

SEARCHING IN AN "EMPTY CLOSET"? A HISTORY OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN SOUTH AFRICA¹

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Die "leë kas sindroom"? Die historiese bestudering van homoseksualiteit in Suid-Afrika

Hierdie artikel belig ontwikkelinge in historiese studies oor homoseksualiteit in Suid-Afrika. Die geskiedenis van affeksie, seks, emosies en intimiteit in pre-koloniale gemeenskappe is problematies. Relatief min geskrewe bronne, wat 'n duidelike beeld kan gee van intimiteit, is gegeneer of het behoue gebly. Beskikbare bronne moet egter met omsigtigheid bejeën word, indien die veroordelende aard wat dikwels bespeurbaar is, in ag geneem word. Hierdie tema val binne die kader van die geskiedenis van die liggaam. Metodologieë, konseptualisering en teoretisering oor seksualiteit bly problematies. Terme soos homoseksueel, heteroseksueel, gay en lesbies kan nie sonder meer transhistories of transkultureel toegepas word nie. 'n Interdissiplinêre werkswyse kan die multi-dimensionaliteit van menslike seksuele interaksie belig. Die mens het seksuele omgang vir beide plesier en voortplanting; in beide gevalle onverbonde aan 'n paringstyd. Die uitgangspunt word hier gehuldig dat sosialisering en die maatskappy van mense mans of vrouens maak. Seksuele aktiwiteite is dus grootliks kultuurgebonde, aangesien mense se biologiese potensiaal deur sosialisering gerig word. Die geskiedenis van seks sal dus neerkom op die geskiedenis van sosiale interaksie.

This article deals with the history of homosexuality in South Africa. The history of affection, sex, emotions, and intimacy in precolonial South African societies is problematic. Written sources are not readily available. Historical studies of (homo)sexuality fall within the sphere of history of the human body. Methodologies and theorization on sexuality are still fraught with difficulties. This becomes apparent when the meaning of terms such as homosexual, heterosexual, gay and lesbian are considered. These terms cannot be applied transhistorically or transculturally. An interdisciplinary approach highlights the multidimensional nature of human sexual interaction. Humans have sex for both pleasure and procreation; in neither case is the frequency or timing of such acts predictable. Society uses people's reproductive potential to determine whether they are men or women

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(gender). A person's sexual orientation is determined by the gender of his/her sexual partner. The manifestation of sexual acts is thus determined to a large extent by society. Consequently, the history of sex translates into the history of social interaction.

1. Introduction

This article gives an overview of trends in the historical study of homosexuality. Over the past 20 or so years, the majority of historical works on homosexuality were produced in America. In order to investigate local trends, the UNEXSUS data base² was used to gain insights into the nature and extent of postgraduate studies in this field. The Index to South African Periodicals (ISAP) was used to trace articles in South African academic journals. Certain papers presented at the *Fifteenth Biennial Conference of the South African Historical Society* are also assessed. The *First Southern African Gay and Lesbian Studies Colloquium* is perhaps proof of a growing interest in this topic. Emerging trends are assessed by means of an overview of papers presented at the two "Hidden from History" sessions at this colloquium. The South African situation lends itself to a stimulating debate about homosexuality and sex overall, since racial, cultural, ideological, class, and religious differences are all found in one country.

Some historians have been largely reliant on written sources in the Rankean tradition. However, keeping the topic of sex in mind, it becomes evident that creative methodologies are called for. This is necessary in the light of the secretive and private nature of sexual conduct. A contributing factor is the different levels of literacy in this country. Very few written sources exist for certain periods and communities. However, theorization and conceptualization might prove to be just as problematic than trying to find sources.³

A number of questions are raised regarding homosexual history, also known as lesbian/gay history. The first question must be: What is homosexuality? An equally important question is: What is lesbian/gay history? In the nineties the term queer has become fashionable in America, thereby adding a new dimension to conceptualization. But does lesbian/gay history really constitute a new field in its own right? If so, what is the basis thereof? Is this basis sound enough to ensure that lesbian/gay history could be compared to women's history or black history? The question remains how to define lesbian/gay and/or queer studies. Unfortunately there seems to be little agreement among scholars. The influence of women's studies also needs to be taken into account. What women's studies do for gender, lesbian/gay studies do for sex and sexuality. It is important to be mindful of the relationship between sexuality and gender. The problem of explaining the connections between gender and sexuality continues to furnish an illuminating topic of discussion in both women's studies and lesbian/gay studies.⁴

Historians face difficulties regarding the interpretation of evidence according to conceptual frameworks. Theoretical premises offered by both the essentialists and social constructionists for example, have their limitations. These premises are often one-sided and

2. Supplied by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC).

3. E. Freedman and J. D'Emilio, "Problems encountered in writing the history of sexuality: Sources, theory and interpretation", *The Journal of Sex Research*, 27(4), Nov. 1990, p. 481.

4. H. Abelove, M.A. Barale and D.M. Halperin (eds.), *The lesbian and gay studies reader*, (New York, 1993), p. xv.

reductive in nature, limiting accounts to a sexual dimension only. Clear thinking about a past society in which desire and intimacy were not categorized on the basis of gender or sexual categories is necessary. Foucault cleared the ground for a radical inquiry into a lesbian/gay social experience. However, homosexual history has to go beyond sex, control, regulation and construction.⁵ Proposedly historians should attempt to interpret evidence by means of a multidimensional model. The focus should be placed on relationships, rather than specific sexual categories. Such a model must include more than the single dimensional sexual category based on the Western medical-psychological model of homosexuality.⁶

2. A reflection on the historical study of homosexuality

Historians rightfully regard the study of the past — including sexuality — as their special province. Calls from certain quarters for a history of sex, specifically of homosexuality, came only in the mid-seventies. A good example is the arguments raised by Bullough⁷ and later by the *Radical History Review (RHR)*. In a special issue in 1977, this journal stated emphatically that sexuality has a history.⁸ *RHR* provided one of the first forums for historians who considered ways in which homosexuality, and by extension heterosexuality too, are social, cultural and historical productions. Reasons for the neglect of sexuality generally, and homosexuality specifically, in historical studies range from fear to ignorance and prejudices.⁹ The intolerance of governments and academics alike cannot be ruled out either.¹⁰

A few developments preceded the eventual increase in scholarly works dealing with lesbian/gay history. Firstly, the success of the lesbian/gay movement, especially in America, created a more tolerant climate in which research could be undertaken. Grass-roots level projects were undertaken. These projects were energized by the lesbian/gay political movement. Activists were eager to prove the existence of homosexuality in both the present and past. The first wave of historical research was undertaken by people with backgrounds in the movement itself, rather than the academy. In 1976 Katz signalled a new era in scholarship with his pioneering collection of documents and commentaries entitled *Gay American history*. Secondly, certain developments in the discipline itself led to an interest in ordinary people's lives. Women's history and feminism sensitized historians to issues of gender and sexuality. It also provided institutional support for a variety of new perspectives. This created an openness among historians for lesbian/gay history. Lesbian/gay studies are indeed indebted to the paradigms developed by women's studies. Women's studies, for

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5. D. Penn, "Queer: theorizing politics", *Radical History Review*, 62, 1995, pp. 25-28.
 6. Neil Miller, *Out of the past: Gay and lesbian history from 1869 to the present* (New York, 1995), p. 559.
V.L. Bullough, "Sex in history: A virgin field", *The Journal of Sex Research* 8(2), May 1972, p. 114;
J.C. Burnham, "The progressive revolution in American attitudes toward sex", *Journal of American History*, 59(4), March 1973.
 8. An overview of the role the *RHR* has played is given in: Editor's introduction, "The queer issue: New visions of America's lesbian and gay past", *Radical History Review*, 62, 1995, p. 1.
 9. V.L. Bullough, "Sex in history", *Journal of Sex Research* 8(2), May 1972, p. 101.
 10. M. Duberman, M. Vicinus & G. Chauncey (jr.) (eds.), *Hidden from history: Reclaiming the gay and lesbian past* (London, 1989), p. 1.

example, offered some theoretical models.¹¹ It is therefore not strange to note that lesbian/gay research has gone through a number of stages, reminiscent of women's history.¹²

An overview of earlier publications on homosexuality reiterates the initial lack of studies. In 1974 Weideman published an annotated bibliography of 1 265 English publications on homosexuality between 1940 and 1968. Regarding the nature of these works, it was noted that many sought to explain homosexual behaviour in terms of congenital and psychological pathology. It was only after the early 1970's that studies veered strongly away from a pathological approach, and came closer to being social studies. In 1974 the first volume of *The Journal of Homosexuality* appeared. It aimed at coordinating rigorous empirical research on homosexuality and gender identity. It also provided a forum for scholarly research. The journal's heuristic value for the understanding of homosexuality and gender identity must be acknowledged. Published findings were aimed at professionals in a wide variety of disciplines and settings.¹³ This journal signalled the start of a new direction in the multi-disciplinary study of homosexuality.

In 1975 Bell commented on the nature of work done up to that time. He concluded that little attention was given to the wide range of homosexual orientations and adjustments. Most works viewed homo- and heterosexuality as a simple dichotomy. Homosexuals were most commonly viewed as inheritors of certain dispositions which were crystallized in the past and were now accountable for future behaviour. Furthermore, Bell found a lack of coordination in research efforts. He also noted a tendency among scholars to work apart from others, and a reluctance to replicate findings. No attempt was made to investigate systematically the differences in developmental histories, such as lifestyles and adjustments, sexual attitudes and behaviours, including the wide range of self- and other-experiencing.¹⁴

Two notable works, which were published during the 1970's, are C.A. Tripp's *The homosexual matrix*, (1975) and A.L. Rowse's, *Homosexuals in history* (1977). Jeffrey criticized Tripp for a lack of a discernable scientific methodology and extremely vague references to recent scientific work. Tripp exhibited a naïve biologism. Against the background of pressure for greater equality, this had potentially dangerous political consequences. An unwillingness to discuss social structures and institutions which affect the way homosexuality is expressed, hampered this work even further. Neither the feminist nor gay movements were mentioned.¹⁵ Rowse, on the other hand, was criticized for a lack of proper insight into the significance of being sexually different and what it meant for the great figures in history he described.¹⁶

Parker compiled a bibliography of 123 books and articles, available in English, to illustrate the nature and quality of historical work that have been published up to 1980.¹⁷ In 1984 Shively, Jones and De Cecco, cited by Isaacs and McKendrick, reported on studies done

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11. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2, and 12; S. Sievers, "Gay and lesbian research in the 1980's: History and theory", *Radical History Review*, 50, 1991, p. 204; Editor's note, "The queer issue", *Radical History Review*, 62, 1995, pp. 1-2.
 12. M. Duberman, et al. (eds.), *Hidden from history*, p. 2.
 13. See statement in front in *Journal of Homosexuality* 1(1), January 1974.
 14. A. Bell, "Research in homosexuality: Back to the drawing board", *Archives of Sexual Behaviour* 4(4), 1975, p. 421.
 15. E. Jeffrey, "Homosexual amnesia", *The Gay Alternative*, 11, Spring 1976, pp. 28-29.
 16. M. Goodwich, "Book Reviews", *Journal of Homosexuality* 4(1), Fall, 1978, pp. 108-109.
 17. W. Parker, "Homosexuality in history. An annotated bibliography", *Journal of Homosexuality*, 6(1/2), Fall/Winter 1980/81.

on homosexuality since 1969. They found more than 1 100 articles in 47 different scientific journals. Various matters came under scrutiny in these articles. Shively and his associates concluded that in most studies sexual orientation has been treated as if it was a perceptible, unitary phenomenon. It would have been more correct to acknowledge the fact that sexual identity and sexual orientation are neither unitary nor mutually exclusive.¹⁸

By the eighties the value of the *Journal of Homosexuality* became evident. Some of the articles were later published in book form. Notable examples are *Gay life in Dutch society*, and *The pursuit of sodomy: Male homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe*. Another noteworthy work that was published in 1980 is Boswell's study *Christianity, social tolerance and homosexuality*. It covers the history of gay people in Western Europe from the beginning of the Christian era to the fourteenth century. In 1989 a work that can be regarded as a landmark was published under the title *Hidden from history: Reclaiming the gay and lesbian past*. It was edited by Duberman, Vicinus and Chauncey. This work covers various themes of homosexual history from the Ancient World to the post-World War II era. The reason for its importance is its attempt to clarify and document theoretical disagreements about sexuality. Sievers praised this book as an "ambitious survey of historical research on gays and lesbians".¹⁹

In July 1990 *The Journal of the History of Sexuality* appeared for the first time. Historians interested in sexuality now had a journal specifically devoted to their field of interest. This journal is notable for its efforts to cover the wide range of sexual expressions. In 1992 Laipson commented on the virtual explosion of scholarship in the field of the history of homosexuality. He noted, however, that historians still had to clarify what the history of sexuality could and should be.²⁰

From 1992 to the present, interest in both gender studies and sexuality have escalated dramatically in Europe and America. Australian scholars have also begun to publish works in this field.²¹ Scholars in Latin America have also begun to produce a growing body of literature about gender in and its relationship to sexuality and homosexuality. These developments reflect the extent to which issues raised by the women's, lesbian, and gay movements in the United States have permeated sectors of academia, producing new analytical tools, such as queer theory. It also reflects the emergence of lesbian and gay social movements in Latin America.²²

Another clear indication of an increased interest can be found in the attention these fields receive by publishing companies. It is evident that sexuality has acquired a sure place in the social sciences.²³ It must be reiterated, however, that trends are not only gauged by the number of publications, but also by the nature of investigations and arguments. If titles

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18. G. Isaacs and B. McKendrick, *Male homosexuality in South Africa. Identity formation, culture and crisis* (Cape Town, 1992), pp. 165-166.
 19. S. Sievers, "Gay and lesbian research in the 1980's: History and theory", *Radical History Review*, 50, 1991, p. 204.
 20. P. Laipson, "From boudoir to bookstore: Writing the history of sexuality. A review article", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34(4), Oct. 1992, p. 644.
R. Aldrich (ed.), *Gay perspectives: More essays in Australian gay culture*, Vol II, Department of Economic History with The Australian Centre for Gay and Lesbian Research, University of Sydney, 1994.
 22. H. Munro Prescott (H-Women editor), "CFP: Gender and homosexuality in Latin America", *H-NET List for Women's History* <H-WOMEN@h-net.msu.edu>, Thursday, 24 April 1997.
 23. Routledge 1996, New books and key backlist. Gender and Women's Studies.

of the vast array of publications advertised by publishing companies are anything to go by, attempts are surely underway to explain sexuality from a much broader base than was the case initially.

3. Homosexuality and trends in South African history

3. *Academic works.*

Historical studies of homosexuality overseas have steadily increased. However, interest among South African scholars has been lacking. Two separate searches were undertaken on the UNEXUS data base.²⁴ The first search was limited to *all historical studies*²⁵ from 1985 to 1995. This period was chosen to correspond with the increase of homosexual studies overseas. The second search, covering the same period, used the key word "homosex*" and encompassed *all disciplines* in the social sciences.²⁶

No studies of homosexuality, registered in History Departments, could be traced through the first search.²⁷ The second search traced Achmat's literature study registered in 1994 in the English Department of the University of the Western Cape (UWC). It aims at explaining the construction of desire, deviance and pathology in the discourse of male homosexuality in South Africa from 1890 to 1948.²⁸

Prejudice, apart from numerous other reasons, can be cited for this seeming lack of interest among South African historians. Work emanating from the History Workshops at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) have contributed immensely to the writing of history from below through their oral history projects. It must be noted that women's studies ranging from biographical to broader topics have indeed been undertaken in the past decade.²⁹ This is in accordance with overseas trends exploring gender, power and sex roles. Both the History Workshops and women's studies have the ability to sensitize historians to the topic of homosexuality.

A broad scope exists for future academic work to be undertaken in the un(der)developed field of homosexuality in South Africa. An example of what historians and postgraduate students might be able to accomplish, is found in Oosterhoff's study entitled *Sodomy at sea and the Cape of Good Hope during the eighteenth century*.³⁰ Extensive use

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24. All studies undertaken at the various universities in South Africa are supposed to be registered at the HSRC, making this data base a (supposedly) comprehensive one.
 25. This included MA and PhD studies, both completed and still in progress, as well as studies for non-degree purposes.
 26. The electronic search method used is open to criticism. Certain titles might not contain the word "homosexuality", which would mean that in the absence of an extract or built-in cross reference system, the computer will exclude it. Another possibility - although it is against policy - is that departments and universities may fail to register projects at the HSRC. This possibility makes the data base less reliable and closer to the unacceptable truth that no data base is complete.
 27. This does not mean that no historical studies are underway, since researchers often engage in preliminary research before registering at the HSRC or a university.
 28. Z. Achmat, "The construction of desire, deviance and pathology in the discourse of male homosexuality in South Africa 1890 to 1948", (Uncompleted MA, English literature, UWC, Commenced 1994).
 29. C. Walker (ed.), *Women and gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (Cape Town, 1990).
 30. *Journal of Homosexuality* 16(1/2), 1988, pp. 229-235.

was made of criminal trail records dating back to the 18th century. The aim was to describe the extent and nature of same-sex acts among sailors and inhabitants of the Cape of Good Hope, and the institutional control thereof.

A number of articles published in South African journals have only recently begun to address themes of sexuality and gender. For this assessment, the Index of South African Periodicals (ISAP) was used.³¹ This search revealed two notable references. The article by Achmat entitled "Apostles of civilized vice: Immoral practices and unnatural vice in South African prisons and compounds, 1890-1920" analyses the emergence of homosexual practices in prisons. Implementing the Foucaultian critical paradigm, Achmat explores the historical processes that constructed the body as a signifier of power relations associated with racial, class and sexual identity.³² Lambert explored the essentialist and social constructionist theories with regard to Ancient Greek homosexuality during the classical period. A comparison between Moodie's study of migrancy and male homosexuality on the South African gold mines and the constructionist studies of homosexuality in Ancient Greece was suggested.³³

3.2. *Non academic works*

It seems that the biggest contribution to lesbian/gay history in South Africa has come from non-academic quarters. This is proven by the publication in 1994 of *Defiant desire: Gay and lesbian lives in South Africa*. It was jointly edited by Cameron and Gevisser.³⁴ Only few contributors to this publication are academics. This is in accordance with earlier developments in America; gay and lesbian activists in the gay rights movement initially recorded their own histories.

Defiant desire is groundbreaking in its scope, approach and research. Apart from specific topics, theoretical questions are investigated. It is especially the research methodology, notably the oral histories and life stories, that reiterate the need for and prospect of studying ordinary people's lives.³⁵ *Defiant desire* has been described by Kossick as a "worthwhile collection [that] succeeds in focusing new light on gay and lesbian issues...bringing into the open a subject too long neglected in South Africa".³⁶ A second edition has been published in the meantime.

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31. Key words included "homosex*", "unnatural vice" and "male sexu*". "History" was not linked to these key word searches. This made the search extremely broad. Consequently, "sexu*" had to be limited to "male sexu*". The same shortcomings pertaining to the use of a limited number of key words are applicable as is the case with any electronic search. T. Dunbar Moodie's article, "Migrancy and male sexuality on the gold mines" was first published in the *Journal of Southern African Studies*. This reference does not appear in ISAP, since it *excludes* overseas journals.
 32. *Social Dynamics* 19(2), 1993, pp. 92-110. Abstract used from electronic data base.
 33. M. Lambert, "Greek 'homosexuality': Whither the debate?", *Akroterion* 39(2), June 1994, pp. 46-63.
 34. M. Gevisser and E. Cameron (eds.), *Defiant desire: Gay and lesbian lives in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1994).
 35. See also: N. Miller, *Out in the world: Gay and lesbian life from Buenos Aires to Bangkok* (London, 1992), Chapter one.
 36. S.G. Kossick, Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron (eds.), "Defiant desire: Gay and lesbian lives in South Africa", *Unisa English Studies* 32(2), September 1994, pp. 41-42.

3.3. *New trends in South African history?*

The 15th Biennial Conference of the South African Historical Society entitled "New trends in South African historical writing: The road forward", might indicate developments within the discipline. The inclusion of the theme "Leisure, Sexuality and Violence" is quite encouraging. Those papers that covered various aspects of sexuality are: Maloka, "'Khomolia oela': 'Canteens', brothels and labour migrancy in colonial Lesotho, 1900-1940";³⁷ Phoofole, "Wayward wives and haggling husbands: the pattern of extramarital sexual activity in late 19th century Transkei"; and Mager, "Sexuality, fertility and male power in the Ciskei and Border region, 1945-1959". None of these papers discussed homosexuality itself. However, new themes, new sources, and ideas on sexuality were introduced. Epprecht's paper discussed domestic violence in the context of the development of capitalism. Reference was made to same-sex mine marriages and same-sex activities in the compounds. Mine marriages were referred to as "shameful practices". Sexual activities were also linked to self-worth.³⁸ This interpretation can indeed be questioned, especially when the findings of Moodie and Kendall are taken into account.³⁹ In the theme "Natal history", Seif's paper entitled, "Gender, tradition and authority in 19th century Natal", creates a backdrop for gender. It also attempts to explain issues related to gender in their social context. Under "women's history", Bradford's discussion of women in the Cape frontier zones, c. 1800-1870, mentioned the lack of knowledge of women's sexual relationships "with men or women" of their own race and class.⁴⁰ This at least shows a sensitivity for same-sex activities that might have existed.

It seems appropriate to conclude that an acute interest in same-sex relations and lesbian/gay studies still have room for development. It is clear that systematic attempts to unearth the history of lesbians and gays, and people who practise same-sex need to be undertaken. The lack of historical studies of homosexuality is thus obvious, a point made by Moodie:

Virtually no work has appeared on the history of homosexuality anywhere in sub-Saharan Africa, let alone in South Africa, and some would claim that there is no history to be written.⁴¹

The *First Gay and Lesbian Studies Colloquium* that was held in October 1995 at the University of Cape Town (UCT) is a step in the right direction. This colloquium had a clear message: Lesbian/gay studies have a sure place in the social sciences. Two sessions covered the history of lesbians and gays.

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37. This paper has meanwhile been published in *Journal of African History* 38(1), pp. 101-122.
 38. M. Epprecht, "Domestic and social violence in the history of capitalist reform in sub-Saharan Africa", pp. 12-13.
 39. K. Kendall, "Looking for lesbians in Lesotho", Paper presented at the *First Southern African Gay and Lesbian Studies Colloquium*, 1995, UCT; T.D. Moodie, "Migrancy and male sexuality on the South African gold mines", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 14(20), January 1988.
 40. H. Bradford, "Women in the Cape frontier zones, c. 1800-1870: A critical essay on androcentric historiography", Paper presented at the *15th Biennial Conference of the South African Historical Society*, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 2-5 July 1995, p. 18.
 41. T. Dunbar Moodie, "Migrancy and male sexuality on the South African gold mines", in: Duberman, et al. (eds.), *Hidden from history*, p. 411.

The papers presented in the two sessions entitled "Hidden from history" covered various topics. Nel's paper treated the history of, and work done by the Gay and Lesbian Organization of Pretoria (GLO-P).⁴² Southey's paper unearthed the life history of the Reverend E. Twells in the late 1800's and the discovery of his homosexual activities with some of the boys in the Anglican Church in Bloemfontein.⁴³ Steakley assessed the work of Karsh-Haack's unparalleled anthropological study published in 1911 about same-sex among natives in southern Africa.⁴⁴ Kendall presented a paper on lesbians in Lesotho. She touched upon important methodological and conceptual aspects.⁴⁵

More concerted efforts to stimulate debate must follow. The possibility of a Gay History Workshop was mentioned. If it goes ahead, it will be the first of its kind in South Africa. Taking the present level of interest into consideration, as noted above, efforts like these must be applauded.⁴⁶

4. Sources

Historians predominantly make use of written sources to unearth the past. However, the nature of social history necessitates the use of, among other things, oral testimonies, photographs, films, and other non-written traces. The merits of non-written sources are constantly debated. It is imperative that the most stringent tests are employed when unconventional and even dubious sources are used. This is necessary to ensure high standards of accuracy. New technological developments have a bearing on the nature of future historical sources. Our means of communication constantly change. Consequently, the need for new methodologies to unearth histories will arise.

A search for primary documents in the Central State Archives, Pretoria, was undertaken, using the RSAE data base through SABINET. Not all references can be traced electronically, since this data base is not yet complete. Court cases in the Court of Justice (CJ) group related to sodomy trials are a case in point. The following key words (the number of references shown in brackets) were used: "homosexuality" (2), "sodomy" (148), "sodomie" (76) "unnatural vice" (17 - not all pertain to homosexuality), and "gay" (numerous files do not refer to "gay" in a sexual connotation).⁴⁷ However, not all cases of sodomy relate to homosexuality. Sodomy included other forms of "unnatural sex", such as anal intercourse between men and women, or anal or vaginal sex between men and animals, such as mares, cows, and chickens.⁴⁸

42. J. Nel, "This is history: Out in Pretoria".

43. N. Southey, "Uncovering homosexuality in colonial South Africa: The case of Edward Twells".

44. J. Steakley, "A 1911 challenge to homophobia and colonialism: Ferdinand Karsh-Haack on African homosexuality".

45. K. Kendall, "Looking for lesbians in Lesotho".

46. Contact person: N. Southey, Department of History, UNISA.

47. Time constraints prohibited efforts to investigate the contents of all these files prior to publication of this article.

48. Documents housed at the Natal Archives (NAD) and Central Archives (CAD) were consulted. The amount of information found was, however, disappointing. In most cases, especially consultation of the AGO (Attorney General's Office) and CSO (Colonial Secretary's Office) groups presented few if any clues. Sometimes only a telegram refer to a file that was forwarded, with information on a case of sodomy that was to be tried. Not all criminal cases are reported in law journals. Documents related to a case are destroyed after a few years, depending on the nature of the crime. This policy obviously

It was hoped that the Police Museum, Pretoria, might contain relevant records. Unfortunately this is not the case. There are no comprehensive archives of police dockets and associated court documents. A few cases are, however, on display, but these are limited to murder cases. In some of these cases sodomy was committed. One such file contained graphic details of a murder case which involved two young school leavers.⁴⁹ In an effort not to differentiate between offences committed by homo- or heterosexual people, the exact nature of, and possible links between the above-mentioned murders and sexual orientation must first be established before it can be included in a homosexual history.⁵⁰

The treatment of homosexuals by the medical profession, especially in psychology, has a bearing on theorizing the concept homosexual. Psychology explains normality in a society by defining the concepts sickness, deviancy or nonconformity. Unfortunately, medical files are for numerous reasons closed. Even if historians can convince psychologists and other medical practitioners not to destroy files, permission would be necessary before the use thereof will be granted - if ever. The The South African National Defence Force has most probably the most extensive collection of medical case histories in the country. It is unnecessary to accentuate the invaluable information locked up in these case histories. The contribution it can make to the study of (sexual) identity formation, family, institutional, and societal influences, to name but a few, are invaluable.⁵¹ Attempts to recreate these evidences by whatever means will be impossible.

Social historians can attempt to cover a wide range of aspects related to gender and sexual identities. These might include advertisements,⁵² jokes, newspapers, movies, the workplace, the family, and institutions such as schools, universities and the defence force. The scope is immensely wide, since the expression of sexuality has no boundaries. The place of, and discrimination against homosexuals at the workplace can find a place in economic and business history.⁵³ The contributions of homosexuals to the economic development of the country must, however, not be interpreted out of context. Rowse made this mistake with

has dire consequences for historians who might be interested in the legal history of sex.

49. South African Police Museum, Pretoria, File 2196, MR 11 Nov. 1986, (Waterval-Boven case).
50. A policy of grave concern for historians relying on police and court records, is the lack of a sense for the conservation thereof. The destruction of certain documents and evidence regarded as "not important" hampers efforts to investigate the implementation of laws that criminalized homosexual acts as well as details surrounding individual cases. However, it is understandable that everything cannot be stored for its historical value, but the ongoing destruction is worrisome.
51. Although this might be a contentious issue, at least these medical case histories would be able to serve as historical sources. Various efforts to secure the permission of the psychology department of the South African National Defence Force to use patients' files have led to nothing - so far. One of the most important reasons given was confidentiality. A second reason given about logistics made more sense. Attempts to find files of homosexual National Servicemen that received treatment from the Defence Force's psychologists is time-consuming. Files are/were most definitely not filed according to pathologies.
52. Consumer articles, from margarine to cookies, health-care products, motor cars, etc. are always advertised with the family in mind or set within a heterosexual framework. The modern nuclear family is not universally applicable. Not all people prefer partners from the opposite sex or strive towards having a family.
53. Are there any differences in the economic activities of heterosexual and homosexual people? If there are differences in, for example, preferences to brand names, certain shops, preferred jobs, etc. how can it be related to sexual orientation? What does it reveal about sub-culture identity formation? Numerous questions must still be answered, not necessarily by historians. See: "Outright survey results: DINKS rule!", *Outright* 3(2) January/February 1996, pp. 32-33.

Homosexuals in history. Nobody will write an economic history of heterosexuals in the workplace merely because they are heterosexual. But since homosexuals usually have/had to work in fear of being exposed, it justifies the need to investigate the issue. A history of homosexuals in the workplace must be able to explain the influence of a certain sexual orientation as contributory/influential to economic activities. Examples of this are found in *Defiant desire* and *Out in the world*.

Theology most certainly deals with homosexuality. White colonists were generally of Protestant descent (without negating the influence of the Catholic Church in Africa). Calvinism has/had an important influence on sexual attitudes and practices. Christian ideas concerning sexuality most certainly excluded same-sex activities. Islam also needs to be treated, indeed Hinduism and Buddhism also; even more importantly the African traditional belief system. The archives of various denominations in South Africa probably contain relevant documents. Scholars interested in researching homosexuality and Christianity must take note of the Dutch Reformed Church's Information Centre, Pretoria. This centre contains numerous documents, and articles from religious magazines on the topic. It is, however, not the only denomination which has archives. The Reforming Church in Pretoria — also known as the "Gay Church" — has a comprehensive address list of all its members. It might be possible to use it for surveys and individual interviews, if use thereof is permitted.⁵⁴

The use of newspapers and magazine clippings is facilitated by the Institute for Contemporary History (INCH) at the University of the Orange Free State. Periodicals and newspapers have been indexed since 1978. The archives of the various newspapers and magazines might be able to supply copies otherwise not available through INCH or libraries. An area that needs attention is the perceptions created by the print media.⁵⁵ A good example of the use of magazines can indeed be found in a chapter in *Defiant desire*, entitled "A drag at Madame Costello's: Cape moffie life and the popular press in the 1950s and 1960s". Various photographs published in *Drum* dating from 1956 were used.

A project to convince people — not only homosexuals — to donate photographs, home movies, love letters, and other tangible objects to an Archive for Sexuality might be worth exploring. The use of these sources could be determined by the donors. At least — if people respond to the call — future historians will have something to work with. Apart from donating personal items, people must be encouraged to write their autobiographies and memoirs. Electronic communication, like e-mail and the telephone, leave no traces for historians. The so-called agony columns in popular magazines might shed light on relational and sexual problems people experienced. This might well one day be valued as assessable written records of ordinary people's emotional experiences.

The invention of the camera and TV have left historians with an extremely rich source of evidence.⁵⁶ Strangely enough, this source stays un(der)used by South African historians.

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54. In an interview with Reverend André Muller, the issue was raised. Efforts in this regard must be taken up with him. See *Outright* for contact numbers, or write to André Muller, P.O. Box 75641, Lynnwood Ridge, Pretoria, 0040.
 55. Examples include: "Poging tot sodomie", *Beeld*, 1.10.90; "Sodomie: Jong man gesoek", *Beeld*, 10.4.1994; "Geweld teen jong kinders skiet die hoogte in vanjaar", *Rapport*, 20.9.1992; "A complex problem now being closely examined for the first time in South Africa: The Homosexuality Report", *Rand Daily Mail*, 7.9.1968; "Jong kinders in skok-net van gewetenlose molesteerders: Homo's jag hul prooi so in nag", *Beeld*, 31.10.1988.
 56. J. Tempelhoff, "Waarneming in die Geskiedenis metodologie; Teorieformulering en bronbepaling", *Historia*, 40(2), Nov. 1995, pp. 10-11.

It is highly unlikely that earlier South African documentaries and films will have had homosexuality as a topic. However, the deconstruction and analysis of society can be facilitated through film. This brings the notion of observation into the historical realm. A new set of methodologies is needed before films and photographs can be used. Regrettably, the National Film and Sound Archives could not produce any tangible source references on the topic. The South African Broadcasting Cooperation (SABC) Archives do contain certain items on the topic. Note that the TV Archives consist of a News Archives section and a Video Archives section.

Mainstream movies in general might be worthwhile investigating. This can possibly assist in the assessment of attitudes towards and treatment of homosexuals.⁵⁷ Furthermore, gay films are in themselves important sources.⁵⁸ Even the history of pornographic movies might shed some light on what people (used to) find pleasurable. Perceptions related to masculinity, femininity and sex practices might be analysed by assessing the creative use of human bodies and sex organs in pornographic material.⁵⁹

Audio material such as recorded interviews and discussion programmes are obtainable from the SABC Radio Archives.⁶⁰ However, oral testimonies have always been regarded with some scepticism by historians, although various techniques have been developed by sociologists in the recent past in an effort to overcome the shortcomings associated with personal interviews. Whatever the case may be, social historians who are interested in (homo)sexuality might have no alternative but to use oral testimonies in their research efforts.⁶¹ This is especially applicable in the case of illiterate societies, like those found in South Africa. It is even more applicable when lives were meant to be kept secret and very little written sources have been produced or survived. In this regard audio technology cannot be ignored. Unfortunately, historians do not seem to have discovered this and other modern electronic equipment - yet.⁶²

New explorations of the complexities of homosexuality will have to employ sources from various disciplines. Since scientists from various disciplines have been interested in human sexuality, historians have a wide field to cover. The multi-disciplinary nature of this topic poses various opportunities.⁶³ But it is also challenging. Numerous sources which

57. P. Tyler, *Screening the sexes: Homosexuality in the movies* (New York, 1972).

58. M. Botha at the Department of Communication, Unisa, specializes in films and movies. Consulting Prof. P.J. Fourie at the Department of Communication, Unisa, might also be worthwhile. Films shown at **The Gay and Lesbian Film Festival** (hosted by Ster-Kinekor at certain centres in the country) are worth considering. Contact person: Nico van der Merwe, Ster Kinekor Head Office, Johannesburg.

59. It might be worth noticing that recent pornographic movies propagate the use of condoms in the wake of AIDS.

60. Numerous references were traced by means of an electronic search. Certain costs are involved in obtaining recorded copies of programme material.

61. The best examples of oral testimonies are: T.D. Moodie, "Migrancy and male sexuality on the South African gold mines", in: Duberman et al. (eds.), *Hidden from history...*; K. Kendal, "Looking for lesbians in Lesotho", Paper presented at the *First southern African Gay and Lesbian Studies Colloquium*, 1995, UCT.

62. Tempelhoff, "Waarneming in die Geskiedenis metodologie...", *Historia* 40(2), November 1995, p. 17.

63. A. Marwick, *The nature of history* (Johannesburg, Macmillan, 1981), p. 302; G.G. Iggers, *New directions in European historiography*, Revised Edition (London, 1985), pp. 181-182.

originated from sociology and sociological surveys⁶⁴ done by the HSRC, anthropological investigations, psychology, medicine, law, theology,⁶⁵ art, and literature,⁶⁶ to name but a few, could be employed by historians.⁶⁷

5. Conclusion

In comparison with the abundance of historical works produced overseas, it is obvious that South African historians lag behind in the systematic study of homosexuality. Scholars abroad have developed and contributed in numerous ways to the systematic study of the history of the body. The historical study of sexuality is however, not without problems. Many questions related to concepts such as sexuality, homosexuality, heterosexuality, gay, lesbian, queer, to name but a few, must be considered. History must include a study of ordinary people living ordinary lives. Explaining the social relationships between individuals in a specific society will depend on our understanding of the interrelatedness of human existence and the construction of social roles and meanings. This must be done with an acute awareness of the constant change of meanings people attach to those aspects that constitute their realities within specific historical contexts.

Historians still have to answer many questions in an effort to describe sexual experiences in South Africa's past. Homosexuality obviously forms part of this. This necessitates breaking through old methodological and theoretical constraints of the discipline

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64. E.M. Schurink & W.J. Schurink, *Aids: Lay perceptions of a group of gay men*, Institute of Sociological en Demographic Research, HSRC, 1990; W.J. Schurink, *The reality of homosexuality: a sociological qualitative analysis*, (DPhil, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, 1989); W.J. Schurink, *A sociological exploration of the way and life of a number of lesbians at the hand of autobiographical sketches*, Institute for Sociological and Demographic Research, HSRC, 1981.
65. G.J.D. Els, "Die beleweniswêreld van die homoseksualis en die implikasies daarvan vir die pastoraat", (MTh, Stellenbosch Universiteit, 1977); A.H. Botha, "Pastorale sorg aan die homoseksuele mens", (DD, Universiteit van Pretoria, 1976); A. Louw, "Homoseksualiteit in Ou Testamentiese perspektief", (MTh, Stellenbosch Universiteit, 1978). Various studies are in progress. See HSRC data base.
66. M. Krouse, (ed.) *The invisible ghetto: gay and lesbian writing from South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1993); Z. Achmat, "The construction of desire, deviance and pathology in the discourse of male homosexuality in South Africa 1890-1948", (MA, University of the Western Cape, Research in progress); J.A. Classen, "Study to determine the existence of a gay psyche as illustrated through gay literature", (MA in progress); I. Van Rooyen, "The concept of a gay paradigm in relation to mainstream literature", (MA in progress). Numerous other titles can be obtained from the HSRC.
67. L.E. Glanz, *Attitudes of white South Africans towards certain legal rights of homosexuals* (Memorandum submitted to the President's Council, Pretoria, HSRC, 1984); S. Schulze, "Homoseksuele identiteitsvorming by 'n Groep Suid-Afrikaanse mans", *South African Journal of Sociology* 22(3), August 1991, pp.78-83; J.P. Loedolff, "Homoseksualiteit: 'n Sosiologiese studie" (MA, Universiteit van Pretoria, 1951); G. Kinsman, "'Homosexuality' historically reconsidered: Challenges heterosexual hegemony", *Journal of Historical Sociology* 4(2), June 1991, pp. 91-111; C.G. Kotze, "Psigoterapeutiese beskouing met betrekking tot homoseksualiteit", *SIRSA*, (Monografieë van die Sielkundige Instituut van die Rep. van S.A. Referaat gelewer tydens die dertiende kongres van SIRSA, Bloemfontein, Okt. 1974); G. Isaacs and B. McKendrick, *Male homosexuality in South Africa. Identity formation, culture, and crisis* (Cape Town, 1992), is an example of a popular publication that originated in part from a PhD study. See: G. Isaacs, "The growth of homosexual identity: An empirical study from a social work perspective of crisis in sexual identity experienced by a sample of homosexual persons in Cape Town, with special reference to cultural factors" (Univeristy of Cape Town, n.d.).

itself. In an attempt to write the history of the hidden ones, a change of attitude might be an appropriate point of departure.