NEGOTIATING NORMATIVITIES: COUNTER NARRATIVES OF LESBIAN QUEER WORLD MAKING IN CAPE TOWN

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the different modes and meanings of queer world making (QWM) of lesbians in Cape Town. Through an analysis of in depth interviews and focus groups it reveals lesbians' constructions of their intersectional and permeable QWM through a series of counter narratives enacted in three interconnected socialities.

Generational narratives reveal psycho-social processes of recognition of lesbian desire and coming into a lesbian subjectivity in a range of modes of QWM. Lesbian erotic world making centres their entitlement to enact sexual autonomy and sexual pleasure. Their counter narratives reveal how they simultaneously inhabit and extend normative gender regimes. Their productions of desire reveal a lesbian centred frame of sexual pleasure that extends the erotogenic body beyond the genitalia, innovates and transforms hegemonic libidinal zones, and extends phallocentric culture.

Lesbian motherhood as a site of QWM reveals the participants' negotiations, conflict, stress and agency in relation to the 'good mother' discourse that undergirds mothering practices in South Africa. Their counter narratives reveal how they simultaneously resist and re-inscribe heteronormativity in their motherhood practice. Ironically, it is through publicly assuming their sexuality that they are they able to perform 'good motherhood'. They perform private resistance and public complicity with good mother ideologies; and simultaneously centre and destabilize the role of the father. They manage their 'difference' to the heterosexual norm by providing their children with tools to navigate heteronormativity, while simultaneously claiming being an unexceptional family.

Their queer place making strategies in *everyday spaces* in Cape Town demonstrate how they rework racialised notions of belonging to incorporate the queer body (at times ephemerally) to make Cape Town home. Their creation of lesbian social networks and communities, embodied in lesbian social scenes and within their private homes, reveals how Cape Town is experienced as a hybrid space, their contrasting and competing narratives of the city revealing narratives of fractured belonging.

QWM reveals how lesbians resist and (re)shape hegemonic identities, discourses and practices, revealing 'a mode of being in the world that is also inventing the world' (Muñoz,

1999: 121). QWM is about borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987), where one lives within the possibility of multiple plotlines (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2006). Their queer life worlds are permeable to racialised heteronormativities. But their agency reveals multi-vocal and multivalent queer life worlds, enmeshed in the web of racialised, gendered, sexualised, aged and class-based hierarchies in Cape Town. There is no singular way of doing a lesbian subjectivity, no singular utopian notion of a lesbian community. Their differences are located in their varying political perspectives and their social positionalities of privilege and penalty, in short, how they position themselves within the 'politics of belonging' (Yuval Davis, 2006).

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the lesbian participants' different modes and meanings of queer world making (QWM) in Cape Town. People who perform non-normative genders and sexualities are often read as abject and perverse, as out of place in hegemonic racialised heteronormative discourses and practices of culture, community and family (Rodríguez, 2014). Through a discussion of lesbian participants' counter narratives to hegemonic racialised gender and sexuality normativities, this thesis explores lesbian participants' constructions of QWM which claim symbolic and material place within their families, communities, and cultures in Cape Town.

1.1. QUEER WORLD MAKING AS A CONCEPTUAL LENS

Although I will elucidate more fully my understanding and use of QWM in the following chapter, for now, it is useful to point out that when I speak of QWM, I refer to the varying ways in which lesbians in the study resist and (re)shape hegemonic identities, discourses and practices, revealing 'a mode of being in the world that is also inventing the world' (Muñoz, 2009: 121). Central to this analysis is a project of normalisation (Foucault, 1978), in which hegemonic social structures render certain subjects, practises and relationships as 'normal' and 'natural', and others as perverse and other. The thesis, however, does not adopt Berlant and Warner's concept of QWM uncriticially. Rather, it addresses the 'blind spots' (Muñoz, 1999:10) produced by the sole application of the heterosexual/homosexual binary within their conceptualisation of QWM by adopting an intersectional reading of queer theory. The reworked concept of QWM ultimately incorporates an analysis of the lesbian participants' navigations of a 'wide field of normalisation' (Warner, 1993). This considers how sexuality and its 'normalisation' project weaves with other axes of difference, such as gender, race, class status and generation in people's everyday lives as they navigate social institutations.

Four ambits of practice and meaning-making are central to my conceptualisation and analysis of QWM. These include processes of forging and claiming *intersectional subjectivities* - 'living outside the lines' of gendered, racialised and classed heteronormativities (Anzaldúa, 1987; 1991; Danielson, 2009). These productions of subjectivities 'outside the lines' talk to issues of *agency, performance and performativity*

(Butler, 1990/1999; Diamond, 1996) as lesbians negotiate place and time-bound normativities within the social instititions of society. They raise considerations of *embodied praxis* (Diamond, 1996; Johnson, 2001) – how lesbians 'do' their genders, races, sexualities etc. in a particular place and time, and the meanings that they attribute to these experiences and processes. Finally, QWM speaks to notions of *belonging* (Probyn, 1996/2016; Yuval Davis, 2006), notably the politics of belonging in which constructions of self in relation to communities (based on shared values and membership, forms of kinship and networks, and constructions of collective memory) are contested and reworked in order to be more representative and accommodating. The politics of belonging considers the manner in which individuals and collectivities comply with, subvert, resist and/or disidentify (Muñoz, 1999) with normativities and exclusionary practices within a matrix of domination (Hill Collins, 1990). These individual (at times collective) processes are theorized as the forging of individual queer life worlds (Buckland, 2002) and as QWM (Berlant & Warner, 1998).

The overall question that I will discuss in the thesis is:

As subjects of perverse desire, what are the different modes and meanings of queer world making of lesbians in Cape Town?

This question will be unpacked and discussed in relation to a series of dominant and counter narratives through the following sub-questions:

- What are lesbian women's processes of recognition of lesbian desire and sexual pleasure in the face of dominant discourses of racialised patriarchal heteronormativities? What are their different modes of lesbian subjectivities? What is the relationship between these lesbian subjectivities and the modes of queer world making practices and the meanings attached to them?
- What are the ways in which lesbian women experience and talk about sexual pleasure? How do they construct and experience their sexual practices as projects of erotic queer world making in relation to hegemonic discourses which construct lesbian desire and sexual pleasure as impossible? How do the meanings attributed to their experiences of sexual pleasure encounter and engage with patriarchal heteronormative frameworks of meaning?

- How do lesbian women's everyday practices of mothering reveal their negotiations with racially and culturally specific 'good mother' discourses? What are the ways in which they experience and negotiate motherhood as a site of queer world making in relation to hegemonic discourses which construct mothers as heterosexual?
- How do lesbians 'make place' for themselves in Cape Town as their metaphorical home? What role do their homes play in the constructions of their queer life worlds, as sites of queer world making?

The modes and meanings of the lesbian participants' queer world making will be analysed through three interconnected scales of sociality, embodied subjectivities, motherhood and every day/night places in Cape Town. These three scales of sociality have been the focus of intense public debate and discussion over the years. This public debate has produced a series of hegemonic discourses, as mentioned earlier, which prop up racialised patriarchal heteronormativies in Cape Town. They act as flash points which highlight past and contemporary contestations around gender and sexuality norms. An exploration and examination of these 'flashpoints', and specifically the ways in which lesbians navigate and interact with these dominant discourses provides insight into contemporary ways of constructing queer life worlds and making sense of these multiple and contradictory discourses which govern South African life. An investigation of the lesbians' narratives will bring to light how they productively create counter narratives. However, these counter narratives co-exist with modes and meanings of queer world making which are simultaneously complicit with and re-inscribe these dominant narratives. Ultimately, their modes of queer world making offer insight into the co-existence of multiple entanglements with dominant discourses and counter narratives, which they produce, and which shape their lives.

The thesis will show how lesbians occupy an ambivalent and contested space in Cape Town. It will argue there is no singular way of becoming, being and doing a lesbian sexuality, or any commonality in ways of wanting to belong. There is no one utopian notion of a gay or lesbian community. These differences in everyday practices of subjectivities will bring to light multiple sites of queer world making (Berlant & Warner, 1998; Buckland, 2002), revealing different modes and degrees of resistance, compliance, and subversion of racialised and classed patriarchal heteronormativities. These differences are located in the

participants' different political perspectives and subjectivities in relation to being lesbian; and how they perform their social positionalities of racialised, classed, aged and able-bodied privilege/oppression. In short, it speaks to how they produce and position themselves within the politics of belonging (Yuval Davis, 2006). These processes describe lesbian queer life worlds inhabited by a multi vocal, multivalent figure within queer worlds enmeshed in a web of racialised, gendered, sexualised, age and class based hierarchies in Cape Town. The thesis will explore how norms work to regulate subjects through a range of social institutions over time, and the varying ways in which the lesbian subjects work to destabilise, subvert or shore them up.

1.2. QUEER WORLD MAKING THROUGH THE LENS OF SPACE

The relationship between sexuality and where and when it happens are important dimensions of queer world making. Sexuality, like any social relationship, is inherently spatial. Its institutions, regulations, norms, pleasures and desires need to be understood within the spaces through which it is constituted and practiced (Browne, Lim & Brown, 2005). Where sexuality/gender/race/class is 'performed' matters; because the assumed generational, sexual, racial, gendered and classed norms related to different places and spaces influence what is expected or 'allowed' to happen there (Valentine, 2007; Browne & Ferreira, 2015).

Research on sexuality and space emerged from a number of disciplines, notably geographical studies of sexuality. Similarly to how queer theory argues that 'individuals do not have pre-existing sexual identities, neither do spaces' (Oswin, 2008: 90). In this way, space is not 'naturally' 'straight', but is actively produced and heterosexualised (Binnie, 1997:223 cited in Oswin, 2008: 90). Although this notion is taken up differently in the various disciplines, Oswin (2008) notes that it is through every day social practices that the sexual, gender and racialised norms which regulate such spaces become enacted.

Obvious examples include gendered cultural and religious expectations of dress and behaviour in relation to specific places – for example, requirements of wearing a hat, having a covered cleavage and knees in church if one is a Christian woman; wearing a burkha in public if one is a Muslim woman; wearing a swimming costume on the beach and not in a shopping centre; ensuring the 'appropriate' amount of body on display when in one's house,

workplace, a night club or a restaurant; regulation of public displays of affection, such as of two lesbians kissing or holding hands in the street. This would also shift depending on where that street is located. These examples reveal place matters to how and which identities, desires and communities are created, allowed and produced (Browne & Ferreira, 2015). When norms are transgressed, for example by a (public) lesbian kiss, the heterosexual norms of the public street can be re-inscribed by the couple being stared at, made to leave, or by them being attacked and beaten. Browne & Ferreira (2015) argue that what happens in that place in response to that lesbian kiss not only 'remakes that place' as sexually tolerant or homophobic, but also 'remakes that couple' as acceptable/unacceptable, or as being in/out of place.

In this way, the social relations of race, gender and class are mutually constituting of sexuality and also, therefore, of social space (Johnson, 2001; Taylor, 2011; Valentine, 2007). This reasserts the importance of not only considering the specificities of place in shaping how people perceive and experience their lesbian subjectivities, but also which categories of lesbian occupy and experience which place. Being a black lesbian or a white lesbian will influence one's experience of place, which places one accesses and how. Thus place is more than a mere backdrop to social relations and everyday practices, but also shapes them (Hubbard, 2006; Browne & Bakshi, 2013). As argued by Ahmed (2006), power is at the centre of spatial negotiations because it marks some bodies and practices as home, or normative, and others as out of place. Age, gender, sexuality, race, class and other forms of social differentiation shape how the norms in a particular place are negotiated and experienced. We experience our lives as multiple and shifting identities, as black/white, lesbian/gay/heterosexual; middle class/working class; older/younger; able bodied/differently abled, and therefore through multiple and shifting positionalities (Yuval Davis, 2006). These differences will influence the multiple and often contradictory ways in which we negotiate, give meaning and produce normativities which define who is in and out of place (Ahmed, 2006) in particular spaces. This suggests that analyses of QWM in particular contexts and times requires that one has to pay attention to the contestation around norms which define who belongs, and to define what bodies are allowed to do, when and where (Browne et al, 2005). However, although these norms and regulations inform surveillance, it is important to be cognizant of how, where and when these norms

can and are challenged and renegotiated. This ensures that the understanding of power is one which considers that 'power is not something that just happens to us'; we are also engaged in these 'entanglements' (Browne, et al, 2005: 5). Power operates through how we regulate and interact with each other and how we construct the spaces that we inhabit (Browne, Lim & Brown, 2005). Thus, while social structure constrains us in many ways, it is also re-made and challenged by us.

1.3. Locating Queer World Making in South Africa: The politics of the racialised, classed, gendered and sexualised body

Turning to consider the particular place and space of South Africa, the context of this thesis, it is common cause that the politics of sexuality has been integral to the colonial and Apartheid project and continue to be a central organiser of social relations today (Bennett, 2009; Lewis, 2011; Matebeni, 2009a; Posel, 2005; 2011; Ratele, 2001; Salo et al, 2010; Steyn and van Zyl, 2010; van Zyl & Steyn, 2005). Sexuality is an important measure of how a society functions and how power works (Weeks, 1986). Norms and regulations governing sexuality inform which subjects are considered 'normal' or 'natural' and the sites of resistance to these, which kinship and family systems are rendered legitimate and are also implicated in the economy and social organisation of a particular society (Weeks, 1986; Seidman, 2002).

At different moments of time in South Africa, the social institutions of the state, the law, religion, education, and the family, among others, have been 'sites of energetic social pressures, evoking equally energetic agencies on the part of individuals to conform, perform, enact, resist, undermine, revise or transform the constraining and enabling influences' (Steyn & Van Zyl, 2009: 4).

Racialised constructions of sexuality were integral to the white colonial project of enslavement, expropriation, exploitation and genocide of the indigenous populations in South Africa. Colonial science classified indigenous women's genitalia as part of a project to classify the local population as a sub-human species. Salo & Gqola (2006) argue how African women and men were located low down on the racial hierarchy in order to justify the denial of their status as human beings and citizens. They were discursively constructed as the exotic 'Other' and hypersexual, needing to be controlled and domesticated. They argue that

these discourses provided the moral justification for enslavement, expropriation, exploitation and genocide. In addition, Stoler (2002) argues that colonialism was not only about the importation of racialised and gendered middle class values and practises to the colonies, but was also about the *making* of them (Stoler, 2002: 99 cited in Gunkel, 2010).

Driven by colonial anxieties about 'rapacious black sexuality' (Posel, 2005), a desire to maintain the 'purity' of the white race and its social, economic and political superior status, the colonial and then the Apartheid state developed legal and social controls which prohibited sex across racial boundaries, consolidated the taboo of miscegenation and the white fear of black men raping white women (Sherman & Steyn, 2009, Posel, 2005). Heteronormativity played a central role in white colonial discourse and practise, and it was the imposition of Victorian legislation which criminalised sodomy during colonialism (Lind, 2005).

The pervasive and invasive policing of sexuality was strengthened during the Apartheid project and led to intensive and explicit state surveillance and regulation of how and with whom sex was practiced, its public representations and performance (Posel, 2005). Apartheid legislation and policies focused on regulating space and the body[1]. Apart from explicitly criminalising 'inter-racial' sexuality, sex work and homosexuality, censorship and the imposition of a conservative morality was seen as critical to preserve white 'civilised culture. The Apartheid period saw the consolidation of heteronormativity through the strengthening of the legal and social control, regulation and criminalisation of homosexuality (Elder, 1995; Gevisser, 1994; Gunkel, 2010; Reid & Dirsuweit, 2002). State sanctioned and promoted homophobia was racially marked in that public discourses and legal regulation revolved around the control and reputation of white male homosexuality (Elder, 1995). This was the outcome of the Afrikaner state's bid to consolidate the Afrikaner Christian National project, 'expelling anything from the laager that was deemed threatening to white

1 Apart from the extensive legal machinery dedicated to racial classification itself, there was a plethora of laws which controlled and regulated space and the body. These included the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act which reserved public spaces and resources for particular race groups, the Group Areas Act and the Influx Control Act to name a few (Bennett, 2009; Salo et al, 2010).

civilization' (Gevisser, 1994: 31). In the resistance movements against Apartheid, young men's overt heterosexuality in the name of the struggle was an important part of the construction of 'struggle masculinities' (Xaba, 2001). Young comrades self-defined themselves as 'young lions' and this partly depended on notions of sexual access to women's bodies (Bennett, 2009). Women, on the other hand, were discursively represented as 'mothers of the nation', and encouraged literally to have babies for the struggle. Notions of racialised femininities, masculinities and sexuality were therefore constructed as much by Apartheid as in resistance to it (Bennett, 2009).

The 'new' South Africa post 1994 saw a new sexual politics produced in its embrace of a constitution and laws founded on the principles of human rights. Posel (2011) notes how the state regulation of sexuality shifted from the regulation and control outlined above to the allocation of rights for citizens and state responsibilities. The 1996 Constitution of the 'new' South Africa, particularly the Equality Clause in the Bill of Rights, outlawed discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, sexual orientation and place of origin amongst other categories. This provided the legal framework that allowed for many of the laws controlling people's right to exercise their sexuality to be fought and amended.[2]

These social changes were 'neither wholesale nor uncontested' (Posel, 2005:62). These attempts to establish a new language and practise of women's and sexual rights co-existed with contested notions of culture and tradition and a shifting cultural politics of class, status and generation (Posel, 2011). This has led to a post 1994 South Afica characterised by a 'fierce gender hostility' as well as an instability and growing fluidity concerning gender and sexual norms (Bennett, 2009: 115). The rape trial of President Jacob Zuma was another

[2] Some examples include the striking down of laws prohibiting sex across racial lines, the decriminalisation of homosexuality, the lifting of censorship of pornography and sexually explicit material; the adoption of the Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act, 2001, which allows for the legal change of one's sex in identity documents without having to undergo surgery; the Civil Union Act, 2006, which gave gays and lesbians the right to marry, although marriage is still considered a heterosexual institution. The Human Tissue Act of 1983 recognises the right of single woman, irrespective of sexual orientation, to have access to sperm donations and assisted reproductive technology (ART) in registered ART clinics, and the Children's Act, 2005 allows for lesbian, gay and transgender parenting.

turning point in South African gender and sexual politics. The marshalling of his particular brand of masculinity also highlighted the tendency to reinscribe a certain version of 'cultural values' which strengthened a traditional gender regime in which men dominate public positions within society, that 'allows' or explains gender based violence and that prioritises 'traditional' systems of controlling women in the postcolonial state' (Gunkel, 2010: 47).

Conflict and hostility notwithstanding, contemporary South Africa is home to 'new' sexual subjects whose rights have been enshrined in law. These include ostensibly autonomous women, and gays, lesbians and transgendered people, within a dynamic, fluid and ever shifting gender and sexual politics.

1.4. CONTRIBUTION OF THE THESIS

Queer world making is a previously unexplored concept in South African sexual politics. This analytical lens provides a unique and useful means through which to examine lesbian productions of their multiple and shifting subjectivities and their practices of everyday life in Cape Town. The thesis has extended and adapted Berlant and Warner's original conceptualisation through adopting an intersectional analysis. This is achieved through incorporating the insights and theoretical perspectives of post-colonial feminist and queer of colour theorists within the concept. This lens provides for a means to theorise the complex, multivalent flows and performances of power within the social relations of gender, sexuality, race, age, class, and able bodiedness in Cape Town.

The thesis contributes an empirically based study of lesbian sexuality in Cape Town. It brings together previously unconnected socialities of embodied subjectivities of lesbian desire and sexual pleasure, lesbian motherhood and the claiming of material and symbolic home in everyday Cape Town. These sites are used to theorise lesbian counter narratives of queer world making in Cape Town. These narratives of queer world making rework theories of racialised gender and sexuality, extend and provide nuanced localised conceptualisations of lesbian motherhood and speak to the politics of belonging in the city. It contributes its insights to the sexuality and gender field, to critical sexuality studies, to women's studies, to family and motherhood studies, to queer studies, African studies and urban sociology.

The thesis contributes the concept of erotic world making. Erotic world making pays attention to and acknowledges constructs of female sexuality that are positive, centring

their experiences of sexual pleasure, intimacy and desire. This moves an analysis of women's sexuality beyond a lens of victimhood, death and disease. The findings provide a topography of lesbian women's sexualities that chart their negotiations, subversions and resistances to hegemonic notions of women's sexualities. Following Rodriguez (2014), my contribution to this scholarship has been to 'write aloud' lesbian desire and sexual pleasure, making place for discourses of lesbian desire and sexual pleasure. These discourses of desire and sexual pleasure are ultimately threatening to patriarchal heteronormativities (Jolly et al, 2013).

Erotic world making – both conceptually and empirically - contributes to a theorisation of the 'messy materiality of the sexed body, the fucking body' (Binnie, 1997). Surprisingly little has been written and theorised about the actual practices of queer, and specifically lesbian, sexual practices and lesbian sexual pleasure. 'Filling in the dirty details' (Halberstam, 1998) contributes to troubling the hegemony that heterosexuality and heterosexual practices occupy, contributing to shifting and redefining dominant narratives of what constitutes 'real' sex.

The demographics of the lesbian mothers in my study are more representative than the samples of previous studies on lesbian motherhood in South Africa. The thesis therefore provides some insight into how the politics of race and class entangle with the politics of sexuality and gender in performances and enactments of lesbian motherhood. Lesbian mothers' counter narratives reveal the multiple ways in which lesbian motherhood is experienced as a site of intense negotiation, conflict, stress, agency and creativity. The discussion reveals that the category of 'lesbian mother' is a complex and contingent one. Their queer world making practices demonstrated the multiple ways in which they have been complicit with, rework and re-signify and/or resist the racialised and culturally specific ideologies of the 'good mother'.

The thesis contributes to a body of empirical knowledge within an African and South African context located at the intersections of gender, sexuality and space, considering how women's sexualities intersect with their experiences of contemporary landscapes. Navigations of every day/night space in Cape Town reveal the lesbian specific and centred mode of occupying and inhabiting the city. The analysis of their symbolic and material occupation of Cape Town is read through a bifurcated lens of public and private. They

construct and produce home within their communities through a number of queer world making modes in relation to heterosexuality – embedded within heterosexuality, homonormative and liminal. These queer life worlds overlay, complement and contradict official Pink Maps of Cape Town (Rink, 2013) and rework the meaning of the representation of Cape Town as the gay capital of South Africa. Their everyday negotiations of Cape Town reveal practices of making Cape Town home through claiming of place in ephemeral and contingent public space. These navigations reveal the 'lesbian place' in Cape Town that Leap (2005) was unable to find, a lesbian place that is dispersed through the nodes of connectivity and community throughout the racialised landscape of the city. Simultaneously, their productions of Cape Town as home take place through the private space of home. Their lesbian specific engagement with space is theorised through the concept of homeplace (hooks, 1990). Homes become 'stretched' through the reconfiguring of domestic space to become sites of identity construction and community building, political education and organisation, and public consumption. Ultimately, homes become sites of collective queer world making, sites of collective resistance to racialised patriarchal heteronormativities.

The thesis ultimately connects and applies the lens of borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987) to its conceptualisation of lesbian queer world making in Cape Town. Borderlands are constructed and produced through lesbian participants' defiance of clearly demarcated categories and boundaries. These borderlands can be found in their blurring of boundaries between and within hegemonic notions and categories of sex, gender and desire. Borderlands are constructed through the participants' simultaneous occupation of a lesbian sexuality and motherhood. The divisions between public and private are blurred in their stretching of domestic space into public sites of identity construction and consumption, and in their productions of home place in public spaces. Clearly demarcated lines between inside and outside belonging to one's racialised communities, which are hegemonically produced through heterosexuality, and membership of LGBTI communities, which are hegemonically produced through white, gay, male and able bodied normativities. It shows how the queer world making produced by the lesbians in the study ultimately produce a range of 'crossroads'.

The following section will explore in more detail the outline of the thesis.

1.5. OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

In *Chapter Two* I will lay out the analytical framework of queer world making which informs the lens with which I analyse lesbians' everyday navigations of racialised patriarchal heteronormativities in Cape Town. I will firstly provide a brief overview of queer theory and describe Berlant & Warner's (1998) concept, queer world making (QWM). The thesis will then outline a number of critiques to which queer theory has been subjected. I read these critiques as a simultaneous critique of Berlant & Warner's (1998) concept of QWM. Considering these shortcomings, I will then elucidate the dimensions of my adapted reworking of QWM, informed in and located by the racialised politics of gender and sexuality within Cape Town, South Africa and Africa.

In *Chapter Three* I will examine and justify the methods chosen to carry out the study, outline some of the key characteristics of the sample, as well as discuss the data collection and data analysis processes. Narrative inquiry will be examined as a pertinent methodology and approach for a study on lesbian queer world making. As an approach, it lends itself to examine, and put alongside and in conversation with each other, contradictory layers of narratives of experience and meaning. Noting that queer world making as a lens aims to explore resistant/complicit/other subjectivities and practices within an exploration of the politics of racialised sexualities, counter narratives are a useful means to uncover the different modes and meanings of queer world making within the thesis, and to explore the politics of belonging within each of the three connected socialities under discussion. This chapter will also outline why I choose to adopt a concept called 'queer' world making and yet to hold on to the analytical and experiential category of 'lesbian'. Ethics and reflexivity are cornerstone discussions in a study informed and influenced by a post-colonial, queer, feminist approach. The chapter will present some of my ethical dilemmas as well as my interrogation of my positionality, reflexivity and how power played out within the research process.

Discussion will then turn to the three interconnected socialities – embodied subjectivities; lesbian motherhood and everyday navigations of Cape Town through which lesbians' modes and meanings of QWM in Cape Town will be explored. A number of dominant narratives frame the politics of sexuality in Cape Town (discussed in more detail below), a proxy for past and contemporary contestations around racialised notions of gender and sexuality,

sites of a politics of belonging and of queer world making. Within each of these socialities, I provide an overview of the key debates and discussions. I outline some of the key literature produced in South Africa and elsewhere in relation to each sociality under review as a means to frame the analytical chapters which follow.

Within the 'analytical' chapters, I have ordered my discussion of these dominant narratives and participants' negotiations of these with the analytical lens moving from the inside outwards. Although I have set up the findings like this, I do recognize that there is a constant interplay between these two 'worlds' and perspectives, and this interplay will be foregrounded as and when pertinent.

The discussion begins by exploring participants' interior worlds, their productions of their subjective sense of self in relation to their racialised, gendered sexuality, and how these are constructed and produced in relation to historically contingent social norms and practises. Noting this, the first set of dominant narratives under discussion relate to the social constructions of lesbian subjectivities as abnormal, unGodly and unAfrican. This brings into focus resistances to this, and the tensions and complexities within the production of culturally intelligible and legibile lesbian, gay or queer subjectivities.

Chapter Four centres on lesbian participants' subjective experiences of 'awakening' to lesbian desire and of the psycho-social processes involved in 'recognising' themselves as lesbian subjectivities. The lesbian participants' stories of recognising same sex desire and enacting lesbian subjectivities construct counter narratives to hegemonic heteronormativities, writing lesbian subjectivities into Cape Town's imaginary. The moment/process of recognition of same sex desire, of a lesbian sexual 'awakening', is a key experience and landmark in experiences of lesbian erotic subjectivities and erotic queer world making. These processes of recognition of lesbian desire and occupation of lesbian subjectivities are racialised, classed and time bound cultural and political processes. They are discussed through the lens of 'generational narratives'.

Analysis will demonstrate how participants inhabit the category of lesbian in varying ways, showing a number of modes of sexual subjectivities, differing modes of queer world making. These indicate the variegated modes in which the participants 'made place' for lesbian

sexual desire, the ways in which their sexuality becomes intelligible for them and the meanings they attach to these processes.

The lens then moves further outwards, to that of sexual practises with self and within relationships. It considers a set of related, but separate, dominant narratives which speak to notions of what is socially considered to be 'real sex'. These will bring two issues into dialogue, namely that 'real' sex is (reproductive) heterosexual penile penetration of the vagina, and will consider women's relationship to sexual pleasure.

Chapter Five considers these processes through the lens of lesbian erotic world making. The ways in which lesbian participants experience and talk about their sexual pleasure and how they construct and practice their erotic life worlds will be considered. The first part will discuss participants' counter narratives of entitlement to sexual pleasure from and within categories of people who traditionally have been seen to be 'outside desire'. They have to actively (re)claim and produce their access and entitlement to sexual desire and pleasure.

The discussion will then focus on how gendered regimes and discourses, and the troubling of these, have informed lesbian sexual subjectivities, perceptions and experiences of sexual encounters and pleasure. Lesbian erotic world making is imbricated in hegemonic gendered discourses, while simultaneously extending, subverting and reshaping them. Discussion will centre on two gendered discourses and practices: romanticised sexual embodiments and the enactments of femme lesbian participants.

Finally, through the lens of the 'lesbian touch', the discussion will reveal a lesbian centred frame of sexual pleasure and desire. The 'praxeological' aspects of sex (Bryant & Schofield, 2007), or the 'doing' of sex, are important aspects in the construction of sexual subjectivities and erotic queer world making. The participants counter narratives of erotic world making draw on the body, heart, mind and fantasy in creating and centring a lesbian inspired frame. Affectivity, the experiencing body, visuality and fantasy produce and act as resources for perverse desire 'speaking for itself'.

These first two sets of dominant narratives form the area of focus of the first site of sociality under discussion, *embodied lesbian subjectivities of desire and sexual pleasure*.

Moving the lens further outwards, the discussion moves on to consider another set of subjectivities and relationships, that of the mother – child/ren relationship embedded within kinship systems and families. A third set of dominant narratives construct motherhood as a central feature of hegemonic femininities within the different racialised groupings in South Africa. With cultural and racialised specificities, these dominant narratives construct this mother to be heterosexual, and to perform and practise her mothering through the lens of 'the good mother'. The exact shape and nature of the good mother discourse differs according to the woman's social positions of class, race and culture. However, a common feature of these discourses is one which requires the mothering practise to prioritise the needs of her children and family over and above all else.

These dominant narratives form the backdrop of the second site of sociality under discussion, *lesbian motherhood*. How the lesbian participants negotiate and manage their lesbian sexuality alongside with, and in relation to their position and role as mothers, forms the focus of *Chapter Six*. Lesbian motherhood is discussed as a site of queer world making. I argue that in contexts of patriarchal heternonormativities, lesbian motherhood is a site of intense negotiation, conflict, stress and agency. I will explore their negotiations of lesbian motherhood through a discussion of four themes, namely, mothering while in publicly unacknowledged lesbian relationships; negotiating conflicting interests between lesbian mothers and child(ren)'s desires and needs; exploring the role of the father figure in tales of conception and 'origins' of children conceived within lesbian relationships, and finally preparing their children to navigate heteronormativity while inhabiting unexceptional families. The discussion will show that the category of 'lesbian mother' is a complex and contingent one. Their queer world making practices will demonstrate the multiple ways in which they have been complicit with, reworked and re-signified and/or resisted the racially and culturally specific ideologies of the 'good mother'.

Finally, the lens moves further out to consider the 'outside' through a discussion of everyday navigations of the Cape Town. Within this level, a third set of dominant narratives brings lesbians into view as invisible within the South Africa imaginary and as victims within racialised zones of black danger/white safety (Judge, 2015). These dominant narratives form the backdrop of the third site of sociality under discussion, *every day/night space/homeplace in Cape Town*.

Chapter Seven considers how lesbians at a symbolic and material level *make place/make home* for themselves in Cape Town. It considers how lesbians occupy and navigate their communities and everyday space and communities in relation to the politics of belonging. Their productions of home take place within and in relation to racialised heteronormativities and heterosexualities. Simultaneously, it asks what roles do lesbians' material homes play in their constructions of their queer life worlds, as sites of queer world making? Through an exploration of individual and collective lesbians' embodied subjectivities and navigations of everyday space in Cape Town, this chapter provides a textured, nuanced and lesbian centred understanding of Cape Town as the 'home space' to lesbian individuals and communities.

Finally, *Chapter Eight* reveals the conclusions, providing a brief summary and overview of the arguments within the thesis and will make some concluding comments on queer world making.

CHAPTER TWO: NORMALISATION FROM AN INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE: QUEER WORLD MAKING IN CAPE TOWN

I will first provide a brief overview of queer theory - the theory which underpins Berlant & Warner's concept of queer world making (QWM) – before briefly critiquing QWM as a concept through the lens of queer in Africa. My adaption of this concept informs the theoretical lens of this thesis through which I analyse the production of lesbian subjectivities and place making practices. In view of this, I provide a brief overview of this adapted conceptualisation, outlining and exploring the key dimensions which I propose constitute this analytical lens. I will then discuss the three interconnected socialities which form the sites of discussion and application of QWM in the thesis.

2.1. QUEER THEORY AND BERLANT & WARNER'S QUEER WORLD MAKING

Jagose notes that queer theory's 'definitional indeterminacy, its elasticity' is one of its defining characteristics (1996: 1). Despite this, it is possible to note that queer theory has its roots in and grew out of a critique of the gay 'ethnic model' of homosexuality (Epstein, 1990: 285). In addition, it can be highlighted that queer theory opposes the idea of a unified homosexual subject, contesting the stable understanding of and relation between sex, gender and sexuality, the regime of sexuality itself (Yep, 2008). Rather, queer theory focuses on 'the knowledges that construct the self as sexual and that assume heterosexuality and homosexuality as categories marking the truth of sexual selves' (Seidman, 1996: 12). This demonstrates that heterosexuality and homosexuality are not merely identities that denote social statuses, but, as Seidman (1996) argues, are in fact categories of knowledge, constructing a frame of how to understand and relate to bodies, desires, sexualities and identities. These set up a norm, establishing 'moral boundaries and political hierarchies' (Seidman, 1996: 13). In this way the focus of queer theory shifts to analysing 'the institutional practices and discourses producing sexual knowledges and the ways they organise social life' (Seidman, 1996: 13).

Yep (2008) outlines three conceptual areas of work within queer theory. *Contesting categories*, particularly sexual categories, is a key area of theorisation. He argues that one should be suspicious about categories because they are the outcome of social relations of power which set up hierarchical binaries. He draws on Foucault's (1978/1990) argument that

sexuality, and its accompanying discourses and knowledge systems, including the categories which constitute them, is a mechanism through which power is exercised and deployed. Yep reminds us that 'categories leak, ooze and bleed, and that one of the aims of queer theory is to foreground the problems and leakages of identity' (Yep, 2008: 39). *Contesting identity* is another area of work. Butler (1990/1999) argues that identity categories are instruments of regulatory systems and that it is impossible to assume a 'queer identity', as the very notion of queer is a rejection of a stable category. Queer theory, as a means to guide and mobilise a political constituency, is anti-ethical for liberation movements, such as black, women, and LGBTI social movements. Finally, Yep (2008) notes the area of work of *contesting liberalism* reminding us of queer theory's emergence and response to the particular socio-political, economic and social context of the United States in the early 90s.

As Yep (2008) outlines, queer theory therefore interrogates, examines and unpacks 'regimes of the normal' (Halperin, 1995); is against normativity and normalisation (Warner, 1993; 1999) and offers a deconstructionist analytical technique (Derrida, 1978) to examine social relations (Seidman, 1996).

It is within this frame of theorisation that Berlant & Warner (1998) coined the term QWM in a number of texts. They define it as:

> *The radical aspirations of queer culture building: not just as a safe zone for queer sex but the changed possibilities of identity, intelligibility, publics, culture and sex that appear when the heterosexual couple is no longer the referent or the privileged example of sexual culture* (Berlant & Warner, 1998: 548*).*

Berlant & Warner's (1998) project of radical queer culture building is one in which queer social practices decentre, unsettle and trouble heteronormativity and 'normalisation' (Foucault, 1978). They conceive of normalisation as a project of social violence in which certain subjects, relationships, and practises are produced as 'normal' and 'natural', at the same time and through the production of perverse and pathological others. Warner (1993) argues for 'resistance to regimes of the normal'.

Heteronormativity is a key concept within queer world making. It is understood as *a sense of rightness* – an idea which is produced through a process of normalisation (Foucualt, 1978),

embedded in 'institutions, structures of understanding and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent (i.e. organised as a sexuality), but also privileged' (Berlant & Warner, 1998:553). The norms implicated in this would be those that reinforce and prop up compulsory heterosexuality and male supremacy (Pereira, 2009). Based on the assumption that there are only two sexes, and that each has predetermined natural roles in life, heteronormativity reveals the expectations, demands, and constraints produced when heterosexuality is taken as normative within a society. In this way, it is similar to Butler's 'heterosexual matrix' (1990/1999). It pervades all social attitudes and institutional arrangements, for example the categories and content of the law, who is seen to be a citizen, how nationality is determined, the workings of the state and commerce, medicine and education, as well as in spaces of everyday culture. It is particularly visible in family and kinship ideologies (Berlant & Warner, 1998; Steyn & Van Zyl, 2009).

In effect, it regulates relations both inside and outside of heterosexuality, which ultimately codes the queer body out of place. QWM speaks to the alternative social possibilities opened up by queer agency, grounded in the practices of the everyday, which ultimately establish intelligibility beyond heterosexuality.

The concept of QWM has been taken up by a range of authors in different ways. These include, but are not limited to, ethnographies such as Buckland's (2002) exploration of the New York gay, lesbian and queer club culture in the 1990s and Taylor's (2012) exploration of the relationship between popular music, queer self-fashioning and (sub)cultural world-making in everyday queer lives. Yep (2008) explores the violence of heteronormativity in communication studies, and provides a critique of queer theory and QWM. Weiner & Young (2011) theorise queer bonds and sociality within queer world making, while Golz & Zingsheim (2015) bring together an edited collection of essays exploring issues such as marriage, friendship and coalitional politics in relation to queer belonging in contexts of heteronormativity and homonormativity. The concept has been taken up, critically examined and extended by Muñoz's (1999) theorising of racial and sexual minorities' negotiations of dominant cultures by working on, with, and against hegemonic structures. He extends it further in his *Cruising Utopia* (2009). In quite a startling use of the concept, Miller (2017) uses queer theory to explore evangelical purity culture in the United States. Aspects of purity culture, for example purity balls, purity rings and virginity pledges are

theorised as carrying out a queer world making project, and the evangelical virgin is queered and established as a subaltern figure.

2.2. Queer Theory under review

Berlant & Warner's concept of QWM ultimately focuses on the operation of the heterosexual/homosexual binary. In so doing, it effectively removes considerations of how other axes of difference and power inform and are informed by the social relations of sexuality and gender. In effect, QWM as a concept suffers from similar criticisms as those of queer theory generally. Due to its simultaneous uptake of deconstructionist techniques, along with the contradictory centring of gay, male, middle class perspectives, queer theory has been charged with having a number of 'queer blind spots' (Muñoz, 1999:10) which disavow the oppression and discrimination suffered 'in the flesh' by black communities, women, lesbians, working class, and transnational communities. These blind spots have the effect of making the workings of power within social relations along the lines of race, class, gender, nationality and country invisible.

A number of critiques of queer theory have emerged, both in relation to its theory as well as its practice or praxis. These can be considered as both critiques of queer theory, and by extension, of the concept queer world making.

A substantial critique has emerged from feminist and queer of colour theorists (Anzaldúa, 1991; Cohen, 1997; Eng, 2001; Ferguson, 2004; Johnson, 2001; Johnson & Henderson, 2005; Muñoz, 1999, 2009; Rodríguez, 2014; Smith, 1982; 1983), who interrogate 'social formations at the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class' (Ferguson, 2004: 149). These recognise that a broader understanding of queerness must be based on an intersectional analysis of people's 'lived experiences', recognising how numerous systems of oppression interact to regulate and police the lives of most people (Cohen, 2005). Two important contributions on the intersections of racialised experience and social positionality are Muñoz's (1999) theory of disidentifications (to be discussed in more detail in a later section), and Johnson's (2001) 'quare theory'.

Considering 'quare theory' as a 'theory in the flesh' (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983:23 cited in Johnson, 2001), Johnson proposes theorising and ways of knowing that are both discursively mediated as well as historically situated and materially conditioned' (Johnson, 2001: 3).

He foregrounds everyday experience as a source of knowledge, and 'embodied performance as a critical praxis' (2001:6). By pursuing an 'epistemology rooted in the body' (Johnson, 2001:9), quare theory fosters theories and practices of resistance, as people of colour within the LGBTI community, as a community of LGBTI people, as communities of people of colour, and as working class communities. In short, he promotes an epistemology rooted in people's multiple locations and for the resulting need for a politics of coalition.

Queer diasporic and transnational theorists extend these queer of colour critiques by seeking to 'disrupt stories of origins and roots' located in 'biological, familial and territorial genealogies' (Eng et al, 2005). In this way, they shift understandings of belonging by denaturalising ideas of what is 'home' and 'nation'; provide new ways of contesting traditional families and kinship structures, and shine a spotlight on claims to authentic community membership and nation. Instead, they explore what new political insights and strategies open up by reconceptualising diaspora as 'affiliation, routes and destinations' (Eng et al, 2005). Post 9-11 and the 'war on terror', queer diasporas have strengthened their interrogation of nation-state, citizenship, imperialism and empire. A central strand of theorising has been to foreground how racialised heteropatriarchies have been universalised as a Western discourse of development, a project of modernity based on a civilising mission promising political and social advancement and freedom (Eng et al, 2005). This perspective has been particularly pertinent to Africa, a continent which has been represented as backward and homophobic, and whose queer citizens are portrayed as victims of uncivilised cultures and traditions. Both area studies and queer studies are critiqued by Gopinath (2005b). She notes the 'implicit heteronormativity within some strands of area studies' as well as challenges the 'parochialism of some strands of queer studies', arguing for the need to make the study of sexuality central to an anit-imperialist, antiractist project' (Gopinath, 2005b cited in Eng et al, 2005: 8).

Considering both area studies and diasporic theorists, theorists in and about Africa have mirrored these critiques of queer theory, including how, particularly in the early days of its genesis, it has been narrowly focused on white, middle class, gay male concerns, predominantly located in the United States (Currier & Migraine-George, 2016a;b; Epprecht, 2008; Gunkel, 2010; Matebeni & Pereira, 2014).

One of the responses to these critiques has been Massaquoi's (2008) call to develop a 'Queer African Framework'. She argues for a framework based on an epistemological and political location of queer Africans, simultaneously marked differently from 'mainstream African communities and mainstream queer communities' (2008: 55). Thus, this framework would be informed from the perspectives of a sexual politics located in Africa and the African Diaspora. Matebeni & Paereira (2014) affirm Massaquoi's perspective of outside belonging held by African queers within the continent and within mainstream queer theory. They argue that the category 'queer' has yet to fully recognise and understand Africa, and centre the call to reclaim queer communities' existence on this continent in the face of their alienation. Stripped of their belonging and connectedness to their home, and not fully recognised by queer theory, they 'create their own version of Afrika – a space that cuts across rigid borders and boundaries' (2014: 7). They argue for an appropriation of both 'Afrika' and 'queer' to affirm sexual and gender identities and positionalities that are 'shamed and violated by prejudice and hatred' (2014:7)

In a similar fashion, but foregrounding people's experiences only located within the African continent, Ekine & Abbas (2013:3) seek to document 'not only the resistance in the daily lives and struggles of Africa's queer communities but to valorise the complexity of how queer liberation is framed in Africa and by Africans'. They point to the need to recognise diversity in thinking as Africans, and within Africa. Their edited collection academically and politically challenges 'the gay international' notion of 'African homophobia' which sets up a liberated and modern (white) West or North, locating victimisation and backwardness in Africa. Their collection instead speaks to an African located and theorised sexuality, indivisible from racialised notions of sexuality, globalisation and world politics. The collection contemplates oppression and discrimination as well as resistance and liberatory discourses. This queer liberation is one which seeks to transform and revolutionise an African order of oppressive hetero-patriarchal-capitalist frameworks.

Nyanzi (2014) argues, however, that in order to queer 'Queer Africa', one needs to broaden the lens beyond South Africa and to reclaim Africa in its bold diversities. She contends that queer scholars in Africa need to think beyond the westernised frame of LGBTI identities, exploring instead local nuances, enactments and performances. In its place, Nyanzi offers theorisation based on local understandings of fluid, transient gender identities based on

indigenous understandings. Queer Africa, she notes, must reclaim African modes of 'blending, bending and breaking gender boundaries' (Nyanzi, 2014: 67). An example considers individuals possessed by ancestors, not necessarily of the same gender identity as the person being occupied.

The South African dominance notwithstanding, Currier & Migraine-George (2016a, b) argue that there has been a growing critical corpus of queer African studies. This has included documenting lesbian and same sex sexualities in Africa (Dankwa, 2011; Ekine & Abbas, 2013; Goltz et al, 206; Tamale, 2011a, 2011b; Tushabe wa Tushabe, 2016) as well as contributing to constructing queer theory based on African realities (Aarmo, 1999; Baderoon, 2011; Böhme, 2015; Carrier & Murray, 1998; Currier, 2012; Dankwa, 2009, 2011; Ekotto, 2013; Ephrem & White, 2011; Epprecht, 2004, 2008; Etoke, 2009; Gaudio, 2009; Gay, 1985; Macharia, 2015; Martin and Xaba, 2013, 2017; Matebeni, 2009a; McLean & Mugo, 2015; Morgan & Wieringa, 2005; Potgieter, 2005; Queer African Youth Networking, 2012; Woubshet, 2010).

From another perspective, a body of work which foregrounds an analysis of the system of compulsory able-bodiedness comes together under the rubric of disability studies/theory. This work critiques and extends queer theory by considering the interwoven effects of 'compulsory' able-bodied heterosexuality for queer crips or other-abled people. McRuer, one of the key theorists of this perspective, describes 'crip theory' in the following excerpt:

> *The system of compulsory able-bodiedness, which in a sense produces disability, is thoroughly interwoven with the system of compulsory heterosexuality that produces queerness: that, in fact, compulsory heterosexuality is contingent on compulsory able-bodiedness, and vice versa. […] Neoliberalism and the condition of postmodernity, in fact, increasingly need able-bodied, heterosexual subjects who are visible and spectacularly tolerant of queer/disabled existences. (McRuer, 2006: 2).*

This analysis provides valuable insights into how particular categories of bodies, which look and work in a certain way get set up as the abnormal, the other to the able bodied. Interestingly, McRuer extends this even more by noting how liberal tolerance works to solidify this production of 'otherness'.

In an attempt to address some of these wideranging critiques, the next sub-section will discuss an adapted conceptualisation of Berlant & Warner's concept of QWM.

2.3. A REWORKING OF QUEER WORLD MAKING

My adaptation of QWM considers individual constructions of queer life worlds (Buckland, 2002) and collective/community queer formations. It contemplates the ways in which normativities and discourses form an agentic and interactive subject, and the embodied effects of this. It considers an embodied praxis (Johnson, 2001) in which individuals and collectivities comply with, subvert, resist and/or disidentify (Muñoz, 1999) with normativities and exclusionary practices within a matrix of domination (Hill Collins, 1990). This matrix refers to an interlocking system of oppression and privilege along the lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, religion, and other axes of difference which arise within historically contingent and socially constructed categories. It considers the centrality of discursively mediated and materially conditioned experience. Inclusion and exclusion, oppression and resistance are practiced and experienced within the social institutions of society (family, education, economy, religion, media, state etc.), at the community level (intersecting categories or groups which an individual belongs to), as well as the individual level (Hill Collins, 1990).

2.3.1. NORMALISATION, INTERSECTIONALITY AND EMBODIED SUBJECTIVITIES

The adaptation and extension of QWM necessitates conceptualising the politics of normalisation from an intersectional lens. Interlocking fields of normalisation considers a series of interweaving norms and discourses, structured along the lines of difference produced within particular historical contexts and historical junctures.

Reflecting on the formation of subjectivities, Butler (1990) argues that the subject is brought into being through norms or by discourse. Her concept of performativity, which refers to the production of the gendered subjectivity, of 'doing gender', describes how gendered subjects come into being through a process of:

> *… a set of repeated acts within a highly regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of "being" (1990: 43).*

This formulation moves the conception of gender from a model of identity to one that conceptualises gender as 'a constituted social temporality' (Butler, 1990: 191). Gender and other norms 'materialise' the body (Butler, 1993) in terms of how it acts, feels and thinks in a continuous and repetitive process. Considering how discourses create and produce gendered bodies, ways of being and feelings, she theorises the intimate relation between and production of sex, gender and hegemonic heterosexuality through the notion of the 'heterosexual matrix':

> *A hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality (Butler, 1990/1999: 208).*

Butler notes that norms are not singular but are generally interconnected and work in clusters. These clusters of normativities refer to how gendered norms are sexualised, racialised and classed, and cannot be read separately from each other. Noting this, beliefs and assumptions associated with other social categories, be they sexuality, race and class (to name a few variables) underwrite the discourse on gender. Race and gender are not analogies, as they always work as background for one another and are produced through each other. For this reason, gender is not an exclusive category of analysis, and needs to be read through and in relation to other categories of sociality (Butler, 1990/1999).

This perspective underlines the need to consider processes of normalisation, and the production of subjects within discourses and norms, from an intersectional perspective. Intersectionality is a term that has been famously attributed to the legal scholar Crenshaw (1991) in her exploration of the effects of domestic violence and rape on black women. She demonstrated how women of color are marginalised if one does not take into account how they are influenced by the intersection of both racism and sexism. However, the analysis and political project that underlies such a concept has its roots in historic struggles in the south, and in black feminism in the USA. Emblematic markers include Soujorner Truth's 1851 speech *Aint I a Woman*?, The Combahee River Collective (1978), Moraga & Anzaldúa (1983), hooks (1982), Hull et al (1982) and Lorde (1984). The concept has been refined and extended

by Hill Collins (1990), Brah & Phoenix (2004), Yuval Davis (2006) and McCall (2005), to name a few. It has since been taken up and used in a multitude of ways by a range of actors, including academics, policy makers, grass roots organizers. These different actors might employ different, and even contradictory, meanings and/or emphasis. Hill Collins & Bilge (2016) is a seminal text that traces the development and uptake of the concept over time and place, as a critical theory and a critical praxis. They argue the core ideas that underlie considerations of intersectionality are social inequality, power, relationality, social context, complexity and social justice. For the purpose of this thesis, I will take up the definition proffered by them in the following excerpt:

> *Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analysing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and social conditions in social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organisation of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and themselves (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016*

Analyses from an intersectional perspective would also contemplate the relationship between discourse and materiality, norm and body. An important notion in this regard is one proffered by Johnson (2001), that of embodied performance. This propergates viewing categories such as race, gender, class, age and so on as historically contingent and socially constructed, while also addressing the 'material effects of race', gender, class etc. in a misogynistic, exploitative, 'white supremacist society' (Johnson, 2001: 9). In this way, Johnson (2001) centres people's lived experiences within that system, and considers them as not only discursively mediated but also materially conditioned.

The need to enact and display a transformative agency in relation to racialised and classed patriarchal heteronormativities brings to the fore how one of the tools of world making is one's own agency and desire to build, rebuild and shift dominant discourses, meanings and

practices (Danielson, 2009). The process of incorporating, or resisting, interrogating and subverting norms is considered to be a form of 'self-fashioning'. However, Butler (2015) cautions that a person is never simply formed, nor fully self- forming (Butler, 2015). It is this required maintenance that opens up the way for considerations of agency. Considering agency and resistance to the regulation of sexualised, racialised gender regimes, Johnson (2001) places performance theory (Diamond, 1996) in a dialogical/dialectal conversation with Butler's performativity (1990/1999) in order to articulate a 'meatier politics of resistance' (2001:10). Using performativity and performance as dialogical concepts in relation to world making allows one to examine enactments, embodied practices, in relation to norms and power, i.e. the citational practices which reproduce/subvert discourses, which discipline or enable subjects and their performances (Gregson & Rose, 2000). In this way, an analysis of the participants' practices and meanings of QWM will require one to take note of their experiences as they are negotiated and represented in relation to norms and discourses in historically specific times and places. Warner, in an interview with Jagose (2000), argues that it is through our embodied practice, in our sociality, our interactions with others and our navigations and negotiations with norms and institutions that we bring into being the space of our worlds. It is this 'historised activity' within particular contexts and social relations that brings our worlds into being (Jagose, 2000: paragraph 38).

However, it is important to note that one's ability to influence, construct and contribute to alternate discourses and practices is influenced by one's social positionality, and relative social power. This requires one to consider how the ability to excerpt power and interlocate with regimes of power/knowledge are not dependent on one's individual will ie they are not voluntarist. The exact conditions in which we create and produce our worlds, what those worlds look like, depend on the psychological, social, cultural and economic resources at our disposal. Thus one's agency is contingent and mediated through one's social positionality. This brings to the fore an awareness of how agency and embodied practices are influenced by the participants' subjectivities and positions within and along the axes of social power of gender, race, class, language group, health status and able-bodiedness, and geographical origins.

2.3.2. NORMALISATION: COMPLICITY, RESISTANCE AND DISIDENTIFICATION

When considering QWM and their agentic productions of subjectivity, the queer figure is often set up as a radical figure that confronts, subverts and aims to transform heteronormativity. A queer radicality is envisioned (Berlant & Warner, 1998; Halperin, 1995). From this perspective, there seems to be the assumption that lesbians will always position themselves as anti-normative. However, *all* lesbians are not involved in projects of transformation, *all* the time. They are sure, at times, to hold personal beliefs and be involved in processes which reveal not only their complicity in normative beliefs and practises, but perhaps even their promotion of these. In this way, there is a need to recognise that lesbians' (or other subjects of queer positionalities) individual consciousness could mirror and speak the politics of the normative, perhaps displaying homonormative (Duggan, 2002) tendencies and world views, racism, sexism or other expressions of dominance.

Considering agency, Muñoz (1999) examines the navigations of those located outside the sexual and racial mainstream cultures. In this situation, he outlines that there are three ways to relate to hegemonic cultures. Firstly, one can identify with the mainstream culture by performing complicity and assimilation to this. This would require queers of colour to disavow all the parts of themselves that do not 'fit' in with this hegemonic culture. A second option is to 'counter identify', or resist. However, this invariably leads to a re-inscription of the very terms of the boundaries and definitions of exclusions. He proposes a third way, 'disidentification'. He explains:

> *… disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology. Instead of buckling under the pressure of dominant ideology (identification, assimilation), or attempting to break free of its inescapable sphere (counteridentification, utopianism), this 'working on and against' is a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within, always labouring to enact permanent structural change while at the same time valuing the importance of local and everyday struggles of resistance (Muñoz, 1999: 11-12).*

While this is a useful overview of the dimensions of agency in relation to navigations of hegemonic systems of regulatory power, it can also be considered simplistic. Oswin (2005) raises questions which complicate the stark distinction between notions of complicity, transgression and resistance. She asks: can complicit figures, because they are queer, still be

radical? As a means of moving beyond a binary of radical queer /complicit sell out, Oswin posits that it would be more productive to think of complicity 'as ambivalent and porous, as an undetermined set of processes that simultaneously enables both resistance and capitulation' (Oswin, 2005:84). In this way, she argues, a complicit queerness can still be regarded as a threat to heteronormativity and normalisation. This is a useful addition to the way of thinking of QWM as it allows for a theorisation of the shades of grey in people's positionalities and relationships with power – and thus for nuance, openness and possibilities.

Given this, there can be no pre-determined idea of what is 'radically queer', of what is revolutionary or what is complicit. These evaluations will emerge from the politics of the day, in the moment, of that place –they are context bound, time bound and relationship bound.

2.3.3. THE POLITICS OF BELONGING

An important dimension of QWM is undoubtedly the politics of belonging. Antonsich argues that belonging 'should be analysed both as a personal (intimate) feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness), and as a discursive resource that constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)' (2010: 644). Bearing this in mind, it is useful to consider Yuval Davis's (2006) conceptualisation of belonging as considering social locations as identifications and emotional attachments, as well as ethical and value systems.

Yearning to belong and building community are important dimensions of world making. Yuval Davis (2006) argues that identities can be conceptualised as narratives, the stories that people tell themselves and others about who they are or are not. These identity narratives can be individual and collective, and reveal perceptions of what being a member of such a grouping might mean. She highlights the deep emotional investments and desire for attachments that they imply. Individuals and groups are often caught up with wanting to belong and wanting to become - fuelled by yearning rather than stable identity states. Similarly, conceptualising identities through the lens of transition, Probyn (1996) highlights the dual process that underlies the affective dimension of belonging. These processes speak to belonging as both processes of being and becoming, as well as the longing to belong.

Yuval Davis (2006) argues that the emotionality attached to people's constructions of themselves and their identities becomes more central the more threatened and insecure they feel.

Ethical and political values inform people's judgement of their own and others' right to belong. Closely related to these notions are the attitudes and ideologies which draw the identity and categorical boundaries as to who belongs and who doesn't. Over time, and depending on how power relations are imposed, regulated and contested, these boundaries can be drawn in more or less exclusionary or inclusionary ways. These arenas of contestation concerning the ethical and political value systems, and the ways in which they use social locations and narratives of identity, moves the discussion into the realm of the 'the politics of belonging'.

The politics of belonging speaks to 'the dirty work of boundary maintenance' (Crowley, 1999, cited in Yuval Davis, 2006: 204). It speaks to the participatory politics of citizenship, as well as to entitlement and status (Yuval, Davis, 2006). Similarly, Ahmed (2000) argues that nations (and collectives) are discursively constructed, 'invented as familiar spaces, against that which is not familiar or external to it' (Ahmed, 2000: 98). The politics of belonging includes struggles around what it means to belong or not to belong to a community, a neighbourhood or a country i.e. what is involved in belonging and not belonging? In this way, it speaks to contestations around the roles which specific social locations and narratives of identity assume, as well as the issues that membership raises.

Probyn (1996) posits that lesbians and gays often experience their belonging in national collectives through the lens of the 'outside', characterised as both a site of oppression and as a liberatory space. She proposes a flattening of the framework of inside/outside to a spatial arrangement which regards the outside as the welding of the interior and exterior. By this, she is not arguing that LGBTI communities or any 'excluded grouping' attempt to fight for a redistribution of 'the inside'. Rather she argues for a 'making strange of belonging', a queering of its epistemological underpinnings. In this way, she contends, any singularity of belonging must continually be freed and encouraged in its movement to constantly become other:

> *Being on the outside, we are drawn within the ever moving interweaving lines of the social, lines that we render as the surface of sexuality, gender, race, economics, class etc.: in short, the outside of contemporary sociality, the limits which allow for other ways of conceiving and enacting belonging (Probyn, 1996: 153).*

Notions of citizenship are on the whole connected to discourses around exclusion. The idea of citizenship as a formation of national belonging is now used analytically to highlight differences in the *de jure* and *de facto* rights of different groups within and between nation-states (Fenster, 2005). Considering this gap, belonging navigates the fraught relationship between 'forms of legal/constitutional freedoms and social and cultural freedoms', serving as an important reminder that 'the existence of the former does not guarantee the possibility of the latter' (Livermon, 2012:299).

The concept of sexual citizenship has come into being due to the new primacy given to sexual subjectivity, laying claim to a new form of belonging, and ushering in a politics of intimacy and everyday life. Sexual citizenship speaks to the importance of issues of sexuality to the nation, state and the globalised world (Bell & Binnie, 2000; Altman, 2001). At the level of a national identity, of feeling authentically South African, what does it mean for same sex practising women 'to belong'? Political contestation around the membership status of this grouping in the South African nation lies at the heart of their construction of belonging.

These considerations remind us that belonging is deeply subjective and political. When belonging is threatened, either through the need to re-inscribe hegemonic positions of power, or through contesting and resisting discrimination or oppression, people become engaged in 'a politics of belonging' (Yuval Davis, 2006). The ability to benefit from hegemonic norms and economic relations which underlie processes of inclusion/exclusion depends to a large extent on the terms which define whether one is seen to be human or not (Butler, 2004). Granting human status to individuals and groups who comply with socially defined norms, and who are economically powerful, will invariably deprive non-compliant or subversive individuals of this status. Butler (2004) argues that this qualified recognition will invariably influence the ability of a person to lead a 'viable life' and could even lead to 'unliveable lives'.

In relation to this thesis, inequalities, exclusions and oppression characterise the city of Cape Town and South Africa more generally. LGBTI communities have variable abilities to access and mobilise the necessary socio-economic and political resources to be granted the status of being considered fully human. Black and white and rich and poor LGBTI community members lead different quality 'liveable lives' influenced by the relative power ascribed to them by their race and class. They are all, however, engaged in different kinds of 'politics of belonging' – struggles over how they access and contest social power, and how they are able to construct normativities which reflect their interests and world view (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Notions of belonging and the politics of belonging are important yardsticks from which to measure liveable lives and liveable cities. These struggles within the politics of belonging speak to processes of QWM.

2.4. CONSTRUCTING INTERSECTIONAL QUEER WORLD MAKING IN THREE INTERCONNECTED SOCIALITIES

How lesbians construct queer world making in Cape Town will be explored through narratives of their everyday constructions of queer life worlds. Queer world making will be explored through a discussion of three interconnected sites of sociality as revealed through a series of dominant discourses and counter narratives.

The first site of sociality is *embodied lesbian subjectivities*. There is a dominant narrative that argues being a lesbian is unAfrican, unnatural and against religion (Sanger & Clowes, 2006; Van Zyl & Stein, 2005; Vincent & Howell, 2014). This ultimately constructs lesbian subjectivity as impossible. Lesbians' accounts of recognition of lesbian desire will reveal a range of counter narratives which speak to different modes of queer world making. A related dominant discourse which notes that 'real' sex is (reproductive) heterosexual penile penetration of the vagina will be explored through the production of counter narratives of lesbian erotic world making, demonstrating experiences of lesbian sexual desire, practices and pleasure.

The second site of sociality is *motherhood*. Lesbian mothers' constructions of their queer life worlds will be revealed through a discussion of a series of counter narratives to the dominant narrative that a 'real' mother is heterosexual, and the incongruence produced by putting 'lesbian' and 'mother' next to each other.

The third site of sociality is lesbians' *every day/night navigations of Cape Town*. This recognises that lesbians are brought into view through dominant narratives of victimisation and invisibility within racialised zones of safety and danger (Judge, 2015), at odds with the dominant representation of Cape Town as the gay capital of South Africa. Discussion of their queer world making will centre on lesbians 'home making', through a consideration of making place for lesbians within everyday space and symbolic representations of Cape Town, as well as through the sites of their homes.

I will now outline the intellectual and political reasons why I consider it important to focus on these three interconnected socialities. I will provide a brief overview of existing discussions and debates within each of these arenas, and the knowledge gaps which I am hoping to address.

2.4.1. THE (IM)POSSIBILITY OF LESBIAN SUBJECTIVITY

The literature in South Africa foregrounds how heteronormativity within coloured, Indian and white communities is grounded within discourses that paint homosexuality as being unnatural, unhealthy, abnormal. These discourses are based on hegemonic gender and sexuality regimes (Gunkel, 2010; Van Zyl & Steyn, 2005; 2009), religious doctrines as well as medicalised and psycho-social discourses of deviance (Judge et al, 2008; Sanger & Clowes, 2006; Wells & Polders, 2006). Heteronormativity within black communities is grounded within these discourses, along with ones which construct traditional African culture as heterosexual. In these processes, homosexuality has been discursively constructed as the western import of a white man's disease, in short, as unAfrican (Bhana et al, 2007; Dlamini, 2006; Epprecht, 2008; Hoad, 2007; Judge et al, 2008; Mkhize, 2008; Morgan & Wieranga, 2005; Muholi, 2004; Reddy, 2006; Roberts & Reddy, 2008; Vincent & Howell, 2014).

These widespread notions have undoubtedly contributed to the disjuncture between *de jure* legal rights to sexual equality and expression afforded by the Constitution, and *de facto* life experiences of discrimination and stigmatisation in Cape Town.[3] However, this disconnect

[3] Gunkel (2010) argues that the connection between colonialism/cultural imperialism and homosexuality that is drawn on in suggesting that homosexuality is un-African is neither new nor exclusively African. She shares how there is a long history of constituting homosexuality as something outside tradition and culture, and thus outside the nation. In other contexts same sex desire has been

between law and everyday life are not experienced equally by South Africans. It is mostly white, English speaking, middle class members of the LGBTI community who are able to enjoy these legal benefits. This owes, to a large extent to the fact that they have the economic standing to buffer themselves from homophobia, discrimination and violence (Holland-Muter, 2013; Judge, 2015; Leap, 2005).

This is not to say that whiteness and white communities are unquestioningly accepting of lesbianism. Although, one needs to recognise that this is a widely prevalent idea, and is propped up by arguments such as that post-Apartheid discourses construct 'the queer body as white and the sexualisation of the black body as straight' (Livermon, 2012: 302). However, this perspective disavows the ways in which whiteness functions and has been constructed through patriarchy, heteronormativity and class relations in different time periods in South Africa's history (Gunkel, 2010; Van Zyl & Steyn, 2005). Heteronormativity played a central role in white colonial discourse and practise, with the imposition of Victorian legislation which criminalised sodomy during colonialism (Lind, 2005). Heteronormativity was consolidated under Apartheid rule through the strengthening of the legal and social control, regulation and criminalisation of homosexuality (Elder, 1995; Gevisser, 1994; Gunkel, 2010; Reid & Dirsuweit, 2002). In post-Apartheid South Africa, heteronormativity within the white and coloured communities is evidenced in the surveys of LGBTI victimisation and discrimination (Polders & Wells, 2004; Rich, 2006; Wells, 2005), and in the effect of the discourses that homosexuality is against God and unnatural (Sanger & Clowes, 2006).

Considering the claim that homosexuality is unAfrican, a number of theorists of African sexuality (Murray & Roscoe, 1998; Epprecht, 2008) have highlighted the existence of same sex sexuality and intimacy in precolonial Africa. Gunkel (2010), however, argues that it is less

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considered unAmerican, unIndian and unIraqi. For example, Sinfield (1994, cited in Gunkel, 2010) argues that homosexuality was considered unAmerican during the cold war, with the argument that homosexuality undermined constructions of masculinity, femininity and family values of American society. Similarly, under formal Apartheid, homosexuality was constructed as unAfrikaans by a range of cultural and religious organisations that feared wealthy Jewish and English men corrupting young Afrikaner boys (Gevisser, 1995: 31).

important to 'prove' the existence of same sex practises and subjectivities. Instead, she posits that it is more fruitful to understand and discuss the conditions which contributed to the emergence of homophobia as a discourse, namely the emergence of a heterosexual African identity proposed within and by postcolonial homophobia.

During colonial and Apartheid times, heterosexuality was policed through race, and race was policed through heterosexuality (Gunkel, 2010; Ratele, 2001). This resulted in white Afrikaner state sanctioned homophobia, violence and discrimination directed at predominantly white males, and later after 'the homosexual panic' of the 1960s, extended to include surveillance and regulation of white lesbians (Elder, 2003; Gevisser, 1995). Gunkel (2010) argues that homophobia in contemporary South Africa is, in effect, reintroducing a colonialist and racist discourse of sexuality into a post-colonial project. She notes that the notions that homosexuality is unAfrican, against God and unnatural is not so much targeting lesbians and gays in the region, but rather contributes to 'securing normative femininity and necessarily linked, hegemonic masculinity […] as reproduced through normative heterosexuality and its political institution, the family' (Gunkel, 2010: 45/46). This contributes to a 'paradox of partial legibility" (Berlant, 1997 cited in de Robillard, 2016), which ultimately positions LGBTI communities as simultaneously 'sitting at the table' while also being constructed as strangers who are already recognised as not belonging (Ahmed, 2000; 2006) as authentic, legitimate members of a community and nation.

A number of studies on lesbian identities and same sex sexualities have been conducted in South Africa which have explored and highlighted how same sex sexualities have operated over time. An important body of work focuses on same sex practices of mommy-baby relationships. These relationships were intimate connections between an older and a younger girl, generally school girls, who provided emotional and physical care and protection for each other. Gunkel (2010) describes them as very deep friendships, characterised by the desire to always be with each other, often displaying the entitlement, ownership and possession found in monogamous sexual relationships. She notes that mummy-baby relationships were relatively institutionalised, enacted with the knowledge and tacit approval of the school authorities. *Ama*chicken is another term for mommy-baby relationships (Chan Sam, 1995; Gunkel, 2010). These practices of intimate belonging were exclusively enacted within black communities (Matebeni, 2012a; Morgan & Wieringa, 2005).

Apart from providing a means for same-sex sociality, Gunkel (2010) contends that many such relationships also included sexual intimacy. This allows one to compare them to Weker's (2006) 'mati work' among women in Surinam[4] and to Dankwa's (2009) 'supi' in Ghana[5]. All of these forms of intimate (at times sexual) sociality speak to ways in which webs of black 'erotic selfhood' were materially produced through activity and connectivity (di Prieto, 2016).

Potgieter's 1997 dissertation *(Black, South African, Lesbian: Discourses of invisible lives)* was the first ground breaking study on black lesbians in post-Apartheid South Africa. Osche (2011) explores discourses framing white lesbian identities in Pretoria. Johannesburg has been the site of much research on lesbian identities, including an exploration of the sub culture of black lesbian communities in the city (Matebeni, 2012a), and the differences in experiences between black and white lesbian university students (Smuts, 2011). The politics of naming and inhabiting of categories amongst black lesbians in Soweto is explored by Pakade (2013). Van Zyl (2011) considers marriage amongst lesbians and the politics of sexual belonging in Cape Town.

2.4.2. The (im)possibility of lesbian sexual pleasure in South Africa

There has been a growing body of work theorising same sex sexual practices, relationships and identities in Africa, particularly South Africa. Although it has played out differently in development, academic and activist arenas, it has been far easier to conceptualise and argue for the need to research or advocate for policy and programmatic interventions in terms of health problems (notably gender-based violence interventions and HIV/AIDS) and the human rights violations associated with these (Reddy, 2004; Bakare-Yusuf, 2013). The early- to mid-2000s saw an increasing number of initiatives which framed sexuality research, advocacy and programmatic interventions from the perspective of sexuality as a source of

[4] Weker (2006) describes 'mati' not as an identity but as a verb, referring to women's sexual practices and actions. The mati work often coexists with heterosexual relationships and/or marriages (Gunkel, 2010).

[5] Dankwa (2009) shares how 'supi' refers to a close friendship between two adolescent girls (with or without a sexual dimension). Supi does not speak of a lesbian sub culture or a lesbian social identity. Rather it alludes to and suggests 'female sex bonds', to secret sexual practices and behavior. These enactments of 'female same-sex passions are tacit, but vibrant forms of knowledge' (Dankwa, 2009:1).

empowerment (Cornwall & Jolly, 2005; Gosine, 2005; Hawkins, Cornwall & Lewin, 2011; Pereira, 2003), which explored sexuality from the perspective of desire, pleasure and sexual autonomy (Alexander, 2005; McFadden, 2003; Gqola, 2005; Jolly, Cornwall & Hawkins, 2013), or which considered issues of erotic justice (Correa, 2002) and erotic autonomy (Alexander, 2005).

Despite this, Mama (1996) and Pereira (2003) note the social and academic silences surrounding sexuality in Africa. In part they suggest that these silences are born out of African women's rejections of racist colonial stereotyping of African (and especially African women's) hyper-developed sexuality. As a way of refuting these stereotypes, they suggest that African women writers and researchers may have shied away from the exploration of sexuality altogether. Gosine (2005) argues that the negative focus and approach towards sexuality, particularly in development discourses and in United Nations arenas, can be traced back to colonial representations of black sexuality as 'deviant' and primitive, propped up by inventions of rapacious black men and hypersexualised black women. He argues that:

> *The negative descriptions of Third world peoples' sexualities are also a consequence of a racializing process that has been institutionalised in development discourses and through the implementation of policies like population control (Gosine, 2005:13).*

These sentiments are echoed by Gune & Manuel (2011) discussing their academic research on sexuality in Mozambique. They outline that reticence to describe sexual practices, pleasure and desire in any detail in the context of Africa, is a partial response to the colonial tendency to construct African sexualities as exotic, and to possibly re-inscribe colonial tropes which viewed African sexuality as 'promiscuous and undisciplined'. There was also the strongly held belief that the pursuit and discussion of sexual pleasure and desire are peripheral and elitist concerns (Jolly, Cornwall & Hawkins, 2013). It has been argued that a focus on sexual pleasure and desire is a luxury in the face of the effects of extreme and dire poverty, the ravages of HIV/AIDS, and the damage inflicted by gender-based violence on women (Mugo, 2016).

Within South Africa, Bennett & Reddy (2007) argue that feminist research and activism in the seventies and eighties prioritised issues of political representation and access to

resources. They argue that although research and activism on gender-based violence had considered the body and sexuality, these had not been centred as areas of research in their own right. Rather, the authors argue, the nineties saw a change in the focus, nature and scope of work on sexualities. They note this was partly due to policy and advocacy work on HIV prevention, and the recognition that sexuality, patriarchy and identity have to be considered for appropriate and effective HIV and health policy interventions. In addition, they point to a growing interest and mobilisation around sexual citizenship, particularly the human rights of LGBTI people (Bennett & Reddy, 2007).

These developments led to a growing number of compilations and articles featuring academic and intellectual discussions on women's sexuality. As Arnfred (2003:7) argued, this reflected a growing sentiment that the time had come to 'rethink sexualities in Africa', beyond the colonial, exoticising gaze, and instead centring the concerns, frameworks and methodological tools on local African feminist scholarship. These concerns have been translated into the establishment of research programmes explicitly focused on sexuality in the African context, from a perspective of developing locally grounded feminist epistemological approaches, critical of Western hegemonic academic and policy discourses (Mama, 1996; Lewis, 2002 as cited in Mama, Pereira & Manuh, 2005), as well as an engagement with university based pedagogies and sexualities (Bennett & Reddy, 2007; Tamale, 2011a).

These research programmes and similar initiatives have resulted in the production of a number of ground breaking books which have paved the way for an African centred and centric perspective of theorising women's sexualities. These include Arnfred's (2003*) Re-Thinking Sexualities in Africa*; Diesel's (2011) *Reclaiming the L-Word*; Tamale's (2011) *Sexualities in Africa*; Ekine & Abbas' (2013) *Queer African Reader*; Martin & Xaba's (2013; 2017) *Queer Africa*, edition one and two; numerous articles and editions of *Agenda*, a journal about women and gender, as well as the African Gender Institute's *Feminist Africa*. All of this academic production has contributed to establishing a sizeable amount of work on same sex sexuality and specifically lesbian and queer identities, lives and experiences in South Africa and Africa more generally. Two publications worth foregrounding include Wieringa & Morgan's (2005) *Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men and Ancestral Wives*, one of the first publications to highlight same sex desire and identities in Africa, and Gunkel's (2010) *The*

Cultural Politics of Female sexuality in South Africa, specifically analysing same-sex sexuality between women in South Africa.

Gqola (2005) notes that there has been a growing body of African feminist-informed scholarship that has challenged the conceptualisation of sexuality in Africa as 'pathology and brokenness, illness, gender based violence, limitation, domination, conscription and death'. This body of work has paid attention to developing historically grounded, local knowledge which includes an exploration and recognition '… that in addition to bruisings, sometimes collision happens in the form of an embrace, a caress or a wink' (Gqola, 2005:4). The last fifteen years has borne witness to a shift in emphasis from domination, oppression and victimisation to a growing demand to provide 'counter-narratives to this hegemonic discourse of sexual terrorism' (Bakare-Yusuf, 2013: 29). This has resulted in calls to recognise and assert women's sexual and embodied agency (Bakare-Yusuf, 2013), to privilege sexual pleasure as a tool for feminist political engagement (McFadden, 2003) and erotic autonomy (Alexander, 2005); to uphold the principles of erotic justice (Aken'Ova, 2013; Correa, 2002) and to foreground intimacy (Perreira, 2003). Tamale (2013) shares how concepts of sexual pleasure, the erotic and desire have been unveiled in a number of studies in different countries in Africa (McFadden, 1992; Moyer & Mbelwa, 2003; Nzegwu, 2003; Tamale, 2005).

Drawing on the work of Audre Lorde (1984) who speaks about the erotic as a source of power for women, Hill Collins (1990) argues that investigations of women's sexualities should go beyond exploring how (black) women's sexualities have been controlled, repressed and restricted to thinking of the erotic as a source of power for women. In this context, sexuality simultaneously oppresses and empowers.

It is surprising to realise that both feminist and queer theorists, and those that straddle both these (as well as other disciplinary) fields, have written surprisingly little about actual practices of queer, or more specifically lesbian sex (Halberstam, 1998; Plummer, 2003). Halberstam (1998) notes a worrying, almost essentialist assumption that particular sexual identities engage in particular sexual practices. He argues that the focus on denaturalising the homosexual-heterosexual binary did not seem to extend to a 'de-essentialising of sex', leaving us with a paradigm in which it is assumed that gay men engage in anal sex and

lesbians in oral sex in much the same way that penile- vaginal intercourse is assumed for heterosexuals (Halberstam, 1998).

Plummer (2003) refers to this as a 'vanishing sexuality' whereby constructionist research on the sexual focuses overwhelmingly on sexual meanings, with a glaring absence of the 'lustful body' and its sexual desires and practices. Mainstream sexological research, on the other hand, focuses on sexual practices without giving them meaning. Within the important subfield of sexuality and space, Browne, Lim & Brown (2005) identify exploring what a sensuous, embodied geography of thinking, feeling and doing sexuality would look like as a contemporary research priority. They call for:

> *[G]eographic work that is concerned with affect and emotions... [a concern for] the materiality, embodiment and affect of contemporary sexualities; what Binnie (1997) called the 'messy materiality' of the sexed body, the fucking body. (Browne, Lim & Brown, 2005:82)*

Noting the difficulties, tensions and anxieties within academia that theorising sexual practices might provoke, Bell (2005:84) argues:

> *It was and still is easier to write about sexual identities and politics than sexual practices, easier to get published on gay gentrification than fisting.*

Reid-Pharr (1996) argues that this absence of explicit discussions of queer sexual practices is similar to ideological processes that maintain whiteness as culturally dominant, and white sexuality as transparent and invisible (cited in Halberstam, 1998). This has the effect of contributing to the continued hegemony that heterosexuality and heterosexual practices occupy. The call for an analysis of sexual practices and their attendant sexual meanings is not just an attempt to 'fill in the dirty details' (Halberstam, 1998) but a contribution to a troubling of what is seem to be normal sexual practices, making conscious and explicit different cultural sexual hierarchies of value (Rubin, 1984), and trouble the homosexual-heterosexual binary system (Halberstam, 1998).

Considering lesbian sexual practice, there is an oft heard call by white middle class feminism[6] for the need to overcome 'the missing discourse of desire' (Fine, 1988) in relation to women, and more especially to lesbians, claiming the necessity to develop a lesbian language of sex and pleasure (Frye, 1990; Distiller, 2005). However, critics have been quick to point out that constructions of sexuality and how it is materialised are racialised and classed, leading to women's varied positioning as subjects of desire.

Processes of colonialisation, racialisation and industrialisation have led to black women and working class women being constructed as hypersexual, with the tendency to stereotype black lesbians and working class lesbians as sexually voracious butch bulldaggers, in this way becoming hyper visible. White lesbians and middle class lesbians, on the other hand, stereotypically become associated with romantic love and emotionality, their desire entwined with an effusive eroticism (Halberstam, 1998). In this way, Freud's hypersexualised lesbian, socially therefore not a 'real woman', and the desexualised lesbian become overlaid with racialised and classed tropes of femininities. Bearing these racialised discourses in mind, complicates the call to overcome a 'missing discourse of desire', as it is clear that there are different silences and different forms of (in)visibility in relation to differently raced and classed lesbian bodies. This realisation leads one to rather call for a deeper interrogation of how different categories of lesbians negotiate and navigate these varied processes of sexualisation and sexual pleasure.

This production has begun the process of 'writing into public discourse' a lesbian desiring voice, a subject of sexual pleasure. However, this needs to be deepened and made louder. There are theoretical questions that need to be addressed in relation to lesbian subjectivities, desire and sexual pleasure, including: What is considered lesbian sex? How do lesbians come to recognise lesbian desire and sexual feelings for another woman? How do they speak about their 'sexual awakening' to same sex desires and subjectivities? How do they become a subject of lesbian desire? How do lesbians understand and experience the relationship between sexual practices and lesbian gendered identities? How do they practice

[6] White middle class feminism is one that centres the interests of these groupings rather than referring to actual white feminists.

and experience sexual pleasure and how do they talk about and understand these processes? (Richardson, 1992; Weeks et al, 2001).

Embodied forms of same sex social connection and carnal pleasure become sites and forms of queer erotic world making, of making a place for lesbian sexuality and desire, materialising a space and moment where our survival becomes imaginable (Rodriguez, 2014).

2.4.3. LESBIAN MOTHERHOOD AS A SITE OF QUEER WORLD MAKING

The rights of LGBTI people to form families by marrying and/or by having children are protected and promoted within the South African legislative framework. Same sex couples and individual adoption, assisted contraception, and the protection and promotion of all kinds of LGBTI families are contemplated in the legislative framework[7] and family 'diversity' is recognised at a policy level.

A Department of Social Development report (2012) based on analysis of data from the 2005 General Household Survey, shows that the most common types of family in 2005 were the nuclear family (23.3 per cent), followed by the single-adult family (20.4 per cent), and three-generation family (16.8 per cent). A racially based analysis of the types of families revealed that Africans had the highest proportion of three-generation, absent-spouse, single parent, child/sibling-headed families. Coloureds had the highest proportion of single parent (unmarried families) and married couple with adopted children, while among Indians the most common type was the nuclear family. Whites had the highest proportion of elder-only and married couple-only families (Department of Social Development, 2012). Statistics South Africa shows that a total of 2 460 marriages and civil partnerships in which at least one of

[7] Conception by egg and sperm donation is governed by two laws in South Africa - the Human Tissue Act (1983) and the Children's Act (2005). The Human Tissue Act extended legal access to assisted insemination in registered ART clinics to all women, regardless of sexual orientation or relationship status (Isaack, 2003). The Children's Act (2005) fully protects all South African children, including donor conceived and surrogate children. It also covers parenting rights and responsibilities. It outlines how any single person may adopt and same sex couples may jointly adopt children (www.justice.gov.za). In 2003, a Constitutional Court ruling granted full parental rights to both members of same sex couples of a child(ren) conceived through assisted insemination (Isaack, 2003). Same sex civil unions were legally recognised in 2006.

the spouses is a South African citizen or permanent resident were registered under the Civil Union Act, the act that governs civil unions between people of the same sex, between 2007 and end of 2010 (Department of Social Development, 2012).

Although there is an ostensible South African government commitment to recognise family diversity, the preferred family form in the family policy is the (heterosexual) nuclear family, often referred to as the 'traditional' family, constituted by a mother and father living with their biological offspring (Breshears & le Roux, 2013; Morison, Lynch & Macleod, 2016, Morison et al, forthcoming). Thus, even though less than a quarter (23.2 per cent) of all South African families are constituted as nuclear heterosexual families within South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2012), this category of family is prioritised as the most desirable and effective family structure in South Africa (Fester, 2006; Morison, Lynch & Macleod et al, 2016; Morison et al, forthcoming; Sunde & Bozalek, 1995). A central argument which props up the notion of the legitimacy of the nuclear heterosexual family is based on a discourse which naturalises and normalises heterosexual romantic love, lifelong monogamy and bio-genetic parenthood. Within this process, motherhood is constructed as natural and instinctual, and femininity is associated with emotionality (Morison et al, forthcoming). The overall effect of this is that all other family structures are pathologised as 'missing' something or someone that is essential for a child's healthy psychological and emotional development and for effective family functioning (Bozalek, 2006; Donaldson & Wilbraham, 2013; Kruger, 2003; 2006; Lubbe, 2007; 2008; Morison et al, forthcoming).

There have been significant changes in traditional South African families over the years due to colonisation, apartheid, urbanisation and globalisation (Makiwane, Nduna & Khalema, 2016). Black families have been systematically torn apart and undermined by Apartheid laws and the migrant labour system (Budlender & Lund, 2011; Makiwane, Nduna & Khalema, 2016). The legacies of apartheid and its effects on South African families, for example, continued impact of migrant labour on family residential patterns, are still very much in evidence today. This, combined with the effects of increasing poverty (Statistics South Africa, 2010), exacerbated by the effect of morbidity and mortality through HIV/AIDS related diseases, have all contributed to a growth in women-headed households as well as multi-generational and extended families (Budlender & Lund, 2011; Department of Social Development, 2012).

Apart from a few independent research and degree-based studies (Lubbe, 2008; Swain, 2010; Van Ewyk, 2013), there are two key volumes of literature focused on LGBTI-headed families and households (and pathways to parenting and reproductive choices): Lubbe-De Beer & Marnell, (2013) and Morison et al (forthcoming). Lubbe-De Beer & Marnell's (2013) edited collection, *Home Affairs: Rethinking lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender families in contemporary South Africa,* drew together the growing body of local scholarship in the field at a time of intense polemical discussion on LGBTI-headed families in public debate in South Africa. It highlighted the wide range of experiences and practices of lesbian and gay parenting in contemporary South Africa. Morison et al in their forthcoming *Queer kinship: perspectives on sexualities, families and reproduction in South Africa* aim to address some of the gaps in existing literature, such as gay men's experiences of families and research that extends beyond white, middle class and urban LGBTI families.

Moving the focus to lesbian-headed families and lesbian motherhood more specifically, it is useful to consider, and extend, Walker's (1995) definition of motherhood. Noting that motherhood is a multi-layered term, Walker (1995) outlines at least three terrains in her definition of motherhood: practice, discourse and social identity, all of which inform and influence each other. An analysis of these three interlinked terrains allows for a re-examination of motherhood in South Africa that will highlight 'its complexity, as an institution but also as a relationship' (Walker, 1995: 428).

Practice contemplates 'mother work' such as the act of childbirth (not a precondition to do mothering work, considering social motherhood, as well as the lesbian partner of the birth mother, adoptive parents etc.), physical care, emotional care and nurturing, and socialisation. I would extend this definition to include the reproductive decision-making process between lesbian couples or by the lesbian mother. Becoming pregnant requires a lot more planning, negotiation, expense and 'work' for lesbians, compared to heterosexual mothers, and should be reflected in the definition.

Discourses of motherhood foreground cultural beliefs and social values which inform and order mothering practice. A fundamental discourse underlying mothering practice is that of 'the good mother'. This proposes a mothering model which prioritises the needs of children and families over those of the woman (Donaldson & Wilbraham, 2013; Goodwin & Huppatz,

2010; Hays, 1996; Johnston & Swanson, 2003; Krane & Davies, 2007). Walker (1995) outlines how the good mother discourse is bound up with ideas about womanhood and a woman's gender identity, as well as childhood and the nature and needs of children. Although the actual content of this discourse will be found in particular historical contexts and cultures, in general, good mothering practices centre on prioritising the needs of her husband and children (in that order) (Hays, 1996; Krane & Davies, 2007). Walker (1995) reminds that mother work/practices are influenced by a range of different, overlapping and, at times, contradictory discourses. It is important to bear in mind that a mother's practice and identity cannot simply be 'read off' discourses, but needs to investigated and named.

This leads to a discussion of the final area, *social identity*, which speaks to a woman's own subjective construction of her identity as a mother. This draws attention to the subjective dimension of motherhood, and speaks to the interplay between individual and collective processes, including how the woman assumes, resists or disidentifies with the social expectation to mother, and in what conditions. Walker (1995) reminds us that a mother has a range of other social positionalities and identities which will inform and influence her self-identity as a mother, such as her age, racial and cultural identities, nationality and ethnicity, her religion, her work and class status etc.

The practices, discourses and identities related to motherhood occur in specific historical situations, informed by the interlocking structures of race, class and gender (Collins, 1994: 45). In South Africa, constructions and conditions of motherhood vary along racial and class lines (Arnfred, 2003). Although being a mother is an expectation for women across racial and class lines in South Africa, motherhood plays a particularly crucial role in black (and Indian) women's identities and roles within their communities (Hassim, 1991; Moore, 2013; Walker, 1995). Traditionally, collectivism has shaped motherhood in black and coloured communities and there is an expectation that mothers will receive familial support from their female relatives. The extended family, female neighbours and community members form the context for childrearing (Arnfred, 2003; Magwaza, 2003; Orderson, 2011; Sudarkasa, 2004, van Doornene, 2009). In contrast, white, particularly middle class, mothers tend to practice mothering more individually, and mothering is generally located within the mother-child dyad and/or within the nuclear family (Magwaza, 2003; Sudarkasa, 2004). Considering class, Magwaza (2003) notes that 'traditional' ways of mothering for black

women living in formerly designated white middle class suburbs have transformed and become more of a private affair, similar to their white counterparts. White and black middle class women often employ other women to take on some of their mothering responsibilities, or access commercial child care initiatives (Magwaza, 2003; Mamabolo, 2009; van Doornene, 2009). Working class women draw on relatives or neighbours to assist them with in their parenting, along with commercial or state provided child care (Kruger, 2006; Magwaza, 2003; Walker, 1995).

However, Walker (1995) argues that while there is a diversity of mothering practices, meanings and identities, there is 'sufficient evidence of overlapping understandings, common concerns and even common experiences among women from diverse backgrounds' to speak of common constructions of South African motherhood, where parenting is viewed as the sole responsibility of mothers/women (Walker, 1995: 436). The hegemonic expectation, moreover, is for mothering to take place within a heterosexual relationship, a heterosexual family.

When lesbians become mothers, or when mothers become lesbians, they confront social discourses which construct lesbian sexuality as unAfrican, unnatural and against religious teachings (see above). Lesbian mothers therefore defy hegemonic ideals of South African femininities constructed within their particular cultures, through their performance of a lesbian sexuality (Distiller, 2013; Lubbe, 2008; van Ewyk & Kruger, 2017).

Although it is important to recognise the legal protections that lesbians and their families enjoy, it is also people's cultural and religious milieu which influences their everyday experience. Same sex parented families confront a range of social discourses which challenge their right to become parents, and the acceptability and appropriateness of being one (Lubbe, 2007). Many of these resistances to lesbian parenting centre on the alleged negative effects that such family formations may have on the children and on traditional notions of the family (Lubbe, 2007). Wider cultural beliefs regarding the family in South Africa reveal the commonly held belief that heterosexual biological conception is the 'natural' ideal method of contraception, and that therefore other means of conceiving or raising a child would cause psychological harm to the children (Kruger, 2003; Donaldson & Wilbraham, 2013; Youngelson, 2006). Thus despite legal protections dominant religious and

cultural discourses question the legitimacy of placing 'lesbian' and 'mother' alongside each other, question lesbians right to form lesbian-headed families and to mother (Butler & Astbury, 2005; Richardson, 2004).

As Walker's (1995) definition of motherhood reminds us, social actors play an active role in the construction of their identities, and women are not passive victims of dominant ideologies and discourses but rather adopt, modify and/or reinterpret these within the cultural and economic means available to them (Garey, 1995: 416 cited in Van Doorene, 2009). For this reason, it is important to explore how lesbian mothers are actively involved in negotiating and re(enacting) the meaning of motherhood.

Hequemborg (2007) reminds us that the term lesbian mother is neither a stable or reified category, but reveals itself in particular contexts, cultural matrices and life stories. This reminds us of the 'complexities and slipperiness' of lesbian lives, and that nuance, contingency and specificity need to be foregrounded. Lesbian mothers have 'become' lesbian mothers through differing pathways to motherhood, such as after separating from or divorcing heterosexual partners and then entering into lesbian relationships, or become mothers within the context of lesbian relationships. Their narratives have foregrounded the differences of class, race and health status, which have influenced the differing social schemes of recognition of gender and sexuality, the material and cultural resources which allow the mother to navigate her mothering practices with greater or lesser ease.

Johnson (2012) provides a very succinct overview of three waves of research in the United States on lesbian mothers and their children. Beginning in the late 1970s, the first wave of research focused on women who had had their children in heterosexual relationships, before subsequently defining themselves as lesbian. These studies initially explored the mothers' concerns with coming out to her children and potential custody battles (Pagelow, 1980; Lyons, 1983; Lewin, 1984; Rand, Graham & Rawlings, 1982 cited in Johnson, 2012). This period also saw the development of research comparing lesbian and heterosexual mothers. These centred on the extent to which homosexual families are the same or different to the heteronormative ideal of the nuclear family, and secondly, focused on the welfare of children who live in same-gendered families, specifically on the ability of lesbian parents to meet their children's needs. This more often than not translated into a concern

around whether the children would display a 'proper' sexuality and gender development, and specifically with concerns over the lack of male role models in lesbian families (Clarke & Kitzinger, 2005).

In these early studies, as well as within second wave studies (from the eighties and nineties), children, adolescents and young adults with lesbian mothers were compared to a norm group – those raised by heterosexual parents. Johnson (2012) notes that the studies revealed how the lesbians' children were doing as well as, if not better than, children with heterosexual mothers. The second wave of research gradually focused on children conceived within lesbian headed families. Initially comparing functioning within planned two-parent lesbian headed households with heterosexual families (Patterson, 1995; Chan, Brooks, Raboy & Patterson, 1998; Golombok, Tasker & Murray, 1997; Gartrell et al, 1999; 2000; 2010; Johnson and O' Connor, 2002; Chan et al, 1998), the studies moved on to focus on adolescents raised from birth in planned lesbian-headed families (Bos, Van Balen & Van den Boom, 2007; Bos, Gartrell, Peyser & Van Balen, 2008; Wainright, Russel & Patterson, 2004; Wainright & Patterson, 2006; 2008; Van Gelderen, Gartrell & Bos, 2009). Three decades of research reveal consistent patterns in which 'lesbian mothers appear to be as or more effective than heterosexual parents' (2012: 47). The third wave of research ceases to take the heterosexual family as the norm, instead focusing on concerns inherent in the lesbian relationship and family. The majority of this research has been criticised for its focus on white, middle class lesbians and their families. Mignon (2011) and Rodríguez (2014) are two of the few studies which focus on the concerns and challenges of black lesbians of colour and chicana communities.

South African research on queer families, reproductive decision-making and parenting can be grouped into three main areas, notably, same sex marriage as family-making; queer parenthood and parenting; and finally reproductive decision-making of queer people (Morison et al, forthcoming). Potgieter's (2003) study was the first academic study in South Africa which specifically addressed issues pertaining to black lesbians, and the central role that motherhood played in their identities. A number of studies exploring lesbian women's identities of motherhood, parenting practices and experiences of doing families emerged in the wake of policy reform supportive of LGBTI reproductive and family rights (Distiller, 2013; Lubbe, 2007; 2008; Lubbe & Kruger, 2012; van Ewyk & Kruger, 2016). Qambela

(forthcoming) provides ground breaking analysis of family practices and kinship for rural-based lesbian women.

In addition, reproductive decision- making and lesbians' pathways to motherhood form the focus of a handful of studies (Donaldson & Wilbraham, 2013; Lubbe-de Beer, 2013; Swain, 2010; Swain & Frizelle, 2013). Scott (forthcoming) discusses the differences and similarities on notions of kinship, meanings of family and parental practices between lesbian couples who come into the relationship with children conceived in previous heterosexual relationships and lesbian couples who plan and conceive of children within their lesbian family. Mavhandu-Mudzusi (forthcoming), focusing on the previously neglected research area of LGBTI people in rural areas, highlights how parenthood was considered as a survival strategy in order to pass as heterosexual. This finding mirrors how central the expectation of motherhood as a defining feature of black femininity is on black lesbians which was highlighted in Potgieter (2003). The media and the law, as important arenas of creating public discourse on LGBTI parenting also came under investigation (Breshears & le Roux, 2013; Morison & Reddy, 2013; Sanger & Sanger, 2013).

2.4.4. Revisiting notions of Cape Town as home to LGBTI communities[8]

Cape Town has often been represented as the gay capital of South Africa, home to the LGBTI community of the country and even continent (Elder, 2004; Rink, 2013; Tucker, 2009a; Visser, 2003; 2010). Historically seen to be a sexually liberal city (Chetty, 1994; Gevisser & Cameron, 1994; Leap, 2004), this notion of Cape Town as the liberal gay capital, has been strengthened and actively promoted since the advent of the democratic dispensation in 1994 (Leap, 2004; Tucker, 2009a). However, as Tucker (2009a) argues, it is clear that there is a stark disparity between the popular representation of Cape Town as 'home' to LGBTI communities, and the everyday reality for most of the LGBTI people who live there. The disparity between representation and experience is located in lesbian, black and working class LGBTI communities' experiences and perceptions of Cape Town.

[8] Appendix One contains a map and some commentary on a map of Cape Town.

Considering lesbians' experiences of everyday space in Cape Town, it is a well-rehearsed argument that the ability to exercise one's sexuality free from stigma, discrimination, and violence is experienced unevenly across Cape Town, troubling the notion of a gay friendly, welcoming city for all. As Leap (2004) notes, sexuality can be mapped on to geographical landscapes, a geography which is racialised and classed. Poverty, unemployment and poor public services such as housing, education and health continue to be daily realities for the black and coloured working class communities on the Cape Flats, situated at least 15km away from the city. On the other hand, predominantly white middle class people continue to dominate the more well-resourced and serviced areas in the inner city, city bowl and suburbs, occupying higher status and well paid jobs. There is a common perception (and reality) that the City of Cape Town works for the economically powerful, predominantly white elite. As Tucker (2009a) notes, racial tensions and gross and enduring social, cultural and economic inequalities continue to define the city and lesbian communities.

These racial and class divisions and inequalities, along with the corresponding hegemonic culture of whiteness, cloak the city like its fog in winter. Seen to be synonymous with white liberalism, ethnocentrism and racism, a little Europe on the tip of Africa, another dominant public discourse constructs Cape Town as a site of rampant racism, social division and discrimination. In spite of Cape Town being one of the wealthiest municipalities, stark social and economic inequalities and cultural divides bear witness to the legacies of Apartheid, and two decades after the birth of the 'new' South Africa, Cape Town's contemporary urban landscape remains a physical testament to the Apartheid fractures of race and class (Salo et al, 2010).

Commonly held imaginaries position the well serviced, affluent, historically white inner city, city bowl and suburbs as being more tolerant and accepting of sexual and gender diversity. On the other hand, the less resourced and underserviced outlying communities, townships and informal settlements of the Cape Flats have become synonymous in the public imaginary with discrimination, violence and hate crimes (Leap, 2005 Salo et al, 2010; Sanger, 2013). This dominant narrative can be represented through the binary of black zones of danger/white zones of safety and tolerance (Judge, 2015). These uneven racialised spatial experiences impact on the ability of white, middle class (lesser so) and black and coloured lesbians to symbolically call Cape Town home.

Within these 'white zones of safety and tolerance' (Judge, 2015), their privileged race and class position created the conditions for white, middle class gay men to claim and assert their identity through consumption practices of leisure and gay tourism, consolidating a 'gay village' situated in de Waterkant and Green Point, suburbs adjacent to the city centre (Rink, 2013; Tucker, 2009a; Visser, 2010). Represented as the space of LGBTI home and safety, these spaces of consumption are marred by practices of racial, class and gender based discrimination and exclusion within the LGBTI community, mirroring general societal trends (Elder, 2004; Leap, 2005; Tucker, 2009b). This exclusion from the site of the gay village, impacts on both white and black lesbians' ability to feel at home in it.

The Apartheid legacy is evidenced in the spatially and geographically divided lesbian and gay 'scenes', fragmented along class and racial lines. There have contributed to the productions of differing sexual cultures amongst racial and class groupings, and I would argue differing political and other interests.

Considering contemporary sexual and gendered discourses within South Africa, it has been argued that the advent of the new South Africa, a racial democracy which enshrined LGBTI rights in the constitution, saw the birth of a more inclusive public discourse, a 'rainbow nation' with a 'rainbow mentality'. LGBTI rights became a sign of the democratic values of the 'new' nation - a symbol of South Africa's democratic modernity (Munro, 2012). However, de Robillard (2016) notes how post-Apartheid South Africa has become as defined by an ever increasing public discourse of the rape and murder of black lesbians as it is for the 'rainbow nation' myths. Analysts have argued that the 'the black lesbian' gets brought into view through discourses of victimisation and violence (Judge, 2015; Matebeni, 2014; Lewis, 2011). Similarly, de Robillard (2016) notes that the figure of the 'black lesbian' has been 'staged as a traumatised victim' within national symbolism.

Moreau (2013) argues that this 'gap' between an enabling legal and policy framework and everyday life experiences is a discourse that normalises violence against black lesbians. There is a hypervisibilisation and spectacularisation of violence enacted on black lesbian bodies, predominantly in the media, but also in international and national academic and activist discourses. These discourses have the effect of promoting an association of black lesbian desire with danger, death and victimisation – and therefore of making invisible the

full dimension of black lesbians embodied subjectivities (Boonzaier & Zway, 2015; Judge, 2015; Matebeni, 2013b; 2014; Morrissey, 2013; Swarr, 2012).

This focus on black lesbian violation and oppression, foregrounding how they die rather than how they live, negates and invisibilises the agency of black lesbians (Boonzaier & Zway, 2015; Morrissey, 2013; Swarr, 2012; Moreau, 2013). It negates their everyday lives of managing safety; enactments of desire, falling in love and forming relationships; experiences of solidarity and political organisation; as well as their experiences of acceptance and love within their families and communities (Holland-Muter, 2013; Matebeni, 2013a; Matebeni, forthcoming; Moreau, 2013).

Another dominant narrative is one of lesbian 'invisibility', whereby lesbians are not seen to occupy public space generally or frequent LGBTI 'scene' spaces and are not part of the imaginary of Cape Town LGBTI communities (Leap, 2005; Oswin, 2005; Rink, 2013; Visser, 2010).

Thus it is clear that the legal victories for gays and lesbians have not fully addressed the underlying causes of discrimination and subordination in South Africa. South Africa more generally, and Cape Town specifically, continues to be characterised by deeply rooted patriarchal heteronormativities (Reid & Dirsuweit 2002; Nel & Judge, 2008; Gontek, 2009). This ultimately has the contradictory effect of simultaneous legal recognition whereby LGBTI people are 'written into citizenship' through the South African constitution, while also 'excluded from belonging' (Van Zyl, 2009 cited in de Robillard (2016: 21).

This paints a context in which lesbians navigate dominant narratives which foreground lesbians as invisible, and victims within black zones of danger/white zones of safety and tolerance (Judge, 2015). Thus, Cape Town, as the symbolic 'home' to lesbian communities, and lesbians' experiences of their actual homes (in their communities and houses), reveal multiple and contradictory experiences of safety and danger and of presence and absence (Moran & Skeggs et al, 2004:85).

2.5. CONCLUSION

Within this chapter, I have outlined and critiqued queer theory and Berlant & Warner's (1998) concept of QWM due to their singular focus on the operation of the

heterosexual/homosexual binary. I outlined the dimensions of my adapted and extended conceptualisation of queer world making. Within this African based and informed queer analytical approach, queer world making will not only focus on the operation of the heterosexual/homosexual binary, but will consider counter narratives to normativities as they are experienced, enforced and resisted along multiple and shifting axes of the matrix of domination (Hill Collins, 1990). From this perspective, it is clear that intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1999; Hill Collins, 1990) is a cornerstone of the epistemological perspective adopted within the thesis. It is one which employs a deconstructionist (Derrida, 1978) analytical technique, while recognising strategic essentialisms (Spivak, 1988) in which concepts of group identity can be used provisionally at the level of praxis and for particular analytical requirements. There is no *a priori* content to the category lesbian, but the exact formulation of this term, its meanings, and implications are constructed in the everyday reality of people's daily lives within a specific socio-political temporal moment and context. This is informed by a politics of embodied performance as a critical praxis (Johnson, 2001: 6). QWM ultimately speaks to constructions of belonging and the politics of belonging.

Finally, I explored the three socialities which will inform the site of analysis and construction of queer world making in Cape Town. These were structured around a discussion of key flashpoints of gender and sexuality contestions, read through the production of a number of dominant and counter narratives.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will consider the methods chosen to carry out the study, the main characteristics of the sample, as well as the data collection and analysis processes. Ethical considerations will also be explored, as well as some of the limitations of the study.

3.1 THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The thesis is an exploratory study which aims to examine the different modes and meanings of queer world making of lesbians in Cape Town. My research questions and subject areas, which are complex, delicate (often intangible) and sensitive, required a qualitative approach. Research located within a quantitative approach forms around assumptions about interpretation and human action, aiming to understand rather than predict and control (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Denzin & Lincoln (2011:3) describe a qualitative approach as:

> *A set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to self … qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them.*

This approach was particularly apt because the focus of my exploratory inquiry was to elicit rich, in-depth knowledge about the modes and meanings of QWM in a number of defined (and linked) socialities from a select number of participants. Queer world making as a phenomenon has not been studied in Cape Town (or in South Africa) and so the open and generative nature of qualitative methods were particularly suitable for the exploration of such issues without a preconceived formula of their construction or meaning (Ritchie et al, 2014). The information gleaned from this approach allows for a deepening of the knowledge of queer world making in the Cape Town context, and contributes to an exploration of this concept, its extension and application.

A qualitative approach was not only suitable but advisable considering that the research questions and subject areas under investigation were located within the participants' personal knowledge of their daily lives as well as their understandings of themselves. Specifically, their representations of coming into a lesbian subjectivity and of their sexual practices through the lens of sexual pleasure; their representations of their experiences of motherhood, as well as the participants' stories of constructing home and embodiments of homeplace (hooks, 1990) all demonstrate their negotiations with a series of interlocking dominant belief systems founded on gender, sexuality, race and class, culminating in representations of their own values and beliefs systems and their everyday practices. A qualitative approach allowed me to make sense of their narratives through a number of socialities, in order to analyse and represent the multiple, and at times shifting, meanings which they attribute to their stories. Notably, the study aimed to analyse participants' narratives in order to explore the modes and meanings of QWM in order to examine how or if these were complicit with or countered the hegemonic normativities of racialised and classed heteronormativities in different social spaces in Cape Town.

The qualitative study was carried out within a narrative approach (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Squires, Andrews & Tamboukou, 2008) as I believed it was suitable to access the stories of people's lives and their experiences. Connelly & Clandinin (2006: 375) define narrative inquiry as follows:

> *People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and […] they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters a world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon.*

I chose to adopt a narrative inquiry approach to explore lesbians' perceptions and experiences of living in Cape Town because it is an open, flexible approach which allowed me to explore their storied experiences and personal life histories. Squire (2008:42) notes that an experience-centred narrative approach assumes that narratives are 'sequential and

meaningful', noting that these may be event narratives, but may also be 'flexible about time and personal experience, defined by theme rather than structure'. She notes that experience centred narratives are 'the means of human sense-making' (2008: 43). In this way, they are 'deeply social' (2008: 44) because they involve both speakers and audience, and because story telling constitutes and maintains sociality (Denzin, 1989 cited in Squire, 2008). This approach assumes that narrative involves a reconstruction of stories across time and places, thus re-presenting experience, reconstituting it, as well as expressing it. Finally, this approach requires the researcher to examine the social and cultural character of personal narratives, mapping out their relationship to broader societal and cultural discourses. Narrative inquiry lends itself to exploring 'different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, allowing the researcher to bring them into dialogue with each other. In this way, it is also possible to deepen one's understanding about individual and social change' (Squires, Andrews & Tamboukou, 2008: 1). This ably lends itself to explore QWM through surfacing contested meanings and practices within a politics of belonging in the arena of a racialised and classed gender and sexual politics in Cape Town.

Bearing in mind that my focus of study was to explore QWM, a concept which aims to explore a range of resistant subjectivities, practices and the politics of social change in the arenas of sexuality and gender, I was specifically interested in exploring the phenomenon of counter-narratives, the 'stories which people tell and live which offer resistance, either implicitly or explicitly, to dominant cultural narratives' (Andrews, 2004: 2). Plummer (2001), notes the trend towards 'intimate disclosure narratives', where story telling of the less powerful operate as bids for representation and power from the oppressed and exploited (Plummer, 2001 cited in Squires et al, 2008). Similarly, Scott (1991) shares how a common strategy of oppressed groupings like women, black people, LGBTI communities and so on, is 'to make visible their experience, providing evidence of a world of alternative values and practices' (Scott, 1991:26), in this way challenging hegemonic constructions of social worlds.

Considering the focus and scope of counter narratives within narrative analysis, this methodological approach was pertinent. However, it is important to bear in mind that counter-narratives only make sense in relation to dominant narratives, revealing that it is a positional category, in tension with that which it is countering (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). In addition, it was important to be cognisant that what is dominant (and what is resistant)

are not static, but revealed within particular contexts, relationships and moments in time. Thus, time (both calendar time and generational narratives) and contingency become important threads to be analysed (see later in discussion of time, place and sociality as key dimensions of narrative analysis).

Dominant narratives offer a way of identifying normative discourses and tropes. When people's own experiences do not reflect that of the master narrative(s), Andrews (2004) argues they come to question the foundation of the dominant perspective. The challenge becomes to understand how people make sense of themselves and their lives, through the stories they tell, finding meaning outside of the 'emplotments' ordinarily available (Andrews, 2004). These reveal stories from the margin from members of 'outgroups' which reveal a 'counter-reality' (Delgado, 1995 cited in Andrews, 2004). In this way, counter-narrative might be experienced and/or articulated individually, which corresponds to individual queer life worlds (Buckland, 2002), but still can be considered to have common meanings (Andrews, 2004), contributing towards a more collective queer world making (Berlant & Warner, 1998). Analyses of counter-narratives foreground a concern with positionality in terms of how narrators position themselves in the stories they tell, the inside/outside dynamics which they reveal and questions of audience (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). These counter-narratives became, for purposes of this thesis, evidence and performances of queer life worlds and queer world making in Cape Town.

However, a close reading of the narratives of the lesbians did not only explore and analyse the counter-narratives revealed through their contestations of the range of dominant narratives which shape and structure their lives. It also considered narratives of their complicities, and the, at times, contradictory positions which they occupied. Analysis of their narratives therefore revealed their engagements and navigations of dominant narratives, revealing the work of constructing their queer life worlds through the ways in which these available meanings are 'taken up, resisted and (re)negotiated' (Taylor & Littleton, 2006, cited in Morison & Macleod, 2013: 571). In this way, their narrative positioning proposed 'an active meaning maker who re/cites as well as performs and transforms available discourses' (Peterson & Langellier, 2006 cited in Morison and Macleod, 2013: 571). In addition, the focus on inside/outside dynamics of an analysis of counter narratives was particularly pertinent for an exploration of the politics of belonging (Yuval Davis, 2006).

3.2 Maintaining a focus on 'lesbian' in queer world making processes

My thesis is concerned with lesbians' experiences of everyday life in Cape Town and their modes and meanings attached to queer world making. It could be asked why am I employing the category 'lesbian' when exploring 'queer' world making? In a similar fashion to Halberstam who embraces categorisation as a way of 'creating places for acts, identities and modes of being which otherwise remain unnameable' in his interview with Jagose (1999, paragraph 7), I argue that the positionality of 'lesbian' offers a potent site from which to interrogate the social, cultural and political interlocutions of gender and sexuality (Wilton, 1995). In other words, there are gender and sexuality specificities to lesbian experiences that are lost by a more generic focus on queer, or on LGBTI as an umbrella term. Lesbians suffer particular experiences of 'marginalisation, inclusion, differences and othering in their navigations of space/place, as well as produce specific sexual and gendered cultures and artefacts' (Browne & Ferreira, 2015:1). Due to their social, cultural and political positionalities as women, whether cis-gendered or transwomen, lesbians have a different relationship to sexual identity, sexual pleasure and desire than trans men, gay and/or queer identified men.

Considering analyses of lesbian navigations of normativities in space and place, feminist geographies have often been heteronormative, assuming a white heterosexual woman; whereas geographies of sexualities have, until recently, (implicitly) assumed white, middle class gay men's experiences as the norm in analyses of urban space. In studies of queer space in the global North (particularly USA, England and Australia), this has led to an over investment in 'visibility', a narrow focus on permanent occupation of territories (through establishment of gay villages or leisure spaces, for example), and a spotlight on singular identities (i.e. gay identities). This erases accounts of how lesbians appropriate and use space (Browne & Ferreira, 2015). For example, moving beyond a singular focus on public space, Podmore (2001) and Peace (2001) argue that lesbians make themselves known to each other differently to gay men, and argue for the need to (re)integrate the domestic sphere into interpretations of urban space, in lieu of a sole focus on public space (Browne et al, 2005: 7). This approach will reveal a multiplicity of different identities, modes and sites of interaction and social relationships within a neighbourhood or city. Thus, instead of concentrating on residential clusters (of queer living) and commercial premises (of queer

socialising), they propose that geographies of lesbian space should consider women's social networks and their daily navigation of everyday urban space (Browne & Ferreira, 2015). My use of the category of 'lesbian' in the project of queer world making will highlight the specificity of how lesbians navigate everyday space and place in Cape Town.

Considering the participants' appropriation of the category queer, it is worth noting that very few of the participants in my study identified themselves as queer, on the whole preferring to self-identify as lesbian or as gay women. At times they asserted other categories of identity, such as being human, their race or their class. Only four participants specifically stated they self-identified as queer and used queer in their discussions of LGBTI communities in Cape Town and South Africa. Queer as a category, both analytically/theoretically and politically is making tenuous inroads into the everyday lexicon in Cape Town, but it is very localised to particular sites (some universities) and networks (cultural performers, gender non-conforming communities, gender non-binaried people). Milani (2014) argues that researchers working in the field of sexuality studies display an uneven uptake of queer theory and its propositions. Some researchers in South Africa (Gunkel, 2010; Livermon, 2012; Matebeni & Msibi, 2015; Milani, 2014; Morison, Lynch & Reddy, forthcoming; Tucker, 2009a; Rink, 2013; Van Zyl & Steyn, 2005), and within Africa more generally (including Ekine & Abbas, 2013; Musangi, 2014; Nyanzi, 2014) reveal a 'queer turn', while at the same time queering/troubling queer from a global south, specifically an African perspective.

Matebeni & Pereira (2014) call for an 'Afrikan' uptake of queer. They explain their particular take on Queer in the continent in the following manner:

> *[…] the need to reclaim our existence and being in this continent. As sexual and gender non-conforming or queer persons, we have been alienated in Africa. We have been stripped of our belonging and our connectedness. For these reasons, we have created our own version of Afrika – a space that cuts across rigid borders and boundaries that have for so many years made us feel disconnected and fractured. … We break borders – we share a sense of kinship – a belonging to a struggle for freedom and social justice. We are, in many ways, queer in the queer sense of the term. (Matebeni & Pereira, 2014:7).*

This is not a wholly shared sentiment, however, with some academic authors cautioning against adopting an English word, with connotations of whiteness and middle class privilege, that lacks broad based currency among black South Africans (Pakade, 2013 cited in Milani, 2014). Pakade's (2013) study of identity labels of same sex practising women in Soweto revealed that *isitabane*, township slang for gender non-conforming (Pakade, 2013), and lesbian were the most popular identity labels, while queer was the least used term. What is clear is that there is a range of theoretical and political uptake and appreciation of queer as an 'identity' label in Cape Town and South Africa.

For the purpose of this thesis, lesbian is an identifier which has been used in conjunction with and alongside queer. My use of queer refers to a theoretical perspective as non-normative (Halperin, 1995), as well as an analytical approach (Epprecht, 2008). It has not been used in the sense of queer as an identity label. The use of lesbian or gay woman is to highlight the positionality of a lesbian identity, which speaks to participants' imbrication in particular networks of power, and to reflect on the specificities of that identity label. In this sense, my employment of lesbian is as both a category of knowledge and a social positionality from which to explore embodied subjectivities.

Having said this, I do, however, recognise that lesbians are not a homogenous category. A lesbian positionality needs to be explored in relation to how it is interwoven with the social relations of gender, race and class (Bennett & Reddy, 2007; Browne & Ferreira, 2015; Gqola, 2005). In this way, I am cognisant that one's experiences of being a lesbian will depend on one's age, including at what point in one's life cycle one began to enact and embody a lesbian identity; one's race and class; one's lesbian gender identity and/or gender performance; physical and mental abilities; health status; geographical location; religious affiliation, and so on. All of these other social markers will contribute to one's life experiences as a lesbian. Specifically they will mark a lesbian's relationship to power, and the opportunities, privileges and exclusions, discrimination and violence one may experience depending on one's intersectional location(s) within the matrix of sociality in Cape Town at any given time. In this way, I am cognisant that a lesbian identity or performing a lesbian sexuality is constructed within particular social relations, in particular moments in time and in particular contexts i.e. the category is fluid, spatial and temporal (Browne & Ferreira, 2015).

For the purposes of the thesis, it is useful and pertinent to use the term *queer* world making, even for people who self-identified as lesbian or gay women, because I am referring to modes and processes of world making based on participants' display and practices of non-normativities, in particular their processes of resisting, transgressing, subverting and/or being complicit with dominant notions of racialised and classed womanhood and heteronormativity. These will be influenced by their specific positionalities as raced, classed and gendered lesbians in Cape Town.

3.3 SAMPLING STRATEGY AND SAMPLE OF PARTICIPANTS

As stated above, the study includes people who self-identified as queer, lesbian or as gay women, or people who were involved in same sex sexual relationships with women in the study. The participants had to have lived in Cape Town for three or more years. Three years is long enough to have established some kind of network and relationship with the city. Noting that extensive migration happens between particularly the Eastern Cape, but also other regions, to Cape Town, I knew that I would encounter a large number of people who were not born in Cape Town. They all had particular stories to tell.

I wanted to ensure a range in age among participants in order to ensure that the stories of lesbians living in Cape Town from before and after the end of official Apartheid would be captured. My assumption was that generational differences might emerge due to changes in the legislative and policy frameworks before and after 1994 (the first year that South Africa enjoyed one person one vote) and 1996 (the year that South Africa adopted its new Constitution).

The dominant public discourse in Cape Town in relation to (particularly black) lesbians is one of violence and victimisation. For this reason, I decided to interview black lesbians who live in townships in two focus groups. The group setting of a focus group with black lesbians (who are discursively framed as victims of violence and discrimination) who live in townships (associated and framed as spaces of danger) would allow for the surfacing of consensus, tensions and contradictions in relation to this dominant narrative. On the other hand, for the in-depth interviews, I wanted to ensure a spread of participants who identified with a number of different racial identities and religious affiliations, noting how the politics of sexuality and gender played out so differently within and amongst different cultures and

racial communities. I used a different sampling strategy for focus group participants and for participants who participated in in-depth interviews.

I accessed participants for two focus groups, one in Khayelitsha and one in Gugulethu, through the help of gatekeepers that I identified through my own social networks from these areas. The gatekeepers each formed the centre of a number of social networks and suggested a number of possible research participants who lived within Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and surrounding townships. I then contacted their referrals via cell phone and explained who I was, the aims and scope of the research project and its process and asked if they would be willing to be involved. I asked some of them to invite a friend to come with them to the focus group.

The focus group participants' ages ranged from 18 – 36 among nine participants in focus group one, and 23 – 32 among eight participants in focus group two. They were all black African lesbians living in a range of townships in Cape Town. Some self-identified as butch or femme, whereas others refused these gendered categories. Nine of the 17 participants were employed. Not everybody specified their job however those that did included mechanic, technical coach and hairdresser. Four participants were unemployed. Two were studying at tertiary level, while two were completing their final year of high school.

For the in-depth interviews, I employed a combination of purposive sampling (Mason, 2002) in key communities selected on the basis of 'symbolic representation', on the assumption that each participant or groups of participants have characteristics that are 'known' or expected to be important or interesting for the sample and study. I purposively sampled for people with varying racial identifications, class positionalities, lesbian gender identities, cis and trans gender identities, variations in age, religious affiliations, and people with different physical abilities and health statuses. In addition to purposive sampling, I also adopted a limited '*qongqothwane* technique' (Van Zyl, 2015)[9] and chain sampling technique (Ritchie, Lewis, Elam, Tennant & Rahim, 2014).

[9] This term coined by Van Zyl (2015) called the '*qongqothwane*' technique, refers to the dung beetle rolling and collecting dung into a ball. This is an adaptation of the term 'snowballing' from the snowballing technique as this term is more appropriate for the South African context and Cape Town

In addition to purposive sampling, I sent out an email to my extensive social networks with a 'call to participate' in the research, with follow up phone calls to a large number of them. I put out notices on social media platforms such as a number of Facebook groups, notably Cape Town Lesbians (with a membership of more than 7 400 lesbians), Lettie Lounge, and Older, Wiser Lesbians (OWL). Across all platforms I asked people to send the 'call to participate' on to their networks. I also attended a number of LGBTI events in the social and political calendar of Cape Town's lesbian 'scene', including Khumbulani ('Remember') Pride in Gugulethu and Nyanga in 2013; Make it Sexy (MISS) parties; Not the Official Pink Party,[10] and targeted a range of club owners, speaking about the research and sending out invitations and/or inviting possible participants.

A total of 23 participants took part in the in-depth interviews, ranging in age from 23 to 63. On the whole, these participants reflected the diversity of Cape Town's demographics, with nine coloured, seven white, six black participants and one foreign born Asian participant. Two other participants were also born outside of South Africa, self-identifying as white (from Zimbabwe) and black (from Angola) respectively. There was one transgender participant, one participant living with HIV and one participant who used a wheel chair.

The participants could be categorised as lower middle class or middle class, with all but one having completed Grade 12, the final year of high school. Two black participants, Bella and Sandiswa, moved in and out of employment during the course of the study. Because Bella owned her house, received sporadic financial support from the children's fathers, as well as from her relatives and partner, she had some level of residential stability. Sandiswa, however, had to return home to the Eastern Cape after resigning from her job as a receptionist. When she returned to Cape Town at a later date, she supported herself via stipends provided by her volunteer positions, and moved between living in relatives' shacks, with her partner, and then subsequently her own shack.

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climate. In a similar fashion to the snowball technique, the '*qongqothwane* technique' refers to the process of being referred on to participants' networks. This term is preferable to snowball 'because we rarely get enough snow here to roll into balls!' (Van Zyl, 2015: 117).

[10] MISS parties and Not the Official Pink Party are monthly socials organised by different lesbian couples who attract quite different racial and class constituencies, and different social networks.

Considering how strongly religion influences public discourse and practice in Cape Town, I was interested in ensuring that there were some participants who considered religion an important part of their identity. All of the participants in some way or another were influenced by religion, but it assumed varying degrees of centrality in their lives. There were five lesbians who identified as, or who grew up in Muslim households; 16 lesbians who grew up in Christian households or who identified as Christians (these included lesbians who also subscribed to traditional African religious beliefs); one who identified as (culturally) Jewish[11], as well as atheists. Two participants had grown up in homes where their parents had different religions – both from combined Muslim and Christian households. One participant converted to Islam as an adult and was raising her children within the Muslim faith. None of the participants strictly followed the tenets of their religious faiths.

Eight of the participants were mothers. Two of the participants conceived their children while in lesbian relationships. The remaining mothers conceived their children while in previous heterosexual relationships and/or marriages with men.

In total, the study had 40 participants. Their demographic details and descriptors can be found in Appendix Two.

3.4 Data collection methods

Two principle data collection methods were chosen: focus groups and in-depth interviews.

Two focus groups were conducted, one in Khayelitsha and one in Gugulethu. Focus groups allow the researcher to gather data on a series of questions and attitudes to a particular research question within a group setting. Focus groups are particularly useful when the researcher aims to glean insights provided by the group process itself, namely the interaction between participants and the different ways in which they engage with the research questions (Lewis & McNaughton Nicholls, 2014). The focus group as a data collection method was particularly suitable as my aim was to explore how lesbians re-

[11] The participant did not follow the Jewish faith, but had grown up in a Jewish household, and followed some cultural rituals and traditions, and therefore referred to themselves as 'culturally Jewish'.

inscribe, thereby becoming complicit with, and/or counter the dominant narrative associating black lesbians with a narrow and single dimension of victimisation and discrimination. The discussion aimed to create a context in which the participants could engage with these and other ideas about being a lesbian in Cape Town, and about performing lesbian sexualities within townships and other spaces. The focus groups would allow for the display of differences and similarities between participants, and create the opportunity for differences to be discussed (Lewis & McNaughton Nicholls, 2014).

The date, time and venue were decided between me and each respective gatekeeper from Gugulethu and Khayelitsha. Both focus groups took place in Gugulethu - the first in one of the participant's homes, and the second in a commercial venue when it was closed to the public. Both took place on a Saturday afternoon - under the assumption that people would have more free time after having finished chores, shopping and/or errands, and that there was still some form of transport running in the area.

Each focus group followed a similar procedure: I introduced myself and presented the research project again. I handed out information sheets and consent forms. After explaining the consent forms and its implications, I requested them to sign the forms if in agreement. Each focus group was recorded using a digital recorder, after permission was sought to do so. I stressed that the proceedings of the focus group would be confidential and a pact of confidentiality was made within the group as well. I informed the group that they could leave the focus group at any point they wished, that there were no right and wrong answers, and solicited a code of conduct of respect for each other's view points in the group. I then facilitated a group discussion, based on the guidelines for the discussion (see Appendix Three for the consent form and focus group guideline). The focus groups were mostly conducted in English, although when people became particularly emotional about an issue they began speaking isiXhosa. My lack of isiXhosa was overcome by a volunteer from the group doing consecutive interpretation, or a person sitting next to me interpreting simultaneously in my ear and the discussion continued unabated. In this way, I did not 'miss out' on any of the interventions, and could still direct and guide the conversation as and when required. I tried to ensure that no one person dominated the group, although in both focus groups this often proved quite difficult. I asked questions and guided the discussion

around the areas that I wanted us to concentrate on, but also allowed the groups to take the discussion where it wanted to go.

There were some clear tensions within both focus groups. In the first focus group held in a participant's home, these tensions played out along the lines of butch/femme gender identities, and also between older and younger lesbians. The first focus group began with a small group of five (mostly butch) lesbians. During a discussion on homophobic violence, they had begun to open up and express their vulnerability in the face of potential and actual experiences of violence in the public sphere. After about 20 minutes, a group of four (mostly femme) lesbians joined the group. This immediately changed the atmosphere, and resulted in a noticeable shift in gender performances from the butch lesbians. Three of them immediately assumed postures of bravado and enhanced masculinity in relation to their management and experiences of public violence, for example, shutting down their previous displays of vulnerability and fear.

The participants proceeded to ventilate and perform the well-rehearsed debates and divisions between and about butch and femme lesbians as well as inter-generational differences in navigating public heteronormativities. These notably centred on blaming discourses, whereby younger, butch lesbians were held responsible for the violence meted out to them on the township streets and leisure spaces. My role within these processes was to promote discussion to ventilate the debates, while also mediating the discussion in such a way as to not violate any particular member's wellbeing, and to 'protect' from possible persecution from the group.

Near the end of the focus group, the discussion moved into some interesting 'diversions' from the focus group discussion guide, veering into sexual practice, sexual pleasure and lesbian gender identities. This was understandable noting how strong the gendered dynamic had become in the group and how the two groupings seemed to play and perform for each other.

These shifts and flows revealed how power circulated in the group, both in terms of 'refusals' to continue discussions around violence and discrimination, for example, and to move it into other areas considered more interesting and exciting, such as the gendered dynamics of sexual pleasure and intimacy. These revealed representations and embodied

performances of place specific gendered and racialised norms and discourses (Johnson, 2001). The gendered performances and dynamic between butch and femme participants in relation to violence and safety was not totally unexpected, as these are well-rehearsed dynamics within communities. However, their agentic diversion into discussions of sexual practice and sexual pleasure was more unexpected for me, considering that the focus group aimed to centre experiences of violence and safety in the township. I decided to 'let' the discussion move in that direction considering that these issues were part of the broader research focus of the project, even though not originally contemplated for this focus group discussion. This shift revealed how power circulated in the group with the participants' refusal to continue discussing violence and discrimination, choosing to move discussion to more 'exciting' discussions of sex and pleasure. In hindsight, however, I realised this was something that I could have foreseen noting that sexual play and tension generally underlies interactions between butch and femme groupings in workshop settings. However, I would not separate femme and butch lesbians in future focus groups, as these dynamics underscore the very issues under discussion – the sexualised and gendered dynamics of violence, and its linkages to desire, gender and sexuality.

The second focus group took place in a tavern in Gugulethu. Although it was closed, they did sell alcohol to the participants. Two of the participants began to drink during the discussion, eventually becoming increasingly drunk and incoherent. I believe that racialisation influenced everyone's reactions to the presence of alcohol and this display of drunkenness. I was uncomfortable with the participants drinking. However, noting the privilege and power imbricated in my position as researcher, and my social position of power as a middle class white woman, I did not want to be perceived as abusing this position and to be seen to act like a 'white madam' imposing her will on the group by asking people not to drink during the focus group. The other participants were initially uncomfortable and then increasingly irritated. They could have been irritated with me due to my inaction, and with the participants who drank to the point of drunkenness. They eventually intervened and reprimanded the two participants for their behaviour. I suspect they might not have done so earlier out of respect for me, being the one ostensibly 'in charge'. They were quite likely reticent to act as well because I am a white middle class woman. However, this did not last, and they soon began to tell the two women not to talk, or to ignore them if they spoke 'off

topic' or went on for too long. At times, there was a degree of embarrassment all around. In hindsight, I should have asked people to refrain from drinking until after the focus group. It was nervousness and inexperience that led me to take these decisions and I would not make similar choices now. In spite of these 'difficulties', the group had a wide ranging and intimate discussion around their perceptions and experiences of navigating Cape Town as black lesbians.

Different to the sharp gendered and age dynamics that had characterised the first group, the second focus group was characterised by differences in power and dynamics related to age and class. A number of participants were unemployed, whereas others held managerial positions, or occupied relatively well-paid jobs. Discussions revealed how middle class black lesbians have negative perceptions and discriminate against poorer, working class black lesbians. Middle class lesbians' resources, such as owning one's own house, or having the money to host parties, increased their ability to manage and navigate heteronormative surveillance and regulation. They did not always invite working class lesbians to these gatherings, or else charged entry fees, which excluded those who did not have financial resources. Middle class lesbians could also negotiate their entry into taverns with greater ease, allowing greater control of their environment and to ameliorate the effects of violence and discrimination. Interestingly, it was middle class lesbians who finally intervened and controlled the actions of the two working class lesbians who were drinking during the discussion. These dynamics bring Hill Collins' (1990) matrix of domination to life, revealing how researcher and participants move in and out of positions of privilege and penalty.

The two focus groups revealed the group dynamics, social interactions and social relations within which the focus groups were submerged (Ryan et al, 2014). The participants' active involvement and dialogue, their exploration of shared or contradictory opinions, beliefs and experiences contributed to what Ryan et al (2014) refers to as collective sense making, surfacing the specificities and complexities of black lesbians' queer life worlds in Cape Town. Each focus group exceeded the 90 minutes I had planned for its duration, extending to about two hours each. After each focus group, the participants were invited to eat and drink from refreshments provided.

In-depth interviews were the second method chosen because they are a powerful means of constructing knowledge, which is actively created and negotiated in the interview by both the researcher and participant (Yeo et al, 2014). The co-constitutive nature of the interviews is highlighted by Gubrium & Holstein (2011:150 cited in Silverman, 2011) when they call interviews 'interactional accomplishments rather than neutral communicative grounds'.

I conducted a total of 47 interviews with 23 participants. All but one of these interviews was face to face in venues suitable for both the researcher and the participants. One interview was conducted via Skype. Each interview lasted for at least 90 minutes, with the longest lasting three hours.

There were two interview guides, each focusing on different dimensions of lesbian life in Cape Town. These interview guides, along with their attendant consent forms can be found in Appendix Four. The first, entitled subjective cityscapes, focused on everyday navigations of Cape Town, while the second focused on sexual histories and narratives of sexual pleasure and desire. I chose to begin with the subjective cityscapes, with the idea that this would allow me to establish a rapport with the participant, and then deepen the discussion to more intimate discussions of sex, desire, relationships and love in the second and any follow up interviews.

During interview one, participants were asked to draw a map of their subjective cityscape, representing their daily navigations of Cape Town (and beyond in some cases). These are similar to Lynch's (1962) mental maps which have been used as research tools to access the maps that people 'carry around in their heads based on their personal experience, knowledge and values' (Bain et al, 2014: 10). Different to the mapping of sexuality and space conducted by Leap (2005), who asked participants to map 'gay Cape Town', I was interested in using the participants' subjective cityscapes as a research tool to elicit narratives of their everyday lives in Cape Town to reveal their queer life worlds and their contributions to queer world making.

I asked participants to represent where they lived (all places they considered home); where they worked (or studied, or what they did during the day); where they went for leisure, religious and/or spiritual practices and any other daily and/or regular practices, including accessing health care etc. Some examples of their subjective cityscapes can be found in

Appendix Five. Once they had drawn their map, I asked people to talk to their map and to tell me about their perceptions and experiences of living in Cape Town. The subjective cityscapes focused on their perceptions and experiences of home and family life, navigations of racialised heteronormativities in their places of work, study, (or) unemployment, leisure as well as their emotional geographies (Davidson, Bondi & Smith, 2016) of Cape Town. These initial narratives of their subjective cityscapes, or 'map talks', formed the basis for further questioning and deepening my understanding of their everyday navigations of the city. Important in the analytical technique was to explore what discursive frames they adopted in both their 'map talks' as well as the narratives co-produced in further conversations during the interviews. This approach requires the researcher to examine their productions of narratives in relation to broader societal and cultural discourses, or dominant narratives. This will be elaborated in more detail in the section below.

The second interview began with any follow up questions of clarity or detail required from the first interview. I then elicited their sexual life histories, working with the Interview Two guideline. Participants were asked to draw a time line of their sexual relationships and I asked them to tell me the story of their sexual lives and loves. This part of the interview aimed to elicit counter narratives of coming into being as lesbian subjectivities, sexual intimacy, pleasure, desire and love, through their sexual life histories and relationships. Alongside these counter narratives of love, desire and intimacy, narratives of pain, loneliness, confusion, violence, betrayal, and despair was revealed within their sexual and emotional relationships.

All interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. The interviews took place in a venue that was suitable for both the participant and myself – including in my or the participant's home, in restaurants, in their or my office spaces, and in a public park.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data was drawn from transcriptions of the 47 interviews and two focus groups, my field notes, notes drawn from sexuality and space literature, feminist post-colonial theorists, queer theorists, lesbian and gay theorists, family studies, South African authors who touched on all and/or some of these literature areas.

The interviews were transcribed by myself and two other people who I hired for this purpose[12]. I included pauses, repetitions, stutters, as well as the tone and cadence of the speech both in the transcription as well as in the interview excerpts used and presented for the analysis. I also included the non-verbal sounds in the recording such as laughing, tears, deep breaths, hand sounds like clapping and gestures and body language that I remembered. I agree with Lapadat & Lindsay (1999, cited in Bird, 2005) that transcriptions are interpretive acts and constitute important initial steps in the interpretive and analytical process. For this reason, transcriptions are not neutral, but are themselves productions which contribute to formulate meaning and filters of experience (Bird, 2005).

The second step was to deepen my familiarity with the data. This entailed reading and re-reading through the transcripts. After the first reading I began taking notes of common issues or threads, issues to highlight within and between the interviews.

I employed a paradigmatic analytical approach in my analysis of narratives (Bruner, 1985 cited in Polkinghorne, 1995). Within this approach I 'collected stories as data and analysed them with paradigmatic or thematic processes, which resulted in descriptions of themes that hold across the stories or in taxonomies of types of stories, characters or settings' (Polkinghorne, 1995: 12). A theme is what the researcher considers as 'important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set' (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 82). A theme is therefore what the researcher considers important in relation to the overall or specific research questions.

I employed two approaches in identifying my themes. The first was an inductive approach based on a close reading of the data whereby the data was coded without trying to fix it into a pre-existing coding frame or my analytic preconceptions (although I am aware that a researcher is unable to 'free' themselves' of their theoretical, epistemological and political concerns and commitments). I acknowledge there was a degree of a deductive, top-down

[12] These people both signed confidentiality agreements to ensure the integrity of my agreements of confidentiality with the participants. In order to crosscheck the quality of the data transcribed by third parties I listened to a number of interviews while accompanying the interview transcription to ensure accuracy.

approach which also influenced my coding of the data, whereby I was interested in looking for themes and ideas based on my theoretical and analytical framework in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Polkinghorne, 1995). Within this process though, I attempted at all times to never 'see what was not there', and to not impose my desires and needs on to the data, but attempted to be guided and located within the data. In addition, I was conducting a search for both semantic and latent themes whereby semantic themes are identified within the 'explicit or surface meanings' of the data, as well as looking for and being conscious of latent themes – identifying and examining for 'underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualisations and ideologies' (Braun & Clarke, 2006:84).

Braun & Clarke's (2006) procedures and techniques to code and organise the data informed the steps that I employed in the data analysis process. This was an iterative process, and eventually led to me organising the data in the form of a thematic framework and map. I then began the process of writing up and describing some of the themes and issues, which led to a further refinement and adjustment of the thematic map. This often led me to revise the codes and thematic framework, including going back to the interview material to code for additional data within themes or areas of focus which had shifted in the reorganisation. I wrote up detailed analysis for each individual theme, also considering how it fitted into the broader overall 'story' that I was trying to construct. This led to further refinements until I had a good idea of what the different themes were, how they fit together and the overall story that I wanted the data to tell, as well as the particular narratives, stories and excerpts I wanted to highlight.

The following points are important to consider in terms of the issues that I took into account when I was doing the actual analysis, and putting my analytical approach to work. The participants' accounts and experiences of living in Cape Town were not taken at face value. As Scott (1991) argues, when meaning (of experience) is seen to be transparent, this does not allow for a critical examination of how the ideological system works. Nor does it allow the researcher to question or explore the categories of representation; question or challenge the principles and underlying assumptions about why these categories were chosen in the stories, how they operate, where they come from and why. Rather, Scott (1991) contends, it is necessary to discuss and analyse the historical processes that position subjects and produce their experiences. In this sense, in analysing processes of queer world

making and participants' experiences, lesbian 'experience is not the origin of our explanation, *but that which we want to explain'* (Scott, 1991: 37 – 38). Bearing this in mind, a deconstructionist analytical technique was employed in the analysis of lesbian narratives.

I also employed a number of strategies drawn from Morison & Macleod's (2013) performative-performance analytical approach. This included a concern for exploring 'subject positioning', particularly pertinent for considering identity through the lens of perfomed narratives[13] (Reynolds et al, 2007 cited in Morison & Macleod, 2013: 571). This is supported by a concern for 'narrative positioning', which allows the researcher to balance determinism and voluntarism, being positioned and positioning oneself through the construction and analysis of the participants' narratives. This brings into view the participants as 'active meaning makers, who re/cite as well as perform and transform available discourses' (Peterson & Langellier, 2006 cited in Morison & Macleod, 2013: 571). This analytical tool also supports the search for and analysis of dominant and counter narratives. A further notion is one of 'trouble' which refers to the difficulties that the participants might have experienced to remain consistent in their narratives or to respond to any challenges from their audience. This often results in the need for 'repair work', which includes the use of rhetoric or argumentation (Morison & Macleod, 2013).

In addition, I adopted Clandinin & Huber's (2010) three commonplaces of narrative inquiry which both specify dimensions of such inquiry and serve as a conceptual framework for analytical work. These were temporality, sociality and place. Considering temporality, Clandinin & Huber (2010:4) note that narrative inquirers need to attend to temporality of their own and participants' lives, as well as to the temporality of places, things and events. This was an important dimension for two main reasons, the changes in the legal and political conditions of living as a lesbian pre and post 1994 in South Africa, as well as changes of living

[13] Subjects are seen as 'complex composites of, on the one hand, who they create themselves as and present to the world, representing their way of "acting upon it", and on the other hand, 'who that world makes them and constrains them to be' (Taylor & Littleton, 2006: 23 cited in Morison & Macleod, 2013: 571).

as a lesbian over a person's life time, including the age at which they begin to identify with a lesbian, or non-normative, sexuality and gender.

Sociality refers to two aspects. Firstly, taking the personal conditions (feelings, hopes, desires, social positionality and political beliefs) of the researcher and participants into account in the analysis, and how these interact and influence each other. Secondly, taking into account the social conditions and context including cultural, institutional and linguistic narratives (Clandinin & Huber, 2010:4). Considering the particular form that colonial and apartheid legacies assume within LGBTI communities and where lesbians live, work and play in Cape Town and the stark disparities of wealth and equality and the consequent ability to buffer oneself from the heteronormative patriarchies, racism, poverty and unemployment which all impact on people's abilities to live a liveable life, sociality was an important dimension to consider in living as a lesbian in Cape Town.

Lastly, Clandinin & Huber (2010: 4) consider place, defined as the 'specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry and events take place. They argue that our identities and experiences are linked to particular places or in places and with the stories that we tell about these experiences. This was an extremely important dimension, considering the politics of race, class, sexuality and gender which play out particularly in Cape Town, and its unique features as a 'field' within the South African socio-economic and political landscape.

3.6 ETHICS

Both the focus groups and the interviews began with me providing a general overview of the objectives of the study, along with the various components of the research design and explaining the implications of participation in the study. Questions of clarification were elicited and answered. The participants were then asked to sign a consent form. As part of a bid to 'do no harm', participants were told that they could withdraw from the interview, and the research process, at any point, and that they could refuse to answer questions that they did not feel comfortable answering.

Confidentiality and anonymity, and power and consent were important concerns throughout the thesis. Participants were given the option of keeping their name or choosing a pseudonym to represent them in the study. Some participants chose to keep their given

name. However, during the write up of the analysis, which described intimate and personal details of people's sexuality and emotional lives, I subsequently decided to adopt pseudonyms for everybody in order to preserve their anonymity. This could be understood as me undermining the right of the participants to choose how they would be represented in the thesis. I experienced similar quandaries as outlined by Camminga (2016) of violating agreements with participants as a means to protect their confidentiality.

Interviewing friends or drawing on social networks for participants can bring assumptions of sameness, and the supposed advantage of having insider knowledge within a particular community (Oakley, 1989). Five of the participants were acquaintances, three were friends, i.e. we had spent time socialising together in our everyday lives. A number of ethical concerns arose for me in relation to interviewing friends in the study. An acquaintance agreed to be a research participant. On being asked why and how she came to know about the research, she informed me that her partner, my friend, had suggested she take part. Browne (2003) explores the effects of the unacknowledged/unknown effect of pressure to participate when friends become possible participants. Although my acquaintance assured me she was a willing participant, I wondered if she only agreed to participate because of her partner's request. My knowing her partner also undoubtedly influenced the type and amount of information she was willing to share. My three friends shared that they revealed more intimate and detailed stories than they would have done if I had been a stranger researcher. Although I strived to treat all the participants' stories with respect and to honour the trust placed in me, my closeness to my friends undoubtedly influenced the lengths to which I went to protect them, including the decision to use pseudonyms post write up in view of the intimacies shared.

A number of ethical concerns also arose when considering closeness and intimacy with participants during fieldwork, as Cape Town is my home as well as the site of fieldwork. At times, these concerns had more to do with a head space, where one was never 'just socialising', or 'just being' in Cape Town, as everything and everywhere entered into the 'field of study', to be documented, and analysed in relation to the thesis. In this sense, Cape Town ceased to be my 'home' and became a 'research site'. At another level, Cape Town is a relatively small space, with a small social scene. At times this brought to the fore tensions between friendship and research in relation to maintaining boundaries and managing

confidentiality. I often found myself in social situations with participants. They were present and witnessed conversations where I was asked about my study. These requests saw me having to manage confidentiality, as well as managing separation and distance between research and friendship, Cape Town as the site of fieldwork and home. One particular incident comes to mind where a participant's partner began asking me questions and pushing me to provide insights into the findings. This conversation took place 'in public' i.e. in front of a number of people at a barbecue. It became uncomfortable when the participant also began to ask questions almost 'to trap' me into revealing personal information about her, setting what felt to me like a series of tests to see whether I would maintain confidentiality. I quickly extricated myself, but it highlighted the difficulties of being an insider within a community in which I am actively a part. O'Connell Davidson (2008) argues that the simultaneous effort to inhabit the world of the research participant, as well as to set oneself apart from it requires a researcher to be both an 'insider out' or 'outsider in', to be both 'here' and 'there' (2008: 56). This sets up a situation in which both the researcher and the participants must exist in two places at the same time – as researcher/participant in interview settings and relationship, as well as being friends in social settings. Both of these relationships are enacted within the 'field' and home of Cape Town.

A related concern emerged when I had to stop myself from 'wearing my research hat' while socialising with people, including participants. I found myself on more than one occasion engaging in 'participant observation'. This was not one of the methods I had adopted for the study, and so 'data' gathered in this way led to me feeling like a voyeur at times. O' Connell Davidson (2008) notes the very fact of being engaged in research implies that one needs to set oneself apart and draw a boundary between researcher and researched. In order to manage these internal and at times external conflicts and ethical quandaries, I eventually began to opt out of social events where I might bump into or mix with participants.

3.7 Reflexivity

Reflexivity and a concern for power relations between 'researcher' and 'researched' has been a common concern for feminist, lesbian and gay, queer, trans and anti-racist researchers alike. Haritaworn argues that emancipatory methodologies 'treat knowledge as negotiated between researchers, participants and epistemic communities' (2008: 3), pointing to a clear concern for positionality. They note how Bhavnani, 1994, Harding, 1991 and Phoenix, 1994 have argued that the question of positionality was a key concern in the feminist and anti-racist methodology debates of the 1990s. Queer methodologies have also been influenced within these debates (Seidman, 1996, cited in Haritaworn, 2008). In contrast to the objective, disembodied, depersonalised perspective claimed by positivists, what Haraway (1990) calls the 'God's eye view', which in fact mask rather than remove power relations, Haritaworn notes that an empirical project which takes the question of positionality seriously, enables researchers to directly 'touch/interact/connect' (2008: 2) with their research participants, in ways which are less exploitative, less objectifying, and more politically relevant.

Browne (2003) argues that when negotiating power, both researcher and research can exist in a state of betweeness, illustrating the limits of agency. Although my research practice within interviews and focus groups attempted to create less hierarchical relationships between researcher and participants, and notwithstanding the power held by participants, I acknowledge the structural power that I held in this process. I designed the research, (bound to the rules of the academy), decided who I would ask to be participants (tempered by their agreement), asked most of the research questions, and had the final say in the interpretation and write up. This needs to be acknowledged. These actions took place and carry a particular weight considering the historical legacies of Apartheid which see white and middle class people occupying social positions of privilege and power. These social relations have racialised questions of who gets to do research, who gets researched and in what kind of relationship. I recognize that these are complex and difficult problems which one needs to be aware, and needs to ensure that one does not deepen existing inequalities, or reinforce and reinscribe relations of exploitation and oppression. I strive to be ethical and cognizant of these relations of power within research processes, and socially more generally, and will continue to contribute to initiatives to transform unequal and unjust social relations.

I concur with Ramazanglu & Holland (2002) who argue that being accountable to a community assists in keeping one in check. Though there are obvious difficulties in defining who that community is, and how this would actually work. These are important issues to consider and act upon as a feminist queer theorist who aims to produce knowledge which contributes to social transformation.

Browne (2003) reminds us that even when participants agree to take part in the research, power relations continue to be negotiated throughout the process. She refers to the performativities and intersubjectivities in these research relationships as 'fieldworkings' (2003: 134). A participant challenged me, for example, on the need to research sexual pleasure and practice arguing that it was voyeuristic, frivolous and without value. We held very different political and epistemological positions on the issue, which became the cause of some minor conflict during the interview. The actual content of this debate is not the focus of discussion for now. These discussions are well rehearsed and covered very well in Jolly et al (2013). I am more concerned with discussing the way in which interview participants and researcher embodied and performed their power, from their respective social positions. After the interview, the participant utilised her individual power to withdraw, refusing to participate in the second interview which foregrounded sexuality, sexual practices and sexual pleasure. By so doing, she refused to contribute to a political project with which she is in disagreement. This was accepted by the researcher, without displaying any negative reaction to this decision. At an individual level, one could say that both parties have exercised their respective individual power in the situation. This highlights the importance of participants' consent and of ensuring that one honours it throughout the research process. Matebeni (2014b) speaks to similar issues. However, ethical issues also go beyond the individual researcher – participant relationship and encounters. These discussions of what research should be done, by whom, and with whom, are issues that we should be, and have been, discussing within our social movements, within our political organizations and within the academy. It is in these fora, that issues of ethics and accountability, along with debates about research priorities and research praxis should be strengthened. Important points within these discussions include, but extend beyond, racial, class and gendered positionalities and power relations between researchers and

participants, building a research praxis which is not exploitative, how to build in mechanisms of accountability to the communities 'under investigation'.

Only two participants interrogated the validity and political worth of the project. Surprisingly, the remainder seemed to give their consent relatively easily without much forethought or questioning of me or the process. Participants across the board, white, black, older and younger, presented as quite passive in this regard. This extended beyond the few participants who considered themselves as my friends or acquaintances. Many times I had to refuse to allow participants to give consent until I had provided more details, and attempted to jointly define people's participation and commitment. This lack of critical consciousness is worrying because it speaks to our inability as a community to hold researchers to account, or to demand good practice in their research. Matebeni (2008a) speaks to these difficulties in South Africa with predominantly white (but not only), middle class researchers who come to the country to extract information and represent the South African reality without any feedback and return.

Noting that South Africa and southern based countries more generally, are often the locus of 'field work' for northern based, generally white, middle class researchers, it was unsurprising to me that I seemed to be placed in this category of 'foreign researcher'. I felt that being categorised in this way, particularly within the focus groups with black, township based participants was undoubtedly because I was a white, middle class woman, who also did not speak their home language. This led to my 'insider' position, as a lesbian and as a South African not being acknowledged. This also confirms Valentine's (2002) argument that shared sexuality does not equate to sameness. However, this categorisation speaks often quite truthful assumptions, that if you are white, you are a 'foreigner' to black spaces and black experience, and you will require translation – both of language and of black experience. This speaks to the power and privilege of whiteness (Bérubé, 2001; Frankenberg, 1993). However, this was not the case with all black participants. I was friends with two of the black participants and had worked politically with others. These relationships, although still contextualised within these social relations, complicated these abstract power relations, our interactions and relationships influenced by our personal power, shared politics and history.

On the other hand, I often experienced an expectation of sameness from white participants. An important aspect of this complicity was the shared expectation of racism. This happened with both upper and lower middle class white participants. On the whole, I did not challenge these expressions of racism, but rather saw them as examples of white privilege and power, and mined them to explore how they affected their perceptions and experiences of lesbian subjectivity, notions and practices of inclusion and exclusion within lesbian communities and Cape Town more generally. However, not all white participants displayed this degree of blatant racism. The expectation of sameness was also experienced from white participants who saw themselves as feminist and anti-racist. This mirrors my political perspectives and was 'easier' to manage.

The process of interviews did not stop once the recording button was turned off. Many times during this process the stories of the participants lived with me on a daily basis, coming to mind at odd moments of my daily life. I was especially touched by some participants' stories of violence and hurt, and found myself having to look for help for debriefing in order to process my own emotional responses to their experiences and lives, often triggering my own.

3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Undoubtedly my positionality as a white, middle class lesbian who does not speak isiXhosa, seTswana or Afrikaans contributed to limitations of the study. This resulted in a very partial and incomplete vision and knowledge with which to interpret and manage an analysis of people's representations of their lives. There was also the difficulty of not being able to communicate with people in their own language, relying on the participants' abilities to speak English and 'translate' their experience for me. Although all researchers are confronted with having to manage participants' translations of their realities, not speaking a person's language closes off many interpretive possibilities and contributes to a barrier in communication.

Although there were working class participants in the focus groups, there were none in the in-depth semi structured interviews. This undoubtedly limited the manner in which working class experience of queer world making could be theorised, and how positionalities of race,

class, gender and sexuality are multiply constitutive, complex and complicated (Taylor, Hines & Casey, 2007:5).

3.9 SUMMARY

This chapter outlined my qualitative methodological approach of narrative inquiry, notably the use of counter narratives (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004) as the most appropriate means to explore queer world making. Within my epistemological position of an African based and informed queer analytical approach (Epprecht, 2008; Gunkel, 2010) I argue why I have held on to 'lesbian' as a category within these processes of queer world making. I noted the need to recognise and conceptualise the gender and sexuality specificities of lesbian experience and locus within power relations, while acknowledging that it is not a homogenous category, but interwoven with the social relations of gender, race, class, abilities and health status. I detailed the purposive and *qongqothwane* sampling strategies adopted to finally work with 23 participants and two focus groups. After defining the sample, I described the data collection methods of focus groups and in-depth interviews, and explained the dimensions of my narrative approach. Considerations of ethics and reflexivities laid out the complexities of what Browne (2003) termed 'fieldworkings', notably the research relations and practices. Here, issues of closeness and intimacy, confidentiality and anonymity, power and consent indicate how personal and social relations influence the research relationship and its attendant racialised and classed power relations.

CHAPTER FOUR: AWAKENING TO LESBIAN DESIRE, PRODUCING LESBIAN SUBJECTIVIES

In this chapter I discuss the lesbian participants' subjective experiences of 'awakening' to lesbian desire and the psycho-social processes involved in recognising themselves as lesbians or gay women. 'Awakening' to sexual desire for another woman is a foundational dimension of their processes of queer world making because it draws attention to the internal, intimate struggles that the participants underwent as they attempted to recognise and make sense of feelings and sexual desires which are outside the hegemonic heterosexual norm. Heteronormativities construct lesbian desire as culturally unintelligible, which often has the effect of making it illegible to people who experience desires which fall outside and beyond these culturally sanctioned flows. Its importance lies in demonstrating their internal struggles, confusions and internal processes of constructing a sense of who they are in relation to their sexuality within cultural contexts which to varying degrees are hostile to same sex desire. It is worth analysing this process of 'awakening' to lesbian desire as separate to one which explores the actual practise of sexual desire and the experience of sexual pleasure. Analysing awakening to lesbian desire deals with the complex and contingent processes of a subject coming into being. It focuses on internal psycho-social processes of individual productions of subjectivity. Sexual practises and exercise of sexual pleasure, on the other hand, speaks to the doing of sexualty. The 'doing' of sexual pleasure will form the focus of the following chapter.

The discussion will be divided into three main parts. The first will focus on three lesbians' narratives of their recognition of same sex desire and sexual subjectivities. Attention will be paid to their social context, foregrounding how the experiences and the stories we tell are shaped by broader social and historical conditions. The second part will consider generational narratives of sexual possibilities and the third part will consider contemporary narratives of inhabiting lesbian subjectivity.

'Awakening' to lesbian desire requires a process of recognising one's feelings for another woman as sexual where heteronormativities have constructed same sex sexual desire as culturally unintelligible (Butler, 1999; Ussher & Mooney-Somers, 2000). These processes of recognition of lesbian desire and the names given to this desire are racialised, classed and

historically contingent processes. Framed as generational narratives, the discussion will discuss the various ways in which lesbians of different races and classes construct and inhabit their sexual subjectivities at different moments of time. These generational narratives of changing sexual subjectivities evidence social instability and contestation around gender and sexual norms. 'Confusion' was foregrounded in these generational narratives. For those who experienced this awakening in the 1970s, confusion referred to the 'lack of language' for their feelings of same sex desire. Although this lack of language was still present in the late eighties and early nineties, confusion was used to refer rather to feelings which were known to be associated with a stigmatised subjectivity. Finally, confusion was named as a response to inhabiting a lesbian subjectivity with the knowledge that occupying this subjectivity was a possible invitation to violence, even death.

Considering participants' narratives of lesbian subjectivity in present day Cape Town, I explore how narratives of their first sexual experiences with women speak to the various ways in which they inhabit their lesbian subjectivity. These variations reveal differing modes of queer world making, surfacing the different ways in which the participants 'made place' for lesbian sexual desire, the diverse ways in which it became intelligible for them and the meaning which they attached to these processes. These modes of erotic queer world making are negotiated in a dynamic interplay with, and reconfigure (racialised and classed) dominant discourses of gender and sexuality. However, no one mode of queer world making is associated with a particular racialised identity.

4.1 NARRATIVES OF COMING INTO A LESBIAN SUBJECTIVITY

Identities as storytelling practice locate people in social structures, processes and discourses (Plummer, 1995; Jackson, 2001 cited in Coleman-Fountain, 2014). Three women's narratives of awakening to their sexual desires for women provide in-depth textured and nuanced accounts of becoming and being a lesbian. These women are Sandiswa, a young black butch self-identified cross dresser in her mid-twenties who lives in the township of Khayelitsha; Light Blue, an older black gender non-conforming lesbian in her mid-forties, who lives between two homes - her home in Goodwood (previously with her two children) and her partner's home in Parklands; and Marie - an older white Afrikaans lesbian feminist in her early sixties, who lives in the City Bowl.

SANDISWA: FROM MOMMY-BABY TO 'I'M THE SHIT'

Sandiswa realised she was 'into girls' while in primary school when she was the baby in a 'mommy-baby' relationship.[14] She recalls she was about eight or nine. Sandiswa describes how their relationship consisted of writing each other letters, buying each other presents, sitting together at lunch time, and of being 'very close, very intense'. She had a number of these relationships and these opened her eyes to her feelings of same-sex sexual attraction, and a growing realisation that this was something 'different'. While at high school, Sandiswa developed feelings for an older woman working in their school as part of an NGO youth development initiative. She is visibly emotionally excited when she shares her intense feelings for this woman:

> *[…] and I **liked** her, like I liked her so much, and I would just look at her and I would drool over her. And I didn't understand it then you know, and then ja, during the breaks she would come up to me and […] make conversation and I was like 'Oh My God'.*

While on holiday with her family, Sandiswa bumps into this woman at the beach. The woman invites Sandiswa over to eat with her and her husband. Afterwards, she walks Sandiswa back to her parents. On the way back, it begins to rain.

> *[…] and then she put me under this towel, and then I don't know but she like kissed me (claps her hand) you know, I was like so confused (wiping her hands over her face, smiling). I was like 'ok, what's happening?' you know. Ja, but she kissed me, but I was like, I froze; like that was my first encounter. And then I*

[14] As discussed previously, a mommy-baby relationship is an intimate female friendship between an older and younger girl, generally while they are at school. Their interaction, apart from involving deep affection, even love, involves the exchange of gifts and letters, and spending lots of time with each other. Some mommy-baby relationships involve sexual practices and are important sexual-affective relationships (Baraka with Morgan, 2005; Blacking, 1978; Gay, 1979; Gunkel, 2010; Khumalo with Wieringa, 2005; Matebeni, 2012a; Wieranga, 2005).

knew, and then she was telling me stuff about lesbian you know, but oh and I was like ooooh kaaaay, alright.

Sandiswa repeatedly speaks to her confusion, produced by her deep seated knowledge that she was 'different' in a context and time where there were no lesbian role models or language for her feelings. Her confusion was accentuated by the kiss. She froze. But then the mists of confusion suddenly lifted - '*And then I knew'*, speaks to a sexual subject being born. As Ussher & Mooney-Somers (2000) note, a kiss can produce more than desire; it can produce a sexual subject.

It is during her first year of university that Sandiswa has what she calls her first 'proper' sexual experience with a woman, her close heterosexual friend. One evening Sandiswa declares her love for her friend, threatening to withdraw from the friendship, arguing it was too painful for her. Her friend, after initially ensuring that Sandiswa knew that she dated guys, said: 'No, I can't stop being your friend'. And then the evening took a different turn:

[…] and then we started being physical and we started kissing, and then jaaa, I'd never fucked, I'd never slept with a woman before and then, she was on top. She was quite, I don't know where she got this from, she was clued on what to do (surprised). So ja, we got naked, she was on top and then she was like rubbing her clit against mine and I was like oooh kaaay, there's pleasure here (bursts out laughing) […]. That was like the first and the last time you know we ever got sexual. […] And after that, I was like 'Oh I'm the shit, cos I know, ya bon' (laughing), so I started doing that to other girls, started dating other girls.

This sexual initiation gives her a newfound 'praxeological' sexual knowledge. This boosts her confidence and bravado, her sense of inner power revealed in her comment, '*I'm the shit*'. Her sexual experience with another woman solidifies her lesbian identity and increases her sense of authenticity as a lesbian (Ussher, 2005). Sandiswa's mode of queer world making is based on an essentialist notion of sexual subjectivity, a sense of always knowing that she

was different, a true sense of self that was lying dormant waiting to be activated and freed from the shackles of heteronormativity[15].

LIGHT BLUE: THERE WAS A TOTAL SHIFT

From Rustenburg, Light Blue moved to Cape Town from Pretoria four and a half years before her interview. She had been married to a man with whom she had two children. After their divorce, she had several other relationships with men. She formed part of a close network of lesbian friends, however it was only in her late thirties that she first felt sexual desire for another woman. She had seen her around before, but had not felt anything at that time. Then, for some reason, she experiences a transformation:

> *[…] Nor did I know by that time, I must say, that I could be attracted to women. As **much** as I had lesbian friends, I just never really thought of myself as one. **At all**. Until I [pause] saw her […] she was sitting there, there was a total shift. So so bad, and [chuckles], oh Lord, it was one of those, like, 'Shh, don't look at me' because you think [chuckles] your whole system is going to be showing that you know, there's an attraction here. I was very attracted to her, **very.***

Emphasising the embodied nature of her desire and reaction, Light frames her sudden jolt of sexual attraction as a before and after moment, an unprecedented 'total shift'. She shares how she was struck by and drawn to the other woman's beauty, embodied in a hyper masculine form, she was tall and dark with a deep voice. With hindsight, Light Blue laughingly acknowledges how her lover's extreme gender non-conformity ('*she really looks like a man*') facilitated her transition to acknowledging her sexual desire and attraction for a woman.

Comparing her sexual relationship with this woman to having sex with a man, Light Blue commented:

> *I was fulfilled. […] it did **say** to me that, 'This is sex with a woman'. It was just **beautiful**, beautiful [pause] intimacy. My, my sexual pleasure with her was, was*

[15] Discussion of this mode of erotic queer world making will be taken up in the last section of this chapter.

> ***absolutely*** *gorgeous, to a point that for* ***years*** *after that, we would tend to migrate to that […] whatever relationships we were in, you know. Uhm, I, I, I don't think I consciously [pause] uh,* ***defined*** *it but I, I was in love with her, I, I* ***loved*** *what we did together, ja.*

However, it was not without conflict and confusion:

> *I didn't know me to be lesbian, so my attraction confused me and, and then threw me because, yoh, that's such a difficult life, you know, being, being lesbian with all that was going on as well and, and I just never counted myself in there. I never did. But I quite embraced where I'm at, you know.*

Light Blue's confusion in relation to her sexual subjectivity was not rooted in a lack of knowledge of lesbian sexual desire, but rather in the fact that she had never envisaged *herself* embodying a lesbian subjectivity. This forces her to reconstruct and re-signify her sense of self – though she was '*thrown*' because she was very aware of the difficulties of being a lesbian in South Africa. '*With all that is going on as well'* signifies her knowledge of the increasingly public conversation highlighting violence against black lesbians, and their vulnerability in the face of heteronormativity, homophobia and discrimination. However, in spite of this initial confusion and ambivalence, she notes how she '*embraced*' her lesbian desire and attraction. She begins to name herself lesbian, arguing that this was what was expected of her from the lesbian community. However, she notes she preferred to call herself a 'woman loving woman who is also a woman loving men'. She does not like to label.

Light Blue's erotic queer world making produces a sexual identity centred on her gender identity and sexual practice. This community demand for, and social ability, to name oneself lesbian speaks to a particular time in South Africa's history and context. Her total shift took place ten years into South Africa's transition to democracy. At that time, there is not only a growing cultural intelligibility of a South African lesbian identity, but also, according to Light Blue, there is a cultural expectation to do so from within her lesbian circles and broader lesbian community. Her sexual subjectivity places her at odds with her lesbian community, as well as the broader heterosexual community. Her mode of queer world making is based on a sexually fluid sexual subjectivity.

MARIE: FROM LESBIAN FRIGHT TO LESBIAN FIGHT

Marie is a white Afrikaans lesbian in her early sixties. Although Afrikaans, most of her social world and home life is conducted in English. Born in Pretoria, she moved to Cape Town to begin her university studies in 1970. Her narrative speaks to a full and varied sex and love life. There were many sexual partners, in all kinds of combinations, individual, group; commercial and non-commercial; for sexual pleasure, for sexual pleasure and love; with men and women.

While at university, Marie shares what she calls her 'lesbian fright' reaction to her good friend when her friend declared her sexual and emotional interest in Marie. While they are lying in bed, her friend declares 'I love you', to which Marie casually responds, 'I love you too'. But then her friend said, 'No, but I *love* you', the emphasis on the love indicating that this was not a platonic love but sexual, romantic love. Marie shares, 'and I *freak*! (mimicking screaming *fuck, fuck*!)'

On reflecting why it had been such a 'freak out' for her, Marie sheepishly admits that her belief systems were being challenged. The experience forced her to confront the contradiction between her professed political commitment to challenge sexual normativities, to support any and all sexual practices as long as there is consent and no harm, and what she had been prepared to do 'in the flesh'.

> *I was just confronted with the reality of, 'Now are you going to go for it?' Uh, and I wasn't ready for it. I wasn't … prepared. […] I was called out and I was left wanting."*

She goes on to clarify that she did not even really know what a lesbian was then. Her knowledge of lesbianism up to that point had been purely intellectual. She hadn't knowingly had any contact or friendships with lesbian or gay people. Her life world had been very heterosexual and heteronormative. She notes the high levels of stigma associated with same sex sexuality within the university and her social circles. Marie was unable to admit to her homophobia when she was trying to explain her violent reaction: 'I don't know what it was, I can't think. All I know is that I just [pause] I wasn't going to go there then.'

Years later, Marie shares how she had had lots of sexual relationships with men to the extent that she had almost felt like sex was 'stale' for her. She'd also 'grown up about sex then', and was into just enjoying sex with 'whoever'. Marie finds herself in Brussels, visiting friends at a dinner party. She shares how she was fascinated by one of the woman guests. She speaks to the desire and attraction that she felt for this woman: 'She was just, she was so *beautiful* and sexy and I *loved* the way she moved.' She describes her first sexual experience with the woman during this trip and some of her reactions:

> *[…] she basically started touching me and I didn't stop her, and then eventually we got into a kiss [pause] and that was the wow, the wow factor. That was the magic kiss, so that was it. And so that weekend we basically fucked like rabbits when we could. […] and I really liked [pause] the Afrikaans word is 'kukkerop', which is to get the frisson going, ok. And so I suppose in some sense it's, having sex with her was one of those. But the thing that **surprised** me was that I think I probably entered into it with a sense of experimenting or whatever, and how it **shocked** me, how much, how different it was and how much I liked it. [Pause] […] The softness, the texture of her body, the [pause] her breasts particularly. They weren't very big breasts. She had, she had quite small breasts. Uh, her buttocks, I could, you know, the fact that she had **full** buttocks, soft buttocks. Her skin, her face not having a beard, you know. Like all those, those things that, I mean, that I still appreciate about, particularly about making love with women is that, that sense of softness, gentleness and, and excitement as well. Also the realisation that you could fuck for **hours** [both laugh] Ja, you know, and come and come and come and come again. I knew I could have multiple orgasms. I've, I never had problems with that […] but with her it was, it was a sense of being able to just go for it. So that's what was different there.*

On her return to South Africa, Marie continues her sexual involvement with men, her 'play group' of regular sex with a group of men and women friends. She works in an escort agency to make money. She characterises it as a period of incredible sexual freedom and pleasure. At the same time, she shares that she became increasingly politically aware and involved in the national democratic struggle against Apartheid, with feminism and women's politics in South Africa in the eighties and nineties.

She begins to have sexual relationships with women in her women's organisation and aligned circles. However, unlike her period of 'sex, drugs and rock and roll', these were structured through a series of monogamous relationships, with the odd foray into non-monogamy. She eventually began to identify as a lesbian in the mid-eighties due to her growing political and feminist consciousness.

My identity as a lesbian is mostly a political identity. If you had to ask me what my **sexual** identity is, then I would say I'm sexual. [Long pause] I wouldn't want to put a tag on it. […] (It) doesn't matter to me whether my partner is male or female in sexual terms. […] I'm a sexual human being, […] lesbian is much more of a political and, and emotional identification of really loving women, uh, and loving a woman. […] the emphasis being on love and not on sex. […] So it's the love that anchors the sex, rather than the sex that anchors the love, which is what I think most conventional marriages are about.

Similar to Light Blue, Marie's erotic queer life world is constructed on her being 'sexual' – noting her sexual attraction to both men and women. However, she adds another layer to her subjectivity, arguing that she *chooses* to politically identify as a lesbian because of her political and emotional connection, investment in and commitment to women as a group, and her love for an individual woman. At the level of relationships, love anchors her sexual desire and attraction. She is ready and committed to fight heteronormativities and other social injustices. Her mode of queer world making is a political one, whereby she identifies as a lesbian, experienced as a core dimension of her sexual subjectivity, as part of a broader liberatory project of social justice.

4.2 GENERATIONAL NARRATIVES OF SEXUAL POSSIBILITIES

Patriarchal heteronormative discourses have shaped and continue to shape the social climate in which people grow up and live their lives in South Africa (Bhana et al, 2007; Fester, 2006; Judge et al, 2008; Sigamoney & Epprecht, 2013; Nel & Joubert, 1997; Van Zyl & Steyn, 2005).These heteronormativities are culturally and racially specific, and are influenced by class and educational status (Roberts & Reddy, 2008). A lesbian positionality and subjectivity therefore needs to be explored in relation to how it is interwoven with the social relations of gender, race and class (Bennett & Reddy, 2007; Gqola, 2005; Gunkel, 2009; 2010).

All of the participants, from the conservative Bible belt of the Free State, rural Eastern Cape, cosmopolitan Gauteng, and the 'gay capital' of South Africa, Cape Town, referenced the heteronormative contexts in which they were raised. Many of the women (across races) reported not knowing how to recognise and/or manage their initial feelings of sexual desire for another woman/women. This mirrors international and national literature exploring same sex desire amongst adolescents and adults (Boonzaier & Zway, 2015; Kowen and Davis, 2006; Logan and Buchanan, 2008; Osche, 2011; Ussher & Mooney-Somers, 2007).

These feelings of attraction were, on the whole, not framed as 'sexual'. Instead, participants noted these feelings as an awareness of 'feeling different' to the hegemonic social expectation to be heterosexual - to behave, look and think like a traditional girl or women. Coloured, white and black participants shared how these feelings of being 'different' were often spoken of as 'confusion'. This mirrors some of the literature on recognition of lesbian desire in South Africa (Boonzaier & Zway, 2015; Osche, 2011; Potgieter, 1997; Sanger, 2013; Van Zyl, 2011). This confusion arises from their difficulty in finding a language to interpret a feeling, thought or bodily experience for another woman *as* sexual desire. In short, due to growing up in hegemonic discourses of heteronormativity, their sexual desire was not culturally intelligible to them (Butler, 1990/1999; Ussher & Mooney-Somers, 2000).

The (in)ability to recognise and/or name their lesbian desire and 'confusion' experienced by the participants varied according to geographical location, historical time period and the social positionality of the participant. Variabilities in place highlight its importance in informing what is seen to be culturally and politically possible across the country. Changing conditions within different historical time periods bring into view generational changes in counter narratives of lesbian subjectivities. These varied across race and class, informing the cultural and economic resources the participants could draw on while navigating changing systems of patriarchal heteronormativities within different time periods.

The older participants grew up in Apartheid South Africa, characterised by the criminalisation of homosexuality, stark sexual and racial repression and an invisible underground lesbian culture within all communities (Gevisser, 1994). Both Marie and Tass, older white Afrikaans speaking lesbians, attest to their lack of a language to speak of lesbian desire and an ignorance of lesbian existence. Marie's narrative above of 'lesbian fright' when

she rejects the sexual overtures of her woman friend takes place in the mid-seventies. In spite of being at university, ostensibly with greater educational and cultural resources on which to draw, with a self-declared commitment to challenge sexual normativities, her narrative highlights how 'she wasn't ready' to transgress the heteronormativity of her milieu. She notes how her knowledge of lesbianism up to that point had been purely intellectual. The invisibility of lesbians was such, that she had never knowingly met or befriended a gay or lesbian person.

Tass grew up in the Free State, South Africa's bible belt. She also shared her lack of language to describe her sexual feelings for girls as a young girl in the early seventies. She withdrew from social and sexual relationships, focusing on her studies during her adolescence. In the mid-eighties, while in her early twenties, she 'chose' to marry a man. This reveals how she consciously ignored her sexual feelings for women to comply with her community and family's patriarchal heteronormative expectations. Tass notes how she didn't feel an alternative was possible at that time in that environment. She phrased this management of her sexual feelings as 'putting her feelings on the shelf'. This is ironic considering that an unmarried woman, a spinster, is referred to as being 'on the shelf'.

However not all older participants framed their recognition of their sexual desire for another woman as 'confusion'. Rusty, a coloured Muslim woman in her sixties, shares how, as a teenage girl she used to charge girls in her school for lessons on how to kiss. She jokes how if she really liked a girl, she would tell her that she needed extra lessons so that she could enjoy kissing her for longer. Rusty recalls feeling a sense of joy and power in this process rather than guilt and shame. She did, however, keep it under the radar. Her practices enabled her to enjoy sexual access to other girls, but in such a way that was non-threatening to heteronormativity. Her erotic queer life world is one where she recognises her sexual desire, and navigates heteronormativity by manipulating the patriarchal heteronormative expectation that girls/women need to know how to please their boyfriends/husbands sexually. She uses the system for her own ends.

The socio-political climate in South Africa post 1994 brought about some notable shifts. Post-Apartheid South Africa saw the birth of a new day in sexual politics in its embrace of a Constitution founded on the principles of human rights. As Posel (2011) argues, the

regulation of sexuality under Apartheid shifted to a matter of allocation of rights for citizens and responsibilities for both the state and citizens under the new dispensation. The outlawing of discrimination on a wide-ranging basis changed the symbolic landscape of the country and what was deemed possible. Post 1994 saw a rapid growth in LGBTI political organisation and increasingly visible LGBTI community networks and public presence. All of this ushered in changes in sexual possibilities and futures, including a growing cultural legibility for lesbian subjectivities and presence, an increased queer belonging (Hoad et al, 2005; Van Zyl & Steyn, 2005). These social and political transformations undoubtedly influenced the conditions in which the participants negotiated their sexual life journeys and the ways in which same sex desire, subjectivity and practice were enacted and experienced.

Sandiswa's narrative highlights the changes over time in naming practices and the different ways of inhabiting (changing) categories of same sex desire. Her narrative reveals what Gunkel (2010) describes as the historical (dis)continuities of female same-sex sexual cultures within which, and from which, different sexual categories emerge. Sandiswa frames her initial forays into same sex connections and relationships with the category 'mommy-baby relationships'. She laments how she was the last generation of school children who enacted these intense friendships and connections of same sex sociality. She was in primary school in the late nineties. She decries what she sees as her lost opportunity to be 'mommy' as by the time she was old enough, the younger learners who might have been attracted to these relationships and who might have been her 'baby' were self-identifying as lesbians. Different to Sandiswa's experience, these younger school-going lesbians' queer life worlds included the category of 'lesbian', an unambiguous sexual subjectivity.

It has been argued that the very enactment of the Constitution, with the equality clause in the Bill of Rights (Section Nine of the Constitution) specifically naming sexual orientation as a basis for protection from discrimination, contributed to the need to inhabit the category lesbian in order to benefit from its protections (Livermon, 2012; Matebeni, 2008b). This undoubtedly influenced the taking up of the category lesbian as a sexual subjectivity. Thus, Sandiswa contends that by the time she became an older adolescent, the social conditions allowed for and perhaps even demanded a lesbian subjectivity – leading to the dying out of mommy-baby practices and relationships.

A number of narratives supported the notion of a stark 'before and after' the Constitution for LGBTI communities. Vivi is a coloured femme lesbian in her early forties, currently living in Goodwood, with close ties and frequent visits to her family home in Retreat on the Cape Flats. Vivi notes she was about 20 when she understood, or one could argue, accepted, that her feelings towards women were sexual. This was in the early 1990s in South Africa, the dying days of Apartheid. Vivi argues that the changing conditions wrought by the new Constitution fundamentally altered her 'confusion' and sense of inferiority. She notes how legal rights ushered in a greater cultural acceptance and visibility of gender non-conforming and non-normative sexualities within her community on the Cape Flats. She references the direct positive influence of these changes, which contributed to her increased confidence to assume a lesbian subjectivity and to her greater sense of belonging in the community. The positive effect of the legal protections on people's everyday lives is also echoed in focus group two with township participants. One participant claims her right to exist free from violence within her township by constantly repeating, 'We are in the constitution, we are in the constitution'. She invokes a collective imaginary, a 'we' that is recognised and protected. This legal legitimacy is invoked as the basis of what could be seen as queer world making, underscoring her right to be considered an authentic member of the nation, and therefore her community.

Posel (2005: 62) reminds us that the introduction of these legal changes was 'neither wholesale nor uncontested', with the post-Apartheid years witnessing a 'fierce gender hostility' (Bennett, 2009: 115). In this context, feeling 'different' and 'confusion' are still important explanatory devices in response to an 'awakening' to a lesbian subjectivity. However, these do not appear due to the lack of a language for, or the cultural intelligibility of lesbian subjectivities. Rather, confusion is produced for Light Blue, a black participant, when contemplating that her new-found desire for women could mean personal danger for her. Light Blue's narrative speaks to her knowledge of black lesbian subjectivities and of socialising within black lesbian communities post 1994. She shares how her immediate response to recognizing her sexual attraction for a woman was to consider if she was willing to assume the social consequences of assuming a non-normative erotic subjectivity. She

references the high levels of patriarchal homophobic violence suffered by many black lesbians at this time.[16]

Confusion is also produced for Abigail, a coloured participant in her early thirties. She is negotiating the contradiction of contemplating enacting a lesbian sexuality in her social context in which it is simultaneously possible to be lesbian (enacted in the law and policies) and impossible (still stigmatised and silenced in different social milieus). Her counter narrative of lesbian subjectivity speaks to her acknowledgement of her sexual desire for women within a frame of knowledge and cultural recognition of lesbian existence. However, her narrative makes known the mixed messages she received about lesbian sexuality as an adolescent within two important spheres in her life, home and school. While there was a strong, seemingly positive, presence of lesbian sexuality and LGBTI sexuality more generally, it was either silenced or repressed by powerful figures in her world. This led to her experiencing confusion around her own negotiations with her lesbian sexuality.

When she was a young girl and later an adolescent, Abigail shares how her mother had been in a ten-year relationship with another woman. Their family home had often received lesbian and gay visitors, regarded as close members of their family social circle. Lesbian and gay sexuality was ostensibly framed as welcome in the home, and as a 'natural' way of life. However, Abigail notes how there were mixed signals. She shares how her mother's lesbian relationship was never publicly acknowledged. It was simply not discussed. Abigail says that at times she experienced this as a palpable silence. Similarly, at school, she shares how there were a relatively large number of girls who were publicly 'questioning their sexuality' but that the school administration attempted to clamp down on these forays into lesbian

[16] By the early to mid-2000s, homophobic violence, 'corrective rape' and later 'hate crimes', particularly against black lesbians, had entered everyday black lesbian lexicon, later to filter into a more generalised public discourse in South Africa. This is mainly due to the outcome of black lesbian-led LGBTI activist campaigns and lobbying of government to respond more effectively to this crisis. This was eventually picked up by the mass media, often very sensationally, and becomes one of the tropes in which black lesbians get brought into public view. These initiatives finally led to the establishment of a Government hate crimes commission and political programme to eradicate hate crimes (Long et al, 2003; Mkhize et al, 2010; Judge, 2015; Matebeni, 2014).

sexuality by ruling it a reportable offence. The principle instructed teachers to warn the learners off such behaviour.

Her mother's silence about her own relationship along with the imposition of heteronormativity by the school authorities led her to respond with confusion to her own growing awareness of same sex sexual attraction. Abigail believed her mother would not respond well to her explorations with lesbian sexuality and was concerned about being 'reported' to the school principle. This confusion led her to attempt to go out with boys, despite her sexual attraction for girls. After a number of failed relationships, she shares how she preferred to withdraw from exploring her sexuality altogether rather than force feelings that were not there for boys, or confront the double messages within her home and her school towards lesbian sexuality. Instead she turns her focus to academic study and extracurricular activities. Abigail's challenges of having to deal with the school administration's regulation and repression of learners' 'explorations' with non-normative sexuality within the school system reflects the heteronormativity, homophobia and exclusion experienced by other LGBTI learners and staff, and the difficulties of enacting the Constitution and educational policy in South African schools (Bhana, 2014; Francis & Msibi, 2011; Francis, 2017).

4.3 MODES OF EROTIC QUEER WORLD MAKING

Coming into a lesbian subjectivity is a core dimension of queer world making. The manner in which one inhabits one's lesbian sexuality informs the perspective with which one inhabits one's queer life world and the particular mode of queer world making. I will now focus the discussion on participants' narratives of coming into their sexual subjectivities after their first sexual experiences with women. Their narratives demonstrate how participants locate themselves into four modes of queer world making, each with their attendant relationship to sexual desire and sexual meanings. These are an essentialist mode of queer world making which speaks to coming home to one's true sexuality; the mode of sexual fluidity/sexual being which foregrounds the search for embodied sexual pleasure; a lesbian identity as a 'core' component of identity - a politicised mode of queer world making; and finally a mode which decentres sexuality as a core dimension, locating it as a private, individual dimension - what Seidman (2002) has called viewing sexuality as a side thread.

4.3.1 QUEER WORLD MAKING THROUGH AN ESSENTIALIST FRAME

A number of participants employed narratives of 'rebirth' and of 'coming home' to their 'true sexuality' when speaking about their first sexual experience with a woman. They spoke of the sexual experience being like a revelation, a watershed moment marking a before and after. This experience led to 'a just knowing', of 'a coming into being' - invoking a sense of having been freed from the trappings of their heteronormative cultures.

Denise, a white Afrikaans woman in her late thirties, shared her reaction to her first sexual experience with a woman. She enthused how she felt alive for the first time, how the experience shifted something inside of her and almost felt like a rebirth:

> *I could feel inside that something change, changed, changing. And I knew after that night I wanted … actually I wanted more.*

She described her feelings within a frame of confusion, a sentiment which she argued is the outcome of a socially based heteronormative pressure brought to bear through her grandmother. She reproduced the oft heard cultural disqualifier of same sex desire, as 'just a phase'. After becoming sexually involved with her woman flatmate and boss, and then taking up with a man, Denise felt compelled 'to choose' between them. She agreed to marry her boyfriend after discovering she was pregnant with his child. She shared that she felt trapped and tricked into marrying him. The import of what she was about to do hit her while standing in front of her friends and family about to commit to her fiancé in heterosexual marriage. Employing a discourse of a religious conversion, Denise described what she calls a 'spiritual revelation' which shown the light on her true feelings. She realised she did not want to marry her fiancé and that she was, in fact, a lesbian. Even though she still went through with the ceremony, this realisation was materialised in a sexual encounter between Denise and her bridesmaid during her wedding reception. She framed the sexual encounter between herself and the bridesmaid, not as a betrayal of her husband, but as finally choosing her 'true self'. Denise's narrative subverts and destabilises the traditional heterosexual wedding ceremony, a public performance culturally upheld to be the symbolic pinnacle of heterosexual kinship.

In a similar framing within a narrative of 'living their truth' and 'coming home to one's true sexuality', Tass, who we met earlier, shares that she lived within a marriage to a man she

loved but didn't desire for years. After all the time of living with her sexuality 'on the shelf', Tass reveals how life transforming her first sexual experience with the woman that she loved was. She shares '[…] It was the most amazing experience for me *to come home* from a sexual point of view'; 'I was coming home to my true sexuality', 'I couldn't live a lie anymore'.

As we saw with Sandiswa's narrative in the first section, a kiss was all that was required for Sandiswa to call her lesbian sexual subjectivity into being and for her to move from being 'confused' to and 'suddenly I knew'. And this 'I knew' sees her lesbian subjectivity come into being, and her entering into a queer life world. While attempting to justify her sexual feelings for women to her pastor father/uncle[17] later, Sandiswa draws on a bio-medical argument to explain the 'cause' of her lesbian desire. Confronted with her father's arguments of religious and cultural normativity, she defends herself by locating 'the cause' of her homosexuality in her body when she argues:

> *No, it's when your sexual hormones you know, when they don't balance, your x chromosome and your y.*

Rusty, a coloured Muslim self-identified gay woman who, as we know, subverted heterosexuality by teaching her fellow girl learners how to kiss, shares her narrative of coming home to her sexuality while she was in her mid-teens at a sleepover at her aunt's house. She shares the moment of sexual recognition between her and her cousin's friend when they first met, describing it as a shared (but unspoken) sense that they were different to the other girls, an unspoken attraction. All girls, they spent the night sleeping in the same bedroom. There are benefits to patriarchal heteronormativity. There are no fears or expectations on the part of the grownups that the girls will become sexual with each other. Rusty shares a bed with this new 'friend'. The chemistry between the two of them leads to their inevitable acting on their attraction. She notes how things 'just happened' between them and her sense of wellbeing in relation to her sexual awakening, commenting, "it just felt so *right*, I didn't feel *guilty*".

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[17] Sandiswa and her brother moved to live with their uncle, a pastor, and his wife and children when their mother died. She was eight at the time. She refers to him interchangeably as her uncle and father.

Mirroring Osche's (2011) findings of her study with white lesbians in Pretoria, these participants framed their sexuality as the outcome of an 'inborn trait', of being 'primary lesbians', i.e. of having no choice. Their narratives around same sex desire framed an understanding of sexual subjectivities within essentialist discourses. These participants located the origin of their same sex desire within the body, arguing that their sexual desires and subjectivity were an outcome of their hormones and biological constitution or an 'uncovering' of their 'true sexuality'. Tass declared, 'I'm just wired that way'. Shelley, a coloured woman in her mid-forties, shared, '[t]There was nothing I could do about it, it is just the way I am' indicating how she *had* to succumb to the will of her body and the enactment of her lesbian desire. Tamara, a young coloured lesbian in her mid-twenties, says how she felt 'like a duck to water' during her first experience of lesbian sex, highlighting the 'naturalness' of her experience.

The participants who framed their sexual subjectivity within an essentialised frame noted a marked difference in their experiences between sex with women and sex with men emphasising their inability to feel sexual pleasure with a male body.

Vivi, the coloured lesbian who lives in Goodwood, originally from the Cape Flats, shares how after beginning her relationship with her first woman lover she realised why she could never have had sex with a man. She notes:

> *I couldn't get to that feeling of, okay let me just sleep with you, even if it's just for the just, I couldn't even do that you know.*

Abigail, the coloured lesbian who struggled with her sexuality in the midst of mixed messages, shares how 'there was always something missing with men'. Tass comments how sex with her husband 'was always icky for me […] I remember being nauseated a couple of times after having sex', 'I couldn't have an orgasm (with him) because […] I wanted her to give me an orgasm'. Tamara shares how 'there was some groping and some stuff, but it never felt right. It was just very mechanical and awkward for me, I never enjoyed it'.

These narratives reveal how the participants who framed their sexual desire within an essentialised mode framed their inability to experience sexual pleasure with men as a marker of lesbian authenticity. In contrast, sex with women was often framed as more

'intimate', more 'intense', leaving them feeling more 'connected'. In this way, a lesbian subjectivity is framed as positive, preferable and better than the more socially accepted and normative heterosexuality.

These essentialist narratives explaining lesbian subjectivity were expressed by participants of all races and cultures revealing how widespread and deeply entrenched they are in the everyday lexicon. Academically and politically, an essentialist understanding of sexuality has been disputed, opening the way to socially constructed understandings of sexuality, which foreground contingency, fluidity and the contextual nature of sexual meanings. Despite this, the influence of essentialism and notably sexology studies continues to hold currency in everyday parlance (Vance, 1989; Correa et al 2008; Weeks, 2006).

The foundations of the lesbian subjectivity of the participants who inhabit this mode of queer world making and their explanations attached to becoming and being a lesbian, frame their experiences as inevitable, as natural. It is this 'force of nature' which wins out against the regulation and control of heteronormativity, which gives way to the praxeological enactment of lesbian desire. In this way, they are arguing that the foundations of their queer world making, their sexual difference, their lesbian subjectivities, are more 'bodily' than cultural.

4.3.2. QUEER WORLD MAKING AS SEXUALITY FLUIDITY

There were a number of participants who framed themselves as 'sexual beings', denoting that they did not necessarily understand their sexual attraction and desire for women to signify a particular subjectivity. Rather, they foregrounded their embodied experiences of enjoying and having the capacity to enjoy having sex with both women and men. This came through particularly strongly in both Light Blue and Marie's narratives, which were explored in the beginning of the chapter.

Danny, a white middle class woman in her late thirties, a mother of a son born within a prior heterosexual marriage and currently married to her woman partner, shared similar sentiments. Her narrative foregrounded herself as a 'sexual person'. She describes herself as a 'very mammal to mammal kind of girl', commenting, 'I like to fuck'. She says she has had to 'reconcile being married and monogamous with being a sexual presence in the world and being *out* there'. She draws attention to her experience of her sexuality as being first and

foremost about the senses experienced and located in the pleasure seeking body. Not in the same way as the essentialist framing of the body, but in the sense of it being 'freed' from the constraints and rules of culture and its normativities – a sexuality in search of and located in bodily pleasures.

At the same time, her narrative is cognisant of the strictures and the racialised and classed gender expectations placed upon her by her mother, to marry well, preferably to a (white) doctor. A young adult during the change in political dispensation, university educated, exposed to gender studies and feminism, moving within alternative and national democratic movement circles, her exploration of herself as a woman and as a sexual being mirrors the changes and ruptures happening around her socially. Her narrative highlights her pathway of learning to assume control over herself as a woman, and to come into her own as a sexual subject. She notes she is firm in her conviction that she has 'chosen' her current partner, with whom she has a very deep, meaningful and intimate relationship. She shares how the 'intimacy of the relationship includes and is bigger than' a mere sexual relationship. Her erotic queer world making sees her engagement with her own sense of power as a sexual being, and as a person in the world. Now, her life choices see her negotiating and actively choosing monogamy, choosing to build a sexual and emotional intimacy, a life project with her woman partner. Danny employs a number of discursive frames while describing her journey of sexual empowerment which demonstrate the production of herself as a figure who has recognised and confronted the social and cultural obstacles which inhibit women's access to and practice of sexual autonomy.

Light Blue, Danny and Marie enact lesbian sexual identities and eroticism through and because of their monogamous relationships with women. It is the dictates of monogamy and their love for their partners that see them inhabiting a lesbian subjectivity. Both Danny and Marie emphasise how their lesbian subjectivities were strongly influenced by their exposure and engagement with feminist and queer theoretical literature and debates. Their racialised class position gave them access to university educations which exposed them to international feminist and queer formulations and debates. Although Light Blue was also a university graduate, she was not a humanities or social science student. Her exposure to lesbian subjectivities and experiences is located in her friendship networks and participation in LGBTI community organisation. Although, as we will see in the following sub-section,

Marie's construction of her queer life world reveals her commitment to a politicised lesbian identity, located within broader social justice movements.

4.3.3 Queer world making as a politicised lesbian subjectivity

There was only one participant who very clearly located her lesbian subjectivity within a political framework, positioning herself as a lesbian feminist. Marie, whose story was highlighted in the opening of the chapter, informed us that her queer life world is one in which her eventual inhabiting of a lesbian subjectivity was a political choice. She has told us that she is a sexual being, that she feels desire for and could have sex with both women and men. Her lesbian subjectivity is informed by her political and emotional identification with women as an oppressed grouping, and as part of a broader political and cultural struggle for social justice. Her lesbian subjectivity is also informed by her choice to form a life partnership with one woman. Her choice to love and be with her partner has led her to eschew other sexual liaisons and relationships. Her queer world making and lesbian subjectivity is informed by a desire to create another world based on social justice, freedom and belonging.

Marie's political awareness mirrors Osche's (2011) findings where she discusses a number of lesbians who have assumed a political lesbian identity, also located within movements to re-vindicate sexual and gender based rights. Both Marie and the politicised lesbians in Osche's study inhabit their sexual subjectivity within an awareness of both the privilege that their racial and middle class positionality give them as white middle class women in contemporary South Africa, along with a political commitment to eradicate social exclusion and exploitation. They link their struggle for sexual rights within and in relation to struggles for racial and class social justice. Their sexual subjectivities are framed within their quest to challenge and transform unjust, exploitative and oppressive social power relations.

This mode of queer world making sees being lesbian as a liberatory project, not just along the lines of sexuality, but to combat unequal power relations constructed on differences based on race, class, gender, age, health, body abilities, and so on. In this way, it does not attempt to tell a single issue story, nor speak of a single issue struggle and does not attempt to separate being lesbian, or the existence of LGBTI communities, from broader

communities. Queer world making is happening in relation to and within the communities where people are living, within their families, their city, their country.

4.3.4. QUEER WORLD MAKING AS AN IDENTITY THREAD

A number of participants resisted naming or labelling themselves as lesbian. Two examples are Rusty and Mandy - both in their late fifties. Rusty is a coloured Muslim woman who speaks both English and Afrikaans. Mandy is a white, English speaking Christian-raised woman. Both adamantly reject labels and classifications in relation to their sexuality, a rejection which speaks to a non-assumption of a lesbian subjectivity, while simultaneously enjoying and enacting a lesbian desire.

Referring to the USA in the late nineties and early 2000s, Seidman (2002) speaks about the existence of a 'politics of normalisation' which shifts being lesbian from a 'core' identity to an identity 'thread' - one aspect of self among many. This would be quite applicable to Rusty and Mandy. They refer to themselves as gay rather than lesbian when talking more widely about sexual subjectivities.

Mandy lives in Mouille Point, a wealthy area on the Atlantic Seaboard, and runs her own construction business. She notes how she is 'quite anti, sort of pigeonholing myself as anything like that', claiming emphatically, 'I'm only a lesbian in bed'. She refuses sexuality as a meaningful component of her identity, and as the basis on which to form friendship circles and networks. She describes her friendship circle as 'the mates that have kind of been in my life for decades'. They are predominantly straight, although she does have lesbian and gay friends. She emphasises the non-identitarian nature of her social circle and recreational activities. Even if her social circle includes lesbians, she highlights its porous nature, how it opens and expands, including straight couples and gay men. She emphasises how they come together as 'people', on the basis of personal tastes and shared lifestyles rather than 'as' something. Mandy continually reiterates in all our interviews how identity and difference were not important to her, or to the people in her circle.

Expressing similar sentiments, Rusty states:

> *Now I'm a human being. I'm not a gay human being. I'm a human being, uh, just like everybody else, so that's why I don't classify, and one don't want to, to criticise people, you, and you don't judge people.*

As Halberstam (2003) argues, sexuality as an identity thread does not necessarily signify the closet, but is closely related to the oft-repeated idea 'my sexuality doesn't define me'. Different to Mandy, Rusty shares how she has never come out to her family:

> *… my family's not asked me anything about my uh, preferences, and neither have I **declared** anything. Uhm, I think it's a given that people might know who I am, or know what I do, but like I said, I don't walk around with a label. The person that I am, I've been accepted **everywhere** and anywhere amongst family, friends, peers, colleagues …*

Rusty is active in her faith and Muslim community, works within a Muslim dominated legal firm and constantly interacts with her family. Her network of friends is more religiously and racially diverse, but different to when she was younger, mostly straight. She says her predominantly straight network is a question of her being older and more mature as she has 'outgrown' the need for a sexuality based social circle and network. She seems to be enacting the 'new normal' (Cohler & Hammack, 2007) by assimilating and withdrawing from her previous extensive lesbian community.

Both Rusty and Mandy, within their very different lives, reject the status of the 'sexual stranger' (Phelan, 2001) preferring to claim inclusion in 'normality' and downplaying signs of lesbian identity considered undesirable and excessive (Coleman-Fountain, 2014). Rusty affirms quite positively how her friends comment on how her lesbian sexuality and relationship is invisible to those not in the know:

> *I've had people commenting and saying, 'If we didn't know about your relationship, you would never say that you were gay'. You know like, we get invited to a lot of functions […] but we don't make people uncomfortable unnecessarily about […] who we are.*

In their bid to claim normalcy and inclusion, both women reject dimensions of what they consider to be negatively stereotypical lesbian behaviour or components of lesbian culture

and community building. Rusty is extremely critical of what she considers to be an excessive focus on sexuality, and of being publicly sexual. She complains how this makes a 'mockery' of our relationships and puts out the 'wrong message about us', a message that 'this is what gay life is all about'. She asks plaintively: 'Do these kids have no shame?'

Similarly, Mandy dramatically enacts her devaluation and rejection of the 'gay scene', preferring to socialise in middle class, trendy Cape Town. Although Mandy used to go to the gay club, Angels, located in the gay village in Green Point when she was younger, she comments that now it just doesn't appeal to her any more:

> *If someone said 'Let's go to Beulah bar[18] for a drink' I'd go, 'Why?? [disgusted tone] you know, 'Why there?' Smoky, funny old truck drivers. No, I'd rather go and sit down at Ricami and have a drink and watch the sunset [laughing] you know, than go somewhere because of a particular orientation.*

There have been a number of debates as to 'what is normal', and is it possible to be 'ordinary' as a member of the LGBTI community which signpost the assimilation/transgression debates, a key issue within queer theory and practise emanating from the USA. In relation to these, questions would be asked about whether Mandy and Rusty's mode of queer world making is an enactment of assimilation or a bid to be ordinary. The argument for assimilation would centre on Warner's (2000) and Duggan's (2002) discourses on sameness and normalisation, which stress how lesbians are trying to assimilate to middle class homonormative[19] domesticity. Coleman-Fountain (2014) argues that this mode of lesbian subjectivity arguably inhabits an anti-lesbian sexuality. Brown (2012) revisits these debates and posits that instead of seeing their actions as a bid to assimilate to a middle class domesticity, they could be merely considered to be 'ordinary'

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[18] Beulah bar is a gay bar also frequented by lesbians in the gay village situated in Green Point.

[19] Duggan (2002:179) notes, homonormativity refers to '(a) politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilised gay constituency and a privatised, depoliticised gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption'.

lesbian women leading 'ordinary lives'. However, I would concur with Coleman-Fountain (2014) when he argues that both options of 'assimilation' and 'ordinary' are nevertheless shaped by 'straight thinking' (Ingraham, 2005). Both Mandy and Rusty display different examples of internalised homophobia and a revering of middle class homonormativity. A case in point is Rusty's rejection of the lesbian community's display of 'too much sex' and her basking in the glow of the compliment that people 'don't know' she is lesbian. Similarly, Mandy's classification of Beulah Bar as a place where 'truck drivers' go, is a reference to the pathologised diesel dyke, rejected for its excessive masculine gendered lesbian identity.

4.4 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has explored how same sex erotic desire and sexual pleasure function as sites of sexual subjectivities and belonging - of erotic queer world making. It reveals in depth, textured and nuanced accounts of coming into an awareness of lesbian desire, and the recognition and assumption of a lesbian identity. These are foundational dimensions of queer world making.

Understanding participants' constructions of their queer life worlds, and the stories they told about their sexual subjectivities, reveals how they were influenced by broader social and historical conditions, within conditions not of their making (Coleman-Fountain, 2014). Constructions of a lesbian sexual subjectivity were always done in relation to heterosexuality, and within contexts of heteronormativity. An important aspect of this process was how the participants recognised and negotiated their 'awakening' to lesbian desire. Different historical moments in South Africa's history, characterised as generational narratives, make known the varying ways in which lesbians constructed and inhabited their sexual subjectivities. These processes of recognition of lesbian desire and occupation of lesbian subjectivity are racialised, classed and time bound. The narratives reveal how prior to 1996, the year in which the new South African Constitution was adopted, there were a range of ways in which same sex desire and subjectivities were brought into discourse, such as mommy-baby practices and relationships. These were not necessarily known as and/or embodied as lesbian. There was a lack of cultural intelligibility and lack of a language to speak of non-normative genders and sexualities. Queer life worlds and queer world making were tenuous and dispersed.

However, 1994 opened the way for a more vociferous claiming of public and private space, ushering in an era of porosity, flux and change. The shifts in the legal landscape opened the way for contestation of sexually repressive laws, a greater sense of entitlement, mobilisation and organisation around sex, gender and sexuality. The legislative legitimacy offered by legal protections provided a symbolic resource which sustained lesbian claims to a cultural legitimate sexual subjectivity, bolstering their counter narratives to heteronormativity. Collectively, these queer life worlds strengthen and reinforce each other, and find traction in a queer world making which brings into view lesbian claims to cultural and community belonging.

These processes, however, are not uncontested, and although violence against lesbians, and women more generally, had been a feature of Apartheid South Africa, the post-Apartheid time period sees hate crimes against black lesbians enter the lexicon and imagination of (black and other) lesbians in South Africa. This in turn, generates greater mobilisation and organisation, resulting in further counter narratives of resistance. The co-existence of violence, discrimination and stigma, with solidarity, acceptance and queer belonging highlights the ambivalence and contradictory position occupied by lesbian subjectivities in contemporary Cape Town.

The different ways of enacting and inhabiting categories of same-sex sexuality and intimacy as and when they became available over different time periods in South Africa reveals the centrality of temporality and place in informing sexual subjectivities. These were raced and classed processes.

The findings reveal how the participants' sexual subjectivities were framed in four modes of queer world making. Both essentialised and sexual fluidity modes of queer world making draw on a praxeology of embodied sexualities, narratives which foreground the body. The differences centre on how embodied sexualities are experienced, and the meanings which participants attribute to their experiences. The essentialised frame foregrounds coming home to an inherent lesbian sexuality located in the body. The mode of sexual fluidity, although also foregrounding the pursuit of sexual pleasure, focuses on a romantic discourse of love and a commitment to individual woman and therefore to a lesbian subjectivity.

Queer world making based on a politicised lesbian subjectivity and the mode which constructs sexuality as a mere 'identity thread' (Seidman, 2002), both foreground negotiations of the sexualised systems of knowledge/power, notably, patriarchal heteronormativities. The politicised lesbian subjectivity centres the structuring power of heteronormativities (along with other indices of social relations of power), while the sexuality as an identity thread denies this sexual hierarchy (Rubin, 1984).

These differing modes of queer world making are always and everywhere entangled with power, in different ways revealing complicities and/or resistances to dominant sexual and gender regimes.

An essentialist framing of lesbian subjectivity claims an authentic lesbian sexuality constructed through tropes of naturalness. It subverts heteronormativity, inverting the hierarchy of value that privileges heterosexuality. However, it is locked into deploying similar categories and meaning frameworks, thereby re-inscribing the homosexual/heterosexual binary.

The mode of sexual fluidity blurs the heterosexual/homosexual binary, prioritising a praxeology of embodied pleasure. However, by resorting to narratives of monogamy, this mode ultimately re-inscribes a hegemonic sexual hierarchy of value which foregrounds and privileges romantic love as the basis of sexual connection. The identity thread queer world making, even though denying lesbian sexuality (and other identity markers) as an important aspect of one's identity, inadvertently becomes complicit in dominant sexual and gender regimes and heteronormativity through negating its structuring power in the social relations of gender and sexuality.

The politicised queer world making not only resists heteronormativity and hegemonic gender and sexual regimes, but all modes of unequal power relation structured along race, class, age and other lines pertinent to particular contexts. It employs both a cultural politics of recognition as well as a politics of redistribution (Fraser, 1996). However, the participant who embodied this mode of queer world making also reveals the incongruence between her political beliefs and political practice, through her example of 'lesbian fright'. This demonstrates the gap between political claims and practices, as well as a reminder that

participants' beliefs and practices change over time, and so a person may occupy different modes at different moments of time, as well as move between them.

Lesbian subjectivity is informed by one's racialised and classed experiences. However, race and class did not inform how participants took up different modes of queer world making or their degrees of complicity or resistance to hegemonic sexual and gender regimes, and other social power relations. Ways of assuming one's lesbian subjectivity rather spoke to participants' political world views and outlook. This troubles notions of the already radical black queer subjectivity and the already conservative complicit white queer subjectivity and supports Oswin's call to reject a reliance on 'specific queer saviours' for a queer approach for one which has no fixed political referent (2008:98). Rather, analysis of particular embodiments in particular times and places will more effectively highlight the unequal power relations in specific contexts.

Ultimately, the different modes of queer world making reveal a range of modes of coming into and assuming a lesbian subjectivity, of 'producing' and enacting perverse desire. They all produce counter narratives and make place for lesbian desire, at the same time as being entangled with racialised heteronormativities in complex and intricate ways (Grosz & Probyn, 1995). These differing modes of queer world making demonstrate the multivalent and variegated productions of counter narratives by the participants. Each mode of queer world making foregrounds different dimensions of the field of normalisation which their counter narratives confront. However, a careful reading demonstrates how they are, in their varying ways, also incomplete transgressions, never fully subverting and transforming normativities. All of the counter narratives destabilise and trouble hegemonic narratives of racialised gendered sexuality. The participants' embodied enactments of same-sex social connection and carnal pleasure revealed themselves as 'sites of possibility' (Rodríguez, 2014). The different modes of erotic world making allowed lesbians to enact lesbian subjectivities, form sexual connections and relationships, and construct an individual sexual belonging. All of these modes of erotic world making ultimately 'make place' for lesbians within a Cape Town imaginary. The discussion highlighted how erotic world making is an exploration and interrogation of how the marginalised status of the 'other' is negotiated. These made known a number of modes of queer world making, which ultimately lead to the

possibility and creation of new discourses and practices. The next chapter will further this exploration of erotic world making, with a focus on sexual practices, desire and pleasure.

CHAPTER FIVE: LESBIAN EROTIC WORLD MAKING, SEXUAL PLEASURE AND PRACTICES

The previous chapter revealed that erotic world making entails *making place* for lesbian desire and sexuality within hegemonic patriarchal heteronormativities. In this chapter, the focus shifts to lesbian sexual practices, sexual encounters and the range of meanings attached to them. I will consider the ways in which the lesbian participants experience and talk about sexual pleasure, how they construct and practice their erotic life worlds and what meanings they attach to their sexual experiences.

I will show how lesbian erotic world making is best understood as processes of sexual embodiment (Crawley & William, 2017; Jackson & Scott, 2007). These are not fixed on a stable ontological ground, but are always relational, negotiated and constructed through every day/night practices in particular social contexts. Lesbian sexual practice and sexual pleasure are experiences and processes that are socially mediated, to be read in relation to, alongside and beyond the hegemonic frameworks and terms of the 'master discourses of sexuality' (Grosz and Probyn, 1995: x). The participants counter narratives of their embodied sexual subjectivities and practices are socially located (sexual) interactions. Their sexual encounters are not just acts or enactments of desire and pleasure, but contemplate how they make sense of what they feel and what they do – both emotion and sensation – and what they convey to others (Jackson & Scott, 2007: 111)[20]. They are constructed materially and discursively, imbricated within relations of power constructed on the axes of race, gender, class, corporality, religiosity, age and location.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part will discuss counter narratives of entitlement to sexual pleasure from and within categories of people who traditionally have been seen to be 'outside desire'. The discussion will then focus on how gendered regimes

[20] Jackson & Scott (2007) conceptualise sexual embodiment as the 'objectified' body, referring to the body as a perceptible entity in physical and social space that can be perceived as an object of desire and can also be acted upon sexually; the 'sensory' body, referring to the capacity to experience one's surroundings through sight, hearing, touch, taste, sound; and the 'sensate' body, referring to the means through which pleasure and pain is experienced.

and discourses, and the troubling of these, have informed lesbian sexual subjectivities, perceptions and experiences of sexual encounters and pleasure. Finally, through the lens of the 'lesbian touch', the discussion will reveal a lesbian centred frame of sexual pleasure and desire.

5.1. Resisting Regulatory Regimes: The 'other' claims sexual pleasure

Lesbian erotic world making is constructed by claiming the entitlement to inhabit and enact sexual autonomy and agency within regulatory regimes which place certain categories of bodies – black and white women, lesbians, poorer women, women living with disabilities, and with HIV) - as outside desire (Butler, 1999; Distiller, 2005; Grosz & Probyn, 1995; Gunkel, 2010; Jolly et al, 2013). The following section will discuss the diverse ways the lesbian participants' narratives reveal how they navigate and resist a number of regulatory regimes.

5.1.1. Overturning surveillance and regulation of women's sexuality

Cultural constructions of sexuality are racialised and classed, leading to women's varied positioning as subjects and objects of desire. Colonialisation, racialisation and industrialisation have led to black women and working class women being constructed as hypersexual/asexual in relation to the sexual purity and/or asexuality of white, middle class women. Black African men and women's sexuality have been constructed through cultural discourses of deviance and excess (Arnfred, 2004; Chinn, 2003, Lewis, 2011; McClintock, 1995; Salo & Gqola, 2006; Tamale, 2011a).

It is commonly held that research on African sexualities began from a place invested in colonial and imperial interests. A 'tripartite framework of morals, reproduction and dysfunction' (Tamale, 2013: 47) constructed the sexualities of African men and women as immoral, lascivious and primitive (Salo & Gqola, 2006; Tamale, 2011a). Colonialism and cultural imperialism, along with the patriarchal religions of Christianity and Islam, intertwined and subverted local systems of knowledge and practice. This led to new scripts, steeped in western traditions. The introduction of Victorian moralistic, anti-sexual and body-shame discourses and practices were inscribed on the bodies of African men and women (Nzegwu, 2011; Tamale, 2011a). Certain versions of knowledge production continue this colonial mind set with its emphasis on violence and public health (death and disease), constructing African bodies as pathological, diseased and broken (Tamale, 2011a; 2013).

However, studies of historical and contemporary African sexualities attest to the presence of the erotic and a women-centred desire across Africa. One such example is the African ontology of 'Osunality', or African eroticism, constituted on the two principles of sexuality (pleasure) and fertility (reproduction)[21]. Òsun is a female deity of fertility who authorises and reinforces female sexuality, without negating male sexuality, in this way authorising mutual pleasure (Nzegwu, 2011). Tamale (2011a) speaks to recent studies which have analysed the workings of sexual pleasure, the erotic and desire such as Moyer & Mbelwa's (2003) study exploring the messages embedded in local kangas that Tanzanian women wrap loosely around their waists; Nzegwu's (2006) discussion of Igbo celebration of vaginal power in Nigeria; or Tamale's (2005) exploration of the Ssenga institutions of sexual initiation among the Baganda of Uganda.

Despite such work, patriarchal western discourses on sexuality have come to represent one of the dominant discourses in Africa, including South Africa (Steyn & Van Zyl, 2009).Women's lack of access to a discourse of sexual pleasure and desire within hegemonic discourses of gender and sexuality is well rehearsed (Arnfred, 2004; Lesch, 2000; McFadden, 2006; Steyn & Van Zyl, 2009; Shefer & Foster, 2009). This literature argues that sexuality is constructed as a male terrain, and the presence of the ubiquitous 'sexual double standard' sees boys and men lauded for their sexual conquests and behaviour in marked contrast to the stigmatisation and punishment meted out to girls and women for similar behaviour (Holland et al, 1996, Shefer & Foster, 2009). Within hegemonic heterosex, the discourse of difference (Shefer & Foster, 2009) regulates and reproduces gendered subjectivities constructed through notions of the 'male sexual drive discourse' (Hollway, 1989), in contrast to feminine romantic love and affectivity. However, it is important to note that these racialised and gendered ideologies of sexuality inform but do not constrain women's sexual subjectivities and practices (Bryant & Schofield, 2007; Crawley & Willman, 2017).

[21] I am by no means setting up western and African systems of thought on sexuality as two distinct homogenous blocks. Tamale (2011) is eloquent on the need to consider and take into account the diversity and multiplicity of African sexualities.

Marie is a middle class, white Afrikaans woman in her early sixties. She shares how her work as an escort, where sexual encounters were negotiated as commercial transactions, gave her the tools and confidence to refuse to continue having sex within her personal relationships if she was not enjoying it.

> *There was a period when I came back […] from overseas when I worked as an escort to supplement my income. And that was an incredibly liberating experience, because one night when I was having sex with [...] a guy [not a client] […] I wasn't enjoying it and I just thought, 'Fuck this, why must I do this?' So I just took him and I threw him off and I said 'That's it, you can go home now' [laughs]. And it was the first time I had decisively said no and that whole guilt thing of women saying no and cockteasing just, just went by the wayside. I just thought, 'Fuck this, if I'm not enjoying it, then I'm not doing it'. So that was, that came out of that relationship of escorting, is being able to negotiate your sexuality in a contractual way.*

She rejects cultural notions of feeling obligated to provide a man access to her body because she is in a relationship with him. She refuses the label 'cocktease' which had previously kept her in sexual encounters she was not enjoying. For the first time, she prioritises her own sexual pleasure. She highlights the ability and power to negotiate as important dimensions of feeling entitled to sexual pleasure:

> *I would have more sex if I had the time, I mean I'm definitely a slut, there's no question about it. I'm proudly out as a slut. [I use the word slut] to reclaim women's* ***pleasure*** *in sex because I really, I do enjoy sex and I think, I think everybody should, and I hate the repressiveness around women's sexuality, you know. I can see my young niece, you know, and particularly religion and ugh, oh God, I don't even want to think about it you know, how that* ***containment****, how you have to play so carefully, how your identity plays out.*

Marie argues that women need to reclaim their entitlement to sexual pleasure, railing against hegemonic cultural repression of women's sexuality. In particular she notes the key role that religion plays in regulating women's sexuality. This is similar to Jolly et al's (2013) argument that religious organisations promote some of the most negative prescriptions

about sexuality. They highlight that a key legacy of Judaeo-Christian traditions is the idea that sex is dangerous and destructive. These ideas have become entangled in different ways with local cultural beliefs and traditions in Africa, contributing to what Arnfred (2004) describes as 'a Christian moral regime' (cited in Jolly et al, 2013: 9).

In South Africa, this ideology was imported and imposed on local communities during colonialism, reinforced by the ideologies of the National Party during Apartheid, with (dis)continuities in the contemporary context (Arnfred, 2004; Steyn & Van Zyl, 2009; Tamale, 2011a). Marie alludes to how regulatory systems which control women's expression of sexual desire and pleasure are not simply discourses of yesteryear. Her mention of her young niece draws attention to how these discourses seem to be alive and well within younger white Afrikaner generations. This reflects the findings of recent studies, which have highlighted how patriarchal male dominance in heterosexual practices continues to undermine women's sexual agency. Working across class and race, in spite of some cultural changes and contestations, women's sexual agency is invariably constrained once entering into relationships with men (Babatunde & Ake, 2015; Jewkes & Morrell, 2012).

However, there is a need to acknowledge that along with this repression, numerous authors have also given voice to the contestations to hegemonic heterosexuality. These studies foreground sexuality as a critical terrain, highlighting the ways in which women have been simultaneously constrained by and contested patriarchy. These have provided important counter narratives of women's sexual agency and critical consciousness, as well as insights into women's perceptions and experiences of sexual pleasure (Arnfred, 2004; Bennett & Chigudu, 2012; Bosch & Holland-Muter, 2012; Jolly et al, 2013; McFadden, 1992; 2003; Matebeni, 2012a; Moyer & Mbelwa, 2003; Nzegwu, 2006; Spronk, 2012, Tamale, 2005). This confirms that any exploration and theorisation of women's sexualities needs to take women's heterogeneity and multifaceted experiences into account (Masvawure, 2011).

5.1.2. INHABITING LESBIAN DESIRE AND SEXUAL PLEASURE

Narratives in this study have revealed the range of ways lesbians navigate patriarchal heteronormativities which outlaw women's desire for women. These narratives reveal how they negotiated a range of social and cultural obstacles to experiencing sexual pleasure with

women. Butch's narrative reveals how she could only really inhabit sexual pleasure after she found self-acceptance as a lesbian.

Butch is a young lesbian of colour in her late twenties. She lives with her siblings in a house effectively owned by her parents. Her father is Muslim while her mother is Christian, although she says education was really the religion in her family home. She came out to her parents when she was twelve. They did not react very well to that, with her dad angrily asking her 'Why are you out to get me?' But it was the near expulsion from high school during her final year, after a kiss between herself and her girlfriend was witnessed, that brought things to a head. Both sets of parents were called in, and both Butch and her girlfriend found themselves interrogated by the headmistress and under surveillance from school staff thereafter. They were forcibly separated at school and their social interaction cut off. Threatened with expulsion as their behaviour had been 'against the school code', it is only through Butch's father's intervention that they were allowed to write their final exams. It was a very traumatic year and saw Butch moving from being a straight A student to nearly failing her final year. Family relationships became mired in conflict about her lesbian sexuality and gender presentation. She began a long period of struggling with her emotional wellbeing, managing the loss of her first intense love relationship, as well as her sense of shame, and discomfort with her lesbian subjectivity in the face of parental rejection and societal disapproval. She had already begun self-harming from the age of 12, and her guilt contributed to her growing depression. She moved in and out of a series of same sex encounters and relationships, continuing to self-harm before being interned in a health care facility after a suicide attempt and break down.

Butch's narrative mirrors local studies which highlight how stigmatisation and victimisation often result in self-harm, drug and alcohol abuse and suicide ideation (Holland-Muter, 2013; Nel & Shapiro, 2011; Wells & Polders, 2004). This is particularly so for learners and young people who are still financially or emotionally dependent on their families (Bhana, 2014, Sanger, 2013). Nel & Shapiro (2011) found that parental reactions to their lesbian children strongly influenced how they 'went on to deal with their own lives'.

It was during this time, through her work with an affirming psychologist, and acting on the advice of a supportive university lecturer to find lesbian community, that she begins to

accept herself. Butch shares that after the pressure let up to stop being an 'inside lesbian' i.e. to keep her lesbianism 'within the family' and to herself, she has felt much better with herself and her sexual subjectivity. Butch says that June, a significant sexual relationship in the last few years, also helped her become more comfortable with her own body and her gender, which 'allowed her to be open to certain things during sex'. Butch's narrative reveals that her ability to give, receive and feel sexual pleasure was intertwined with her journey towards self-acceptance:

> *[…] Right now I'm able to really enjoy sex. For the past six years I've been able to really, really enjoy sex for what sex is. Um, but I think my previous partners, before June, I wasn't always able to, I wouldn't be able to really desire sex or to want sex, whereas now I find myself thinking about sex all the fucking time, cos I really enjoy sex these days. And I think that it comes from enjoying who I am in the space I occupy, and what I do, and what I study, and who my friends are, and those things.*

Narratives of lesbian sexual practice and pleasure need consider the hegemonic discourse and social recognition that penile penetration of the vagina has been constituted as *the* definition of 'having sex' (Butler, 1990/1999; Jackson & Scott, 2007; Kendall, 1998). Within this hegemonic discourse of heteronormative sexuality, heterosex is constructed through gendered models, positioning male and female sexuality in relation to each other, either in patriarchal or more egalitarian models (Nzegwu, 2011). In addition, hegemonic racialised constructions of desire see black lesbians constructed as unAfrican (Dlamini, 2006; Lewis, 2011). These systems of thought do not contemplate culturally recognised and socially located erotic desire and sexual practice between women, either black and white. It is these systems that underlie the cultural bafflement revealed in the classic question often posed in relation to lesbian desire and sexual practice, 'so what do lesbians do in bed anyway?'

The normative assumption that women do not have a sexual desire of their own independent of men is disrupted by the recognition of lesbian desire and subjectivity (Distiller, 2005; Jalas, 2005). A number of authors argue that desiring and enjoying a sexual connection with other women is at the core of a lesbian identity (Chinn, 2003; Farquhar, 2000; Kitzinger, 1987). Within the South African context, Potgieter (1997) defines a lesbian

as 'women who love women'. Matebeni (2009b; 2012a) is critical of Potgieter's (1997) understanding of lesbianism, arguing that Potgieter desexualises the category lesbian, and fails to explore 'who is lesbian' and what is lesbianism in the South African context. I agree with Matebeni's (2009b) contention of the need to bring the negotiation and performance of sexual practice into the category lesbian. I argue for the need to centre and foreground a language and a theorisation of lesbian desire and/or love between women (Jalas, 2005). Butch's narrative reveals how self-acceptance and a positive lesbian subjectivity are important dimensions of being able to embody and enact lesbian desire and sexual pleasure.

5.1.3. OVERTURNING CULTURES OF 'UNDESIREABILITY' OF OTHER-ABLED BODIES

Sharonne is a middle class, coloured woman in her late forties who lives in the southern suburbs of Cape Town (see map in Appendix One). After being involved in an accident, Sharonne is paralysed from the waist down, left with very limited sensation in different parts of her body and moves around by means of a wheelchair. She shares how she had to manage these very abrupt changes in her body:

> *I went from being an able-bodied person to being disabled overnight. So it was like having a whole different **body**, a whole different life you know? Everything, you know, everything that we knew just [clicks fingers] was gone, and I was also depressed. […] [Within her relationship] I was starting to feel, inadequate, lesser than, uhm, you know, that I'm damaged goods now […]*

Historical discourses construct certain body types as the norm. Disability becomes visible when individuals are seen to be differing from the norm (Garland-Thomson, 2012; Naidu, 2015). Thinking through the implications of living with a disability in a disablist society requires one to interrogate the effects of normative ideas of what it means to be human and the implications of the ability/disability system which values bodies differently (Garland-Thomson, 2012; Mohamed & Shefer, 2015). One such set of stigmatising discourses constructs people living with disabilities as asexual, hypersexual, sexually invisible or sexually lacking, in other words, as sexually lesser than (Das & Joseph-Salisbury, 2016; Mohamed & Shefer, 2015). Erickson (2016) refers to these processes as creating 'cultures of undesirability'. These cultures of undesirability are gendered, racialised and classed processes (Garland-Thomson, 2012; Mohamed & Shefer, 2015) and also become imbricated

in heteronormativities. Levels of stigmatisation deepen when one considers same sex desires of people living with disabilities (Barry, 2006; 2013; Chappell, 2015; Das & Joseph-Salisbury, 2016). Sharonne's narrative highlights how she had to grapple with the implications of the changes wrought on her body on her sense of self-worth within her sexual relationship. In a similar manner to the South Africa women in Naidu's (2015) study on women living with disabilities and their negotiations with their sexuality, we see how Sharonne had a deep sense of her own inferiority, of feeling like 'damaged goods'.

Sharonne becomes involved in the people with disabilities movement and disability politics. She develops a transformed political sense of herself and begins to embrace her disability. She has a growing realisation that 'it's not me that's challenged, you know. I am challenged by the lack of accessibility in society'. Sharonne shares how falling in love with another woman with a disability was a turning point for her. Although they never had a relationship, her attraction and desire for another woman living with a disability led to her own transformed sense of self, body and desirability:

> *That was a turning point for me, because that's when I realised that you could still find someone **hugely** desirable [laughs] and fall in love, you know, with someone who, who is in a wheelchair, and sometimes pisses in their pants and can't walk and you know. Um, so ja, it was a **big** turning point for me.*

Sharonne was struggling with socially constructed notions of her undesirability. This is quite different to notions of hypersexuality socially ascribed to women with intellectual or emotional challenges (Shuttleworth et al, 2012). These socially constructed notions of 'disabled femininity' draw on gendered ideologies of beauty and embodiment (Mohamed & Shefer, 2015). Sharonne's counter narrative reveals how she had to confront, resist and overcome deeply internalised dominant notions of the body, beauty and desirability. Her coming out on the other side of her 'turning point' reveals her embrace of her sexuality, her sense of entitlement to sexual pleasure:

> *I think I'm quite emotionally intense and that translates to sexual intensity. I am, I'm a very sensual person and I'm definitely a very sexual person. I can have sex every day. I don't have a problem [laughs] you know. So I'm very in touch with my sexuality, and uhm, ja, I, I feel like a very sexual person, and I think it also*

comes from embracing uhm, you know, your body [pause] and loving yourself and [pause] being able to be in touch with your body, you know, even in a paralysed body. Uhm, people make assumptions you don't get turned on or you know, that you can't really have sex. It's an absolute myth. I've had the best sex in my life in a wheelchair [laughs].

Sharonne's counter narrative highlights her successful subversion of normative constructions of sexuality. Her narrative reveals how falling in love with and being attracted to somebody who was living with a disability, led to her own acceptance of her own body. She was able to reconnect with herself as a sexual being and her body, through erotic feeling (Chinn, 2003). This transformation ultimately opens the way for her to explore and engage with her ability to feel sexual desire, and her love for herself and others.

The above three regulatory regimes governing which bodies and categories of people, within which relationships, have cultural entitlement to sexual pleasure and desire have emerged through the workings of discursive systems grounded in colonial writings, religion, medicine, sexology, anthropology, and even in the workings of the state within different temporalities, places and contexts. As Butler (1993:2) argues, the 'materiality' of sex, what constitutes 'real' sex, who can do what to whom, and in what kind of socially sanctioned relationship, is 'forcibly produced' through the 'repeated and violent circumscription of cultural intelligibility'. These regulatory regimes have constructed ideas around aberrant categories of people who are presented as either hypersexual or asexual, in relation to the normative. These systems of cultural intelligibility are contextually specific and malleable to change. Alongside these hegemonic regulatory regimes, a series of counter narratives, conflicting sets of knowledge and practices, recognise and speak to the sexual and cultural rights of sexual 'minorities', and a growing call for African women's sex positivity (Arnfred, 2004; Bennett, 2009; Ekine and Abass, 2013; Posel, 2005; Tamale, 2011). This wide array of discourses are the resources that were available to lesbians within this study to make sense of their sexuality and embodied sexual practices.

5.2. TROUBLING GENDERED REGIMES OF SEXUAL PLEASURE

It was unsurprising that hegemonic gendered discourses structured lesbian counter narratives of sexual pleasure in the study. Participants' sexual subjectivities and gender

expression were evident in their relationship with their bodies, who/what they found desirable, what they could or could not do sexually, their experiences of sexual pleasure, and the meanings attached to these practices.

These constructions of erotic queer world making were produced through a series of gender regimes. Firstly, a strong discourse of love and intimacy emerged, based on the belief that sexual pleasure was best produced within the context of a stable, monogamous emotional relationship. A second discourse of sexual pleasure emerged within or in relation to the categories of butch/femme lesbian gender identities. Focusing specifically on femme sexual embodiments, these narratives revealed how, while embracing seemingly patriarchal heteronormative roles, participants simultaneously subvert and trouble binaried hierarchies. This reveals that gendered lesbian identities do not have stable content, meaning or significance. Rather, their multiple and varied embodied enactments of desire and sexual practice open a range of interpretive possibilities, revealing 'complex designations of desire that often exceed the names and categories assigned to them' (Rodríguez, 2014: 120).

5.2.1. EMOTIONALITY AND EMBODIED SEXUAL INTIMACY

Although there were a variety of discourses in relation to sexual pleasure, a very strong narrative spoke of sexual pleasure as preferable and perhaps only possible within the context of a stable love relationship. Here, in a seeming re-inscription of gendered normativities equating women's desire and sexuality with love and intimacy (Fine, 1998; Shefer & Foster, 2009)), love ignites and produces a romanticised sexual embodiment. This was expressed by black and white lesbians, as well as lesbians who identified themselves within butch/femme lesbian gender identities, and those who did not.

Jay, a coloured more butch performing lesbian compares her experiences of sexual pleasure in and outside of a serious relationship in the following excerpt:

> *Sexual pleasure is, um, it's different in a relationship [compared to] when you're having a fling or a one night stand. Because then sexual pleasure is just…an orgasm. I mean it's a quicky, or…not a* ***serious*** *relationship. And then when I'm in a relationship, it's completely different where…there are so many other things that you're thinking of while you're having sex. It's breathing, it's smell, it's the different, um…textures of skin on different parts of the body, if there's music*

*playing, where you are, all of those type of things coming to…ja. Then it's never really just a **quicky** type of thing. Because then it's all of those things going through my mind. Ja. And all of those things make it exciting for me […], how excited the other person is.*

In a similar fashion, Rusty, a coloured Muslim gay woman, shares the long lasting effects of sexual pleasure experienced within a respectful love relationship:

*In betweeners is more **lus**t, you know. Uhm, it's a case of there's chemistry and you [pause] it's not done with **respect** to self and to the other party. I think it's more a case of **needs** for that moment. Uh, it's a **need** or a desire for that moment and you **indulge** and uh, you walk away from it feeling satisfied. But not […] it wasn't a 'wow', you know? Uh, feeling so good that, that you want to go back for more or that you want this thing to last. Uh, if you do it with respect, uhm, and you do it with all your being and you know, and it's reciprocated, uhm, it comes from **both**, it comes from the **heart**. You know, when, I always say I don't, you know, uhm, you don't just make love to certain **parts** of the body, you make love to the **entire** body. It's when you, when you in bed with somebody, or you sleeping with somebody, or making love to somebody, making out, it's time that your animal instincts takes over. Uh, you forget about your God, you forget about the world, you are engrossed in another body, in a human being, and you find yourself in a total **blissful** [pause] uhm, **engagement** where you know, nothing matters. You forget about everything, and when you wake up from that uhm, [pause] engagement you feel [pause], you feel totally in awe of what you've been through. Almost to the effect that you know, when uhm, if she **touches** me and I'll get that, you know, I'll still **jerk** uh, that's how, that's how it is, yes.*

Sharonne, a coloured femme lesbian, notes the need for trust in order to experience sexual pleasure:

*Like I can't have sex outside of **that** context. It doesn't work for me, uhm, so sex is **very** connected to emotion. It's very much an expression of love for me, and it's very much a sacred act of love. Uhm, [pause] so ja I'd say I'm quite open, I'm*

open to experimentation, I'm open to [pause] pleasure, you know, I'm open to that but within the [pause] the confines of, of, of a partner that I really trust 'cause for me trust, trust in sex is very important and I'm also very aware of sexual diseases and uhm, [pause] you know, so HIV and all of that, so I'm very like, for me it's, it's between me and you and, and what we have with each other outside of having sex, uhm, and sex is also [pause] general intimacy that doesn't have to involve the sexual act, you know, se-, you know. Being a sexual being is being in your body, being present, being awake, being aware. It's like touch, it's like [pause] holding someone's hands, looking into their eyes, you know. [Susan: hmm] It's cooking them a meal. It's on so many different levels. But ja, I mean I would say [pause] I see myself as, as very sexual person, ja.

Casual sexual encounters are either disavowed completely (as in Sharonne's case) or foreground the temporary nature of these connections. Easily forgettable 'quickies', , inspired by 'mere lust' are contrasted with 'serious relationships' which foreground the intensity of sexual, emotional, physical and spiritual connections extending beyond the physical encounter. Emotional and spiritual connection is constructed through religiosity, 'a sacred act of love', or to being so intense, that you 'forget about your God'. It is the emotional intensity of the connection, its deeply romantic nature, which releases and opens the way to deeply embodied sexual experiences. This makes the participants sensitive to all the senses of touch, smell, sight and taste, intensifying the libidinal body. It speaks of an engagement with the whole body, not just 'parts' of the body. These embodied connections and experiences can be so intense that you lose reason, 'it releases your animal instincts', ' you forget the world', signifying a move beyond the social. These expressions of romantic sexual embodiment mirror Lorde's (1984) linking of the erotic, sensory experiences of the body with the spiritual in her ground breaking essay '*On the uses of the erotic*'. She highlights, 'the sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic or intellectual' that embraces the whole body, producing an energy that 'heightens and sensitizes and strengthens all experience' (cited in Chinn, 2003: 188).

5.2.2. Reworking of femme subjectivities, passivity and power

Similarly to strands of thought in both international and national literature, I argue that femme subjectivities not only inhabit, but also rework the scripts of patriarchal

heteronormativity (Butler, 1990; 1991; Cvetkovich, 1995; Matebeni, 2009a; 2012a; Morgan & Wieranga, 2005; Rodríguez, 2014 and Wieranga, 2005). I demonstrate how femme lesbian identities do not have a stable meaning or significance. Rather, their multiple and varied enactments of desire and sexual practice open a range of interpretive possibilities, revealing 'complex designations of desire that often exceed the names and categories assigned to them' (Rodríguez, 2014: 120). Femme lesbian participants subvert and trouble binaried hierarchies and the power embodied within certain sexual subjectivities and sexual acts such as butch/femme; masculine/feminine; top/bottom, active/passive; giving/receiving; fucking/being fucked and penetrating/being penetrated (Cvetkovich, 1995; Matebeni, 2012a; Rodríguez, 2014).

Both hegemonic patriarchal sexuality, as well as US based sex negative feminists within the feminist 'sex wars' (Vance, 1984; Rubin, 1984; Rich, 1986) have equated being sexually penetrated with domination, submission and passivity. However, contesting discourses argue for the need to foreground and recognise the power held by femmes within their enactments of the erotic dynamic, as well as the need to develop a more complex understanding of power. Within these sexual dynamics, there is a call to recognise that 'giving up power' is powerful and an active sexual practice, contributing to enjoyment of intense sexual pleasure (Cvetkovich, 1995; Johnson, 1992; Kennedy & Davis, 1993; MacCowan, 1992; Matebeni, 2012a; Nestle, 1981; Rodríguez, 2014). In short, they argue for a 'recasting of receptivity' (Cvetkovich, 1995: 129).

A number of narratives within the study reveal representations of femme agency and power, and a concomitant subverting of the equation of penetration with submission and domination. Denise, a white Afrikaans lower middle class lesbian, shares how her femme lover's (Lanel's) sexual performance is read by Denise as an invitation to take control and 'to fuck her like a man'. This reveals enactments of femme power, where performances of sexual pleasure and 'loss of control' of the femme partner, allow her butch lover to read her body and sexual cues (MacCowan, 1992). Denise shares:

> *[…] just the way she kissed me and touched me and made me feel […] I could feel that, with her, she wanted me in a way, in a sense of way that she wants a man, when a man fucks her, she wanted me to fuck her like one - there's no other way*

to say it. […] It depends on…(small laugh) […] I don't know, I… maybe she wanted to feel how a woman feels, and how they do it […] I just love being with a woman that wants to be with, that wants someone else to be in control.

Even though we are getting insight into her lover's feelings and needs through Denise's words, similar sentiments are echoed in many a femme narrative (MacCowan; 1992; Nestle, 1981; Rodríguez, 2014). Denise reveals to us Lanel's desire is to be fucked, to be controlled. This can be read, and many argue should be read, as an embodiment of Lanel's agency and control of the situation and not as Lanel being passive. *Giving up* control is not the same as *not having* control. Considering that Lanel is a heterosexual woman currently also involved with a man, Denise speculates it may be because Lanel was curious to experience a woman fucking her as a man would. Lanel's kisses and touches are testaments to her active participation in the sexual encounter, an active invitation to be 'fucked' and 'controlled'. This could be read as a re-inscription of hegemonic gender sexuality discourses, with Denise enacting hegemonic masculinity in taking control. But I would argue, this rather speaks to Denise and her sexual partner's lesbian erotic world making centred on Lanel giving up power , with Denise being able to read and respond to her lover's desires. Giving up control is one of the possible femme sexual pleasure practices, and the ability to read and respond to her lover's cues is one of the butch sexual pleasure practices.

A femme's erotic life world which incorporates inviting someone to 'take control' also implies the emotional and psychic risk involved in 'opening up and giving (her)self' (Cvetkovich, 1995). This highlights the strength implied in receptivity, the capacity to be open and embrace the world, to live inside the body and to actively receive. Within the femme erotic life world, her role is one of both receiving and giving pleasure back. She gives pleasure back by receiving and showing her pleasure.

In another example of femme embodiment of power and control, Light Blue shares how her femme lover, Toolz, refused to step out of normative butch/femme sexual roles whereby Toolz had positioned Light Blue as the giver and herself as the receiver. It was clear that power did not work in a unilinear direction held by the butch and wielded over the femme. Light Blue was unable to shift the terms of their sexual encounters. Light Blue notes, 'it *was* her expectation that I kind of meet her expectation […] They're quite *set* in their ways and

their thinking'. Light Blue provides a glimpse of how the gendered 'rules' which were supposed to govern their sexual relationship were at odds with some of Light Blue's own needs:

Toolz was very distinct, you know, uhm, she, she wouldn't give [pause] but I would insist, you know, I mean. Ah look, it's **sex,** so why, why wouldn't I get? And she just didn't know what to do with that because it's not her mentality, ja. […] I would get very frustrated […] it's also one of the reasons why we couldn't be together long because she really wouldn't know, uhm, what to do with that. [Long pause] and she wasn't **comfortable** giving.

This exchange reveals the inadequacy of the sexualised dichotomies of butch/femme for describing power relations, where the butch is seen to hold the social power whilst the femme is seen to be the passive dominated party. In this case, it reveals the power of the 'bottom', in that Light Blue was not able to shift Toolz's expectations of a very particular sexual 'performance contract' with very particular sexual enactments and roles. From quite a different perspective, Light Blue shares how her self-identified femme lover's refusal to touch and penetrate Light Blue demonstrated Toolz's level of control and agency within their sexual relationship.

This dynamic was also explored in Matebeni's (2012a) study, where butch lesbians shared their frustration at not being given the freedom to step out of prescribed sexual scripts, in order to enjoy being seduced and/or pleased by their lovers. Matebeni (2012a) reveals how there are a range of sexual normativities and cultures within black lesbian communities in Johannesburg. These include traditional butch/femme sexual scripts (also discussed by Swarr, 2012), as well as a range of lesbian sexual performativities which reveal 'their ability to resist both butch and sex/gender norms in their context, and free themselves from these social trappings' (Matebeni, 2012a: 233). This highlights how erotic life worlds of individual lesbians are governed by lesbian community norms, and each partnership has to engage and negotiate their individual needs and wants in relation to them. As Light Blue's narrative reveals, not all lesbians are able to reach an agreeable consensus within their sexual relationships.

Vivi is a 'femme' presenting, middle class coloured lesbian woman who lives with her long term partner of nine years. Her narrative reveals the contingent nature of her 'role' within

casual or more serious sexual relationships and the kind of erotic practices she will enact or allow within these different categories. She describes that she would only ever have flings with and/or be a sex buddy with femmes, bisexuals and 'curious heterosexuals'. She forms long term more emotionally committed relationships with butches. These different categories of relationship inform how she performs sexually within the sexual encounter/relationship and the kind of sexual practices she allows or expects. The difference for her is located in the 'seriousness' of the relationship, and the 'category' of person with whom she is having sex:

Well one night stands is uh, there's a difference. There's always a difference. First when I decide it's just going to be a one night stand, already my mind is made up, that, 'You know what? This is just for fucking around'. And even **then** when it comes to fucking around, [pause] I would fuck her, she doesn't fuck me. Yes, I would do the fucking […] She gets to touch me, but she doesn't get to penetrate, uhm, me. […] You know what, I'm, [pause] you feel something, however, it doesn't go **beyond**, to a feeling of being in love or wanting to have more, or something like that. […] [In longer term relationships with butches] I always make it clear to them that, 'You know what, this is a two way street. I'm not just going to lie down and you fuck me and I cannot fuck you. If it is that we go into a longer uh, relationship, uhm, I, you satisfy me, I satisfy you in both way'. So I always kind of make that clear to my partners, ja.

Vivi's narrative speaks to how she consciously controls her body and her emotionality within her varied sexual encounters. She frames her one night stands as strictly physical sexual encounters, with no emotional connection, during which she seems to call the shots. She embodies a power and control over what she does and what gets done to her and how. Vivi does not associate being touched intimately as a problem within these sexual encounters. However, she does draw the line at being penetrated. Within her erotic life world, her femmeness in casual sexual encounters is constructed through a discourse of 'situational untouchability'. She positions herself as a non-penetrable femme in her casual sexual encounters with other femmes, bisexuals or 'curious heterosexuals'.

Vivi's erotic life world sees her reserving the act of (reciprocal) penetration for butches. Drawing on a romantic discourse, Vivi shares how she constructs emotional and longer term

relationships with butches, relationships that entail 'a feeling of being in love or wanting to have more'. Within her erotic life world, the butch figure is positioned as being the only lesbian subjectivity that she trusts to hold her emotionally and who can offer her a sense of stability and future. This is because she believes that butch lesbians are committed lesbians, unlike the sexual tourism she experiences from 'curious heterosexuals', or the instability and lack of guarantee offered by femmes and bisexuals. This attitude devalues femme lesbians and their status as authentic lesbians. The idea that femme lesbians are not 'real' lesbians is a commonly held belief (Eves, 2004 cited in Matebeni, 2012a) and is reflective of a misogyny directed towards femmes. They are treated with suspicion and always seen as potentially heterosexual (Matebeni, 2012a). In this way, I argue that Vivi's erotic life world is characterised by an internalisation of this femme misogyny, complicit with dominant lesbian gender normativities.

However, Vivi simultaneously subverts the norms of hegemonic lesbian gendered identities in that she is not only a 'receiver'. Similar to Matebeni's (2012a) lesbians who enjoy and expect 50/50 within their sexual relationships, Vivi is adamant that she only accepts a 'two way street' within her relationships with butch partners. Her erotic life world sees her valuing sexual reciprocity as a sign of intimacy and equality within her emotional and sexual relationships with butch lesbians. Vivi's narrative demonstrates her agency, power and ability to influence and determine the conditions in which she engages in different kinds of sexual encounters, and the terms on which she will have a longer term sexual relationship.

These narratives have revealed how femme lesbian subjectivities subvert and trouble meanings and power ascribed to the binaries: active/passive and in control/being controlled. Femme erotic world making, hegemonically associated with passivity and being dominated, re-signifies how power is understood. Their narratives ask us to recognise that giving up power and opening oneself to receive are powerful positionalities. Power is also enacted through femme performances of sexual pleasure - giving pleasure through receiving - and through a femme's 'refusal to touch'. The narratives have revealed in addition how these femme lesbian subjectivities and practices are constructed in relation to others, depending on if the encounters are casual or within more permanent relationships. The femme narratives do not only resist hegemonic constructions of femme as weaker and passive. They re-inscribe dominant narratives which construct butch lesbians as the more authentic

lesbian, better positioned to be relationship material, while devaluing femme lesbians who are relegated to 'fun times' and for casual sex.

5.3. THE LESBIAN TOUCH: PRODUCING A LESBIAN CENTRED FRAME OF SEXUAL PLEASURE AND DESIRE

In this section, an exploration of narratives from the study focusing on masturbation and touch will reveal a lesbian-centred frame of sexual pleasure and desire. This extends the erotogenic body beyond the genitalia, and produces, innovates and transforms hegemonic libidinal zones, thereby extending the frame beyond phallocentric culture. Narratives centred the lesbian hand as a sign of lesbian erotic power and independence (Wednesday, 2008). There is also a centring of the senses –touch, taste, sight, hearing –and of fantasy and visuality. This visuality does not speak to Foucault's (1978) regulation and surveillance, nor the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975) which objectifies and regulates women's sexual autonomy and pleasure. Rather it brings to view the 'power of looking' (hooks, 1992) with the lesbian gaze (Gras, 2016) –direct, prolonged eye contact filled with sexual meaning and promise; the gaze of a sympathetic, aroused lover, a gaze that works in collaboration with the other senses and the mind. The participants' narratives of erotic world making draw on the body, heart, mind and fantasy in creating and centring a lesbian inspired frame. Affectivity, the body, visuality and fantasy produce and act as resources for 'perverse desire' speaking for itself.

The lesbian narratives within the study reveal that although masturbation has been touted as a very common sexual practice, it is one which is shrouded in secrecy. Not all the participants in the study enjoyed masturbation. A few of them disavowed its status as a sexual practice of sexual pleasure, while others stated that they needed the relationality provided by another body. However, for some it was a central dimension of their erotic life worlds, a key sexual pleasuring practice. These were important narratives to highlight noting how masturbation is a signifier of entitlement to sexual pleasure and to one's sense of self as an autonomous sexual being. Hegemonic cultural norms are highly gendered, and commonly held notions view masturbation as a masculine prerogative.

Tass, an older white Afrikaans lesbian in her mid-forties, explains how she has always loved her body. She shares how she started masturbating when she was quite young, about six or seven. She notes how she didn't know what she was doing, sharing how 'it was a discovery

that [just] happened'. Tass does not only lay claim to masturbating, but frames it as having a sexual relationship with herself, elevating its status to one in which she communes with and enjoys herself sexually:

> *[…] I was just, I remember see, touching myself through my panties just, I just remember just, just touching myself at, and I remember just, I carried on touching myself and it was like, 'This is something nice that happens'. Uhm, I can't remember why it happened. It was just, I suppose* ***idly*** *just exploring my body. […] I did it for years without knowing what it was, and like I said when I became a teenager I could at least, 'Oh, ok'. And I used to go find library books with sex scenes in them, and really get turned [laughing] on by them and you know, also have my sexual fantasies and you know, uhm, touch myself.*

Tamara, a young coloured Muslim woman in her mid-twenties, shares how she masturbated for the first time when she was 13. It was a Friday night. She had watched something, an intense sex scene in a movie. This moved her, aroused her, and in spite of her initial fear and surprise, she responded to her body's call.

> *I just felt [pause] like, 'Mmm, what's going on? Like let's see what's happening?' and then ja, found my clit and wala. It was, ja, it was intense. [laughs] It kind of scared me, I'm like, 'Holy shit, what's happening?' And ja, ever since then I've, ja enjoyed it. [laughs] I think, it's not a normal amount [laughs]. Ja. […] Uh, I think I basically masturbate every night, ja. It's a good way to fall asleep. [laughs] […] Obviously like first, with me, like I first need to watch something or* ***read*** *like, surprisingly reading like very smutty things turns me on, uhm, much more than like porn. […] Anyway, I need to kind of like get something to get me started, [pause] and then I become aroused, uh, get into bed, turn off the lights [laughs]. That's the one thing like I, I cannot masturbate with the lights on. I don't know how to, and I cannot masturbate with my right hand […] Ja! Ja, I can only come with my left hand! I've tried this, like as an experiment. I, I can't come with my right hand. It's, I don't know, maybe that's some deep moral thing, you know, right hand is clean, I don't know, it's weird.*

Both Tass and Tamara speak of their entry into masturbation as the outcome of surprising bodily desires which they frame as 'spontaneously' emerging, their sexual desire creeping up

on them without warning. Tass touches herself through her panties while idly exploring her body, while Tamara responds to the stimulus of the visual, an enactment of sex on the screen, which fires her imagination and her body. They both highlight how the secret, solitary exploration of their bodies becomes a regular feature of their erotic life worlds. However, Tass subverts the notion of masturbation as a solitary exercise, framing her enactment of self-pleasure as a relational practice. Within Tass's erotic life world, she constructs its meaning as an expression of her love for herself, a love for her body, the materialisation of her sexual relationship with herself. Tamara seems to be much more functional in her appreciation of the role of masturbation in her life world, framing it as a means to an end, 'to help her relax'.

Both Tass and Tamara speak to how masturbation is considered taboo, not 'real sex'. Tass's recognition of the taboo nature is revealed through how she feels she had to explain to her partner that she masturbates often and regularly - breaking the custom of hiding these practices from one's sexual partners (HOLAAfrica, 2016). In Tass's erotic life world, masturbation is a legitimate and important part of her sexual embodiment. For Tamara, on the other hand, her narrative reveals that masturbation seems to be tinged with stigma. Although it features as a regular means for Tamara to enact sexual pleasure, her laughing admission that 'it's not a normal amount', reveals that perhaps she feels her daily masturbation is excessive. This could be an admission of the societal control exerted on sexuality through the western construction of masturbation as taboo (Foucault, 1978). Needing to masturbate in the dark, where she cannot see herself, and only being able to touch herself with her left, 'unclean' hand (according to Islamic belief) speak to the moral dilemmas with which she seems to grapple.

The literature on western hegemonic sexuality reveals how masturbation was actively controlled and discouraged. Medical and religious doctrines not only forbade masturbation, but through the ages there have been a range of regulatory practices which actively controlled and discouraged the practice, especially for children (Foucault, 1978). Although today there are no longer regulatory practices of tying children's hands up at night, or ironing the clitoris, these have been replaced by cultural myths (such as you will go blind, get hairy hands etc.) and stigma. These notions were clearly brought to South Africa through the teachings of the missionaries and medical doctrines and they strongly contradicted African

based ontologies of sexuality and sexual pleasure (Nzegwu, 2011; Tamale, 2005). Practices such as labia stretching, apart from acculturating the genitalia, introduce young girls to their genitalia, providing them with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with their genitals, in both individual and collective sessions of exploration and massage. In effect, they introduce young girls to the act of masturbation, the discovery of other erogenous zones and invite them to discover their bodies (Nzegwu, 2011). These narratives reveal how their 'body-erotic potential' (Dowsett, 1996: 159) gets materialised through the 'doing of something nice' (Bryant & Schofield, 2007). Their practices speak to counter narratives of independent sexual pleasure as woman, as lesbians. They bring into view a language and practice which constructs an erotic queer world making based on a sexual relationship with oneself, independent of another body, and of men.

Considering more relational practices with another body(ies), and narratives of touch, fantasy and visuality, Marie's and Sharonne's narratives of sexual touch highlight the sensitivities of the skin, and how the interplay between memory, fantasy, mind and bodily sensations are a potent combination. Their narratives reveal the different ways in which they made sense of, and sensed, their sexual embodiment – in relation to hegemonic notions of sexuality, and/or the range of lesbian-centred narratives of sexual pleasure and desire.

Marie, a white middle class lesbian in her sixties, speaks to how fingering, the stimulation of the vagina, vulva and clitoris, is one of her favourite sexual practices:

> *[…] fingering is one of my favourite ways of coming, uh, because of how, how dextrous the fingers are, you know, so, and it's, plays a huge role in my fantasies […] fantasies that I've actually lived out. Like for instance at a restaurant, sitting and being fingered, you know, and just I mean, virtually just hardly being able to be touched and just coming.*

Marie highlights how fingers are an important part of the lesbian gesture, fingers which make up the lesbian hand (Merck, 2000). Here, Marie highlights what has often been posited as the advantages of fingers over other objects or body parts that penetrate the cunt – they are 'dexterous'. Fingers can change shape; increase and decrease in number; they can shift in intensity – lightly caressing, whispering over the skin or fucking hard and fast; move in and

out rhythmically, or hold still, feeling and intensifying those pulsations; find that G-spot, push right to the back up to the cervix or concentrate on the entrance of the vagina, just at the top where it's so good. Fingers can slide along the sides of the labia, slip inside, on and around the clit, creating intensities, bringing together disparate surfaces.

As Grosz (1995) argues, this makes the hand a sexual organ, the fingers a site. Extending Freud's hegemonic psychoanalytic or physiological models of sexual pleasure, hands and fingers within this lesbian frame of sexual pleasure, produce pleasure not only for another person, but also for their own 'orgasmic intensities'. The fingers and the hand participate in the intensities they kindle in the cunt. Unlike Cvetkovich's (1995) 'non orgasmic objects' (1995: 134), Grosz's hands and fingers do not simply 'induce pleasure in another, for another, but also always for itself' (1995: 288).

Marie also evokes how public sex is one of her sexual fantasies, demonstrating how pleasure is produced not only by the touching and feel of skin on skin, but also through fantasy. Fingers and the hand play a large role in her fantasies of public sex, fantasies which she has had the pleasure of realising. Her fantasies draw on and play with a public maintenance of control, while experiencing great sexual pleasure, transgressing taboos of public sex.

Sharonne shares another perspective on sexually embodied touch and fantasy. As discussed earlier, Sharonne is unable to feel touch on her body from below her breasts downwards due to paralysis. She frames her experiences of sexual touch and pleasure through a grammar of visuality. The visual brings touch to life, inciting her senses, sexual desire and pleasure:

> *Well my breasts are very, very sensitive, because uh, my paralysed from underneath, just underneath my breasts so I always think of having like two clitorises. [laughs] It is rather nice. Uhm, ja so I'd say they, that's, and my neck, probably, those are the two most sensitive areas of my body. But touch everywhere works, you know, and if someone is touching me* ***there****, I'll, it still turns me on. I can't feel it, but I can see, you know, and* ***sometimes*** *with penetration, I can feel. It's v-, it's not how you would experience it, but you can feel a sensation of something going-, ja, I can feel some, it's very faint, very, very faint. But ja, it's more the visual that will turn me on. And my body still reacts [pause] uhm, you know, like I will still lubricate and I'll still, not as*

much as be-, you know, as my able-bodied years but sex is very much in the mind. It's very, like, this is the biggest organ [chuckles] and that's where all the, the turning on happens, you know. Uhm, but ja, just to, to be with someone intimately, [makes noise with mouth] it's lekker [chuckles].

Sharonne highlights how her mind is the biggest site of sexual desire. She experiences touch and sensation unevenly on her body, touch which is hegemonically associated with the ability to feel sexual pleasure and incite desire. Her counter narrative reveals how she understands and experiences touch and sensation from a different perspective. Her breasts are extremely sensitive, which she likens to having two clitorises, speaking to a body of excess and multiplicity. Touch, sight, and mind work together, bringing together the inside and outside of her body to produce sexual pleasure. Her narrative challenges notions of asexuality culturally ascribed to 'other-abled' bodies, revealing a strong sense of sexuality and desire. Sharonne's narrative mirrors Kafer's (2013) challenges to the framing of living with a disability as a site of no life and no future, highlighting the critical relationship between disability, gender and sexuality. Sharonne's portrayal of sexual touch locates the physicality of these experiences within faint sensation, with a louder and more direct relationship to the visual and the mind. In a triangular relationship, she describes how her sight works with her mind to amplify and make sense of, and sense, the tactile. In this way she provides a multi-vocal, multiple register of her experiences of sexual touch.

Mirroring Sharonne's and Marie's register of the touch and senses, Light Blue's narrative of penetration picks up on the excess and abundance of sensation, centring the pain and pleasure of fisting. She shares her stories of being introduced to and also introducing (not always successfully) her subsequent lovers to the practice of fisting or fist fucking. This entails inserting one's whole hand either in the vagina or the anus. Within western lesbian discourses of sexuality, fisting was associated with sadomasochism, repudiated by the 'sex as danger' lesbian feminists as an enactment of violence and oppression, while enjoyed and defended by sex positive feminists as a site of transgression and liberatory sex (Rich, 1986). Light Blue says:

[Chuckles] The first time I was fisted was [gasps] ***incredible****. It was with S, she actually taught it [chuckles]. Oh my* ***word****! I had never come across that and I was*

blown [pause] completely, so I tend to play there, a lot! Uh, I love giving it, I love receiving it and I've had to negotiate my way around that, because uhm, [long pause] M didn't [pause] know it [pause] but quite enjoyed it when we did it. T didn't either, and it's quite receiving, and B, not at all [chuckles]. Not at all, uhm, nor would she give it, so [pause] ja my sexuality was very repressed here. Very, very repressed. And I'm, I wouldn't say I'm ***wild*** *but I* ***love*** *the freedom to be, it, in anything so uhm, ja. So fisting is my most favourite, quite sore but* ***pleasurable*** *[chuckles].*

Light Blue's narrative highlights her emotional and affective reaction to fisting – it was 'mind blowing'. Fisting penetrated not only a boundary of a before and after in her sexual practice, but the boundaries of her body and mind in new and unimagined ways. Her experiences of fisting are framed within the duality and co-existence of pleasure and pain. A convert, 'she loves to play there'. For her, the enjoyment of fisting is experienced in both giving and receiving it. This, however, is what presents a problem. Her lovers are not all willing to go there, an experience which she frames as 'repression' of her sexuality. She loves the idea of breaking boundaries, pushing the limits – 'I'm not wild but I love the freedom to be in anything'. Fisting for her is possibility and freedom, extending hegemonic notions of heteronormative penetration.

Light Blue's narrative reveals the complexity of lesbian erotic world making in the range of ways penetration can take place, and its role within lesbian communities. Penetration within lesbian erotic world making requires a different language to patriarchal heteronormative cultures, and acquires a range of meanings in relation to the range of objects of penetration. A lesbian erotic world making of sexual penetration entails a complexity that gets erased in a phallocentric culture that assumes that only penises do the penetrating, and only vaginas are penetrated (Cvetkovich, 1995). However, lesbian erotic world making expands the erotics of penetrating objects or body parts, which has been hegemonically limited to a focus on penises and phallic substitutes. Penetration occupies a particularly contentious position within lesbian erotic world making because of its association with heterosexuality and phallic-centred culture. Matebeni (2012a) speaks to some of these complexities within lesbian communities, notably the 'untouchability' of butch lesbians (Halberstam, 1998; Cvetkovich, 1995) and their difficulties with trust in providing access to their bodies. However, similarly to Cvetkovich's (1995) argument, this study has revealed that lesbian

sexuality requires a language for penetration with dildos, fingers, fists, tongues, vegetables, fruit … (the limit is one's imagination and predilection). It brings into focus the lesbian hand, and a broader system and discourse of lesbian erotics.

These narratives of producing desire within a lesbian centred and framed discourse of sexual pleasure have focused on touch and texture, foregrounding the 'the lesbian hand' as a sexual object. Lesbian hands are celebrated as a signifier of erotic power (Merck, 2000; Wednesday, 2008). This erotic power does not fetishise lesbian hands as 'the lesbian phallus', as this, according to Wednesday (2008), would bind them to patriarchal understandings of sex and sexuality. Rather, they are framed as independent of such regimes. As Wednesday (2008) argues, they should be celebrated for 'this double significance of erotic power and independence [...]. Hands hold our power, our independence, our talent, our strength, and most important, each other' (Wednesday, 2008: 401-402).

5.4 Conclusions

These representations of individual lesbian erotic life worlds contribute to a discourse of queer erotic world making, lesbian centred sex positive processes of sexual embodiment. Although they are necessarily always imbricated and entangled in and with them, these become counter narratives to hegemonic constructions of patriarchal heteronormative sexuality and sexual practice.

Lesbian narratives foreground how sexual desire and pleasure are constitutive of meaningful lesbian identity, a central foundation of their erotic life worlds. Lorde goes so far as to argue how erotic and sexual pleasure is a life force, 'a well of replenishing and provocative force to the woman who does not fear its revelation' (Lorde, 1984: 54). It is clear that the mere fact of two (or more) engaged in self-pleasure, in all its guises and with its range of meanings, is a challenge in and of itself to the hegemonic notion of 'real sex'.

The erotic world making of the lesbians in the study reveals their troubling of the gendered regimes of sexual pleasure. Although mirroring the hegemonic discourse associating femininity with romance and love within sexual relationships, lesbian narratives of romantic sexual embodiment reveal the powerful centring of the body, sexual pleasure and desire. Romance is highlighted, but love and sentimentality produce desire, sexual connectivity and

pleasure. This is firmly located within an actively desiring and pleasuring erotic life world, as constructed through sexually embodied romantic connections. This is different to the hegemonic discourse associated with white heterosexual women's missing discourse of desire (Fine, 1988) and the related notions of 'giving it up for love', as well as to the hegemonic othering constructions of black hyper sexuality.

The narratives of the femme lesbians, who inhabit their lesbian gender identity within clear gendered dimensions, rules and roles, still shift, transform and challenge hegemonic gendered performances and powers. Femme agency and embodied power is foregrounded within their sexual relationships and interactions. Their sexual gestures, touch, desire and pleasure revealed a 'recasting of receptivity' (Cvetkovich, 1995). This discourse highlights the power inherent in 'giving up' power (Rodríguez, 2014). These productions overturn commonly held notions that 'passivity', or what can be read as passivity, are in fact active gestures which demonstrate the power inherent in such actions as opening oneself, psychologically and physically, to be sexually touched, to be on the receiving end of attempts to titillate and provoke, and to perform and display one's sexual responses of pleasure and corresponding desire. Other narratives of femme power highlighted a 'refusal to touch' as part of a femme's sexual embodiment project. This troubles notions equating being sexually active with power, and highlights how 'receiving' is an active, powerful dimension and role within sexual encounters. In all instances, 'recasting receptivity' requires one to understand the active 'work' required and active part played in the production and display of pleasure – both for the femme herself, as well as for her butch partner. Nzegwu's (2011) 'devouring vagina' is assigned with agency when it engulfs body parts (the penis in Nzegwu's case). Nzegwu's 'devouring vagina' could be stretched to include femme embodied power, whose vaginas 'devour' or 'engulf' the lesbian hand, tongue, dildos, and other sexualised objects, a sign of femme power. Nzegwu (2011: 266) does argue for an extension of the teachings of 'osunality' to incorporate 'non-heterosexual preferences'.

Lesbian erotic world making saw narratives which centred 'the lesbian touch', producing a lesbian-centred frame of sexual pleasure and desire, foregrounding the 'lesbian hand' as a sexual surface - a signifier of erotic power (Merck, 2000; Wednesday, 2008). Foregrounding the physical and emotional sensations produced by touch and sexual play, the role of the body is larger than that of mere function (Chinn, 2003). Its textures, shape and ability to feel

or not to feel are central. 'Erotic bodily pleasures' (Dowsett, 1996) created the potential for new sexual possibilities to be revealed, materialising and 'making real' their 'body-erotic potential' (Dowsett, 1996: 159). The narratives of lesbian erotic world making include a range of different ways of 'producing' (Grosz and Probyn, 1995) and enacting perverse desire. Narratives reveal agency and consciousness in participants own forms of sexual meaning making. The surfaces of viscerality, visuality and fantasy acted as resources for sexual pleasure and desire. One indeed finds evidence of perverse desire speaking for itself. Their narratives take up the challenge posed by Grosz & Probyn (1995), who dared us to consider sex and desire alongside and beyond the hegemonic frameworks and terms of the 'master discourses of sexuality', beyond heterosexism and phallo-centricism - allowing one to recast theories of gender and sexuality.

The following chapter will move considerations from embodied subjectivities in relation to erotic world making to another sociality, another site of queer world making, notably that of lesbian motherhood.

CHAPTER SIX: LESBIAN MOTHERHOOD AS A SITE OF QUEER WORLD MAKING

Both motherhood and women's sexuality have been sites of historical and contemporary social regulation, surveillance and contestation in South Africa (Arendell, 2000; Arnfred, 2003; Jeannes & Shefer, 2004; Kruger, 2003; 2006; Lewis, 2011; Mokobocho-Mohlakoana, 2008; Posel, 1995; Walker, 1995). Motherhood is fundamental to the construction of womanhood and South African femininities, the normativities and practises of which are constructed within the mother's racial, cultural and classed membership (Moore, 2013; Potgieter, 2003; Walker, 1995). In the context of South African patriarchal heteronormativities, dominant discourses construct being a lesbian as unAfrican, against nature and against hegemonic religious beliefs (Gunkel, 2010; Sanger and Clowes, 2006; van Ewyk & Kruger, 2017). Thus, it is unsurprising that when a mother becomes a lesbian or a lesbian becomes a mother, the juxtaposition of lesbian and motherhood are often seen as paradoxical (Gabb, 2005), as undermining a core signifier of heterosexuality (Dunne, 2000) and as disrupting the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990/1999).

Hegemonic racially and classed specific notions of the 'good mother' inform the dominant narrative against which lesbian mothers construct their counter narratives of lesbian motherhood and mothering. These counter narratives of lesbian mothering demonstrate that lesbian mothers are not passive victims of dominant ideologies and discourses but rather adopt, modify and/or reinterpret these discourses (Garey, 1995: 416 cited in Van Doorene, 2009) within the cultural and economic means available to them.

Counter narratives of the participants in the study provide insight into how lesbian mothers (and their children) are actively involved in negotiating and enacting the meaning of motherhood. The chapter will focus on lesbian motherhood as a site of queer world making, considering the ways in which lesbian women experience and negotiate their motherhood, and the meanings attached to these processes.

Eight women in the sample were mothers. Two of the participants, Lucy and Jay, planned and conceived their children while in their respective lesbian relationships. The remaining lesbian mothers, Tass, Denise, Rusty, Light Blue, Danny and Bella, conceived their children

while in heterosexual marriages or relationships, and in different ways, entered into lesbian relationships with their children and formed 'blended' families.

I will explore their negotiations of lesbian motherhood through a discussion of four themes, namely, mothering while in publicly unacknowledged lesbian relationships; negotiating conflicting interests between lesbian mothers and child(ren)'s desires and needs; exploring the role of the father figure in tales of conception and 'origins' of children conceived within lesbian relationships; and finally preparing their children to navigate heteronormativity while inhabiting unexceptional families.

The chapter will reveal how lesbian motherhood is a site of intense negotiation, conflict, stress and agency. It will reveal that 'lesbian mother' is a complex and slippery category, simultaneously resisting and re-inscribing heteronormativity, always in relation to 'good mother' ideology. The practices of motherhood are racialised and enculturated, and see mothers coming closer to the ideal of the good mother only after acknowledging their distance from this category. Ironically, it is through being a lesbian mother that they are able to perform 'good motherhood'. Their practices reveal how they perform private resistance and public complicity with good mother ideologies; and simultaneously centre and destabilise the role of the father. They also manage their 'difference' to the heterosexual norm by providing their children with tools to navigate heteronormativity, while simultaneously claiming being an unexceptional family.

6.1. MOTHERING WHILE IN PUBLICLY UNACKNOWLEDGED LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS

This section focuses on the processes of mothering within lesbian households where the mothers' lesbian sexuality and/or relationship is unacknowledged to the child and/or others. Negotiating lesbian motherhood as a site of queer world making reveals that mothering practices are informed by how the participants assumed and enacted their lesbian subjectivity. This is not just an individual process, but is also negotiated within the lesbian couple. This includes the decision of how and when, if at all, to inform one's children (and the rest of the family) of one's lesbian sexuality. It is clear that one's subjectivity and practices as a lesbian mother will depend on how one assumes and accepts one's lesbian sexuality, as well as the context within which the children were conceived and live. The

narratives of Rusty and Tass's lesbian subjectivities and maternal practices will form the focus of the discussion.

Rusty is a coloured Muslim woman in her late fifties. She had same sex experiences and lesbian relationships from her mid-teens. However, she notes that after a spiritual revelation, she began exploring relationships with men, and eventually married one. They had a son. For a range of reasons their marriage broke down, her husband had an extramarital affair, and eventually asked her for a divorce. Her son was two at the time of their divorce. She shares how she had not loved her husband for a long time and focused her energies on gaining custody of their son. She describes the non-existent relationship with her ex-husband noting, 'he doesn't have any sort of relationship with my son, we don't see each other, we don't worry or bother to talk to one another'. Shortly after the divorce Rusty began a live-in relationship with a white Afrikaans woman:

> *[…] she became like a second mom to my, to my son. He was two and a half years old. We got into a relationship, but our relationship was* ***very,*** *uh, discreet in the sense that we didn't share a* ***room.*** *We each had our own room, with my son sharing my room.*

When asked to explain how she and her partner negotiated their sleeping arrangements, Rusty notes that her son was a major consideration in them not sharing a bedroom:

> *We both agreed that we weren't going to expose him to the relationship at a young age. I don't know whether we, I think it was just a, a … an arrangement that we, you know, I don't even think we spoke about it, to be quite honest.*

Rusty notes that she and her partner at the time with whom she shared her life for ten years both parented and loved him as mothers. They decided, seemingly without even having discussed it, to not explicitly assume a couple relationship in front of him. In the navigations of their lesbian and maternal identities, Rusty notes, that it was their son's age that influenced their decision, not wanting to 'expose' their son to their lesbian relationship while he was so young.

Rusty and her partner negotiated their own relationship and parental practices in relation to heteronormative beliefs which posit the incompatibility between lesbian sexuality and

motherhood (Breshears & Lubbe-De Beer, 2016; Distiller, 2013; Lubbe, 2007; Lubbe-De Beer & Marnell, 2011, Van Ewyk, 2013). Their strategies are not dissimilar to those revealed in USA-based studies which note that lesbian and gay households frequently have a separate bedroom that can be assumed to be the partner's room, whether the children request this or not (Lynch & Murray, 2000). However, the parents within the literature adopt this strategy of separate bedrooms for the 'outside world', the public, rather than to disguise their relationship from their own children within the household (Lynch & Murray, 2000). Different to these parents, Rusty and her partner chose to have separate bedrooms for the 'inside world', their son.

As a rule, Rusty does not openly declare her lesbian subjectivity to anybody. Within her family, Rusty is an 'undisclosed lesbian'. She notes, '[…] My family's not openly asked me anything about my preferences and neither have I *declared* anything'. She elaborates however, that she doesn't think people think she is heterosexual: 'I think it's a given that people might *know* who I am, know what I do […].' One could argue that this practice of not 'declaring her sexuality' could also have influenced her/their decision to not explicitly perform coupledom and assume shared maternity of their son.

Rusty and her ex partner's decision to have separate bedrooms and to perform as heterosexual for their son did not change as he grew older. Only at the age of 13 was he finally told by her partner, during what Rusty describes as a vicious and messy separation. Rusty argues that her ex-partner did it to sully their son's perception of Rusty's new relationship: '[She] was the one who played so-called dirty […] ja, she made it very difficult for him to accept my current partner'. Rusty shares her son's very emotional reaction:

> *Look he was very **angry.** He walked around with so much anger in him, you know. Uhm, he believed that I wasn't **honest** enough with him, and when I say honest, I didn't say anything. I didn't **lie** to him, ok. But he, when he, he, he construed it and he perceived it as **dishonesty** and the more I tried to explain to him that, 'I've not **told** you anything, and I haven't', 'Ja but you've been **living** a lie'.*

The cause of her son's anger is not his mother's lesbian sexuality. Rather, he is angry because Rusty had not said anything, and in this way was dishonest with him. Rusty shares how later he railed at them, arguing, they 'could've told him, he wasn't stupid'. When asked if, with hindsight, she would handle the situation with her son differently, Rusty insists that they did the right thing in keeping their relationship secret from him when he was younger. She does concede however, that perhaps she underestimated him intellectually, and that he probably would have understood their situation and she should have told him sooner. She notes, 'perhaps he wanted us to be together'. In this way, she recognises that her son's anger was at being excluded from the family unit. His sense of betrayal was at not being taken into his mothers' confidence and the lack of trust shown in him.

By not telling her son as he grew older, Rusty seems to have inadvertently re-inscribed heteronormative beliefs, behaviour and family structure on their family unit. In this way she becomes complicit with these beliefs and with a hegemonic good mother ideology. However it is in this very bid to 'protect him', and to navigate heteronormativity as she does, enacting a side thread lesbian subjectivity, where her sexuality is seen to be private, without labels (see Chapter Four), that she seems to have contributed to the conditions in which he feels harmed.

Tass's narrative also shows emotional distress and conflict with how to manage her lesbian relationship with her children. Tass is a white, Afrikaner woman currently in her late forties. As a young woman, Tass married a man to comply with her community and family's expectations of white femininity. They have two daughters and lived in a small mining town, a conservative, religious community, in the Free State. Finally 'recognising her real sexuality', after falling in love with a woman and embarking on a 'massive affair', Tass divorced her husband. Tass and the woman begin what was to be a ten-year relationship. This, however, was an unacknowledged relationship as the woman was in the closet. This was difficult for Tass as she shares that after her sexual realisation, she wanted to 'stand on the roof top, […] and never had any problems with telling anybody that I'm gay'. This woman also separated from her husband, lived with her own two daughters, separately to Tass. Although they did not live in the same household, they functioned as a family unit, spending all their time together, and the children all went to the same convent school.

Tass reveals, however, how her queer world making subjectivity and maternal practice were severely curtailed by her partner's refusal to publicly acknowledge their relationship. Apart from the difficulties this created between the two of them, Tass comments how this also set up an untenable situation for her two daughters, who were six and two when Tass divorced their father. Tass shares how her daughters told her later that they had grown up knowing something was 'different' about Tass's relationship with her partner, but they had not felt like they had the space to ask questions and to bring their relationship out into the open. According to Tass they said: 'Mom, because of the situation we behaved as if she were a friend'. She notes how her daughters commented that this lack of acknowledgement of their mother's relationship meant that they weren't able to form a relationship with her partner as the 'other' mother, nor develop a frame within which to understand and explain their family.

Using the wisdom of hindsight and emotional distance, Tass shares how her partner's internalised homophobia, and her own collusion with this, created a damaging silence in the family. Tass's centring of her partner's need to be secretive about their sexual relationship meant that she became complicit with heteronormativity. After having finally 'discovered' her sexuality after so long, this in and of itself was the cause of a lot of personal stress for Tass, leading to her being an angry and frustrated person. She notes, that this also meant that she didn't fulfil her maternal responsibilities to her daughters, as the secrecy and ambivalence led to confusion and uncertainty for them.

Subsequently, the eldest daughter moved to Cape Town to complete her final year of school. After the relationship ended, Tass joined her daughter in Cape Town with the younger daughter. Tass notes how it is only here in Cape Town, with the channels of communication opened between them, that her daughters are able to open up to her about the difficulties they experienced as children:

> *[…] when we moved to Cape Town, when my daughter sat down and said 'You know how hard it was for us'. And I was aware...but I was also pulling the wool over my own eyes, not dealing with that, because there were issues that I wasn't dealing with. So they have never [pause] they've never said to me "Mom why are*

you gay, [pause] we wish you weren't gay', it's because I've lived it in a loving way; this is my choice.

Tass shares how even though she was aware of how difficult the situation might have been for her daughters, she could not bring herself to deal with them, as she could not confront her own difficulties in her sexual relationship She was unable to respond to her daughters' needs for support and assistance to navigate their family situation and their heteronormative small Afrikaans town. From her perspective, we hear how her daughters did not reject her for her sexuality or wish that she were different. Rather, their problem centred on how her silence around her sexual relationship contributed to difficulties in their family life, and their inability to build a maternal relationship with her mother's long term partner. Their family unit was not built on transparency, communication and support but secrets and frustration - a decision she now regrets. Tass redeems her maternal practice within her next serious relationship with a woman. Her queer world making subjectivity sees her assuming her sexuality and relationship openly, and including the children in this relationship. Even though they do not live together as a family unit with her current partner, the daughters have shared how they related to this partner as another mother.

Rusty and Tass's narratives reveal that coming out to children conceived within previous heterosexual relationships is not an individual process. Rather it is a process negotiated within the lesbian couple. Their mothering practices were also informed by how they assumed and enacted their lesbian subjectivity. Tass's desire to come out to her children, and openly live as a lesbian couple, was constrained by her partner's refusal to acknowledge their relationship. Rusty is an 'undisclosed lesbian'. It was and is not her practice to come out to family members and her community. Both of Tass's and Rusty's ways of enacting their lesbian subjectivities impacted on their ability to mother, include their children in their relationships, and their children's ability to form relationships with the unacknowledged partner *as* the 'other' mother. Their maternal practices affected the way family bonds were formed (or not), the ways in which connectivities were constructed, and the symbolic and material recognition of it as a household and family unit.

Their narratives of coming out to their children (or not) were framed employing the 'best interests of the child' discourse. Rusty resorted to this discourse to justify her decision to not

come out to her son in order to 'protect' him from their lesbian relationship. In Tass's case, however, this discourse was employed in recognition of how she had not acted in her daughters' best interests by not speaking openly about her lesbian relationship with them. Instead she 'chose' to protect her (closeted) partner's need for non-disclosure. Both narratives speak to how these decisions are subsequently repaired by dialogue and communication, contributing to their family units being transformed from a space of (dis)connection to one of love, trust, recognition and belonging. As openly acknowledged lesbian mothers within their maternal relationships with their children, they are able to fully inhabit their multiple subjectivities as lesbian mothers. Ironically, by resisting heteronormativity in this way, they are able to come closer to fulfil the ideology of 'good mothers' constructed in their respective cultures, as 'good lesbian mothers'.

6.2. PRIVATE RESISTANCE/PUBLIC COMPLICITY WITH GOOD MOTHER IDEOLOGIES

Conflicts between some of the mothers and their children arose specifically as a result of the mothers being *lesbian*. Both Denise and Light Blue share how they managed the emotional crises and conflicts with their children after they began lesbian relationships. Their narratives reveal their simultaneous resistance to and complicity with the racialised 'good mother' ideologies that frame motherhood within different racialised cultures in South Africa.

Denise is a white, Afrikaans, lower middle class woman in her late thirties. She has three daughters, Emma (12 years old at the time of the interviews) from a previous heterosexual relationship, and twins, Jonene and Jolene (9 years old during this study) from her previous heterosexual marriage. The children have been living with Denise and her partner, Mary, for about seven years. Denise has not lived with her children all the time. The twins lived with her ex-husband for about two years, which had been his condition for granting her a divorce. At the same time, Denise's grandmother, furious with Denise's lesbian sexuality, took over the care of her oldest daughter, Emma, until Denise 'sorted herself out' i.e. 'reverted' to heterosexuality. After two years, her grandmother fell terminally ill, and Denise took custody of Emma again. She then asked for and received her twin daughters from her husband without a fight. Denise and Mary have been living with the children since then, with Mary acting as an effective co-parent.

Light Blue, a black woman in her mid-forties, is a divorcé with two children, a son, Dineo (27) and a daughter, Lesego (17) from a previous heterosexual marriage. As was culturally practiced and accepted, for reasons unrelated to her sexuality, the children had lived off and on with Light Blue's mother, both during her marriage and after their divorce. The children's father lives in Rustenburg, very close to Light Blue's mother's house. Light Blue lived with her children for some years in Pretoria, and then moved with her to Cape Town a few years ago.

Denise and Light Blue's narratives reveal that their parenting while in lesbian relationships has led to many negotiations and discussions with their children, requiring both families to manage the conflicting needs and interests between lesbian mother and their children.

Different to Rusty and Tass and their respective partners, Denise and Mary had never hidden their sexual and emotional relationship from their children. Denise comments that the twins 'had never really known any different' and had essentially grown up within their lesbian headed household. She feels that they had unquestioningly accepted their relationship, and their household, from the start. Denise notes, however, that her eldest daughter, Emma, is not so accepting of Denise's lesbianism and of assuming Mary as a second mother. Emma is angrily confrontational, demanding that Denise be 'normal':

> *[…] and she (Emma) says she actually **hates** me for being a lesbian. She's **upset** with me for being a lesbian. 'Why can't I be normal and have also a father, like a man, like the other kids?'*

Emma's openly hostile reaction to her mother's lesbian sexuality is different to that of her younger twin sisters. Unlike the twins, Emma does not have a relationship with her biological father and does not seem to have a father-daughter relationship with the twins' father. She spent some time living with the grandmother, who had initially been openly homophobic and rejecting of Denise's relationships with women. It is unsurprising that growing up in such a household, Emma could hold similar views. However, perhaps it is not only the learnt homophobia at play in Emma's reactions. After returning to live with Denise and Mary, Emma was old enough to witness and understand Denise and Mary's conflictual relationship issues, marred by jealousy, infidelities, violence, break ups and reconciliations. Denise shares how Emma began acting out at school when her and Mary went through a

particularly bad break up. They continued to all live together. Mary moved her new lover into the house. Denise moved into Emma's bedroom, to which she would bring her own casual lovers. Denise shares how her emotional stress at this time led her to withdraw from mothering, commenting how 'she went bonkers', and how Mary had taken on the main mothering role.

Within this context, Emma had forbidden Denise and Mary to publicly assume their lesbian relationship at her school. Denise shares that Emma had told her that her fellow learners at school are quite homophobic. Denise adds later that she attributes Emma's negative reactions to her mother's lesbian sexuality to Emma getting older, and becoming more conscious of and influenced by what her friends are saying and thinking. Similar to their mothers, the children of lesbians have to negotiate 'disclosure' and fear of rejection based on their non-normative household. From what Denise shares, Emma does not seem to want her non-normative and relatively chaotic home life displayed at school.

These concerns are mirrored by the children in Lubbe's (2008) study on children growing up in lesbian-headed households in South Africa and their decision whether to openly assume their lesbian headed families at school. These decisions were heavily influenced by whether they perceived their school environments to be tolerant. The study also highlighted how children might become homophobic as they get older and become more conscious of their peers, especially within the school environment.

Denise shares her negotiations with herself and with Emma:

> *But I'd still said to Emma, […] 'Do you want me to be with a man? Because if that will make you happier I'll definitely go, then I'll be with a man'. But at the end of the day its not gonna, it's about* ***me*** *as well. And I mean to be honest, I don't think she'll even be happy if I did take a man.*

Ultimately Denise resists the demands of her daughter to comply with their heteronormative Afrikaans community and culture, and 'to be normal and give her a father'. She also resists the good mother ideology within Afrikaner culture of prioritising the needs of her children over her own.

Confronting similar tensions and negotiations within her own household, Light Blue shares how her children and family were 'disappointed and hurt' when she discussed her lesbian sexuality with them. She comments they felt this way 'mostly for not understanding and not knowing what to do with that' (her sexuality). Initially, she shares, her children were confused and asked her 'why choose to be that?' Light Blue says her children had spent a lot of time with her family while growing up. Her family considers homosexuality as something foreign to their culture, and she is sure that this attitude was transferred to her children. She comments on her family's response to her lesbian sexuality:

> *… it was just a foreign concept at home and maybe [they were] just not expecting it from their mother who's lived with their father. […] It has been a really great painful thing for them'.*

Similarly to Emma's call to Denise to give her a father like a 'normal' person, Light Blue relates how her daughter had asked her for 'a daddy'. Light Blue shares how her daughter had said that, 'she wished that maybe someday she would have a daddy too'. Because the child already has a father, Light Blue interpreted this as another way of asking her to 'go bac'k to being heterosexual. Light Blue shares the negotiations she had with herself on whether to grant her daughter her 'wish':

> *I thought of, of, I mean, dating men is still an option, uhm, I thought about it and I thought maybe, you know, I will normalise my life, uh but for their sake, definitely for their sake. But I mean, I had, I had never really said to myself that I am [long pause] a* ***woman*** *only person. Like I'm not totally, totally lesbian. I'm very open-minded uhm. The only reason that I'm here [in lesbian relationships] is because my feelings have been, uh, migrating to […] women only. My attraction has been to women for quite a while now, and uhm, [pause]* ***thus*** *I'm in this space, and, and embracing it fully, I must say. I love where I am. So I had thought about that and, and more for their sake uhm, but then I thought, 'I, I don't think it's the right thing to do', you know?*

Light Blue frames her negotiations with herself about returning to relationships with men within the common dictum, 'for the sake of the children'. Even though she has not defined herself as strictly lesbian, Light Blue acknowledges that 'her attraction has been to women

for quite a while now' and she is 'embracing it fully'. She notes that she loves her current attraction to women and is not prepared to give it up. She finally chooses *her* emotional and sexual needs over the needs of her daughter (and family), thereby resisting the heteronormativity of her culture and the good mother ideology. Light Blue's queer world making parental practice sees her transgressing normative maternal demands to be self-sacrificing and to prioritise her children's needs over her own.

Light Blue adds another layer of complexity to her argument when she argues how men, particularly step fathers, can be potentially dangerous for girl children in these times, implicitly referring to the high rates of sexual abuse and rape of young girls and women in South Africa (Jewkes et al, 1999). She justifies her refusal to return to men by showing she is considering her daughter's wellbeing, thereby rescuing her status of 'good mother'

> *The risk of being a girl child, bringing in a male, strange male into, into her* ***environment*** *as well, you know, I thought no, I will not do that. She has a father, you know […] and I said to her, 'You do have a dad, my child. And your dad is enough'."*

Light Blue is highlighting that her daughter's request for a father makes no sense when she already *has* a father. She challenges her daughter's need to have a relationship with a father *through* her mother. Her child's father lives in Rustenburg, and they do not have a close relationship. In this way, she is deflecting the social expectation that a mother resolves her children's emotional needs. She is pushing her daughter to take responsibility for building her relationship with her father, even though they no longer share a home, and he is no longer in a relationship with her, the mother.

However, both Denise and Light Blue, out of consideration for their daughters' feelings, *do* accede to their daughters' requests to perform situational heterosexuality in certain public spaces. As mentioned earlier, Denise shares how Emma specifically asked her not to tell the school authorities and teachers that she is a lesbian and in a relationship with Mary. She shares how when she and Mary go to school plays or attend teacher/learner evenings everybody assumes that Mary is Emma's aunt and that Denise is single. This performance of situational heterosexuality leaves Denise feeling constrained and unable to be herself.

Light Blue's negotiations of her mothering role also see her adopting strategies to manage her children's negative reactions and homophobia. In a similar manner to the black lesbians in Mignon's (2011) study, who are concerned with conforming to 'acceptable' images of motherhood, but who also defend their sexual agency and right to perform their lesbian sexuality, Light Blue performs a series of time/place management strategies which allow her to exercise her lesbian motherhood in a manner that simultaneously meets her daughter's need for a heterosexual mother and her own needs to inhabit a lesbian sexuality. Light Blue performs 'situational heterosexuality' in public spaces which involve her children. She shares 'as much as I'm out, I try to protect her from having to deal with my sexuality with her peers'. Light Blue explains that she lives between two homes, her partner's home in Parklands and her family home with her children in Goodwood. Light Blue effectively separates her life into Parklands, where she lives as an out lesbian with her partner and socialises with friends, and Goodwood, where she lives as a mother who is publicly perceived to be heterosexual. Light Blue relates how this public enactment of heterosexuality sees her avoiding overt displays of affection for her partner like holding hands or kissing, or of bringing her lesbian relationship and community home to Goodwood.

Their performances of lesbian motherhood see Denise and Light Blue resisting the good mother ideologies of their respective cultures and heteronormativities in the private spaces of their homes. At home they both centre their own needs to assume their lesbian sexuality and to maintain affective, sexual and intimate relationships with their respective partners. By doing so, they resist normative mothering ideals and heteronormativities. However, in public spaces both mothers perform heterosexuality in order to accommodate their children's need to maintain the appearance of heterosexual motherhood. Both Denise and Light Blue consciously submit to these 'straightening devices' (Ahmed, 2006) and regulatory regimes of heterosexual public behaviour (Valentine, 1996; 2000) as part of their parental practice. They both perform 'situational heterosexuality' in order to 'protect' their children. Both, however, in different ways, refuse to provide their children with the 'good father', a socially required complement to the 'good mother'. Light Blue asks her daughter to build a relationship directly with her own biological father, while Denise argues that having a father would not provide her daughter with the happiness that she is seeking. In this way, their narratives reveal how their queer world making as lesbian mothers simultaneously resists (in

private) and re-inscribes (in public) the good mother ideology and heteronormativities within hegemonic versions of their different cultures and racialities.

6.3. TALES OF 'ORIGINS' AND CONCEPTION: SIMULTANEOUSLY DESTABILISING AND CENTRING THE ROLE OF THE FATHER

Jay (with her partner, Jacky) and Lucy (with her partner, Leanne), are the only two participants who conceived their children while in their respective lesbian relationships. A big concern that they negotiated in their motherhood practice was how to tell the children the story of their conception and to manage their own anxieties and expectations, as well as their children's questions, of the role of the father in their children's lives.

Assisted reproductive technologies have challenged traditional assumptions regarding who and how a family can be formed and kinship relations (Donaldson & Wilbraham, 2013; Jones, 2005; Ryan-Flood, 2009). In choosing to become mothers as lesbian couples, Lucy and Jay, and their respective partners, destabilised the hegemonic 'biological imperative' of families, based on the normative notion of a biological father and mother. In this way they challenge the assumption that heterosexual reproduction and parenting is the only 'natural' and 'normal' means to conceive and raise children (Donaldson & Wilbraham, 2013; Dunne, 2000; Morison et al, forthcoming).

Lesbian couples who use assisted reproductive technologies (such as anonymous donor insemination), present fundamental challenges to heteronormativities due to the lack of a physical father figure (Chabot & Ames, 2004; Dalton & Bieby, Dunne, 2000). In spite of the fact that South African families do not always empirically count on the presence of a father (Stats SA, 2010), the ideology of need for a father figure is deeply ingrained in society. Within South Africa's hegemonic racialised patriarchal cultures, fathers and men are of course entwined in the construction of the 'good mother', by performing the role of head of household, protector and male breadwinner within the hegemonic nuclear (and extended) family (Rawsthorne, 2010). In response to this, lesbian couples in South Africa (and internationally) have constructed 'alternative families' which do contain some version of a father figure, or male role model (Ryan-Flood, 2009). Small studies of lesbian mothers contemplating assisted conception in South Africa reveal that their concerns for their children centred on the 'lack' of a biological father and the effect of belonging to an

'alternative' family (Donaldson & Wilbraham, 2013; Lubbe-De Beer, 2013; Swain & Frizelle, 2013). Both Jay and Lucy's negotiations of motherhood, their management of the conception stories and the role of the father with their respective children are testaments to their own navigations of the ideological dominance of the role of the father within 'ideal' family structures. Both Jay and Lucy, albeit in different ways, simultaneously destabilise the need for and centre the biological father figure in their family narratives.

Lucy and Leanne, a white middle class couple in their mid-thirties, live in Hout Bay. When discussing the different pathways to motherhood which they had contemplated, Lucy shares how they had initially intended choosing a known father, with whom the child could have a relationship. Lucy felt very strongly about the need for their children to have a father figure, or at least, known male role models. However, their initial choices of Leanne's brother, followed by a close gay friend, as providers of sperm both fell through. They eventually chose assisted conception. This was a difficult choice for Lucy, as she wanted her child to at least know the identity of their father. This would not be possible as the identity of the donor is withheld under South African law. Lucy had fertility treatment and eventually fell pregnant, giving birth to twins, a boy and a girl.

The everyday enactment of their family lives sees them seamlessly introducing their children to the idea that they have two mothers. Lucy comments that the children accepted their family without question. They call their mothers, Mommy Lucy and Mommy Leanne. They were still young, under five, at the time of the interviews, and happily receive Lucy and Leanne's well thought out responses to any questions they have in relation to their family. Rather than being concerned with managing the children's reactions to having lesbian parents, Lucy outlines how they were much more focused on how to manage any questions about their conception, and the notion of an absent 'father'.

Lucy shares that up until now, the twins when asked by others 'where is their father?' would respond quite blithely, 'we don't have a Dad'. Lucy notes this is the truth, and reflects the 'facts' that have been told to them – they don't have a father. Lucy shares they did not want to 'create some fictitious person for them'. Recognising that the twins might begin to ask deeper and more complicated questions within the year, Lucy wrote an age appropriate story for them. This would be given to them as an illustrated book for Lucy and Leanne to

read with them. Lucy argued that the story would give the twins the language and the narrative of their family, providing them with the tools to process and talk to others about their 'origins' and their family form and practice. They would also have a material object to hold on to in the future. Lucy shared this was not only important for the children's identity and security, but to also help them in their navigations of other social institutions. These efforts, they felt, would contribute to their children's sense of belonging. Lucy's conception story written for their children goes as follows:

> *Once there lived two women who loved each other dearly. Leanne was tall, athletic and fair, while Lucy was stocky and dark-haired. They had many adventures together. They especially enjoyed paddling in their canoe on rivers together. They loved children and dreamt of having a family together. In the same city, lived a young man with blonde hair and hazel eyes. He enjoyed playing the guitar and was good at sports. He was also a very clever scientist who enjoyed finding out how the world worked. He wasn't just handsome, he was kind and generous. He wanted to give everyone the chance to have a family so he gave a special gift to Leanne and Lucy. It was the gift of his magic seed. The doctors helped put the donor dad's magic seed inside Mommy Lucy's tummy and it grew into two little babies – a boy and a girl. Their moms were delighted to welcome them into the world and called them Kevin and Patricia.*

Lucy frames the story as a fairy tale with 'once there lived …' a fitting genre for children. She provides them with a love story between two women, thereby normalising lesbian affective relationships. She gives the mom characters in the story the same physical characteristics, personality and hobbies as herself and her partner, Leanne. The story emphasises how the twins were planned and wanted, and part of a well thought out strategy to form a family. The aim of the story is to give the twins information and to construct a favourable perception of not just a sperm donor, but a father figure, *their* father figure.

The story gives the twins information about his geographical location – he comes from the same city – allowing them to identify with a particular place, to feel a sense of roots and territorial history and belonging. She pays attention to the physical attributes of both mothers and the sperm donor, so that they can 'see' themselves in their parents' bodies –

providing a sense of a material embodied lineage and history. In a similar rhetorical move shared by other lesbian mothers who have undergone assisted conception (Scheib et al, 2000; Ryan-Flood, 2009), she emphasises how kind and generous the donor was. She frames the anonymous financial transaction between donor and fertility clinic as a personalised 'gift' to them from the sperm donor. This does three things. Firstly, it changes the flow of the relationship and transaction, from donor-clinic and then clinic-lesbian couple to be donor-lesbian couple. This personalises the transaction and individualises and humanises the sperm donor, transforming him into a 'Dad'. Secondly, it frames the donor as being the active agent, the one who gives *them* a 'gift', centring his role and framing him as a saviour figure. This mirrors the socially ascribed superior position of father figures in the maternal-paternal relationship. The sperm donor is also constructed as a superhero, whose sperm is no longer just sperm, but a 'magic seed'.

These rhetorical moves embedded within Lucy's story of conception have the effect of re-inscribing hegemonic heteronormative social relations, ones founded on biogenetic relationships and traditional gendered relations between mother and father. However, these features of the story are simultaneously destabilised by Lucy foregrounding that the effective parents are two mothers, a lesbian couple. Also, quite untraditionally, the location of the conception takes place within a clinic, with the participation of the health system, and recognises the role of the doctors who 'helped put the sperm into Mommy Lucy's tummy'. Here, Lucy's role as the birth mother is recognised. Troubling heteronormativity, Leanne, as the social mother, is also centred in the story at all times. She is part of the unit that planned their creation and wished them into being, and is there to receive and welcome them into the world.

Jay and Jashery, a lower middle class coloured couple in their early twenties, decided to have a baby together because Jay had always wanted 'to have that whole family life'. Different to Lucy and Leanne, Jay and Jashery did not want to have and raise a child as a nuclear couple. Perhaps reflecting her cultural milieu and upbringing, Jay shared how they had planned from the outset to experience motherhood collectively, as part of an already very close-knit, large, extended family. They moved into Jay's family home in Mitchell's Plain as soon as they decided to conceive, so that the child would be born into the family home, as Jay notes, 'with us, and in my family'. As Jay was unable to fall pregnant, Jashery planned

to bear the child. Jay and Jashery attempted to find a sperm donor from men within their networks. However, quite differently to Lucy and Leanne, they did not look towards Jay's brothers in a bid to maintain a biological connection between Jay and the child. Rather, Jay comments how they merely looked around among the people that they knew. She commented that they had said 'we just gotta pick somebody', and they chose one of their few male friends who was 'willing to donate his sperm and make no claims'.

For Jay and Jashery, 'not making any claims' was the most important criterion for choosing a sperm donor. They were clear that they were forming a lesbian family, within the support of Jay's extended family. This motivation troubles the perceived need for a child to have a biological father figure. In a queering of the institutionally based assisted reproduction discourse, which centres the technologically assisted basis of assisted conception, Jay shares that Jashery had sex with the sperm donor in order to fall pregnant. He is not given a name. We know nothing about him. He is named and framed as a 'sperm donor'. The meaning ascribed to the act of impregnation is removed from a sexual frame, and placed in the functional one of 'donor'. This is in marked contrast to Lucy's very strongly biogenetic discourse in relation to their sperm donor, which centres the 'biological imperative' of the nuclear family. Jashery gives birth to a daughter. They name her Erica. From the very beginning, Erica is cared for by everybody within Jay's family.

Over the years, Jay and Jashery had not shared any specific information with their daughter, now in her mid-teens, about the exact circumstances of her conception. Jay explains that this was because Erica has not asked. What is interesting is that during our conversations, Jay vacillated between naming the man who impregnated Jashery a 'sperm donor' and Erica's 'father'. It seems that with Erica they do not refer to him as a sperm donor at all, but frame him as 'your father'. It seems that Erica, therefore, does not regard him as a 'sperm donor', but as a 'father'. Jay shares how Erica had at one point asked to meet her 'father', and had expressed curiosity about who her 'father' is. Jay said she responded as follows:

> *And I told her that, his - his life is not, he doesn't have his shit together. And, um…I can understand that she wants to know who he is. And…like I- I told her, when he's ready, then no problem. But I don't want her as an impressionable*

young teenager to meet her father who's a drug addict, you know, and have all those things, issues also to deal with. Ja.

Jay shares how she had been keeping tabs on the 'sperm donor/father' over the years in case there was ever a need to introduce him to Erica. She comments that he had begun taking drugs and had, in fact, become an addict. In refusing to let her meet him, she draws on the discourse of 'the best interests of the child'. Subverting the idea that all men are 'good fathers' by their mere presence, she notes that the man can meet Erica 'when he's ready'. In this way, Jay is positing that he has to earn the right and to fulfil certain basic criteria in order to be worthy of meeting her daughter i.e. he has to *be* a 'good' father. In this way, Jay, in the name of what is 'good' for Erica, becomes the buffer between Erica's possible idea of who her 'father' will be and the 'issues that she would have to deal with when, or if, she meets the reality.

Both Lucy and Jay's narratives reveal ambivalent and contradictory framings of the father figure with their children. In a bid to be 'good mothers' and to provide their children with the socially required fathers within families, both couples re-inscribe the centrality of the role of the father. Lucy does this in her conception story and we see this in Jay's narrative of his presence in Erica's life, and potential fathering role. However, they also construct counter narratives to the need for a father in their children's lives, simultaneously troubling the centrality of the father figure. In addition, through their parental practice, they have populated their children's lives with a range of people, both men and women, who care for their children, forming part of the extended network and family of their children.

6.4. MANAGING DIFFERENCE WHILE IN AN UNEXCEPTIONAL FAMILY: PROVIDING CHILDREN WITH TOOLS TO NAVIGATE HETERONORMATIVITY

Unlike heterosexual parents, lesbian and gay parents need to prepare their children to manage heteronormative contexts. A large part of negotiating motherhood for Lucy, Jay and Danny includes adopting a range of strategies to prepare and protect their children from possible stigmatisation, discrimination and harm due to their being the children of lesbian mothers. Their narratives highlight how their parenting practices include an awareness of the need for strategies to prepare their children to navigate heteronormativities. This awareness of potentially hostile contexts which their children would have to navigate, and providing them the tools and support to manage these, formed part of their 'good lesbian mothers' practice. These practices exist while simultaneously claiming the unexceptional nature of their families. Their narratives of queer world making as lesbian mothers foregrounded their 'normality' and 'ordinary' lives.

In South Africa, families are diverse and do not reflect the heteronormative nuclear family. One in three children do not live with their fathers (Department of Social Development, 2012), there are women headed households, grandmothers head up households, there are child headed households, families live together as extended families, there are polygamous families (Fester, 2006). However, despite this, the heterosexual nuclear family remains the ideal (Fester, 2006; Lubbe, 2008; Morison & Reddy, 2013; Morison et al, 2016). This diverse range of families is *all* evaluated in relation to a heterosexual norm.

When she was discussing her parenting, Jay shares how she never drew Erica's attention to the 'exceptional' nature of Erica having lesbian mothers. By calmly going about everyday life, without making any fuss, she shares how her and her family gave Erica a 'normal' family life, living in an extended family that reflected other families in the predominantly coloured community in Mitchell's Plain. Jay notes: 'We never hid the fact that we were together and that, you know' It was something that Erica was born into, and she never knew anything else. Jay affirms that there have never been 'any issues' with Erica in relation to having lesbian mothers. On being asked how Erica experiences her family life, Jay shares:

> *To her it's no different than any other relationship. Because she knows that myself and her mom were together, and she grew up with her mom and myself,*

and then myself and Hayley were together. So there's never been any issues you know.

In this highlighting of the lack 'of issues', Jay employs the discursive frame of their mother-daughter relationship and family life 'being unexceptional'. This included, like other children in their neighbourhood, Erica being cared for in an extended family. Jay's parenting practice centred on building Erica's sense of being part of a family, even with the eventual separation from her birth mother and Jay's new partner beginning to live with them. In spite of Jay's family narrative being one of 'normalcy', there is awareness of the power of social norms which either do not recognise their mother-daughter relationship, or see it as abnormal. Jay shares how, unlike heterosexual parents, they have had to provide their child with tools to navigate the heteronormativity that she would encounter outside their immediate circle:

So…we just helped her deal with it as she got older, and…friends started asking questions like, 'You have a mommy and an aunty?. Um… … Do you have a daddy?". And then, when Jashery and I broke up and she was living with me, she had to tell them that her mommy's not living with them, and…you know, that type of thing.

Jay shares how the focus of their support to Erica centred on giving her the tools and the language to assist her with comparisons between families, and managing the fact that their mother-daughter relationship was different to the normative model. Later, when her and Jashery separated, Jay and her family had to provide Erica with support on how to manage that she was living with her 'aunty' Jay, and not living with her 'biological' mother. These queer world making parental practices reveal that Jay and her family confront similar heteronormative practices which have the effect of making lesbian headed families feel inferior. As other South African studies have revealed, these include having to respond to questions such as 'who is the real parent?' (Distiller, 2013), and 'where is your father?' Or 'where did you come from?' (Breshears & le Roux, 2013:4).

One could argue that this is no different to what many other children go through in South Africa every day with the range of family compositions different to the hegemonic nuclear family and the rate of divorce in the country. However, Jay has to manage her daughter's emotional processes in relation to the changing nature of her family make up within the

context of a lesbian relationship on the Cape Flats. Jay and the rest of her family therefore have to manage the additional dimension of preparing Erica to navigate the impact of heteronormativity, providing her with tools to navigate social expectations.

Danny's queer world making parental practice shares a similar narrative of creating the space to consciously prepare her son and her partner's nephew to process their family difference, and to provide them with tools to navigate heteronormativity. Danny is a white, middle class lesbian in her early forties who is married to her white lesbian partner, Katherine. They co-parent Danny's eleven year old biological son, Kevin, from a previous heterosexual marriage, and Katherine's nephew, in his late teens, who recently came to stay with them. Danny laughingly shares, however, how all their attempts to provide support and create a caring environment for their son have been met with his indifferent response. For him, all has been good, all was 'normal'. Danny shares how their son does not appear to foreground the significance of their family situation in the same way as they do.

> *[…] like with Kevin, you know, we all into this you know, 'We're gay' (meaningful tone) and whatever, whereas for him it's like, well he's got two moms (blasé tone) rather than, you know what I mean, the whole sexuality thing.*

Apparently for him, the sexuality of his mothers is not an issue. Kevin's reaction no doubt, also speaks to the relatively liberal social contexts in the southern suburbs and deep south of Cape Town within which Danny and her family navigate their daily lives. Although Danny shares how her mother was initially not so accepting of her lesbian relationship, Danny now also enjoys the support of her mother and her stepfather, who function as secondary caregivers to their children. Danny shares how her mother's house functions as a second home for their children. They live around the corner from Danny's mother in order to be able to access their support. Danny's former husband, a white man from Germany, and his current wife, a black woman from KZN, also come to stay when they visit Cape Town. Danny shares how everyone just seems to get along, and get on with life.

Both Jay and Danny highlight how their families perceive themselves as normal and ordinary. This does not mean, however, that they frame themselves as being 'just like' heterosexual families – both Jay and Danny prepare their children and create the space in the family to deal with any of the negative fallout from living within heteronormative

cultures. Although they foreground how their families are unexceptional, they both recognise their families are considered 'different' within heteronormative contexts. The exact extent of how 'different' or 'lesser than' depends on the social contexts and normativities of the spaces which they occupy within the Cape Flats and the southern suburbs of Cape Town. When Jay says they have an 'ordinary' family, she is highlighting how their family practices provide care, love and support for its family members. Their family is intelligible as a family; their maternal relationship to their daughter is recognised. And finally, they are recognised, as lesbians, as intelligible members of Jay's extended family (Butler, 2002). This version of 'normal' troubles the assimilation versus transgression debate as discussed by queer theorists in relation to queer parenting (Rodríguez, 2014; Ryan-Flood, 2009). Their more collective parenting model also does not set up the lesbian mothers as being the only or always the primary, caregivers for their children. In this way, they disrupt the hegemonic white 'good mother' ideology which foregrounds the centrality of the biological mother being the primary nurturer and carer.

6.5. CONCLUSIONS

The chapter has revealed the multiple ways in which lesbian motherhood is a site of intense negotiation, conflict, stress, agency and creativity. The counter narratives of lesbian motherhood have revealed that the category of 'lesbian mother' is a complex one. The participants' queer world making practices reveal how they have been complicit with, reworked and re-signified and/or resisted the the racialized and classed ideologies of the 'good mother'. Their experiences and the meanings which they ascribe to these processes of negotiating lesbian motherhood trouble the binary set up in queer theory between sameness/difference and assimilation/transgression.

Lesbians who had children from previous heterosexual relationships have to manage the decision to come out (or not) to their children and the rest of the family. These processes are heavily influenced by the culture, race and religious milieu of their families of origin, and the way in which the mother assumes her lesbian subjectivity. They are also not individual decisions, but are negotiated with the lesbian mother's partner, and do not always take place within conditions of their choosing. The decision to come out (or not) to their children was framed within the discourse of the best interests of the child. However, participants' narratives reveal that only after they had openly acknowledged their lesbian sexuality with

their children, were they able to include their children in their relationship, and for their children to form relationships with the unacknowledged partner *as* the 'other' mother. In this way, their maternal practices affected the way family bonds were formed (or not) and the symbolic and material recognition of the relationships as a household and family unit. Ironically, it is through resisting heteronormativity and openly assuming a lesbian sexuality with their children, that they were able to come closer to the norm of the 'good mother' and form more emotional connections and supportive relationships with their children. The normative 'good mother' is reworked into the 'good lesbian mother'.

Unlike tendencies to over emphasise the positive stories of 'progressive practices in order to promote the potentialities of lesbian families' (Gabb, 2004; 174), this chapter highlighted the 'uneasy complexities' for the lesbian participants when assuming motherhood while lesbian. Similar to the argument posited by Rodríguez (2014), an examination of the queer world making practices of the lesbian parents reveal that they 'speak the unspeakable'. Although Lewin (1994:10) argues that for many lesbian parents, motherhood is *the* focus of the identities of the respondents in her study, a number of the participants in my study shared times in their lives when they chose to prioritise their own needs over those of their children. This can be seen in the narratives of Denise and Light Blue, who felt that at times they didn't fulfil their responsibilities of 'good motherhood', or experienced their mothering as a site of conflict and stress. Their narratives reveal that they don't only talk to the 'joy' of having children, but highlight the tensions and contradictions which arise for mothers due to social expectation to give up their social, affective and sexual autonomy. However, their narratives also highlight their management of these familial conflicts and internal self-doubt, and how they devised ways to overcome conflicting interests. Their queer world making as lesbian mothers reveals how they simultaneously resisted the good mother ideology within the private spaces of the home, choosing to prioritise their sexual and emotional needs within their lesbian relationships, against their children's wishes. At the same time, they also chose to re-inscribe good mother ideologies and heteronormativities within hegemonic versions of their different cultures and racialities. They performed 'situational heterosexuality' in public spaces inhabited by their children in order to protect them from the stigma and discrimination attached to non-normative sexualities.

Their narratives of queer world making reveal that subjectivities and practices as lesbian mothers can be conceived and experienced as simultaneously displaying a radical and subversive position, as well as be read as unexceptional, even 'ordinary'. The lesbian headed families' claims to be 'ordinary' and normal were not the same as claiming to be 'just like' a heterosexual family. They were not using heterosexual parenting and heterosexual families as the 'gold standard' against which their families are measured (Morison & Reddy, 2013). Rather their narratives highlighted the benefits of their families, which foregrounded the need for communication, transparency, negotiation and building trust. However, these modes of queer family making revealed that their parenting practices also included an acknowledgement of the ways in which LGBTI people and their families are discriminated against and oppressed. Preparing their children for managing their heteronormative environment was a central component of their parenting practice. Similarly to Breshears (2010, 2011) internationally and Distiller (2013) locally, these mothers were very aware of the implications that their 'different' family has for their children, and the support required. In addition, in a similar fashion to more communal, collectivist parenting practices, previously ascribed to black communities in South Africa, their models of parenting included a reliance on extended family, friendship networks and insertion within their communities. In this way, they disrupted the 'good mother' ideology which foregrounds the centrality of the biological mother being the primary nurturer and carer.

For mothers who conceived their children within a lesbian relationship, the focus of the mothering extends beyond the mothers' lesbian sexuality, to include discussing the manner of conception, and the lack of/role of the father. Lesbians who conceive children using 'sperm donors' while in lesbian relationships trouble normative notions of biogenetic families. Their conception stories reveal how, along with destabilising notions of who and how families are conceived and practiced, they also re-centred and re-inscribed traditional notions of the role of the father, and the father figure.

Lesbian motherhood as a site of queer world making reveals the complexity and situational nature of the performances of their identities as raced, classed and gendered lesbian mothers. Their mothering practices reveal how they have to engage with and (at times temporarily or privately) subvert their varying cultural normativities within their families and communities. Their enactments of their mothering and sexuality, their relationships with

their children, partners and families extend the practices and meanings of hegemonic motherhood and lesbian sexuality; contribute to the kaleidoscope of what is seen to be a family and family practice in South Africa and the terms on which family relationships are navigated.

The following chapter will see the discussion turn to analysis of the sociality of everyday navigations of Cape Town, interrogating the manner in which Cape as 'home', and the participants' material homes function as sites of queer world making.

CHAPTER SEVEN: LESBIANS MAKING HOME IN CAPE TOWN

This chapter will ask how lesbians *make place/make home* for themselves in Cape Town. It will explore how lesbians make Cape Town their symbolic home and examine the role that their homes play in their constructions of their queer life worlds. Ahmed (2006) argues that power is at the centre of spatial negotiations, marking some bodies and practices as *home* and others as *out of place*. The chapter will explore how norms and regulations surrounding the body (raced, sexed, gendered and sexualised bodies) operate and are negotiated in spaces of everyday life.

The chapter is structured into three parts. The first will explore lesbians' counter narratives to the dominant notions of racialised zones of safety and danger. The second will focus on lesbians' individual navigations of everyday space in Cape Town and how they construct their sense of place and home. Finally, the third section will foreground the creation and consolidation of lesbian social networks and communities as a mode of queer world making, through lesbian scene spaces and their homes, or 'homeplace' (hooks, 1990).

7.1. SHADES OF GREY: BLURRING THE BLACK ZONES OF DANGER/WHITE ZONES OF SAFETY[22]

It is common cause that *all* lesbians face some degree of stigma, discrimination and violence due to their transgressing hegemonic gender and sexuality norms. However, the degree of their vulnerability to discrimination and violence differs on the basis of race, class, gender performance, age and location, amongst other factors. Mirroring the literature to a large extent, the lesbian narratives within this study confirm that black, butch presenting, poorer, township dwelling lesbians were at greater risk of experiencing stigma, discrimination and violence based on gender and sexuality. This is due to the compound effect of misogynoir[23]

[22] Black zones of danger/white zones of safety is a binary framing from Judge (2015).

[23] Bailey (2010) coined 'misogynoir' in a blog, *the Crunk Feminist Collective* while discussing misogyny toward black women in hip hop music. She notes the term is a*"*word I made up to describe the particular brand of hatred directed at black women in American visual & popular culture' (Bailey, 2010). She then theorises and writes about it in an academic journal in Bailey, 2013. The exact application of the term is unpacked by Trudy, in her blog *Gradient Lair* where she notes: 'Misogynoir is **not** about non-Black women of colour or White women, period. Misogyny impacts women.

(Bailey, 2010; 2013) and patriarchal heteronormativities (Gontek, 2010; Holland-Muter, 2013 Isaack, 2007; Long et al, 2003; Matabeni, 2013b; Mkhize et al, 2010; Muholi, 2004, Nel and Judge, 2008; Polders et al, 2008; Rich, 2006).

Bella, a black, self-identified femme lesbian from the Eastern Cape lives in the house that she owns in Khayelitsha with her partner, three children and sister. Her perceptions of what it is like to live as a black lesbian in Khayelitsha are illustrative of how townships are generally perceived as being heteronormative, unsafe, unwelcome spaces for black lesbians [and gender non-conforming women]:

> *Khayelitsha and the other townships […] need to do something to bring the crowd back because honestly, around where I stay there isn't one space where we would, ja, where we can for example hold your partner's hand, kiss if you want to without people looking at you funny. […] And of course places like Dez, which you know is a gay friendly space, and people go there and be who they are. But there are places where you can't even show up dressed in your favourite 'boyfriend jeans', as Woolworths calls it, you know. And so you feel much more comfortable* ***out*** *of the area than...well, I am basically. I'm much more comfortable being on this side of the railway line (pointing to the southern suburbs), where I can hold my woman, she holds me, you know, and hug and, well, sometimes hugging at the taxi rank is not such a big deal because people hug. But, there will always be that one critical eye that 'Oh!* ***that*** *hug was a little bit longer'. Like 'why do* ***you*** *care, I wasn't hugging you? '(defiant tone). … But so...ja. Lapa, this side of the line...mhmm there*

Bella shares that she does not feel safe as a lesbian 'around where I stay'. In a similar manner to the respondents in Moran & Skeggs et al's (2004) study on sexuality and the politics of violence and safety in England, Bella outlines a series of places organised in a hierarchy of danger and safety. Activities are outlined, enactments of gender and sexuality –

Racialized misogyny impacts women of colour. Misogynoir impacts Black women because of misogyny and dehumanization through anti-Blackness' (Trudy, 2014: blog paragraph 2).

holding her lesbian partner's hand, hugging or kissing each other, dressing in 'boyfriend jeans', socialising in a lesbian friendly tavern – which are possible to enact (or not) in these different locations. She ranks these from the most dangerous around where she stays to 'this side of the railway line' (the historically designated white southern suburbs), where she feels 'comfortable' i.e. safe to enact her lesbian sexuality. Similarly to Moran & Skeggs' respondents, she employs the term 'comfortable' to name her experience of located safety, a word which they argue speaks to both a *feeling* of being at home, relaxed, without threat or danger, as well as *being* at home. 'Around where she stays' does not only refer to around her home, but to the actual area where she stays and others like it, Khayelitsha and other townships, historically designated residential areas for black people. Her perspective re-inscribes a dominant narrative, the binary framing of 'black zones of danger/white zones of safety' (Judge, 2015). This binary framing ultimately 'blackens homophobia' (Judge, 2015), and therefore, remaining within this frame, whitens tolerance. Bella's mode of unbelonging, of feeling like a body out of place (Ahmed, 2000), is achieved through acts of surveillance and regulation by other community members. These range from 'people looking at you funny', 'that one critical eye', to acts of physical enforcement and regulation which are merely alluded to in their severity, but as the empirical evidence tells us, include beatings, rape and death.

However, Bella develops a simultaneous counter narrative to this binary framing of racialised spatial safety/danger for lesbians in Cape Town. Her counter narrative speaks to lesbian resistance and transgression, the uneven enforcement of heteronormativities, as well as displays of community acceptance of and solidarity with LGBTI communities within townships. Resistance and lesbian transgression is materialised in a popular lesbian friendly tavern, Dez, located in another township, Gugulethu (see map of Cape Town). Bella also speaks of the uneven enforcement of heteronormativities when she refers to the varying levels of acceptance of transgression of patriarchal heteronormativities within different areas in townships. Importantly, Bella's counter narrative is also revealed in how she herself 'speaks back' to her critics in her imagined confrontation between herself and 'that one 'critical eye'. Later in her interview, Bella speaks to the demonstrations of support, acceptance and community solidarity she has received from her neighbours and her children's teacher, in spite of, and at times because of her lesbian sexuality.

Similarly, Sandiswa, a black butch lesbian who lives in Khayelitsha, speaks of the support and acceptance that she has received within her area.

> *The neighbours, […] the guys opposite my house, they're okay. They're all accepting, actually. […] I haven't had any incidents where people are being discriminative you know.*

Ntombi, a young butch lesbian from Philippi, highlights the visible gay and lesbian presence where she lives. She attributes their acceptance within the area to living side by side with their neighbours, of a familiarity built up over years of relating and relationships.

> *And in Philippi, the reason it's not too hectic it's because a lot of people they have come out. You'll find a lot of gay people, a lot of lesbian people living in the community. And because of that, people change their perception because it is someone I know, it is someone I've grown up with […] so once they have that link with a person who is gay or lesbian, they then understand.*

This dominant narrative of racialised binaries of safety and danger found a strong echo within the narratives of the lesbian participants, black, white and coloured. However, Bella's and other lesbians' counter narrative of resistance and lesbian transgression in the township, and references to acceptance and support of non-normative, trouble this black and white binary, revealing instead shades of grey.

The hegemonic framing of white safety and tolerance was also troubled. A number of participants shared their experiences of heterosexuality being enforced in historically white spaces, generally associated with tolerance and safety. Denise, a white lower middle class lesbian from Kraaifontein, shares her experience of verbal abuse in a pub in the northern suburbs:

> *[…] me and Mary was at a pub and this guy […] he had so much hatred against lesbians. And […] you could see it in his eyes that this is someone that if he gets you alone he'll bloody well make sure he fucks it out of you or something like that. […] He was like een van daai* ***boere*** *manne,* ***plaas*** *boere, wat uhm,* ***rugby***

kyk en drink en vieslik raak vuil, barl met sy mond[24] *[…] Because that time me and Mary was like so into each other. And you could see, like this is a guy who just, get out of his way because he...he doesn't take something like this lightly. [He was] insulting us. He was 'so hulle pussy naaiers'. 'Kom ek gaan jou wys', jy weet. Praat hy met vriende*[25]*, and you can...you can* ***feel*** *the shivers running down your spine.*

Denise's experience in a heterosexual leisure space, is about feeling threatened by a group of white Afrikaans speaking men. They express their disgust at what they are witnessing – Denise and her partner being publicly affectionate. It is noteworthy that Denise refers to him as a '*plaas boer*' – a play on words, an Afrikaner farmer and a reference to a particular version of masculinity, the stereotype of a patriarchal, traditional, conservative Afrikaans man, whose values are centred around *God, Volk en die Land (* God, Nation and the Land). In this version of patriarchal heteronormative gender relations, the man is king and women are subservient to men and are *volk moeders* (mothers of the Afrikaans nation) (van der Westerhuizen, 2013). Goffman notes that the act of staring alone is an embodiment of power, where subjects who do not comply with the norm become 'objects of fascination' (Goffman, 1963) and staring becomes a 'negative sanction'. It is also understood as the first warning somebody receives of their wrongdoing (Goffman, 1963: 86 – 88 cited in Gabb, 2005). The men in Denise's case through shouting and staring achieve what they set out to do – enforce a patriarchal heteronormativity in the social space, letting Denise and her partner know you do not belong here.. Threats of violence, 'Come let us show you' have the desired chilling affect – 'you can feel shivers running down your spine'.

Butch, a lesbian of colour in her late twenties, shares her experience of heteronormativity while organising an LGBTI awareness campaign run by her student LGBTI organisation, Rainbow, at her historically white university located in the southern suburbs. Noted for

[24] He was like one of those farmer men, farmers, who watch rugby, drink and smell terrible, who *barl* with their mouth.

[25] 'Those pussy fuckers'. 'Come, I will show you', you know. He was talking to his friends like that.

being a liberal institution, she shares her surprise at the students' display of homophobia and racism:

> *When I was doing Rainbow I actually felt a lot more verbal bias from people because then I would get spoken to […] and it was from that discussion with random campus folk that I would get told things like 'I don't approve' and 'I don't want to do it' […] I'd never heard homophobic talk in my classes before, I've never really heard racist talk either (upward tone). It was only when I became involved in the student activism that I became aware of what people were actually thinking.*

Max, a white woman in her early twenties, rents a room in Newlands. She is an intern. On being asked about her perceptions of safety in Cape Town and whether she has been able to move around Cape Town without fear, Max responds that she has experienced Cape Town's suburbs and city centre as relatively safe spaces. She does acknowledge that she is not entirely oblivious to heteronormativity noting:

> *[…] I haven't been subjected to an, like, aggressive commentary or been approached by strangers or anything. […] Maybe once or twice like drunk sport science majors shouted at us in the Engen or whatever but mostly like...I don't think that reflects necessarily the level of acceptance but I think it's just like a fact of living in privileged areas and like also in the centre of the city […] that just means that they are abiding by the social contract of where ever they happen to be, you know. It doesn't mean they […] accept my relationship […] or like same sex relationships.*

Max argues that one should not mistake lack of overt physical violence and aggression against LGBTI people in the city centre and suburbs as an indication of acceptance. Rather, she highlights, this is merely a reflection of the 'social contract'. This 'social contract' might mean less of a physical blow but it does not mean lack of social surveillance and regulation, the lack of heteronormativity and homophobia.

These counter narratives draw our attention to the work of the dominant characterisation of black zones of danger/white zones of safety (Judge, 2015). Similarly to the distinctions of

right-left and east-west discussed by Ahmed (2006:14), the township/suburb distinction is not neutral. The dominant narrative of black zones of danger/white zones of safety and tolerance (Judge, 2015) creates a symbolic space that configures being lesbian, or queerness more generally, through a hierarchical distinction between an imagined white city centre and black township. Queerness is seen to be located and embedded within the white urban space, and is situated in a symbolic opposition between city and township life (Weston, 1995:55). Lesbians (and queers more generally) who reside in the township are rendered as out of place and 'stuck' in a place they would rather not be (Halberstam, 2003: 162).

The counter narratives to this framing, however, highlight the agency exercised by black lesbians living in the townships, who on a daily basis make the township home. They provide a glimpse into the multiple ways of performing lesbian subjectivities and queerness, revealing the multi-dimensional facets of living in the township, including how gendered sexuality is performed through the lens of living and loving, rather than only through victimisation and death. The counter narratives of support, solidarity and acceptance of homosexuality shown by and within black communities also challenge the sole association of blackness and black space with persecution, regulation and the imposition of a hegemonic patriarchal heteronormativity. Similarly, their counter narratives reveal the heteronormative regulation and persecution performed within so called white spaces, breaking down the unproblematic sole association of whiteness and white space with safety, tolerance and permissiveness.

Knopp & Brown (2003) argue that any mapping of sexualities should not hold hubs or cores as constant sites of liberation in contrast to repressive or heteronormative peripheries. Arguing against the notion of discrete sites of sexual oppression and sites of greater sexual actualisation, they argue for a 'tacking back and forth'' (Knopp & Brown, 2003: 417) in sexual subjectivities that occurs not only across physical space but also within the sexual subject. In this light, one should not consider Cape Town city centre, suburbs and 'gay village' as constant sites of liberation in contrast to the repressive and heteronormative peripheries of the townships and informal settlements. Rather, one should be exploring when, how and in what ways do places become sites of sexual actualisation or sites of oppression. In addition, one needs to consider that even in places of extreme oppression and repression, there are sites and experiences of resistance. These expressions of black resistance, of 'making place',

as well as expressions of white surveillance and regulation, grey Judge's (2015) binary framing of radicalised safety and danger.

7.2. MAKING HOME IN RELATION TO AND WITHIN CONSTRUCTIONS OF RACIALISED HETEROSEXUALITY

This section explores how lesbians within the study individually navigate heteronormativities in Cape Town in everyday spaces, actively 'making place' for themselves. They adopt a variety of safety mechanisms and technologies to ensure their safety, and claim their legitimate place within their communities. They construct their queer life worlds within and in relation to hegemonic patriarchal heteronormativities. Their narratives reveal different strategies of making home, of queer world making and of assuming one's lesbian subjectivity in relation to one's community. These processes are racialised and classed, as they are performed within racialised and classed spaces/places.

I will discuss four lesbians' place making strategies in relation to their communities and Cape Town more generally. Sandiswa and Bulelwa are both butch black lower middle class lesbians. Sandiswa is in her late twenties and lives in Khayelitsha whereas Bulelwa is in her forties and lives in Tambo. Mandy is an older white middle class lesbian who lives in Mouille Point on the upmarket Atlantic Seaboard, and Tamara is a coloured Muslim, in her mid-twenties, living with her parents in Mitchells Plain.

The narratives of Sandiswa and Bulelwa speak to their strategies of building relationships with their neighbours and community to ensure they are known and are seen as individual personalities, and do not just inhabit the category lesbian. Their everyday practice sees them actively claiming space/place in their (heterosexual, heteronormative) communities through constructing friendships, doing cultural labour (Livermon, 2012) in order to be seen as legitimate and authentic community members.

Sandiswa has lived in Cape Town for about five years and moves in and out of employment and in and out of formal and informal housing within Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and other areas. Her narrative reveals how she actively constructs Khayelitsha as a safe space for herself, mainly by using her charm and friendliness to build male networks of support and protection from possible danger.

*People **like** me you know. And sometimes I think it's more of the **personality** more than the sexuality thing, honestly. Because the moment you start speaking to people, they tend to look beyond what you bring. You get people that go to a place and then just, you know, **frown** and then automatically people will just judge you. But if you get to a place and you talk and you're friendly with people, then automatically they like you and uhm, because they can see what I am and they know other people around the area that are like me, you know, the...they might feel the need to protect me, okay. Which is, I've never been in any position where I had to be protected (laughing while talking), but they've always shown that thing that 'Okay we're there for you. If anyone messes with you, we're there for you okay'. So ja, and I always guard myself, okay. I don't put myself in positions where you know, it will be too awkward and I will have to be protected.*

Sandiswa highlights how her emphasis on being friendly separates her from other lesbians 'who just frown'. Her safety practice rests on establishing a bond of common humanity with the people with whom she engages. She argues that by building relationships people will 'look beyond what you bring'. People will like her in spite of her sexuality and gender performance. Sandiswa builds friendships and networks with male heterosexuals in the tavern opposite her house as well as in other spaces, employing a gender normative strategy of using men for protection. This is not because they are completely altruistic as she mentions that perhaps they see her as providing access to potential sexual relationships with her bisexual and heterosexual girlfriends. In this sense, one could argue, that Sandiswa's strategy is also built upon a complicity of masculinities, based on a potential trading in female affection and bodies.

Displaced from her parental home by her siblings after her parent's death, Bulelwa has lived on her own in Tambo Village near Gugulethu for a few years. She is an older butch lesbian in her mid-forties. She employs similar safety techniques to Bella of screening and surveying places and the people that occupy them; and like Sandiswa has a strategy of building relationships. However, Bulelwa's narrative adds another dimension to her queer 'place-making' strategies in that she emphasises how she consciously 'fixes things':

[…] It depends where you are […] I can say that I am comfortable in Tambo, but when I am in Gugulethu there are certain areas that I don't go because they won't only say words, nasty words, they are going to beat you, they are going to rape you, because they say when they see us, they see us as lesbians who want to be men. […] In my area they are accepting, to go to another area and start a new life, that's hectic, so I love my area so much. Because you can fix things that are there […]. You've got people who understand who you are, who respect who you are, who see you as a human being. That's my area.

Bulelwa builds relationships within her community, and consciously ensures that she is recognised as belonging to the community. These queer world making practices aim to undo the work of prejudice, to speak back to the dehumanising effect of homophobic prejudice and violence. Bulelwa is enacting what Livermon (2012) would term 'cultural labour' in order to achieve a life of greater socio-cultural freedom, to access the promise offered by the Constitution. Similarly to Bella, she uses 'comfort' ('I am comfortable in Tambo') as the register employed to denote a located experience of safety. However, differently to Bella, and similarly to Sandiswa, Bulelwa places this located sense of comfort within the township and community that she lives. Bulelwa's repeated use of 'my area' in her narrative invokes the rhetorical regime of 'property talk' (Moran & Skeggs et al, 2004). Property talk highlights possession and belonging and emphasises her sense of entitlement to this space, to her right to legitimately call her area/township 'home' as an authentic member.

In different ways, Sandiswa and Bulelwa build relationships to be seen as human beings. This strategy depends on breaking down the sense of estrangement that exists between insider and outsider groups, of being seen as a stranger to their communities (Mason, 2005; Ahmed, 2000). Both of their safety practices talk to a 'making place' for their lesbian existence in their homes and communities. In effect, their narratives challenge the trope that being lesbian is unAfrican and can only happen safely in the previously designated white suburbs. They foreground their embeddedness and location within their black communities and neighbourhoods.

From a very different vantage point and social location, in fact from her self-acknowledged position of privilege, Mandy shares how she has never felt discriminated against as a lesbian.

Mandy's narrative foregrounds how she refuses to see herself as different to others. She comments that she doesn't pigeonhole or label herself, nor has she every related to her sexual orientation as political. She frames her life, friendship circles and social networks as 'blurring' the lines, because it is not lesbian only. She does have occasions when she and friends consciously gather as lesbians, going away for the weekend, getting together for a big birthday or a rugby match, for example. However, then she is at pains to share how even if they do gather as women, 'half way through the evening in will come a bunch of straight people who have always jorled with those women, or a bunch of gay guys who tend to hang with us you know'. She constantly emphasises the non-identitarian, porous nature of her social circle. She emphasises that people come together to have fun, to eat, to cook, to dance, to go away together, drinking and taking drugs along the way. They live privileged lives, work hard, and play hard.

Mandy calls herself 'fanatically moderate', refusing to carry a flag or banner for anything political. Mandy recognises that for her 'it's always been kind of … comfortable. Ja, which is why I've never thought it necessary to label myself'. She goes on later to note that she doesn't even live a 'lesbian lifestyle'. Her homonormative (Duggan, 2002) manner of assuming her sexuality does not leave her completely oblivious to the heteronormativity and social norms which she has to navigate. She is conscious that she is complying with social expectations to a large extent, but does not experience it as being regulated or surveilled:

> *I kind of always see it as nothing (being lesbian) until there's a threat of an incident. And I don't know if I've even known a threat of an incident. I think you're kind of, your instinct reads situations and dictates how you behave without ever consciously doing it. […] If you walk into a Michelin restaurant you know, as you would* ***dress*** *appropriately, you would* ***behave*** *appropriately, you wouldn't snog your girlfriend at the table you know, so ja, its' just social* ***appropriateness*** *[…]*

She completely negates and naturalises power relations which inform social normativities, framing compliance with hegemonic normativities as 'social appropriateness'. Due to the fact that for the most part Mandy benefits from them, she does not recognise their existence. Her queer world making sees her often as complicit with class and raced based

norms, as well as heteronormativity. She has depoliticised her sexuality, considering it a private, domestic affair, only recognised 'while I'm in bed'. Mandy frames her relationship with friendship and social networks and with her community as being a 'huge chameleon' – behaving in different ways depending on who she is with and what is expected of her. She notes that she is 'probably overly conscious of being accommodating and being accommodated, so I probably overkill in that department', adding that 'I kind of like to do the right thing'. In her case, for the most part, 'doing the right thing' speaks to doing white middle class public respectability.

Tamara is in her mid-twenties, a Muslim, leaning towards femme presenting lesbian who lives with her family in Mitchells Plain. She is a student and financially dependent on her family. Her queer world making practices see her performing a public heterosexuality in her home for fear of being ostracised by some of her family and of being financially cut off. This mirrors the practices of other young coloured LGBTI people in Sanger's (2013) study on coloured youth in Cape Town's urban peripheries. She enacts the chaste, assumed heterosexual, albeit still non-conventional, non-covering Muslim daughter; studious and intelligent, an embodiment of her upwardly mobile class aspirations. Her narrative reveals, however, that once she drives down the N2 towards the city centre, the southern suburbs and the University of Cape Town, her place of study at the time, she enacts and embodies a positively identified lesbian woman, drinking and socialising with a range of people, women and men, lesbian and heterosexual. Here, though, her positioning and framing as a coloured Muslim woman from Mitchells Plain, separates her from her white, middle class friends – because of their perceived ignorance of her life at home within a Muslim, lower middle class/working class household, and their fears which associate Mitchells Plain with gangsterism, drugs and violence. Tamara's narrative suggests her ambivalent relationship to both Mitchells Plain and to the southern suburbs as she does not fit into or feel that she completely belongs in either community. This leaves her feeling like she is living a life of liminality, on the borderlands, betwixt and between her two communities of reference.

She is conflicted by her performing heterosexual within Mitchells Plain. On the one hand she believes there is a level of acceptance for homosexuality in the area. She argues that even though some community members use words that can be perceived as derogatory like

'moffie'[26], this is said more in the spirit of a joke, and forms part of a discourse that positions 'gays as fun'. She notes that the road where she lives is 'really gay' because there are a couple of out butch lesbians who live there, and has not heard any nasty rumours or gossip about them. However, at the same time, Tamara notes that she doesn't feel completely safe in Mitchells Plain because of the lack of a strong visible presence of lesbians. This absence leads her to ask, 'why are lesbians hiding?' Similarly to Salo et al (2010) and Leap's (2004) studies, Mitchells Plain is characterised by an ostensible lack of a publicly performing LGBTI community. Tamara maintains they are hiding because there is a danger, and therefore she is in danger. She is also concerned and fears her family's reactions.

Tamara's narrative has a lot to do with her contradictory and ambivalent feelings of belonging. She claims a sense of belonging to her community and her area, noting that she feels a part of Mitchells Plain, enjoys its ways of working, and networks of solidarity and caring, and lives with her family and has a history there. But, at the same time, she is very concerned that she will be rejected because of her sexuality, both from her family and from her broader community. Assuming her lesbian sexuality openly within the community, she fears, would lead to her losing the respect and status that she occupies due to being the first one to get a tertiary education. She fears being kicked out of home, losing her family's financial support and love.

> *It does (higher tone) (short breathing out) in...in one way ja, I feel like even if I leave (upward tone), it's still a place that feels like where you belong, like everyone looks out for one another, everyone is there to help each other, which I don't see in kind of these more middle class suburbs like Rondebosch, like you never know the neighbours name, so in that sense you do belong like they'll look after you, they'll protect you. But in another way, I don't really feel like I fit in, like what I- or like my identity, to use that word, like my lesbian identity wouldn't fit in there, I don't- I wouldn't feel comfortable, I wouldn't feel safe, in the sense that I don't know what would happen, I don't know how they would react. So ja,*

[26] Moffie is a term 'coined in the coloured communities of the Western Cape, a South African equivalent of 'queer', 'faggot', or 'flikker'' (Chetty, 1994: 127).

umm, but I do belong, but I said I also don't belong in another way so it's- it's confusing.

She does not feel at home and welcome as 'all' of her in Mitchells Plain, due to her lesbian sexuality. However, the sense of being part of a community that looks out for each other, with a shared history and with strong links of solidarity and support are very appealing to her.

When she moves from Mitchells Plain into Rondebosch and the southern suburbs, she feels like the 'coloured' other, and is confronted with the whiteness and racism of some of her friends and broader social circle. She parodies a common reaction from some of her white friends to going to Mitchells Plain is 'oh you gonna die and get shot'. Although she is able to perform as lesbian and gender non-conforming among her social networks in the southern suburbs, she has to manage their negative perceptions and stereotypes of Mitchells Plain gangster induced violence. And so here, too, she feels she can't be 'all' of herself.

This liminality and borderland positionality (Anzaldúa, 1987) leaves her in a constant state of mediating worlds, managing identities and tick tacking in her subjectivities and practices. Her queer world making subjectivities, embodied practices and search for belonging reveal the conscious choices that she makes within each space. She understands the normative codes within the different spaces in her life and chooses to negotiate them in ways that contribute to her sense of safety and comfort. In this way, she consciously polices her identity and embodiments to comply with particular codes and norms – both in terms of her sexuality and gender, as well as her race and class.

The queer life worlds discussed here have revealed the variety of ways in which lesbians in the study have navigated Cape Town, with varying degrees of resources (cultural and economic) to make it home, or to experience it as a welcoming space. Although sexuality and how they assume their lesbian subjectivities are important factors in influencing the way in which they 'made place' for themselves as lesbians, their queer world making was also largely influenced by their positionality within the social relations of race, class and age, amongst others.

7.3. CONSTRUCTING LESBIAN COMMUNITY AS A MODE OF MAKING HOME AND BELONGING

Forming collective lesbian space and community are key strategies adopted by many participants to manage heteronormativity in everyday spaces and construct a sense of home in Cape Town. These processes of collective queer world making take place in both private and public space, inside and outside of view and 'knowledge' of the general community.

Constructing lesbian community takes place through a number of strategies and sites. The lesbian scene space is an important space of building identity and community – which is enacted in both permanent gay and lesbian commercial venues, as well as within monthly events based activities held in 'heterosexual' commercial venues. In this way 'lesbian scene space' has been created in what has been previously constructed as a solely (white) gay, male scene.

Lesbian homes, as private, secure locations, also function as sites of lesbian performativity, a place where inhabitants and their friendship circles and social networks can 'escape the disciplinary practices that regulate [their] bodies in everyday life (Johnston & Valentine, 1995: 99). Notwithstanding homes being experienced as sites of violence and erasure (between partners, or between generations), they also play an important role as nodes of community building. Homes function as sites of leisure and recreation amongst friendship circles; as sites of commercial gain within social networks, and importantly as sites of political education and mobilisation. Homes are reconfigured from domestic to public spaces, and stretched to 'homeplaces' (hooks, 1990).

Both lesbian scene space and 'homeplace' (hooks, 1990) make place for lesbian performativity in Cape Town, creating a space of fractured belonging which includes both a symbolic and material home for lesbians. This is accessed and experienced unevenly across race and class.

7.3.1. THE LESBIAN SCENE AS A SITE OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND FRACTURED COMMUNITY BUILDING

None of the lesbians in the study only socialise within lesbian scene space, but for a large number of them, lesbian scene space has played an important role in their lives as a means to consolidate a lesbian subjectivity and contribute to a sense of belonging. Much has been

written about how lesbian and gay leisure spaces function as 'safe havens' for marginalised LGBTI communities. Lesbian women's leisurescapes have been constructed as sites of identity construction, empowerment and resistance to heteronormativity and a haven from the threat of homophobic violence (Browne & Ferreira, 2015). As sites of safety and identity construction, Buckland (2002) notes how lesbian scene(s) are key to the cultural life of individuals, groups and queer life worlds in that as sites of queer sociality they make meaning and value as a community. She argues that 'any queer dance floor is a node in which many weaving, layered maps meet. Any one of those maps is part of a queer life world: a mobile theatre or map of common relations' (Buckland, 2002: 3).

The participants' narratives mirror this, highlighting how lesbian social scene across the geographical divides in Cape Town functions as safe spaces for them to enact lesbian desire, to form social networks and to feel a sense of lesbian community. This increases their sense of belonging and a sense of Cape Town being a home.

Max, a young white lesbian from Newlands notes:

> *As like a newly enabled gay person, it was very appealing to me to be able to go, the first time I went to like a women only party […] it felt really good to be in a space that I knew just had women in it I guess. The whole loneliness in the beginning, like not having any queer friends. And wanting to enter into those spaces and get enmeshed in some kind of community.*

Max highlights the affirming role that lesbian social spaces offer to younger lesbians and those that are newly engaging with their lesbian sexual subjectivities. They also provide much needed access to larger social networks, breaking down social isolation. Such affirming spaces build a positive self-identity and provide a sense of belonging to a broader community. This confirms other research on South African youth which highlights how being part of a wider community contributes to resilience, breaking down the isolation and marginalisation experienced within the family, school and broader social context (Kowen & Davis, 2006).

Jay and Tamara, both coloured lesbians from Mitchells Plain, share their perceptions of the lesbian social scene.

Jay:

Um…the first time I went to Angels, […] it was awesome. Just to be in a place where I didn't have to worry about people watching me…you know. I didn't have to hide that I was a lesbian, there's other women like me, and it was just amazing. And that was amazing.

Tamara:

> *[The Pink Party is] a nice place to like kind of just hang out with your friends, like, in a space that is like, open to different sexualities and different ways of expressing love. Like if you were to make out with your girlfriend and you're in the middle of UCT, it'll be really awkward [chuckles] like people would be looking at you. Like, so just being able there to kiss someone of the same sex without being judged or being looked at, it's nice kind of having that space.*

Jay and Tamara speak about different moments in time in Cape Town, the early nineties and 2013, and yet both reference how lesbian scene space provides them with a safe space to publicly enact their lesbian identities and lesbian desire. Jay refers to how Angels, a popular lesbian bar/club in the eighties and nineties in Green Point, provided her with a safe space as a young coloured woman in her late teens during the early nineties. At that time, she was living in the closet in her family home in Mitchells Plain. She had been the victim of lesbophobic violence, attacked in the car park of a club in her area for publicly displaying affection to her girlfriend. Some twenty years later, in 2013, Tamara, also living in the closet at home with her parents, refers to her sense of relief at being able to express love and desire in a space 'that is open to different sexualities'. For Tamara, in spite of the legislative and socio-political changes which have seen greater visibility and public acceptance towards LGBTI people in contemporary Cape Town, being able to access a space like Pink Party, a monthly queer party held in Zonnebloem, is still a life line.

Although Jay has noted a greater visibility of lesbian presence in public spaces in Mitchells Plain in recent years, Leap (2005) and Salo et al (2010) both point to how a gay and lesbian presence is 'tolerated' within coloured communities as long as they are not too visible. They are accepted as 'marginal persons'. Tamara has a similar feeling within her community in Mitchells Plain. Spaces like the Pink Party provide her with the safety to freely enact her lesbian desire without fear of being watched and judged. Both Jay and Tamara register the freeing effect of a legibility of lesbian desire and the sense of community created by the knowledge that there 'were other women like me'.

Sandiswa, a young black butch lesbian from Khayelitsha notes:

> *In Dez […] it's a hangout spot for gays and lesbians, mostly lesbians okay, […] Because before Dez we all used to go to Mzoli's you know. Because you'll get a lot of gay people there. Everyone, every kind you know. […] Most people like it because they meet people there. It's like a hook up spot I don't know, pickup job I don't know (laughing while talking). That's where you get to meet other lesbians from other areas. People drive from all the locations around, even from Parklands to Cape Town, Obs, wherever. They want to go to Dez, whatever. We get to meet a lot of different people. It's very nice.*

Sandiswa's narrative highlights how Gugulethu is the site of a range of collective lesbian 'scene spaces'. Sandiswa has noted that she refuses to attend the lesbian friendly bars in Green Point, because they are expensive, play 'white music' and are full of white lesbians. Lesbian participants from the focus groups also shared their refusal to attend the lesbian social scene in the suburbs and the city centre because of experiences of racism and classism within these spaces. These experiences mirror studies on the Green Point gay scene (Elder, 2004; Tucker, 2009a; 2009b). Many also experience difficulty in accessing these spaces due to the lack of transport and expensive entrance fees and drinks. The taverns, Dez and Shawn's Place, in Gugulethu provide sites of lesbian identity construction and community building within the township. They provide a space of safety and resistance to patriarchal heteronormativity, a safe space to enact lesbian desire and play – while also providing a haven from the racism experienced in the lesbian scene in the city centre.

However, Dez has also been a site of tension and fear. It is not a lesbian only space, and the owner does allow some heterosexual men and women into the tavern. This has led to some conflicts, mainly between heterosexual men and butch lesbians. This tense relationship has often been cited as partly motivating the sexual and physical violence enacted against black butch lesbian bodies.[27] The desire not to have to deal with heterosexual men in social spaces

[27] The literature speaks to the tensions between (black) hegemonic heterosexual masculinities and (black) lesbian masculinities, a clash which plays itself out in two scenarios. Firstly, by hegemonic heterosexual men attempting to assert their masculinity over lesbian masculinities, by letting butch lesbians know that they may enact a lesbian masculinity, but they are still women, and therefore socially and culturally 'fair game' for heterosexual men. This is achieved by these heterosexual men testing and baiting butch lesbians by 'proposing' sexual relationships with them. Secondly, there is a

has led Sandiswa and other lesbians to stop frequenting Dez and to move their social allegiance to Shawn's Place, a lesbian only space. This border practice (Moran & Skeggs et al, 2004) of creating a lesbian only space in the midst of these tensions is a mechanism of safety and security.

These queer world making spaces are restricting in that they offer a limited number of venues and places for lesbian centred leisure and recreation. However, they also open up freedom of expression and bodily safety within a bordered, protected space. The lesbian scene demonstrates the place making practices performed by lesbians in Cape Town. Different to the early nineties studied by Leap (2004), when he noted a 'lesbian place' was absent from the gay scene in the city centre, one can speak of 'lesbian places' in the leisurescapes of Cape Town. These are not only located in the gay village, but also in a number of historically designated white and coloured suburbs and black townships throughout Cape Town. They are also partial, ephemeral and temporal, reflecting the monthly events and lesbian inspired leisure calendar rather than the permanent space of the (rapidly reducing and dispersing) gay scene. They reflect the social, racial and class divisions and cleavages within Cape Town, a legacy of colonial and Apartheid South Africa. In this way, the queer world making revealed by the lesbian scene space makes visible a fragmented and dispersed belonging, a fractured place making.

7.3.2. RECONFIGURING DOMESTIC SPACE

Most, if not all, participants' narratives reveal how their homes function as sites of leisure and recreation. This mirrors both international and national studies (Leap, 2005; Peace, 2001; Rothenberg, 1995;) which outline that lesbians socialise and come together as communities through friendship and social networks which occupy private/domestic spaces or public space ephemerally.

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reference to the 'competition' that exists between them for the sexual attention of heterosexual women or femme lesbians. (Gontek, 2007; Holland-Muter, 2013; Martin et al, 2009; Mkhize et al, 2010; Swarr, 2012).

The middle class lesbians of all races in the study who lived outside of the townships did not frame socialising in their homes specifically as a 'safety practice'. They did however refer to how their homes serve as sites of recreation and community building. This is in contrast to black lesbians living in a range of townships who specifically referenced how their homes function as a safe haven from the stigma, discrimination and violence they often experience in public spaces. As Bella noted:

> *I mean... [pause] going out at night, I don't feel safe going out at night. So what do you do? Or what do I do? I stay home. Um, just by virtue of being female, or a woman you know, you are not safe. And if people find out other things about you, who you hang out with, where you go, things you do, then you automatically have a target mark on your face.*

The distance between people's homes in the township and the city centre where much of the lesbian and gay social scene is located; the lack of personal and public transport, together with the racism and exclusion experienced in what is seen to be white lesbian scene space in the city centre, (Leap, 2005; Rink, 2013; Tucker, 2009a; 2009b; Visser, 2003) all contribute to social activities centred in informal networks and friendship circles in black domestic spaces. Black lesbian narratives illustrate how their homes located in the township function as sites of refuge or leisure, not only for the people living there, but also for their friendship circles and broader community networks. Similar to Lewis & Loots (1995) and Salo et al's (2005) findings, lesbians constructing safe zones in domestic spaces as a central feature of their construction of queer life worlds figured strongly in their narratives.

The following excerpt from the focus group discussion held with lesbians living in and around Gugulethu draws attention to this and how the 'inside' (the domestic, the private) offers a refuge from the 'outside'(the public world of patriarchal heteronormativity).

Focus Group One discussion:

Bulelwa:

> *No me, I'm having fun in my house [Zim: me too]. […] and then lesbians will come to me and we just sit down in my house. Or I will go where it's safe, I know we are going to sit here, no one's going to crowd us, and anyway, we have to protect ourselves.*

Zim:

*I think we have to protect ourselves, **yabon** (you know)? Because we are old, you see maybe it's age/interrupted*

Bulelwa:

We've been there!

General commentary:

Ahhhh heeeyyy! Guys come on now (laughing)

Zim:

So now at least we are tired. You sit at home, get your booze, get some chips, some things [KK: Organise some chips, (laughing); some juices, (laughing); Siphokazi: some sushi] and then when you want to sleep, you sleep in your bed. You don't think of going… at least sometimes yes, when you want to network with people you go to Dez and see some chicks there.

Bulelwa:

Jaaaa, once in a while.

As Salo et al (2010) note, the domestic space provides lesbians with a safe space to create an alternative subculture. The meaning of the home space is stretched, employed as a site of recreation in order to become a means of protection, 'we have to protect ourselves', and as a respite, 'no one's going to crowd us'.

Bulelwa's statement 'And then lesbians will come to me' reveals how homes also become nodes of friendship networks and community belonging. The home becomes a node where individual queer life worlds merge and converge to form a collective of queer life worlds. Zim and Bulelwa suggest that this form of safety practice seems to be favoured by older lesbians. Zim, who self identifies as an older butch lesbian, notes how she prefers home because 'we are tired'. This could refer to being 'tired' of fighting, of having to confront and

navigate heteronormativity in public spaces, and particularly of having to manage heterosexual men.

As mentioned earlier, homes performing as sites for socialising extend beyond the townships. Jay, Butch, Rusty (three coloured lesbians living in Mitchells Plain and southern suburbs) and Danny, a white middle class lesbian in the deep south, all share how their homes, as well as those of their friends, function as sites of lesbian community among their friendship networks.

In the second focus group held with black lesbians from a range of townships in Cape Town, the home also emerged as a site of economic gain through the creation of commercial lesbian social spaces. Below, Letsa discusses her commercial venture of creating safe lesbian social spaces in her home in Gugulethu:

Focus Group Two

Letsa:

> *I wanted a niche market for just us, because we never had a haven where we can go and, you know, be at home, […] where you can go and say my day was shitty today because of X, Y, Z and a friend will go, no my friend, here have a glass or whatever. Or here have a smoke whatever. So that is basically my idea in the first place of bringing events across. […] I think everyone felt very safe because what I did was I made sure that there's security around. They don't let the very not so scrumptious characters come through. Uhm, make sure that there's sufficient toilets for everybody. Sometimes the police would come because I didn't have a licence to sell, but me being black, doing the... (laughter) I made a plan. So now if they would come say round about 2 o' clock, 3 o' clock, I know taxis haven't yet started at that time. But we'd play either music very softly for people to still chill up until there's taxis. And then after 5 when taxis start, as soon as I hear the first taxis hooting then I tell everybody 'guys taxis are here'. If anybody uhm, is waiting to take a taxi, because some people don't have lifts. Other people just walked to my place or they took a taxi whatever the case.*

Employing the register of 'haven' and 'be at home', she clearly invokes this venture as a safety practise, a bid to create a safe zone for lesbians. Letsa highlights the borderlands

protection practices (Moran & Skeggs et al, 2004) of employing security to prevent the entry of 'the not so scrumptious characters'. One is not clear who these undesirables might be (possible lesbophobic men? A class based descriptor?). But it indicates a protective practice of creating an inside and an outside, a gate keeping mechanism to limit right of access. Different to commercial social scenes, this home based venture operates throughout the night to cater for the lack of public transport in the township. A number of lesbian respondents shared how they had had no transport home after being caught up in the joy of lesbian gatherings and infused with alcohol. Letsa ensures that her home remains open for people until the first taxis start hooting the following morning when it will be safe for them to leave.

It goes without saying that to offer one's home as a site for socialising one has to have the means to own a home, or to rent and/or occupy a space, even if that is just in a backroom in your family home's yard. This denotes economic class privilege, allowing one to be buffered from (at times violent) heteronormative spaces. Sandiswa however shares how a solidarity economy within the township lesbian social networks operates:

> *… you **knew** that if you guys were hosting you must provide everything for these guys […] you know you have to pop up something for the guys that don't work, so that's how it is in the township.*

Thus, both the material site of socialisation (the home), as well as the means to enjoy oneself (the food and the alcohol) were shared. This solidarity economy practised within these private spaces distinguishes them from commercial scenes, as well as the 'bring and share' of more middle class private social scenes in the suburbs.

Lesbians in the study also shared how homes became sites of consciousness raising and political organisation, a queer world making practice directed at changing individual awareness, building support and solidarity and a more political collective consciousness as lesbians and heterosexual women.

Jay, a coloured woman in her thirties, says during the early nineties, while she was in her late teens, she met a large network of relatively older lesbians who would socialise in Angels

(lesbian bar in Green Point in the 80s and 90s). She shares how they would also get together outside of the clubbing space, gathering at somebody's home to talk about:

> *all the issues that they encounter, and…gay bashings, where not to go, to go out in groups and…discussions about…your rights as a woman, and, choices that you can make, and things like that you know. And experiences that they've gone through.*

Jay notes that it was an eye opening experience for her, broadening her political and social understanding of herself and her positionality as a coloured lesbian. She also mentions how this group would establish safe houses in different areas for women to seek refuge if they found themselves in times of trouble. She talks about this experience as 'a discovery of other gay women', a sense of a community.

These references to home as a refuge and safe haven, as a space for political awareness raising, bring to mind bell hooks's 'homeplace' (hooks, 1990) where she speaks about the role that the home played in black women's lives, individually and as a community:

> *We could not learn to love or respect ourselves in the culture of white supremacy, on the outside; it was there on the inside, in that 'homeplace', most often created and kept by black women, that we had the opportunity to grow and develop, to nurture our spirits. This task of making a homeplace, of making home a community of resistance, has been shared by women globally, especially black women in white supremacist societies*. (hooks, 1990: 42).

Here 'the private 'inside' of the homeplace functions as a site of resistance, nurturance and protection of the black family (understood to be broader than the immediate nuclear family) from the white supremacist 'outside', public world. I would argue that hook's 'homeplace' has a number of common features with the lesbians' queer world making in their home spaces. The lesbian homeplace within their queer life worlds offers a place of refuge and protection, where lesbians love and support each other, provide positive affirmation and acceptance of themselves and their sexuality within the context of a broader heteronormative society. In bringing together a collective, they make a home for a community of resistance. I would argue that this holds true even if the function of the

gatherings and collective come together in order to 'have fun'. These collective gatherings, in the homeplace, function as refuge and safe places, as protection, for a community of lesbians who gather as lesbians, for lesbians. In this way, they become collective sites of resistance to heteronormativity.

7.4. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has demonstrated how the lesbians in the study are engaged in a politics of belonging (Yuval Davis, 2006) in order to make Cape Town home, and how the home has also functioned as a homeplace (hooks, 1989). The dominant narrative which represents Cape Town as sharply distinct black and white spaces, and its binary framing as discriminatory/ liberatory, was troubled in a number of ways, revealing a bleeding between the two 'zones' of ostensible white lesbian freedom and black lesbian oppression.

Counter narratives reveal how black lesbians have adopted a number of safety practices in order to manage heteronormativities, as well as transgress and resist racialised heteronormativities. They have created a contingent sense of feeling 'at home' in Cape Town in historically black areas - countering the dominant narrative of 'black homophobia'. The lesbian narratives have also highlighted the tensions of navigating heteronormativities in historically white areas, again troubling the notion of white zones of safety. The affective emotional landscapes of Cape Town revealed in the lesbian narratives within this study materialise the variegated ways in which the sociality of race, class, gender performance, age, amongst other factors, shapes how lesbians construct their individual and collective queer life worlds. The multiple bases through which individuals occupy and access privilege and/or experienced oppression – be it on the basis of race, gender performance, age, employment status, place of residence, able bodiedness or health status – provide 'cultural capital' to mitigate the effects of heteronormativity, and affected the meanings which they ascribed to their experiences.

Making home and feeling at home in Cape Town is also influenced by the participants' social contexts, and their agency as social actors as they navigate everyday space from their positionalities of race, class, age and gender performance, amongst other factors. These have been discussed through the modes of 'embedded lesbianism' which rework notions of belonging within black communities; homonormative performances of lesbianism which

rework a middle class whiteness (Bérubé, 2001; Frankenberg, 1993) and finally through a mode of borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987) and liminality.

Constructions of lesbian communities through the creation of lesbian scene space, and through their everyday use of their homes as sites of refuge, identity construction and collective community contribute to a fractured belonging in their communities and Cape Town. These queer life worlds overlay, complement and contradict official Pink Maps of Cape Town (Rink, 2013) and rework the meaning of the representation of Cape Town being the gay capital of South Africa. Through the occupation of ephemeral and contingent public space they reveal the 'lesbian place' in Cape Town that Leap (2004) was unable to find, a lesbian place that is dispersed through the nodes of connectivity and community throughout the racialised landscape of the city.

The home plays an important role in the construction and consolidation of lesbian identity, community and belonging. This 'stretching' of their homes for what Gorman-Murray (2006) refers to as 'unhomely' practices (read non-heteronormative), refers to how domestic spaces are reconfigured as 'an unequivocal homosexual site […] usually not associated with the concept of "homely"' (Johnston & Longhurst, 2010:47). Homes become 'stretched' through the reconfiguring of domestic space to a site of identity construction and community building, political education and organisation, and public consumption. Ultimately, homes become a 'homeplace' (hooks, 1990), sites of collective resistance to patriarchal heteronormativity. However, although these home spaces speak to queer bonds (Weiner & Young, 2011) and to another social ontology through writing an alternative code of entanglements and connectivities (Butler, 2015), they ultimately remain sites of fractured belonging due to their interstitial and ultimately private nature.

There is no singular notion of lesbian/queer identity, nor is there a 'utopian notion of a lesbian community' (Buckland, 2002). Queer life worlds are produced within everyday lives, in particular moments and contexts, and are ephemeral and contingent. The wide ranging place making processes of the lesbians reveal the racialised, classed and gendered nature of their queer world making and life worlds. Their narratives reveal contrasting and competing narratives of the city, surfacing how Cape Town is experienced as a hybrid space, a place of

multiple contradictions, simultaneously positioned as a site of personal realisation, sexual liberation and diversity, and exclusion, division and oppression.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS - A POLITICS OF SEXUAL BELONGING

This thesis set out to explore the different modes and meanings of queer world making of lesbians in Cape Town, constructed as subjects of perverse desire. It did this through an exploration of how lesbians navigate a series of dominant narratives, which indicate flashpoints of contestation of racialised gender and sexuality norms, within three socialities. These are inter alia, embodied lesbian subjectivities; lesbian motherhood and every day/night space/homeplace in Cape Town.

When theorising Berlant & Warner's (1998) QWM from the prism of intersectionality, the thesis employed 'corrective methodologies' (Yekani et al, 2010: 90), to respond to Muñoz's critique of queer theory's conceptual and empirical 'blind spots' (1999: 10). The thesis is an empirical, historically contingent analysis of lesbian queer world making, sensitive to a locational politics of place, space and scale (Puar, 2007) in Cape Town. It is concerned with the politics of positionality (Erel et al, 2008; Hill Collins, 1990; Yuval Davis, 2006), with how lesbian subjectivities are constructed and lived within asymmetrical power relations dispersed along a number of intersecting axes of social inequalities. Categories of identity and social differentiation were considered from a deconstructive point of view (Derrida, 1978), always and 'already intertwined in multiple frameworks of inequality' (Yekani et al, 2010: 80), with participants moving in and out of positionalities of privilege and penalty within interlocking systems of oppression and privilege (Hill Collins, 1990).

The thesis elucidates how normalisation was navigated through a reading of intersectionality as a lived phenomenon. This provided a focus on lived experiences, rather than conceptualising intersectionality as 'a benign, descriptive listing, a structural-formulaic "weigh" or a purely cultural representation' (Taylor et el, 2010: 4). It shows the messy reality of the participants' lives, and the varied ways in which sexuality is attached to and bound up with other subjectivities and positionalities. Binaries have been resisted when exploring the relationship between categories of identity and experience such as black and white lesbians, butch/femme, heterosexual and lesbian mother, township/suburb. Instead, notions of connection and complexity (Taylor et al, 2010), contingency and nuance have been foregrounded.

The thesis centres the participants' agency and navigations of a wide ranging field of normalisation through a constellation of interlocking norms which define who belongs, what bodies are allowed to do, when and where and in which relationships (Browne et al, 2005). These were produced in everyday spaces of the home, family, community and neighbourhood, lesbian scene space and the city. The thesis foregrounds their embodied praxis (Johnson, 2001) and their desire to build, rebuild and shift dominant discourses, meanings and practices (Danielson, 2009) within three socialities. Their everyday agency and multivalent transgression, subversion, resistance of, and/or complicity with dominant narratives and hegemonic discourses reveals their self-fashioning (Butler, 2015). Their constructions of counter narratives (Bamberg, 2004) produce their queer life worlds (Buckland, 2002) and constructions of lesbian belonging. The thesis highlights a multileveled and multifarious politics of belonging, which makes known the ambivalent, the contradictory, but ultimately the presence, 'the place', of lesbians within Cape Town.

8.1. THE (IM)POSSIBILITY OF LESBIAN SUBJECTIVITY

Hegemonic heteronormativities in post-Apartheid South Africa construct lesbian subjectivities of all races and classes as abnormal and against religious teachings, with black lesbian subjectivities also being constructed as unAfrican (Gqola, 2005; Reddy, 2004; Van Zyl & Steyn, 2005; Vincent & Howell, 2014). Lesbian participants' experiences of 'awakening' to lesbian desire and the psycho-social processes involved in 'recognising' themselves as lesbian subjectivities provide powerful counter narratives to these sexual hegemonies.

'Awakening' to lesbian desire required a process of recognising one's feelings for another woman as sexual where heteronormativities have constructed same sex sexual desire as culturally unintelligible (Butler, 1999; Ussher & Mooney-Somers, 2000). This recognition of sexual desire entails the embodiment of the socially devalued sign of lesbian. Recognition of this desire led to feelings of confusion, inferiority or a sense of 'rightness'. These are racialised and classed cultural processes. Examined through the lens of 'generational narratives', their counter narratives speak to shifts in how same sex desire and lesbian subjectivities are produced within different historical moments in the country. The thesis gives witness to (dis)continuities in modes of inhabiting same sex desire and lesbian subjectivity over time. We see the death of mommy-baby relationships, and the spawning of multivalent, multi-vocal enactments of same sex desire and lesbian subjectivities in a

steadily growing cultural legibility of lesbian subjectivities. The co-existence of stigma, discrimination and violence, with acceptance, solidarity, and queer belonging highlights the ambivalent and contradictory positionality occupied by lesbian subjectivities in contemporary Cape Town.

A variety of modes of queer world making elucidates the different ways in which participants enacted and 'made place' for lesbian sexual desire. These ranged from an essentialist mode, couched within a discourse of 'coming home' to an authentic lesbian subjectivity and desire; the mode of 'sexual beings', without a designated object of desire; the mode of a politicised lesbian subjectivity, part of a broader political project and commitment to social change and justice; and finally, the mode of an 'identity thread' (Seidman, 2002), where their lesbian subjectivity was merely a personalised aspect of their private life. Not sticking (Ahmed, 2006) to any particular racialised or classed subjectivity, they all produce counter narratives and make place for lesbian desire, at the same time as being entangled with racialised heteronormativities in complex and intricate ways (Grosz & Probyn, 1995). These modes revealed a way of being in the world that was also 'inventing the world' (Muñoz, 2009: 121).

The thesis provides insight into the complexity and historical contingency of constructing and producing lesbian subjectivities within social contexts that are unevenly receptive or hostile to the performance and display of lesbian sexualities. It demonstrates how queer life worlds and queer world making responds to particular historical time periods, and contributes to making history. This is evidenced in the bringing into being of a legally recognized category of sexual identity and how participants managed the resulting contradictory discourses emanating from its uneven uptake within everyday life. Generational narratives of subjectivity raise questions about what is lost and gained with the birth of a lesbian category with legal rights, and the dying out of categories and practices such as mommy-baby relationships. These differences in modes of queer world making over time draw attention to the historically contingent nature of lesbian subjectivities and sexual practise, and how these are heavily influenced and located within particular cultures and racialised groupings. Ultimately, it draws attention to how queer world making is not structured along a single homosexual/heterosexual binary, but is always implicated and produced in relation to complex racialized, gendered and classed socialities.

The meanings attached to queer subjectivities and modes of queer world making are complex and multivalent. They are not attached to a complicit or transgressive figure, which has predetermined racial and or class attributes. By this, the thesis has shown that being black and poor does not construct a necessarily always radical, transgressive figure, and being white and rich, does not always and already produce a complicit, homonormative figure. Rather, one's personal trajectory, political ideologies and beliefs, in relation to and in dialogue with one's social positionality, contribute to the emotional and political attachments to different modalities of queer world making.

8.2. EROTIC WORLD MAKING: THE (IM)POSSIBILITY OF LESBIAN DESIRE AND PRACTICES OF SEXUAL PLEASURE

The thesis developed the concept of erotic world making whereby the 'body-erotic potential (Dowsett, 1996), the 'doing of something nice', creates the conditions for discovering new sexual possibilities. The participants' productions of their erotic life worlds consider sex and desire in relation to, alongside and beyond the hegemonic frameworks and terms of the 'master discourses of sexuality' (Grosz & Probyn, 1995).

Lesbian erotic world making is produced by claiming the entitlement to inhabit and enact sexual autonomy and agency within regulatory regimes which construct certain categories of bodies – black and white women and lesbians, poorer women, women living with disabilities and with HIV - as outside desire and pleasure (Butler, 1999; Distiller, 2005; Grosz & Probyn, 1995; Jolly et al, 2013). These served as resources for lesbians within the study to make sense of their own embodied practices and sexuality.

Their constructions of erotic queer world making show productions of sexual desire and pleasure through a series of gender regimes. Firstly, a strong discourse of love and intimacy emerged through a narrative of 'romantic sexual embodiment'. Although mirroring the hegemonic discourse associating femininity with romance and love within sexual relationships, lesbian discourses of romantic sexual embodiment reveal the powerful centring of the body, sexual pleasure and desire. Romance is highlighted, but love and sentimentality produce desire, sexual connectivity and pleasure. Deeply emotional, almost spiritual, connections produce intense embodied sexual connections. A second gendered discourse of sexual pleasure emerges in relation to the categories of butch/femme lesbian

gender identities. Focusing specifically on femme sexual embodiments, their narratives reveal how, while embodying seemingly patriarchal heteronormative roles, they ask us to recognise the power and emotional work required in taking these emotional and psychic risks of giving up power and opening oneself to receive pleasure. Power is also enacted through showing their lovers the effect of their lovers' caresses and touch as well as in one femme's 'refusal to touch'. The gendered regimes in their narratives of sexual pleasure reveal that gendered lesbian identities open a range of interpretive possibilities, revealing 'complex designations of desire that often exceed the names and categories assigned to them' (Rodríguez, 2014: 120).

Lesbian erotic world making also sees narratives which centre 'the lesbian touch', producing a lesbian-centred frame of sexual pleasure and desire beyond phallocentric culture. These foreground the 'lesbian hand' as a sexual surface and celebrates it as a signifier of erotic power (Merck, 2000; Wednesday, 2008). In a refusal to bind themselves to patriarchal understandings of sex and sexuality, this erotic power does not fetishise lesbian hands as 'the lesbian phallus' (Wednesday, 2008) but rather, celebrates hands for their 'double significance of erotic power and independence [...]. Hands hold our power, our independence, our talent, our strength, and most important, each other' (Wednesday, 2008: 401-402).

Their 'productions of desire' highlight the viscerality and visuality of being touched, stroked, caressed, penetrated/penetrating, and the role of fantasy in sexual pleasure. The role of the body is larger than that of mere function (Chinn, 2003). A focus on the senses – of touch, taste, sight, hearing, smell – reveals a sexualised embodiment of surfaces, textures and emotionality. The visual components of desire and pleasure do not speak to the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975), which objectifies and regulates women's sexual autonomy and pleasure but rather brings into view the 'power of looking' (hooks, 1992) with the lesbian gaze (Gras, 2016). The body, heart, mind and fantasy produce and act as resources for 'perverse desire' (de Lauretis, 1994) speaking for itself.

Cornwall & Jolly (2005) highlight that positive approaches to sexuality, including the right for women to define what they want and don't want, offer potential entry points to challenging heteronormativity and the social and cultural norms which limit and undermine women's

abilities to exercise sexual autonomy and agency. These explorations into lesbians' constructions of erotic queer world making provide us with the language and symbolism required to develop a new discourse on women's sexuality. These material manifestations of counter narratives of a lesbian's right to sexual expression and pleasure contribute to producing a cultural legitimacy of women's sexual pleasure, and contribute to building women's sexual autonomy, control and agency (Correa, 2002; Cornwall & Jolly, 2005; Klugman, 2000; Tamale, 2013).

A discourse and practice of lesbians' sexual autonomy and sexual pleasure function as sites of queer (be)longing, as technologies of queer world making, of making place through queer encounters. These discussions contribute to building a language of queer desire and write women's desire out loud.

The thesis contributed to extending the queer imaginary of what queer pleasure looks like, how it is practised and who experiences it. It has positioned femme sexualities as active agents in pursuit of their sexual pleasure, and also resignified gendered romantic discourses of sexual pleasure. In effect by exploring in a more granular manner the complexities of the flows, textures and sites of desire, these discussions centering lesbians' erotic world making have ultimately contributed to extending, and moving beyond patriarchal, phallocentric modes and models of desire. They have rewritten the sexual and sexually experiencing body.

8.3. LESBIAN MOTHERHOOD AS A SITE OF QUEER WORLD MAKING

Hegemonic discourses of 'the good mother' (Hays, 1996; Krane & Davies, 2007) inform the dominant narrative against which lesbian mothers of all races construct their counter narratives of lesbian mothering. In addition, hegemonic religious and cultural discourses position same sex sexuality as unAfrican, abnormal and/or ungodly (Currier & Migraine-George, 2016). These two constructions question the legitimacy of placing 'lesbian' and 'mother' alongside each other (Butler & Astbury, 2008; Richardson, 2004).

The participants' counter narratives make known the multiple ways in which lesbian motherhood is experienced as a site of intense negotiation and conflict, but also agency and creativity. The category of 'lesbian mother' is a complex and contingent one. Their queer world making practices reveal the multiple ways in which participants have been complicit with, reworked and re-signified and/or resisted the racially and culturally specific ideologies

of the 'good mother'. Ultimately, their experiences trouble the binary set up in queer theory between sameness/difference and assimilation/transgression.

Lesbians who had children from previous heterosexual relationships have had to manage the, at times, stressful decision to come out (or not) to their children and the rest of the family. These processes are heavily influenced by the culture, race and religious milieu of their families and the way in which the mother assumes her lesbian subjectivity. They are not individual decisions, but are negotiated with her partner, and do not always take place within conditions of their choosing. Their narratives uncover that only after they have openly acknowledged their lesbian sexuality with their children are they able to include their children in their relationship, and for their children to form relationships with the unacknowledged partner *as* the 'other' mother. Ironically, it is through resisting heteronormativity and openly assuming a lesbian sexuality with their children, that they are able to come closer to the notion of 'the good mother' and meet their children's emotional needs.

Unlike the positive stories of 'progressive practices that promote the potentialities of lesbian families' (Gabb, 2004; 174), this thesis highlights the uneasy complexities for the lesbian participants when assuming motherhood while lesbian. Similar to the argument posited by Rodríguez (2014), an examination of the queer world making practices of the lesbian parents reveal that they 'speak the unspeakable'. Lewin (1994:10) argues that for many lesbian parents, motherhood gave 'value and significance to their lives'. However, several of the participants in my study shared their emotional turmoil when conflicting interests with their children arose after they began lesbian relationships. The performance of motherhood saw the lesbian mothers' resisting the good mother ideologies of their particular cultures in the private spaces of their homes and extended families. In these private spaces, they both centred their own needs to assume their lesbian sexuality and to maintain affective, sexual and intimate relationships with their respective partners. However, in public spaces we see mothers performing 'situational heterosexuality' in order to accommodate their children's need to maintain the appearance of heterosexual motherhood. In times of familial conflict, their queer world making practices as lesbian mothers sees them simultaneously resist (in private) and re-inscribe (in public) the good mother ideologies and heteronormativities within hegemonic versions of their different cultures and racialities.

For mothers who conceived their children within a lesbian relationship, the focus of mothering extends beyond the mothers' lesbian sexuality, to focus on the manner of conception, and the lack/role of the father. Lesbians who conceive children using 'sperm donors' while in lesbian relationships trouble normative notions of biogenetic families, however, their narratives of conception stories and 'origins', reveal ambivalent and contradictory framings of the father. In a bid to provide their children with the fathers socially required within families, the lesbian couples re-inscribe the centrality of the role of the father. However, they also construct counter narratives to this social need, simultaneously troubling the centrality of the father figure. Through their parental practice, they also populated their children's lives with a range of people who care for their children, forming part of the extended network and family of their children.

What sets lesbian parents in the study apart from heterosexual parents is their need to prepare their children to manage heteronormative contexts. A large part of negotiating and practising motherhood for the mothers are the range of strategies adopted to prepare and protect their children from possible stigmatisation and harm. This forms part of their 'good lesbian mother' practice. The performance of these practices exists while simultaneously claiming the unexceptional nature of their families. In addition, in a similar fashion to more communal, collectivist parenting practices, previously ascribed to black communities in South Africa, their models of parenting include a reliance on extended family, friendship networks and insertion within their communities. In this way, they disrupt the white hegemonic 'good mother' ideology which foregrounds the centrality of the biological mother being the primary nurturer and carer.

Lesbian motherhood as a site of queer world making reveals the complexity and situational nature of the performances of their identities as raced, classed and gendered lesbian mothers. Their enactments of their mothering and sexuality, their relationships with their children, partners and families extend the practices and meanings of motherhood and lesbian sexuality; and ultimately reformulate what is seen to be a family and the terms on which family relationships are navigated. The figure of the lesbian mother queers hegemonic notions of heterosexual domesticity and reproduction. She troubles the heterosexual matrix, and hegemonic notions of biogenetic reproduction (Distiller, 2013).

These counternarratives of mothers' QWM centre and foreground the figure of 'the mother'. This figure is located alongside and in relation to queerness and queer world making, troubling the hegemonic figure of the transgressive radical queer figure. The figure of the lesbian mother extends hegemonic notions of queer worlds, associated with the public, 'the scene', to incorporate notions and practices of the domestic and domesticity as radical practises.

8.4. CAPE TOWN AS THE SYMBOLIC AND MATERIAL HOME OF LESBIANS

Considering the politics of belonging at play as lesbians symbolically make Cape Town their home, and their constructions of their homes as sites of belonging, the lesbians in the study speak to counter narratives which foreground their agency, their everyday practices of managing their safety, an ontology of contingent being in and forming community, within lesbian and broader communities. In contexts of uneven heteronormativities across the racialised and classed landscape of the city, their counter narratives make known their queer 'place-making' strategies in the everyday enactments of their queer life worlds. These also contribute to queer world making, through a reworking of belonging which includes and incorporates the queer body (at times temporarily, ephemerally). Through a variety of strategies and discursive means, they occupy and navigate a range of nodes and sites in which the politics of belonging is being waged in order to make Cape Town home, and in which their homes function as a 'homeplace' (hooks, 1989).

Confirming Knopp & Brown's (2003) negation of discrete sites of sexual oppression and sites of greater sexual actualisation, the counter narratives of the lesbians in the study trouble the dominant narrative of black zones of danger/white zones of safety (Judge, 2015). The lesbian counter narratives reveal the agency exercised by black lesbians living within the townships, who on a daily basis make the township home. These provide a glimpse into the multi-dimensional facets of living in the township, including how gendered sexuality is performed through the lens of living and loving, not only victimisation and death. In addition, their narratives describe support, solidarity and acceptance of homosexuality shown by and within black communities, challenging the dominant notion of 'blackening homophobia' (Judge, 2015). Similarly, their counter narratives reveal the heteronormative regulation and persecution performed within so called white spaces, breaking down the sole association of whiteness and white space with safety and tolerance. Ultimately, these

counter narratives reveal that everyday spaces in Cape Town, both township and city centre/suburbs, are governed by racialised and classed patriarchal heteronormativities which code the lesbian body as out of place in different ways. These heteronormativities are not monolithic, and depend on the schemes of recognition and legibility operating from place to place (Nash, 2015).

Different to the northern-based gay and lesbian communities who created gayborhoods or 'gay villages' (Bell & Valentine, 1995a; Browne, Lim & Brown, 2005), lesbians in the study construct their sense of place and home making in relation to and within constructions of racialised heterosexuality. Their everyday individual navigations of Cape Town reveal how lesbians adopt racialised queer place making strategies in relation to and within heteronormativity and heterosexuality. The queer place-making strategies of black lesbians reveal modes of 'embedded lesbianism' in which their cultural labour (Livermon, 2012) reworks notions of belonging within black communities. This has the effect of (temporarily and contingently) including same sex relations and lesbian identity as part of black African culture and communities. This reflects Muñoz's (1999) strategy of disidentification. Homonormative performances of white lesbianism are assimilated into, and reworked within a middle class whiteness (Bérubé, 2001; Frankenberg, 1993; Rasmussen et al, 2001); and finally coloured lesbians' place-making strategies reveal a mode of borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987) and liminality. These do not reflect the narratives of all lesbians within the study who occupy these racialised categories, confirming that political perspectives and ideology cannot be read off racialised identities.

Lesbian community as a key mode of queer world making, and thereby of lesbian belonging is centred. This takes place both through lesbian 'scene space', as well as within friendship and social networks which come together and move outward from private homes. Homes become 'stretched' (Gorman-Murray, 2012:116) through the reconfiguring of domestic space to be a site of identity construction and community building, political education and organisation, and public consumption. Ultimately, homes become sites of collective queer world making, a 'homeplace' (hooks, 1990), sites of collective resistance to patriarchal heteronormativity. These home spaces speak to queer bonds (Weiner & Young, 2011), an alternative code of entanglements, attachments and connectivities (Butler, 2015). However,

they ultimately remain sites of fractured belonging due to their interstitial, and ultimately private and temporal nature.

The thesis contributes to materialising an intersectional and located queer analysis. It provides a reading of the localised ways in which the racialised, classed and gendered discourses of sexualities are produced within contemporary Cape Town. The discussions of QWM break down the binary of public/private in relation to how lesbians make Cape Town home. Making Cape Town home in a symbolic sense could be read as contributing to queer counter publics, through an excavation of how they construct and build community, and relate to their communities in a number of different modes. These are complex processes, influenced by feelings of safety and danger, gendered and racialised constructions of belonging, and the forms of subjectivity occupied by the participants. Making Cape Town home, also speaks to the construction of counter publics through and in the private space of the home, stretched to becoming a homeplace (hooks, 1990).

Ultimately, the QWM manifested in the thesis speaks to an occupation of an imaginary and a physical space which breaks down previously commonly held notions of invisibility and victimization.

8.5. CONSIDERING QUEER WORLD MAKING

Queer world making speaks to the complex process of constructing counter narratives (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004) while simultaneously complying with, resisting and (re)shaping hegemonic identities, discourses and practices. Although they ultimately reveal 'a mode of being in the world that is also inventing the world' (Muñoz, 2009:121), these constructions of counter narratives, read as queer world making, are ephemeral and contingent, always produced in relation to, alongside and within dominant narratives. For this reason, they can be contradictory, multivalent and incomplete. They are attempts to construct a world, in different ways, in which the patriarchal heterosexual couple, hegemonic masculinity, whiteness, able-bodiedness, youth, middle classness and so on, are no longer the dominant cultural referents, and economic oppression and exclusion is no longer the norm. QWM speaks to a politics of belonging, referring to the construction and production of 'authentic' and culturally recognised subjectivities, practises and relationships, subverting and extending family and kinship systems, and occupying and making place in the imaginary and

material place of the city, and national culture. It speaks to the politics of citizenship, belonging, entitlement and status (Yuval Davis, 2006). The modes and meanings highlighted within this thesis reveal how the participants' varied productions of QWM ultimately centre and speak to a complex politics of belonging within a particular historical and political context.

Queer world making has revealed itself on the same three levels as outlined in Hill Collins (1990) – individual consciousness, cultural context and social institutions. At the level of *individual consciousness*, the lesbian participants' constructions of their queer life worlds position them as simultaneously complicit with and countering the range of dominant narratives which prop up racialised patriarchal heteronormativities. Complicity took on several meanings and relations to regimes of power, ranging from its perpetuation and reproduction, a re-inscribing of dominant narratives, to Oswin's (2005) more ambivalent complicity. These can be found, for example, in their modes of lesbian subjectivity; their erotic world making where sexual pleasure (re)produces gender regimes, and in their stories about motherhood and private resistance and public compliance. Participants' complicity and simultaneous resistance of these dominant narratives can be read as 'ambivalent and porous, as an undetermined set of processes that simultaneously enables both resistance and capitulation' (Oswin, 2005:84).

Their negotiations of the racialised codes and disciplinary regimes of gender and sexuality within the contours of their respective cultures inscribe them as inside and outside of the range of *cultural contexts* of the multiple communities to which they belong. They reshape and shift (albeit temporarily, unevenly) the institutional norms, practices and power relations performed and enacted within the social institutions of the family, and simultaneously reproduce and resist the disciplinary regimes within education, religion, media, and ultimately the state. Their narratives reveal there is no singular way of becoming, being and doing a lesbian subjectivity. The lesbian queer world making in the thesis reveals a multi-vocal, multivalent figure, enmeshed in a web of racialised, gendered and sexualised, age and class-based hierarchies in Cape Town.

Considering Anzaldúa's (1987) writing on *mestiza* consciousness and the struggle of borderlands, the lesbian queer life worlds and collective queer world making have to do with

lesbians' 'sense making' within their own worlds as they navigate the normativities within the different contexts in Cape Town, making place for themselves in its landscape of racialised and classed heteronormativities.

Queer world making is not so much about worlds with clear borders, with clearly defined boundaries, but rather speaks to 'porous' worlds. The lesbian queer life worlds are porous to the heteronormativity, racism, sexism, able-bodyism which inform the dominant narratives they navigate, and these dominant narratives are also 'porous' and responsive to the lesbian participants' agentic reworkings of their counter narratives. This porosity brings to mind a queer world making reflective of Anzaldúa's (1987) borderlands.

'To live in the borderlands'[28] (Anzaldúa, 1987: 194) sees a breaking down of the boundaries between masculinities and femininities, between cisgender and transgender coporealities and subjectivities. The modes of lesbian subjectivities in the study indicate the multiple ways in which gender subjectivity and presentation was taken up and inhabited by the participants. The variegated relationship between sex, gender, and sexual desire was shown in the multiple pathways and gestures of desire, notably how the 'incarnate particularities of sexual desires, physical embodiment, diverse forms of racialisations, and all manner of gender' (Rodríguez, 2014: 184) are enacted. These performativites of gender and sexual desire at and of the borderlands destabilise the seamless workings of the heterosexual matrix. They disturb hegemonic notions of bodys and flows of desire, of meanings attached to particular practises and rework regimes of the erotogenic body.

'To live in the borderlands' (Anzaldúa, 1987: 194) speaks to the manner in which lesbians within Cape Town can loosely be said to form a version of 'community'. Living on the borderlands draws attention to the permeability of the line that gets drawn around notions of lesbian and queer communities. It reveals how the lesbian 'community' is porous to racism, sexism, classism, agism and other abledness,. Living on the borderlands reveals a lesbian community splintered and fragmented along the faultlines created by these

[28] 'To live in the borderlands' is a repeated line from the poem 'To live in the Borderlands means you' from Anzaldúa (1987:194). I take this line to extrapolate a number of ways in which it speaks to the modes and meanings of QWM of lesbians in Cape Town.

processes of exclusion oppression and othering which characterises Cape Town sociality more generally. Lesbians move in and out of classed and raced normativities produced within lesbian circles, networks and nodes of socialisation. TThe 'lesbian community' is porous to Cape Town's divisions and fragmentations, reflecting a kaleidoscope of fractured and splintered communities.

'To live in the borderlands' (Anzaldúa, 1987: 194) is to navigate the racialised and classed landscape of Cape Town, their narratives have shown they do not live bordered existences within clear cut and defined lesbian communities. It is a borderland which sees black lesbians having to negotiate meanings of blackness within their communities and the authenticity and legitimacy of their group membership, from their location of queerness. Similarly, white lesbians have to negotiate meanings of whiteness and coloured lesbians have to negotiate meanings of colouredness from their positionality and subjectivity of queerness. This borderland sees racialised lesbians forming part of contingent, partial and mediated belonging within 'their' communities. They share a common cultural history, language, food, music, rituals and social location. They share their respective communities' relative privilege, liminality or oppression. However, as queer figures, they all are located on the outside of hegemonic racialised patriarchal heteronormativies. Their position of borderlands demonstrates how they are simultaneously on the inside and outside.

'To live in the borderlands' (Anzaldúa, 1987: 194) sees negotiations of, and a breaking down of, the boundaries between the public and private. This has been evidenced with lesbians' performances of heterosexuality within the privacy of their family homes, together with public performances of lesbian sexuality. Alternatively, these divisions are broken down with lesbian mothers' private resistance to heteronormativity, along with public compliance with heteronormativity as revealed by their displays of situational heterosexuality. This bleeding between categories can also be seen in the lesbian participants' *stretching* (Gorman-Murray, 2012) of the privacy of their homes into spaces of public consumption and productions of lesbian community.

'To live in the borderlands' (Anzaldúa, 1987: 194) ultimately means inhabiting queer life worlds characterised by porosity and contingency, connection and complexity (Taylor et al, 2010), a breaking down of divisions and boundaries. Their queer life worlds are

characterised by a tolerance for 'contradiction and ambiguity, by the transgression of rigid conceptual boundaries, and by the creative breaking of the new unitary aspect of new and old paradigms' (Anzaldúa, 1987: 34). Borderlands does not speak to the creation of two worlds merging to form a third country, but rather speaks to those contingent spaces that exist around borders where one lives within the possibility of multiple plotlines (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2006). It speaks to the 'constant state of transition' where the prohibited and the forbidden are its inhabitants – it speaks to the 'troublesome', those who 'cross over', 'pass over' the confines of the 'normal' (Anzalúa, 1987: 3).

An empirical study of queer belonging and the politics of belonging, it provides insights into the shifting racialized sexual and gender politics of Cape Town, and by extension, South Africa. It contributes to knowledge production within a diasporic setting which decentres and destabilises a northern and white centric academy and politics. It speaks to constellations of gender, race and class, which bring into view the multiple pathways in which processes of normalisation are negotiated by lesbians of different ages, races and classes in Cape Town – at times being subverted, troubled and challenged, at times, reinscribed and shored up. But at all times, the queer world making revealed is one which troubles the notion of one category of authentic South African, one authentic category of mother, and one category of authentic desire. It speaks to a politics of sexual belonging within a nation, a city and a public discourse.

The thesis has produced a situated knowledge of queer world making that intersects with important deconstructive knowledges. It centres constructionist research, paying attention to the interconnections between temporality, sociality and place (Clandinin & Huber, 2010) with deconstructionist concerns (Broad, 2010). Lesbian queer world making has been revealed to be a 'contested site' in which racialisations, genderings and classed processes are performed and enacted within 'multifaceted constellations of power' (Oswin, 2008: 100). The thesis has provided a snapshot of how lesbians 'live, labour, and enact queer worlds in the present' (Muñoz, 2009: 49), offering 'fractured, differentiated and subjective interpretations of queerness' (Bain et al, 2014: 13) which are ephemeral and grounded (Hawkins, 2012) representations of individual and collective sexual belonging. The thesis has shown how the lesbians in the study have constructed and survived borderlands, their queer

world making has attempted to live '*sin fronteras'* (without borders), by being, in short, a crossroads (Anzaldúa, 1987: 195).

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APPENDIX ONE: MAP OF CAPE TOWN

Description[29]

This description should be read with the map below. Cape Town is the first colonial city of South Africa, colloquially dubbed the 'Mother City'. The city extends below a range of mountains with its spine running north-south along the Cape Peninsula. In the main, the commercial and residential areas of greater Cape Town are found on the eastern side of the mountains and in the areas adjacent to them. At the northern end of this mountain chain stands Table Mountain.

The city centre, which includes the 'original' settlement, the harbour and the Central Business District, is located within a hollowed-out sheltering pocket on the northern side of Table Mountain. On one side of the mountain, a chain of affluent predominantly white residential areas crowd the coastline extending west and south of the city centre. Neighbourhoods include de Waterkant, Green Point, Sea Point and Mouille Point. The gay village is located in de Waterkant and Green Point. During Apartheid times, these were designated white residential and commercial areas. Although, they are still predominantly white, they are racially mixed.

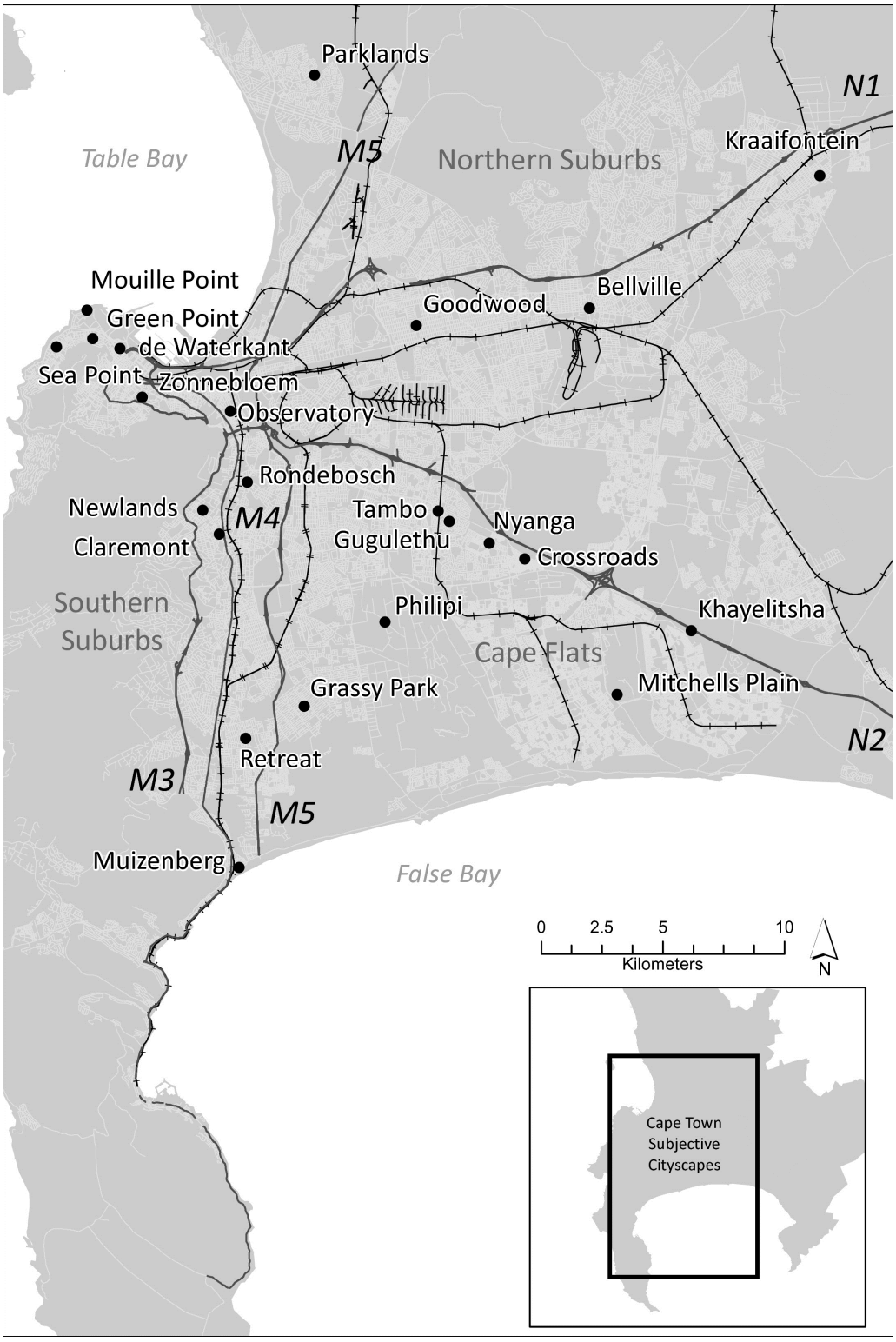
The 'southern suburbs' extend southward from the city centre and along the eastern side of the mountains towards Muizenberg: neighbourhoods include Woodstock, Salt Rock, Observatory, Rondebosch, Newlands and Claremont. During Apartheid, these were designated white residential areas. Woodstock, Salt River and Observatory are more racially mixed suburbs. Observatory houses students, and a relatively large artistic, bohemian, alternative crowd. Rondebosch also houses many students, and is the site of the University of Cape Town. The southern suburbs are served by a railway line which runs from the city

[29] This description is an adapted excerpt from Leap (2005: 239 - 240), 'Finding the centre', in M. van Zyl & Steyn (eds) *Performing Queer: Shaping sexualities 1994 – 2004*, Volume One, Roggebaai: Kwela Books.

centre to Simon's Town, south of Muizenberg. Three highways, the M3, M4 and the M5, run on either side and parallel to the railway line.

Moving east, across the M5, marks the end point of the city centre and the southern suburbs, and the beginning of the Cape Flats. The Flats are un-contoured, wind-swept and largely treeless. During Apartheid, coloured families who were forcibly removed from their homes in and near the city centre were relocated to the Flats. Mitchells Plain is an important reference point. There were also residential areas for black people, called townships, built on the Flats such as Nyanga, Gugulethu, Khayelitsha and Philipi. Some were removed from areas in or near the city while others came from the rural areas or other provinces to work in the city.

North of the Flats are the northern (and historically white designated) suburbs – Bellville, Goodwood, Durbanville. These were predominantly Afrikaans speaking communities. These areas have changed their racial and class composition over time, and are no longer whites only.


Parklands
N1
Table Bay
M5
Northern Suburbs
Kraaifontein
Mouille Point
Bellville
Goodwood
Green Point
de Waterkant
Sea Point
Zonnebloem
Observatory
Rondebosch
Newlands
M4
Tambo
Nyanga
Gugulethu
Claremont
Crossroads
Southern
Suburbs
Philipi
Khayelitsha
Cape Flats
Grassy Park
Mitchells Plain
N2
Retreat
M3
M5
Muizenberg
False Bay
0 2.5 5 10
Kilometers
N
Cape Town
Subjective
Cityscapes

APPENDIX TWO: DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Name	Age	Race	Religion	Education	Employment	Mother hood	Nation-ality	Years in CT	Residence
Tamara	23	Coloured	Muslim	Studying Master of Arts	Student	No	SA	Born	Cape Flats/ Mitchell's Plain
Max	23	White/ Jewish	Jewish	BA in Fine Art	Intern	No	SA	Born	Southern Suburbs/Newlands
Prunaja	24	Black	Christian/ traditional	Diploma	Recruitment officer – supermarket retailer	No	SA	6 yrs (From Mpuma-langa)	Northern suburbs/ Brackenfell
Nazley	24	Coloured	Christian	BBA – Tsiba Edu	Functionary at an NGO	No	SA	Born	Cape Flats/Delft
Nunu	26	Coloured	Christian	Grade 12	Metrorail train hostess	No	SA	Born	Southern Suburbs/Wetton
Butch	27	Coloured	Muslim/Christian upbringing	Master of Arts	Teacher	No	SA	Born	Southern Suburbs/Bergvliet
Sandiswa	27	Black	Christian	Grade 12 Incomplete diploma (2 yrs)	Receptionist/later unemployed	No	SA	3 yrs (From Eastern Cape)	Khayelitsha
Jiyun	29	Asian	Sangoma	Grade 10	Functionary at an NGO	No	Non SA	4 yrs (From Asia)	Southern Suburbs/ Observatory
Mariela	30	Black	Christian	Diploma	Manages a bar	No	Non SA	11 yrs (From Angola)	Atlantic Seaboard/ Green Point
Abigail	33	Coloured	Christian/Muslim upbringing	Grade 12	Administrator	No	SA	Born	Southern Suburbs/ Kenilworth
Denise	35	White	Christian	Grade 12	Marketing consultant/later teller in a shop	3 children (15 yr daughter, 12 yr girl twins)	SA	19 yrs (From Gauteng)	Northern suburbs/ Kraaifontein
Jay	36	Coloured	Christian	Degree, qualified chef	Owns a biltong business	One daughter (15 years)	SA	Born	Cape Flats/ Mitchell Plains

Name	Age	Race	Religion	Education	Employment	Mother hood	Nationality	Years in CT	Residence
Bella	37	Black	Muslim	Grade 12 Incomplete Bachelor of Social Sciences	Functionary at an NGO / later unemployed	3: 17 year old son; 11 year old son; 9 year old daughter	SA	19 yrs (From Eastern Cape)	Khayelitsha
Lucy	38	White	Christian	Honours	Self-employed, facilitator	Twin boy and girl (3 years)	Non SA	12 years (Zimbabwe)	Hout Bay
Vivi	41	Coloured	Christian	Diploma	Events organiser	No	SA	Born. (lived in Pretoria for 5 yrs)	Between Northern & Southern Suburbs/ Goodwood
Thabi	41	Black	Christian/ traditional	Diploma	Cooker	No	SA	7 yrs (From Gauteng)	Western Seaboard/ Parklands
Sharonne	42	Black (Coloured)	Buddhist/ Christian	Master of Arts in Fine Arts	Film maker	No	SA	20 yrs (From Eastern Cape)	Southern Suburbs/ Woodstock
Danny	42	White	Christian	Master of Arts	Consultant - facilitator, writer, coach	A son (12 years)	SA	9 yrs (Gauteng, lived in Europe)	Deep South/ Muizenberg
Light Blue	45	Black (African)	Christian/ traditional	Degree	Office Administrator	2 children: 27 year old son, 17 years old daughter	SA	4 and a half years (North West Province)	Southern Suburbs/ Goodwood/ Western Seaboard/ Parklands
Tass	47	White	Christian	Bachelor of Arts	Education Development Specialist	Two daughters	SA	Six years (Free State)	Deep South/ Kommetjie
Mandy	58	White	Christian	Matric	Construction industry	No	SA	25 years (Eastern Cape)	Atlantic Seaboard/ Mouille Point

Name	Age	Race	Religion	Education	Employment	Motherhood status	Nationality	Years in CT	Residence
Rusty	59	Coloured (I don't)	Muslim	Diploma	Financial manager	A son (25 years)	SA	Born	Between Cape Flats and Southern Suburbs/Kenwyn
Marie	63	White Afrikaans	Christian	Completing a PhD	Consultant – gender and sexuality	No	SA	25 years (From Gauteng)	City Bowl/ Tamboerskloof

Participants from Focus Group One

Name	Age	Where do you live?	Who do you live with?	What do you do?
Ondz	18	Nyanga	With mother and brother	Unemployed
Ntombi	20	Philipi	With mother	Unemployed
Siphokazi	21	Gugulethu	With family	Unemployed
Vuvu	21	Nyanga	With mother and aunt	Student
Zimkitha	22	Nyanga	With grandmother	Unemployed
James	26	Khayelitsha	With friends	Unemployed
Zamo	27	Lower Crossroads	With family	Hairdresser
Sisi	28	Gugulethu	With family	Student
Zim	32	Gugulethu	With parents	Mechanic
Bulelwa	36	Tambo	With partner	Working

Participants from Focus Group Two

Name	Age	Where do you live?	Who do you live with?	What do you do?
Songo	22	Khayelitsha	With cousins	Work and study
Lady Z.	23	Gugulethu	Alone	Student
Dick	24	New Cross Roads	With Girlfriend	Photographer
Mampie	26	Gugulethu	Mother	Technical and functional performance coach
Rhee	29	Khayelitsha	With family	Work
Letsa	32	Philipi	Parents	Work at a call centre
Zim	32	Gugulethu	With family	Part time job

APPENDIX THREE: FOCUS GROUP GUIDELINE AND CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN FOCUS GROUP

You have been asked to participate in a focus group as part of my research for my doctoral thesis. I am a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Cape Town. My research is exploring: ***How and in what ways do lesbian women experience space, place and belonging in Cape Town?***

I will be exploring lesbian identities, the different spaces that we create as lesbians, as well as how we experience the spaces and places that we go to as part of our daily lives. We will be discussing how we live our daily lives and the issues that affect us, and how all of these issues affect our sense of belonging in our communities, and in Cape Town.

There are no right or wrong answers to the focus group questions. I want to hear many different viewpoints and would like to hear from everyone.

You can choose whether or not to participate in the focus group and stop at any time. Although the focus group will be tape recorded, your responses will remain anonymous and no names will be mentioned in the research. The focus group interview will be transcribed. My supervisors and myself will be the only people who will see the transcripts of the discussions.

The research will be written up as a thesis, articles, conference presentations, and perhaps a book.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

I, _____ have had the study explained to me (or have read the consent information sheet). I have understood all that has been read and had my questions answered satisfactorily. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any stage.

I agree/ I don't agree to take part in this research

Name: _____

Participants' signature: _____

Date: _____

Name chosen by participant: _____

Participant number: _____

FOCUS GROUPS QUESTIONS

1. Tell me your name and where you live? How long you have lived in the area?

2. In your own life experience tell me about three bad things about living in your area? Tell me three good things about living in your area?

3. What do you do for fun and where do you go? Who do you go with? How do you get there?

Issues to consider:

- What are the different social networks and spaces that we create as lesbians?
- Which places do people go to – 'straight' or 'LGBTI' specific?
- In which part of the city?
- Who else is there? Who is not there?
- What happens there?
- How does time influence what happens? Ie day or night/week day or weekend? Holidays?
- Where do people go to emotional support?

4. Are you open about being a lesbian everywhere? Where yes? Where no?

5. What do you think about the idea that Cape Town is the gay capital of South Africa?

Issues to consider (chameleon issues):

- Freer here and more accepting in CT than other cities; long tradition of gay and lesbian people
- It is uneven, depends on where you are at...
- the common discourse that lesbians are unAfrican, unnatural and against religious teachings
- Issues of discrimination, violence and homophobic murders
- Issues of division and fragmented nature of the LGBTI community in Cape Town

- Levels of participation in Pride, LGBTI social spaces and events

6. Patricia de Lille says that Cape Town is an inclusive and caring city – the DA has a slogan that says “Cape Town working for you”! What has been your experience of Cape Town as an inclusive and caring city?

Issues to consider:

- Access to education, housing, health, justice
- Differential access to different parts of the city depending on economic class and race

7. What does it mean for you “to belong” to a particular community or the city? Do you feel like you have a community/ies? Do you feel like you belong to the community in Gugulethu/Nyanga) and Cape Town more generally?
8. All things considered, if you were talking to a lesbian friend who is thinking of coming to Cape Town to live, what would you say to her?
9. Provide a short overview of the purpose of the study and ask: have we missed anything in our discussions? Is there anything we should have talked about but didn’t?
10. Wrap up by providing feedback on how the focus group went. Provide some info on way forward in the research.

APPENDIX FOUR: IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS GUIDELINES AND CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS ONE AND TWO

You have been asked to participate in the interview process as part of my research for my doctoral thesis. I am a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Cape Town. My research is exploring: ***How and in what ways do lesbian women experience space, place and belonging in Cape Town?***

I will be exploring lesbian identities, the different spaces that we create as lesbians, as well as how we experience the spaces and places that we go to as part of our daily lives. We will be discussing how we live our daily lives and the issues that affect us, and how all of these issues affect our sense of belonging in our communities, and in Cape Town.

There are no right or wrong answers. I want to hear many different viewpoints and would like to hear from everyone.

You can choose whether or not to participate in the interview process, you only have to answer the questions that you feel comfortable answering and share the information you feel comfortable sharing. You can stop the process.

Although the interviews will be tape recorded, your responses will remain anonymous and no names will be mentioned in the research. The interviews will be transcribed. My supervisors and myself will be the only people who will see the transcripts of the interviews.

The research will be written up as a thesis, articles, conference presentations, and perhaps a book.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

I, _____ have had the study explained to me (or have read the consent information sheet). I have understood all that has been read and had my questions answered satisfactorily. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any stage.

I agree/ I don't agree to take part in this research

Name: _____

Participants' signature: _____

Date: _____

Name chosen by participant: _____

Participant number: _____

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW ONE: SUBJECTIVE CITYSCAPES

1. Introduction to the interview and consent form

Thanks so much for agreeing to participate in my research. This research fulfils the requirements of getting a PhD degree. I am registered at the Department of Sociology at the University of Cape Town.
My principal research question is: How and in what ways do lesbian women experience space, place and belonging in Cape Town?
One of the reasons that I am doing this research is that very little research exists on lesbian lives in Cape Town and in South Africa as a whole. We also only hear particular kinds of stories about being lesbian. At the moment we are hearing a lot about hate crimes, rape and murder in the newspapers. We need to find out more about this and to speak about this. But we are also more than the discrimination, rape and murder. We live full lives, we build communities, we fall in love, we celebrate and we resist. So I would like to explore and write about lesbian everyday life as we live it in all its complexities through the different spaces and places in Cape Town.
I am exploring the different meanings and experiences of being lesbian (in Cape Town), the different spaces that we create as lesbians, as well as how we experience the spaces and places that we go to as part of our daily lives, and the issues that affect us in these different spaces and places. I will also be exploring our identities and our sexual and emotional relationships, together with the different meanings of belonging in our communities and in Cape Town/South Africa.
These discussions will take place over two interviews.
The interview process will be confidential and I will protect your anonymonity. I would like to emphasise that you can choose to terminate the interviews at any time, or refuse to answer particular questions. I will do everything I can to protect you and to do no harm.
I would like to check if it's ok if I record the interview, which will then be transcribed and used as data for my research. I want to capture everything you have to say. I don't identify anyone by name in my research. You will remain anonymous. My supervisors and I will be the only people who will have access to the transcripts.
The research will be written up as a thesis, and possibility articles, conference presentations, and a book.
If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask. Provide them with a consent form to sign.

2. Demographic information

I would like to get some basic information about you and your life. Take them through the demographic form and ask them to fill it in.

3. Drawing the subjective cityscape (15 min)

I would like you to think of your daily life during a typical week/month/over the past six months (what should the time period be?). I am asking you to draw me a map that represents your particular experience of Cape Town.

Please could you draw your map of Cape Town showing your daily life and movement through Cape Town. You can think of the following issues:

- Where do you stay?
- Where do you work? If you are unemployed, where do you go to get money? How do you support yourself economically? If you are a student, where do you study?
- Where do you to go have fun, to socialise, to relax, how do you spend your leisure time?
- Where do you go to express your religious or spiritual beliefs (if applicable)?
- If you have been sick, where do you go to get help?
- If you have been part of community based activism, what do you do and where do you do it?

[Provide participants with A3 sheet with different coloured pens and pencils].

4. Interview guide

a) General overview: Tell me about your map.

b) Questioning into specific parts of the map (if not already covered in the overview, or to go deeper)

Home/Neighbourhood/Community

1. So you said you live in XX neighbourhood – tell me about where you live?
    - How long you lived there?
    - Why do you live there?
    - Who do you live with – your relatives/friends/partner/lover/tenant/alone?
    - What are the relationships like in the house?
    - What are the relationships like with the neighbours, the community?
2. How do you feel about living there?
    - Tell me about a good and a bad experience while you were living there (optional – if it has not come up)
    - Do you feel part of the house/community as a legitimate member, as if you belong to it?
    - Have you ever felt excluded or discriminated against in your house, in the neighbourhood/community?

Work/study?

1. Tell me about where you work/study? (If not working in a formal job - how do you survive economically?) What do you do there?
    - How long you worked there, where before?
    - Why do you work there?
    - What is your relationship like with your co-workers/colleagues and your boss?
2. How do you feel about working there?
    - Tell me about a good and a bad experience while you were working there (optional – if it has not come up)
    - Do you feel part of the work place, as a legitimate member, as if you belong to it?
    - Have you ever felt excluded or discriminated against in your house, in the neighbourhood/community?

Spaces of leisure/recreation

1. What do you do with your free time? 0R what do you do for fun/in your free time/to relax?
    - Where are the different places that you go to socialise?
    - Who are you with?
    - What happens there?
    - When do you go?
2. Why do you do these things/activities?
3. How did you find these places?
    - Tell me about a particular good and bad time/experience that you remember while socialising in these places.
    - Do you feel part of these social places, as a legitimate consumer; as if you belong here, have a right to be there?
    - Have you ever felt unsafe, excluded or discriminated against in any of these spaces?
4. (Optional: if it hasn't come up already) Tell me about the LGBTI spaces in Cape Town. Do you go to any LGBTI events or spaces? What are they? Where do they happen? What happens there? What do you think of them?

Experiences of religious community

1. If you are religious – do you go to church/mosque/religious gatherings? Where? Who do you go with? why do you go there?
2. How has it been for you?
    - Tell me about a good and a bad experience while participating in religious gatherings/communities.
    - Do you feel part of the religious community, like a legitimate member, as if you belong to it?
    - Have you ever felt excluded or discriminated against in your religious community?

3. Has your religious beliefs affected your sexuality in any way? Explain... eg helped you to understand your sexuality, been a support in your sexuality, been an obstacle for you to experience your sexuality

Access to health/justice

1. If you have ever been sick and needed to go to a healer, doctor, clinic, hospital – where did you go. Why did you go there? What were those experiences like for you? Do you feel like you have a right to access these services as a legitimate consumer? Have you ever felt discriminated against or excluded in these spaces?
2. Have you ever had to go to the police station, courts? Why, when, what happened? How was that experience for you?

Experiences of community activism

1. Have you ever been part of community based activism? Why? What kind of organisations or initiatives have you been a part of? Who was part of it? What kind of actions did you engage in? Where did these take place? How do you feel about it? (provide an example of good and bad experience)

Mobility

1. How do you get around the city? Do you use public or private transport? Both?
2. How do you move around at different times of the day/night/public holiday?
3. What has it been like to use public transport – taxi, train, bus for you in terms of costs, safety, (feeling like a legitimate consumer/discriminated against or unable to pay)

INTERVIEW TWO GUIDE SEX AND SEXUALITY

SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

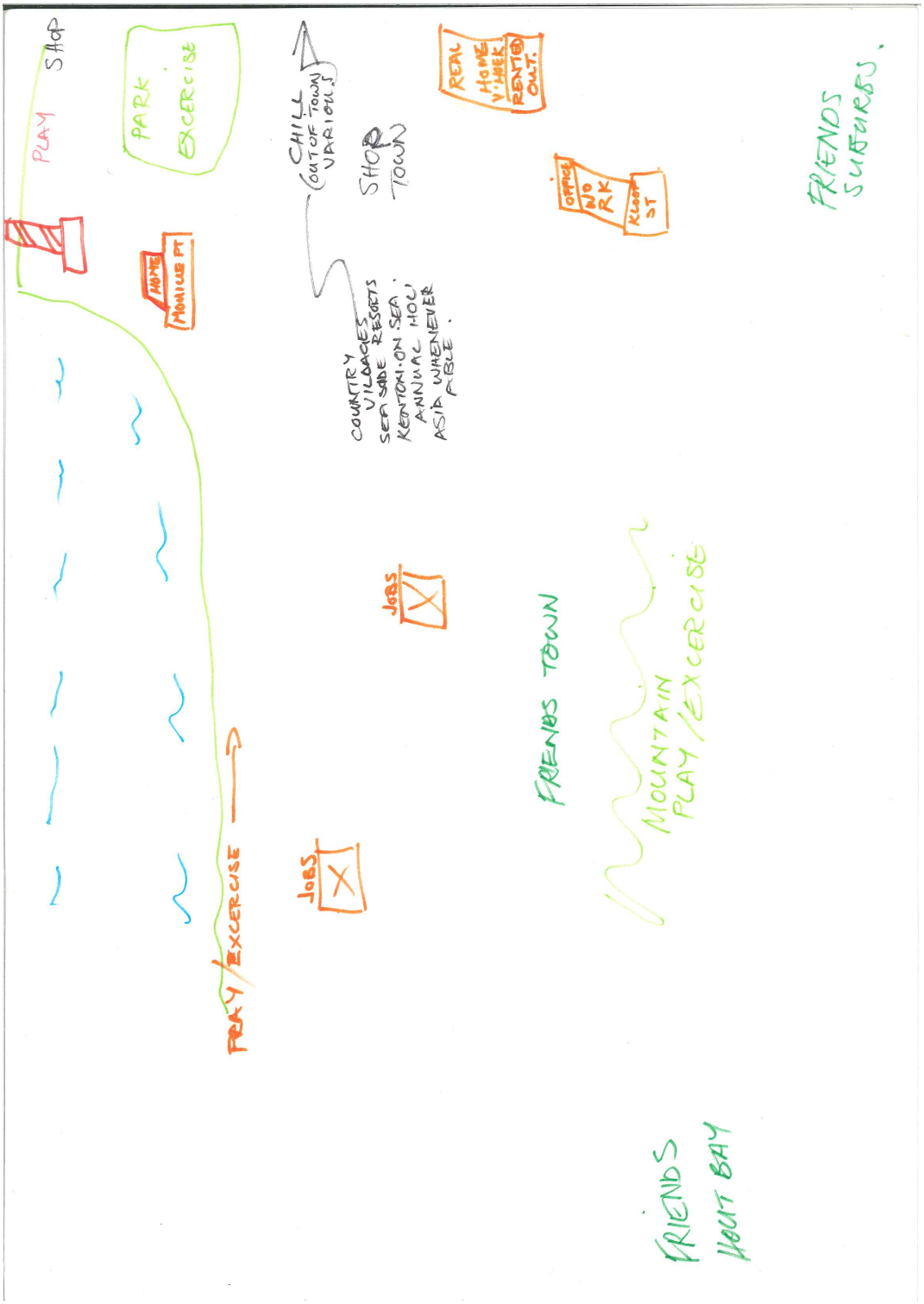
Could you tell me the story of the sexual relationships you have had? Can you speak in as much detail as possible, telling me about your experiences, important events, feelings? To help you it might be easier to construct a time line showing where you were living, what you were doing (job), and who you were involved with at different moments of your life, noting important landmarks in your relationships.

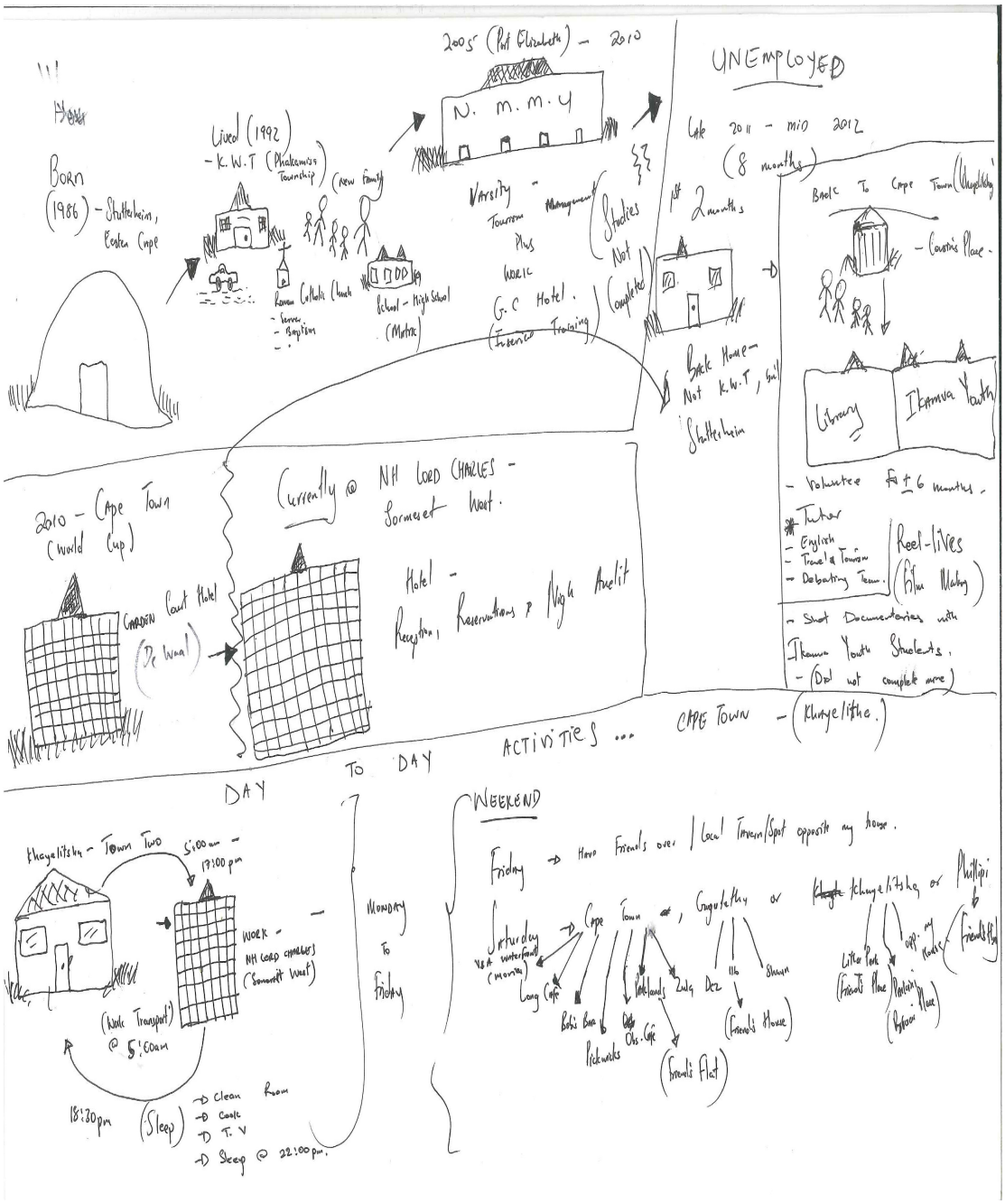
SEX AND SEXUALITY

- Can you identify key events and people that might have influenced the development of your beliefs and knowledge about sexuality? Where did you receive information about sex generally? About lesbian sex?
- How would you describe yourself as a sexual personality? Can you explain why?
- How do you feel about your body in relation to your sexuality?
- What is sexual pleasure to you?
    - What are the differences between hook up/casual sex/one night stands, long term relationship sex, married sex?
    - Does sex = love? Reasons for sex?
    - What do you think of group sex? Sex toys? Masturbation?
    - Are there differences between sexual enjoyment between sex with a man or a woman?
- Can you share one moment of sexual pleasure or intimacy.
- What sometimes gets in the way of you having sexual pleasure? Obstacles to sexual pleasure?
- Have you ever visited a sex worker? Would you? What do you think about paying for sex? Have you ever been paid for sex?
- Have you ever had sex when you did not want to? What happened?
- Do you think you have ever had sex with somebody who didn't want to have sex with you? What happened?
- Any other information to add?

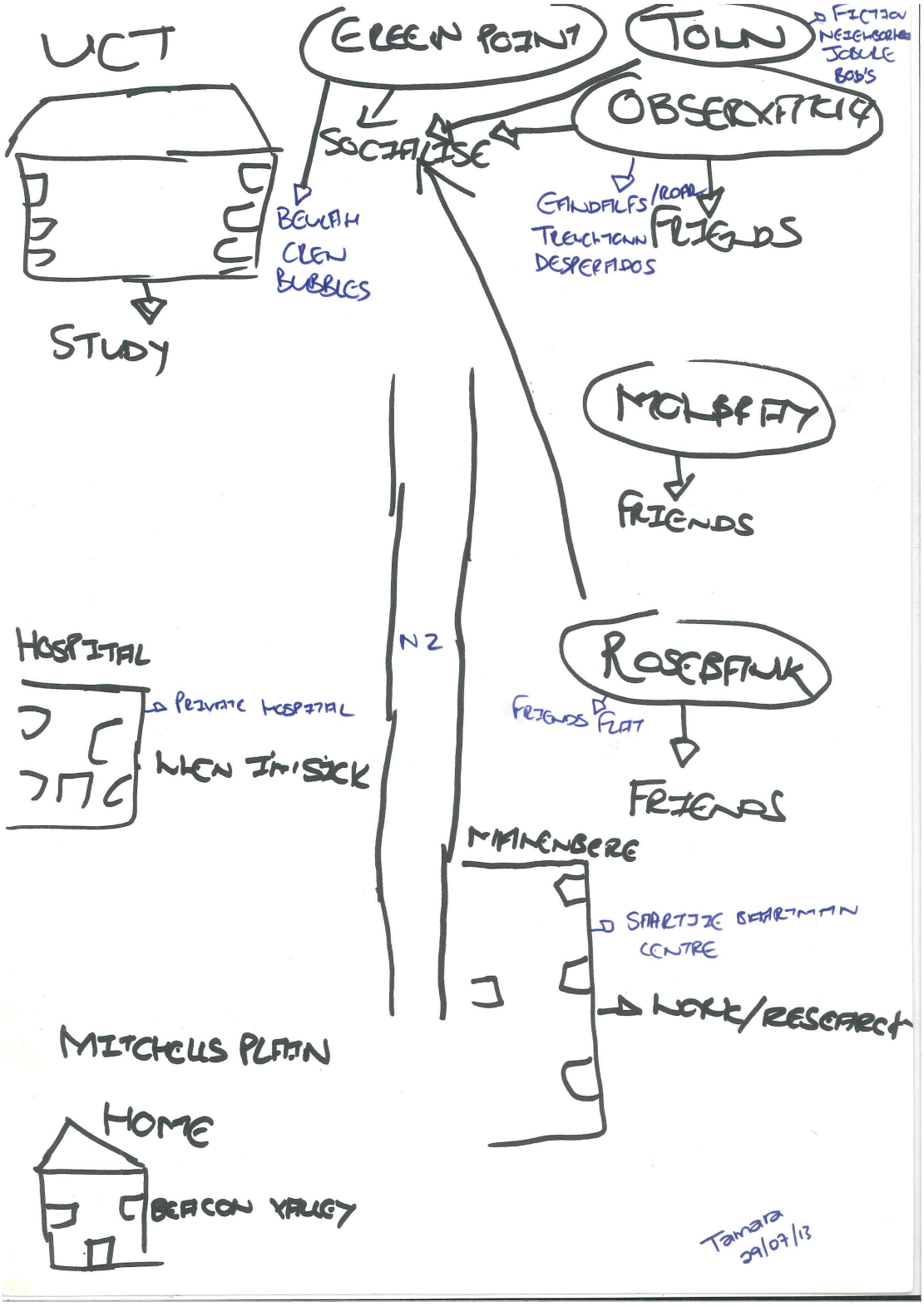
APPENDIX FIVE: EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPANTS' CITYSCAPES

Mandy's Subjective Cityscape





Sandiswa's subjective cityscape



Tamara's subjective cityscape