

Lesbian adolescents' narratives of identity: A participatory Photovoice project

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ABSTRACT

Lesbian identities in South Africa have largely been framed within a risk paradigm, with a focus on adolescents' experiences of homophobic victimisation in schools and black lesbian women being victims of 'corrective rape'. This framing of lesbian identities within a risk paradigm is problematic, as it erases the multi-dimensionality of lesbian lives and identities. This study aimed to shift away from a risk paradigm and allow young lesbian adolescents to represent their own lives and identities. This study therefore investigated how young lesbian and bisexual women chose to represent their lives and identities through the method of Photovoice, and how the stories they told challenged or maintained dominant narratives about young people of diverse sexualities. Fourteen black, Xhosa-speaking adolescents between the ages of thirteen and seventeen participated. Twelve participants identified as butch lesbians and two identified as bisexual. The study used Photovoice, a participatory action research (PAR) method. The participants were trained in photography and took photographs that represented a story that they wanted to tell about their lives, and created a written narrative (photostory) to accompany their photographs. They also participated in focus groups and individual interviews. The Photovoice process culminated in a public exhibition of the participants' photographic work. The focus group transcripts, interview transcripts, photostories, and photographs were analysed using thematic narrative analysis. Five main narrative themes emerged: *Narrating 'tomboy' childhoods*; *Clothing as a symbol of identity*; *Negotiating butch identity*; *Constructions of safety, violence, and community*; and finally *Alienation and finding affirming spaces*. Recommendations and implications of the findings are discussed. In particular, the findings point to the importance of the use of participatory methods with young people.

Keywords: Gender, sexuality, lesbian, bisexual, Photovoice, adolescents

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Gender and sexuality have emerged as important research areas in post-apartheid South Africa. This has been mainly as a response to concerning ‘social problems’ such as the HIV epidemic and extremely high levels of gender-based violence (Bhana & Pattman, 2009; Boonzaier, 2008; Greig, Peacock, Jewkes, & Msimang, 2008; Jewkes, Dunkle, Nduna, & Shai, 2010; Wood, Maforah, & Jewkes, 1998). Heterosexuality has rightly been problematized as the site where these ‘social problems’ are largely perpetuated (Shefer & Potgieter, 2006). In addition, there has also been an increased focus on young people within gender and sexuality research, as they are seen to be most at risk, with young women between the ages of 15-24 being most at risk for contracting HIV (Bhana & Pattman, 2009; Greig et al., 2008; Jewkes et al., 2010). However, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) young people have largely been excluded from mainstream research in South Africa, and their experiences remain marginal (Kowen & Davis, 2006; Nell & Shapiro, 2011).

This thesis focuses on adolescents who identify as lesbian and how they construct their identities through visual, written, and spoken narrative. It is important to bear in mind that the ‘lesbian’ identity is a contested identity, and definitions of what it means to be lesbian vary within different cultures and contexts (Clarke, Ellis, Peel, & Riggs, 2010; Matebeni, 2011). In addition, the concepts and language used to describe sexual and gender identities may vary in different cultures, so some women in same-sex relationships may not necessarily identify as ‘lesbians’ (Clarke et al., 2010; Morgan & Wieringa, 2005; Swarr & Nagar, 2003). With this in mind, I now give a brief overview of adolescence and identity formation, and how lesbian identities have largely been framed in terms of ‘risk’.

Adolescence and Identity

Adolescence is a time when identity development is a central developmental task (Erikson, 1968; Savin-Williams, 1990). The central conflict for adolescence, according to Erikson (1968), is *Identity vs. role confusion*. Erikson suggests that adolescents go through a ‘crisis’ period in which they attempt to define who they are in various domains of their lives, such as occupation, sexual identity, religion, etc. The ‘coming out’ process is often seen as central in the formation of gay and lesbian identities (Cass, 1979; Savin-Williams, 1990; Smuts, 2011), and adolescence is the time when many gay and lesbian young people will ‘discover’ their sexuality, or ‘come out’ for the first time (Savin-Williams, 1990, 2005). Adolescents who identify as lesbian may, however, face additional challenges in resolving this developmental conflict due to the stigma they may face in a hetero-normative society which is often hostile towards homosexuality and gender non-conformity (Rivers, 2002; Savin-Williams, 1990, 2005). The additional challenges lesbian young people may face include rejection, isolation, and victimisation in their families, schools, peer groups, and in religious settings (Clarke et al., 2010; Kowen & Davis, 2006; Rivers, 2002; Savin-Williams, 2005). Within this context, research with young people internationally and in South Africa has largely framed them within a ‘risk paradigm’, as being ‘at risk’ for mental health problems and homophobic victimisation.

Research with LGB Youth within a ‘Risk Paradigm’

Internationally, there has been an increasing body of literature since the 1980s and 1990s with a focus on lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth and their experiences (transgender and intersex young people remain marginalised) (Savin-Williams, 1990, 2005). Most of the research, especially in North America, has focused on the challenges that LGB youth may experience, resulting in a great deal of research being conducted within the ‘minority stress’ model (Meyer,

2003); this model posits that “stigma, prejudice, and discrimination experienced by lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals create a hostile social environment that can lead to chronic stress and mental health problems” (Burton, Marshal, Chisolm, Sucato, & Friedman, 2013, p. 395). A great deal of research has therefore focused on the link between homophobic victimisation and mental health problems, with most research finding that gay and lesbian youth have higher levels of mental health problems than heterosexual youth, including depression, substance abuse, and suicidality (Burton et al., 2013; Duncan & Hatzenbeuhler, 2014; Marshal et al., 2008, 2011, 2013; Meyer, 2003; Russell, Ryan, Toomey, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2011). Linked to this, research has also looked at some factors that protect young LGB people from developing mental health problems, with a strong focus on parental support and identity affirmation (Beals & Peplau, 2005; Bregman, Malik, Page, Makynen, & Lindahl, 2013; Padilla, Crisp, & Rew, 2010). In South Africa, although research with LGBT youth is limited, there has similarly been an increasing focus on gay and lesbian learners’ experiences of homophobic victimisation in schools (Butler, Alpaslan, Strümpher, & Astbury, 2003; Msibi, 2012), as well as the difficulties that they experience negotiating their identities in their everyday lives (Kowen & Davis, 2006; Nell & Shapiro, 2011). The research focus on ‘minority stress’ has therefore resulted in young lesbians’ lives largely being framed within a ‘risk paradigm’, where they are seen to be ‘at risk’ - of victimisation and the resultant mental health problems.

Lesbian Identities ‘at Risk’ in South Africa

Lesbian identities in South Africa, specifically black lesbian identities, have similarly been framed within a ‘risk paradigm’, with a focus on black lesbian women and their risk of being victims of hate crimes such as ‘corrective rape’ (Matebeni, 2013; Mkhize, Bennett, Reddy, & Moletsane, 2010; Morrissey, 2013; Muholi, 2004; Nel & Judge, 2008). Internationally, a hate

crime is defined as a criminal act, such as rape, arson, murder, etc., (and therefore differentiated from hate speech and discrimination) that is at least partly motivated by bias or hate (Breen & Nel, 2011). Therefore, the victim of the hate crime would be at least in part selected because of their race, nationality, sexual orientation, or any other relevant identity marker, as in the case of ‘corrective rape’. Hate crimes affect not only the direct victim, but also members of the larger group to which the victim belonged (Breen & Nel, 2011; Duncan & Hatzenbuehler, 2014).

‘Corrective rape’ refers to the rape and often murder of (black) lesbian women where the implied intention of the perpetrator is to ‘correct’ or ‘cure’ them of their sexuality (Matebeni, 2013; Muholi, 2004; Swarr, 2012). The act of ‘corrective rape’ is often extremely brutal and violent. ‘Corrective rape’ is a term originally coined by activists in order to bring attention to crimes committed against lesbian women based on their sexual orientation (Mkhize et al., 2010; Muholi, 2004). It is, however, a problematic term. Matebeni (2013) argues that the term privileges the position of the perpetrator in that it implies that sexuality is something that can be ‘corrected’ or ‘cured’, and it may therefore be offensive to victims. In this thesis, I use the term ‘corrective rape’ (in inverted commas) to indicate that it is a problematic and contested term. Because there is no official hate crimes legislation in South Africa in which to record ‘corrective rape’, there are no official statistics as to prevalence (Wells & Polders, 2006). However, some researchers and activists suggest that it is a considerable problem (Mkhize et al., 2010; Muholi, 2004; Nel & Judge, 2008). With the increasing public attention on ‘corrective rape’, Matebeni (2013) has argued that black lesbians have increasingly become defined in public discourse as “‘special’ victims of widespread rape and sexual torture” (p. 344).

Problems with the ‘Risk Paradigm’ and the Need for Further Research

Although it is important to acknowledge the risks and challenges that lesbian women and adolescents face, the sole focus on ‘risk’ is problematic on several levels. The focus on youth ‘at risk’ of homophobic victimisation and mental health problems often results in lesbian young people being pathologised (Diamond, 2003; Savin-Williams, 2001). This is problematic as it erases the strength and resilience that young people demonstrate in coping with experiences of alienation, prejudice, and victimisation (Savin-Williams, 2001, 2005). Likewise, portraying lesbians solely as victims of rape erases the multidimensionality and fullness of lesbian lives and identities, ignoring that lesbian women also experience, joy, pleasure and survival (Matebeni, 2011, 2013). Moreover, positioning black lesbian women as victims also renders their agency and resistance to victimisation invisible (Morrissey, 2013; Swarr, 2012). With the above in mind, there is a need for research that moves away from pathologising, victim narratives towards telling the stories that young lesbians themselves want to tell about their lives and identities.

Aims of the Research Project

This project is part of a larger research project that looks at representations of gender and sexuality among diverse young people in South Africa through Photovoice, a participatory method. Specifically, this project aims to ‘give voice’ to the stories that lesbian adolescents themselves choose to tell about their lives and identities. By allowing the young women to tell their stories through participatory methods, the project ultimately aims to contribute towards the creation of youth-centred knowledges and social change.

Structure of the Thesis

In Chapter Two I review the literature on lesbian adolescent identities and violence against lesbians in South Africa. I then describe the methodology that I employed in the study in

Chapter Three. In Chapter Four, I present the analysis and discussion of the themes that emerged in the participants' narratives, with particular reference to how these themes impact on identity. Finally, Chapter Five concludes the thesis, with a discussion of the recommendations based on the findings, the limitations of the study, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW ON LESBIAN IDENTITIES AND VICTIMISATION

In this chapter I review the literature on lesbian adolescent identity formation and on LGBT adolescents and ‘risk’. In the first section I look at two models of identity formation: ‘sexual inversion’ theories and stage models of identity formation. I then review the literature on lesbian adolescents and identities in South Africa. In the second section, I review the literature on LGBT young people which has mainly been conducted within a ‘risk’ paradigm: being ‘at risk’ for homophobic victimization. I first discuss homophobic victimization generally in South Africa and discuss the problem of ‘corrective rape’. I then focus specifically on youth experiences of homophobic victimization in schools. I then present the rationale and motivation for this study, arguing for the need for research that shifts away from a risk paradigm. Finally, I discuss the aims and research questions.

Adolescence and Lesbian Identity Formation

‘Sexual inversion’ theories of homosexual identity development. Early literature and psychological theorising around sexual orientation proposed that sexual orientation was linked to gender, where homosexual people were considered to be ‘sexual inverts’ who displayed the characteristics of the opposite gender (Havelock Ellis, 1928 as cited in Peplau & Garnets, 2000; Krafft-Ebbing, 1908/1950 as cited in Peplau & Garnets, 2000); these were known as ‘sexual inversion’ theories. These ideas about sexuality continue to be prevalent, specifically in research that attempts to link sexual orientation to biology (Peplau, Spalding, Conley, & Veniegas, 1999). Researchers have attempted to look at potential biological bases for sexual orientation by researching factors such as exposure to specific hormones in utero, abnormal hormone levels in adulthood, and differences in brain structures between heterosexuals and homosexuals, which

may explain the link between ‘masculinisation’ or ‘feminisation’ and sexual orientation (Peplau et al., 1999). Furthermore, ‘sexual inversion’ theories proposed a link between gender non-conformity in children (which is considered to have a biological basis) and later homosexual orientation (Peplau & Huppig, 2008). From this perspective, early gender non-conformity could be considered an early ‘sign’ of later homosexual orientation. Thus, in the case of women, the assumption is that being a ‘tomboy’ in childhood (preference for ‘masculine’ activities, toys, clothes, etc.) is linked to identifying as lesbian in adulthood.

There have, however, been inconsistent findings regarding biological bases for homosexuality, with one review of the literature on women and sexual orientation showing that there seems to be no biological basis for sexual orientation in women (Peplau et al., 1999) and others showing that prenatal hormones may play some role (James, 2005). With regard to childhood gender non-conformity, Bailey and Zucker (1995) showed in a meta-analysis of retrospective research on childhood gender non-conformity and sexual orientation that lesbian women and gay men report higher levels of gender-non-conformity in childhood than heterosexuals. Qualitative research in South Africa has similarly shown that lesbian women tend to remember being ‘tomboys’ as children (Kheswa & Wieringa, 2005; Nduna & Jewkes, 2013; Van Dyk, 2010). The link between gender non-conformity in childhood and homosexual orientation seems to be stronger for men than for women (Bailey & Zucker, 1995; Savin-Williams, 2005). However, in the case of women findings are more complicated. Bailey and Zucker’s calculation based on their findings shows that, although many lesbians retrospectively recall being ‘tomboys’, only about 6% of women who show ‘tomboy’ behaviour in childhood will later identify as lesbian. Other research has similarly shown that most ‘tomboys’ will later identify as heterosexual (Peplau & Huppig, 2008; Savin-Williams, 2005). Some have suggested

that the association between childhood gender non-conformity and sexual orientation may be stronger for women who identify as butch lesbians (James, 2005).

It is important to bear in mind that most research looking at childhood gender non-conformity and sexual orientation has been retrospective in nature, and therefore causality cannot be implied from research findings (Peplau & Huppig, 2008). Peplau and Huppig suggest that, in the case of women, some lesbians may exaggerate their memories of being ‘tomboys’ in order to fit in with stereotypes of lesbians and masculinity; heterosexual women, on the other hand, may forget or dismiss their experiences of being ‘tomboys’. Similarly, Clarke et al. (2010) point out that findings linking gender non-conformity in childhood and sexual orientation may be “a product of the research questions asked and the social imperative to construct sexual and gender identities coherently” (p. 151). In light of the weak evidence in favour of ‘sexual inversion’ theories, researchers have highlighted the multiple possible pathways and trajectories for developing a homosexual identity (Peplau & Garnets, 2000; Peplau & Huppig, 2008). Stage models of identity development have similarly attempted to provide an account of how identity develops.

Stage models of homosexual identity development. The model of homosexual identity development that is most often cited is Cass’s (1979) model. In this model, Cass lays out six stages through which gay and lesbian people progress on the path to developing a coherent identity. The first stage is *identity confusion*, which is characterised by feelings of confusion and questioning sexual identity. The second stage is *identity comparison*, where the person may feel excluded and separate from heteronormative culture, leading to feelings of alienation. In the third stage, *identity tolerance*, the person acknowledges and accepts their homosexual identity. Fourth, the person will reach the *identity acceptance* stage, where they choose to disclose their identity to

selected individuals. The fifth stage is *identity pride*; in this stage the individual will take pride in their homosexual identity, be active in challenging heteronormative assumptions and be more open about their sexual identity. Finally, a homosexual person will reach the *identity synthesis* stage, where the person is open about their sexuality, but their sexuality is no longer central to their identity and is integrated with other aspects of identity. Despite its popularity, however, Cass's (1979) model, and other stage models that were subsequently developed based on Cass's model, have been criticised on several grounds.

Critiques of stage models. Stage models have been criticised for being too linear, with the assumption of universal experiences (Clarke et al., 2010; Savin-Williams, 2005; Smuts, 2011). Cass's and other stage models are mainly based on the experiences of gay men, and have been generalised to women who identify as lesbian (Savin-Williams, 2001). However, some theorists suggest that the development of same-sex attractions among young women may be unique in many ways and may follow different developmental trajectories (Bedard & Marks, 2010; Diamond & Savin-Williams, 2000; Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2000). For example, researchers highlight the important role of female friendships and peer groups in the formation of female same-sex sexualities (Bedard & Marks, 2010; Diamond, 2002; Diamond & Dubé, 2002; Griffin, 2002), and some research also suggests that there may be gender differences in the "context, timing, spacing, and sequencing of sexual identity milestones" (Peplau, 2003; Savin-Williams & Diamond, 2000, p. 607).

In addition, the assumption of linearity is problematic because it erases the possibilities of multiple pathways towards identifying as LGBT as well as the possibilities of moving between stages (Clarke et al., 2010). The linearity of the stage model also assumes that sexuality is something innate and that homosexual people discover their 'true' identities by moving through

the stages; however, this erases the possibility of fluidity in sexual identities and identifications. Sexual fluidity refers to the notion that sexual attractions, behaviours, and identities can change over time (Clarke et al., 2010). In a longitudinal study of sexual identifications of non-heterosexual women over a ten year period, Diamond (2008) found that sexual fluidity was a prominent feature of female same-sex sexualities. Diamond (2008) interviewed 79 non-heterosexual women (lesbian, bisexual, or unlabelled) between the ages of 18-25 in the United States (US) five times over a ten year period. She found that 67% of the women in her study changed their identity labels at some point during the study period, and 36% changed their identity labels more than once. Moreover, Diamond also found that there was a greater trend towards sexual fluidity, in that women tended to adopt bisexual/unlabelled identities rather than give up these identities (i.e. fewer women changed to 'lesbian' or 'heterosexual' identities). These findings suggest that sexual fluidity may be a salient feature of female same-sex sexualities and that the boundaries between 'lesbian' and 'bisexual' identities may be a "matter of degree rather than kind" (Diamond, 2008, p. 5). It is, however, important to note that Diamond's sample consisted primarily of white, middle-class women, so these findings may not necessarily apply to all women.

Stage models have furthermore been criticised for failing to take into account the role of social context and socio-historical factors such as feminist movements, the gay rights movement, and the HIV/AIDS crisis in shaping identities (Clarke et al., 2010; Cohler & Hammack, 2007). The socio-political climate in which identities are formed is considerably different than it was 30 years ago when these models were developed (Clarke et al., 2010). In this regard, Cohler and Hammack (2007) highlight the importance of looking at the narratives that are culturally available to young people for identity development at particular points in time, depending on

social, historical, and political contexts. For example, Cohler and Hammack identified two ‘master narratives’ currently available to gay and lesbian young people in constructing their identities, the *narrative of struggle and success* and the *narrative of emancipation*. The *narrative of struggle and success* became prominent during the 1980s and 1990s with the rise of the gay rights movement and a greater focus on the experiences of gay and lesbian young people and the challenges that they face. Although gay and lesbian young people’s experiences are constructed as being part of ‘normal’ adolescence, there is also the added challenge of homophobic victimisation and internalised homophobia, leading to mental health problems; therefore, identity development is constructed as a struggle of overcoming stigma with eventual success in self-acceptance. The *narrative of emancipation*, on the other hand, has only become prominent more recently with a cultural shift towards postmodernism. This narrative constructs the possibility of fluid identities, the depathologising of gay and lesbian youth experiences, and a focus of the strength and resilience of gay and lesbian youth in coping with adversity. Although these two narratives are currently simultaneously available in shaping identity construction, the emergence of the *narrative of emancipation* allows for new ways of conceptualising identities.

Finally, most of the theories and models have been developed in North America and Europe, and therefore do not take into account different social contexts (Clarke et al., 2010). Furthermore, these models were developed based mainly on white, middle-class samples, and therefore do not take into account the role of other intersecting identities such as race, class, space/location, etc. (Smuts, 2011). The importance of an intersectional approach to identity has been highlighted in a variety of settings, including in South Africa.

Research on lesbian identities in South Africa. Research with lesbian women in South Africa has continually highlighted the importance of considering intersecting structures such as

space/location, race, and class in the formation of lesbian identities as well as the daily lived experience of lesbian women (Bagnol et al., 2010; Gibson & Macleod, 2012; Matebeni, 2011; Salo, Ribas, Lopes, & Zamboni, 2010; Smuts, 2011; Swarr & Nagar, 2003). For example, research with women who identify as lesbian at a historically white university shows how different aspects of identity become salient in different contexts (Gibson & Macleod, 2012). Although all participants in Gibson and Macleod's study faced challenges, for example in navigating heterosexist familial and institutional settings, particularly the black participants highlighted how their lesbian identity needed to be negotiated in different racialized and classed contexts, for example in the township as opposed to university settings and in rural versus urban settings. For white participants, on the other hand, race and space did not emerge as particularly important, highlighting the normalization of white experience, even within the LGBTI community. Similarly, Bagnol et al. (2010) show how young people negotiate raced, classed and sexual identities in different spaces in Johannesburg, and how intersectional identities shape lived experiences of risk, violence, and HIV. For many black lesbian women, the negotiation of identities involves a complex interplay between claiming visibility and staying 'hidden' in order to avoid violence (Matebeni, 2011; Swarr, 2012).

In addition, ethnographic and qualitative research has highlighted butch-femme sub-culture¹ as an important aspect of lesbian identities in South African townships (Kheswa & Wieringa, 2005; Matebeni, 2011; Swarr, 2012; Swarr & Nagar, 2003). It seems that there is some pressure on lesbian women in townships to take on either a butch or femme identity (Kheswa & Wieringa, 2005; Swarr, 2012; Swarr & Nagar, 2003), but it is important to bear in mind that butch and femme identities are socio-culturally constructed and should not necessarily be

¹ Lesbians who identify as butch tend to take on a more masculine role in actions, dress, and mannerisms. Femme lesbians, on the other hand tend to take on a more feminine role.

considered fixed identities (Peplau & Huppin, 2008). For example, some research has shown that some women will change between butch and femme identities at different times in their lives (Kheswa & Wieringa, 2005) and that butch and femme identities can be versatile and fluid (Matebeni, 2011). Although butch-femme sub-culture appears to be prominent among black lesbians, Matebeni (2011) shows how some masculine lesbians do not identify within the butch category, but shape their identities by self-styling according to localised masculine styles. Though these lesbians may be identified as 'butch' by others due to their masculine styling, they may not necessarily identify themselves as such. It is therefore useful to conceptualise lesbian masculinities more broadly than simply categorising them as 'butch'.

The growing body of literature around lesbian women and identities in South Africa can provide some understanding into the lives of lesbian adolescents. However, little is known about how age may shape different experiences in the gendered and sexual lives of adolescents who identify as lesbian in South Africa. Nell and Shapiro (2011) conducted interviews and focus groups with LGBTI youth from a variety of different racial, gender, and class identities (though most were black, gay, and male) in Gauteng for a report commissioned by The Atlantic Philanthropies. They found that LGBTI youth face similar challenges to other South African youth, but that these challenges are compounded by experiences of discrimination and alienation in the family, at school, and in religious settings, as well as threats of violence in their communities. However, despite these challenges, many of the young people they interviewed also found spaces where their identity was affirmed, specifically in LGBTI spaces and organisations and by getting involved in LGBTI activism. Nell and Shapiro's report therefore provides a broad overview of the lives of LGBTI youth in South Africa.

There appears to be little published research looking specifically at the experiences of lesbian adolescents in South Africa, with only two journal articles found at the time of writing this thesis (Kowen & Davis, 2006; Nduna & Jewkes, 2013). In one study, Kowen and Davis (2006) interviewed seven Xhosa lesbian youth between the ages of 16-24 and four English-speaking lesbian youth between the ages of 16-19. They investigated the experiences of these lesbian young women within the family and school, as well as their perceptions of their representation in popular culture. They found that participants in their study faced a great deal of isolation and feelings of alienation from their family and peers at school. Participants in Kowen and Davis's study were also concerned with the invisibility of same-sex sexualities in popular culture, which is starkly heteronormative. They did, nevertheless, gain support from friends and displayed resilience in coping with the challenges they faced

The research that has been conducted with young lesbian women in South Africa provides some understanding of the challenges and opportunities that young lesbian women face. However, little is known about how lesbian adolescents construct their identities. The majority of studies that have been conducted with gay and lesbian adolescents in South Africa and internationally have been framed around 'risk' and addressing issues of violence and victimisation.

Violence Against LGBTI People in South Africa

The rights of LGBTI people in South Africa are enshrined in the constitution, which protects against discrimination based on a variety of identities, including sexual orientation. The South African Constitution is considered to be one of the most progressive in the world, and one of the first to ensure protection on the basis of sexual orientation (Cock, 2003; Thoreson, 2008).

However, the protection of the constitution often does not translate into protection in the lives of people living in deprived contexts (Nel & Judge, 2008).

Despite progressive legislation regarding the protection of sexual-minority rights, attitudes towards homosexuality in South Africa remain overwhelmingly negative (Roberts & Reddy, 2008). In a review of the trends around attitudes towards homosexuality in the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) from 2003-2007, Roberts and Reddy (2008) showed that the percentage of respondents who believe that sex between people of the same sex is 'always wrong' remained relatively steady, ranging between 82%-85%. SASAS is conducted each year by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) with a nationally representative sample of between 3500 and 7000 respondents aged 16 and older (<http://www.hsrc.ac.za/en/departments/sasas>).

Studies conducted in South Africa looking at levels of empowerment among LGBT people in various South African provinces indicate that homophobic victimization is widely reported, including verbal abuse, physical assault, and sexual assault (Baird, 2010; Wells & Polders, 2004; Rich, 2006; Wells, 2006). In addition, homophobic victimization may intersect with other forms of oppression, such as racism and sexism to create multiple levels of discrimination (Nel & Judge, 2008). The Empowerment Studies were conducted in Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal (KZN), the Western Cape, and North West. The aim was to obtain quantitative data on empowerment levels, as most previous studies were qualitative. The topics covered by the studies in order to measure empowerment included levels of social integration, victimisation, use of and satisfaction with the justice system, health status and use of health care services, substance abuse, well-being, and political and religious identification and behaviour. The studies used purposive quota sampling, with clusters divided according to sex, race, and age, and 30

participants recruited in each cluster. Questionnaires were distributed online, via post, and in person. However, it is important to note that the studies did not use random sampling, and thus results from these studies may not be generalizable to the entire LGBTI community in these provinces, though they do nevertheless provide some understanding of the challenges and opportunities that they face.

Looking specifically at victimisation experienced over the last two years, the Western Cape Empowerment Study found that, out of a sample of 958 respondents, 37% had experienced verbal abuse; 8% had experienced physical assault; 2% had experienced rape or sexual abuse; 6% had experienced domestic violence; and 8% had experienced attacks on property in the last two years (Rich, 2006). It is likely that lifetime prevalence rates are higher. Males reported more instances of victimisation than females in all categories, and coloured people reported the most instances of victimisation in all categories. When asked about perceived reasons for victimisation, the most common response was homophobia (83%), followed by ‘being a woman’ (30%) and ‘being effeminate’ (20%). These findings from the Empowerment Studies show that there are high levels of victimisation which are fuelled by the intersection of sexism and homophobia. Looking specifically at fear of victimisation, however, black women experienced the highest levels of fear of all race groups and across all categories. Black women’s fear levels of sexual assault were the highest, with 86% experiencing fear of sexual assault. This may be related to the increasing focus on ‘corrective rape’ in South Africa.

Black lesbian women and ‘corrective rape’. Lesbian women are subjected to violence because they are women and because they are lesbian, with many black lesbian women bearing the additional burdens of racist discrimination and economic disempowerment (Holland-Muter, 2012; Mkhize, Bennett, Reddy, & Moletsane, 2010). It is therefore important to consider how

structures of oppression such as patriarchy, heterosexism and racism intersect when thinking about violence against (black) lesbian women. In addition, Mkhize et al. (2010) point out that, despite often being targeted because of their sexual orientation, violence against lesbian women cannot be separated from the high rates of violence against women in South Africa. Much of the research with lesbian women has pointed to the particular struggles that black lesbian women face, especially in township areas (Graziano, 2004; Holland-Muter, 2012; Morrissey, 2013; Muholi, 2004; Swarr, 2012; Swarr & Nagar, 2004). Specifically, there has been growing local and international media attention and acknowledgement of the problem of ‘corrective rape’ in South Africa, where black lesbian women are raped (often brutally) in order to ‘correct’ or ‘cure’ them of their sexuality (Carter, 2013; Dana, 2012; Nandipha, 2014; Strudwick, 2014).

Because there is currently no official ‘hate crimes’ category in which crimes against LGBTI people can be classified, there are no official statistics on the prevalence of ‘corrective rape’ or other crimes committed against LGBTI people based on their sexuality (Wells & Polders, 2006); however, some evidence suggests that ‘corrective rape’ is a considerable problem (Holland-Muter, 2012; Mkhize et al., 2010; Muholi, 2004; Nel & Judge, 2008). For example, Muholi (2004) interviewed 47 lesbian women from townships in Gauteng who were victims of hate crimes. In her sample,

20 were raped explicitly because of their sexual and gender non-conformity, 4 experienced attempted rape, 17 were physically assaulted (3 with a weapon), 8 were verbally abused, and 2 were abducted. Twenty-nine women knew their attackers and only 16 survivors reported these hate crimes to the police. Many of these women experienced these hate crimes more than once. (Muholi, 2004, p. 118)

NGOs and activists working on LGBTI rights have similarly highlighted violence against black lesbian women as a concern (Mkhize et al., 2010).

‘Corrective rape’ is often analysed through the lens of gender; it is most often butch lesbians who are the most at risk of victimization, though this is not to say that femme/feminine women are not victimized (Muholi, 2004; Swarr, 2012). It is argued that butch lesbians symbolically claim male privilege through their masculine dress and actions (Gunkel, 2010; Swarr, 2012). Thus, butch lesbians are argued to pose a threat to the traditional gender order, and to heterosexual men. A common perception within communities is that butch lesbians want to be men, and are taking over the role of men (Swarr, 2012). In addition, butch lesbian women are also known to have sex with straight women, and thus they are furthermore perceived to be ‘stealing’ those women from heterosexual men (Matebeni, 2013; Swarr, 2012). ‘Corrective rape’ is then seen as a way to enforce the traditional gender order. With the above in mind, Msibi (2011) and Swarr (2012) argue for the crucial importance of understanding and challenging masculinities in South Africa in order to understand homophobic hate crimes against black lesbian women.

With the widespread acknowledgement of problem of ‘corrective rape’, the portrayal of black lesbian women has largely become about victimhood and their risk of being victims of ‘corrective rape’ (Matebeni, 2013; Morrissey, 2013; Swarr, 2012). Thus, they are viewed through a lens of ‘risk’: being at risk of being raped. Donaldson and Wilbraham (2014) have argued that the increasing public attention on ‘corrective rape’ has resulted in the ‘hyper-visibility’ of black lesbian bodies. However, the framing of black lesbian women as ‘victims’ also have the effect of making invisible the agency these women have and the political organising that is occurring with black lesbian women in township spaces (Morrissey, 2013; Swarr, 2012). Moreover, these

portrayals of black lesbians as perpetual victims also deny the multi-dimensionality of their lives and their everyday experiences of survival and pleasure, as opposed to victimhood (Matebeni, 2013). Although research with adult lesbian women has started to look at the ways in which viewing women through a lens of 'risk' can be detrimental (Matebeni, 2013; Morrissey, 2013; Swarr, 2012) most of the research with adolescents still focusses on risk and victimization, with a focus on homophobic victimisation in schools.

Homophobic victimisation in schools. Homophobic bullying and victimization in schools has been raised as a worldwide concern (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Committee [UNESCO], 2012). In South Africa, some research with LGBT adolescents has looked at experiences of victimization in schools and how young people deal with homophobia (Butler et al., 2003; Msibi, 2012). Quantitative research that is available on homophobic victimisation in schools has mainly been conducted by NGOs working on LGBTI rights (Rich, 2006; Stephens, 2011; Wells, 2006; Wells & Polders, 2004). The Empowerment Studies mentioned earlier also measured victimization at school, both of participants who were at school at the time of the study and retrospectively for adult participants. In the Western Cape study, 45% of respondents reported verbal abuse; 21% reported physical abuse; 8% reported sexual abuse; and 67% reported negative jokes while at school (Rich, 2006). In addition, a study of Grade 10 students in 7 randomly selected schools in Pietermaritzburg found that many learners harboured negative attitudes, felt negative emotions, and behaved aggressively towards gay and lesbian learners (Stephens, 2011). These findings highlight the pervasive nature of homophobic victimisation in schools.

Most published research has been qualitative in nature (Butler et al., 2003; Msibi, 2012). These studies similarly indicate that LGB adolescents experience victimization and harassment

by peers, verbal slurs being the most common form of victimization. For example, most participants in Butler et al.'s and Msibi's studies mentioned incidents of being called names such as *'faggot'*, *'moffie'*, *'ongqingili'*, and *'isitabane'*, all derogatory words. Verbal harassment occurred on a daily basis for some of the participants in these studies. Participants in both of these studies also reported some incidents of physical assault by peers. Gendered identities seem to play an important role in victimizations as well, as gender non-conforming individuals are most likely to experience victimization and harassment (Msibi, 2012; Nduna & Jewkes, 2013; Wells & Polders, 2004).

In addition, researchers have also raised concern around gay and lesbian learners' reports of victimization from teachers and administrators in the form of verbal abuse, physical assault, and public humiliation (Butler et al., 2003; Msibi, 2012; Wells & Polders, 2004). Dunne, Humphreys, and Leach (2006) demonstrate how schools are highly gendered spaces where gender is strictly policed through institutional power relations related to age and authority. In the Western Cape empowerment study, for example, most participants reported being victimized by fellow students (61%), but a large proportion were victimized by teachers (17%) and principals (6%) (Rich, 2006). A recent example of discrimination by school administrators, as evidenced by the recent case of a school in Tembisa, Johannesburg that has threatened to expel seven lesbian learners for refusing to wear skirts, indicates the problematic heteronormative assumptions that underlie discrimination and how they are linked to gender expression (DeBarros, 2014). Msibi (2012) likewise highlights how victimization of lesbian learners by teachers often centres on the school uniform and policing traditional gender roles. However, even if teachers and administrators do not overtly engage in homophobic victimization, research has shown that many still promote heterosexism in their classrooms and in the general school culture (Bhana, 2012;

Butler et al., 2003; Francis & Msibi, 2012; Msibi, 2012). For example, participants in Butler et al.'s study emphasised that their school environments did not foster a culture of support for LGBTI learners, and they often felt like their sexuality was made invisible within the school through enforced silence about homosexuality.

These findings from students are echoed in other qualitative studies that have been conducted with school teachers around their views of homophobia and how they approach the issue in school (Bhana, 2012; Francis, 2012). These studies found that teachers often repress conversations about sexuality in general and actively silence conversations around homosexuality specifically. For example, in her study of 11 high school Life Orientation teachers in Durban, Bhana (2012) found that teachers were reluctant to even use vocabulary linked to gay, lesbian and bisexual sexualities. Furthermore, teachers also promote heterosexuality as 'normal', in part due to lack of education around diverse sexualities and feeling that they do not have enough training into what homosexuality is (Bhana, 2012; Francis, 2012). This silencing of diverse sexualities is further highlighted at a curriculum level, where same-sex sexualities are barely dealt with at all in most Life Orientation textbooks that are used in South Africa (Potgieter & Reygan, 2012; Wilmot & Naidoo, 2014). Except for one textbook series where homosexuality was dealt with in a sensitive and inclusive manner (though extremely only extremely briefly in Grade 7), Potgieter and Reygan (2012) found that most textbooks were either completely silent about homosexuality, or portrayed it in a negative light, for example alongside issues of HIV/AIDS. All of the factors described above contribute not only to individual learners feeling isolated and excluded, but also to a heteronormative culture within schools that makes non-heterosexual sexualities invisible (Butler et al., 2003; Msibi, 2012). The victimisation, isolation, and exclusion that learners may experience may have a direct impact on well-being, with

international literature demonstrating a link between ‘minority stress’ and vulnerability to mental health problems (Burton et al., 2013; Duncan & Hatzenbeuhler, 2014; Marshal et al., 2008, 2011, 2013; Meyer, 2003; Russell et al., 2011)

Rationale

Adolescence is an important developmental period for identity formation, with ‘coming out’ seen as an important step in identity formation for adolescents who identify as lesbian. Lesbian adolescents face additional challenges in identity formation, sometimes facing isolation and alienation from most structures that would normally be supportive, such as the family, school and peers. Research with adult lesbian women has highlighted the importance of looking at intersecting structures such as race, class, and space when talking about lesbian women’s identity; however, there is a lack of research around adolescents who identify as lesbian and identities. A focus on gendered and sexual identities and their intersections with other identities is important in order to understand how adolescent girls who identify as lesbian navigate the world and understand their experiences as gendered and sexual beings in a patriarchal and heteronormative society.

It has been established that victimization rates are high for LGBTI people in general and black lesbian women in particular, specifically in the case of ‘corrective rape’. Research that has been conducted with gay and lesbian adolescents has similarly been framed around different risks that they face, especially the risk of homophobic victimization in schools. The gendered and sexual identities of adolescents who identify as lesbian seem to be particularly salient in understanding the victimization that they experience, which is often based on their gender presentation (e.g. gender non-conforming adolescents are more likely to be victimized) and their

sexual identities as lesbian adolescents. The silencing of talk around diverse sexualities may further fuel discrimination and victimisation in schools, and contribute to feelings of alienation.

It is, however, important to take note of the detrimental effects that a sole focus on ‘risk’ and victimization can have, in the end dehumanizing the people we are trying to study. Portraying young people purely through ‘risk’ and victimhood denies their agency and makes invisible their lives as holistic human beings who may also experience survival and pleasure. Therefore, research is needed that moves away from studying lesbian adolescents solely through a lens of ‘risk’, instead focusing on what lesbian adolescents themselves deem important in terms of their lives and identities. While this may include the risks and victimizations that they face, it may also bring forward aspects of identity that are pleasurable and empowering.

Aims and Research Questions

This project is part of a larger research project that looks at representations of gender and sexuality among diverse young people in South Africa through the method of Photovoice. Specifically, this project aims to give voice to the experiences and representations of gender and sexuality of adolescents who identify as lesbian. The research questions that this project aims to answer are:

- How do lesbian adolescents choose to represent their experiences and identities through Photovoice?
- How do the stories lesbian adolescents tell challenge or maintain dominant narratives about young people of diverse sexualities?

CHAPTER THREE: DESIGN AND METHODS

In this chapter I outline the design of the study and the methods used. I begin by describing the theoretical framework within which the project is located. I then discuss the design of the study, following which I describe the sample and the community in which the study took place. I then discuss the data collection procedures and data analysis methods. Finally, I look at the ethical considerations relevant to the study as well as my own reflections on the research process in the reflexivity section.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, I approached the research questions from a feminist perspective. The study was a narrative study of the stories participants choose to tell about their lives, and I therefore locate the study within narrative theory.

Feminist research. Considering the multiplicity of feminisms and feminist theorising, it is often difficult to pin-point an exact definition of feminism or feminist research (Gergen, 2008; Kiguwa, 2004). Broadly speaking, the aims of feminist research are “to seek social justice, to enhance women’s voice and influence in society, and to explore alternative ways of understanding the world through women’s experiences” (Gergen, 2008, p. 280). Bearing these aims in mind, Boonzaier and Shefer (2006) mention three broad areas of concern for feminist research. First, feminist research is concerned with gender as a primary lens of analysis, and research questions derived from women’s experiences. In addition, feminist research also takes into account the roles of power and politics in the research endeavour, and there is an emphasis on the contribution of feminist research towards political activism and applicability to the lives of women. Finally, feminist research takes into account the power relations between researchers and researched. Through being self-reflexive, feminist researchers look at how the researcher’s

subjectivity impacts on the entire research process, from the formulation of research questions through to the analysis and interpretation of the data.

A feminist approach was therefore appropriate for this research because I was concerned with lesbian adolescents' everyday experiences, the stories about their lives, and how they make sense of their gendered and sexual identities. Furthermore, from a feminist perspective I was particularly concerned with the issue of agency, especially since I was working with a marginalised group who have experienced a great deal of stigma. As a group, young black lesbian women have often had identities imposed upon them (e.g. victims of homophobic violence) and this study was therefore concerned with allowing participants agency in constructing and making meaning of their own stories and identities. A feminist stance in research was therefore particularly useful in working to 'give voice' to young lesbian women whose voices have largely been marginalised.

Narrative theory. Narrative theory is broadly located within the social constructionist paradigm (Murray, 2003), which looks at how language and power construct social realities (Burr, 1995). Narrative has been defined in various ways, and defining what constitutes narrative has been widely contested (Riessman, 2008; Silver, 2013). Murray (2003), for example, defines narrative as "a cohesive causal account of an event that has occurred or is expected to occur" (p. 98), whereas Parker (2005) defines it as "a performance of the self as a story of identity" (p. 71). Common understandings of narrative suggest, however, that narrating a story creates order and meaning of events through temporality, and is central to the performance and construction of identities (Murray, 2003; Parker, 2005; Taylor, 2006).

Within a narrative framework, story-telling is considered to be central to identity construction; we form our identities around the stories we tell about ourselves and others

(Murray, 2003, 2008; Parker, 2005; Riessman, 2008; Taylor, 2006). The link between narrative and identity can furthermore be extended specifically to the construction of gendered and sexual identities (Kiguwa, 2006). Narratives are always co-constructed (Riessman, 2008). Therefore, the context in which the narrative is told, and the positionings of the narrator and the ‘audience’ to whom it is told, have an impact on how identity is constructed and performed (Parker, 2005; Riessman, 2008). Taylor (2005, 2006) argues, however, that although narratives are formed within the particular contexts in which they are told, they also always draw on previous tellings of the narrative, so identities are therefore often constructed through repetition and rehearsal.

Within a narrative framework, authors of narratives are considered to be ‘subjects’ of their stories (as opposed to objectified ‘subjects’ of positivistic experiments) (Parker, 2005). From a feminist perspective, this is particularly important for marginalised groups, as they “are often located in stories, without much involvement in the creation of that story” (Gergen, 2008, p. 289). A key idea within narrative theory is therefore to restore agency to participants as authors of their own narratives, within the particular contexts in which they are located. In addition, narrative also looks at how individual narratives are shaped by broader social and cultural narratives, and how they are linked to broader political and power structures (Murray, 2008; Riessman, 2008; Squire, 2008). In order to understand how the narratives are linked to broader social structures, this research is also informed by intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991), which looks at how the embodiment of different race, class, sexuality, and other identities interact to shape everyday lived experiences (Bowleg, 2008; Crenshaw, 1991; Shields, 2008).

With the above in mind, narrative theory was therefore appropriate for this project because I was concerned with identities and how adolescents who identify as lesbian or bisexual chose, as active agents, to represent their own lived experiences. In addition, narrative could be

useful in bringing forward stories that challenged harmful assumptions about young people of diverse sexualities, such as stories of empowerment and pleasure as opposed to dominant narratives of risk and victimhood. In this way, participants would be able to be ‘subjects’ of their own stories, rather than ‘objects’ of dominant narratives that are imposed on them (e.g. ‘victims of hate crimes’). The stories participants told about their photographs could also show what social and cultural narratives were available to participants in their particular contexts through which they could frame their identities as lesbian adolescents, and how these identities were shaped by intersecting identities and structures.

Research Design

This project used participatory action research (PAR) methods in order to gain in-depth understanding and of what lesbian and bisexual adolescents deemed important, and the stories they wanted to tell about their lives. PAR attempts to break down the power differentials between ‘researcher’ and ‘researched’ by positioning participants as the ‘experts’ and including them in all aspects of the research process (Parker, 2005; van Vlaenderen & Neves, 2004). Participants therefore play a role in guiding the direction of the research questions and contribute towards data analysis. PAR further aims for empowerment and community mobilisation.

Photovoice. Specifically, this research used the PAR method of photovoice to engage adolescents who identify as lesbian and bisexual, and gain understanding about their experiences. As part of the photovoice method, participants are trained in photography and take photographs that represent a specific story that they want to tell about their lives (Wang, 2006; Wang & Burris, 1997). The process of collecting photovoice data incorporates several qualitative methods apart from the actual photography, including focus groups and interviews (Wang, 2006; Wang & Burris, 1997). Although specific steps have been proposed for the photovoice process (Wang,

2006), there is also an acknowledgement that it is a flexible method and that these steps can serve as a guide rather than a set of rules (Catalani & Minkler, 2010).

Through participation in the photovoice process, the aim is to create a ‘critical consciousness’ (Friere, 1970 as cited in Suffla et al., 2012) about the issues of importance in people’s lives related to the research question, in this case gender and sexuality. In this regard, researchers have highlighted the importance of using participatory methods when researching topics such as gender and sexuality (Pattman, 2014). Previous research has shown that Photovoice can be a particularly empowering method for engaging and mobilising young people (Kessi, 2011; Wang, 2006; Wang, Morrel-Samuels, Hutchison, Bell, & Pestronk, 2004). For this reason, participatory visual methodologies such as Photovoice have become increasingly popular in work with young people in South Africa, with a particular focus on research related to HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, and safety (De Lange, 2008; De Lange & Geldenhuys, 2012; Khanare, 2012; Moletsane et al., 2007; Suffla, Kaminer, & Bawa, 2012). Participatory visual methodologies such as photovoice aim to ‘give voice’ to marginalised groups (Suffla, Seedat, & Bawa, 2015), and are also often interventions in themselves, creating an environment for “reflection, action, and social change” (De Lange & Geldenhuys, 2012, p. 497). Thus, Photovoice was a powerful means through which participants could explore identities and bring forward knowledge about their lives and their gendered and sexual identities in an empowering way.

Methods

Sample. The study is part of a larger research project that looks how diverse youth represent their gendered and sexual identities through Photovoice. For this study, I collaborated with the Triangle Project, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that does work on LGBTI

rights in Cape Town (<http://thetriangleproject.org/>). They also provide services to LGBTI people in the Western Cape. As part of their Community Engagement and Empowerment Programme (CEEP), Triangle Project has set up ‘safe spaces’ in various communities in and around Cape Town. The safe spaces are groups where LGBTI people meet for support and information. Staff from CEEP identified a particular safe space where there were many young members in the required age range, contacted potential participants, and arranged an initial information meeting. I therefore used purposive sampling, where participants were recruited through the researcher’s networks and connections (Kelly, 2006).

The ‘safe space’ from which participants were recruited is located in Mbekweni, a semi-rural township community close to Paarl, about 70 kilometres outside of Cape Town. Mbekweni is located within the Drakenstein Municipality, in the Cape Winelands District. Wine farming and agriculture are the main sources of employment in the municipality (<http://www.drakenstein.gov.za/Residents/Pages/Residents.aspx>). The majority of the population in Mbekweni are black Xhosa-speakers (Grundlingh, 2011). The word ‘Mbekweni’ means ‘place of respect’ in isiXhosa, and Mbekweni seems to be a community where there is a relatively strong sense of social cohesion (Grundlingh, 2011). However, the community also faces multiple challenges, including high levels of poverty and unemployment, high levels of HIV and TB infection, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, and sexual violence (Grundlingh, 2011).

I initially aimed to recruit 8-10 participants between the ages of 16-17; because of the large amount and diversity of data collected in the photovoice process, the slightly smaller sample size would have been appropriate for the scope of this study. However, about 18 potential participants between the ages of 13-17 arrived at the first information meeting, and I did not want to turn participants away. Because of the lengthy time commitments involved with the

study, some participants took part in some stages of the study but not others. For example, some participants participated in the first focus group, but did not participate in the rest of the study. In total, 14 participants took part in all stages of the research. All of the participants were black, Xhosa-speaking females. Twelve identified as butch lesbians and two identified as bisexual. Although I specifically advertised for participants who identified as lesbian, two participants who identified as bisexual chose to participate in the study. Their data is included, as it allowed for more nuance and depth in the analysis of marginalised gendered and sexual identities. Additional demographic information for the 14 participants who participated in all stages of the study is provided in Table 1. In addition, I have included one participant, Khetiwe, who participated in the first focus group only, as she contributed significantly and also assisted with translation. All names are pseudonyms.

Table 1

Demographic information of participants

Participant	Age	Grade	Sexual identification
Akhona	16	10	Lesbian
Fezeka	15	10	Lesbian
Khanyiswa	13	8	Lesbian
Lindiwe	13	8	Lesbian
Mandisa	17	11	Lesbian
Nandipha	17	10	Lesbian
Nokuthula	16	11	Bisexual
Noluthando	17	8	Lesbian
Nomathemba	15	9	Lesbian
Phumzile	15	9	Lesbian
Sesethu	17	12	Lesbian
Yonela	17	12	Bisexual
Thembeka	17	11	Lesbian
Sindiswa	16	10	Lesbian
Khetiwe	17	12	Lesbian

Data collection procedures. The photovoice process took place in several phases. First, the recruiters from CEEP set up an initial meeting between the researchers (myself and my supervisor, Floretta Boonzaier) and lesbian and bisexual adolescents who expressed interest in participating in the project. The meeting took place at a room in the community centre where the ‘safe space’ conducts their weekly meetings. During this initial meeting, we explained the procedures to potential participants as well as the time commitments if they chose to participate.

Participants were told that participation involved 6-8 meetings over a period of 4-6 months which would include taking part in photography training, focus group discussions, individual interviews, as well as the final exhibition. During this initial meeting, we finalised who wanted to participate and established days and times which best suited participants for meetings going forward. We also handed out parental consent forms for participants to give to their parents to sign.

The second meeting was a focus group discussion for participants to get to know each other and to start discussing their lives and concerns (see Appendix A for interview schedule). The discussion was facilitated by myself and Floretta Boonzaier. The focus group lasted 30 minutes and around 17 participants took part. Before starting the discussions, we collected signed parental consent forms and went through the assent forms with the participants, which they then signed. Being a participatory method, the aim of the photovoice method is for participants themselves to guide the direction of the discussion (Wang, 2006). Thus, the focus group was relatively open-ended with space given for what participants wanted to discuss. We also asked participants who were good at English to be the translators because the group leaders from the 'safe space' who were supposed to translate had to facilitate the meeting; this also added to the participatory nature of the discussion. The researchers asked some open-ended questions to get the conversation started. Sample questions included "Tell me a bit about your lives" and "What is it like to be a lesbian teenager in Mbekweni?" We then probed around some of the topics that came up in the discussion.

The participants requested another focus group to continue the discussions, which was set up for two days later. In the second focus group, we continued the discussions and probed around some topics that had not been fully discussed in the first focus group. At the end of the

focus group, we asked participants to start thinking about what story they would like to tell about their lives. The second focus group was about one hour long and was facilitated by myself and Floretta Boonzaier. One of the group leaders from the 'safe space' was also present as an interpreter. Fourteen participants attended the second focus group, and it was decided that only participants who attended would take part in the rest of the Photovoice process.

The fourth meeting was the photography training, which all participants attended as a group. The photography training was conducted by Lindeka Qampi, a professional photographer, one week after the focus groups, with me assisting. Because we only had eight cameras, I split the participants into pairs who would share the eight digital cameras. Each pair was given a camera at the beginning of the training. The photographer taught the participants how to use the digital cameras and how to take good photos. In addition, the training also included discussions on how to approach people safely and obtain consent if they want to photograph them. Participants were also asked to start thinking about what kinds of pictures they would like to take in order to tell their story, bearing in mind themes from the previous focus group discussion. An excursion was then set up for the following day; Lindeka, with me assisting, led the participants on a walk through Mbekweni, where they could practice taking photos and approaching people with her assistance. At the end of the training, each pair was given the camera for two weeks, with each partner receiving it for one week. They were asked to take photographs that represent the story they want to tell. Ideally, participants should receive cameras for at least two weeks, as this gives them time to think about and plan what photos they would like to take (Wang & Burris, 1997). However, due to the large number of participants and the fact that we only had eight cameras, two weeks for each participant was not feasible within the timeframes of the study.

After one week with the cameras, I met briefly with participants before the start of their ‘safe space’ meeting in order to facilitate the exchange of cameras. However, some participants did not arrive for this meeting, so we changed some of the partners and made alternative arrangements for camera exchanges. At the end of the meeting, I arranged the third focus group for the following week and asked participants to write photostories (a written narrative to accompany the photos) and bring them to the focus group.

Floretta Boonzaier and I then met with the participants for the third focus group discussion (see appendix B for interview schedule). The focus group was held in the community centre, with one of the ‘safe space’ group leaders present as an interpreter. This focus group was an opportunity for participants to discuss their photographs with the group if they wished to, and to talk about what the process of taking photographs was like for them. It was also an opportunity for participants to raise and discuss any themes that they had noticed and thus contribute to the analysis of the discussions. This is in line with a participatory approach, which involves participants as much as possible in the research process (van Vlaenderen & Neves, 2004). The focus group lasted about 45 minutes. At the end of the focus group, we arranged to conduct individual interviews with each of the participants. We also brought our laptops with the participants’ photos and met with each participant at the end of the focus group to select which photographs they would like to display at the exhibition. Participants were told that they could select up to five photos that represent their story. We also collected their written photostories, which I then typed out as they were written and printed out.

I then conducted individual interviews with each of the participants (see Appendix C for interview schedule). Because we could not get the room which was usually used, I conducted the interviews in my car outside the community centre. Five of the participants chose to be

interviewed in English and nine were interviewed in Xhosa with a ‘safe space’ group leader present as an interpreter. The interviews ranged in length from 17 minutes (some participants arrived late for their interviews) to an hour. During the interviews, I asked participants to tell me their individual life stories, and also probed around some of the topics that had come up in the group discussions. Towards the end of the interview, I asked participants to tell me about their photos and photostories. I aimed for the interviews to be relatively unstructured interviews in order to collect life story narratives, but most of the interviews ended up being semi-structured interviews due to language barriers. I therefore collected episodic narratives around specific topics (Murray, 2003).

Following the interviews, we organised a ‘mini exhibition’ and planning meeting in order to organise details for the public exhibition. Floretta Boonzaier and I met the participants and ‘safe space’ group leader at the community centre and drove them to another conference venue in Paarl. We printed out the participants’ chosen photos and photostories, and brought easels and boards to the conference venue. We gave participants time to set up their own displays as they would like them to be exhibited at the exhibition and also allowed them to look at each other’s displays. We then discussed all aspects of the exhibition with the participants, who made all the decisions about the exhibition. The participants decided on the date, time, catering and venue of the exhibition, as well as who would perform and who would be invited. They also came up with the title of the exhibition (*Chained sexualities: Voices of the “other” women*).

A successful public exhibition of the participants’ photographs and photostories was held at the Mbekweni community hall one month after the planning meeting. For the exhibition, we collaborated with Triangle Project who contributed towards the costs of the exhibition. Participants were able to choose whether they wanted to take part in the exhibition or not, and all

of them chose to do so. In the lead up to the exhibition, the exhibition was also profiled in the local *Cape Times* newspaper (Farber, 2014). The participants' friends and family, Mbekweni 'safe space' members, 'safe spaces' from other communities, as well as members of the public attended. The exhibition consisted of speeches and performances by the participants, members of the 'safe space', and other 'safe spaces' that were invited to the exhibition, followed by time to browse the exhibits.

Finally, I conducted a follow-up focus group about three weeks after the exhibition that lasted about one hour. The focus group was held at the community centre. The participants who were good at English again acted as translators. This focus group was an opportunity for participants to discuss anything that had happened since participating in the project and what benefits or challenges they had faced through the process. It was an unstructured focus group where participants were asked to reflect on their experience of participating in the project and what they would keep the same or do differently. I also asked about what, if anything, had changed for them during the process of involvement.

Refreshments were provided by the researchers at all meetings and focus groups, but not for the individual interviews. All focus groups and interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts of the individual interviews that were conducted in Xhosa were then translated (and back translated) into English for analysis.

After the follow-up focus group, the participants were invited to exhibit their work at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) and at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). At UWC, they also used their exhibition materials to conduct a two-hour sensitizing session for final-year teaching students about issues faced by LGBTI youth in the classroom.

This was part of the first course implemented in South Africa at UWC on ‘Sexual diversity and the role of the educator’ (University of the Western Cape [UWC], 2014).

Data analysis. Data analysis in this study included a narrative analysis of the photographs and written photostories produced by the participants, individual interview transcripts, as well as focus group transcripts.

According to Riessman (2008), there are four general types of narrative analysis: *thematic narrative analysis* involves an analysis of the content of the narratives, or ‘what’ is spoken/written; *structural analysis* focuses on how a story is told; *dialogic/performative analysis* looks at how narratives are constructed interactively and performed between speakers, including the researcher; and, finally, *visual analysis* analyses how visual images contribute to the construction of narratives alongside oral or written data. These four types of narrative analysis are not mutually exclusive, and often overlap. Because I was concerned with the content of the stories that participants chose to tell, I primarily used thematic narrative analysis in this research. However, I also made use of some of the other kinds of analysis at times, including some elements of structural analysis to elucidate how the structure of a story can serve a particular purpose for the narrator, dialogic analysis to elucidate co-constructed narratives in the focus group discussions, and some elements of visual analysis in the analysis of the photographs participants took alongside their photostories.

The data analysis took place in several phases. First, I read through each of the individual interview transcripts, focus group transcripts and photostories several times, familiarising myself with each narrative. I then summarised each participants’ narratives under each content area that was asked about in the individual interviews. Narrative analysis generally aims to keep extended narratives intact, rather than breaking them into smaller units to be coded, as in a traditional

thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008). Therefore, I interpreted each narrative as a whole, and coded for themes within each participant's narratives in the individual interviews as well as the photostories. Following this, I then refined the themes by looking at themes that were common across cases, and also looking at contradicting or opposing narratives. I then analysed how participants used the photographs that they took to aid or resist particular narratives within specific themes. In analysing the focus group data, I coded for content themes, which were then incorporated into the themes from the individual interviews and photostories. I also looked at how interaction between participants worked to construct collective narratives or to create contested narratives. I did this by looking at how participants used language such as “we” and “us” to construct collective, social narratives, as opposed to ‘othering’ terms such as “they” and “them” (Murray, 2008). Finally, I interpreted the themes within my chosen theoretical framework.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the larger project (of which this study was a part) was obtained from the Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee at UCT (see Appendix D).

Informed consent. Informed consent was obtained from parents (see Appendix E), and informed assent from participants (see Appendix F). Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time, and this would not affect their participation in any Triangle Project or ‘safe space’ programmes or services. Consent and assent were also obtained for audio-recording all focus groups and interviews.

Confidentiality. In the consent/assent forms, parents and participants were informed that the researchers were required by law to break confidentiality in the case that we became aware of sexual abuse or rape that had not been reported. The referral and reporting procedure, which was

coordinated via Triangle Project, was also outlined in the forms. Confidentiality in focus groups could not be guaranteed, but we discussed the importance and limits of confidentiality before starting, and this was also mentioned in the consent/assent forms. Participants were allowed to choose whether or not participate in the exhibition, though all participants decided to participate. Anonymity was maintained in publications and the thesis by using pseudonyms, eliminating identifying information, and blurring faces in the photographs.

Benefits and risks. There were several benefits of participation in the study. Participants were given the opportunity to discuss their concerns, views and experiences, and this may help in developing programmes with other young people. They also received photography training by a professional photographer. In terms of risks, there was the possibility that participants would become distressed by discussing issues around gender and sexuality; in this case, counselling was made available through Triangle Project and I also provided referrals to counsellors in the participants' communities. In addition, all participants were provided with information about the services provided at Triangle Project as well as contact details at the end of the photovoice process (see Appendix G). There was some risk in taking photographs of other people; in order to avoid this, photography training included discussions on safety and how to obtain consent to take photographs.

Secondary participants. It is also important to consider the rights of secondary participants, those that are being photographed. Participants were asked to obtain verbal consent before photographing people. Faces in photographs were blurred in publications and the thesis and no names were used.

Reflexivity

It is important to highlight the researcher's role in the co-construction of the data and the narratives that participants may produce (Palmary, 2006; Parker, 2005; Riessman, 2008). Parker (2005) emphasises that reflexivity should not simply be an exercise in confession, but should rather focus on the political structures that inevitably influence the researcher's subjectivity, and thus also influence the construction and interpretation of the data. As a white, middle-class woman, I embody privilege. Though I do not identify as heterosexual, my being white and middle class allows me access to opportunities and spaces that are most likely inaccessible to many of the participants in this study. In addition, my affiliation with UCT, a university that is still considered by many to be white, and my position as a 'psychologist' also put me in a position of power and influence, both in terms of level of education and attributions of expertise that comes with a being affiliated with a 'prestigious' university such as UCT (Palmary, 2006). In the discussion that follows, I discuss how some of these dynamics influenced the research. These are just a sample of examples, and are representative rather than exhaustive. I also discuss particular moments when my identities became salient in the analysis and discussion in Chapter Four.

In the last focus group, I asked the participants what they had found difficult or challenging about the Photovoice process. One of the participants, Mandisa, then mentioned that at the time she had been scared of doing the individual interview with me, and was glad that someone from the safe space was there as an interpreter. When I asked her what she was scared of, she mentioned that she was scared that I would drive off with her and kidnap her. She was scared because she did not know much about me, or where I lived. When she expressed this fear, other participants nodded in agreement. I was perplexed by this exchange and thought at the time

that it was quite bizarre: I am quite a shy and reserved person, of slim build, and I like to think that I am unimposing and non-threatening. Moreover, by the time I conducted the individual interviews, the participants had interacted with me several times. Upon reflection, however, I have come to think of this fear that the participants expressed in more symbolic terms, as a fear of the oppressive systems that I represent and embody as an ‘outsider’ in their community: whiteness, and class and institutional privilege. It is also possible that the participants’ status as minors, and the associated parental protection, may have led to a greater mistrust of strangers. This mistrust may have been heightened by the fact that I was a white researcher, and therefore a symbolic representative of a white regime that is likely to be mistrusted in the townships.

I also link this fear to issues of representation, and me representing their experiences and stories as a white, privileged ‘outsider’ (me ‘driving off’ with their stories?). There has been a great deal of debate in feminist scholarship about who gets to represent marginalised women’s stories, and how these stories are framed (Mohanty, 1993 as cited in Palmary, 2006). Though this study aimed to allow the young women to represent themselves through their photographs and photostories, my interpretation of the narratives, and the subsequent transformation of their stories into a ‘thesis’, inevitably comes from within a white, middle-class gaze. Furthermore, I am mindful of how black women’s bodies have been exoticised and fetishized based on colonial narratives (Matebeni, 2011), which inevitably shape my worldview as a white woman. Therefore, I have attempted as much as possible to situate myself in the analysis and to highlight that the interpretations are based on my ‘outsider’ perspective. I have also attempted to highlight the young women’s agency that emerges in their narratives and how they resist dominant victim narratives.

Another area I would like to highlight in this reflexivity section is how power dynamics related to age and authority came into play in the research process. This project aimed to centre youth voices and contribute towards youth-centred knowledge. There were, however, several instances in which the participants' voices were de-centred. Suffla et al. (2015) highlight how adult interpreters working with adult researchers re-interpret meanings, adding another layer of representation to young people's narratives. This in turn contributes to adults co-opting young people's voices, with the focus shifting to the adult dyad. A similar dynamic occurred in this study. Another incident that exemplifies how age and authority came into play occurred in the second focus group, where the safe space group leaders were present as interpreters. Thembeke asked Noluthando how she could be a lesbian if she had never dated a woman, in an accusatory tone that seemed to invalidate her identity. At this point one of the interpreters intervened saying "OK guys, this is not open for discussion". Although Thembeke's tone may not have been conducive to respectful discussion, the authoritarian intervention also shut down what could have been a meaningful exploration about what it means to be lesbian. In trying to centre youth voices, I have tried in the analysis to centre how age has played an important role in how the young women experience their identities.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: LESBIAN AND BISEXUAL IDENTITIES AND IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

This chapter presents the findings from the narrative analysis of the photographs and photostories, interview transcripts, and focus group transcripts. The focus in the analysis is on identity and identity negotiation. From a narrative perspective, I acknowledge that there are many possible ‘readings’ of the narratives that the participants told. These findings therefore do not represent any absolute truth, but rather my own interpretations of the narratives and the themes that emerged. Because the project was concerned with issues of ‘voice’ and representation, I have deliberately refrained from over-interpreting the data.

The photographs that I present in the analysis were chosen based on their relation to the themes, and come from a larger pool of photographs that the participants chose to exhibit. All faces have been blurred in the photographs. I acknowledge that blurring the faces is problematic, as, in many ways, it goes against the broader aims of the project, which were to make the participants’ stories of identity visible. Blurring the faces could therefore be understood as making their stories invisible again, and reproducing the power dynamics that silence and marginalise lesbian and bisexual youth. Faces were not blurred at the public exhibition, but it is important to bear in mind that those who attended the exhibition were predominantly people that the participants wanted to invite, their friends and families, and members of their community. In addition to the institutional ethical requirements to maintain anonymity, I also felt that blurring of the faces was necessary in light on the possibly larger audience, unknown to the participants, who would potentially read this thesis.

In the following sections I discuss four of the main themes about identity that emerged across the narratives. In the first theme, *Narrating 'tomboy' childhoods*, I discuss how the participants narrated memories of childhood gender non-conformity in order to construct continuous and coherent identities. In the second theme, *Clothing as a symbol of identity*, I discuss how clothing has become a symbol of 'lesbian' identity in relation to the school uniform and to 'coming out' narratives. In the third theme, *Negotiating butch identity*, I discuss how the participants who identified as butch lesbians negotiated entry into the butch community and how they negotiated intimate relationships. In the fourth theme, *Constructions of violence, safety, and community*, I discuss the participants' contested constructions of violence and safety in the context of their community. Finally, the last theme, *Alienation and affirming spaces*, briefly looks at the participants' experiences of alienation from family members and friends, as well as how they resisted this alienation.

Narrating 'Tomboy' Childhoods

For many of the participants, their identities as 'lesbian' seemed to be constructed through narrating their memories of childhood. Specifically, most of the participants recalled being 'tomboys' or engaging in gender non-conforming behaviour as children and this seemed to be of central importance to how they constructed their current identities. In their narratives of 'tomboy' childhoods, participants discussed always having male friends, a preference for boys' clothes, playing with 'boys' toys', and playing masculine roles in pretend play (e.g. playing 'the father'). Talk of 'tomboy' childhoods was prominent in almost all of the narratives.

The centrality of narrating 'tomboy' childhoods in relation to the participants' current identities seemed to be apparent in how they structured their narratives. In response to my first

question to “tell me about your life”, several participants, such as Fezeka, began their narratives with a description of how they were gender non-conforming as children:

When I was growing up, I used to play with boys. I never played with girls and, but all I liked, what I liked to do is to play with boys. I never dated a boy. My first relationship was with a girl and I grow up with my two, both parents and my sisters, siblings. (Fezeka, aged 15)

Additionally, participants also often talked about ‘tomboy’ childhoods in response to the question “when did you first realise that you were lesbian?” In this case, participants would often give an age, but qualify their response by saying that they had been a ‘tomboy’ since childhood:

...but I think it was 2011. Yeah, I was in Grade 8. That was the first time I got interested in a girl but before I was always the, kinda tomboy person. I always played with boys and most of the time, when I spent time with my dad, there would always be his friend's male children and yeah. Mostly not girls around, it would be, I would be the only girl around there, yeah. (Thembeke, aged 17)

Interestingly, Yonela (aged 17), one of the participants who identified as bisexual, constructed her narrative in a similar way:

Alright, first I grew up playing with boys. I spend lot of, most of my time playing with boys, all of the time. Then there was a camp, when, I was doing grade, think grade 4. ... There was girls only, then there's this time, that we are waiting for room, some girls who are coming, from Khayelitsha. ... Then they come, most of, those girls, they are bisexuals, so, I date one of them, then I see, okay, it's okay, mos I am bisexual.

Some of the participants also chose to represent their childhood experiences in their photographs and photostories. For example, Phumzile (aged 15) took a photo of a boy playing a ‘girls’ game’ (Photograph 1). The boy was a representation of her and how she grew up playing with boys:



Photograph 1: Boy playing a ‘girls’ game’

International literature has similarly shown that many lesbians retrospectively recall being ‘tomboys’ as children (Bailey & Zucker, 1995; Savin-Williams, 2005). Some qualitative research in South Africa with lesbian women has also shown this trend (Kheswa & Wieringa, 2005; Nduna & Jewkes, 2013; van Dyk, 2010). However, the literature has also demonstrated that the relationship between being a ‘tomboy’ in childhood and later lesbian identification is not clear-cut, with most ‘tomboys’ identifying as heterosexual in adulthood (Peplau & Huppert, 2008; Savin-Williams, 2005). It is therefore important to analyse the meaning and function that remembering and narrating ‘tomboy’ childhoods has for many lesbian women, and specifically for the young women in this study.

From the narratives, it seems that, for many of the participants, being a ‘tomboy’ in childhood was seen as an early ‘sign’ of being lesbian. As they became aware of sexual feelings for girls, there was a later differentiation between ‘tomboy’ - how a person acts- and ‘lesbian’ –an identity and deep internal feeling of who one is. Some participants described this distinction as particularly important within the lesbian community, where being called a ‘tomboy’ was seen as an insult that could result in violence from lesbians who felt that this was a challenge to their sense of identity. However, most of the participants perceived being a ‘tomboy’ in childhood as the basis for their later sexual preferences. With being a ‘tomboy’ perceived as an early ‘sign’ of being lesbian, narrating ‘tomboy’ childhoods could therefore be understood as a way for participants to construct their gender and sexual identities as things that had always been there, though they may not have been aware of it at the time. In this way, the idea that their sexuality was something that suddenly appeared when they first noticed they had feelings for other girls is rejected. From a narrative perspective, my concern is not whether this is objectively ‘true’ or not; rather, I aim to highlight how narrating their stories in this way aids the participants in the construction of a continuous and coherent sense of self and identity over time (Kiguwa, 2006).

Narratives are always narrated to a particular audience, and serve a particular purpose for the narrator (Parker, 2005; Riessman, 2008). Stories about ‘tomboy’ childhoods mostly emerged in the individual interviews, as well as in the photographs and photostories. Bearing in mind that narratives are co-constructed (Parker, 2005; Riessman, 2008), it is important to consider the ‘audiences’ towards whom the narratives were directed. In the case of the interviews, the stories were told to me, mediated in some cases through an interpreter. In the case of the photostories and photographs, the ‘audience’ for their narratives was extended to the wider public at the exhibition. Looking at how the narratives are structured, in the first extract Fezeka begins the

interview by describing gender non-conforming behaviour in childhood, and only later goes on to contextualise her family situations. The fact that some participants chose ‘tomboy’ childhoods to be the first thing about their lives that they told me highlights the centrality of this part of their story to their identities as lesbian young women. However, it was not only about their own self-concepts and identities, but also about how the young women may have wanted me as an ‘outsider’ listening to their stories to *perceive* their identities. Looking at Thembeka’s narrative, for example, the story around when she first realised that she was lesbian was qualified by the word “but”, followed by a description of being a ‘tomboy’ in childhood. It could be argued that this particular manner of constructing their narratives serves to ‘justify’ their identities (to me as the ‘audience’, and perhaps unconsciously to themselves) by similarly emphasising the continuity of their identities over time. Identities are often constituted through multiple re-tellings of narratives of identity (Kiguwa, 2006; Taylor, 2005). Taylor (2005) additionally suggests that investment in certain narratives about the self occurs through repetition and rehearsal of stories, which are always informed by previous re-tellings. It could therefore be argued that the young women’s focus on childhood gender non-conformity may represent a ‘rehearsed’ narrative that serves to make sense of their identities by placing these events in specific temporal framework (Kiguwa, 2006; Parker, 2005).

In Yonela’s narrative, her sentence “I spend lot of, most of my time playing with boys, all of the time” may perhaps be indicative of her own identity negotiation in the moment of narrating her story (Kiguwa, 2006). As a young bisexual woman, she may not have had the same level of investment in a masculine identity as the other participants who identified as butch lesbians. Nevertheless, the shift from a “lot of”, to “most of”, to “all of the time” in Yonela’s narrative may point to her investment in constructing a continuous and coherent identity. On a

broader level, this may in turn point to an overarching narrative about women's same-sex sexualities that emphasise the relationship between gender non-conformity and lesbian identities (Peplau & Huppin, 2008; Savin-Williams, 2005). Though the literature does not seem to suggest this relationship for bisexual identities, it is possible that the marginalization of narratives of bisexual identities (Hayfield, Clarke, & Halliwell, 2014) may mean that Yonela constructs her identity within dominant narratives in her particular context. Thus, in the moment of narrating her story, she may be constructing a narrative that may be seen as 'acceptable' within the broader context.

Clarke et al. (2010) suggest that the frequent recollection of memories of 'tomboy' childhoods among lesbians may be linked to the "social imperative to construct gendered and sexual identities coherently" (p. 151). Therefore, it is possible that this "social imperative" may have played a role in how the participants chose to portray themselves to me as an 'outsider' and to the wider public audience at the exhibition. It is possible that they chose to tell a particular narrative of themselves that fit in with cultural perceptions of what is acceptable- a coherent and continuous identity.

The specific context in which the young women who participated in this study are located may also have played a role. Many political and religious leaders in Africa generally and in South Africa have condemned homosexuality as being 'un-African' and a 'Western import' (Cock, 2003; Gunkel, 2010; Muholi, 2004), and these views have been promulgated in many black communities (Gunkel, 2010; Muholi, 2004). Moreover, being lesbian is often constructed as a 'phase' or a 'fashion' in township communities (Muholi, 2004). Thus, black lesbian women are often placed in a position in which the validity of their identity is questioned. The prominence of 'corrective' rape in townships and the idea that lesbian sexuality is something that

can be ‘corrected’ places poor black lesbian women in an even more precarious position where their identities are further invalidated and their physical safety is placed at risk (Matebeni, 2013). It is within this broader context that the young women who participated in this study were tasked with constructing and narrating their identities. The emphasis on gender non-conformity in childhood and the need to construct continuous identities could therefore partially be understood as a response to a broader context that constructs their identities as situational and ‘correctable’. In opposition to this view, the young women construct their identity as continuous, coherent, and innate, in line with the gay rights discourse of being ‘born this way’. Narrating their identities in this way could therefore potentially be understood as an act of resistance against perpetrator narratives of rape as ‘corrective’.

Clothing as a Symbol of Identity

Most of the participants in this study identified as butch lesbians, and wearing masculine clothing seemed to be an essential aspect of their identities. Wearing masculine clothing served as physical marker that symbolised their identities, both to themselves and to others. In this section, I discuss how wearing ‘boys’ clothes’ has become a symbol of identity in relation to the school uniform and in relation to ‘coming out’ stories.

School uniforms. Most of the young women who identified as lesbian wore ‘greys’ (grey pants considered to be the ‘boys’ uniform’) to school. For these young women, wearing ‘greys’ was felt to be an essential part of their identities as butch lesbians. The ‘greys’ also served as a physical marker of their lesbian identities to themselves and to others, in a school context in which they were expected, as young women, to be wearing dresses or skirts instead². However,

² The national guidelines on school uniforms (South African Schools Act 84, 1996) allow each school to decide school uniform policies for that particular school. Schools may treat refusal to wear the approved school uniform as a disciplinary matter. In the participants’ school, the principal allowed lesbian learners to wear ‘greys’, but individual teachers continued to discriminate against lesbian learners

wearing 'greys' to school also resulted in a great deal of discrimination and victimization from teachers. The school uniform seemed to be the site of conflict between teachers and some of the participants, though it is important to note that this conflict was confined to one particular school. Many of the participants described incidents of being 'chased' out of school by teachers (and therefore missing school), verbal abuse (e.g. being called 'dogs'), public humiliation, and some incidents of physical abuse (e.g. being slapped by a teacher). In addition to incidents of abuse towards individual learners, many participants also talked about a strong discourse of 'separate development' from some teachers, who suggested that lesbian learners should be taught separately, by lesbian teachers.

Dunne et al. (2006) suggest that schools create their own 'gender regimes' through formal and informal school traditions, rules, and codes of behaviour that are governed by gender. In township schools such as those attended by the participants, the 'gender regime' may be further reinforced by conservative religious and cultural understandings of gender roles (Msibi, 2012). Dunne et al. (2006) do not directly mention the school uniform as part of the 'gender regime', but it could be argued that the uniform forms a central part of the regime through being a physical marker of 'gender difference' (Nduna & Jewkes, 2013). Thus, although the abuse and discrimination that the participants faced seemed to be centred around the wearing of the 'boys' uniform', it is important to bear in mind that this conflict was not about the uniform itself, or school rules about the uniform. Rather, it was about what the uniform represented: the policing of the traditional gender binary in the schools' 'gender regime', which the young women in this study subverted.

Some of the participants wrote about their experiences at school in their photostories and also took photographs to represent their experiences. Through publically exhibiting this aspect of

their stories, the young women drew attention to the victimization and discrimination that they experienced. For example, part of Sesethu's (aged 17) photostory is presented below:

At school there was this day a teacher came to me and ask are you a boy or what, I did not answer her because she knows me. Then she take me to another teacher, they were asking me a lot of questions which are not good. I was very angry because I did not like the way they were talking with me. When I listen to them seriously they are talking about me wearing a grey pants which they say is for boys. I was very shocked because I have been wearing this grey since 2010, but they were not talking. In my mind I had this unanswered question which is why they don't want me to wear this now, what about those passed years. There was this day the same teacher called me to her class. Then she said where do I belong in the register, she was asking that do they put me under boys' side or girls' side. I said to her how can you ask me that because you are the teacher, girls are in the same side. She said to me I must take my pants off she wants to see what I am hiding behind those pants. I did not take my pants off so she chased me out of school.

The above extract from Sesethu's photostory highlights how the school uniform has become the site of discrimination against lesbian learners because it is a physical marker of their identities. Sesethu acknowledges this when she says "When I listen to them seriously they are talking about me wearing a grey pants which they say is for boys." However, it is also evident in the extract that the 'greys' have become a symbol for something much larger: the subversion of the traditional gender binary which the teachers feel the need to police. Thus, the teachers ask her whether she belongs in the girls' line or the boys' line, and what she is "hiding behind those pants." It therefore seems that the 'greys' have become a physical marker or symbol of a stigmatised identity ('lesbian') that is seen as threatening to the traditional gender order and the

school's 'gender regime'. Msibi (2012) points out that such behaviour on the part of teachers reflects the intersection of sexism and homophobia, with teachers wishing to enforce sexist traditional gender roles ('girls wear skirts'), but also with a focus on how this is linked to homosexuality.

In her photostory, Sesethu wonders about what has changed this year that has caused the teachers to focus on the uniform. Another participant, Mandisa (aged 17), elaborates on this point and elucidates on potential reasons for what some of the participants perceived as a sudden change from teachers regarding policing the uniform:

I don't know what is it, or since [name removed] is the deputy principal now she wants to shine or maybe to be noticed in her position now, or I say because there are lots of us now that is why we are easily noticed, 'cause last year there were few of us we were not this much, or that is why we are noticed there is too much of us, and we also go together, in fact we know each other there is no way that we wouldn't go together.

Mandisa's extract above points to some of the possible power dynamics that may fuel discrimination against lesbian learners. Although she partially attributes the discrimination to the deputy principal's desire for power, her principal attribution ("or I say") seems to focus on how lesbian learners have become more visible in school through larger numbers and through being seen together in groups. It is possible that greater visibility, which is marked by large numbers of girls wearing the 'boys' uniform', has resulted in the perception that lesbian learners are more of a threat, and therefore need to be policed. In this way, the uniform has become a symbol of the greater visibility of a 'threatening' identity ('lesbian'). Msibi (2012) suggests that fear of contagion or the 'spread' of homosexuality contributes to the discrimination against queer learners by teachers, who feel that if they 'police' gender non-conforming behaviour they will

prevent queer learners from influencing others. It is therefore possible that the greater numbers and visibility of lesbian learners may have fuelled a fear of contagion, which resulted in the ‘sudden’ use of violence and discrimination by teachers. This fear of contagion may also be at play in some teachers’ desire to separate lesbian learners from the rest of the school.

International literature has highlighted schools as highly gendered spaces, where gender is strictly policed and compulsory heterosexuality is actively promoted (Dunne et al., 2006). In South Africa, previous research with gay and lesbian learners has similarly shown that these learners experience a great deal of victimization from teachers and peers, including verbal abuse, physical abuse, and public humiliation (Butler et al., 2003; Msibi, 2012; Rich, 2006; Wells, 2006; Wells & Polders, 2004). Msibi (2012) demonstrated the particular challenges that queer learners in township schools face, and how gender policing and the promotion of compulsory heterosexuality through physical and verbal violence create a climate of fear at school. The literature also points to the potential detrimental consequences of the kind of victimization that the young women in this study experienced, including an increased vulnerability to depression and other mental health problems (Burton et al., 2013; Polders, Nel, Kruger, & Wells, 2008). This suggests that the victimization learners experience has a direct impact on how they experience themselves, and how they construct their identities.

The school uniform and identity. Having detailed the kinds of discrimination and victimization that the participants experienced, I now focus on how the discrimination the participants experienced around the school uniform was deeply connected to how they negotiated their identities. This connection is demonstrated in Sesethu’s story (part of which was described above). Although it is not visible due to the blurred faces, in photographs 2 and 3 Sesethu (aged 17) shows herself feeling sad in the ‘girls’ uniform’ and happy in her ‘greys’:



Photograph 2: Sesethu feeling sad in the 'girls' uniform'



Photograph 3: Sesethu feeling happy in her 'greys'

In her photostory, she also talks about how she feels in her ‘greys’:

This is the way I feel comfortable not what they want me to wear. It's not like I want to be a boy it's just that I feel happy when I am wearing my grey, I think it's not good to force a person to do something that she/he does not like to do.

Likewise, Lindiwe (aged 13) also writes in her photostory about feeling comfortable wearing boys' clothes, and her feelings of pride in being a butch lesbian, which is deeply connected to what she wears:

I Lindiwe believe that being a lesbian is not a curse and I will grow up a lesbian, I am proud of my personality I feel comfortable when I am wearing like a boy, I hate wearing skirts even at school I wear boy's trouser. ...Even at school some teachers hate how I am but all I believe is that their comments will come in to the first ear and get out in the second ear, I am a proud butch lesbian from Mbekweni.

Both Sesethu's and Lindiwe's stories demonstrate how wearing masculine clothing (including ‘greys’) allows the young women to feel a deep sense of happiness, comfort and congruence with their identities as butch lesbians. Lindiwe makes the connection between clothing and identity explicit when she describes wearing boys' clothes as part of her personality- who she is.

Furthermore, despite the discrimination that they faced, both Sesethu and Lindiwe publicly display their agency in constructing proud lesbian identities by rejecting negative constructions of their identities from teachers. Sesethu, for example, tells the public that she does not think it is right to “force a person to do something that she/he does not like to do”, thereby positioning the teachers as morally at fault. Similarly, Lindiwe's comment about letting teachers' comments come in one ear and out the other allows her to maintain pride in her identity by constructing the

teachers' comments as unworthy of her attention. These examples show how narrative can be a powerful way to restore agency to young people who have been marginalised (Parker, 2005).

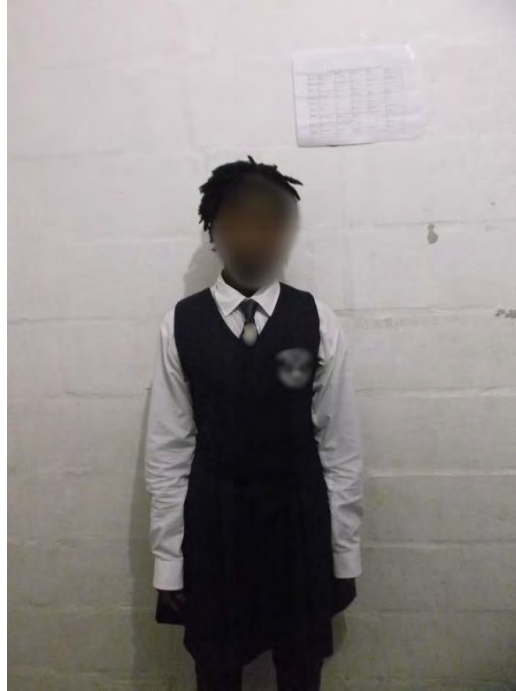
Conversely, some participants talked about a profound sense of internal alienation and identity incongruence when they were forced to wear the 'girls' uniform' for a time in order not to miss school. One participant, Sindiswa (aged 16), experienced such a deep sense of internal incongruence when wearing the uniform that she was unable to concentrate at school and started failing her subjects. Eventually, the teacher also noticed this and allowed her to wear her 'greys':

Like what can I say neh she doesn't like it neh. But she doesn't have another choice 'cause she can see me and that I will fail, and she even said so herself and I also realised that I must just wear the school dress 'cause I could see that the year is coming to an end. And she finally let me in and she said I must wear the grey if I don't feel comfortable in this uh I must just wear the grey.

Another participant, Phumzile (aged 15), described her distress around the fact that she could 'tolerate' wearing a skirt while her classmates were being kicked out of school because they could not. Although she could 'tolerate' wearing the skirt, her own feelings of discomfort and alienation were also evident. Both Sindiswa and Phumzile demonstrate in their narratives how having to wear the 'girls' uniform' negatively affected their experiences of themselves and resulted in feelings of anguish and sadness.

In addition, some participants talked about how their classmates and teachers mocked them when they wore the 'girls' uniform'. Nandipha (aged 17), for example, took photographs to represent this experience (photographs 4 and 5). In describing why she took these photographs, Nandipha talked about how her teachers were the ones who told her to wear the uniform, but

they were the also the ones that mocked her when she did. Her classmates also mocked her by saying that she looked like a boy in a dress:



Photograph 4: Nandipha feeling sad in the 'girls' uniform'



Photograph 5: Nandipha demonstrates her agency

The contrast in Nandipha's depiction of herself between the two photographs may point to how she experiences her identity. In photograph 4, Nandipha appears passive and submissive. This depiction may perhaps reflect her experience of having her identity devalued through being mocked. In photograph 5, on the other hand, Nandipha demonstrates how she rejects the traditional construct of femininity that the teachers want to impose on her. Through her body stance and by incorporating elements of the 'boys' uniform' (the long socks and shoes) in photograph 5, Nandipha asserts her agency in rejecting the feminine identity that her teacher wants her to adopt. This photograph could therefore be understood as a reclaiming of her agency in constructing a proud identity that subverts the gender binary. Through the contrast in the photographs, Nandipha highlights for the public that how she wears the uniform deeply affects how she experiences herself in the world.

Mandisa (aged 17) similarly experienced mocking from teachers and classmates when she wore the tunic for a day. In this story, Mandisa talks about her experience with wearing the tunic:

Oh something that happened to me I will tell you about something that happened to us at school that we must wear a tunic and we didn't want to wear tunic in fact I didn't want to wear tunic you see, but I did wear it for one day since I wanted to get books I wore it, but I didn't enjoy to be at school that day, I was mocked as if it's their first time to see someone wearing a skirt you see, and the boys were sucking at us you see they were sucking at me things like that, even now I never put it on again I wore my grey, and the teachers were talking and chased me away you see.

When I asked Mandisa how her teacher mocked her, she explained that

she said do you see how good you look in this uniform I don't know why you wear greys making yourselves boys and being tight on these shorts, but I didn't entertain her you see, I didn't respond to her I just kept quiet, I didn't take note of what they were saying no you look good on it you should wear it every time this and that.

It is evident that Mandisa experienced her day wearing the tunic at the beginning of the year as profoundly alienating and uncomfortable. This experience of internal and external alienation seems to have contributed to her decision to “never put it on again”, despite continued discrimination that resulted in her missing school. It is interesting to note Mandisa’s use of language in this story; her use of the words “us” and “we” interspersed with “I” and “me”, as well as her repetition of certain phrases using both pronouns, may point to how lesbian identities are constructed collectively for the young women (Murray, 2008), through their collective struggles and experiences of discrimination. In this way, Mandisa is not only talking about her own experience in the extract, but also about all the other lesbian learners whose experiences of themselves are deeply affected by conflicts about the uniform. Mandisa’s experience of her teacher’s compliments as mocking highlights the extent to which wearing masculine clothing is linked to her identity. Her teacher complimenting her on how she looked in the ‘girls’ uniform’ was therefore experienced as an attack on her identity as a butch lesbian. By ignoring and disregarding her teacher’s comments, however, Mandisa also demonstrates her agency in attempting to construct a positive identity that feels comfortable and pleasurable to her, despite external efforts to delegitimise her masculinity.

Stories of resistance to discrimination at school. Although the participants experienced a great deal of discrimination at school, which had a profound impact on their identities, the young women also actively resisted this discrimination. Through these acts of resistance, participants

simultaneously resisted dominant representations of black lesbians as passive victims of violence and discrimination (Matebeni, 2013; Morrissey, 2013). I have already discussed how participants claimed their agency in the narratives that they told about discrimination, which in itself is a form of resistance. In this section, I focus on more active resistance that the participants engaged in in order to put a stop to the uniform-related discrimination that they experienced.

The participants' resistance to the discrimination they experienced took several forms. Many of the participants described initially attempting to talk to teachers themselves, but the teachers did not engage with them. In light of this, the participants used the resources available to them to find alternative ways for their concerns to be heard. Many participants enlisted the help of supportive caregivers and the LGBTI organisation that they were part of, who came to the school to advocate for them. Akhona (aged 16) enlisted the help of her mother:

Like I must also wear a skirt, then I told the teacher no I can't wear a skirt like he said, I must go and come back when I realise I want to be a real girl. Like it was quite hurting to me like, I wanted to be at school. Every time I entered the class, but I didn't give up. I just told my mother and then my mother called the teacher and told him all the story. That I can't. It's like I don't feel comfortable. But now the teacher is fine with me.

Fezeka (aged 15) talked about asking the safe space leaders for help:

... Mandisa [another participant] said we must come here [the safe space] and tell Anele and Noxolo [safe space group leaders] we go at our school and we did ... They didn't want us to wear greys and, but Anele went there at [name of school removed], then we're now wearing greys, because they talked with our teachers.

It is evident from the extracts that, despite being unable to engage with the teachers themselves, these young women narrated their stories in a way that demonstrated their resourcefulness in

accessing support. In all of the narratives above, the discrimination against the young women was resolved after the intervention from another adult. In light of this, these stories highlight the need to focus on age/youth when thinking about these stories of discrimination. Dunne et al. (2006) have highlighted how gender in schools is regulated through institutional power relations linked to age and authority. The institutional power relations between teachers as authority figures and learners as ‘youth’ meant that the participants’ needs around the school uniform were not taken seriously until an adult intervened. In addition, these narratives further highlight how the young women’s experiences of discrimination and resistance were directly affected by their status as ‘minors’ and their dependence on their parents. In the extracts above the participants had supportive adults or organisations that they could turn to for assistance. It is likely, however, that their experiences would have been radically different if they did not have these resources available to them.

In addition to enlisting supportive caregivers and organisations for support, the participants also found other ways to resist discrimination at school. In collaboration with members of the safe space, lesbian learners put on a show at school:

Hmm, good things. We had a show. Show for gays and lesbians at school. I didn't take part. Nomathemba, Mandisa, [two names removed] they were modelling. Hai, it was fun.

Everyone was laughing. We enjoyed it. Then after that show, we were great, 'til now.

(Fezeka, aged 15)

Fezeka’s extract above demonstrates how young lesbians at her school came up with an innovative and creative method with which to resist discrimination and allow other learners and teachers to get to know them. The role of clothing is again emphasised in the extract, as much of the show was about “modelling”. Fezeka later talked about how this show played a role in

ending the discrimination they experienced. This extract therefore highlights the need to focus on organising and ideas on how to resist from marginalized groups themselves, which is often hidden with the sole focus on objectifying lesbians as victims of violence (Morrissey, 2013).

In resisting the discrimination she experienced at school, one participant, Khetiwe (aged 17), described in the first focus group how she took her teacher to court:

I only mentioned it once here at the meeting when they kicked us out of the school, then I just took that one teacher to court 'cause she was insulting me, so I took her to court for insulting me at school while the principal is OK with it. So but then she let me wear whatever I want to.

Here, Khetiwe similarly narrates about her resourcefulness in using the legal system as a tool to resist discrimination. South Africa's legal system has been widely hailed as a leader in legislation on gay rights (Cock, 2003; Thoreson, 2008). However, the legal system has been criticized for not being relevant to many people 'on the ground', especially those who are marginalised by racism, sexism, and socio-economic inequality (Nel & Judge, 2008). Although she is the only participant who mentioned using the legal system, this extract from Khetiwe may point to the increasing usefulness of the legal system as a tool of resistance even by people 'on the ground'.

It is interesting to note that in all of the narratives of resistance presented above, the stories ended with a favourable outcome for the young women, with them being allowed to wear the 'greys'. The structure of the narratives is similar, with the young women experiencing discrimination, then taking an action (telling a parent/organisation, putting on a show, taking a teacher to court), which ultimately leads to a favourable resolution of the situation. By narrating their stories in this way, the young women construct identities in which they have agency to change discriminatory practices in their lives. For the exhibition, Akhona (aged 16) took

photographs that represented her agency and resourcefulness in dealing with her situation at school. When I asked her what the photos were about, she told me about how she stood up for herself:

It's like, for me, I have, I have fought for myself. I have overcome some things in my life, like obstacles...Like the school thing... Yes I didn't just let it, I fought for it, and then they ended up accepting me. Like, I was brave for myself. Like, I stood up. (Akhona)

Through the images and captions, Akhona tells a story that fits in with Cohler and Hammack's (2007) *narrative of struggle and success*. The photographs show the pain that she experienced in dealing with stigma, leading to eventual self-acceptance and pride in her identity. Akhona's images are displayed below (Photographs 6-9):



Photograph 6: “When I was lonely I felt as if I’m no-one. I lost hope in everything and the road seemed to be closed and empty for me.”



Photograph 7: “What I’ve told myself is that people may judge and do whatever they want but God doesn’t judge and He will always brighten my life.”



Photograph 8: “What I believe is that it doesn’t matter how you wear and what you wear but the fact is WHAT IS INSIDE YOUR HEART.”



Photograph 9: Man at Youth Day march

‘Coming out’ stories. The link between masculine clothing and lesbian identities was also apparent in ‘coming out’ narratives. Some participants talked about how they used shopping for clothing as a ‘method’ for coming out to their parents:

We went to buy Christmas clothes and she took me to the girl’s side and I told her I am never going to wear girls’ clothes again I am a lesbian I will choose this side and she said ok she never argued with me. (Lindiwe, aged 13)

In some cases, participants talked about how they never actually told their parents that they were lesbian, but the parents just ‘knew’ because they bought them boys’ clothes. In this way, boys’

clothing came to act as a placeholder for the word ‘lesbian’ so that it did not have to be articulated in language, as can be seen in Nandipha’s (aged 17) story:

I started to be a lesbian on 2008 and at home they didn’t know ‘cause I never told them but my mother could see and she accepted, I never told her but she knows ‘cause she buys me boys’ clothing and she knows who I’m dating you see, it went on like that.

Nandipha’s story is a particularly powerful example of how boys’ clothing has come to signify the participants’ identities as lesbians to themselves and to others.

The prominence of boys’ clothing in coming out narratives and later in narratives about how the young women negotiate their identities within their families emphasises the importance of clothing in constructing their butch identities. The role of clothing in constructing lesbian subjectivities has been noted in the literature (Clarke & Turner, 2007; Huxley, Clarke, & Halliwell, 2014; Matebeni, 2011; Rothblum, 1994). Clarke and Turner (2007) point out that the masculine clothing style has become the predominant method through which lesbian sexuality is ‘read’. In townships, this may be expressed through different localised ‘styles’ (Matebeni, 2011). Though the participants did not specifically talk about localised styles, it is likely that their choice of clothing was similarly shaped by local styles.

However, the extracts above indicate how the participants’ statuses as minors and the fact that they were financially dependent on their parents/guardians meant that ‘coming out’ was almost a necessity in order for them to be able to express their gender in a masculine way. The participants like Nandipha who did not directly tell their guardians about their sexual preferences were similarly dependent on them in order to obtain the clothing that marked their identities as butch lesbians. Therefore, the young women relied on their parents’ acceptance in order to be

able to construct positive butch identities. The participants' dependence on their parents is demonstrated in the following extract from Phumzile's (aged 15) photostory:

as long as both my parents leave me to wear boys' clothes and they accept me as their child I thank them and I'm proud. I'm proud because they supported me and I'm proud being a lesbian, no one can stop me, no one can change me. If she/he loves me she will love me the way I am.

Phumzile's statement in the extract above that "as long as both my parents leave me to wear boys' clothes" highlights the value that boys' clothing holds for her identity. Her ability to feel proud of her masculine identity is therefore intimately linked to the support that she receives from her parents in them 'allowing' her to wear the clothing that she feels comfortable wearing. In this regard, international research has demonstrated that parental acceptance and identity affirmation are linked to well-being for gay and lesbian youth (Beals & Peplau, 2005; Bregman et al., 2013; Padilla et al., 2010). Thus, the young women's narratives demonstrate how youth lesbian identities are often constructed relationally. This finding highlights how, especially for young people who are dependent on their families, age may play an important role in how young lesbian women can experience their identities (Kowen & Davis, 2006).

Furthermore, class identities may intersect with age in enhancing or constraining how they can express their identities. For example, Mandisa (aged 17) talked about how boys' clothing is often more expensive than girls' clothing, and that has placed an additional financial burden on her family, who are already quite poor. The fact that she has not yet told her father about being lesbian means that she finds it difficult to justify why the money he sends for her clothing is not enough. Sindiswa (aged 16) talked about how her fathers' rejection of her due to being lesbian has resulted in him refusing to buy her clothes or support her financially. His

rejection of her has similarly resulted in additional financial burden for her mother, who now has to buy her clothing without her father's support. These examples underline the importance of considering how relationships and intersecting identities shape how the young women may experience and express their identities (Bowleg, 2008; Shields, 2008).

Negotiating Butch Identities

Most of the young women who participated in this study identified as butch lesbians. How they negotiated these identities and what the identities meant to the participants was discussed in most of the interviews. In this section I focus on how butch identities were negotiated through narrative in the interviews.

Entering into the butch community. In South Africa, the butch-femme subculture is particularly strong, especially among black lesbian women (Kheswa & Wieringa, 2005; Matebeni, 2011; Swarr, 2012). Therefore, there is a strong cultural influence for young black women who identify as lesbian to fit into the butch-femme binary. For the young women in this study, their identities as butch lesbians were negotiated within the broader cultural understanding of what it means to be butch and to be part of the 'butch community'. The fact that they belonged to the 'safe space' group meant that the young women were exposed to other butch lesbians and the butch community in Mbekweni. In informal conversations, some of the safe space members I interacted with talked about the hierarchies that exist within the butch community and the pressure to fulfil expectations or 'rules' of being butch. For example, in one of the interviews with a participant, the interpreter told some of her own story about negotiating the hierarchies within the butch community:

I used to have long hair, but I didn't drop them, I was a butch with long hair. No, I was called gay, and I was confusing, when you butch and then our butch lesbians would call

you gay, which means you are drakey, so they are more superior than you inside the butch, so you more of the feminine butch they call you soft butch they'll call you drakey, they'll call you all kinds of names, but I like my style as I have my long hair I have my gangster clothes but then.

The above extract from the interpreter clearly shows the hierarchies and power structures that exist within the butch sub-culture. From these informal conversations, my impression as an outsider was that there was a great deal of policing that occurred as to what was considered truly 'butch'. As an outsider, I do not fully understand the complexity of these hierarchies of what it means to be 'butch', and what negotiating these hierarchies might mean for the young women who participated in this study. Moreover, although I did ask the participants what being butch meant to them, I did not go into detail about broader butch culture and how they may negotiate the complexities of 'belonging' to a larger collective. However, there were some indications from participants that there was pressure to be as much 'like boys' as possible. For example, when I asked Mandisa (aged 17) what she does and does not like about being lesbian, she mentioned peer pressure to act in a masculine way:

Ok things that I like is dressing like this like a boy. Things that I don't like is the fact that when you are a lesbian you have to do things that are done by boys like smoking, drinking and all that stuff, those are the things I don't like.

Mandisa later mentioned that she did not smoke and that she only drank on festive days, but there was nonetheless a strong pressure on her and other butch lesbians to engage in such behaviours that would make them more 'like a boy'. Mandisa's use of the words "have to" may point to pressure within the butch community to conform to collective 'rules' of the community. It is therefore important to bear in mind the dominant cultural narratives that are available within

the butch community for identity construction (Squire, 2008; Riessman, 2008), especially for adolescents, for whom identity construction is a particularly salient developmental task (Erikson, 1968). In this case, it seems that the dominant narratives of what it means to be butch seemed to be structured around the collective ‘rules’ or expectations of butchness. It is with this in mind that I now discuss how the participants negotiated their identities within this dominant framework.

As was mentioned in the section on ‘tomboy’ childhoods, most of the participants recalled gender non-conforming behaviour as children and took on a masculine identity as they grew older. However, many of the participants only heard the word ‘butch’ and what it meant when they joined the ‘safe space’ group. It is likely that their understandings of what it meant to be butch were therefore deeply informed by what they assimilated from others in the group. In their narratives about how they came to identify with the term ‘butch’, many of the participants talked about how their personalities already fit in with collective constructs of butchness, even if they only found out about the term when they joined the safe space. For example, Noluthando (aged 17) talks about how it was something she “always knew”: *“It’s something I always knew then I realised my sense of style relates to the description of butch.”* For Noluthando, it therefore appears that discovering the term ‘butch’ allowed her to find the language that fit in with her experiences of herself. These stories of entry into the butch community seem to construct butchness as an essentialised category of identity with specific characteristics that are innate to the individual, even though the individual may not be aware of the word ‘butch’.

On the other hand, however, some participants narrated stories of entry into the butch community that challenged essentialised constructions of butchness. Nandipha (aged 17), for example, talks about the changes she made when she realised she fit into the “butch category”:

No basically I was wearing girl's stuff but never wear a dress but I was wearing boy's stuff as well but I had no knowledge of being a butch but I only realized the term when I came to the meeting and that's when I knew and I noticed that on the side I was sitting in I fitted on the butch category. So that's when I realized I was butch, but I already had the style, I would dress like that now and how is the butch is different from being a femme you see... No the things I stopped is I had long hair and I'm not that keen with combing my hair and I'm also scared of a hair dryer, so I told myself that I might as well cut them and have short hair and even with the short I don't want to comb so I'm making dreadlocks, even with girls' clothing I don't want them anymore so I'm wearing boy's clothing now.

Nandipha's statement about butch being the "side" she fit into may point to her agency in constructing her own identity (Kheswa & Wieringa, 2005). In line with this, Nandipha therefore chooses a "side" that is most congruent with how she experiences herself. Another participant, Khanyiswa (aged 13), similarly described how she learnt what it meant to be butch from other lesbians that she met at school and at the 'safe space' meetings. In Nandipha's and Khanyiswa's narratives, it is evident that their interactions and engagement with other lesbians played an important role in how they came to identify as butch. Thus, it seems they were 'socialised' into an understanding of what it meant to be butch, as opposed to automatically fitting into the category. This again highlights the relational nature of identity construction, with identities being constructed collectively through interactions with others. Furthermore, in these narratives there also seemed to be a more active engagement in the process of 'becoming' butch. Although these young women described how many aspects of their behaviour and 'style' already fit into the butch category, they both also narrated ways in which they took active steps in order to fit in

with dominant conceptions of what it means to be butch, such as not having long hair. It is important to note, however, that the young women considered these changes to be congruent with their identities and not something that they felt pressured or resentful about. The contrast between Noluthando's narrative on the one hand, and Nandipha's and Khanyiswa's on the other hand, highlights the complex and multiple ways in which identities are constructed, and the multiple pathways available towards identifying as 'butch' (Peplau & Huppin, 2008; Taylor, 2005, 2006). Many of the participants took self-portraits to represent themselves and their butch identities. Khanyiswa is shown in photograph 10.



Photograph 10: Khanyiswa- "I am butch"

Negotiating intimate relationships. Part of negotiating butch identities also involved negotiating intimate relationships. Butch lesbians take on what would be considered traditionally masculine gender roles in relationships (Kheswa & Wieringa, 2005; Matebeni, 2011; Swarr, 2012). When I asked the participants what being butch meant to them in relationships, the young women often talked about their role as being “like a man”, as Fezeka (aged 15) demonstrates in this quote: *“It mean that I must be a man. Is a lesbian that is willing like a boy, acting like a boy.”* In her photostory, Noluthando publicly stated her position as the ‘man’: *“I am a butch lesbian in terms of that in a relationship I would be the man of the house, I set the rules and I do the go and seeing her late.”* In taking on the role of the ‘man’, there were specific expectations of how to behave that the young women were expected to adhere to. They were expected to propose a relationship to a girl, to buy their girlfriend gifts, to go and visit their girlfriend at night, and to be attentive to their girlfriend’s wishes. For the most part, participants said that they enjoyed this role and the feeling of authority that it gave them. However, there were situations where the young women experienced challenges in negotiating their identities in relation to these expectations. Nandipha (aged 17), for example, found it difficult to approach girls to propose a relationship, even though this was expected of her:

I was scared of going to them and I’m also a shy person so I don’t get used to someone quickly even if it’s my first time to see you I will not be the first one to talk to you so it’s better when you start to talk to me, but they were not going to come to me unless I go to them but I’m very shy so I couldn’t.

This extract demonstrates how Nandipha experienced internal conflict between what was expected of her as a butch lesbian, and aspects of her identity that may not have fit in with the dominant narratives of what it means to be butch. Nandipha has found ways of managing her

shyness over time, though this is something that she continually negotiates in relation to her butch identity. In another case, Sesethu (aged 17) talked about how the expectation that she needed to ‘attend’ to her girlfriend at all times frustrated her, and she therefore preferred not to be in a relationship at the time. Though slightly different from Nandipha’s situation, Sesethu’s story similarly points to how young lesbians navigate the collective expectations of butch identity in relation to their own needs and desires (Matebeni, 2011; Swarr & Nagar, 2003).

Many of the participants talked about enjoying the power that came with being the authoritative partner in the relationship. The link between taking on a masculine role and power is further elucidated in the following extract from my interview with Thembeke (aged 17):

Thembeke: *Well hmm, I would say that I’m a butch lesbianist, cos mostly, in my relationships, I’m the one who always wanna take control, like the male character, yeah.*

Maia: *Okay, so it’s about kind of taking control?*

Thembeke: *Hmm, no, well ... you’d take me wrong if I say I want power cos, yeah power is kind of rough yeah, but it’s kind of something like that.*

Maia: *Okay. And kind of what does like having power mean to you?*

Thembeke: *Like, it means like okay nobody would tell me what to do in a relationship yeah. I kind of decide for myself but I’d also be like, I wouldn’t overdo it.*

In the extract above, Thembeke alludes to how, by identifying and investing in masculinity, she attempts to gain some of the power and privilege that traditional masculinity affords. Her reference to power as “rough” could be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the violence associated with traditional notions of masculinity in a hetero-patriarchal society (Shefer & Potgieter, 2006; Swarr, 2012). Thembeke mostly rejects this notion of hetero-patriarchal power,

but suggests that her position in a relationship is “something like that”, and allows her some of the privileges associated with that power. In addition, it seems that Thembeke understands ‘power’ as having independence and not allowing others tell her what to do. Therefore, as a butch lesbian, she has the freedom to make her own decisions. In this way, Thembeke asserts her agency by taking ‘control’ of her relationships and not being ‘controlled’ by her partner. Other participants shared similar views about having power as butch lesbians in intimate relationships. Therefore, by taking on an identity that allows them to perform masculinity, young lesbian women ‘invert’ this power relationship to occupy a more agentic position (Swarr, 2012; Swarr & Nagar, 2003).

Although the young women take on a position of power in their relationships, Thembeke’s extracts suggests that she attempts to move away from entirely unequal relationships. Thembeke’s statement that “I wouldn’t overdo it” could perhaps indicate her desire to construct her ‘power’ as different and as less violent than the ‘power’ relations in heterosexual intimate relationships (Matebeni, 2011; Swarr & Nagar, 2003). Similarly, Nandipha’s statement in her interview “*but I must also listen to what she says*” suggests that, despite her authoritative position, she is advocating for a relationship in which her partner’s concerns and requests are valued. Therefore, although the young women construct their identities as ‘powerful’, they are also building butch identities that subvert and resist dominant conceptions of “rough” power.

Constructions of Violence, Safety, and Community

In this theme, I discuss the multiple and contested ways in which safety was constructed, and how this impacted on how the young women navigated their community as young black lesbians and bisexuals. Mbekweni is a relatively small township, and my first impressions of it as I drove in were that it seemed ‘not so bad’ for a township. The area where we drove in seemed to

have many face brick houses and seemed relatively ‘peaceful’. The immediate feeling that I got was that it was ‘safe’ for me to be there as an ‘outsider’ and a young white woman. Of course, these feelings and impressions were representative of my privileged position as an ‘outsider’ middle-class, white woman. However, these sentiments were also reflected to me in informal conversations with participants and ‘safe space’ group leaders during different phases of the photovoice project. For example, during informal conversations people made comments such as “this is the best township”, “this is one of the safest townships”, and “it would be very dangerous for you to get lost in Gugulethu [a large township close to Cape Town] but here you will be fine.” During my time there, I got the impression that the young women and other members of the organisation that I met were trying, understandably, to create a favourable impression of their community. However, as I spent more time with the participants and in the community, I began to see a different side of the township. As we walked deeper into Mbekweni away from the main entrance to the township for the excursion with the photographer, I was confronted with the more obvious signs of extreme poverty: shacks, lack of sanitation, and lack of other services. In addition, as I spent more time there, I was also exposed to certain incidents that made me question my assumption of ‘safety’. On one occasion, for example, a drunk man approached me in my car to ask for money while I was waiting for a participant who was late for her interview. When I did not give him money he started threatening me, telling me that he was going to call his friends to come and rape me. My intention in describing my perceptions is not to pathologise the community, but rather to give some understanding of the complexities of how community is perceived and constructed. There is a great deal of literature that suggests the link between place and identity (Dixon & Durrheim, 2001; Prince, 2014; Taylor, 2003), and the participants constructions of community are therefore intimately linked to how they construct their identities.

In the participants' narratives, I noticed that their constructions of community seemed to echo my experiences and perceptions around safety, poverty, and violence. It is within this broader context, and bearing in mind my position as a privileged, white outsider, that stories about violence, safety, and community were told.

Throughout the photovoice project, I did not directly ask about rape or hate crimes against lesbians, unless the participants themselves brought it up. I wanted the participants to bring up what was important to them, rather than a continuous focus on them as victims of violence. However, the participants brought up issues of rape, safety and violence from the first focus group. The question that I started off with in the first focus group, which prompted discussions around rape, violence, and safety, was "What is it like to be a lesbian teenager in Mbekweni?"

The participants' constructions of violence and safety in their community were often conflicting and contested, both between participants and also within participants' own narratives. Although participants often reiterated that there had never been any hate crimes against lesbians in Mbekweni that they knew about, talk about hate crimes and violence against lesbians was prevalent. Conflicting and contested narratives of safety seemed to be about what 'safety' actually means. For some participants, the fact that there had been no reported hate crimes in their community meant that it was 'safe'. For others, the fact that they experienced harassment on the streets meant that it was not 'safe'. Some participants also alternated between the two positions in their own narratives. The following interaction from the first focus group demonstrates some of the contestations around how safety was constructed:

Khetiwe: ...So it's like, let me just say it, there's no problem there, they don't have a problem with, um, lesbians and stuff like, you don't usually hear of lesbians being raped here and, all that kind of stuff. [Ja so people are calm about it]

Floretta: [So you feel safe]

Khetiwe: Ja I feel safe

Nokuthula: In that case I don't feel safe here, there's no place where I can say it's safe here in my place, because, probably having faced some challenges and problems around, but it's not easy for us to kiss our girlfriends in street because people complain about it we have complaint saying it's devil thing ((noises of agreement)). ((To Khetiwe)) if you haven't got that I have got that, and even if you walk with a person, you can't like, touch them in a setting where you should, where you should like, walk as a group of friends or something. It's not easy here and the rape part it's out there, people might not say it but they have been raped, although they might not say it to you, or come out about it. There's a hate everywhere, no-one likes to accept the fact that we are there, we can't hide ourselves but, although we trying to tell them that we there, we facing problems. So we not safe everywhere.

In the extract above, Khetiwe (aged 17) and Nokuthula (aged 16) provide conflicting opinions on what it means to be safe as young, black lesbians and bisexuals. Khetiwe suggest that she feels safe because there have been no incidents of lesbians being raped that she knows about. On the other hand, Nokuthula does not feel safe due to the harassment that she experiences, and the underlying assumption that lesbians have probably been raped even if they are not talking about it. In the extract, the prominence of rape and murder of lesbians as a 'standard' for safety or lack of safety is notable, though Nokuthula provides a more nuanced perspective of safety. It is

interesting to note how Nokuthula shifts in her use of pronouns from talking about herself as individual to an understanding of herself as part of a collective ‘community’. Her statements that “there’s a hate everywhere” and “so we not safe everywhere” may point to how the prominence of hate crimes against lesbians in South Africa has resulted in a generalised fear, and acknowledgement that as members of this collective, they too are not safe.

These contestations around what it means to be safe were echoed in individual narratives. There seemed to be some polarization of opinion, with some participants such as Fezeka (aged 15) saying that they felt completely safe and had never been threatened: *“I’m not scared. I even walk at 11 or 10 o’clock. Never even had a boy or the old man saying he will rape me or something. It’s safe.”* On the other hand, many of the participants described experiencing incidents and threats of violence. In the focus group, Khanyiswa (aged 13) described how she did not like to be a lesbian in Mbekweni due to the harassment that she experienced. In her individual interview, she explained some of her experiences:

Or when I’m walking with my girlfriend and boys would say “oh no these things” and they just wanted us to turn back and they would throw stones on us and we were scared of boys and we are not boys but we are girls and they will just hurt us very bad but I would just ignore them ‘cause I’m use to them now. (Khanyiswa)

Apart from stories of harassment such as Khanyiswa’s, many of the participants also described frustration that they could not hold hands or show affection towards their girlfriends in public for fear of such harassment.

Furthermore, the conflicting and contested narratives of safety sometimes came up in the participants’ own narratives. The following extract from Nandipha’s (aged 17) photostory exemplifies this contestation:

Same applies in the community when you passing by with boys they calling you a name because you walk with your girlfriend. At the same time I feel great being a lesbian in Mbekweni because we walk free there because no person has died with a murder because she's homosexual. But at the same time I feel bad because you just can't carry your girlfriend in the street. You must walk and act as friends as it is not. But all I will say is that Mbekweni is the best community ever. (Nandipha)

Nandipha's photostory is a particularly powerful example of contested constructions of safety. It could be argued that Nandipha's story reflects an internalization of contested narratives of safety in her community as part of her own narrative and identity (Taylor, 2006). It is also important to bear in mind that this story was presented at the public exhibition, and it is possible that her last sentence may be for the benefit of maintaining the dignity of her community to a public audience. Her story additionally brings attention to how constructions of community, violence, and safety are inextricably linked.

Despite the contestations about what it means to be safe, stories about rape and threats of rape were prominent. Even in narratives where participants believed it was safe in Mbekweni, rape and murder often seemed to be the 'criterion' according to which safety was evaluated. Thus, even when participants were talking about *lack* of rape or murder of lesbians, rape and murder were still often present in the narratives. Phumzile's (aged 15) photograph below reflects the prominence of rape and murder as something that is always 'at the back of her mind':



Photograph 11:” But still we’re killed for who we are. It should stop.

We are still the same as others.”

Some participants wrote about threats of rape that they frequently experienced when walking in their community. The following are extracts from Sindiswa’s and Lindiwe’s photostories:

For me life as a young lesbian I would not say it is easy because every day I have to face challenges. Most of the times the streets you will find that guys are ganging up on me, they teasing me about the way I am that I am a lesbian. Sometimes when I am walking alone I would bump into a guy he would be like “I wish I could sleep with you so that you will realise that you are not a boy and stop what you doing, and start act like a girl.” Many people especially guys when they see a lesbian like a butch one it’s like they see someone they could rape. (Sindiswa, aged 16)

Here in Mbekweni there are young gangsters who always attack young girls from school. Those gangsters also liked to do silly comments and I couldn't ignore them because they always said things I am afraid of, including rape. Gangsters believed that if you are a virgin lesbian, once they sleep with you will stop being a lesbian, which is a lie. Butch lesbians are the ones who always get comments from young boys because butch lesbians date beautiful chicks and attracting chicks. (Lindiwe, aged 13)

Through displaying their photostories at the exhibition, the young women drew attention to the common threats of violence that they experienced. Although only Lindiwe mentions it directly as something that she is “afraid of”, both of the extracts suggest that fear of rape is a daily experience for the participants due to frequent threats. These findings are in line with previous South African research, which has shown that threats of sexual violence against lesbians in townships are extremely common (Swarr, 2012). Fear of sexual violence is also extremely prevalent among LGBT people (Rich, 2006; Wells, 2006; Wells & Polders, 2004). In the Western Cape Empowerment Study, for example, 86% of black women reported fear of sexual assault, which was much higher than all other racial groups (Rich, 2006). It is likely that the prominence of ‘corrective rape’ and murder in other communities, as well as in the media, may fuel this fear, in addition to the actual threats that the participants receive.

Additionally, both Sindiswa and Lindiwe begin to unpack how they make meaning of the rape threats against them, with both of them mentioning that threats of rape are directed predominantly towards butch lesbians. Identifying as butch lesbians themselves, the young women simultaneously construct themselves as potential victims of rape through their narratives, in addition to simply describing their daily experiences of harassment. Sindiswa’s and Lindiwe’s narratives suggest an understanding of some of the power dynamics that make them and other

butch lesbians threatening to men. Butch lesbians are often perceived as threatening because they symbolically claim the privileges associated with masculinity (Gunkel, 2010; Matebeni, 2013; Swarr, 2012; Swarr & Nagar, 2003). Thus, they are seen to be taking over the role of men, as the man in Sindiswa's narrative suggests when he says she must "realise that you are not a boy." Furthermore, butch lesbians are often perceived to be in competition with men because they commonly date 'straight' women, who may simultaneously be dating men (Swarr, 2012). In line with this, some of the participants also mentioned that they or their lesbian friends sometimes date 'straight' women. Lindiwe alludes to this sense of competition in her narrative when she says that butches are threatened because they date "beautiful" and "attracting" women. It is important to note, however, that it is not only butch lesbians who are targeted and threatened. Nokuthula (aged 16), who identifies as bisexual and presents as more feminine, also described frequently receiving rape threats. The following is an example of one such threat that she received:

This guy on my street will always say to me: "Nah, what you doing is not good. You just need to be raped in every way where there is an opening, even it's in the nose, the ears and the mouth."

Matebeni (2013) suggests that, although they may not be as visible as butch lesbians, femme lesbians may also be targeted because they shift the focus of their eroticism from men to women. Thus, men may target both butch and feminine women due to their sexual inaccessibility, and the challenge that this poses to hetero-patriarchal structures (Holland-Muter, 2012; Matebeni, 2013; Muholi, 2004; Swarr, 2012).

Although many of the participants experienced harassment and threats of violence in their community, they also developed strategies to manage their safety in public spaces. This involved

a careful negotiation of their identities in public spaces (Matebeni, 2011). In the following extract, Mandisa (aged 17) describes how she negotiates her identity in relation to the harassment that she experiences:

Like with no reason you see boys like mocking like even if we are just walking, especially if we are a group, they will pass remarks but we don't entertain them. Even if I walk alone they sometimes mock at me, if I'm not scared of that person I respond to that person but if I'm scared of him I just keep quiet. Even if you are walking with your girlfriend they will never keep quiet, they talk. We shouldn't hold hands together while walking, you must just walk, and look like you are just chatting.

In Mandisa's narrative, it is evident that she is highly attuned to her environment, and responds to the harassment she experiences according to what she judges to be safest in the moment. Thus, she narrates a story in which she needs to 'hide' her identity to maintain her safety, but also demonstrates her resistance by responding to her harassers when it is safe to do so. Like Mandisa, many of the participants mentioned that they did not hold hands with, or kiss, their partners when they were in public, and rather pretended to be friends. This was frustrating for them, and many expressed anger that they had to 'hide' in order to avoid harassment and threats of violence, though they too confronted their harassers when they thought it was safe to do so.

Thembeke (aged 17), in contrast, mentioned that being more visible and 'known' in the community aided her in negotiating safety: *"Like if you're known in Mbekweni, then the people don't have a problem with you, like they don't really have a problem, in my experience."*

Although the participants who identified as butch lesbians constricted their behaviour when necessary, they could never fully 'hide' their identities, as these were made visible through their embodiment of masculinity. This therefore creates a paradox, as Matebeni (2011) and Swarr

(2012) suggest: the visibility that they desire as butch lesbians through their embodied masculinity may simultaneously make them more vulnerable to violence. Thus, the young women needed to constantly monitor their environments and negotiate their identities, attempting to strike a balance between being ‘known’ and staying ‘hidden’. The participants’ narratives reflected this dialectic. These findings echo a large body of literature suggesting that lesbian women are constantly negotiating their identities in relation to the spaces in which they find themselves (Bagnol et al., 2010; Gibson & Macleod, 2012; Matebeni, 2011; Salo et al., 2010; Smuts, 2011; Swarr, 2012; Swarr & Nagar, 2003).

Furthermore, the participants demonstrated through their narratives and photographs how their experiences of violence, safety, and community were intimately linked to poverty and marginalisation. In Mbekweni, about 48% of people live below the South African poverty line (Bland, 2011 as cited in Grundlingh, 2011). Continued structural racism and economic inequality as a legacy of apartheid and colonialism mean that many black people continue to be impoverished (Swarr, 2012; Swarr & Nagar, 2003). Thus, it is important to consider the intersections of gender, race, class, sexuality and other identities and how these shape everyday lived realities (Bowleg, 2008; Crenshaw, 1991; Swarr & Nagar, 2003). The participants’ experiences of living in poverty were particularly prominent in some of the photographs that the participants took. Sindiswa (aged 16) took photographs of where she lives, which is a poor area in another informal settlement just outside of Mbekweni (Photograph 12). Mandisa (aged 17) likewise took a photograph of the informal settlement where she used to live (she now lives with her grandmother in an RDP house) (Photograph 13).



Photograph 12: The informal settlement where Sindiswa lives



Photograph 13: The informal settlement where Mandisa used to live

Swarr and Nagar (2003) highlight how the lived experiences of violence and safety in townships are intimately linked poverty and everyday struggles for survival. The poor living conditions which are evident in the photographs (lack of safe transport, inadequate housing, lack of adequate sanitation, lack of lighting, etc.) may make the young women more vulnerable to future violence as a young lesbian women (Swarr & Nagar, 2003), and also shape how the young women negotiate their environments in order to maintain safety.

Thembeke (aged 17) took a photograph to represent the poverty and the resultant fragmentation of her community. Her description of the photograph is below:



Photograph 14: “If only food grew on the ground”

Oh yeah, and then there's that other one of ...the biscuit ...and that one I can say it really, it represent hmm, the poverty, and me also just saying that poverty, black people are related to poverty and something like that. And because it's broken in pieces, so I would also say that it represents the breaking up of a community, the non-unity that the people have yeah.

In this extract, Thembeke constructs her community as “broken” and fragmented. She also demonstrates an understanding of the politics of race and class in South Africa. Akhona (aged 16) narrated a similar story of a ‘broken’ society, specifically mentioning problems such as substance abuse and rape. Thus, the participants narrated how the fragmentation of communities linked to poverty and racism also has a direct impact on violence and safety.

Like Akhona, the problem of sexual violence and its impact on safety and community was mentioned by some of the participants. Although lesbian and bisexual women are often targeted and threatened with sexual violence specifically *because* of their sexual and gender identities, this violence also takes place within, and cannot be separated from, a broader context of high levels of sexual violence and violence against women (Matebeni, 2013; Mkhize et al., 2010; Msibi, 2011; Swarr, 2012). Some of the participants talked about their experiences with sexual violence outside of discussions about the threats they endure because of their sexual and gender identities. Sindiswa (aged 16), for example, disclosed that she had previously been raped at age 12, about four years ago. Her rapist was arrested, but has now been released from prison and is back in the community. Given the small size of the township, it is likely that she will come face to face with her rapist at some point in the future, which could put her safety at risk. The participants’ narratives suggest that sexual violence is a problem that affects them individually and has a deep, fragmenting impact on the community.

Alienation and Finding Affirming Spaces

When they ‘came out’ as lesbian or bisexual, many of the participants experienced alienation and rejection from various people and institutions that had previously supported them. Many of the participants described how their disclosures of being lesbian or bisexual impacted on their relationships with their families. Some families were immediately accepting when the

participants disclosed. However, the ‘coming out’ process and negotiating family relationships was more difficult for many of the participants. Some of the young women experienced outright rejection from some family members. Sindiswa’s (aged 16) father, for example, refuses to support her in any way or buy her clothes since he found out that she was lesbian:

No he doesn't buy for me anymore but he buys for my brother.... Like we don't get along, I don't get along with my father, we don't talk to each other like I try to talk to him but he says there's nothing, he wants nothing to do with me like things like that.

In Sindiswa’s case, her father’s rejection not only had negative emotional repercussions, but also impacted financially on her mother, who had to bear the additional burden of buying her more expensive boys’ clothes without support.

Another domain in which many of the participants experienced alienation was from friends who rejected them when they came out as lesbian or bisexual. Many of the participants described such experiences:

...so I decided to tell my friends about it and that's when I started to lose friends. Yeah, they don't trust me anymore. They don't wash in front of me, some of them. You know, they don't wanna sleep next to me. They think that I have something for them, you know. Yeah, that's when I started, my life changed a bit, losing friends. (Nokuthula, aged 16)

The participants generally described losing friendships because their friends felt that they could no longer ‘trust’ them, usually because they did not understand what it meant to be lesbian. The young women told about how the mistrust came from fear and the belief that a lesbian or bisexual friend might become attracted to her. For many of the participants, the loss of friendships was particularly painful.

The young women in this study experienced a great deal of isolation and alienation from a variety of people and institutions, including family members, friends, and religious settings. These findings are in line with previous South African research that has likewise shown that isolation and alienation are common experiences in the lives of LGBTI young people (Kowen & Davis, 2006; Nduna & Jewkes, 2013; Nell & Shapiro, 2011). These studies similarly found that LGBTI young people often experience rejection from family, friends, school and religious settings. The negative psychological implications of alienation and isolation have been noted in the international literature, where parental rejection as well as the devaluation of young people's identities is linked to poorer well-being and mental health (Beals & Peplau, 2005; Bregman et al., 2013).

However, while it is important to acknowledge the difficulties that the young women faced, a sole focus on these difficulties may feed into dominant narratives of victimhood and disempowerment (Savin-Williams, 2001). LGBTI young people often display a great deal of strength and resilience in coping with the challenges they face (Kowen & Davis, 2006; Nell & Shapiro, 2011; Savin-Williams, 2001). Despite the pain, loneliness and alienation that they experienced in various domains of their lives, the participants also resisted the alienation that they experienced.

Resisting alienation. The young women in this study resisted the alienation they experienced by finding spaces where their identities were affirmed. Some of the participants wrote in their photostories about finding loving friendships with other lesbians:

I am a proud black activist lesbian. I am also an activist for the LGBTI community in the Paarl Mbekweni area... I am openly lesbian. I like being with my friends because all of them are lesbians and I love them all. (Mandisa, aged 17)

When I became a lesbian, I didn't want to accept myself I always asked myself a question "Why am I attracted to other women". Suddenly I met butch lesbians at school then I built friendship with them even now we still friends. (Lindiwe, aged 13)

These extracts indicate that the participants have managed to find friendship, affirmation, and solidarity among other lesbians, despite the loss of other friendships. Kowen and Davis (2006) similarly found that lesbian youth in South Africa gain strength and resilience from supportive friends. It could be argued that through these public statements, the young women construct counter-narratives to dominant narratives of victimhood, alienation, and disempowerment that surround LGBTI youth (Savin-Williams, 2001).

Participants additionally found an affirming space at the LGBTI organisation where the safe space meetings took place:

Well I could say that, meeting other people who have different stories to share about how they living as a lesbian, it's very interesting. So I would say ... it's so nice to come here to [name of organisation] and chill with other people ... who are lesbians and hear of their problems and hear their advices sometimes, yeah. (Thembeke, aged 17)

Through the safe space, participants found a space where they could share stories, get advice, and get affirmation from others. In this way, the young women engaged in a process of collective identity formation, where they could construct positive identities through their interactions with others and through collective activism. It seemed that for many of the participants, the group formed an essential part of the young women's support structures. Nell and Shapiro (2011) similarly showed that young LGBTI people in Gauteng found support and affirmation through joining LGBTI groups and organisations, as well as engaging in activism. Joining these groups

helped the young people cope with the various alienating situations that they faced, and helped them in constructing positive and proud identities

In addition, the young women also found affirming spaces through the sporting activities that they engaged in. These activities not only allowed the participants to feel a sense of belonging, but also allowed them to experience pleasure through embodied activity. The young women engaged in a wide variety of activities, including soccer, pantsula dancing, hip-hop dancing, swimming, and others. In this section, I focus on soccer, as almost all of the participants played soccer. For many, soccer was a central part of their lives and formed an important part of their identities, providing a sense of belonging. It was also considered as a possible career choice that could earn an income. The link between pleasure, belonging, and identity is furthermore demonstrated in the following quote from Nomathemba (aged 15): *“Football makes me feel comfortable, cool and have peace of mind. Even when I’m with my team mates and having a nice chat it’s great.”* Nomathemba’s description of soccer highlights how she has found affirmation, friendship, and a sense of belonging through playing soccer. Nomathemba took a photo of a boy playing soccer to demonstrate the importance of soccer in her life:



Photograph 15: Young boy playing soccer

Similarly, Thembeke (aged 17) took a photograph of the Kaizer Chiefs³ logo, and described the photo in the following way:



Photograph 16: The Kaizer Chiefs logo

³ A local South African soccer team.

That was to show talent, I can say, the talent we have yeah. And how it brings people, and the bringing of people together. How sport can sometimes unite people yeah... Yeah it could be the talent of Mbekweni and my talent too, 'cause yeah I'm very talented at sport.

The participants' narratives suggest that participation in soccer provides an environment where they can be free in their identities, experience pleasure, and gain meaningful social networks. It also provides a sense of unity and solidarity, as Thembeke suggests. In line with the participants' narratives, Grundlingh (2011) argues that participation in sport "creates conditions where social networks, meaningful relationships and norms of trust and reciprocity (antecedents of social capital) can prevail" (p. ii). This in turn aids the young women in resisting the alienation and isolation that they experience in other areas of their lives.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I first provide a summary of the findings and discuss some recommendations based on these findings. Following this, I look at some of the limitations of the study. Finally, I provide some suggestions for future research and conclude the thesis.

Summary and Recommendations

In this thesis, I have highlighted the multiple and complex ways in which adolescent lesbian identities are constructed and negotiated. The research questions asked how lesbian and bisexual adolescents choose to represent their experiences and identities through Photovoice, and how the stories they tell challenge and maintain dominant narratives about young people of diverse sexualities

The findings from the first theme, *Narrating 'tomboy' childhoods*, highlight how narrating memories of gender non-conformity or being a 'tomboy' in childhood aided the participants in constructing coherent and continuous identities over time. The findings show how the construction of 'tomboy' childhoods may be linked to specific contextual constructions of black lesbians in South Africa that construct their identities as situational and 'correctable'. Conceptualising the narration of 'tomboy' childhoods as an act of resistance to specific contextual constructions of their identities may provide an alternative way of thinking about the function of these narratives.

The second theme, *Clothing as a symbol of identity*, looked at how 'boys' clothing' served as a symbol and physical marker of butch lesbian identity. In the first sub-theme, the participants drew attention the widespread discrimination that they experienced from teachers at school and how this was linked to the policing of the gender binary through the school uniform.

Although their experiences fit in with dominant narratives about LGBTI youth victimisation, the participants also challenged these dominant narratives of victimhood by demonstrating how they asserted their agency and resisted discrimination, despite continuous efforts to devalue their identities. The participants' stories of discrimination do, however, point to the need to work with teachers on creating safer, more inclusive environments for learners with diverse sexual and gender identities. Some work is already being done in this area (Bhana, 2012; Francis, 2012; Francis & Msibi, 2011). In addition, perhaps the use of more participatory and youth-centred interventions for teachers may be useful in this regard. As an example, the participants' use of the Photovoice materials to run a sensitizing session for teaching students at UWC may serve as a useful model for making training on these issues more youth-centred. The second sub-theme under *Clothing as a symbol of identity* looked at the prominence of clothing in the young women's 'coming out' narratives and how this demonstrated the centrality of clothing to their identities. An important finding here was how the participants' statuses as minors and their dependence on their families to buy 'boys' clothing' meant that familial acceptance was key in allowing the participants to express their masculine gender identities.

The theme *Negotiating butch identities* highlighted how the participants negotiated the complexities of being part of the butch community particularly as young lesbians, in terms of entering into the butch community and negotiating their intimate relationships. The findings highlighted how the young women locate themselves within the butch identity in order to occupy a more agentic position. The findings also showed that, despite the position of power in which they position themselves, the young women also attempt to construct more egalitarian relationships.

The young women's *Constructions of safety, violence, and community* indicated the contested and conflictual definition of what it means to be safe as a young, black, lesbian woman. Rape and murder were prominent in the young women's talk, and it was interesting to note how the presence of rape and murder seemed to be the criterion by which safety was measured. Many of the participants described receiving daily rape threats based on their identities as lesbian and bisexual, and having to monitor their environments and negotiate their identities in order to maintain their safety. Their experiences with violence also impacted on how the young women constructed and experienced their community. Particularly, the impact of sexual violence on the community came through strongly. This suggests the need for interventions addressing sexual violence in Mbekweni.

Finally, in the last theme, *Alienation and Finding Affirming Spaces*, the participants described the alienation they experienced in their everyday lives due to rejection from parents and loss of friendships. These narratives fit in with dominant narratives which frame the challenges young people face through 'risk'. Importantly, however, the young women resisted the alienation they experienced by finding spaces where their identities were affirmed, through finding friendships with other lesbians, involvement in a LGBTI group, and playing sports such as soccer. This finding points to the need for more LGBTI spaces that are inclusive of LGBTI youth, as Nell and Shapiro (2011) have proposed. However, LGBTI youth in South Africa are often prevented from accessing support structures and LGBTI spaces due to ageism and concerns around the fact that they are minors (Kowen & Davis, 2006; S. Thafeni, personal communication, 24 April, 2014). This points to the need for the creation of groups specifically for LGBTI youth, or the adaptation of existing groups to be more inclusive of youth. The safe space where this study took place could perhaps serve as a useful model in this regard.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. Firstly, the criteria I used to recruit participants ('lesbian') meant that young women who engaged in same-sex behaviour but did not necessarily identify as lesbian were excluded. Although two participants who identified as bisexual chose to participate, their stories were marginalised even within the research as it was difficult to find themes across cases due to the small number of participants. I therefore did not go into depth regarding the specific experiences of the bisexual participants, and presented their narratives when they fit in with the broader themes that emerged from the rest of the narratives.

In addition, language and cultural differences between myself and the participants meant that nuances in the meanings may have been lost. Linked to this, the process of interpretation in interviews and focus groups and the translation of the transcripts meant that new layers of meaning were added to the participants' narratives, and some of their meanings may have been lost or re-interpreted in the process. For those who chose to speak in English, speaking in a second language may have hindered what they were able to express.

Finally, there were some limitations in the Photovoice process itself. Because of the large number of participants and the time constraints of the study, the young women were only able to receive the cameras for one week. This may not have been enough time for them to think through and plan what photographs they wanted to take.

Directions for Future Research

The findings presented in the thesis provide an in-depth understanding of the lives of young black lesbian adolescents in a semi-rural township community. However, this study did not go into depth around the participants' experiences of being part of a larger community of lesbians. Future research could look at how younger and older lesbians negotiate their identities

communally and how they mutually influence the process of identity construction. In addition, this research has highlighted the importance of participatory research with young people, and future research could make use of participatory methods in schools to create participatory interventions, in collaboration with lesbian learners, to address issues of victimisation and discrimination in schools. Finally, the experiences of LGBTI young people in general remain marginal in South Africa. Transgender and intersex identities in particular have received little attention (Nel & Judge, 2008). Future research could therefore use participatory methods such as Photovoice to look at how LGBTI youth from a variety of backgrounds construct and experience their identities.

Conclusion

In this this thesis I have discussed the multiple and complex ways in which identity is constructed and negotiated among young, black, lesbian and bisexual women. Dominant narratives that portray black lesbians as victims erase the multi-dimensionality of their lives, and their experiences of joy and pleasure. Although these participants did experience victimization and alienation, the experiences did not define them. The thesis therefore highlighted how these young women challenged this dominant narrative of victimhood.

This work makes an important contribution to the literature on LGBTI young people. The findings provide a more in-depth understanding of how identities are experienced among lesbian and bisexual youth, a group that Kowen and Davis (2006) refer to as an “invisible population” (p. 81) in South Africa. The thesis also showed that the Photovoice methodology can be a powerful way to engage young people who may be stigmatised or marginalised. Muholi (2013) argues that photography can be a powerful way to foreground the subjectivity of those being photographed. Therefore, the photographs that the young women took work to counteract

dominant, objectifying narratives of victimhood by centring their identities and what is important to them.

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APPENDIX A

Focus group 1 interview schedule (Maia Zway & Floretta Boonzaier)

Go through assent forms and take signed copies. “Are there any questions about the project or about participating in the project? Is there anything you are unsure about?”

Introductions: Go around and say name and something interesting about yourself.

Expectations: “What are you wanting or hoping to get out of participating in the project? What are you worried about?”

“During this group discussion we want to talk about your lives and how you experience being a teenage and girl and being lesbian. Can you tell us a bit about your lives? What is it like to be a lesbian teenager?”

Possible prompts:

- What was ‘coming out’ like for you?
- How do you experience being lesbian at home? At school? In your community?
- What do you enjoy about being lesbian?
- What is difficult for you?
- What would you like other people to know about what it is like to be a teenager who identifies as lesbian?

APPENDIX B

Focus group 2 interview schedule (Maia Zway & Floretta Boonzaier)

Remind participants about voluntary participation, may choose not to answer questions etc.

“In this group discussion, we want to talk a bit about what the process of learning how to take photos and then taking your own photos was like for you, and if any of you would like to talk about the photos you took to the rest of the group you can do that too. How was it for you?”

Possible prompts:

- How did you decide and choose what photos you wanted to take?
- What was it like for you to take the photos, and to ask people for permission if you took photos of people?
- What have you enjoyed about taking the photos?
- What has been difficult or challenging?
- What would you like to tell the group and other people about the photos you took?

“In this group discussion, we also want to start talking about any themes you have noticed in the previous group discussions. This can be anything that you think is important that we talked about before, or if you noticed that different people were talking about similar things. Can you maybe tell us what you thought was important from our previous discussions?”

APPENDIX C

Individual interview schedule (Maia Zway)

Briefly remind participants about voluntary participation, and that they may choose not to answer questions, etc.

“This interview is an opportunity for you to tell your individual story. We will also possibly pick up on some of the themes from the group discussions to discuss further. To start off, tell me about your life as a young lesbian woman.”

- Use themes from focus group discussions as prompts

“During the photography training, we asked you to choose a photograph or group of photographs that tells a story of what you want to tell us about what is important to you. Can you tell me about your photo/s and the story you want to tell?”

“Is there anything interesting that came up for you in the group discussions or the photography that you would like to talk about?”

APPENDIX D

Ethical Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



Department of Psychology

University of Cape Town Rondebosch 7701 South Africa
Telephone (021) 650 3414
Fax No. (021) 650 4104

13 March 2014

Dr Floretta Boonzaier
Department of Psychology
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch 7701

Dear Dr Boonzaier,

I am pleased to inform you that ethical clearance has been given by an Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Humanities for your project, *The gendered and sexual lives of young people in South Africa: A participatory project*. The reference number is PSY2014-002.

I wish you all the best for your study.

Yours sincerely,

signature removed

Johann Louw PhD
Professor
Chair: Ethics Review Committee

APPENDIX E

Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



Department of Psychology

Photovoice, gendered and sexual lives of young people in South Africa – Study Parental
Consent Form

1. Invitation and purpose

Your child is invited to take part in an empowerment research project on gender and sexuality in the lives of young people in South Africa. We are researchers from the Department of Psychology at University of Cape Town.

2. Procedures

Participation in this study is voluntary, and your child can decide to stop participating in the study at any time, without any negative consequences for her or her participation in Triangle Project or Zonwabele programmes or services. Your child may also choose not to answer any questions if she feels uncomfortable discussing a topic.

If your child decides to take part in the study, she will be expected to do the following:

- Meet 6-8 times with the researcher/s as well as the other participants in the study. The meetings will include photography training, group discussions, and individual interviews with the researcher. During these meetings, group discussions and interviews we will talk about the project, the expectations your child has of the study, your child's views and experiences of gender and sexuality, and your child's photographs. The meetings and discussions will take place at a convenient venue which we will let you know about in advance, and will not last longer than 90 minutes. The meetings and discussions will be audio recorded but we will make sure that your child's identity is protected in any of the information that we use from these discussions.
- Participate in photography training by a professional photographer who will teach your child how to use a digital camera and how to take good pictures.

This training will take place at a convenient venue we will tell you about in advance.

- Take photographs relating to her life and her community. Your child will be given a camera to use for two weeks. Together we will select some of your child's best pictures and we will pay for the printing of the photos after she has taken them.
- Discuss the photos with the researchers and with the other group members. Your child may also develop a story about her own photographs, which could be recorded into a video clip.
- If your child would like this, we will display her photographs or digital stories at a public exhibition. Your child does not have to participate in the public event if she doesn't want to, but if she does, your child will decide which photographs or stories she would like to include.

3. Inconveniences

We don't expect that your child will be distressed by the research but if it does become distressing your child may stop participating at any time without any negative consequences. If your child becomes distressed by any of the procedures in this project we will refer her for counseling, if necessary.

4. Benefits

Your child is given an opportunity to share her views and experiences and what your child tells us is also likely to help in formulating other programmes with young people. Your child is given an opportunity to tell us and others what is important to her and for your community. Your child will also receive training in photography.

5. Privacy and confidentiality

We will take strict precautions to safeguard your child's personal information throughout the study. Your child's information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the principal researcher's office without her name and or other personal identifiers. The group discussions, meetings and interviews will all be digitally recorded and these files will be stored on the principal researcher's computer and will be protected by a password.

In the group discussions, what your child says will be heard by other members of the group and we will ask participants to respect confidentiality in the groups. We have no control over what other group members will say outside the group – so be aware that full confidentiality of the group discussions cannot be guaranteed.

We also want to make you aware that if your child mentions to us that she has been raped or abused and has not reported it, we are required by law to report it on her behalf because she is a minor. If this happens, we will put you and your child in contact with Sharon Ludwig (head of the Health and Support Services Programme) at Triangle Project, who will make sure she gets counselling and gets help with the reporting process.

Some of this research may be published in academic journals but your child's identity will be protected at all times.

6. Money matters

Neither you nor your child will be paid for taking part in the study but you will be reimbursed for any transports costs you may have incurred.

7. Contact details

If you have further questions or concerns about the study please contact one of the researchers at the Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town

Maia Zway (principal investigator): 076 735 5272

Dr Floretta Boonzaier (supervisor): 021 – 650 3429

If you have any issues or problems regarding this research or your rights as a research participant and would like to speak to the Chair of the Ethics committee, please contact Mrs Rosalind Adams at the Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town (UCT), 021 650 3417.

If you understand all of the procedures and the risks and benefits of the study and you consent to your child participating in the project, please sign below:

Parent/guardian Name: _____

Parent/guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Agreement For Tape-Recording

I agree to allow my child's voice to be tape-recorded in the group discussions and individual interviews.

Parent/guardian Signature: _____

APPENDIX F

Participant Assent Form

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



Department of Psychology

Photovoice, gendered and sexual lives of young people in South Africa – Study
Assent/Consent Form

8. Invitation and purpose

You are invited to take part in an empowerment research project on gender and sexuality in the lives of young people in South Africa. We are researchers from the Department of Psychology at University of Cape Town.

9. Procedures

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you can decide to stop participating in the study at any time, without any negative consequences for you or your participation in Triangle Project or Zonwabele programmes or services. You may also choose not to answer any questions if you feel uncomfortable discussing a topic.

If you decide to take part in the study you will be expected to do the following:

- Meet 6-8 times with the researcher/s as well as the other participants in the study. The meetings will include photography training, group discussions, and individual interviews with the researcher/s. During these meetings, discussions and interviews we will talk about the project, the expectations you have of the study, your views and experiences of gender and sexuality and your photographs. The meetings and discussions will take place at a convenient venue which we will let you know about in advance, and will not last longer than 90 minutes. The meetings and discussions will be audio recorded but we will make sure that your identity is protected in any of the information that we use from these discussions.
- Participate in photography training by a professional photographer who will teach you how to use a digital camera and how to take good pictures. This training will take place at a convenient venue we will tell you about in advance.

- Take photographs relating to how you experience gender and sexuality in your life. You will be given a camera to use for two weeks. Together we will select some of your best pictures and we will pay for the printing of the photos after you have taken them.
- Discuss your photos with the researchers and with your other group members. You may also develop a story about your own photographs, which could be recorded into a video clip.
- If you like, we will display your photographs or digital stories at a public exhibition. You do not have to participate in the public event if you don't want to, but if you do, you will decide which photographs or stories you would like to include.

10. Inconveniences

We don't expect that you will be distressed by the research but if it does become distressing you may stop participating at any time without any negative consequences. If you become distressed by any of the procedures in this project we will refer you for counseling, if necessary.

11. Benefits

You are given an opportunity to share your views and experiences and what you tell us is also likely to help in formulating other programmes with young people. You are given an opportunity to tell us and others what is important to you and for your community. You will also receive training in photography.

12. Privacy and confidentiality

We will take strict precautions to safeguard your personal information throughout the study. Your information will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the principal researcher's office without your name and or other personal identifiers. The group discussions, meetings and interviews will all be digitally recorded and these files will be stored on the principal researcher's computer and will be protected by a password.

In the group discussions, what you say will be heard by other members of the group and we will ask participants to respect confidentiality in the groups. We have no control over what other group members will say outside the group – so be aware that full confidentiality of the group discussions cannot be guaranteed.

We also want to make you aware that if you mention to us that you have been raped or abused and have not reported it, we are required by law to report it on your behalf because you are a minor. If this happens, we will put you and your parent/guardian in contact with Sharon Ludwig (head of the Health and Support

Services Programme) at Triangle Project, who will make sure you get counselling and get help with the reporting process.

Some of this research may be published in academic journals but your identity will be protected at all times.

13. Money matters

You will not be paid for taking part in the study but you will be reimbursed for any transports costs you may have incurred.

14. Contact details

If you have further questions or concerns about the study please contact one of the researchers at the Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town

Maia Zway (principal researcher): 076 735 5272

Dr Floretta Boonzaier (supervisor): 021 – 650 3429

If you have any issues or problems regarding this research or your rights as a research participant and would like to speak to the Chair of the Ethics committee, please contact Mrs Rosalind Adams at the Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town (UCT), 021 650 3417.

If you understand all of the procedures and the risks and benefits of the study and you would like to participate in the project, please sign below:

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Agreement For Tape-Recording

I agree to have my voice tape-recorded in the group discussions and individual interviews.

Participant Signature: _____

APPENDIX G

Participant Information Sheet

Participant information sheet for services provided by Triangle Project

Triangle Project's **Health and Support Services Programme** aims to contribute towards the mental, physical and emotional well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people by providing quality health and support services to them, their families and dependents in a holistic manner that takes into account the full person (mental, physical, emotional and spiritual). We offer services through our LGBTI helpline, face-to-face counselling, a medical clinic as well as court support services for victims and survivors of sexual orientation and gender-based violence.

LGBTI helpline

If you need to speak to someone you can phone our helpline (021 712 6699) daily between 13:00 and 21:00 and a counsellor will phone you back.

Face-to-face counselling services

To make an appointment with a clinical psychologist or clinical social worker, or for more information about our services, please phone Heather or Sharon (021 686 1475).

Services in Paarl

Please speak to Ntombi and she will put you in touch with people you can speak to in the Paarl area.

If you would like to speak to one of the researchers, you can contact Maia Zway (principal researcher) on 075 735 52572 or Dr Floretta Boonzaier (supervisor) on 021 650 3429.