"WHERE THERE'S GAYS, THERE'S ISINGQUMO": A LINGUISTIC AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO ISINGQUMO, SOUTH AFRICA'S GAY BLACK LANGUAGE

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

1. Introduction

Lavender languages refers to specific 'languages' created by queer communities around the world with the intent to, as members from Western queer communities would say, "throw shade[1]" or "spill the tea[2]" without the "breeders[3]" understanding what they are saying. From Bajub in Brazil to Swardspeak in the Philippines, queer communities have been creating and expanding their very own 'languages' much to the joy of lavender linguists, whose main goal is to study, analyse and document these languages.

      This dissertation focuses on isiNgqumo, a lavender language created and spoken within the Zulu queer community[4] of modern-day South Africa. Modern-day South Africa is home to two well-developed lavender languages, namely Gayle and isiNgqumo. The racial segregation instated by the apartheid regime has left its traces in the contemporary gay communities of South Africa, with Gayle being spoken predominantly by the white gay community and isiNgqumo by the Zulu gay community. This dissertation focuses on isiNgqumo as it attempts to further the research and documentation of the understudied language.

      The topic choice of this dissertation came to me after reading about isiNgqumo on the Internet and being slightly underwhelmed by the lack of information and research available. Having been born and raised in Africa, having studied linguistics at university, and as a member of the queer community myself, I find it imperative to bring isiNgqumo to light. By expounding on the intricacies and complexities of the language, I hope to highlight how highly evolved queer cultures can, in fact, be. The linguistic and social importance of this research was therefore also a determining factor in the decision to write this dissertation in English. This way it would not only cater to an international audience but also, and perhaps more importantly, it would allow isiNgqumo speakers access to it as well.

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[1] Publicly criticize or express contempt for someone.
[2] To gossip
[3] Heterosexuals
[4] The Zulu are part of the wider Nguni ethnic/linguistic cluster. It is important to note that although it was created and is mainly spoken by Zulu gay men it is also plausible to find Nguni homosexuals who are able to speak it seeing as its matrix, Zulu, is very similar to the other Nguni languages (Xhosa, Swati, Hlubi, Phuthi and Ndebele).

There is much debate amongst linguists as to whether lavender languages are fully-fledged languages in their own right or if they merely constitute registers such as dialects, sociolects, genderlects, jargons or slangs. The linguistic status of each lavender language is case-specific. However, based on the (albeit wanting) research into isiNgqumo, it appears that this specific lavender language can be classified as a 'true' language rather than a dialect, slang or jargon. Further research into this understudied and undocumented register shall either concur or deny this hypothesis.

Homophobia, discrimination and stigmatization form a daily reality for queer individuals in South Africa. The online article titled "Maimane, Zuma and Other 'Anti-Gay' Statements in SA Politics" elaborates on how, during the 2006 Heritage Day celebrations in Kwadukuza, future South African president, Jacob Zuma, referred to same-sex marriages as "a disgrace to the nation and to God". He further spouted that, "when I was growing up, *unqingili* [a gay person] would not have stood in front of me. I would knock him out". Zuma's sentiment was shared by Zulu king, Goodwill Zwelethini, who has also been known to make homophobic statements: "Traditionally, there were no people who engaged in same-sex relationships. There was nothing like that, and if you do it, you must know that you are rotten" ("'Anti-Gay' Statements in SA Politics", 2015).

Many African leaders have claimed that homosexuality is an "un-African" phenomenon, that is, a Western import that is considered to be the "white man's disease". However, countless studies have proved that homosexuality is, in fact, a natural occurrence and has been documented repeatedly throughout history and across the world. In spite of these findings, however, homosexuality remains a taboo in many modern African societies. The homophobic environments subsequently force homosexuals to adapt in a bid to avoid persecution. Like many queer individuals around the world, the members of these queer subcultures feel so threatened and unsafe in the heteronormative societie they live in that they seek refuge among like-minded individuals, subsequently forming their own sub-cultures and, in some cases, creating a very own register as a tool of protection so as to avoid harassment and possibly, in severe cases, beatings, imprisonment and most regrettably a death sentence (as is the case in countries such as Nigeria, Sudan and Somalia).

This dissertation will thus focus specifically on one such lingo, namely isiNgqumo. This specific lavender language is spoken predominantly among the Zulu who inhabit a great deal of modern-day Eastern South Africa and is derived from the Zulu language. According to previous studies, isiNgqumo is mostly a spoken language, created in and around, but not limited to, Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal. Yet the study of these lavender languages by lavender linguists has stirred much debate as to what extent these 'languages' can be considered to be fully-fledged languages rather than highly evolved dialects, slangs or jargons. The same is true of isiNgqumo, which has not only remained widely understudied but has been researched almost exclusively from an historical, anthropological and/or ethnographic viewpoint.

A preliminary study however suggests that isiNgqumo can in fact be considered to be a fully-fledged language in its own right. This was argued based on an overwhelming lack of mutual intelligibly between the lavender language at hand and Zulu (the language it is supposedly derived from). Furthermore, the complexity of isiNgqumo had been underestimated for the preliminary research came to show the language to have its very own regiolects, dialects and sociolects. Showing, once more, just how intricate, complex and extensive the Kwa-Zulu Natal queer community and its register in fact are. This dissertation therefore aims to elicit, document and analyse the grammar and vocabulary of isiNgqumo in an attempt to further the linguistic understanding thereof.

However, before continuing any linguistic research it is important to revise the anthropological data this research is based on. All research, be it sparse to say the least, on isiNgqumo and its gay subculture are from many years ago and thus in all likelihood obsolete. During a private conversation with Thabo Msibi, one of the few academics to have ever researched isiNgqumo, he prompted me to, before furthering any linguistic research on the subject, to re-evaluate the structure and layout of the Kwa-Zulu Natal gay subculture. For he pointed out that his research and that of fellow researchers on the topic of isiNgqumo most likely no longer holds water seeing as the language, just like the culture attached to it, is ever changing and evolves daily. It is for this reason that this research will be, besides linguistic, also anthropological in nature, as it strives to question, verify and update the understanding of the gay subculture present in Kwa-Zulu Natal. In so doing no longer using the existing data

on the subculture as the basis of the research but rather as the model for the questioning and reanalysis thereof. This will be done from the belief that it is impossible to fully grasp and comprehend isiNgqumo without having a strong understanding of the culture and context it derives from.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Lavender Languages

2.1.1. What are Lavender Languages?

In "Gay Language in Cape Town: A Study Of Gayle – Attitudes, History and Usage" Kathryn Luyt explains how lavender linguistics is "the study of the communicative practices and 'language' of the LGBTQ community" (Rudwick as cited in Luyt, 2014, p. 14). These 'gay languages' are also commonly referred to as *lavender languages*, the term *lavender* being coined as such due to the strong association of the colour with the queer community (Luyt, 2014).

Lavender languages exist all over the world, encompassing Polari in Great Britain, Swardspeak in the Philippines, Greek Kaliarda in Greece, Brazilian Bajub in Brazil, Lubunca in Turkey and both Gayle and isiNgqumo in South Africa (the former being used by the white and coloured queer community in South Africa and the latter being used by black queer South Africans) (Luyt, 2014).

Each lavender language has its own intricacies and complexities, some being more evolved than others. In her article "The Opacity of Queer Languages" Anna T recounts how these lavender languages are all very divers with lifespans ranging from thirty (isiNgqumo) up to four hundred (Lubunca) years and with a vocabulary between six hundred (Polari) and six thousand (Kaliarda) words. The vocabulary of these languages takes many years to evolve, often starting out predominantly as words and phrases pertaining to particular (sexual) practices/interests of the group and over time growing so as to include words and phrases that describe everyday household objects, professions and activities (T, 2014).

Lavender languages do not arise for aesthetic purposes, but are instead, like many languages created by subcultures and characterized by their functionality. In "Gay and Lesbian Languages" Hayes sets forth that lavender languages around the world have three specific functions: Firstly, they function as a secret code developed for protection against exposure; secondly, they are used to express a broad range of roles within the queer subculture; and lastly, they can be used by activists as a means of politicizing social life (for example, by redirecting the meaning of pejorative terms

like *fag* into positive term as a symbol of defiance) (Hayes as according to Kulick, 2000 p. 253).

Other lavender linguists would further argue that the use of such lavender languages function as a means of creating solidarity and unity. Furthermore, they are a useful tool for revealing oneself and identifying other members of the community when any explicit confirmation of such would be inappropriate and even dangerous (Kulick, 2000). What's more, it could be argued that the use of lavender languages is in fact a form of social subversion: it is the refusal to remain silent in a heteronormative linguistic environment, and is thus a form of creative resistance (T, 2014).

All lavender languages are created in a very similar fashion and therefore share many linguistic characteristics. In "Swardspeak (Gay Lingo) in the Philippine Context: A Morphological Analysis", Gemma Pascal explains how queer communities adapt and play with words from their native language, consequently creating their own vocabulary. This includes using loanwords, borrowings, metathesis (syllable switching or full reversal), affixation, substitution, acronyms, duplication, reduction, using names of popular persons or places, onomatopoeia and metaphors (Pascal, 2016). Hayes adds two more points to this list: strategic evasions (e.g. omitting or changing gendered pronouns), and, in the case of activists, conscious revaluation of formerly derogatory terms (Kulick, 2000). The latter can be illustrated by the evolution of the term *queer*: As Tommaso Milani recounts in "Language and Sexuality", the word *queer* was historically used as a pejorative term for homosexuals but evolved throughout the years and by the 1980s had become a positively laden in-group marker which no longer referred strictly to gay and lesbians but rather to any individual who does not adhere to heteronormativity (Milani, 2017).

Subsequently it is also important to point out the struggles/debates that are present within the field of lavender linguistics. Only by discussing these, will an adequate analysis of isiNgqumo be possible. The biggest and most important debate within lavender linguistics questions whether these 'languages' really exist. On a linguistic level, using the term *lavender languages* can be problematic seeing as, in most cases, it does not refer to actual languages with their own grammar, syntax, morphology and phonology but rather a means of communication, much like a

sociolect, a jargon or slang. The term *lavender language* therefore functions as an umbrella term for numerous registers including slangs, jargons, argots, dialects and, only in some instances, actual languages—which, even then, is still highly debated (Ntuli, 2013).

Assuming, for argument's sake, that lavender languages do exist, a second debate arises concerning their value. Several critics criticize lavender languages for being politically problematic and question whether they should be embraced and celebrated or whether they are self-created means of enslaving oneself to heteronormativity. Julia Penelope insists that lavender languages are sexist, classist and racist. She acknowledges the advantages of said languages as a tool for unification and identification, but points out how, simultaneously, "[t]oo much of the lexicon of gay slang is given over to a preoccupation with sexual objectification and social stratification, both economic and racial" which she describes as "typical of relationships in the larger, heterosexual society". Penelope further states that "what is usually regarded as 'gay slang' consists of quite ordinary (and derogatory) terms for women.... [G]ay males use these terms among themselves for the same reasons straight males coined them, as a way of verbally trivializing and abusing women" (Penelope as cited in Kulick, 2000, p. 249). This quote discusses a recurring characteristic in lavender languages, namely the habitual use of female names and pronouns (she, her, miss, mother, girl) when referring to (gay) men. Rudes & Healy assert that this linguistic usage is misogynistic by nature. They claim that the very use of feminine pronouns implies that they see their fellow gay men as lacking masculinity and a certain manliness. This would seemingly beg the question as to why it is politically incorrect for heterosexuals to use these terms when homosexuals use them amongst themselves (Rudes & Healy in Kulick, 2000, p. 249). This reasoning, however, fails to consider the possibility that the use of female names and pronouns might in fact be a parodic strategy to distance oneself from the stereotypes (Kulick, 2000).

A final struggle in the field of lavender linguistics concerns the plea of lavender linguists for a nuanced view on homosexuality. The Western concept of homosexuality, which has become the norm across the world after globalization, may not always apply transculturally or transnationally. As Heiko Motschenbacher states

in "Queer Linguistic Approaches to Discourse", the terms *heterosexuality* and *homosexuality* were only coined in the second half of the 19th century as 'pathologizing' medical terms when the act of sodomy was still an illegal offence (Motschenbacher, 2013). Although sex is a universal concept, the way sex and sexuality is understood differs cross-culturally and cross-historically. The distinction between homosexual and heterosexual is therefore much less clear-cut around the world as it tends to be in the West (Luyt, 2014). Studying lavender languages whilst employing a Western worldview can therefore be problematic as it fails to take into account the different conceptions and perceptions of same sex practices around the world.

2.1.2. How Are Languages Categorized?

As the debate surrounding lavender languages has proven, the distinction between an independent language and its varieties is not always clear-cut. When studying new or largely undocumented languages, defining its linguistic status is an essential first step. It therefore becomes imperative to discuss the most salient characteristics of each respective register in order to shed light on the complexity of language differentiation.

i. Language

There is no universally accepted criterion for distinguishing a language from its variants. According to the annual reference publication *Ethnologue*, the issue that arises when attempting to distinguish languages as an entity in and of itself (and therefore different to its variants) is a lack of consensus on the determining metrics. All official languages contain variants that arise within the language as "innovations of new features and retentions of long-standing lexical, phonological or grammatical features spread across geographic and social space and which come and go over time" ("Language and Dialect" in Ethnologue, n.d.). These divergent variants can be known as registers, which include slangs, jargons, and dialects. In some cases, they may be distinct enough to consider them separate languages, but whilst some researchers base their definition on purely linguistic grounds, focusing on lexical and grammatical differences; others consider social, cultural, or political factors to be more important. ("The Problem of Language Identification" in Ethnologue, n.d).

     Ethnologue, however, uses the following basic criteria for language identification in defining a language in relation to its variants or registers:

- Two related varieties are normally considered varieties of the same language if speakers of each variety have inherent understanding of the other variety at a functional level (that is, can understand based on knowledge of their own variety without needing to learn the other variety). ("ISO 639-3 Criteria For Language Identification" as cited in Ethnologue, n.d.)

- Where spoken intelligibility between varieties is marginal, the existence of a common literature or of a common ethnolinguistic identity with a central variety that both understand can be a strong indicator that they should nevertheless be considered varieties of the same language. ("ISO 639-3 Criteria For Language Identification" as cited in Ethnologue, n.d.)

Whilst these two criteria confirm how a single language can have different variants, the following criterion defines the point at which these two variants can be considered *separate, independent* languages as opposed to different variants of the same language:

- Where there is enough intelligibility between varieties to enable communication, the existence of long-standing distinctly-named ethnolinguistic identities coupled with well-developed standardization and literature that are distinct can be treated as an indicator that they should nevertheless be considered to be different languages. ("ISO 639-3 Criteria For Language Identification" as cited in Ethnologue, n.d.)

The last criteria of having "long-standing distinctly-named ethnolinguistic identities" already seems to suggest that distinguishing a language from a variant is not merely a linguistic issue, but also requires a certain cultural/social/political dimension. An example can be found with Serbian and Croatian. In "Serbian and Croatian: One Language or Languages?", Marko Kovacic explains how the two languages, which are said to have originated from the ex-Yugoslavian language known as Serbo-Croatian, came to exist when in the 1990s Yugoslavia separated into present-day Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia, each with their own official language. Despite the fact that these languages use different alphabets they are known to be mutually intelligible and grammatically extremely similar and with only slight differences concerning pronunciation and vocabulary evolving through time. It is merely because the respective countries wish to have their own official language in a bid to strengthen their social, cultural and political identity that these languages came to be created and viewed as official, separate languages (as opposed to variants of the

same language). This example enforces the world-famous quote by Max Weinreich: "a language is a dialect with an army and a navy" (Kovacic, 2005).

ii.   Dialect

In "Language, Dialect, and Register: Sociolinguistics and the Estimation of Measurement Error in the Testing of English Language Learners" Guillermo Solano-Florez explains how a dialect mostly refers to the form of a language that is spoken in one area (e.g. regiolect) or by a certain group of people (e.g. sociolect) that may be different from other forms of the same language. Even though dialects are language varieties spoken by people from different communities (regional, social and gender), they are still characterised by mutual intelligibility (cf. definitions given by *Ethnologue*). Furthermore, dialects tend only to differ in phonetics and phonology but not in semantics, they are mostly spoken and not written, and speakers are often aware of the fact that these are dialects and not a standard language (Solano-Florez, 2006).

iii.   Slang

According to a presentation given by professor Lefteris Kailoglou entitled "Slang: Language and Style" slang is an "ever-changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness within a group or with a trend or fashion in society at large" (Kailoglou, n.d.). As José Antonio Sanchez Fajardo points out in "Exploring the 'shashification' of Teenage Slang", this process of 'in-grouping' by means of slang is predominantly visible among teenagers or young adults. However, it is interesting to note that the use of slang among youth disappears as the users grow older: this is known as "age grading" and refers to "the transitory standardization of the language that occurs as users get older and enter a new age-defined sociolinguistic stratum" (Fajardo, 2018, p. 1).

In "Tropes of Slang", Asif Agha elaborates on one of the most fundamental characteristics of certain slangs, namely, register breach by partial lexicalization:

In most cases, the majority of slang expressions are lexicalized as nouns, adjectives and verbs, with few or none occurring in other grammatical classes. Partial lexicalization entails that slang lexemes occur as foregrounded segments in discourse. In such cases, slang expressions occur in bounded regions of discursive text, as text-segments whose surrounding material is not slang. It is therefore not possible to use slang expressions without the accompaniment of non-slang expressions in the same utterance, and hence, not possible to use the slang register without register breach. (Agha, 2015 p. 322)

Besides their lexical creativity, words and expressions in slang are also known for their ephemerality. As Jessica Ong Hai Liaw points out in "Language Usage of Jargon and Slang in Strategic Studies": when older words have become over-used and lose their impact; new, vivid ones are introduced in their place (Liaw, 2013). These new and innovative words and phrases are cautiously created and often derived from or formed by simple rules that are "highly effective in the sense that they can be applied to every word in the language". Agha continues by saying that "the standard lexeme is predictable from the slang form if you know the rule. There is no need to learn a separate vocabulary and, since rules of word formation apply productively across word classes, every lexical item in an utterance can be a slang expression" (Agha, 2015, p. 323). As Iryne Kapnivna Kobyakova and E.A. Redkozubova expound in "Word-Building Process vs. Slang Subsystem" and "Slang in the Communicative Space of South-African Linguistic Culture" respectively, these simple rules include: back slang (the 'backward' pronunciation of words e.g. *kew* instead of *week*); overgeneralization (e.g. *to beam out* meaning 'to walk out'); clippings/abbreviations (e.g. *mike* instead of *microphone*); acronyms (e.g. *BFF* meaning 'best friends forever'; borrowings (e.g. *baloney* taken from *Bologna*); combinations of meanings (e.g. *greycation* meaning 'having grandparents join your vacation'); new words for new activities (e.g. to *friend* and to *unfriend,* or to *follow* and to *unfollow*) (Kobyakova, 2017, p. 95); polysemy (when the word is used in a new sense, e.g. *sick* meaning 'cool' instead of 'ill'); alliteration (e.g. *boingboing* meaning 'fat person'); metaphors (e.g. *cow* meaning 'unattractive female'); metonyms (e.g. *meat* meaning 'attractive female'); euphemistic denotation of unpleasant things in life (e.g. *to snuff it*

meaning 'to die'); rhythmical synonymys (e.g. *cruising for a bruising* meaning 'looking for trouble'); and phonological reduplications (e.g. *goodie-goodie* meaning 'perfect') (Redkozubova, 2013, p. 224).

iv.   Jargon

Jargon refers to the language and vocabulary that is specific to certain people in a trade, profession, or other defined group. Jargons are thus used by doctors, lawyers and linguists (amongst others) and even amongst people with similar hobbies and interests. Jargonauts, (linguists who study jargon) claim that jargons emerge as a means of facilitating communication within a group within the specific context of their profession. Unlike slang, the use jargon is for purely functional and/or professional reasons and in no way functions with the intent to socially differentiate the users from the 'in-group' from non-users in the 'out-group'. For example, police jargon contains terms such as *10-4* meaning 'OK'/'Got it' and *POV* meaning 'Personally Owned Vehicle' (Liaw, 2013).

An interesting anecdote with regard to jargons is a story of a seaman who is a witness at a court trial and who is being cross-examined by the attorney. When asked if he knew the plaintiff the seaman acknowledged that he did not know what the word *plaintiff* meant. At this the attorney asked: "You mean you came into this court as a witness and don't know what *plaintiff* means?" Later the sailor was asked where he was standing when the boat lurched. "Abaft the binnacle," he replied. Upon noticing the attorney's questioning stare, the seaman responded: "You mean you came into this court and don't know what *abaft the binnacle* is?" (Liaw, 2013, p 662).

2.1.3. Documenting Undocumented Languages

Once a 'new' language has been classified as an independent language, the next challenge is its documentation. For languages that have remained largely undocumented, linguists can turn to a grammatical sketch with the intention of grasping an initial feel and understanding of the register's most salient grammatical characteristics and collecting an initial vocabulary list.

Historically, grammatical sketches have gone by different names. In the Belgian Congolese colonial tradition they went by *esquisse*, which Jan Blommaert describes as "a 'minimal' grammar: a skeleton-structural description of a language, and usually a language of which there was no authoritative published record yet". A famous esquisse is Van Bulck's *Recherches Linguistiques au Congo Belge* of 1948. Linguistic fieldwork comprised mainly of elicitation with the ultimate goal of collecting a grammar, a dictionary and a collection of texts (Blommaert, 2008, p. 296).

A grammatical sketch is ideally accompanied by an extensive word list. In instances where amassing one such extensive list is simply not possible, linguists opt for a more limited list indicating basic vocabulary known as the Swadesh list. The Swadesh list contains 100 words that are considered to be universal. Though this lists does not categorically contain the most frequently used words, its linguistic *forte* pertains to its being the most common denominator of vocabulary across different languages. In other words, it is the most stable vocabulary, which is the least prone to change. Examples of the words included in this list are *woman*, *dog*, *tree*, *egg*, *eye*, *to eat*, *to drink*, *sun*, *fire*, *hot*, *big*. It is therefore mainly constituted by words that embody direct human experience, which makes it an interesting starting point for building a core lexicon, linguistic documentation and research (Huang et al., 2007, p23).

2.2. Case Study: IsiNgqumo

As previously stated, this dissertation will thus focus on a specific lavender language, namely isiNgqumo. IsiNgqumo is a language created and spoken within the Zulu queer community of modern-day (Eastern) South Africa and is said to be derived from the Zulu language. IsiNgqumo has remained widely understudied and, similar to other lavender languages, has invoked much debate as to whether it can be considered an independent language. In an attempt to weigh into the debate, this dissertation therefore aims to take the first linguistic approach towards the study of isiNgqumo. In order to do so, however, a revision and re-evaluation of the structure and layout of the Nguni gay subculture is first needed, for it is impossible to fully grasp and comprehend a language without having a strong understanding of the culture and context from which it derives. It is therefore that this this dissertation will subsequently look at the existing research of homosexuality and homophobia in Africa as a whole, in South Africa and more specifically in the Zulu gay culture.

2.2.1. Homosexuality in the African Community

i.   The Conceptualization of Homosexuality in Africa

Despite the prevalence of same-sex practices throughout Africa, its historical, social and cultural significance raises the question as to whether this can truly be considered homosexual, at least in the Western sense of the word. Sex itself is universal, but the way in which it is understood differs cross-culturally and cross-historically. The term *gay* or *homosexual* carries with it a strong Western connotation and interpretation of same-sex erotics. It's applicability to same-sex practices in African cultures must therefore be carefully considered: just as Euro-American feminists have been criticized for trying to categorize *all* women into the single monolithic category of 'woman', so too have anthropologists been criticized for scouring the earth in search of the monolithic category of 'homosexual' (Amory, 1997). Both 'woman' and 'homosexual' do not exist as single, homogenous categories: just as African women

are intrinsically different to European women, so too are African forms of homosexuality different to those in the West.

The predominant difference concerning the conception of same-sex practices and homosexuality between Africa and the West is the opposition between homosexuality as an identity ('I am') as opposed to homosexuality as an act or practice ('I feel' or 'I do'). The latter is more prominent in Africa and takes into account only the sexual act (having sex with another man) while the former is most present in the West and is strongly linked to an identity (Milani, 2017).

The term *gay* or *homosexual* arose in the West as a separate social category from a specific history with its own politics and struggles (Epprecht, 1999). Having originated in the 19th century as a means of pathologizing same-sex erotic acts as abnormal and sexually deviant (Motschenbacher, 2011), the words *gay* and *homosexual* gradually evolved from describing a medical condition to describing a social identity with its own movements, culture, institutions, festivals, neighbourhoods and flag. Thus, being *gay* in the West goes hand in hand with the idea of an identifiable, discernible individual who engages in same-sex relations (Msibi, 2011).

However, this Western interpretation of the term *gay* entails an identity that many people who engage in same-sex relations—especially those living outside of the West—do not necessarily relate with. Terms such as *gay* or *homosexual* "suggests a clarity arising from a specific history of scientific enquiry, social relations and political struggle that did not historically exist in Africa and still does not very accurately describe the majority of men who have sex with men or women who have sex with women in Africa" (Epprecht, 1999). The terms *homosexuality* and *gay* are therefore devoid of any meaning in an African context, for "same-sex erotics, practiced by many people in many different historical contexts, do not always necessarily lead to the emergence of a [gay] identity" (Msibi, 2011).

Many would therefore advocate for the term *queer,* which refers to anything that does not adhere to heteronormativity, thereby encompassing all the sexualities in the LGBTQIA+ acronym. In short, the term *queer* includes all non-heteronormative forms of sexual expressions. Where terms such as *gay* and *lesbian* intrinsically see sexuality as rigid and definite, queer theory and the term *queer* sees sexuality as fluid

19

and multiple, depending on space, time and context. The use of the term *queer* is therefore an attempt at acknowledging the complexity of identification that strives to avoid essentialism (Msibi, 2012). However, the term *queer* is not without its own pitfalls:

> While 'queer' is helpful in capturing the varied and multiple forms of sexual performances among individuals, it too carries a heavy load of western history and hence inevitably fails to express the evolution of African sexual politics. (…) The fact remains that many people outside western contexts (as indeed inside them) will not understand how 'queer' is being conceptualised. As a result 'Queer' may sometimes be used as yet another fixed form of gender identity, something for which it was not intended. (Msibi, 2013)

Describing African sexual practices using non-African terminologies and concepts should be avoided at all costs (Zabus, 2013). Certain scholars therefore advocate for alternative terminologies such as "men who engage in same-sex relations" or "same-sex-desiring individuals" as attempts to avoid the aforementioned predicament while simultaneously highlighting the complexities of sexual identification in African contexts. These terms are believed to not carry with them a certain intrinsic European bias and are, therefore, somewhat more neutral (Msibi & Rudwick, 2015). Of course, the most preferred and most advocated for terminology is the usage of *local* naming practices for queer sexualities. Unfortunately, such local naming practices are scarce, to say the least, and, when they are existent, are very culture specific and thus not applicable as umbrella terms for same-sex practices over the whole continent.

The question now arises as to which term is best used when discussing African same-sex practices. For although terms such as *gay* and *homosexual* carry a Western connotation and conjure a Western interpretation of same sex practices, the fact remains that in the globalized world we live in today, more and more Africans are increasingly exposed to Western influences (through TV, media, internet, social media, etc.) leading them to increasingly mirror and identify with Western notions of sexuality and identity (Awondo, 2012). As a result, there has been a marked rise in Africans identifying themselves as *gay* or *homosexual* in the Western sense of the

word and thus employing it as an identity marker rather than just a practice. On the other hand, despite the fact that the term *queer* remains a Western coinage, used mainly in the West, invoking Western forms of sexuality, it nevertheless allows for a freer interpretation of sexuality, thus leaving space for fluidity in ones being and sexual desires. The term is open to all forms of sexuality that are not heteronormative and would therefore, technically, encompass all forms of same-sex relations that take place in Africa and that Western notions do not envelop, although very few people in Africa would identify as *queer*. The fact therefore remains that the terms gay, *homosexual* and *queer* describe African sexual practices with Western terminology.

ii. The Perpetuation of Homophobia in Post-Colonial Africa

Africa is far more 'homosexual' than is widely believed. However, given the general acceptance for these non-heteronormative practices in pre-colonial times, why is modern-day Africa rife with homophobia? In 38 of the 53 African states, it is illegal to engage in consensual, gay sex. Countries such as Nigeria, Malawi, Senegal and, more recently, Uganda have some of the harshest forms of punishment in place for individuals engaging in same-sex relations. These homophobic laws are reminiscent of colonial times, which attempted to regulate sexuality by instating anti-sodomy laws - laws which remain largely unchanged in post-colonial Africa (Msibi, 2011). Besides judicial implications, individuals who refuse to conform to heterosexual norms and ideals are often subjected to harrowing experiences of rape, beatings, ostracism, employment blacklisting, blackmail and so much more (Epprecht, 1999).

South Africa's modern history is also evidence of a tumultuous history with national homosexual and homophobic sentiment. In "'Gay and Zulu, We Speak isiNgqumo': Ethnolinguistic Identity Constructions", Stephanie Rudwick points out that homosexuality was deemed illegal during the apartheid regime in South Africa (leading to a twofold discrimination for black queer South Africans: firstly on the basis of skin-colour and secondly on that of their sexual orientation). Yet despite its illegality, there was a notable presence of homosexual activity as of the mid-twentieth century in major South African cities such as Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban, and particularly in their surrounding mine compounds (Rudwick, 2010). "In fact, over

21

70-80% of the inhabitants of these mine compounds would have engaged in same-sex practices according to the Law of Sokisi: a homosexual relationship between an elder mineworker and their younger 'boy-wife'" (Epprecht as cited in Rudwick, 2010, p. 116), with the latter being expected to perform household chores and play a passive role during intercourse (Sanders, 1997).

In 1996, however, after obtaining independence, South Africa drafted and approved a new constitution. This new constitution not only brought an end to apartheid but also made history by making South Africa the first country in Africa to add sexual orientation into the national non-discrimination clause, thereby protecting the rights of homosexuals. South Africa subsequently also became the first country in Africa to legalise same-sex marriage in 2006 (Rudwick, 2010). Unfortunately, as Markfd F. Massoud points out in "The Evolution of Gay Rights in South Africa", this progressive government and constitution did not reflect the attitudes of the South African population, the majority of which did not support homosexuality and gay rights. Thus, the progressive government had created a gap between its tolerant laws and the conservative social attitudes of its citizens (Massoud, 2010).

Rudwick expounds on said contrast by discussing an article from *The Witness* (a South African local newspaper) which claims (according to a survey made in 2005) that "20% of gay and bisexual men and 19% of lesbian and bisexual women reported having been violently raped or sexually assaulted when they were at school". Furthermore "black gays and lesbians in Kwa-Zulu Natal were victimized more severely and had a greater fear of homophobic hate crimes because of the highly patriarchal values among Zulu men in the province" (Rudwick, 2011, p. 91). All this clearly illustrating that homophobia in South Africa is not in fact a thing of the past. The presence of homophobic sentiment in South Africa, and in the African continent as a whole, is evident, and its perpetuation can be put down to four prevailing arguments that either directly or indirectly influence African leaders and their constituents.

a. Un-African

One of the strongest arguments fuelling homophobia in Africa is the idea that homosexuality is a Western phenomenon that was brought to the African continent under colonization. The fundamental belief that homosexuality is "un-African", a "colonial import" considered to be the "white man's disease" is a sentiment that regularly features in the narratives of African leaders and is generally shared by its constituents. The late Zimbabwean president, Robert Gabriel Mugabe, infamously referred to homosexuality as "a scourge planted by the white man on a pure continent" (Zabus, 2013); while Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi made it clear that "Kenya has no room or time for homosexuals and lesbians" noting that "homosexuality is against African norms and traditions and even in religion it is considered a great sin" (Msibi, 2011).

However, this contemporary notion that homosexuality is un-African is completely unfounded. Homosexuality occurred not only in colonial but also in pre-colonial Africa. It was, in fact, colonial rule that disrupted the delicate and balanced understanding of same-sex practices that pre-colonial Africa had experienced. In the case of South Africa, for example, it is known that pre-colonial Zulu society showed a particular acceptance for same-sex practices with certain rites of passage for young boys including male-male intercourse. In addition, the mighty King Shaka Zulu was known to order his soldiers to refrain from sex with women and instead have sex with men as this was believed to give his warriors strength for battle. Furthermore, the presence of the ancient Zulu word *iqenge* (a man who engages in same-sex behaviour) is yet another proof that the Zulu community had known same-sex practise before the colonial intrusion (Ntuli, 2009).

Research has shown that pre-colonial African societies co-existed peacefully with same-sex practices: as long as the heterosexual status quo was not challenged and disrupted (meaning it occurred in a discreet manner and as long as certain familial and societal expectations were met), men had the leeway to partake in same-sex practices. Men were still expected to marry women and produce families of their own, but whether a man preferred to have sex with other men or not was of no concern to anyone. As long as he fulfilled what was expected of him, he could be known for having sex with other men without it being a negative indictment on him (Ntuli,

23

2009). Pre-colonial Nigeria, for example, was known for its gender fluidity with the presence of non-gendered identities among the Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa. For example, it was not uncommon for Hausa males to cross-dress, have sex with other men, partake in activities traditionally associated with women, and yet still often marry women and father children (Msibi, 2011).

In fact, it is not homosexuality but, rather, *homophobia* that colonial rule brought to the continent. When colonial rule took over Africa, the colonialists began entrenching their cultural norms and values on the indigenous African societies. The colonialist had a homophobic agenda and branded homosexuality a shameful act. It is this feeling of shame that they passed on to the indigenous people. Shame was already a notion many African cultures were familiar with: amongst the Zulu, for example, social shame fell upon one who was unable to sexually satisfy one of his wives or when a young unmarried virgin fell pregnant. Homosexuality, however, was not considered to be a shameful act in pre-colonial Zulu society. It is only during colonial rule that this began to change and partaking in same-sex activities came to be considered a shameful act. Furthermore, in many colonial states in Africa, homosexuality was not merely considered a shameful act, it was also a made a crime punishable by death (Ntuli, 2009).

In South Africa, this certainly remained the case throughout Dutch and British rule and continued until 1871 when the death penalty for same-sex practices was ultimately abolished. Homosexuality still remained a crime, however, and offenders were sentenced to life in prison (Ntuli, 2009). By this point, after years of extreme homophobic policy (enforced both by the racist colonial rule and by the Christian missionary teachings), homosexuality began to be scapegoated, as black Africans started to blame homosexuals for the harshness that was falling upon them. As a consequence, the acceptance and tolerance of homosexuality by black Africans began to diminish, and in its stead homophobia became entrenched in the socialization of African communities (Ntuli, 2009). Homosexuality is therefore—contrary to the belief of many Africans —not un-African or a Western import, but rather homophobia is.

b. Religion

Religion is another commonly shared argument in defence of homophobia on the African continent. Many African leaders and their constituents have argued that homosexuality is a blasphemous act that goes against the religious morals and values of both Christianity and Islam. Former South African president, Jacob Zuma, once declared that same-sex marriage was a "disgrace to the nation and to God" (Msibi, 2011); while former Nigerian president, Obasanjo, claimed that "homosexuality is unnatural, and ungodly" (Msibi, 2011). For those who condemn same-sex practices, "religion, both Christianity and Islam, has served to deny and place in question the morality and existence of same-sex relations. God becomes a perfect tool to silence indigenous same-sex practices, and, after all, who wants to go against God?" (Msibi, 2011).

However, the question of whether Africa's two most prominent religions truly condemn homosexuality is strongly debatable and dependent on one's own interpretation of the religion in question. Given that South Africa is a predominantly Christian country, South African leaders often turn to the Bible for the justification of homophobic sentiment. They turn, in particular, to six passages that ostensibly condemn homosexuality. These passages are referred to as 'the six bullets in the chamber'. However, alternative interpretations argue that these passages do not pertain to homosexual relationships between two free and consenting adults, but to rape, cultic prostitution, male prostitution and pederasty (Gnuse, 2015):

> And they called to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them'. (Genesis 19:5)

This passage from the Book of Genesis tells the story of the men of the city attempting to (forcibly) engage in sexual activity with two angelic visitors to the city who have appeared in the form of men. Abraham refuses to hand over his guests to the 'angry mob' and instead offers his daughter to the men so they 'may know her' instead. Many interpret this act of Abraham sacrificing his daughter as an argument that the Bible condemns homosexuality—so much so that the rape of a virgin girl was considered a more acceptable sin. However, others have argued that the passage has

nothing to do with homosexuality but, instead, pertains to the attempted rape of angels (and thus by extension God) (Gnuse, 2015).

> You shall not give any of your offspring to sacrifice them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord. You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. You shall not have sexual relations with any animal and defile yourself with it, nor shall any woman give herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it: it is perversion. Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, for by all these practices the nations I am casting out before you have defiled themselves. (Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13)

Possibly one of the most notorious arguments used to justify homophobia in the church are the two nebulous verses from the Book of Leviticus which often boil down to "thou shall not lay with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination". Besides the argument that the Book of Leviticus is seen by many as an outdated book of laws that no longer ought to be followed (given that it also dictates a ban on items such as shellfish and mixed fabrics), it can also be argued that the verse does not pertain to consensual homosexuality, but, rather, to cultic homosexuality due to the fact that the law is placed, as you can read in the passage, between two other laws disapproving cultic rituals, namely infant sacrifice and bestiality (Gnuse, 2015)

> For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error. (Romans 1:26-27)

Once again, it can be argued that the verse found in the Book of Romans argues not against same-sex relationships between faithful and committed partners, but against idolatry, promiscuity and shrine prostitution. In this passage, gentile society faces God's wrath because it has suppressed the truth that God has revealed by exchanging the glory of God for the worship of images of creatures. For this reason, God gives

them 'unnatural' passions. Some have argued that this refers to what is 'natural' to the people themselves: heterosexual people engaging in homosexual activity and thereby going against their 'natural' orientation. According to this view, Paul is not condemning all homosexual behaviour, but only that which goes against the person's own sexual inclinations (Gnuse, 2015).

> Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

In this verse from the Book of Corinthians, Paul describes different kinds of people who, unless they repent, will be excluded from the Kingdom of God. What is important to note is that, in Biblical times, there was no word for *homosexual* in Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek. The word was coined in the 19th century in the West and did not show up in English translations of the Bible until 1946. Consequently, it cannot be claimed that the Bible says anything at all about it. The writers of the Bible had neither the understanding nor the language to describe homosexuality. The original scriptures therefore used the term *malakoi,* which, throughout the centuries, evolved to *homosexuality*. However, these two terms do not encompass the same meaning. *Malakoi*, when translated literally, means 'soft ones'. In classical literature, this term could be used as a pejorative term for men who were effeminate; for the younger and more passive partner in a pederastic (man-boy) relationship, or for male prostitutes. In a moral context, this term refers predominantly to a 'lack of self-control, weakness, laziness, or cowardice'. It can, therefore, also be seen as a term to refer to people who are considered 'spineless' or 'soft' to the point that they wouldn't stand up for injustice or what truly matters (Gnuse, 2015).

> This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, fornicators,

sodomites, slave-traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching. (1 Timothy 1:9-10)

In this verse from the Book of Timothy, we are confronted with the term that is often used to condemn homosexuality in the Bible, namely, sodomites. However, in the original scriptures, the term used was *arsenokoitai*, a Greek term that can be translated as 'pederast'. With that in mind, this verse can be interpreted entirely differently into a passage that does not condemn or disapprove of free, loving, consensual love between same-sex individuals as it can be said to refer to what we would now know as paedophilia and/or statutory rape. It's clear that the translation of a single word can make a big difference. Several biblical translations of *arsenokoitai* opt for the term *pervert*. This only further advocates for an alternative interpretation given the discrepancy in meaning between 'homosexual offenders' and 'perverts' (Gnuse, 2015).

The Bible is a complicated library of books that have been written, edited, collected, and anthologized by different people across many generations since its genesis. Modern-day translators are bound to misinterpret or insert their own biases. The Bible is open to a myriad of interpretations, allowing one to either condone or condemn homosexuality. A case can therefore be made against the use of religion to justify homophobia, for "Christianity clearly presents a dilemma in understanding the debate about a 'sodomite-free' Africa. And if Africa rejects ideologies brought from the West, then surely religion brought from the West cannot be used to reject something that is being rejected for its foreign roots" (Msibi, 2011).

c. Patriarchy

A third prominent contributing factor to homophobia in Africa is the need for heteronormativity in order to reinforce and sustain the patriarchal society that so dominates many societies and cultures on the continent. Homosexuality is in direct opposition with patriarchal values and is often associated with lower levels of masculinity. Societies in which hypermasculinity and the subsequent endorsement of traditional gender roles and sexist attitudes are prevalent are known to have a significantly more negative perception of sexual minorities. An Italian study, for

example, found that male soldiers in the military (generally considered to be hypermasculine men) had a much more negative perception towards sexual minorities when compared to that of male university students (Tskhay & Rule, 2014). Homophobia in Africa therefore (subconsciously) serves as a tool for solidifying the position of the heterosexual man in society.

> A visible 'gay' identity destabilizes men's positions in society, creating the need for men to reassert themselves. This is most evident in the 'corrective rapes' that are perpetrated against lesbian women in South Africa, and in the determined moves to reduce homosexuality in Africa by introducing more stringent laws. (Msibi, 2011)

d. Globalization

Another prevalent contributing factor to homophobia in Africa is globalization and the intrusion of Western organisations and activists in the continent advocating for LGBTQ-rights. As previously mentioned, Africa has historically always retained a certain tolerance for queer practices providing that these were acted on discretely and behind closed doors. In fact, as long as queer individuals conformed to societal expectations, they were generally left to do as they pleased. This 'don't-ask-don't-tell' attitude entailed that as long as the heterosexual status quo was not challenged and disrupted (meaning it occurred in a discreet manner and as long as certain familial and societal expectations were met), men had the leeway to partake in same-sex practices. Men were still expected to marry women and produce families of their own, but whether a man preferred to have sex with other men or not, was of no concern to anyone. As long as he fulfilled what was expected of him, he could be known for having sex with other men without it being a negative indictment on him at all (Ntuli, 2009).

Globalization has, however, resulted in an increment of Africans interpreting same-sex practices as an identity rather than a mere deed or act. This, in addition to the presence of gay rights organisations and activists in Africa, is counter-intuitively fuelling further homophobia rather than eliminating it. This rising stance of coming

up for gay rights is in sharp contrast with, and challenges, the prevailing 'don't-ask-don't-tell' attitude of many African communities. These activists adopt an open and public stance in their demand for gay recognition and rights. In doing so, these activists and institutions publicise what African cultures generally deem a private and discrete matter and, in so doing, (unintentionally) bring many people's lives and livelihoods in danger. By imposing Western ideals on human rights, these gay activists can actually bring more harm than good: "Gay activists who promote the notion of a global gay identity based on the homo/hetero dyad as universal can, in fact, reinforce homophobic reactions that victimize local people" (Massad as cited in Awondo, 2012).

> It appears that 'being gay' (personifying and/or visibly claiming a gay identity) puts oneself at a greater risk of being attacked or harassed. I argue therefore that it is in part this visibility or 'personification' that has contributed to the reactionary responses we witness in Africa today. (Msibi, 2011, p. 69)

Nevertheless, despite the (indirect) negative effects the struggle for gay rights in Africa may enforce, it can also be argued that Africa must mirror these initiatives and start advocating for gay liberation on the African continent on their own terms. As Thabo Msibi eloquently states: "I am not suggesting here that Western allies should not be vocal on these issues, but rather that African voices now need to start becoming louder (…) The fact is that the politics of fear need to be replaced by better understanding (Msibi, 2011).

2.2.2. Homosexuality in the IsiNgqumo Community

In South Africa, the cultural homophobia that has been entrenched by colonial regimes has seen the rise of many different queer communities and languages. One such lavender language is that spoken by the queer community of Zulu society, known as isiNgqumo. Its emergence is characterised by the same reasons as that of other lavender languages all around the world: to signal ones identity as a member of the group, to communicate in secrecy and thus be protected from sexual assault, and to unite and empower the speakers. In fact, the word isiNgqumo is derived from the isiZulu word *ukungqumuza* meaning 'to speak quietly so that others about do not hear of important matters' thus confirming its primary function as means of 'inside' communication used to avoid persecution (Rudwick, 2010). Similarly, its function of empowerment thereby entails that isiNgqumo can also be seen as a political entity, for within South Africa's homophobic societies the use of isiNgqumo can be perceived as a form of political expression of homosexual independence and rebellion (Ntuli, 2009).

i. IsiNgqumo Gender Roles

It is important to note that the use of isiNgqumo is not as wide-spread in the Zulu queer community as one might assume: most Zulu queer men are not able to speak isiNgqumo, many are not even aware of its existence, and some consciously and actively reject it (Rudwick, 2010).

One of the most important determining factors in identifying isiNgqumo speakers has to do with the division of the Zulu queer subculture into *skesenas* and *injongas*. Traditionally a skesena is a man who desires sex with another man and takes on the 'passive' role. These men are characterised by their feminine and effeminate traits: they not only take on the passive role during intercourse but also tend to all household chores traditionally allocated to women. However, what is important to note is that these skesenas do not consider themselves to be women, but "men who feel like women" (Rudwick, 2010). Skesenas are known to desire only

injongas who are seen as 'masculine'[5] and are, in fact, considered to be 'accidental' homosexuals as they only have sex with men who pretend to be 'female' (Msibi & Rudwick, 2015). This is typical of how African cultures conceptualize homosexuality: those who penetrate other men (thus playing the 'active role') are conceived as '(straight) men', with those who 'bottom' being seen as 'women'. IsiNgqumo is said to be predominantly spoken by skesenas: they are believed to have a very thorough knowledge of the language (often referred to as 'deep' isiNgqumo) and take most joy and pride in using it. This does not mean, however, that all isiNgqumo speakers are skesenas or that all skesenas speak isiNgqumo (Rudwick, 2010).

A second determining factor of isiNgqumo speakers is socio-economic status. In the Zulu queer community, it is believed that isiNgqumo is used predominantly by queer individuals of low socio-economic upbringing—with middle and upper-class queer Zulus more likely to choose English as their medium of communication instead (Rudwick, 2011).

A third and final determining factor has to do with regional variation. It is interesting to note that there exists some variation between the isiNgqumo spoken in the cities and that spoken in the townships, mainly in terms of vocabulary. For example, the word *ulayini* (isiNgqumo for 'cocaine') is found only in the city and is evidence that the different lifestyles give way to different vocabulary (Ntuli, 2009).

ii.   IsiNgqumo Cultural Influences

IsiNgqumo is not only highly influenced by the Zulu language but is also entrenched with several of its cultural characteristics, norms and values. Zulu society has two vastly important pillars on which its society is built: *ukuhlonipha* (the traditional custom of showing respect, both through social and linguistic behaviour) and *amandlozi* (belief in the power of the ancestors) (Rudwick, 2011).

The first pillar, *ukuhlonipha*, has two main branches: *ukuhlonipha abadala* (respect for elders) and *isiHlonipho sabafazi* (women's language of respect towards men). *Ukuhlonipha abadala* means, for example, that addressing an older Zulu male

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[5] Adhering to stereotypical Zulu virtues such as strength, authority masculine looks and behaviour (being tough and streetwise)

with his first name is considered extremely disrespectful. He must be referred to as *Ubaba* (Father/Elder), instead. Equally disrespectful is for a young person to look an older person directly in the eyes whilst speaking (Rudwick, 2011).

IsiHlonipho sabafazi, however, plays a major role in the Zulu queer community. *Hlonipa* in general has to do with linguistic forms of showing respect and refers not only to the avoidance of certain terms but also to the existence of an entire lexicon of specific isiHlonipho words (Msibi & Rudwick, 2015). *IsiHlonipho sabafazi* therefore refers to a specific lexicon women use in order to show respect to their male counterparts. As previously mentioned, Zulu gay couples distinguish themselves as either a skesena or an injonga. The skesena, who is considered to be the 'woman' in the relationship, is therefore expected to show the same amount of respect to his injonga as a straight woman to her husband through the use of *isiHlonipho Sabafazi* (Rudwick, 2011). It is therefore not surprising to see a substantial number of *Hlonipa* Zulu lexical items in isiNgqumo lexicon (Msibi & Rudwick, 2015).

The second pillar, *amandlozi*, also has a determining influence in the Zulu queer community. The Zulu community strongly believes in the power of the *amandlozi* and the need for *hlonipa* towards them. It is because of this deep respect for the ancestors that many Zulu transsexual individuals refrain from getting a sex change: it is actively discouraged by the Zulu elders and therefore adhered to by the queer community out of respect for their elders and/or ancestors who are believed to speak through the elders. Defying their advice would upset the ancestral spirits, which no Zulu wishes to do (Rudwick, 2010). It is also this deep respect for the ancestors that makes it impossible for queer couples who wish to have children to adopt: an adopted child would have a different set of ancestors making it impossible for the child to ever fully be part of the family and would exclude them from any cultural rituals in which a Zulu child is expected to partake (Rudwick, 2011). On the other hand, it is worth noting that ancestral spirits have been used to justify homosexuality in the Zulu community. It is believed that "the real reasons you know that you are gay is because one of your ancestors is a woman who died and has gotten into you, and she wants you to work through her" (Rudwick, 2010).

The relevance and importance of these Zulu cultural influences on the Zulu queer community showcase where the normative Zulu and the queer Zulu

communities intersect. It is, therefore, through the use of isiNgqumo that "homosexuality, tradition and Zulu culture merge and give expression to gay Zulu ethnicity" (Rudwick, 2010).

iii.   Origins of isiNgqumo

There are several theories as to how isiNgqumo came into existence. One of the most widely accepted and believed theories is that isiNgqumo came about as a consequence of an influx in rural to urban migration. According to research, due to the growing urbanization in Durban in 1940, the government set aside a part of town for all incoming migrants, dubbed Mkhumbane (present-day Cato Manor). Migrant men from different regional, cultural and sexual backgrounds were forced to live together in this shantytown (Ntuli, 2013).

As a consequence, homosexual activity thrived in Mkhumbane: these migrant men who had left their wives in hopes of finding work had to find alternative ways to satisfy their emotional and sexual needs and due to their unregulated living circumstances, were able to live homosexual lifestyles without fear of persecution. A culture of boy-wives, subsequently formed: older heterosexual 'men' (injongas) would take younger homosexual men as their 'wives' (skesenas). The duties of a boy-wife were similar to that of a female wife in a traditional heterosexual marriage, namely, cooking, cleaning and providing sexual relief. It is important to note that, despite the prevailing homophobia in the Zulu community, these same-sex 'marriages' were deemed culturally acceptable due to the dire circumstances. These couples were thus considered to be heterosexual couples, as they consisted of a heterosexual male and a "homosexual 'female'" (Ntuli, 2013).

In "IsiNgqumo: Introducing a Gay Black South African Linguistic Variety", Stephanie Rudwick and Mduduzi Ntuli point out that it was here, in Mkhumbane, that isiNgqumo emerged as a medium of expression among the skesenas who created it to gossip about their injongas and to be able to speak in public without the risk of provoking hostile reactions (Rudwick & Ntuli, 2008).

In the 1960s, however, the government dispersed Mkhumbane and relocated its inhabitants to newly allocated townships (Umlazi, KwaMashu and Chasterville). In

so doing, the culture of boy-wives in mine compounds was brought to an end, for it was in these new townships that the migrant men could afford to relocate their families and live with them. However, as the skesenas from Mkhumbane relocated and dispersed throughout Kwa-Zulu Natal, so too did the isiNgqumo language, and thus, the boy-wives had successfully passed on their creation to the next generation of gay men (Ntuli, 2013).

2.2.3. Linguistic Characteristics

i.   Classification in the Bantu Language

As a South African language, allegedly highly influenced by Zulu, isiNgqumo can probably best be classified as a Bantu language situated in the S40 Nguni group in the same vein as Sheng, a Swahili and English based slang spoken in Kenya is classified as a 'new' Bantu language in the G40 Swahili group in Maho's update of Guthrie's referential classification. The Bantu language family forms a branch of the Niger-Congo phylum and counts between 500 and 680 languages. These languages are spoken on the African continent roughly from the northeastern corner of Kenya on the east, the lower half of Cameroon on the west, and down to the southernmost tip of South African (Nurse & Philippson, 2003).

As introduced by Guthrie (1967-1971) and later revised by Maho (2009), the languages of the Bantu family are often referred to with a code consisting of a letter (indicating a zone) and a numeral (indicating a specific language within the zone). For example, Zulu and Swahili have the numbers S42 and G42 respectively. Given that isiNgqumo is supposedly derived from Zulu, it would follow that the lavender language would also be classified as an S40 language (Nurse & Philippson, 2003).

Given that the purpose of a grammatical sketch is to document the most prominent and salient grammatical characteristics of a language, the close relationship between isiNgqumo, Zulu and the wider Bantu languages would mean that a preliminary documentation of the language ought to focus on the two most salient and typical grammatical features generally associated with Bantu languages namely 1) the noun class systems and 2) verbal constructions.

Bantu nouns are typically divided into different noun classes (a maximum of 23 have been reconstructed in Proto-Bantu, although most of today's languages have between twelve and twenty). Each class containing nouns that share the same nominal prefix and trigger the same agreement. Most noun classes are associated in pairs, one class typically being singular and the other plural. The class a noun belongs to is not arbitrary, for though they may differ from one Bantu language to another, each noun class (pair) is most often associated with specific semantic concepts (Nurse &

36

Philippson, 2003). A complete list of the Proto-Bantu and Zulu noun classes and their respective semantic domains are provided in Figure 1.

Class	PB Prefix	Example	Semantic domain	Zulu Prefix	Example	Semantic domain
1	mu	muntu (person)	humans, animates	umu	umuntu (person)	persons/human beings
1a	ø	tata (mother)	kinship terms, proper names, personified animals	u	ubaba (father)	terms of relationship, proper names
2	ba	bantu (people)	plural to classes 1 and 1a	aba	abantu (people)	Plural of class 1
2a	X	X	X	o	obaba (fathers)	plural of class 1a
3	mu	muti (tree)	trees, plants, non-paired body-parts, other inanimates	umu	umuthi (tree)	natural phenomena; plants, body parts, river, animals
4	mi	miti (trees)	Plural to class 3	imi	imithi (trees)	plural of class 3
5	i	itui (cloud)	fruits, paired body parts, natural phenomena, augmentatives	ili /i	ilitshe (stone)	fruit, body parts, ethnicity/race, loanwords, animals, undesirable people, augmentatives, derogatives
6	ma	matui (clouds)	liquids, masses, collectives, plural to classes	ama	amanzi (water)	plural of class 5, collectives

37

			5,9,11,14,15			
7	ki	kikuba (breast)	inatimates, manner/style, diminutives, augmentatives	isi	isitsha (plate or dish)	implements, objects, tools, instruments, animals, diseases, amelioratives, body parts, kind of person, custom/culture/language
8	bi	bikuba (breasts)	plural to class 7	izi	izitsha (plates or dishes)	plural of class 7
9	n	ngoina (crocodile)	animals, inanimates	in / iN	inja (dog)	animals, abstracts, people, body parts, tools, instruments, natural phenomena
10	n	ngoina (crocodiles)	plural to classes 9 and 11	izin / iziN	izinja (dogs)	plural of class 9
11	du	dudimi (tongue)	long and/or thin things, abstracts	ulu or u	uthi (stick)	long objects, lanuages, body parts, natural phenomena, utensils
12	ka	kaja (village)	diminutives	X	X	X
13	tu	tuja (villages)	plural to class 12	X	X	X
14	bu	buboba (fear)	abstracts, mass nouns, plural to class 12	ubu	(largeness or size)	abstracts, collectives

15	ku		Infinitives	uku	ukubona (to see)	infinitives
16	pa	paipi (near)	locatives, 'near' or 'explicit'	pha	phandle (outside)	locatives
17	ku	kudai (far)	locatives, 'remote' or 'general'	ku	kumama (to/at/by mother)	locatives
18	mu		locatives, 'inside'	X	X	X
19	pi		diminutives	X	X	X

Figure 1: The Proto-Bantu (PB) and Zulu Noun Classes and their Associated Semantic Domains (Meeussen, 1967 and Keet & Khumalo, 2017)

Bantu languages are often referred to as 'verby' as their verbal constructions are typically morphologically more complex than any other word category. Indeed, "the verb is pivotal in the sentence, it incorporates much information, and may stand alone as a sentence" (Nurse & Philippson, 2003).

The numerous affixes that either precede or succeed the verb root relay different functions ranging from verbal derivations to TAM and agreement inflections (Nurse & Philippson, 2003). In Zulu, for example, the verb root can be suffixed by derivational extensions (EXT) such as the causative (C), applicative (A), reciprocal (R), passive (P); as well as be prefixed by morphemes that encode tense/aspect/modality (TAM), negation (NEG), subject marker (SM) and object marker (OM). Furthermore, each verb contains a vowel placed in the final position, known as a Final Vowel (FV), which can be either neutral or informative (providing additional information as to tense/aspect/mood). The root and the final vowel form the stem, which is an obligatory part of any inflected verb form. The specific position of each affix type in the verbal morphology of Zulu is presented in the following template:

Pre-SM NEG [SM] NEG2 TAM OM Root TAM2 EXT FV POST-FV
(Nurse, 2008)

An example of a Zulu verb with some, but not all of its possible affixes, is given below:

"Ungangisiza?"
u-nga-ngi-siz-a
sm2sg-prs.pot-om1sg-help-fv
"Can you help me?"
(Keet & Khumalo, 2017)

A complete list of affixes of Zulu morphology is provided in Figure 2. In order to interpret the table, it is important to note that when it comes to the conjugations of Zulu verbs, a distinction is made between conjoint and disjoint verb forms. The alternation is fully discussed in i.a. Buell, 2005, 2006, Halpert, 2017. For the purpose

of this overview, it suffices to say that disjoint forms can occur phrase-finally, whereas conjoint forms cannot (Van der Wal, 2016). For example:

Disjoint: Ufik**ile**. *They arrived.*
Conjoint: Ufik**e** izolo. *He arrived yesterday*

Van der Wal defines disjoint/conjoint alternation as "an alternation between verb forms that are formally distinguishable, that are associated with an information-structural difference in the interpretation of verb and/or following element and of which one form is not allowed in sentence-final position" (Van der Wal, 2016).

Pronoun	TAM(a)	SM	TAM(b)	OM	Root	EXT	TAM(c) / FV	Post-FV
I	(k)a- (Negative1[6])	-ngi-	- ø - (Present; conjoint)	-ngi-		-w- or -iw- (Passive)	-e- (Past perfect, conjoint)	- yo (Relative)
You(sg.)		-u-		-ku-				
We		-si-	-ya- (Continuous present; disjoint)	-si-		-el- (Applicative)	-ile- (Past perfect, disjoint)	- ni (Question)
You (pl)	a-/e- (Relative)	-ni-		-ni-				
			-a- (Remote past; conjoint and disjoint)			-isis- (Intensive)	-e (Subjunctive)	- phi (Where)
Class 1	a-	-u-		-m-				
Class 2	(Politative when in combination with subjunctive)	-ba-	- zo/zu/yo - (Future; conjoint and disjoint)	-ba-		-is- (Causative)		
Class 1a		-u-		-m-			-i (Present negative when in combination with NEG1/NEG2) (Subjunctive when accompanied with -nga- in TAM(b))	
Class 2a		-ba-	-nga- (Negative2[7]) (Subjunctive when accompanied with -i- in FV)	-ba-		-an- (Reciprocal)		
Class 3	be- (Past continuous)	-u-		-wu-				
Class 4		-i-		-yi-				
Class 5		-li-	-sa- (Persistive, "still")	-li-		-elel- (Completive)	-anga (Past negative when in combination with NEG)	
Class 6		-a-		-wa-				
Class 7	ka-, ma-, a- (Hortatives)	-si-	-nga- (+ Potential, "could")	-si-				
Class 8		-zi-		-zi-				
Class 9		-i-	-nge- (-Potential)	-yi-				
Class 10	se- (Inceptive, "beginning to", "now", "already")	-zi-		-zi-				
Class 11		-lu-	-bo- (Request)	-lu-				
Class 14		-bu-		-bu-				
Class 15		-ku-	-ka- (Exclusive negative)	-ku-				
			-zu- (Past negative in combination with NEG1)					
			-yi- (To be)					

Figure 2: Affixes in Zulu Morphology (Keet & Khumalo, 2017; Bosch & Pretorius, 2017 and Nurse, 2008)

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[6] In Zulu negatives, the present tense is formed through the combination of a pre-SM 'a' and the respective SM. However, this is not the case for all 17 classes in Zulu. In some instances, when the two components are combined, a slight modification takes place. For example, the negation of a verb agreeing with a noun from class one would not be 'au' (a + u), but rather 'aka'.

[7] Negative2 occurs in infinitives, subjunctives, relatives, the second verb of compounds and a range of subordinate clauses.

At present, IsiNgqumo remains un- or under documented. A grammatical sketch of the language has hitherto not been created. The little linguistic documentation that *does* exist can be briefly summarised. In terms of its vocabulary, isiNgqumo consists predominantly of nouns, such *isidudula* ('car'), *umngeni* ('water') and *izimvakazi* ('clothes'); and verbs, including *ukukala* ('to look'), *ukubhedlela* ('to sleep'), *ukufoza* ('to smoke'). Prepositions, adverbs and pronouns, on the other hand, are not as extensive, meaning speakers rather opt for their Zulu equivalent. It is also important to point out that the presence of a lexicon beyond the field of sex proves that isiNgqumo has evolved from a code used primarily for talking about sex and gossip by the skesenas to a more extensive code that can sustain a mundane conversation (Ntuli, 2009).

It is worth noting that, according to Stephanie Rudwick, isiNgqumo is derived from archaic Zulu. This form of Zulu is said to be a purer, more beautiful form of the language, which is comparable to the difference between Shakespearian and modern-day English (Rudwick, 2010). The difference, however, is that Shakespearian English was spoken hundreds of years ago, while archaic Zulu was predominantly spoken until the mid-1900s. It is for this reason that certain individuals in modern-day Kwa-Zulu Natal (especially those from the older generation) speak and/or comprehend archaic Zulu. It has been claimed that most isiNgqumo words are thus created through manipulation or slight derivations of their archaic predecessor: the word *khamela* ('to bask'), for example, being derived from its archaic Zulu form *thamela*, meaning 'to bask'. In modern-day Zulu, however, *ukubhekela* is used to express 'to bask'. Apart from derivations of Zulu words, isiNgqumo vocabulary also regularly uses Zulu (or other foreign language) words in their skeletal form and subverting its meaning so that it means something very different in isiNgqumo. For example, as Mduduzi Ntuli points out in "IsiNgqumo: Claiming Public Space through Language in South Africa", *amabhodwe esiZulu* (the Zulu word for describing large round three-legged Zulu pots) has the isiNgqumo meaning 'bums' because the image of two Zulu pots placed close to one another resembles a person's buttocks (Ntuli, 2013). IsiNgqumo derives most

of its vocabulary from Zulu and it is important to note that English lexical borrowings are non-existent (Rudwick, 2010).

Grammatically speaking, isiNgqumo shares many features with Zulu. Verb to noun derivations, for example, is one such similarity between the two codes. For example, in isiZulu, the verb ***uku**fundisa* ('to teach') becomes the noun ***um**fundis*i ('teacher'). Similarly, in isiNgqumo, the verb ***uku**juketisa* ('to teach') uses the same prefix and undergoes the same process of nominalisation as its isiZulu counterpart, thus becoming the noun ***um**juketisi* ('teacher') (Ntuli, 2013). Another interesting aspect of isiNgqumo is that isiNgqumo speakers do not use female pronouns or refer to each other as 'she'. This is in stark contrast to other lavender languages, and the anomaly is probably due to the fact that in Zulu, the third person singular pronoun (*yena*) is not gender-specific (Rudwick, 2011), yet another grammatical phenomenon isiNgqumo has borrowed or retained from the Zulu language. However, although isiNgqumo is very often morphologically, phonetically and grammatically similar to Zulu, the two languages are semantically entirely different (Ntuli, 2013). It is for this reason that speakers of Zulu would find it near impossible to understand any conversation taking place in isiNgqumo (Ntuli, 2013).

3. Research

3.1. Preliminary Results

A preliminary research was carried out to ascertain a basic understanding of the isiNgqumo landscape. The research was made possible through the popular gay dating app, Grindr, which offers a special feature that allows one to contact profiles all over the world. Through this app, I was able to find participants from in and around Durban whilst personally conducting the research from Belgium and Tanzania.

A total of 91 Grindr profiles were randomly contacted and asked about the existence of isiNgqumo. Of those 91 profiles, a total of only 29 (31,9%) individuals could confirm its existence; the other 62 (68,1%) claimed never to have heard of it before. Of the 29 individuals that could confirm its existence, only 9 (31% of those that knew of its existence and 9,9% of all questioned) claimed to be able to speak it. The 91 profiles contacted were separated over 2 different cities, namely, Johannesburg and Durban. Of the 49 profiles in Durban, 24 knew of isiNgqumo existence, of which 8 were able to speak it. Of the 43 profiles contacted in Johannesburg, on the other hand, only 5 had ever heard of isiNgqumo, with only 1 claiming to be able to speak it.

These preliminary findings already invoke two interesting deductions: firstly, that isiNgqumo most certainly is not very widespread within the community, seeing as only a small percentage of the individuals knew of its existence and an even smaller percentage was able to speak it; and secondly, the fact that isiNgqumo is recognized more in and around the Durban area confirms that it is a language spoken mainly in the Kwa-Zulu Natal region.

Participants were then asked to provide a definition of, or explain what isiNgqumo was. The following responses were recorded:

Anonymous: "It is a slang which is mostly spoken by gay people from SA, it is vastly and most popular amongst bottoms."

Sanele: "It is an African gay language."

Phumlani: "Gay Language."

Iwazi: "I can say it's just a language that gay people use when they are in the presence of straight people. They use this language to understand each other and to ensure that straight people amongst them won't understand a word. It's very rare that a straight person can understand it."

Songz: "It's a gay lingo. Zulu gay men use it to communicate."

Lethu: "I'd call it the African/black version of Gayle." When asked if he considered it to be a language he responded as follows: "Yes, as it meets the five fundamental characteristics of language. Language is symbolic, cultural, flexible, dynamic and has rules of usage. It meets all of the above."

Luyanda: "It is basically slang that is used in LGBTQI community here in Durban."

The alternating use of the term *language* and *slang* in the definitions given above are a telling representation of the previously mentioned, current debate on isiNgqumo and lavender languages in general. Although the term *language* was used in the majority of the cases, it is evident that, for most users, it remains unclear as to whether isiNgqumo can be considered an independent language, or simply a language variant.

It is also worth mentioning that in several cases, those individuals who were aware of the existence of isiNgqumo seemed to have a strong negative attitude towards it:

Bradley: "I don't speak that shit." "It's nothing."

Bambolunye: "It's just another level of gay which I really don't want to associate myself with."

Vuyani: "I always thought why speak some secret language as if you're trying to hide your experience as a queer person. Our experiences are valid even in our native languages so let's use language we're all familiar with."

The research participants were also asked to provide a short story or fragment written in isiNgqumo. Each story was subsequently translated by 3 separate individuals: a contemporary Zulu speaker, an archaic Zulu speaker and an isiNgqumo speaker (different from the one who provided the actual fragment). These translations made it possible to denote how speakers of the respective registers each translated, understood and interpreted the isiNgqumo fragment put in front of them. In so doing, an attempt was made to determine mutual intelligibility so as to determine whether Zulu and isiNgqumo are two separate languages or if, instead, they are variants of each other.

Interestingly enough, there was a repeated 0% mutual intelligibility between contemporary Zulu/archaic Zulu and isiNgqumo. However, it is worth noting that contemporary Zulu speakers often made no attempt to translate the fragment, claiming that the fragment provided was not Zulu:

"My mother tongue is Zulu and I tell you, this is not Zulu"

"I don't think I can help you with the translation, this is deep old Zulu bro."

Seeing as archaic Zulu speakers, on the other hand, were able to recognize and provide a translation for the given fragments, this can only confirm that isiNgqumo is in fact based on an archaic form of the Zulu language and not a contemporary one. However, although the archaic Zulu speaker was indeed able to provide a translation of the isiNgqumo fragments, their translations were so semantically disparate to that

of isiNgqumo speakers, that the translation once again offered 0% mutual intelligibility with the source fragment:

Example 1

Original isiNgqumo fragment: "Lutho nu. Inju ingigcike ukuthi ngiguzele emjikhethweni."

IsiNgqumo speaker: "No friend, my dad said I was go to school today."

Contemporary Zulu speaker: "This is not Zulu."

Archaic Zulu Speaker: "Nothing. The honey has hit me within the circle."

Example 2

Original isiNgqumo fragment: "Kuti Set ke, singaguza siyobhama if uwindela futhi."

IsiNgqumo speaker: "That would be nice! We could go for lunch if you would like."

Contemporary Zulu Speaker: "This is not Zulu"

Archaic Zulu Speaker: "On a set we can switch back again."

Archaic Zulu speakers not only found issue with the translations on a semantic level, but on a grammatical level as well, often complaining about "the bad grammar of the given fragments".

The semantic and grammatical divergences could point towards two explanations: either the archaic Zulu translator was thoroughly mistaken in his translations; or the isiNgqumo grammar and lexicon (though it may be based on archaic Zulu) is unique and significantly different from its matrix. The latter could therefore be an argument in favour of categorizing isiNgqumo as an independent, fully-fledged language. This is further supported by the fact that its lexicon shows none of the common traits found amongst that of a slang, that is to say, none of the set of rules for word derivation from standard language to slang (such as back-slang, overgeneralization, clippings, acronyms, rhythmical synonyms) can be characterised in the given fragments. A larger and more thorough research using archaic Zulu is

therefore of paramount importance for analysing isiNgqumo's grammar and word derivation.

However, what was most interesting and striking was the translations from fellow isiNgqumo speakers. Despite largely being able to correctly translate and interpret the short stories given to them, it was noticeable that they, too, encountered difficulties translating certain words. This can be explained by the existence of regional, social and diglossic differences within the isiNgqumo language, thereby making it possible to determine one's age-group, regional origin and societal background based purely off of their isiNgqumo language use.

For example, when analysing the isiNgqumo fragment provided by Sanele (cf. Appendix C), a second isiNgqumo speaker, Aluta, was able to tell me that Sanele was a "youngster" because according to Aluta, Sanele's isiNgqumo was "immature" and had a certain "colloquial subtext" because he "used slang" and "mixed isiNgqumo with Zulu". In other words, Sanele was not using the standard isiNgqumo which older generations are believed to speak.

In addition, it was interesting to see how Zulu speakers who are part of the queer community but claimed to have no knowledge of isiNgqumo tended to have a greater comprehension of the language than straight Zulu speakers. This was the case with one such research participant, Songz, who succeeded in translating a short story in a noticeably more successful way than a straight contemporary Zulu speaker. Asked how this was possible, he replied that it was easier for him to understand isiNgqumo "using judgement from what I've heard from other people". This, of course, puts the preliminary findings of this research into question: it is possible that many of those who claimed not to know of the existence of isiNgqumo, or claimed to be unable to speak it, merely did not know the lexicon/phrases they were using had a certain name and/or that they could indeed speak it more than they realised.

In conclusion, the preliminary findings showed that only *archaic* Zulu speakers were, to some extent, able to recognise and provide translations of the isiNgqumo, clearly indicating that isiNgqumo has its roots in archaic Zulu. Yet, the translations were consistently unsound and inaccurate, suggesting that there is no mutual intelligibility between the two languages. In addition to the criteria concerning mutual intelligibility, the cultural and social importance of isiNgqumo to the Zulu gay

49

community as put forth in the theoretical framework, as well as the apparent existence of regional, social and diglossic variants within isiNgqumo, can only be said to argue in favour of *Ethnologue's* criteria of a "distinctly-named ethnolinguistic identity" and arguably, of a "well-developed standardization" (to an certain extent, based on the prevalent diglossia).

3.2. Current Research

3.2.1. Research Question

Literature speaks of an elaborate, extensive and colourful black gay subculture present in South Africa complete with its very own language. IsiNgqumo and the gay sub-culture surrounding it warrant more extensive scholarly attention as the current lack thereof exposes racial disparities. This becomes even clearer when considering its South African 'white' counterpart, Gayle, which has been the subject of scrupulous documentation and analysis. The goal of this dissertation is therefore two-fold. Firstly, on an anthropological level, it wishes to answer the question of what it is like to be black and gay in South Africa in 2020. The question is whether the available literature on homosexuality, homophobia and the gay landscape in modern-day South Africa continues to be relevant to this day or, instead, is in urgent need of revision. Secondly, on a linguistic level, this dissertation wishes to compile a preliminary grammatical sketch of isiNgqumo complete with an analysis of its most salient grammatical features and the most extensive wordlist registered to date.

3.2.2. Methodology

Similarly to the preliminary research, this research opted for a less orthodox approach in *digital* fieldwork. Participants were once again obtained through the popular gay dating app, Grindr, which offers a special feature that allows one to contact profiles all over the world. Through this app, I was able to find participants from in and around Durban whilst personally conducting the research from Belgium. One of the greatest advantages of this methodology is that it provides access to an array of South African queer individuals from many different backgrounds (ages, cities, socio-cultural backgrounds and queer identities).

As many accounts as possible were contacted, a rudimental conversation was initiated and an attempt was made to ascertain whether the individual had any knowledge of isiNgqumo. Those who expressed knowledge of the language were asked for their phone numbers so that we could chat and get to know each other better through the popular texting app WhatsApp. The objective was to first build up trust with one another and hopefully initiate a friendship. I believed this to be an important first step as working with people whose identity carry a stigma in mainstream society means that the sensitive nature of such research requires the researcher to put a great deal of effort into negotiating access, building rapport and developing a level of trust, beforehand.

The participants were then informed about the research and asked if they were willing to participate. All participants were required to give some form of informed consent: a message, in any form, stating that they understood and agreed to partake in the research sufficed. Throughout the research, participants were given full transparency as to the purpose of the research, anonymity was warranted to those who so desired, and self-conception (in terms of gender identification, sexual orientation, etc.) was adhered to and respected at all times. It was made clear that participants were expected to willingly partake in this research without expecting any form of compensation.

Once a group of research participants was assembled (through Grindr or through subsequent snowball sampling), two different strategies were put into play. Firstly, for the anthropological research, 6 interviews took place between March 2020 and April 2020 through WhatsApp video calls. The objective of these interviews was to ascertain the life experiences of queer individuals in South Africa. It was my intention that these interviews reflected informal conversations between friends rather than rigid and impersonal examinations. This is not to say that these interviews/conversations were held without any

form of direction or preparation. A questionnaire was prepared beforehand, specifically targeted at verifying, corroborating and/or denouncing the various facets of gay experience in South Africa as discussed in the theoretical framework (cf. Appendix B). These interviews were, after receiving informed consent, recorded for subsequent analysis.

Secondly, in order to implement a grammatical sketch and amass a vocabulary list for the linguistic research, this dissertation made use of a corpus that consisted of 1) dialogues and vocabularies compiled from previous researches on the topic 2) dialogues and vocabularies compiled from the aforementioned preliminary research and 3) dialogues and vocabularies compiled through active elicitation (cf. Appendix A) from isiNgqumo speakers by means of WhatsApp chat and/or calls aimed at educing the noun class system and verbal conjugations and structures of isiNgqumo.

It is important to point out that obtaining a grammatical sketch with the described methodology did not come without its challenges. Aside from the aforementioned geographical dissociation, a second challenge faced during the linguistic analysis was my inability to speak Zulu and therefore my subsequent dependence on third-party (albeit native) translators. Given that isiNgqumo is often used interchangeably with Zulu, and in combination with the loose translations provided by these third-party translators, an excess of time was spent either trying to figure out the exact source language and literal translations of the words and sentences in the compiled dialogues. For example:

Fragment:
A: "Asiguze siyokala indzabakazi yako movo mashwashwa."
B: "Angilokothi phela mina angimeshile."

Code-mixing (*italics*: isiNgqumo, **bold**: Zulu)
A: "Asiguze siyokala indzabakazi yako movo mashwashwa."
B: "**Angilokothi phela mina** angimeshile."

Loose Translation:
A: "Maybe we can go to the movies together tomorrow as a date?"
B: "I'm sorry but I am not gay."

Literal translation:

A: "Let us go let us watch something see movie night."

B: "I will not me I am not gay."

This time could have been used to elicit more isiNgqumo utterances or to analyse those already received. However, my extensive knowledge of Bantu grammar, my ability to speak Shona, Lingala and Swahili, and my familiarity with Zimbabwean slang helped immensely in analysing and understanding the corpus at hand. In that aspect, much time was saved as consulting a third party to help analyse the findings was not necessary. Third party individuals—Zulu and isiNgqumo speakers alike—were helpful in providing both a corpus and translations, but were not required for the linguistic analysis of the corpus itself.

Furthermore, the methodology used means the (written) linguistic fragments were not obtained through natural speech. Given that isiNgqumo is an almost exclusively oral language, a spoken fragment may have benefitted from a greater level of reliability.

Elicitation through digital fieldwork proved to be tedious, time consuming, impractical, and slow. Furthermore, in the case of linguistic fieldwork, the fact that the data provided can prove to be inaccurate and the inability to ask supplementary questions (at least not to any satisfactory extent) often led to frustration. Some of the obstacles faced during the research included 1) research participants going offline for days on end and not knowing if they would ever come back online or if you had just lost yet another research participant 2) research participants being non-responsive to messages at times having to wait 2-5 days for a reply 3) Research participants not answering the question at hand 4) research participants experiencing frustration when they believe they are being asked the same question over and over again. (The questions posed, though they may have seemed similar, were in fact variations of the original question, asked in a bid to determine specific grammatical features. Examples of these 'repetitious' questions included inquiring after the plural of a word after receiving its singular form or probing after the past tense of a verb when given a verb in the present tense) 5) Research participants contradicting themselves. (This was the case with one research participant who, in the past, had informed me of certain words in isiNgqumo and upon asking for their translations months later claimed that these words do not exist in isiNgqumo. Another example included a

research participant who informed me that he is a fluent speaker of isiNgqumo and so respected in the community that he has taken it upon himself to teach the next generation the language. However, when asked for elicitations, he claimed not to be able to speak the language all that well).

Aside from the chosen methodology, the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown in Belgium and South Africa impeded the progress of this research in countless ways, from minor issues such as being unable to print detrimental documents to research participants being unable/unwilling to continue their help because of various personal reasons that the lockdown brought with it.

3.2.3. Self-Reflection

During the course of this dissertation, I was often confronted with the positionality and legitimacy of this research. I spent a great deal of time reflecting on the ethics of a European researcher documenting an African language. History is replete with instances of Europeans (e.g. William Bleek) distorting the African socio-cultural-linguistic landscape when documenting and standardizing previously undocumented languages and, in so doing, creating imagined communities, ethnicities and, by extension, boundaries. The documentation of these native languages often ignored the complex linguistic landscapes at play in Africa where multilingualism was neglected in favour of the belief of homogenous ethnicities. The identification and differentiation of different ethnicities was often used as a tool to conquer and divide. The seemingly innocent practice of language documentation can, therefore, have long-lasting and extensive consequences on linguistic, social, cultural and even political levels. It is therefore not something to take lightly.

The purpose of this research however, was to document the isiNgqumo language with no other objective than to reveal its legitimacy as an extensive and sophisticated language within the Zulu gay sub-culture.

I also believe that my personal link to Africa (having been born and raised in Zimbabwe) and extensive knowledge on the (historical) linguistic landscape of Africa through my studies in African Languages and Cultures provides me with a certain level of nuanced knowledge and understanding. I am aware, however, that my positionality calls into question the emic/etic dichotomy, which undoubtedly influenced the interpretation of my findings. On the one hand, due to the fact that I am part of the queer community and have certain African roots, my ability to understand and interpret the topic better than most undoubtedly provided a certain emic viewpoint. On the other hand, however, as a white male of Western heritage, an etic perspective could have led to a Eurocentric interpretation of such a delicate and nuanced cultural issue. While I tried to remain aware of the dichotomy throughout my study, the balance between emic and etic remains a difficult obstacle to all researchers. As Mduduzi Ntuli points out:

While 'insider' researchers face the difficult task of creating sufficient distance between themselves and their informants, the role of an 'outsider' provides space and awareness for linguistic and cultural particularities and further creates some kind of pre-eminent distance. While a foreign researcher runs the risk of being culture-blind, an indigenous researcher runs the risk of being blinded by the familiar. ("Exploring Origins" Ntuli 453).

3.2.4. Results

i.   Linguistic Research

Through the methodology discussed above or through slight adaptations, a total of 7 dialogues and a wordlist of 140 English lexemes (with some 210 isiNgqumo translations) were amassed for the linguistic branch of this research. As the aim of this research was to provide a grammatical sketch of the language, focus was laid on two prominent parts of any Bantu grammar: nominal and verbal morphology. In addition, a vocabulary list of the language was compiled. The findings of which are subsequently discussed.

a. Nouns

All the isiNgqumo nouns that were collected during the research were placed in a separate table for analysis. Unfortunately, obtaining both the singular and plural forms of every noun was not always possible. In such cases, either the singular or plural form alone was recorded. In order to determine and/or analyse the noun class system within isiNgqumo, those nouns of which both the singular and plural form had been obtained were grouped according to their singular-plural prefix pair, for example *u/o* or *isi/izi*. Surprisingly, the findings showed that the isiNgqumo noun class systems tends to manifest itself in one of three ways, by 1) full resemblance of the Zulu noun class system, 2) partial resemblance of the Zulu noun class system, or 3) no resemblance of the Zulu noun class system.

- **Full resemblance of the Zulu noun class system**

From the 14 ascertained noun class pairs, there were 6 that fully resembled the Zulu noun class system:

Zulu Noun Class	Zulu Prefixes	isiNgqumo	Translation
1/2	uma/aba	umjukethisi abajukethisi	teacher
1a/2a	u/o	um'mjukhethisi om'mjukhethisi // ubhovu obhovu	teacher woman
(3/4)	umu/imi	umufozo imifozo // umhelana imihelana	cigarette hat
5/6	i/ama	iqenge amaqenge	man
7/8	isi/izi	isiphefu iziphefu // isitende izitende	ass house
9/10	im/izim	imalasi izimalasi // inhlanzi izinhlanzi shoe	dog shoe

- **Partial resemblance the Zulu noun class system**

From the 14 ascertained noun class pairs, there were 3 that partially resembled that of Zulu. Indicating that even though most isiNgqumo nouns adhere to the Zulu noun class system, some instability have been noted. IsiNgqumo appears to have some pairings not present in

Zulu but still making use of 'original' Zulu noun prefixes. For example, instead of the *u/o* and *isi/izi* noun class pairs for class 1a/2a and class 9/10 respectively, a noun class pair *u/izi* was ascertained in isiNgqumo, which would be a combination of Zulu class 1a and class 10 prefixes.

Zulu Noun Class	Zulu Prefix	isiNgqumo	Translation
1a/10	u/izim	ubhovu izimbhovu	woman
1a/6	u/ama	ufezela amafezela	straight guy

- **No resemblance of the Zulu noun class system**

The isiNgqumo noun class system predominantly resembles the Zulu noun class system (either completely or partially). However, the research also established two features that do not bear any resemblance of the Zulu noun class system, namely the presence of suffixes and zero prefixes. It was ascertained that the zero prefixes either take a Zulu prefix or a zero prefix in the plural form.

Suffixes

isiNgqumo Singular	isiNgqumo Plural	Translation
othith**i**	othith**o**	breast
onem**o**	onemo**lina**	name

Zero prefixes ➜ o

isiNgqumo Singular	isiNgqumo Plural	Translation
shwili	oshwili	boy
qenge	oqenge	man

Zero prefixes ➜ izi

isiNgqumo Singular	isiNgqumo Plural	Translation
smesh	izismesh	gay guy

Zero prefix ➜ Zero prefix

isiNgqumo Singular	isiNgqumo Plural	Translation
nonkroyi	nonkroyi	bitch
fruzah	fruzah	friend
smesh	smesh	gay guy

It is worth noting, however, that despite their absence in the Zulu language, these anomalies do agree with the pre-existing Zulu subject and object markers. This would indicate that despite their absence in the Zulu noun class system, these anomalies do not form a separate noun class system but can be incorporated into one of the 15 existing classes.

1) Nomloshelo   uziqedile   izismesh.
   Ø-ecstasy   sm3-om9-destroy-perf.conj   cl9-gay.people
   Ecstasy has destroyed gay people

2) Akukho   smash   esingamukelena   namasaka
   No   Ø-gay.people   rel-sm7-pot-date-fv   deadbeats
   No gays can go out with a deadbeats

It seems that the isiNgqumo noun class system is both complex and arbitrary. This complexity becomes clearly visible in the way isiNgqumo nouns relate to Zulu. In contrast to Zulu nouns, isiNgqumo nouns can be simultaneously recorded in different noun classes and/or show a lack of semantic similitude in the respective noun classes. It is because of this arbitrariness that one might argue that isiNgqumo has no definite noun class system. It is up to an isiNgqumo speaker to arbitrarily determine the class of a noun.

Zulu Noun Class	Zulu Prefixes	isiNgqumo	Translation
1/2	umu/aba	umjukethisi abajukethisi	teacher
1a/2a	u/o	um'mjukhethisi om'mjukhethisi	teacher

Zulu Noun Class	Zulu Prefixes	isiNgqumo	Translation
5/6	i/ama	iqenge amaqenge	man
X/2a	zero suffix/o	qenge oqenge	man

Zulu Noun Class	Zulu Prefixes	isiNgqumo	Translation
X/9	zero suffix/izi	smesh izismesh	gay guy
X/X	zero suffix/zero suffix	smesh smesh	gay guy

Furthermore, given that nouns in certain classes do not semantically 'belong', there is more cause to believe that the isiNgqumo noun class system is formed arbitrarily. It is therefore purely based on and determined by the speaker.

Zulu Noun Class	Semantic domain	isiNgqumo	Translation
1a/2a (u/o)	kin relationships	umaswithelana omaswithelana // um'mjukhethisi om'mjukhethisi	cold drink teacher
3/4 (umu/imi)	natural phenomena	umufozo imifozo // umhelana imihelana	cigarette hat

In conclusion, the arbitrariness of both isiNgqumo noun formation and the discrepancy of the semantic domains of the noun classes suggest that the language has no (defined) noun class system. However, the prevalence of Zulu prefixes and the agreement of the nouns with Zulu subject and object markers indicate that isiNgqumo speakers are reliant on the Zulu language to navigate noun formation in their own language. Rather than completely resembling the Zulu noun class system, it seems as if isiNgqumo simply echoes it or uses it as a touchstone in the creation of its own noun class system. It is up to the speakers themselves, inspired by Zulu, to determine the noun class of isiNgqumo nouns.

b. Verbs

This research amassed a total of 73 productively conjugated verbs. These verbs were subsequently glossed, analysed and grouped together according to similar affixes. The first step in dissection the conjugated verbs required glossing:

1. sizoguza

    [si-zo-guz-a > sm1pl-fut-go-fv]
2. ngikale

    [ngi-kal-e > sm1sg-watch-sbjv]
3. angishumi

    [a-ngi-shum-i > neg-1sg-know-neg.prs]

All the recorded affixes were then placed in a table showcasing isiNgqumo morphology (cf. Figure 3), resembling the table of affixes in Zulu morphology (cf. Figure 2). The amount of times each affix had been recorded was included in the table. The results show that a total of 31 affixes were ascertained in isiNgqumo, all of which are identical to the Zulu affixes in form, function and position. In some cases, however, glossing proved to be dubious and troublesome.

ucako eseluthuka ubhovu

guy - [e-sa-luthuk-a > unknown[8]-pers-kiss-fv] – girl

the guy is kissing the girl

Be that as it may, based on the number of recorded affixes and their frequency, it can be concluded that the conjugation and morphology of isiNgqumo verbs is (near-) identical to that of Zulu. It can therefore be concluded that isiNgqumo verbs are conjugated according to Zulu grammar.

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[8] The unknown 'e' could anything from an undocumented subject marker to a relative marker.

Pronoun	TAM(a)	SM	TAM(b)	OM	Root	EXT	TAM(c) / FV	Post-FV
I	(k)a- 6x (negative1)	-ngi- 30x	- ø -17x (present; conjoint)	-ngi- 6x		-el- 5x (applicative)	-e- 4x (past perfect, conjoint)	-ni 1x (question)
You (sg)	se- 5x	-u- 9x	-ya- 6x	-ku- 2x			-ile- 3x (past perfect, disjoint)	
We	(inceptive)	-si- 8x	(continuous present; disjoint)					
You (pl)	a-/e- 2x (relative)		- zo/zu/yo 14x (future; conjoint/disjoint)				-e 8x (subjunctive)	
Class 1	a- 2x	-u- 4x	-nga- 31x					
Class 2	(politative when in combination with subj)	-ba- 3x	(subjunctive when accompanied with -i- in FV)					
Class 3								
Class 4			-sa- 2x (persistive)					
Class 5				-li- 2x				
Class 6			-nga- 3x (potential)					
Class 7		-si- 4x						
Class 8			-yi- 3x (to be)	-zi- 1x				
Class 9		-i- 2x						
Class 15		-ku- 6x						

Figure 3: Affixes in isiNgqumo Morphology

All isiNgqumo words encountered throughout the research were placed in a vocabulary list along with their English translation and the participant from whom it was recorded. Analysis of this grammatical sketch proved to offer further interesting insights into the isiNgqumo language.

Firstly, analysis of the grammatical sketch collected concurs with the literature that claims that isiNgqumo vocabulary goes (far) beyond the field of sex. As the grammatical sketch proved, the isiNgqumo language encompasses lexicon ranging from sex (*ngubane* ('such a small dick'), *umsengo* ('sperm') and *isphefu* ('anus')) to everyday matters (including *umjukhetho* ('school'), *isifico* ('medicine') and *umqingo* ('phone')). In so doing, the language proves not to be restricted to sexual matters but rather allows for conversations outside of sex-related affairs.

In addition, upon analysing the vocabulary and elicited dialogues, this research follows the literature in concluding that the vocabulary predominantly consists of nouns and verbs. Of the 140 words recorded, 82 were nouns and 45 were verbs. Other word categories such as prepositions, adverbs and pronouns prove not to be as extensive, often opting for the Zulu equivalent instead.

Interestingly enough, analysis of the dialogues and the vocabulary shows that isiNgqumo regularly includes English and/or Zulu lexicon. In fact, the recorded dialogues were rife with code mixing between isiNgqumo, Zulu and English:

Original: "Mina ngine muke yakwami iqenge esesimukelene for 5 years and ngiyaliphumela."

Zulu: mina ngine muke yakwami
IsiNgqumo: iqenge esesi mukelene
English: for 5 years and
siNgqumo: ngiyaliphumela

Translation: I have a man at home, we have been dating for 5 years and I love him

Similarly, some of the vocabulary proved to be clearly influenced by English:

> Ukuset (to be okay > to be set)
> Ukutriks (to seduce)
> Friendolina (friend)
> ukuthankiza (to thank)
> othithi (breast)
> onemo (name)

The influence of the English and Zulu language in isiNgqumo vocabulary may suggest the presence of slang. However, given that the vocabulary does not seem to show any discernible and/or reoccurring word derivation techniques common to the formation of slangs (cf iii. Slang) from either English or Zulu, this argument may in fact rule in favour of isiNgqumo being an independent language.

However, several cases of verb to noun derivations were identified. Given that verb to noun derivation is not Zulu-specific but is, rather, prevalent throughout all Bantu languages, its presence in the isiNgqumo language argues in favour of the classification of a Bantu language, if not Zulu. Furthermore, it indicates that many isiNgqumo nouns are derived from verbs:

> To wear: ukujojela
> Clothes: injojelo

> To hear/ to listen: ukucoshela
> Ear: yokucoshela

> To smoke: ukufoza
> Cigarette: isifoza

Lastly, the grammatical sketch shows that, in certain cases, nouns have several variation forms. Though they clearly are all cognates of each other, these variations

act as further proof of the complexity and arbitrariness of isiNgqumo nouns. It seems it is up to the speaker to use whatever variation they prefer and to subsequently place it in a noun class they so choose.

English word	isiNgqumo variations
Boy	uchaki
	uchakisana
	umcaksana,
	ucako
	umchakisane
English word	**isiNgqumo variations**
Cigarette	isifoza
	umufoza
	ufozana

Similarly, the grammatical sketch also shows is that not everybody knows and/or uses the same words. A total of 140 English words were recorded, for which a total of 213 isiNgqumo translations had been given. As mentioned above, this proves that there are several isiNgqumo words available for one English translation. These multiple translations can be put down to a variant form, a completely different lexeme, or the absence of an isiNgqumo translation (allegedly). For example:

English word:	isiNgqumo translations provided:
Penis	Iwazi: "Isiphukwana"
	Luyanda: "Isiphukwane"
	Ntuli: "Umjovo"
	Sanele: "There is no translation"

English word:	isiNgqumo translations provided:
Beer	Ebrary: "Isichibi"
	Sanele: "Isigeqo"
	Boykie: "Isigayo"

Luyanda: "There is no word for beer, only for alcohol"

English word:	isiNgqumo translations provided:
Friend	Lethu: "Frizoska"
	Senny: "Utchoma"
	Sanele: "Friendolina"
	Boykie: "Ufriendolina"
	Iwazi: "Fruzah"
	Boytki: "Ufruzah"

Though isiNgqumo's vocabulary doesn't seem to show any traces of Zulu, its grammar overwhelmingly does. While the verbs prove to fully resemble Zulu in every aspect, the nouns, on the other hand, appear as anomalies, arbitrariness and instabilities. Be that as it may, the research has shown that, despite the discrepancies isiNgqumo, nouns are still highly reliant on Zulu and its grammar. In addition, an analysis of the dialogues and vocabulary obtained shows traced of sociolinguistics, codemixing, verb to noun derivations and high level of varieties, thus revealing isiNgqumos extensiveness, elaborateness, complexity and ingenuity.

ii.   Anthropological Research

A total of 6 interviews took place between March 2020 and April 2020. Different aspects concerning isiNgqumo and the gay culture in Durban were elucidated and subsequently recorded, analysed and interpreted. The aspects discussed started with isiNgqumo and its role in the black gay community of South Africa, moving on to the conceptualization of homosexuality and prevailing gender roles, and ending with the influence of Western and Zulu culture on the black gay community of those living in Durban. For further details on the specific questions posed, please refer to the Appendix B.

IsiNgqumo is spoken predominantly in Kwa-Zulu Natal and, more specifically, in cities and townships. It is spoken wherever there is a gathering of gay people, be it in a club or amongst friends at home. The language is learned through interaction. It is picked up and spread informally through conversation.

> **Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu:** "IsiNgqumo belongs to the black gay community—specifically Zulu, in Durban or KwaZulu Natal."

> **Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu:** "It's spoken during social gatherings with gays. So you can say the clubs or even my house if I'm hanging out with friends. Where there's gays, there's isiNgqumo."

> **Aluta, Trans, Zulu:** "You learn through interaction. You have to be in the midst of gay people to understand. You learn along the way."

IsiNgqumo appears to be spoken exclusively by the gay and trans community. According to the participants, however, there are rare cases in which white people, cisgendered women, lesbians, or heterosexuals are able to speak the language. However, the participants were quick to point out that these rare cases only occur when these speakers have a black gay friend and/or relative and thus naturally pick it by association. They would, however, never use it amongst each other but only when in the presence of gay men.

> **Aluta, Trans, Zulu:** "Many cisgendered girls will be able to speak it because they are allies to gay people. And families of gay people, even heterosexual men who have LGBTQI family members in their households get exposed to it and they will get to understand the language."

> **Lethu, Bi, Zulu:** "It's mostly spoken by people from the gay and trans community. Others, like lesbians, white people and straight people will

maybe understand it, but won't speak it. They might understand a sentence or two."

> **Siphamandla, Gay, Zulu:** "Lesbians can speak it as well if they are friends with gay people."

Within the black gay community, participants corroborated with the previous literature stating that isiNgqumo is mostly spoken by 'bottoms' in townships or by those from a lower class. The prevailing classism, as will be discussed later on, would lead to black gay men from higher classes using English as their mode of communication as a marker of their affluence and class.

> **Songz, Gay, Xhosa:** "'Bottoms' [effeminate males, often considered the woman in the relationship], speak it more than 'tops' [masculine males, often considered the man in the relationship] . I would say it's mostly those of a lower class that would speak it. It's mostly around townships."

> **Lethu, Bi, Zulu:** "It's generally the 'bottoms' who speak it to be honest."

> **Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu:** "It's spoken by people that are deemed or perceived as lower class."

Generally speaking, 'tops' and bisexuals will not be speak isiNgqumo, because they do not wish to viewed as gay, for gay is associated with femininity and thus it would jeopardize their masculinity. Given that they are not gay (read: 'not feminine'), they would have no need for such a language or would simply shy away from it. Speaking isiNgqumo would only affect them negatively, for the belief is that isiNgqumo is gay, and thus he who speaks it is gay.

> **Aluta, Trans, Zulu:** "They might not want to express it or use it, but they know it. Some people don't want to use it because of the stigma attached to it. Because how do you know isiNgqumo? You're going to have to explain

71

yourself. Bisexuals won't speak isiNgqumo because it outs them. People will question why you can speak it. They will think you are gay."

Lethu, Bi, Zulu: "Some will actively refuse to speak it; some don't see the purpose of it; some don't like it; and others don't want to be associated with 'those' type of gay people, that is, the openly gay people, the feminine ones."

With regards to the inner workings of the language, a few of the participants alluded to the complexity of the language on account of the different regiolects, sociolects and dialects present within the language itself.

Aluta, Trans, Zulu: "There are a lot of words in isiNgqumo that I don't understand because they're from a certain geographic location and/or a certain grouping of people based on class."

Songz, Gay, Xhosa: "I can't. Not that I don't want to, but because the terms are confusing. Words have different meaning in different contexts. So it's kind of complex."

   b.   On the segregation of the queer community

According to the participants, the queer community in South Africa is indeed segregated. However, contrary to what previous literature has claimed, it seems the divide is not merely along racial lines but by class and sexuality too. From the interviews, it became apparent that classism and inter-queer discrimination is prevalent among the black queer community of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Aluta, Trans, Zulu: "Racially we are separated. We have the blacks living in the townships and the whites living on their own in the suburbs. So that kind of infringes on the socialization between the races. You find that there are very few clubs that have interracial mixture. You find that certain spaces are demarcated for certain races. This could be because of safety, because for

72

a white person it's not easy to travel to a township where you are just going to be the only person there."

Lethu, Bi, Zulu: "There is segregation along racial lines. You have black gays, white gays, Indian gays and coloured gays, each frequenting different areas. But there is also classism."

Songz, Gay, Xhosa: "There is a lot of classism. A lot. Especially amongst gay black people. You have your intellects, for example. These are recent graduates who are working and who only associate themselves with people who are on their level. And you have your bigger ones who are high up in power, in politics, who only seek young skinny boys. It's very messy."

Aluta, Trans, Zulu: "What you can also find is discrimination between gays and transgendered people. You find that even within the community, gay people don't understand trans or bi-sexual people. You see that we are judging one another."

Despite the segregation, there still seems to be an overwhelming sense of unity among queer individuals throughout the country. The idea seems to be that though the different pockets in the community do not actually spend time together, they ultimately identify with each other and consider themselves to be part of the same community. Pride events seem to be the perfect example for this unity, for though the different pockets do not intermix on a day-to-day basis, at events like these, they come together and celebrate a single, shared queer pride:

Siphamandla, Gay, Zulu: "Because we are different in race. We have different vibes. We won't chill together. But when it's gay pride it's all love. We are all the same. We are one."

Aluta, Trans, Zulu: "You find that at pride we all come together, but quite often you still find those pockets of gays there, trans there, lesbians there."

As discussed in the literature, isiNgqumo can be used as a means of protection, for secrecy, as a political statement, as a means of uniting and empowering, and as a way to signal one's identity as a gay individual. What the literature failed to mention, however, as the participants pointed out several times, is that isiNgqumo is also learnt and spoken as a means to belong. Speaking isiNgqumo allows you to belong to and survive in the community by being able to partake in it. If you cannot speak the language, you are left out of the conversation. If you cannot speak the language, you miss out and are left feeling like an outsider.

> **Aluta, Trans, Zulu:** "You might find that we are in a social where there is some sort of danger and you have to alert somebody of it. Then, by speaking in isiNgqumo, we can talk right in front the danger."

> **Aluta, Trans, Zulu:** "We create a language which we choose and which liberates us rather than discriminates or takes away powers. It is political in a sense, because it goes against the status quo."

> **Siphamandla, Gay, Zulu:** "We speak isiNgqumo so that people cannot hear what we are saying. Like, I can literally gossip in front of you and you wouldn't understand a thing."

> **Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu:** "To find a home. To use something only you and your people can identify with. It is something that is close to your heart, that only resonates with your people."

> **Aluta, Trans, Zulu:** "When you hear somebody use an isiNgqumo word, you know they are gay without any questions asked."

Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu: "Sometimes, when you're chilling with friends and you can't speak, you feel like an outsider. They'll pass comments and you'll be like, "What are you saying, bitch?" And in some cases, you'll feel like they're talking about you when they're not."

Siphamandla, Gay, Zulu: "You don't want to miss out. You don't want to be left out."

d. On the conceptualization of homosexuality

In South Africa the terminology identifying and referring to same sex practices seems to be rather complex. It appears that the semantics are layered and the use and interpretation of the different terminologies present in Kwa-Zulu Natal is very much case and/or person-specific. There are three levels at play, English, Zulu and isiNgqumo, each of which has its own dynamics. When questioned about how she relays to the terminology used to mark sexuality.

Aluta, Trans, Zulu: "From a perspective of trying to make sense of the word, they [different terminology] become key identifiers for technologies that can be used to decode and further understand individual identity. I won't say I have a bad feeling towards them unless if they are used in a context which is derogatory or is intended to isolate, discriminate or marginalize a certain individual. I think they are identifiers which have brought meaning to sexuality as we understand it and they are not fluid, they are ever changing, so I treat them just merely as concepts and how they are used is basically what I respond to."

All participants sexually identified using English terms: Aluta identifies as *trans*; Songz, Brian and Siphamandla as *gay*; and Lethu as bisexual. Only Luyanda said to prefer not to use any labels. The fact that each participant identified using an English term (and more specifically with a distinct denominator in the LGBTQIA acronym) rather than the overarching term *queer* is an important observation, for although these six participants form only a minuscule sample of the South African population, it

75

shows that "homosexuality in the Western sense of the word" is in fact present in Africa. This constatation, however, thoroughly problematizes such statements, for they negate the lives and experiences of such individuals who *are* in fact gay rather than the presupposed *do* gay.

All participants seem to opt for a specific English diction in affirming their sexuality because from the plethora of vocabulary available in both English and Zulu (and thus useable among the wider heterosexual public) the English terms carry the least stigma and the smallest possibility of being used in a derogatory manner. For as Aluta previously alluded to, terminology referring to non-heterosexual practices tend to be used in a derogatory manner with the intent to isolate, discriminate and/or marginalize. It is then up to the individuals that make up these queer communities to navigate the vocabulary available and determine which word(s) they deem most desirable to describe their sexuality. In the case of South Africa, it seems that English terms a better received than the generally more derogatory Zulu terms:

> **Songz, Gay, Xhosa:** "We are more lenient on Western terms, because in our own languages we don't have comfortable terms or accepting terms."

> **Brian, Gay, Zulu:** "The word *gay* is more appropriate and more commonly accepted. *Istabane* is more of a derogatory term [for homosexual]."

Local Zulu terms that refer to homosexuality are mostly used in a derogatory manner. Furthermore, it seems that Zulu employs a derogatory hierarchy with certain words being more disparaging than others. The situation becomes more complex when we consider that even though many of the available Zulu terms are predominantly derogatory, they are nonetheless (widely) used amongst the individuals to which they refer. In this case, they are used not as derogatory terms but rather as terms of endearment. This is done as a way of reclaiming and redefining words that offend, marginalize, isolate and discriminate. The speaker and the intention of the speaker determines how a certain word is perceived:

> **Aluta, Trans, Zulu**: "It is how the word is used that I respond to it".

Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu: "It depends on the person and context that the word is used in. I take offence in some instances where someone tries to use it in a derogatory way. But when I'm in a conversation with fellow homosexuals, I really don't mind it. We turned it around and used it as words of endearment. Just like Americans took *nigger*, you know? For example, *istabane*, that's a derogatory term. Again, when I'm with my friends who also identify as gay, I don't take it as an offensive word. But when a heterosexual man says that to me, it's really homophobic. I am really saddened and hurt by it. I feel really scared when somebody says that."

Brian, Gay: "It's like the word *queer*. Previously the word *queer* was more of a derogatory term, until recently when it was reclaimed and redefined. And *istabane* initially was more of a derogatory term. But it has become a more acceptable term to use."

However, it has to be pointed out that there are words in the Kwa-Zulu Natal region that refer to non-heterosexual practices and that are inherently non-derogatory. Unfortunately, these are unknown to the wider heterosexual public, for they are neither Zulu nor English, but isiNgqumo, and thus known predominantly by the people who make up the community. However, here, too, the situation is complex, for not everybody is aware of these existing terms and many who are tend to have different understanding of these terms. Furthermore, depending on how you relate to the gay community, the meaning of these terms will vary. For example, with regard to the words *skesena* and *injonga*, different interviews resulted in different answers:

Songz, Gay, Xhosa: "*Injonga* and *skesena*? I am unfamiliar with these words."

Aluta, Trans, Zulu: "*Injonga* and *skesena* is just an umbrella term for 'gay'."

Luyanda, No Labels: "*Skesana* means the same as *istabane* [Zulu for gay]."

Lethu, Bi: "*Injonga* and *skesena*? I don't really think anybody uses those words in this day and age. *Skesena* is somebody who is feminine and flamboyant. *Injonga* is somebody who is masculine."

Brian, Gay: "*Skesena* and *Injonga* are not official terms that the general public uses. They are used only within the gay community. They simply mean 'gay'. It depends from which level you look at it. For a gay, it means 'top' and 'bottom', but if you ask a general person what *skesena* means, they'll refer to every gay person as *skesena*. *Injongas* is too complex. Most people won't know that, especially the straight people. Straight people would maybe know *skesena* but not *injongas*, because skesenas are easily identifiable.

These results clearly show that the black gay community in Durban is not made up of injongas and skesenas. Though the terms exist, they are not as well-defined, prevalent and/or engrained in the culture as the literature claims. The terms are foreign to some and open to an array of interpretations to others.

However, there is an isiNgqumo term that previous literature fails to mention and that seems more prevalent and defined than *skesena* and *injonga,* namely *smesh*. *Smesh* is a non-derogatory term referring to a homosexual. It is a word that not only came up during the interviews but was repeatedly used during chat conversations as a term of endearment. It can be translated into English as *dear*, *dude*, *mate*, or *buddy*, but is only applicable to gay people.

Songz, Gay, Xhosa: "We do have a word we kind of created. It's *smesh*. We are comfortable with that word. It's what we use to call each other."

> **Siphamandla, Gay, Zulu:** "*Smesh* is actually isiNgqumo, which means 'gay'. If you are gay, we say *uyismesh*[9]."

> **Brian, Gay, Zulu:** "*Smesh* means the same thing as *skesena*. It is more of a common term used by the general public for *gay*. It's not derogatory."

When questioned of the prevalence of heterosexual men who sleep with other men, all interviewees immediately affirmed that such practices are indeed rather common in South Africa.

> **Songz, Gay, Xhosa:** "There are people who don't describe themselves as gay. They are straight but they want to fuck a guy every now and then."

> **Siphamandla, Gay, Zulu:** "Yes it's very common. I can tell you from my experience and the guys that I've dated and had sex with. I would usually ask them, 'Why are you doing this? Why are you sleeping with me?' and they would say, 'No, I'm not gay. I just cannot fight this feeling.'"

These testimonies corroborate the theory of men having sex with men in Africa as being a *deed* rather than an identity. It is important to note that every interviewee voiced the same theory that such individuals are in fact gay/bi but are just too scared to admit it and by extension come out:

> **Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu:** "Men who have sex with men but are straight is common in South Africa. I think it has to do with internal homophobia. A lot of people would not want to come out but would rather deflect and say, 'I enjoy sex with a particular gender, but I do not identify.' For most people it's just a façade."

> **Siphamandla, Gay, Zulu:** "I think they are in denial or something. They are just in denial and they don't want to admit to themselves that they are gay

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[9] u-yi-smesh > [2sg-to.be-gay] > you are gay

because people here, when you are gay they look at you in a disgusting way. At least now it's better. It's not that big of a deal to be gay, but still, the culture in our homes and through South Africa doesn't allow us to fully express ourselves. But deep inside they know that they are gay but they just can't admit it."

Songz, Gay, Xhosa: "It depends on the situation. You describe yourself as a straight man but maybe it's based on the fact that you haven't found yourself. So maybe you are bi or you are still confused."

e. On the perpetuation of homophobia

Homophobia is still very much present in South Africa and its intensity seems to be location-specific with towns and cities being more welcoming than the countryside and rural areas.

Siphamandla, Gay, Zulu: "Verbal abuse is common, and maybe, if you provoke them, they might physically beat you. But I've never been beaten. If you mind your own business, they won't do anything to you. They will call you a disappointment, use vulgar language, or you know, spit. They'll do everything to like destroy you at that moment."

Songz, Gay, Xhosa: "I have experienced homophobia almost my entire life. During my young age it was a bit physical, being pushed around and bullied, because I grew up in the rural areas before I moved to the city for my first year of university."

Aluta, Trans, Zulu: "Homophobia still exists, especially in places where it's traditional like farms or the countryside. It's because there is no visibility. Lots will go to the city centres where it's quite safe and conducive for such cultures."

Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu: "The gay experience differs from where you are from. In Johannesburg, where people are more liberal and open-minded, people are more comfortable in their sexualities. And that's why people gravitate more towards places like Johannesburg and Cape Town, because those places are more welcoming and accepting. But when you come to rural KZN, it's not really accepted and it's something people turn a blind eye to."

Despite the shared constatation that homophobia is still prevalent, there is also a unanimous confidence in progression. The participants shared their belief that the country is, ever so slightly, becoming less homophobic than it has been in the past. It seems the growing acceptance of homosexuality in South Africa is owed to the ever-increasing degree of visibility of queer individuals on the streets, in politics, in the media and on social media. Visibility is leading to acceptance and tolerance as it inspires individuals who were previously too afraid to live their true lives to follow suit, and it allows for the general public to accept and/or become accustomed to homosexuality by being exposed to it.

Aluta, Trans, Zulu: "When we walked, people used to throw stones at us, curse us and call us names. Being visible through the years has meant that we are slowly but surely becoming part of society and that things are normalizing. There are still cases, but it is not as wide as it used to be and, quite often, it might just have criminal intent rather than just being overtly homophobic."

Lethu, Bi, Zulu: "People who are accepting are those who are exposed to it. So they slowly start to get around it."

Siphamandla, Gay, Zulu: "The gay people are staying true to themselves. They literally don't give a fuck. They do what they want to do. And people have accepted that there is nothing that they can do; they are here to stay. And by being out there, living our lives, we've kind of made homosexual people fonder of us. And besides, today's generation literally doesn't give a

81

shit. We do what we want when we want. Old people didn't have that courage."

Siphamandla, Gay, Zulu: "In order for people to accept we are gay, we have to stop hiding, and they will get used to us."

Songz, Gay, Xhosa: "But through social media and television, people see that people like this actually do exist, but it's still difficult to understand how it is for someone to actually identify themselves as gay, lesbian or whatever. What mostly helps are the public figures who are out, who are gay. They actually spread the message of acceptance and everything. The numbers of them are growing and also motivating others to come out and they're having an influence on parents too. People like Somizi and Lasizwe. This includes many who are also vloggers and Youtubers."

All the participants were quick to ascertain the cause of homophobia to the culture they live in. In contrast to what previous literature suggested, none looked towards religion as a main culprit, though it was fleetingly mentioned as one of the many reasons for homophobia. The greatest offender seems to be the notion that homosexuality is against Zulu/Xhosa culture.

Siphamandla, Gay, Zulu: "I think gays in America are so confident. They aren't afraid to do anything, whereas here in Africa, I think culture is the only thing that is standing in our way. There are things I want to do but can't because I have to think of my family first, because there are some things that are expected of me as a boy."

Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu: "Zulu society is less tolerating because of patriarchy. I can't find any other reason. It's just patriarchy and internalized homophobia, once again. And as an AmaZulu, it's said if you're man, this is what you're supposed to do. You need to grow up, work, find a wife, and build a family. That's it. We are all raised to believe in that way. But nothing

82

is really our culture, because cultures evolve. And that is what I feel people fail to understand. We have to move with the times. People need to adapt with their environment. You can be living in 1989 when we're living in 2020."

Siphamandla, Gay, Zulu: "The state of mind that a man should be a man. They should carry on the family name and everything. They have expectations as to how you should act as a man. To be a man is to have a family, work and provide for your family. You should get married to a girl and carry on the family name by obviously having a lot of children— especially boys.

f. On the conceptualization of gender roles

In the interviews, it was unanimously voiced that, in South Africa, it is indeed common practice for same-sex relationships to mirror the gender roles of the heterosexual patriarchal society. A same-sex relationship thus tends to consist of one man and one woman with the masculine male being the 'man' and the effeminate male being the 'woman'. Distribution of responsibilities such as bread winning, cleaning and cooking are done according to these 'genders'. These gender roles also apply to marriage proposals in which the 'man' is expected to pay lobola [dowry] to the 'woman's' family. It is important to note, however, that though such gender roles are in fact present, they are not omnipresent. In fact, most interviewees acknowledged the existence of these practices but stated that they themselves did not adhere to them.

Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu: "Gender roles? Sure! If somebody identifies as top then automatically he is the man. He is supposed to do whatever a man is required to do. And the 'bottom' basically just submits to the 'top', again, subscribing to our culture of heteronormativity. The top is supposed to be working; the bottom is supposed to be cleaning."

Lethu, Bi, Zulu: "With marriage, you still get the whole lobola system. The one who is the bottom, or the female, would be the one to get lobola, like in a normal wedding. Some go so far as to actually wear the dress. "

Aluta, Trans, Zulu: "When it comes to gender roles, I think it's still quite very definitive. There's your masculine and your feminine expectations. And very rarely is there cross-pollination. Being the woman in the relationships means you service your man (do the cooking, cleaning, taking core of the children and being the bottom). When I come back home, I still have to be sub-servant, unfortunately. It's quite a challenge from a feminist perspective to challenge that, because you're coming into a system that has been like that for a long time. We have grown into those socializations."

Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu: "But with me and the people that I know, we are not fine with it."

The presence of gender roles in the black gay community in Kwa-Zulu Natal is further attested by the presence of terminology to differentiate the 'top' (*umacksana*) and 'bottom' (*umfazi* and *mumbuluza*), which translates to 'man' and 'woman' respectively. This shows that sex between two men is looked at through a heterosexual lens. However, it is important to remember that *umacksana*, *umfazi* and *mumuluza* are isiNgqumo words created by and for the gay community. It is therefore not the heterosexual world imposing these heteronormative terms and interpretation of sex but rather the gay community voluntarily ascribing to them.

Aluta, Trans, Zulu: "*Injonga* is not used for a 'top'. *Umckasana* would be used for 'top' and *mambuluza* is a woman in the relationship or plays the feminine role."
Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu: "*Umfazi* is 'bottom'. When we use the term *umfazi* we are subscribing to heterosexuality. The English translation of *umfazi* is 'woman'."

g. On the influences of Western culture

The queer community in South Africa mirrors that of the West in countless ways.

> **Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu:** "We take a lot from the West. We learn a lot from the West—like the language that we use or even the terminology. Things like *gurl* and *slay*. Even the way that we dress, the music that we listen to, or the content that we consume. You know, almost every gay guy is a Beyoncé, Rihanna or Nicki Minaj fan."

This being said, there are some salient differences between the two queer cultures, including the previously assessed gender roles in same-sex relationships. In the West, the notion that a relationship between two cisgendered men is made up of a man and a woman is deeply offensive and widely contested. According to the interviews, a second disparity arises from a different approach to sex and sexuality. It was the belief of all the interviewees that sexuality in the West is more fluid, while it is rigid and uncompromising in South Africa. In South Africa, you are either a masculine 'top' or a feminine 'bottom', 'man' or 'woman'. In the West, however, it is common to find a vers [somebody who is both top and bottom], a feminine 'top' or a masculine 'bottom'.

> **Aluta, Trans, Zulu:** "I travelled to New York and the queer community is very fluid. There's vers and it was overwhelming."

> **Songz, gay, Xhosa:** "In South Africa, I would say, when you are femme, you are supposed to be 'bottom' and when you are more masculine you are a 'top' person, whereas in other cultures you'll find that there are people who are femme 'tops' or people who are 'tops' that also like doing drag or are feminine. So in terms of sexual interest, most people are under that idea that there has to be that male and female resemblance, like a guy and girl. In South Africa, I would say it's not progressive in term of queerness, yet in other countries I would say it is progressive."

Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu: "It feels like there are no lines. Like being vers in the West is more acceptable. But being vers on our side, a lot of people look down on it."

h. On the influences of Zulu culture

When it comes to the topic of the amandlozi [the ancestors] and their influence on the lived experience of queer individuals, several of the participants agreed that queer being is either caused, influenced, aided or condoned by the ancestors and, more specifically, from the female ones. The large amount of gay sangomas [traditional doctors] would stand as proof.

Aluta, Trans, Zulu: "There is an emergence of a lot of gay people who become sangomas because they feel like their bodies are being used by a certain spirit who informs their identity."

Aluta, Trans, Zulu: "After four failed attempts at transitioning, I ended up burning incenses and speaking to them telling them this is what I want to do and asking them to please accept it. Afterwards, things started to become easier and my mom and people around me started to become more understanding."

Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu: "It does happen that when you are a male, a gay man, you are more connected to your grandmother."

As to whether queer individuals would not be able to adopt and start their own family considering the belief that the children would have a different set of ancestors and thus never fully belong in the family, it was voiced that this issue could easily be bypassed by means of a ritual requesting the ancestors to welcome the child into the family and become their new ancestors.

Aluta, Trans, Zulu: "There are exceptions and provisions whereby you can do certain rituals to bypass that. There are certain rituals where you can slaughter a goat and talk to the ancestors and tell them the situation and then you can plead to bring the child into the family. You talk to the ancestors and ask them to welcome them as a member of the family."

Luyanda, No Labels, Zulu: "For me, that wouldn't be a problem because you can buy a goat, slaughter it then introduce the kid to the family and the amandlozi would protect the child that you have adopted."

The anthropological research proved fruitful as it either contradicted, concurred or enlightened the literature. For example, the paying of lobola for the feminine partner in the same-sex relationship was both concurring of entrenched gender roles and simultaneously enlightening to the extent thereof. Furthermore, the ascertained disuse of the terms 'skesena' and 'injonga' contradicted the literature which claimed the two words/concepts to be an integral part of the Zulu gay culture.

4. Conclusion

Homophobic legislation throughout the majority of African nations is reflective of the anti-queer sentiments shared by many Africans. The claim that homosexuality is un-African and/or un-Christian is both unfounded and ignorant. Homosexuality is not a Western import, homophobia is. Furthermore, the Bible is open to (mis)interpretation, allowing many to interpret the preaching of love as those of hate. Be that as it may, homophobia, stigmatization and discrimination form a daily reality for queer individuals in South Africa. As such, it is not surprising that both the white and black gay communities of the nation have created their own sub-cultures with concomitant lavender languages (Gayle and isiNgqumo respectively).

This dissertation set out to focus specifically on isiNgqumo: a lavender language created and spoken in and around, but not limited to, Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal. As isiNgqumo has been underwhelmingly researched and/or documented, an initial attempt was made, using Zulu as a yardstick, at analysing and documenting the languages most salient linguistic characteristics: the noun class system and the verb morphology. This grammatical sketch was subsequently completed with the assemblage of a word list. Furthermore, in addition to the linguistic research, this dissertation warranted one of anthropological nature, questioning, verifying and updating the understanding of the gay subculture present in Kwa-Zulu Natal by using the pre-existing data as the model for the questioning and reanalysis.

Dating and messaging apps such as Grindr and WhatsApp allowed for digital fieldwork, as they were detrimental in amassing research participants, eliciting linguistic data and conducting interviews for anthropological data. Pre-existing literature on the lavender language is predominantly of ethnographic and/or anthropological nature. With regard to the linguistic capacity of isiNgqumo, little to no information was available. It was for this reason that a preliminary research was first conducted to determine the linguistic status of the language so as to weigh into the debate of many linguists who question whether lavender languages are fully-fledged languages in their own right or if they merely constitute registers such as dialects, sociolects, genderlects, jargons or slangs. Based on an overwhelming lack of mutual intelligibly between the lavender language at hand and Zulu (the language it is

supposedly derived from), it can be argued that isiNgqumo can, in fact, be considered a fully-fledged language.

The subsequent linguistic research showed that though isiNgqumo's vocabulary seems not to show any traces of Zulu, its grammar overwhelmingly does. While the verbs prove to fully resemble Zulu in every aspect, the nouns, on the other hand, are laced with anomalies, arbitrariness and instabilities. Be that as it may, the research has shown that despite the discrepancies, isiNgqumo nouns are still highly reliant on Zulu and its grammar. In addition, an analysis of the amassed dialogues and vocabulary offered sociolinguistic data and shed light on the presence of codemixing, verb to noun derivations and variation forms in the register.

The anthropological research touched on the conceptualization of same-sex practices in Africa. Given the prevailing homophobia in Kwa-Zulu Natal, it is not surprising that research found isiNgqumo to be so widely and extensively used within the gay and trans community. Spoken mostly in cities and townships, the language acts as a coping mechanism, serving as a tool for protection, secrecy, unification, empowerment and identity marking. In order to belong and, by extension, survive in the queer community, the ability to speak isiNgqumo is essential and without it, members of the queer community risk being left out and becoming an outsider.

Research also confirmed that for some, same-sex practices go hand in hand with an identity, whilst for others it remains merely a deed. Sex and sexuality is highly gendered within the queer community of Durban. The same gender roles present in the Zulu (heteronormative) society can be found in that of the Zulu gay community, with same-sex relationships consisting of 'tops' (masculine males, considered the man in the relationship) and 'bottoms' (effeminate males, considered the woman in the relationship). Culture practices attached to these gendered roles follow suit, with some 'tops' even going so far as to pay *lobola* for the 'bottom'. When it comes to naming non-heteronormative practices, Zulu diction is least favoured, as it tends to be predominantly derogatory. Despite many attempts to reclaim and "decolonize" these derogatory Zulu terms, by using them instead as ones of endearment, it seems queer individuals prefer to gravitate towards English and/or isiNgqumo vocabulary to express their sexuality. Lastly, despite the very strong and overpowering (patriarchal) culture of Zulu society, there does seem to be a unanimous

belief in progression. The ever-growing visibility of queer bodies, both on and off (social) media, seems to be inducing a growing tolerance and acceptance.

Though this dissertation has made great strides in researching and documenting isiNgqumo and the queer culture from which it originates, much work is still to be done. Though further anthropological research could prove to be worthwhile it is my conviction that further linguistic research ought to take precedence as there is still so much to be done. A more in-depth analysis of the noun class system, a more extensive vocabulary list, a more detailed research of word formation techniques and a comparative linguistic study with both Zulu and the remaining Nguni languages would prove fruitful in obtaining a better understanding and documentation of the language. Black queer voices have for too long been neglected. The time has come to show their resilience, ingenuity and creativity.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Linguistic Questionnaire

a) Please provide the isiNgqumo translations of the following words (singular and plural). If there is no isiNgqumo translation, feel free to just put "X".

man		men	
person		people	
boy		boys	
friend		friends	
fish		fishes	
father		fathers	
mother		mothers	
tail		tails	
mouth		mouths	
fire		fires	
blood		**hair**	
egg		eggs	
nose		noses	
tooth		teeth	
breast		breasts	
stone		stones	
cloud		clouds	
name		names	
sun		suns	
belly		**sand**	
tree		trees	
hand		hands	
penus		penuses	
bird		birds	
dog		dogs	

ear		ears	
heart		hearts	
moon		Moons	
star		stars	
tongue		tongues	
foot		feet	
ass		asses	
night		nights	
day		days	
fire		fires	
house		houses	
shop		shops	
book		books	
boyfriend		boyfriends	
A gay man		Gay men	
girl		girls	
food		foods	
car		cars	
money		**clothes**	
Shoe		shoes	
teacher		teachers	
baby		babies	
Flower		flowers	
door		doors	

b) Please provide a list of as many isiNgqumo words as you can think of. Please note, if they are nouns, please provide the singular and the plural form e.g. *Fezela/amafezela* = straight guy.

c) Please provide some sentences made up of only isiNgqumo along with their translations.

Appendix B: Anthropological Questionnaire

How do you identify? Why? (injonga, skesena, queer, gay…)

How do you feel about the terms *gay*, *queer*, *injonga* and *skesena*?

Are there (local) terms more applicable for people who partake in same-sex practices in SA/Durban? (Injonga? Skesena?)

How would you refer to 'top' and 'bottom' in Zulu?

Does having sex with men make you gay?

Do you consider same-sex practices as gay?

What's it like being gay in SA? (homophobia, attacks, queer pride, gay clubs, tolerance…)

Have you experienced homophobia?

Would you say the Zulu society is less accepting of homosexuality than other South African societies?

Why do you think SA is tolerant of homophobia? (religion, culture, law…)

Are there places you know to avoid as a gay person?

Do you notice change? (Progressive or regressive?)

What's the gay scene like in South Africa? (Segregated?)

How do you feel about the notion that homosexuality is "un-African" or "against christianity"?

How would you explain the terms *injongas* and *skesena*?

- Are they still being used?

- Is it like 'top' and 'bottom'? Do they have a different connotation?

- Is an *injonga* seen as 'straight'?

What does a modern-day relationship look like in SA? Are there any set gender roles?

- man – woman

- top – bottom

- straight- gay

- man – man

- injonga - skesena

How would you describe Zulu gay culture?

- Do you feel like South African queer culture can be compared to that of the West?
    - In what way are they the same?
    - In what way are they different?
- Does isiNgqumo culture incorporate Zulu culture and/or American/European gay culture?
- Does ukukhlonipa and amandlozi impact your gay being?

Why do you speak isiNgqumo?
- Signal identity
- Part of culture
- Stay secret
- Political/rebellion
- Unite and empower
- Protection

When do you speak it?

How did you learn it?

Who speaks it?
- Bottoms
- tops
- Lower class
- High class
- Women
- Straights
- Only gays
- Trans
- Whites

Where do you speak it? Are there spaces you would and wouldn't speak it?

Are there people who refuse to speak it?

Do you know how isiNgqumo came to be?

Can you always understand what's being said? What do you consider the standard?

Is it only spoken in Durban?

Appendix C: Dialogues

Fragment 1

Provided by *Sanele*

    A: Urekge?

    B: Yebo ngirekge! Wena?

    A: Uguzela ngakethembeni?

    B: Lutho nu. Inju ingigcike ukuthi ngiguzele emjikhethweni

    *A:*Asiguze siyokala indzabakazi yako movo mashwashwa

    *B:*Angilokothi phela mina angimeshile

    A: Awuuu sizoguza njengo frendolina

    B: Kuyi Set ke, singaguza siyobhama if uwindela futhi

    *A:*Ngingawindela ukuyogeda nogcekeni ave eyiSet naye

    *B:*Uzoqalisa sigcawu sini masekumashwashwa

    *A:*Ngizoguzela esitendeni koguqula ngikale nomakala deeer, wena?

    B: Ngiqalisile mina esitendeni izolo, ngizoguzela kogiyama nje

    A: OmaMBHU neN barekge?

    B: Bayisethi, abangakwakho bayanikisa yini?

    A: Owakwami Mambhuzet uyasikhelana

    *B:*Mmmmmm engathi angaba rekgeeee

    A: Sengiyaguza uliveke kayisethi

    B: Guzan uh

    A: How are you doing?

    B: Are you going to the shops?

    A: No. My father told me I have to go to school today

    B: Maybe we can go watch a movie tonight

    A: I'll definitely not, I'm not gay

    B: So then we can go as friends?

    A: That would be nice! We could go eat (as well) if you would like

    B: Yeah! I would love to go get some chicken!

    A: What will you do after the movie?

B: I will go home and clean and watch TV. What about you?

A: I cleaned yesterday, so I will just go home and sleep.

B: Your mother and father, they are well?

A: They are doing well. And yours, how are they?

Fragment 2

Provided by *Iwazi*

Izolo siphumile no fruzah sayojujuma, ngibe sengigeda abackaksane Abaymbanqo. Ngebjadi Lona omunye akanhiphumeli kwamele ngingxile kulo a omunye. Siye estenden Sami siyobhamana, mangfika umchaksane isphukwana siwusishwili. Lapho nhinxanxathekeni.

Yesterday, I went out with my friend (for dancing), I picked up 2 boys/men. Unfortunately, I didn't like one of the boys. I'm focussing on the other one. We went to my place to fuck. When I got there the boy/man had a small dick/cock. I was longing for a fuck.

Fragment 3

Provided by *Aluta*

Umcaksana ose phameni lakwami uyangphumela, nivi angimphumeli. Kodwa ave eyisidayi. Mina ngine muke yakwami iqenge esesimukelene for 5 years and ngiyaliphumela. Sino shwili oyimukuza, owubhovu and ave ngimuphumela. Uneminyaka eyimukuza. So angishumi ukuthy ngiqalise injini or ngimugcike insule.

The boy next to me really loves me, but I don't. But (I must admit) he is attractive. I have a partner at home. We have been dating for 5 years. I love him. We have a one-year-old daughter. I love her (dearly). She's 1 year old. So, I'm not sure if I should tell this boy the truth - or lie.

Fragment 4

Provided by *Sabelo*

       B: Uka how? Uyobhadlaza?

       A: Njini? Ngiyabhadlaza kubo just.

       B: khapha uzongikala ebusuku! Ngifuna ukukukhaphisela ibook.

       A: Ngizokhapha ngabo-7

       B: unenjili?

       A: cha! Anginayo injili.

       B: uqalisa iwhat namhlanje?

       A: Angishumi, Monday or maybe Tuesday.

       B: Ngizokukala kodwa. Ungaqalisi injili nalelo book!

       A: ngikhaphe neBook leliengikade ngili- ducatha last week.

       B: ngiyathankiza smash!!

       B: How are you? Are you going to buy?

       A: No. I am just buying.

       B: Come see me tonight. I want to give you a book.

       A: I will come at 7.

       B: Are you lying?

       A: No. I am not lying

       B: What day is it today?

       A: I think Monday, maybe Tuesday.

       B: I will see you (later). But (please) don't lie about the book!

       A: I shall bring the book I read last week

       B: Thank you, dear!

Fragment 5

From *Dissertation IsiNgqumo: Exploring Origins, Growth and Sociolinguistics of an Nguni Urban-Township Homosexual Subculture, by Praisegod Mduduzi Ntuli p176*

       Mcedisi: Ngivele ngizwe is'bhomu uma ngibimona Leliya qenge Ngifisa

       angi-ayine. Awubheke lesi smeshi sesibhedlelekile.

Bruce: Hhayi mina o sengibhamekile manje, sengizoguza phezulu.

Mcedisi: I just feel an orgasm when I see that guy. I want him to penetrate me. Look at him, he has fallen asleep.

Bruce: My friend I am hungry now, I'm going (leaving).

Fragment 6

From *Dissertation IsiNgqumo: Exploring Origins, Growth and Sociolinguistics of an Nguni Urban-Township Homosexual Subculture, by Praisegod Mduduzi Ntuli p72*

Nhlanhla: Awu, dali, awukopiti ucako kanje dali.

Sfiso: Ey, yo, ngiyakugcika, uma ngimgeda, ngingayek ukwentha/ukunkriza dali.

Nhlanhla: Asisethi kanje uphefu dali, kodwa imvelo ayisethi

Nhlanhla: Kodwa ungathi ucako uyismesh, ngoba nje unompholiso.

Sfiso: Hayibo, kala dol, ucako eseluthuka ubhovu. Ungathi ufezela.

Nhlanhla: Asiguze, dali, siya kuyena.

Nhlanhla/Sfiso: Sawubona.

Mlwazi: Sawubona. Kodwa ngisishumi isiNgqumo.

Nhlanhla: wow, darling, can't you see this (cute) guy, what a darling.

Sfiso: Ey, yo, I tell you, if I could get (date) this guy, I would not be bitching (fooling around anymore).

Nhlanhla: It's so beautiful, his butt, darling, but it's just his perfect nature.

Nhlanhla: But one could say that the guy is gay, because he is quite effeminate.

Sfiso: Hayibo, look doll, the guy is [French] kissing a woman. It seems he is straight.

Nhlanhla: Let's go, darling, we'll go to him.

Nhlanhla/Sfiso: [Hello]

Mlwazi: Hello. But I speak isiNgqumo.

Fragment 7

Provided by *Boykie*

1) Ngicimele okhothi ba mambhu

   I stole Mom's money

2) Briyo ngigiyame ka friendolina

   Yesterday I slept at my friend's

3) Ngithe ngilander ka chako ngafica inkomfa

   When I arrived at my man's place there was a crowd

4) Imuke yakwami imukelene nezimbomvu ezimbanqwa

   My boyfriend is dating 2 girls

5) Umambu we qenge lakwami akangiphumeli

   The mother of my boyfriend (my mother in law) doesn't like me

6) Akukho smash esingamukelena namasaka

   No gays can go out with a deadbeat/ hobbo/ rundown/ nobody

7) Uwindela mina noma okhothi bami

   Do u like me or my money

8) Uchako wami usewindela ukugodloza

   My man wants to marry

9) Siguzela eMall siyobhadlaza injonjelo

   Let's go to the mall we will buy clothes

10) Isgayo nomloshelo uziqedile izimash

    Alcohol & drugs has destroyed gays

11) Qeda ukuguqula

    Finished cooking

12) Uqalisani?

What are you doing?

Appendix D: Glossings

1.   Ngiguzele

     [ngi-guz-el-e > sm1sg-go-appl-sbjv]

2.   Sizoguza

     [si-zo-guz-a > sm1pl-fut-go-fv]

3.   Singaguza siyobhama

     [si-nga-guz-a > sm1pl-pot-go-fv]

     [si-yo-bham-a > sm1pl-fut-eat-fv]

4.   Uwindela

     [u-windel-a > sm2sg-want.appl-fv]

5.   Ngingawindela ukuyogeda

     [ngi-nga-windel-a > sm1sg-pot-want.appl-fv]

6.   Uzoqalisa

     [u-zo-qalis-a > sm2sg-fut-do-fv]

7.   Ngizoguzela

     [ngi-zo-guz-el-a > sm1sg-fut-go-appl-fv]

8.   Ngikale

     [ngi-kal-e > sm1sg-watch-sbjv]

9.   Siyobhamana,

     [si-yo-bhaman-a > sm1pl-fut-fuck.asso-fv]

10. Angishumi

     [a-ngi-shum-i > neg-1sg-know-neg.prs]

11. Ngiqalise

     [ngi-qalis-e > sm1sg-do-sbjv]

12. Ngimugcike

     [ngi-mu-gcik-e > sm1sg-om1-tell-sbjv]

13. Uyobhadlaza

     [u-yo-bhadlaz-a > sm2sg-fut-buy-fv]

14. Khapha

     [khaph-a > come-imp]

15. Uzongikala

[u-zo-ngi-khal-a > sm2sg-fut-om1sg-watch-fv]

16. Ngizokhapha

    [ngi-zo-khaph-a > sm1sg-fut-come-fv]

17. Ngizokukala

    [ngi-zo-ku-kal-a > sm1sg-fut-om2sg-see-fv]

18. Ngikhaphe

    [ngi-khaph-e > sm1sg-come-sbjv]

19. Uguzela

    [u-guz-el-a > sm2sg-go-appl-fv]

20. Angimphumeli

    [a-ngi-m-phumel-i > neg-1sg-om3sg-like.appl-prs.neg]

21. Uqalisa

    [u-qalis-a > sm3sg-do-fv]

22. Barekge?

    [ba-rekg-e > sm3pl-good-fv]

23. Asiguze

    [a-si-guz-e > pol-sm1pl-go-sbjv]

24. Angishumi

    [angi-shum-i > neg-1sg-know-prs.neg]

25. Bayisethi

    [ba-yisethi > sm3pl-be.set-fv]

26. Urekge?

    [u-rekg-e > sm2sg-be.wel-fv]

27. Uqalisani?

    [u-qulis-a-ni > sm2sg-do-fv-question]

28. Siguzela

    [si-guz-el-a > sm1pl-go-appl-fv]

29. Siyobhadlaza

    [si-yo-bhadlaz-a > sm1pl-fut-but-fv]

30. Awukopiti

    [a-u-kopit-I > neg-2sg-see-neg.prs]

31. kala

[kal-a > look-imp]

32. Asiguze

    [a-si-guz-e > pol-sm1pl-go-sbjv]

33. Uwindela

    [u-windel-a >sm2sg-want-fv]

34. Ngimgeda

    [ngi-m-ged-a > sm1sg-om3sg-get-fv]

35. Bayanikisa

    [ba-ya-nikis-a > sm3-cont-be.well-fv]

36. Uyangphumela

    [u-ya-ngi-phumel-a > sm1-cont-om1sg-like.appl-fv]

37. Ngiyabhadlaza

    [ngi-ya-bhadlaz-a > sm1sg-cont-buy-fv]

38. Ngiyathankiza

    [ngi-ya-thankiz-a > sm1sg-cont-thank-fv]

39. Ngiyakugcika

    [ngi-ya-ku-gcika-a > sm1sg-cont-om2sg-tell-fv]

40. Ngiguqalisile

    [ngi-guqalis-ile > sm1sg-clean.caus- prf.cnj]

41. Ngicimele

    [ngi-cimel-e > sm1sg-steal- prf.cnj]

42. Ngigiyame

    [ngi-giyam-e > sm1sg-sleep- prf.cnj]

43. Sengigeda

    [se-ngi-ged-a > inc-sm1sg-get-fv]

44. Sengizoguza

    [se-ngi-zo-guz-a > inc-sm1sg-fut-go-fv]

45. Sengibhamekile

    [se-ngi-bhamek-ile > inc-sm1sg-be.hungry-prf.dsj]

46. Esingamukelena

    [e-si-nga-mukelen-a > rel-sm7-pot-date-fv]

47. Uyismesh

[u-yi-smesh > sm3sg-be-gay]

48. Usewindela

    [u-se-windel-a > sm3sg-inc-want-fv]

49. Ungaqalisi

    [u-nga-qalis-i > sm2sg-subj-do-subj]

50. Angiayine

    [a-ngi-ayin-e > sm1-om1sg.fuck.sujv]

51. Akangiphumeli

    [a-ka-ngi-phumel-I > neg-3sg-om1sg-like-neg.prs]

52. Akanhiphumeli

    [a-ka-ngi-phumel-i > neg-3sg-om1sg-want-prs.neg]

53. Sayojujuma

    [(si-)sa-yo-jujum-a > pers-fut-party-fv]

54. Ukugodloza

    [uku-godloz-a > inf-marry-fv]

55. Ukuguqula

    [uku-guqul-a > inf-cook-fv]

56. Ukukukhaphisela

    [uku-ku-khapis-el-a > inf-om2sg-give-appl-fv]

57. Koguqula

    [ku-guqul-a > inf-clean-fv]

58. Ngizoguzela

    [ngi-zo-guz-el-a > sm1sg-fut-go-appl-fv]

59. Kogiyama

    [ko-giyam-a > inf-sleep-fv]

60. Ukuyogeda

    [uku-yo-ged-a > inf-fut-get-fv]

61. ayisethi

    [a-yi-seth-i > sm?-be-good-fv]

62. Ngiliducatha (book)

    [ngi-li-ducath-a > sm1sg-om?-read-fv]

63. Siwusishwili

[si-wusishwil-i > sm7-be.small-fv]

64. Imukelene

    [i-mukelen-e > sm9-date-prf.cnj]

65. Ngiyaliphumela

    [ngi-ya-li-phumel-a > sm1sg-cont-om5-like.appl-fv]

66. Ingigcike

    [i-ngi-cik-e > sm9-om1sg-tell-prf.cnj]

67. uziqedile
    [u-zi-qed-ile > sm?-om8-destroy-prf.cnj]

68. Sesibhedlelekile

    [se-si-bhedlel-ek-ile > inc-sm7-sleep-appl-prf.dsj]

69. Asisethi

    [a-si-seth-i > rel-sm7-good-fv]

70. Ngisishumi isiNgqumo

    [ngi-si-shum-i > sm1sg-om7-speak-fv]

71. ngilander

    [ngi-lander > sm1sg-arrive]

72. Angimeshile

    [a-ngi-mesh-ile > neg-1sg-gay-prf.dsj]

73. Eseluthuka

    [e-sa-luthuk-a > unknown-pers-kiss-fv]

Appendix E: Word List

Vocabulary

English	isiNgqumo sg.	isiNgqumo pl.	Translation from:
Ass	umgodo		Ntuli
	nosh		Siphamandla
	isphefu	iziphefu	Senny, Luyanda
	uphefu		VerNtuli
Beer	isichibi		Ebrary
	isigeqo		Sanele, Brian
	isigayo		Brian, Boykie
Bird	ofaku	ofakweni	Senny, Boykie (sg)
Bitch	nonkroyi	nonkroyi	Ntuli, Boykie
Black person	ubukhwashu		Boykie
Blowjob	is'qeda		Ntuli
Boy	ushwili	oshwili	Ebrary, VerAluta
	shwili	oshwili	Lethu
	shwile		Boykie
Boyfriend	imuke	imuke	Senny
Bread	ubhabsi		Oscar
Breast	othith**i**	othith**o**	Senny
Bums	amabhodwe esizulu		Ntuli
Car	isidudula	izidudula	Ntuli, Ebrary, Oscar
	isdu		Boykie
Chicken	nogcekeni		VerSan
Church	umshwayo	imishado	Oscar, Boykie (sg)
		emshwayeni	Boykie
Cigarette	isifoza/umbhemo		Ntuli
	umufozo	imifozo	Unknwon
	ufozana		Boykie
Clothes	injojelo	injejelo	Senny, Boykie
		izimvakazi	Ntuli, Ebrary
Cold drink	umaswithelana	omaswithelana	Oscar
Darling/doll	gweni, dali, dot		Ntuli
Difficult situation	ulucayi		Ntuli
Dog	imalasi	izimalasi	Oscar, Thabo, Ebrary, Senny
	injezo		Ntuli
Dominant gay lover	injonga		Ntuli
Ear	indabakazi	indabakazi	Senny
	yokucoshela	yokucoshela	Senny
Elder	umfundisi		Ebrary
English	isdayi		Oscar
Eye		amaqaphelo	Ebrary
Father/man	inju	inju	Senny, VerSan Boykie,

			Lethu (pl)
	injubugane		Ntuli
Fesses	amasi		Ntuli
Fish	inhlanzi	izinhlanzi	Senny
Food	imbhamo		Oscar, Ebrary, Senny,
	umbhamo	/	Lethu, Ebrary
Friend	frizoska	ofrizoska	Lethu
	uTchoma	oTchoma	Senny
	friendolina	friendolina	Senny, VerSan
	uFriendolina	ofriendolina	Boykie
	fruzah	fruzah	VerIwazi
	ufruzah	ofruzah	Boykie
Gay guy	inkwili	inkwili	
	iskhesane	izikhesane	Oscar
	smesh	smesh	Lethu, VerSan
	smesh	izismesh	Unknown
God	nozitshwaxa		Ebrary
Guard	maskingalane		Ebrary
	uchaki	ochaki	Oscar
		ochako	Boykie
	uchaki	abachikisana	Senny
	umchakisana		Thabo, Ebrary
	umcaksana		VerAluta
	umchaksane		VerIwazi
	ucako		VerNtuli
	umchakisane	abachakisane	Luyanda, VerIwazi (pl)
Hair	ombheko	ombheko	Oscar, Senny
Hat	umhelana	imihelana	Boykie
Hot guy	uvele		Ebrary
	ubonakele		Ebrary
House	isitende	izitende	Brian, Oscar, Ebrary, Boykie
	isitende	estendeni	Senny, VerIwazi
	esitendeni		Boykie
	ste/stende		Unknown
Hyperactive person	umjampi		Ntuli
Indian person	imbakhla		Ebrary
Kindness	ubusomi		Ntuli
Less dominant injonga	umsengi		Ntuli
Lie/No	injini	injini	Oscar, Wikipedia, VerAluta, Boykie
Love	uswidins		Ntuli
Love affair	umcedo		Ntuli
Man	iqenge	amaqenge	Lethu
	qenge	oqenge	Siphamandla, Boykie

Mature skesena	u-anti		Ntuli
Medicine	isifico		Ebrary
Money	okhothipeni		Senny
	openi		Senny
Mother	mambhu	omambhu	Boykie
	mamburuza		Ntuli
	umambhu		Senny, Thabo, Ebrary
Name	onemo	onemolina	Senny, Boykie
Night	bukwashu	bukwashu	Senny
	mashwashwa		VerSan
	masekumashwashwa		
Orgasm	isibhomu		Ntuli
Penis	isiphukwana		Wiki, VerIwazi
	isiphokwane	iziphokwane	Luyanda
	umjovo		Ntuli
Phone	umqingo		Ebrary
Place to stay	ingojo		Ntuli
Player/Casanova	umhephula		Ntuli
Problem	sigcawu		Boykie
Radio	isbhabhazo	izibhabhazo	Oscar
School		emjukethweni	Boykie
	umjukhetho	imijukhetho	Oscar, Boykie (sg)
School (to school)	emjikhethweni		Verhaal Sanele
Scrotum	is'khonde		Ntuli
Shoe	ingqugquzo	izingqugquzo	Oscar, Boykie
	izingqugqu	izingqugquzo	Senny
Small dick	ngubane		Siphamandla
Sperm	umsengo		Ntuli
Straight guy	ufezela	amafezela	Oscar, Ebrary, Ntuli
Student		abajuketi	Ebrary
Suspected of being gay	iqhude		Ntuli
Talkative person	ingevu		Ntuli
Teacher	um'mjukhethisi	om'mjukhethisi	Senny
	umjukethisi	abajukethisi	Ntuli, Ebrary
Town	ngakethembeni		VerSan
Tree	uhlahla		Ntuli
Truth/fact	insule		Unknown
TV	nomakala deer		VerSan
Versatile gay male	imbube		Ntuli, Ebrary
War	imfazo		Ebrary
Water	umngeni		Ntuli, Senny, Ebrary, Oscar
White person	udayi		Ntuli, Ebrary, Boykie
Woman	ubhovu	obhovu	Lethu, Sanele

	ubhovu	izimbhovu	Brian, Senny, Thabo, Ebrary, Oscar, VerNtuli
	umabovette	obovette	Lethu, Brian (sg)
Work	umqhumo		Ntuli, Senny
Wound/pain	ibobo		Ntuli
Crowd	inkomfa		Boykie
Rubbish	namasaka		Boykie
Ecstasy	nomloshelo		Boykie
Boring	isikhenzi		Ntuli
Small	swhili		Boykie
Something	indzabakazi		VerSan
Yesterday	briyo		Boykie
Beautiful	imvelo umvelo		Oscar, VerNtuli Ebrary
Two	mbangqwa		Siphamandla, VerIwazi
One	mukuza		VerAluta, Boykie
Okay	rekge		Sanele
Never	nivi		Boykie
Yes	maye		Wikipedia, Boykie
At	ka		Boykie
Of	we/wa		Boykie
From	ba		Boykie

Verbs

To be good/okay/well/set/on point	ukurekge	VerSan
	ukudayi	Boykie, VerAluta
	ukuseth	Boykie, VerNtuli, VerSan
	ukunikisa	VerSanele
To be hungry	ukubhameka	Ntuli
To be small	ukuwushwili	Boykie
To bitch, scream	ukunkriza	Boykie
	ukwentha	VerNtuli
	ukufaza	Thabo, Oscar
To bring/to give	ukukhaphisa	Oscar
To busk	ukukhamela	Ntuli
To buy	ukubhadlaza	Ebrary, VerSabelo
To cook	ukuguqula	VerSan
To cry	ukutekula	Ebrary
To do	ukudanitha	Oscar
	ukuqalisa	Boykie, VerSan, Versan, VerSab
To drink	ukuqeqa	Ntuli
	ukugaya	Oscar
To eat	ukubhama	VerSan, Boykie
To French kiss	ukuluthuka	Boykie
To fuck	ukunkuna	Ntuli
	ukuqalisa ikhasi	Boykie

	ukubhamana	VerIwazi, Boykie
	ukuayina	Ebrary, VerNtuli
To get / To pick up	ukugeda	VerSan, VerIwazi, VerNtuli
To give birth	ukubhuluza	Thabo
To go	ukuguza	VerSan, Luyanda
To go / To walk	ukushaya	Ebrary, Ntuli
To go / To come	ukukhapha	Oscar, VerSab
To hear / To listen	ukucoshela	Thabo, Ebrary
To kiss	ukuluthuka	Ebrary
To like/love (somebody)	ukuphumela	Ebrary, VerAluta, VerIwazi
To look / To see	ukukala	Ntuli, VerSan, VerSab
To masturbate	ukuskomora	Ntuli
	ukushaya ndlwabu	Ebrary
To party	ukujujuma	VerIwazi
To read	ukuducatha	Boykie, VerSabelo
To say/ to speak/ to know	ukushuma	VerSab,VerNtuli
To seduce	ukutriks	Ntuli
To see	ukukopita	Unknown
To sleep	ukubhedlela	Ntuli
	ukugiyama	VerSan
To smoke	ukufoza	Ntuli, Boykie
To stay	ukuzinza	Ebrary
To teach	ukujutetha	Boykie
To tell	ukuchathaza	Oscar
	ukugcika	VerSan, VerAluta, VerNtuli
To thank	ukuthankiza	Boykie, VerSab
To want	ukuwinda/ukuwindela	VerSan
To watch a movie	ukuyaka movo?	VerSan
To wear	ukujojela	Boykie
To steal	ukucimela	Boykie
To say	ukutha	Boykie
To arrive	ukulander	Boykie
To encounter	ukufica	Boykie
To date	ukumukelena	Boykie
To marry	ukugodloza	Boykie
To finish/to destroy	ukuqeda	Boykie