day 1 and we said you can’t all come back tomorrow, all of them came back and so I think that I am often surprised to see in the same way that I see men are desperate to talk about patriarchy and masculinity and patriarchy, those men were desperate to try and understand heteronormativity, patriarchy, homophobia, better, whether that was because they felt they needed to have that understanding and experience being an activist, whether it was just to understand themselves, I don’t know, but it was really striking we’ve never kind of acted on that lesson, as the lesson was people want this.” (Mark)

Mark contends that he feels there is a demand for work around LGBTI issues that isn’t being met. Other participants also indicated that there have been donor requests to do more work around LGBTI issues as well, particularly the Swedish government, who has an active interest in pursuing LGBTI issues in the region. This idea that there is ample opportunity and demand for Sonke to do work around LGBTI issues is contentious, as other LGBTI organisations have been voiced concerns about Sonke participating in the LGBTI “sector”.

These tensions are important to discuss, as they reveal parts of the context to which Sonke’s integration of LGBTI issues pertains to. Several interviewees indicated their own encounters with resistances from women and LGBTI organisations who have confronted Sonke about their participation in various political spaces:

“Yea the obvious set of alliances that we’ve really had to pay attention to and deliberate about is with women’s rights organisations and you know it’s still contested terrain, so I think there are fewer and fewer people in South Africa and globally who are automatically quite sceptical and almost hostile to the idea of men being involved with gender equality work, but it’s still there, and understandably, and the same way that people of colour are sceptical of white people who are involved with anti-racist work, it’s kind of inevitable” (Mark)

Mark suggests that the hostilities from various women’s rights organisations are due to the fact that Sonke is a “men’s organisation”. He compares some of the resistances against Sonke from women’s rights organisations to his engagements with people of colour who are sceptical about white people who are involved with anti-racist work, assuming that the hostilities are based upon the mere fact that Sonke is a men’s organisation. This response to the resistances from various women’s organisations constructs these hostilities within particular radical feminist discourses, which deny or resist the participation of men within feminist work. However, it could be said that the construction of certain women’s organisations or activists as being hostile based upon the mere fact that Sonke is a men’s organisation seeking to do gender equality work forecloses the discussion of how Sonke itself is theorising “working with men”. It reduces the perceived resistance from women’s organisations to the issue of “men doing gender equality work”, while leaving little to no space to contend with the obstacles to solidarity.

The hostilities from women's organisations that were described in the interviews echoed similar resistances from LGBTI organisations:

"There's a lot of challenges...I think that first there's building support with other LGBTI organisations. Number one, it's not going to be easy I know this because ...and you know I guess if I think about traditional LGBTI or women's organisations, so I guess I understand, yea, there might be some resistance, so you know because there is this, you know there is obviously this trust issue like hello you are this men's organisation speaking for us so obviously there is things around that, who gets to speak for who so why this sudden this attention from Sonke...and people see it as a men's organisation so I don't think that there is this real understanding of what Sonke is about when it comes to gender equality issues, and so yea and so....first thing is Sonke doesn't have the right to speak about LGBTI issues – I'm not saying this is true for me I'm saying it's a challenge, also working with women's rights organisations, you have all these resources so there's a protection of ...You know you're coming to take away resources from us, that's a big thing [...]" (Dawn)

Dawn raises a few points here that are necessary to this discussion on Sonke's interest in integrating LGBTI issues, and in turn forming solidarities with the LGBTI movement. Similarly to the issues raised earlier with the women's movement, Dawn constructs the hostilities towards the LGBTI movement as based on the fact that Sonke is a men's organisation. This reduction of the hostility towards Sonke from LGBTI organisations assumes that main reason these organisations are hostile to Sonke is because Sonke is being constructed as an outsider (i.e. a heteronormative men's organisation). It reduces the tension (between Sonke and LGBTI organisations) to constructions of Sonke as an outsider, which allegedly legitimises hostilities against Sonke. In other words, Sonke is being accused of colonising political spaces:

"Yes. Of course the LGBTI organisations can view Sonke as um, you know as probably intruding into some of those spaces but it's not about taking over, but it's about complementing each other but it's also about making sure that all our advocates efforts are well informed from you know with their ideas from different organisations from different activists and so forth and at Sonke we've that mandate to at least take work with LGBTI communities, seriously, as a human rights issue" (Joey)

Joey discusses this idea that Sonke is being accused of taking over political spaces that were already occupied by other NGO's or activists. He asserts that Sonke is not in fact trying to "take over", and that Sonke's work should happen in alliance to the common goals between women's organisations, Sonke, and the LGBTI movement. What is also being contended here is that Sonke has a legitimate claim to these political spaces because the work that Sonke does complement the work that LGBTI organisations are currently doing. Sonke is being constructed here again as part and parcel of a "broader movement" of which the unravelling of patriarchy is beneficial to men, women, and LGBTI people. Joey implies that there should be solidarity between Sonke and these other organisations and activists who share common goals.

While the above analysis contends with the discourses that emerged as to "why" Sonke wants to integrate LGBTI, an analysis of the silences also reveals more nuances that pertain to the question "why" integrate LGBTI. The following quotation demonstrates some of the silences regarding the construction of the target constituencies of which solidarities are being forged. While there is a clear indication that there is opportunity for Sonke to expand its work to include LGBTI based upon its human rights mandate, there are many silences in terms of how this expansion should take place:

"[...] Sonke is just still very much at the beginning stages so there's a lot around sensitisation and awareness around LGBTI issues within the organisation, I don't think that we've really targeted people beliefs directly but I think there's a lot of conversation, so a lot around sensitisation, what do we mean how do you feel about...LGBTI, we don't ask people that directly but you know and then the other most important thing that is spoken about a lot is how do we support the human rights of LGBTI that's always a blanket talk you know that supporting LGBTI human rights and stuff...um, and so, I think that there's a move to speak about this issue through the

workshops in community, but right now there isn't within the organisation, a sense of knowing how to do that, like for how for instance fieldwork, it's like how do I actually speak about these issues, it's difficult your dealing with rejection and discrimination, but I think there are individuals within this organisation which for them, listen, we'll talk about it and it's fine, but it think he majority of people struggle with that, but also I mean I know Dean was talking about doing a big campaign (this is just an idea), with Health 4 men, doing a big campaign with them about heterosexual men, speaking out against homophobia, that was just an idea, I hope it will materialise." (Dawn)

The notion of "sensitisation" which is referred to by Dawn, is indicative of notions of "political correctness". The implication is that people need to be educated and sensitised around LGBTI, and that ignorance to queer discourses contributes to the problem. However, there is no indication on what exactly the problem is, who the problem is, and how to address the issues that are being raised.

The above response was to the question of what the integration look like should, and Dawn directly answers that she does not know what it should look like. In contrast the reasons constructed for "why" (Sonke should integrate LGBTI issues) are clear: as mentioned in the previous section, it's something that Sonke feels it "should" do, and also since LGBTI rights are attached to broader human rights discourses – of which Sonke is mandated to work within – LGBTI issues should be a part of the work that Sonke does. However, according to my interviewees, the process to which this will happen is largely unknown:

"Um, well I think I've spoken about the first one the conceptual stretching, so getting our own staff to be more aware of that, maybe also being also be useful to get the gay people or the trans people on staff to be more explicit about their own sexuality...but straight people aren't that explicit about their sexuality...but creating spaces to engage with sexual orientation. I think, so orientation, so sexuality, in terms of I mean it includes a lot more than just sexual orientation, but just to create spaces to talk more about it." (Jordan)

"The first step I think in the process is to have a discussion or two about the what does this mean for Sonke, and I think it would be great if it triggered some thoughts, and I think it's going to be something you do before you leave, something thoughts on like here is what we can talk about, here are some words that I'm quite familiar with, you might not be familiar with, here are some ideas or debates, so let's talk about this application it has for Sonke and our work [...]" (Jordan)

"I don't think we have a clear road map yet, it's like when we're thinking about gender equality how do we expand that through LGBTI, and maybe not just LGBTI, but queer politics...and how...because right now, gender is about men and women and it's about heterosexual men and women, so how do we expand that and it's about privilege power patriarchy in relation to, and make those dots and those connections, yea I think that's the direction we need to take" (Dawn)

The major silence here is around how this integration should happen. The "why" question is (loosely) constructed, and the desire to pursue the integration is articulated, but there no idea of how to actually make this work manifest. Notions of "sensitisation", human rights, political correctness, and mentioning previous LGBTI project partners operates to reason why Sonke should integrate LGBTI issues. However, there is not much of an idea as to how this should take shape. Relating this again back to the possibilities of solidarity, the lack of understanding or considering how this solidarity should take shape suggests that this might create obstacles for alliance building. Though as an organisation, Sonke may believe they have legitimacy in doing this work, without considering the process of which to build alliances with LGBTI activists, there may be conflictions on the road to solidarity. Without constructing the purpose and process of the integration, the ways in which LGBTI partners are to "fit in" to the "new" Sonke would be difficult to determine. For example, would the potential LGBTI partners have an authentic solidarity with Sonke to do this work, or would the alliance be based loosely upon an assumed political alliance based upon a broad discourse of human rights?

While some of the reasons as to “why” integrate LGBTI was due to Sonke’s human rights mandate which could hypothetically be extended to add the issue gender based violence against LGBTI people, there was very little acknowledgement of the fact that a human rights framework does not necessarily subvert heteronormativity. Further, aside from Jordan and Dawn’s comments mentioned earlier, there was also very little acknowledgement of the fact that the current workshop models reproduce and reinforce heteronormativity. By deploying workshop models that perpetuate the gender binary and heteronormativity, the programming actually articulates heteronormative scripts, which is counterproductive to the discourse of gender equity being propagated by Sonke.

University of Cape Town

Subtheme 2: Theorising the Process of Integrating LGBTI

Part of the discussion on integrating LGBTI contended with how the participants viewed the process of integrating LGBTI issues into the organisation. This theorising on the process to integrate issues pertaining to queer masculinities is central to an analysis of the possibilities of solidarity with LGBTI activists. Theorising change is central to this thesis, as it underpins the methodology of which I seek to contend with discourses of solidarity. Thus, an analysis on the ways in which this solidarity can or cannot be forged can unfold through considering the ways in which Sonke chooses to pursue the integration of LGBTI issues into their organisation.

The previous subtheme considered the reasons *why* Sonke is integrating LGBTI issues – the justifications for such integration and the ways in which Sonke envisions solidarity with the LGBTI movement. This next section will contend with the theorising of process, which is critical to an analysis of the solidarities that will or will not be forged. As the previous subtheme on masculinities considered the discourses of masculinities that Sonke is situated in, this next section will analyse what my participants view as necessary changes to the organisation in order to build cohesion and solidarity with the LGBTI movement. As an organisation that predominately works to transform a specific constituency – i.e. poor, black, heterosexual men that live in townships – the following section will grapple with the changes that the interviewees present as needed in order to go forward with the integration of LGBTI issues, and eventually build an authentic solidarity with LGBTI activists.

As mentioned in the first theme, Sonke constructs itself as an organisation that works in solidarity with the women's movement. As an organisation that seeks to end violence against women through transforming problematic masculinities that have been identified as contributing to gender based violence, Sonke positions its work as part and parcel of the women's movement. The solidarity that Sonke now seeks with LGBTI activists would again shift Sonke's positionality as an organisation that currently posits itself with the women's movement. In this following section I analyse how shifts are imagined by Sonke in order to integrate LGBTI issues into the organisation, which will inform the ways that solidarities can be imagined with LGBTI activists.

One of the methods of analysis that I will employ here again is a reading of "silences" and "gaps" in the responses to questions of process and integration. The reason I will be utilising this method is because there was an overwhelming lack of responses to the questions on how the participants saw this integration. When pressed about which "LGBTI" sexualities and genders should be considered in the workshops, most participants did not have an answer. These gaps in responses to this critical question on who the new constituency, or "new man", would look like (i.e. what would change about the target constituency after integrating LGBTI issues), is indicative of the possibilities to solidarity – without deciding who is the target of the new direction and new work that Sonke is attempting to move towards, an alliance with the LGBTI community would be difficult because common goals would be difficult to determine.

The generalisation of "LGBTI" is an important aspect to consider when analysing the possibilities to solidarity between Sonke and the LGBTI movement, as it infers the ways in which the "targets" of solidarity are being constructed, or not constructed (or even considered) at all. The contention that I raise here is that

without knowing the constituency you are interested in partnering with, solidarities with that constituency would be difficult to forge. The interviews revealed that Sonke is unclear about who the target constituency of the “LGBTI integration” would be, which suggests obstacles to the possibilities of solidarity.

Further, the way that the term “LGBTI” was deployed and how “LGBTI” was *spoken about* also raises some questions about solidarity. The ways that “LGBTI” was constructed can also be considered through an analysis of the vocabulary used to describe integrating “LGBTI”. Verbs such as “deal with” or “expand” or “taking on” indicate some of the discourses that inform Sonke’s integration of LGBTI issues into the organisation:

“[...] how do we **expand that through LGBTI**, and maybe not just LGBTI, but queer politics...and how...because right now, gender is about men and women and it’s about heterosexual men and women, so how do we expand that and it’s about privilege power patriarchy in relation to, and make those dots and those connections, yea I think that’s the direction we need to take” (Dawn)

“[...] Sonke is saying that listen we we’re not an LGBTI organisation, because you know those lines are also fine and so what are we doing what are we **taking on**, we’re working with men around what, we’re working around men on homophobia we’re working with men to find the links between privilege power and homophobia um, you know in our community work if there is violence against LGBTI people in South Africa or even across Africa what kinds of statements are we going to put it, are we going to put out any statements [...] (Dawn)

“For example in terms of accessing services it’s really tough for the LGBTI community because of so many reasons one it’s about we have less trained health medical staff to attend to the needs of LGBTI communities of course with policies we have proper documents on the table but unpacking some of those clauses is difficult for the medical staff...here we are referring to those at cross level so to think about how we should actually train them to understand that they should come up with a strategy to **deal with** LGBTI communities different then somebody who is not MSM, somebody who is just heterosexual, how best do we package those services differently, our needs are completely different, the needs of somebody who is MSM and the needs of someone who is heterosexual is completely different [...]” (Joey)

[...]from what I have observed from my colleagues is that they are more interested in **taking this work forward**, and what we need to do is probably to work on what we’ve manage to work with and also to present the key findings what we’ve managed to learn out of this very short assignment, then if we present the findings the benefits of this work then we should be able to take seriously this because what we also doing at the regional level is to do policy analysis issues on HIV AIDS, GBV parenting, child rights and also issues around LGBTI which is of course in Africa a problem to really come up with policies and so forth we can have policies but it becomes a problem when it comes to recommendation (Joey)

There are a few things to consider in regards to contending with the verbs used. First, the way that I am reading the analysis of the verbs is through the relationship between the words I was using to describe the addition of the LGBTI work to Sonke. I began the conversations using the word “integrate” and “include”, which suggests a different relation to LGBTI than “add” or “take on” or “deal with”. My deployment of the word “integrate” indicates the pursuit of *inclusion*, which posits LGBTI on a different platform than “add” or “take on” or “deal with”. The interviewees did sometimes use the word “integrate” and “include” in the interview process, however, other verbiage was used to describe the process of integrating LGBTI, which offers a useful analysis of the possibilities of solidarity.

There is first a construction of “The Other” from the use of the words “deal with” or “take on”. The work at Sonke is the centre, the crux, the norm, while the “other”, LGBTI work, is something to be “dealt with”. It is another discourse to be “taken on” to the focus of Sonke’s “original” discourse. “Deal with” reinforces othering through constructing LGBTI work as secondary to the “original” discourse. LGBTI is being constructed as “the other” through these verbs, which suggest that the LGBTI discourses are “additive” to the central, prioritised discourse of working with masculinities that Sonke is currently situated. The use of these verbs indicates the

discursive relations between Sonke's current discourse of working with masculinities and the work that they are pursuing with LGBTI.

Another way that "LGBTI" was described was in the way that "LGBTI" tended to be generalised together as a "bloc". Although I continually pressed the interviewees on who this constituency looked like – or who consisted of "LGBTI", I usually received two answers. Some participants said that Sonke should broaden the approach to include L, G, B, T, and I, while others stated that they did not know:

"I think all of them...of course transgender we, because Sonke is a learning organisation, and um, I believe that it's always good to do the broad spectrum of all the issues because what we see are in our communities is clearly affected by because we just need to address the issues at community level, I don't know how to put it across but we continue to come across issues of LGBTI, and we still stick to the broad terms in terms of LGBTI of course we have different categories that constitutes the LGBTI...Q or something like that, but I think I can see that we can get to that level about how we can get to that level about how can we address issues that affect gay men, lesbians, transgender, how can we start to unpack what we really understand as transgender, and we had to get there, but for the meantime to generate discussion, to generate more interest, so that we can see the benefits about exploring more on this subject, I think we need to gather more support and evidence so that when we start to do this work, with specific resources, resource persons, then we know that we are really looking forward to clear plans, clear targets and issues, but for the meantime I think that we are good to start to set the pace on the right position and the right people, we're interested but we just need to talk about LGBTIQ issues in the broader sense but when it comes to programming then we have to really sit down and do a proper plan with the proper resource persons, the proper methodologies and so forth and so forth." (Joey)

There are particularly interesting ways in which the silences emerged in this response to the clarification question of which constituencies Sonke wants to work with. The response began with the need to include L, G, B, T, and I in order to avoid exclusion, however, there was very little engagement with the differences (or similarities) between lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and intersex people. Joey contends that these issues are being raised in community, and Sonke sees the need to acknowledge and integrate these related discourses into Sonke's work; however, there is no method of integration or process towards solidarity that is offered. In fact, there is an indication that the process requires a multitude of things that *have not* been considered. Joey says that "we are really *looking forward to* clear plans, clear targets and issues" – but these plans, targets, and issues are not at all defined. In fact he goes as far as saying the proper methodologies are non-existent at this point in time.

This single brushstroke generalisation of "LGBTI" was a consistency that emerged from many of the interviews, that suggests some inferences to the possibilities of solidarity. Firstly there appear to be some confusions in conglomerating "LGBTI" together. The ways that "LGBTI" was deployed assumes that there are generalizable issues that pertain to "L, G, B, T, and I" – and that these issues are what Sonke wants to integrate into the organisation. This generalisation seems problematic, as it ignores the political differences between these constituencies. As an organisation that works primarily with heterosexual men, the changes that would need to happen in order to integrate LGBTI issues requires the attention to the political differences between L, and G, and B, and T, and I. Also, as pointed out, as an organisation that works particularly with straight, poor, black men, the changes that would be required in order to integrate L, and G, and B, and T, and I would probably need to be considered in order to effectively integrate these constituencies into the work that Sonke does. For example, the methodology that Sonke currently uses to work with straight men to mitigate men's violence against women for example includes challenging men's power because that power is bad for women, and also bad for men. To integrate LGBTI, a deeper engagement with sexuality, particularly through religious

prejudice against queer sexualities for example, and discourses on transgender, and the sex/gender binary would need to be considered. This integration of “LGBTI” as a whole, would completely alter the methods used in workshops for the particular constituencies that Sonke works with. However these changes that I refer to did not come out of the interviews – in fact there was an outright denial of the consideration for these changes.

The deployment of the term “LGBTI” was, as mentioned earlier, also used to describe a human rights discourse that Sonke’s work was constructed as a part of. “LGBTI as Human Rights Discourse” and as a “bloc” informs the ways that solidarities with LGBTI activists are formed, given that from these constructions, a very limited, generalised engagement with LGBTI issues could happen. As mentioned above, the conglomeration of “LGBTI” ignores the political histories of those identities in the South African context, which creates a very narrow starting point on which to build solidarities. Similarly, the deployment of the term “LGBTI as a Human Rights Discourse” constrains the possibilities of solidarity. Human rights discourses do not necessarily require the transformation of hegemonic masculinities. Political correctness and “tolerance” towards queer masculinities would suffice under certain human rights discourses, while ignoring the perpetuation the oppressive systems of power such as heteronormativity and patriarchy.

In contrast to the others, Mark did indicate which constituencies should be integrated into the work that Sonke does. He particular points out lesbians, gay men, and transgender people:

“So I guess I think for me I see more the L and the G, and the T in terms of how it pushes us to think about how we think about gender as a construct, and so , so how do we think about gay rights in the context of Sonke’s work, and how the role of gay men fit into the organisation and how we partner with organisations who work with MSM or men who self-identify as gay – I think the simple answer is not enough, and so how would it change the organisational culture at Sonke if we had a standalone gay rights initiative or LGBTI rights initiative so have more staff in the organisation who are out, and at the moment I think the only people who are out are at our Cape Town office, so what does that mean for how Joburg and Bushbuckridge organisations and our office internalise LGBTI rights, I do think that when you work in close partnership with LGBTI rights activists they become part of the lens through which you look at the work, you internalise their concerns” (Mark)

“But I think ideally the notion that people have in their heads when they recruit people are straight identified men, so they would not go to places to recruit people because they knew this was a space where gay men hang out I don’t know if they are excluding them, but they wouldn’t in turn say that we need gay men in the group, to help broaden the discussion about homophobia heterosexuality etc. but I think what’s interesting is that when you bring men together to talk about masculinities and male socialisation, men who are who don’t conform to rigid ideas about gender end up in those spaces whether they identify as gay or MSM, whether they are you know Q part of the questioning LGBTIQ I feel like the acronym gets longer and longer” (Mark)

“[...] I think I’ve spoken about the first one the conceptual stretching, so getting our own staff to be more aware of that, maybe also being also be useful to get the gay people or the trans people on staff to be more explicit about their own sexuality...but straight people aren’t that explicit about their sexuality...hahaha, but creating spaces to engage with sexual orientation. I think , so orientation, so sexuality, in terms of I mean it includes a lot more than just sexual orientation, but just to create spaces to talk more about it [...]” (Jordan)

“Well I think firstly they should just be there you know that, in the manuals, we should just say look, it’s right there and then deal with it from there, deal with people’s attitudes, deal with whether it is, like we were talking about doing a workshop, how do we facilitate this in community? [...] the first step I think is the stuff that you are doing, like with the workshop materials and policy manuals, you know, that there is something in the policy that says this is our statement, this is as Sonke our position (which we don’t have yet), and this is our policy on LGBTI issues and that transgender, and this is what that includes, because when we talk about LGBTI issues, but we’re only talking about lesbian gay, and not bisexual and definitely not transgender, so there needs to be a clear statement, and I think that management needs to figure that out as well, where are we going with this because I don’t think we know as an organisation” (Dawn)

Mark's suggestion to include lesbians, gays and transgender people offers a number of platforms to discuss integrating queer discourses into Sonke and the subsequent solidarity with the LGBTI movement. He indicates that lesbian, gay and transgender discourses can be utilised to expand the current model of gender constructs that Sonke uses. The exclusion of bisexual and intersex implies that they may not contribute to the expansion of gender constructs *in the same way* that L and G and T do. The exclusion of intersex, particularly in relation to transgender suggests that there isn't much attention being paid to the diversity of biological sex. If transgender discourses are considered *at the exclusion* of intersex, then the attempts to disrupting the biological sex binary would be marginalised. In other words, if we consider one of the locus's of transgender discourses to be the notion that biological sex does not determine gender, without considering the location of intersex bodies within that discourse leaves out the critical importance of diversifying the biological sex binary. By asserting that sex doesn't determine gender, but without interrogating the normative assumption that there are only two biological sexes, bodies that do not fit within those confines would be marginalised.

The silences around bisexuality also raise issues with not only the direction that Sonke is pursuing, but perhaps also with the current work that Sonke does with MSM in prisons. As previously mentioned, discourses of MSM in the current work that Sonke does includes the notion that men who have sex with men in prisons may not identify as gay. "Gay" is a loaded political identity that many MSM may not identify with, or they may completely reject this identity altogether. Men who have sex with men in prisons may also be in heterosexual, nuclear family relationships, who actively enjoy sexual intimacy with women, and also men. To marginalise discourses of bisexuality because it would not push current constructions of gender in Sonke's current model would be contradictory to the reality of the constituencies that Sonke works with currently, particularly in prisons.

The above quotations also raise some interesting concepts regarding the process of integrating LGBTI in the organisational culture at Sonke. Many of the participants suggested this idea that there needs to be more of a "queer presence" at Sonke. Mark and Jordan suggests that having queer people that are visible and out would help change the organisational culture at Sonke – implying that Sonke is currently as an organisation quite heteronormative. Mark also indicates that the notion of being accountable to your peers would change the organisational culture at Sonke, and therefore it would be useful for more queer people to be out and working in the organisation. Another idea that was offered was that if Sonke were to have a department that was solely focussed on gay issues, the presence of the department would change the organisational dynamic to be less heteronormative.

These contentions also raise a number of issues that pertain to the integration of LGBTI issues into the work that Sonke does, as well as offer some further insights into the possibilities of solidarity with the LGBTI movement. Firstly, this idea that "more queer people need to be out" shifts responsibility to change the heteronormative culture at Sonke to queer people in the organisation. This statement itself is ironically heteronormative, as it assumes that queer people should have fewer reservations about being in the closet, and should be more upfront about their sexuality so that straight people can "learn to be less heteronormative". Similarly, this idea that having a department that deals with LGBTI issues would help shift the inherent

heteronormativity in the organisation, suggests that the changes that are being identified as needing to happen, are through “confrontation”. In other words, the changes are being pursued by having queer people be “more out” or through an LGBTI department which would subvert the organisational heteronormativity. Hence, the changes that are being imagined to the organisation, happens as a *reaction* to these “queer confrontations”. This notion is a consistent theme that indicates a reference to an intended organisational transformation, but with no conceptualisation of how to materialise the changes.

Organisational transformations were also referenced in a broader paradigm: the shifts in the organisation to integrate LGBTI issues were also recognised to have broader implications for the organisation at the regional level:

“[...] but I think the challenge that we face is there are multiple (challenges); so southern Africa and Africa, still sees this issue as somehow a Western imposition and you only need to look at the laws in Uganda and the demonstrations around the law...to criminalize homosexuality...the demonstrations were about you know “we don’t want your western constructs here” so I think there is a challenge in the region...less profound in South Africa [...]” (Jeffrey)

“[...] I think that Sonke is being very brave about because especially in the international programme, where we are going to other countries that are very homophobic like Uganda – Sonke could very easily lose their credibility very fast, so I think they are being very brave that they’re taking it on and so admirable, so I’m feeling very positive about it.” (Dawn)

Jeffrey and Dawn contend that Sonke is risks losing funding by integrating LGBTI issues. Homophobic countries and regions where Sonke currently does work in and outside of South Africa may become resistant or even hostile to Sonke if in fact Sonke begins to integrate and be vocal about its LGBTI position. This infers that at the organisational level, Sonke may be shifting quite radically. If there is the potential for donors to pull funding if Sonke takes this new direction, then at the organisational level, the changes being imagined must be a departure from Sonke’s current status/work. Since there is recognition that Sonke may lose funding if they begin taking on LGBTI rights issues, then the implication is that there are fundamental shifts to the organisation that will take place if Sonke takes on this new work.

Another part of the changes that I pressed the interviewees towards was who the target constituencies of the LGBTI integration would be. This is a critical question because it intends to reveal which constituencies Sonke is including in its “new” work, which informs the solidarity it seeks with the LGBTI movement. Who is the target of Sonke’s integration of LGBTI issues? Is it straight identified men who are the target? Is Sonke trying to include gay men? What is the intended outcome of the new work that Sonke is identifying? Is it LGBTI tolerant straight men? These questions are important to consider because they ultimately will shape the direction that Sonke takes to integrate LGBTI. For example, if Sonke is only attempting to encourage straight identified men to be queer tolerant, then there would probably be more of an emphasis on human rights and the constitution protections against discrimination. As opposed to a workshop that would subvert the gender/sex binary altogether, and contending with the diversity of bodies and sexualities. These are just two examples of the many directions that as an organisation that seeks to transform current models of masculinity, that has now identified the need to integrate LGBTI issues, could pursue. However, the primary question that predicates the decision of where Sonke wants to head towards is who Sonke wants to change, and what that

change looks like. From the interviews, this was a gaping silence, as there were nearly no responses that directly answered this question:

“For example in terms of accessing services it’s really tough for the LGBTI community because of so many reasons one it’s about we have less trained health medical staff to attend to the needs of LGBTI communities of course with policies we have proper documents on the table but unpacking some of those clauses is difficult for the medical staff...here we are referring to those at cross level so to think about how we should actually train them to understand that they should come up with a strategy to deal with LGBTI communities different then somebody who is not MSM, somebody who is just heterosexual, how best do we package those services differently, our needs are completely different, the needs of somebody who is MSM and the needs of someone who is heterosexual is completely different [...]For example if I am MSM if I go to any medical centre, I am told to say, no we don’t cater for you , so we just have a standardised package for everyone whether you are bi or MSM or whether you are from LGBTI they don’t have most of these institutions don’t have specific things for specific people which makes it difficult for LGBTI communities to go to any institution to access treatment so unless ...I go to certain institution or clinic, I know that I’m going there because it caters for LGBTI people, it caters for since it caters for my specific agent needs [...]I’m not sure how to respond to that...it’s quite tricky but I would say that things are just completely different, services for a gay and a non-gay man is completely different” (Joey)

“[...]we do have these things um, happening in our society but we don’t know how to address the agent specific needs of the LGBTI people, where should we start from so that was also went to the policy level to say do we have any legislation set to that address issues of LGBTI issues or MSM” (Joey)

Joey outright says that he does not know how to address the needs of the LGBTI community – and he constructs L, and G, and B, and T, and I together when discussing the “agent specific needs” of the community. The insistence that continues to emerge over and over again is that LGBTI people have different needs than non-LGBTI people, but there is absolutely no idea what those differences may be. Joey uses the example of health care delivery, which he says does not cater to the LGBTI community, but when pressed about *how* health clinics should meet the alleged different needs of the LGBTI, there was a gaping silence in the responses that contended with this question. Without identifying the differences or context of the LGBTI constituencies of which integration of their issues are being considered, how can solidarities with LGBTI activists be forged? What is particularly odd is that there is consistency across the interviews that LGBTI people have different needs, but rarely are those needs identified. Even in terms of violence against LGBTI people, there was a major lack of engagement with how violence against LGBTI people differs or is related to “gender based violence” and violence against women.

“How best do we position ourselves as Sonke when we think about LGBTI issues, and how do we deal with homophobia and how best do we refer people to services, so understanding case studies and how do we understand the matter of...for example certain LGBTI activists, how do we combine our efforts and move together in terms of lobbying communities in terms of lobbying policy you know and law enforcement agencies to be proactive in terms of taking seriously crimes perpetrated against LGBTI people so those were kinds of conversations but I think now that we’ve entered into a new phase, where we are seriously looking to LGBTI issues as Sonke, I think we notice that to come up with topics that build the capacity of programme coordinators to at least really understand real subjects and also understand how they can best unpack lessons learned in their One Man Can training workshops, I think, those aspects are critical at that point in time, of course we are in the process of reviewing some of our materials, and we now have a module that we need to incorporate into the men engage training initiative, so how then do we build the capacity of trainers to really understand those subjects those issues, per se, and to be able to provide accurate answers to some of the questions.” (Joey)

This is linked to the earlier inability to describe the differences in agent specific needs of LGBTI people is this idea of dealing with homophobia. Though the response is long and mentions solidarities with LGBTI activists, capacity building, and various other methods of alliances that are constructed as necessary to the process, there is no indication of how to make this integration happen. Lobbying, law enforcement, workshop evaluation are all mentioned, but they present a disconnected process of integration that generates confusion in terms of the possibilities of solidarity with the LGBTI movement.

These following quotes which were responses to questions about the process of integrating LGBTI into the organisation, affirm some more gaps in terms of how the integration is supposed to materialise:

“That can happen indirectly because now that we have we’ve managed to review our pre and post evaluation forms, to say before a workshop, let’s just get a general understanding of how the participants view and think about certain questions and subjects, so those questionnaires will then shape what kind of discussions should we have with the participants, and after that, that is also pushing us to think about how best can we come up with modules and integrate LGBTI issues into our already existing interventions, when you talk about sexuality, rights, there is no way we can even talk about LGBTI issues because it’s happening in our communities we are concerned about human rights issues, how then do we come up with activities or information packs that seeks to disseminate information about LGBTI in our communities, so we are taking the right shape and we can see the model the shape of letting us to what platform will we seek as Sonke we are proud of doing this work we are proud to compliment LGBTI activists LGBTI organisations [...]” (Joey)

“[...] we are trying to work with other organisations and the LGBTI community, but I think that at the same time, we haven’t had the door for them, we sort of go to a meeting, and come back write the minutes, and then at some point we get too busy with the work that we are doing, but if we had a door, if we knew what it is that we want, how can if we had a plan, of working with the LGBTI community then we wouldn’t be going to a meeting and then coming back, and forget about the next meeting because you get so busy doing your work, so I think we need to open that door we need to know how once we know the how part, because we know the why part, once you know the how part, how do you, how do we see ourselves, reaching the LGBTI community, and then we can move forward as an organisation” (John)

“[...] In the workshops we are doing we are always focusing on gender based violence even if we can put LGBTI issues in the One Man Can materials, at least we can know that when we are doing trainings we know that we have a slot for LGBTI issues, so that we can know that we can talk about these issues [...]” (Danny)

From these statements, there is a major silence in terms of the changes that Sonke as a whole organisation would need to contend with in order to do the work that it intends to do with LGBTI communities. Danny and others suggest that LGBTI issues need to be mainstreamed into the One Man Can workshop; however, the process in which this needs to happen is unknown. There seems to not be an understanding that to “slot in LGBTI” would radically change the way that the One Man Can workshops are currently delivered. The One Man Can workshops currently use a mostly liberal democratic approach to encourage heterosexual men to avoid violence and risky behaviours. There are modules in the One Man Can workshops that diversify the gender and gender scripts; however the workshops still heavily rely on the gender binary. For example, one of the exercises, called “Act Like a Man” uses an exercise where participants write down a list of what masculine traits are considered (if your Dad says, “Act like a man”, what would those “actions” be?). A box is then drawn around those traits, and then traits that are not “manly” are written around them, and a discussion emerges around why those attributes are not manly, and how discrimination can arise from these gender myths. The outcome of the workshop is intended to disrupt normative constructions of masculinity which are deemed to lead to violence and unhealthy behaviours. To integrate LGBTI issues would need to contend with discourses of sexuality, which would more than likely require a different approach than solely dealing with gender.

While the One Man Can workshops do contain workshops on sexuality, there is not a lot of space currently to diverge from the sexuality of (straight) men and (straight) women. Grappling with prejudices against LGBTI people and deep rooted heteronormativities requires more than simply subverting gender scripts. Issues of religious prejudice, the sex binary, and other discourses feed into the multiple forces that contribute to heteronormativity. In order to integrate LGBTI issues (particularly if indeed lesbians, and gays, and bisexuals, and transgender, and intersex issues are to be integrated) into the One Man Can workshops,

there would need to be a complete overhaul of the workshop process. Further, if LGBTI people are to be integrated as actual participants in the workshops, there would probably need to be a complete overhaul of not only the outreach strategy, but Sonke as a whole would change. As an organisation that currently works with predominately straight identified, poor, black men, to integrate LGBTI people as participants would mean attending to the various differences that constitutes LGBTI issues, as opposed to only the issues that pertain to the previous constituency.

Conclusions

This chapter analysed how the interviewees envision the integration of LGBTI into the organisation. By investigating the discourses of integrating LGBTI into Sonke, I intended to explore the possibilities of solidarity with LGBTI activists. What was revealed was that Sonke is discursively incoherent in regards to integrating LGBTI: In many ways, Sonke is very clear about certain discourses – for example, discourses of how heteronormative men experience homophobia. However, at the same time, Sonke is also overwhelmingly discursively unclear, particularly regarding the process of integration and forming solidarities with allies. The ways that this “addition” of LGBTI work into the organisation is imagined by the interviewees offers various questions on the possibilities of solidarity with LGBTI activists. The ways in which “LGBTI” is constructed, for example, informs the ways in which Sonke will engage with the community. For example, “LGBTI” was sometimes referred to as “they”, which implies a form of othering, or separation from the discourses that Sonke is currently located. The notion of integrating LGBTI in order to be “politically correct” also relates to the notion of “othering”: Political correctness in terms of engaging with LGBTI agendas ignores the need for transformation because it does not necessarily suggest transformation – it merely “gives face” or acknowledges the issue without necessarily eliciting change. On the other hand the need to challenge homophobia through subverting gender norms was also a discourse that was raised in different conversations with the participants in different questions. These seeming contradictions reveal some of the ways that Sonke is discursively unclear about LGBTI, and the need to add LGBTI work to the organisation. I argue that these discursive incoherence’s suggest needs for partnerships, however, these discursive incoherence’s need to be *conscious*. Without recognising and engaging with discursive incoherence’s, the partnerships imagined with LGBTI activists would marginalise the possibilities of a co-driven discourse. I contend that the prioritisation of discourse is critical for social movement transformation – a process predicated by recognition of political subjectivity and political histories. I will explore this in detail in the final analysis.

Some of the ways that the interviewees were discursively clear about working with LGBTI was in regard to the relation between patriarchy and gender/sexuality norms which contributes to homophobia. The link between patriarchy-homophobia, and patriarchy-gender norms (which affects everyone), is a way that my participants constructed reasons to work with LGBTI. Sonke’s work in prisons was also a way that they were very clear about the need to engage with LGBTI issues, given the discourse of the vulnerability of MSM in prisons. There were also ways in which the participants were overwhelmingly unclear about integrating LGBTI work into the organisation. The ways that the process of adding LGBTI issues into the organisation was constructed was discursively unclear. For example, the reasons “how” to integrate was virtually unknown by most of the participants. The needs of LGBTI people were constructed as “special”, however, those “specific needs” remained unnamed/unknown. These silences in the discourse of integrating LGBTI issues into the organisation raise questions about the possibilities of solidarity with LGBTI activists.

Another way that the interviews revealed incoherent discourses around integrating LGBTI work into Sonke was around the inability to imagine the target constituents that would result from the integration. The

inability to construct the target constituents may adversely affect the possibilities of solidarity, given that without engaging with whom you want to work with, it becomes impossible to imagine partnership. These examples are just some of the ways that the discursive confusions that emerged from the interviews may affect the possibilities of solidarity with the LGBTI movement. The ways in which organisational change is theorised affects the possibilities of solidarity because the process of change informs how partnerships are envisioned. For example, if Sonke recognised their own discursive incoherence, they could hypothetically partner with activists who are more familiar with the new work Sonke is attempting to pursue. “Beginning” a partnership by recognizing how they are positioned to the LGBTI movement (i.e., that they are discursively unclear about how to integrate LGBTI) would offer to potential LGBTI activists, a process of engaging with discourse in order to do transformative work. In other words, if Sonke doesn’t recognise and engage with their discursive position and goes forward with the integration by leading the discourse themselves, then the voices of LGBTI activists on the ground may be marginalised from not only the process of integration, but also in the outcome of the new work that Sonke is pursuing. Without recognising these political histories, solidarities with LGBTI activists would be imagined differently.

The discursive incoherence of Sonke in regards to LGBTI and the need to integrate LGBTI issues fundamentally affects the ways that partnerships with LGBTI activists can be considered. The political subjectivity of Sonke as an organisation that currently works primarily with heteronormative, poor, black masculinities affects the ways in which the process of partnering with the LGBTI movement is imagined. Without articulating the process of integrating LGBTI issues, the need to contend with the dynamics of a partnership would be difficult to consider. Without grappling with the changes required in order to add LGBTI work to Sonke, the imagining of partnerships and solidarities would be misinformed by a lack of contention with the political subjectivities and political histories that locate Sonke, and the LGBTI movement.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Final Analysis

If we consider notions of solidarity as essentially partnerships and alliances within transformative social movements, examining the ways in which solidarities are imagined influences the ways in which movements produce transformation. Castells contends that in a social movement, agency is collective, not individual – if social actors act alone they will not form a social movement (Stalder, 2006: 77). In this research project, I set out to investigate discourses on solidarity, motivated by the notion offered by Castells – that it is through partnerships that social transformation can be achieved. In this project, I contend with the ways that Sonke – as an organisation that currently does work with primarily heteronormative masculinities – imagines organisational transformation in order to integrate LGBTI issues. It is through drawing on the *significance* of these organisational shifts and changes that I hope to consider discourses on solidarity.

My location within this research project as an intern at Sonke provided me with a unique opportunity to consider notions of “solidarity”. In many ways, by interning at Sonke, I embodied notions of “solidarities” as Sonke forged an alliance with me, where I helped Sonke begin the process of integrating LGBTI issues, with the future intent of building solidarities with LGBTI activists. My positionality as a researcher, as well as a volunteer working very closely with the organisation to help integrate LGBTI issues into Sonke opened up a number of possibilities for me to explore discourses on solidarities. I will begin this concluding analysis by offering a reflexive evaluation of my own experiences of solidarities with Sonke, and how these discourses inform the research *outcome* as well as the research *process*. By starting with my own positionality, and embodiments of solidarity with Sonke through my position as an intern, I can build an analysis of how the organisational transformations imagined by my participants inform the possibilities of solidarity. By beginning from a reflexive position, my positionality as a researcher, intern, and activist can be built into my analysis of the ways that my participants imagine organisational transformations which offer significance to the possibilities of solidarity. I draw upon correlations between discourses of “being reflexive” as feminist research praxis and notions of reflexivity which inform the possibilities of solidarity. I argue that being reflexive of our discursive positionalities informs the ways we form solidarities with one another.

The connections between being reflexive as a researcher and reflexivity as key to solidarity between activists and activist organisations will also inform the ways that I relate my research project to social movements. My research has led me to different discourses of political movements in South Africa which provide a context in which my thesis – on discourses of *solidarities* – is located. One of the consistent concepts that emerged in my literature review was the “materialisation” of solidarities, and whether or not the solidarities that were formed led to doing the intended transformative work (Hassim & Gouws, 1988:57). Some of the dissolutions of solidarities between organisations appeared to be through the denial of the ability to engage with *processes* which grapple with the inherent political subjectivities between activists (Hassim, 2003: 505). The lack of equitable participation in a co-driven discourse through engaging with political subjectivity appears to be a characteristic of many movements and solidarities that have failed (Hassim, 2003: 505; Vos, 2007:438). This led to my own interest in trying to understand more deeply how a prospective solidarity may be discursively imagined. As an organisation at the cusp of a relationship with the social justice

agendas of a constituency very far from its own “base”, Sonke offered me the opportunity to research a *moment* of “solidarity-making”.

The preceding analysis chapters reveal the current discourses of “working with men to prevent gender based violence and the spread of HIV/AIDS” that Sonke is situated in right now. The second analysis chapter also revealed that, as an organisation that currently works predominately with heteronormative masculinities and is interested in adding “LGBTI” issues into their organisation, Sonke is overwhelmingly “unclear” about the ways in which to pursue solidarities. These discursive confusions are the terrain through which I explore the possibilities of solidarity through prioritising the *role* of discourse in partnership formations. By beginning with my own experiences at Sonke, I intend to draw connections between embodiments of solidarity at a personal reflexive level and discourses of solidarities through analysing how organisational shifts are imagined by Sonke.

Reflexivity as research praxis and research outcome

As outlined above, my positionality played an important role in how the data was formed. My experience at Sonke, and my opinions on their work and the organisation also affect how I am writing this analysis as well, therefore an analysis of how I am located in proximity to my research is warranted. My experience at Sonke as an intern made me realise a number of things about the organisation, which likely affects the way in which I have evaluated or constructed the organisation in this thesis. As a feminist who is used to working with self-identified feminists in radical queer spaces, I was not used to the way that Sonke functions as an organisation. Sonke is also a massive NGO, with distinct hierarchies. At Sonke, I felt that management drove the organisational directions – which is a process that I am also not familiar with, particularly with my experience working with feminist NGO’s in Vancouver. My beliefs in particular grassroots models (of engaging with communities) were confronted when, from my experience, Sonke’s model contrasts with what I was used to.

I think the work that Sonke does is incredibly important and necessary – which is why I was initially encouraged when I found out that an organisation like Sonke actually exists. I haven’t come across nor worked with many organisations that are devoted entirely to transforming masculinities for the purposes of mitigating gender based violence and HIV/AIDS, thus when I discovered Sonke, I was quite excited to learn about their models of transformation. After my internship at Sonke, I continue to believe that the work Sonke does is important, however, my main critique of the organisation that I want to offer here (based on my experience there as an intern) is the model that it deploys to transform masculinities marginalises the voice of the people they seek to transform. There are better models that exist which include processes to engage target audiences, which is not only a more purposeful and ethical approach, but also, deeper integrations of intended audiences arguably determine the sustainability of transformative work. These engagements that I had with Sonke indicate that I have reservations about Sonke’s model of work, which informs the way that I am writing about them in this research project.

These personal opinions come from my internship at Sonke, which is another aspect of solidarity in this research project that deserves a further consideration. My positionality as an intern at Sonke offers a site of analysis where I contend with the embodiment of solidarity through my personal experiences working at Sonke. Sonke and I forged solidarity to pursue the process of adding LGBTI issues into the organisation. I was not only treated as an ally, but the work that I produced, particularly the evaluations and recommendations for integrating LGBTI issues, (I felt) was respected as an important document that would foreground the decisions that the organisation would make in order to first mainstream LGBTI issues into the organisation, and eventually forge alliances with LGBTI activists. The solidarity that was formed between Sonke and myself, as an intern that was constructed as an LGBTI activist, offers the perspective of a “lived” experience of solidarity with Sonke that offers nuance to the understanding of possibilities of solidarity that this thesis intends to consider.

Throughout my three months at Sonke, there were many parts of my experience that offer different perspectives to notions of solidarity that exist at Sonke. The interactions that I had at Sonke suggest that in many ways I was included as an ally, yet at the same time, there were also spaces that I was excluded which reveals ways that I experienced solidarity with Sonke. One of the ways I was included was in the responses that I received for the policy and workshop recommendations that I produced as an intern. The responses were all positive – there was not a single critique throughout the entire process, which indicates that the documents were well received, and that my position as an LGBTI/feminist ally was seriously considered. In meetings and conversations with staff members, particularly individuals that had been involved with the process of strategizing the LGBTI integration, I was treated almost as an expert in the field (of LGBTI activism). I felt there was very careful consideration of words used around certain discussions with me regarding LGBTI, which made me feel that my input was important. The feelings of being referred to as an expert in the field was also reflected within the interviews, where the ways that I was constructed as an ally also helped shape the responses in the interviews.

Constructions of an “ally” within the interview process

Another point of analysis of the ways I was “included” is through examining the ways that I was constructed within the actual interview process. Understanding the relations within the interviews reveals a different lens on which to view the data which informs the analysis. Some argue that the relations of power within and during the interview process negatively affect the interview process: “Greater attention needs to be paid to what actually happens in an interview, including the question of who exerts power and how. Such an analysis will show not only that the participatory model relies on a fixed understanding of power, but that an insistence on rapport sometimes works to undermine research outcomes” (Lyons, C. & Chipperfield, J., 2000:2). This is the idea that notions of power in the interview process may negatively affect the data by undermining the research outcome. These debates centre around the relations established in the interview, and contend that the relations of power may affect the outcome of the interviews. However, my positionality within the

research process suggests that rather than avoiding these relations, engaging with these relations enriches the research data. The fact that I was actively doing the work that I was researching indicates the need to contend with the ways I was constructed through the relations I had with the interviewees. Rather than attempt to separate my positionality from the data, grappling with the implications of my embodiments of solidarity within the research data reveals different nuances that inform the analysis.

My positionality as an intern at Sonke who works with the participants – in various degrees – played an important role in the interview process, as it was evident that I was constructed as an insider. My relationship with the participants (as co-workers) did affect the research data, and grappling with these relations reveals a lens to provide a richer analysis of the data. An analysis of the ways that I was constructed indicates that I was considered an ally with the discourses that were being contended with throughout the interviews:

“[...] and it's like you said earlier, there's this binary of thinking male and female, and like, there are more ways to be male than it's kind of hard to find words to describe the complexity of it, but I'm quite invigorated or relieved to think about the various dimensions or levels of biological sex, your physical sex, gender sexual orientation and how those are not aligned in normative ways.” (Jordan)

“[...] maybe because I identify so strongly with feminist principles and such, sometimes I'm not patient enough. Um, you know and sometimes I might go into a blaming kind of aspect, and I don't think I do it very often eh, where I'm blaming masculine men, and I think that's the kind of difficulty of it, the kind of falling into these language around yea but men, are the issue, so I reflect on those things a lot because I need to be careful, because you know we all have been socialised into gender norms and binaries and it comes up in conversation, and I think a lot about the language that I use that it's not persecuting men. And so for me, yea, those would probably yea...but we struggle with those kinds of things as men as women, all the time, yea.” (Dawn)

The ways that I was assumed to be familiar with particular discourses indicated in the above quotations suggests that I was constructed as an ally. Jordan affirms an earlier conversation that I had brought up about binaries, and the conversation that emerges connects me with the discourse that he is trying to convey (about gender and sex diversity). The way that he includes me in the conversation on discourses of the gender and sex binaries indicates that I was constructed on a level terrain as him. For example, if I was constructed as an “outsider”, Jordan may not have used the term “binary” to describe what he was referring to – instead, he makes reference to how “I said it before”. He presents a theoretical discourse about “norms” and “binaries”, and includes me in the conversation, suggesting that I am constructed as an ally. Dawn suggests a similar reference to me, as she speaks about norms, binaries and “feminist principles” in a way that presumes I am familiar with these discourses. The quote above also indicates that Dawn is telling a very personal story, as she is reflecting very seriously on her experiences at Sonke, which also suggests that I was treated as an ally – she may not have been so open and honest with someone who wasn't constructed as such.

The deep and personal level of conversations that I was allowed to have with my participants suggests that not only was I constructed as an ally, but I was also taken very seriously. The answers that I received were of great depth (from all the participants), and in lots of detail which indicates that my participants regarded me with a certain degree of respect:

“You know what, there was something that didn't mention that is at the back of mind and I think is critically important is that for people to think of the links between homophobia and masculinity. For me that's just so crucial and so critical and not only homophobia but transphobia as well, so if we can get to that, god I think that would be really brilliant, because for me it's not just about understanding what is lesbian, what is gay, because that is the

approach we are taking yes it is important because people have those questions, but hello, when we're talking about patriarchy and we're talking about privilege and power that's what we should be talking about because that is what Sonke is working on, patriarchy power privilege, so we also have to think about what that means in terms of LGBTI, power privilege, homophobia transphobia, and so I guess the common goal in Sonke is working towards gender equality working towards women's rights I guess, but I guess it's really like you're saying, and I don't think we have a very clear road map yet, it's like when we're thinking about gender equality how do we expand that through LGBTI, and maybe not just LGBTI, but queer politics...and how...because right now, gender is about men and women and it's about heterosexual men and women, so how do we expand that and it's about privilege power patriarchy in relation to , and make those dots and those connections, yea I think that's the direction we need to take [...]" (Dawn)

Dawn asserts certain points about discourses of homophobia and masculinity that is imperative to include in the interview process. My role in these responses can be attributed again to the ways that I was constructed – as an ally, and with a particular degree of respect. In contrast, if I was constructed as naïve, the way that discourses of homophobia were presented to me might be completely different. Instead of needing to mention something that was “critically important” that she forgot to mention before, Dawn may have responded with discourses that are more accessible to people unfamiliar with queer and feminist theory. Instead, Dawn goes into very great detail about the discourses of homophobia that she wants me to hear.

Another way that I was taken seriously was in the long, full, in depth responses that span multiple, intersecting personal and political discourses. The long and full answers suggest that the participants were really engaged with myself, and the interviews:

“[...] the kind of logic that informs the strategy in our work, is the social ecological understanding right, of course coupled with a range of other theories a big one being patriarchy and feminist theories of change informing that the personal reflection to the political activism, you know and TAC and others have popularised work that was about building active citizenship so I think that would be another strain of theory that informs our work that if you want democracy it's not enough to have elections only that really what you have to have particularly in a newly emerging democracy like ours is um you know citizenry and citizen is a problematic term because it excludes people who live here that aren't citizens, but community members who understand their rights and understand the mechanisms in which they access their rights and are willing to put pressure on those mechanisms to do that...so I worked at the TAC for a short while but long enough to be inspired by their models, so I think that that is the roots...so if you think about our community education work, the goal of that is not a workshop, the goal of that is to mobilise people to understand what role they can play in demanding justice at local level and not just demanding justice in some angry way but also kind of insisting on my affirming more celebratory and passionate ways of living together, so I think we also try to foreground in very real ways the positive outcomes it's not just about being angry with the state, it's about saying there have to be ways that we can live together and affirming that are fun and exciting so I suppose that if I think about it, there's a recognition that change requires different many strategies, often simultaneously, so that would be a primary premise of our work, and another one is that and coupled of course, is that when it comes to issues of GBV and HIV patriarchy is a very significant problem if you understand patriarchy to be not just of men's oppression of women, but also of notions and understanding of manhood that are bad for men, and that put men, that put pressure on men to behave in a whole range of ways that are bad for women and are bad for men, and that patriarchy isn't just a system that grants men power privilege over women, but a system that grants a few men significant power over lots of other people, to the detriment probably of everyone including those men, you know, so the understanding, Mbuseylu, so he talks about toxic masculinities, and I think that's an interesting way to put it.” (Mark)

Mark's quote above uses multiple discourses to describe the model that Sonke employs to do work with masculinities. He refers to sociology, human rights, notions of citizenship, discourses of patriarchy and many other theories to outline the details that make up the approach that Sonke takes. While there could have been much simpler ways of explaining why Sonke works with men the way they do, instead, Mark elaborates on the multiplicity of discourses that intersect to produce the model that Sonke engages with to transform masculinities – which suggests that I was taken seriously enough to warrant such an explanation.

There was also a sense that the participants wanted to ensure that they didn't “miss” anything when describing various discourses. This is related to the earlier quotation from Dawn where she backtracked and

insisted on adding a particular point to the discourse on homophobia that she was presenting. Many of the participants also backtracked and clarified various points, which indicate that they felt it was important to convey to me a “full” response. Also, the responses for the most part were not at all rehearsed or performed as a “script”, which indicates a level of respect and trust, but also reveals facets of the relations between myself, the participants and the research data. The way that I was taken seriously in the research process reflects the data that I received, thus the role that my positionality played in the research process is fundamental to consider. My position as an intern, researcher, and feminist activist, played a central role in these responses as the way that I was constructed as an ally in the interviews informs the responses that I received.

The ways that I was constructed further elevates the role of my positionality in this research project. Not only was I doing the work that I was researching, I also formed relations – solidarities – with the activists that I was interviewing. This implies that my embodiments of solidarity as an intern at Sonke is also evident in terms of how my relations with the interviewees emerged in the research data. These discourses of researcher positionality indicate a different way to grapple with the role of the researcher in the research data. While the ways that I was embedded in the research data make it impossible to disaggregate my positionality from the data, an analysis of the ways in which I was deeply entrenched in the research process may actually offer a fuller analysis of discourses on solidarity.

Though these above experiences of inclusion indicate that there were specific spaces where I was considered an ally, there were also many situations where exclusion was experienced. Referring back to the policy and workshop evaluation documents I produced, I was generally included in conversations about the purpose of the document, but the process in which to pursue the direction of integration and/or addition were spaces that I was deliberately excluded from. My internship, my work, the documents I produced, functioned to perform roles within a particular process (of integrating LGBTI into Sonke) – however, I was excluded from the *design* of the process. The discourses of engaging with LGBTI, processes of actualising the integration of LGBTI were spaces of development where I was not a part of, which reveals the specific role that I played as an intern at Sonke. These points of exclusion offer nuances in terms of understanding the ways of in which solidarity was formed with me.

Implications of discursive incoherence to solidarity

Relating this back to the earlier analysis chapters on Sonke’s discursive instability in terms of integrating LGBTI, my experience of exclusion in the process of developing a model of alliance and integration – as an LGBTI ally – is further indicative of the fact that Sonke intends to drive the discourse of integrating LGBTI by a model designed internally. The fact that there was very little consultation with partners, communities on the design of the process suggests that Sonke is leading the discourse, as opposed to a *co-driven* discourse process. Relating this back to the interviews, the interviews indicated that Sonke is discursively incoherent in terms of including LGBTI issues into their current organisational model. This was also something that I

experienced, as there was very little direction given to me in terms of the intentions of why and how Sonke planned to build solidarities with other LGBTI activists.

The interviews overwhelmingly indicated that there were many “unknowns” in terms of LGBTI issues, and the process of integrating LGBTI into the organisation. The reasons why Sonke wants to integrate LGBTI issues were loosely constructed upon human rights frameworks, and homophobia as affecting the current heteronormative men that they work with. The process of *how* to integrate LGBTI was even more loose, as there was little to no understanding of what changes would need to occur at the organisational level in order to successfully *do* the work that they intend to do with LGBTI (the area of work that they intended to do was also an area of “unknowns” that came out of the interviews). These discursive instabilities have the potential to offer sites of solidarity with LGBTI activists; a conscious recognition of Sonke’s position on LGBTI (their position being that they have many “unknowns” and are discursively incoherent) would provide opportunity to engage with LGBTI activists who have a greater familiarity with the communities and issues, to form a process of integration. Similarly, the fact that I was excluded from participating in the process of change required to integrate LGBTI suggests that Sonke is relying on its own internal models to produce a process to integrate LGBTI. This suggests that Sonke is not conscious of its own discursive instability. In fact, I would argue that there is possibly a deliberate denial of the need for a consciousness of Sonke’s own discursive instability. The analysis that I want to contend with here is the *implications* of being conscious or not being conscious of discursive instability. The *recognition* of “unknowns”, I argue, should suggest that there is opportunity to invite LGBTI partners to participate in a co-driven process, which would lead Sonke’s integration of LGBTI issues. However, without a conscious recognition of Sonke’s discursively incoherent position on LGBTI, the processes taken to engage with partners would be affected.

Another experience of exclusion in the context of solidarities with LGBTI allies that is relevant to this analysis of my positionality is around this notion of process and consultation. One of the things I was most uncomfortable with was the process of developing strategies to integrate LGBTI. In my opinion, having consultants write policy and workshop materials without grappling with context is problematic because it can likely lead to a rift between programming, and the experiences in the intended communities (and experiences on the ground). I believe that there are better models of building materials that are more closely related to the intended audiences *through building solidarities* with communities on the ground that are affected by the intended transformation. This lack of contending with building alliances with communities, locating local “expert” activists (which are activists who do the work that you are intending to pursue), and other stake holders indicates again a lack of desire for a co-driven discourse processes. As revealed in the interviews, the discourse of organisational change to integrate LGBTI is currently only being developed internally, sometimes with consultants that are hired from overseas. I think this raises important considerations towards not only the possibility for solidarity with LGBTI activists in South Africa, but also towards the possibilities of doing sustained transformation of sexuality and gender dynamics.

Another discourse that the notion of using paid international consultants versus engaging people and activists on the ground is the ways that “experts” are constructed. While these people from various contexts

(including myself) may be able to offer appropriate material recommendations for developing programming, without grappling with context – and by context I mean *communities* – materials developed may be divorced from the experiences of the intended audiences. From my own experience, developing materials that are relevant to communities requires listening to communities, who are inherently experts of their own experiences. Listening to the intended audiences and the issues they raise regarding LGBTI would be, in my opinion, a critical step. Programme development models that come from communities affected by Sonke's LGBTI integration might offer better ways of not only sustaining community “buy-in”, but also offer material that is more deeply relevant and even embedded in local discourses.

This construction of “experts” as being consultants from abroad also raises for me some ethical issues regarding the process of doing work with communities. My experiences with feminist models of alliance building and grassroots organising has influenced my suspicions towards models that ignore the importance of process and community consultation throughout the development and implementation process of doing social change. Without engaging with the process of building alliances and solidarities with community, then the discourse that leads the transformative work comes solely from the organisation – which, I would argue, categorises the process as being “top-down”. I argue that without building alliances and solidarities with community and stake holders, the programming developed would therefore be driven by discourses largely *outside* the community, which raises some ethical issues. When developing programming, how does Sonke contend with the *political history* of LGBTI communities and activism? How does Sonke grapple with their position as an organisation that traditionally works with heteronormative masculinities and now intends to work on LGBTI issues? These questions raise some of the ethical issues that persist through the denial of grassroots processes which contend with political subjectivities and alliance building.

My experience as an LGBTI activist in solidarity and partnership with Sonke also revealed a unique opportunity to engage with my own positionality. This can be evaluated at multiple levels. Firstly, my position as a researcher and my simultaneous position as an intern whose work contributed directly to the material I was researching indicates that I am embedded deeply in the research data. While being reflexive is an important aspect of research methodology that I need to contend with, the fact that I was so deeply entrenched in the research data emphasises the prominence of reflexivity in my analysis. Secondly, my internship at Sonke revealed particular spaces where I had to grapple with being reflexive between being in a position of an outsider researching an organisation, and being in a position within the actual organisation with my own opinions and politics that I was actively contributing to Sonke. There were many situations particularly at the beginning of my internship where I did not know whether it was right for me to be voicing my concerns in various spaces at Sonke, out of fear I might be placing too much of my own politics into the data and not engaging with “Sonke”. For example, my recommendations for integrating LGBTI into Sonke raised issues about the gender and sex binaries, as well as gender presentation, and ways that I envision a future of radically subverting the current gender and sex norms that oppress queer people. These were very much my opinions on what I envision for gender transformation, with little input from anyone else, let alone Sonke and community members. At one point I was concerned as to whether this was adding too much of my voice, and that instead I

should be consulting more people in the organisation – or better yet, consulting LGBTI activists and communities where the integration would be directly affected – in order to include relevant voices to the recommendation documents I was writing. My struggle with being reflexive as an intern, and the role that my internship played in the research data, has made me consider what role my positionality plays in this thesis.

As reflexivity played a critical role in the ways solidarity was lived and embodied through Sonke's relationship with me, the notion of reflexivity emerges in the broader analysis of the possibilities of solidarity between Sonke as an organisation and other LGBTI activists. I began the analysis by locating the discourses that situate where Sonke is currently positioned in terms of working with transforming masculinities – this provided a basis of which to contend with the organisational changes required to integrate LGBTI issues, and build solidarities with LGBTI activists. The analysis of the interviews I conducted with staff members at Sonke Gender Justice Network revealed firstly that Sonke works with a specific group men, and "type" of masculinity. It is important to note that Sonke does not organisationally exclude other forms of masculinity or groups of men from their work, however, the discourses from which Sonke draws the reasons they need to transform masculinities constructs a particular form of "masculinity" as problematic (and thus needing transformation). The resulting targets of transformation that emerge from discourses of men's victimisation (from patriarchy), and discourses of male power, are poor, black, heterosexual men that live in townships and informal settlements. Since Sonke is actively seeking to add LGBTI issues into their work at both the organisational level and at the workshop level, the changes that would need to happen to Sonke as an organisation would need to be considered to understand how the solidarity with queer activists might be imagined. What resulted from the research data was a discursive instability in terms of how and why Sonke intends to integrate LGBTI, and an inability to consider this instability, let alone grapple with its implications.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, discursive instabilities have the ability to suggest the need for partnerships. If an individual or organisation has the desire to work with a particular group of people, but do not know how to pursue the new work, but *recognise* that other organisations that have a political history with the intended political issues have more experience and knowledge, partnerships can emerge through acknowledging and grappling with the political subjectivities and discourses that implicate relations between each activist or activist organisation. However the ignorance towards this instability creates obstacles towards any possibility for a process which allows for partnership and solidarity. Without being accountable to the political history of the work they intend to do, the relations between an organisation and their potential partners would be limited. Without grappling with how Sonke is situated in relations of power and political history with LGBTI organisations, the partnerships that unfold may take shape differently than a solidarity that was formed through a more reflexive process of engagements with power within social and organisational relations.

The importance of a co-driven discourse for the process of building solidarities is part and parcel of (feminist) theories which indicate that the process of contending with power (and privilege) is fundamentally important for the success of transformative social movements (Stalder, 2006: 196; Weldon, 2006:55). Individuals – let alone activists – who come into a partnership are not isolated from their political locations

when they enter into solidarity. The political subjectivities of each actor inform the ways in which the solidarity will materialise, and an inability to contend with these subjectivities will also inform the shape that solidarity takes. Weldon describes the global movement against gender violence, and suggests that one of the reasons that the movement has been able to sustain international solidarity is due to a “norm of inclusivity, which includes internal conflict as part of the process (Weldon, 2006:55). Weldon contends that this notion of “conflict as process” is what has made the global movement against gender violence able to sustain a long term, transnational solidarity. This concept of conflict as part of the process of maintaining solidarity is related to what was revealed in this research project. The importance of co-driven discourses refers to the idea that in order to have solidarity, contending with social relations through grappling with political subjectivities and histories – in other words, in order to build an alliance, it is critical to have a process which involves dealing with positionalities.

To relate this to notions of power, actors and organisations embody a multitude of positionalities and subjectivities which place activists (and activist organisations) in political relations to one another. Discourses of power have many implications on political processes, as they inform who is “allowed” to speak – not only for themselves, but for whom. Butler suggests that “hegemony emphasises the ways in which power operates to form our everyday understanding of social relations and orchestrates the ways we consent to these covert relations of power” (Butler et. al., 2000:14). We understand social relations – and solidarities – through the ways in which we are positioned towards one another. Privilege and power underpin these discourses, as hegemony enforces privilege through silencing some, and privileging others. Therefore, we can consider the ignorance of political subjectivities as adversely affecting the ways in which individual actors interact, by constructing unequal circumstances. In regards to the possibilities of solidarity, actively ignoring relations of power, positionality and political history may affect the ways in which partners interact with each other in adverse ways.

Foucault suggests that power and privilege operate to sustain particular hegemonic discourses through placing differing values on certain discourses (Foucault, 1978:52). Foucault describes the relationship between the rational man and the “mad man”, where although the mad man is articulating a discourse, his discourse does not have the same currency as the rational man (Foucault, 1978: 52). Foucault suggests that the “speaking subject” is discursively constructed as privileged at the expense of those who are also silenced by this privilege. It is a contention with discourse that is critical to this analysis of solidarities (Foucault, 1978: 52). Power stratifies the “currency” of discourse, which manifests in political subjectivities. Without grappling with the political subjectiveness of each actor, how can solidarities be formed? The role of discourse in producing privilege and silences cannot be ignored from a discussion on how partnerships between different organisations and people can be forged. The possibilities of solidarity are premised upon the inherent conflicting discourses that produce political subjects – grappling with these political subjectivities is fundamental to forming partnerships and alliances.

The discourses on LGBTI that emerged from the interviews referred to these notions of political subjectivity. The term “they” was used considerably throughout the interviews to describe the “LGBTI”

community, which suggests a form of “othering”. The deployment of the term “they” suggests that there are recognisable political subjectivities between these constituencies that were constructed in the interviews. By taking the position of naming the “Other”, Sonke constructs itself in a privileged position in relation to the “LGBTI” community. Like Foucault’s example of the mad man and the rational man, the construction of the “other” (i.e. the mad man) relegates the currency attached to the discourse of the “other”. In the conversations raised in this research project, LGBTI discourses were often constructed within hierarchal relations to discourses of working with masculinities that Sonke is currently situated. These relations of power inform the possibilities of solidarity by hierarchizing the ways in which actors are positioned towards each other.

What is pertinent about these othering discourses is the ways in which this informs the possibilities of solidarity. As indicated here, the positions of privilege and marginality infer the relations that different actors have towards each other. If one actor occupies a speaker subject role, or a privileged role at the expense of the person they seek solidarities with, constraints to partnerships may emerge. This political subjectivity is something that would need to be contended with in order to build solidarity with the LGBTI community – without doing so, the conflicting relations of power may inhibit the formation of fruitful solidarities which lead to transformative work.

Social organisation as communicative process

The theories articulated by Manuel Castells are also relevant to the analysis that emerged from this research project. I particularly want to draw attention to Castells’ insistence of social morphology’s pre-eminence over action (Stalder, 2006:196). As referred to in the literature review, Castells discusses contemporary social movements through his theory of the “network” society, where he contends that globalisation and advances in technology, have changed the context and status of “power”. He suggests that social movement organising has been brought to different heights due to the interconnectivity of the world, where transformative power is vested in the power of “networks” (Castells, 2010:52). However, despite these changes in power structure, Castells insists on the importance of social morphology – or social structure – which predicates the context in which social change can happen. In other words, social structures inevitably include people occupying various spaces and positionalities. The spaces which people occupy are informed by power relations, which affect the ways that solidarities are formed in pursuit of social transformation. Castells contends that the discourse of social hierarchies in social morphologies have a critical relevance to social movements.

Central to his theory on the network society, is the role of social organisation. Castells contends that “social organisation is a communicative process, the *means* of communication play a very important role” (Stalder, 2006:196, emphasis added). This argument suggests that social morphology is premised on the discourses that affect the context in which the social organisations materialise. The means of communication can also be related to the process of grappling with individual political subjectivities which constitute the pieces which inform solidarities. The political “locatedness” of various players informs the means of

communication, which in turn affects social organisation. If we understand the notion of solidarity to be a communicative process, the relations of power that surround the communicative process fundamentally affects the ways in which solidarity can be imagined. The critical role of process which begins with recognition of discursive instability, grappling with political subjectivities, and acknowledging political histories underlies the ways in which solidarities can be formed.

This notion of process is particularly relevant to a postmodern conceptualisation of solidarity, as it locates the critical role of reflexivity. Reflexivity is not just an apparatus which sets a platform for alliance building, but rather, the process of grappling with relations of power and the various political subjectivities that inform solidarity is fundamentally a part of the ultimate goal of the transformative work. In other words, process is not simply a necessary linear step for solidarity, but rather it suggests that process is a part of the outcome. A reflexive process is not just an “ethic” of doing transformative work, but rather it is a critical paradigm which ultimately affects the outcome of the partnership. The means to which transformative work unfolds is predicated upon the solidarity formed through partnerships.

The concept that continuously pulses through this research project has been the notion of reflexivity. Reflexivity as a process to form solidarities, reflexivity as part of research methodology, and reflexivity in terms of a process of formulating strategies for transforming social relations – these notions of reflexivity have been fundamental to the process of this research project, as well as the outcome. The role of reflexivity in this thesis concludes that reflexivity is not only an essential tool in research, but it is also related to broader discourses of partnership development. Being reflexive allows the possibilities of co-driven discourse-led solidarities and work. Without being conscious of one’s own discursive position, it is very difficult to be reflexive – how can we “check” our positionality without recognising the need to?

CHAPTER EIGHT: Conclusions

What I conclude from my research, is that the possibility of solidarity is premised upon being conscious of one's own discursive position, and then engaging with the ways in which we, as individual activists, and activist organisations are positioned to one another. Discursive instability is not a sign of inability, but rather, it opens up the possibilities of solidarity with allies who have a vested interest in the transformative work that an organisation, like Sonke, is pursuing. Recognising discursive instability allows for a reflexive process of grappling with political subjectivity and relations of power which underpin the ways that partnerships can unfold.

By examining an organisation that is at the very cusp of transforming themselves in order to integrate LGBTI issues, I analysed how discourses of organisational transformation offer sites to analyse the possibilities of solidarity. What I discovered about the possibilities of solidarity is the role that discourse plays in determining the process of building solidarities. While Sonke has the desire to do LGBTI work, because it is loosely related to the work that they currently do around heteronormative masculinities, the process to "do" the integration remains unclear. This discursive position is critical as it offers a site of which solidarities can be built. However, being conscious of the discursive instabilities is vital to the imagining of solidarities, as engaging with political histories cannot happen without recognising how Sonke is positioned to LGBTI activists. The possibilities for solidarity can be interrogated here, on this site of "being conscious of their discursive position" to LGBTI activists. Without contending with positionality, the way that partnerships unfold will be imagined differently.

These notions of solidarity were also embodied through some of the experiences that I had at Sonke as a feminist working at the organisation for three months. The importance of reflexivity in evaluating these embodiments also raised some interesting parallels with the role of reflexivity in solidarity building. Similar to the assertions made above about the need for activists to be conscious of their discursive position in order for solidarity to be possible, the role of reflexivity emerges in the research praxis of this thesis as being conscious of my discursive position as a researcher that is simultaneously embedded in the research data was fundamental to the analysis. The role of reflexivity and consciousness of our discursive positionalities emerged as a fundamental convention of not only feminist research praxis, but more broadly in terms of collaborating through partnerships with allies.

The ways in which we contend with the implications of our discursive positions, informs the possibilities of solidarities which ultimately affects the transformative work that we, as feminists, intend to do. Grappling with our discursive positions opens up the possibility to engage with the social relations which inevitably predicate our interactions with our allies. The ways that we can strengthen our partnerships can hopefully lead towards the social transformations that we desire, however, grappling with the ways that we engage with our discursive positionalities informs how these solidarities can be imagined.

I have learned in this research process through my internship with Sonke that “engaging with discourse” and “reflexivity” are not rhetorical feminist academic lexicons. These notions of reflecting and engaging with positionality inform the possibilities of doing the work that we want to pursue – “work” which inevitably involves people and social relations around us. Without engaging with the discourses that produce these relations, the solidarities that we form may rearticulate some of the power relations we seek to challenge. Sonke Gender Justice Network is situated in a discourse, in the South African context, where there is a vast political history which has culminated to the current political situation that has allowed for the possibility of an organisation like Sonke to exist. As an organisation that currently works with poor, black, heteronormative men in townships, and seeks to incorporate LGBTI issues into its work, contending with the organisational shifts required to incorporate LGBTI *could have* involved grappling with Sonke’s current discursive positionality to the LGBTI community (and LGBTI activists). This “grappling” could have taken shape in many forms. Starting conversations with partners from the very beginning of the process by indicating that Sonke needs advice and help to integrate LGBTI into their work (because they *recognise* that they are discursively unclear about the integration process), would shape the process of building solidarities with LGBTI activists differently than the current process, which has been revealed that Sonke is currently not aware or not conscious of its discursive incoherence in regards to LGBTI. For example, Sonke could have invited grassroots LGBTI organisations and community members to participate in the very beginning stages of the integration – which is the part of the process which I researched in this project. Sonke could have then asked them at these beginning stages what they think of Sonke integrating LGBTI issues into their work, how should this process look like, how can Sonke’s work contribute to the mutual goals that each partner has? How can Sonke’s work complement the work that their partners do? Sonke’s oversight in grappling with this process of engaging with discourse and positionality will likely shape the solidarities formed with LGBTI activists.

As I have discovered in this research project, engaging with discourse is fundamental to the work that feminists do. Without grappling with the *significance* of discourse through recognising our discursive positionalities critically affects the partnerships that we build, which inevitably affects the ways we build social movements for social transformation. Grappling with discourse doesn’t only refer to recognising the spaces we occupy, however, acknowledging and engaging with the implications of our locations informs the ways we build solidarities, and thus affects the ways we build movements for social transformation.

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