Domestic space and the performance of identity: the role of house parties in shaping sexuality and space in Cape Town.

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ABSTRACT

The public spaces of visibility and interaction within Africa's 'gay capital' of Cape Town are typically associated with attractive men, beautiful beaches, amazing social events, and a lavish lifestyle. Such spaces include clubs, bars, and high-profile events – all of which have received attention from scholars. However, few studies have interrogated the experience and role of queer social spaces in Cape Town within the domestic realm. This study focuses on house parties and their role in the performance of visibility and identity in the context of Cape Town and falls under the traditional geographical theme of social interactionism as it aims to explore how domestic space is perceived and used amongst actors of a particular social milieu. Using both ethnographic and archival methods, this research draws on the history of such social gatherings in the domestic setting while also interrogating their current use as spaces of interaction. Through a deliberate focus on queer domestic spaces, this study fills a gap in the literature on sexuality and space as it aims to explore the role that domestic social spaces play in the expression of gay male identity.

KEYWORDS

domestic space, identity, sexuality, LGBT+ community, house party

DECLARATION

I declare that Domestic space and the performance of identity: the role of house parties in shaping sexuality and space in Cape Town is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Full name: Andrew Jacobs

Date: 10 November 2023

Signed:

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"If anyone feels that they do not have a safe space, know that there is a community. There is a family. If you're being disowned by your family, there's another one you can come to." – Wes

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1. CHAPTER ONE: WELCOME TO THE PARTY

1.1 Background & Rationale

Given that the South African history of homophobia is so racialized and vastly different from any other country's past experiences, it is an important part of history to be recorded and studied from various points of view. Many tend to think that it is because of the racial divide in South Africa which have driven many queer[1] persons of colour out of city; however, it is in fact a long history of events prior to the establishment of urban social spaces such as gay clubs which led to people of the LGBT+ community gathering in domestic spaces.

Queer, often used in opposition to homosexuality and/or heterosexuality, is used within this literature as a way of describing not particularly 'gay', but that which is questionable and peculiar (Tucker, 2009 and 2010). During the Apartheid regime, acts of sodomy[2] were frowned upon, with all those showing signs of queerness often being targeted not only by strict policing at the time but also by the general public. The Immorality Act [3](RSA, 1986) allowed for same-sex actions to be punishable by law (Elder, 2003). For this reason, ballrooms and gay clubs did not exist in South Africa during the *60s* and *70s* as they did in America (Bailey, 2014), and therefore secretive parties were held in households in what were considered to be the domestic social spaces (Visser, 2008a, 2008b; Livermon, 2012 and 2014). House parties therefore provided a safe space for gay and queer individuals to 'be themselves' and enact their queerness through the visibilities of things associated with the LGBT+ community such as the Pride flags, tutus and feature boas on gay men, and other subtle hints of queer performances (Tucker, 2010).

House parties – social gatherings in the domestic sphere of the home – not only existed as a means to secretly rebel against the homophobic Apartheid government at that time, but also to copy gay culture from abroad and apply it to our own context. Gay material culture, having been mostly observed and practiced from North American and European LGBT+ people and spaces, has gained momentum and adapted to mingle with all sorts of cultures from around the world, from the gay cruising bathhouses in Asian-European Singapore and Turkey, the house

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[1] *The use of the term 'queer' in this thesis is inspired by Tucker (2009a) who argues that "…to be queer is framed as an endeavour to consciously and continually question regulative agendas that normalise within society". Using the term queer thus allows individuals and groups the possibility of knowing subversion (2009, p. 16).*

[2] *Sodomy – referring to sexual intercourse which has been described as unnatural acts of indecency from men lusting after men, as depicted in the Bible in the story of the city of Sodom.*

[3] *The Immorality Act – Act No. 57 of 1969 which included acts of sodomy was a law passed by the then Apartheid South African government of 21 May 1969 deeming such acts punishable.*

balls in the United States of America, the drag parades in the slums of Brazil, to the ghettos of South Africa. In watching documentary and television shows such as *Paris is Burning*, *Pose*, and the most recent *Casa Susanna* one can see what role these safe spaces played for persons of the LGBT+ community who were not allowed to be themselves in the hetero-normative public. Similarly, queer people in Cape Town have adopted the ideas of bathhouses and balls. What was seen on television and in magazines were recreated and shaped to blend in with the taste of South Africa where each agent added their own flavour to the context.

Unfortunately, much of the research into gay and material culture has neglected to actively look at how human actors, both individually and as a group, behave as well as the non-human actors which play a role in contributing to the production and consumption of the culture (Wagner, 2011 and 2020). Despite the limited scrutiny of house parties in South African LGBT+ communities, the domestic spaces of house parties have played an important role historically, particularly in evading the punishment under the Immorality Act (Elder, 2005b). House parties took place in different neighbourhoods which not only limited how freely gay men could express their sexualities, minimizing the risk of conflict by taking into consideration the attitudes and behaviours of their neighbours, but also influenced how these parties were conducted in terms of racial and cultural differences which shaped the basics of house parties. Though the reason behind gay house parties may have changed over the years and have different meanings to young and old it is still the preferred space where queer people can be themselves and freely perform their sexuality. Although having different meanings or interpretations of what it means to be gay and how the performances of gay identities (Butler, 2013) are practiced and portrayed, many aspects of every individual's thinking and behaviour still have the same roots and similarities amongst them within gay culture.

Whilst there are many different racial groups with varying experiences of sexuality and space, the focus is not primarily based on race alone and the experiences of a group in its entirety but rather so the personal experiences of the individual and how their perceptions of space and sexuality have informed house parties throughout the ages. By looking at individual perceptions and how these perceptions have influenced the reason and/or need for house parties in the past and present time, and by reducing the focus of race, age, and class of the gay actors, whether urban or rural and public or private, can thus result in a wider sense of sexuality and space within the LGBT+ community if we strip it down to the root meanings and considerably note that all actors play a vital role in the framing of gay culture across borders (Gardner *et al.*, 2000). This is a term called geographical *integration* whereby we overlook the social

differences and inequalities, beyond the exclusion and marginalization of homosexual and queer groups, as the fundamentals of gay culture are practiced all over the world which thus homogenize homonormative practices and create a sense of world community. I am therefore interested in how people and things have transformed domestic spaces through symbolic practices of house parties, as both human and non-human actors place identity to the space through fashion, food, conversation, and other forms of entertainment (Agnew, 1987; Kraftl, 2007). By looking back at the history of house parties using archival sources and gathering the narratives of gay male house party guests in contemporary Cape Town, this research aims to explore the use of social space and how gay males give meaning to these spaces through their ways of social interaction and performed identities to be included in an urban LGBT+ community.

1.2   Research Problem

In the public sphere, the 'gay scene' in Cape Town is often associated with attractive men, beautiful beaches, high profile social events, and a lavish lifestyle. To-date, much of the academic explorations of queer Cape Town have focused on intersections of sexuality and space in the public realm. Scholars such as Rink (2008a, 2008b, 2013, 2016), Visser (2003a, 2003b, 2008a, 2008b, 2013), Tucker (2009a, 2009b and 2010), Elder (2003 and 2005a), and Sonnekus (2007) have focused on urban leisure spaces. Such a view of LGBT+ social life in Cape Town however limits understanding of the role of domestic space in shaping social life and identity.

Few scholars, such as Waitt & Gorman-Murray (2011) and Livermon (2012 and 2014), have written studies on the domestic sphere. Those who do discuss domestic spaces, however, tend to focus more on gay and lesbian identities and their roles in the household (Johnston & Valentine, 2003; Murray, 2003; Gorman-Murray, 2006a; Lambert, 2006; Holland-Muter, 2018) which are aimed at stretching the notion of the home and reconfiguring meanings attached to domestic spaces, or cases of prejudices in the workplace (Gevisser & Cameron, 1995/2013; Soeker *et al.*, 2015) towards persons of the LGBT+ community..

House parties provide opportunities for social mixing in a similar vein to night clubs, yet they take place outside of the public realm. They are an important – yet underexplored – geographic space for the performance of queer identities. A gap in local and international literature creates an opportunity to focus on social interaction within the domestic sphere of the private home, and how the social practices of both human and non-human actors shape sexual performance

and gender identity within domestic space. In order to get a mix of responses, I will be looking at the major regions of the Cape Town area as my site of study, namely the Western Atlantic Seaboard, City Central (CBD), Northen Suburbs, Cape Flats, and the Southern Suburbs which may result in themes differentiated by race, age, and possibly income.

1.2.1   Research Aim

The research aims to explore the role of house parties in shaping gay male identity in domestic space.

1.2.2   Research Objectives

This study will seek to achieve its aim through the following objectives:

- by framing the history of gay house parties in using archival sources from Gay and Lesbian Memories in Action (*GALA*) Queer Archives at the University of the Witwatersrand, and from the District Six Museum in Cape Town; and
- exploring the role of domestic space for social interaction and identity performance through ethnographic methods of observation; and
- by unpacking and discussing the narratives of gay individuals and their engagement with domestic space, in particularly house parties.

1.3   Chapter Outline

Chapter One: Welcome to the Party.

This chapter introduces the background, aim, and objectives of the study, while also highlighting the justification for such research through sexuality & space scholarship that focuses predominantly on the public sphere. This chapter thus contextualises the role of house parties in shaping sexuality and space for gay men in Cape Town.

Chapter Two: Celebrating Queer Space.

In this chapter, I review the international and South African literature that frames the debates on how sexuality and space are co-constituted. Using queer theory, this chapter demonstrates the need to study domestic space and spatial practices, through South African examples of house parties.

Chapter Three: Manifesting Party Space through Research Design & Methodology.

This chapter details the study's use of qualitative research methods including participant-observation and interviews to gain knowledge into the phenomenon of house parties. Using these methods, the role(s) of house parties are explored and given meaning to through social constructions.

Chapters Four & Five: Findings & Discussion.

In these chapters which have been divided by historic (chapter four) and contemporary (chapter five) data, the findings aim to interrogate the data which were interpreted using thematic- and situated analysis. Observations made while in the 'field' (of house parties) also contributed to exploring the role of domestic space in gender and sexual identity performance. Based upon these findings, I then discuss the role of house parties in shaping sexuality and space for gay men in contemporary Cape Town.

Chapter Six: Shutting down the house.

The final chapter looks at how both human and non-human actors have contributed to the production of house parties and shaping the identity of domestic space as a haven for performing sexuality, in the past as well as now. I then draw the study to a close by relating the findings to the research aim while also speaking back to South African and international literatures on sexuality and space.

2.   CHAPTER TWO: CELEBRATING QUEER SPACE

Links between sexualised cultures of consumption and the production of sexualised spaces have been given much attention, especially in the urban setting of society. However, very little research has been done on the role of domestic spaces on shaping space and performing different gender roles. The study of socially constructed realities (Bruner, 1991; Bourdieu, 1989; Kinkaid, 2020) through the use of domestic space by both human and non-human actors thus gives an insight into how sexuality and spaces are shaped through social interactions. This study is conceptually framed by literatures that focus on the intersection of identity, space, and place and therefore explores the production of knowledge into a particular sector of the LGBT+ community by delving into the lives of self-identified gay men and their meaning-making of the role of house parties for a gay male audience.

Identity and sexuality are situated in the performance of a community as actors situate themselves in these real and imagined spaces. The identity of space is thus developed out of the representations of the space (Lefebvre, 2014); however, limited identity formation takes place within these spaces through the limitations of the imagination and how others may react to the setting (Visser, 2003a and 2003b). As the research examines the role of house parties through situational analysis (Pauwels & Mannay, 2019), which entails listening to the dialogues of actors, it is important to note that the term 'actors' may in this case refer to both human and non-human subjects and objects which represents the practice.

With the focus of this study mainly aimed at exploring the space, identity, and the interactions within these spaces I start off with how spaces are often taken for granted but offer the best observations of social relations between the marginalised and invisible groups of society (Duncan, 1996). Therefore, with the study being on gay house parties, knowledge is thus socially produced within space which is influenced by what is considered to be global Gay Culture and the social relations of the participants of the particular setting they find themselves, which in this case is the domestic home. I am to do this study by firstly evaluating the theoretical works of Lefebvre (2014), Kraftl (2007), and Bourdieu (1977, 1989, 1996 and 1997) and thereafter analyse the data from images and interviews to establish themes. This study therefore explores the production of knowledge into a particular sector of the LGBT+ community by delving into the lives of self-identified gay men and their meaning-making of the role of house parties for a gay male audience in Cape Town.

2.1 Defining Space: A Shift in Views

The concept of space has always been studied by Physical geographers in its absolute[4], physical terms with relation to the location where each one of the individuals within that spatial setting knows exactly how to act or conduct themselves in line with what they have seen, heard, and taught through experience, as well as the rules which govern that space; such as a learning institution where staff and students are controlled by a set of rules meant to control chaos and activity within the four walls of a classroom or lecture hall and the confines of the institute's grounds (Bourdieu, 1997).

It is only up until the 1950s when a paradigm shift changed the way space was conceived. Geographers therefore reconfigured their understandings of space and its human relations by going beyond the physical setting and treading into the mental perception thereof. As a turnover, Human geographers then approached the concept of space in its relative[5] terms as a socially constructed idea by the occupants of that particular space (Hubbard *et al*., 2002) where it is believed that spaces carry powerful meanings because of their symbology (Tan, 2015). In contrast to absolute space, relative space thus focuses on how space is constituted and given meaning through human endeavours. Here space is not physical, but rather produced through socio-spatial[6] relations. Hence, no laws pre-exist to dictate actions, but rather constructed by cultural and social relations between people and things (Hubbard *et al.*, 2002).

Whist many queer and feminist scholars argue that the concept of space is conceived in male terms, thus marginalizing the opinions of women, others however suggests that it is important to include both the male and female perspective to feminists and queer theories in order to create an unbiased, duo understanding of a phenomenon. As this is seen as a gap in the literature for the production of knowledge, there is thus a call for further study in order to understand the relationship between sexuality and space.

2.2 Sexuality & Space

The study of sexuality and space has been given much attention to in books such as *Defiant Desire* (Gevisser & Cameron, 1995/2013) and *Mapping Desire* (Bell & Valentine, 2003) among other literature. Exploring space in the public or domestic realm requires an acknowledgement of its construction with identity, including but not limited to race, religion,

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[4] *Absolute – Physical aspects of space which refer to its x, y, x position in place.*
[5] *Relative – Perceived aspects of space which are socially constructed in the mind of individuals.*
[6] *Socio-spatial – The relation between society and space. It constitutes the relationships and activities which take place within spaces (e.g., worship in churches, learning in classrooms, dancing in clubs).*

gender, and sexuality (Livermon, 2012). Whilst it is not the focus of this study, race and gender have had effect on how people performed different sexualities and the how queer spaces where shaped. Before we can look at how gay males, as agents[7], inform house parties, as structures[8], we firstly need to review how other structures of heteronormative society, the state institutions, and concepts of identity have shaped sexuality and space and the performance of queer people.

The state generally acts as a suppressive masculine power in a patriarchal society, as seen in many parts of the world where there has been a struggle for freedom of expression for sexual identity (Rink, 2008a), where masculine ideologies are often imposed onto society on what it means to be a 'man'. This was particularly the case for most South African men whose sexuality were policed by the then Apartheid government who viewed acts of sodomy (when a man lies with another man in the biblical sense) as taboo and an insult to the roles of a man in the family home (RSA, 1968). It is only in 1994 when South Africa became a democratic country that these laws were abolished and allowed for same-sex partnerships. This however was frowned upon with backlash from homophobic idealists which at times committed harsh and violent cries against members of the LGBT+ community which thus makes one question whether all public queer and/or gay-friendly spaces around the world are truly there to accept the LGBT+ community or whether it has been used as a means to monitor and police queer persons which are seen by the state as a threat to heteronormativity.

While Oswin (2006) believes that there are no pre-existing notions of sexual identity, Rose (1993) argues that these identities are relational to one another as it involves the process of 'othering' – the *us versus them* position (Blumer, 1986). Masculine identities therefore depend on the existence of femininity, so too does homosexuality exist in opposition to heterosexuality. Therefore, the one cannot exist without the other. However, as heteronormative behaviour forms the basis of many societies, homosexuality is often referred to as 'unnatural' or 'ungodly' as it goes against the ideals of the family in the setting of the home/household, among other institutions and structures such as religion and cultural traditions (Oswin, 2010; McEwen, 2018). Heterosexism therefore supported the idea that heterosexuality is natural and anything other was abnormal. In this, the masculine ideology amongst most heterosexual men is that other men can be gay; as long as they do not show it; thus, forcing gay men to hide their sexual

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[7] *Agents – a human person or non-human object which is used to identify a practice.*
[8] *Structure – the institute or space used by the agents which is governed by a set of rules and the roles they play.*

identity in public and only practice it in their private spaces (Hodge, 1995; Elder, 2003; Tucker, 2010; McCormick, 2015; Valentine, 2016).

This was viewed as un-African and unnatural especially the case for people of colour such as black queer men who are held closely to their traditional notions of masculinity in that men are to act and behave in a certain manner which is seemingly dominant and aggressive towards other people (Henderson & Shefer, 2008). Homophobia hence maintained a sense of hierarchy in heterosexual males who ruled public space and non-heterosexual males who were stigmatised and marginalised.

Not only in the workplace, but in several public spaces do gay men experience such prejudices. Gay men therefore need to conduct themselves to the standards of heteronormativity amongst their straight peers, colleagues, and others in order to avoid homophobic violence by dressing 'straight' or not showing public affection to their partners (Valentine, 2016; Soeker *et al*., 2015; Tan, 2015). In this, they alter their appearance by creating false identities in order to protect themselves for fear of being ridiculed in public spaces. Their queer *visibility* (Tucker, 2010) therefore undergoes a sense of gender fluidity at times as their performance of identity shifts in various contexts, such as playing the role of a butch[9] man in public versus that of a queen[10] in private (Gevisser & Cameron, 1995/2013; Murray, 2003). Identity is thus a social construction in itself by men performing differently to social practices to adapt to the space and setting (Bruner, 1991).

2.3   Identifying the Need for Gay Spaces

Gay discos and bars across the world existed out of the need to create a space for the LGBT+ community to express themselves which they were denied in public spaces of visibility during the 60s to late 80s. These places involved symbolic performances such as gay pride parades and dances (Visser, 2003b; Binnie, 2004) which imprinted cultural and sexual identity onto places, whilst also empowering queer individuals with a sense of community belonging which they were often denied in certain spaces (Tan, 2015). However, certain public spaces did not always offer the freedom for queer expression and visibility (Tucker, 2009a, 2009b and 2010). Many of these spaces were often raided as an anti-gay stance by the state to enforce their vision of heteronormativity upon society (Visser, 2003a and 2003b). This includes examples from

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[9] *Butch – Refers to a queer individual who portrays themselves as manly – a masculine role.*
[10] *Queen – Refers to a queer individual who portrays themselves as womanly – a feminine role.*

around the world such as the infamous 1969 Stonewall raid in New York City, or that of the 1993 police raid of the popular gay disco Rascals in Singapore, among other.

Much of the socialising of LGBT+ persons took place in spaces, which were more private and queer accommodating, where the freedom of self-expression was emphasised. To evade the brutality of police forces and facing prosecution for same-sex acts, smaller gatherings took place in the form of bathhouses, ballrooms, and house parties (Haslop *et al*., 1998). These gay ghetto spaces outside of the inner-city were areas for gay men to work, live, and play in their pursuit of establishing a community of their own as they were not accepted in the inner city (Kraftl, 2007).

The idea of queer spaces hence threatened the gendered and centralised order of heteronormativity in public spaces and its exclusionary tendencies of hetero-normalised space, thus leading to the construction of 'safe' spaces where queer actors could exercise their agency and perform their sexualized identities (Rink, 2008a) which also provided an escape for gay men from these heterosexual spaces (Visser, 2003a:129). This created a community on the outside and away from public view with a space especially centred for homosexuals who were not biologically related but rather a chosen queer *fam* (Harie, 2019).

2.4   The Case of Queer South Africa

The case of South Africa is therefore very complex as it was fuelled by racial tensions and other issues which displaced many queer families – leading to the desire of belonging and hence the creation of house parties. To paraphrase Gevisser & Cameron (1995/2013), the unfortunate truth for many gay men in South Africa is that they are unable to freely practice their sexual identities. While the intention of this study is purely focused in exploring the *general* role of house parties without is coming across as homogenous, we must firstly look at how different races and/or cultural groups enacted house parties in the past in order to paint a picture of what these practices were like and their initial intentions, before we are able to move forward and plot the way for the new-age subcultures and their interpretations of house parties.

In the South African context, social gatherings took place in various privatised spaces across different races. *Stokvels*, or *gooi-gooi* [throw-throw], originated in the township of Soweto near the city of Johannesburg and were said to at first only consist of men, but it has predominantly been taken over by women with the concept of the home and stokvel parties having changed over the years. The spaces where stokvels took place were not only a place where people could meet and contribute to the 'pot' in sharing food and alcohol, but also considered sites of

community formation for Black people of Soweto. This was a weekly social practice among many black persons in what is considered to be townships with the practice later becoming rebranded to only exclusive to Black women of older ages who would meet to discuss and plan grocery hampers or the financial dividences which they have equally given a monthly contribution to. This new cultural trait was made popular in the South African Broadcast Channel (SABC) show *STOKVEL* where it depicted the women meeting at a house to gossip while the men were banned from the meeting, and the house in general, and were allowed for that time to meet with their male friends at a local shebeen or the house of another. As these parties occurred spontaneously, only members, particularly Black working-class South Africans who lived in the townships, knew where and when these gatherings took place. In the Lefebvrian view, these spaces were represented not only by its queer actors, but by materials such as music, food, and drinks (Livermon, 2012 & 2014). Similarly, *GAT* parties originated in White Afrikaner communities in the northern suburbs of Cape Town, such as Parow and Bellville, and was thus known as such for it being in old quarries which was called *die gat* [Afrikaans for 'the hole'] for its location. The space was queer-friendly and but remained true to its Afrikaner origins by including langarm[11] dances and sokkie[12] music (Taraldsen, 2015). Apart from this, Coloured queer persons then also had their own subcultural practice or parties, which very little is known of.

Unfortunately, all forms of queer identities were scrutinised under the apartheid era. Many parties therefore took place within the setting of the home, so as to evade laws which discriminated against their sexual preference. House parties therefore provided a much-needed space of queer socialization where gay men enact homosexual acts, perform identities, and establish relationships in domestic spaces to align themselves with the LGBT+ community (Giddens, 1984; Agnew, 1987; Tan, 2015).

However, in January of 1966 police raided a gay party in Forest Town, Johannesburg, which later lead to the stricter laws being set in place. On 21 May 1969, the Immorality Act was amended to include the "men at a party" clause to Section 20A which claimed that any occasion where more than two people occupied space and conducted homosexual activities was considered a gay party and was therefore punishable by law (RSA, 1968; Elder, 2003 and 2005b). News of the New Forest house party raid in Johannesburg therefore struck fear into

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[11] *Langarm – Longarm form of dance to country-type Afrikaans Folk music which is an up-tempo form of the waltz.*
[12] *Sokkie – A form of Afrikaans music and dance, popular in White Afrikaner communities.*

the LGBT+ community which sent them into hiding by seeking out more private spaces (Taraldsen, 2015).

2.5   Urbanizing the Spatial Studies

Before moving to domestic space, it is important to look at how space was conceptualised in the urban context and whether these ideas flow into the domestic sphere or are completely unhinged from one another. Bringing it to local literature, Rink gives an example of how urban spaces are used to shape space and its identity of queerness. In his recent study, Rink (2016) largely uses the concept of *quartering* in urban spaces as a 'symbolic framing of culture' (Bell and Jayne, 2004). Rink (2016) identifies three types of quartering; namely: Gay, Bohemian (ethnic), and Lifestyle Quartering. His explanation of gay quartering relays more to the concept of place and place-making as the study is defined by a physical locale (i.e. De Waterkant); thus, these places within the public eye allows for limited expressions of sexual identity.

Quartering paved the way for sexual liberation through social interactions and the shaping of the city where the upcoming gay village offered a space for gay men to experience a utopian lifestyle of gay subcultures (Haslop *et al.*, 1998). However, in these public spaces some gay men experience discrimination homo-prejudices from others, and therefore needed private spaces to practice their sexuality.

In his study of De Waterkant, Cape Town, gay clubs and bars offered a space for queer individuals to express themselves, however, these spaces were nonetheless contested and tended to favour a White minority (Rink, 2008a, 2008b and 2016). Not only did gay men experience discrimination from the outside heterosexual community, but subtly from within the homosexual community as well for their race and social class. Although being considered open spaces for gay males as it was placed in the public sphere and provided a platform for sexual citizenship, it discriminated against people of colour as it was only exclusive to White gay males during the 1980s and 1990s (Rink, 2008a); thereby restricting the free flow of other agents of gay culture and their meanings of the space (Ballard, 2005; Rink, 2016). This can be seen in some clubs where race rears its ugly head in clubgoers displaying slight signs of racism.

While these spaces aimed to create a sense of *communitas* (Tan, 2015) these spaces were built upon the forced removals of 'the others'; where many people of colour were forced out of the area and visited only for work of leisure to a place which was once their home. This could be seen in the article of Ballard (2005) where white people saw persons of colour entering the city as a threat where their sense of community and the utopian urban lifestyle they lived being built

upon the displacement of its original brown inhabitants due to the Group Areas Act (GAA – Act No. 41 of 1950).

This 'Westonification' (Tan, 2015) not only lead to the modification of the city but also had a devastating effect on the early flourishing of the gay culture which began to take place in District Six, such as the Kewpie balls at the Ambassadors Club and drag shows at Madame Costello's, among other (Gevisser & Cameron, 1995/2013; Chetty, 2013; McCormick, 2018). The influx of new actors altered the identity of the space as a multicultural area with a family-like feel into that of a gay quarter by destabilizing and establishing a new gay village on top of its original identity of the Cape Malay area which consisted of large mixed families (Rink, 2016). This form of quartering created the opportunity for a new breed of young white actors to populate and assert their own sense of culture and identity in an already existent context, thereby shifting the identity of the community from what the locals considered an oriental mixture of spices, people, and cultures to that of a bohemian one which was seen by foreigners as something strange and exotic, yet vibrant. These outsiders hence became part of the new fabric of identity of the area, which removed the diverse ethnic tapestry of what community used to be before apartheid – a place which they termed bohemian due to its exotic and diverse nature – which goes against the ideas of what De Waterkant and District Six used to be; a rich multicultural landscape comprised out of a variety of people from different races and religions.

2.6 Queer Community Formation

After having looked at *where* (the structures) these practices were performed, typically studied in the urban context, we now look at *who* (the actors) these social practice participants are and how they have formed communities of people to perform said practices. Social practices, through sexual, gender, and racialised norms, are situated in the performance of communities who gather to take part in cultural and subcultural practices which define and maintain the bonds of its members. While the notion of the 'home' as a place of rest and relaxation for the privacy of families (Hooks, 1989) has been adapted with the inclusion of friends for the purpose of gathering for entertainment whilst still keeping the privacy which they may not have in public spaces such as clubs, bars, or pubs. In an interview by Rink (2008a) which he conducted with an anonymous business owner, the interviewee states "Their home became a focal Point for friends and formed part of Loader Street's new reputation as a street filled with house parties" (Rink, 2016:25). He goes on to say that "It's a strange area. We've become so friendly with so many people. It's a 'tight' village. Everybody knows everyone; [De Waterkant] not really for families. Families don't really survive here; pets don't really survive here" [sic]

(Rink, 2016:25). From this, it is evident that the purpose of these gay spaces was to attract like-minded individuals with common interest, such as getting together and knowing other gay men – and possibly find a partner – or simply a party to gossip and share news (Rink, 2008a). Though this may seem like the perfect setting to begin defining the role of house parties to establish connections, their view at the time of a tight-knit, village-like community was based on the inclusion of like-minded people only as themselves – white, pale skin European characteristics.

The notion of 'village' therefore "...brings with it a sense of community and a feeling of security" (MacLeod & Ward, 2002:159). However, these spaces were not always inclusive of all racial groups, although similarly identifying as gay, and thus led to the need for private spaces to practice sexual identity. These smaller queer communities were hence built on the sense of identity and security (amongst people and spaces) as well as a sense of belonging (Holland-Muter, 2018). As Latour (1999) says that socialising is important in creating a sense of belonging and inclusion to the actor network, this sense of community was and still is established by actors who are spatially unbounded individuals with aligned interest and similar practices. This topic has been heavily debated by scholars with some standing for the point of belonging as a natural part of live as opposed to others who stand for the point that it is the bonds we nurture with others that makes us part of a community.

Whilst Emile Durkheim (1982) claims it is in our *nature* to belong, it is in the opinion of Edmund Leach (1976) that this sense of belonging is only a matter of *perception* of the individual. We may therefore think that we belong to a certain group and assert ourselves within the group because we behave like 'them' – however, the other individuals who take part in the collective actions and practices which identify the group may not consider the outside individual as part of the collective group of actors.

Similarly, Knopp (2004) says that this community building and homogeneous practices creates a false notion of *togetherness*. This implies that although one has a feeling of being part of a space one may not truly be so unless accepted by the dominant powers of the community; for instance, you may bring a friend of yours to a party of another, however, that person is considered an outsider until only after being acknowledged by the host or collective group irrespective of that person taking part in the social activities alongside the other members. However, in the LGBT+ communities these lines of power or blurred as there is no one

dominant ruler but rather consists of smaller groupings with numerous seemingly dominant figures such as the one who always decides where the group is going clubbing this weekend.

Elder too notes that "what this space creates is a myth of 'community', while so masking the life of gay and lesbian people and the material inequalities of globalization" [sic] (2005a: 580). The inequality between gay men, according to race, age, and class, therefore creates exclusion of the global notion of gay culture, thus creating smaller variations of gay culture – subcultures – both locally and internationally. For this reason, the gay scene in Cape Town may be different to that of Durban and Johannesburg in terms of language use, accents, and material culture (different consumption of food, music, and clothing), whereas the club culture in South Africa as a whole is different to that of clubbing in America and elsewhere (Oswin, 2006). In order to understand community formation and actor networks we therefore have to look at the interactions of agents within these practices and the perceptions of what unites them, which thus requires a shift in theoretical thinking.

2.7   Problematique: A Shift in Theory

Although Bell & Jayne's (2004) theory of quartering aims to identify the character of a place, by means of the production and consumption of place (i.e. the occupants who use the space) which thus gives it meaning, it is flawed as it continues to consider the most common identity of a space; thereby ignoring other smaller spatial practices within the larger area, similar to aspects of queer visibility where only that which is visible is considered as agents which gives the space its identity. Though working for physical, and specifically urban social spaces, these concepts cannot fully define a space as its identity is constantly shifting due to the space being "…characterised by a patchwork quilt of spaces that are physically proximate but institutionally estranged" (MacLeod and Ward, 2002:164). This means that various spaces and practices may take place in close proximity to one another, however, each one has its own purpose and identity and therefore cannot be clustered into one unform identity or theme. To paint a picture of this, the mall may serve as a public space with the purpose of shopping, however, each shop and section of the mall such as the food and entertainment areas may have their own identities. Similarly, the home as a place of leisure too has spaces of intimacy (bedrooms and bathrooms) and spaces for socialising (lounge, tea garden, backyard, and entertainment space) (Hooks, 1989).

Theories such as Quartering and Visibility in its basic absolute terms are only able to answer questions for urban spaces and not domestic spaces and therefore does not function as an

inclusive theory which needs to be thought of relatively in order to expand beyond its spatial boundaries, so as to include a wider network of agents which all contribute to the practices and meaning-making of spaces within its social context.

Moving away from these theories and wishing to explore space by means of *queer meaning-making* whereby agents deem to shape the ideas of practices (Holland-Muter, 2018) through the use and understanding of both human and non-human actors, my approach to the study is therefore similar to that of Knopp as it looks at the radical notion of agency involving human and non-human objects (2007). I base my study on the theory of social practices and take a queer approach to the study which rejects the concept of space in simply its basic terms, thus moulding it to suit my argument as to why we should expand our view of spaces beyond its urban domain and focuses on smaller individual spaces. In applying this approach to the domestic sphere, it offers a freer expression of sexuality to be studied. I thus use the Social Practice Theory (SPT) as a framework to inform my study in the field of domestic house parties.

2.8   From Theory to Practice

The social practice theory originates from scholars in Anthropology and Sociology such as Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens. Social practices are based on the relationships of the individuals and the context in which they find themselves (Blumer, 1986; Bourdieu, 1977). It is for this reason why scholars of Anthropology have used the concept as a tool to frame their ideas whilst doing ethnographic study in the field. The theory of social practice requires an understanding of how space is utilized and is why I am interested in including this approach to the study as it has become a topic of importance within the fields of Geography, Anthropology, Sociology, and Psychology to reaffirm group identity by means of social interaction within a particular space.

Theorists view these practices as a central point of departure for understanding social systems and may thus branch out to other fields of study, including the discipline of Geography (Giddens, 1984). The Social Practice Theory can be of value to scholars of Geography as this framework is a suitable starting point for exploring the roles and meanings of social practices and the behaviour of individuals as actors who portray their agency within different social milieus (Holtz, 2014). We may therefore apply this knowledge to the phenomenon of gay house parties.

Social practices are activities which structure the lives of groups of people with one or more common interests amongst its members in order to form a sense of community through socializing which is defined by the authors Browne & Bakshi who state that "socializing refers to the act of meeting others for social/leisure purposes" (2011:193). Many of these spaces are performative and involve social practices for gay men which include Pride marches, bar hopping, gay clubbing, and house parties. How gay men practice their agency within these structures is what gives these spaces their identity. The Social Practice Theory is thus used to explore the usage of space (Giddens, 1984) whereby gay men form part of a network of actors who give meaning to the space by means of social practices. With this, the Actor Network Theory (ANT) which may be summarised to describe the relationship formed between people who are connected by a common goal, ideology, and/or practice (religious and learning institutions as example) further explains how actors unite to form a community of people who play a large role in the shaping of sexuality and space through these gay cultural practices (Latour, 1999 and 2007).

According to Lefebvre (2014) spatial practices often heavily relies on the perception of space. Massey (2009) therefore states that space is both a process and a social product which arises from the social practices and the relationships within them, thus focus has been largely placed on the actors and their symbolic interactions which contributes to the collective practices and meanings of culture. These meanings have largely arisen from their own interpretations of their group actions (Bourdieu, 1977 and 1989) as well as the narratives of past and present actors themselves and the meanings which they place on their individual or collective actions. One thing which anthropologist lacks and where geographers could possibly make up for is to include the interpretation of space and place both in physical (absolute) and socially constructed (relative) terms, whereas anthropology has mainly focused on the actions of the actors and how these actions and power relations contribute to a structure – the structure versus agency debate which argues whether the people as agents place more importance on the structures, or do the institutional structures of culture, politics, and economics influence how people react in society (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1989; Hubbard *et al*., 2002). Hence there is a gap in literature and a need for a multidisciplinary study which adopts, adapts, and combines theories to give a better look into a phenomenon of people and their interaction in spaces, not just by the physical interactions but by the meanings of these actions given.

The trialectic Lefebvrian view from 1991 whereby space may be *perceived*, *conceived*, or *lived* gives a good understanding of space as it encompasses three major characteristics: spatial

practices, referring to the behaviour and movement of people within a particular context; representation of space, referring to the human and non-human actors such as the materials and props which gives meaning to the space; and finally the existence of space through the lived experiences of people and the feelings they attach to the space (Lefebvre, 2014).

Taking into consideration people's perception of the space which may influence their behaviour and performance of identity in certain social settings we are able to grasp a unique understanding of the individual and their narrative to their surroundings (Butler, 2013). Given the Lefebvrian argument that social interactions involve both human and non-human actors, social practice theory is thus useful as a framework for understanding spatial practices such as house partying, the interactions, and the symbology within these social domestic spaces.

House parties not only create a sense of community by bringing people together and socialising with one another through symbolic activities but has also framed the formation of gay culture within the domestic sphere (Bourdieu, 1989). The concept of space is hence not taken in physical terms, but rather symbolically. House parties therefore acts as an entity on its own; a subculture; whereby homosexuals shape the ideas of gay culture through their symbolic actions, representations, and interpretations of the space they use (Lefebvre, 2014). It therefore presents a gateway for multiple forms of citizenship (fem, butch, twink, drag, et cetera) to develop in these spaces which branches out to the wider range of LGBT+ community (Soeker *et al*., 2015; Tan, 2015). The phenomenology of social space in the setting of house parties may thus be studied through the usage of space and representations thereof which are socially constructed (Bourdieu, 1996; Kinkaid, 2020).

2.9   House Parties: A Move Towards the Domestic

Social space can take place in two forms; firstly, public space which is often linked to the urban context, and secondly, private space which is linked to the suburban domesticated context (Bourdieu, 1996). The domination of heteronormativity suggests that much of public space is understood to be heteronormative and thus waiting to be queered by LGBT+ persons. As Tan (2015) notes, "Everyday spaces are more heteronormative than heterosexual, in that only certain heterosexualities are publicly acceptable" (Tan, 2015:2205). This being an indication of the space and the agents which occupy the space being heavily affected by the structure and the rules which govern it. The *gaying* up of space therefore implies that space undergoes changes in identity from a predominantly heterosexualised space to that of a queer space through the social actions and mere presence of gay men (Sonnekus, 2007). Multiple forms of

space can co-exist which means that spaces can therefore be simultaneously gay and straight (Visser, 2008a and 2008b).

Though the concept of home is fixed by the physical location to a place in its spatial sense, which is absolute, it is important to also look at its relativity as it reflects the meaning of the practices within a social milieu. It is therefore time to move away from heteronormative thinking and consider queer perceptions and the relativity of spaces which give it its identity. The house, which is typically seen as a place of leisure (Hooks, 1989), can thus be considered what Livermon (2014) calls 'the situation, or as the "material site of socialisation" (Holland-Muter, 2018: 83). The home as a place of enquiry is used as a conceptual framework through which the phenomena of house parties are studied. With a shift in the way of thinking of space we can thus observe that any space has the ability to change its identity. The meaning of home therefore takes on new meaning and allows for the production of space and the performance of queer identities to create and practice a gay subculture in domestic spaces.

Although attempting to study domestic spaces for LGBT+ use, many scholars have taken different routes in understanding how spaces are used by queer people in the setting of the domestic home, often studying it only as a place of leisure for biological families rather than as a space for socialising of queer families (Gorman-Murray, 2006b; Tan, 2015). In my opinion, these domestic spaces however were better suited as it offered a space for inclusion and safety of identity performance where both human and non-human objects shaped the space through symbolic social practices and queer world meaning making (Holland-Muter, 2018).

The problem with space, be it public of private, is that these spaces have – and may continue to have – the tendency to exclude others and to bar entry or participation to those considered as outsiders, which may be intentional or unintentional depending on the acknowledgement of the others' presence in the space and activities. Only those who can identify with the other agents of that context may hence take part in the symbolic actions of that particular culture and thus be considered as part of that actor network, family, or community.

Although not intentionally being exclusive towards particular individuals, domestic spaces are primarily catered towards groups of friends and acquaintances, however, human actors within these spaces are quite accepting of outsiders – to an extent which allows the outsider to feel welcomed and partake in social activities without having the power dynamics shifted to a point where the identity of the space may be threatened or changed. Nonetheless, the notion of these spaces serves as a space for the performance of gay identities to exist through symbolic

interactions which this research aims to explore through the phenomenon of house parties (Binnie, 2004).

As observed in the literature, certain spaces offer a certain level of comfort and inclusivity to different individuals. Whilst some spaces are considered public and are therefore more open, not all queer persons felt comfortable practicing their sexuality freely within these spaces as they were surrounded by others whom they do not know and may feel restricted to certain acts of conduct. As many identities and sexualities could not be freely practiced in heterosexualised spaces, people of the LGBT+ community needed to practice their sexuality in spaces which were away from public eyes. The location of these spaces constantly changed out of the need for secrecy. For this reason, various gay spaces existed outside of the city centre in suburbs, townships, and rural areas for queer people of colour to perform their sexuality by retreating to the *home* (Visser, 2003a, 2003b, 2008a, 2008b and 2013). This means that the individual may feel more comfortable at 'home' – not necessarily his own – but a space in which trusted peers are as this space is considered to be pleasurable by those who use this space. The concept of home therefore does not only refer to the individual's personal physical address but can be constructed in the space of another where they are accepted by friends and family; be it their biological, adoptive, chosen, or queer families (Harie, 2019).

Kraftl thereby depicts the queer domestic sphere as a safe space for social interaction to comfortably perform identity, as opposed to heterosexualised public spaces which are often homophobic and suppresses the ability to perform gay identities (Kraftl, 2007). House parties within the domestic space of the home therefore are considered more private and intimate, thus giving the individual the feeling of safety and security to express their sexual identity as they are surrounded by peers in their supporting community and need not fear judgement from the public eye. As these practices are privatised, one would feel more comfortable wearing a dress in private than in public.

House parties thus arose in domestic spaces outside of the city as a need for performing their identity safely, the sense of security therefore presumes that both risk and rewards are shared in the space by those like-minded individuals, thus also bringing with it a sense of belonging (Kraftl, 2007). These spaces therefore involved performances such as dress-up theme parties with symbolic interactions between the actors which imprinted cultural and sexual identity onto space. Using Bourdieu's (1977 and 1989) social practice theory and incorporating Lefebvre's

(2014) aspects of space thus shape the understanding of the production of social domestic space (Kinkaid, 2019).

Social practices within these spaces holds symbolic meanings to the actors and contribute to the shaping of gay culture. There are various non-human aspects which plays a role in the setting of gay house parties, such as the actual venue or *locale* in which social relations are constituted (Agnew, 1987), *food*, *theme* of the party, *history of events* (previous events leading up to the current one), and *language* which identifies a space and its practices and may all have different meanings attached to them.

The Social Practice Theory therefore encompasses all three of Lefebvre's understanding of space. Going back to Lefebvre's (2014) ideas of what constitutes space, it is evident that both the symbolic social interactions between gay men (as human actors) and materials such as music, food, and other objects (as non-human actors) has given identity to space through the social practice of partying where queer identity is performed, thus shaping gay culture in the domestic sphere (Blumer, 1986; Bourdieu, 1989).

These communities create an actor network (Latour, 1999 and 2007) and brings human actors together through the use of non-human actors, such as food and entertainment in a private space of one's home (Agnew, 1987). I therefore stand in favour of the view by Kraftl's (2007) *utopia of the homely* which gives the idea that domestic spaces are the perfect places for establishing social connections and expanding the actor network with food and entertainment in a private space of one's home, to that of public spaces of bars and clubs.

As we have seen, space and the meaning of space therefore has the ability to change. I therefore further argue that space in itself has no identity of its own and is shaped by the thinker's imagination. It is the idea that space is sexualized and given identity by the people and things which are used in that setting in general day to day life. My argument is that it is not gender itself which identifies a space as either heterosexual or homosexual, but rather the human and non-human actors which gives meaning to space. Kraftl's *utopia of the homely* therefore adds to my argument for the need in understanding domestic spaces as it gives the idea that domestic spaces are better suited places for establishing social connections. This may be emphasized by the understanding of the performativity of space in arguing that it does not have a preconceived notion of gender, but rather conceived and recreated through symbols and actions which represent the space.

I therefore do not see space as a heterosexualised subject *waiting to be queered* (Gevisser and Cameron, 1995/2013) as it is neither heterosexually male nor female, but rather a non-binary spaced which can only be defined by the human and non-human actors who occupy and use it as they wish to. It is thus my strong opinion that because of these human and non-human actors 'space' is therefore sexually fluid as it has the ability to transform the setting and shape its identity through the people and things which occupy it, thereby giving it character. For instance, if you wish to host a Nautical theme party and make it truly authentic, what will give it its character is firstly the design of the invitation, then the rules and expectations of what to follow which is set out on the invitation, the venue itself would be near the ocean or have an element of water – a pool perhaps – to give it the feeling of being near water and creating an atmosphere, thereafter we focus on the decorations, food, and music which are all to be linked to the occasion. By changing any of these and mixing it with others are not only aesthetically unappealing but also change the identity of the space and the practice it is intended for. Space therefore cannot be assigned a gender, unless in the case of public restrooms which retain strict gendered guidelines. The blurring of gender identities and roles therefore requires that we look at who is using the space and how it is being used along with what gives the space its identity.

In observing the behaviour and performance of gay/queer identities within the phenomenon of house parties such as that of Kewpie and the ladies of Casa Susanna (Capozzola, 2006) and others (Visser, 2008a and 2008b; Livermon, 2012 and 2014) we can thus create a study on the different themes which stem from the perceived, conceived, and lived experience of these social spaces.

3. CHAPTER THREE: MANIFESTING PARTY SPACE THROUGH RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

Ontology – There is no one way of doing research as various scholars use different paradigms to inform their methodology. Paradigms therefore become an accepted means of gathering knowledge from existing theories which may be merged in favour of the development of new transformative and inclusive way of thought and research. In my research I follow the Constructivist view to the ontological belief in theory in saying that people socially construct their own realities where values and opinions can be known and measured through unique methods, thus legitimising its content and use as a production of knowledge and insight into the phenomena of house parties.

Epistemology – Human geographers often clash with the objective views of physical geographers and therefore require theories of knowledge to be adapted from other fields of humanities in order for their research to be valued and understood. For this reason, I adapt the Social Practice Theory to my study as it focuses on the material, people, and their practices.

Ideology – This study in in line with the behavioural geography theory and social interactionism (Blumer, 1986) as it looks at a typically marginalised group of people where knowledge does not simply exist only in the physical, but also in the social context. By exploring spaces beyond the urban setting into the domestic I take a situated approach in looking at the objectives and rationale behind house parties, emphasising the social construction of knowledge. Although this is frowned upon as this approach does not follow a scientific route which is quantifiable, it does hold qualitative evidence which is often lacked in research. Therefore, the spoken words of the participants hold valid knowledge and value into the phenomenology of house parties as it is a narration of their personal experiences which lead to socially constructed meaning of the realities of spaces.

Ethnography - Using both archival and ethnographic methods, this research draws upon the rich history of gay social gatherings in the domestic setting while also interrogating their current use as spaces of interaction. Whilst the archival approach using resources from *GALA* traces the history of house parties as secretively organized gatherings seeking to evade sodomy laws (RSA, 1968), methods including participant-observation and semi-structured interviews provide the narratives of self-identified gay men in Cape Town and their experience of and performances within the context of house parties.

3.1   Research Design

The research design was strongly influenced by the methods used by Pauwels & Mannay (2019), with the primary focus and context focussed on the materials within these social spaces (Table 1). Studying gay culture in terms of the Lefebvrian view also requires one to look at the materials which make up the space. Whilst there are no definitive methods as to how research must be followed, it is always helpful to have background knowledge of previous works. Often more than not a mixed methods approach is followed. I therefore adapted my strategies to suit the phenomena of house parties as a situation of inquiry.

Table 1: Four Orientations to Material Culture. (Source: SAGE Handbook, Pauwels & Mannay, 2019:85).

Comparative dimensions Orientations	Artifacts	Technology	Materials-that-matter	Materiality
Primary focus of inquiry	Products and tools of cultural practice	Cultural productions and associated materials, tools, strategies, and outcomes	Materials that subjects notice and regard as significant for whatever reason	Material foundations of culture and social life
Vernacular question	What are these things and what do they mean?	What materials and tools do these people use to accomplish x, y, or z?	What materials do these people care about and why?	What interaction effects characterize these people and their physical environment?
Primary contexts of analysis	Index objects to where they were found, acquired, used, and relative to other objects similar in form	Index objects within cycle or circuit of cultural production and relative to objects with related functions	Index objects to perceptual and symbolic world of subjects	Index objects to social/physical ecology and relative to other populations and locales
Archetype disciplines	Archaeology and art history	Ethnography, bio-engineering	Ethnography, cultural studies, market research	Ethnology and human ecology

While the above was very informative, I found it difficult to situate my study to a particular framework which took into account Peter Kraftl's 'notion of the home', Henry Lefebvre's 'aspects of space', and Pierre Bourdieu's 'theory of social practices' which were the three fundamental theories while also looking at Agnew's materials which are used along with other scholars. For this reason, I then adapted to a framework which combined to find a theory which looks at how the social practices of parties are constituted in the situation of the home which not only shapes and reshapes the aspects of space but the performance of sexuality(ies) within these spaces. The exploration of house parties through the three major theories is therefore a result of the methods depicted in Figure 1 below which shows the methods used to both collect and analyse the data.
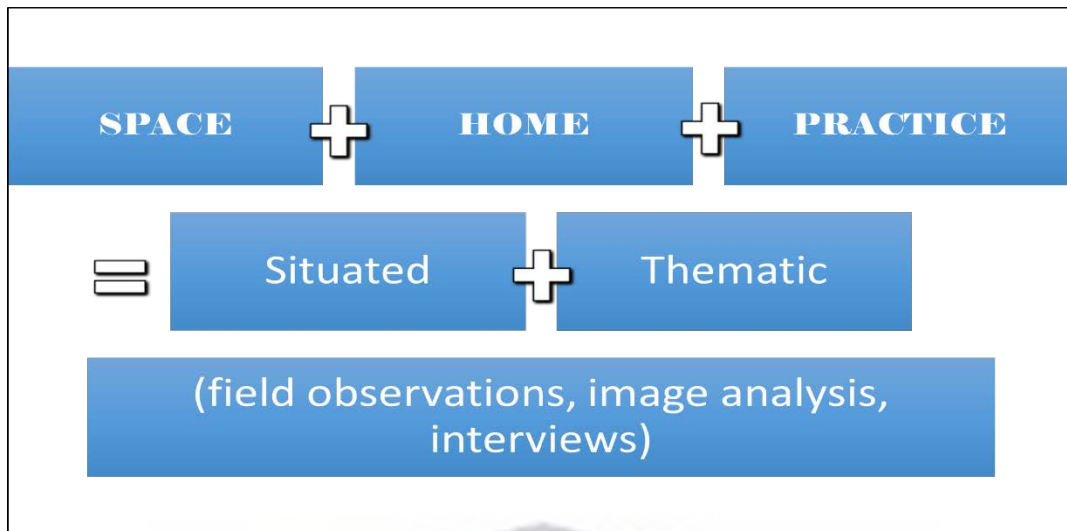
Figure 1: Research design for the analysis of house parties. Generated by researcher.

3.2   Data Collection

3.2.1   Archives of Historic Imagery

Open Access Images were collected from the Gay and Lesbian Memories in Action (*GALA*) archives from the University of the Witwatersrand in Braamfontein, Gauteng, which formed part of the historical visual data. Access to the *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* collection, which were digitized between 2016 and 2018 and is available at the District Six Museum in Cape Town, Series A: Photographs were provided by the archivists as it gives a detailed view on the life of Kewpie from Kensington and was implemented into the study which illustrates the struggles faced by gay men for acquiring access to spaces where they can express their sexuality. The use of these images paints a picture of past house parties and the uses of space by both human and non-human actors. The authors Pauwels & Mannay, (2019) claim that studying images are crucial as material culture matters. In these historical images we are able to see the things which are used in social practices, how they are used, and what their importance may be. The pictures speak to us as to how they interacted in these party spaces by giving its own queer identity – a space in which they could express themselves freely without the fear of prejudices and homophobic violence. By looking through the Kewpie Photographic Collection AM2886 (as seen in the Appendix C) – which consisted of six standard sized archive boxes and was purchased by the GALA from Eugene Fritz (Kewpie) in 1998 – we are able to observe materials such as food, drinks, clothing, and other decorations within the space which not only changes the identity from a normal house but into a party space which was shared amongst he and his queer peers during a time which was not only difficult for the LGBT+ community alone, but so too for all persons of colour irrespective of their sexuality

during the Apartheid era. I then use these images as a bases of understanding which human and non-human objects to look at and how each and every element shapes and gives meaning to the space; for instance, kitchen appliances within a space is suggestive of a kitchen area, bedding and wardrobe would be suggestive of a bedroom or sleeping quarters, and similarly then a mixture of food, music, and entertainment may be suggestive of social space. In order to understand this we will therefore be exploring the meanings of these materials indicated in the images.

3.2.2 Ethnographic Fieldwork

3.2.2.1 Network & Sampling

Participants were identified through social networking and advertising at the 2020 Cape Town Pride festival right before the Covid pandemic hit the city. The tiny pamphlet as seen in Image 3.1 gave minor details of my intended study which led them to the Facebook page, *The Queer Guide to a Kiki* (www.facebook.com/Kikiqueer), which I created to not only spread awareness of my study but also share news of the history of queer icons and other LGBT+ community interests. In this way I was able to expand the field of study to a wider audience through **snowball** sampling as the audience shared the information to others. This has shown good results as seen in Table 2 below with the posts reaching a grand total of n=753 Facebook page followers, of which n=716 Facebook users were from South Africa. Of this South African total, my target was the n=285 persons in particular who indicated that they were from Cape Town, hence relying on this sample of people to spread the word by sharing the post and/or link to the page.
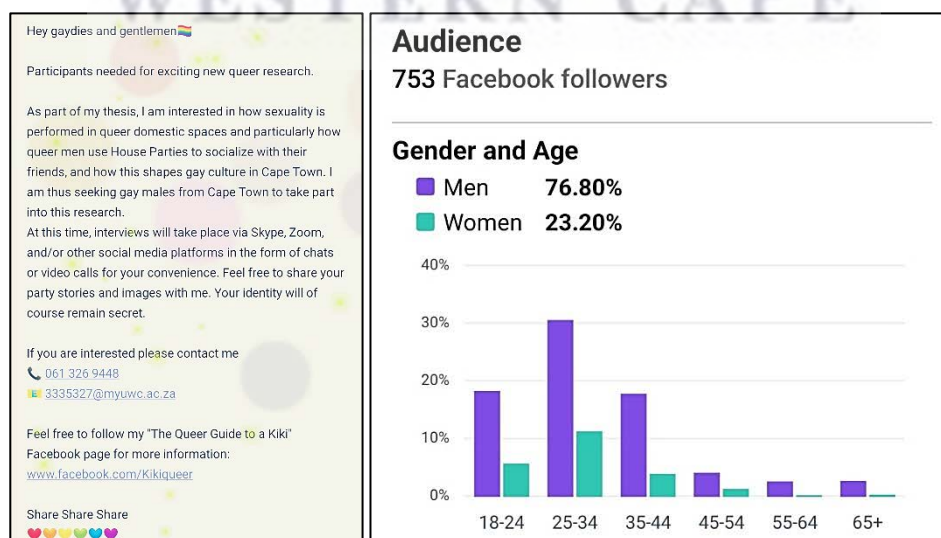
Image 3.1: Call to research handout. Source: Image by Researcher.

Table 2: Facebook page statistics. Source: Facebook.com/Kikiqueer (2023).

Potential participants of the study were able to contact me via phone or email. Once the participants have shown interest and reviewed the Information Sheet (as seen in the Appendix B), further discussions on the study were explained before attending their house party or conducting interviews. A total of n=15 male participants were selected for the study from the surrounding arounds of the Cape Metropole (Table 3).

Table 3: Participant Information. Generated by Interviewer.

ID	Pseudonym	Area	Metropole	Age group	Race
1	Baby	Valhalla Park	Cape Flats	20 – 30	Coloured
2	Rick	Belhar	Cape Flats	20 – 30	Coloured
3	Valentino	Manenberg	Cape Flats	20 – 30	Coloured
4	Fred	Kraaifontein	Northern Suburbs	30 – 40	Coloured
5	Dash	Mitchell's Plain	Southern Suburbs	20 – 30	Coloured
6	Dawie	Sea Point	Atlantic Seaboard	50 – 60	White
7	Gina	Kensington	Northern Suburbs	30 – 40	Coloured
8	Wes	Bo Kaap	City Bowl	40 – 50	White
9	Phil	Zonnebloem	City Bowl	60+	Coloured
10	Sipho	Gugulethu	Cape Flats	20 – 30	Black
11	Hart	Gardens	City Bowl	30 – 40	Coloured
12	Charlie	Camps Bay	Atlantic Seaboard	40 – 50	White
13	Julies	Paarl	Northern Suburbs	30 – 40	Coloured
14	Jan	Bellville	Northern Suburbs	50 – 60	White
15	Lance	Gardens	City Bowl	30 – 40	Coloured

3.2.2.2 Observations

The philosophy of phenomenology suggests that the best manner in which to describe a phenomenon is to place oneself into the context of the other. In this way we are able to assert our own attitudes and perceptions of reality, thereby understanding and appreciating the subjects of study in its context. For this reason, upon attendance of the domestic party the concept of **participant-observation** (Bourdieu, 2003) was used where the researcher can both observe and engage with the various human (people) and non-human (food, beverages, decorations) actors, thereby also creating my own interpretations of the space I find myself in. This method is highly recommended in the field of Anthropology as a performance ethnography in understanding the field and/or subject(s) of study and their social practices. Recording fieldnotes in-situ did not seem socially acceptable as I was amid others who not only required my attention but would also take away from having the full experience of situating myself in the space. For this reason, notes were made immediately after arriving at my personal place of residence and were accompanied with images taken at the 'event' to add to my collection of observational data. By using this method, I was not only able to observe how the space is used and shaped by the activities which takes place, but also able to participate in these social activities, thus creating my own learning experience and gaining perspective on how people interact in the setting of house parties and how they perform their sexuality.

The Covid pandemic played a large role in not only delaying the progress of fieldwork due to lockdown restrictions but also in ways in which data could then be collected for the period of March 2020 to July 2022. In the cases of events which were not able to be physically attended by myself the method of **visual observation**, through images as well as videos of prior house parties which were sent by participants before the interview was used. This allowed me to formulate questions relating to the material (*What was the theme/colour scheme for the party, and why? / What is the significance of the music playing in the background?*). Without having to change the research design, methods of observation and interviews could thus both be switched to an online platform and be conducted virtually.

3.2.2.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted with the participants at an agreed time and date following the house parties. These semi-structured interviews formed part of the contemporary narrative data and served as a basis for access to deeper questions and knowledge of the phenomena of house parties in Cape Town. The idea was to dig deeper into their (the participants) perceptions of space. Participants were able to give their own

explanations and delve deeper into their lived experiences of house parties by answering these open-ended questions which allowed the conversation to flow freely.

In the cases where the interviewer (myself) and interviewee (participant) could not physically meet, meetings then took place on online virtual media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Google Meet, and ZOOM. The major research tool for this study was a mobile device which could record these interviews and then reused as a playback for transcribing the data. This will provide visual, audio, and textual proof of the interviews which have taken place and will be transcribed into a direct transcription document. Questions could therefore not be clearly established beforehand as it may change as the study progresses or new ideas may emerge whilst in the field. Below are a few base questions which may or may not be used, depending on the flow of the interview and questions which needed to be answered:

- *Have you had house parties before, and what were they like?*
- *What was your experience like at this particular party?*
- *What makes this space so special (to you or your group)?*
- *How comfortable do you feel by expressing yourself in this space?*
- *What do you think is the most important part of a house party?*
- *What is your meaning of gay culture?*

3.3   Data Analysis

3.3.1   *Situated Analysis*

Situated analysis of images were supported by the Sage Research Methods Handbook (Pauwels & Mannay, 2019) which claim that it is important to study cultural practices through *visual analysis* as it captures the significance of the phenomenon. We therefore look at these images and seek to find the material culture of things which "…includes foodstuffs, clothing, tools, family photographs, decorative beadwork or tattoos, religious regalia and relics, drugs, server farms, home and office furnishings – and the homes and offices themselves, dolls, toys, armaments, automobiles, and much more" (Wagner, 2020:77). Whilst this means of analysis requires one to know the purpose and intention of the group and the phenomenon beforehand, this method is suited as these images capture a part of history in the situation which can be legitimised through both the point of view the participant who provided the images and the researcher in a *participatory* and *subject-centred* approach. This is a duo method whereby the participants presented the images and their interpretations thereof which was followed up by the researcher asking questions related to the things which are or are not visible in the images.

3.3.2   *Thematic Analysis*

Thematic analysis of texts which were derived from the semi-structured interviews with the participants and materials used to give meaning to the space analysed the answers provided and attempting to find common trends amongst house parties. Whilst the initial idea of clustering the data in terms of race and location was seen as important, as we have seen in the literature that queer men in the past were divided by race (i.e. only white Caucasian males versus people of darker coloured skin) and location (i.e. city centre and suburbs), I then chose to not differentiate the data in order to get a holistic view of gay culture at house parties. In this, I was able to find general themes surrounding food and drink, music and dance, language and conversation, and popular clothing cultures which all play a role in the identity of queer spaces. Whilst the data was not based on race, age, or class it was however evident later in the study that these aspects had very subtle influences on how the partygoers performed and experienced house parties, without it being a definitive factor in establishing the themes of analysis generated. These themes will then be further explained by finding differences and similarities in their meanings of space, thus giving meaning to the role(s) which house parties play in shaping sexuality and space.

3.4   Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was based on the considerations of personal information protection of all participants, as seen in Ethical Clearance Letter grated by the UWC Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix A) which was later updated to suit the restrictions on fieldwork during the Covid-19 pandemic As a study that seeks to explore the formation of sexual- and/or gender identity, concern over the protection of participants is paramount. What participants felt comfortable sharing during the interview they may not feel comfortable sharing in public (Pauwels & Mannay, 2020). This may include, but not limited to, their names, contact details, images, or parts of their stories which may link the data back to them. For this reason, participants were be given the opportunity to choose their own pseudonyms, or have one assigned to them; hence the research design will ensure protection of participant identity and the minimisation of potential harm. Interviews took place in a setting which was mutually decided on by the researcher and the participant where both were comfortable and could speak freely. This usually took place in a quiet coffee shop during the day or using an online meeting platform. Audio and voice recording were used with the knowledge and consent of participants. This audio data was much more accurately transcribed than simply making notes during the interview which distracted from the conversation. These points were noted in the Consent

Form (in the Appendix B) signed by the participants, giving informed consent to the use of the interview and image data. The faces on all participant-provided images have been blurred so as to protect the identities of any persons captured in them.

3.5   Research Limitations

This study is limited in its spatial and temporal scopes, as well as its sample size. From a spatial perspective, the study is not restricted to a fixed physical location or study area as these domesticated social practices of gay men (unlike that of the public realm) are scattered across geographic boundaries. Thus, the results cannot be generalised across geographic space. However, the study seeks to be inclusive of the social space of house parties across the Cape Metropole including the Atlantic Seaboard, Southern suburbs, Northern suburbs, and the Cape Flats areas, thus giving a holistic view of Cape Town. Temporally, fieldwork could only take place in the months from November and January, encompassing the festive season when house parties were more numerous and participants more willing to participate as they were off from work. In spite of the increase in parties during the summer season, not all domestic-based social gatherings take place during this season as some took place in the months between June and September which showed an increase of birthday parties, Halloween house parties, and spring mixers. Finally, with regards to sample size, a house party does not necessarily have to be a large affair but can also be a small and intimate gathering of people. For this reason, sample size is not definitive and may vary.

3.6   Timeline of Research

- *July 2019: Proposal submission and application for Ethical Clearance.*
- *August 2019: Ethical Clearance granted for fieldwork.*
- *September 2019 to October 2019: Gather participants through advertising and networking.*
- *November 2019 to February 2020: Intended fieldwork (Placed on hold).*
- *March 2020: Covid-19 Lockdown commencement in South Africa.*
- *May 2020: Methodology restructuring and new Ethical Clearance application.*
- *June 2020: Ethical Clearance granted for new fieldwork.*
- *July 2020 to January 2021: Delay in fieldwork due to lockdown restrictions.*
- *February 2021: Approval of archival image use.*
- *February to March 2021: Literature search and write-up.*
- *April to July 2021: Draft chapters submitted to peer-reviewer.*

- *August 2021 – July 2022: Delay in fieldwork due to lockdown restrictions.*

- *August 2022: Application for Extension of research.*

- *September to December 2022: Data collection and analysis.*

- *January to February 2023: Findings and discussion chapter.*

- *March 2023 to July 2023: Commencement of studies and thesis write-up.*

- *August 2023: Full draft thesis submitted to supervisor.*

- *September 2023: Intention to submit and appointment of examiners.*

- *October 2023: Supervisor feedback and editing.*

- *November 2023: Submission of final thesis for examination.*

3.7   Personal Experiences

The number one hindrance at this time of all study is the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, also known as the Corona Virus, which has caused many researchers to reconsider their research. The Government of South Africa declared this a National Disaster and to limit the spread have implemented a nationwide lockdown as of Thursday 26 March 2020. Social distancing under lockdown restrictions therefore prevented all fieldwork to take place as people may not come into contact with others apart from their direct household attendants.

Considering the high rate of active cases of corona virus patients in the Western Cape and particularly Cape Town, this therefore meant that there were no house parties allowed to take place and therefore no physical contact as in original Research Proposal. I have therefore added the alternatives.

I was initially to do fieldwork in February 2020, however, with the news of a deadly virus making the rounds it caused much fear and panic. Although the virus was not detected in South Africa as yet, much activity was limited which caused a strain on networking to gather participants. The first week of March came, and with it the first case of the virus in South Africa. At that time I was working at the University where teaching and learning had already been halted until further notice for the second term of the semester.

As we waited for news to return to campus for work and studies, more cases made headlines. This resulted to online methods of teaching and learning which caused a further strain on research as the research methodologies then had to be adapted in line with the Covid Regulations. Not physically being in the presence of others during house parties and observing their culture however took away from the personal experience of what is to be observed and learned in the cultural space. I then conducted virtual interviews and relied more on the pictorial

data of participants and the experience of house parties. It is only in 2021 where some restrictions were relaxed which allowed me to once again attend these social events with in-person interviews.

I still find that engaging with the LGBT+ community is a struggle because of these close-knit group of people still finding it hard to open and accept outsiders into the clique. In the final stages of editing, the issue of loadshedding then presented an obstacle in completing the thesis writeup as I had to work without electricity. However, the overall experience during the study was eye-opening and enjoyable, with much to learn.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: UNPACKING HISTORY THROUGH KEWPIE

History, be it good or bad, is of utmost importance to study and honour within literature, media, archives, projects, and in the classroom as it helps to understand queer cultural history, uplift current generations and their fight to promote progressive social change, and to shape the future of the LGBT+ community and their culture. Books, television series and documentaries such as *Me* by Ricky Martin, *Pose*, *Paris is Burning*, *The death and life of Marsha P. Johnson*, *Before Stonewall*, *A Secret Love*, and others all shed light on the lived-experiences of LGBTQ+ persons and serve as excellent history lessons to both young and old. By studying material such as the Kewpie collection we are able to not only have a look at the past events, but also understand and compare such events to modern times. Pauwels & Mannay (2019) suggests that unpacking such images gives an understanding of what makes up space and what things, human and non-human, define the spaces and the practices within them. Relating this data to the framework of Lefebvre (2014) hence paves the way for understanding the role of house parties and how this has helped shaped gay identities, the social spaces used by gay men, and its contribution to gay and queer culture.

In the past the *moffies*[13], as they were known amongst the locals, were a largely accepted group of peoples (Harie, 2019). However, that has changed during the Apartheid era when acts of sodomy were considered taboo. Queer visibility (Tucker, 2009a, 2010) had to be concealed as homosexuality was punishable be law. Although we now live in a democratic country which was the first in the world to include gay rights in its new constitution, the rights of gays have not been completely accepted by all South Africans.

The use of the tern queer, at the time of Kewpie, was an indication of those questioning their sexuality, at times even being referred to as moffies. The reason for this being that while these men are attracted to other men, they may also display themselves as females and take on the role of women – something which modern day society may view as a transgender/crossdresser. Gay males who showcase more feminine homosexual characteristics (termed *queens*, *twinks* or *moffies*) receive and experience more homophobic prejudices than their masculine (*butch*) homosexual peers as their sense of manhood and manliness is not portrayed in their sexual identity, thus threatening the concept of manliness and its conservative social attitudes and

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[13] *Moffie – a popularly used in Coloured communities in the Western Cape of South Africa the term moffie originates from the Afrikaans language and is a colloquial term used to describe gay men who display signs of femininity and flamboyancy (Cage, 2003) and is equivalent to the derogatory terms of 'queer', 'faggot', or 'flikker' (Chetty, 2013).*

norms of what it means to be a *man* within our patriarchal society (Elder, 2003; Soeker *et al.*, 2015).

Eugene Fritz (1941-2012), better known as *Kewpie*, was one such a gender-fluid queer icon who symbolises the 'not so ordinary' individuals who challenged the patriarchal heteronormative society. He/She – the pronouns both being accepted by Eugene at the time as he transitioned between gender roles, often being referred to as he/him by his family and she/her amongst friends – ran by their own rules and bent gender forms by expressing him/herself through fashion and hairstyles. Being a male hairstylist, Eugene already went against the norms of what was expected of a typical male role but showed a glimmer of hope for LGBTQ+ acceptance in the larger community as many people went to his 'hairdressers', Salon Kewpie, in Kensington. His exhibit Kewpie: Daughter of District Six, which is on display at the District Six Museum in Cape Town, shows the life and times of Kewpie with his peers from where he lived and worked in Kensington, to where she partied at the District Six Ambassador's Club. Whilst (s)he and friends, who were famous 'moffie' drag icons in the District Six community at the time, loved to perform at the *jol* (club) they also thoroughly enjoyed several house parties where they could freely practice and perform their sexuality, often shaping the space around them from a heteronormative living space to a queer party space.

Queer archives and exhibitions such as the Kewpie Collection capture the most intimate parts of history and recreate these spaces of queer truths for public memory. Including LGBTQ+ history studies in education gives us a deeper sense of the persons and the roles they played both in the private and the public eye, hence I have selected this particular collection to include into the study as it not only illustrates the shaping of queer spaces such as the Ambassador Club and the example of the Marie Antoinette Ball, but also gives a rich historic account of house parties held at the time where these queer persons changed the space to give it a new identity. Accurately recorded collection titles for the following images may be found in Appendix C and related contact sheets.

4.1 Rutger Street, District Six

Just off to the side of the well-known Hanover Street, which is also the current name of a modern nightclub in GrandWest Casino and Entertainment World, we find old Rutger Street in the area which has now been renamed to Zonnebloem after the forced removals of District Six residents during the Apartheid era. It is here in one of the homes, which was also used as a

salon space during the day, where much of the socialising took place during the evenings, with 1974 being a popular year of many house parties captured in the pictures of Kewpie and his friends.

Image 4.1: Christmas lunch in Rutger Street. Source: Image provided by D6 museum.
Image 4.2: Kewpie's party in Rutger Street, 1974. Source: Image provided by D6 museum.

Despite the hardships at the time, these images symbolise the importance of family regardless of how that might be defined (Image 4.1). Be it biological, queer, or chosen family was more than just sharing a meal together but sharing a bond with people who formed part of their actor network. This particular image has been used in many of the Kewpie covers, advertising, and articles and shows how big of a deal queer family was. These were people that they would more likely spend their quality time with, people who are like them, who loved and supported them, as opposed to their biological family who may have hurt, rejected, or disowned them. It was a means of sustaining family values amongst a group of people you connected and associated with, people with similar interests and needs to perform queer culture at the time when many like them were watched with scrutiny and experienced prejudices in public heteronormative city spaces.

While the clothing and hair choices were symbolic of the era, these were spaces where men could dress as men, men could dress as females, females could dress as females or even as men. It was a identifiably a safe space for LGBT+ persons to not only engage with one another, but also share that space with allies who made them feel welcome in the larger community. The images above (Images 4.1 and 4.2) show the same house in Rutger Street in different times and for different occasions, one being a more formal Christmas lunch around the dining table and

the other a dance party hosted by Kewpie. It not only shows who or what objects occupied the space, but also how the space was used. The way in which the space was decorated and used thus gives the impression that these were two different venues. Symbology thus played a large role in setting the space with the table and dancefloor acting as spaces where combined group practices through the actions of eating and dancing took place, bringing these individuals together.

4.2   De Smidt Street, Greenpoint

Situated along the Atlantic Seaboard area, the sights and smells of the area was totally different to that of the inner suburbs. This however changed over time when many people of Colour where forcefully removed out of their homes to accommodate a White minority who changed the landscape of the city and its identity. Whilst house parties continued, it no longer had the same feeling of 'openness' which the residents of the past had, where neighbours were accepting of gay and transgendered identities and could join in on the festivities, as seen in Image 4.3. House parties later became more secretive with the increasing of strict laws such at the Immorality Act and the Men At A Party clause (RSA, 1969).

AM2886_65.6.tif   AM2886_65.7.tif

Image 4.3: Famous Mrs Mills, always with us … [famous] for singing and dancing with us. Source: Image provided by D6 museum.

Image 4.4: The Gang. Source: Image provided by D6 museum.

Looking back at the past we can see how these group images show a lighter side of the partygoers where they are at ease and enjoying themselves, with a *cilla* and *dora* in hand (Cage, 2003), in a space where they could be themselves by portraying their identity in a shared space

amongst trusted peers, be it queer or straight folk. Here, at these parties, different forms of activities took place which include dancing as seen in Image 4.3.

Fashion and dress-up was a major thing for partygoers. Though Kewpie and his friends were openly expressive of their sexuality, for others it was not the case. Hence, retreating to the 'home' provided a safe space where they could wear their feather boas and tutus; items which represented a sense of gay pride and the embracing of their selves and their sexuality (Capozzola, 2006; Soeker *et al*., 2015). Dressing up allowed these human actors to freely express their sexualities and queer up the space to give it identity. Deciding what to wear became part of the process of shaping individual identity of what they wanted to portray whilst also shaping the space and material culture of house parties.

Whist the space offered main entertainment spaces which were transformed into party spaces, traces of home living around the house were still evident. This is evident in other images such as that which is captioned '*Brian and Kewpie in Kewpie's bedroom*' (see Appendix C, Contact Sheet 02 – AM2886_62.7) which gives the clear indication that this was domestic space. Despite the image depicts the visual of a seemingly gay male being intimate with a seemingly transgender female, it also displays subsections of the home which were more privatised spaces where access was limited. This included bedrooms and bathrooms. The space within the space created a setting for more 'intimate' activity to take place between participants, or to simply break away from the group temporarily.

Apart from the background of the images, the foreground also indicates the role and importance of alcohol (and/or other beverages) and food within the setting. Hosts would serve food to their guests to not only keep them occupied but also to have something to nibble on during the long party hours. The food and drinks often depended on the occasion. For many of the informal get-togethers we can observe finger foods being served to guests such as the New Years Eve party where champagne and savoury snacks were served whereas for the longer, more formal, parties such as Christmas Eve and Christmas Day where larger meals were served.

The images speak to the setting of the living room which changed by moving household furniture out of the way to open up a space to act as a dancefloor. The De Smidt Street home in Greenpoint was had a multitude of identities. It was not only a space typically used for home living, but at times served as a salon where Kewpie would practice his early styles such as the Beehive on his clients. Apart from this, the space was also shaped for house parties with

different purposes. Many at times it would be an informal get-together, a pre-drinks and dress-up party before heading to the Ambassador's Club, or a formal Christmas Eve party.

Kewpie, who solely captioned the images, shows how important queer family was by often referring to them as *'The Gang'* in Image 4.4. Pauwels & Mannay (2019) state that images capture the most intense and most important parts of historic events, be they social, political, or for other purposes. Multiple images of the same event or occurrence and the repetition of phrases it also said to show importance. The multiple times that the 'gang' has been captured in images, and mentioned, is thus of significance as these group photos give a good indication of who was considered part of the group and who became part of their actor network in the spaces of the domestic home where social events would take place.

Domestic spaces such as these homes were often used for entertaining. Dancing and music set the scene in quiet rooms by creating an atmosphere for partying. At that time the spaces were much more inviting of others, as seen in the images where the neighbours would also show up to the party in their everyday work of stay-at-home clothes whether they were invited by the hosts themselves or simply showed up after hearing the music. This is similar to the research done by Livermon and Visser where almost anyone from the street could show up to house parties which later being so occupied that it flowed beyond the yard gate and became street parties. However, over the years homes as social spaces became more privatised from even neighbours, becoming a community with social practices cut off from the rest of the community.

4.3   Mitchell's Plain

Michell's Plain being one of the largest communities situated on the outskirts of the Cape Town CBD as a result of the Group Areas Act during the Apartheid era is infamous for its gangsterism and high crime rates. Despite this, it was and still it a place where many Coloured Capetownians live in what is considered to be part of the ghetto Southern suburbs.

AM2886_92.1.tif

AM2886_92.2.tif

Image 4.5: This was a Christmas party at Mrs Biggs's place in Mitchell's Plain. Source: Image provided by D6 museum.

Image 4.6: Christmas party with Mrs Biggs and family. Source: Image provided by D6 museum.

In Images 4.5 and 4.6 we see the background of the living space indicating that change has occurred to give the space a new meaning. Whilst there are still signs of heteronormative family life (biological family pictures in photo frames on the walls and in the cabinet, the television and VCR, household decorative ornaments, and the mere presence of Mrs Biggs and her children, we can observe how decorating plays a large role in creating a space within a space. Though in the setting of the home, the living room was shaped into a party where partygoers gathered to share a meal and festivities around the dining table which was decorated to give it a Christmas theme; from the crown party hats and toys which came from popping the Christmas crackers, to the type of food on the table. This serves as proof to my argument that space can therefore be simultaneously gay and straight, making it sexually fluid which is dependable of the type of interactions and visibilities within the setting.

Furthermore, we can also observe how queer persons such as Valley, Mitzi, and Kewpie (AM2886_92.8) were openly accepted into the heterosexual homes of others. Family and community formation therefore meant more than that which was biological, but people who you considered your own in the setting, making the house feel like home.

4.4   Situating the Home: A Place of Safety, Security & Secrecy

While it is easy to become distracted by the great photographic history of Kewpie, we need to remember that these parties took place during a time when their expression of their sexuality was oppressed. It is only until the late 80s to 90s when many queer-friendly bars and dance

clubs served as spaces of inclusion, safety, and identity formation for the LGBT+ community (Knopp, 2007). One of the most notable gay urban spaces at the time was the popular restaurant/bar known as Café Manhattan which still exists today, drawing both locals and visitors to the area (Rink, 2016). This is why I relate these past experiences to my current study.

> *"Bronx, that time (pointing by flicking his hand), old Bronx on the corner where there's now a Spar, that Bronx meant a lot to US. It meant so much to us. It was the first place where I saw men in a club kissing and I was like 'Oh my gawd, this is so sexy, holy shit' I felt like this is my world, this is it. Club Vibe, and Galaxy and all those places that all the places that I went to with my friends was not my world, that's not my community, but Bronx was my community, and those gentlemen found me so hot, so I was like 'Yes, this is where I belong' [...]." – Gina*

Although we now live in a democratic country, many in society have yet to fully accept the LGBT+ community. Despite these spaces being gay-friendly, it often experienced homophobic prejudices. Many did not feel safe in public gay spaces of the city as these spaces could easily be targeted. This was due to instances such as the pipe bombing at Blah Bar in November 1999, the car petrol bomb burning outside of Bronx Bar in August 2000, and the horrific shooting massacre at the Sizzlers Massage Parlour in Sea Point in January 2003.

Participant Gina gives us an image of what one such a gay club was like at the time. He goes on to mention how he was there on the night of the petrol bombing outside of Bronx club, seeing someone's car burning up in flames as a hate crime against gay men *"in fear of gay boys taking over the city"*. Many gay men therefore stopped partying in the city and therefore decided to host more parties at their homes for fear of their safety in public.

House parties took place in the suburbs and informal areas, with some of these areas being quite unwelcoming and dangerous (Soeker *et al*., 2015). Whilst the home in itself offered a safe space for them to party the general community areas, known as the ghettos for their crime and living circumstances, were an unsafe space for many in the Coloured and Black communities, as seen in some of the interviews with Holland-Muter (2018) conducted with lesbian participants. This is evident in cases such as that of the 4th of February 2006 where the openly gay Zoliswa Nkonyana was stabbed and stoned to death in Khayalitsha. April the 28th of 2008 saw the death of LGBT activist and former Banyana Banyana female soccer player Eudy Simelane in her hometown of KwaThema where she was raped and murdered as part of a correctional rape hate crime. Almost exactly three years later on the 24th of April 2011 KwaThema was shook with another rape and murder hate crime, this time against the LGBT

activist Noxolo Nogwaza. The free expression of one's queerness in open public spaces was thus dangerous and therefore required secretive domestic spaces to be shaped into party space (Henderson & Shefer, 2008; McEwen, 2018). This was also noted in my study by some of the coloured and black participants who lived on the infamous Cape Flats areas.

> *"Being gay in a black community is more acceptable if you're like really feminine but otherwise if you're a black kid who likes boys you get beaten up. The fem queens are more open in public. So you have to be extra gay around magogo [grandmother] and the others so they know 'Ya neh [Yes hey], that one is the skew (queer) one'. So yeah!" – Sipho*

4.4.1   Why the need for space?

For many queer people it was a safer way to say that they are going to a friend's place than to outright state they are going to a gay house party in fear that questions would arise, and they would be 'outed' (Soeker *et al.*, 2015). Often in public settings, their visibility was limited in the way they would dress and act, with many lesbians and gay men feeling pressurised into the need to hide their sexuality from others by adapting strategies to 'pass' as a normal straight person in everyday places (Valentine, 2016). Portraying these identities were difficult yet necessary. This is evident in the quotes of Phil and Gina who accounted for their experiences of public spaces in the 80s and early 90s

where certain behaviours needed to be performed in particular social milieus by building up a *persona* and giving a *performance*.

> *"As you leave your house, you kind of, you change. It starts where, you put on, you take off stuff, and by the time you need to be in the street you ARE THAT* **persona***. Deem it where you be at school, or at work, or whatever. You built yourself, in your house, literally. You're in your house, you get ready, you're UH! Doesn't matter what your damn house looks like, when you're out there in the street people are gonna [going to] look at you, they're gonna go 'Hmmm not bad, lekker [nice], kwaai [cool]'. So you do that and it's literally done. It's like a meditation, you don't do anything else. You just FIX yourself. You iron your clothes, wash, you do all that things. There's nothing in your head. You're not, you're not going 'Oh, the meaning of life'. You are literally focused on getting ready. You get READY. And get ready means 'Here, alles die [all this], attitude right, everything, cool'. Then when you leave your house you're walking down the road you're building that persona you need out there. Cool. Jou skouers soe [Your shoulders like this], DAAI kyk [THAT look], the look that you need." – Phil*

> *"At the time I was deeply closeted. Out in the world I was like 'WHOOO, I'm gay, I'm as gay as can be', but my mother didn't know. And that was the problem. And because of that I wasn't giving the* **performance.** *[...] So whenever someone asked how long have you*

been out I gave the quickest thing that could come to my mind and that was usually 'Oh no
I've been out since 19, I visit club Bronx on the regular', but in the back of my mind I'm
like 'Oh god', I can feel my mother packing my clothes, getting ready to throw me out if
she found out that I am gay." – Gina

Furthermore, what stood out to me is when Dawie describes these social spaces as *"It's a space when I can be free"*. Picking up on the unusual part of speech I was particularly interested in the reason as to why the participant used to word 'when' and not 'where'. Whilst some places, such as gay clubs and bars do offer spaces of acceptance, it is moreso those around you who create the space for acceptance. To quote "Support and acceptance from friends and family members contributed to the participants' confidence to truly be themselves around the people they love, without any false pretence. This is often a place in which they find comfort and love, which is a stark contrast to the prejudiced environments some of the participants experience in their places of work" (Soeker *et al.*, 2015: 15). I therefore emphasised the word as he suggests it is not where you are but who you are with. He goes on to explain this by saying,

"It's more that, here amongst me friends I can be more open (said in a way where hints of
his Scottish accent came through). I can be my fabulous self. There's a limit to how
feminine you can be in public spaces; except gay bars of course. But normal pubs, er, not
so much. It's more the fact that you're surrounded by peers – by people you know – and
they're the same as you. So you feel more comfortable around them than complete
strangers." – Dawie

"The space creates a setting that's both entertaining and accommodating for loved ones
where they feel most comfortable and happy." – Fred

There is thus a certain level of comfortability in the home among familiar and trusted persons which outside spaces do not offer, with Fred going further in saying *"[…] these spaces are safe, inclusive, and often therapeutic […] we all allow each other to express ourselves fully and not hold back who we are"*. I bring it to my study by looking at where these spaces of inclusion were offered to my participants with many indicating homes within areas which were seemingly dangerous in general with regards to crime statistics but were considered safe to them as these spaces were 'more lively' with multiple forms of activity taking place as opposed to the quiet suburbs.

4.4.2   *Where do these parties take place?*

The phenomenon of house parties may occur across different demographics and in different locations across cities, as we have read in the examples of authors such as Livermon, Taraldsen, Visser, and others. It however remains in the leisurely setting of the family home as seen in the examples below.

"[...] its either at a family members' house or a friends'." – Fred

"We usually house-hop. However, most of the parties are held by my one friend in the ghettos because the vibe is just more lively there than at my place in the suburbs where your neighbours might skel (complain) at any moment because the "music is too loud". – Baby

"The parties are usually held here at my place in the ghettos, or here in the Cape Flats 'bloke' as we know it." – Valentino

"We usually party at my friend's place in Mitchell's Plain. Which is considered the 'ghetto' which is why we usually party there because crazy behaviour would be more acceptable there. What makes this space special and significant is that anything goes there, there isn't a thing you cannot do at that house. Anything and everything is possible at that house." – Dash
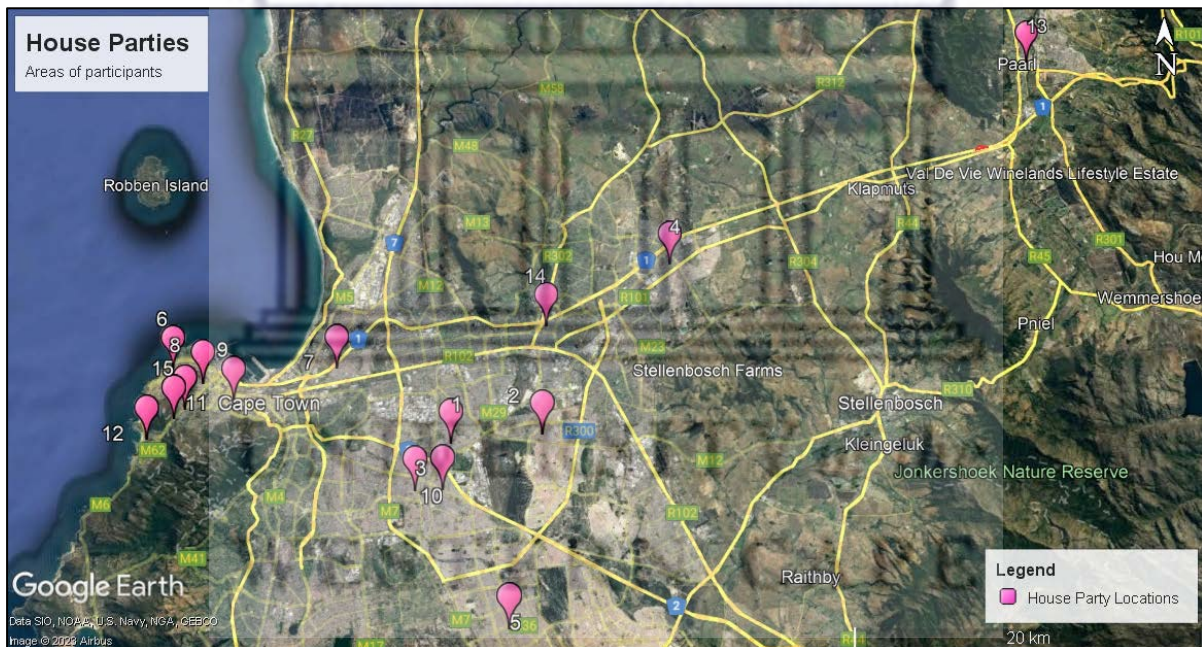
Image 4.7: Map of participants house party locations. Source: Image generated by Google Earth.

Whilst these responses and the map (Image 4.7) gives an indication of the places these house parties would take place at; which can be noted as a possible future study in the mapping of social domestic spaces; I was more so interested in the space itself which led me to ask the following question, which brought me to my next section.

4.4.3   What happens here?

Enquiries into these social domestic spaces are important in understanding the roles of house parties which have been given through the various; yet similar; narratives and perceptions of the people within the space and how they react to others, both human and non-human, around

them. The following interview extracts came from answering the same question which was posed to the participants as to what happens in these party spaces.

"We party, which consists of drinking alcohol, dancing and listening to music whilst socializing with each other at the party." – Dash

"Usually we meet up, pass pleasantries and usually (lol) end up talking about the latest work dramas, family dramas or people we've been crushing on! During this conversation, usually drinks are refilled, food prepared and eaten with games and music played during the evening." – Rick

"At these parties we usually just catch up with one another. Find out what has been happening since we last spoke, and reminiscing on the funny moments we had together." – Baby

From these responses, it was evident that Kraftl (2007) was onto a point but lacked looking at the symbology of the actors within the space which included elements of food, music, entertainment, and other. These social domestic spaces not only provide a space for actors (Latour, 1999 and 2007) to come together, but also a space in which a gay subculture (Haslop *et al.*, 1998) of house parties is produced through social practices and material cultures which represent the people and the space. It is for this particular reason why I carefully look at the human and non-human actors and objects in the space which are representational to the meaning making of sexuality and space in Cape Town.

5.   CHAPTER FIVE: EXPLORING MODERN PARTY STORIES

Many of my participants were young which is why most of the extracts from Baby, Rick, and Dash as evidence in my themes for explaining more recent modern house parties, with minor contributions from Fred, Sipho, and others. My more mature group of participants such as Gina, Wes, and Phil provided much more background narratives to their life experiences which were used in exploring life of partygoers during the Apartheid regime and their contributions to the shaping of gay culture in Cape Town then and now. Much older participants such as Jan also gave uninterrupted accounts of his experiences of house parties, as seen in the transcribed Interview Extract in Appendix D which took place during March 2021.

Table 4: Summary of Thematic analysis. Adapted from interviews and generated by interviewer.

Theme	White (4)	Coloured (10)	Black (1)
Alcohol	Wines	Spirits	Beers
Food	Salads, seafood	Savouries, snacks	Maize, meat
Music	Afrikaans	Yard	Africano

While this summarised data in Table 4 showcases some of the aspects to the house party and how they may differ between racial groups provides a good starting point, it is not an accurate account for all house parties, not only due to the limited participants, but also may be differentiated in terms of personal preferences and availability of the resources rather so than race, age, and social class alone as determining factors. It would therefore be best preferred to instead further elaborate on these themes with arose from similarities situated in the narratives of the participants.

These narratives provided examples of what house parties were/are like, their purpose, and the experiences of partygoers to the people and their surroundings. As this research examines the use of human and non-human actors, through interviews and observations of spatial activities and images, the data was used in coding the physical and mental spaces of house parties as a situation of inquiry. The data was then analysed and yielded a wide range of themes, only some of which are addressed in the findings.

Within the narratives, I thus found that many; if not all; of the participants had similar rules which are to be followed when it comes to attending a house party. It was then noted that the rules in fact go hand in hand with the themes I discuss below. I therefore start off my

ethnography section by looking at the need for space and understanding the roles of house parties. Both party planning (Theme one) as well as the party rules (Theme two) are important for not only establishing a house party but also controlling the flow which is why I then move on to look at aspects of planning a house party and the rules for the space.

5.1 Theme One: Party Planning

5.1.1 *Have a main party space – Space*

Having a main party space is important for establishing the part of the home where practices are performed. This may be spaces for dancing, eating and drinking, playing games, and other social group activities. Spaces are constantly changing (Rink, 2008a) from living rooms to dancefloors, from backyards to entertainment space, from bathrooms to smoking sections, and from kitchens to Very Important Persons (VIP) sections (as seen in Image 5.1) of the house and back to what it was originally intended for as a space for home-living once the festivities are concluded. The home therefore has the ability to house multiple changing sexualities and identities (Oswin, 2006), thus making it a fluid space which is able to take shape by the actors and meanings given to it.

> *"Kallit [Coloured] people really treat the kitchen at house parties like the VIP section." –*
> *Gina*

Image 5.1: The VIP section of the party, lol. Source: Image provided by Charlie.
Image 5.2: Gay rainbows everywhere. Source: Image provided by Julies.

House parties are not only about having a main party space providing the structure for a queer subculture to form but also takes into account the aspects needed in shaping space to give it meaning (Haslop *et al*., 1998). Ornamented decorations act as agents in doing so by not only giving visibility to the space (Tucker, 2010) but also embeds meaning in perception of human actors for what these ornaments are intended to represent. This may include banners, balloons,

cutlery, and all other things we often take for granted which brings colour and identity to the room as seen in Image 5.2 where the lounge area was transformed into a party space. In both of these images we see that food seems to be the central focus of the room and is where partygoers gather to nibble and chitchat, similar to the images of Kewpie and friends in images 4.2, 4.5 and 4.6 gathered around the table.

While food has been identified as one of the elements for house parties, it is not the only (Agnew, 1987). How the space is shaped through decoration may also depend on the purpose – one would not have a pool party with no pool, and that too indoors. Many party hosts take great care when it comes to decorating in order to fit a theme or purpose. Whilst for some setting the space up to give it a club-feeling is essential as they are at times unable to go the well-known clubs in the urban district, others simply felt the need for a small get-together or to celebrate an occasion such as a birthday party. How the space it decorated and the non-human actors which play a role in shaping the space are thus also essential elements to house parties.

"Our annual Christmas party has more so a disco theme than an actual Christmas theme. The inside of the house is decorated with festive holiday ornaments such as mistletoe at the arch, a tree in the corner, banners of tinsel hanging on the walls, and the table where we sit to have our meal has all sorts of Santa-related decorations. However, the scene changes from the inside to the outside where we usually dance under flashing blue lights. Even the cake suits the theme. For the Pool party we had a dolphin cake, whereas for the Christmas party we had a North Pole cake. […] These things play a vital role in setting the party. If you do not have these things, then it would just be a regular old boring conversation. I absolutely love how they decorate the space. We usually have the gathering in the garage with the gate open so a nice breeze can flow through. And they would put these flashing lights up hanging from the ceiling to set the tone and give it a club vibe. We also just feel more free there because their family is accepting of us and knows all of us, so it's never a problem when the two of them ask to use the space for a party. And of cause we're free to walk through the house soos ou huiskinders (as old house kids)." – Baby

"[…] They used colourful blow-up party balloons; you know those animal shaped ones the clowns use at the circus; to make a large twenty-one sign, but the one ended up looking more like a penis than anything else (lol). I think it was fitting though seeing that she was coming of age. The colours were blue and green themed." – Baby

In the instance of the quote by Baby, Whilst the balloons were meant to symbolise a celebration of sorts, the unintentional shape of the penis-like balloon was given meaning by the human

actors in the space, showing how important meaning-making is in the context. Through participant-observation I was able to take part while also observing the interactions of others in the space of the home. At one such a birthday party where Baby and I were partygoers, from both the views of myself as a researcher and the participant we observed how sections of the party flowed into other spaces and were connected by a trending feeling of *socialising*. In this, I mean not only how the space was decorated but also how people flowed into different areas of the home but were still connected to the main space. Here at the 21st birthday party, the lounge area served as the main space where the birthday cake table was situated and where most of the formal pictures were taken. These are often the pictures which paint a brief picture of the situation and are shared with others, as opposed to the candid photos which may be blurry or include private details which the hosts and others do not wish to share.

With people, music, and food flowing from the kitchen to the lounge, the space then further flowed over into the backyard where the pool was set up and partygoers were told to come dressed in beachwear to give the themed event its pool party identity. This is also the space where most of the activities took place which included swimming, dancing, smoking, eating, and drinking. The adjacent garden shed also served as a section where the extra alcohol was stored. The different sections of the home therefore serve different purposes and are decorated and used accordingly – one would not have a barbeque inside the house.

In the context of the typical home these would be disconnected and seen as separate sections of the home, however, with house parties these lines of spaces may be blurred as activity and mobility of people flow into connecting spaces to shape the overall look and feel of the space. This is seen in how the space is decorated as seen in the description of the parties and Image 5.2. These decorations of space may be intended as in cases where they were selected to give it a theme or may not have been intended as in the instance of participant Baby's event where the balloons were ironically shaped as a male reproductive system at the birthday pool party which symbolised the coming of age by now having to find a boyfriend. Apart from this, alcohol, food, music, and other forms of entertainment which aim to unite the human actors may also have symbolic meanings and must therefore be studied within these social milieus (Agnew, 1987; Kraftl, 2007).

5.1.2   Deck up a variety of alcohol – Alcohol

Alcohol is largely mentioned in the findings. The smell and taste of certain wines, liquors, and spirits may invoke memory (Lupton, 1994), as many shared their stories with me where they

have either threw-up or blacked-out from tequila. I too have had my fair share of bad experiences with a certain brand of vodka which got the better of me, and to date still scares me just by the mere smell thereof but the story can be recollected, shared, and laughed about amongst close friends. Similarly, these close-knit groups share stories of past experiences with alcohol in their circles as a means of bringing up memories while also creating new ones in the process.

Image 5.3: Drinks on deck. Source: Image provided by Hart.

In all of the house parties, the presence of wine, alcohol, and spirits were clearly visible. With particular spaces being considered sacred or private space, such as the bathroom and bedroom, which is why the placement of the alcohol collection also played a large role in shaping the space with that section of the party often being considered the *bar* section (Image 5.3). There is a need for a variety of alcohol at a party as it is the assumption that all individuals have their own unique tastes and preferences as seen in the example above. This too can tell one a lot about the person drinking it as participant Baby jokingly says,

> *"I think – and this is just what I think (lol) – that White people prefer their wines,*
> *Coloured people like their variety, and Black people like beers. But that's just my opinion*
> *and what I have noticed. Those are usually what is drunk at these different racial parties if*
> *there's one predominant group. Anyone can have a braai, but it's the things which*
> *accompany the braai that makes it different and truly unique to your group of peeps*
> *[peers]." – Baby*

He goes on to say that *"Alcohol is a staple in our community (lol). Everyone just has their preference. The ladies will have gin and tonic, the girls drink their vodka with juice so it's softer on their palate whereas the guys*

have theirs with Sprite to give the fizzy bubbles a little more of a kick, then the more manly men would have an additional brandy, but everyone has a few shots of tequila." – Baby

This is emphasized by another of my participants which states that *"The most important thing at these parties is alcohol. (Lol) because if there isn't alcohol, it just wouldn't be a party. For me personally, I cannot dance sober, so that just wouldn't be a vibe for me." – Dash*

Whilst the consumption of alcohol can cross all genders and sexualities, what make gay parties different is the identification of the drinks with more so feminine cocktails being served to men. What was fascinating to learn about this during my study is that alcohol tends to be associated with different genders and sexualities. This is emphasised by participant Sipho who says that *"The gents; I mean the butch gay ones that is; would drink beers and secretly admire us from afar while we ladies sip our ciders."* **Interviewer:** *So you're saying there's an association of alcohol to sexuality? "Oh yes. Ciders are a girly drink for the fem bottoms and beers for the more manly tops." – Sipho*

While there is a multiplicity of gay cultures and sexual roles attached to them, such as 'butch' gay males taking on an domineering masculine role of being outside at the barbeque with a beer as opposed to 'queens' who take on a feminine role and found in the kitchen preparing salads with a glass of wine in hand, it is however difficult to place these associations down in modern day where there is a vast variety of sexualities and how the individual decides to personally portray their sexuality. With this, sexual terms, pronouns, and the roles thought to be attached to them are often used wrongfully assigned to individuals. Sipho who is an effeminate gay man identifies himself as a top (the penetrator) despite coming across to others as a bottom (the penetrated) due to his feminine way of behaviour, his love for fashion, his use of makeup, and flamboyant way of speaking. His preference of ciders and cocktails as opposed to beers at house party events is thus as a result of personal preferences and not outside influences of male gender identity and black racial identity along with the roles attached to these cultures.

The purpose of alcohol hence does not only cater to the tastes of different people, but also sets the mood and often than not makes for a good conversation catalyst at parties. It also has different meanings to different people in the same settings. This has been seen in the townships where beers are viewed as a *manly* drink as to that of ciders which have less alcohol and are therefore better suited to females and gay men (Livermon, 2012). It goes even further with certain brands of alcohol being attached to social status. This is often observed in clubs with black men in particular who boast and display their manliness in what kind of brands would be bought and the manner of paying, either by large bills or cards. So too in the ghettos the number

of beers and other strong drinks which the more masculine partner can buy portrays his butch gay performance, as opposed to the fem gay performer who is seen sipping on cocktails. Alcohol thus not only gives identity to the person but also the space, showcasing the levels of masculinity in a social setting of the home.

5.1.3   Choose the menu wisely – Food

One of the participants who was were actively involved in the participatory-centred visual analysis is Hart, often speaking to the images of food and menu. He was particularly interested in the topic of food at house parties, calling it a passion of his, due to previous studies and current work. In his apartment on Kloof Street where he resides with his male partner they often host dinner parties which allows his to try out new dishes and also catch up with old friends on a Friday evening which is almost the only time available to steal away from their busy work week. Showing a certain level of control as the host, he invites no more than four of their closest gay friends to join himself and his partner; five in the event his partner is away on business travels; to the intimate setting of the dining room where they casually engage around the six-seater dining table. Whereas most house parties are quite informal with savouries and finger-dips, Hart decides to go a more formal route in creating a three course meal with a set menu. He very carefully selects his music and décor to match the food he wishes to present to his partygoers. One of the examples he is quite fond of is *"Mary had a Little Lamb"* and *"Mariah Curry"* where his play on words was an indication to the guests that they will be served lamb curry to the background music of Mariah Carey (Image 5.5).

> *"This was from when I hosted our (my partner and I) first din-dins in the newly decorated space. My guests LOVED the food and décor. Feeding and entertaining people always brings me so much joy." – Hart*
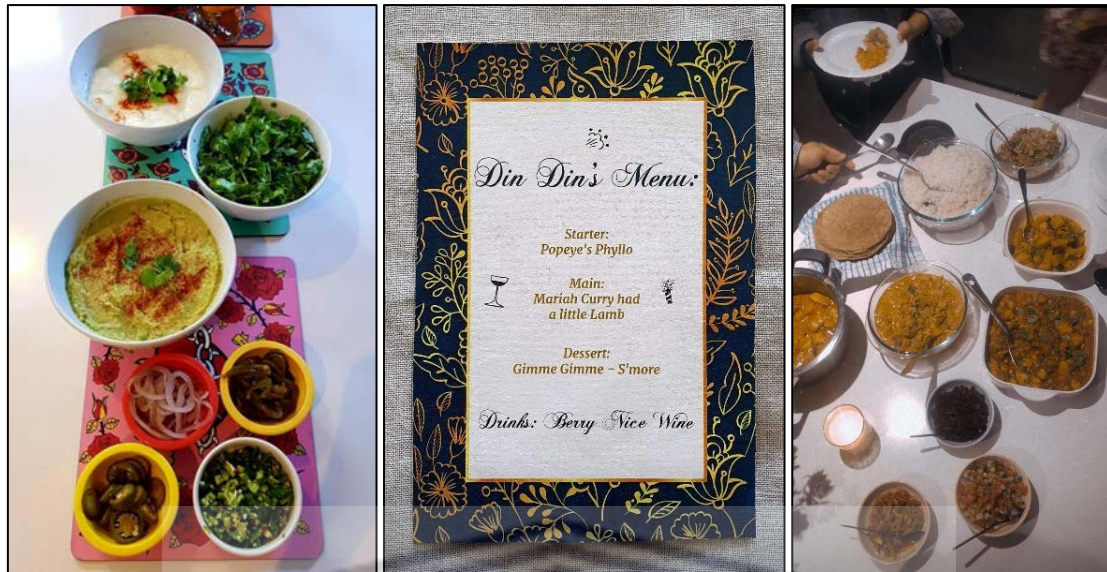
Image 5.4: A make-your-own-wrap station at the Kitchen table. Source: Image provided by Charlie.
Image 5.5: Din-Dins menu in the new venue. Source. Image provided by Hart.
Image 5.6: Farewell dinner curries all served on the table. Source: Image provided by Lance.

Food plays an important part in any house party as it not only serves its basic purpose to feed partygoers but also as a decorative piece and a space where multiple persons will gather (Image 5.4). Lance said that *"Food warms the heart. Warm food, warm belly, warm heart"* suggesting that a shared warm meal amongst friends is not only filling to the body but also to the mind as it opens up conversation surrounding food, family, and everyday life. As a farewell party for their one female friend, Lance decided to invite all their gay peers to his house to say goodbye. He thus chose an Indian food theme with everyone bringing different types of curries in honour of her heritage as seen in Image 5.6. Here they recollected memories and wished her safe travels on her journey. This is also evident in the interview extracts below.

"The space to be oneself, the great conversations, the memories shared and the love we have for one another." – Lance

"Besides being a necessity for any party especially the hungry tummies there (lol), these mediums provide good conversation starters or closers, bring up memories of past gatherings or remind us of things we should maybe remove from the menu if it does not sit well with the crowd." – Rick

"Oh, and we had snacks – the usual Kallit (Coloured) party snacks like mini pies, pizzas, halfmoons, samoosas, and of cause your chicken variety; pops, drumsticks, strips, and wings with dip." – Baby

Irrespective of where I was or what I have observed in images of parties which I was not able to attend, food and beverages where always present. While power dynamics may seem to

favour the host as the person who decides on all final arrangements, it does become complex as the host must take into account the choices of others. For this reason, preference and availability influences what and how the space is shaped. Food therefore has more than the purpose of feeding. Through the cultural practice of contributing food we not only become part of the group as a contributing actor of the network, but also create meaning and memory through the sharing of food (Lupton, 1994; Gardner *et al*., 2000). We also observe how different foods are associated with different parties, from the *soutvlei en trifle* [corned beef and cake pudding] at Christmas lunch to the *tjops en wors* [chops and sausage] at a bring-and-braai. The smell and tastes of the food awakening old memories while also creating new ones. We can thus decipher from this why Kraftl (2007) states food as one of the major components in the setting of the home as it is used as a means to include and unite the actors.

5.1.4   *Curate an amazing playlist – Music*

In the 60s to 80s, music had been available and used in only certain racialised settings, with Afrikaans sokkies being popular among white people (Taraldsen, 2015) and township jive among black people (Livermon, 2012 and 2014). With the passing of time in the 80s to 2000s came the introduction of radios, cassette tapes, and compact discs (CDs) which made music more popular, but was however still restricted to certain groups of people. Today however, we find that music is easily accessible through mobile devices and the availability of disc jockeys (DJs) which therefore blur the lines of music in relation to race, age, and social class.

Music is one of the things which can be found in both straight and queer spaces. Music is often stigmatised in gender and sexuality with the stereotypical view that rap and hip-hop songs are assigned to cis-gendered heterosexual men as opposed to pop(ular) chart songs which are for cis-gendered female and queer persons (Browne & Bakshi, 2011). This is not true in case as personal preferences in music blur the lines to what music is and for who it should be. Whilst music cannot simply 'gay' up the space (Visser, 2008a and 2008b) it does play the role of setting the ambience of the room as a sound and audio component.

> *"As for the music, the host decides the playlist and controls the music. Whereas the occasional hosts usually plays Gqom[13], I personally like to play Oldskool when I host, which includes some 90's and early 2000's Janet and Whitney in the mix – not that gay cliché Mariah shit which they think all us gays play. The music and lighting really sets the ambience in a space."* – Baby

I found this quote to be particularly funny as it was exactly "that gay cliché Mariah shit" which Hart and his friends were fond of at their parties, showcasing their bond to the love of her

music. Different people have different tastes in music, which thus make creating a playlist quite tricky. What the host or play lister may like may not necessarily be loved by all who share the space. It is therefore suggested that a mixed playlist be curated which caters to the likes of all, or at least be somewhat satisfying. Dash notes that at these *yaadt* parties it is similar to some clubs where they would play old school tracks before 10pm and thereafter more new school mixes into the late hours of the night.

Unlike larger spaces such as clubs in the public sphere where people are able to go to various dancefloors with different DJs in each section, the domestic home is limited to one main space. The playlist therefore is suggested to have various sections. However, in spite of attempting to cater to all those in the space, not all persons will be satisfied the entire time. Their dislike in the section of music may lead to them taking a break from being an active participant in the socializing and moving to a corner of the room such as the couch where they can observe the others in the space. In smaller groups of friends, music can therefore act as an object which leads to feelings of inclusion and exclusion (Edgar & Toone, 2019). By this I mean that those who note some of their favourites being added to the list may therefore feel like part of the group and thus enjoy themselves at a party as opposed to those whose taste in music may not have been included in the list, with the latter thus not only dissociating themselves from the social activities of the party by not taking part in the singing and dancing but also from the people around them who are (Lewis & Ross, 1995).

It is not the human actors, in this case the singers behind the music, but also the non-human music related actors which play a role in setting the 'vibe' of the party. The start of music could represent the commencement of the party whereas stopping the music could be an indication of the party ending. Also, tempo and volume are controlled elements in the space which is mostly operated by the host or DJ with different speeds and beats of the music resulting in a change of dancing pace, or the change in volume indicating a purpose such as lowering it for a speech or raising it to hype up the partygoers. Music therefore not only has different meaning and feeling to different people, but also various purposes.

> *"Ek sê vir 'my piel' (my man) gister 'n party is nie 'n party nie sonder 'n music speaker*
> *met liggies wat klop nie. [I told 'my penis' (my man) yesterday a party is not a party*
> *without a music speaker with lights that beat.]". – Julies*

Often at these instruments include a USB or cell phone connected to a speaker box by means of an aux cable or Bluetooth syncing. At times these devices may be faulty which dampens the mood of participants at the party or are stollen. Ensuring the security of these devices and the

feelings attachment to them by their holders is one of the reasons why these gatherings are small and intimate and require knowledge of the other partygoers. Therefore, inviting others who are not clearly known to the group is often scrutinised by the peers due to feelings of safety and security not only for the partygoers but for their belongings as well.

5.1.5   Include entertainment – Games

Forms of entertainment include master of ceremonies, DJs, live bands, dancers and singers, and movies to name a few. However, in the setting of the home which does not necessarily offer the space or necessity for these, games have been noted as activities within the larger social house party practices. This may be drinking games, boardgames, and others where the group gets involved. As seen in Images 5.7 and 5.8 some examples may include the following.

"We play games like dominos, 30 Seconds, the famous UNO, and Heads-Up which is a guessing game, almost like charades where you have to act out a word or phrase given but in this case the rest of the gang acts it out while the person who blindly chose the card has to guess what it is." – Baby
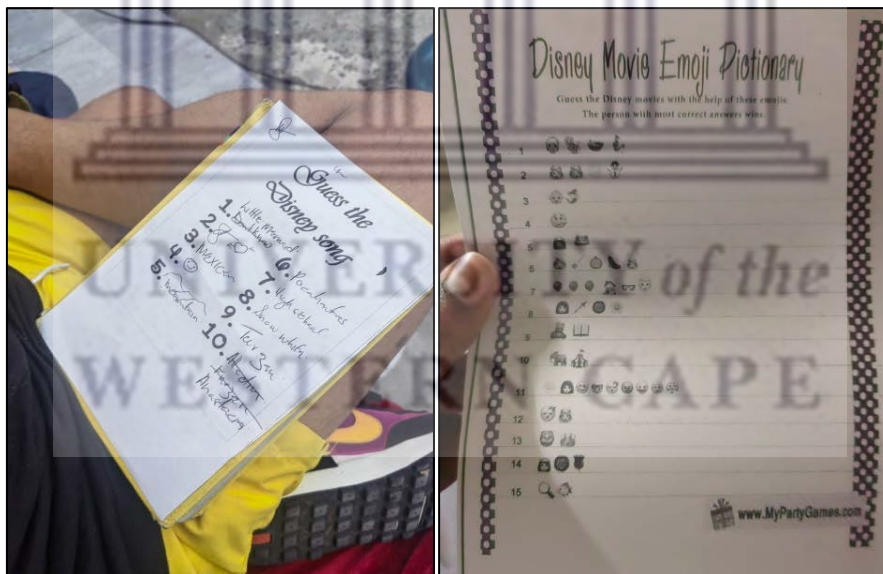
Image 5.7: Guess the Disney song game. Source: Image provided by Rick.
Image 5.8: Guess the Disney movie game. Source: Image provided by Rick.

Within these smaller social settings, games can thus be considered acts of powerplay where the competitive nature of individuals may arise. Whilst the intention of entertainment may be to set the tone of the space and bring its actors together (Gardner *et al*., 2000) it may also seclude and exclude individuals, as in the cases of games such as dominos which only allows for four players to compete or play at a time. A shift in the role of actors and their importance in the current practice therefore takes a shift with some being primary actors and secondary actors;

those who participate versus those who observe. This principle goes beyond games and includes other entertainments such as movies, song, and dance. Here the host may decide which activities may take place and the order in which to do so, which may not always be seen as something others would want to partake in. Nonetheless, entertainment serves the role of group activities which aim to unify the group through fun.

5.2   Theme Two: Party Rules

5.2.1   *Follow the rules.*

First thing's first, when it comes to a party is to *follow the invite instructions*. Often these gay house parties have specific themes and rules to be followed. I myself know that it can be quite irritating and slightly disrespectful when one or another does not follow the simple suggestions given on themed nights. While there may seem to be a role of powerplay here, it is not race nor age which dictates who holds the power, but rather a combination of the actors' decision by coming to a consensus of where the following house party will be. Based on this joint decision, a host is then determined – a role which requires him/her/them to see to the smooth process of the practice. Unlike other structures (such as churches and schools) which have a standard set of rules which govern the space and behaviour of the actors within that space, here the rules are instead suggestable. The idea behind this, from the perspective of the host, is to create some form of unity amongst the group of partygoers so as to not outshine, or outperform, one another. Here we have an example of a Mad Hatters lunch (Image 5.9) and a Minions themed birthday party (Image 5.10) where partygoers were required to dress to the occasion.

Image 5.9: The 'guys' at a Mad Hatters party. Source: Image provided by Charlie.

Although time may be given within the instructions of an invitation, it is contrary to popular belief, when it comes to house parties it is always best to *arrive a little late* so as to give the hosts a few additional minutes to do last-minute checks and arrangements. Unlike more formal events which require a certain strict time to be followed, proper etiquette suggests being ten to thirty minutes 'late' in a fashionable manner (Delmacy, 2013).

5.2.2   Make yourself known.

Invitation to parties took place through either human actors by word-of-mouth or via text message through the cell phone as non-human actors, once again showing an aspect of house parties which is often taken for granted as it is used as a means to grant entry into the home space of others. With this, another of the rules agreed upon by the participants is *do not invite others* to a party which is not held by yourself as the host without informing the other host. As a matter of respect, it would also be best if the host gives prior indication to others of who might be invited to the intimate gathering as some of my participants have stated. Access to these events are often limited due to the fact that one must first become part of the network of friends or allied community and accepted by others who already constitute the makeup of the group and the space they identify, occupy, and utilise whether it be public or private (Edgar & Toone, 2019).

> *"These gatherings are usually arranged by myself, my fiancé, family or friends of which the guests are limited to the role/relationship they play in each of our lives."* – Fred

Upon being asked whether the atmosphere within the space changes when someone else is brought into the intimate setting amongst their queer peers, these were some of the responses.

> *"It would indeed change the dynamic because there would be tension in the regard of the new acquaintance getting along with the others in the inner circle. But as time goes along, and the alcohol starts flowing, everyone would get along with everyone basically."* – Dash

> *"It absolutely changes the initial pace of the party. It's awkward for both you and them in the beginning as you do not know each other, so neither of you can truly be yourself. But after some convo gets going, you learn to lighten up. Its takes initiative from those already at the party and who are familiar with the surroundings and other people to step forward and start up a conversation with the newbie though."* – Baby

During my time in the field as an outsider coming into a space where no one knows who I am that it is important to *introduce yourself* to the host and/or other guests. Not only did I feel uncomfortable in the new space, but it was clearly observed that those around me too were uneasy with the new face to their group, despite being familiar with the space. However, this quickly changed in the short time when my intentions were clear to the group, and I became socially accepted in the space. This leads me to the opposing views as stated below.

"Definitely not! We love and respect all for their own individuality but often we communicate if one is bringing a new acquaintance along." – Fred

"No it would not. In fact, because we are social and hungry to meet new and interesting people – we would probably have a whole session where we get to meet the person and share interests etc. We actually all became friends. The host and I met via social apps, a friendship blossomed. I then introduced him to my friends, and he the same with me and the circle grew from there." – Rick

Though two of the respondents (Fred and Rick) felt strongly that bringing a stranger into the group had no effect, the opposing views (Dash and Baby) showed that it initially does. However, it is evident from what they later say what while the space remains the same as a queer room (through decorations and those who occupy the space) which is free of expression, the slight shift in people's behaviour when faced with an 'outsider' is quite apparent, but only temporary as it takes time for people to become familiar and at ease around one another in the space. The above quotes hence shows that although there may be some tension to start with, there is hope for acceptance into the close network; which Dash describes as *"my inner circle"*; despite being unfamiliar with one another at first.

"Besides the now familial bonds, I think it's the openness and the fact that you are amongst likeminded individuals, who are in the same age group as you, facing the same problems and dilemmas every 20 something is going through." – Rick

Whilst race and age difference may have played a role in who gets invited to the party for the older generation, they however are not major factors of determinacies due to changes in the workplace, schools, and other public spaces which are open to various racial groups. Whilst many of the parties which I have attended are predominantly Coloured-based, we see in the cases of Lance, Hart and others that their domestic space is open to a mix of not only races but have also included persons of other sexualities. In this case, it is not race nor age which is seen as a dividing factor for exclusionary measure but rather a personal choice of comfortability of the other individuals who share the space.

Also, those who are perceived as not being identified as a gay male or ally may also be seen as an outsider irrespective of whether he or she themselves feel comfortable in the space around them as they are not considered by others as part of the group. Having to disclose my sexuality ally-ship to the group was therefore seen as a necessity, regardless of the purpose of my intended study. It is thus needed that we take into consideration that these tight-knit groups may not always be completely accepting of all persons, so as to prevent their selves and their peers from being judged and labelled from within the group, but does afford the opportunity for a sense of belonging. Therefore, though it may be in our nature to belong (Durkheim, 1982), it is the bonds we nurture by keeping these house party practices alive which establishes and reestablishes our network of friends. Community formation and the sense of belonging and acceptance thus remains highly debated by scholars such as Gardner *et al*. (2000) as well as Lewis & Ross (1995).

5.2.3   *Bring something to the table.*

The culture of gift giving and gift exchange is seen as a means of creating and fostering social relationships (Bourdieu, 1997; Sherry, 1983). Once you have arrived at the party, it is good practice to present the host with a gift of sorts. All of the respondents suggest to *bring a bottle* as a thank you gesture for the warm invitation. This is echoed by the statements from the following participants.

> *"This is an unspoken party etiquette, which is that one should not come empty handed; especially regarding alcohol. But other than that, everything goes at a 'yaadt' party." –*
>
> *Dash*

> *"[...] each one contributes and brings something towards the festivities: snacks, drinks or games." – Rick*

> *"If you're invited to a party, it's best you bring something along. Its rude to go emptyhanded. It can be a gift for the host like a plant or a box of chocolates; preferably not a TV Bar or something cheap; or something for the table, as I did when I took a bottle of wine with." – Baby*

Image 5.11: Bottle of wine taken to a party as a gift. Source: Image provided by Sipho.

Image 5.12: Party shots - Ponchos, our favourite. Source: Image provided by Hart.

Bringing a gift as a gesture of thanks in exchange for food and conversation is not only seen as a sign of respect to the host and others, but also opens up an invitation for acceptance to take place whereby the group may share their gifts (Sherry, 1983). While alcohol was the gift of choice for many of the participants as this is something which could be shared among the group (Images 5.11 and 5.12), they also said that they often contribute to the table in one of two ways – by either giving money and allowing the host to buy all the goods needed or share the responsibility of different tasks which were split up amongst the individuals, which is similar to any clan where roles are given to various people in different settings (i.e., villages, religious and learning institutions). Because these are small and intimate events where each person can, and is expected to have, provided a good (food, decorations, drinks, or music) or service (buying or preparing the meals, decorating the space, playing bartender by serving drinks, or controlling the playlist) of some sort. Those who bring nothing are therefore frowned upon as they were not considerate to the efforts and contributions of others in the group but also wish to share in the festivities (Lupton, 1994).

> *"Hy wil ook saam suip, maar hy bring fokkol nie [He also wants to drink with, but he didn't bring anything]" – Dash*

Earlier I have discussed the role of the host in setting the tone of the part by shaping the space. At many of the parties which I have attended during the study; apart from two or three which were simple last-minute get-togethers; the scene has already been set by the host with decorations and maybe a few snack platters and alcohol. Other partygoers then each brought

with them meals which were pre-decided amongst themselves. As a newcomer with no knowledge of what the others may like, the most appropriate offering sought fit was a bottle of wine to share. After the individual interviews were conducted, a box of chocolates was given to each interviewee so as to thank them for their participation. Though I may have no intention to possibly attend one of their house parties, the exchange opened a window for future invitations and an ally bond was formed to the group. Though the exchange of gifts may or may not be reciprocated we can conclude that gift exchange is important between human actors within these spaces as it creates a bond between individuals with the intention of continuing to maintain that relationship in the future.

5.2.4 *Respect the common space.*

It is expected that all be considerate of the space which they are using and those around them, which is why Delmacy (2013) says to *not snap wild photographs*. However, one may argue that taking images is a way of creating photographic memory and should be allowed. It is usually the hosts' responsibility to take photos and decide which ones are appropriate to be uploaded on social media as they are the proprietor of the venue but must be done with delicate care for the feelings of others. This may depend on the purpose of the house party in itself, such as a birthday party where random candid images are often taken, or the comfortability of the person being photographed who may or may not be openly gay and does not wish to expose themselves (yet). For these reasons, I have not taken any of my own photographs at the house parties but rather been provided with images from the participants who were comfortable in sharing these particular images. One would therefore not upload and post any images which may compromise the safety of others, embarrass, or defame them in any way. This especially is rule when it comes to images and videos where the person may be in a state of drunkenness.

Whilst this may be a private domestic space where you may enjoy an alcoholic beverage it is important to remember that you as an attendee of the house party are not alone but in a shared space with others which must be respected.

> *"The idea is just that everyone has fun – but within an appropriate context since these gatherings do take places at another person's house. So showcasing of respect towards that person's valuables and possessions. A don't would maybe be, er, if one was rude or being obscene – behaving wildly, to the point that you damage the others persons property endanger others or yourself." - Rick*

Which brings me to the next rule to *not get 'wasted'* to the point where you would destroy the host's bathroom with your antics. In case this does happen, do *clean up the bathroom*

(Delmacy, 2013). While getting to a level of tipsiness is socially acceptable in breaking the ice, getting drunk can be amusing to some but may not be the same to others as it could lead to a distraction or hinderance from the party goings. This may lead to temporary exclusion whereby the partygoer(s) is removed from the social activities to regain their bearings as seen in the Image 5.13 below, or even have future invitations permanently revoked should the others not see his actions befitting of the social setting.

Image 5.13: A very tipsy partygoer. Source: Image provided by Charlie.

"One! Do not leave a mess – clean up after yourself. And two! Do not block the toilet!" –
Baby

Lastly, this brings me to the rules of *offer to help clean*, but do in fact try to *leave long before the actual clean-up* which the host usually does at the end of the night. No one really wants a drunken Betty wondering around whilst they are trying to clean up the remains of the night. These party rules of etiquette thus provide a standard of controlled behaviour among individuals who are considered as equals in these domestic spaces with one rule being set to follows by all the participants in the space.

6. CHAPTER SIX: SHUTTING DOWN THE HOUSE

6.1   In My House: A self-observation of house parties

Looking for similarities among gay house parties holistically was far less complicated than attempting to incorporate elements of race, age, and class into the study. While straight and gay parties may seem homogenous, what makes them differ from each other is the performance and portrayal of sexuality in these domestic spaces. Of the three dinner themed parties specifically Lance, Fred, and Hart all had different themes, however the essence of their parties were very similar. Colour patterns and ornamentation may have differed, but it all trickles down to a group of friends seated around a decorated dinner table of no more than 6 to 8 close-knit friends enjoying one another's company over a hearty homecooked meal. What makes it different from the usual heterosexualised home is not the meal, but rather the nuances around the space with extra attention to detail being placed in the decorations, for what is seemingly a simple gathering in the home, and the people who use the space – gay men and queer friends – whose language use and topic of conversation differs in context.

All of the participants painted a picture of harmonious and positive aspects of their house parties in their responses, contrary to that of Jan whose view of a house party was moreso what kids today would call a rage/rave party. This is because those who attended included many uninvited guests where things quickly got out of control. Whilst I am not saying that fighting may not occur at house parties, it is most certainly less likely that conflict will arise due to the familiarity bonds shared with others in the privately intimate space. Many of the house parties observed in this research, and given past accounts of by the participants, were attended by no more than 10 to 15 guests. Houses are considered sacred spaces where one does not simply wish to invite anyone and everyone. For this reason, the space is thus intimate and controlled. While things may become confrontational during arguments, it is far less negative than public spaces which are seen as sites of violence, conflict, and division. Reason being domestic house parties are spaces of inclusivity and exclusivity (thereby meaning invitational only) among peers. It is therefore not race, age, or class which unites the group (in some cases so but for many not), but rather being invited as an acquaintance with the potential of later becoming part of the network of friends. House parties have therefore been a way of connecting small groups of people and passing the torch down to others, this metaphorical torch being the fundamentals learned through previous house parties and what is needed in the party planning and party rules.

6.2   Practice in Place: Summarizing the party space

Whist the intention of house parties may have shifted from a space to evade the law and public scrutinised to a space for socialising, in both the past and the present house parties have remained a space of social interaction whereby shared practices and elements of food, music, conversation, and other entertainment had symbolic meanings to different people. As multiple actors partake in a range of practices within the space of cultural milieus, various themes within the collected data that actively frame and discuss the space may arise in the narratives of these actors. Their perception of the space and the activities within them shaping their meaning-making of the social setting, with various perceptions resulting in various roles and intentions.
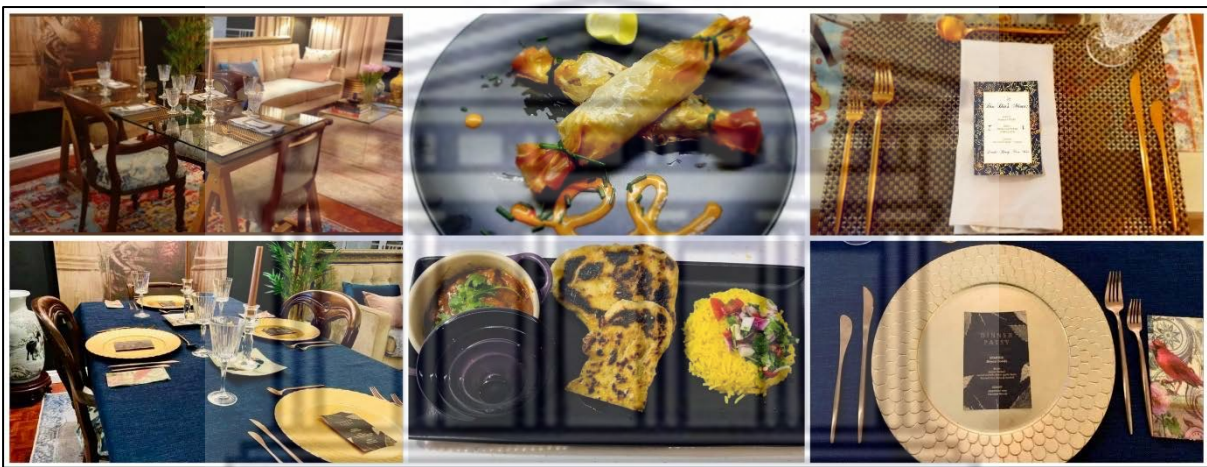

Image 6.1: A collective comparison of images indicating the setting, food, and decoration of space. Source: Images provided by Hart.

The ideas of spaces are a dynamic construct; thus, I have argued that space should have no preconceived notion of sexual identity (Oswin, 2006). Image 6.1 above provided by participant Hart shows us two examples of dinner house parties which he previously held. The space typically goes against what is seen as the typical meaning of home as it not only provides a living space for himself and his gay partner but also a social space as a private dinner 'restaurant' as well as dinner parties for he and his gay friends. As the background of the space remains the same, the inner space setting changed with the use of different materials to create new themes. This has been done by means of table setting decorations, food, and colour schema where much planning and thought to its meanings have been given to. While the space cannot typically be seen as 'gay' space, identifiers such as the kind of background music, the play on words in the menu, and the presence and visibility of gay male participants themselves, what they wear, and how they act all play a role is giving the space its identity – which in these house party cases were gay dinners.

Similarly, the idea of sexuality too is to be based on the agents (the human actors) and the structures (of race, religion, age, and class) which govern them. Like Sipho who discussed his sexuality in relation to the topic of alcohol at parties, Hart who identifies as a versatile (someone who both gives and receives during sexual intercourse) gay male can be found in the kitchen baking and preparing food while hosting the party. On a personal note, as one who often hosts parties, I too find myself fluttering between the guys outside around the braai fire with their beers in hand, with the ladies sitting and chatting in the lounge with their snack platters and ciders, or by myself in the kitchen running to refill food and beverages. While one may argue that this is then simply the task of the host, all partygoers have to shape their sexuality somewhat as they transition between the spaces of the home according to those around them. This once again shows that gender roles may not be assigned to sexuality which is a social construct.

Earlier in the literature we looked at how scholars have argued the importance of understanding phenomena from multiple points of view in order to get a deeper understanding thereof. This study in particular required that we take into consideration what makes up space and the meanings attached to them. For this, incorporating multiple theories across the social sciences such as Peter Kraftl's use of the home in addition to Henry Lefebvre's aspects of space and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social practices hence provided a good combination of theory in this study as it incorporates the symbology of not only the human agents but also the structural aspects of the home and how non-human actors also play a vital role in shaping the space. If we now look at the Kraftl (2007) within the context of the domestic home, we may observe how the living spaces have been transformed into social party spaces with the use of elements which may be human or non-human. This was emphasized by Agnew's (1987) idea of food, theme, and history of events all playing a role in the *who/what/when/where/why* of the parties – Who will be invited? What is the potential theme and what will be served? When and where will the party be hosted? Why and for whom are we having the party – all of which can only be truly answered by the partygoers as we have seen in the narratives of Lance, Hart, and others who gave detailed accounts of their house parties. These aspects combined with the meaning of home which changes, not only literally but also figuratively, can be seen in how the space is used. What used to be considered as private space for heteronormative families are now shaped into homosexual social space in the way it is perceived, conceived, and lived (Lefebvre, 2014). Here the space is given dimension and identity through its actors which shape the space through

social practices of queer engagement which are symbolic to them (Blumer, 1986; Bourdieu, 1989 and 1996).

The participants, as the original owners of the images, have provided substantial information to the study through their perceived, conceived, and lived experiences of these spaces. Highlighting the use of imagery and narratives thus provides sound descriptive and explanatory qualitative evidence in the situation of domestic social interactions through symbols and perceptions, with various constructs of realities existing thereof (Pauwels & Mannay, 2019). The use of multiple images of the same or similar objects in the space are thus said to show its importance (Wagner, 2011; Pauwels & Mannay, 2019). In the historic images of *Kewpie* we see this in the repetitive compilation of images with 'the gang' as he called them showing how important they were to his as a network of actors during a time when life was quite uncertain for many queer persons and their safety in society. Whilst Kewpie and her friends were largely accepted by the Cape Coloured community, it was not the case for others.

Similarly, from the images provided by the participants, of which only a few were selected to represent the themes, we see that Kraftl's ideas behind food and entertainment do in fact play a large role in the performance of sexuality and shaping the identity of spaces. These human and non-human actors, along with the physical space itself, practices, and the meanings attached to them therefore explore the gay cultural phenomena of house parties for gay men in Cape Town as seen in the quote below which gives a great summary to the argument of the home as a space which incorporates these material agents.

> *Music and food are vital! Drinks is usually an add-on for those who fancy a drink. Music often ranges from oldies to the new generation hits depending on the setting. Food in general plays a significant role within our culture as it is known to bring people together. Moving on to the drinks, we enjoy a selection of good wine, gin, liqueur, beer, or brandy.*

6.3   House Parties in Shaping Gay Culture

The interactions between people, places, and materials have in combination shaped the perceptions of house parties which, apart from race, gender, age, and social income or class, have impacted on the performance of social practices – which some feeling restricted as opposed to others who may feel comfortable in the space and therefore freely portray their sexuality and inform the space as a gay house party space. Before ending this chapter of the research, many perceptions as to what contribution house parties have to gay men and its importance in the shaping of gay (sub)culture have resulted in various interpretations due to

what people perceive as of importance to them. The symbology of these practices may also be as a result of their lived experiences (Blumer, 1986; Lefebvre, 2014). I therefore take it back to the objectives of using archival images as well as the semi-structured interviews to understand the narratives behind why gay men have used domestic spaces for social pleasure and how they have done so. For this, the following interview extracts from the participants therefore depict their understandings to the important role house parties play in shaping sexuality and space for gay men in Cape Town. From this we have therefore reached the aim of exploring such queer private space by observing and may conclude that despite these perceptions varying, they may be traced to similar roots of gay and material cultures across the world which include decorating the space to give it LGBT+ related identity and the occupation of the space for socialising through practices of food, dance, music, and entertainment which may seem similar to any heteronormative party but is however different in the sense as to what these elements symbolises to gay men in these spaces.

"Gay culture to me means self-expression, diversity and kindness because most of us overflow with kindness and joy as most of us within the gay community have overcome hardship. […] it (house parties) brings us closer and we learn from each other at these parties. I learn how to Gayle. Every time we dance, I learn a new vogue move. In the LGBTQ community, one is never too old to learn something new." – Dash

"For me it is something personal. I feel like it's a pride in one's identity and capabilities – thus the Pride Flag. Besides pride, for myself it is also a constant reminder of how far I've come as an individual that identifies as LGBT, and also how far I have to grow. […] Which is why I've come to understand at my age is that each person on the spectrum will obviously also have a different experience of what Gay culture is and what it means to them. We have to respect that, I guess and their journey their on […] it's the idea of openness that you can express with likeminded individuals. Throughout history, whether it's on RuPaul Drag Race and their kikking or with ballroom culture, in POSE on Netflix – it all started with a simple house party or informal gathering. I believe it's the foundation that has kept many acquaintances, friendships and any blossoming courtships that have come from it, past or present." – Rick

"Gay culture can be whatever you want it to be. To me personally it is culture that evolves to be intertwined with other cultures. Gay culture is living and expressing oneself fully with confidence, living in colour and showing our communities that we matter and belong. […] Each 'house party' shapes a different perspective of gay culture which I think is so important as it embraces the diversity within our queer community. We are all experiencing gay culture through our own walks of life. To be able to share that with the

world allows others to understand the vast expressions within gay culture and it
essentially breaks down the stereotypes." – Fred

"You see, Gay Culture means a lot of things to me and different things to many different
people. But in essence, what we can all agree on is the gay pride rainbow flag represents
us as a whole – our diversity, all coming together as one nation. […] Ithink, gay culture is
similar to pop culture, or even religion at that. We all may practice Christianity, but how
we practice it may differ. It all comes down to the same roots though. Being gay and
celebrating gay pride means having part of not only the local, but also the wider range of
gay community. Like, I can relate to someone from America, or China, or wherever it may
be because though we are different in our own ways, Pride unites us and the little things
we do like these gay parties – almost like a little community, you know?" – Baby

As individual agents, your position in the space plays a large role in how you contribute to the space and the performance of practices which shape gay culture. It is therefore both a matter of where you are (the space you find yourself in which you are to give meaning to through performance) and who you are (how your sexuality informs your performance of practices) along with those around you. Non-human objects and ornamentations are thus reliant on the human actors and the meaning which they attach to these objects (Lupton, 1994). How spaces are decorated and assigned identity is thus by means of what those who occupy the space seen necessary and popular among other members of the network (Latour, 1999 and 2007) for the purpose of shaping cultural practices.

6.4   Concluding note

Whilst race may have an impact on the study, as shown in some of the literature in terms of spatiality and gay identities, it is important to note that the study was not solely based on aspects of race, age, and class but more so on gay material culture as a whole. Through the objectives I was able to achieve the aim of exploring queer space by looking at gay house parties in Cape Town. The observations made in the field supported the argument that space should not simply only be considered as heterosexual but may be considered as homosexual or queer through the use of space and those who or which occupy said spaces. From this, many themes emerged but can be traced back to the idea of these spaces serving the purpose of a safe and interactive zone which is often not provided in public either due to homophobia or queer persons simply not wanting to disclose their unusual sexuality to others.

Whilst these queer perceptions of space may not necessarily paint a global picture of gay culture, it can be used locally to elaborate on the framework used to theorize the sexuality of space in Cape Town. It is important to note that it is not only events which happen in the public

sphere which contributes to the construction of gay culture in Cape Town, but those in the domestic sphere as well. Whilst this study only scratches at the surface of how queer agents express their sexuality and shape space through their performance of identity in domestic spaces, it does paint a picture of gay subcultural practices. Researchers need to reconfigure their understandings of space and its human relations with dialogues around sexuality and space considering the meaning-making of actors which shape the ideas of the house party in a marginalised group gives meaning to their narratives and symbology captured in these images.

Simply studying a phenomenon such as house parties in its absolute physical sense can be deceiving and must be adapted to include a relative view where symbolic interaction creates a space that offers the possibility of numerous sexual identities to be produced and reproduced within a social milieu, as both form part of the holistic view and framing of culture. Exploring space beyond visibility to include symbology has seen how house parties have shaped the ideas of gay culture through their symbolic actions, representations, and interpretations of space. It not only presents a gateway for multiple forms of citizenship (fem, butch, twink, drag, et cetera) to develop in these spaces which branches out to the wider range of LGBT+ community but also indicates that these spaces may have different meanings to different persons.

We must however acknowledge that the narratives of people may often be partial or selective as it is shaped by their own perceptions. Domestic spaces thus uses both individual and collective human actors as well as non-human actors (the materials used to define the space) to derive meanings associated with the space and practices therewithin. Combining theories therefore does not place restrictions on the symbolic framing of culture and can provide a holistic view which includes all, or most, of the actors involved in the definition of said cultural practices.

The shaping of the domestic home into social space therefore provides a utopia for gay men and their peers as they are able to shape the space to their will – an opportunity which is often not granted in public spaces. Apart from the domestic home being a space of inclusion and secrecy to freely perform sexual identities no standard universal truths exists as to the true roles of house parties, how they are conducted, or the materials which represent the space, as every individual have their own socially and personally constructed realities of what the space means to them and why these parties are held, thus contributing to the varying narratives. One can but only attempt to give meaning to the role of house parties by looking into the meanings represented by the actors of this practice phenomenon. One such as study which goes deeper

into the understanding of objects as materials for cultural analysis is Griswold *et al* (2013) whose theory may be included into the study of subcultural gay practices. I therefore recommend more research be done into the study of domestic social spaces as I have merely looked at one part of the community practice in question and invite others to follow the study with possible new avenues to approach this topic.

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RESOURCES

AM 2886: *Kewpie Photographic Collection, ca. 1950s to 1980s*. Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action.

Series A: Photographs

- Box 1 Photographs AM2886/1 – AM2886/50
- Box 2 Photographs AM2886/51.1 – AM2886/87
- Box 3 Photographs AM2886/88 – AM2886/127B
- Box 4 Photographs AM2886/128.1 – AM2886/233.2
- Box 5 Photographs affected by mould.
- Box 6 Negatives & duplicate enlarged prints, B and C.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Letter (Updated with Covid Ethics Protocol)

UNIVERSITY *of the* **WESTERN CAPE**

60 YEARS *of hope, action & knowledge*

01 June 2020

Mr A Jacobs
Geography, Environmental Studies and Tourism
Faculty of Arts

Ethics Reference Number: HS19/8/28

Project Title: Domestic space and the performance of identity: The role of house parties in shaping sexuality and space in Cape Town.

Approval Period: 01 June 2020 – 01 June 2023

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report by 30 November each year for the duration of the project.

The permission to conduct the study must be submitted to HSSREC for record keeping purposes.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape

Director: Research Development
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X 17
Bellville 7535
Republic of South Africa
Tel: +27 21 959 4111
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

NHREC Registration Number: HSSREC-130416-049

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.

Appendix B: Research Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

Faculty of Arts

Research Information Sheet

Project Title: Domestic space and the performance of identity: The role of house parties in shaping sexuality and space in Cape Town

Description of study: The 'gay scene' in Cape Town is popularly known for its bars and clubs such as Zer021 Social Club, The Pink Panther Nightclub, Crew Bar, and StarGayzers to name a few. It is for this reason why researchers in the fields of Geography & Tourism have placed much of the research focus on public/urban spaces and their relation to the LGBT+ community. As a Human Geographer, I however am interested in private/domestic spaces. This study explores how gay men use the home environment to socialize with their peers at house parties through gossip, food, music, and other forms of entertainment and what these spaces and interactions mean to them; as opposed to that of clubs and bars.

Role of participants: Your role as host or guest at a house party is to extend an invitation to the researcher and allow the researcher to observe and also interact with others in the space – consider it as a new acquaintance being introduced to the group. Participants should feel free to be themselves and not consider the presence of the newcomer as a hindrance to enjoying the party. Participants will be interviewed at a set time and date after the party, reflecting on the events which took place at the party and what they mean to you the participant.

Confidentiality and protection of participants: In order to ensure and protect anonymity of the participants, the name and surname of participants will be changed upon request and pseudonyms will be used in all my research findings, oral presentations, the final submitted dissertation and any subsequent publication. All data will be secured digitally in a password-protected drive and/or manually in a locked drawer.

Potential risks: There are no foreseeable physical, psychological, social, economic, legal or loss of confidentiality risks attached to the study.

Further questions?
If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact the researcher:

Andrew Jacobs
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University of the Western Cape
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Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

Faculty of Arts

Consent Form

Domestic space and the performance of identity:
The role of house parties in shaping sexuality and space in Cape Town

Researcher: Mr Andrew Jacobs

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. If I wish to withdraw I may contact the lead researcher, supervisor or HOD at any time.

3. I understand my responses and personal data will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the reports or publications that result from the research.

4. I give consent to audio and video recording.

5. I agree that the data collected from me may be used in future research.

6. I agree to take part in the above research project.

Name of Participant (Or legal representative)	Date	Signature
Name of person taking consent (If different from lead researcher)	Date	Signature
Lead Researcher (To be signed and dated in presence of the participant)	Date	Signature

Copies: All participants will receive a copy of the signed and dated version of the consent form and information sheet for themselves. A copy of this will be filed and kept in a secure location for research purposes only.

Researcher:
Andrew Jacobs
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HOD:
Dr Mark Boekstein
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Email: mboekstein@uwc.ac.za

Appendix C: Kewpie Image Collection

1. AM2886_103: Cissie Gool's house in Mount Street: Lameez, Olivia, unknown, Cora, Kewpie, Bassey, 04/09/1971.

2. AM2886_117.2: Below (RHS): Mariam, Olivia and Cliffie in Invery Place.

3. AM2886_47.2: Christmas lunch in Rutger Street (L-R seated) Kewpie; Carmen; Hayley Mills; Mitzi; Brigitte. Unknown person at the back, possibly Miss Caron.

4. AM2886_58.10: Kewpie's party in Rutger Street. 1974

5. AM2886_58.19: Stella; Amy; Kewpie (L-R) same party in Rutger Street. 1974

6. AM2886_58.24: Achmat (Dicky) with Stella. 1974

7. AM2886_62.1: De Smidt Street, Greenpoint. 'Smashing party'. Kay Kendall and friends. Barry (Kay's husband); Kay Kendall (green dress and champagne glass); unknown; unknown (hidden Diana Ross; Mitzi (at the back) (L-R).

8. AM2886_62.2: De Smidt Street. Ross (Diana Ross); Joseph; Bassey; Stephanie Powers (L-R).

9. AM2886_62.3: Friends at party in Greenpoint. Joseph on right; Kewpie in centre at back; Kay in the foreground.

10. AM2886_62.6: Kewpie, Kay Kendall; (L-R), Mitzi (seated in front). Salon interior.

11. AM2886_62.7: Brian and Kewpie in Kewpie's bedroom.

12. AM2886_63.2: Brian, Kewpie, Gerhardt, Samantha.

13. AM2886_63.3: Vera; Brian; Samantha (L-R). Party in De Smidt Street, late 1970s.

14. AM2886_63.5: Indries, Samantha and Gerhardt.

15. AM2886_63.5a: De Smidt Street; Indries (Brian's brother) and Sammy, Gerhardt on couch.

16. AM2886_63.6: Party at De Smidt Street: Samantha; Mitzi Gaynor; Vera Momberg (Dolores Gray); Brigitte Bardot; Brian; Bassey.

17. AM2886_65.2: Mitzi, Gerhardt, Brigitte Bardot (L-R).

18. AM2886_65.4: 'The gang in Greenpoint at a party stage with the late Brian kissing Kay Kendall', De Smidt Street': Mrs Mills, Kay Kendall, Brian, Carmen (white gloves) and 2 neighbours.

19. AM2886_65.5: De Smidt Street: Sadie, Nonsie, Leslie Carson, landlord's nephew, unknown person, Christmas Eve Party in the 1970s.

20. AM2886_65.6: De Smidt Street: Brian, Sammy, Brigitte and Mrs Mills, 'famous Mrs Mills, always with us … [famous] for singing and dancing with us'.

21. AM2886_65.7: De Smidt Street, 'The Gang', 'I call it the gay gang'.

22. AM2886_71.2: Salon Kewpie in 5th Ave: Mitzi, Leslie Caron, Pattie, Kewpie, Mr Davids (Davie), Aubrey Lewis (caterer) (L-R).

23. AM2886_76.15: Winifred (Aunty Winnie), Aunty Ray (RHS), Mitzi, Rudolph.

24. AM2886_76.18: 'We have the whole gang at the Ambassador Club with the Roaring '20s': Boeta Jap, Warrel, Tima, Issie, Anne and Moosie' (L-R).

25. AM2886_90: Kewpie at the Ambassador Club.

26. AM2886_91: 'The late Pattie at the Ambassador Club'.

27. AM2886_92.1: 'This was a Christmas party at Mrs Biggs's place in Mitchell's Plain'. Kewpie, Mrs Biggs and family. Mrs Biggs (on the left hand side, on the end), Kewpie is on the end facing her.

28. AM2886_92.2: Christmas party with Mrs Biggs and family.

29. AM2886_92.3: Kewpie, Valley, Mitzi (LHS – RHS). Christmas Day, after lunch.

30. AM2886_92.4: Kewpie with Mrs Biggs's daughter and neighbours (the little girl on the left of Kewpie is Mrs Biggs's daughter).

31. AM2886_92.5: Mrs Biggs, Kewpie, Mrs Biggs's daughters and son.

32. AM2886_92.6: Kewpie at Mrs Biggs's table on Christmas day.

33. AM2886_92.8: Valley, Mitzi, Kewpie (LHS – RHS).

Appendix C: Contact Sheet 01

(Source: *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* – AM2886 Photographic Collection, District Six Museum).

AM2886_103.tif

AM2886_117.2.tif

AM2886_47.2.tif

AM2886_58.10.tif

AM2886_58.19.tif

AM2886_58.24.tif

AM2886_62.1.tif

AM2886_62.2.tif

AM2886_62.3.tif

Appendix C: Contact Sheet 02

(Source: *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* – AM2886 Photographic Collection, District Six Museum).

AM2886_62.6.tif AM2886_62.7.tif AM2886_63.2.tif

AM2886_63.3.tif AM2886_63.5.tif AM2886_63.5a.tif

AM2886_63.6.tif AM2886_65.2.tif AM2886_65.4.tif

Appendix C: Contact Sheet 03

(Source: *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* – AM2886 Photographic Collection, District Six Museum).

AM2886_65.5.tif

AM2886_65.6.tif

AM2886_65.7.tif

AM2886_72.tif

AM2886_76.15.tif

AM2886_76.18.tif

AM2886_90.tif

AM2886_91.tif

AM2886_92.1.tif

Appendix C: Contact Sheet 04

(Source: *Kewpie: Daughter of District Six* – AM2886 Photographic Collection, District Six Museum).

AM2886_92.2.tif

AM2886_92.3.tif

AM2886_92.4.tif

AM2886_92.5.tif

AM2886_92.6.tif

AM2886_92.8.tif

Appendix D: Interview Extract

(Source: Interview with J.M., March 2021)

The gay men like to associate themselves with their own kind because they like to flatter their own egos during house parties and other gay gatherings. They love to advertise their bodies, their personalities, and their willingness to be accepted as part of a group – "The gay group". These house parties is normally at different houses at different times, depend on who the hostess is and what they are trying to achieve with parties like that. Normally the parents of the household will be gone for the weekend and the young gay son try to gain some points in his gay friendship group by hosting a party at his parents' house. Sometimes it's a big birthday party or just a fun arrangement between friends to come together and having a social party of some sort. Everybody gets to be invited. You tell me and I tell 3 of my friends and so it goes on till everybody knows about the party. Social media also plays a big role in advertising such a party. How more people, the bigger the chances are for the host of the party to gain points in the gay society. Everybody wants to be popular, especially in the gay population of Cape Town. Half of the guests only attend these parties for the booze and the music. We all like to party and show some moves, some skin and if all goes well, a well-deserved sex partner for the night. Some of us only likes to socialize and get to know new people to the group. The new guy on the block will automatically get more attention from all guests because not only does everybody want to make him feel at home, but also like it goes between our male species, to gain more popularity and likes from the new guy. He gets everybody's attention from the start. In other circumstances a lesbian friend of the host will also be invited and then some of her friends or even lover will come with to attend this house party. Although some of our gay boys love to have lesbian friends, at house parties the two sexualities do not interfere in each other's business. It's like lion and wolf in one room. No one interferes with the others business and everybody just enjoys themselves. Some of the house parties I've been to becomes a war zone after most of the guests became drunk. Then the surrounding neighbourhood knows about the fight. Gay people can fight and the fight can be an ugly fight (lol). Gay or lesbian, doesn't matter. That is when the more civilized guests leave the part to attend another somewhere else or they would go to a club to enjoy the rest of their night. So… House parties are all different and the purpose of these gatherings are also with different mottos. One can never say what would happen at parties like that. I've been to house parties where the guests arrived, stayed for a few minutes, and then leave again because of the bad atmosphere there created by older people like parents and uncles who wants to take over.... Those parties starts at eight and ends at nine with chips and cooldrink. – Jan