Through the Rainbow Lens:

A participatory Photovoice study of LGB students at UCT

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Abstract

Despite South Africa's liberal constitution, many LGBTI people (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex) still experience discrimination, hate crimes and violence. Violence and discrimination are not experienced equally across race, class and gender lines, which means that these intersections and its implications for the lived experiences of young LGBTI people should be acknowledged. Even though much has happened to address issues of intolerance, it is claimed that very little has been done in tertiary education to address continued heterosexist patterns and resulting homophobia. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of LGBTI students at the University of Cape Town, a site known for key transformative processes, using a participatory qualitative methodology. Six study participants who identified as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual were led through a Photovoice process where focus group, individual interview as well as visual (photographs) and narrative data were collected. Thematic analysis was used to analyse all data and findings suggest that although UCT has anti-discriminatory policies many LGB students live in fear of coming out due to religious or contextual concerns. A further finding that emerged was that intolerance was also perceived to be present within the LGBTI community and was seen to diminish the supportive role it is meant to have in the lives of the community members. This participatory qualitative methodology resulted in rich, in-depth data on the experiences of LGB students at UCT and contributes on theoretical and methodological levels to the study of gender and sexuality amongst young people, and also on practical levels in that it informs processes of transformation at UCT.

Keywords: transformation, LGB, LGBT, LGBTI, Photovoice, participatory research, UCT

Background

Post-apartheid South Africa has taken huge strides in making the nation one which upholds the rights of all but this, however, is not yet the case. Despite South Africa's liberal constitution, many LGBTI[1] people (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex) still experience discrimination, hate crimes and violence due to homophobia being deeply rooted in South African society (Baird, 2010). Much emphasis has been placed on research surrounding the younger generation growing up in the wake of apartheid. However not much of the work has explored the youth's constructions of gender and sexuality (Chadwick, 2010) and very little research has enquired into the lived experiences of LGBTI young people and how they themselves construct these experiences (Zway, 2014). Higher education institutions have been key in the transformative processes with the University of Cape Town (UCT) taking a keen interest in creating an environment for its students which is free of any discrimination (Kessi, 2013). The main focus of the transformative processes has been on race and class with little emphasis on sexuality. This study aims to explore the experiences of UCT students who identify as LGBTI and how these reflect the transformative aims of the university.

Research on homophobic attitudes and experiences of discrimination

Heterosexism is defined as "the attitude which views heterosexuality as the only acceptable, normal pattern for human relationships and tends to view all other sexual relationships as either subordinate to, or perversions of, heterosexual relationships" (Nel & Joubert, 1997, p.20). Heterosexist views may result in homophobia (negative attitudes about homosexuals or homosexuality) due to heterosexuality traditionally being seen as the norm and homosexuality as a deviance and something that requires correction or punishment (Flowers & Buston, 2001). As such, homophobia leads to aggression towards LGBT people (Hirschfeld, 2001) in the form of negative verbal behaviour or 'hate speech' and/or negative physical behaviour or 'hate crime' (UNISA Centre for Applied Psychology and OUT LGBT Well-being, 2008).

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1. Where the full LGBTI acronym is not used (e.g. LG, LGB or LGBT) it is to remain true to the group(s) specifically included in the cited literature.

Internationally, the majority of LGBT people have experienced some form of victimisation (Breen & Nel, 2011). Major adverse effects on well-being and health, in personal and social capacities are experienced by victims of homophobia (American Psychological Association (APA), 2008; Burton, Marshall, Chisolm, Sucato, & Friedman, 2013; Msibi, 2012; Padilla, Crisp, & Rew, 2010; Polders, Nel, Kruger, & Wells, 2008; Shields, Whitaker, Glassman, Franks, & Howard, 2012). These effects are particularly profound in gay and lesbian youth (Sullivan & Schneider, 1987) in that it often creates internalisation of homophobic stereotypes which may lead to anxiety and self-hatred (Butler, Alpaslan, Strümpher & Astbury, 2003). These and other factors such as alienation and stigma the higher prevalence of mental illness found amongst homosexual individuals, as compared to those who are heterosexual (Meyer, 2003). Hirschfeld (2001) also emphasised the paucity of research on negative attitudes towards non-normative gender identity and sexual orientation.

Even though South African legislation has decriminalised homosexuality and legalised same-sex marriage LGBT citizens remain particularly vulnerable to hate crimes (Nel & Judge, 2008). Several communities have disproportionate instances of "sexual-orientation- and gender presentation-related discrimination and victimisation" (Nel & Judge, 2008, p.32). Theron (1994) found that from his sample of 611 South African lesbian women and gay men, 67% had been subjected to verbal abuse, 22% had been physically abused and 22% had experienced sexual assault. Similarly Theuninck (2000) found that from his sample of 329 white gay men, 75% experienced verbal abuse and 17% were sexually assaulted. LGBTI people frequently find themselves victims of criminal acts based purely on their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or biological differences (Breen & Nel, 2011; Wells & Polders, 2006). These hate crimes are part of a larger system of domination against LGBT people (UNISA Centre for Applied Psychology and Out LGBT Well-being, 2008) which links the crimes to issues of identity (Nel & Judge, 2008). Perhaps the most heinous of these crimes is that of corrective rape. This form of sexual assault is most often brutally 'administered' to black lesbian women in an attempt to 'cure' them of their sexuality (Holland-Muter, 2012; Morrissey, 2013; Muholi, 2004; Swarr, 2012). In her study with 47 lesbian women, Muholi found that 20 of them had been raped because of their sexual orientation, 2 were abducted and 17 were physically assaulted. Many had experienced these hate crimes more than once (Muholi, 2004). These attacks on particularly black lesbian women are an example of the intersections of race and sexuality.

One must also acknowledge other intersectionalities such as class, gender, age, religion and so forth which all differentially affect and impact on how LGBTI experiences are shaped and lived (Richardson, 2006; Theuninck, Hook, & Franchi, 2002). Violence and discrimination are not experienced equally across race, class and gender lines (Holland-Muter, 2012). In a report conducted on behalf of *OUT LBGT Well-being* Polders and Wells (2004) researched over 200 LG youth, and argued that the extent to which LG youth are harassed or victimised depended on their race and gendered mannerisms. It was found that victimisation is high in schools and that although actual victimisation is higher in whites than blacks, fear of victimisation was higher for blacks than whites (Francis & Msibi, 2011; Polders & Wells, 2004). The issue of gender and how society expects members of a certain gender to behave (gender roles) have important implications for LGBT persons. Gender roles have typically portrayed men as being powerful and women as weak and powerless (Bosch & Holland-Muter, 2011; Rúdólfsdóttir & Jolliffe, 2008; Shefer & Foster, 2009). Traditionally men are also viewed as being heterosexual and masculine and a deviance from this norm indicates inferiority of one's male-ness (Shefer & Ruiters, 2011). Kimmel (2000) argued that gay men experienced more violence and discrimination because they do not meet the social constructions of what it means to be a 'man'. Reid and Dirsuweit (2002) also found that gay men are targeted because of their gender nonconformity and sexual orientation. In addition the authors argue that lesbians are targeted because they do not conform to traditional gender (feminine) norms and they subvert the norm of sexual availability to men. Moreover Peasley, Plummer and Ridge (2006) highlighted discrimination within the gay community in that traditional masculine behaviour is far more readily accepted on the gay scene than more feminine qualities and characteristics.

Homophobia at Higher Education Institutions

It is during tertiary education that the majority of young people are at a stage where their identities are being shaped. Identity formation cannot be seen in isolation and must take into account the agency which the individual is afforded to shape their identity/ies. Factors such as social relationships, social influences and the community all form part of young people's construction of their gendered and sexual identities (Salo, 2002). A factor which is often overlooked is the freedom necessary to determine or reinvent these identities as they see fit (Castells, 1998; Jenkins, 2004). Even though a lot has happened in South Africa to address issues of intolerance, many institutions continue to exhibit heterosexist patterns (Richardson,

2006; Wells & Polders, 2006). According to Francis and Msibi (2011) very little has been done in tertiary education to address issues of homophobia. The *Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions* (Department of Education, 2008) notes that patriarchal behaviour by staff and students continues to maintain homophobic and heterosexist norms. One academic from Rhodes University said "…our thugs have beaten up gay men, beaten up and raped female students, raped lesbian women to cure them, ridiculed and denigrated all homosexual people" (Department of Education, 2008, p.86). Arndt and De Bruin (2006) found that heterosexual students in Gauteng universities harboured negative attitudes towards fellow LGBTI students. In a case study of a university in Limpopo Province some of the consequences of homophobia on LGBTI students were listed as leading to poor performance in class, students feeling like they had to live dual lives, feeling lonely and isolated and ultimately dropping out of university (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Netshandama, 2013).

A site known for key transformative processes in order to address past inequalities is the University of Cape Town (UCT) (Kessi, 2013). Processes include purposefully changing the inclusion demographics to be more representative of the South African population as well as fostering an institutional climate which is diverse, accepting and free from discrimination (Fraser, 1997). Most of the post-apartheid research conducted at UCT has focused on racial integration on the macro- and micro-levels (Alexander, 2007; Alexander & Tredoux, 2010; Schrieff, Tredoux, Dixon, & Finchilescu, 2005; Tredoux, Dixon, Underwood, Nunez, & Finchilescu, 2005) with research on sexuality remaining marginal (Zway, 2014).

As shown above, valuable steps have been taken on a legislative level to abolish human rights violations. Although race and gender inequality is purported to have lessened it is clear that homophobia still exists in South African universities. In order make an effort to change society's negative attitudes toward same-sex sexuality it is vital to ask individual LGBTI people about their experiences. Baird (2010) suggested that the only way to measure the levels of empowerment and well-being of LGBT communities is to conduct research on a sample of individuals from that community. Through the "right research asking the right questions a picture could emerge which provides valuable insight into the lives of LGBTI individuals and their communities" (Baird, 2010, p.12). As UCT undergoes a transformative process based on equity and diversity it is important to investigate the lived experiences of LGBTI students here in the hope of informing programmes which address specific LGBTI needs.

Aims and Research Questions

This project aims to give voice to the experiences and representations of diverse sexuality, gender expression and sexual identity in LGB students at UCT. It is thought this project will minimise the current gap in LGBTI youth research in South Africa and also provide insight into the transformative processes at UCT. Moreover we aim to empower participants by bringing their knowledge and expertise to the fore. The research question that this project aims to answer is, "What is it like being a LGB student at UCT?"

Theoretical Framework

This project approaches the questions from a critical feminist stance, with intersectionality theory used as the framework for this analysis. Mbilinyi (1992) states that critical feminist research is multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional. Moreover it shows how gender is constructed and deconstructed within different spaces. Critical feminist research also acknowledges that power relations exist between the researched and researcher. They insist that researchers reflect on how their subjectivity influences and shapes the research process. Lather (1991) states "very simply, to do feminist research is to put social construction of gender at the centre of one's inquiry" (p.71).

Collins (2007) defines intersectionality as a means of understanding people's lived experiences in terms of how systems of oppression such as race, class, gender and so forth crisscross. Shields (2008) argues that identities such as race, class, gender and sexuality cannot be seen as separate because they intersect and influence one another to create unique lived experiences. Collins (2007) suggests that an intersectional approach is beneficial in that it allows for an in-depth exploration of lived experiences, helps to identify internal versus external struggles that influence experiences, and it challenges political assumptions. Intersectionality theory will therefore be a useful tool to use to analyse the participants' experiences and construction of their identities as LGBTI students and how their identities intersect with other possible social identities and forms of oppression and discrimination.

Method

Research Design

The interpretative methodology of qualitative research (Marecek, 2003) makes it an ideal fit for this project. In order to gain in-depth understanding of what LGBTI students deem important this project also utilises participatory action research (PAR) methods. Qualitative research of this kind is sensitive to individual experiences and can lead to empowerment and emancipation (Kvale, 1996) by means of challenging or legitimizing existing structures. This is particularly congruent with the outcomes and aims of this project. PAR creates a way to position participants as the 'experts', thereby breaking down power differences between the 'researchers' and the 'researched' (Van Vlaenderen & Neves, 2004). This is also a fundamental feature of critical feminist research. Adjunctively, PAR allows for the development of an unbounded critical consciousness about lived experiences. One of the methods used in PAR is Photovoice — a qualitative method whereby participants are given cameras and asked to document their own realities, concerns and experiences (Wang & Burris, 1997). More and more research is employing the Photovoice method when making enquiry into the lives of young people (Kessi, 2011; Wang, 2006) and previous research has also shown how Photovoice can be utilised for mobilising and engaging young people in various issues they specifically value as important to them (Kessi, 2011; Wang, 2006; Wang, Morrel-Samuels, Hutchison, Bell, & Pestronk, 2004). By using Photovoice this study hopes to provide participants with the opportunity to share and make visible concerns and solutions in terms of their diverse gendered and sexual identities and experiences at UCT.

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of 6 participants recruited from the University of Cape Town (the characteristics of the sample can be seen in Table 1 below). The sample initially included a seventh participant who withdrew during the study. As a large amount of diverse data from a focus group, photographs, written narratives and interviews were to be collected it was deemed appropriate to continue with a smaller than expected sample size. Recruitment took the form of both advertising (see Appendix 1 for the study advertisement) on the UCT LGBTI society (RainbowUCT)'s Facebook page and through UCT's Student Research Participation Programme (SRPP). In some cases 'snowball sampling', where a recruited participant recruited another participant, occurred. Heterosexual students and non-UCT students were not included. Four of the participants were female (F) and two were male

(M). Six of the participants are in the faculty of Humanities and the seventh is in the faculty of Commerce.

Table 1.

Sample Characteristics

Pseudonym	Race & Nationality	Age & Year of Study	Sexual orientation	Religion
Red (F)	Black (South African)	19 First Year	Lesbian	Jehovah's Witness
Orange (F)	Coloured (South African)	19 First Year	Bisexual	Christian
Yellow (F)	White (South African)	20 Second Year	Bisexual/Pansexual	Jehovah's Witness
Green (M)	Coloured (South African)	20 Second Year	Gay	Islam
Blue (M)	White (American)	21 Third Year	Gay	None
Purple (F)*	Coloured (South African)	20 Second Year	Bisexual	Christian
Indigo (F)	Mixed Race (Jamaican)	19 First Year	Bisexual	Christian

*Purple withdrew after the focus group.

Data Collection Procedures

The process of collecting Photovoice data is set out in proposed steps (Wang, 2006) which are flexible and guiding rather than strictly procedural (Catalani & Minkler, 2010). The photography forms one part of the data with interviews, focus groups and written narratives forming other parts (Wang, 2006; Wang & Burris, 1997). For this project, data from each participant were collected in the form of photographs accompanied by a written

narrative, one focus group, one interview and a written reflective narrative. The process took place over various phases:

Phase 1 – Focus Group and Photography Training. The focus group is a type of interview which elicits information from participants and also creates an opportunity for participants to interact with one another as well as the researcher(s) (Wilson & Maclean, 2011). One advantage of a focus group is that it gives participants who might feel reluctant to be interviewed a chance to engage in a group discussion and to co-construct information with people who have had similar experiences (Kitzinger, 1995). The focus group was open-ended to facilitate the participants' driving of the discussion but researchers had prepared some questions in order to prompt responses if necessary (see Appendix 2 for the focus group schedule). The photography training session followed the focus group. During the photography training the participants were given a camera and shown some of the key features of it and shown examples of how to tell stories through photos. At the end of the session participants were asked to take the cameras with them and to take photographs that represent their experiences and the story about their lives or experiences that they would like to share. They were asked to produce a one-page written story which connects with their chosen photographs.

Phase 2- Individual Interviews. After an elapsed period of two weeks the participants returned the cameras and written narratives and were individually interviewed by LR. In order to maintain consistency the researchers decided that it was better if the same researcher conducted all of the interviews. It was important to conduct personal interviews as it provided the participants with a safe and comfortable environment to share personal stories and experiences that they might not have felt comfortable sharing during the focus group. Interviews are ideal to use when a deeper level of detail is required (Seidman, 2012). The interviews were semi-structured (see Appendix 3 for the interview schedule) and aimed at eliciting the story surrounding the photographs participants had chosen to take. During the interview the researcher also gained permission to use selected photographs for the exhibition.

Phase 3 – Poster Design and Exhibition Planning. After the June/July holiday the participants attended a meeting to design their individual posters (using their printed photographs and narratives) to be displayed during the exhibition. Participants also decided on the name, venue, date and time of the exhibition. One of the participants designed the exhibition invitation (Appendix 4) and the participants shared the invitation with friends, family, colleagues and the media.

Phase 4 – Exhibition and Reflections. The exhibition, entitled "Rainbow Reflections" was hosted on 3 September 2014 at 6pm in the foyer of the PD Hahn Psychology Building on Upper Campus. The exhibition remained on display in the foyer for a further two weeks. Integral to the Photovoice method is the empowering of marginalised individuals (Wang, 2006). Sharing responsibility of such a big part of the study meant that participants had complete control over which stories were told and how these stories were told and to whom they would be delivered, thus providing the participants with a real sense of agency. Two weeks after the exhibition each participant wrote a one page reflective narrative on their experiences of participating in the study.

Data Analysis

The photo stories, focus group transcripts and individual interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a flexible method that can be compatible with any chosen theoretical framework (Wilson & Maclean, 2011) and offers a way to inductively discover phenomena rich in social, contextual and psychological factors (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This type of analysis is a qualitative analytic method for "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). The analysis occurred according to six stages as set out by Braun and Clarke (2006): 1) Becoming familiar with the data; 2) Generating initial codes; 3) Searching for themes; 4) Reviewing themes; 5) Defining and naming themes; and 6) Producing the report. In order to address the issue of validity both researchers coded all of the transcripts. The codes were then entered into a spreadsheet in order to identify patterns. Codes of similar nature were then grouped together into subthemes. The researchers then grouped and regrouped the subthemes into reviewed themes until both were satisfied that the data had been captured and represented accurately.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee at UCT (Appendix 5). There were several ethical considerations which were taken into account:

Informed Consent

An informed consent form (Appendix 6) was developed and given to all potential participants during an initial meeting which outlined the aims, incentives, expectations and time-constraints of the study. The researchers went through the forms with each participant and answered any questions. Each individual was asked to give their voluntary consent before participating. Participants were informed that they may choose to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. The consent forms indicated that participants granted permission for the researchers to use the photographs taken by the participants as well as the stories told in the focus groups and interviews about the photographs. Participants were also asked to consent to the recording of all discussions (interviews, meetings and focus groups). Consent was negotiated and re-negotiated throughout the research process (e.g. at the start of each meeting, interview and the focus group).

Confidentiality

All recordings, transcripts, photographs and narratives were securely stored in our supervisor's office. In the first session participants were informed of the limits of confidentiality in the focus group discussions, so as to able to make an informed decision on what to disclose in group. We asked the participants to respect the confidentiality of all participants. The use of the colours of the rainbow as pseudonyms and not including images that might reveal their identities in any publications, including the exhibition (unless they made it clear that they wanted to be identified) guaranteed the protection of identity. Participants were given the choice to partake in the exhibition.

Benefits and harms

There were potential benefits to participation in the research. These benefits included the opportunity to discuss their concerns, views and experiences and be given the chance to

create new knowledge about themselves. They also received photography training and received the required SRPP points for two terms. The risks of participation were minimal. However, we acknowledge that discussing issues around gender, sexuality and discrimination might have made some participants feel anxious or distressed; in these case(s) researchers provided referrals to the Student Wellness Centre. Taking photographs of other people may pose as a risk and in order to avoid this, the photography training included discussions on safety when taking photographs.

Reflexivity

It is vital to explore the researcher's role in co-constructing the data and narratives of the participant (Palmary, 2006). Reflexivity is not so much about confessing one's involvement as it is to consider the various structures which inevitably affect the interactions, subjectivities and interpretations (Parker, 2005).

We are both female heterosexual postgraduate students at UCT. We thought that our identification as heterosexual would separate us from our participants and increase the power relations but we both felt that it had the opposite effect. Rather than assuming we knew what they meant when they spoke, the participants were intent on sharing their experiences in as much detail as possible. However, it is also conceivable that our lack of shared experience resulted in some stories being exaggerated or understated. For instance, in order to gain possible sympathy they might have spoken more about instances of discrimination than those of empowerment. Although we initially tried to steer them towards sharing positive stories the negative stories remained the dominant discourse. The fact that we are female could also have shaped our behaviour and their subsequent responses. It is possible that they would have told different stories had we been male. Through the method we became more than the 'researchers' and the 'researched'. We became co-researchers who spent more than six months together working to facilitate social change. We are aware that our personal experiences could have influenced the questions and the interpretation of the data. We both realised afterwards that we could have asked more prying and challenging questions but that we did not out of fear of being seen as part of the 'unaccepting straight community'. This is further strengthened by our backgrounds as psychology students who want to 'help and make people feel better'. Rather than challenge them on certain aspects we sometimes veered away

from a difficult or uncomfortable topic. More important than our roles of co-researchers is our roles as feminist researchers which is underpinned by an acknowledgement and awareness of our various individual identities and how these might have impacted upon our interactions with our participants, our analyses and interpretations of the data and the writing up of this project.

Findings and Discussion

The following section entails a description and interpretation of the three broad themes that emerged from the analysis. The three themes can all be said to have two sides to them. The first theme, *Facilitators and Barriers to Coming Out*, describes the conditions students spoke of that either facilitates or hinders the coming out process. The next theme, *Inclusivity vs Alienation: The LGBT Community*, highlights the feelings of support and/or discrimination experienced by the students from and within the LGBT community at the university. The final theme, *The two sides of UCT*, exposes the experiences of ongoing homophobia in an environment purposefully striving for non-discriminatory practices.

Theme 1: Facilitators and Barriers to Coming out

Previous research has shown that the 'coming-out' process is an integral part of the construction of a diverse sexual identity (Cass, 1979; Savin-Williams, 1990; Smuts, 2011). This is reflected in our study by how all of the students spoke about coming out —whether they had come out or not. Two of them were completely out and living openly as gay men. Some of them were out to some people and some of them were not out at all. All of them, however spoke of the conditions surrounding their decisions to come out or stay in the 'closet'. Factors which seem to facilitate 'outness' included being comfortable with their sexuality, support from family and feeling that they would be accepted. What is apparent is the importance of the contextual climate in which they find themselves and how that influences their preparedness/willingness to be open about their sexuality.

So what I realised was that it was during high school that I knew that I was gay but didn't feel comfortable coming out in that space. I didn't fully feel comfortable coming out to myself. So all throughout high school it was something that I kept

within myself and wasn't something confirmed…But it was only in high school that the label was starting to form…And then it was when I went to university, the University of Michigan that I was sort of in a really open and accepting climate. I was living with people who were openly gay, openly bisexual and really learning from their experience and feeling very comfortable with myself and with my identity and so I came out to myself around the age of 18 and I came out to my really important friends during like my 18 and 19 year old stage…but it wasn't until I turned 20 that I came out to family. (Blue, Interview)

Blue's account also reflects the seemingly procedural nature of 'coming out'. First, one comes out to oneself, then to close or 'important' friends, including partners (as in the case of three of the female students) and then to family. Although we also found that students were mostly out to their friends, echoing findings by Polders and Wells (2004) whose respondents were out to their friends but not their family, two students spoke about coming out to their families. Yellow shared her story of how she came out to her mom:

My mum is very liberal. She's great...So, we're driving in the car one day and there was a pedestrian and we stopped and I said, "That girl is very pretty." And she's like, "Do you like LIKE her?" "Yeah, you know, it would be nice to go on a date or something." She said to me later that it doesn't matter whether I date a man or woman or transsexual or a purple dinosaur. As long as that person treats me well. She'd rather me be in a relationship with a girl who treats me well than a man who doesn't. So she was very cool about it. (Yellow, Interview)

Although these two stories are positive most of the students spoke about reasons why they had not come out yet. These included religion, being afraid of damaging their and their family's reputation, being afraid of being made a spectacle and losing their personhood. Most overwhelming was religion. All of the students had strong religious backgrounds (i.e. Christian, Islam and Jehovah's Witness) and continued to struggle with various aspects of being raised in non-secular environments. These struggles included not only acts of oppression and damnation from religious followers but also difficulties in reconciling their own beliefs with their sexual orientations. This is similar to findings in a study on students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal where students stated that religion informed their every assertion and that non-heterosexual behaviours "betrayed their religious convictions" (Francis & Msibi, 2011, p.165) Furthermore, when the students spoke about religious doctrine and judgement they seemed accepting of the fact that religion will never accept them. They often

made excuses for their family members' and peers' homophobia and put it down to the fact that "They do not understand". Red, however, was quite emotional and the only one to openly admit to being angry:

> I get so angry sometimes that I cry. Why am I like this, because of the problems that I face with my sexuality I get angry sometimes. Why am I like this and why is this happening to me? Why did I have to be a Jehovah witness, why did I have to know a God? Now that is the problem, that's it. (Red, Interview)

Almost all of the students spoke about being afraid — of living in fear. Based on literature and media reports one would assume that the fear was in anticipation of gay-bashing or corrective rape but this was not the case:

> M: Are you afraid to come out?
>
> R: I'm so afraid, I'm so afraid of what might happen.
>
> M: What would happen?
>
> R: My reputation would be ruined. (Red, Interview)

It is evident from Red's answer to the posed question that damage to reputation and being judged by strangers evoked the most fear. Reputation, and the protection thereof, is so important to the students that they are not willing to come out.

Another reason given for not coming out was the fear of becoming a spectacle. Many of the students stated that when they came out their sexuality would become the central focus of who they were and that everything they do subsequently would be put down to their being 'gay'. In this way they thought that people would lose the idea of them, i.e. they would lose their personhood, and it would be replaced with gay stereotypes. Orange focused on this in her photo story:

When you come out…you're going to be under constant scrutiny from EVERYONE. No matter how long they've known you for…once you've come out all they see is the fuzzy part of it which is the being gay. They lose the image of you. Like yes, you're still the same person you just have a different sexuality now but they don't see you as you. No matter what you do they're gonna class it as a gay stereotype. "You're just doing it because you're gay." Not because of that's the type of person you are. (Orange)

Students who spoke or wrote about this fear described it as being in "prison", "trapped", "being behind bars". It seemed that religion, fear of damage to reputation, fear of being judged and loss of personhood created an environment from which they felt unable to escape. Orange shares her feeling of being trapped with the following picture and narrative:

It's like you're trapped if you haven't come out yet. So, yes, you're YOU but you're trapped inside of who you are because you can't be who you are. You have to live up to the image people think you are. (Orange)

Coping with living in "this prison" has taken on different forms amongst the students. Some of them stay in heterosexual relationships and hide their sexuality from their opposite sex partner whilst some of them are 'out' to their partner but no one else. It seemed that some of these students identified as bisexual rather than lesbian in order to protect themselves from the perceived additional discrimination associated with being lesbian. Also, the students spoke often about having to hide who they were by pretending to be someone or something else. In a similar way, Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Netshandama (2013), in their research with students at the University of Venda, found that many LGBTI students were living dual lives in order to cope with the homophobic attitudes of fellow students.

Another important aspect was sexuality 'confusion'. The two men in the study identified very strongly as gay whilst the females all oscillated between various subcategories. During the focus group the female students co-constructed stories of being confused about the labels. This is highlighted in Yellow's answer when asked how she identifies:

I am a little bit confused….I primarily uhm identify as bisexual but I'm seeing if I can kinda get the whole pansexual thing. Uhm I'm kinda switching between each other… (Yellow, Focus Group)

This led to a discussion of what pansexuality[2] is and the discrimination participants received when identifying as such. Toward the end of the discussion Purple appeared to have had a breakthrough:

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2. The *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines pansexuality as, "not limited or inhibited in sexual choice with regard to gender or activity".

Yellow:	Basically, if you find someone attractive then NOTHING else MATTERS.
Purple:	It's almost like a person's soul mate?
Indigo:	Yeah! The plumbing doesn't matter.
Purple:	Oh, then that's what I have.
	(loud group laughter) (Well done!)
Purple:	I'm out! (more laughter and hand clapping) (Focus Group)

Of particular interest is Purple's admission of what she 'has' rather than what she 'is', reflecting the difficulties she may have had in trying to come to terms and name herself in terms of her sexuality. This highlights the conscious and subconscious levels of difficulties faced by these students in constructing their 'typical' and sexual identities. Not only are there many subcategories of sexuality but there are also different attributions, stigmas and myths surrounding each.

Various factors facilitate or hinder an individual's choice to come out or not. The attitudes and beliefs of the people closest to the individual seem to play the biggest role. Religion particularly has a great effect on how these attitudes and beliefs are shaped. It is evident how difficult it is for the students to come to terms with and share their sexuality. This is a constant reminder of how different the experiences of non-heterosexual students are to those of their heterosexual peers. Particularly in light of the fact that 'straight' individuals do not need to come out whilst society feels 'queer' individuals ought to. From above it is evident that the students' choices and experiences are influenced by a myriad of factors. In addition to those discussed hitherto is the role played by the LGBT community.

Theme 2: Inclusivity vs Alienation: The LGBT Community

In this theme we describe the mixed emotions articulated by students regarding their place in the broader LGBT community. Most students spoke of how they were inspired and happy to see other LGBT members being open and proud on campus. Their sexuality united them beyond race and class barriers and they felt comfortable around other LGBT students in comparison to their straight friends. In contrast many students spoke of feeling discriminated

against and alienated by the LGBT community at UCT. Participants spoke of the queer subculture, which was new to them. Most of them are not from Cape Town, and were pleasantly surprised by the lively subculture that existed in Cape Town in the form of Pride marches, gay clubs and societies for those identifying as LGBT. They were given a space to meet others like themselves, which appeared to be comforting to many.

> I think there's a really amazing subculture that comes to with the queer community…and that subculture is so colourfully articulated. So having gone to Pride here, having gone to clubs here, going to some really beautiful places in Greenpoint and seeing how that culture is articulated here and becoming a part of it and becoming you know, deeply acquainted with it. It just makes your heart sing. You're just so happy to see all of your peers dressed up in ridiculous costumes or as beautiful drag queens or dressed up in really amazing butch outfits as drag kings. You just get so excited by it. And you see people enacting their identities and feeling so comfortable and at peace with who they are and portraying part of themselves to you. I think it's a delightful thing. (Blue, Focus Group)

Participants also stated that their sexuality helped to break down barriers that often keep people separated. Rainbow UCT, a campus organisation for those who identify as LGBT, was attributed with creating perceptions of social solidarity.

> …Rainbow UCT, which is one of the student societies on campus. And there is that perception of, "We're all in this together." There's sort of a political act and through that there is this friendship and through this, to some extent, your sexuality can play a role in bridging that divide. Because there is this perception that we constitute a 'community' and we shouldn't be held apart by differences that have otherwise been played out across campus so that's been MY experience: the class divide has been bridged by this common understanding…this common experience [of being gay]. (Blue, Focus Group)

Blue's account of 'togetherness' was echoed by many other participants who felt that they were only understood by other LGBT members part of Rainbow UCT, as they were united by their sexuality. However, although many felt inspired by the openness shown in Rainbow UCT, many participants also said that they felt excluded from this community because certain groups, such as bisexuals, were ignored. These feelings that came up in our participants were not unique, in a recent report released by the San Francisco Human Rights Commission

(2011), they reviewed the recent studies done on bisexuality in the United States of America (USA) and found that many bisexuals experienced discrimination by straight, lesbian and gay communities. They all spoke of being made invisible, they were treated as if they did not exist, demonized and being called various degrading names by their own community. Indigo shares her mixed feelings about the community during the first focus group:

> The whole open community has really inspired me to be more open but I also feel excluded from it because I'm bi. I almost feel like it's for people who know. Sometimes I feel a little bit like I'm nobody. A part of it as much as I wanna be, but part of that is also my fault because I'm not open, how can I be part of an open community when I'm not open, you know. But then there is some, there is a little discrimination towards bisexual people because some people just don't believe they exist, whether they are homosexuals or heterosexual. (Indigo, Focus Group)

The experience of the participant above illustrates the contradiction of feelings that exists within some participants who identify as bisexuals. On the one hand they feel inspired to be open and be themselves but at the same time feel excluded from the very society that is meant to make them feel safe and welcomed. Those participants, who identified as bisexual, spoke of how they were heavily stigmatised by lesbian and gay members who called them "sluts" and "dirty", discriminating against them too. Indigo reiterates this in her photo story below:

The column is meant to represent a divide and she's meant to represent a lesbian that's very happy with herself and she's open and how she's supposed to be. [The other girl] is bisexual, and she's confused and she wants to approach this girl but she knows there's discrimination between bisexuals and lesbians. She's thinking that she's not gonna be taken seriously and she's not comfortable or bold enough to come forward so she's kinda looking at her saying, "I wish I could." (Indigo)

This feeling of discrimination within the queer community was also echoed by Yellow:

And I'm just like, "You're discriminated against so much and now you're coming to ME and you're discriminating against ME. How….how does that make you any better than a homophobe? (Yellow, Focus Group)

The San Francisco Human Rights Report (2011) found that often bisexuals were ignored from societies that claimed to fight for their rights too. From the studies they reviewed, they found that none of the programmes where the word bisexual appeared in the organisation name or mission statement, actually offered programs to address the needs of bisexuals. Moreover there was a lack of representation of bisexuals in most of the organisations they looked at, which is what many participants bought up. Blue stated that within Rainbow UCT there is a lack of representation of individuals who identify as bisexual:

I also think that even though the…Rainbow UCT Society gives expression let's say of diverse sexuality on campus…Bisexual people are very invisible. I can't think of one person in the Society off the top of my head who has talked about bisexuality or identified with that label. It's often gay men and black lesbian women. That's mostly who constitutes the Society. And so there's still that lack of representation that I think there is somehow…even a stigma within a Society which is supposed to be so accepting of people of EVERY sexuality… (Blue, Focus Group)

From the accounts in this theme it is apparent that the LGBT community represents a place where LGBT students can unite and find acceptance. However, as much as the LGBT community endeavours to support people of diverse sexuality it is clear from these accounts that, within the community, prejudices and discriminations exist. Lesbians and gays are more readily accepted than bisexuals, illustrating a gap between the ideals and realities of the

LGBT community. The next theme looks at another community where this contradiction is thought to exist.

Theme 3: The two sides of UCT

This third and final theme explores participants' constructions of the university as a contradiction. The university has as its aim to be liberal in its thinking and accepting of everyone regardless of race or class, yet many participants found that the campus environment was highly homophobic. It appeared that from the top down the university was very transformative. UCT employs gay and lesbian staff; they have and support the LGBTI society, *Rainbow UCT*, and gender neutral bathrooms exist. Blue reflects on this during his individual interview:

> UCT is the first institution where I have taken a course with an openly gay lecturer… and I think it is important that an academic who studies something that may seem like something trivial like deviant desires can be taken seriously and given a position at this university…And I think that speaks in terms to where UCT is as a university. (Blue, Interview)

Interestingly this lecturer, like many LGBT lecturers at UCT is from the Humanities faculty, which was the faculty that most students said they would feel comfortable expressing their sexuality in. The Humanities have a long history of tackling issues of sexuality and race within different courses such as Gender Studies and Social Work. Moreover it is known as the faculty with the most women, hence perceived to be more welcoming than more traditionally masculine departments such as Engineering or Maths.

> Yellow: I mean if someone is like, "Who likes someone of the same gender here?" I would, I would put up my hand. I mean I feel comfortable enough. I think it's because it's Humanities.
>
> Interviewer: Okay?
>
> Yellow: I don't think I would feel comfortable in an Engineering class. (Yellow, Interview)

Yellow's admission of how comfortable versus uncomfortable she would feel disclosing her sexuality in a Humanities versus an Engineering faculty is an example of the two sides of

UCT. Students expect to be able to be free and open to be themselves without fear yet they find themselves witness to and victims of instances which counter this. There appears to be a relatively large gap between how UCT is perceived to be and what it is really like for these students.

> I was very surprised by UCT because it is very kind of liberal (makes quotation marks with fingers) university. I mean "We don't discriminate against anyone. And we've got parties for gay people and we've got an entire club [society] for it." Uhm yeah, I was shocked! I was I was shocked! (Yellow, Interview)

Yellow was shocked by how her expectations of UCT differed from her reality. She was expecting a complete change from her hometown which was extremely homophobic and when she experienced discrimination at 'liberal' UCT she was very taken aback. Red echoed this in her interview when she spoke of how her expectations of being accepted at UCT were not realised:

> … coming to UCT I thought it would provide the platform for me to explore the other part of me that has been you know … imprisoned. I know people here are uhm open minded and everything but still...uhmm I still find it difficult though. It's not what I expected. (Red, Interview)

Both students came to UCT expecting a tolerant and accepting environment, but when they arrived they experienced other students' open disgust and discriminatory remarks:

> I'm in res and as a first year you have to room with someone and I just happen to…you just pick a name out of a hat. And you just I just happened to be paired with a lesbian girl and it kind of got out that I was bisexual and….I was asked to move rooms because [the student-run housing committee] were scared. (Yellow, Interview)

> I remember this one time at res, we were waiting for a Jammie [bus] with one of my guy friends and a girl I liked had just walked past. I saw him staring at her and I asked, "Why are you staring at her, do you like her?" And he said, "No, I don't like her! I'm just upset and disgusted because can't you see she's gay? I can't believe she was my orientation leader." He made all these nasty remarks about her, and I thought, "Okay, I can never ever come out to anyone." (Red, Interview)

Indigo accidentally captured a male student staring at two female students holding hands, illustrating that openly non-heteronormative relationships are something out of the ordinary for some at UCT.

It is clear to see from these accounts how intolerant some of the UCT students are and how these attitudes have consequences and implications for the lives of LGBTI students.   Yellow was forced to move in with a new roommate, who was ultra conservative and displayed intensely homophobic behaviour towards her. She was forced to endure this for an entire year. Red, as we can see, found apparent confirmation that she could never be herself. She reiterates this in her photo story called "Straight Only":

> I sometimes feel out of place at UCT because of people's attitudes towards homosexuality. There's no place for homosexuals on this campus. It is for straight people only. (Red, Interview)

It is evident that even though the students are open to talking about their experiences they downplay and endure the consequences without much resistance. In a study across two campuses in the Midwestern United States seventy percent of the LGB students who were interviewed (the majority being from a reputedly progressive and welcoming campus) would recall homophobic events but would minimize or downplay these homophobic comments (Fine, 2011). The students from UCT and Midwestern campuses dealt with the discrimination at the 'liberal' universities by accepting the status quo and assimilating into their expected roles.

Part of this assimilation involves adopting mannerisms and characteristics associated with traditional gender roles. It would seem that it is in fact possible to limit the amount of discrimination one received by controlling how 'homosexual' one looked. Our findings were similar to those found by Peasley, Plummer and Ridge (2006) who found that more traditional masculine behaviour was more accepted on the gay scene than feminine qualities. Blue speaks about how he can manipulate his 'passing privilege' by how he dresses and behaves:

> I don't feel as if I've experienced the same kind of discrimination or the same amount of discrimination as peers who are either from Cape Town or from somewhere elsewhere and I think that has to do with in part with "passing privilege" because I don't automatically read as gay. Sometimes I'm very …I butch it up. (Blue, Focus Group)

Yellow echoed a similar sentiment, where feminine lesbians were afforded more leeway because they represented the norm of what a woman should look like and behave:

> I find that butch lesbians get a LOT more flack than feminine lesbians. Cause you can kind of pass for a straight person most of the time. (Yellow, Focus Group)

The examples above illustrate that the more one conforms to heterosexual ideas of manhood and womanhood (gender roles), the more protected one is. Moreover in a study conducted by Polders and Wells (2004) with 200 LG youth, they argued that the extent to which one was discriminated against depended on one's gendered mannerisms as well as one's race. This is especially important to acknowledge within a context of South Africa. Blue is a white middle-class American who speaks with a very strong accent. He acknowledges that he is afforded certain privileges and has not experienced discrimination to the extent that his black gay peers have. He is also the only participant who chose to display a self-portrait:

 I think that the line between race and sexuality gets crossed a lot at UCT where people conflate the two where they afford different privileges to people based upon their race and sexuality. So …as a white man who is gay I get probably MUCH more privileges than a black man who is gay. And people have different expectations of what I might do and different expectations of what the rules are for me than for my other peers. (Blue, Focus Group)

Blue's acknowledgement that he has received more privileges than a gay black man aligns with works from Holland-Muter (2012) and Polders and Wells (2004) that argue that violence and discrimination is never experienced equally but that the amount of discrimination one receives is the result of your race, class, gender, location and so forth. Harper (2005) explains that multiple layers of oppression exist for those who are members of more than one marginalised group. For example, black LGB members are marginalised because of their race and sexual orientation. This interaction can further be complicated by dynamics of power. When individuals switch or conceal an LGB identity they themselves influence the varying degrees of opportunities and social power afforded to them (Harper, 2005).

These findings illustrate that although much has been done in the way of transformative policies there remains amongst other students, a certain degree of homophobia. This theme reflects arguments made by Richardson (2006) and Well and Ponders (2006) who found that although a language of inclusivity and tolerance exists (policies), many South African institutions such as education still reproduce heterosexist patterns.

Summary

The findings of this research highlight the varied feelings and experiences of LGB students at UCT. It is clear to see that although these students find themselves in a university with a reputation of being all-inclusive they still face an inordinate number of challenges. Some students commented on how they can see the success of certain processes of transformation in that openly gay staff members are employed, gender neutral bathrooms exist and that the LGBTI society is supported by the university. However it seems that these processes have not yet extended to deal with the homophobic comments and actions of the students at the university. Most of the study participants had been witness to or victims of direct and/or covert acts of homophobia and discrimination. These include cases where they themselves or loved ones had been ridiculed or called names such as "slut" and "mister sister" or where they have been forced to change residence rooms based purely on sexual orientation. These instances and their level of intensity can be seen to be influenced by a variety of often intersecting factors such as religion, race, gender, class and nationality and

impact upon LGB students' identity formation and lived experiences on campus and in university housing.

Our findings are consistent with those in the *Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions* (Department of Education, 2008), Arndt and De Bruin (2006), Butler et al. (2003), and Mavhandu-Mudzusi and Netshandama (2013) which showed that homophobia was still a problem in South African education institutions, with students still displaying many overt and covert discriminations towards students of non-normative sexualities. It seems that not much has changed in over a decade of research into homophobia at South African universities. Noteworthy also are the findings of the intersectionality of race and gender which align with conclusions reached by Francis and Msibi (2011), Holland-Muter (2012), Peasley, Plummer and Ridge (2006), and Polders and Wells (2004) that violence and discrimination are not experienced equally across race, class and gender lines. The findings show that discrimination does not end with heterosexual individuals. Some of our students who identify as bisexual highlighted the fact that discrimination exists within the LGBTI community too. Bisexuals are discriminated against and not taken seriously as a subcategory whilst gay men and lesbian women who do not conform to traditional gender roles were less likely to be accepted and supported.

Significance of Study

This study contributes to the body of literature on youth sexuality and transformative processes in a variety of ways. Firstly, it adds to the literature on university students and the experiences of LGB young adults, which is currently under-researched in South Africa. Secondly, it generated an in-depth understanding of the fears and concerns faced by many young LGB students. University is intimidating enough without the constant fear of verbal and/or physical homophobic assaults. Thirdly, it shows that 'liberal' UCT although known for its attempts to foster an environment free of discrimination (Fraser, 1997) is still beset with homophobia. The findings of this project, we hope, will be used by UCT administration to inform their transformation processes and make the university environment more inclusive for LGB students. There is the possibility that the exhibition promoted awareness around LGB issues and experiences and allowed for open dialogues between students around diverse sexual orientations. Fourthly, the findings are significant within the wider context of discrimination and prejudice in educational settings in South Africa. They could also inform

future interventions which have as their aims the fostering of inclusiveness and acceptance whilst minimising discrimination and intolerance

Lastly, this study aimed to empower young adults by giving them the opportunity to bring their knowledge and expertise to the fore through the use of participatory methods. We believe that we provided a platform from which the participants were able to challenge dominant stereotypes and truths about LGB young adults and create new knowledge(s). This was evident in their reflective narratives which due to space constraints cannot be shared in full here. These narratives showed how the opportunity to share their experiences with not only the other participants and researchers but also friends, family and strangers gave them a chance to reflect and come to terms with their individual stories. Through their participation they expressed a hope that their experiences would educate and hopefully inspire understanding and empathy for the struggles still faced by students and others of 'diverse sexuality'. We saw immense personal growth amongst the participants which were confirmed by their reflective stories of overcoming, liberation and transformation. These stories of transformation, in personal terms as well as in wider contexts, are particularly important as they connect with the transformation of UCT. We acknowledge that this study will not in itself eradicate homophobia at UCT but it has on some level raised awareness about LGB issues at UCT and has positively contributed to the lives of the participants.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future research

This research has many benefits but is also constrained by several factors. Firstly all the participants in the sample were attending classes on Upper Campus which comprises mostly the scientific and engineering faculties. It could be argued that the same study had it been conducted on Hiddingh or Middle Campus (arts faculties) might have yielded very different findings. Another critical limitation is the limited sample size. We recruited for almost three weeks through various LGBT channels and got two responses. It was only through the SRPP system that we managed to recruit enough participants to initiate data collection. This, perhaps, is the clearest indication of how scared and unsupported students feel to be identified as LGBTI at UCT. Another limitation is that the study did not involve intersex or transgender individuals as we had hoped.

The findings show that discrimination and intolerance amongst students at UCT is still rife. Future research should be conducted across all UCT campuses in order to determine whether

LGB students and staff experience the same levels of discrimination. The findings could be used to inform ways to increase acceptance and tolerance amongst UCT students. Focused efforts should also be made to include intersex and transgender individuals. The current study could be replicated at other universities in order to learn about LGB students' experiences in an attempt to improve tolerance and acceptance across all South African universities.

Conclusion

This study explored the experiences of LGB students at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Through the participatory method of Photovoice LGB students were provided with the opportunity to reflect on and share issues they deemed important. The findings suggest that LGB students had conflicting experiences of coming out, the LGBT community and the UCT environment. It is apparent that although UCT has implemented various processes and policies of transformation and inclusivity some students still hold homophobic attitudes symptomatic of larger heteronormative patterns.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Study Advertisement

Appendix 2: Focus group schedule (Lana Rolfe & Simone Peters)

 "Are there any questions about the project or about participating in the project? Is there anything you are unsure about?"

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

Introductions: Go around and say name, how you identify sexually and something interesting about yourself.

"During this group discussion we want to talk about your lives and how you experience being a lesbian, gay, bisexual student at UCT? Can you tell us a bit about your lives? What is it like to be a LGBTI student?"

Possible prompts:

- How do you experience being LGBTI at home? At uni? In your community?
- What do you enjoy about being gay?
- What is difficult for you?
- What would you like other people to know about what it is like to be a student who identifies as being LGBTI?

Appendix 3: Individual interview schedule (Lana Rolfe)

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

"This interview is an opportunity for you to tell your individual story about your life and about the photos you took. 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 LGB person"

- 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?"

"Is there anything else you would like to share with me about what it is like to be a LGB student at UCT?"

Appendix 4: Exhibition advertisement

Appendix 5: 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,

Johann Louw PhD
Professor
Chair: Ethics Review Committee

Appendix 6: Informed Consent Form

Department of Psychology
University of Cape Town

Faculty of Humanities
Rondebosch 7701
South Africa
Tel: +27 21 650-3417

A study on LGBTI students' experiences using Photovoice

You are invited to take part in a study which looks at your experiences of being a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning or queer student. We hope to learn about things and people in your life which contribute to your experiences as a student who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or questioning – and how you choose to represent your life and identity through photography.

Procedures

As part of this study we will be using a method called Photovoice. Photovoice is a way of gathering information by asking someone to take photographs of a particular subject and then using these photographs to tell a story. Should you not know how to use a camera, this is no problem at all! Training will be provided and someone will be there to help you all the way.

Should you decide you do want to take part in the study, the following will take place:

- Firstly, you will attend a meeting with the other participants where we shall discuss the aims, incentives and time-demands of the study.
- Secondly, you will attend a short photography training session followed by a general group conversation about your experiences as an LGBTI student at UCT. This session is meant to provide you with some idea of what you would like to base your photo story on. After the session you will be given a camera.
- You will be able to keep the camera for 2 weeks. During this time you need to take photos for your story and write a short reflection of your chosen pictures.
- After the 2 weeks you will hand in the camera and the short piece of writing.

- As soon as possible after this one of us will want to have a short interview with you so that we can discuss your photo story. This interview will happen at a time and place convenient to you and will be no longer than 1 hour.

- After the interviews, at a time and place convenient to the group, we will sit down and have a discussion about some of the pictures and your experiences of taking them. This should take about 1½ hours.

- An exhibition will be held during Pink Week where we will display some of your pictures and find out who the winner of the brand new digital camera is!

- Lastly, we will have a short group meeting to discuss what the project was like for you and whether you have any ideas as a result of participating.

Privacy and Confidentiality

We, as the researchers, will do everything we can to make sure anything you tell us during this project is kept confidential. It is important for you to remember though, that everything you say in the group meetings will be heard by the other group members. Therefore confidentiality within these groups cannot be guaranteed, as other members may choose to disclose information to non-members outside the group. We shall, however, ask members of the group to respect confidentiality outside of the group. In addition to this, all meetings and interviews will be recorded. These recordings, however, will be for the researchers' use only and kept locked away in our supervisor's office at all times. Any information that you tell us, either in the group meetings, interviews or in the stories about your photographs, may be used in any reports that the researchers write for academic reasons or publications. In order to ensure your privacy your real name will never be used. Pseudonyms will be used throughout.

Photographs

While you will be able to keep a copy of all your photographs, agreeing to take part in this project, means that you agree to also allow the researchers to use a copy of them in the reports mentioned above. Once again however your real name will not be used, nor will we use images in which you can be identified. Should we want to use the photographs for any other purpose, we will be sure to get your permission first.

Participation in project and withdrawal

Your participation in the project is entirely voluntary. You do not by any means have to participate if you do not want to. Also, if you do decide to participate and at any point in the project change your mind, you can stop taking part at any time.

Benefits

Your participation in this project will allow you an opportunity to share your experiences of being an LGBTI student at UCT. It will also bring awareness of the possible difficulties you might face. Even though we might not be able to change any of these circumstances immediately it is hoped that your participation will bring about greater awareness of issues on campus and possibly within yourself. It will also give you an opportunity to gain a useful skill, as well as learn more about photography and how to use photographs to tell a story.

Questions

Should you at any point have any questions about the study, your rights as a participant or concerns regarding the research process, please do not hesitate to contact any of the following researchers.

Simone Peters - 071 930 6933

Lana Rolfe - 082 356 9513

Dr Floretta Boonzaier - 021 650 3429

If you would like to take part in this study and understand all of the above, please sign below.

_____

Name

_____

Signature

_____

Date

Agreement for Tape-Recording

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

Participant Signature: _____

Thank you!

Authors' Note