HUMAN RIGHTS, LGBT MOVEMENTS AND IDENTITY: AN ANALYSIS OF
INTERNATIONAL AND SOUTH AFRICAN LGBT WEBSITES

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This thesis entitled

HUMAN RIGHTS, LGBT MOVEMENTS AND IDENTITY: AN ANALYSIS OF
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This thesis examines human rights, the international and South African lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) movements, and their organizations, exploring how they articulate human rights, sexuality and identity. The literature review includes the different perspectives on human rights philosophy and the LGBT movements, their influences and philosophical underpinnings. Issues of identity, continuity in the movements, and conceptualizations of rights are also explored. Organization’s websites, from both the international and South African movements, are analyzed using a post-structural textual analysis methodology to see how these organizations represent themselves and articulate human rights and homosexuality. Through this research, it is clear that both sets of organizations view human rights as universal and homosexuality as natural, but there are variations in the types of rights emphasized and the way homosexuality is represented and articulated. Though both groups of organizations collaborate and interact, they are distinct movements with unique approaches to LGBT rights.
Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. 3

List of Tables .......................................................................................................................................... 5

Acronyms .................................................................................................................................................. 6

Chapter 1: International Human Rights ............................................................................................... 7
  Universalism ........................................................................................................................................... 8
  Cultural Relativism ............................................................................................................................... 12
  Socialist ................................................................................................................................................ 16
  Imperialists .......................................................................................................................................... 18
  The Paradigms and Sexual Orientation as a Human Right ................................................................. 20
  Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 22

Chapter 2: International LGBT Movement .......................................................................................... 24
  History of the International Movement ................................................................................................. 27
  Analysis of the International Movement’s Focus and Assumptions .................................................... 32
  Critique of the International Gay and Lesbian Movement ................................................................. 35
  Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 41

Chapter 3: South African Gay and Lesbian Movement ....................................................................... 43
  History of the South African Movement ............................................................................................... 46
  Analysis of the Movement ....................................................................................................................... 55
  Opposition and Critiques ....................................................................................................................... 58
  Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 63

Chapter 4: Research Topic and Methodology ...................................................................................... 65
  Significance .......................................................................................................................................... 67
  Methodological Legitimacy ................................................................................................................... 68
  The Sample .......................................................................................................................................... 70
  Approaching the Quantitative Analysis ................................................................................................. 73
  Approaching the Qualitative Analysis ................................................................................................... 75

Chapter 5: Observations, Findings, and Conclusion ........................................................................... 78
  Quantitative Results .............................................................................................................................. 79
  Qualitative Results ................................................................................................................................. 83
  Similarities .......................................................................................................................................... 83
  Differences ........................................................................................................................................... 89
  Findings and Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 98
  Further Study ....................................................................................................................................... 104

Bibliography ........................................................................................................................................... 105
List of Figures

Figure 1: Content Analysis Table ......................................................................................80
Figure 2: Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Center’s Logo .....................103
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABIGALE</td>
<td>Association of Bisexuals, Gays, and Lesbians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AZAPO</td>
<td>Azanian Peoples’ Organization</td>
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<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<td>GASA</td>
<td>Gay Association of South Africa</td>
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<td>GAIDE</td>
<td>Gay Identification Development and Enrichment</td>
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<td>GLOW</td>
<td>Gays and lesbians of the Witswatersrand</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome</td>
</tr>
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<td>ICESCR</td>
<td>International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights</td>
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<td>IGLHRC</td>
<td>International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILGA</td>
<td>International Lesbian and Gay Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBT</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAGO</td>
<td>Lesbians and Gays Against Oppression</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCGLE</td>
<td>National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Nongovernmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMBLA</td>
<td>North American Man Boy Love Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLGA</td>
<td>Organization for Lesbian and Gay Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organization of African Unity</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>United Democratic Front</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOSOC</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDHR</td>
<td>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
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</table>
Chapter 1

International Human Rights

Although the concept of human rights is internationally known and debated, it is hardly an issue with a standard understanding or universally accepted definition. Even though under the United Nations there are many international treaties and declarations which define and describe human rights, and many nation-states throughout the world are signatories to these instruments, the topic of human rights is one with differing ideologies, debates, and disagreements. The first of these instruments, created in 1948, was the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and although this instrument is only a declaration and not legally binding, it serves as a foundation for other subsequent human rights conventions, resolutions, etc. However, issues including whether human rights are universal, indivisible, individualistic, applicable to groups and not just individuals, of Western origin, compatible with non-Western values, culturally specific, or not applicable to all cultures are debated and hotly contested by both scholars and politicians alike. Human rights as a concept and as a discourse is internationally known, but different philosophical approaches to human rights have emerged. Through all of these differing understandings, sexual orientation and gender identity as human rights is identified as being consistent or inconsistent with these philosophies, providing a framework for which to understand the debate behind lesbian and gay rights.

There are four key ways scholars and politicians perceive and debate human rights, namely the universal perspective, the cultural relative perspective, the socialist perspective and the imperialist perspective. Even though the idea of sexual orientation or
gender identity as a human right should not be inconsistent with any of the above approaches, it is an issue which many do not include within conceptualizations of human rights. It consistently remains absent from all international human rights documents, and it continues to be the basis for which to discriminate against individuals. In fact, very few communities protect individuals’ freedoms based on their sexual orientation, and South Africa is the only country where its national constitution includes sexual orientation among the other, less controversial characteristics from which a person shall not be discriminated against, like race, religion, etc. Issues surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity as a human right will be discussed later in the chapter.

First, it is important to examine the four different perspectives regarding human rights in order to gain an understanding of these paradigms’ assumptions and philosophical foundations before they can be related to gay and lesbian rights.

**Universalism:**

Within the universal perspective on human rights, human rights are seen as universally applicable, indivisible and inalienable to all human beings throughout the world. “Human Rights are the rights one has simply by being a human being… and human rights are equal rights: one either is or is not a human being and therefore has the same human rights as everyone else (or none at all).” (Donnelly, 2003, p.10) To universalists, this claim is valid, because within every culture there are ideas and practices surrounding human dignity. All societies throughout the world with unique cultures have protected their community members’ needs like the need for food, shelter, life, etc. These universal protections are tied to the same values with which modern
human rights are attached and therefore can be seen as similar to the modern version of human rights. In line with this thought, Asante states:

“Human rights, quite simply, are concerned with asserting and protecting human dignity; and they are ultimately based on a regard for the intrinsic worth of the individual. This is an eternal and universal phenomenon, and is as vital to Nigerians and Malays as to the Englishman and Americans.” (Asante, 1969. p. 102)

Moreover, political legitimacy and community cohesion of any nation-state rests on the fact that “human beings have an essential, irreducible moral worth and dignity independent of the social groups to which they belong and the social roles that they occupy.” (Donnelly, 2003. p. 27)

Another aspect of human rights within universalism is that they are individualistic. Although individuals are a part of larger entities like communities, societies, and cultures, human rights belong to the individuals alone, and these rights should be protected by the communities in which the individuals live. For example, the freedom of religion, listed in the UDHR under article 18, is a universal human right granted to individuals, and this right should be protected by the community even if the individual’s chosen religion might go against his/her community’s culture or traditional religion. The individual is the unit for which human rights are bestowed, understood and conceptualized.

The universalist perspective of human rights is the perspective which has been included in all of the United Nation’s conventions, covenants, and declarations. In the preamble of the UDHR, for example, this perspective is explicitly stated. “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members
of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” (UDHR, 1948). This universal perspective is useful to the United Nations and its work. According to Baehr:

“Universal human rights instruments are based on the assumption that they reflect universally accepted norms and behaviors. This is important… for the role of the United Nations in supervising the observation of these international standards. Unless human rights-or at least a nucleus of such rights- are universally accepted, the United Nations will lack the basis on which its supervision activities are founded.” (Baehr, 1999. p. 9)

This is not to say that there hasn’t been debate among member nation-states of the United Nations about the universalistic aspect of all human rights. In fact, every nation within the UN has claimed that some or all human rights are not applicable to their cultural context, or that some listed rights are not even true human rights, and therefore the nation-state is not obligated to abide by those rights or implement them. There are many examples of this including some Islamic states objecting to certain women’s rights and any references to sexual orientation by claiming they are not applicable to Sheri’ah law. Another example is the United States refusing to become a signatory to the International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) because it claims economic rights are not as important as civil and political rights. There are many more examples of states reacting to universalistic claims of human rights, and it is not confined to these two examples.

At the Second World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, the issue of the universality of human rights was meant to be resolved. There was a reiteration of
the universalistic position by delegates from all nation-states stating that they did concur that there were in fact universal human rights. However, they avoided becoming overly universalistic, leaving room for cultural variation due to context. At the same time, this space also left room for those to continue arguing against the universal aspect of human rights. In the resulting declaration from the conference, the participants of the conference maintained that human rights are universal but have variation attributed to cultural and societal contexts.

“While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of the States, regardless of their political, economic, and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.” (Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. 1993. para. 5)

Many critiques to the universalist perspective on human rights claim that since human rights emerged from Western philosophical thought, human rights are a Western construct and therefore alien to non-western cultures. Universalists agree that the modern version of human rights did emerge from western philosophy during the enlightenment period and the French and American revolutions. Philosophers, namely John Locke, Thomas Paine and Jean-Jacques Rousseau among others, used the concept of natural law to argue that individuals are entitled to certain rights. Despite this Western origin, universalists argue that human rights, as they are conceptualized, are not alien to non-western cultures and origin should not even matter. The fact that human rights are universal and are afforded to every human just by shear membership in humanity means they are valid and applicable in every society, therefore it doesn’t matter from which
culture they emerged (Donnelly 2003, Howard 1986). Moreover, as said before, all societies have had versions of values relating to human rights and human dignity so the concepts of modern human rights are therefore not foreign to any culture and could have emerged from any culture.

Lastly, universalists point out that western nations were not alone in drafting the UDHR. Non-western thinkers were included in the drafting process and they were from China, Chile, and USSR. The non-western countries who were apart of the UN at that time and who voted to adopt the final version of the UDHR included: Afghanistan, Burma, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Philippines, Syria, and Turkey. (Donnelly 2003. p. 22)

Cultural Relativism:

Another perspective regarding international human rights is the cultural relativism approach. Within cultural relativism, proponents agree with universalists that yes, instances and concepts around human dignity exist in every culture. However, cultural relativists believe that the modern, western version of human rights, as articulated by the UDHR, is not the same as concepts of human dignity and cannot be found in all cultures. To cultural relativists, the modern version does not fit into all societies and all cultures. Human rights are derived from western culture and western philosophical foundations, and therefore, they are not universal. Panikkar, as an example of this perspective, states that since cultures vary, concepts of human rights are not universal. “No concept as such is universal. Each concept is valid primarily where it was conceived”. (Panikkar, 1982 p. 84) This is not to say that other cultures do not have their own version of protecting members of their society, promoting human dignity, etc. but that cultural and societal
structure are key when thinking about human rights. As Renteln sums up the cultural relativist position quite strongly,

“[There is] a fallacy common to many writings on human rights, namely the presumption of universality. What typifies this way of thinking is the belief that human rights exist independent of culture, ideology, and value systems… Even when scholars acknowledge that human-rights norms appear to be Western, they nevertheless assert their universality. This is a peculiar form of ethnocentrism insofar as Western ideas are presumed to be ubiquitous.” (Renteln, 1990. p. 12)

There are many scholars who analyze different cultures to highlight the different practices of human rights and human dignity which are culturally specific and not within the western version of human rights. Regions particularly focused on by cultural relativists for having different understandings of human rights are within Asia, China, and in Sub-Saharan Africa. Since the scope of this paper looks at South Africa and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender organizations within that country, I will address those scholarly works which highlight practices and characteristics relating to human rights within the African setting and different African cultures. Cultural relativists point to three key variations, discussed below, as Africa’s version of rights.

The first characteristic many Africanists and African scholars discuss is the tendency for African societies to stress communalism, claiming that community membership is important to the individual. As Shivji describes the African philosophy, he says, “I am because we are, and because we are therefore I am.” (Shivji, 1989 p.22) An individual does not see him/herself independent from the group, i.e. family or
community. This understanding, therefore, brings the African unit of analysis in terms of human rights to the group level rather than the Western version which focuses on the individual. African culture does not subscribe to such western notions of individualism. However, the modern version of human rights is in line with these western notions and makes the individual the recipient of the rights, not the group, sometimes even at the expense of the group. Referring back to my previous example using the right to religion, this is one example, of many, where an individual right can have the potential to be contradictory to the group’s culture, tradition, or right. The individual, through his/her rights, could choose to adopt a religion different from that of his/her community. This idea that the individual’s rights are a priority over the group is understood as being alien to the African cultures and not applicable to African societies.

The second characteristic many scholars identify is that African societies are based on a system of rights as well as obligations to community and society. This point was touched on in the previous discussion but it is a distinct point. It is believed in most African cultures that a person cannot have a right at the expense of the collective (Shivji, 1989). Moreover, an individual is seen as having duties to the collective, i.e. the family, community, and society. In fact, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted a regional charter on human rights called The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (from here on referred to as the Banjul Charter). Within this charter there are individual rights, people (or group) rights, as well as individual and group duties. Most of the duties listed in the Banjul Charter are to remind the individual of his/her responsibility to their families and neighbors, reiterating the communal characteristic of
African societies. An example of a duty within the Banjul Charter that stresses the importance of placing the individual within the community is as follows:

“The rights and freedoms of each individual shall be exercised with due regard to the rights of others, collective security, morality, and common interest.” (Article 27 (2) Banjul Charter)

Lastly, there are many scholars who analyze African cultures to identify the forms of dignity, understanding about humanity, and practices that were similar to conceptions of human rights but that are unique to Africa. Deng is one such scholar who analyzes the people from Southern Sudan, the Dinka. (Deng, 1990) Deng claims that an African version of human rights has historically been the basis of Dinka society. The Dinka had not codified their ideas of human rights but Deng looked closely at the Dinka’s cultural practices, and showed that there were values within the Dinka social fabric which can be understood as human rights. Within Dinka’s culture, there is a concept known as *cieng* which loosely translate to morals, behavior, or culture (p. 226). If a member of the Dinkan society acts with bad *cieng* toward his family, neighbors and fellow community members, he/she is shunned for violating the society’s code. Deng even argues that this value within Dinkan culture provided a foundation for a Dinka version of human rights. It has even led the Dinka to later expand this notion to all of Sudan and allowed them to lead a Southern insurgency against the current government for freedom for all Sudanese from discrimination and persecution by the state based on religion, ethnicity, and culture.

Cultural relativists argue that this analysis, along with analyses of other African societies by scholars including Wai (1980) and Asante (1969), show that there were values in Africa which are similar to human rights but they are not replicas of the modern
version of human rights as articulated in the United Nations instruments. Rather, they are different versions of human dignity. One example of how these traditional African values are different, found within these societies studied, is that people seen as outside the group were denied human dignity. This demarcation of who is granted dignity, even occurred within the Dinkan culture as the Dinka were known to brutally fight with others outside their community. However, society would not survive if it did not have practices and values within its culture through which community members could satisfy their basic needs. Having versions of human dignity even if they are the African version of human rights is not the same as having modern human rights, such as equality to women and right to religion, etc.

Socialist:

The socialist perspective on human rights is actually more of a critique of the universalist perspective, but through this critique came important contributions to the different understandings and conceptualizations of rights. When the socialist critique emerged, initially it argued that human rights are not realized through abstract philosophy about human nature alone. An individual does not have human rights by simply being human, no, an individual has rights exclusively because those rights are granted by the state. “[T]here is no such concept as ‘rights’ outside state-law.” (Shivji, 1989. p. 21) Due to the reliance on the state to provide human rights to the individual, this understanding goes against the idea that human rights are actual natural rights but that they are instead nation-states’ responsibilities or gifts to their citizens. Those who subscribe to the socialist critique argue that human rights are just a moral ideal rather than attributes one has by being a member of the human race. As Imre Szabo states,”
“The human rights embodied in natural law are neither laws nor rights, but moral ideals, or shall we say: pretensions conceived of as rights, formulated in respect of all the law-to-be-created; accordingly, they should not be called rights at all” (Szabo, 1968. p. 36).

Within human rights instruments, nation-states are the providers and protectors of the rights of their citizen. It is the nation-states which are members of the United Nations, and they are the entities which become signatories to the declarations, conventions, and other instruments. As signatories, the states then are pressured to modify or implement laws in line with the human rights standards. Societal structure and community culture or climate, which can also contribute to human rights violations, fall outside of the realm of the human rights documents. In fact, it becomes the role of the nation-state to implement programs, laws or policies to address hostile climates within their jurisdiction. This reliance on the nation-state, however, is problematic not only because states could become ineffective in promoting positive change in a culture or community climate which is hostile to certain human rights but also, often it is the nation-state which violates human rights. Human rights instruments assume democratically run nation-states, but if a nation-state is non-democratic and does not depend on the citizenries’ approval to remain in control, human rights violations are more likely to occur at the hands of the state. This can be seen throughout countries in Africa, like in current day Zimbabwe, and in the recent past in countries like Zaire, Uganda, and Malawi. (Shivji, 1989)

Through the socialist critique, the idea emerged that since rights did not exist without the nation-state and since the nation-state needs to provide an environment for its
citizens to satisfy their basic needs, in order to maintain legitimacy, maybe certain rights were more important than others. Socialists argued that economic, social and cultural rights were more important rights and were prerequisites to other rights. “Only those who have forgotten the pangs of hunger will think of consoling the hungry by telling them that they should be free before they eat.” (Baehr, 1999 p. 16) By following this logic, countries should focus on providing basic commodities to their citizenry before focusing on civil and political rights because these rights are less critical for life. It was the United States which focused on civil and political rights making them the focus within the initial years of the United Nations and it was the socialist critique that economic, social and cultural rights gained increasing importance within the United Nations during the 1960’s and 1970’s. These rights are now referred to as second generation rights, and the rights to development became known as the third generation rights. Nations from developing areas and primarily those in Africa, argued that they were unable to be successful in providing economic, social and cultural rights for their citizens due to their underdevelopment. Universalists do not agree with this prioritization of rights because they see freedoms as no less important as food and shelter and that often freedom and access to economic rights go hand in hand. “[I]t has occurred to me that the denial of food may be the direct consequence on the denial of freedom. For several months, the German occupation forces did not allow the food to reach the hungry population (during World War II)” (Baehr, 1999 p. 16)

**Imperialists:**

Critics who argue from the imperialist perspective about human rights, maintain that human rights as an international ideology is imperialistic. Human rights have
western origins and were not created in non-western settings. At the same time, developed nations, almost entirely western, use human rights standards within their foreign policies. Nations have been known for withholding aid to developing nations, citing human rights concerns as the reason. An example of this is the United States avoiding certain political agreements with China by citing its concern on the condition of human rights.

Even though developed nations stress human rights publicly and within their foreign policy, historically some, especially the United States, have supported undemocratic dictatorships in certain countries which were known for their massive human rights violations. Moreover, there have been instances where the United States actually intervened in foreign governments and installed regimes with brutal repercussions on the local population.

“Who does not know that Mobutu, who gracefully preside[d] over the death and detention chambers of Zaire, was installed by the CIA? Who is so ignorant as to forget that the Lion of Juddah (Haile Selassie), who turned his country into a jungle where people in their thousands starved to death in fear and famine, was one of the greatest beneficiaries of US military arsenal? Many know that the US is one of the staunchest allies of South Africa [during apartheid]; the military supplier of UNITA in Angola; the benefactor of dictators like Banda and Moi and the protector of Liberia’s military nincompoop Sammuel Doe.” (Shivji, 1989, p. 55)

Beyond the imperialistic implementation of human rights and the ironic support of governments which violate the rights of their own citizens, those who subscribe to the imperialist perspective claim that human rights are imperialistic in and of themselves.
They push an agenda and style of governance and economy on nations, which by nature of participating in the international geo-politics and in the United Nations, the nations are forced to adopt and implement this style. For example, right to private property is Article 17 in the UDHR. However, private property as a concept does not exist in some cultures or communities, especially in the rural areas. Through this Article, the concept of private property is then imposed on places which may or may not accept it, which is a form of imperialism. One critic “refers to the problem of Article 17 as one of cultural imperialism because it … ‘seeks to impose free enterprise and capitalism on the rest of the world.’” (Zvobgo quoted in Renteln, 1990, p. 51)

**The Paradigms and Sexual Orientation as a Human Right:**

The freedom of sexual orientation and gender identity and the freedom from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity are not included in or specifically mentioned in any international human rights instruments. The implications of this fact are important and leave gays and lesbians at risk for their lifestyles, behaviors, and identities to be targeted for discrimination and persecution. However, freedoms associated with sexual orientation and gender identity are not inconsistent with all the paradigms of human rights. Through following the differing paradigms’ arguments, human rights in terms of sexual orientation seems especially consistent with the universalist perspectives, but it could even find space in the cultural relativist, socialist, and imperialist perspective.

In the universalist perspective, all human beings are entitled to human rights due to their membership in the human race, which should also include sexual minorities. In terms of the other three perspectives, often resistance to accepting sexual orientation as a
human right stems more from issues associated with stigma than to the philosophical underpinnings of human rights. Homosexuality and gay and lesbian identities are very stigmatized and many countries are overrun with homophobia and heterosexism. In fact, those who argue against human rights for sexual minorities are doing so due to stigmatization rather than through their standpoint on human rights per se. It is not that sexual orientation is inconsistent with these paradigms. The reason it is omitted from human rights, has to be linked to other issues, like societal stigma. For example, in cultural relativism, so long as human rights are culturally appropriate and specific, they are applicable. Of course, many claim that homosexuality is alien to many cultures but, in fact, homosexual behavior has been well documented as occurring in all cultures throughout the world and is therefore not alien to any culture. Once this fact is accepted, the issue then becomes how those engaged in the many variations of homosexuality are to be included in the culturally appropriate form of human rights rather than debating whether sexual orientation should or should not be included in human rights. This varied view of human rights does allow for societies not to acknowledge sexual orientation as a human right but if a society does so it is not tied to the fact that varying sexual practices are not a part of that society but more to the society’s stigma and ideology, like religion.

Socialist critics, who also argue against sexual orientation as a human right, do so less from their conceptualizations of human rights and more to their understanding of and feelings about homosexuality. If one who subscribes to the socialist critique sees sexual orientation as a human right, he/she maintains that the state is the provider and protector of human rights and it should include sexual orientation as a human right and another responsibility delegated to the nation-state. Some imperialist critics claim that gay and
lesbian rights and sexual identity are actually forms of Western imperialism. This issue will be addressed in later chapters, but if one does not view homosexuality in that way, sexual orientation then becomes another issue societies need to address individualistically and determine how that will handle it in terms of rights. Sexual orientation as a right is not inherently inconsistent with any of these perspectives on human rights and omitting it from one’s view of human rights has more to do with other issues and ideologies rather than how one perceives rights.

**Conclusion:**

These four paradigms are just different ways to understand human rights. Through these paradigms, issues like what are human rights, who is entitled to human rights, and how human rights are granted and protected vary. Sexual orientation, though not inherently inconsistent with any of these paradigms, is not included in any of the international human rights documents and instruments and, in fact, when brought up during international conferences on human rights, the topic becomes subject to much opposition and reaction. This reaction is linked with issues surrounding the continued stigma sexual minorities face and other opposing ideologies, like religion.

The human rights ideologies, as mapped out in this chapter, are specific to issues surrounding human rights, its debates and discourse, but these paradigms can also be used as broader lenses through which to view the world and the variety of topics throughout the world. Specifically referring to sexual orientation, ideas and debates using the same philosophical underpinnings of universalism, cultural relativism, and imperialism are constantly invoked. As shown in subsequent chapters, within the international lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender movement, as well as the gay and
lesbian movement in South Africa, activists certainly grapple with these perspectives and paradigms when dealing with their own constituents, people within their movements, as well as critics. Though some of the sentiments may be more about gay and lesbian identity than human rights, the arguments and ideas are still from the same frameworks of the fore mentioned perspectives.
Homosexuality, or sex between people of the same gender, occurs throughout the world. There is scholarship, historical evidence and ethnographies that have documented homosexuality in a wide variety of places throughout all the populated continents of the world, namely North America, South America, Europe, Asia and Africa. Though homosexuality has occurred globally throughout time and place, this is not to say that those who engaged in same sex activity understood themselves as gay, lesbian, a sexual minority, or sexually different. In fact, scholars who have studied homosexuality have consistently indicated that there are many different reasons and culturally specific nuances which allow or lead individuals to engage in homosexuality without causing them to become stigmatized by society or to have their identities be defined by their sexual practices. The emergence of the term ‘homosexual’ to define someone based on their sexual orientation did not occur until 1868 by a European named Karl Kertbeny. (Roseneil, 2002) Recently, within the last 40 years or so, there has been a new emergence of international gay, lesbian, and queer identities, that appear to have continuity through the use of common symbols and images. These new identities initially emerged within Western societies and culture, but recently it is increasingly becoming a global phenomenon. “There is evidence of this new gay world particularly in Southeast Asia, South and Central America, and Eastern Europe” (Altman, 1996, p. 78)

Apart from identity, gay and lesbian political movements and organizations have emerged only within the last century. Starting in the late 1960’s, lesbian and gay
liberation and political movements have been emerging internationally, first developing in Western countries, namely the United States and countries in Western Europe, then in Latin American countries, and more recently in Asia and South Africa. During the 1960’s and 1970’s, the movements that existed in America and Europe focused on domestic issues and did not have formal transnational links. These movements emerged from the “New Left” which was characterized by the student, anti-war, black power and feminist movements of the 1960’s. This influence resulted in the gay and lesbian organizations’ stance tending to be militant and radical, calling for liberation and self-determination (Engel, 2002 and Adam, Duyvendak, and Krouwel, 1999). As these movements matured, and transnational gay and lesbian organizations emerged in the late 1970’s and 1980’s, the focus of the movements shifted to begin treating gay men and lesbians as a victimized social minority striving for equality, rights, freedom from discrimination, and inclusion into the dominant society (Richardson and Seidman, 2002).

Through focusing on gays, lesbians, and other people engaged in homosexuality as a victimized minority and a single entity, there is an assumption that there is some universal or shared experience or lifestyle between all the people included. Classifying people who engage in sex with people of the same gender into a cohesive group, for example within the category of LGBT, is to assume that the people share something in common and that they understand their own commonality. When adding other people besides gay men and lesbian into the sexual minority category, e.g. bissexuals and transgendered people, or by including people from other countries and cultures who are engaged in same sex sexuality, finding commonality and shared experiences could
become problematic. However, the international LGBT movement maintains that there is in fact commonality between all people engaged in homosexuality or who define themselves as sexual minorities whether they define themselves as gay, lesbian homosexual, bisexual, queer, etc. International LGBT groups identify repression and discrimination that people experience in countries throughout the world as the similar aspect. This stance is not without its critics, though. Primarily these critics are scholars and people from non-western countries. They claim that there is no cohesive LGBT identity and movement and that local movements are not a part of an international movement, which is marked as being Western. Moreover, these critics claim that through the international movement, Western LGBT identity is imposed on local sexualities.

It is quite clear that the perspectives discussed in the previous chapter are also brought into the debate surrounding sexual minorities in terms of both identity and rights. Universal understandings, issues surrounding Western imperialism, and claims from cultural relativists, all come into the wide debate regarding gay rights and the international LGBT movement. Gay and lesbian activists who adhere to the universalist perspective argue LGBT people are not included in international human rights standards, because due to homophobia, they are stigmatized and seen as sub-human, but others say it is not that simple. Culture, identity, and communities are important factors when considering gay and lesbian rights. Before delving into the intricacies of human rights, ideology, and cultural specificity, we need to first, look at the history and formation of the international movement, its assumptions and its focus. After this historical overview, the movement will be analyzed and the influences of the previous perspectives will be
highlighted to determine their effect on the international gay rights movement. Lastly, the movement has critiques which will be addressed and discussed.

As a precursor, it is important to note that the organizations that represent people engaged in homosexuality do not have a standard definition of who they represent. Some claim to be all inclusive representing gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender, intersex, queer, men who have sex with men, homosexuals, and allies. Others claim only to represent lesbians and gay men. As the gay and lesbian political movement emerged, most of the organizations just claimed to represent two groups, lesbians and gay men. Current international groups all claim to represent gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. To avoid confusion, I will stick to using either gay and lesbian or LGBT terminology. I am not claiming that all groups within the international movement have the same definition of who is included in the sexual minority or adhere to the same understandings on who is gay, what defines a lesbian, etc. Identity, as we shall see, is subjective.

**History of the International Movement**

The gay and lesbian political movement initially started in North America and in Western Europe. In the 1950’s, there were small scale movements that fought for basic rights for gays and lesbians by pursuing an assimilationist strategy that “fostered a culture of ‘middle-class respectability’” (Taylor, Kaminski, and Dugan, 2002. p. 106). They encouraged members to dress respectfully and show the dominant society that they were “normal” people. They were also “conservative in their demands and moderate in their outlook,… seeking tolerance from a heterosexual majority” (Richardson and Seidman, 2002 p. 8). Examples of these organizations in North America were the Mattachine
Society and Daughters of Bilitis and in Western Europe they were the Homosexual Law Reform Society and Kenric and Minorities Research Group (Richardson et. al., 2002).

What is referred to as the origin of the contemporary gay and lesbian political movement occurred when groups began to reject assimilationist strategies and stressed community and identity as sources of pride (Taylor et. al., 2002). This rejection emerged in the 1960’s during the development of the ‘New Left’ and the civil rights movements and gained particular momentum after the Stonewall Riots in New York City in 1969 (IBID). This contemporary movement was composed of a number of local liberation organizations primarily in North America and Western Europe, but also in South America and Australia. They worked on local issues, demanding rights, respect, and freedom from stigma. By the 1970’s, some of the gay and lesbian activists thought that their local movements would gain power and strength if they came together, shared ideas, and collaborated. In doing so, the organizations could also jointly address an issue that they all shared, that of gay and lesbian human rights. In 1978, the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) was formed during a conference of gay and lesbian activist in Coventry, England (Altman, 2002). This organization was formed to serve as an umbrella organization, meaning it brought together organizations around the world working on gay and lesbian issues separately into a network. The organization also included lobbying and monitoring lesbian and gay rights throughout the world as part of the group’s mandate. “The aim of the association has been to monitor, publicize, and campaign against the oppression of homosexuals the world over” (Laviolette and Whitworth, 1994 p. 568).
One of the main goals of the ILGA was to gain official accreditation from the United Nations. In 1991, ILGA applied for accreditation status from the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) but because approval necessitated a consensus role-call vote, ILGA failed to obtain this consensus because some countries voted against the petition on grounds that gays and lesbians spread disease and are immoral (Laviolette et. al., 1994). However, in 1993, ILGA received temporary accreditation, enabling the organization to attend the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. This was the first time that any gay or lesbian organization had been officially recognized by the United Nations, and this allowed the ILGA to address the UN delegates.

Official permanent accreditation was not granted to ILGA until late 1993 and this happened only because ECOSOC broke with tradition and abandoned its required consensus. Success was not long lived as this decision was later repealed when it was found that some of the organizations under the umbrella were working to repeal the age of consent laws which was considered an attempt to promote pedophilia. One such organization under ILGA which was singled out was called the North American Man Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) as it promoted intergenerational homosexual relationships. Many countries demanded that ILGA’s accreditation status be repealed on the grounds that the organization included pedophile organizations as their constituents. The ILGA acted quickly to avoid this repeal, and “at its annual meeting in June of 1994, ILGA delegates voted overwhelmingly to eject three pedophile organizations, including NAMBLA, from ILGA membership” (Laviolette et. al., 1994, p. 569). None the less, the ECOSOC council suspended ILGA’s recognition and accreditation, and this status has yet to be reinstated.
Regardless of the ILGA’s interaction with the United Nations and ECOSOC, throughout the years it has become a very large organization with over 400 member organizations throughout the world (ILGA website). As an organization, it has published three books, called the *Pink Books*, describing the conditions of LGBT people in different countries throughout the world, as well as providing in depth accounts of homosexuality in areas ranging from Argentina, to West Africa, to Eastern Europe. “The *Pink Books* began a new phase in the ILGA’s efforts to promote and defend the interests of lesbians and gay men worldwide, and to strengthen international collaboration between them” (Hendricks, Tielman, and Van der Veen, 1993. p. 15).

Another organization which developed later in the international lesbian and gay movement is the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC). This organization was established in 1991 in San Francisco and its aim is to “secure the full enjoyment of the human rights of all people and communities subject to discrimination or abuse on the basis of sexual orientation or expression, gender identity or expression, and/or HIV status” (IGLHRC website). Its activities to reach this aim include, “research, documentation, (the distribution of) bimonthly ‘action alerts’,… and the publishing of country or region specific reports” (Sanders, 1996, p. 104). They also conduct coalition building campaigns and offer technical assistance to local gay and lesbian activists or organizers. They even hold regional workshops with local gay and lesbian activists to provide assistance in organization management, mobilization, and community education. In South Africa, they have launched a Positive Sexualities Project in which their aim is:
“to raise awareness of the issues, support leadership, build capacity, create further training opportunities, identify local resources, make health and legal services more accessible, and provide replicable frameworks for analysis, service provision, and documentation. To this end, we are working very closely with local experts in gender rights, health, anti-violence conflict resolution, and the law.”

(IGLHRC website)

These organizations, together with nationally based organizations, began to pressure other human rights focused organizations to include sexual orientation and gender identity within their definition of human rights. It took 17 years of lobbying the respected organization called Amnesty International, but in 1991 the organization finally expanded their definition of prisoners of conscience to included individuals persecuted for their sexual orientation (Sanders, 1996). The reason for the 17 years of reluctance, was that Amnesty International was concerned with losing support from non-Western areas of the world, and they cited the fact that gay and lesbian rights were not specifically included in international law or in any declaration, convention, or covenant. In 1994, Human Rights Watch, another important international human rights monitoring organization, followed Amnesty International’s suit in 1994 to include gay and lesbian issues within their mandate (Sanders, 1996).

The international LGBT movement is not just represented by these transnational organizations but is also composed of local and national organizations. These local and national organizations throughout the world have many similarities which add to the understanding that there is indeed a cohesive international gay and lesbian movement and identity. The individual organizations share similar characteristics in terms of their
action patterns, strategies, issue emphasis, organization, and development. (Adam et. al., 1999) “Significant cross-national similarities can also be found in the pattern of action and events organized by movements in different countries” (Adam et. al., 1999, p. 346). Due to these similarities, local groups learn from each other and share with each other, forming national and regional coalitions. In Southeast Asia, organizations from Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, and Singapore “are extremely aware of and interested in each others’ activities. Similar networking exists in Eastern Europe and South America” (Altman, 1996. p. 90). There is also a similar network in Southern Africa which will be addressed more in depth in the next chapter.

**Analysis of the International Movement’s Focus and Assumptions**

The international gay and lesbian movement has gone through different phases over the past 50 years. As it emerged from its more militant and liberationist stance during the 1960’s and 1970’s, which was in reaction to and a rejection of the assimilationist stance of the 1950’s, the international movement compromised some of its radical edge and moved back toward focusing on rights and viewing gays and lesbians as a victimized minority. By viewing lesbian and gays as a victimized minority, the international organizations were able to focus their work on documenting and exposing all injustices that gays and lesbians faced in their respective countries. John D’Emilio described the shifts within the lesbian and gay movement over the past fifty years as, “a move from an outlook captured by the phrase ‘here we are’, towards activism about family, school, and work which puts a different demand; ‘we want in’” (in Richardson and Siedman, 2002 p. 9).
Currently, the international LGBT organizations understand all people included within the defined sexual minority, i.e. people engaged in homosexuality or gender difference, to be full citizens and the problem is that they are excluded from the full range of rights associated with citizenship. The fact they are excluded from these inalienable human rights is unjust and therefore needs the movement’s attention and focus. In fact, this stance of approaching gay and lesbians as a victimized international minority helps the international gay and lesbian organizations unite with each other and with local groups, because there are common goals that all members share which can be applied to an international agenda. These goals include advancing the issues of sexual orientation and gender identity in the United Nations, the inclusion of these issues in human rights concepts, the decriminalization of same sex relations through repeals of sodomy laws in the many nations where these laws continue to exist, and confronting stigma associated with gay and lesbian identity. These problems and issues tend to be found universally all over the world.

The international LGBT organizations and even the local political organizations understand and assume human rights are universal rights applied to all individuals. In fact, these organizations rely on human rights as justification for their own cause and movement. The specific human rights that organizations appeal to are the freedom from discrimination based on ‘sex’ and ‘other status’, which are two characteristics mentioned in article 2 of the UDHR. There is one case law from an international court where the court found that ‘sex’ refers to freedom of sexual orientation. In Toonen v Australia, presented in front of the Human Rights Committee, it was found that one cannot be discriminated against based on sex. In this case, sex was defined as gender as well as
who one has sexual relations with. “The Committee said that ‘sex’ included ‘sexual orientation’” (Sanders, 1996, p. 94). In this case, a Tasmanian man was found to have been discriminated against by the state. The other human right LGBT activists appeal to is the right to privacy. The state should not interfere with a private matter such as who one chooses to have sex with (Donnelly, 1999).

Within the international LGBT movement, there is acknowledgement of local variation from country to county in terms of identity, environment and composition. The international organizations do not refute local variation, but they all assume commonality among gay people. In fact, in much of the literature produced by these organizations there is mention of “our communities” and “we” as if there is a cohesive group with inherent similarities amongst all the diverse people who compose the community (see Pink Books 1, 2, and 3 from ILGA and IGLHRC publications and website). The commonality the international organizations would point to in this example is that all of these people experience some form of stigmatization, persecution, or discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

Through appearances, there is credence to believe in a shared movement and identity. Within recent years there has been a globalization of gay symbols and terminology. Rainbows, pink triangles, and other gay and lesbian, primarily Western, symbols have been appropriated by non-western movements and organizations. Organizations throughout the world, in Latin America and elsewhere, use the pink triangle within their organizations’ logos and there is a common use of the word ‘Stonewall’ in organizations’ names. Gay pride parades, which started as a phenomenon in Western countries, have gained increasing popularity and have been happening
internationally from South Africa, to Brazil, and Israel. Even slang used by, and referring to, gay and lesbians is crossing borders. In field research conducted by Deborah Amory in Nairobi, Kenya, it is apparent how much information is transmitted through film, television, internet, and other media channels.

“Angelique [a Kenyan transvestite] learned the term “lesbo” from ‘a movie called The Women of Brewster Place’. That movie included the terms “lesbian”, “lesbo”, “doe”, and “dike”. Angelique explained quite patiently to me that the spelling of the word, “dike”, had to be with an “i”, and not a “y”, because “dyke” would mean an earth dam like they have in Holland” (Amory, 1999, p. 12).

Through globalization and increased contact between gays and lesbians from Western nations with those from non-western settings, it is clear that there is an international phenomenon of gay identity and movements emerging from a variety of countries. These local movements, facilitated by the international gay and lesbian movement, are becoming increasingly linked and interconnected. This trend is not without its critics though, and this next section will review some of the components of the critiques and how they have influenced or affected the international gay and lesbian movement.

**The Critiques of the International Gay and Lesbian Movement**

The first critique refers exclusively to the strategy and focus of the international lesbian and gay movement in terms of its emphasis and goals. As said before, the international gay and lesbian movement has focused on gays and lesbians as a victimized minority and it seeks to address their issues through international human rights and through lobbying the United Nations and individual nation-states to enact legal statutes to
protect this minority and the individuals’ rights. However, by focusing on international law, human rights, and national laws in specific countries, the international LGBT movement misses addressing the more prevalent forms of oppression, stigmatization, and discrimination experienced by gays and lesbians within families, societies and communities. “The gay-bashings and murders of gay men, transvestites, bisexuals, and lesbians that take place around the world are often not perpetrated by the state, but by enormously homophobic groups, religious organizations, and individuals.” (LaViolette and Whitworth, 1994 p. 582).

General intolerance, misunderstanding, discrimination, homophobia and heterosexism within societies’ fabric often fall outside of these legal realms, but, it is these types of oppressions which created a hostile environment and cause LGBT people’s lives to be unpleasant. An example of the harm homophobia causes comes from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Gay and lesbian teens are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide and they make up 30% of completed suicides (Quoted from Laviolette and Whitworth, 1994, p. 582). The critics argue that the international movement would be more effective if their focus was on society rather than legal venues. They should focus on trying to foster general respect for diversity and acceptance of differences within the local communities. Human rights and legal protection, though valuable, might not be able to “address these more pervasive, and insidious, experiences of oppression (Laviolette and Whitworth, 1994 p. 583).

Within the critique on strategy, is the critique on the philosophy underpinning the strategy in terms of the stance on human rights. The fact that the international LGBT movement, as represented by the mentioned transnational organizations, focuses
primarily on legal reform and human rights doctrines and indicates that they either consciously, or unconsciously, adopt both a universalist as well as a socialist understanding of human rights. The criticism to the adherence to universalism refers back to previously mentioned claims that human rights are not universally applicable, but more interesting is the critique of the strategy’s emphasis on seeing the international agencies and nation-states as the mechanism for change. Through this understanding, human rights are not natural rights but moral goals to be fulfilled by the state. Perhaps the international organizations follow this strategy because through the United Nations they can affect all members rather than having to address each society throughout the world and all of their varying specific characteristics. However, to focus so intensely on human rights and nation-states adherence to the international instruments is really putting a lot of faith in the nation-state as a benevolent actor and moreover, the nation-states’ power over its citizens’ beliefs, culture, prejudices, etc. It assumes that change is created through the overarching systems of government rather than from a bottom-up, grassroots approach.

Still another variation in the critique of strategy and philosophy is the critique of the focus of gay and lesbian organizations on human rights and the claim that human rights are Western constructs and have a Western bias. This critique is a recurrence of the cultural relativists perspective. As discussed in Chapter 1, many claim that human rights are not applicable to non-Western cultures and settings. For the international LGBT movement to focus on these perceived alien concepts would therefore prove their energies to be ineffective when approaching the rights of people engaged in homosexuality in non-Western or developing countries.
The second critique of the international LGBT movement is that it attempts to represent too many identities. Gay men, lesbians, bisexuals (both men and women), transgender people, transsexuals, people who identify as queer, homosexuals, men who have sex with men, and intersexed people, among others are all included under the international LGBT movement. The concern is that the needs and issues of these different people are not similar and therefore will not be adequately addressed. For example, “it is gay men who are more likely to face situations of criminalization and who are often most directly affected by criminalization of homosexuality”, i.e. sodomy laws, whereas lesbians might be affected more by issues of forced marriages (Laviolette and Whitworth, 1994. p. 581). Therefore by focusing on international and national legal codes, the international organization might be only addressing the oppression of gay men and having little, if any, affect on the issues that lesbians experience.

Similar to this critique, in that it also argues that the international LGBT movement tries to represent too many different people, is the third critique. This critique states that there are too many local variations and differing cultures among people engaged in homosexuality for there to be a united, international LGBT movement. There is no singular gay and lesbian identity and no commonly shared experience by gay and lesbian people throughout the world. The commonality that is claimed by the international organization is actually a western identity and from Western ideology, according to this critique. Moreover, the fact that the international gay and lesbian movement claims commonality is actually a form of cultural imperialism (Altman, 1996 and King, 2002). Within international conferences, the fact that these international organizations speak for local groups precludes local variation from being expressed and
articulated and forces the Western models on the local. One example of this is provided by Altman (1996). In this article, he quotes an activist from Asia, who says:

“There were strong cultural frameworks of “third gender” which have had a long history and many within such groups have played socio-political-religious roles in their societies. To transpose Western understandings (and subsequently HIV/AIDS prevention programs) is to destroy these social constructions and recreate them in a Western mold. Discussion revolved around moving away from gender dimorphic structures that arose from the West and talk about Alternate genders, in other words more than two genders… Similarly we should be talking about lesbian identities and gay identities, should be discussing homosexualities instead of homosexuality, communities instead of community.” (Altman, 1996 p. 81)

To add onto this critique, the idea that there is one LGBT “community”, characterized by local variation but one that generally is composed of people who share similarities in their identity, disregards the importance of class, race and gender in individuals identities. In some cases, class and racial differences precludes a cohesive community and identity from forming. There are gay and lesbian people who are racists and those who do not associate with people from lower classes. In certain developing nations, it is the upper-class LGBT people who are able to organize and create a movement and they may not have any interaction with poorer people. “In Brazil and Thailand, and in other (usually richer) parts of the developing world, a small elite see themselves as interconnected with a global network via groups such as ILGA and an international commercial scene in which they participate.” (Altman, 1996, p. 84)
The last critique expresses the concern that the international LGBT movement avoids acknowledging that there are people around the world who engage in homosexual acts but who do not identify as homosexual and who are not stigmatized by society. A perfect example of this phenomenon is in South Africa, where men, who are employed in the mines, engage in same sex activity but are not seen, and do not see themselves, as gay. Some studies have indicated that these men engage in this behavior due to the lack of access to women. These men do not become passive during sex and since the need for sexual release it seen as natural, they are not seen as gay. This non-acknowledgement of these people weakens the international LGBT movements’ claim for representing all sexual minorities.

Also, due to the international movement’s increased activity and notoriety, they might bring these groups of people previously unaffected by homophobia, under repression. Within South Africa, in the mining community there was fluidity of gender lines but now since the emergence of the South African LGBT movement, this fluidity has been hampered. This will be discussed more in depth in the next chapter. “The classificatory grid in the making was different from the old one. Now both partners in a same-sex relationship were potentially classified as the same (male gender) and as gay” (Donham, 1998, p. 11). Before, when culturally appropriate sexual practices happened, they were not associated with the globalized, maybe even Western, perception of gender and sexual identity.

In response to these critiques, the international movement has made some concerted efforts in trying to account for the diversity among the people who engage in homosexuality. Within ILGA’s Third Pink Book, the authors reiterate over and over that
they are not trying to say that there is a singular gay identity but that peoples’ experiences vary from country to country, even within countries. “There is no such thing as a gay or lesbian: same sex lifestyles differ from place to place” (Hendricks, Tielman, and Van der Veen, 1993. p. 18). Also, in response to the criticism that there was too much focus on human rights and national law, the IGLHRC which previously was exclusively a human rights monitoring organization, expanded its efforts to include community building, capacity building of local activists and technical assistance. As said before, they now organize regional workshops as part of their mandate for local activists to strategize on organizing and mobilizing within their locally specific environments.

**Conclusion:**

It is undeniable that there is some form of an emerging international gay and lesbian movement and identity (Adam, Duyvendak, and Krouwel, 1999, Altman, 1996, Laviolette and Whitworth, 1994, Clark, Hendricks, Power, Tielman, and van der Veen, 1993, Sanders, 1996, Richardson and Siedman, 2002). However, it is not clear that this movement is cohesive and that there is a common understanding within the movement that there is commonality among its members based on behavior and identity. As shown by Adams et. al, (1999) there are commonalities at the local level in terms of strategies and development, even if the local identities differ from each other. Through these common strategies of local organizations, international LGBT organization, like ILGA, IGLHRC, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, are able to bring local groups together in a network and federation. Through this network, the international organizations try hard to represent and lobby for all the LGBT organizations at the international level. This type of organization of the international movement allows the
local groups self determination and autonomy, giving them freedom to pursue different
agendas, unique from the agenda of the international organizations. This federation is not
homogenous.

Regardless of local difference, people engaged in homosexuality are by and large
persecuted, targeted for discrimination by both the nation-states and societies, and
experience homophobia and intolerance at many levels in their lives. The work of the
international organizations is therefore important, but equally important is the variation
and uniqueness of all people relating to culture, class, race, gender, etc. As stated by a
gay scholar from Latin America in response to his white, western colleague’s use of
“we”, “[W]e could have asked him not to presume that we were included in his well-
meaning “we” (Cruz-Malave and Manalansan, 2002). Instead the movement has moved
to adopt the sentiment and stance of Eduardo Nierras, quoted in Altman (1996). “When
we say to straight people, or more rarely to Western gay people, ‘We are like you’ we
must remember to add, ‘only different’” (p. 90).
Chapter Three

South African Gay and Lesbian Movement

Within recent years, Southern African politicians have demonstrated their intolerance of homosexual activity within their countries. Presidents, from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, as well as politicians in Botswana, have continually, publicly targeted homosexuals for condemnation and vilified them by calling them immoral, un-African, and social degenerates. President Chiluba of Zambia, in one of his many public speeches against homosexuality, said, “Homosexuality is the deepest level of depravity. It is unbiblical and abnormal. How do you expect my government to accept something that is abnormal?” (Human Rights Watch and IGLHRC, 2003 p. 40). This is just one example of the homophobic rhetoric that has emerged from most of the Southern African governments, and it provides a basic idea of the environment and sentiment toward gays and lesbians in the region, especially by government leaders and officials.

However, amongst these countries characterized by a discourse of hate and intolerance toward homosexuality, is the country of South Africa. Since the fall of Apartheid, South Africa has become the most liberal country in the world with respect to gays and lesbian rights. On May 8, 1996, the final constitution of the new, democratically elected government was approved and with this approval, it became the first country in the world to include sexual orientation within its constitution as grounds for protection. Within the constitution, sexual orientation is included among a whole host of other characteristics from which an individual shall not be discriminated against.
“The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience belief, culture, language, and birth” (South African Constitution, Article 9(3), Quoted in Isaack, 2003. p. 19).

This inclusion of sexual orientation in the constitution is largely attributed to the strong lobbying by gay and lesbian organizations on the African National Congress (ANC), which was the party assumed to ascend to power after the first democratic election (Louw, 1999, Croucher, 2002, Palmberg, 1999, and Gevisser and Cameron, 1995). However, this success by South African gay and lesbian organizations should not lead us to believe that South Africa has experienced a long history of gay and lesbian political organizing or that South Africa is a country without homophobia or discrimination against people engaged in homosexuality. In reality, organizing by gays and lesbians is a recent occurrence, taking place over the past thirty years and only gaining prevalence in the late 1980’s. Also, the gay and lesbian organizations have been small, many were racially divided, and all have had to fight stigmatization, homophobia and misconceptions about homosexuality by the society.

In 1994 a coalition of gay and lesbian organizations throughout South Africa was formed called the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE). This coalition brought all gay and lesbian groups together and united them under a common goal to fight for equality for gays and lesbians within the new government and within the scope of the South African law. Under this coalition, each member organization still maintains its own distinct group in order to address their individual priorities and
projects, but under the coalition umbrella, the national gay and lesbian activists create an appearance that there is a cohesive, South African, gay and lesbian contingent that shares similar needs. This contingency crosses class, racial, and gender lines and the movement’s claim is that people within the contingent share similar forms of oppression within South Africa. In 2002, the coalition members voted to create a non-governmental organization (NGO), called the Equality Project, in place of the coalition so the political and legal activists could gain some autonomy, but even now the NGO maintains close ties with the former coalition member organizations.

However, as with the international gay movement, there are some critics in South Africa who claim that there is no such thing as a South African gay identity or even a cohesive movement. “Being black and gay and poor in South Africa is hardly the same as being black and gay and middle-class, which is again hardly the same as being white and gay and middle class” (Donham, 1998. p. 15). Also there are critics who invoke distorted views of cultural relativism, by claiming homosexuality is alien to African culture. There are also those who maintain that gay identity is actually from the west and the current homogenization of gay identity is a form of cultural imperialism.

There has been a lot of success for gay and lesbian rights in South Africa. In spite of this success, there have been questions, both from within and from outside the gay and lesbian community, concerning the continuity of the group, whether or not gays and lesbians in South Africa share a commonality or form a cohesive movement. Also, there are questions concerning whether or not gay and lesbian rights as articulated as rights to privacy and freedom from discrimination, are an extension of white, bourgeoisie conceptualizations of rights, not applicable to the black communities who understand
human rights in terms of full inclusion into society and freedom from discrimination in participation in the community. In order to analyze these questions and distinctions, it is important to look first at the history of the movement, its foci, its assumptions, and its makeup. After such a discussion, critiques and oppositions can be analyzed and understood more fully.

**History of the South African Movement:**

There is much historical evidence and many ethnographies which describe homosexual practices among many different ethnic groups and cultures throughout Africa (Murray and Roscoe, 1998). Within South Africa, there has been documentation of homosexual sex, gender crossing, and even same sex ‘marriages’, like temporary mine-marriages, among the Zulu, Xhosa, and Venda ethnic groups (Krige, 1965, Morris, 1965, Moodie et. al, 1988, and Hartman, 1992). However, although instances of homosexuality and same sex relations historically existed in South Africa, this is not to say that people engaged in these practices thought of themselves as sexually different or as homosexual. In fact, these practices and occurrences did not result in the individual being ostracized by society or treated differently or as unique. Some scholars even speculate that there were indeed socially acceptable reasons for why homosexuality occurred (Murray and Roscoe, 1998). For example, it is argued that people engaged in homosexuality for a variety of reasons including lack of access to women (as in the case of mine work), as a part of a ritualized rite of passage, or for political arrangements between families to maintain wealth or lineage. Homosexual organizing and the creation of the contemporary LGBT movement in South Africa did not begin to emerge until the late 1960’s and it was not associated or influenced by any of these historical and cultural forms of
homosexuality. In fact, the contemporary LGBT movement in South Africa may have had an adverse affect on these homosexual practices by influencing or stigmatizing them.

To understand the emergence of the contemporary LGBT movement in South Africa, first one needs to be familiar with the political history of the country. From the 1950’s through 1990, the country of South Africa was characterized by apartheid. Apartheid was the system of laws implemented and enforced by the "White" minority government which created a system of racial segregation in South Africa from 1948 till 1990 (Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/random_graph, March, 2005). Under apartheid, the South African gay community was also racially segregated. Initially, starting in the 1950’s, the gay movement characterized by the white, English speaking, gay men, who came together and carved out their own social spaces in the major cities of Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban (Gevisser and Cameron, 1994, and Croucher, 2002). These social spaces primarily were characterized by bars, outdoor cruising places and private parties. There were no formal organizations and no political pursuits by the gays within these social scenes.

In 1968, as a governmental response to the emerging gay scene documented by increased publicity in the major cities, the Immorality Act was proposed and debated in the House of Assembly. This act sought to

“…make male and female homosexuality an offence punishable by compulsory imprisonment of up to three years. This [Act] would have had the effect not only of bringing lesbians into the scope of the law, but of making homosexuality itself statutorily illegal, whereas previously, only public male homosexual acts had been regulated by statute” (Gevisser and Cameron, 1994, p. 31).
In response to the proposed act, professional whites began to organize and formed a group called the Law Reform Movement. This movement’s main aim was to raise money to hire attorneys to influence law makers through lobbying and to fight the law litigiously. To raise money, the group held small rallies and fundraising parties, which were advertised by word of mouth, in the Johannesburg-Pretoria area. The movement was composed mostly of white gay males, though there were some white women involved. The movement was successful in preventing the Immorality Act, in its entirety, from being adopted. However, three laws were passed which affected gays and lesbians including the raising of the age of consent for homosexual men, the outlawing of dildos, and outlawing men having sex with other men at ‘parties’. After the passage of these three laws, the Law Reform Movement died out as it failed to “link up with the broader opposition to Apartheid and, in addition to a rather narrow focus, its constituency was made up entirely of upper class men” (Croucher, 2002, p. 314).

After this movement during the 1970’s, the white gay community was forced to limit their visibility by abandoning the out-door social spaces they had created, for fear of repression. They had to rely exclusively on bars for social interaction. During this era, Afrikaans speaking men also joined the community because many were migrating into the cities at this time. By being white, they were able to enter into the English speaking gay communities with ease. Due to this expanding white, gay community and in order to facilitate increasing the social options available for them, an organization called Gay Identification Development and Enrichment (GAIDE) was formed in 1976. This was exclusively a social club and sought to provide social support to gays and lesbians via an information and counseling phone service, but it was never involved in activism. This
group, however, was short lived as it collapsed after its founding member, Bobby Erasmus, emigrated (Gevisser and Cameron, 1994).

After a series of police raids in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, the white, gay community in Johannesburg sought to organize a national group to “address gay needs” (Croucher, 2002). They formed an organization called the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) in 1982. This group, like the GAIDE before it, sought to serve as a social organization for gays throughout South Africa and it also sought to remain apolitical. The difference between GASA and GAIDE was that GASA strived to be open, public, and did not avoid publicity. It also attempted to become a national organization by establishing branches throughout the country. The reason why GASA continued the trend of remaining apolitical was that through avoiding politics, the group hoped to be non-confrontational to the ruling class thereby gaining their acceptance and becoming better able to push their agenda of legal reform through decriminalization of homosexuality and a reduction of the age of consent laws, etc. (Gevisser and Cameron, 1994). “Among its 11 points, the GASA mission statement, drafted in 1982, stated that the organization aimed to provide a ‘non-militant, non-political answer to gay needs” (p. 51). This strategy is very similar to the assimilationist strategies of the organizations in North America and Europe during the 1950’s.

However, it was ultimately this apolitical stance and failure to address apartheid that led to GASA’s demise (Gevisser and Cameron, 1994, Croucher, 2002). Even though this national organization primarily had white middle class members, both Afrikaans and English speaking, they did have a few black members. One such member was Simon Nkoli. He had joined the group in 1983, but by 1984 he was arrested during a rent
boycott demonstration along with twenty-one other black, anti-apartheid activists who were all members of one of the Anti-Apartheid organizations called the United Democratic Front (UDF). He was held in jail for two years and charged with treason. In 1986 he was even charged with murder, which he would be later acquitted of due to lack of evidence.

GASA, who had applied to become a member of the umbrella international organization ILGA in 1983, had been denied membership because of their apolitical stance and because their membership was primarily white. A year later, after GASA proved that blacks were indeed members, GASA was granted membership of ILGA. However, after Nkoli was arrested, GASA withheld support from Nkoli because of their effort to remain apolitical and on the grounds that he was a criminal and a murderer. This decision to withhold support was damaging to the group because Simon Nkoli had become a celebrated figure and a rallying point for the international gay movement. “The confluence of his open homosexuality and his imprisonment as a soldier against apartheid made him immensely appealing to the liberation-oriented gay organizations around the world” (Gevisser and Cameron, 1994). ILGA expelled GASA from its membership due to its apolitical stance, its lack of commitment to black, gay members, and its refusal to support Nkoli. After the Nkoli affair, GASA went into steady decline and was ultimately disbanded.

After the GASA experience, it became apparent that gay and lesbian organizations could not remain apolitical and must, therefore, take a stand on apartheid and injustice. “It was impossible for gay and lesbian organizations to exist in isolation from the surrounding political context in South Africa” (Croucher, 2002, p. 319). In fact,
with this reality and the increasing black involvement in gay and lesbian organizing, new predominantly black organizations begun to emerge. In 1988, Gays and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) was organized by Simon Nkoli along with others in Johannesburg. This was the first gay and lesbian organization to be predominantly black, showing that gays and lesbians are not just within the white community. Also, since Nkoli along with others were also members of anti-apartheid organizations, this was the first organization which linked gay and lesbian liberation with issues of equality and human rights that characterized the anti-apartheid movement.

GLOW also was very involved in mobilizing and supporting black gays and lesbians in the townships. Before GLOW and during apartheid, black gays and lesbians only had underground and hidden spaces to come together. Only now is the literature emerging that covers issues of homosexuality in the townships and within the black communities. There is evidence of a black gay township culture, whose members would congregate at certain shebeens (informal bars). Some few black gay men sought support by joining organizations like GASA which was dominated by white, middle class, members with whom they did not have much in common. GLOW, and later the Association of Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians (ABIGALE) formed in 1992 in the Western Cape, became the place for black gays and lesbians to come together and find the social support they needed.

“Many political activists in organizations like GLOW and ABIGALE make no bones about the fact that these organizations do serve very important social functions, and only assume more activists roles after they have taken care of more immediate psychological and social needs” (Gevisser and Cameron, 1994, p. 80).
GLOW was not the only gay and lesbian organization to link gay and lesbian rights to the anti-apartheid movement. Politically active, white gay and lesbian South Africans formed a group called Lesbians and Gays Against Oppression (LAGO) in 1986 in the Western Cape. The group later changed its name to Organization for Lesbian and Gay Action (OLGA) in 1988. This group was very important in getting gay and lesbians rights included in the anti-apartheid agenda. It coupled gay rights with the anti-apartheid movement and endorsed and supported the ANC’s Freedom Charter (Gevisser and Cameron, 1994). The organization also supported Simon Nkoli and a white, gay prisoner of conscience named Ivan Toms, who refused to join the South African Defense Force on the grounds that he conscientiously objected to apartheid. This stance on apartheid led the group to be adopted as a member in the anti-apartheid umbrella organization called the United Democratic Front. As a member of the United Democratic Front coalition, OLGA lobbied the ANC, and challenged it, to adopted sexual orientation in its draft bill or rights in 1991.

During this lobbying, OLGA, along with GLOW, had shifted their rhetoric to facilitate the acceptance of gay and lesbian rights into the ANC’s agenda and philosophy on freedom, democracy, and human rights. They effectively abandoned the non-confrontational and assimilationist strategies of the past, which had just stressed the need to accept gays and lesbians in South Africa. The new rhetoric challenged the political process to take on gay and lesbian liberation as part of their movement (Gevisser and Cameron, 1994). Since the large political movement against apartheid argued for
freedom from oppression and freedom from discrimination based on race, religion, etc., OLGA and GLOW were easily able to articulate their demand similarly. An example of this rhetoric comes from GLOW, quoted in Gevisser and Cameron (p. 74). As one can see, there is a call for all those oppressed to unite for basic human rights and calls people to action. It is more militant.

“The manifesto [of GLOW] calls upon ‘All South Africans who are Committed to Non-Racists, Non-Sexist, Non-Discriminatory Democratic Future’ to:

- UNITE in the fight for the basic human rights of all South Africans, including lesbian and gay men.
- MOBILIZE against discrimination.
- ASSERT the role of lesbians and gay men in the current process of political change.
- CONFRONT South Africa with the presence of its lesbian and gay community.
- DISPEL MYTHS nurtured by years of discrimination and stereotyping.”

After the ANC was voted into power in 1994, the NCGLE was formed to continue this strategy of challenging the government to continue including gays and lesbians within their concept of rights. The NCGLE embarked on a massive publicity campaign to maintain the pressure on the ANC to include sexual orientation within its final version of the South African constitution. The campaign included having African members appear on national television shows, releasing press releases about people, highlighting especially the non-white people, suffering and being charged on sodomy statutes under apartheid, as well as other types of publicity (Spruill, 2001). Most of the
publicity was pointedly directed at the critique that the gay movement was un-African and alien, because it specifically showcased African constituents. Also, it continued articulating gay liberation within anti-apartheid rhetoric. “Activists countered the slogan ‘Homosexuality is unAfrican’ with ‘Discrimination is unAfrican’… and an OLGA tee-shirt reading, ‘no liberation without gay liberation’ also aligned lesbian and gay equality with the national struggle against apartheid’s ‘internal colonialism’” (Spruill, 2001, p. 6). Though many critics responded to this campaign calling gay rights unbiblical and immoral, the call for equality was too persuasive to overcome. With this public pressure and publicity campaign, the NCGLE, along with other organizations, was able to successfully maintain sexual orientation’s inclusion in the final constitution.

In 2000, the coalition was dissolved by member organizations in order to establish a nongovernmental organization (NGO) in its place called the Equality Project (Equality Project Website). With this new NGO, more full time staff is able to be added and the group can act autonomously, though it still maintains close ties with its former coalition members. Although there have been many advances made, NCGLE, and now Equality Project, works hard to continue pressuring the government for continued support, and it also challenges laws which are unequal or are anti-homosexuality through legal channels. This continued pressure has resulted in much progress. This progress includes having sexual orientation included among the characteristics which one cannot be discriminated against for housing, employment, employment pensions, and medical insurance. Gays and lesbians have also gained rights in adoption, custody of children, parenting rights and donor insemination (Isaack, 2003). Just recently, there has been an important ruling from the high court determining that domestic partnerships should include same sex
partnerships as well, opening up space for the legal battle for gay marriage in the future. Equality Project has made it very clear that they intend to challenge marriage in court to gain inclusion for same sex couples. All of these successes have made South Africa one of the most liberal countries in terms of protections and rights for gays and lesbians, in spite of the fact that South Africa is still plagued by homophobia and intolerance of gays and lesbians. Even the ANC members— one prominent member, the Deputy Secretary General, Cheryl Carolus, in a speech supporting gay rights—acknowledge the prevalence of homophobia in South Africa.

“Many people that we love dearly- our parents, our brothers and sisters, our priests, our teachers- are themselves quite often prejudice when it comes to the issue of homosexuality. We must accept that we are not just confronting bigots, people with horns, but that we need to take on this debate with our families and those closest to us. Only then can we begin to shift the position in society” (quoted in Palmberg, 1999, p. 274)

**Analysis of the Movement:**

Once the gay and lesbian movement became political, moving away from serving a purely social function, the main strategy of the movement was to focus on legal reform. As mentioned before, there were political organizations, like GLOW, which also sought to provide support for their members, but the emphasis of the national movement, as represented by Equality Project, focused almost entirely on legal reform. This is not to imply that South Africa does not have problems with homophobia within its communities. However, addressing this homophobia, either through education on tolerance and respect or through an advertising campaign, has not been a priority for the
national movement. This emphasis in strategy is similar to that of the international gay and lesbian movement. There is much faith in the national government or, in the international movement’s case, the international instruments, to affect change and protect gays and lesbians from harm.

In order to push this legal reform, the South African gay and lesbian movement uses less of a rhetoric tied to universal human rights and more of a rhetoric tied to issues of equality, liberation, and freedom from oppression. Through using this chosen rhetoric, the movement attempts to link gay and lesbian rights to the anti-apartheid movement. As seen in a previous citation from the GLOW manifesto, there is mention of human rights, but this mention is included with more liberationist rhetoric similar to the sentiment of anti-apartheid. It also does not seem to be in reference to the universal human rights enshrined in the UDHR, but rather a basic right to freedom which had been denied to so many people under apartheid. It seeks to include gays and lesbians with the South African populations who have also felt oppression. It is rhetoric specific to the domestic environment which has only recently moved from a system where most of the citizens were denied their freedoms and experienced massive oppression. Of the same rhetorical style were declarations from GLOW and OLGA, saying, “None will be free until all are free,” (Croucher, 2002, p. 320). These proclamations were said during the time when the government was creating the constitution. Again, this rhetoric seems to be borrowing from the sentiment that emerged as a result of oppression, referencing freedoms that were denied during apartheid. With the use of this type of rhetoric, the South African movement is unlike the international LGBT movement, as the international movement appeals to universal human rights encapsulated in the UDHR rather than focusing on gay
liberation. The international movement appeals to individual sanctity whereas the South African movement links gays and lesbians to the South African community, tying their rights and oppression to others.

There is one document, included within the Human Rights Watch web-site, that is written by African gays and lesbians to appeal to the African member countries of the United Nations Commission of Human Rights to support the resolution to add sexual orientation as a human right. This declaration is one of the few references or direct appeals to international human rights. Still, in this document, there is an emphasis on liberation, freedom from oppression, and group membership rather than focusing on the universalistic and individualistic aspect of human rights. This emphasis is striking when reflecting back on the African conception of human rights in chapter 1, where the individual is insignificant without his/her group membership.

“We speak to you as fellow Africans, concerned that our continent develop and realize its full potential, steady in hope for African democracy, aware that repression and fear are inconsistent with peace and freedom, conscious that democracy and development can only be attained by mobilizing the energies of all Africa’s peoples” (The Johannesburg Statement on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Human Rights, Human Rights Watch Website).

Another aspect of the South Africa gay and lesbian movement is the variation amongst members who were involved in the NCGLE coalition. Since the gay and lesbian movement of South Africa was composed of different groups who were then brought together by the umbrella organization, the NCGLE, and still remain affiliated to the new NGO, the Equality Project, not only is there more collaboration, but the individual groups
can benefit from this interaction but also maintain their own autonomy, allowing them to be free to pursue their own agendas. As said before, this is key, because different groups and different members of the South African gay and lesbian movement have different needs. Black members from the townships need more support and space for social networks, whereas other groups focus on gay and lesbian health, teen counseling, and politics, etc. The collaboration, as organized by the Equality Project, also seeks to form allies. Through working with groups that are fighting for similar issues, the gay and lesbian movement can join forces with them and gain their support in return. Since the Equality Project has full time lobbyists on staff, the organization can support issues not specific to gays and lesbians in order to gain support from non lesbian and gay organizations on issues important to them. This effort to create allies is not unique to the South African movement because the international movement also seeks to identify allies from women’s groups and minority groups, among others.

The above analysis covers the strategies and the focuses of the South Africa gay and lesbian movement. These aspects have all contributed to the movement’s success in South Africa. However, there is opposition and critics to the gay and lesbian movement that are important to address. There are, in fact, many critiques from both within the movement and without, and this next section will discuss these critiques.

**Opposition and Critiques:**

The first main criticism and opposition to the lesbian and gay political movement is the argument from some of the anti-apartheid organizations that gay and lesbian rights are a distraction from the bigger issues and ANC’s emphasis, the successful emergence from apartheid to democracy and addressing the extreme inequality between blacks and
whites. An example of this stance is, when asked whether “the Azanian Peoples’ Organization (AZAPO) has a policy on gay rights, national publicity secretary Strini Moodley responded: ‘At this present time, AZAPO does not consider homosexuality a priority” (Gevisser and Cameron, 1994). As addressed before, the response from the gay and lesbian community to this critique was to link their freedom inextricably with other peoples freedom. However, this sentiment can be found throughout South Africa. South Africa faces many pressing challenges, including racial inequality, HIV/AIDS, unequal distribution of land, etc. People resent that gay and lesbian rights get as much attention as they have is recent years, taking time away from these other issues.

Some aspect of this criticism of gay and lesbian organizations stealing time from other issues, is tied up in a distorted view of cultural relativism, maintaining the belief that homosexuality is not a part of Africa culture. When Winnie Mandela was being tried for kidnapping and assault, outside the court room was a banner that read, “Homosex is not in Black culture” (Sanders, 1997, p. 100). Mandela was being charged with kidnapping and her defense argued that she did so to protect black children from “alleged sexual abuse by a church’s European minister. This and her subsequent conduct had simply been a matter of the ‘good Black mother’ saving her ‘children’ from the homosexual advances of a ‘bad European father’” (IBID). Mandela is not alone in these types of statements. In 1987, a senior ANC official, Ruth Mompati, who was a National Executive Committee member of the ANC, told a British publication, “I cannot even begin to understand why people want gay rights. The gays have no problems. They have nice houses and plenty to eat. I don’t see them suffering. No-one is persecuting them” (Gevisser and Cameron, 1994, p. 70). Though she does not indicate specifically that she
views gays as belonging to a particular race, most middle and upper class people within South Africa are white. She completely does not accept that gays could also be from a lower economic standing and therefore more likely to be black. This quote not only demonstrates the misconception that homosexuality is un-African but that it is isolated to the upper-class, white community.

To carry this argument out even further, there are other critics who claim that homosexuality, as it is practiced and conceptualized in white, affluent communities, is alien to African culture (Sanders 1997 and Donham, 1998). Same sex sexual practices, have existed in many different African societies, but these practices were conceptualized as an identity or a lifestyle. They were a result of what Sanders refers to as circumstantial and situational (1997). Men had sex with men in the South African mines as a result of the lack of access to women, or even as an extension of power relations amongst the mine workers. Men with seniority in the mines were the ones to take the “new-comer ‘boy’ to become his ‘mine-wife’ (IBID, p. 104) and the mine wife would not only engage in intracrural (dry sex) sexual relations but would perform domestic chores (Sanders, 1997). The men who engaged in such behavior would then go home to their women wives when on break from the mines. They did not define themselves as homosexual and this phenomenon is not similar to the “modern gay lifestyle”. Gay and lesbian identified people were not found in African culture until the modern gay and lesbian movement became known and influenced black people engaged in homosexuality to adopt this identity. To support this notion, a black gay man named Linda Ngcoba, wrote that he did not consider himself gay until he became in contact with white gay groups and became aware of the global gay community (Mclean and Ngcobo, 1994). Before then, he had
always considered himself a third sex, not a boy or a girl but a *skesana* (a boy who likes to be *ucked*) (p. 164). Black homosexuality, according to this critique has changed and been altered by the influence of the white, western, globalized movement, making the local uniqueness of black sexualities fall away or become repressed. This homogenization of homosexuality and gay and lesbian identity is therefore a form of cultural imperialism.

The last criticism and critique is on the continuity of the gay and lesbian movement. The movement has coalesced into a national coalition in order to strengthen their lobby of the national government and to join the organizations together so as they can focus their energies into a united agenda. However, many within and without the movement claim that that South African gays and lesbians are too diverse and have too many alternative needs to really be represented by and benefit from the national movement. One can speculate that this diversity might have contributed to dissolving the coalition and replacing it with an NGO. Under the coalition, all groups were involved in the decision making process and this might have created an environment where, in the presence of too many differing interests, decisions might have been difficult to reach. As said before, blacks from the townships have different needs than those from the middle class white community. Once the coalition was dissolved, the Equality Project in its place, was given its own autonomy and ability to act independently. Though relations are maintained between the NGO and its former coalition member organizations, the NGO now does not depend on them for the approval for action but rather the NGO decides its own course of action and includes the other organizations in their action.
Beyond the fact that the needs of different people are different, is the fact that people do not share commonality. They do not see themselves as a cohesive group. This lack of common bond is demonstrated by the fact that they do not organize together and are predominately members of separate groups. Black gays and lesbians are significantly under-represented at gay pride parades. In March 2005, a BBC article commented on how the gay pride parade in Cape Town is dominated by white participants in spite of being labeled as a multi-racial event. “It is the third year Cape Town has hosted a pride march, but again it was noticeable just how white-dominated the participants were” (BBC, 2005/03/08). At the same time, the Miss GLOW competitions, drag queen shows and competitions, are largely dominated by blacks. There is clearly a motivation to maintain separations based on racial lines. Since the literature is sparse on the South African gay and lesbian communities, it is hard to also draw the same conclusions about the separation between gays and lesbians. However, most groups, though they claim to represent both gays and lesbians, tend to be dominated by men. It is not clear from the literature where people who define themselves as transgender fit.

In response to this criticism, the gay and lesbian national movement claims that since the political and multiracial aspects of the movement are rather recent, they haven’t been given enough time to mature into a cohesive entity. “This country’s lesbian and gay subcultures have not yet matured to the point of being able to constitute an effective, coherent and united political minority” (Gevisser and Cameron, 1994, p. 82). However, in spite of this fact, there still is unity in the political fight for gay rights amongst a wide variety of gay and lesbian organizations representing very different components of the South African society. These groups all came together under the coalition of NCGLE
and now are still collaborating through the close relationships maintained among themselves and by the Equality Project.

**Conclusion:**

The South African gay and lesbian political movement is one that has only emerged in recent years but nonetheless is one that has achieved much success in terms of getting gay and lesbian rights within the South Africa Constitution and including gays and lesbians within the broader understanding of freedoms from the South African government. Though not addressed within this paper, some of the gay and lesbian organizations’ success has resulted from gaining high level, respected leaders’ public support. Albie Sachs and Desmond Tutu, among others, have made public statements supporting gay and lesbian rights. Some of these leaders, however, had Western influence, whether by residing in the West during exile or by interacting with Western organizations and governments when negotiating and working with them during anti-apartheid campaigns. Due to securing these key supporters, the gay and lesbian movement is on firm ground to continue its legal reform campaign. It does need to be wary because homophobia is prevalent in South Africa, and once these leaders fall out of the political sphere, new, possibly less sympathetic, leaders could come to power. Therefore, effort needs to be put toward addressing the society’s intolerance toward homosexuality in order to solidify their successes in the long term.

Also, the movement has developed with support and influences from the international gay and lesbian movement. The South African gay and lesbian political movement emerged when communications, media, etc. had become globalized so they had access to gays and lesbians, and their movements, throughout the world. With this
influence, not only are western gay and lesbian symbols and rhetoric adopted by the multitude of gay and lesbian groups, but Western expressions of pride, such as parades, drag shows, and fairs have been incorporated into the South African movement. International organizations even worked with the South African organizations to support them in the mobilizing and organizing. ILGA had even established an office in South Africa, but then a year later it had to be closed due to lack of funds.

Clearly, there are connections between, and similarities among, the international gay and lesbian movement and the gay and lesbian movement in South Africa. Their strategies are similar in that they focus on legal reform, they also focus on gays and lesbians as a social minority with common needs, and they use the same symbols and terminologies. There are also differences which have emerged from the literature, namely the rhetoric used and the organizations and the emphasis by the South African organizations on liberation and inclusion with all other oppressed people from repression versus focusing on individualistic human rights. The next section will take a closer look at organizations which represent these movements, to see if these similarities and influences really are portrayed by the groups themselves or if they solely were extrapolated from the past literature.
Chapter 4  

Research Topic and Methodology

Within these previous chapters, the debates regarding the conceptualizations of international human rights have been presented and analyzed. Through this analysis, it can also be seen how some of the perspectives regarding the debate on human rights have also been applied to issues relating to gay and lesbian rights and identity, both in the international arena and within South Africa. Issues surrounding universalism, cultural relativism, and cultural imperialism emerge not only in how these different organizations understand themselves and how they approach and formulate their demands for inclusion or articulate their need for rights, but they also can be seen within the critiques and opposition to these growing movements. It is clearly demonstrated that the international gay and lesbian organizations have gained increased international recognition throughout the second half of the twentieth century, and the South African organizations have recently gained much influence and have established a presence in South Africa, as they never had before. Both movements have seen success and both movements have had high levels of interaction, involvement, and collaboration amongst themselves. It has been shown, within the scope of this study, that not only are the movements experiencing similar trends and seeing the emergence of similar themes in terms of issues like identity, strategy (focusing on law reform), claiming commonality amongst gays and lesbians and associating with common symbols and expressions of pride, but there are also some important differences between them.
The question then becomes, are the similarities superficial? Do South African gay and lesbian groups, although their rhetoric may be different, conceptualize human rights and gay identity similarly to the international organizations? Is there a common gay identity being portrayed? Some literature reviewed clearly articulates that the rhetoric chosen by the South African gay and lesbian groups has specific resonance to the South African context, based on concepts of freedom from oppression, liberation, and inclusion in society, which is not similar to the rhetoric used by the international gay and lesbian organizations, which focus on the individuals’ human rights as enshrined in the UDHR. This is one identified difference in the literature, but can this difference be seen by looking at organizations and how they represent themselves? Are there other differences that can be identified by looking at the different organizations and how they represent themselves, articulate themselves, and display themselves to the public?

Organizations use many venues in order to get themselves known and convey their messages. Some of the ways include press releases, advertisements, participation in community events, public rallies, and organizing functions among others, but a recent medium used for providing information about an organization is through maintaining websites which showcase their organization within the World Wide Web. This type of self representation is becoming more and more important presently, because as more and more people gain access to computers with internet hookups, the more people are able to access these websites and view the organizations’ activities, missions, strategies, foci, etc. In fact, websites are becoming a very important venue for people first trying to access information on the organizations due to their ease, anonymity, and ability to provide a quick understanding of the organization. Organizations have freedom to include any
information they deem important and relevant on their websites and since the medium is not solely text, organizations can include pictures, colors, symbols, banners, etc. to enhance the presentation within their web-pages. This expanding prevalence of organizations maintaining websites interests me, and it is why I have chosen to look at the issues of similarities and differences between gay and lesbian organization of the international arena and those from South Africa by looking at their websites and how they have chosen to represent themselves.

**Significance:**

This specific research is important to conduct because not only does it contribute to and enhance the small body of literature regarding gay and lesbian movements, especially concerning the movements in Africa, but it fills a gap in the literature by addressing a topic not broached by other scholars. Absent in the literature is an analysis of the actual images used, discourse and conceptualization of human rights, homosexuality and identity the South Africa gay and lesbian groups exhibited to society via the internet. Also unique, is the analysis of the South African organizations’ representations and articulations of human rights and homosexuality through their websites as compared to that of the international organizations on their websites. The previous literature explores the cohesiveness of the international movement, or if there is any cohesion, but does not explore how they represent themselves as compared to each other. Hopefully, through this analysis, we will be able to determine if the South African organizations present themselves as sharing commonality with the international organizations and vice versa in terms of their websites, or if there are clear distinctions
which demonstrate that the two movements are not only unique but conceptualize
themselves and their identity differently.

**Methodological Legitimacy:**

This study will be drawing upon tools used within text based qualitative analysis.
Often qualitative research is understood as being based on a knowing subject, however
there are many methods of research using mute evidence (Hodder, 1994), also known as
unobtrusive qualitative methods relying on non-living forms for data (Hesse-Biber and
Leavy, 2004). Research using this type of data does not, therefore, interview, observe, or
interact with research subjects but seeks to “go beyond the world of individuals” (Hesse-
Biber and Leavy, eds., 2004 p. 314) and, in fact, to analyze texts, pictures, or artifacts
created by the subjects. Often this type of research is done as a precursor to subsequent
research or in triangulation with other methods, however, analysis of non-living forms of
data has become increasingly legitimate as valuable data on its own. Lindsay Prior
(2004) argues that studying texts specifically, “need not be subordinated to studies of
interactions, nor need text be regarded as mere adjunct to the empirical analysis of
subjects…Texts can constitute a starting point for qualitative analysis in their own

Data relying exclusively on indigenous commentary (Hodder, 1994) provides
excellent insight into how an individual, group, or culture relates to the world around
them but does not address how the world, culture or society is reflected within or by the
individual or organization. The issue that individuals themselves are impacted by the
world around them, often in ways that they are unaware of, is therefore not addressed.
Taylor indicates that individuals are “imprinted” by culture, society, and their
environments (Taylor, 1987). Text, which is produced by these “imprinted” individuals, is therefore a cultural product (Prior, 1997) and provides us an understanding of how the creators of the text understand the world around them.

Since my research questions relate to how the International and South African gay and lesbian organizations represent themselves and if there are similar themes that emerge and similar conceptualizations and views on human rights and gay identity, by looking at how their web-sites, mission statements, and programs are organized, both textually and visually, much insight into how these two groups understand their world will become available. Websites, as they are created by individuals, are cultural texts (Wakeford, 2000) and through looking at and analyzing these websites, themes will emerge. I will be able to identify how human rights are conceptualized and understood and how the group’s gay and/or lesbian identities are being displayed. This type of data collection is important, and it provides a different understanding to that which is gained from indigenous, or emic, commentary. “Scholars must interrogate cultural text and discursive practice (i.e. the specific ways language is used within texts) in order to reveal traces of the dominant world views embedded within the artifact as a result of the process by which it was produced.” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2004, p. 305).

The disadvantages to relying on texts, specifically those of websites, for the data are two fold. One, due to the fact that the data collected are entirely from the outside, or an etic perspective, I am unable to attribute intention. Did the creators of a particular website intend to leave out specific words or visual imagery which could be found in other websites? Without interviews or interaction with the creators, my research and data are unable to address such a question. However, as discussed before, I am more
interested in the themes and representations that emerge from the websites, rather than the motivation behind the creation. Since websites can be accessed by anyone with a computer and an internet connection, how an organization visually and textually represents itself via the website therefore becomes important because as individuals accesses the website, this process is usually devoid of interaction with the organization.

Second, due to the nature of websites, they are a fleeting, shifting and changing medium. In fact, websites can constantly be updated, reformatted, or reconstructed. Since I am basing my research on websites, it became necessary to overcome this fact. Therefore, I sought to capture all of the websites within the same time period. This was done by printing out site maps, descriptively recording the websites into my notes, and printing out their home pages within one week period. The websites I included in my sample, which are listed in the next section, have already undergone multiple changes from the time that I captured them to the present time that I am writing this methodological section. Most of the format, logos, images, mission statements, and all other more permanent information of the organizations have, however, stayed constant and it is just the news and current information which changes. Only one website in my sample has undergone significant changes, which is identified in the next section.

The Sample:

The way that I selected my websites was through using my literature review and using the search engine Google. While conducting the background research, many organizations, both internationally and within South Africa, were mentioned as being prominent organizations in the LGBT human rights movement, and I recorded the names of these organizations to research later through the World Wide Web to determine if they
had websites. Most of the International organizations did have well developed websites, whereas, some of the organizations from South Africa had websites and others did not. Two organizations which were active in the South African gay rights movement, namely Association of Bisexuals, Gays, and Lesbians (ABIGALE) and Gay and Lesbian Organization of the Witwatersrand (GLOW), unfortunately, did not maintain websites and therefore were not able to be included in the website analysis portion of this paper. It is important to note here that these two organizations are the organizations whose membership is primarily black and they seek to serve the black township gay and lesbian communities. This characteristic could be a factor as to why these organizations do not maintain websites. Maybe the organizations themselves lack access to computers or maybe their constituents do not rely on computers as a source for information leading the organizations to opt out of developing this medium of communication. Without interviewing the groups, it is impossible to determine why they do not maintain websites.

The other way I searched for both international and South African websites was on the Google search engine. Google led me to one international website which is actually under the auspices of Amnesty International USA, but it focuses on international LGBT issues. When I searched Google for organizations in South Africa, I found two websites which I included in my study, namely the Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Center and Out LGBT Well-Being. My criteria for choosing the websites was only that the websites must be from organizations that focus on LGBT issues and have activism and social justice central to their purpose or their mission. Organizations which served a purely social function by linking people, serving as a dating service or were for entertainment purposes were therefore excluded. The organizations had to be political,
addressing issues of gay and lesbian rights, speaking out against discrimination, etc.
The websites that matched my criteria and were included in my study are listed below.

**International Organizations and Websites**

International Lesbian and Gay Association
http://www.ilga.org/index.asp

International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission
http://www.iglhrc.org/site/iglhrc/

Outfrount! Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Human Rights
http://www.amnestyusa.org/outfront/index.do

Human Rights Watch, Gay and Lesbian Rights
http://hrw.org/doc/?t=lgbt&document_limit=0,20

**South African Organization’s and Websites**

Lesbian and Gay Equality Project
http://www.equality.org.za/

Triangle Project
http://www.triangle.org.za/

Behind the Mask
http://www.mask.org.za/index2.html

Out LGBT Well-Being
http://www.out.org.za/

Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Center

It is important to note that the only website that has undergone significant reconstruction since this study was conducted was the Triangle Project and due to this reconstruction, some of the specific observations within this study are no longer a part of the website. Though this affects specific examples, the themes, emphasis and feel of the website is similar to its former site and its change does not affect my conclusions.
Approaching the Quantitative Analysis:

Once the home pages of each websites were properly captured in the week time frame, I first looked to capture the general characteristics of the homepages by using content analysis. Home pages are the front page of each website. There are many subsequent pages which you can access through the homepage. After conducting a content analysis, I then conducted my qualitative analysis of the websites. Content analysis was not the central component to my analysis but rather it provided an initial picture of how the websites are similar and how they differ. In line with the typical content analysis procedure, I coded each of the websites in response to a variety of questions regarding presentation, the prominence and use of human rights language compared to other facets of the organizations, and the links and networks of the organizations. I then grouped the coded results of each website according to which group the website was from, either from an international organization or from a South African organization. By doing this, I was able to see if there were any distinct, basic differences between the international and South African websites.

To code, I adapted a method from Van Aelst and Walgrave’s (2002) work analyzing the “Anti-Globalization” movement and the role of the internet. They developed a coding scheme where they reviewed websites and scored them according to their content, giving scores ranging from 0-3, and compared these scores of the different websites to each other in order to draw their conclusions. Since my research not only dealt with small samples, four international websites and 5 websites from South Africa, and since my sample sizes were uneven, I instead coded websites as low, medium, and high. To give a website its code, I looked at the content of the websites in my work and
for specifics characteristics. I simply analyzed each website for a specific characteristic and determined the website’s rank according to that characteristic’s prevalence within the website. I gave the website either a low, medium or high rank; low indicating that there is no presence or the characteristic is not included, medium being a minimal presence or a minor characteristic of the website, and high being the characteristic is a major theme or has an extensive presence. To differentiate medium and high, I decided that to rank websites in a particular characteristic, I would judge them on their first glance impression. At first glance, if the characteristic was dominant, i.e. if I was coding the websites for its use of pictures and the website used pictures throughout, then the website would be ranked high in the characteristic of pictures and visual imagery. If, at first glance, the words “human rights” did not stand out enough to be noticed, even though at closer look human rights terminology is present within the page, the website would then be coded as medium because it did have it within its content but it did not dominate. Although this method is open to critique that it is subjective, this analysis is exclusively to provide me with an initial picture of the themes and a broad overview of the websites’ differences and similarities.

Since the content analysis was meant to give a basic understanding of the websites, their differences and similarities, this coding scheme was applied to big picture issues, like overall presentation and general impressions. The following are the specific characteristics or topics on which I coded the websites.

**Presentation**

- Use of LGBT symbols including rainbows, pink triangles, women and men symbols, the color pink, etc.
• Prominence of LGBT terminology, i.e. are the words lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender prominent at first glance, non-existent on the home page, or buried.

• Featured pictures of LGBT people, both generally or as identified people.

**Human Rights Language**

• The organization’s home page mention and inclusion of human rights language.

• Prominence of other facets of the organization over human rights.

• Inclusion of news relating to United Nations Human Rights.

• Inclusion of regional or county specific news.

• Use of language linking gay and lesbian struggles to those outside of the group, i.e. use of community building language.

**Links**

• Many or few links to other entities or organizations.

• Many or few links to other organizations within this study.

**Approaching the Qualitative Analysis:**

Though the content analysis provided a general overview of how the international organization might differ from the South African organization in terms of their homepage content, construction, and emphasis, it is through qualitative analysis that I was able to delve deeper into describing the themes that emerge. The qualitative portion of my research was where I was able to make most of my observations and interpretations. There are many different ways to conduct qualitative research through using texts, but ultimately I chose to use a post-structuralist textual analysis. I chose this method because it granted me freedom to develop questions which interested me, and I was able to find a book to guide me during the research process. Much of the technique for the post-
structuralist textual analysis was obtained from Alan McKee’s book on textual analysis (2003).

Post-structural textual analysis is a “methodology for gathering information about different people or group’s sense-making practices” (McKee, 2003, p. 49). This information is gathered by formulating questions to ask of the text so as to abstract an understanding of the dominant discourse, patterns and assumption within the text. McKee stressed that because an individual researcher formulates the questions and conducts the analysis of the texts within this method, conclusions and results are, therefore, interpretations. Another researcher could conduct the same analysis with the same questions and develop alternative interpretations and results, but this does not therefore invalidate this type of research. This variation among results of different researchers is because each researcher has his or her own sense-making practices and world view and it is unavoidable that these influences will not intersect and influence the conclusions one would make when interpreting texts. This research does provide good information, not only to scholarship because dominant paradigms can be identified within the websites, but also the organizations themselves can gain an understanding of how they are critically analyzed and understood by an outsider.

The first series of questions I formulated for my textual analysis were constructed in order to assist me in identifying the organization’s assumptions about human rights. My questions included: 1) How is human rights articulated? 2) How prevalent is human rights terminology in the mission, vision of action statements or is human rights implied? 2) What is challenged and unchallenged by the websites? 3) Who/what is the ‘enemy’ or what are the organizations ‘struggling’ against?
Second, I wanted to determine the organization’s portrayed understanding of homosexuality. The questions I used to interpret this topic were: 1) Is homosexuality portrayed as natural or a chosen identity? 2) Should homosexuality be protected or accepted? 3) Who are ‘we’ and who are ‘they’?

Third, I composed other questions which are useful in determining the dominant discourse within the different websites. These questions included: 1) What is the assumed knowledge of the reader? 2) What is considered obvious? 3) What do they think is worth including? 4) What languages are the websites written in? 5) Are other languages available? 6) What symbols and images are used? 7) What are the functions of the organizations or what services do they offer? 8) What other organizations does the organization provide links to and how associated are they with other organizations?

Last, I wanted to analyze if there were similar omissions in the organizations’ websites? Was there specific information left out? Were certain groups or people not included? How were transgendered people and their specific issues dealt with within the websites?

By asking the above questions of the texts, I was able to abstract some interesting themes, patterns, similarities and differences between the international LGBT organizations’ and the South African organizations’ websites. The last chapter will review these findings, articulate them, and conclude this paper.
Chapter 5

Observations, Findings and Conclusion

After determining which methods to use to analyze the different websites and after my questions were formulated in order to interrogate the texts qualitatively, I conducted my analysis. The following is a description of the themes, similarities and differences which emerged through interrogations of both international LGBT organizations’ websites and those from LGBT organizations in South Africa. Though I found themes that were similar and those distinctively different, in terms of how the two different groups of organizations present themselves, articulate their causes, and organize themselves, this is not to say that these findings are the ‘truth’. As said before, each researcher has his or her own world view and assumptions and it is unavoidable for this world view not to influence and become part of the particular findings of the researcher.

This does not, however, invalidate the findings. In fact, since this research is unique and analyzes two groups which have never before been compared specifically in terms of how they represent themselves, how they define their struggle and how they conceptualize human rights and homosexuality, my research gives much insight into the different groups’ influences, ties and uniqueness. It would be very interesting to see if my findings would be similarly repeated by other research, especially one from within the South African context, with a presumably alternative world view. Also, it would be interesting to take these research findings and extend the research by approaching these groups and interviewing them to determine if they are in fact cognizant of the identified influences, themes, similarities and differences. This research could also be advanced
through determining if these groups intended to represent sexuality and rights the way they presented them within their website. Through this initial study, there were important trends that emerged, both in terms of how the different groups were similar and how they were distinct, that are worthy of discussion and are addressed in the following pages.

**Quantitative Results:**

Before conducting the deeper, qualitative analysis, I conducted a basic content analysis of the websites’ homepages to get an overview and general understanding of the different characteristics of the websites. As said before, the websites included in this study are those from organizations which are politically active and that seek to represent or advocate on behalf of gays and lesbians or others engaged in homosexuality. For a detailed description of my sample, please refer to Chapter four in the section titled, Sample.

In conducting the content analysis, I coded each homepage for specific characteristics. I analyzed each website for these characteristics and determined the characteristics’ prevalence within the homepage. I then marked the organizations as either having a low, medium or high prevalence in terms of the specific characteristic; low indicating that there is no presence or that the characteristic is not included, medium being a minimal presence or a minor characteristic of the website, and high being the characteristic is a major theme or has an extensive presence. For more detail regarding how I designated a website as high versus medium in a specific characteristic, see Chapter Four within the section titled, Approaching the Quantitative Analysis. Attached is a graph of my findings.
## Figure 1: Content Analysis Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>International Organizations</th>
<th>South African Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=4</td>
<td>N=5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% ranking high</td>
<td>% ranking medium</td>
<td>% ranking low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% ranking high</td>
<td>% ranking medium</td>
<td>% ranking low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT Symbols</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prominence of LGBT</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terminology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT People's Pictures</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human Rights</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of Human Rights Language</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prominence of Other Facets Over HR</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of UN HR News</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of regional/country headline news</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Links</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many links with other websites and organizations</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many links with organizations within study</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen by looking at Figure 1, there are some clear patterns which emerge. Within the presentation of these websites, clearly South African websites use more internationally recognized LGBT symbols within their sites. What I looked for with this characteristic was the inclusion of rainbows, pink triangles, women signs intertwined or men signs intertwined, and use of pink, a color which is sometimes used within expressions of pride to liberate the color from its former association with the triangle homosexuals were forced to wear during the Holocaust. Also, one can see that most of the organizations of both the international and South African groups’ websites had high prevalence in terms of LGBT terminology, which can be expected as they are groups focusing on LGBT. As said before, I coded a homepage as having high prevalence if upon uploading the website, it was quickly identifiable that the website was dominated by a specific characteristic, in this case, it was clear that the groups focused on LGBT issues through the predominance of words. Use of pictures within the websites varied equally amongst organizations within each group and there was no distinct tendency between the groups.

In terms of the human rights language, international websites scored high in prevalence, where South African organizations varied in including human rights within their homepages. There were two organizations with no reference to human rights within their homepages, even though they included concepts of human rights in other sections of their sites. South African organizations had a higher prevalence of other facets of their organizations over human rights as compared to international organizations. Particularly interesting is that South African organizations did not have any references to United Nations and its human rights instruments, whereas the international organizations were
more likely to include specific mention of the United Nations, some even with specific mention of the United Nation’s Commission on Human Rights (please see IGLHRC website). International organizations were high in including international news covering all regions throughout the world whereas only two of the South African organizations included this journalistic style, headline news, while the other three did not.

In analyzing the content of organizations’ links, the South African organizations seem to not only maintain many links but they also had more links with organizations within this study. Links are pathways to other websites that organizations provide within their web-pages for users to click on and gain easy access to the other websites. The organizations choose to include links to websites that they deem relevant to their cause or with whom they have established relationships. International organizations did not provide as many links as the South African organizations.

This general overview of the content analysis provides us with a basic understanding of how South African and international LGBT websites are similar and different to each other. This provides us with a useful understanding of big picture themes, but it does not allow us to understand the deeper nuances that distinguish South African LGBT websites from international. For instance, through the content analysis, we see that international organizations include human rights terminology. Is this terminology one that denotes individualistic and universalistic assumptions or is it one that invokes the holistic bundle of different types of rights or just those of civil and political rights? For this detail and deeper analysis, I turn now to my qualitative analysis.
Qualitative Results:

As said before, to conduct the post-structuralist textual analysis, I formulated questions to serve as my guide in analyzing the websites as texts. To review the specific questions, please refer back to Chapter Four in the section titled Approaching the Qualitative Analysis. After interrogating the websites in regards to the questions posed, some striking themes, similarities and distinct differences, in terms of how certain topics were represented, emerged among the international LGBT organizations and the South African LGBT organizations’ websites. I then compared the international organizations’ websites, as a group, to those of the South African organizations. This is not to say that all organizations within the South African group, or within the international group, were the same but that they shared similarities different from the other group. The degree to which these similarities were represented within the websites varied.

Similarities:

There are similarities which all websites include. The first similarity is that both the international and South African websites appear to have the same underlying assumptions about homosexuality in that they treat it as a normal phenomenon and that they believe people do not choose to be LGBT. Within three of the five South African websites, there are specific articles and texts dealing with the issues of why people are sexually attracted to the same sex. An example of such an article within the websites is from the organization, the Triangle Project. This organization provides a link, under their section “News and Views”, to a text that was published within its newsletter. The title of this article is called, “What Causes Homosexuality” and within this article, it is stressed that homosexuality, though it is not biological (i.e. there is no gay gene or it is not an
illness) a person does not choose their sexuality and being homosexual is perfectly natural.

“Feelings, including sexual feelings, are "given's". They are not things that we choose, nor that we can change. We do not choose to feel anger, sadness, joy, guilt or sympathy. We either feel them or we do not. Similarly, erotic feelings are not chosen; they are only experienced (felt). Whether homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual, we do not choose the fact that we experience emotional and sexual attraction towards a particular sex, we just do. (Triangle Project Website, 2005)\(^1\).

All the international websites, though they do not include similar texts to the one above in discussing why someone is gay, imply that they understand that LGBT sexualities are an unavoidable reality. LGBT are just who they are and because there is no choice in the matter, or personal agency in terms of identity, they should not be discriminated against or excluded from accessing equal rights. An example of this emphasis can be seen in the OutFront homepage in the statement, “Around the world, the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people are violated daily. People are beaten, imprisoned and killed by their own governments simply for engaging in homosexual acts (OutFront Website, 2005). The emphasis is subtle, but again people are LGBT and because of being LGBT they engage in homosexual acts. Choice and agency are eliminated from the understanding of why people engage in homosexuality.

This similarity is not particularly surprising, as these organizations all advocate for LGBT people and communities, but it is significant that all organizations operate

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\(^1\) Note: Triangle Project’s website has undergone significant reconstruction, as stated in Chapter Four in the section titled Sample. A link to this specific quote is no longer live.
within the paradigm that sexuality is not chosen versus being a result of personal agency, cultural practices, or even biology. If an international organization were to operate from the perspective that sexuality is a freedom of expression, which people are in control, the approach of the organization would be different and would probably not focus on grouping all LGBT people together as a stigmatized minority or an oppressed group in order to affectively advocate and lobby. Instead the group might focus on attacking societies’ need to control the intimate lives of its citizens or focus on the role of religion within society. To approach homosexuality as natural and normal by presenting LGBT people to be the same as heterosexuals, in that they also strive for adult, loving stable relationships but are just attracted to different people sexually, the organizations are, in a sense, attempting to avoid being associated with other sexual deviants, including swingers, people engaged in sadomasochism, pedophiles, etc. (Warner, 1999). This approach is further emphasized by the South African organizations’ maintenance of marriage as their ultimate goal and the international organizations’ continued spotlight of the ‘normal’ persecuted gay or lesbian, whose only crime is being found in the arms of his or her lover. This stance bares striking similarities seen in the homophile movements of the 1950’s in the West, as mentioned in Chapter 2.

The second similarity is the inconsistency each of the organizations have when approaching, addressing, including, and articulating the issues and the needs of both bisexuals and transgender people, particularly transgender. Most of the organizations, regardless of which group they belong, stress that they represent or advocate for LGBT people. One organization in South Africa, the Equality Project, includes intersexed people into their defined group of constituents as well. Durban Lesbian and Gay
Community and Health Center is the only organization which does not include transgenders in its website. Going beyond the basic inclusion of transgenders within most of the organization’s defined constituents and within the organizations discourse, very few programs, actions, or statements which specifically deal with transgender issues, needs or concerns are found. For example, as previously stated, the Equality Project’s claims to represent a wide variety of people but their legal services primarily and specifically serve lesbians and gays as they address all “matters relating to discrimination based on sexual orientation,” and not issues relating to gender identity (Equality Project’s website, 2005). In fact, most of the organizations continually leave out and do not mention bisexuals and transgenders within their many textual descriptions of most of their programs and actions. Gays and lesbians dominate in terms of being the point of focus for the organizations. Even most of the organizations’ names include gays and lesbians while bisexuals and transgenders are just tacked on in the organizations’ mission statements. The international organizations, specifically IGLHRC and Human Rights Watch, do include in their lobby gender identity, but both seem to stop short of demanding the freedom to change one’s gender. ILGA does provide a map which can be accessed through its website which, among other things, does indicate which countries legally allow people to change their defined gender and which countries have made it illegal to receive sex reassignment surgery.

The third similarity is that marriage is given a lot of priority within most of the websites, regardless of group. OutFront is the only international organization which does not specifically mention marriage, demand that LGBT be included in the right to marry or be granted access to all the rights associated with marriage. They do, however,
demand non-discrimination of LGBT people under the law, leaving room for them to make claims about marriage, if they decide to. The South African organizations heavily emphasize marriage, the most notable example being the Equality Project. Their director wrote an article about marriage which is highlighted on their website which says, “We have, however, not yet achieved the equality we seek. Individuals who wish to marry a person of the same sex, close blood relatives and the mentally disabled remain as the only adult groups that the law will not allow to marry a person of their choice” (Equality Project Website, 2005). Even the organization Out, which does not focus significantly on legal reform, was one of the organizations to jointly file the legal challenge to the marriage statute. Since South African organizations have been so successful in terms of legal reform, this might be reason for the strong emphasis on marriage, the last legal exclusion of gays and lesbians from equal rights. This emphasis could also stem from the South African LGBT movement’s history, where emphasis was placed on inclusion within society and equal protection under the new laws of the emerging, liberated government. The Equality Project Director mentions other adult groups who are also excluded, linking LGBT people to others experiencing similar oppression.

The last similarity is the inclusion of international and regional information regarding news and events relevant to LGBT people. As indicated within the content analysis, all international organizations included headline news regarding LGBT people, including events, arrests, people being released from jail, violence, repression, award winners, etc. Although only two South African organizations included this journalistic style of news on international and regional events, when I expanded the definition to include mention of anything regionally or internationally, two more South African
organizations were included. Three organizations were not included in the content analysis but they did include regional and international information within their programs and projects. For example, Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Center included news in the form of discussion boards, and Triangle Project included information on South Africa’s pride festival and other social events within South Africa. Out was the only organization which did not include any information regarding any event or news item outside its jurisdiction. There is no means to speculate what this omission implies, as interviews were not within the scope of this research. However, I argue the other organizations’ inclusion of international and regional news and events specific to LGBT people does give credence to the fact that there is some sense of commonality amongst LGBT communities, or at least, there is interest in knowing about each other. The information would not be included if it was not deemed somehow relevant.

These four similarities, across organizations within the international and South African movements are interesting if placed within the framework of human rights and the different philosophical paradigms. Rights are most certainly understood as universal and homosexuality is understood not only as natural part of all human societies, but as a universal phenomenon. However, within this universal assumption and inclusive definition of constituency, certain peoples’ needs are minimally addressed, if at all, by the movements. As seen, transgender people are the least included or understood by either group of organizations even though there is reference to a third sex self understanding. As mentioned in the South Africa Chapter, it is striking that the South African organizations do not reflect variation and this diversity. It is as if all organizations attempt to adopt similar conceptions on sexuality to possibly find strength in one another
but also to avoid variation which could undermine both movements’ claim of normalcy and being a part of human nature. These organizations studied are, in fact, big, formal, pseudo-corporate organizations, which no doubt have to compromise much and have to focus on pushing the agenda for inclusion, in order to make strides in their goals of legal reform, inclusion in rights, and eliminating governmental discrimination.

Differences:

Even though these are interesting similarities which have implications for both movements, there are some notable differences among the two groups of websites, namely the international organizations and those of the organizations from South Africa. The first difference is the emphasis on how the two groups refer to human rights and how they articulate their understanding about human rights. As said before, though both clearly understand human rights as universal, the international organizations clearly understand human rights as individualistic and exclusively civil and political. As an example, the international organization, Human Rights Watch, emphasizes documentation of discrimination against people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity and focuses on the United Nations’ human rights doctrines as a means to lobby for LGBT people, by getting sexual orientation listed as a human right. Although these are important pursuits, they clearly show their acceptance of the UN and its international instruments as ideal and that human rights are applicable within every country.

The international organizations do not emphasize the emotional, spiritual, economic and cultural needs of the people engaged in homosexuality but are only concerned with pressuring governments to stop infringing on LGBT peoples’ civil and
political rights, i.e. freedom from discrimination, arbitrary arrest, and privacy. While conducting this research, ILGA was soliciting money by having a donation link on their homepage to send to Sri Lanka to assist in the Tsunami relief, but in spite of the good intentions of this endeavor, there is no similar collection taken for other poor LGBT groups who are within developing nations. It is exclusively a temporary effort to gather money for the relief, rather than collecting money for ongoing development projects, poverty reduction campaigns, etc. IGLHRC does provide organizations in developing nations with technical assistance, training, etc. but it does not include in its scope programs addressing income inequalities between the LGBT communities in developed countries and the LGBT communities in developing countries.

In contrast, South African organizations do include economic, social, and cultural rights within their understanding of human rights. It is clear that they still do consider human rights to be universal because their mission revolves around improving LGBT peoples’ access to rights and freedoms. Equality Project makes references to the “broader human rights framework” as if it is universally understood and accepted entity and applicable everywhere (Equality Project website, 2005). However, the human rights that are emphasized are not exclusively political and civic rights but also include other rights like the right to health, self-esteem, education, and social networks. Behind the Mask, though its mandate is to solely document and provide information, articulates its mission as “to empower and support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in Africa- politically, culturally, socially, and economically, by the gathering of information” (Behind the Mask Website, 2005). Out’s mission is exclusively tied to health and yet this is articulated as part of people’s rights. “We promote
Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender people’s physical and mental health and related rights” (Out Website, 2005). Clearly the understanding of rights is a broader, more holistic version than that of the international organizations which have an exclusive focus on civil and political rights.

A second difference is that international organizations emphasize homosexuality as a mere characteristic of an individual and those individuals who are homosexual should be included in the distribution of rights and not be subject to discrimination, whereas, South African organizations do this as well as focus their efforts on encouraging individual and community acceptance of homosexuality. It is a subtle difference of emphasis, which affects strategy as well as the organizations’ programming. International organizations within their missions, projects and actions are exclusively focused on “liberation from discrimination” for LGBT people (ILGA website, 2005). South African organizations devote considerable portions of their websites toward advertising community building activities, health groups, counseling groups, community forums, social events, etc. All these activities, especially the social and support groups, are centered around getting the individual to come to terms with his/her identity and sexuality and to overcome internalized homophobia.

“Social spaces provide safe spaces for gay and lesbian people, and their friends, to meet and talk about the issues facing them. It is also a great way to have fun and to share in all the excitements of gay and lesbian life. [There are] two hour events which include, discussions, videos, or just chilling” (Out website, 2005)
Out advertises its community workshops, peer outreach, counseling phone line, and also its social groups, all with the aim of supporting LGBT people. The Triangle Project advertises its book club, support groups and outreach programs. Another example is the Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Center. It has many programs within its center to support and encourage LGBT people to develop. Even Behind the Mask, as an organization solely focused on documentation and information for all of Africa, advertises social functions in South Africa. The international organizations do not include such information to support the emotional needs and development of LGBT people.

Linked to the second difference, is the third difference, which is that South African organizations devote a considerable amount of space and coverage within their websites toward issues, activities and announcements regarding community building. Unique from the second difference, this is not specific to LGBT community building, but also reaches out to the greater community, to enhance increased awareness and acceptance of sexual diversity. Within the Triangle Project’s mission, this community emphasis is quite clear. “Our purpose is to empower gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered persons through health and social development programmes that promote individual and community well-being and pride, and build individual and community capacity” (Triangle Project, 2005). Also, within accordance to their wider understanding of human rights and to support the capacity building of both LGBT people, as well as community members, three of the five South African organizations offer a variety of classes on topics that range from job searching to CV creation, basic skills and anger management, and all community members are invited to attend.
The international organizations, although they provide ways to get involved, through letter writing campaigns or through receiving updates on news events, there is not this emphasis on grass roots, community outreach and interaction. This could be due largely to the fact that the international organizations’ scope is too large for them to be able to attempt outreach and involvement in grass roots organizing within the many diverse countries around the world. However, this large geographic scope could be overcome by encouraging local formations of groups, under the auspices of the international organization. ILGA has local groups within its umbrella, but this is not the same as if ILGA were promoting community building through grass roots level ILGA groups. Also, the international groups do have offices within other cities throughout the world, and although these cities are within developed nations, they still could engage in community outreach in areas around their headquarters. This could expand their capacity if they were to encourage local groups to volunteer with grassroots organizing elsewhere. IGLHRC does welcome volunteers, but on an individual basis.

The fourth difference is that South African organizations do not include any information on the United Nations and its human rights instruments, which is a primary characteristic of the international organizations. This is not to say that South African organizations are not focused on legal reform as part on their strategy. Equality project, as the South African Organizations most focused on legal reform, does so by emphasizing and focusing on the South African government but the United Nations is not included in this focus. I speculate that some of the South African organizations would include information about the United Nations if there had been any recent international news regarding it, as they do include up to date information on topics relevant to LGBT.
The time frame in which I captured the websites was possibly one with no activity to report on with regards to the UN. Behind the Mask does challenge African governments to protect gays and lesbians from discrimination and abuses, but it does not challenge the United Nations to do the same. It is unclear why Behind the Mask stops short of including the United Nations. Maybe their focus on Africa, precludes them from including information on the United Nations, but this explanation does not explain Behind the Mask’s non-inclusion of information regarding the African Union. The International organizations’ focus is geared toward the United Nations as well as individual governments, but it is clear that much energy is devoted to lobbying and pressuring the UN, which is unlike South African organizations.

Even though the South African organizations do not refer to the United Nations, an international institution, the fifth difference is that South African organizations include more internationally recognized representations and symbols of LGBT within their websites than the international organizations. The only international organization which includes rainbows and pink triangles is ILGA, which has one rainbow in the shape of a flame and a right side up pink triangle. Perhaps this lack of use of symbols could be due to an attempt by the international organizations to present a diluted, respectable, professional, image. The South African organizations’ websites include many symbols, the most decorated being the Triangle Project which has four rainbows, thirteen pink triangles, and an overall theme of pink within its homepage, alone. The Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Center has background images underneath its text of male symbols interlinked as well as female symbols intertwined. Also, the left side of the page is bordered pink. This use of international symbols, as well as the South African
organizations’ adoption of pride festivals and drag shows, is an indication that South African organizations do attempt to represent themselves within the international LGBT movement and that they have an international concept of gay and lesbian symbols and representations.

The sixth difference, and within the same theme as the last difference, is that South African organizations mention, include details, and refer to sex within their websites whereas international organizations avoid mentioning sex. In an effort not to contribute to the stereotyping of Africans as being more sexual, it should be made clear that South Africans inclusion of sex within their websites could have more to do with their broader conceptualizations of rights and their effort to provide for their communities’ and people’s needs by addressing sexual health and that the international organizations’ omission of sex could have more to do with trying to present themselves as normal and respectable (Warner, 1999). This having been said, of the international organizations, OutFront mentions people who are persecuted for engaging in “homosexual acts” and other organizations make references to sexual orientation. For example, IGLHRC’s scope includes all people who are discriminated against based on their “sexual orientation or expression” (OutFront website, 2005 and IGLHRC website, 2005). However, there is no direct reference to sex. The international organizations skirt around the issue by referring to it indirectly. An organization is hard pressed to avoid alluding to sex when they are representing a people who are persecuted because of who they are sexually attracted to or sexually engaged with. However, this is where international organizations stop, in that they choose to only allude to it rather than making direct references. Only when an instance, like, in India where a man was
beheaded by his lover after sex, occurs then international organizations are forced to include a direct mention to sex (see IGLHRC). It seem that in avoiding direct mention to sex, the international organizations may be trying to secure respectability with government and the United Nations, the actors that these organizations seek to lobby and influence.

The South African organizations, on the other hand, not only include sex within their websites but do so in an open and prominent way. The Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Center is the most conservative of the five organizations in terms of its inclusion of sex within its website and announced activities. Although, it does publicize awareness workshops about HIV/AIDS which includes information regarding safer sex (Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Center website, 2005). The organizations with the most references to sex are Out and Triangle Project. One of Out’s pictures on its homepage is of a masculine looking female leaning against a wall with her arms open with the words written above her, “women loving women and STI” (Out website, 2005). The Triangle Project is perhaps the most playful and direct in terms of sex, as it includes not only a link to “the guide to enhance pleasures through the use of sex toys” but it has flashing posters on its homepage which advertise their safer sex workshops, which cover topics from lubricants to oral sex (Triangle Project, 2005). The poster which advertises safer oral sex uses the slogan, “You are what you eat” (IBID). The freeness, playfulness, and openness of including sex within the South African websites could be a result from their emphasis on safe sex and health initiatives. To effectively address sexual health, it is quite impossible to avoid discussions of sex, and if
it were avoided, the health initiative could not be ineffective because the organization would be demonstrating that they see sex as dirty or taboo.

The last difference between international LGBT organizations and South African organizations, in terms of their presentations within their respective websites, is that most of the texts and content within the international organizations imply that they have full faith in governments, and especially in the United Nations, to be in control and be able to make the difference in protecting LGBT people from abuses and discrimination. In this case, it seems that international organizations adhere more to the socialist perspective of human rights in that they stress government and transnational agencies, such as the United Nations, as the implementers, providers, and protectors of human rights. All action alerts from IGLHRC (which you can subscribe to via the IGLHRC website) and information regarding the international organizations’ activities are directed at appealing to the UN and individual countries’ governments, to either stop imprisoning people or to repeal discriminatory laws, etc. The assumption is clear that by directing their appeals to the United Nations and to governments, they will create legal change and then that change will trickle down to affect the societies and communities. No where is the emphasis on the United Nations more prevalent than with IGLHRC. On their website, they even include a picture of the United Nations New York building as the icon to click in order to access their “Action Kit on Sexual Rights and Sexual Orientation at the UN Commission on Human Rights” (IGLHRC website, 2005).

Although South African organizations do include information about lobbying the national government for inclusion of LGBT interests into national law, they all have a
wider scope and place much emphasis in community interaction and education. Even Behind the Mask, which functions as a documenting organization putting information on their website regarding African nation’s actions relevant to LGBT, includes information for education, community building, and health. This emphasis reflects that although the South African organizations see government as an important agent for change, change also comes from the grassroots, community level. This type of change may even be more important. Also, although legal reform and government support is crucial, South African organizations clearly formulate their strategy to secure rights for their constituency to include legal reform as well as efforts, such as outreach and education, to create community cohesion, tolerance and acceptance.

**Findings and Conclusion:**

How do these interpretations and discussions of similarities and differences relate to the framework and other issues within the previous chapters? In regards to human rights, international and South African organizations understand human rights as universal. Since they both represent groups of people who are denied access to a variety of perceived human rights, this perspective is not surprising. Although both groups could be called universalistic in their understanding of human rights, there are variations of the types of rights emphasized by each group. South African organizations’ understand rights in a more holistic way. They see rights as more than civil and political but rather social, cultural and even economic, as seen in the example of organizations offering job skills training, classes in resume writing, etc. They also emphasize the importance of community and community building and this emphasis could provide sustenance to the
cultural relativist’s argument that rights need to emerge from the community and be culturally appropriate. However, the cultural relativism paradigm really is inapplicable to either the international or South African organizations’ representations because both groups do clearly see human rights as universal, even though there are slight variations in the rights stressed. South African organizations do emphasize community but there are no indications that community membership and community rights trump the individual’s rights, like some cultural relativists argue as fundamental to African society and mentioned in Chapter One.

In terms of how South African organizations represent themselves on, and the information and components they choose to include in, their website, it is clear that South African LGBT organizations identify themselves within the international LGBT movement. Not only do they include internationally recognized symbols and terminology, but they also include information about events relevant to LGBT but in other places. The marriage struggle in Canada, a new HIV/AIDS strain found in California, and even recent rulings of a Russian court were all news events woven into the content of some of the South African websites, as if they were relevant and important to their organizations and their constituents in South Africa. International organizations also strive at presenting information from around the globe, covering issues that effect LGBT people in different areas of the world, as if it is relevant and important to people in other areas. Even the pictures the international organizations include within their websites seem to be chosen specifically to reflect this international theme, including pictures of people from Latin American and Africa. Therefore in terms of representation, both South African and international organizations seem to agree that there is an
international community between them and other LGBT groups and movements around the world.

Also, an issue which emerged which was not in accordance with the literature presented in this thesis. The literature claims that LGBT movements primarily focus on legal reform (Adams, Duyvendak and Krouwel, 1999), and this is not the case with the South African organizations. My findings show that South African organizations focus on many more strategies rather than exclusively focusing on legal reform. Yes, Equality Project does emphasize legal reform as a primary strategy, but the other four organizations from South Africa focus on issues apart from legal reform. They focus on community and capacity building as their primary concerns. With South African organizations, legal reform seems to be one component of a multifaceted campaign whereas international organizations do adhere to Adams et. al.’s (1999) claim, in that they focus heavily on legal reform for their strategy.

Lastly, in accordance with the literature presented in Chapter Three, South African organizations, within their websites, continued the identified trend of formulating their rhetoric to try and link their constituents’ rights and freedoms to those of the entire South African population. This rhetoric has particular resonance within the South African historical context, as they have now reached 10 years from their emergence from Apartheid. As covered in Chapter Three, South African organizations would consistently link LGBT oppression to the oppression black South Africans, as well as others, experienced under apartheid. The director of the Equality Project, in a quote about marriage, clearly demonstrates this rhetoric, case in point.
“In our view, [there are many] arguments why we as a society should now reject this continued oppression. The first is historical. The argument for the equal right to marry can only be understood in the context of an inclusive and rights-based definition of family, rooted in an understanding of the oppression of our apartheid past.” (Equality Project website, 2005)

Due to South Africa’s apartheid past, and the LGBT organization’s ability to include sexual orientation within the larger political struggle, South Africa could be seen as an anomaly within the African continent. Clearly, much of the movement’s success to achieve inclusion stems from the country’s oppressive legacy and the political struggle to overcome it. However, although South Africa’s history is unique, many gay and lesbian activists in other countries on the continent look to the gay and lesbian success in South Africa and draw a lot of support, ideas and motivation from the South African organizations. Not only has South African organizations supported gay groups in Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, and so forth, there are even emerging gay groups in countries further from South Africa like Kenya and Sierra Leone, all which are influenced and inspired by South Africa. Behind the Mask truly understands this connection of LGBT people and struggles within the continent to South Africa, and that is why they focus on documenting all relevant news regarding LGBT issues within the continent and showcase the South African successes and strategies. Although the South African LGBT movement is unique because of the country’s history, its effects, influences, and contributions to LGBT Africans is significant.
Although there is evidence which corroborates the claim that there is a unified international LGBT movement from this study, it is also shown that this movement is one with a variety of philosophical underpinnings, one with a variety of emphases, and one composed of different organizations with similar but distinct goals. These organizations within the movement conceptualize human rights the same in that they clearly see them as universal but there are other influences, including underlying assumptions on focus of strategy and importance of community, which divide the cohesive ideology of human rights as being universal. Although South Africa can be included in the international movement, their struggles are different and unique from that movement. The South African movement, with its variations, can instead be seen as very influential to the different emerging movements within the different countries on the continent of Africa.

It is as if the international movement is composed of different cultures, actors, and organizations, all with the same focal point, but with different approaches, understandings, and philosophies. Within each region or even country, there are specificities and uniqueness which characterizes the different movements and the case of South Africa clearly exemplifies this. A South African organization’s logo which almost perfectly illustrates this similarity but at the same time highlights the distinct uniqueness of the movement is the logo of Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Center: an upside down triangle, but rather than filled with pink, it is filled with the South African flag made from beads. It is as if to say that, “yes, we are gay and lesbian, similar to others around the world, but we are foremost South African and our experience is unique from others.”
Figure 2: Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Center’s Logo
Further Study:

These finding are truly relevant and give credence to the claims that there is an international LGBT movement, one composed of different and unique LGBT communities. Also, in terms of human rights, South African organizations seem to support the claim that within Africa, the priority of community and the placement of the individual within the community, is very important to the realization of human rights, even though the South African LGBT organizations do not show that they see the community or group as trumping individual human rights. Whether this emphasis is intentional and that South Africans conceptualize human rights and the importance of community in this way, cannot be determined from this research. However, this topic would be very interesting to explore and would be able to provide a very interesting addition to the ongoing debate about human rights and cultural understandings of rights in Africa. As with most research, when one research questions is explored, it opens up a whole host of other questions and avenues for future research. It is my hope to continue exploring these questions regarding the understandings of human rights, conceptualizations of homosexualities, and shared commonality within the LGBT movement, and it would be most rewarding for me to one day travel to South Africa and pose these questions with people in a interactive research methodology.


United Nations Conventions


Websites


**International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Websites**


**South African Gay and Lesbian Rights Websites**


