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Babylon, the bar: a multimodal critical discourse analysis of a Johannesburg queer digital space

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Babylon, the Bar:

A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of a Johannesburg Queer Digital Space

By

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1065157

A Master's Dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Masters) in Linguistics

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Submission date: 31 March 2021

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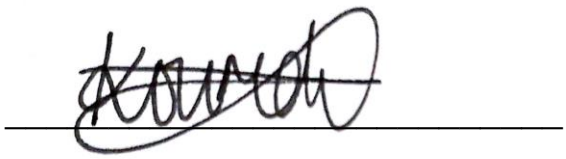
1 DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research is my own unsupported work that is being submitted to the degree of Master of Arts at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been previously submitted, whole or in part, for any degree or examination at any other university.



(Signature of Candidate)

__31st__ day of __March_ *(year)* _____2021_____

2 ABSTRACT

This paper applies a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis to a corpus of posters that were published by Babylon, a self-identified gay bar. These posters advertise various events taking place at their establishment in Illovo, Johannesburg, and appeared on various digital media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and their official online website. The study focuses on the role of language and visual imagery in the indexing and circulation of discourses surrounding gender and sexuality, particularly in the context of LGBTQ+ people. The analysis of the corpus is divided into three sections, unpacking discourses around gay iconography, activism, and the gay body with a focus on intertextuality. Much of Babylon's advertising approach involves placing focus and value in somewhat stereotypical representations of what it means to be queer, saturating their digital spaces with rainbows and allusions to a fun and promiscuous lifestyle. This oversimplified narrative is reinforced by the unidimensional nature of their models, the majority of whom are white and reproduce various elements of the hegemonic masculinity found in mainstream, cisheteropatriarchal society (Baker 2008b). The discourses surrounding these creative choices are unpacked, drawing comparisons between Babylon's glamorous portrayal of gay existence and the actual realities of the queer lived experience in South Africa, where progressive legislation exists in opposition to social attitudes and cultural values. The topics of desirability and commodification are also explored, as is the relationship between the inherently-political nature of queerness and Babylon's lacklustre involvement in issues of sociopolitical significance. This research therefore also exposes the ways in which the role of the gay bar may have shifted in the modern time, contributing more to the establishment of group identitity and less to the active defiance of cisheteropatriarchal conventions.

3 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Throughout the writing of this dissertation, I have received support and assistance from a variety of people, without whom I would not have been able to emerge victorious. First and foremost, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Dr. Gilles Baro, my supervisor, who, despite the added stress of the COVID-19 pandemic, was always an email away and ready to dispense much-needed guidance and insight. Thank you for your endless patience and encouragement through this process; if you have any grey hairs, I know they are because of me!

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To my fellow Masters students: walking this road together made all the difference. I feel blessed that we could lean on each other, commiserate with one another, and motivate each other in times when the workload seemed unending and the mountain too high to climb. I am proud to have worked alongside you.

In addition, I would also like to extend my gratitude to Lidija Damjanović and Natalija Ćerimaj, who were always there to help me refine my writing and provide much-needed emotional support. I would not have made it this far without your constant words of reassurance. I could not have asked for a more loving partner, or a better best friend, and so I am grateful for you both.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to all those who paved the way for LGBTQ+ freedom in South Africa. Though there is still work to be done, the effects of your commitment to justice and equality are felt today and will not be forgotten. This dissertation could not exist without you.

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5. GLOSSARY

The purpose of this glossary is to define and expand on identity terms that will be used frequently throughout this study. Nuance, expansion, and contextualisation of terms is to be expected throughout the study, and as such, only basic, condensed definitions are included here for ease of reference. Definitions in this glossary have been taken from the Safe Zones training manual, which is dispensed to Safe Zones trainers at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Ally: A person who, while not being LGBTAIQ+, is supportive of and advocates for LGBTAIQ+ individuals and communities.

Asexual: A person who does not experience sexual attraction to others.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to two or more genders. Often, someone who is attracted to people of their own gender, and then other genders.

Gay: A man who is primarily attracted to other men. Some women also use this term, instead of 'lesbian'.

Intersex: A person whose biological sex does not fit clearly into either male or female.

Lesbian: A woman who is primarily attracted to other women.

LGBTAIQ+: An acronym for the people or communities who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Asexual, Intersex, or any other non-heterosexual, non-cisgender identity that has not been explicitly mentioned thus far.

Queer: The definition of this term in the context of sexuality is complex, multifaceted, and sometimes contested. This word was originally a slur for LGBTAIQ+ people, and has since been reclaimed by many individuals in the community, though not all. The definition of the reclaimed term typically either refers to an individual who is not heterosexual or cisgender, but who does not necessarily identify with any of the aforementioned identity labels, OR,

otherwise, refers to an umbrella term encompassing all of the aforementioned identity labels, without specification, often for the purpose of brevity.

Transgender: A person whose gender does not match the gender they were assigned at birth.

6. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to introduce gay bars and Babylon as a topic of study, unpacking the Babylon brand and general practices. The idea of queerness will also be explored, with a focus on the origin of the term and modern-day usage. Following this, the concept of an LGBTQ+ community will be introduced, and the aim of this study will be outlined.

Babylon is a self-proclaimed 'LGBT+ bar' with an inclusive mission statement and a penchant for hosting colourful, uniquely-themed events which are well-attended by queer people in the surrounding area. These events often feature drag performances from both local and international queens, incentivising and rewarding the active participation of their patrons. If their social media is anything to go by, this bar is never empty. While Babylon is certainly a successful establishment with a strong brand and active media presence, certain aspects of their advertising campaigns call their commitment to diversity into question. In an era where the variety of queer identities seems to be expanding and visibility has become more important than ever, why does a bar choose to represent one kind of 'queer' over another? Perhaps the benefits of palatability and patriarchy supersede the desire to accurately encapsulate what it means to be a queer body in South Africa.

Queerness, when defined most loosely as a deviation from normative standards of cisgender and heterosexual identities and practices, has existed for as long as humanity itself. This way of living and being has been expressed and understood differently across time and space, with many civilisations placing great value in alternative expressions of gender and sexuality. This is easily observed in the societies of ancient Greece and Rome, where depictions of same-sex relations have been recorded in art (Atack 2015; Hubbard 1998; MacMullen 2013). Gender fluidity that is now often identified as 'queer' or associated with a transgender identity has been esteemed and even deified in a multitude of other indigenous groups for millennia, with First

Nations and Native American peoples still recognising the existence of Two Spirit and adjacent identities (LeMaster 2014; Smithers 2014). It is often said that the issues of homophobia and transphobia only came into existence with the rise of Abrahamic religions, though early Christian evangelism in particular is often deemed the most active culprit (Thomas and Olson 2012). This is largely as a result of the clear-cut dichotomy between men and women stressed by organised religion, which builds society on the foundation of cisheteropatriarchal values. Gender identities beyond the binary have no place in such a world, nor do non-heterosexual identities and practices, which flout pre-determined gender roles and conventions, and disrupt the valued objective of sexual reproduction. This idea was further spread by colonialism, much of which was carried out on religious grounds (Meiu 2015). As such, it is little wonder that, since the first wave of Christian evangelism, individuals whose desires and identities do not align with supposed Bible-derived heterosexual norms[1] have sought to build community for themselves as a means of achieving security as well as personal fulfilment (Thomas and Olson 2012).

The result of this is what is now known as the LGBTQ+ community – that is, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer community, with the '+' symbol meant to include other non-cisgender, non-heterosexual identities that do not fit into the previous identity labels –, though labels and practices may vary. As is the case with any community, spaces have been established – in both formal and informal capacity – to facilitate group interaction and development among those who identify with LGBTQ+ identities, the most common and recognizable of which is the gay bar. Though the physical appearance of the gay bar is not a monolith and is greatly variable, this space has played an integral role in the Gay Rights movements of the last few

[1] While the spread of Christianity has played out differently across time and space, the general classification of homosexuality as sin is a common feature of belief statements across many denominations. This is despite the work of scholars pointing to fact that the original Greek and Aramaic Biblical texts do not directly mention consensual homosexual relationships between adults. (Robinson 2013)

centuries, often acting as a hub and source point for scholarship, protest action, and identity development.

The modern understanding of a gay bar is less complex, when separated from scholarship and discourses surrounding language, gender, and sexuality in space. A gay bar is, quite simply, a bar where LGBTQ+ people – or rather, people of non-normative gender identities and sexualities who may or may not identify with any given label – go for entertainment and recreation. Since same-sex relations and deviations from the gender binary are now considered to be a deviation from societal norms, their embodiment and celebration is inherently queer, when one considers the general definition of the term finds its foundation in unorthodoxy (Baker 2008d; Tucker 2016). This, of course, extends to spaces designed for and by queer people; as a result, gay bars are considered queer spaces.

6.1. Aim and Rationale

The metropolitan area of Johannesburg is home to a small handful of commercial establishments that can be considered "queer spaces." Babylon, a club in Illovo, is widely regarded as one such space, as it is owned and frequented by queer people, as well as advertised as a "gay bar," on posters, their website, and their official Facebook page. Illovo is an upmarket suburb of Sandton with a large population of young professionals who work in the surrounding area. It is one of the wealthier areas of Johannesburg, and thus, also home to a variety of spaces and establishment designed for recreation and entertainment. This study aims to look at the a corpus of Babylon's event posters in order to assess what characteristics the digital space possesses which qualify Babylon as a queer space. Further objectives of this study are to identify the most prevalent discourses within the posters, and explore whether the space and event posters are or are not representative of queer existence in South Africa, particularly in terms of key identities such as race, gender, and identity expression. The study will be

conducted via a multimodal critical discourse analysis, observing and analysing various elements within each of the posters and the discourses they index.

The aim of this study, ultimately, is to contribute to South African queer studies by investigating one of Johannesburg's most popular queer spaces. While some scholars have conducted research of this nature, – namely Shaikjee and Stroud (2014) and Milani and Wolff (2014) – there is always a need for further analyses of specific, commercially-designated queer spaces in South Africa. Despite an airtight Constitution heavy on anti-discrimination legislation and being the fifth country globally to legalise same-sex marriage in 2006, a significant portion of South Africa's population holds homophobic views, with a 2012 research report revealing that 46% of participants still disagree with the legalisation of same-sex marriage (The Other Foundation, 2012). Moreover, a 2019 report by ILGA titled *State-sponsored Homophobia* (ILGA 2019) confirmed that which has been acknowledged in South Africa for many years: high rates of rape and homophobia-driven assault of LGBTQ+ individuals in less affluent areas, particularly townships, are some of the highest in the world. It is important to note, however, that the West's focus on struggle and violence in townships often overshadows – and, as a result, detracts from – a more holistic view of queer existence within townships. The result of this is an essentialised and oversimplified perspective on what it means to be an LGBTQ+ person in South Africa – particularly when one is Black or low-income –, with discourses around corrective rape and victimhood at the centre (Imma 2017). These discourses are problematic primarily because they do not demand the issue be interrogated further to identify the source or reasons behind the violence; rather, the Western layman is left to draw conclusions, the majority of which are incorrect and suppose violence is an inevitability when one is gay, Black, and in a township, rather than a result of the Western-imposed desire to control women's bodies or reproduce heteropatriarchy (Judge 2021).

With South Africa having such a complex, multifaceted, and intense relationship with queerness, bars, clubs, and other social spaces designed for (and advertised to) queer individuals are still sparse, far outnumbered by those in the United States of America and many European countries, some of which have yet to reinforce their acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community in any legislative capacity.

Such statistics provide ample explanation as to why the majority of 'official' LGBTQ+ spaces, designed to provide safe recreation and reprieve from discrimination, are dominated by middle- and upper-class South Africans, the majority of whom are white (Canham 2017). In a country of great racial and cultural diversity, there exists also a stark inequality in terms of who is free to embrace their queer identity, and who would be in immediate danger by doing so. The country's history of racial segregation and consequent wealth gap is undoubtedly a contributing factor to this; population groups struggling with having more basic needs met are unlikely to involve themselves in issues that may potentially introduce further difficulties into their lives, such as identity politics and unconventional 'lifestyles'. When one considers that it is predominantly non-white South Africans who are statistically less wealthy and stable than their white neighbours due to past systemic inequality, it is unsurprising that the majority of 'out and proud' South Africans are middle-class, and white. This divide is especially noticeable when one considers that 80% of South Africa's population is Black, and only 9% white. This study therefore also aims to highlight this discrepancy and observe how it plays out in a space advertised as being 'the best gay hangout in Johannesburg,' which is very deliberately situated in Illovo, an affluent suburb near Sandton, an area known for its upper-class residents and their opulent lifestyles.

The aim of this research study is therefore twofold: firstly, to investigate what about Babylon's event posters signal that Babylon is a queer space; that is, what characteristics of the space

make it a ‘gay venue’, as it is advertised? Secondly, this research study aims to explore the various discourses surrounding queerness that can be found in the posters.

The outcome of this research has the potential to be useful in future sociolinguistics studies around queer culture in South Africa, as it combines semiotic landscape analysis with queer issues, shedding light on how language and their media – that is, the type of vocabulary used and the format in which desired messages are conveyed – can create a space for a specific demographic which may exist in opposition to one’s immediate surroundings. This information can be applied in a variety of other contexts, but particularly where the establishment of queer spaces in South Africa is needed. In other words, the results of this study can be used to better understand what promoters and marketing professionals rely on when trying to attract or appeal to queer South Africans, as well as what characteristics of a space are required in order for those who frequent it to feel welcome and safe. Consequently, progress can be made toward the establishment of more queer spaces where they are most needed in less affluent areas, in order to provide a greater portion of the queer South African population with safe and comfortable spaces to exist in.

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7. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

7.1. Introduction

In this section, I summarise the field of language, gender, and sexuality, with a particular focus on multimodality, difference, and desire. I also summarise the fields of semiotics and semiotic landscape studies, explaining how the latter has come to intersect with linguistic landscape studies in an effort to properly understand meaning-making in space. This is unpacked in the specific context of language in digital spaces. Referring to a small number of studies, I explain how one cannot understand how space is constructed or understood without attention to issues

of language, gender, and sexuality. Furthermore, I delve into the realm of language, gender, and sexuality in the context of identity formation and desirability, with emphasis on how multimodal analysis can be used to unpack the ways in which queerness is conceptualised and represented. Finally, I also explore the ideas of masculinity and identity in queer spaces, as well as describe the current state of queer affairs in the contexts of both South African legislation and general public opinion. The results of these studies point towards a greater need to understand the standards according to which queer spaces in South Africa are advertised, as well as how identities relating to gender and sexuality can be constructed, defined, and indexed through visual imagery and linguistic choices. This is particularly pertinent when one ponders the ways in which establishments may self-identify as queer spaces, as well as how queer spaces may represent and construct the gay body.

7.2. Language, Gender, and Sexuality

Early linguistic scholarship has often focused on the relationship between language and gender or language and sexuality, with little emphasis placed on the ways in which these two facets of identity are interrelated (Talbot 1998). Butler posits that gender is not an innate component of one's being, but rather, a performance that takes place, either consciously or unconsciously (Butler 1990). Butler suggests that all everyday actions, utterances, behaviours, and choices one makes, work together to construct the performance that is one's gender expression. Her theory of gender performance aims to deconstruct the notion that gender is an innate and direct result of one's biological sex, and repositions gender as an aspect of identity which has the potential to interact dynamically with issues of race, sexuality, and power, among others (Butler 1990). Butler also draws on the work of Irigaray, whose research explored attitudes and language use towards women. In her work, Irigaray proposes that society's treatment of men and women has its foundation in phallocentrism, and thus, the exploitation of women is a result of a power imbalance between two biological sexes (Irigaray 1985). Though her writing seeks

to unpack discourses surrounding female pleasure and the experience of womanhood, it has since been criticised for being essentialist and reinforcing the notion of an immutable gender binary. Contemporary research acknowledges the importance of a more well-rounded and thorough approach, taking into account both gender and sexuality when investigating language use in society, rather than merely one or the other (Baker 2008f).

7.2.1. The Three Ds

Earlier ideas around gender and language use have been collated into a set of models referring to the three Ds – Deficit, Dominance, and Difference (Baker 2008a). Danish Linguist Otto Jespersen is credited with the development of the Deficit model, although many of his ideas have since been disputed on grounds of their sexist foundations (Baker 2008a; Talbot 1998). The chief takeaway from his theorising about Deficit postulated that women's use of language was an inferior deviation from standard (male) usage. Despite accusing women of speaking too much and using grammar incorrectly, Jespersen still postulated that it was women, rather than men, who maintained the purity of language by avoiding vulgarity. Men, on the other hand, were credited with continuing the development of language through innovation and creativity (Baker 2008a). Though much of the Deficit model is now known to be inaccurate, the idea that changing gender dynamics and discourses in society affect language use rings true and is a foundational aspect of language, gender, and sexuality as an academic field.

The model of Dominance builds on this, having surfaced in the 1970s, some fifty years after Jespersen's claims. Established during the Second Wave of feminism, this linguistic theory has a more political basis and attributes differences in language use to patriarchal power dynamics (Baker 2008a). Robin Lakoff is credited with popularising the Dominance model through a 1975 publication, which postulated that women's use of language was a result of their socialisation to be polite, meek, and subservient, while men's use of language served to assert their position of power and authority in society (Baker 2008a; Lakoff 1973). The validity of

this theory has also been called into question, as these claims were a result of personal observations rather than academic research and study. Further critiques of this study involve the reframing of Lakoff's observations to the context of general power relations rather than those concerning gender. In other words, more contemporary scholars posit that the kind of language use Lakoff associated with women – that is, excessive politeness, platitudes, cooperative language, and words denoting uncertainty (Lakoff 1973) – is not a feature of one's gender, but rather, a feature of one's positionality and power. Thus, it could apply to individuals of any gender, depending on social context (Baker 2008a).

The theory of Difference attempts to broaden the scope of why language use may vary according to gender and identity. The Difference model is the most recent of the three, and as such, has undergone the most revision and adaptation as the field of Sociolinguistics has evolved. A variety of academics – namely Spender, Aries, and Johnson (Aries and Johnson 1983; Spender 1980) – have investigated gender-based differences in language use more empirically, noting differences in typical topics of conversation, as well as in language use in the context of professional group settings. This broadens the scope of what 'difference' may refer to, extending beyond how people of different genders speak, to what they speak *about.* Such research has contributed to the prevalence of the notion that men and women simply do speak differently, though the reasons behind this are varied (Baker 2008a). The model of Difference was eventually expanded beyond the realm of heterosexuality by scholars exploring the ways in which gay individuals used language, with a particular focus on the role of gay slang in developing a group identity (Baker 2008f). Though early studies around 'gay language' occasionally lacked nuance and reinforced stereotypes about gay men, the idea that one's sexuality may impact language use just as much as gender was integral to the further development of Language, Gender and Sexuality as a field of academic study (Baker 2008a). As with any kind of research involving individual identities, there is no clear-cut or concise

answer to the question of how – of even *if* – language is used differently by people of varying genders or sexualities, as there are simply too many external and contextual variables to consider.

In her work, McElhinny stresses the importance of maintaining a critical and cautious stance when conducting research on language, gender, and sexuality. While studies in this field can be invaluable, one must be cautious not to rely too much on a rigid definition or characterisation of any component of identity. In other words, one should not over-define the concepts of gender or sexuality, as these are not static or finite aspects of being (McElhinny 2003a). Moreover, one cannot analyse gender as a concept in isolation, as gender is a construction built upon the context in which it is found, and cannot exist without an understanding of sex and society (Cameron 1997; McElhinny 2003a). McElhinny also puts forward that, where a topic as broad as language, gender, and sexuality is concerned, one must actively seek to explore chosen discourses in as much specific detail as possible, so as to avoid saturating the field with multiple versions of the same vague and uninformative perspectives on otherwise mundane media (McElhinny 2003b).

While the field of language, gender, and sexuality has the potential to provide valuable insight into complex social structures, phenomena, and contexts, it is not without critique. Anthropologist Don Kulick takes the stance that a desire-based framework of research would serve language, gender, and sexuality studies more effectively than an identity-based approach (Kulick 2000). Kulick posits that language cannot be accurately – or rather, comprehensively – studied in the context of gender and sexuality, because identity and practice are two different things that do not always line up. In other words, a researcher who endeavours to study 'gay and lesbian' language will inevitably fail to take into account the language use of individuals who do not identify with the above labels, but who still experience and engage with same-sex desire (Kulick 2000). More contemporary scholars would take issue with this claim, however,

as modern language, gender, and sexuality studies acknowledge the nuanced difference between identity labels and sexual practice (Peters 2005).

7.3. Queer Sociolinguistics

7.3.1. Overview

Before one is able to competently investigate a queer space, it is of vital importance that queerness and all its nuances have been thoroughly explored. Beginning as a slur for any individuals perceived to be gay or societally-unacceptable, 'queer' has evolved and been reappropriated to index non-normative sexual- and gender identities (Peters 2005). While some participants of Peters' study viewed 'queer' as an umbrella term encompassing all non-heterosexual, 'deviant' identities, others embraced it as a term referring to being 'neither here nor there' in terms of sexuality; that is, 'queer' was used to escape the restrictive binary of a strictly heterosexual or homosexual identity. In other words, a queer identity can sometimes exist in direct opposition to a gay or lesbian identity, subverting the idea that sexuality can be essentialised or exist as a fixed entity (Peters 2005). This idea is corroborated in Milani's study of homosexual identities in the online community of *Meetmarket*, where he discusses the various interpretations of what it means to be queer, commenting on the fact that queerness is often produced or performed in a manner which replicates or conforms to heterosexual norms in order to be palatable (Milani 2013a). This study also explores the methods by which homosexual behaviour and identity can be commodified, valorising expression most similar to heterosexual standards of masculinity through language, often at the expense of more unconventional forms of queerness (Milani 2013a).

To many self-identified queer folk, queerness goes beyond simply sexual orientation, and extends to many other facets of identity, such as gender conceptualisation and performance, political ideology, and social practices. In the words of Beaker, one of Peters' participants in her study, "queer is a headspace", rather than a static label (Peters 2005). Queerness can

therefore be applied to any context where what is conventional and normative is being subverted in some way, with focus on the intersectionality of identities and the impact thereof (Crenshaw 1991). Emphasis lies on the idea that "queer" is not simply an adjective describing somebody who is an "other" of some kind; queer can be an identity, an ideology, a way of thinking, a way of acting and existing, and so forth (Peters 2005). In summation, while the exact indexicality and meaning of queerness is largely personal, it encompasses that which is considered non-normative, but which will not be confined to a pre-arranged, binary label, which is often restrictive and somewhat inaccurate.

Queer sociolinguistics is therefore the study of queer language in society. Such a topic is still broad, and can include the study of language used by queer people, the language used *about* queer people in greater society, as well as the language that exists to index queerness as an identity, as Baker explains in a chapter about language and identity (Baker 2008c). This explanation is not exhaustive, and expands in tandem with the development of language and the consequent development of sociolinguistics as a field (Motschenbacher 2011). Existing queer sociolinguistics studies have included 'secret' dialects of English used exclusively in gay circles, such as Polari (Taylor 2007), studies pertaining to the kind of language used on websites targeted at queer couples (Milani and Wolff 2015), as well as studies on how language is used to appeal to a queer target market (Shaikjee and Stroud 2014).

7.3.2. Making Meaning and Identity in Space

Sociolinguistics has grown in popularity over the last century. This field has increased in relevance over the years, and focuses on the relationship between language, those who speak it, and greater society. That is, sociolinguistics explores how language differs based on social context, and how people can construct identities or perform functions in society using language (Holmes 2013). Sociolinguistics speaks primarily to how individuals interact with themselves and others using language, as language informs positionality, ideology, and identity. Moreover,

the way language is used depends greatly on the society in which it appears; even further, language use differs based on the specific space in which it finds itself, as different audiences and speakers influence instances of language in both content and format (Holmes 2013). Language is therefore an integral component of identity formation, as it facilitates the development of categories, standards, and archetypes, according to which individuals define or identify themselves. This is not limited to the establishment of in-groups and out-groups, but rather, extends to defining what is perceived as normal or desirable (Baker, 2008). Moreover, language is the chief means by which social meanings are able to be constructed and challenged, as well as the vehicle by which these meanings circulate within societies. Not only is language therefore crucial in describing and establishing identities and discourses relating to gender and sexuality, it is also responsible for dispensing these ideas to the greater public (Baker, 2008).

Also worth noting is that the varying ways in which language is formatted or presented may affect how meaning is created or perceived. In the context of language and digital posters, the manner in which various design elements are combined to create a composition has great bearing on the meaning made and the message communicated to the audience (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006). Moreover, because online interaction does not require the additional nuance required for face-to-face communication – and relies largely on language itself, it is useful in exploring how language creates identity (Baker, 2008).

The existence of so many factors with the potential to influence language use and meaning-making necessitates multimodal analysis. Multimodality, in essence, is a research approach based on the idea that a subject or space does not exist as one entity, but rather, is comprised of and informed by a multitude of elements that work together to create the whole. Where communication is concerned, multimodality refers to the various resources and mechanisms that interact during the meaning-making process (Pütz and Mundt 2018). This may involve the

physical voice, iconography, writing, media layout, colour, language placement, images, music, gesture, and body language, among a plethora of other semiotic resources (Adami 2015). These various modes of communication are most efficiently analysed by means of critical discourse analysis, an analytical framework whereby the various discourses indexed through semiotic resources are identified and unpacked in the context of where they appear (Zappettini 2013). Multimodal critical discourse analysis is particularly valuable in research where physical and digital spaces are concerned, as they allow for a more thorough understanding of how language interacts with its environment to create meaning (Milani 2013b; Piller 2010).

In less complex terms, it is important to understand that words and images do not exist in isolation and therefore do not index or shape identity without the influence of external factors. Such factors include, but are not limited to, the context of said words and images, as well as the identity of those perceiving them. Language is a highly effective tool in creating hierarchy and value. By framing certain aspects of gender and identity as more meaningful or desirable than others, individuals and corporations alike are able to elevate or even redefine what it means to have an identity or gender of their choice, thereby influencing entire populations and societies. That is, aspects of identity performance which are considered positive are typically reduplicated and represented frequently in media, while aspects which are not held in high esteem are not. This fosters the development of a cycle wherein individuals are consistently exposed to and reminded of the standards of desirability they ought to strive towards. Though such actions may have long-lasting effects on the ways the gender and sexuality are perceived, they are also easily subject to change if more impactful language and discourse disrupts their trajectory (Baker, 2008). As a result, meanings and connotations behind language and images are not static, evolving over time as identities, discourses, societies, and contexts develop (Mpendukana 2014).

7.4. LGS, Linguistic Landscapes, and Space

The intersection of identity and community building with linguistics is integral to sociolinguistics and the overall field of language, gender, and sexuality, particularly where branding and queer spaces are concerned. This is especially true if one is to unpack the discourses behind desirability and ideas surrounding what it means to be queer in a heteropatriarchal world (Baker 2008d). Moreover, Mpendukana posits that it is important for such topics of research to be explored with an emphasis on multimodality, owing to the fact that meaning-making and identity formation are not exclusively driven by language alone, and are often accompanied by other communicative agents (Mpendukana 2014), such as signs, though this is not the focus of this study. In the context of multimodal media analysis in the field of LGS – that is, Language, Gender, and Sexuality –, the priority lies in exploring how language and visual clues index and/or contribute to discourse surrounding gender and sexuality. Baker expands on this in his chapter about gendered discourses and heteronormativity, where he exposes the power language and visuals have to define what is seen as 'normal' or acceptable when it comes to the performance or expression of gender and sexuality (Baker 2008b). .

Baker adds that the use of language to create positive, palatable representations of queer identities contributes to the reconstruction of discourses surrounding gender and sexuality. Despite aiding in the establishment of group identities, however, Baker also notes that the commodification of stereotypical elements of queer identities may also contribute to the essentialisation and oversimplification of 'alternative' expressions of gender and sexuality (Baker 2008d). This is discussed in the context of Pride-based advertisement campaigns, many of which centre rainbow iconography and language around self-love, while ignoring the multifaceted nature of sexuality and gender identity. Moreover, Baker cautions that a lack of diverse representation when discussing queer identities may lead to the reinforcement of

hegemonic masculinity and cisheteropatriarchal values, by representing only those in the queer community who reproduce what is already acceptable in mainstream spaces (Baker 2008b).

7.4.1. Digital Space

Milani and Wolff (2015), investigating a digital space, explore the replication of heteronormative ideas in queer spaces in the context of a website advertising wedding-planning services for same-sex couples. While one would initially have assumed that a queer-oriented service would be inclusive and progressive in its presentation of ideologies, Milani and Wolff's findings indicate otherwise, revealing an adherence to typical heteronormative values and ideas despite an 'atypical' target audience (Milani and Wolff 2015).

This begins at the homepage, which prompts users to select their gender, offering only two options (man and woman, or more accurately, male and female), using the traditional Mars and Venus sex symbols. This exclusion of individuals beyond the gender binary and conflation of sex and gender indicates a lack of research and insight into the queer community and queer identity, pointing researchers to a single conclusion: the website and service exists more out of a need to commodify queerness than it does to understand and cater to the actual needs of queer people in South Africa. Further substantiating this idea are the pages to which a user is redirected upon selection of their gender. While the text is identical regardless of which page the user has been redirected to, selection of 'female/woman' yields a page with a pink border, while the selection of 'male/man' yields a blue one. This choice plays into a conformity to stereotypical notions of gender before anything has been said or done on the website, pointing to a potentially-subconscious but meaningful reduplication of heteronormative values and ideologies without any adaptation to its queer context (Milani and Wolff 2015).

7.4.2. Queer Spaces

Queer spaces constitute any spaces within a particular geographical location which cater to or are often and notoriously frequented by queer people (Hunt et al. 2019). A number of such spaces operate without formal commercial intervention, existing purely as a result of queer individuals gathering together in a space that has been communally classified as safe and desirable. Formal queer spaces differ in this regard, having been intentionally established for – and often, by – queer individuals seeking a place to gather. In the words of Munt (1998), the primary motivation of queer people gathering in a space is to create commonality and unification, as well as to express solidarity and commitment in fighting oppression (Munt et al. 1998). While the majority of these spaces exist for the purpose of entertainment, recreation, or courtship, spaces dedicated to activities of a more professional nature, such as the provision of education or medical care, exist and thrive around the globe. While gay bars are a common kind of 'queer space', they are certainly not the only kind. In other words, a gay bar is always intended[2] to be a queer space, but a queer space is not always a gay bar.

In his study on language and sexuality in chat rooms, King (2011) posits that gender and sexuality are intrinsically tied to space, as all space contains discourse, and all discourse indexes identity in some way (King 2011). This stance can be explained by the fact that space is highly relational, coming into existence as a result of human interaction and decision making. That is, wherever a space has been constructed, there are people who have constructed it, and since all people have identities, genders, and sexualities, these aspects of a space cannot be ignored. (King 2011). This is also true of digital spaces.. Such assertions are responsible for bringing the topic of queerness into linguistic landscape studies, which previously failed to

[2] *Intended* is the operative word in this case, as queerness must, by definition, subvert societal conventions. This is not always the case with gay bars, who often inadvertently reinforce ableist, classist, or racist structures, among others. In practical terms, a gay bar that caters only to upper-class, white men, does little to challenge normativity. In this case, this is a reduplication of mainstream society, albeit with a homosexual twist.

consider the effect of identity on space. In the same way that gender and sexuality cannot be separated from linguistic studies of space, these aspects of identity must be considered in all sociolinguistic studies. In his book, Baker (2008) explains that gender and sexuality are fundamental components of an individual's identity, affecting both the way they position themselves in society, and how they use language to interact with the world (Baker 2008d). These conclusions have come to be considered common knowledge among sociolinguistic scholars, and thus, issues of gender, sexuality, and identity have an important place in the research of space, both physical and digital.

Both historically and today, formally-established queer spaces designed for recreational purposes have typically taken the shape of bars and nightclubs, more so than coffee shops or other non-alcoholic venues. As a result, the majority of queer spaces – including Illovo's Babylon, the subject of this research study – are populated almost exclusively by adults who are often inebriated, using illicit drugs, and/or seeking sexual partners for the night (Hunt et al. 2019). This in itself has more recently become a point of contention within the queer community, as there are consequently very few formal queer spaces accessible to minors, persons with disabilities, or those battling with addiction.

Hunt, Antin, Sanders and Sisneros (2019) explore the two most dominant discourses surrounding the use of alcohol in queer spaces. The first of these focuses on alcohol as a distraction from underlying issues surrounding an individual's queerness; that is, the supposition that queer people use alcohol to distract themselves from the outside world, where homophobia-based social stigma has led to depression and anxiety, among other issues. In a series of interviews, a considerable number of participants expressed that alcohol lowered their inhibitions and allowed them to explore behaviours typically considered taboo in queer contexts, such as flirting, provocative dancing, and other sexually-motivated activities (Hunt et al. 2019). Without alcohol, many participants explained that they would feel too shy or afraid

to engage with strangers in this way, primarily as a result of the fact that they were socialised to view homosexual behaviours as inherently shameful or predatory (Hunt et al. 2019).

More contemporary research departs from the focus of alcohol as a crutch and examines the way it can be used to facilitate the performance of various identities and strengthen communal bonds. In this article, Hunt, Antin, Sander, and Sisneros (Hunt et al. 2019) investigate the connotations of alcohol consumption within a heterosexual framework, comparing it to the way it is used in queer spaces. In some cultures and contexts, particularly in Western societies, drinking can often be intertwined with the performance of masculinity, thus rendering femininity not as commonly associated with the practice The prevalence of this in Western societies means it is often indexed in mainstream Western media (Iwamoto et al. 2011). Western societies have evolved this paradigm further, considering women more suited to mixed beverages, and men to stronger, undiluted spirits. Once again, this reinforces the notion that there must be an inherent inequality within a set gender binary. There are a variety of discourses to be unpacked from these findings, the first of which is the simultaneous reduplication and subversion of this archetype within a queer context.

In their article (Hunt et al. 2019), participants express that they feel free to subvert gender norms when they are in gay bars, drinking whatever beverages they prefer without being subjected to jeering or pressure to indulge in something more 'suited' to their gender presentation. When asked about other reasons to choose a queer space over a standard straight bar, the vast majority indicated that gay bars offer them a greater sense of security due to the general lack of heterosexual men. Throughout the study, participants reported that the more inebriated heterosexual men were – friends and strangers alike – the more obnoxious and aggressive they seemed to become, leaning into the negative characteristics of the hegemonic masculinity that alcohol has been seen to represent. In the same vein, because space is relational (King 2011)participants express being particularly careful with who they choose to drink with,

excluding individuals whose intoxication and consequent lack of inhibition may become a hazard. Consequently, participants of all genders expressed that gay bars, in the absence of heterosexual men, are spaces where they can socialise and enjoy themselves with minimal risk of harassment (Hunt et al. 2019). Gay bars are also a space free of heterosexual expectations and assumptions; queer women can gather without being approached by men who expect that they are heterosexual and interested in being pursued, while queer men can display affection without being subjected to slurs or facing violence from straight men who view their relations as an affront to masculinity. The presence of alcohol in these spaces eases any awkwardness or anxiety patrons might feel when entering a queer space of such 'unorthodox' values, allowing them to let their guard down and socialise without fear or trepidation. This lack of inhibition further establishes a sense of community among patrons – a sense of belonging in a society where they are often considered to be statistical anomalies among heterosexual peers who have never experienced any shortage of safe spaces to gather. As a result, queer spaces are vital for the development of a cohesive community; nowhere else is it possible to meet a high concentration of people who share similar identities and values in a short space of time, without fear of backlash or violence (Hunt et al. 2019).

7.4.3. Masculinity and Alcohol

Alcohol also allows access to an alternative form of masculinity; removing restrictions on gender expression allows women to perform masculinity through alcohol consumption and an inflated sense of confidence without being marginalised as they typically would in a sober and heterosexual space. As a result, women in queer spaces feel freer to express more traditionally-masculine traits or to take on conventional masculine roles, such as approaching people they are interested in without being construed as offensive or predatory (Hunt et al. 2019).. Furthermore, access to queer spaces and alcohol creates an environment where queer men are

able to distance themselves from expected behaviours in line with hegemonic, heterosexual masculinity in relative safety.

Performances of masculinity do not only appear when individuals are inebriated, however. Using the theories first presented by Butler (1990), Cameron (1997) explores the ways in which genders and masculinities are performed in various contexts (Cameron 1997). While traditional binary views of gender and behaviour may claim that men and women perform gender innately and without premeditation, Cameron and Butler postulate that the performance thereof is almost always deliberate, serving a specific purpose within a given space and context.

Cameron (1997) proposes that the performance of gender and masculinity is never incidental, even when it conforms to societal expectations, as all individuals exist within a gendered discourse within which they are actively socialised and are therefore actively aware of. It then follows that each person is offered the choice to perform that which they know is expected of them, or go against it in an act of subversion or rebellion. While Cameron's research focuses specifically on gendered styles of speaking, this performance of gender and masculinity extends to a plethora of other contexts, such as clothing, physical appearance, body language, choice in beverages, hobbies, and so on, many of which have been explored by Milani (Milani 2014).

Such performances are highly unstable and depend on what an individual hopes to achieve in any given context. Gender and masculinity expressed in one moment may therefore change in an instant, depending on space and time. Cameron unpacks this in the context of in-groups and outgroups; that is, situations may arise where it is more favourable or beneficial to conform to an archetype than to subvert it, or vice versa (Cameron 1997). This can easily be seen in action if one looks at gay bars and clubs, where queer individuals often adapt their behaviour in order to reinforce their queer identities and belonging in the space, potentially attracting others

sharing in their ‘sameness’, only to revert back to a more socially acceptable, ‘straight-passing’ performance of gender on the way home (Shaikjee and Stroud 2014). Subversion may operate in the same way, albeit in reverse, and can be observed in contexts where being identifiable as markedly ‘different’ or ‘other’ serves a purpose, such as in activism and protest (Cameron 1997).

7.4.4. Queer South Africa and Race

Milani and Wolff’s research (Milani and Wolff 2015) also sheds light on another pervasive issue in South Africa’s queer community: despite the country’s population being 76.4% Black and only 9.1% white (Statistics South Africa 2011), the majority of people displayed in the website’s gallery were white. On the men’s portion of the website, 167 out of 204 participants in the online gallery were white, with only 11 black men featured in comparison. On the women’s portion, 184 of the 241 women pictured were white, while just 33 were Black (Milani and Wolff 2015). Moreover, no interracial couples were featured in the gallery at all. An analysis of these results points to the fact that there is little representation of non-white queer individuals in South Africa, with corporations focusing on white members of the LGBTQ+ community as their primary target market (Milani and Wolff 2015).

This focus on the white queer population is further unpacked in one of Canham’s *studies* (Canham 2017), where several Black lesbians are interviewed on the topics of safe spaces and the discrepancy between the comfort of queer white people versus the lack thereof among the queer Black population. Canham’s research focuses on the context of lesbian women in queer spaces, partly because less research has been conducted on woman-specific issues, and partly because queer Black women, who face ‘triple oppression’ at minimum (Canham 2017), endure the most targeted violence compared to the rest of South Africa’s LGBTQ+ community.

Throughout the study, several important issues are raised. The first of these is the role of economic status on queer spaces. As time has progressed in post-Apartheid South Africa, the majority of well-known gay clubs and spaces have migrated from the city centre to the Northern suburbs, many of which later closed down after being replaced by more upmarket establishments (Canham 2017). One of the participants in the study notes that the further North one ventures, the more expensive everything becomes. This problem is coupled with the fact that many such areas are far from townships and neighbourhoods where the majority of queer Black individuals stay. Moreover, such affluent areas are difficult to navigate at night-time due to lack of public transport (Canham 2017). Another participant notes that, even if these new queer spaces were more accessible to the Black queer population, there is often a feeling of 'otherness' or exclusion permeating these spaces as a result of the fact that the majority of people who frequent them are white, middle- or upper-class, and men (Canham 2017). It is made very clear, one of Canham's participants states, that Black queer people – and more specifically, Black queer women – are not the target market of most commercial queer spaces (Canham 2017). This discomfort and lack of belonging does not only extend to clubs and 'hangout' areas; the Johannesburg Pride event is known across the country to be the 'white people's Pride', seeing very few queer People of Colour each year. This is further elaborated on by Milani in an article concerning the One in Nine campaign, which purposely interrupted the Joburg Pride event of 2012 with a die-in, and sought to highlight the additional issues Black queer women faced in South Africa(Canham 2017; Milani 2015)

The assertion that Johannesburg Pride is for white people leads to another discourse Canham and his participants unpack; the relative comfort and safety queer white people experience has allowed them to mould their spaces into those of celebration and entertainment, particularly since 'queer' seems to have been essentialised, often coming to index – or be represented exclusively by – white, gay men (Canham 2017). In contrast, two of the women Canham speaks

to as part of his research note that the majority of gatherings queer Black people partake in are for the purpose of activism (Matebeni 2011), in protest of the violence they are subjected to on a daily basis (Canham 2017). This is also offered as an explanation for the fact that they are not the target market of commercial queer spaces, since corporate brands invest only in positive narratives and celebration rather than those of protest and suffering (Thompson 1990).

There therefore exists a rather large chasm between the white queer experience and the Black queer experience, where the former, in their privilege, are free to enjoy the pleasures and safeties offered by South Africa's progressive legislation and higher socioeconomic status, while the latter still dedicate large portions of their time to merely surviving in a society that refuses them security or socioeconomic justice (Canham 2017).

7.5. Summary

The analysis of meaning-making cannot be conducted without consideration of contextual issues and identities. In less academic terms, one cannot investigate language use without accounting for a) who is using it, b) who is on the receiving end of it, and c) where and how it appears in space. Early research around the models of Deficit, Dominance, and Difference also provide insight into the various ways communication methods and meaning-making processes may differ according to gender and sexuality. This is further reinforced by more contemporary scholars, who posit that the creation of such identities may be facilitated by the construction of space, the circular nature of which both creates meaning and exists as a platform for it to be expressed. This is true of both material and digital spaces, making multimodal critical discourse analysis a valuable tool in investigating queer identity construction in the context of language.

Queer existence in South Africa is far more complex than in many Western countries, owing predominantly to its difficult history of colonialism, oppression, and racial segregation. While the diversity of South Africa's population may lead one to the assumption that the LGBTQ+

community is racially and culturally integrated, the vast socioeconomic discrepancy between Black and white South Africans has led to a divide between predominantly-Black and white queer spaces. Further complicating this are the varying conditions in which queer South Africans of different races operate. While white privilege and historical advantages have allowed queer white individuals to embrace their identities and be catered to by commercial brands, the vast majority of the queer Black population find themselves in an entirely-different situation where their safety is not guaranteed, and thoughts of self-preservation come before entertainment and celebration.

This literature review offers a summary of queer sociolinguistics, language and identity development in both physical and digital spaces, as well as linguistic landscapes, drawing a multitude of conclusions: queer spaces are subsequently impossible to essentialise in South Africa, where one's safety or ability to express themselves freely varies according to their race, gender, and physical location. Identity and gender performances are therefore constantly changing depending on context – and spaces, with them. The exploration of South African queer spaces and populations must therefore be conducted in segments, with focus on one particular space at a time, rather than a space the South African LGBTQ+ community takes up as a whole, of which there is almost certainly none.

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8. CHAPTER THREE: THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework according to which the study was conducted, explaining multimodal critical discourse analysis as a research tool. The basis of this approach – that is, critical discourse analysis – is also unpacked, with emphasis placed on its use within the field of linguistics, and the study of language in space according to the work of Scollon and

Scollon (Scollon and Scollon 2003). The research methodology used for this study is then outlined, with limitations declared.

8.1. Theoretical Framework

This study was conducted by means of a multimodal critical discourse analysis. Simply put, MCDA is a technique by which varying modes of meaning-making are analysed in the context of the varying discourses they index, but through a critical lens (Mpendukana 2014; Zappettini 2013). This investigation technique pays close attention to the format, position, and construction of signs and words as communication devices, with emphasis on identifying and unpacking the discourses associated with each element of a composition. Multimodality in signage is a vital component of this research study, as each mode is a plane upon which a message can be conveyed.

Three kinds of signs have been identified: icons, symbols, and indexes. Icons take the exact shape of their referent, while symbols hold an arbitrary association to their referent. Indexes, such as arrows and crosses, rely on their context – that is, their space – to hold meaning, unlike icons and symbols, which can exist independently. All of the above must exist in the material world to be considered signs, as they are designed to represent and convey important information about their surroundings (Scollon and Scollon 2003)

A further component of multimodal analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CDA), which explores the various discourses attached to signs and media within any given environment. Not only is CDA a theoretical framework, but it is also a set of tools which equip researchers with the ability to unpack and better understand power dynamics and principles within identified discourses. The most important resource within this framework is of course language, which all people turn to when a message is to be communicated. Moreover, because language is intrinsically tied to societal structure and human expression, it is also the

cornerstone of power dynamics. As a result, power dynamics and discourses can both produce and be produced by language, subtly favouring one agenda or ideology within a space (Munt et al. 1998).

Evidence of this phenomenon can be observed in contexts where a certain feature, act, or identity aspect is normalised in a given space, despite being uncommon or frowned upon in other spaces. Examples of this are broad, ranging from signs indicating which side of the road cars should drive on, to prohibiting or encouraging noise, animals, or even specific groups of people. The fact that signs are able to govern the behaviours of otherwise autonomous individuals is sufficient motivation for the thorough investigation of all discourses attached to signs, symbols, and other forms of indexing within a given space. It is no longer enough to accept that individuals follow rules within spaces simply because they are there; rather, it is integral to unpack the various discourses and ideologies indexed by signs within spaces (Munt et al. 1998).

As was discussed by Kress and van Leeuwen, language and images do not exist in a vacuum, and meaning is made based on personal, discursive, and contextual factors (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996). In other words, the signs, symbols, and language present in a given space, whether digital or physical, do not and cannot hold meaning independently, and are therefore only meaningful in the context of the discourses that inform them (Scollon and Scollon 2003). In practical terms, this means an advertisement or poster can be analysed according to its visual properties, but the context the poster is meant for is vital to this analysis if it is to be thorough. That is, while analysis is possible without this knowledge, a sufficiently-thorough analysis demands that the advertisement's *emplacement* in space is integral to comprehensive and correct analysis, as this heavily impacts how it is interpreted, as well as by whom (Baro 2017). Moreover, research within a framework of multimodal critical discourse analysis requires attention to the meanings made by components in isolation, *as well as* how these components

relate to and interact with one another to fulfil a communicative role (Milani 2013b). In simpler terms, multimodal critical discourse analysis challenges the researcher to explore and understand the ways in which semiotic resources work together in varying combinations to make different meanings (Machin 2013).

In the context of language, gender, and sexuality, a multimodal critical discourse analysis focuses on investigating various elements of a subject in order to ascertain how they interact with and speak to issues of identity formation and performance. This is explained by Baker, who posits that ideas and discourses around gender and sexuality require language to circulate and evolve (Baker 2008c).

Also vital to this framework is indexicality – that is, what meaning is physically attached to in the context where a given poster appears, and how. According to Peirce, indexicality can be determined by means of four questions (Peirce 1931). These questions can be asked of any sentence: 1) Who has uttered the sentence in question? 2) Who is the sentence meant to be read or heard by? 3) What is the situation in which the sentence will be read or heard? 4) Does the sentence relate to the context and space referred to, and the environment in which it is situated? In practical terms, one needs to ask these questions whenever a sentence is read or uttered. If a large billboard displays the words "This is a safe space for you", these questions must be asked in order to understand the statement. Who is making this statement? Who is the intended reader? What is the social context of this sign? Where is this so-called 'safe space' in relation to the sign? Without these questions, the statement can have no effect on its environment (Peirce 1931).

This systemic approach is a core benefit of using MCDA as a research method, as it allows for a comprehensive and methodologically-consistent unpacking of media. Like any theoretical framework, however, multimodal critical discourse analysis as a concept is not without flaws.

MCDA has received criticism on grounds that it allows for mundane and easily-observable features of media to be hidden behind convoluted analyses which are ultimately of little significance or value (Machin 2013). Moreover, the versatility of this method can also be overstated; since MCDA has its foundations in linguistic analysis, one must take care not to impose linguistic terms and concepts onto the analysis of unrelated media (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006).

Also important to consider when conducting a critical discourse analysis is the fact that all people perceive meaning in relation to who they are and what they have experienced, as well as in relation to the discourses they have been exposed to (Peirce 1931). It is therefore vital to engage in the process of recontextualization in order to produce a more accurate deduction and analysis of meaning (Machin 2013)/

The second of Scollon and Scollon's (2003) proposed systems, visual semiotics, speaks to how this interaction order is reflected in signs and images, investigating how actions taking place in a physical space can be represented in signage. In other words, signs and images are analysed in terms of who or what is represented, how they are represented, and by what means. Drawing from the work of Kress and Van Leeuwen (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1996), the difference between the sign and that which it indexes is also explored, noting any modifications. Furthermore, the Scollons (2003) also investigate how people depicted in a sign interact with those viewing it, particularly in the context of their social distance, identity, and intention.

The last of these concepts, place semiotics, explores the web of discourses within the material world and how these discourses can affect signage, people, and social interactions within space. Scollon and Scollon (2003) posit that *where* a certain action takes place is of great importance, as the physical environment a person finds themselves in has the potential to affect how they behave. Artefacts, buildings with historical value, and modern constructions are all important

components of a space, indexing discourses and social meaning within their location. It follows that the way signs and images will be perceived differs according to their placement in the material world, as well as who they will be viewed by. For example, a poster reading "Support religious freedom" placed on a bus stop in a religious area of Texas will index somewhat different discourses than if the same poster was placed on a billboard next to the remains of a Nazi-era concentration camp in Germany. A sign can therefore not be separated from its placement in the physical environment, just as all analyses of those who interact with a sign must be conducted in relation to their positionality within the space (Scollon and Scollon 2003).

Geosemiotics is therefore a vital component of space and linguistic landscape analysis; research of the material world that is to be effective cannot ignore the fact that signs are intrinsically tied to their placement in the physical environment. Furthermore, how they are interpreted depends heavily on the person interacting with them, who in turn will also relate to their physical surroundings in a different way than somebody else. As such, all matters of identity, perception, and belief cannot be separated from positionality, and heavily affect one's interaction with the material world. While Shaikjee and Stroud (2014) have looked at queer spaces in Cape Town and Baro (2017) has conducted geosemiotic analyses of various locations in the Johannesburg CBD, my study is the first to combine the two in upmarket Johannesburg, making it a meaningful contribution to South African queer sociolinguistics.

8.2. Research Methodology

This section will explain how this research was conducted, detailing all steps that were taken from the start of this study until the end. All methods of data collection and analysis have been declared, as well as the limitations of my study and potential solutions thereto. Ethical clearance was obtained prior to the commencement of this study, and all guidelines were observed so as to avoid any breach of ethics.

This study was conducted by means of corpus compilation and analysis, with the results being qualitative in nature. Over the course of the study period, I visited Babylon's various digital platforms — that is, Babylon, the self-proclaimed gay bar — a number of times in order to compile a corpus of event posters for analysis. The primary digital platform for my data collection was Facebook. Event posters were sourced from the establishment's official Facebook page only, and as such, no images were taken from private, personal profiles. This study was initially meant to include ethnographic research methods, but this component was removed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent government-mandated lockdown. Ethnographic methods of data collection are common in the field of sociolinguistics, having been used in a variety of local South African studies, such as Shaikjee and Stroud's research on Drag King groups in Cape Town (Shaikjee and Stroud 2014), Baro's semiotic landscape study of Marshalltown (Baro 2017), and to some extent, Ćerimaj's study of #FeesMustFall protests at the University of the Witwatersrand (Cerimaj 2018). While an ethnographic approach to research has been criticised in the past for producing data that is too context-dependent and variable according to the ideology and positionality of the researcher (Fabian 1983; Scollon and Scollon 2003), this limitation can be alleviated via the comprehensive contextualisation of data, with emphasis on historical events and ideas which provide explanation as to how the results of the present came to be (Baro 2017). For this specific project, I have done this by exploring what South African queer spaces have looked like in the past, particularly in the case of signage and indexing queerness in an otherwise cisheteronormative environment and greater society. This information was found in archives, both online and at the GALA library at the University of the Witwatersrand.

In the case of my research, a corpus of one hundred (100) posters was compiled for analysis. Posters advertising both 'normal' un-themed nights and themed events at Babylon were analysed the latter of which typically focuses on a specific demographic within the LGBTQ+

community, such as Ladies' night, Drag Queen evenings, or Bears' night[3]. Each poster will be unpacked comprehensively, taking note of all components s which index queerness. This includes both physical language and visual imagery, such as graphics, themes, models, and design choices. Collected data focused on signs and images within the posters, with special attention paid to the use of colour schemes, queer motifs, and identity-based language, which have been the focal categories in most similar studies I have read, such as Shaikjee and Stroud's research on Drag Kings in Cape Town (Shaikjee and Stroud 2014). The latter element is twofold, including both specific references to LGBTQ+ issues or concepts meant to make it clear to all that the intended audience is queer, as well as allusions or references to subtextual concepts that only queer individuals or dedicated allies would understand. Also to be considered is imagery specific to South Africa's queer community; that is, I searched for signs in the posters indicating that the space is specifically recognisable as a queer space in South Africa, rather than simply a generically-branded queer space that could ostensibly be located anywhere in the world.

The primary mode of signage analysed in this research is in the form of promotional posters advertising weekly events, which have been sourced from Babylon's various digital media platforms. Each of these characteristics have the ability to inform the way a given space is perceived and how meaning is made. Moreover, even the demographic of people has the potential to influence the space; if an establishment claims to have been designed or designated for queer people but none frequent it, then its status as a queer space is called into question. Conversely, a space may provide no official indication that it has been designed in any way for

[3] For clarification, 'Bear' in this context typically refers to a gay man who is heavy-set, hairy, and has a more traditional masculine appearance. This demographic has evolved to have its own distinct subculture within the male queer community.

queer individuals, but still be classified informally as a queer venue due to a large population of queer patrons who indirectly lay claim to it as a space.

Further data collected pertains to the physical appearance and presentation of models used in Babylon's posters, This data will be compared with traditional standards of hegemonic masculinity, as well as with stereotypical notions of how queer individuals of various genders are said to present themselves.

The relevant discourses found to be indexed throughout the corpus were unpacked and analysed by means of applying a multimodal critical discourse analysis; that is, data was investigated in the context of pre-existing discourses around desirability, gender, and sexuality. The analysis attempted to answer various questions first posed in the theoretical framework, particularly those relating to indexicality. These questions included – but were not limited to – what modes were in use in each poster, who the intended audience was to be, and what kind of context the poster was published in. The issues of temporal and geographical context are of particular importance in the analysis, as many posters index external events and historical discourses. While each mode was analysed and contextualised in isolation, particular attention was paid to the issue of how the various modes in the posters interacted with one another to create greater meaning and communicate a representation of LGBTQ+ identities. Thereafter, conclusions were drawn regarding Babylon's status as a queer venue and the various ideas their advertisement campaign communicate.

A note about poster numbering: while the posters from the corpus have been labelled according to the order in which they appear throughout the dissertation, selected posters are unpacked multiple times in different chapters. In this case, the original numbering has been preserved, leading to a break in the chronological flow of labelling. This chronological order resumes with the next poster.

8.3. Limitations

Several limitations exist in this study. First and foremost, the scope of my research was greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent government-mandated lockdown of all non-essential establishments. I had originally planned to conduct an ethnographic study based on geosemiotics, analysing the linguistic landscape of the physical bar. My original plan was to visit the space during various themed and un-themed events, taking notes and making observations about the various features of the space., My findings would, of course, have only brought forth results in accordance with the landscape on the nights I was physically present to conduct observations. That is, all results would be based purely on what I had seen on a given day and therefore speak to generalized ideas of what the space looks like at any given moment in time. While this is a common result of ethnographic studies that has been critiqued in the past (Fabian 1983), the historical and temporal contextualisation of my results as mentioned above served to diminish this risk. With the COVID-19 pandemic eliminating my ability to conduct research of a physical space, my research was shifted to focus on the advertisements Babylon features on their official digital platforms. While there is much insight to be gained about an establishment from its promotional material, this is merely one way Babylon is able to index discourses through language, and thus, it must be noted that the results may not be a complete or three-dimensional representation of the ways they address language, gender, and sexuality. Moreover, as the Scollons have also noted with regards to the analysis of space, personal bias exists and cannot be completely eradicated (Scollon and Scollon 2003); as such, there exists the possibility that my findings will not be entirely objective despite my best efforts, potentially being influenced by discourses existing within me rather than in the space I am studying. While the chances of this are slim, the potential for such must be declared in advance. I myself am a queer individual, gay, white, and not South African. While I cannot consciously allow these facets of my identity to permeate and influence my research, they are

relevant in how I myself perceive my environment and those with whom I share it at any given moment in time. While it is obviously not yet known how this will impact my data, I can hypothesize that Black and Coloured South Africans in the LGBTQ+ community will not be as heavily represented in the space. In the same vein, I also expect to find the space catering more to men than any other gender, though this is merely conjecture that will need to be replaced with empirical results. This can be attributed to Canham's observation that most queer spaces of celebration, such as clubs and bars like Babylon, are targeted at 'the essentialised queer' – that is, a white, gay man (Canham 2017). Though my queerness allows an insider's perspective of the space and the discourses within it, the fact that I am white and neither a man, nor South African, has the potential to impact my perspective. I will likely not, for example, be drawn to aspects of the space that have been placed there to attract the attention of gay men, and thus, will actively have to search for and pay attention to such. Moreover, I am unlikely to pick up on any features of the environment that are specific to South African people, language, or culture without putting in a concerted effort to do so. While these realities can be attributed to a lack of male and South African identity and socialisation, I trust that my awareness of them beforehand will enable me to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the space without extensive biases or so-called blind spots.

9 CHAPTER FOUR: The Social and Political Life of Babylon

This chapter explores the role of queer spaces in the fight for justice and equality throughout history, with a particular focus on early queer spaces and the Gay Liberation Movement. Furthermore, the ways in which Babylon does or does not engage with or contribute to social and political issues is explored, based on linguistic and visual elements identified in the poster corpus. This chapter will therefore unpack the various social and political discourses Babylon's posters index, and attempt to determine what kind of contribution they make to the greater conversation about equality and justice in South Africa. It would not be unusual to expect that establishments like Babylon would prioritise engagement

with sociopolitical issues as a result of their historical role in activism and politics. On the contrary, however, analysis of Babylon's posters reveals a pervasive marketing strategy whereby iconography indexing social and political struggle is incorporated into poster design without further acknowledgement of this discourse. As such, it often appears that familiar social and political icons and events – such as national holidays and gay organisations, among others – are used as an excuse to host an entirely apolitical event at the bar for the purpose of profit. This is interesting, as it contrasts greatly with the original (and highly political) purpose of gay bars and spaces.

9.1 Background and Contextualisation

Activism is an almost-unavoidable component of queer identity and praxis, primarily as a result of the elements of structural cisheteronormativity – that is, the holding of cisgender and heterosexual identities as the default, standard, and most valued state of existence – and resulting marginalisation that permeates contemporary society. As a community that has historically experienced violence and oppression simply for existing, a gathering of any kind is inherently political, though this is not always overt. This is particularly applicable in contexts where the environment is still hostile towards LGBTQ+ individuals, as well as environments where this hostility has only recently been replaced with tolerance and/or safety. Further, more direct forms of activism are often found in the form of Pride parades and marches, as well as in the formation and support of organizations dedicated to various LGBTQ+ issues. Queer spaces such as bars and clubs have often acted as hubs and source points of discussion and organisation, with many instances of resistance and civil disobedience having been traced back to meetings and events in spaces such as these.

9.2 Queer activism throughout history

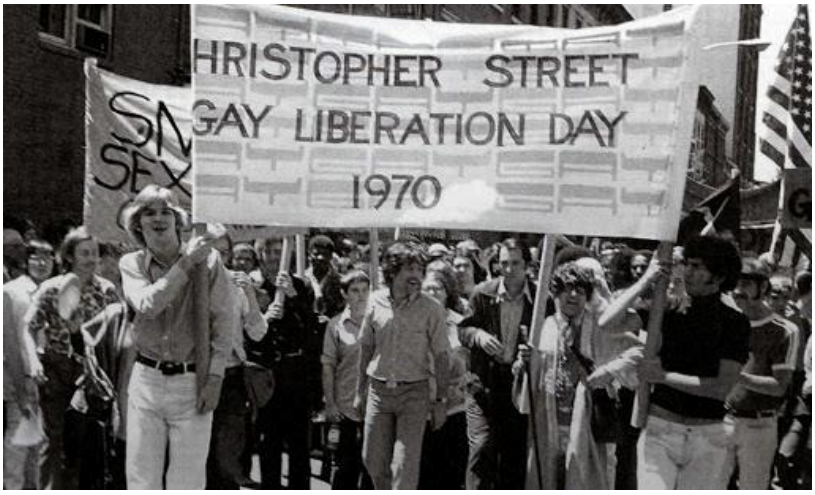
Before the dawn of the LGBTQ+ rights movement, the gathering of individuals who did not identify as heterosexual or cisgender typically occurred in secret, due to an overall lack of acceptance by greater society, as well as legislation that criminalized same-sex relations. In South Africa, such legislation was particularly rife under the apartheid regime, during which homosexuality was a criminal offence and punishable by up to seven years in prison (Reddy 2006). Though 1994 marked the end of the apartheid era, homosexuality was only decriminalized in 1998, following a ruling by the Constitutional Court

(Thoreson 2008).). Early advocacy for LGBTQ+ individuals across the world was primarily in the form of appeals for decriminalization, as homosexual acts –often officially classified as 'sodomy,' 'lewd behaviour' or 'perversions' – were widely punishable by death, mutilation, or arrest. Records of organisations created specifically for the purpose of LGBTQ+-related activism can be found from as early as the 1920s, though these were quickly shut down by governmental powers (Morris 2009). The most notable of these is the Society for Human Rights (SHR), founded in the United States of America by Bavarian immigrant Henry Gerber, in 1924. Committed to protect the interests of minority groups and promote diversity, this organisation was the first of its kind. Despite being officially registered as a non-profit organisation, it was shut down after being reported as a "Sex Cult" full of "degenerates", with several members subsequently being arrested on obscenity charges (Salvo, 2020).

The next known gay organization did not surface until 1950, after the end of the Second World War. The Mattachine Society, formed in Los Angeles, USA, referred to themselves as a "homophile" group, and was comprised of self-identified gay and lesbian individuals. This organization focused on promoting acceptance and tolerance within communities, rather than seeking political or legislative reform. Despite eventually dissolving into smaller independent organizations, the Mattachine Society was instrumental in creating a foundation upon which LGBTQ+ rallies and movements could base themselves (Pettis, 2015).

[4]

Figure 1



Left: an original photograph of the first official Pride march. Taken June 28, 1970.[1]

Photographed by Diana Davies. Sourced from the New York Public Library's Online Exhibition Archive.

[4] Source: Davies, D., 1970. Christopher Street Liberation Day, 1970. [image] Available at: <http://web-static.nypl.org/exhibitions/1969/christopher.html> [Accessed 9 November 2020].

With this foundation in place, a multitude of organizations began to establish themselves across the USA and the broader West, with records of organization and activism in the Netherlands, Denmark, France, and Great Britain, among others. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the movement began to intersect with other social justice causes – namely the Women's Liberation, anti-war, and Black Power movements, to name but a few – inspiring activists to become more radical in their beliefs and approach. This was further driven by the Stonewall riots of 1969, previously discussed in the *Gay Iconography* chapter of this dissertation. In June of 1970, the first official Pride march took place in New York City, in memory of the Stonewall Riots. This event is often referred to as Christopher Street Liberation Day, as the Stonewall Inn is situated on Christopher Street, Manhattan. Participants were not limited to gay men, and included people of all genders and sexual orientations. With a broadened scope of focus now encompassing bisexual and transgender identities, the reinvented movement came to be known as the Gay Liberation movement. This drive towards progress and societal acceptance also facilitated the development of exclusively-gay spaces such as bathhouses, particularly in the United States. Though they were often raided, these venues provided a safe space for LGBTQ+ people – and gay men in particular – to meet in both sexual and platonic contexts.

These spaces allowed for public socialization without the risk of being turned away or facing violence. As bathhouses increased in use and popularity among gay communities, the idea spread globally,



***Figure** 2*

Right: another original photograph of the first official Pride march. Taken June 28, 1970.

Photographed by Diana Davies. Sourced from the New York Public Library's official website, under an article titled Christopher Street Liberation Day by Jason Baumann, and Susan and Douglas Dillon.

reaching various countries across Europe and eventually, Australia. Over the next few decades, bathhouses became more sophisticated, registered establishments with a variety of functions beyond their original purpose[5].

The 1970s saw a boom in the establishment of LGBTQ-based organizations, followed by legislative reform across a variety of countries, including – but not limited to – the United Kingdom, Sweden, Malta, Australia, and various countries in the Balkans[6]. Notably, the original eight-colour Pride flag was first flown in 1978, and that same year, a protest in remembrance of the Stonewall Riots lead to a slew of arrests.

The late 1980s and early 1990s were a pivotal point for queer history in South Africa, during which leaders of the African National Congress, exiled at the time, publicly declared their position on homophobia and homosexuality. Prompted by confrontation and controversy surrounding their attitudes towards gay issues, Thabo Mbeki issued a statement affirming his and the ANC's commitment to pursuing equality and protection for the gay community, with his comrade Simon Nkoli – imprisoned at the time – urging supporters of both the Anti-apartheid and Gay Rights movements to work together by drawing parallels between the struggles of homophobia and racism (Thoreson 2008). This was achieved largely by likening discrimination on grounds of race to discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and practice, thereby presenting homophobia as an additional symbol of prejudicial categorisation of the self. Though this discourse around sexual orientation was often binary, leaving transgender and bisexual individuals unacknowledged, it was a successful strategy in framing

[5] Though bathhouses continued to be used primarily as a venue for sexual activities, they often threw Pride parties, and acted as a refuge for individuals who had been ostracized for their orientation and had nowhere else to go. Already meeting places, these establishments have also been documented as providing voter registration services (Ending HIV, 2016).

[6] While the majority of legislative reform was generally limited to decriminalization, amendments in some countries also existed in the form of declassifying homosexuality as a mental illness, and in the case of Sweden, going as far as introducing protocols and protections for transgender individuals (then, called transsexual), including the provision of HRT and the changing of gender markers.

homophobia as a legacy of apartheid and colonialism. It is worth noting, however, that the Marriage Act was only amended to include same-sex couples in 2006.

9.2.1 Bars in the context of activism

By the 1980s, bars and clubs owned by and marketed to LGBTQ+ people were plentiful across the globe, providing people with a more generalized public space in which to gather. While bathhouses were primarily for men and often exclusionary in their approach to patronage, clubs and bars were open to people of all genders and proclivities. This allowed the previously-underground drag scene to flourish. While these establishments were largely legal, they were not exempt from police raids, and as such, often became spaces of inadvertent resistance and activism. While the uprising at the Stonewall Inn is most widely known, similar incidents have taken place globally, albeit often on a smaller scale. As a result, patronage at a gay bar automatically incurred a certain risk, particularly in areas where the general attitude towards homosexuality was hostile. In risking assault or arrest to congregate with one's community, an individual attending a gay bar asserted their right to exist in the public eye, as well as to gather with others. In a restrictive environment where non-normative sexual and gender identities were classified as perverse and an affront to mainstream society, this was an act of outward defiance. Moreover, with frequent patrons often facing repeated arrest and brutality at the hands of police, gay bars largely fostered a sense of collectivism; thus, they were often the starting point –and eventual epicentre – of LGBTQ+ civil resistance and political action in their communities (Sisson, 2016).

As the immediate threat of prosecution or physical harm lessened, particularly in Westernized countries, the LGBTQ+ community gained visibility and legitimacy as a group dedicated to social justice. The 1970s and 1980s saw the Gay Liberation Front and similar groups protest the Vietnam War, antisemitism, racism, and gender inequality, among other sociopolitical issues. This element of intersectionality and solidarity was instrumental in developing alliances and fostering a sense of comradery across marginalised groups, who often came to each other's aid when overlooked by greater society.

Figure 4

Figure 3

Below: self-identified gay men and women join the protest against the Vietnam War in Manhattan, 1969. Photographed by Diana Davies. Sourced from the New York Public Library's Online Exhibition Archive.



[7]



Above: Jewish lesbians protesting antisemitism and racism at a rally. Exact date unknown, estimated 1975. Photographer unknown. Sourced from an NYU Press article titled *The Forgotten Jewish Element of the Women's Liberation Movement*, by Joyce Antler.

Meanwhile, in South Africa, despite the dissolution of the apartheid government in 1994 and the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1998, gay bars had yet to become the post-racial hubs for LGBTQ+ activism that they may have had the potential to be Rather, the social scene among queer individuals was, like most other spaces in South African history, complex and multifaceted. The most notable setting of LGBTQ gathering in Johannesburg was Hillbrow, an inner-city neighbourhood that saw a variety of gay clubs and bars establish themselves following South Africa's decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1969 (Botes 2021). Despite shared LGBTQ+ identities, there was little mingling between white and Black individuals in these settings, owing partly to the fact that a large portion of these new gay establishments were not accessible to Black people under the apartheid regime. While the deracialisation of the inner city in the 1980s allowed greater diversity to appear in Johannesburg, it also catalysed the spread of gay bars and clubs to suburbs as more white people moved away from the city. The results were twofold – while Hillbrow developed into a transgressive space where Black and white people shared space and identity, this also triggered the relocation and recontextualization of gay

[7] Davies, D., 1969. Gay Liberation Front Protests The War In Vietnam:. [image] Available at: <https://ebisupublications.com/fighting-on-all-fronts-part-i/> [Accessed 4 November 2020].

bars in more upmarket neighbourhoods (Botes 2021).It is also worth noting that, much like the case with Babylon, early gay spaces in South Africa were also geared towards men, and often overlooked queer women (Botes 2021).

The most notable case of activism involving gay bars in South Africa was not concerned with gay rights, however. Rather ironically, the inequality in question existed in the form of racial discrimination, with gay bars being the perpetrators rather than spaces of safety.

In 2003, almost a decade since the apartheid government had fallen and racial segregation had been outlawed, the insidious spirit of racism in gay spaces was exposed following one particular incident where a well-known gay bar in Cape Town, Silver, admitted to having turned away a 'coloured' man as a result of a racially-discriminatory admissions policy. The increasing publicity around the event inspired large numbers of Black, coloured, and other non-white queer individuals to come forward with complaints of similar experiences. This led to several instances of protest action as LGBTQ+ South Africans pushed for change in the way gay spaces operated and highlighted the interconnected nature of racial, sexual, and gender identities, as well as the ways in which class and race often intersect (Tucker 2016).

9.3 HIV/AIDS

In 1981, the dawn of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States changed attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly where men were concerned. As cases of infection skyrocketed among gay men and MSM[8] – who, due to the typical nature of their sexual activities, are more susceptible to the virus than most women and heterosexual men – the virus was quickly linked to homosexuality and dubbed a 'gay cancer[9]' within a month of initial reports (Veronese et al. 2019). As an increasing number of gay

[8] The term MSM refers to Men who have Sex with Men and includes a large population of men who engage in homosexual activities without identifying as gay, bisexual, or queer in any capacity. In most cases, this label exists as a result of societal hostility or intolerance; that is, men will have sex with men but continue to identify as heterosexual, since claiming a gay or LGBTQ-adjacent identity would increase the risk of violence, legal repercussions, or social ostracization (Veronese et al, 2019).

[9] The choice to use 'cancer' in this label is a result of the frequency with which infected individuals developed Kaposi's Sarcoma (KS), a rare cancer that causes lesions on the body, among other symptoms. KS is most commonly found to develop in patients who are already immunosuppressed, making HIV+ individuals particularly susceptible.

men began to show signs of severe immune deficiency, the virus – thus far without an official name – was named GRID (Gay-Related Immune Deficiency) by researchers. With the misconception that infection was limited to homosexual men rife among both medical experts and the general public, little energy was invested into finding a cure or curbing the spread. Over a period of three years, as more cases emerged in patients who did not fit the brief of a homosexual male, the sense of urgency increased, and more federal resources were allocated to research and infrastructure development (Kaiser Family Foundation 2020). In 1987, the United Nations General Assembly debated a disease for the first time, resolving to dedicate UN efforts to fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS, with the World Health Organization at the helm. By 1994, AIDS had become the leading cause of death in Americans aged 25-44, and by the year 2000, the death toll had reached 448,060[10] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001). With between 77-92% of all patients between 1981 and 2000 being men, and MSM/gay men accounting for the vast majority of this percentage, the LGBTQ+ community was up in arms. Ronald Reagan and his administration were held in contempt, blamed for wilfully ignoring the epidemic while cases seemed to be limited to gay people. By the time official forces were mobilised to combat the virus, the LGBTQ+ community had long since joined forces to take action against the spread. Faced with the reality that governmental aid was nowhere to be found, LGBTQ+ individuals and allies took it upon themselves to provide the services their suffering community desperately needed. Thus, activist groups such as the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) and the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), among others, were born. This movement saw thousands of LGBT-identified individuals and allies caring for the sick, supporting the grieving, administrating self-established contact tracing offices, disseminating information about the virus, and lobbying for governmental attention, among a variety of other services (ENDING HIV 2016). It is worth noting that lesbians and bisexual women, as well as trans women of colour, were often on the frontlines of this activism. This also extended to organizing blood drives to keep up with the increased demand from patients requiring transfusions, as well as to compensate for a shortage caused by a ban on donation from any men

[10] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001. HIV and AIDS --- United States, 1981--2000. [online] CDC.gov. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwR/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5021a2.htm> [Accessed 16 October 2020].

engaging in homosexual sex. The most notable group providing this service was The Blood Sisters (see figures XX & XX below), a group of lesbians who organised and administrated blood donation specifically for patients with HIV/AIDS. This group was led by Wendy Sue Biegeleisen, Nicolette Ibarra, and Barbara Vick (Women's Museum of California, 2019).



Figure 6

Above: a photograph of the front page of the *San Francisco Sentinel* from May 29th 1987. The story follows the Blood Sisters and their efforts to support HIV/AIDS patients.

Below: the Blood Sisters with a "Welcome Blood Sisters" sign. While the identities of these women cannot be confirmed, contextual clues (such as the rainbow accessory worn by a woman in the front, and typically masculine clothing across the board) suggest the majority of those pictured are lesbians.



Figure 5

With the emergence of the HIV epidemic coinciding with the pushback against apartheid in the 1980s, the virus and its devastating effects were largely ignored. This can likely be attributed to the fact that those most affected belonged to the Black and gay populations, whose health and wellbeing was, at best, not prioritised by governmental powers. By the year 2000, South Africa was the most HIV-positive country in the world (Gilbert and Walker 2002), with then President Thabo Mbeki rejecting scientific breakthroughs and relief programs, opting to blame the virus on external forces such as colonialism and

[11] Image 1: Lister, K. (2018) The lesbian 'blood sisters' who cared for gay men when doctors were too scared to, The i. Available at: https://inews.co.uk/opinion/comment/the-lesbian-blood-sisters-who-helped-save-gay-mens-lives-235100 (Accessed: 12 October 2020).
Image 2: Women's Museum of California (2019) The Blood Sisters of San Diego, Women's Museum of California. Available at: https://womensmuseum.wordpress.com/2019/04/10/the-blood-sisters-of-san-diego/ (Accessed: 9 November 2020).

poverty. Hundreds of thousands of lives were lost as a result of this negligence, the effects of this still felt today (Bello and Ndagurwa 2018).

9.4 The Impact of History on Today

The significance of history in terms of today's activism relates to the way the LGBTQ+ community structures and perceives itself. While queer identities and experiences are far from homogenous and cannot be essentialised or condensed, shared experiences of consistent struggle and marginalization across time have led to an increased awareness of the need for intersectionality and solidarity across identities. That is, an environment of constant struggle and adversity has enlightened the vast majority of minority populations to the fact that supporting one another is the only way to ensure survival and make headway in terms of securing equality and justice for the individual. In practice, this means a willingness to engage and ally with LGBTQ+ people of all categories rather than gay men exclusively associating with other gay men, lesbians with other lesbians, and so on. This also extends to a heightened awareness of other types of identities and sociopolitical issues – including but not limited to issues of race, gender, religion, disability, and so on – and the understanding that if one is to be effectively anti-homophobia, one ought to also be actively anti-racism, anti-transphobia, anti-ableism, and so forth. Not only does this widen the scope of one's influence and activism, but it also avoids alienating individuals within minority groups who may hold multiple identities beyond that which is currently in focus. One would suppose, then, that gay or queer spaces in the modern time would speak to this historically-established intersectionality, and adopt strategies to remain inclusive of all identities to be found under the LGBTQ+ umbrella and community. Moreover, it is expected that contemporary LGBTQ+ organisations and spaces engage with issues and causes that impact other marginalised communities, so as to maintain reciprocation in solidarity.

Furthermore, the HIV/AIDS pandemic had a devastating effect on the LGBTQ+ community, all but eradicating an entire generation of queer men. As a result, one would expect that at least some attention is paid to issues of health and safety within the queer community, particularly in the context of safe sexual practices and the COVID-19 pandemic. While various linguistic and visual components of Babylon's posters do indicate the prioritisation of safe sex and general concern for caution against

illness in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, evidence of concern for social justice as a broader scope of interest is sparse and difficult to identify in the poster corpus.

9.5Corpus Analysis

9.5.1 The Jozi Cats

Poster 1



Poster 9



Poster 43



Posters 1, 9, and 43 advertise events planned in collaboration with the Jozi Cats. As discussed in a previous chapter, the Jozi Cats are a Johannesburg-based, proudly-gay rugby team whose purpose is to

promote the sport within the LGBTQ+ community, as well as to provide a form of recreation for LGBTQ+ people that goes beyond nightlife. While the Jozi Cats do not exclude prospective members on grounds of gender or sexual orientation, the group is comprised largely of gay men, the majority of whom are white. Though no official analysis has taken place regarding the racial demographics of the group, this latter assertion can be made based on the available images of the club, which indicate a predominantly – but not exclusively – white member base. There are various explanations for this; when rugby was first introduced to South Africa in 1862, and for many years thereafter, gameplay and training facilities were only available to white South Africans, who were primarily Afrikaners or British Colonials. While Coloured and Black people were eventually permitted to form their own groups, the sport was largely associated with Afrikaner nationalism (Pinsky, 2020). As a result, rugby remains most popular among white South Africans in the modern day, particularly among individuals with Afrikaans or British heritage. Also accounting for the racial imbalance are the different extents to which white and Black South Africans are able to safely come out and publicize their queerness. As was discussed much earlier on in this dissertation, there exists a great discrepancy between the pro-gay, anti-discrimination legislation laid out in the South African constitution, and the lived experiences of actual queer South Africans. This is especially true in the context of non-white South Africans, who are often received with great hostility and violence in their communities as a result of deeply-entrenched religious and cultural beliefs condemning homosexuality (Brown, 2014). With white individuals being statistically more likely to be accepted in their communities, as well as economically more advantaged[12], it follows that joining a publicly gay, recreational sports team is more viable[13] than it would be for a large portion of their Black counterparts.

[12] Statistics corroborating this assertion can be found in an economic analysis by Servaas van der Berg (van der Berg, 2010). This is, of course, a generalization applied to a large population and does not disqualify the fact that not all white people are wealthier than Black and other non-white South Africans, and vice versa.

[13] According to the official Jozi Cats website, while the first two training sessions are free of charge, team membership is R240.00 per month thereafter. This fee, in combination with the cost of transportation, sport-appropriate clothing, athletic shoes, and other sport-related equipment, makes participation less accessible to individuals without much expendable income.

Sourced from: Jozi Cats (2021) *Jozi Cats, Join Us*. Available at: https://www.jozicats.co.za/#joinus-section (Accessed: 8 October 2020).

One could also propose that having an all-gay, officially-recognised sports team is Gay Pride in action, albeit in a different, somewhat unconventional format. Though marching the streets has been replaced with running across a sports field, the same message behind Pride celebrations and demonstrations is being communicated: we are here, we are unapologetically queer, and we deserve to participate fully in society. Not only is the existence of such a group a direct affront to a significant percentage of South Africa's population, who believe that homosexuality is immoral and should not be supported in legislation or validated socially (The Other Foundation 2012), but the existence of the Jozi Cats provides LGBTQ+ individuals with an additional method of establishing community and promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion in a sport typically associated with hegemonic masculinity and oppressive patriarchal discourse (Pinsky 2014). Moreover, the Jozi Cats often use their social capital and physical resources to engage with other areas where social justice is required, such as childhood poverty and LGBTQ+ homelessness (Jozi Cats 2020). Though the Jozi Cats could certainly engage in more direct forms of activism to strengthen the scope of their influence, there is certainly benefit to their existence in the context of promoting solidarity and establishing community among LGBTQ+ individuals.

In establishing a partnership with the Jozi Cats and hosting events with them, Babylon indicates a willingness to be considered an active player in LGBTQ+ relationships. That is, that while the events do not involve physical protest or legislative appeal, they have nevertheless been designed for the purpose of bringing LGBTQ-identified individuals together for recreational purposes, while also gathering support for the organisation and the causes it supports .As has just been discussed, the Jozi Cats, while recreational, exist to represent a minority demographic and promote inclusivity of some marginalized populations. As such, the hosting of fundraisers and promotional events serves to facilitate the injection of resources into the club, which contributes positively to sustaining Johannesburg's gay social scene, and thus, Babylon, as a gay space, declares and affirms the value they place in strengthening social ties across people of varying queer identities. The alliance between these two groups is based on the shared identity of queerness, and the subsequent mutual desire to promote recreational spaces for the LGBTQ+ community of South Africa. Affiliation with the Jozi Cats also implies agreement with their core principles and other forms of activism; that is, by supporting the Jozi

Cats, Babylon is placed in tacit agreement and alliance with other causes or initiatives they may be involved in. In this case, this includes support of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions, South African Human Rights Commission, Tag Rugby South Africa and SARU, as well as an outreach program for children of disadvantaged communities, and various inclusivity workshops for members of the club. The Jozi Cats club also declares partnership with Brand South Africa, Play Your Part, Microsoft, and the International Gay Rugby federation.[14] These groups further contribute to the framework of support that is being developed, as these partnerships make it clear that there are allies and comrades to be found within them, pledging to invest in their support and development.

9.5.2 Women and Gender Equality

Poster 44



Poster 32



Posters 2 and 28 are the only posters in the corpus specifically referencing any kind of cause dedicated to the support and empowerment of women. Both of these posters host events in celebration of Women's Day in South Africa which takes place on the 9th of August each year., The latter event is stipulated as being Ladies-Only on the poster. This is both interesting and concerning, though not at all atypical of commercial queer spaces, many of which are known to focus on gay men. While Men-Only bathhouses have gradually decreased in use as other kinds of establishments have become more popular, inclusivity of all orientations and gender identities is often found to be implicit or theoretical, and does not always manifest in practice. This is to say that, while the vast majority of LGBTQ+ spaces and events may tout

[14] These initiatives and partnerships appear on the Jozi Cats' official and public website. Source: Jozi Cats (2020) *Jozi Cats, Community Initiatives, Our Partners.* Available at: https://www.jozicats.co.za/#partners-section (Accessed: 8 November 2020).

verbiage proclaiming that "All Are Welcome", marketing campaigns, events, and facilities are often designed with the gay man in mind as the default representation of a person who is not heterosexual, an issue which is expanded upon in the *Gay Body* chapter.

It seems that, despite the role of women – and *LGBTQ+* women in particular – in supporting and advocating for gay men and LGBTQ+ rights throughout history, little energy is invested into aiding causes specific to them when compared to other social issues. In choosing to honour South Africa's National Women's Day, however, a distinctly political act of activism is commemorated. Women's Day in South Africa is celebrated on the 9th of August each year, and commemorates a group of some 20 000 women marching to the Union Buildings in Pretoria, to protest the country's pass laws. This law mandated that all Black citizens carry a pass – that is, an internal passport – as part of a system to maintain racial segregation between areas under the apartheid regime. The women carried with them a petition containing over 100 000 signatures protesting the racist law, making this one of the largest protests in South African history. Also notable is the non-violent nature of the demonstration; while the apartheid regime was responsible for mass suffering among South Africa's non-white population, those in attendance remained calm and dignified throughout the event, singing struggle songs, and eventually, standing in total silence for half an hour (Sisulu, 2006).

One can assert, then, that while advocacy for women and women's issues is somewhat lacking when compared to the support of other causes, actively commemorating one of the most politically-charged days in South African history does indicate a willingness to engage with women's issues, at least in a social capacity. Moreover, one can also postulate that the hosting of Women's-Only events on this day recognises the fact that women often feel – and in reality, often *are* – safer when men are not present, allowing for a more pleasant experience within entertainment-based and recreational spaces. This is particularly true in the case of queer women, who are at a higher risk of violence, assault, and so-called 'corrective rape' at the hands of homophobic men who view their existence as an affront and seek to 'cure' them of their homosexual proclivities (Koraan, R. and Geduld, A., 2015). It is also worth noting that this event does not explicitly refer to or address lesbians or queer women directly. Rather, the title addresses all women. While not using language that narrows down the target audience may be perceived

as more inclusive in some ways, it can also be read as an act of erasure. In a community where women are typically already side-lined in favour of gay men (Milani 2013a), the absence of language recognising lesbians and queer women may be seen as a slap in the face. This is particularly true when one considers that the type of women who would wish to attend a Women's-Only event at a gay bar are more than likely to be lesbians. In not using the word 'lesbian' or referring to queer women in any way – ironically while celebrating female empowerment and civil resistance – Babylon seems to take one step forward and two steps back in their motions toward social justice and equality for vulnerable populations. It is also worth noting that trans women are not mentioned in any way, shape, or form, which also calls Babylon's desired edification and appreciation of women somewhat into question.

9.5.3 Pride Organisations and Celebrations

This section contains the largest portion of posters relating to social and political awareness, and deals with the recognition and promotion of Pride events. As has been mentioned in Chapter 4: "Gay Iconography," the existence of Pride is, in itself, a form of activism. This assertion can be made on grounds that Pride is an ostentatious and bold celebration of that which society has tried – and failed – to silence, outlaw, and eradicate. It must therefore be understood that refusing invisibility and loudly making one's existence known is a choice that carries some degree of risk. While this degree is largely variable according to a number of factors, it is nonetheless there. A plethora of factors exist which may influence the individual's personal risk, while only a select one or two factors have the potential to impact all participants somewhat equally. Geographical area is a factor most likely to affect the safety of the collective – that is, hosting a Pride march or celebration in an extremely intolerant country where homosexuality is criminalized carries with it far more risk than would potentially be incurred hosting the same event in an extremely liberal and legislatively-protective country. One does not need to look far to find an example of this: in 2016, attempts to host a Pride parade at a Ugandan resort were blocked by police officers, who forcibly escorted participants back to the capital, where they were later threatened with mob violence (BBC NEWS 2016) Beyond this, factors with the potential to affect individuals differently include gender identity, specific sexual orientation, age, social standing, economic status, race, disability and neurodivergence, and so on. This relates, once again, to the concept

and experience of intersectionality; a cisgender man who is gay, but white and able-bodied, will incur risk differently than a transgender woman who is Black and uses a wheelchair. In the same vein, an individual who is upper-class and earns well experiences less risk than someone who lives in poverty and cannot access certain amenities, such as reliable transport and health insurance, should an incident occur. It is highly important that the issue of risk incurrence is properly understood, as this is the partial basis upon which Pride celebrations in South Africa can be classified as a form of activism. As has been discussed at a variety of points throughout this dissertation, attitudes towards queerness in South Africa are largely mixed, despite an inclusive constitution and comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. While the South African government speaks out in support of population diversity, attitudes towards homosexuality and the LGBTQ+ community are often negative among the country's more conservative groups, which make up a significant portion of the population. As a result, the existence of Pride events does incur some level of risk, particularly when participants come from the aforementioned conservative groups. In simpler terms, a queer individual who participates in a Pride march risks safety, stability, and comfort in doing so, if they come from – or merely exist in proximity to – a family or community with conservative and homophobic beliefs. Consequently, hosting and/or participating in a Pride march or event is an act of defiance and rebellion, where one asserts their existence and right to move through the world despite forces that would work against this. In light of this, Pride can most certainly be classified as a form of activism, promoting the inclusion of a minority group while fighting against the oppressive ideologies behind homophobia.

This having been said, however, it is also vital to recognise that Pride parades have not been immune to commodification and consumerism. As the LGBTQ+ community has become more accepted in certain areas and contexts, so too has the neocapitalism drive to profit prevailed. While Pride marches are rooted in civil unrest, many modern Pride parades of today have turned queer identities into a

Poster 46



gimmick or brand for the purpose of financial gain. There is, consequently, a component of modern Pride that is more about consumer identity than social justice.



Poster 45

Poster 16

Poster 13





Poster 14



Poster 15

Poster 8



Poster 22



Posters 45, 46, 13, 16, 3, 7, 15, 8, 14 and 22 can be characterized by their direct and official affiliation with Johannesburg Pride, which is an event run by Pride of Africa. This affiliation is made clear through visual and linguistic branding. While poster 3 does not feature the Pride or Pride of Africa logos, the event has been titled "Johannesburg Pride Official After Party." In directly naming Johannesburg Pride as the event and then including the word "official", Babylon explicitly links their establishment to Johannesburg Pride as an event and organisation. This same strategy is employed in poster 15, though without fully naming Johannesburg Pride as an event. Rather, this event has been entitled "Official Pride Pre-Party." Despite also being without any official Johannesburg Pride or Pride of Africa logos, the words "Official" and "Pride", when combined, successfully index the relevant event. Poster 16 builds on this existing strategy; not only does the title classify the event as the "*Official* Pride Afterparty", but a further visual element has been incorporated into the design space to index Johannesburg Pride and Pride of Africa as an organisation, but the bottom portion of the poster space also features a vector of the Johannesburg skyline. This vector has been filled in with a portion of the enlarged logo of Pride of Africa. While the words may be difficult to make out if the reader does not know to look for them, the colours and pattern are instantly recognizable to anyone who has seen the logo before. The original logo is pictured below, for reference purposes.



Figure 7

The original Pride of Africa logo, an enlarged portion of which features in Poster 52.

By combining references to Johannesburg, Pride of Africa as an organisation, and the word "official", Babylon uses both linguistic and visual cues to index the particular Pride event they are endorsing, while also reinforcing the gay – or rather, more broadly LGBTQ+ – nature of their establishment.

Poster 22 supersedes the criteria of one single category. Containing references to both Pride of Africa *and* a national holiday with political history, this poster is a prime example of the intersection of sociopolitical causes, as well as a physical manifestation of allegiances in activism. Moreover, it features endorsement from establishments that are otherwise without political affiliation, the relevance of which is to be discussed. This poster advertises a Bar-Hop; that is, an event whereby participants follow a designated route and patronize a pre-determined set of participating establishments over the course of several hours. The purpose of such an event is typically to promote the various establishments, as well as to bring awareness to or celebrate a particular event. Bar-hops, sometimes known as Bar- or Pub-crawls, are typically attended by groups of patrons rather than individuals, making them an excellent method of drawing a large crowd. In this case, participants are required to purchase a ticket – at the rather hefty price of R280 per person[15] – which includes a set number of snacks and beverages, as well as free entrance to Babylon before 9 pm.

Not only does this incentivise participants to continue purchasing food and drink upon using up their 'free' benefits, but it also assures that the majority will then go on to spend the rest of the night at Babylon, spending more money as a result. While this kind of marketing strategy is not particularly

[15] While the cost of this Bar Hop is not unreasonably high and is inclusive of some food and drink, the cost can be conceptualised as the price of 20 beers, and thus, is not affordable for the average South African on a budget, who could get much more for the same amount of money.

transparent in its purpose to encourage spending as much as possible, it provides a recreational experience more unique than simply visiting one venue, and due to the popularity of the bar-hop concept, one can safely assume that it is also effective in fulfilling its economic goals.

Upon examination of the participating establishments, it is clear that they vary greatly in both menu, typical target audience, and atmosphere. From bottom to top, the logos advertise the following participating establishments: Pride of Africa – which is not an establishment, but rather, the organization coordinating the event –, Priscilla's Cocktail Lounge, Babylon The Joburg Bar, Beefcakes Burger Bar, Momo Soko, Yamato Japanese Restaurant, '86 Public, and Hogshead Illovo. The first four titles in this list are all queer spaces, while the last four do not express any official affiliation with the LGBTQ+ community. Priscilla's, like Babylon, is a self-proclaimed "LGBTQ bar" which opened its doors for the first time in 2019. Beefcakes is also a self-identified queer space, described as "a prominent, all-inclusive figure in the South African LGBTQ+ business community" on its official website.[16] This establishment specialises in cocktails and burgers, but is largely known for hosting drag shows, which are difficult to find in South Africa. The venue also employs topless [male] waitstaff, who are trained to interact with patrons provocatively[17], adding a further element of novelty to the experience.

Momo Soko and Yamato are both restaurants specialising in East Asian cuisine, with the former serving Asian-fusion dishes, and the latter focusing on authentic Japanese food at a slightly higher price point. '86 Public is a pizzeria, though also advertised as an ideal location for cocktails and evening socializing. The last participating venue is Hogshead, a traditional pub specialising in craft beers and grilled meat, offering the quintessential American pub experience, with the occasional South African element. While not all of these venues are alcohol-based – that is, they have not been established for the explicit purpose of facilitating recreational alcohol consumption – they serve a large variety of alcoholic beverages,

[16] Beefcakes.co.za. 2020. About Us. [online] Available at: <https://www.beefcakes.co.za/about-us> [Accessed 3 November 2020].

[17] While Beefcakes is not the object of research in this dissertation, the element of self-commodification, which will be discussed in the chapter of The Gay Body, is ever-present and worth noting.

some of which are not easily found in mainstream bottle stores, or require specialised skills to concoct. Hence, their participation in an event of this nature is understandable.

The object of this Bar-Hop, much like any other, is financial profit, with the added bonus of a drastic and guaranteed increase in patronage on that particular night. This is particularly helpful to new and lesser-known establishments seeking to market themselves, such as Priscilla's, which opened its doors just a few months prior. While this event is most certainly not an act of direct activism, some elements of activism are still evident and worth noting. In choosing to celebrate South Africa's Human Rights Day, Babylon – as well as the other participating venues – actively acknowledges the occasion and its validity as a commemoration of a historically-significant event. Human Rights Day in South Africa exists to raise awareness of the country's difficult and oppressive history, as well as to pay homage to those who fought against the apartheid government. More specifically, Human Rights Day honours civilians who were killed by apartheid police in the Sharpeville Massacre, a tragic and politically-charged event where law enforcement opened fire on citizens protesting the country's Pass laws. As a result, Human Rights Day also celebrates the end of apartheid and the progressive nature of South Africa's new constitution, which prioritises equality, human dignity, and freedom of movement for all (GOVZA: Government of South Africa, 2020). When one considers that this bar-hop event could easily have been held without any mention of the occasion, and that the coordinating organisation, Pride of Africa, is vocal about its involvement in sociopolitical advocacy, it is clear that the hosting of this event on Human Rights Day is deliberate. In simpler terms, this event could have been held on any other day of the year, yet it was not, and this cannot be ignored. It would also have been entirely possible to host the event on this day without mentioning Human Rights Day. Not doing so was, once again, entirely deliberate, and therefore, once again, cannot be ignored.

Despite Babylon's attempt to commemorate this politically significant event in South African history, it would be untrue to say the event is as impactful as it has the potential to be. Besides simply mentioning Human Rights Day, no other actions pay significant homage to the victims of the Sharpeville Massacre in any concrete way. While remembering history is important, this event demands nothing of patrons beyond money towards alcohol, does little to change the trajectory of the future, and thus, is a rather

weak form of activism that could have been improved in a variety of ways. Since the poster does not indicate exactly where the funds collected from ticket sales will go, it is sensible to assume that the income will be divided across the participating establishments or go directly to the organising body. The effectiveness of an event such as this in the context of social justice could have been greatly increased were these proceeds donated to a worthy social cause, of which South Africa has many. However, since the text on the poster does not indicate this in any way, it can be assumed that the Bar-Hop is predominantly a moneymaking operation, with a side of historical value and homage to activists of the past.

The next aspect of this event to be considered in relation to activism is that of allyship and solidarity. As has been pointed out, the first four of the involved parties (viewed from bottom to top on the poster) are explicitly LGBTQ+ in nature. Running an event together can therefore be seen as a manifestation of allegiance and solidarity. Although in a drastically different – and substantially less risky – context, this is much like many of the historical events which were mentioned previously, which saw gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and other non-heterosexual, non-cisgender people advocating for each other in times of need and/or vulnerability. In this context, one can see various queer establishments banding together to promote each other, ensuring that the success and availability of queer spaces for South Africans in Gauteng. Were such alliances not present, it is entirely possible that several venues would struggle to maintain patronage and eventually disappear, as has been seen to have happened in the past. This has been observed to have happened with many gay clubs and venues in the past. One such club is Simply Blue, which opened in 2003, but closed its doors in 2018 after 15 years as an iconic queer space. When interviewed about the closure, co-owner Jerome Camp pondered the relevance of gay spaces in the modern world, remarking that, “united we stand, divided we fall,” (DeBarros, 2018). This statement summates much of what is important about the collaborative nature of the Bar-Hop, which is the development of a supportive network through which LGBTQ+ organizations and establishments are able to offer each other aid and share resources in order to achieve their objectives.

The issue of straight allyship is also relevant when one considers the remainder of participating establishments. None of these venues overtly proclaim allyship toward the LGBTQ+ community in

their official websites, and, as is to be expected, none express any direct association with heterosexuality either. As 'neutral' parties, they are assumed to be straight, cisnormative spaces, as this is the current societal default. Consequently, their choice to become partners in an event run by a gay organisation, featuring a variety of gay bars and restaurants, provides insight into their (presumably-positive) stance on the LGBTQ+ community and associated spaces. One can therefore also posit that actively investing resources into an event designed to promote LGBTQ+ spaces is, in fact, an active form of allyship, and therefore, an act of activism.

Three posters referencing Pride as a concept remain to be discussed. These posters – that is, numbers 7, 8, and 14 – centre Pride as an integral thematic aspect of their event, but do not indicate official affiliation with Pride of Africa as an organisation.

Poster 7, the last poster mentioning Pride of Africa in this chapter, advertises an event titled the "One World Party", hosted by Babylon in partnership with Johannesburg Pride. This partnership is explicitly states at the top of the poster, which reads "Babylon & Joburg Pride Presents…". This poster's references and ties to sociopolitical discourse do not end here. Though not entirely cohesive from a grammatical point of view, the full title of the event appears to be as follows: "Babylon & Joburg Pride Presents One World Party; Stonewall Remembrance in Celebration of World Pride Day." While this title is cumbersome and is not ideal from a copywriting point of view, the purpose of the occasion is made clear. That is, the party is being hosted to commemorate the Stonewall Riots and celebrate World Pride Day. World Pride day, sometimes called WorldPride, is an international event organised and coordinated by InterPride, an organisation specialising in planning and hosting LGBTQ+ pride parades, festivals, and related events. Like many international events, it is hosted in a different country each year, and in 2019 – when the event on poster 7 takes place – took place in New York City, USA. This event has now been recorded as the largest international Pride celebration to have taken place so far in world history, likely owing to the fact that it also commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots. Babylon's event, intentionally runs parallel to this, with the poster informing readers that the actual event in New York City will be streamed live at their establishment. The poster also advertises a drag show to be performed in their space during the celebration. At the top right of the poster space, the

logo for the New York City even is featured, further reinforcing the connection between the events and affiliation with official Pride events and organisations. This logo has been included below, for reference.

[18]



Left: the official logo for 2019's WorldPride event, held in NYC, USA.

Figure 8

The original event upon which Babylon's is based is one of great political significance, owing to the inherent political nature of the riots at Stonewall and subsequent civil unrest that followed. As has been explained in previous sections of this dissertations, the events at Stonewall are often seen as the foundation for modern Pride celebrations, as well as the most significant catalyst for LGBTQ+ activism in the United States. In hosting a parallel event to commemorate Stonewall and participate in the global celebration, Babylon includes itself – and consequently, also its patrons – in LGBTQ+ discourse and praxis. Considering the actual Pride march, which is inarguably a form of activism, is nowhere near Babylon's geographical area, hosting a parallel event with a live stream is tantamount to active participation, and thus, it can be said that this particular Babylon event is the most activism-related event to be included in the poster corpus.

It is also worth noting that the background of this poster space has been decorated with various faded images of Pride marches across history. Upon closer inspection, many of them feature people holding up cardboard signs, and though they lack saturation and clarity, it is clear these photographs are of historically-significant protest action. This further reinforces Babylon's positive stance on LGBTQ+ activism, and confirms their willingness to participate in a local, South African context. These photographs are clear intertextual references to queer activism throughout history; though the images

[18] WorldPride, I., (2019) Stonewall 50 Logo. [ONLINE]. Available at: https://newyorktheater.me/2019/06/02/june-2019-new-york-theater-openings-stonewall-50-on-stage-fairview-returns/stonewall-50-logo/ [Accessed 4 October 2020].

are too small to identify exactly which incidences of protest they each come from, they nevertheless provide a clear reference to discourses surrounding LGBTQ+ history and the countless instances of protest action that had to take place before modern-day Pride events could become possible. In including this in the poster background, the audience is quietly reminded of the powerful and often violent history behind the fun, celebratory events enjoyed by present society. This also increases the significance of the event being advertised, which commemorates the Stonewall Riots as one of the largest and most impactful protests in LGBTQ+ history.

Posters 14 and 46 are much less political in nature, featuring no direct references to activist organisations or sociopolitical discourse. Despite this, they do reference Pride and its significant place in LGBTQ+ history. Poster 46 advertises an event that has been titled "Pride Night", referencing Pride, and potentially indexing the discourse around it, albeit not explicitly. This event takes place in October, which is also when various Pride-related events take place in South Africa. Poster 15 promotes an event called Pure Pop, with the words "Pride Month" displayed boldly at the bottom of the poster space in clear, black text. This poster also informs those who read it that locally-famous Drag performers are set to entertain that night, further proving that Babylon values the contribution Drag culture has made to queer history, and the important place Drag performers have in queer spaces and discourse. The Pure Pop event is also advertised as taking place every Saturday for the duration of Pride month (June), encouraging patrons to increase their participation in honour of the month. This acknowledgment of Pride month, in itself, can be considered a form of participation in LGBTQ+ culture and activism, as this month exists specifically to pay homage to those involved in the Stonewall riots and recognize the importance of LGBTQ+ people in society. In celebrating Pride month, and Pride as a concept, Babylon celebrates Stonewall and the existence of LGBTQ+ people, and thus, the above posters promote and facilitate the inherent activism in affirming and celebrating one's existence as a minority.

9.5.4 Further Evidence of Activism and Interest in Social Justice

The remaining posters to be discussed are those which index an awareness of sociopolitical issues in some way, but are not explicitly related to any of the clearly-established categories that have been identified and investigated in this chapter. The discourses and issues indexed here include the health and safety in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, child homelessness, and both national and international days of social significance.

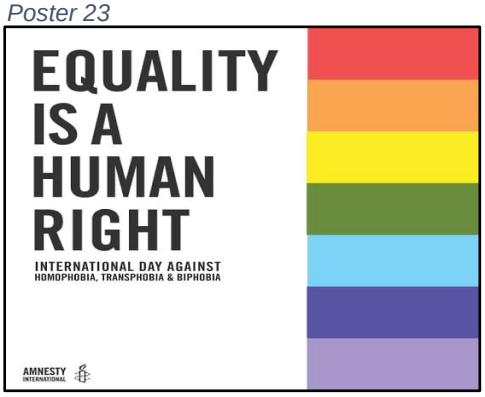
Poster 2



Poster 25



Poster 23



Poster 24



Poster 47



The first poster to be discussed is poster 2, which seems to promote general patronage of the Babylon over 2018's Heritage Day weekend rather than one particular night or event. The incentive to attend, as stated by the text on the poster, is that "Monday is a public holiday", owing to the fact that South

Africa's national Heritage Day fell on a Monday in 2018. The main text on the poster reads "Heritage Day", and stands against a background of the rainbow South African flag often seen at Pride parades. South Africa's Heritage Day is on the 24th of September each year, and was established as a public holiday to encourage South Africans to celebrate the diversity of the country's population. The 24th of September was initially only special to those in KwaZulu-Natal, who observed it as a day to commemorate King Shaka and his role in uniting the Zulu people. In 1996, however, after action from the Zulu-dominated Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the South African government declared the day a public holiday dedicated to celebrating the diversity of South Africans' cultural heritage (GOVZA: Government of South Africa 2012). While it is entirely possible that Babylon is only paying attention to Heritage Day because it is a public holiday people can use to patronize their establishment, it would also have been entirely possible for them to advertise themselves without mention of the occasion. However indirect, centering Heritage Day can be considered a passive example of activism, as it draws attention to the country's history, and promotes diversity, which has also been an integral part of the LGBTQ+ rights movement.

Though the celebration of heritage is not intrinsically tied to activism in a conventional sense, it can be said that this is the case in the context of South African history. As a country with a long and painful history of slavery and colonial rule, followed by an oppressive apartheid regime, one's heritage was often grounds for their oppression. As white European colonists and Afrikaner powers seized the land and ascribed little value to Black lives beyond their contribution to labour forces, much of indigenous Southern African culture was forcibly erased or suppressed in favour of Eurocentric tradition and lifestyle. Examples of this can be seen in the banning of indigenous African languages in schools and prohibition of traditional cultural practices (Christie and Collins 1982). One must also recall the effects of the Second Anglo-Boer War [1899-1902], which saw Afrikaners executed in concentration camps, once again at the hands of British colonists (Sangster 2013). With a violent history of constant cultural and linguistic suppression, the significance of South Africa's Heritage Day does not stop at celebrating diversity. Rather, the existence of this national holiday both allows and encourages citizens to exercise rights they were once denied; that is, the right to speak one's native and heritage language, the right to

participate in cultural ceremonies, the right to wear traditional clothing, and so on. While this can be done any day in contemporary South Africa, the cost of this freedom is often forgotten. From this perspective, the celebration of Heritage Day can be seen as paying homage to activism of the past, while encouraging LGBTQ+ people to form meaningful relationships and act as a community.

Poster 23 is more direct in this regard. Interestingly, it does not advertise any event Babylon is hosting, but rather, takes a stand against the oppression that the LGBTQ+ community has faced. The poster reads "Equality is a Human Right" in large capital letters, with smaller text beneath it. This smaller text reads "International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia". Below this, the Amnesty International logo sits in the bottom left corner. Amnesty International is a publicly-funded organisation which exists to uncover human rights violations across the globe and lobby against any powers that enable or perpetuate them. This organisation runs multiple global campaigns to achieve social and political justice for minorities and oppressed groups, engaging with both governments and corporate entities to end human rights violations. While the headquarters can be found in the United Kingdom, Amnesty International has a presence in a multitude of countries worldwide, including South Africa, where the focus is primarily on ending gender-based violence (GBV) and promoting education (Amnesty International, 2020). The issue of equality in the context of the LGBTQ+ community is therefore highly relevant to their work, hence the existence of this particular poster. International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia falls on the 17th of May each year, and is observed in approximately 132 countries worldwide, coinciding with a variety of other celebrations and occasions relating to LGBTQ+ justice and equality. The primary purpose of the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia is to create awareness of the systemic oppression and violence that the LGBTQ+ community faces around the world, as well as to encourage discourse and engagement with those who have the power to create change. In publishing this particular poster, Babylon asserts their status as an LGBTQ+ establishment with the interests of LGBTQ+ people at the top of their priorities. The fact that this poster does not advertise an event to benefit them economically reinforces this, as they do not stand to benefit directly from their vocal support of queer justice. This poster exists merely to ensure that those who read it know what Babylon stands for in the way of core values and

beliefs. This, in combination with the fact that publishing the poster indicates agreement and alliance with Amnesty International, can be recognised as an attempt to participate in LGBTQ+ discourse.

Poster 47 diverges from the typical target of Babylon's activism, and promotes a Christmas-themed fundraiser for St. Francis Care Centre and Orphanage. This poster informs readers that free entrance will be granted in exchange for a cash donation towards the orphanage instead. This is a rather overt form of activism, as this project redirects a great source of Babylon's financial gain – that is, their entrance fees, which are often over R100 per person – towards a charity organisation they otherwise have nothing to do with. St. Francis Care Centre and Orphanage is a non-profit organisation offering palliative care to terminally ill patients, while also acting as an orphanage (St. Francis Care Centre, 2019). In supporting St. Francis Care Centre and Orphanage, Babylon pledges allegiance to the institution textually, with a promise to invest resources into the issues of public health, poverty, and child homelessness. While technically indexing a humanitarianism discourse rather than an activist one, both are interconnected and concern themselves with achieving justice, protection, and dignity for vulnerable and systemically-oppressed populations. Providing financial support to organisations tackling issues of social justice is arguably one of the most direct and effective form of activism Babylon displays, as a lack of financial resources is often the reason behind a variety of social issues, many of which feed into one another. While investing in such initiatives is evidence that Babylon takes interest in social issues and the wellbeing of others, the potential political reasons behind issues such as income inequality, ageism and poor state healthcare are not mentioned or indexed in any capacity; rather, the poster has a cutesy theme and the event has been noticeably depoliticised. Moreover the choice to foreground four young, white women – who are also seemingly-cisgender and able-bodied – also speaks to the trope of white women's innocent and purity, which can be problematic at best.

Also relating to the issue of public health are posters 25 and 36, which are also the last two to be discussed in this chapter. Poster 25 features a graphic of two male superheroes kissing, with the text "We're [sic.] in this together, stay safe,", and poster 36 simply says "Stay Safe", with a variety of smaller illustrations in the background. These illustrations include, but are not limited to, condoms, bananas, interlinked and interlinked Venus and Mars symbols. The messages behind these two posters

are twofold; first, there is the issue of safe sexual practices in a country with one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS in the world, and second, there is the issue of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was at its early stages when these two posters were first published. As was discussed earlier on in this chapter, HIV/AIDS had a devastating effect on the queer population of the West, and as a result, the LGBTQ+ community is no stranger to unexplained and life-threatening pandemics. Starting in March of 2020, as cases of the newly-discovered virus COVID-19 began to sweep through the country, the South African government implemented a mandatory, countrywide lockdown that required all businesses and institutions to close down. While this lockdown was initially planned to be in place for three weeks, it soon became clear that it was to last indefinitely, and with all non-essential employees confined to their homes, anxieties about the future were at an all-time high. Babylon, like all other recreational venues, was closed to business, and with no more events to advertise, posters 25 and 36 were published instead. These posters urge those who read them to stay safe, and through the phrase "we [are] in this together," remind the community that they do not stand alone as individuals. While this does not accomplish anything quantifiable in context of any sociopolitical cause, it can be considered another way in which Babylon attempts to engage in current events and social issues. It is also reminiscent of the historical period where those in the LGBTQ+ community supported each other during the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and exists with the purpose of encouraging and fortifying a minority group. The elements of intimacy and sexuality indexed by the graphics in each poster contribute to this, as they remind readers to protect themselves in sexual contexts as well as in the context of COVID-19[19]. This is also pertinent, as few national resources are allocated to education and safety in the context of LGBTQ+ relationships. Advocating for both of these issues reinforces Babylon's position as a pillar of the LGBTQ+ community, as it shows they are willing to use their platform to advocate for the wellbeing of their community. Posters like this are reminiscent of the educational campaigns and civil protest posters that were prevalent during the HIV/AIDS crisis, which was discussed previously. In indexing these discourses, Babylon emphasises the importance of community and solidarity among LGBTQ+ individuals. It can certainly be argued that these posters do not achieve much in the way of advancing

[19] The fact that these figures are kissing while urging a reader to practise social distancing is somewhat ironic, and calls the poster's effectiveness into question.

social justice or benefitting the lives of LGBTQ+ people. Nonetheless, an attempt at expressing solidarity and community has been made, which is worth noting.

9.6 Conclusion

Though Babylon certainly makes an attempt to engage with issues of activism and social justice, the overall effectiveness of these efforts is questionable. Through the examination and categorisation of these posters, it becomes clear that Babylon does not actively participate in activism the way many gay bars of the past have. Rather, the posters indicate an interest in social and political issues, *as well* as a reluctance to involve the establishment too heavily. As a result, many of Babylon's posters use language and visual imagery to index sociopolitical issues in the context of an otherwise depoliticised event. It seems that the extent of Babylon's willingness to fully engage with social inequality and politics is limited to raising awareness of issues, organisations, or entities that may potentially have been overlooked, as well as participating in the occasional fundraising initiative d. With this in mind, it can be said with confidence that many of Babylon's posters and graphics do indicate awareness of history and interest in social issues of the present despite limited follow-through. In advocating for a variety of causes such as Pride, Women's Equality, the Jozi Cats, and others, Babylon is able to assert itself as a player in the LGBTQ+ community in South Africa, very occasionally going beyond its original function as a social venue. While the majority of posters do exist with the primary purpose of promoting social gathering at the bar, their intention to facilitate the development of the LGBTQ+ movement in South Africa ought to be acknowledged. In many ways, as they increase awareness of various South African justice organisations and groups, they can be considered allies to the greater cause of LGBTQ+ equality. The extent of Babylon's influence stops there, however, as little concrete action is taken to improve the lives of LGBTQ+ South Africans beyond raising awareness of issues, and the vast majority of partnerships the venue takes on are shared with profit-driven establishments that have little to do with their purported cause. While many of Babylon's posters index discourse surrounding gay liberation and queer history – albeit selective, Western history – there is little to suggest the establishment involves itself in present-day issues beyond the occasional fundraiser. This is particularly salient when one considers that essentially all protest-related language and imagery appears in photographs from the past.

While it is undeniable that Babylon uses both language and visual imagery to *acknowledge* discourses around activism and gay liberation, there is a distinct gap where their own contributions perhaps ought to be and a definitive depoliticization of these discourses. This discrepancy between knowledge and action may be explained by the contrast in how most LGBTQ+ South Africans – the majority of whom are Black (Statistics South Africa 2019) – experience queer existence in relation to other intersecting identities, as opposed to Babylon's target audience, which seems to be white, wealthy, and much more monolithic in nature. Moreover, as a privileged minority, it is unsurprising that wealthy white South Africans do not feel a need to engage with complex discourse around social struggle or involve themselves in complex political issues that do not directly affect them. The depoliticization of Babylon's posters is therefore telling of their intended target market.

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10 CHAPTER FIVE: GAY ICONOGRAPHY

This chapter aims to define gay iconography, explaining its purpose and role in the context of community and identity. The history anad symbolism of the pride flag is unpacked, as is the topic of homonationalism and intertextuality. Thereafter, various posters from the study's corpus are presented for analysis, with emphasis placed on intertextual signs, gay slang, and the representation of masculinity and femininity across the corpus.

10.1 Background and Contextualization

Gay iconography is a component of LGBTQ+ discourse that is often recognisable by those outside the community. This is largely due to the fact that the most popular kind of gay iconography is the rainbow flag, which is colourful enough to draw one's attention, simple enough to be remembered, and generally rather pleasant to look at. The gay pride flag is widely recognised, and as such, it is clear that gay iconography is able to index discourses that even 'outsiders' – that is, people who do not identify with any LGBTQ+ identities – can perceive and interact with in some capacity. The first event posters to be analysed are from 2019, and as is to be expected from a venue of this nature – that is, a bar and club – the majority of the events advertised are parties.

10.2 The Pride Flag

The rainbow flag has come to be a familiar symbol of the LGBTQ+ community and queer activism across the world, transcending many linguistic and cultural barriers. As a result, it is often called the Pride flag. There is no significant difference between these terms. That being said, the somewhat-recent emergence of other flag designs representing pride in more specific identities within the LGBTQ+ acronym – such as the transgender or bisexual pride flags – sometimes necessitates the use of "rainbow flag" for the purpose of clarity. For the most part, however, the terms "pride flag" and "rainbow flag" are typically interchangeable. Designed by American designer Gilbert Baker in the late 1970s, the rainbow flag was conceptualised to replace the pink triangle, which at the time was the primary symbol of queerness. Wanting to mark the dawn of a new era of liberation, as well as do away with this former symbol of Nazi oppression[20], Baker debuted the first, eight-colour rainbow flag at the United Nations Plaza in San Francisco, in June of 1978 (BBC and Grovier 2016). Over the years, the flag has undergone a variety of evolutions, with colours being either removed or added on to encompass specific marginalised identities. The latest and most recognizable modification to the rainbow pride flag is the unofficial addition of black and brown stripes – a symbol of solidarity between the LGBTQ+ community and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour), whose fight against systemic racial injustice has intensified over the last few years. Further alterations include a triangle adding pastel pink, blue, and white, representing the transgender flag and community.

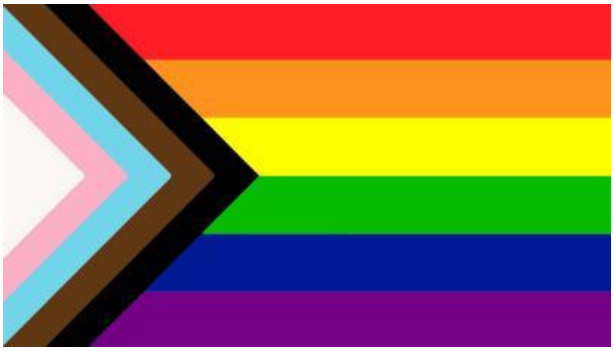
Figure 9



The BIPOC-inclusive pride flag, designed by the Philadelphia Office of LGBT Affairs in 2017 as part of their More Color More Pride campaign, which aimed to raise awareness of racial injustice and issues of intersectionality within the LGBTQ+ community.

[20] The pink triangle as a symbol was initially used to label known homosexuals in concentration camps during the Holocaust (Gilbert Baker Foundation 2019).

Figure 10



This trans- and BIPOC-inclusive pride flag was designed by artist Daniel Quasar in 2018.

10.2.3 Homonationalism

While the LGBTQ+ population of the world remains divided on the use of the above modified flags, their frequent, albeit-unofficial use in pride parades and queer spaces has earned them a place in queer history as symbols for more intersectional activism. The incorporation of gay iconography and pride colours into a nation's flag has come to be called homonationalism, and concerns itself with discourse surrounding the 'gay-friendliness' of countries as a desirable characteristic, as well as the ways in which individuals relate to their national identity in the context of their queerness. In less complex terms, homonationalism speaks to the relationship between state, sexuality, and the self, and often manifests itself in the form of editing or re-stylizing flags to index queer identities (Puar 2013). This is also useful in reinforcing the notion of community and shared identity among LGBTQ+ individuals of shared nationality. Throughout this corpus, various adaptations of national and Pride flags can be found, each one contributing to discourses around the events they advertise.

Poster 1



Poster 2



Poster 3



Poster 4



Poster 5



Poster 6



Poster 7



Poster 8



Poster 9



Poster 10



Poster 11



Poster 12



10.3 The rainbow as a form of queer-coding

The above 12 posters are a sample from the greater corpus of posters collected for this research. While these posters each advertise different events at different points throughout the year, they all contain one salient element in common: the rainbow. While not necessarily being the focal point of all the posters, the inclusion of a rainbow motif is an effective way of queer-coding (Baker 2008b) – that is, signalling queerness – particularly in posters that are otherwise not explicitly 'gay' in writing.

Poster 1 is a suitable example of this. Featuring a shirtless, white, assumingly-cisgender man holding dumbbells against a plain blue background, nothing about this poster would indicate an association with the LGBTQ+ community were it not for the rainbow heart. Without the inclusion of rainbow iconography, this event could easily be one marketed to heterosexual women in search of conventionally attractive men who embody elements of hegemonic masculinity (Baker 2008b) such as an interest in physical fitness. This exists, of course, in conjunction with the Jozi Cats logo. Founded in 2015, the Jozi Cats are a Johannesburg-based rugby team comprised primarily of gay men, though they advertise themselves as being inclusive of all genders and sexual orientation. While their affiliation makes it quite clear that the event will be a queer space, the Jozi Cats are not nearly as well-recognized as the rainbow motif, which has come to signify gayness across the world and does not require knowledge of any local language or organisation. The small rainbow heart being included in the poster design is a subtle but meaningful way to affirm the queerness of Babylon as a space without explicitly including a written statement such as "THIS IS A GAY VENUE" in the design.

The same subtle signification appears in poster 2. Although the acronym 'LGBT+ is printed in the bottom left corner of the poster in small letters, this is somewhat easy to miss as it is not the focal point of the image. While there is no further, direct mention of queerness in relation to the event being promoted, this poster features the South African flag in the background, having undergone its common and well-recognised "gayification." This is not an academic or particularly technical term, though online evidence suggests it has been in use colloquially since at least 2011, and refers to the process by which something that was previously not-gay, becomes gay (Urban Dictionary and Steelbackguy 2011). In a South African context, this involves replacing the colours of the South African flag with rainbow

colours, while maintaining its original design in all other aspects. This flag is often flown at national Pride parades and celebrations, as a way to signify that one is both 'proudly South African' and also proudly queer. Designed and launched by artist Eugene Brockman and officially entitled "the Gay Pride Flag of South Africa", the purpose of this flag is both to celebrate the diversity and legalisation of same-sex marriage in South Africa, and to raise awareness of issues such as homophobia, transphobia, discrimination, and hate crimes such as corrective rape. Unfortunately, limited information is available on the design and registration of this flag as an official South African symbol.

Figure 11



The original flag design, before adaptation for the Babylon poster.[21]

With the words "Heritage Day: tomorrow is a public holiday" in the foreground of the poster and the remainder of the poster space being black and white with the Babylon logo, there is no other indication that the event is associated with the queer community at all. Interestingly, there are also no further references to South African history at all beyond this piece of text. The extent of Babylon's actual engagement with Heritage Day leaves much to be desired, and is unpacked in a later chapter.

Poster 3 is somewhat more obviously queer, with the largest word in the title being "PRIDE referencing the parties, parades, and marches that take place globally in celebration of gay liberation and LGBTQ+ identities. Such events typically take place once a year, though LGBTQ+ organisations and private establishments often host Pride-themed events periodically. " This word is flanked by rainbow-coloured lines on either side, and the poster in itself is advertising Babylon as the venue for the official

[21] It is worth taking note of the possible dual meaning behind a rainbow-coloured South African flag. One the one hand, this could index discourse around progressiveness, inclusivity, and support for the LGBTQ+ community. On the other hand, this could also allude to South Africa's status as the 'rainbow nation' post-Apartheid. In truth, both of these notions could be problematised, as they are not always evident in practice.

Johannesburg Pride after-party. Like many of the posters, there is a ribbon at the bottom with the word "Babylon" written repeatedly. This particular poster features the text in rainbow colours, in contrast to posters 2 and 4, where the text is white. The affiliation with Johannesburg Pride is in itself an indication that Babylon markets itself as a queer space; this point will be discussed in chapter 3 of this dissertation, which deals primarily with activism.

Poster 4 features text in the foreground advertising a themed event entitled "Twink Night: Youth Day edition." Rainbow panelling is on either side of this title, encompassing the majority of the poster space. In addition to the easily recognizable rainbow motif, the word 'twink' in itself is a signifier of queerness, albeit a somewhat more subtle one which has the potential to go unnoticed to people not well-versed in queer slang. While the origin of the word 'twink' in this context is debated, it has come to refer to a young, typically-white, gay man with a boyish, slender frame, and effeminate mannerisms (Polaris 2018). The choice to include this word on a poster is an act of intertextual signalling, the purpose of which is to index one discourse via the presence of another. This process allows an audience to perceive meaning where it is not explicitly outlined, based on external knowledge.

Posters 5 and 6 are similar in design, advertising a recurring event that takes place on most Fridays. The event, aptly titled 'Frigay' – a portmanteau of the words 'Friday' and 'gay' – does not seem to have a particular theme or dress-code attached to it; rather, it is the gathering of the queer patrons at the venue that is seen to make the moment a 'gay Friday', for lack of better phraseology. The subtitle, "THE GAYEST DAY OF THE WEEK", also featured in both posters, further serves to affirm the 'gayness' of the events, as well as creates an expectation that the event will be entertaining for LGBTQ+ people, with the focus likely being white, middle- and upper class, cisgender, gay men. The basis for this latter postulation is explained in sections 10.8 and 10.9 of chapter six, which deals with the idea of the gay body. One may also expect the space to be full of queer people, with special attention paid to their desires and interests. Also in both posters, a large rainbow strip descends behind the main title, similar to a shadow or movement streak. Not only does this add movement to the poster and guide the eyes to the title, which is the focal point, but it further reinforces that the event is associated with – and targeted at – the greater queer community.

Poster 7 takes queer-coding one step further. This poster promotes an event Babylon is hosting to commemorate the second annual celebration of Stonewall Day in June of 2018.

The Stonewall Riots give name to a series of aggressive acts of protest against targeted police brutality towards the LGBTQ+ community in June of 1969. Responding to the police raiding the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City, patrons of the bar and gay residents of the neighbourhood banded together to demand an end to the unprompted arrests and unprovoked violence that often took place at the hands of law enforcement (Nappo 2010). The uprising saw individuals of all marginalised identities and lifestyles, from effeminate gay men and butch lesbians, to transgender sex workers and drag queens, throwing bricks, restraining police officers, and destroying property in an attempt to assert themselves against their oppressors. These events, which took place over the course of several days and led to the establishment of various organisations and committees for gay rights, are widely lauded as the foundation of the gay liberation and gay pride movements we know today (Nappo 2010). The most famous of activists involved in the Stonewall riots is transgender woman of colour Marsha P. Johnson, who is hailed as an icon among queer activists (The Marsha P Johnson Institute 2020), and surprisingly, not mentioned in the poster for this event.

In inviting the audience to a commemorative event, poster 7 assumes the audience's knowledge of this particular piece of iconic queer history, further emphasising that their target audience and their space is explicitly queer. In the foreground of the poster, a rainbow-coloured vector of Johannesburg's skyline stretches from one side to the other. The consistent stylistic choice to include the Johannesburg skyline in Babylon's posters is interesting, if not somewhat bizarre; while Babylon may include this imagery in an attempt to associate themselves with Johannesburg, the suburb of Illovo where the bar is situated is nowhere near the Johannesburg CBD in reality. The desire to associate themselves with Johannesburg may in part be an attempt to broaden the geographical area with which they are associated, potentially increasing local and international/touristic patronage. That is, Babylon aspires to be *the* gay club to visit in the general Johannesburg area despite its distance from the city centre, rather than merely *a* gay club in Illovo. It is worth noting that there is some irony in this, as Babylon – being an upmarket and rather elitist establishment, as is explained further on – does not cater or market itself to the demographic who

actually lives in the inner city. It is somewhat problematic, then, that an image of the skyline is commodified and used as promotional material for a space its occupants would not be welcome in.

In the background of poster 7, small squares frame faded photographs of pride marches and protests throughout history. The name of the event – that is, "ONE WORLD" – is silver, but features a gay pride flag passing through it, adding an additional rainbow motif to the poster. The phrase, "STONEWALL REMEMBRANCE" directly underneath it, includes a further portion of this rainbow flag background passing through it. This event celebrates the anniversary of the Stonewall riots, and includes a live stream of a similar celebration taking place in New York City. While this poster features a variety of other small components that inform the queer nature of the event, the rainbow element is by far the most prominent, dominating the space. It is this, coupled with the explicitly queer event it is advertising, that makes it clear the space is gay.

Poster 8 follows a similar format, including a similar rainbow-coloured vector of Johannesburg's skyline. The rainbow colours flow into the background of the poster, as well as into a large swirl placed directly in the centre of the design. The title of this particular event is "PRIDE'S FIRST REVEAL PARTY", with the word "PRIDE" situated directly over the bulk of the rainbow swirl, the colours filling it. In this context, a 'reveal party' refers to the announcement of Johannesburg Pride's theme and the line-up of artists set to perform at the event, both of which change each year. Behind this, as in poster 7, small squares frame photographs to comprise the remainder of the background. This time, however, the photos depict patrons of the club at previous events, partying. It is worth noting that the majority of these patrons are muscular white men without shirts on, which is rather telling of the kinds of patrons they are hoping to attract.

Poster 9 adopts a less complex aesthetic, with the design being similar to that of posters 5 and 6. Like these aforementioned posters, the background is a solid colour – in this case, purple – with simple sparkle shapes and stars every few centimetres. The event advertised in this poster is a celebration of the Jozi Cats' 4th 'Birthday', as well as a 'Bachelor/ette fundraising auction', where patrons can bid on their favourite Jozi Cats members for a chance to win a dinner with them, among other prizes. Underneath the text, a ribbon of four colours runs horizontally across the space, loosely but distinctively

resembling the rainbow pride flag. Directly above the title is a heart with a judge's gavel in it, the latter component representing the auction that is to take place at the event. The heart is filled with six rainbow stripes, their hues matching the colour scheme of the rainbow ribbon below. This rainbow heart is easily identifiable as a pride-related icon, as seen in poster 1, making it clear that the event has been created with LGBTQ+ people in mind.

Poster 10 features less rainbow iconography than the posters before it, while still succeeding in making the queer target market known. The rainbow element of this poster can be found in the form of a horizontal stripe across the bottom length of the poster. While it is not particularly large, the vibrant colours contrast greatly to the rest of the poster, which is comprised entirely of different shades of purple. Consequently, the stripe is a particularly noticeable element of the poster and can be considered one of the main focal points, save for the woman who takes up most of the space.

Poster 11 advertises a tequila festival to take place in September 2019. A large, traditionally-decorated Mexican sugar skull – famous for symbolising the country's national Day of the Dead – with a red halo fills the left side of the poster. The background is black, with faded icons of additional, smaller sugar skulls, potion bottles, and classical guitars. To the right, the word "TEQUILA' is in large, rainbow-filled letters, within a banner outline of the same rainbow pattern. The link between tequila and Mexico is, of course, that this is where the popular alcoholic beverage originates and remains most popular. Across the bottom of the poster, a familiar rainbow stripe containing Babylon's name and logo spans from left to right. While this event is evidently themed according to the traditional festive aesthetics of Mexico's Dia de los Muertos, these auxiliary notes of rainbow colouring serve to remind patrons of the venue's affiliation with the LGBTQ+ community.

Poster 11 promotes a night focusing on the attendance of Detox, an American drag queen who rose to international fame after appearing on several seasons of RuPaul's Drag Race. This reality competition series features both professional and amateur drag queens who complete various challenges across the season, with the winner being awarded glamorous prizes, including but not limited to large sums of money, photo-spreads in popular magazines, modelling contracts, lifetime supplies of makeup products from prestigious cosmetic brands, international holidays, and so on. Drag queens, having been an

integral component of gay culture and activism throughout history, are still important to the modern LGBTQ+ population, and thus, this television series is incredibly popular with members of the community. This poster features an illustrated version of the United States of America's flag, comprised of rainbow-coloured stripes and tiny pink hearts where there are usually stars., a design choice very similar to the South African adaptation of the rainbow gay pride flag. This indexes discourse around homonationalism yet again (Puar 2013). The title of this event is "FRIGAY, WITH DETOX", a familiar weekly event that has been tweaked to accommodate the queen's performance. The logo for RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars can be found directly below this, and to the right, a large photograph of Detox herself fills the remaining space. As in poster 46, a rainbow-filled banner runs across the bottom of the poster, the Babylon logo within it. These rainbow additions serve to confirm that the event is largely aimed at LGBTQ+ individuals.



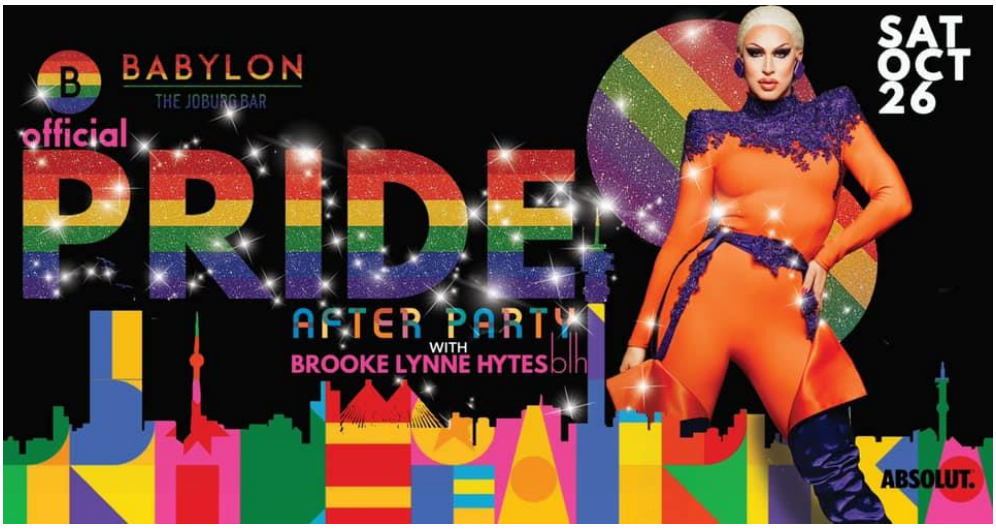
Poster 13

Poster 14





Poster 15



Poster 16

The above posters, while all different, are linked by a common feature: they are all advertising events which revolve around Johannesburg Pride, and international Pride Month, which is in June. Poster 13 promotes an event focused on the "build up to Pride", with the Pride in question being Johannesburg Pride. The word "PRIDE" in large, capital letters, takes up the majority of central poster space. Below it, the recognizable Johannesburg skyline vector spans the poster width. Both "PRIDE" and this vector are filled in with the rainbow-adjacent colours and pattern used in the official Johannesburg Pride logo. The same is true of the Babylon logo, which is placed directly above "PRIDE."

Poster 14, which advertises an event celebrating international Pride month, takes a different approach to the rainbow. This poster is arguably one of the most colourful. Featuring rainbow-based gradients in the event title, "Pure Pop", as well as in the streaks and dots that decorate the space and fill the majority

of the left side. To the right, an illustration of a woman's face fills the space. Drawn in a style reminiscent of pop-art, her hair and facial features are coloured in segments, each one a different colour of the rainbow, in the traditional rainbow order. Across the bottom width of the poster, a banner repeating the establishment's name and logo stretches from one corner to the other. This, too, is filled in with a rainbow gradient.

Poster 15, in partnership with Johannesburg Pride once again, advertises the "official Pride pre-party". The majority of the poster background is filled with a vector of a pride flag, which folds itself down and across the poster space. Sparkles adorn the main title, which is in large, white font in the centre. The remainder of the poster space is plain white. With the word "PRIDE" being capitalised and the simple, but to-the-point pride flag colours, this poster is unequivocally and unsubtly gay, pointing to the fact that the event will also be the same.

Poster 16 differs greatly in design and complexity. Unlike poster 15, this composition shies away from minimalist aesthetics and layers three separate rainbow motifs across the poster space. As has been seen numerous times in previous posters, a vector of the Johannesburg skyline runs across the bottom of the space. This time, it is filled with the rainbow-based pattern found in the Johannesburg Pride logos and promotional material. Above this, the word 'PRIDE' in large print fills much of the space. This text is filled in with a different, glittery pride rainbow, with an overlay of sparkles. Sparkles are often associated with drag and ballroom culture, which places great value in bold clothing full of sequins and glitter (Shaikjee and Stroud 2014) Directly above this, the word "Babylon" and the club logo are filled with the same rainbow colours. Below 'PRIDE', the words 'AFTER PARTY' are filled with yet another colourful, rainbow-based pattern. To the right of this text, a drag queen by the name of Brooke Lynne Hytes, another famous RuPaul's Drag Race contestant, strikes a pose. Behind her, two more circle shapes are filled with the glittery rainbow pattern. All in all, the poster is saturated with rainbow-themed imagery and is therefore unmistakeably gay.

Poster 17



Poster 18



Unlike many of the previous posters, poster 17 does not use rainbow iconography as the basis of the poster design. Rather, this poster features illustrations of four naturally-coloured, brown and white bears, standing in pairs. Between each bear is a heart, this shape filled in with the traditional six colours of the rainbow flag. As the only bright and colourful feature of the poster, these hearts stand out. Consequently, and in combination with the bears being a reference to a gay subgroup, which will be discussed at a later stage, this poster is recognizably gay – to members of the LGBTQ community, at the very least.

Poster 18 returns us to the in-your-face, rainbow-based poster theme which is popular across Babylon's online media.

This particular poster features photograph of a human skull against a dark purple background. The inclusion of a skull relates to the theme of the advertised event, which is called "Scream Kweens" and takes place the night after Halloween. Similar to some previous posters, the skull casts a "shadow" of rainbow colours behind it. These same rainbow colours – six of them, as is in the official LGBTQ flag – also emanate from the skull's eye sockets, much like laser beams. Each colourful stripe in this configuration also holds the name of a drag queen performing at the event.

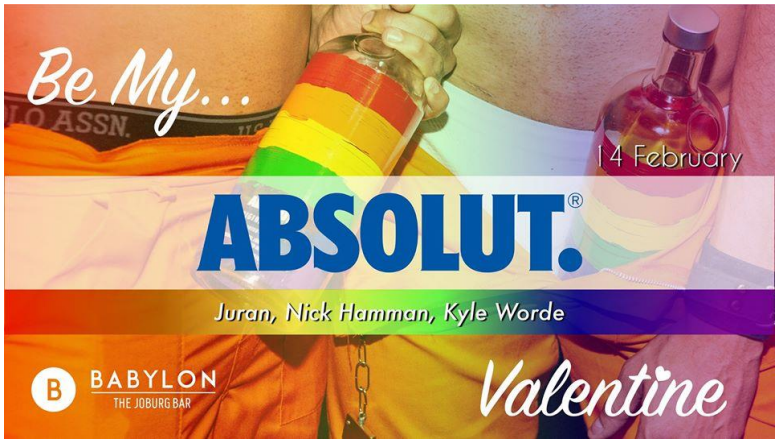
Poster 19



Poster 20



Poster 21



Poster 19 uses rainbow iconography to "gayify" a poster design that would otherwise likely not be read as queer-adjacent in any way. With a dark purple background and luminescent silhouette of a shirtless

man wearing a halo, little to nothing about this poster implies a relation to queerness. It is the event title, “Black FriGay”, a play on the phrase “Black Friday”, which gives the reader a clue. The choice to play on Black Friday is interesting, as this refers to a day where commercial establishments greatly reduce the prices of their products, so they are temporarily accessible to all, while ensuring that the mass sales still result in a profit. The decision to model a weekly event after this occasion speaks to the discourses surrounding the objectification and commodification of gay bodies, which is explored in a later chapter.

While the word “Black” is filled with a lavender, black, and white gradient, the word “Frigay” is outlined with a bright, rainbow gradient. This, in conjunction with the existence of the word “Frigay” in itself, points to the fact that the event is gay.

The same technique of contrasting rainbow with an otherwise-monochrome design is used in poster 20. The poster background is filled entirely with a photograph of Donna Summer singing, dressed in glittery, sequined clothing. This photograph is black and white. Across the centre of the poster, the event title, “Disco Divas”, takes up the majority of space. The text is white, with a rainbow “shadow” behind it. This splash of colour is in stark contrast to the otherwise-dark background, making the rainbow colours difficult, if not impossible, to take note of. In conjunction with the word “divas”, this colour scheme heavily implies that the event is queer. The decision to include an image of Donna Summer in the poster further substantiates this, as she is extremely popular in gay pop culture and is often considered an icon.

Poster 21, advertising a Valentine's Day event, is more complex in design and colour. The background features a close up shot of two shirtless men in their underwear, with the shot focusing on their groins. Both of them are holding the 2018 Pride-edition bottles of Absolut vodka, which feature the rainbow Pride flag wrapping around the entirety of the bottle's body, as seen below.

Figure 12

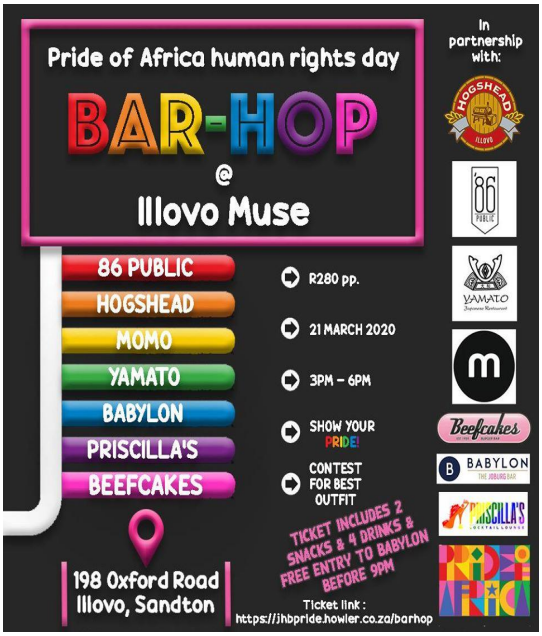


[22] The title of this event integrates a pun based off of the vodka: "be my…ABSOLUT valentine." With the word "ABSOLUT" front and centre and the words "be my…" and "valentine" on the top-left and bottom-right corners of the poster respectively, it is clear that this special-edition Pride vodka is the focal point of the event. Below the word "ABSOLUT", a banner filled with a rainbow gradient spans across the width of the poster, further emphasising the rainbow theme. This poster is undeniably gay because of its use of the rainbow colours.

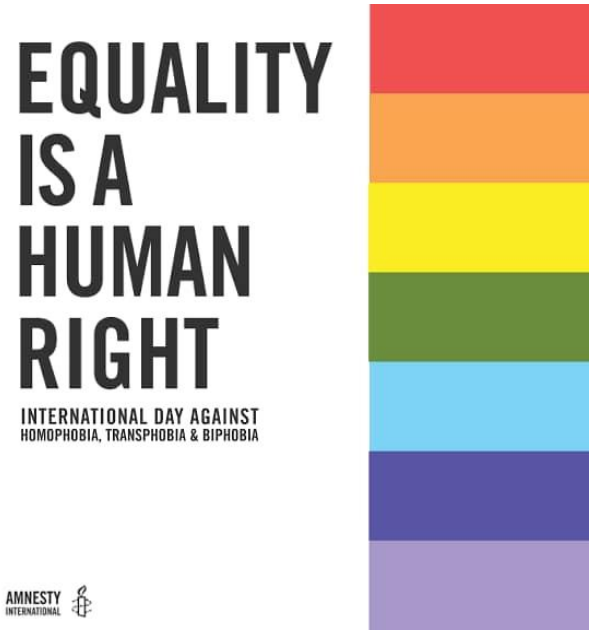
It is also worth noting that Absolut was the first international alcoholic brand to advertise specifically to the LGBTQ+ demographic, with their first formal engagement with gay consumers taking place as early as 1981. Official statements assert that this move was not politically-motivated, and stemmed from a desire to be inclusive in their marketing campaigns. This also speaks to the issue of commodifying queerness, though the issue was not as pervasive at the time (Elliott 2011).

[22] ABSOLUT, 2018. [image] Available at: <https://www.blackwellswines.com/products/absolut-colors-vodka-750-ml-limited-edition-rainbow-bottle> [Accessed 2 October 2020].

Poster 22



Poster 23





Poster 24

Poster 22 advertises a bar hop arranged by Pride of Africa, the organisation responsible for Johannesburg Pride, in partnership with a variety of establishments in the area – namely Babylon, 86 Public, Hogshead, Momo, Yamato, Priscilla's[23] and Beefcakes. While the majority of these venues are simply pubs and restaurants that do not outwardly advertise themselves as catering to any particular demographic[24], Priscilla's is a self-advertised gay bar, and Beefcakes is a queer-run restaurant chain – the Johannesburg venue being directly opposite Babylon – famous for hosting drag shows. This poster features a plain, black background, with the majority of text being white. The phrase "BAR-HOP", having been stylised to be the focal point of the title, is the largest text on the poster, and is written in capitalised, rainbow-coloured text. With the phrase being comprised of six letters, each letter is a solid colour, filled in the order of the six-colour LGBTQ+ pride flag. A similar artistic technique has been used to list the venues participating; directly underneath the title, seven colourful tabs – each one, once again, a colour of the rainbow, plus pink – each contain the name of an establishment to be visited during the event.

These tabs, placed in the shape of a column, create an easily-discernible rainbow pattern. To the right of this, white text provides details to the event, such as the cost per person, time, and additional information in bullet points. One of these bullet points simply proclaims, "show your pride!" with each letter of 'pride' a different colour, again in rainbow order. On the extreme right, along the edge of the poster, the logos of all partnering venues form a border. Both Priscilla's logo and the logo for Pride of Africa, which has been featured before in other posters, are rainbow-coloured. This poster is saturated with rainbow iconography, from the title to auxiliary design choices. With three self-proclaimed LGBTQ+ entities endorsing it, this event is irrefutably and ostentatiously gay in nature.

[23] Priscilla's has likely been named in reference to *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, which is a movie and musical about drag queens and a transgender woman. This piece of media is an important part of LGBTQ+ pop culture.

[24] Although these establishments do not explicitly define their target market, their patrons are largely middle- and upper-class individuals living in the area, who are mostly – but not exclusively – white. It follows, then, that the majority of people interested in participating in an event that involves all of these venues are likely to fit into the above category.

Posters 23 and 24 differ somewhat to those which have come before them, in that they do not advertise any particular events to be hosted at Babylon. Rather, the former aims to raise awareness of International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia on behalf of Amnesty International, and the latter simply urges all those who see the poster to stay safe. This comes in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic reaching South Africa, and the subsequent government-mandated lockdown, which included the closure of all establishments not deemed to be providing essential goods or services.

Poster 23 is simple in design, featuring bold black text and a vertical panel of rainbow-coloured blocks against an otherwise plain, white background. The text reads "EQUALITY IS A HUMAN RIGHT" in large letters, with "International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia" below it in much smaller letters. The Amnesty International logo sits in the bottom left corner, even smaller. While the auxiliary title on this poster does provide formal information regarding the purpose of the poster, the rainbow panelling is likely enough for the majority of those who see it to correctly parse the context. This poster is explicitly gay, as it serves no other purpose than to advocate for LGBTQ+ justice, an interest of Babylon's that is unpacked in chapter five.

Poster 24 asserts the queerness of the venue via the plentiful use of gay iconography outside of the rainbow, which will be revisited in the section that is to follow. There is minimal text on this poster; excluding the Babylon logo, only the words "STAY SAFE" appear in the middle of the poster space, the font large and light grey. This command has been placed within a magenta circle. No further elaboration is provided as to what readers are to stay safe *from,* though one could assume that, since this was published during South Africa's first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, the urge pertains to safety from the virus, and other dangers that may crop up as a result, such as increased crime and civil unrest. To the right, the familiar gay rainbow stripes run in a vertical column, all the way down the poster. While this poster does not promote an event, it asserts that the venue, even when not operational, exists for the LGBTQ+ demographic, and seeks to attract the attention of patrons who support or identify with this.

10.4 Intertextuality and in-group references

Intertextuality has been a core aspect of communication between individuals within marginalised groups. In its simplest form, intertextuality can be defined as the strategy of using one piece of text to refer to another. In this context, "text" can be expanded to encompass additional, non-literary components of a poster, such as icons, patterns, and illustrations. The primary purpose of intertextuality in media promotion is to increase appeal and express solidarity within a desired demographic (Machin and Mayr 2014; Scollon and Scollon 2003). By indexing discourse prevalent within a particular group of people, one is able to create a sense of community or convey a desired message to their target audience, often without the broader public noticing (Peters 2005).

This is a prime example of how a venue like Babylon can create an in-group and an out-group; that is, Babylon utilizes intertextuality in their poster design to appeal to viewers who understand 'hidden' references, while flying under the radar of others whom they are not concerned with attracting. In less complex terms, these posters are designed to include many features that index discourse familiar to people who fall into the category of LGBTQ+, excluding those who do not. This strategy reinforces the notion that, while anyone is welcome to attend, the venue and its events are deliberately designed for queer patrons.

All found instances of intertextual signalling across this corpus of Babylon posters have been tabulated, with poster numbers included for reference. Data has been separated into two main categories: written language, and visual text. The former deals with intertextual references to aspects of queerness which are conveyed subtly via text, often through wordplay, use of slang, references to popular media, and so forth. The latter examines the conveying of queer subtext through visual media; in simpler terms, visual intertextuality denotes how images, icons, and illustrations can index discourse that is otherwise not explicitly mentioned.

10.5 Language-based intertextuality

Figure 13

Text	**Poster Numbers (original)**
Pink = slang	Red = BDSM / Yellow = Drag / Blue = Media
Twink	8, 11, 18, 20, 23, 43, 61, 66, 67
Leather, BDSM, Kink	11, 95
Drag Race/Drag Show	12, 14, 24, 29, 50, 55, 56, 61, 70, 73, 80, 81, 84
GoGo Dancers	21, 81, 99
Tipping the Velvet	28
Beyonce and Madonna, Lady Gaga special mention, Mariah Carey, Mean Girls	B 29, 22 M, 59 G, 65 MC, 68 MG
Diva/s	38, 40, 63
Orange is the New Black	39
Bear	44

Kunty Karaoke	47
RuPaul	14, 47, 48
Kweens	56
~~Crystal~~ Queer	57
Yass	59
Slay	73
Luscious	91
Jozi Cats	37, 94
Boys	7, 62, 81, 100

10.6 Gay Slang

Throughout this poster corpus, a variety of words are used which can be considered gay slang. While slang words and their frequency of use have changed, evolved, and fluctuated throughout time, their existence does not come without historical significance. From as early as the 16th century, gay-specific language use has been recorded and discussed by scholars and laypeople alike (Polaris 2018). The term 'gay slang' is multifaceted, and encompasses all forms of language, including but not limited to individual words, whole phrases, and complete dialects. A variety of informal dialects have been found to exist across the globe, with the popularity of their study increasing among sociologists and linguists over the last two decades (Taylor 2007). Classified as 'cant' slang, – that is, jargon that is cryptolectic and incomprehensible to outsiders in a deliberate attempt to exclude them (Taylor 2007). The most notable of these dialects include Polari in Britain, Kaliardá (Καλιαρντά) in Greece, Swardspeak in the Philippines, and locally, Gayle in Cape Town, South Africa (Mary-Gwyneth Luyt 2014).

While the usage, context, and format of gay slang differs globally, the purpose of its existence is largely shared. Like most slang, the objective of its use to create a sense of community among those who use and understand it, as well as to exclude those who do not understand it. While this exclusion is not always aggressive or deliberate, it is an inevitable by-product of community-specific jargon. In the context of LGBTQ+ history, gay slang is known to have been used as a method of attracting or identifying fellow queer individuals without having to out oneself publicly (Baker 2008c). Slang usage has often allowed people with queer identities to communicate their identities and desires without placing themselves at risk of homophobia-driven violence (Taylor 2007). This is not to say that gay slang exists exclusively for privacy purposes; such language is also popular in 'safe' contexts, often to create or reinforce camaraderie, classify identities or subgroups, refer to particular behaviours common in queer circles, or index specific discourse, among other things.

While this particular poster corpus – and Babylon's collection of digital media in general – does not feature references to complete gay dialects, a plethora of individual slang words and phrases are used.

Twink

This word is used to classify the physical appearance of a gay man. 'Twink' typically refers to a gay man with a slender build, conventionally-attractive features, minimal body hair, and a youthful overall appearance. While individuals classified as twinks are often in their 20s and quite effeminate, this is not a necessary prerequisite for classification. Visually, a twink is the opposite of a bear.

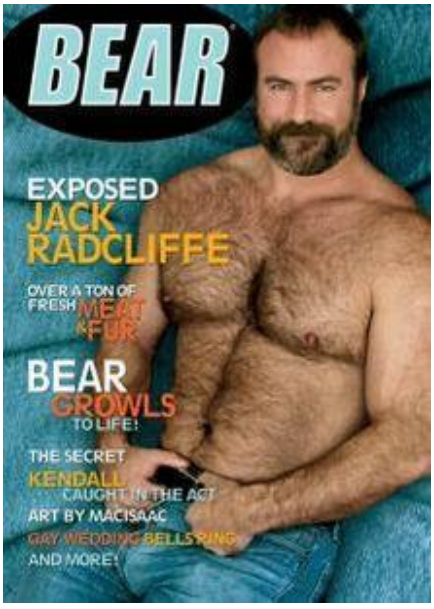
Diva

In gay contexts, 'diva' refers to a gay man with effeminate mannerisms and a loud, glamorous personality. A diva typically has an interest in fashion and places importance on status and physical appearances, sometimes to an obnoxious extent. This word has been borrowed from mainstream language, where the definition is the same but traditionally applies to women only.

Bear

This word is also used to classify the physical appearance of a gay man. A man fitting the 'bear' label is typically heavy-set and burly, with ample body hair and a traditionally masculine appearance and demeanour. This subgroup is established and well-recognised, even having a personalised pride flag and dedicated print media, such as the Las Vegas-produced periodical pictured below. Visually, a bear is the opposite of a twink.

Figure 14



Above: *Bear* magazine, established 1987

Below: the official Bear pride flag, designer unknown.



Figure 15

Kunty Karaoke

While this phrase in itself is not established slang, it employs a linguistic technique popular in Drag scenes. This entails selecting a word with sexual or crude connotations and modifying its traditional spelling, making it slightly less offensive. These words are then often used as part of Drag Queen names, often paired with alliteration, puns, or other plays on words, adding an element of humour to the otherwise risqué phrase. In this case, the word "cunt" – an expletive referring to a vagina – has been turned into "Kunty", and followed with the alliterative "Karaoke", to name an event. It is worth noting that karaoke and lip synching are an integral part of drag shows. It is also worth noting that, in some drag scenes, the word "cunty" has become slang for "unpleasant, which can also be said to carry misogynistic undertones (Nixon 2009)."

Kweens

Sometimes spelled 'queen', particularly in heterosexual circles, this term was originally used as a derogatory way of referring to flamboyant, effeminate men, the majority of whom were gay. Like many other slurs, the word was reappropriated by LGBTQ+ folks involved in the ballroom scene[25], gaining new spelling in the process. The word now refers to an individual who is performing well at any given task, or in more colloquial terms, being a 'badass.' Often used together with 'yass', this word is especially popular among gay men and folks involved in Drag Culture.

Queer

The word 'queer' is loaded with both historical significance and modern-day contention. Once used as a vicious slur towards people thought to be LGBTQ+, this term has been reappropriated by some, while still remaining rejected by others. To those who have embraced this word, 'queer' is often thought of as a non-specific umbrella term to refer to any identity within the LGBTQ+ acronym. Others, too, take this label on because no other established identity under the LGBTQ+ acronym suits them. Even today,

[25] Ballroom culture is an LGBTQ+ subculture originating with POC in New York. Largely an underground scene, participants would stage competitions involving lip synching, dance, and drag. This is the foundation of today's drag culture, and was rooted in defiance of homophobic and transphobic societal norms (Bailey 2011).

the use of this word to refer to general groups of non-heterosexual individuals sometimes sparks debate, as its reclamation has not been wholly accepted.

Yass

Sometimes also spelled 'yas', this word is an interjection used to express agreement, encouragement, or praise. This word originated from 1980s ballroom culture, a subculture comprised of LGBTQ+ African-American and Latinx individuals in the USA. The majority of people involved in this scene, which centered dance and vogueing competitions, were transgender women and drag queens. The expression made its way into mainstream queer vocabulary by the mid-1990s, and has since increased in popularity and usage among gay men of all backgrounds.

Slay

First used in the 16th century to denote being uncontrollably enthused, to the point of laughing oneself to death (Wellington 2018), this word once again rose to popularity in the 19th century, this time in the context of a person being "dressed to kill." By the 1980s, the word had joined "yass", having been adopted by Black gay men involved in the ballroom scene (Smythe 2019). Since then, this word has been publicly used by a variety of celebrities who are considered gay icons, such as Beyoncé and RuPaul, in his television show, *RuPaul's Drag Race.* 'Slay' has come to denote achieving success in any field; in other words, one who "slays" in a certain context is performing well. Like "yass", this word is particularly popular among gay men.

Luscious

While the official origin of this word as gay slang is not known, the words "lush" and "luscious" are frequently used by gay men as a substitution for "great", "awesome," or "cool." The word is sometimes also used with sexual connotations, implying that something is titillating. In US slang specifically, the word 'lush' refers to an attractive heterosexual man (Green 2020).

Boys

Initially referring to male sex workers in the 1930s and 1940s, the term "boy", in a gay context, has come to refer to any gay man, with men referring to each other as "boys." While the exact reason for this is unknown, mainstream opinions indicate this is an attempt to retain a youthful image, as the much-desired elements of glamour and 'fun' are not well-associated with maturity and aging.

Gogo Dancers

Often also called Gogo Boys, this term refers to men who are hired to dance and entertain patrons at clubs. While not exclusive to the LGBTQ+ community, Gogo Dancers are generally associated with gay clubs, and the entertainers are usually gay men themselves.

10.7 References to Popular Media

A variety of these posters make references to media and characters who are popular within the LGBTQ+ community for various reasons. These references take on a plethora of different forms, from events themed according to singers who have been classified as 'gay icons', events themed according to movies and television shows with a predominantly-queer audience, and events in honour of local LGBTQ+ celebrities and queer-bent characters in mainstream cinematic media. This includes, but is not limited to, events featuring Britney Spears, Katy Perry, Kylie Minogue, Ariana Grande, Lady Gaga, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé, who are immensely popular among queer men and are considered gay icons. Babylon also hosts two "Ladies-Only" events in 2019, the first themed according to *Tipping the Velvet*, and the second according to *Orange is the New Black*. Other aspects of television and cinema can be found in the inclusion of superheroes Captain America, Deadpool, and Superman, as well as in the hosting of an event themed according to *Mean Girls*. Furthermore, Babylon also hosts a variety of events featuring both local and internationally-acclaimed drag queens, often with reference to television show *RuPaul's Drag Race*. More locally-understood themes can also be found, such as events promoting and fundraising for the Jozi Cats. The purpose of including these icons in visual promotion material is, broadly, to attract the attention of individuals who feel positively towards them. In this case,

since all of the above are typically popular among LGBTQ+ groups, this is an excellent method of attracting LGBTQ+ and allied patrons, keeping the space gay[26]-dominant.

Popstars as gay icons: Britney Spears, Katy Perry, Kylie Minogue, Ariana Grande, Lady Gaga, Mariah Carey and Beyoncé are a handful of internationally-famous singers who have an especially large following in the LGBTQ+ community. This fan base is comprised primarily of gay men, many of whom participate in 'stan culture'[27] across social media platforms and passionately support these women's every move. While the reason these celebrities are considered gay icons cannot be pinpointed exactly, various factors may come into play. All of the above women represent various brands of ostentatious, unabashed femininity, and have been known to speak out on the importance of self-love and embracing one's individuality. The majority of the above women have also been vocal about supporting the LGBTQ+ community, with Mariah Carey, Britney Spears, and Lady Gaga even going so far as to receive GLAAD awards[28].

Television for queer women: Babylon hosted two 'Ladies-only' events in 2019, with the first being themed according to *Tipping the Velvet*, and the second according to *Orange is the New Black*. *Tipping the Velvet* is a historical fiction novel and a television series with strong themes of erotic lesbianism and gender diversity. While the book and series made their debuts in 1998 and 2002 respectively, they are still somewhat well-known among LGBTQ+ women who enjoy literature and film, partly owing to the fact that good-quality media with authentic depictions of queer women is rare. *Orange is the New Black*, the theme of the second 'Ladies-only' event, is an American television show created for Netflix, following various characters incarcerated in a women's prison. The vast majority of the main characters

[26] For the purposes of concision, and to avoid referring to groups of LGBTQ+ people as 'queer' when they may not identify as such, I refer to Babylon as a 'gay' space. This is not to say that all patrons are gay, or that the space is exclusively for people who are gay. In fact, the space is designed for—and frequented by—individuals of varying non-heterosexual identities, many of which extend beyond the LGBTQAI+ acronym.

[27] The term 'stan', originally birthed from rapper Eminem's song *Stan*, refers to an individual who aggressively follows and promotes a certain celebrity on any given social media platform. This can, on occasion, extend to support in real life. A stan is therefore an extremely passionate and involved fan. This word can also be a verb; in other words, one may be a Lady Gaga stan, but one may also stan Lady Gaga.

[28] GLAAD is an American organisation founded by LGBQ+ people, which monitors LGBTQ+ representation in the media, rewarding allyship and positive, authentic representation.

identify as either lesbian or bisexual, with many episodes centering this in some capacity. This television show also features a Black transgender woman, a self-identified butch lesbian, and discourse about the intricacies of sexual fluidity. As a result, this show has a large fan base of LGBTQ+ women, who seek to see themselves represented, albeit in an unorthodox and sometimes comedic context.

Superheroes and masculinity: A handful of Babylon's posters feature various well-known superheroes, such as Superman, Deadpool, and Captain America. While superhero movies and comics have typically been considered a hegemonically masculine interest, the designers of the posters in question have queered this notion by stylising the characters in an explicitly homoerotic context.

Poster 25



Poster 26



In poster 25, Captain America and Superman can be seen kissing each other passionately on the mouth. This serves no constructive purpose to the rest of the poster, which simply urges those who read it to "STAY SAFE" in the time of COVID-19 and does not promote a particular event. Poster 26, which advertises an after party post-Comic Con – a comic book and science fiction convention also typically associated with heterosexual men – features two pictures of Deadpool, also stylised in a typically 'gay' fashion. The first Deadpool touches his index finger to his lips coyly, with his other hand on his buttocks. The second Deadpool holds both hands on his cheeks. These poses are commonplace among female porn stars, and have come to be associated with femininity, innocence, and sexiness. This juxtaposes greatly with the traditional image of Deadpool and the conduct of superheroes in general, which is typically masculine, aggressive, and strong. Deadpool's inclusion in this poster is notable, as

he is canonically pansexual, and does not subscribe to the conventional behavioural norms typical of superheroes (Fleenor 2019).

Drag Queen iconography: Babylon frequently hosts events where the attendance and performance of both local and internationally-famous Drag Queens is the headlining event. These queens are often in some way associated with *RuPaul's Drag Race*, which has garnered the attention and adoration of the LGBTQ+ community through its promotion of queer culture and gender diversity. As a result, their affiliation with Babylon attracts LGBTQ+ and allied patrons, contributing to the creation of a gay space. A more thorough analysis and unpacking of the inclusion of Drag Queens in Babylon's marketing campaign and entertainment repertoire will be conducted in the chapter that is to follow.

The Jozi Cats: As explained more thoroughly in chapter five, the Jozi Cats are a predominantly-gay, predominantly-male rugby team based in Johannesburg, who accept players of all genders and orientations. The team was founded with the aim to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion within a sport that has historically been dominated by white, heterosexual men with conservative values. As a result of their involvement in various South African Pride parades and other LGBTQ+-related events, the Jozi Cats are well-recognised among LGBTQ+ locals, particularly among those who are white, middle-class men. Consequently, using their logo and players in posters is an effective way of attracting patronage which is predominantly-queer.

BDSM: BDSM refers to a set of sexual practices and preferences relating to bondage, discipline, domination, submission, sadism, and masochism. While BDSM is not actively mentioned in any of the posters, certain words and phrases heavily allude to it. Both posters 27 and 28 contain the word "leather" in their titles, with poster 28 offering free entrance to patrons dressed in "kinky" attire. These posters, in addition to some others, also contain visual elements which hint at BDSM-related practices. The title of poster 28, "Leather and Lace", is significant; this was the name of a women's BDSM support and social group established in Los Angeles during the 1980s, and has become a common phrase within the BDSM community since. Leather has long been an integral feature of BDSM culture, with many in the community wearing various leather garments during sexual activities to denote dominance and increase sex appeal, as well as to signify kinks of interest (Weiss 2015). While BDSM is certainly not exclusive

to gay individuals, studies have found that it is more popular among non-heterosexuals (Richters et al. 2008). It stands to reason, then, that BDSM-themed events would be appealing to some of Babylon's patrons, making it a worthwhile venture. Furthermore, since BDSM – much like any deviation from heterosexuality – is considered taboo and frowned upon in mainstream, conservative circles, one can consider it to be on the periphery of 'queerness', in some respects[29]. With this in mind, it seems sensible that Babylon holds a positive stance towards the BDSM community, going so far as to reward it at certain events.

Poster 27



Poster 28



[29] This is not to say that people who engage in BDSM are queer by default. Rather, I mean to draw a parallel between BDSM and queerness, when viewed through a traditionalist lens; non-heterosexual proclivities of any kind are often instantly labelled sexual perversion or deviance. This is also true of BDSM practices, even between heterosexual parties. As a result, BDSM and queerness both fall into what one could categorise as sexual "otherness", linking the two in some, albeit limited capacity.

10.8 Image-based intertextuality

Figure 16

Text	**Poster Numbers (original)**
Pink = Physical Representations of Gayness Red = BDSM Green = Masculinity and Femininity Yellow = Drag Blue = sex appeal	
Muscles and weights	1
Venus symbol/Mars Symbol	2, 41, 85
Feminine gestures/body language	3
Emojis	6
Shirtless, suggestive levels of nudity	1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 28, 31, 34, 42, 45, 53, 58, 60, 61, 62, 66, 67, 69, 71, 74, 75, 81, 89, 90, 96, 98, 100
BDSM	11, 95

Drag Queens	13, 14, 47, 48, 53, 54, 55, 70, 73, 76, 77, 80, 84, 86
Tattoos	18, 26
Same-sex intimacy; kissing etc.	15, 16, 25, 28, 31, 35, 45, 82
Sparkles	10, 14, 17, 27, 28, 32, 33, 35, 37, 47, 52, 56, 68, 73, 80, 81, 87, 91
Flowers?	4, 7, 15, 16, 25, 38, 40, 42, 46, 69, 93, 96
Genitalia, Breasts, Bananas, Eggplant, etc.	43, 62, 85, 100

10.9 Physical representations of queerness

Throughout the poster corpus, certain images and icons imply gayness without explicitly stating the fact. Poster 24, for example, features two interlinked Venus symbols. This is a common image within the lesbian, bisexual, and WLW[30] community, representing non-platonic relationships between women. This image is well-recognised in LGBTQ+ community, and frequently appears on Pride flags, as well as LGBTQ+-related apparel, such as jewellery and clothing. A single Venus symbol appears in poster 44, which advertises a Women's Day event. The single Venus is also popular iconography among queer women, and is also often used as a tattoo to indicate one's identity or preferences while remaining discreet (University of Missouri-St. Louis 2013). Poster 24 also features two interlinked Mars symbols, signifying sexual – or more broadly, non-platonic –relations between men.

Poster 29





Poster 30

[30] The term WLW (woman-loving-woman) is used here as an all-encompassing, inclusive term for woman-identified individuals who may desire and experience relations with other women, but may not identify as lesbian, bisexual, or queer.

Poster 31



Poster 32



Poster 33



A further signification of queerness in practice can be found in posters 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33. All of the aforementioned posters feature physical expressions of same-sex intimacy, such as close physical touch or kissing. While this is a somewhat more overt sign of queerness, no information is provided textually and thus, the meaning is left to the viewer's own interpretation. These visual clues aid individuals reading the posters in reaching the conclusion that the establishment advertised is geared towards people who identify with the models. In other words, Babylon's status as a gay space is non-verbally communicated and reinforced.

10.10 Sex Appeal and Hookup Culture

For better or worse, research has found that a significant part of gay culture involves expressing one's personal sense of sexuality. This often manifests itself as the idolisation and pursuit of sex appeal, promiscuous behaviour, and participation in hookup culture (Lufkin 2017). This has led to a stereotype associating queerness with hookup culture, particularly in men, though –as is the case with most stereotypes – this is not universally applicable. Out of the 100 posters featured in the corpus, 34 posters feature their models in some state of undress. Since only 65 of the posters in the corpus contain human models or illustrations of people, we are able to deduce that 52.3% of all models – over half – are in some stage of undress. While the majority are shirtless men, a handful can be seen in swimwear or underwear. Various posters zoom in on the models' chests or crotch areas, reinforcing the sexual connotations behind the images.

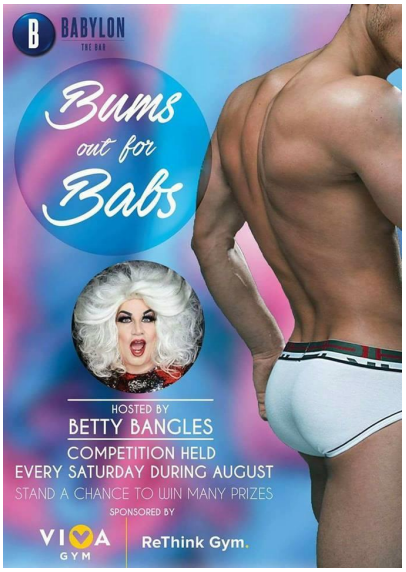
Poster 34



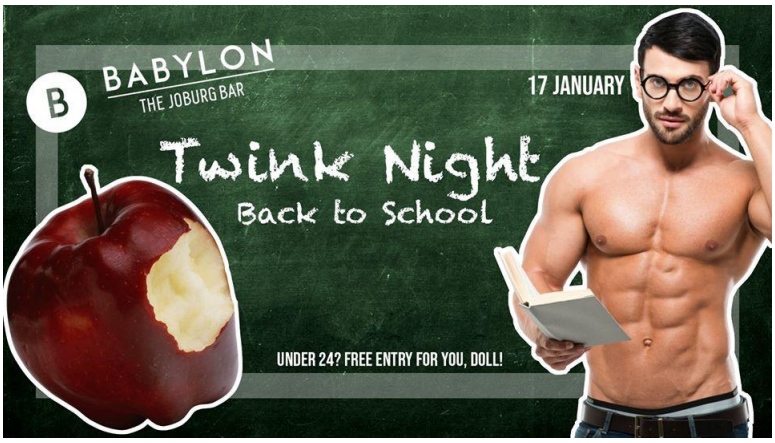
Poster 35



This is exemplified in poster 34, which features a closeup shot of a man's midsection, crotch, and upper thighs. He has little body hair, chiselled abdominal muscles, and wears only a pair of snug, Speedo-style swimming bottoms. Poster 35 features the same concept, with two more muscular men in swimwear dominating the poster space. Poster 36 takes this one step further, displaying only the model's back and buttocks, covered only in tight-fitting briefs.



Poster 36



Poster 37

Poster 37 plays on the "sexy teacher" trope popular in pornographic films, featuring a muscular, shirtless man with thick spectacles and a book. There is also a large, bitten apple at the forefront of the image. This may be an allusion to the trope of the eager student presenting an apple to their teacher, which often appears in porn films before ethically-questionable relations ensue. Alternatively, the apple may index the notion of 'forbidden fruit', which is derived from the Biblical story about Adam, Eve, and the origin of sin in the Garden of Eden.

The man the focal point of the poster, which advertises a "Back to School" event and offers free entry to patrons under the age of 24 years. The models featured in Babylon's posters, all of whom appear to be conventionally attractive and at the peak of physical fitness, do not appear to serve a purpose beyond enticing Babylon's prospective target market. Few of these models are women, and as such, one can quite easily draw the conclusion that their purpose is to draw the attention of gay men by appealing to

their attractions and desire to exist in proximity to those with status-elevating sex appeal, who will then receive further information about the events being hosted upon reading the rest of their particular poster.

Sexuality, sexual desire, and lust are further indexed through the use of emojis and suggestive illustrations, which can be found decorating a variety of posters in the corpus. Poster 38 features more subtle, restrained allusions to sex, in scattering a selection of traditional emojis across the poster space. The majority of these crowd around the model, who is a shirtless, muscular white man. His exact state of undress cannot be known, as the shot only includes his torso, upper body, and face. As such, we can only speculate as to whether or not he is entirely naked; perhaps this is implied, to add an extra layer of sex appeal to the image. The emojis displayed are as follows – a kissing face, a dizzy face, a devil face, a nerdy face, a blushing face, heart eyes, a drooling face, and a 'cool' face, in sunglasses. They have been included below for ease of reference[31], with their typical meanings thereafter.

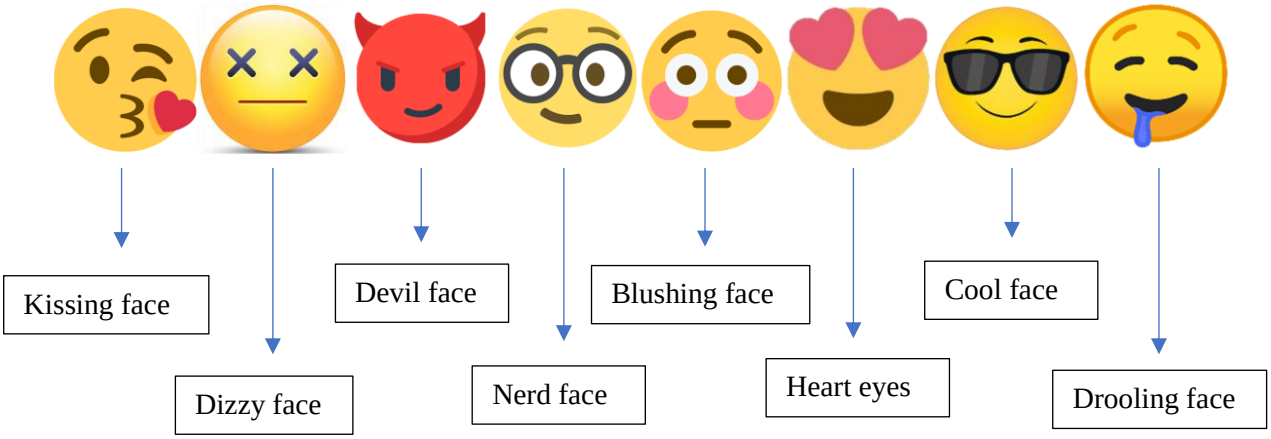
Poster 38



Figure 17

[31] The exact stylization used in the poster could not be found. However, these emojis appear on all social media platforms and all smartphones, and thus, are easily recognized despite their slight variations across interfaces.

[32]



Kissing face: used in both platonic and flirtatious contexts, suggesting affection and/or flirtation.

Dizzy face: used when one is stunned or shocked. Common across a variety of contexts.

Devil face: used to denote that one is engaging in 'devilish' or sneaky behaviour. Commonly used to imply flirtation.

Nerd face: used to indicate innocence, as well as when one feels they have done something clever. Typically used in platonic contexts, though not exclusively.

Blushing face: used to indicate that one is feeling bashful, shy, or embarrassed. A common response to overtly flirtatious messages.

Heart eyes: used to indicate infatuation, non-platonic love, and/or attraction. A popular reaction to photographs one finds sexy or appealing.

Cool face: used to indicate one is feeling relaxed, positive, and good about themselves.

Drooling face: used to indicate desire for a particular subject or object, depending on context.

It is important to note that the above expansions on each emoji are not exhaustive; that is, while these emojis are *generally* understood in similar ways across the population, meaning and context of usage may vary slightly according to country, region, language, subgroup, and individual preference and/or

[32] These images were extracted from a variety of websites specialising in free-to-use images of popular icons and emojis.

idiolect. This having been said, all of the above emojis are common in contemporary online communications, particularly in the context of two individuals flirting or getting to know one another.

Deviating from standard, web-based emojis to independent illustrations and iconography, poster 36 makes use of both overt and implicit imagery to convey a set of desired messages. As noted in the previous section, this poster does not advertise any particular event and features minimal text. Moreover, this poster does not feature a model of any kind; rather, the space is filled with digital line-drawn illustrations of various objects and symbols, all of which connote various elements of sexuality. The illustrations are as follows:

Interlinked Venus symbols: as previously explained, these symbols represent intimate connections between women. Connotations are not necessarily sexual.

Interlinked Mars symbols: as previously explained, these symbols represent intimate connections between men. Connotations are not necessarily sexual.

Bananas: over the last few decades, this fruit has increasingly come to be associated with the human penis owing to its shape, which is loosely reminiscent of an erect phallus. The exact origin of this association is unknown, though it may be related to the practice of placing condoms on bananas in many American public schools, as part of the sex education curriculum[33].

A condom: this image is inherently sexual, and notably, the smallest of all the illustrations across the poster space. The condom, being a form of contraception and protection against STIs, may also add an intertextual meaning to the text in the poster, which reads "STAY SAFE." While the original context of this is health and safety in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, an intertextual reference to safe sexual practices may also come into play. It is worth noting that poster 39 also features bananas, this time in the form of photographs that make up the background behind models.

Poster 39

[33] While this is not done in all states across the USA, the practice is common enough that it has been featured in various US-produced films and television series. As a result, it has permeated international pop culture and subsequently, most individuals across the globe are familiar with the procedure.



Human forms: this poster features three line-drawings of various portions of the human body, all of which are missing limbs and faces. They are almost entirely naked, with the focus being on the one item of 'clothing' present on each body. The first of these drawings is a naked torso, wearing only a conical bra. The second is a similar torso, this time wearing what appears to be a crotchless corset or bodysuit. The last of the drawings features the hips, crotch, and upper thighs of the human form. This figure wears a chastity belt, with a lock and vibration lines visible. The items on these three figures are pieces of lingerie that are highly popular in BDSM circles, and thus, convey a strongly sexual message that is otherwise not directly mentioned in the poster text. This is not the only poster to feature BDSM-related apparel; the model on poster 27, which advertises a "Leather Twink Night", can be seen wearing a leather jumpsuit popular among men who engage in BDSM. Furthermore, the event title has been decorated with illustrations of two devil tails, providing a further allusion to the BDSM and kink scene.

Poster 40



Less explicit references to sexuality can be found in the background of poster 40, which features a variety of differently sized concentric circles behind the two models, against a pale pink background. Upon closer inspection, it is clear these circles have been arranged to resemble human breasts in their

simplest form. Three of these breast shapes have black crosses across the portion one would consider to be the nipple. This reinforces the notion that they were intended to be breasts – particularly women's breasts – as this is the way many female feminists and activists have concealed their nipples while still going shirtless in spaces where the display of women's breasts results in punitive measures. While taping crosses over the nipple is often in association with the Free the Nipple campaign[34], activism relating to this cause goes beyond one single campaign. A real-life example of the nipple-censoring technique (Helppie-Schmieder 2015) is found in the poster below; it is clear that Babylon's poster is drawing on this concept.

Figure 18



[35]

Linking to the theme of queer-specific activism intertextually represented through illustration are the graphics found in poster 10. Behind a photograph of a featured DJ and the event title, a variety of pink triangles are dispersed across the poster space. While this iconography could easily be overlooked by individuals who are uninformed or uninvolved in LGBTQ+ issues, the pink triangle – particularly when upside down – is of great historical significance and carries heavy symbolism to this day. This symbol was initially sewn to the uniforms of prisoners who had been sent to Nazi concentration camps in the

[34] Officially established in 2012, Free the Nipple is a campaign advocating for gender equality with regards to toplessness; the campaign asserts that the public exposure of female nipples should be normalized and desexualized, as is the case with male nipples.

[35] Image source: Erin Twarogal, (2015), *Free the Nipple Protest* [ONLINE]. Available at: https://bloximages.newyork1.vip.townnews.com/jackcentral.org/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/e/0d/e0def69e-7309-11e6-a9bc-df03d54fefc3/57cccd4e93d46.image.jpg [Accessed 23 September 2020].

1930s for the crime of gay or lesbian activity. An estimated 10 000 men are said to have been sent to concentration camps for sexuality-related reasons, while the number of women is unknown due to the loss of records (Waxman O.B, 2018). As with all Nazi-related symbolism, the pink triangle fell out of use immediately after the Third Reich came to an end, with all references to it inspiring shame and terror in both victims and perpetrators of the Holocaust. In the mid-1970s, this symbol resurfaced for the first time in the context of the gay rights and liberation movements sweeping through Europe and North America. Since then, it has become a common symbol of solidarity among the LGBTQ+ community, signifying a reclaiming of power and paying homage to the victims of the past (Jensen, 2002). An image has been included below for reference.

Figure 19

[36]

Babylon including this symbol in poster 41 is a subtle, but meaningful choice. While many may overlook it as an aesthetic addition to the poster background, those with a more observant eye will recognise the symbol and find a hidden meaning: this event and this space is for LGBTQ+ people, though we have not explicitly said so on the poster.

Poster 10

[36] Source: FACES OF AUSCHWITZ, 1940-1945. Accessed 28 October 2020.



10.11 Masculinity and Femininity: elements within iconography

The last category of iconography to be unpacked from the poster corpus can be explored through a more general scope. This category deals with representations of masculinity and femininity within non-specific iconography found embellishing the posters. The iconography to be investigated includes the frequent use of sparkles, flowers, tattoos, and markers of physical fitness. The former two – that is, sparkles and flowers, – are typically associated with conventional femininity, which places value in both people and things being delicate and aesthetically beautiful. Tattoos and physical fitness, in contrast, align much more with the connotations brought by hegemonic masculinity; that is, both of these elements are often associated with strength, dominance, or even aggression.

Poster 41



Poster 42



Out of the 100 posters in this particular corpus, 30 contain either floral or sparkly iconography. These illustrations are in slight contrast to the models on the posters, who for the most part, – as has already been discussed – embody and uphold the traditional archetype of masculinity through their muscular bodies and conventionally-attractive facial features. This juxtaposition ties in with the duality of identity and the varied balance between elements of masculinity and femininity within each person. Whereas hegemonic masculinity rejects femininity in men and views it as a sign of weakness, Babylon's posters exemplify the queering of manhood by having both masculine and feminine elements featured positively across their poster corpus, tying together rather than competing. This can be seen clearly in posters 41 and 42, which contain flowers and glitter, respectively. Both models are muscular men, shirtless and posing to accentuate their physique. It is clear that they have been positioned to be attractive and create a positive association with Babylon as an establishment. By including traditionally-feminine iconography like glitter and flowers in a digital space otherwise saturated with men, Babylon highlights the fact that their values and perceptions of desirability are inherently queer and contrary to heteronormative standards, and therefore welcoming of patronage aligned with that.

10.12 Conclusion

This chapter provides insight into the manner in which rainbow-based iconography and design can be used to convey queerness in a digital space, even when it is not directly mentioned. Other popular

iconography featured in Babylon's poster design includes – but is not limited to – historically-significant symbols, imagery with contemporary political connotations, and sexually suggestive emojis. This kind of iconography indexes queer discourses that transcend the constraints of written or spoken language, drawing the attention of all those who are familiar with queer culture and practices. This method of intertextual signalling allows Babylon to attract patrons who endorse their values and/or are a part of the greater LGBTQAI+ community, without incurring the risk of appearing exclusionary, an objective that is achieved via the creation of in-groups and out-groups based on who is privy to the queer discourses indexed. Moreover, the incorporation of such iconography, in combination with other elements indexing queerness –such as drag queens, BDSM, gay celebrities, etc. – effectively promotes the establishment of a cohesive queer identity and sense of community among patrons by means of these same in-groups and out-groups. The iconography featured in the corpus of posters showcases the various visual elements that Babylon associates with LGBTQ+ identities and experiences, providing insight into what they think it means to be a queer person in a society largely built on heterosexual discourses and dynamics.

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11 CHAPTER SIX: The Gay Body

This chapter seeks to elaborate on the meaning of the word 'gay' where identity is concerned, and explore how Babylon positions the gay body within their branding and advertisement efforts. The idea of a gay body is deconstructed, with particular focus on the intersectional nature of personal identity. The issues of race and gender are brought into this discussion, with particular emphasis placed on investigating desirability in gay bodies. Finally, the sexualisation of commodification of gay bodies and the gay identity is explored in the context of Babylon's branding and target market.

11.1 Background and Contextualisation

The word 'gay' is often used both as an adjective and as a noun, denoting a facet of one's identity. One may describe themselves as a 'gay person', or as 'a gay.' This latter form of self-identification is not

heard quite as frequently in the present day, most likely due to more contemporary discourse surrounding the multifaceted nature of identity and the move away from categorical labels that pathologize attraction or reduce one's personhood to a single component of their identity (American Psychological Association 1991; Del-Teso-Craviotto 2008) Though only three letters, what this word indexes is complex, carrying with it a wide array of associations and discourses, depending on who is asked. When one considers the 'gay body' as an entity, it is important to understand that the gay identity is multifaceted and cannot be essentialised or oversimplified without a large margin of inaccuracy. Like most – if not all – identity markers, one's personal experiences and associations with 'gay' are likely to differ greatly from another's, and thus, it is imperative that the topic of the gay body is explored through a critical lens, taking into account issues of diversity, intersectionality, and the general instability of identity as a whole. Moreover, one cannot ignore the role of language in the production of the body, as it is primarily through language – both verbal and nonverbal – that the body is able to create meaning and discourse in space (Bucholtz and Hall 2016; Milani 2015). This concept is most commonly referred to as embodiment, and is primarily concerned with the various ways in which language and the body relate to and interact with one another to produce meaning. The body is also performative, creating discourse, meaning, and identity through action and presentation (Milani 2015). Embodiment in linguistics can therefore be considered an integral feature of indexicality, as it is the body that adds context and meaning to language in such a way that discursive associations can be made (Bucholtz and Hall 2016). Embodied sociolinguistics therefore looks to aspects of the body such as the voice – which is not particularly pertinent in this study – self-presentation, and agency, in order to investigate the way language and meaning are created and perceived within a given space (Bucholtz and Hall 2016). It is therefore crucial that the topic of the gay body is unpacked, and that one remains cognizant of the fact that embodied discourses may often be more impactful and meaningful than those communicated through written language alone. This having been said, the gay body is also multifaceted and constantly evolving, and as such, cannot be essentialised or oversimplified into a singular static archetype. This chapter will therefore avoid any attempts to define the meaning of 'gayness' or the gay body as a rigid entity, seeking instead to unpack how these things are specifically represented by Babylon through their digital media. The core issues to be investigated pertain to gender, intersectionality, and the

sexualisation and commodification of the gay body. Moreover, the topic of representation will also be explored, specifically in terms of whether or not Babylon's portrayal of the gay body is accurate in the context of South Africa.

The 'About' section of their official website and Facebook page contains the same introductory paragraph providing information about the establishment. This paragraph appears on the website[37] as follows:

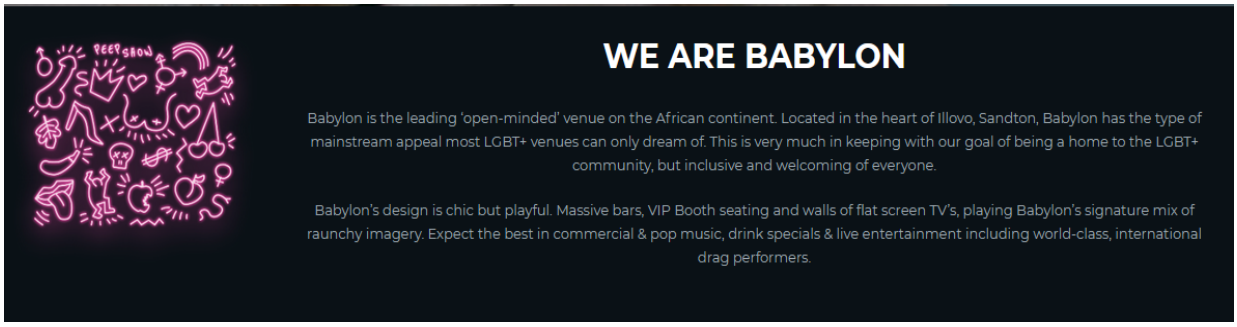

Figure 20

For clarity, the text states:

> *Babylon is the leading 'open-minded' venue on the African continent. Located in the heart of Illovo, Sandton, Babylon has the type of mainstream appeal most LGBT+ venues can only dream of. This is very much in keeping with our goal of being a home to the LGBT+ community, but inclusive and welcoming of everyone.*
>
> *Babylon's design is chic but playful. Massive bars, VIP Booth seating and walls of flat screen TV's, playing Babylon's signature mix of raunchy imagery. Expect the best in commercial & pop music, drink specials & live entertainment including world-class, international drag performers.*

Text highlighted in yellow indexes discourse around community and diversity, while providing insight into their proposed core values and what they intend to achieve as an establishment. Text highlighted in green indexes discourse relating to their perceptions of sexuality and its expression. Text highlighted

[37] This graphic is a screen capture from Babylon's official website. Source: Babylon The Bar (2020) *We Are Babylon*, Babylon Bar. Available at: https://babylonbar.co.za/ (Accessed: 18 December 2020).

in purple indexes further discourses about the importance and value placed on drag culture in both historical and contemporary queer settings.

It is imperative that this text and the accompanying visual are unpacked prior to the commencement of any more thorough analysis, as the way Babylon perceives themselves and the gay body is valuable information and useful for comparison purposes. Various words and phrases of interest have been highlighted in the above transcription, selected because they provide insight into Babylon's brand identity and target population.

Throughout their description, Babylon uses language denotes an understanding that the gay body is varied rather than monolithic, both in an individual and collective capacity. This is particularly evident when one considers the choice made to call the establishment an "LGBT+" venue rather than simply a gay venue. In making this linguistic choice, Babylon indexes discourse around who is welcome in a typical gay bar, emphasising the wide spectrum of identities that constitute queerness and informing perceptions of what it means to be a gay body. Simply put, saying 'LGBT+' instead of 'gay' expands the definition of the gay body as an idea. In calling themselves 'open-minded', Babylon acknowledges that they represent a worldview and spectrum of identities that some may consider taboo or scandalous, requiring an 'open mind' to engage with. While this is undoubtedly done with good intentions, this approach can also be considered somewhat problematic, as it validates the perspective that acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities in the result of unique and progressive thinking rather than a worldview that acknowledges the inherent diversity of humankind and agency of the individual. The text then goes on to flaunt the "mainstream appeal" of the establishment, framing this as something similar venues desire (see "dream of") but cannot achieve. This indexes the particularly relevant discourse around conformity and the idolisation of heterosexual desirability. One must ask themselves why it is that LGBT+ venues, communities, and individuals should aspire to appeal to the 'mainstream' population, who have historically been the single greatest source of oppression and obstacle to sociopolitical justice for the LGBTQ+ community. While garnering favour with the majority group in power is not without its benefits, there exists a nuanced difference between this approach, and the general veneration of the occasionally-hostile majority group who are considered the 'normal' or 'default' population.

The second observation to be made relates to the topic of how Babylon label themselves as an establishment. In this particular segment of text, Babylon is identified as an "LGBT+ venue", rather than simply a gay bar. This terminology is inclusive of more non-heterosexual, non-cisgender identities, and departs from the assumption that all LGBTQ+ people are comfortable being identified as 'gay'. Moreover, in stating that the establishment is intended to be "a home for the LGBT+ community", Babylon both professes a desire to be considered both a gay space and acknowledges the communal aspect of the queer identity. The use of the word "home" in the description also denotes the desire to be considered a safe space, which, while often going hand-in-hand with the idea of a gay space, contains subtle differences in its implication. If a particular space is considered to be gay, the general assumption is that it is frequented predominantly by gay men, and is likely designed with them in mind. A safe space, however, takes this assumption one step further, suggesting that the space is free from oppressive or threatening forces and therefore a sanctuary for those to express their identities without fear of judgment or violence. The last portion of the sentence being looked at calls this into question, however, as it stipulates that the space is "inclusive and welcoming of everyone[38]." While this is typically not a bad thing, the pragmatic meaning – that is, the message the text is *actually* trying to convey – is that heterosexual people are welcome to patronise the establishment with the same freedom as those who are LGBTQ+.

One cannot expect Babylon to exclude patrons on grounds of sexual orientation; not only would this be impossible to prove and illegal, but simply, it would be bad for business. Any attempt to determine who does or does not qualify as a 'gay body' would be misguided, likely relying on fundamentally inaccurate and potentially offensive ideas of how queerness manifests itself at a physical level. In more practical terms, there is no strategy Babylon could use to quantify or classify a prospective patron's 'gayness' beyond evaluating the presentation of one's body according to banal and erroneous standards. There is no One Gay Body, and thus, no visual way to determine how any given patron may identify. As such,

[38] One must unpack the notion of "everyone", however. In truth, Babylon is only a space for those who are able to pay the admission fee, and even then, there is the expectation that patrons will buy beverages, rent VIP booths, and so on, which implies a certain economic standing.

while Babylon's statement that they are "welcoming of everyone" positively showcases their attitude toward inclusivity, truthfully, they have little say on the matter.

On the other hand, however, actively appealing to and welcoming members of the heterosexual majority has the potential to detract from the safety of the space. Moreover, it also somewhat destabilises Babylon's status as a gay space, raising the question of what characteristics a space must possess in order to be classified as gay. That is, if a space professes to be gay, but on any given night, receives more straight than gay patronage, is it still gay? Can the establishment be considered a gay space, rather than merely a gay-friendly but neutral space where all are purportedly welcome? The answer to this is subjective and multifaceted, and therefore cannot be answered without taking into account all other variables relating to the space in question. Despite the lack of a concrete answer, however, the effects of integrating the majority into a specialised minority space are worth pondering.

Also notable in this descriptive paragraph is the mention of the venue's "signature mix of raunchy imagery", which often appears in the form of a provocative slideshow displayed on various wall-mounted television screens throughout the space. Printed posters of scantily clad models (mostly male, white, and cisgender, as seen in the corpus) can sometimes be found on the venue walls, adding to the selection of imagery. The choice to have this kind of decor become a signature element[39] of the venue relates to the hypersexualisation and commodification of alternative sexuality, and will be discussed further on in this chapter.

The final component of this paragraph to be noted is the mention of drag performers. As has previously been discussed, drag culture has played an integral role in LGBTQ+ history and holds indisputable significance in LGBTQ+ discourse. In subverting the norms around gender expression and sexuality, drag performances have come to epitomise what is considered 'gay' in commercial and social spaces. In other words, drag queens are quintessentially 'queer', and exert this influence over any space they

[39] This choice is reflected and reinforced in the actual descriptive banner itself, which features a block of neon, doodle-style illustrations, the majority of which are sexually suggestive. These illustrations include a penis, set of breasts, an eggplant, a leaf, cherries, the phrase "peep show", and various gender symbols, among others.

occupy. By asserting that drag performers are an integral part of their brand, Babylon restores – to a certain degree, at least – its status as a gay space.

11.2 The Gay Body and Gender

At first glance, the corpus of posters appears to feature men and masculine figures more so than women. This is confirmed by a simple statistical analysis, which reveals that, out of 100 posters[40] – 74 of which feature either human models or illustrations of humanoid forms – 41 feature men, 20 feature women, and 13 feature drag queens.[41] Some posters have been included for the purpose of these statistics but do not contain other relevant elements warranting additional analysis. As a result, they have not been pictured in this chapter, and have simply been included at the end of the corpus as posters 70-100.

Only one poster in the corpus, number 59, features both a man and a woman, which is somewhat concerning. Percentage-wise, this means that close 55% of all posters featuring either human or illustrated models feature men, while women are only featured 27% of the time. Further, drag queens account for just under 18% of all human figures represented in the corpus. The discrepancy in the frequency of male and female[42] representation cannot be overlooked, as it is through this that Babylon provides insight into what they consider their most-highly prioritised target population. The corpus of posters does not feature any mention of transgender people or identities, beyond the occasional ⚧ symbol, which is used to denote transgenderism in the same way the Mars and Venus symbols denote binary sex. As far as models are concerned, there is certainly no visible representation of transgender bodies, with all people in the posters being either obviously cisgender or in drag. This lack of representation greatly contradicts Babylon's professed commitment to diversity, as well as calls their status as an "LGBT+ venue" into question, since there is no 'T' to be found.

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[41] While drag queens do not constitute a third gender, the differentiation is relevant in the context of representation; drag queens are not presented or conceptualised as "men who are dressed in women's clothing for entertainment purposes", but rather, as independent entities embodying a particular persona.

[42] While the terms 'male' and female' refer more to biological sex than gender identity, they are used here for the purpose of brevity. In truth, one can only assume the gender identities of each model in the corpus based on their outward appearance, and while assumptions are typically discouraged, it is unlikely that they are incorrect in this particular context. Furthermore, this chapter of research could not exist without them.

It is also worth noting that the vast majority of women featured in the poster corpus are celebrities around whom particular events are centered. This can be observed in the case of poster 50, which features an edit of Britney Spears modelling for an event named after her, as well as in poster 53, which employs the same techniques for a Lady Gaga tribute night. Poster 61 does the same for an event paying tribute to Beyoncé, as do posters 52, 53, and 55, honouring Kylie Minogue, Ariana Grande, Katy Perry, Britney Spears (again), Madonna, and Mariah Carey, respectively.

Poster 50



Poster 41



Poster 52



Poster 53



Poster 54



Poster 55



Various other posters featuring women seem to require a special occasion or specialised event to do so; poster 44 features a woman because the event takes place on women's day, while posters 32 and 56 feature female actresses to advertise 'Ladies-only' events themed after *Tipping the Velvet* and *Orange is the New Black*, both of which feature romantic and sexual relationships between women and are therefore highly popular among women in the LGBTQ+ community. Poster 41 features a woman at the forefront of the poster, and context suggests she is Kimmy K, the DJ around whom the event is centered. The same applies in the case of poster 57, where an image of musical artist Tamara Dey is used to promote her performance at Babylon. Poster 47, which features the protagonists of *Mean Girls* – a coming-of-age film with a large number of LGBTQ+ fans – and poster 58, which features a woman in old-school aerobics apparel, seem to be some of the only posters with female models that do not advertise events specifically geared towards women.

Posters 60 and 61 also fit into this category, each one featuring a single woman in revealing clothing, advertising rodeo-, tropical-themed events. Moreover, it is worth noting that poster 59, advertising a military-themed party, seems to be the only poster in the corpus featuring both a man and a woman. This is problematic in its own right, as it reinforces the notion that gay men associate only with other gay men and gay women associate only with other gay women, an idea that was discussed in The Social and Political Life of Babylon.

Poster 56



Poster 57





Poster 58

Poster 59



Poster 60



Also notable is that the overwhelming majority of women pictured in the poster corpus are celebrities. If these are removed, only 6 posters featuring ordinary women remain, and have been included below for reference. Without the inclusion of celebrities, women become the minority represented group, with drag queens being represented more frequently across the corpus. While drag culture is certainly worthy of acknowledgement and promotion in gay spaces, it is somewhat concerning that gender-bending performers – generally men dressed as women – who typically exaggerate feminine traits as a point of humour, are represented more frequently than actual women.

Poster 61



Before issues of race or auxiliary physical characteristics have been called into play, there is already a discrepancy between Babylon's professed target market, and who is represented in their posters. Despite branding themselves as a recreational venue "for everyone", it is clear that men have been centered in their marketing campaigns and events, leaving women on the proverbial backburner, without representation unless they are celebrities – who, once again, are more popular with men – or a rare event dedicated exclusively to women is set to take place.

This is likely the result of the systemic misogyny in which most – if not all – societies are still steeped, which prioritises the desires and interests of men, treating them as the 'default' when considering mixed-gender groups (Levitin, 2019). As a result, despite Babylon's statement of diversity and inclusivity, the face of their establishment is unequivocally that of a man.

11.3 Race

Gender is not the only facet of identity that requires consideration when investigating how the gay body is conceptualised in the promotional imagery of Club Babylon. The issue of race cannot be ignored, as this unalterable characteristic brings with it complex discourses surrounding power dynamics and societal hierarchy. Statistic-based estimates conducted by the South African government in 2019 posit that 80,7% of the country's population is comprised of Black African individuals, while the remaining 8.8% is Coloured, 2.6% Indian or Asian, and 7.9% is white (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Despite the overwhelming majority of South Africa's population being Black, however, only 6 of Babylon's 78 posters with human forms feature Black models, accounting for less than 8%. Moreover, poster 39 is the only poster in the entire corpus to feature two models of different races together. The remaining posters all feature white models, with poster 29 being the exception, featuring two Latino men. This poster, included below for ease of reference, advertises an event which has been labelled "Latino Beach Party", promoting the performances of artists Pablo Hernandez and Joey Diamond.

This is a rather peculiar thematic choice, considering that South Africa's Latinx population is negligible. In choosing to feature Latino men instead of South African men of colour, Babylon engages in what is likely fetishization of the former group, who are often stereotyped as being exotic and highly attractive, with great sex appeal (Taylor 2018). Further evidence of fetishization can be observed in other aspects of the poster's design, which labels the event a "beach party" and fills the remainder of the poster space with tropical flowers and leaves. This is problematic for a number of reasons, the first being that Latinx people do not exist to be objectified for promotional purposes. Moreover, overtly associating Latino people with tropical beach themes is both an essentialisation of Latino culture and geographically inaccurate, as Latinx people populate the entirety of the South American continent and do not only appear on exotic beaches popular with Hollywood and the tourism industry. The second issue with this poster is that it centres a demographic that is neither native to South Africa, nor commonly found. With Babylon being a local establishment and not a branch of an international chain, one would expect advertisements and events to reflect the demographics of the country. Rather, this poster communicates that what is exotic is considered desirable, while what is local is not, while being culturally insensitive to both Latinx and South African individuals.

Moreover, one must also question why the overwhelming majority of models – most, if not all of whom are more than likely either South African, or generic stock images – appear to be white. The phrase "appear to be" is important in this sentence, as conclusions regarding models' racial identities are based on physical appearance alone, without additional background information. It is certainly possible that some of these models are not white, and merely white passing, particularly since South Africa is home to a great deal of racial diversity. That said, however, it can be assumed that any cases of this are statistically negligible, as it is highly unlikely that all of these models are actually coloured or Asian people who just so happen to look white. Furthermore, even if this *were* the case, one would then have to question why Babylon would select fair-skinned, white-passing people of colour to model for them over people of colour with darker skin. Thus, for the purpose of this study, this statistically-irrelevant possibility of white models actually being white-passing people of colour will be discarded, and it will be assumed that models with fair skin are, in fact, white.

Based purely on the poster corpus, it is fair to posit that Babylon favours the representation of white people, finding white skin to be more desirable. This is, of course, not an accurate representation of South Africa's population, and begs the question of why it is that Black bodies are not considered suitable for display. This could potentially be attributed to the fact that homosexual identities are often thought of as 'un-African', despite this being fundamentally untrue (Mwikya 1996). Nonetheless, Black queers are disproportionately affected by homophobia-driven violence such as corrective rape and physical assault (Gyamerah et al. 2019). Another potential reason for the lack of Black representation in the poster corpus is the existence subconscious racial bias, which prioritises white individuals over those who are Black or brown. Moreover, issues of white privilege, class, and power dynamics must be considered, as they provide further insight into why the white man seems to be the face of Babylon, despite statistics indicating that the majority of LGBTQ+ South Africans are likely Black, irrespective of whether they are accepted in their communities. While white people make up a meagre 8% of South Africa's population, this group holds the majority of the country's wealth (van der Berg 2011). It follows, then, that Babylon chooses to represent and appeal to the demographic with the most spending power, particularly since the venue is situated in the heart of a wealthy suburb. While such a strategy

may be most logical from a purely economic point of view, one must remember that the practice of 'up-marketing' an establishment in such a way that it is no longer accessible to the working class has historically been used as a roundabout method of tacitly excluding non-white South Africans from spaces post-Apartheid (Tucker 2016).

The average model on Babylon's posters is a young white man with minimal body hair, an athletic build, and no discernible blemishes or other unique identifying characteristics, such as freckles, moles, or scars. He is seemingly able-bodied, with brown hair and no tattoos or piercings, perfectly fitting the mould of what is considered conventionally attractive in most Western societies. The model in poster 38 perfectly exemplifies this 'look', so much so that the same photograph of him has been reused in poster 41.

11.4 The Nature of Desirable bodies

It is important to consider that the way bodies are framed and perceived is not limited to the colour of their skin or their gender presentation. Rather, additional characteristics play a vital role in influencing the scope of representation. Visible signs of disability, physical fitness, and age are but some of the parameters influencing the appearance of a body and thus, also how it is perceived. This also ties in with the theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991; Walby, Armstrong, and Strid 2012), which posits that one's identity is actually comprised of many identities, each of which change how they interact with the world around them, as well as the kind of oppression they may face. By means of example, not all men can be considered to have the same lived experiences. A man who is young, white, able-bodied, heterosexual, and Jewish, had the potential to face only one kind of systemic oppression in the form of anti-Semitism, and is otherwise not likely to experience hurdles at the hands of his identity. In contrast, an elderly Black man who is gay and uses a wheelchair stands to experience much more systemic hardship rooted in racism, ableism, homophobia, and so on. These examples are a simplification of the concept, which becomes much more complex and nuanced when further parameters such as gender identity and socioeconomic status are introduced. The importance of intersectionality in the context of this poster analysis relates to the issue of representation; in selecting what kind of models are displayed on promotional posters, Babylon chooses the characteristics they frame as desirable, and seek in their

patrons. An individual who does not see themselves or their various identities represented in official imagery published by the establishment, is not likely to perceive themselves as the target audience and begin to engage. In simpler terms, who is represented communicates the message of who is welcome; a gay venue only posting images of men is not likely to attract the patronage of gay women, and a poster corpus of only white people is not likely to make Black people and other people of colour feel welcome in that space. Moreover, if physical fitness and youth are prioritised in marketing material, older people are likely to assume that they do not fit the mould of what is considered desirable and valuable in gay spaces, while people who are overweight or living with physical disabilities will not expect the space to be accessible to them. This lack of diversity in bodies does not necessarily mean such people will not visit the space; rather, it simply frames one particular kind of gay body as that which is most desirable, attracting the attention of those who look this way, or desire others who do. Strictly speaking, Babylon is under no obligation to diversify their model base, as nowhere in their description is their mention of diversity in terms of race or body type. That being said, however, this monolithic representation of the gay body has the potential to be alienating.

As far as one can tell, the corpus does not include any models with visible disabilities. Rather, the vast majority – if not all – of these models appear to be at the peak of physical fitness, often flexing their chiselled abdominal muscles and arms. Examples of this can be seen below.

Poster 74



Poster 67



Poster 60





Poster 1

Poster 1 exemplifies this particularly well, as it depicts a male model lifting two large dumbbells to his chest in the well-known dumbbell curl. His face expresses strain, suggesting that the weights are heavy and he is therefore rather strong. Like most of the models in this corpus, he is shirtless, revealing broad shoulders and muscular, veiny arms. These characteristics denote physical fitness and are therefore aspired to.

Moreover, as can be seen above and in the rest of the corpus, all of the models appear to be young. In exclusively representing men – and very occasionally, women – who are physically fit and young, Babylon communicates that these are the characteristics one ought to aspire to in order to be considered desirable, as well as suitable for their space. Moreover, because they are a self-proclaimed LGBT+ bar

and gay space, they are associating these kind of characteristics with the gay identity. This is unrealistic, of course, as not all LGBTQ+ people are young and physically fit, with athletic bodies and no blemishes in sight. Rather, it is more likely that people who fit this description are in the minority, since what society has deemed "imperfect" is in fact, the norm. Babylon therefore has the potential to alienate a rather large portion of South Africa's LGBTQ+ community, who may feel they do not fit the brief according to what they have seen represented as ideal.

There is thus a substantial contradiction to be found in Babylon's statements, versus what they present. While the *About* section on their Facebook and website has been seen to claim that diversity is valued and all are welcome –the exact words calling Babylon "a home to the LGBT+ community, but inclusive and welcoming of everyone" – this same diversity cannot be found in the posters they have created. While their descriptive paragraph states they are an "LGBT+ venue", their posters present sparse acknowledgement of the L or the B, and certainly none of the T or the '+'. One is therefore inclined to believe that their perception of what constitutes an LGBTQ+ person is, in fact, a fit, gay, white man, rather than someone who is Black, bisexual, gender non-conforming, transgender, overweight, or living with a disability. In short, to Babylon, the gay body is synonymous with the male body, the white body, and the able body. Not only is this problematic in that it has the potential to be construed as ignorant at best and discriminatory at worst, but it is also an inaccurate representation of the community it allegedly seeks to provide a home for. Not only do members of South Africa's LGBTQ+ community come in a variety of shapes and sizes, encompassing a plethora of varied and unique identities, but statistics reflect that they are also predominantly Black, a fact that is not at all represented in the poster corpus.

Moreover, a large majority of posters index discourse surrounding Pride, with no mention at all of the potential risks that come with being openly queer in South Africa. Considering it is queer Black bodies that are most often violated as a result of homophobia, one would expect this to be addressed, particularly if Babylon expresses a desire to be considered a "home" for LGBTQ+ South Africans.

11.5 Sexualisation and Commodification

A further topic pertinent in the corpus is the commodification and sexualisation of the gay body. Historically, any deviation from the established norm of heterosexuality was considered a sexual perversion and condemned (Foucault 1978) . While attitudes to this have improved and this perspective is no longer as pervasive as it once was, there still exists the misconception that queerness is inherently sexual among cisgender, heterosexual individuals who have not had much exposure to LGBTQ+ people (Kuhar et al. 2003). This hyperfixation on the sexual element of non-heterosexual identities has caused much harm to society, negatively impacting both heterosexual and non-heterosexual individuals. An example of this can be seen in the fact that the South Africa Department of Education only began work to introduce the topic of gay identities and homosexual sex to high school sex education programs in 2019 (DeBarros, 2019). In the country with the highest HIV/AIDS rate in the world (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2020), the lack of such education is both irresponsible and damaging to society. Moreover, the view that queerness is inherently sexual can be linked to the pervasive issue of so-called 'corrective rape' in lower-income areas across South Africa, as this particular form of violence often stems from an aggressive desire to replace one form of sexual contact with another (Koraan and Geduld, 2015.)

Despite the issues that come with focusing on sex in relation to the LGBTQ+ identity, Babylon follows the blueprint of many gay bars and does exactly that, making use of sex appeal to attract attention and 'sell' their establishment. By objectifying the gay body and representing only models who are conventionally attractive, the idea of 'sexiness' is actively associated with the establishment. The message is therefore conveyed that those who visit the space will be surrounded by the most desirable of gay bodies, who embody what it means to be valuable or desirable. Should patrons participate in the events fully – that is, arriving shirtless or in a jock strap as is encouraged by the text in some posters – they will be reproducing or approximating these same levels of desirability. This is not free, however, as the posters also indicate the reality of entrance fees, and patronage typically also involves purchasing beverages on top of this. As a result, the gay body is essentially presented as something to desire and aspire to, the access to which must however first be 'bought' with financial capital. This is the very essence of commodification, which markets desirable expressions of gender and sexuality in bodies as

'products' that must be purchased (Baker 2008e), and explains the prevalence of suggested nudity Babylon's promotional material.

There is clear evidence of this in the poster corpus; Out of the 78 posters featuring human models or humanoid illustrations, 33 of these models are in a partial state of undress. If one does not consider that 13 of the 78 models are drag queens, the sample size is reduced to 65. This means that just over half of the models (33 out of 65) who are not drag queens are either shirtless or otherwise wearing minimal clothing, clearly conveying the well-known message that sex sells (Sender 2003). An example of this can be seen in poster 8, which features a man wearing nothing but a jockstrap. He is positioned diagonally to the camera, exposing his naked buttocks.



Poster 62

The arm closest to the camera is holding a dumbbell, once again indexing the discourse around physical fitness and desirability, while also introducing a more explicit, sexual element. Text in the poster also offers prizes for "the sexiest jock strap", encouraging patrons to arrive wearing jock straps themselves. As a sexually-coded item typically worn in sexual contexts as a form of male lingerie, this reinforces the notion that the expression of sexuality is welcomed and desirable in Babylon's space.



Poster 11

This is further emphasised by poster 11, which features a male model in a topless bodysuit. This item is similar to a jockstrap in that it is often worn in sexual contexts, though the bodysuit is more associated with BDSM-related sexual practices than 'vanilla' sex. The suit is skin-tight around the model's crotch, leaving little to the imagination. Once again, Babylon sexualises and commodifies and objectifies the gay body, and in doing so, communicates the message that what is sexy or sex-related is desirable, particularly in the context of the gay body. The same techniques are used in posters 20, 21, and 26, which are pictured below, as each model is sexualised and commodified as an incentive for those who see the posters to visit the establishment.



Poster 63



Poster 64

This is also evident in the case of posters 25, 28, 31, 35, 45, and 82, all of which feature two men kissing on the mouth, or touching each other in sexually suggestive ways. These images are pictured below, for ease of reference.



Poster 31



Poster 32



Poster 33



Poster 76



Poster 17



Poster 23

Poster 25 is perhaps the most chaste of those listed, in terms of nudity and physical activities portrayed. The poster advertises an event called "Christmas in July", with text at the bottom reading "you want to be on our naughty list." This overtly sexual statement is complemented by two male models kissing on the mouth, while one man holds mistletoe over their heads. This man is wearing tight boxer briefs and a jersey with a traditional Christmas print on it. The man he is kissing wears a shirt that has been unbuttoned in the front, exposing his bare chest. Below, he wears tight boxer briefs, also with a Christmas pattern on them. This scene, showing a progressing state of undress, implies sexual activity is to follow, making the viewer an inadvertent witness. The image is undeniably sexual in nature, presenting the sexual activities between two men as desirable. This desire is then commodified as the viewer is invited to participate in Babylon's event, which requires patrons to pay a fee before entering after a certain point in the evening (see "free entrance before 10pm" beneath the event title) and places the audience in a space where spending money on beverages is an integral component of participating in the event. Simply, one cannot engage with the desire depicted on the poster unless they have paid to be part of the experience.

This scene bears some resemblance to that in poster 28, which is the only poster in the corpus that features physical intimacy between two women. However, poster 28 is substantially less suggestive, as the women are dressed in undergarments typical of the late 1800s, when *Tipping the Velvet* – the novel this event is based on – is set. Though the image does connote intimacy, there is no nudity to speak of.

Poster 31 features one man hanging on the back of another. Though their faces are obscured in this poster's design, they are not the focal point. The man in front, whose body is visible, is wearing only a tight, somewhat sheer pair of bikini briefs. His exposed chest reveals a chiselled physique, which seems to be shiny with sweat. Very little can be seen of the man on his back, though his bare legs and arms suggest that he is naked. Poster 45 is very similar, both in terms of general design and with regards to the models. This time, the models are shirtless, but wearing jeans, and one leans in to kiss the other. Their eyes are closed and mouths slightly open in preparation for the kiss. Both of these scenes are overtly sexual.

Poster 35, though less explicit in its suggestion of sexual activity, features two men kissing each other on the mouth. They are both dressed in black t-shirts, and the man on the left has his arm around the other man's shoulders. While there is no nudity in this poster, close intimate contact is nonetheless being used as a selling point for the venue, commodifying and sexualising the gay body for marketing purposes.

Poster 82 is stylistically unique, as the male figures it portrays are cartoon-style illustrations rather than photographs of real-life models. The men appear to be Superman and Captain America, famous superheroes from rivalling comics universes, DC, and Marvel. They are presented in their uniforms, and in passionate embrace. Rather explicitly, Superman has his tongue in Captain America's mouth. This is a 'gayification' *and* sexualisation of characters who have already been commodified, repurposed to draw the attention of potential patrons. There is also the possibility that these posters index pre-existing discourse surrounding the homoerotic nature of interaction between superheroes and their corresponding villains (Best 2005; Stein 2017). Though not necessarily intentional, having muscular men in skin-tight suits engaging in highly-physical contact with one another does have the potential to be read as sexually-charged, particularly when these men are already subjects of admiration, as is typically the case with superheroes. It is also entirely possible that the inclusion of superheroes in

Babylon's marketing campaign is a strategy to attract a particular target market to whom superheroes are objects of desire. This poster's visual image may also reinforce the fantasy of hypermasculine homoeroticism – a possible reconfiguration of the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. Though this cannot be proven, the existence of 'nerds' and 'geeks' as social subcultures is enough to make this theory plausible, particularly when one considers the ways in which bodies associated with power are already framed as important and desirable (Best 2005).It follows then, that there likely exists an entire demographic of men who both idolize comic book heroes as symbols of power and status while also experiencing queer sexual or romantic attraction to them. By appealing to this group, Babylon effectively uses the pre-existing commodity of superheroes to broaden their target market.

11.6 Conclusion

Throughout the poster corpus, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Babylon perceives the ideal gay body in terms that favour whiteness and the cisheteropatriarchy, despite being an establishment with a pledge to encourage and honour diversity. The ideal gay body is positioned as one that is male and white, which conforms to the way power dynamics are currently structured in society. Moreover, Babylon's posters implicitly favour those who are young, physically fit, and able-bodied; this is made evident by the lack of older models, and missing representation of individuals with disabilities or more voluptuous bodies. There is little consideration of the way identities may intersect, as the gay body portrayed by Babylon's posters is largely monolithic, and not at all an accurate reflection of the South African LGBTQ+ community, which it claims to represent and appeal to. Little effort is put into including bodies that more appropriately represent their patrons. Rather, focus is placed on depicting an idealised and *desirable* kind of gay body, which is largely monolithic and does not align with what the establishment claims to value. It becomes clear that Babylon's posters do not exist to showcase gay bodies in South Africa, but instead are designed with the exclusive objective of fuelling sexual desire and encouraging the target market to act upon it by visiting the space and spending money.

Furthermore, the gay body is sexualised, objectified, and commodified in this corpus, presenting the gay identity as one that is sexual and *sexy*. Though this is done for the purpose of attracting potential patrons, it also has the potential to reinforce the notion that homosexuality is a sexual behaviour rather than an identity – an idea often held by individuals who use it as a justification for homophobia-driven violence. Though sexual expression is not inherently wrong or immoral, one must question the need to sexualise the gay body to promote a safe space for LGBTQ+ people, some of whom may either not find themselves accurately represented within the landscape, or simply may not wish to enter into such a sexually-charged environment.

12 CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Gay bars and recreational spaces have long been an integral part of LGBTQ+ history. Though initially operating in secret, establishments designed for the LGBTQ+ community have played an integral role in LGBTQ+ history, providing non-heterosexual individuals with safe spaces to exist without fear of rejection or violence. Moreover, gay bars have been instrumental in the development and solidification of a shared, communal 'identity'; that is, gay bars have encouraged the idea that those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and so on, are united in their membership to one community, rather than simply being individuals in their various societies who are considered deviants on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. In identifying itself as a gay or LGBTQ+ bar, Babylon attempts to become a participant in the community, and insert itself into the greater discourse around queerness. The outcome is only semi-successful, however; while Babylon *is* home to several elements of queerness – that is, predominantly-gay patrons, drag queens, affiliation with Joburg Pride, and so forth – it is also a somewhat exclusionary space. In focusing representation on able-bodied, white, cisgender men, and requiring substantial disposable income for entrance and participation, it appeals to a demographic that is extremely normative, were it not for the added aspect of homosexuality. Despite promoting itself as a venue for the entire LGBTQ+ community, there are features of exclusivity and elitism that make the space inaccessible to the vast majority of the South African population.

In the process of advertising itself as a gay bar, Babylon makes a variety of assertions about the nature of the LGBTQ+ community, both implicitly and explicitly. These assertions can be identified by unpacking the discourses indexed through the iconography included in the poster design, as well as through allusions to historically-significant events or figures. Moreover, various other elements relating to Babylon's poster design index certain discourses and ideas surrounding what the management team believe it means to be LGBTQ+, though this is also largely a matter of personal perspective.

The use of well-recognised gay iconography such as rainbows, pride flags, and interlinking Venus/Mars signs, among others, allows Babylon to establish their intended target market and label themselves as a gay space. Much of the iconography used in the promotional posters also indexes discourses that will

only be recognised by individuals familiar with queer pop culture, Western history, and related themes. This facilitates the development of in-groups and outgroups; in simpler terms, those who encounter Babylon's posters either understand the content and identify themselves as the target audience, or they do not. This can be seen to be a modern take on the age-old format of covert communications in plain sight, which was widely in-use in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Though much has changed since the early stages of the Gay Rights Movement, the vast majority of the freedoms available to LGBTQ+ people globally are owed to the activists of the past. Through various references to historical events like the Stonewall Riots and the Holocaust, Babylon reinforces a sense of community through the lens of shared suffering. This is also somewhat questionable. Though it would be untrue to say that the cisgender, white, gay men Babylon favours do not experience oppression or homophobia, they are certainly not the demographic experiencing the worst of it in South Africa (ILGA 2019; Koraan and Geduld 2015). Moreover, Stonewall and the Holocaust, as *Western* incidences, may be more difficult for South African patrons to identify with, as opposed to the multiple instances of oppression that have taken place locally.

Further, in forming partnerships with other LGBTQ+ organisations and hosting events to the benefit of other local charities, Babylon displays active allyship to other social justice issues, though depoliticising the vast majority of its own events. Despite having one of the most comprehensive constitutions worldwide in terms of equality and anti-discrimination policies, queer existence in South Africa is not monolithic in its lived experience, with POC, women, and other vulnerable groups incurring more risk than cisgender, white, gay men. Thus, actively investing resources into supporting minority groups in the country can be considered a form of activism in line with the values of LGBTQ+ movements of the past.

While Babylon does attempt to involve itself in social justice advocacy n order to reinforce a sense of community among LGBTQ+ patrons, the portrayal of the gay body is not entirely in line with the realities of one's lived experience as a queer person in South Africa. The poster corpus reveals a discrepancy between the demographic represented and the actual demographic distribution of the country. Statistical analysis reveals that white models represented in posters far outnumber Black

models, while at the same time featuring men far more than women. Moreover, characteristics such as physical fitness and youth are framed as desirable, while the opposites are not represented. While Babylon's official statements emphasise the importance of diversity and inclusivity, these concepts are not always visible in practice, where physically attractive, white men are positioned as the default representatives of the gay body. This ties in with the commodification and sexualisation of models in the corpus, a technique which is presumed to attract patronage, while ostensibly reinforcing various misconceptions about the inherent sexual nature of the queer identity, as well as the racialised, ableist, and classist ideals around queer desirability.

While the techniques Babylon employs in their poster design are not entirely unproblematic in nature, the inclusion of gay iconography, when combined with various forms of activism, creates a context in which potential patrons are able to engage with the establishment and one another. This provides the individual[43] with a sense of community and purpose, therefore solidifying their sense of identity and belonging. Though this is a positive outcome, it is of utmost importance that the limitations of these efforts are noted; despite hundreds of events and posters available in which to represent different facets of the local community, Babylon leaves much to be desired in the way of accurate representation. While the establishment can be considered a gay space by virtue of self-identification, the nature of events taking place, and the non-heterosexual identities of most patrons, there is work to be done in lessening the contrast between how 'gayness' is experienced by South Africans beyond its doors. Despite imperfections and limitations, Babylon the Bar is a local and small-scale monument to LGBTQ+ history, as well as a symbol of greater things to come in the future.

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[43] This is, unfortunately, only applicable to people wo are in the position to benefit from Babylon existing as a queer space. As has been previously mentioned, not all individuals are able to engage with the space safely, and others simply do not see themselves represented in Babylon's advertisement campaigns.

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14 APPENDIX

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1			Percentage out of 100	Percentage out of the 78		
2	Man	41	41%	55,4%		
3	Woman	20	20%	27,0%		
4	Drag Queen	13	13%	17,6%		
5	**People/humanoid illustrations**	**74**	74%	100,0%		
6	***Total Corpus***	***100***				
7						
8	Notable: **only 1 poster (89)** contains a man AND a woman.					
9						
10	Out of:		78	Percentage		
11	Physical fitness		14	17,9%		
12	Shirtless/partial nudity		33	42,3%		
13	Black		6	7,7%		
14	White		66	84,6%		
15	Latinx		1	1,3%		
16	Mixed/both gender		3	3,8%		
17						
18			73			

B17

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	**CAUSE/AFFILIATION**	**POSTER NUMBER**	**TOTAL**					
2	JoziCats	1, 37, 94	3					
3	Women/Gender Equality	2, 28	2					
4	Pride official or POA	9, 10, 24, 30, 36, 49, 51, 52, 78	9				addressed	
5	pride in general	50, 92	2				completed	
6	Healthcare	82, 85	2					
7	Other	68, 83, 23, 5	4					
8	**TOTAL**		**22**					
9	**OUT OF**		**100**					
10	**PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL CORPUS**		**22%**					
11								
12								
13	Discuss 15 and why it's weird because Latinx people are a minority but not in South Africa???							
14	43 is Free the Nipple but not really?							
15								
16								
17								
18								

LANGUAGE-BASED INTERTEXTUALITY			
Text	**Poster Numbers**		
Pink = slang	Red = BDSM	Yellow = Drag	Blue = Media
Twink	8, 11, 18, 20, 23, 43, 61, 66, 67		
Leather, BDSM, Kink	11, 95		
Drag Race/Drag Show	12, 14, 24, 29, 50, 55, 56, 61, 70, 73, 80, 81, 84		
GoGo Dancers	21, 81, 99		
Tipping the Velvet	28		
Beyonce and Madonna, Lady Gaga special mention, Mariah Carey, Mean Girls	B 29, 22 M, 59 G, 65 MC, 68 MG		
Diva/s	38, 40, 63		

Orange is the New Black	39
Bear	44
Kunty Karaoke	47
RuPaul	14, 47, 48
Kweens	56
~~Crystal~~ Queer	57
Yass	59
Slay	73
Luscious	91
Jozi Cats	37, 94
Boys	7, 62, 81, 100

IMAGE-BASED INTERTEXTUALITY	
Text	**Poster Numbers**
Pink = Physical Representations of Gayness Red = BDSM Green = Masculinity and Femininity Yellow = Drag Blue = sex appeal	
Muscles and weights	1
Venus symbol/Mars Symbol	2, 41, 85
Feminine gestures/body language	3
Emojis	6
Shirtless, suggestive levels of nudity	1, 4, 6 same guy, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 28, 31, 34, 42, 45, 53, 58, 60, 61, 62, 66, 67, 69, 71, 74, 75, 81, 89, 90, 96, 98, 100
BDSM	11, 95
Drag Queens	13, 14, 47, 48, 53, 54, 55, 70, 73, 76, 77, 80, 84, 86

Tattoos	18, 26
Same-sex intimacy; kissing etc.	15, 16, 25, 28, 31, 35, 45, 82
Sparkles	10, 14, 17, 27, 28, 32, 33, 35, 37, 47, 52, 56, 68, 73, 80, 81, 87, 91
Flowers?	4, 7, 15, 16, 25, 38, 40, 42, 46, 69, 93, 96
Genitalia??? Boobs??? Bananas, Eggplant, etc.	43, 62, 85, 100

15 POSTER CORPUS

A note about poster numbering: while the posters from the corpus have been labelled according to the order in which they appear throughout the dissertation, selected posters are unpacked multiple times in different chapters. In this case, the original numbering has been preserved, leading to a break in the chronological flow of labelling. This chronological order resumes with the next poster discussed.

1.	
	Poster 1: Locker Room party, Friday 23 March
2.	

	Poster 2: Heritage Day Event
3.	
	Poster 3: Johannesburg Pride Official After Party
4.	
	Poster 4: Twink Night Youth Day Edition, 16 June

5.	
	Poster 5: Frigay Event, 26 July
6.	
	Poster 6: Frigay Event, 9 August
7.	

	Poster 7: One World Party, Stonewall Remembrance, 29 June

8.	
	Poster 8: Pride's First Reveal Party, 27 July
9.	
	Poster 9: Jozi Cats 4th Birthday Party & Fundraising Auction, 23 August

10.		
	Poster 10: Frigay with Kimmy K Event, 30 August	
11.		
	Poster 11: Tequila Festival, 23 September	

12.		
	Poster 12: Frigay with Detox Event, 27 September	

13.		
	Poster 13: Build up to Pride Party with Special Detox Performance, 28 September	

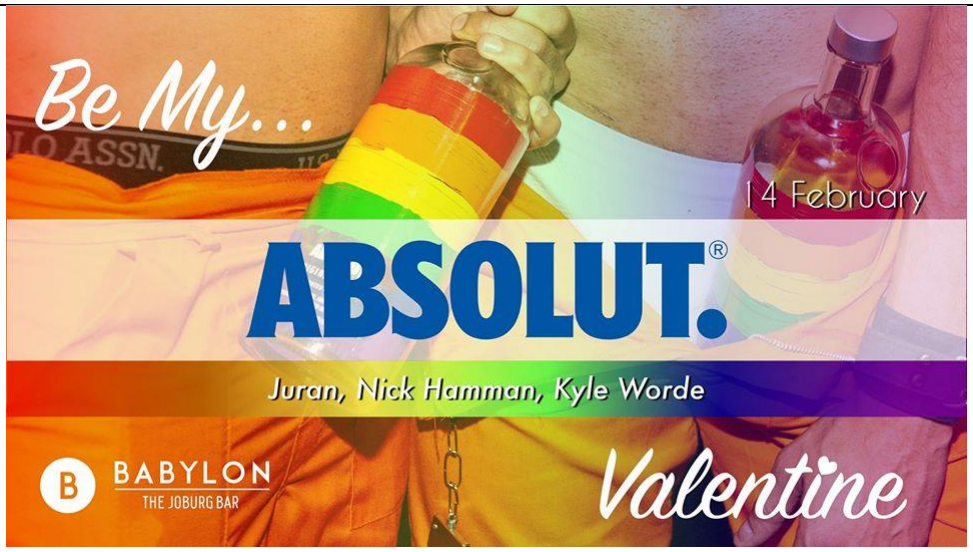
14.	
	Poster 14: Pure Pop Pride Month Event

15.	
	Poster 15: Official Pride Pre-Party, 25 October

16.		
	Poster 16: Official Pride After Party with Brooke Lynne Hytes, 26 October	

17.		
	Poster 17: Pure Pop, Pop It Off Event, 21 September	

18.	
	Poster 18: Scream Kweens Halloween Party, 1 November
19.	
	Poster 19: Black Frigay Event, 29 November

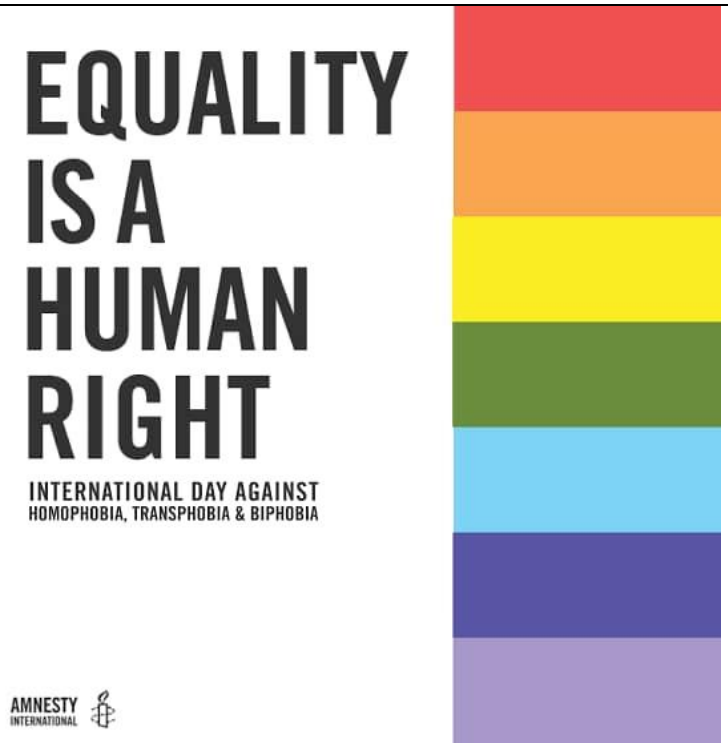
20.		
	Poster 20: Disco Divas Event, 14 December	
21.		
	Poster 21: Be My… Absolut Valentine Event, 14 February	

22.



Poster 22: Pride of Africa Human Rights Day Bar Hop, 21 March

23.



Poster 23: Equality is a human right

24.	
	Poster 24: “Stay Safe” Poster
25.	
	Poster 25: Stay Safe Poster

26.	
	Poster 26: Comicon After Party
27.	
	Poster 27: Leather Twink Night
28.	
	Poster 28: Meet the Jozi Cats Event, 16 September 2017

29.



Poster 29: Latino Beach Party Event, 8 February

30.



Poster 30: Thurst Daze Event, 4 April

31.



Poster 31: Christmas in July Event, 13 July

32.	
	Poster 32: Tipping the Velvet Event, 8 August
33.	
	Poster 33: Pure Pop, Pop It Off Event, 3 August

34.	
	Poster 34: Pink Frigays 7, 14, 21 & 28 February
35.	
	Poster 35: Summer Party, 3 January

36.	
	Poster 36: COVID encouragement Poster
37.	
	Poster 37: Twink Night Back To School, 17 January

38.	
	Poster 38: For the Gram
39.	
	Poster 39: Boys Night
40.	
	Poster 40: Twink Night Crop Top Edition, 20 September

41.	
	Poster 41: Spring Event
42.	
	Poster 42: GOGO Boy Advertisement

43.	
	Poster 43: Meet the Jozi Cats
44.	
	Poster 44: Women's Day Event

45.



Poster 45: Pride of Africa Event, 31 August

46.



Poster 46: Pride Night

47.



Poster 47: Christmas Cheer Charity Party

48.



Poster 48: "WTF!!!" Manhunt Weekend, 31 May

49.



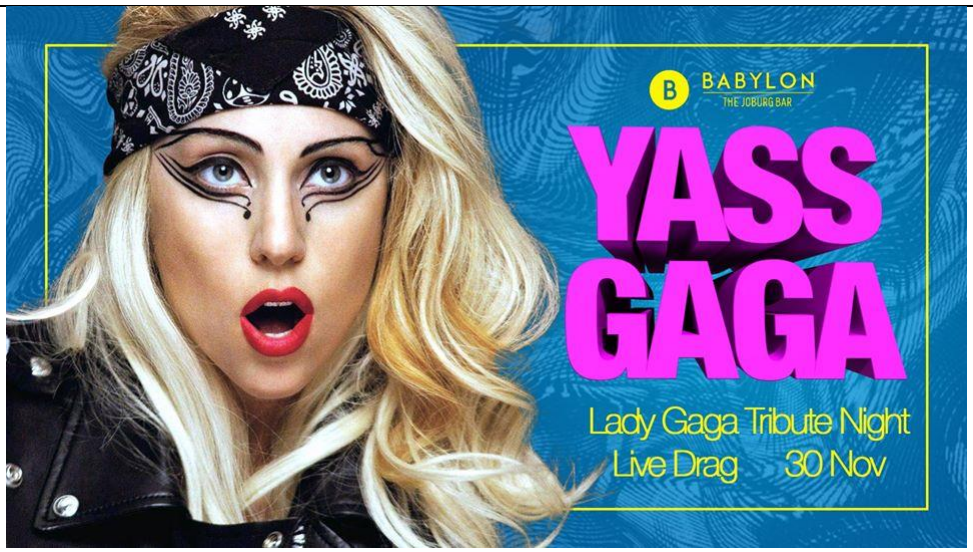
Poster 49: Britney Pop Night, 30 April

50.



Poster 50: Pop Tribute Madonna Event, 15 June

51.	
	Poster 51: Beyonce Tribute Event, 17 August
52.	
	Poster 52: Battle of the Divas Event, 24 August
53.	

	Poster 53: Battle of the Divas Event, 7 September
54.	
	Poster 54: "Yass Gaga" Lady Gaga Tribute Night, 30 November
55.	
	Poster 55: Mariah Carey Tribute Night, 21 December

56.	
	Poster 56: Orange is the New Black Ladies Only Event, 5 September
57.	
	Poster 57: Tamara Dey Crystal Queer Summer Tour, 23 November

58.



Poster 58: Throwback Party 2019 Edition, 28 December

59.



Poster 59: Military Party, 30 April

60.



Poster 60: Tropical Summer Party, 3 December

61.



Poster 61: Raunchy Road, 28 May

62.



Poster 62: Jockstrap Twink Night

63.



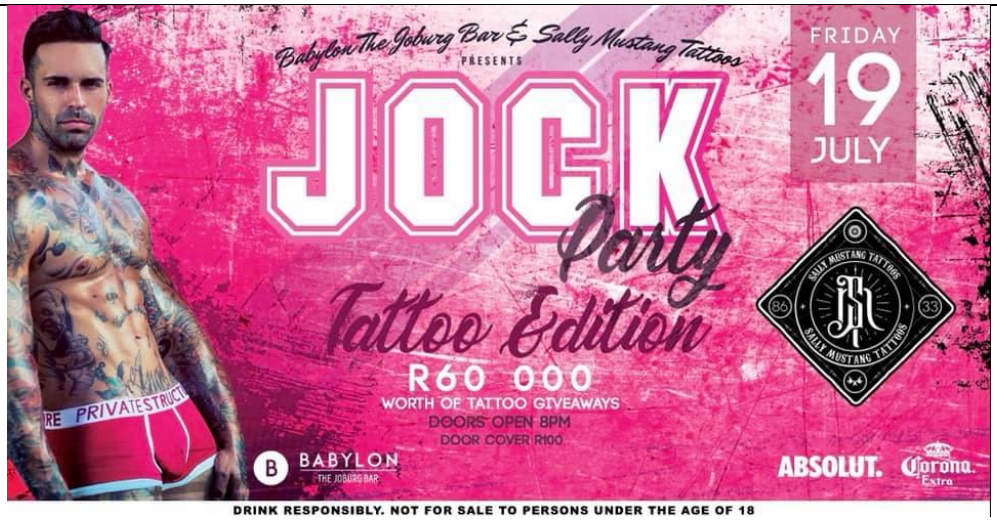
Poster 64: Twink Night Underwear Edition, 17 May

64.



Poster 65: Jock Party, 24 May

65.



Poster 66: Jock Party Tattoo Edition, 19 July

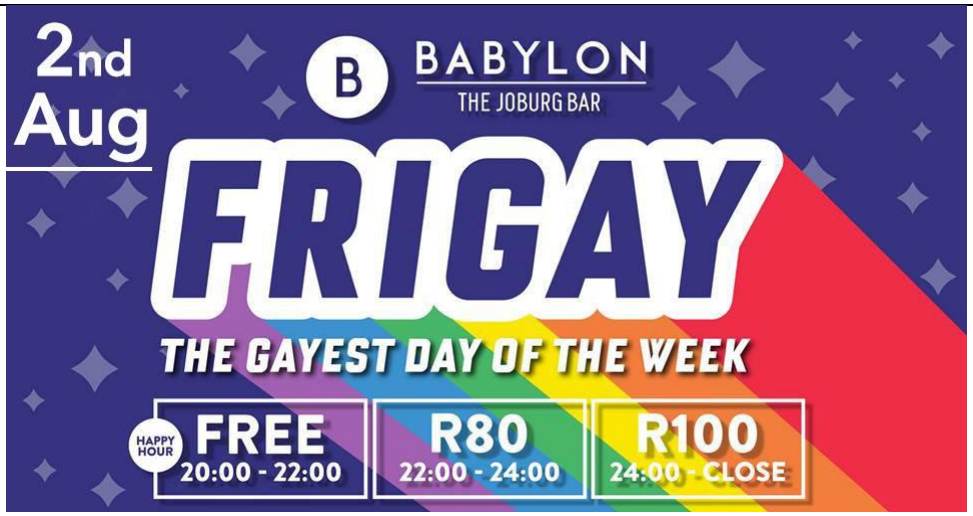
66.



Poster 67: For the Gram Event

67.	
	Poster 68: Beach Boys Event
68.	
	Poster 69: Pre-Pride Party, 26 October
69.	
	Poster 70: Black Friday Event

70.	
	Poster 71: RuPaul's Drag Race Dusty Ray Bottoms Event, 18 January
71.	
	Poster 72: RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars Morgan McMichaels Event, 22 February
72.	
	Poster 73: RuPaul's Draft Race Mayhem Miller Event, 3 May

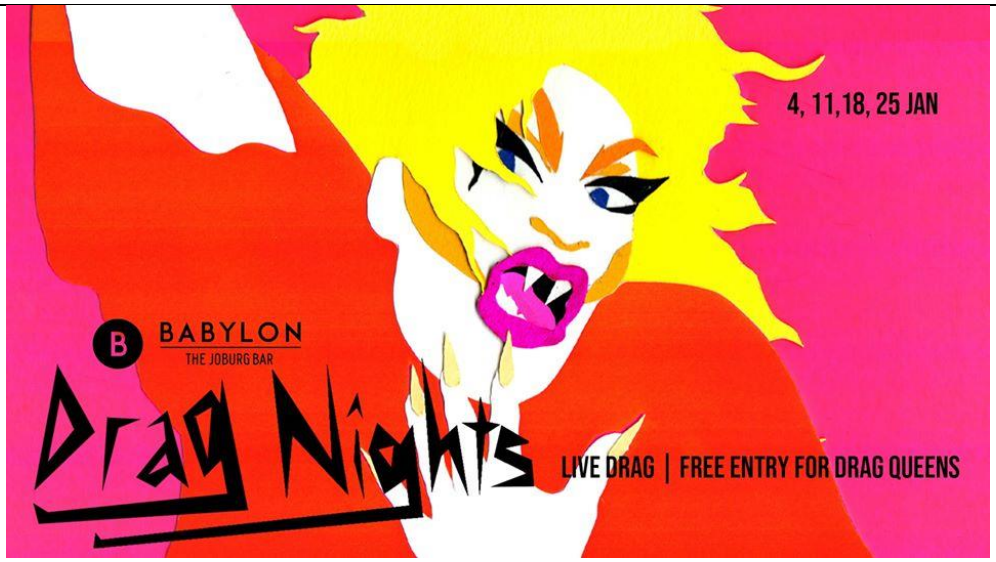
73.	
	Poster 74: Twink Night Tattoo Edition, 18 April
74.	
	Poster 75: Frigay Event, 2 August

75.	
	Poster 76: Pure Pop Event, 10 August
76.	
	Poster 77: For the Gram Event, 16 August

77.	
	Poster 78: Spring Party, 13 September
78.	
	Poster 79: Babylon Bear Bash Event, 14 September

79.	
	Poster 80: Kunty Karaoke hosted by Detox, 26 September
80.	
	Poster 81: Olmeca Tequila Party, 18 October
81.	

	Poster 82: Brooke Lynn Hytes Event, 25 October
82.	
	Poster 83: Alaska 5000 Summer Tour Event
83.	
	Poster 84: 2020 Happy New Year Event, 31 December

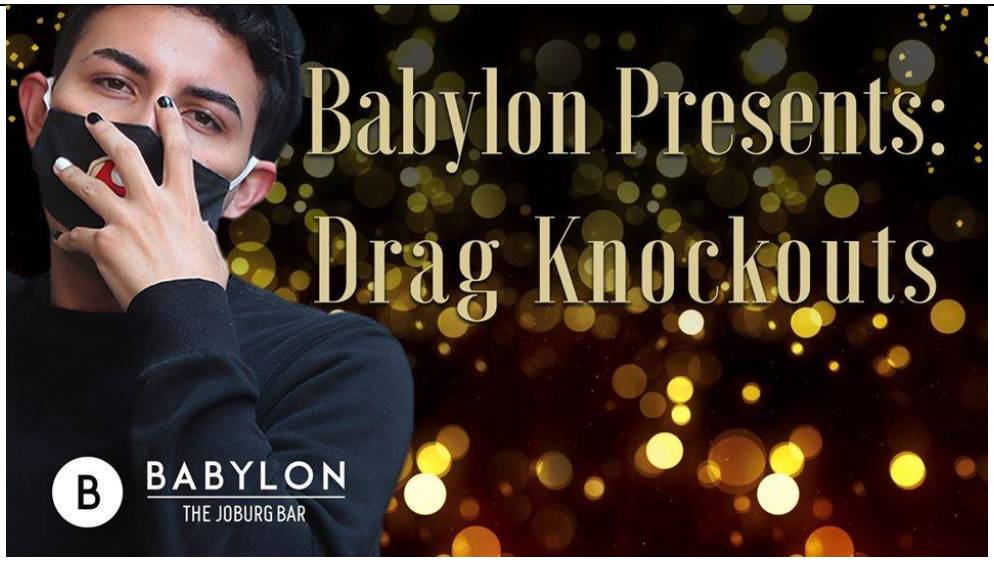
84.	
	Poster 85: Twink Night Drag Edition, 22 November
85.	
	Poster 86: Drag Nights 4, 11, 18 & 25 January

86.	
	Poster 87: Frigay Nights 10, 24 & 31 January
87.	
	Poster 88: Ultra South Africa Official Pre-party Countdown Tour, 31 January

88.	
	Poster 89: SaturSlay & Drag Night 1, 8, 15 & 22 February
89.	
	Poster 90: Tequila Party, 29 February

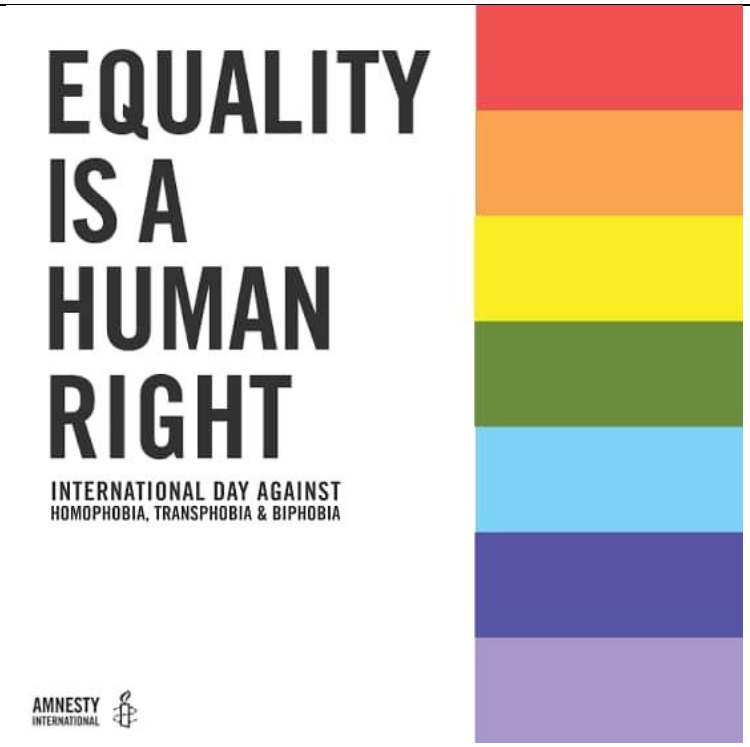
90.	
	Poster 91: Manila Van Teez Event, 6 March
91.	
	Poster 92: Live Stream House Party, 10 April

92.

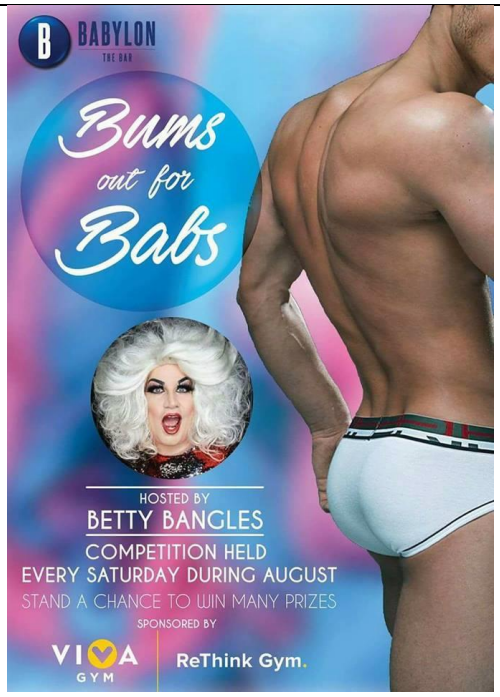


Poster 93: Drag Knockouts Event

93.



Poster 94: Amnesty International - Against Homophobia, Transphobia & Biphobia

94.	
	Poster 95: Bums out for Babs Event, hosted by Betty Bangles
95.	
	Poster 96: It's Time to Play! Event, 15 June 2017

96.	
	Poster 97: Raunchy Rodeo Event with Bent Jozi, 28 May
97.	
	Poster 98: Tropical Summer Year End Party, 3 December
98.	
	Poster 99: Wild West Rodeo, 16 January 2015

99.		
	Poster 100: VIP event	