
“THE BLACKS ARE HERE AND THEY’RE
QUEER”: THE REPRESENTATION AND
NEGOTIATION OF GENDER AND SEXUAL
IDENTITY AMONGST BLACK QUEER
STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE
TOWN.

LINDA MKHIZE

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
NOVEMBER 2016

Supervisor: Floretta Boonzaier
Word Count:
Abstract: 220
Main Body: 9985

PLAGIARISM

This means that you present substantial portions or elements of another's work, ideas or data as your own, even if the original author is cited occasionally. A signed photocopy or other copy of the Declaration below must accompany every piece of work that you hand in.

- 1. I know that Plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and pretend that it is one's own.**
- 2. I have used the American Psychological Association formatting for citation and referencing. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this essay/report/project from the work or works, of other people has been attributed, cited and referenced.**
- 3. This essay/report/project is my own work.**
- 4. I have not allowed, and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.**

NAME: LINDA MKHIZE

STUDENT NUMBER: MKHLIN023

ASSINGMENT: Research Project

TITLE: "The blacks are here and they're queer": The negotiation of gender and sexual identity amongst queer black students at the University of Cape Town.

DATE: 17 November 2016

SIGNED: *L. Mkhize*

Acknowledgements

“The intersection of being black, woman and queer is one of the most beautiful, painful and colourfully liberating spaces on this planet.”– FN.

My first thank you goes to all the black and queer individuals who openly live their truths and allow others to do the same. You are the inspiration behind this project.

My most heartfelt gratitude and appreciation goes to all my participants who shared their stories/photos with me and permitted me to share them with others.

To Floretta Boonzaier, my supervisor, thank you for carrying me through this project. Thank for responding to every email and submission with equal encouragement and constructive criticism. Your presence, guidance and support are meant more than you understand.

To my family and friends, thank you for always checking in on me and providing all the emotional, mental and financial support throughout this process.

Henry, je vous remercie de m’ avoir tenu la main en durant cette année. Je t’aime.

ABSTRACT

While there is a growing body of literature on the experiences of LGBTQI+ people worldwide, it seldom focuses on how factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation and location/geography work together to shape these experiences. The South African Constitution condemns discrimination on the basis of gender and sexual orientation, however, countless LGBTQI+ individuals experience discrimination and other forms of violence daily. Evidence of this is abundant in literature. What the existing literature fails to engage with and display is how LGBTQI+ individuals also experience joy, pleasure and empowerment from their identities. The purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which black queer individuals at the University of Cape Town talk about how they experience their varying gender and sexual identities through a research process called photovoice. The study included seven participants who identified as 'queer' in terms of their gender and/or sexual orientation. Participant's narratives and photographs revealed two broad themes about the backlash of heteronormativity on queer students as well as the positive facets of queer lives despite this backlash. These findings are significant because it highlights how intersecting identities work to shape a particular lived experience. More so, the study challenges the exclusively negative narratives that are often told about queer lives by showing the contentment and companionship that queer individuals obtain from their identity.

Keywords: race, gender, sexuality, photovoice, UCT

Table of Contents

• Acknowledgements	2
• Abstract	3
• Introduction	5
○ Research Questions	8
○ Theoretical Framework	9
• Methods	9
○ Research Design	9
○ Sampling	10
○ Data Collection Methods	12
○ Data Analysis	13
○ Ethics	14
▪ Informed consent	14
▪ Confidentiality	14
▪ Benefits and harms	14
○ Reflexivity	15
• Results and Discussion	16
○ Expectations versus Reality	16
○ An Incursion on Intimacy	22
○ Friendship In and Out The Queer Community	25
○ The Pride, Pleasure and Partnership.....	30
○ Summary	33
• Significance of study and limitations	34
• Conclusion	35
• References	36
• Appendices	40
○ Appendix A – Study advertisements	40
○ Appendix B – Interview schedule	41
○ Appendix C – Ethics approval	42
○ Appendix D – Consent forms	44

The representation and negotiation of gender and sexual identity amongst black queer people at the University of Cape Town (UCT).

Being a queer black individual in post-Apartheid South Africa is a complex identity that has a very particular socio-historic context (Matebeni, 2011). Apartheid laws, such as the Immorality Act of 1957, restricted sexual relations across races and between individuals with the same-sex as it was seen as “unnatural/immoral sexual acts” (Ratele, 2009; Weeks, 1981). The intricacy of this identity is not easily unpacked. While LGBTQI+ people may share similar experiences, it is inaccurate to say all their narratives are identical especially when including other identities such as race or gender identity. The purpose of this study was to explore the ways in which queer black individuals at UCT spoke about representing and negotiating their gender and sexual identities. Through the lens of intersectionality, I investigated how identities such as race, gender and sexual orientation shaped the unique lived experience of these individuals and the meaning of the stories they told about their experiences.

To Be Black, To Be Queer in South Africa

I would like to clarify the meaning of two terms that will be used throughout this paper: LGBTQI+ and queer. LGBTQI+ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer, intersex and so forth. The term ‘queer’ and queer theory arose from lesbian and gay studies in the mid-1980s but today the term is used to describe gender and sexual identities outside of the heteronormative sphere (Kaczorowski, 2004). While ‘queer’ is included in the LGBTQI+ category, I have intentionally chosen to include and expand on it because it further encompasses those who are non-binary (a gender identity that does not fit between masculinity and femininity) or asexual (a sexual orientation characterized by having no sexual attraction to any gender).

In order to better understand the experiences of queer black people, an understanding of intersectionality is necessary. Crenshaw (1991, p. 1245) states that all individuals occupy “multiple grounds of identity”. Any discrimination or oppression that queer black people face is not simply about racial, gender or sexual identity disjointedly but rather it is about how these identities are intertwined to produce a unique lived experience (Crenshaw, 1991). However, it is not understood this way. For example, studies regarding the different systems of oppression only look at race and class, race and gender or gender and religion (Adamu, 1999; Stuart, 1992). Yet, research on intersectionality shows that many people experience systems of oppression based on

race, class, gender, sexual orientation and religion simultaneously (Adamu, 1999; Crenshaw, 1991; Bowleg, Huang, Brooks, Black, & Burkholder, 2003; Stuart, 1992).

The South African Constitution, Section 9, Subsection 3, has outlawed discrimination based on race, gender, sex and sexual orientation amongst many others but what is written in the Constitution does not always translate to what happens in the real world (South African Government, 1996). Queer black people experience continuing discrimination from verbal abuse to gruesome acts of corrective rape (Gibson & Macleod, 2012; Matebeni, 2011; Smuts, 2011). Corrective rape is defined as “a form of sexual punishment by men towards lesbians in order to cure them of their sexual orientation” (Mwambene & Wheal, 2015, p.58). According to Middleton (2011) at least 500 lesbians are victims of ‘corrective’ rape in South Africa annually. Furthermore, 10 new cases of corrective rape are estimated to occur weekly in Cape Town alone (Middleton, 2011). It is essential to problematize term ‘corrective rape’ because it implies that there is something wrong with lesbian women or queer people which warrants punishment. There is a prompting that this kind of rape is acceptable because it is thought to ‘correct’ the sexual ‘deviancy’ of these individuals without recognizing that rape cannot be justified.

A common phrase heard by LGBTQI+ individuals who are from or in Africa is ‘Homosexuality is unAfrican’ (Nkabinde & Morgan, 2005). This phrase often silences black LGBTQI+ individuals (Gibson & Macleod, 2012; Zway & Boonzaier, 2015). Being hushed about their non-normative gender and sexual identities is the trade-off that some black LGBTQI+ people have to make in order to avoid discrimination and alienation from their families, friends and religious communities (Smuts, 2011; Zway & Boonzaier, 2015). For example, a lesbian participant in a study by Gibson and Macleod (2012) states that her family continuously refused to acknowledge her sexual orientation but were fiercely proud of her academic achievements. The participant was celebrated by her family, as long as her ‘deviant’ sexuality brought to light.

Gibson and Macleod (2012) also looked at the experiences of lesbians across races. When reviewing coming out to their families, two white participants discussed how while their sexuality was not entirely accepted by their families, there was an attempt to be liberal and understanding about their sexual orientation. Conversely, two black participants indicated that their sexuality was completely ignored and always disregarded by their families. We are shown how sexuality can be racialized and therefore experienced differently by people across different

racism – tying back to the notion that ‘homosexuality is unAfrican’ and difficult to accept in some black/African homes.

Higher Education Institutions and LGBTQI+ Students

Academic institutions are a site of discrimination for LGBTQI+ students (Arndt & De Bruin, 2006; Richardson, 2006). Larger studies from the United Kingdom reflect those done on a smaller scale in South Africa which indicate that LGBTQI+ students in universities often experience seclusion, mistreatment and a lack of support at their institutions (Gibson & Macleod, 2012; Graziano, 2004; Rolfe & Peters, 2014). Students at various institutions stated that they had been abused due to their sexuality (Department of Education, 2008). For example, a study by Sithole (2015) indicates that LGBT students faced challenges such as labelling, sexual abuse, marginalization by lecturers and students, discrimination from religious communities, problematic allocation of residences and unequal treatment in health facilities. In other studies conducted at universities, the research questions asked were about the experiences of heterosexual students or the feelings heterosexual students had towards LGBTQI+ communities which upheld heteronormative and homophobic norms (Arndt & de Bruin, 2006; Ellis, 2009; Gibson & Macleod, 2012).

In the past two years, UCT has been the location for vital discussion about issues regarding transformation (Kessi, 2013; Peters & Rolfe, 2014). Transformative discussions have largely been centered on the race and gender in order to ensure that demographics of the staff and students should match those of the larger South African populace (Fraser, 1997; Rolfe & Peters, 2014). However, much of the research at UCT has investigated racial matters with little emphasis on gender and sexuality research (Rolfe & Peters, 2014; Zway, 2014).

Of the minimal research that had been done on sexual identity, there had been little focus on how the sexual identities of LGBTQI+ students’ are intersected with race (Gibson & Macleod, 2012; Rolfe & Peters, 2014). The literature indicates that LGBTQI+ university societies such as RainbowUCT or OUTRhodes are more accommodating to white LGBTQI+ students (Gibson & Macleod, 2012). For example, when speaking about OUTRhodes, a white student stated, “Well I mean Rhodes is very different I mean the fact that there’s even a society was quite amazing for me... the university’s structures is more protective of gay people...” (Gibson & Macleod, 2012, p. 13). A contrasting the narrative to a black student who stated, “I

think it just I was a bit naïve at first... thinking ‘The gays, yay, place where I’ll be accepted! ...race does play a game’ (Gibson & Macleod, 2012, p. 14).

Three primary gaps had been identified in the literature reviewed above. Firstly, there is a need for more research that includes the voices of young black LGBTQI+ people. As previously mentioned, race is often excluded in the conversation about the experiences of LGBTQI+ individuals. Zway and Boonzaier (2015) state that while many South African youths suffer discrimination for various reasons, youth that are black and part of the LGBTQI+ community face discrimination, homophobia and other forms of abuse. Therefore, it was vital to hear what this distinct population had to say about how their identities merge with their daily lives to form distinctive experiences.

Secondly, while it was impossible to disregard how queer black people experience a multitude of difficulties because of their gender identity and sexual orientation, it was equally important to start creating knowledge that does not always position queer black people as victims. An effort was made to show that for the violence and discrimination that these individuals endured, they also experienced happiness, pleasure, agency and companionship (Zway & Boonzaier, 2015). It was necessary to begin to create more of an “out and proud” narrative for young queer black persons (Lewis, 2005, p. 14).

Finally, the lack of research on the intersecting aspects of gender and sexual identity at UCT, an institution in the midst of current struggles around transformation, was a cause for concern. If we do not expand on our knowledge of gender and sexual identities, then we cannot change the misconceptions and attitudes that people have towards the LGBTQI+ community. Above this, we will continue the silencing and the marginalization of such populations.

Research Questions

The main research question for this study was, “How do queer black students represent and negotiate their gendered and sexual identities?” The sub-questions for this study were, “How do queer black students at UCT experience their gender and sexual identities at home, at UCT and in their lives more broadly?” and “How do queer black individual’s representations of their identities challenge existing stereotypes about their lives?”

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this project is Black Feminist theory. Black feminism is a school of thought that speaks to black women's experiences and how these experiences cannot be understood simply on the basis of race and gender separately (Collins, 1996). The aim of Black Feminism is to center the experiences of black people, especially women and individuals who are not cisgender (a person whose gender identity matches the sex given at birth) (Collins, 1996; Kiguwa, 2004). Black Feminism is also a critique of mainstream feminism that speaks on behalf of all women while disregarding the many intersections that form the lives and experiences of black women in particular (Kiguwa, 2004).

Intersectionality, as already defined earlier, was used to further understand how identities such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion and so forth affect individuals lived experience (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality has its roots in Black feminism and helps to expand on how each identity that an individual occupies is capable of locating them in a particular part of systemic oppression (Collins, 2002). These two concepts were used in this study to better comprehend the meanings participants make of their gender and sexual identities and how they chose to represent these through photovoice.

Methods

Research Design

A qualitative design was used for this study. Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey (2005, p. 5) state that qualitative research is able "to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue". This study was predominantly interested how people made use of talk and text to represent and illustrate personal experiences of gender and sexuality.

As a part of this design, participatory action research (PAR) was used. PAR is a form of research where researchers and, most importantly, those affected by a particular issue can collaborate in order to bring attention it (Kendon, Pain, & Kesby, 2008). The aim of PAR is to democratize knowledge production and provide an opportunity for empowerment for those who participate (Kendon, Pain, & Kesby, 2008). Photovoice, a PAR method, was used in this project to represent the experiences of black queer students using photography. Photovoice is a process

and research method that lets participants “identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique” (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 1).

PAR was therefore useful to this study because it allowed me to co-create knowledge about queer black people with queer black people who are experts of their own lives. Additionally, by giving these individuals cameras and photography training, they were able to pinpoint and represent the issues regarding gender and sexuality that matter most to them and possibly gained a sense of empowerment.

Sampling

The study consisted of seven participants (see Table 1 below for the demographics of the participants). The criteria set for participation included that the persons identified as black (black/coloured/indian), queer and attended UCT. During the research process, participants expressed their preferred pronouns (the gender pronouns that an individual favours to be used when talking to or about them) and I used these same pronouns when discussing participants in the analysis and discussion section. All the participants in the sample were students who attended UCT because I wanted to explore how UCT as an institution contributed to how these participants experienced their gender and sexual identities. Recruitment was done by advertising through SRPP, Flourish (a Facebook group for young, black women), RainbowUCT Group (a UCT LGBTQI+ Facebook group) (see Appendix A). Snowball sampling was also used where one participant was able to refer and recruit another participant (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 1998).

Table 1.

Sample Demographics

Pseudonym	Race & Nationality	Age	Year of Study, Field of Study	Preferred Pronouns	Sexual Orientation
Red/Refilwe	Black, South Africa	20	Second year, Psychology/Economics	She/Her	Bisexual
Pink/Pumla	Black, South Africa	20	Second year, Psychology/Industrial Psychology	She/Her	Bisexual/Lesbian
Purple/Phalo	Black, South Africa	21	Third year, Medicine	He/Him OR They/Them	Panromantic (a person romantically attracted to others but not limited by others sex or gender)
Yellow/Yibanathi	Black, South Africa	19	First year, Philosophy/Environmental Studies	They/Them	Pansexual (capable of sexual attraction to any gender)
Black/Busi	Black, Botswana	21	Third year, Industrial Sociology/English	She/Her	Pansexual
Grey/Gcina	Black, South Africa	24	First year, Social Work	She/Her	Bisexual
Blue/Buhle	Black, South Africa	22	Second year, Psychology	She/Her	Queer

Data Collection Methods

Photovoice is a relatively new form of research and does not have a fixed process (Malherbe, Cornell, & Suffla, 2015). This flexibility permitted me to use photovoice in a way that best suited my study. I conducted the study in the following four parts:

Part One – Individual interviews and photography training. I began the research process with individual interviews (see Appendix B for the interview schedule). Interviews are a valuable tool for data collection because they provide straightforward responses from participants, an opportunity to probe for more detail, private communication and flexibility (Steinar, 1996). I was interested in hearing about how each participant spoke about their gender/sexual identities and how their gender/sexualities identities were negotiated by the spaces they occupied. These interviews were semi-structured in order to allow a multitude of topics to be explored and talking about whatever each of the participants felt was relevant during this interview process (Louise Barriball & While, 1994).

After the initial interview, participants were given cameras and they were taught how to use them to capture the images they wanted to include in their photo stories. Participants were then given a photo mission that asked them to take photographs that represented their lives as queer black people.

Part Two – Focus group and photo sharing. After a few weeks, participants returned with their photographs to share in a focus group setting. Focus groups allowed for open and free discussion as well as synergy during the discussion process (Madriz, 2000). The participants were able to share their photographs with the group and found similarities as well as differences with each other. This focus group setting will helped facilitate group discussion and co-building of stories around the topic at hand. It was likely that hearing and discussing others' stories would help create a sense of solidarity amongst participants and enable a sense of increased consciousness about the issues that affect their lives as young black queer individuals. The use of individual interviews, focus groups and photo-stories was necessary in order to gain a layered understanding of the participants experiences by using multiple mediums for data collection.

Part Three – Planning for the exhibition. As a part of its purpose, photovoice requires that participants are strongly involved in all parts of the research process (Malherbe, Cornell & Suffla, 2015). There was involvement in the planning for the exhibition, for the students who

chose to participate in the exhibition. During this time, the collective decided on a theme, time and venue for the exhibition.

Part Four – Exhibition and final thoughts. After the exhibition, participants were expected to meet once again to discuss their final thoughts and feelings about the entire research process, however, due to the shutdown that occurred at UCT during this time we were unable to have the exhibition and complete this part of the photovoice process.

Data Analysis

All the data collected during this study was analyzed and interpreted using thematic narrative analysis. Thematic narrative analysis is a frequently used analytic tool for qualitative research (Riessman, 2008). Thematic narrative analysis aims to make use of the stories of participants to create meaning, to describe social identity and finds themes through narratives (Riessman, 2008). When doing narrative analysis, it is important to look at the text as a whole entity, recognize that stories are not always told chronologically and recognize that the process of storytelling is performative (Riessman, 2008). There is no particular method to thematic narrative analysis as there may be for thematic analysis. Rather, there are three levels of investigation and interpretation: hearing the stories told by participants, interpreting the stories as a researcher and the reconstruction of the story as perceived by the reader (Riessman, 2008).

This project made use of a thematic narrative analysis because narratives are a good starting point for social enquiry (Riessman, 2008). In the case of this project, thematic narrative analysis allowed me to gain a particular viewpoint on the experiences on black queer students by allowing them to give me their perspectives and actions in the world.

The analysis also had a visual component. Some of the photo-stories that the participants produced will be used as a means of further understanding the narratives that came up during data collection.

It is also important that the theoretical framework is incorporated into data analysis. Black Feminism centered the experiences of these black queer students and made use of the data collected to unpack how their racial, gender and sexual identities have come to shape their stories about their experiences.

Ethics

Ethics are an important component of the research process because they ensure that no harm occurs to the participant(s) and the researcher during the research process (Rest, 1994). The ethical authorization for this study was granted by the Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Humanities under the project 'The gendered and sexual lives of young people in South Africa: A participatory project' (see Appendix C). All issues regarding ethics were presented in the informed consent form and then repeated upon meeting participants. Ethical issues were addressed as follows:

Informed consent: Before the start of the interviews, participants were given informed consent forms which highlighted the aims, procedures, expectations and time-frame of the study (see Appendix D). All participants were given an opportunity to read through the informed consent form and ask about any other queries that they had. Participants were notified that they would be able to remove themselves from the study at any point and that they would suffer no consequences for this. The form notified participants of the fact that their interview/focus group discussions would be recorded and their photographs would be used in write-up of the study as well as in the exhibition.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality, despite all good intentions, has limitations (Rest, 1994). During the focus group, participants were requested to respect the confidentiality of all the other participants. The recorded discussions/transcriptions as well as the photographs were stored on the researcher's laptop which is always locked with a password. This material was only heard by the researcher and the supervisor. Pseudonyms and photographs without the faces the participants were used in order to avoid the identification of the participants, unless they stated that they were comfortable doing so.

Benefits and harms: Participants were notified of both the potential benefits and harms of the study. Participation in this study would be beneficial as it would provide a platform to discuss experiences, criticisms and personal insights. Participants were able to expand on individual stories and learn about/from the stories of others. Above this, participants gained photography training. The risks of participation were minimal. Nonetheless discussing issues regarding race, gender, sexuality and potentially negative experiences could have been emotionally/mentally triggering and difficult. In order to reduce this, all participants were given

information about how to access various organizations (such as The Triangle Project and Gender DynamiX) who assist with this kind of trauma. Debriefing took place after each session.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the manner in which a researcher has to inspect themselves and their presence within the research process (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Reflexivity not only interrogated how my presence in the study affected the interview processes but it also interrogated how my presence shaped everything from the conception of this research topic to how I interpreted the narratives heard from the participants.

I conducted this study as a person who identifies as a black queer woman. There were advantages to having an identity that was similar to the participants in my study such as being comfortable enough to share stories without fear of judgment or being viewed as instinctively empathetic. Conversely, some participants and I were dissimilar in the realm of class, religion or other identities which would shape our lived experiences differently. Also, there was a risk of missing out on some information due to the assumption that I already knew this information as a queer black woman. For those who did not know how my sexual orientation, the interview process was different in that they only related to me on the basis of race and sometimes gender.

Despite how similar or dissimilar my participants and I were, there was still an imbalance of power between the researcher and the researched which I tried my best to decrease by sitting on the same side of the table with them or ensuring they were comfortable with what was being discussed throughout the interview process. Even in doing my best to reduce the power imbalances, the research process was still riddled with other power imbalances which I could not always control which is inevitable in all research.

In my initial search for participants, I had advertised that I was looking for black women who were queer in regards to sexuality. Instead, I found black individuals who were queer in both their gender and sexual identities. Additionally, my research question investigated both gendered and sexual identities but most of my participants spoke on their sexual identities. As a result, I moved from focus from specifically black queer women to black queer individuals and allowed participants to talk about their queerness in a way that they saw fit.

Results and Discussion

This section involves the explanation and examination of the various narrative themes that emerged during data analysis. These themes fall under two broader headings. The first was ‘narratives about the backlash of heteronormativity’ with two sub-themes that address the how participants anticipated UCT to be a liberating space for LGBTQI+ persons as well as the interfering ways in which people enquire about the sexual lives and orientations of queer people. The second was ‘narratives about the positive aspects of queer lives’ with two sub-themes which looked at friendships in and out of queer communities and the ways in which queer individuals gain joy from their identities.

Expectations versus Reality

UCT plays a central role to how students experience their gender and sexuality identities. The stories told and the narrative themes that emerge from participants commonly depict UCT as a contradictory place. Multiple participants spoke about the preconceived ideas they had about UCT as an institution where people could act, dress and express themselves as they pleased without facing any kind of judgment. Before coming to UCT, this participant had a predetermined idea that the institution would be a welcoming space after coming across something on TV:

“... I saw the pink closet thing on TV one time. I thought this is great! I'm finally gonna get to be myself.” (Pumla)

Here Pumla is talking about the pink closet that was displayed during Pink Week, a LGBTQI+ awareness campaign hosted by RainbowUCT (a UCT LGBTQI+ association). The closet is often decorated with an assortment of sticky notes that have messages of support, positivity and confessions written by and for UCT students. According to Pumla, seeing this campaign gave her the impression that UCT was a place where queer people could openly and honestly express themselves. Yibanathi’s photo story and caption re-emphasizes this:



Yibanathi: Rainbow UCT was a club I immediately wanted to join the moment I walked past its stand on Plaza Week.

Continuing with this idea, another two participants state:

“As soon as I got to varsity, I made it my point to break out and let people know that I was bisexual.” (Refilwe)

“I don’t know if it’s just UCT or universities in general... We have this we’re very open and be yourself like, it’s varsity now you can do whatever.” (Phalo)

Once again, we are told a story about how students believed that once they came to UCT, they would be able to rid themselves of any facades and “break out” of any deceitful moulds of identity. These positive expectations towards UCT seem to be based on the assumption that university is a place for freedom of expression and a place where LGBTQI+ people and/or issues are accepted and broadly understood:

“But because of the awareness here, I think there is a larger probability of standing up against a person degrading a person of that community rather than standing next to them. You know? And I might be completely wrong but I think there is a pretty strong will in terms of standing up for the LGBT people.” (Busi)

The above remark demonstrates how there is a belief that UCT as well as its students had a sound awareness of LGBTQI+ issues and therefore would not act in a problematic nature towards LGBTQI+ students. Furthermore, this student proposes that if there was problematic behaviour, the UCT community would stand in solidarity with any of the LGBTQI+ people who might face discrimination at the institution to ensure their safety and well-being. The prospect that universities are a site of liberal thinking and behaviour was also evident in other literature. Gibson and Macleod (2012) along with Rolfe and Peters (2014) state that the transformative nature of universities, support groups (such as RainbowUCT) and the implementation of gender neutral bathrooms, often lead LGBTQI+ students to believe that staff and students to be receptive towards them.

The belief that UCT is an accommodating institution with tolerant students did not extend to all participants. The reality of the UCT environment was revealed to participants once they arrived at the institution and started navigating their way around the campus and residences.

Pumla, who had seen the pink closet on TV, soon realized that the preconceived idea she had about UCT was false. Shortly after stating that she was excited to come to UCT, she voiced the reality she was meet with:

“... and when I came here ummm, like every day I had to I had listen to homophobic slurs...” (Pumla)

Phalo’s photo-story also brings to light the discrimination and sexual abuse that is faced by some queer students as mentioned in the literature by Sithole (2015) and the Department of Education (2008):



Phalo: This was taken literally less than an hour before I was sexually assaulted in this same venue by someone who said they too study at UCT, on a night out with friends.

The perception of UCT as a place where one could securely be themselves as a queer person was disturbed by homophobia and sexual abuse. This kind of discrimination is common for anyone is who is courageous enough to disclose their sexual orientation that is anything other than heterosexual (Baird, 2010; Gibson & Macleod, 2012). Previously reviewed literature by Graziano (2004) and Sithole (2015) similarly found that once the gendered and sexual identities of such students are revealed, they often face discrimination, victimization, labelling and an unfair allocation of resources. The discrimination endured was not only on the basis of sexual orientation but also gender. One participant spoke about how her friends reacted to someone who did not conform to gender expression in their dress code:

“And they will be talking about someone else and they’ll be like “Ya no, that guy is really cool. He dresses like a girl. That’s fine but I am not going to invite him to my party because it’s going to be weird.” (Refilwe).

Though her friends are not specifically speaking about her, Refilwe states that when her

friends spoke about, insulted and distanced themselves from other queer individuals it made her realize what they thought about queer people and perhaps even herself. The above excerpt also suggests that anyone who was “weird” and did not adhere to predetermined gender expression was not fit to be a part of particular social circles at UCT. This is supported by Horn’s (2007) research stating that young adults did not only base social acceptance on sexual orientation but also on gender expression. Furthermore, individuals (gay or straight) often rejected friendship from anyone who did not conform to conventional gender expression (Horn, 2007).

Participants did not only experience discrimination on campus and from peers but also at UCT residences. Sithole’s (2015) research revealed that straight students did not want to share residences with gay students because gay students allegedly made unwanted romantic/sexual advances and made sexist remarks towards them. Pumla’s narrative below closely replicates Sithole’s (2015) findings as she explains an incident that occurred in her residence:

“So one of the female sub wardens said that I made advances on her.... Yah, she said that and that was completely untrue and because she has been at [a UCT residence] longer than I have, and she is a subwarden, she has gained the trust of the warden and the staff, obviously you know, they believed her more than they believed me and uummm she said that as a heterosexual female, she felt uncomfortable about me making advance on her, and I was like but what does sexuality have to do with it? Like why is okay if a guy makes advances on you and how is it different? I didn't like that, the fact that she brought sexuality into it. I wasn't comfortable with that, and that upset me a lot... Yah! and she basically outed me, she outed me, when I didn't even want to tell the wardens. She brought sexuality into it and I was like grrr and because of that, I feel like uh uummm the LGBT people are still stigmatised.” (Pumla)

Some students who are placed in the UCT accommodation system face a lot of difficulty with being placed in same-sex residences. As seen in the case of Pumla, she is outed her residence authority. Exposing people’s sexual orientations without their consent does not respect the individual’s rights to privacy. It is important that LGBTQI+ people are allowed to disclose their sexuality or gender identity when they feel most comfortable with it. More so, exposing the

sexual orientation of a student in response to an incident shows that there is indeed a lot of stigma attached to being a queer individual and this stigma could be used to vilify queer people. Finally, Pumla's sexuality was made to seem 'deviant' and therefore a tool that could be used to victimize another student. The subwarden uses Pumla's sexuality to disparage the Pumla's side of the argument and make it seem that the sexual advances that Pumla had supposedly made were a form of violence. A clear hierarchy of sexualities is drawn when the word of a straight woman is taken above that of a queer woman. If it were a heterosexual man making these advances towards a heterosexual woman, it is unlikely that his heterosexuality would have been used as a means to discredit his argument.

The narrative around the difficulty of being queer within UCT residence continues:

“The problem with some of these things, like sharing a room, the assumption that two females can share the same space. Me as a queer person who also does like females, it got uncomfortable to be in a living with someone that I started to realize that I might have feelings for.... Sometimes I'm like maybe I would have been better off in a mixed res or like maybe with guys or something because this female thing... I go to showers with women. The shower has clear glass where there's a naked woman there each morning... Girls are walking to the bathroom in their panties. And I am not saying they are doing anything wrong and I am not trying- And I don't want it to seem like.” (Busi)

The existence of same-sex residences is often used as a means of organizing students by sex and trying to ensure that students are safe in a same-sex environment. However, there is no consideration for what happens when there are women in these residences who experience same-sex desire. While her intentions were not predacious, Busi states that it was hard to live in a same-sex residence because of her attraction to the other female students in the residence. It would be harder for her to articulate this because she might have faced the stigma of being a queer individual as seen in the example above.

It is then vital to attempt to understand what it is about UCT that makes it particularly challenging to be a queer person. The explanations for this varied but one participant suggested:

“... what makes it harder is the fact that UCT is umm... like cis-het men culture. White cis-het men culture and umm they are actually at the top of the food chain, so umm, for you, for a person like me like with all these, call them intersections, you literally feel like you are at the bottom of the food chain.” (Pumla)

According to Pumla, to be at the top of the “food-chain” at UCT, one has to be white, a man and heterosexual. Pumla introduces in the complexity of intersecting identities. Perhaps UCT is perceived as a welcoming space for LGBTQI+ students but only for those who were white. It seems UCT is a safe space for white LGBTQI+ students but as you move along the matrix of domination and identities begin to fuse it becomes increasingly complicated. The ‘matrix of domination’ is a term closely linked to intersectionality and coined by Collins (1993) which refers to a sociological paradigm which explores the interlocking systems of oppression such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation and so forth. In this case, Pumla states that UCT is accommodating if you existed in the matrix as or close to “cis-het men”, however, as soon as an individual did not qualify as cisgender, heterosexual or white, their place falls to the “bottom of the food chain”.

Based on the above, it becomes clear that UCT sometimes helps and sometimes harms those who wish to openly express themselves as black queer students. There is a clear difference in how UCT was initially perceived as an institution before students arrived compared to what happens once they arrive on campus. These individuals are subjected to negative attitudes and discrimination on the basis of their gender and sexual identities on campus and in residences.

An Incursion on Intimacy

Participants across multiple interviews expressed that a part of their experiences as black queer students was the imposition on their sexual orientations. Phalo expands on this:

“And I’m like, sexuality and gender are not the same thing but okay sure. And it’s so weird also, I understand why you’re asking the question now because it’s part of the research but so many people for example will ask for my pronouns. And I’ll be like they or them. So then they’ll ask what my gender is and I will be like agender. Then all of a

sudden they then think it is okay to ask about what my sexuality is... My gender is fine because I want you to address me correctly... and don't misgender me so that's fine. Ya. You can't just go up us and be like, I'm sorry but are you gay? It's like, it's not a thing but ya. It's like once you've already identified as trans, everything is game. Everything else game..." (Phalo)

The unwanted and equally invasive questions and comments about queer people's sexual orientation and details of their sex lives was a topic largely ignored and omitted from existing research. Nonetheless, it was a narrative theme that emerged across multiple interviews and participants shared the similar sentiments around it. While participants told their stories differently, the questions or comments on sexual orientation often occurred as follows:

"The guys are like, "Great, two girls, one guy. Perfect situation." And it's hard to explain to them that that's not... I mean, great, there's definitely girls out there who are down for that you know? But that's not me and I am not... That's not what it means to be bisexual for me." (Refilwe).

"It just... You're just an experiment for people to find out... You're a petri dish for people to observe and learn things about. That really irritates me. I don't appreciate that." (Busi).

For these participants revealing their sexual orientation was met with commentary that suggested that the participant's sexual orientations were invites for sexual encounters rather than simply being an expression of their sexuality. Refilwe's sexuality moves away from being a part of her identity, as she explains that "that's not what it means to be bisexual for me", to being about a source of entertainment and/or pleasure for men. This was supported by Busi narrative about how her sexual orientation was occasionally seen as a place for others to experiment with their own sexuality. Literature on bisexuality states that bisexual individuals or those who embody sexual fluidity often have this part of their identity disregarded or ridiculed (Barker & Langdrige, 2008). This erasure takes place despite that fact that bisexuality is as common, if not more, as homosexuality (Yoshino, 2000). Sexuality is fluid and allows sexual relations with

people within or outside your own sex/gender. However, Busi expresses that it is harmful to simply use others as a means to experiment without taking into account the feelings and lived realities of queer people (Diamond, 2008).

In addition to speaking about this, one participant reveals who they got this kind of response from and why they thought it was the case:

“I think... I don't know. And mostly for me, it's mostly from men. For me, the way I also understand it is black men are raised to feel like they are entitled to us and our bodies. Growing up they are told that they are going to have a wife who is going to be obedient and all of this stuff. They are told they are alpha males and they are the providers so for them when you're not this meek person and go completely the opposite, they're just like no, no, no, you're supposed to be here with me...” (Phalo).

Phalo started by saying that they get this response from men, black men specifically, and attributed it to their sense of entitlement. Feminist research supports this claim. On occasions where women perform sexuality outside of heterosexuality and outside what is meant for the pleasure of men it is often seen to be problematic and this is seen to be rooted in male entitlement (Nussbaum, 2005; Roberts, 1993). Additionally, we are reminded of the notion that queerness is unAfrican and therefore would unsettle some black men to see defying these beliefs (Nkabinde & Morgan, 2005).

There was also an element of intrusiveness that some participants expressed they felt when it came to sharing their sexual orientation with others. This lent itself to the invalidating sexual orientations or experiences. For example:

“When you're mentioning someone that you're interested in, it's not even about you anymore, they ask so how do you guys have sex? You know what I mean? Like [they'll ask] don't you miss- It's just these really... It just minimizes your whole experience” (Busi).

The enquiry into how queer people have sex or experience intimacy is intrusive and insensitive. Heterosexual sex is seen as the norm and anyone who does not participate in it has to disclose how sex and other forms of intimacy happen in their own lives. There was a sense of vulnerability in having to explain this and justify why queer sex qualified as sex. Later on in the excerpt Busi expressed that some people asked her if she missed having sex with men and, as articulated by other participants, it was exceedingly belittling to her experiences and identity.

Friendship In and Outside the Queer Community

A narrative that emerged repeatedly as a result of asking about the positive aspects of being a black queer student at UCT was the importance of friendship. Refilwe's photo-story illustrates the kinship and gratification she receives from these friendships:



Refilwe: *I am a member of a community, a member of friendship.*

Despite the marginalization that participants experienced in the university, they also spoke about the joy that they found in the sense of community with other LGBTQI+ students at UCT:

“And also, it feels really good to like know who you are... like [having] this sense of community and then I was like yo fam, maybe it was a [just] stage, and I was starting to think [about] things that heterosexual people say to you, like it's a phase...” (Yibanathi).

“I loved hearing people’s stories and you know can identify with the little things that people experience so it’s fulfilling to express that and have someone understand that experience so I was really grateful for that. And sometimes I wish there was more of that because when you leave that space you are back to this heteronormative world.” (Busi).

The two above accounts touch on two noteworthy points. Firstly, both participants speak on the significance of community and the ability to talk over experiences with other LGBTQI+ UCT students. Busi speaks about the amount of joy she finds in sharing common experiences with other LGBTQI+ students. She continues to talk about the significance of being in a space and amongst people who can relate closely to her own experiences. Secondly, later on in both excerpts, we see both participants bringing up issues about having to revert back to heterosexuality or heteronormativity as a point of comparison. Yibanathi expresses that this sense of community is important to them because in the past their heterosexual friends had made them feel as though their queer sexual identity was simply a “phase.” Similarly, Busi speaks about how these LGBTQI+ communities or friendships are essential to her because it was the one space where her sexuality is considered the norm rather than an ‘alternative’ sexuality. The manner in which Busi talks about having to “back to this heteronormative world” shows her frustration with having to go back to a reality where she is not considered norm and the consequences that come with that.

Other participants felt that LGBTQI+ communities are also important because of the ease with which one could communicate their LGBTQI+ issues. For example:

“Within the LGBT community, it’s just easier to talk about certain things without having to over-explain yourself. Because a lot of the times with other people, you first have to explain the whole thing first and then go and discuss it. But with trans people you can just say a certain word because it’s a whole different vocabulary...” (Phalo).

To give more context to this excerpt, Phalo was referring to the particular vocabulary or jargon that is usually used to discuss sexuality and gender identity. Phalo found that these terms are usually more common to their queer friends rather than their straight ones. As a result, Phalo

found communication to be easier with the likelihood of focussing more on sharing experiences rather than having to explain their gender and/or sexuality:

“... people who understand or ask you questions not necessarily from a curious, experimentation type thing which is because I feel that way with my hetero friends, is that they ask a lot of questions to be oh that’s weird, that’s different. And they ask me my opinion based on the fact that I am queer as if this identity makes my opinion on things inherently different.” (Phalo).

Above, Phalo articulates that often when they communicate with their straight friends, they feel as though they are being viewed as an experiment and their gender or sexual orientation is a talking point which invites curiosity on the basis of being dissimilar. On the other hand, with Phalo’s queer friends, the conversation is not intrusive as argued earlier. When discussing Phalo’s identities or experiences with other queer friends, it is for the sake of sharing mutual stories and never having to additionally justify or defend their identities.

While LGBTQI+ communities are of importance to these participants, the demographic nature of the groups is equally important. Tetreault, Fette, Meidlinger and Hope (2013) emphasize that even though LGBTQI+ students may share a campus, their experiences may be far from the similar. In Gibson and Macleod’s (2012) paper, there is an indication that white LGBTQI+ students find LGBTQI+ support groups and social spaces to be inclusive while black students disagree. To demonstrate this, Yibanathi spoke about how they attended a predominately white gay bar and were made to feel unwelcome:

“... We went to Bar X and we were there dancing and we having a good time and these two white gay men were like "what are the blacks doing here?" and I was like "the blacks are here and they're queer" (laughing). Like please, please. I was just like- that hit me hard because I was like hawu even within a marginalized community we're experiencing this nonsense.” (Yibanathi).

Yibanathi's story begins to show how race plays a large role in some LGBTQI+ spaces. The question "what are the blacks doing here" asked by a fellow white patron shows the racist and exclusionary nature of a space that is meant for marginalized individuals. More so, the question suggests that some people in the LGBTQI+ community may feel that blackness cannot be associated with queerness. Yibanathi's response "the blacks are here and they're queer" demands acknowledgement of the fact that there are some people who take up the identities of blackness and queerness in one body. While Yibanathi's response was to the patron in that particular situation, it also acts as a response on a larger scale. While the belief is that homosexuality is unAfrican, research by Sexual Minorities Uganda (2014) shows that 21 varieties of traditional African homosexuality and indeed echoes that "the blacks are here and they're queer" all over Africa.

A while later, Yibanathi attended an event specifically for black queer individuals where they immediately felt a lot more at ease and welcome:

"Like once I really started thinking about it I was like ohh I wasn't white enough, that makes sense so yah, no and I can definitely sense that even like heterosexual people accept white gays much more and their like aesthetic which is stolen from black people, but anyways, their aesthetic more than like black queer people which is why I went to Black Queer Social... Yah, it was so lit like to be able to talk about being queer and being black without having like white people be like no no but us, but what about our lives and our opinions. It was so good to have that whereas we don't have that space within the ordinary queer community." (Yibanathi).

The intricacy of some LGBTQI+ spaces and communities is emphasized through this narrative. In this excerpt, Yibanathi conveys how sharing the same sexual orientation is not the only factor that is important to building a solid LGBTQI+ community. After attending an event distinctly designed for black queer people, Yibanathi explains that this community of black queer individuals is more accommodating. Yibanathi claims to have felt this way because in this space the issues of black queer individuals can be discussed without being ignored, invalidated or diverted by the concerns of white individuals. Towards the end of Yibanathi's extract, they refer

to the “the ordinary queer community” when discussing the community of white queers. This once again suggests that black queer persons are not usually seen as the norm in terms of queerness.

The problem of non-inclusive LGBTQI+ spaces was seen at Cape Town Pride in February 2016. A group of protestors, who called themselves *Alternative Inclusive Pride Network*, took to the streets of Cape Town to protest the manner in which the festival excluded lesbians, black people and other parts of the LGBTQI+ community (“Cape Town Pride”, 2016). The theme of the pride event had been “Gay, Proud, Colourblind” (“Cape Town Pride”, 2016). The keyword ‘gay’ in the 2016 theme suggested that lesbians or the range of other LGBTQI+ individuals were not represented. Moreover, ‘colourblind’ as a part of the theme was insensitive to people of colour especially in a country that has had a history where race is very relevant and important.

Although the hope is that these spaces are all-inclusive, all the time, it is not the case as seen in Buhle’s photo-story:



Buhle: We’ve tried to intertwine and find comfort in our contact zone but we never interlink.

In the particularly white LGBTQI+ spaces, Buhle stated that she felt that she was not “white enough” to be accepted into particular spaces. Furthermore, Buhle expressed that she felt that it was easier to be accepted as a white queer rather than a black one because queerness “is not a

black thing... it was a lot of white people". These statements mirror the literature by Nkabinde and Morgan (2005) about homosexuality being unAfrican.

To further complicate the characteristics of identity:

"That's one thing that bothers me a lot in my life and that probably why I haven't, that, not probably, definitely why I haven't dated in a long time, because uh at UCT first of all, I'm black, I come from a poor background, I don't speak English that is as fluent as everyone else in UCT and I may not have typical body type... Someone once said at RainbowUCT that, one of my criteria for dating is that the person must speak a certain way and they said this in a group discussion, they said that they must speak a certain way, if you don't speak good English and you don't have a certain accent, then I'm sorry. So those are the things that make me feel like I wasn't good enough..." (Pumla).

Through this narrative, we are shown the complexity of these LGBTQI+ communities with an intersectional lens. Not only is sexual orientation and race important this sense of community, but it also comes down to class, language and even body type. The participant expresses that the shaming based on class and language, came from someone who was within the RainbowUCT society. What does it mean when one cannot does fit into or is shamed within in the very community that is supposed to accommodate them? For some students it meant the abandoning of communities or, as mentioned earlier, seeking communities such as the Black Queer Social or online communities which exist outside of the UCT LGBTQI+ space.

The Pride, Pleasure and Partnership

Part of what I had hoped to hear and intentionally probed for were the positive stories and experiences of these black queer individuals. Much of the literature on LGBTQI+ persons focuses on the discrimination, violence and other negatives aspects that are common in this population. As a part of my research questions and purpose, I aimed to display how participants may be able to challenge the negative existing stereotypes about their lives. Participants engaged with this by articulating the best part of being a black queer individual:

“The best part is when I went to my first Pride last year.” (Pumla)

“My best, I dunno uummm... I guess it's like the experience with different relationships I've been into... Its, most of them have been great... There's just something about being in love with a woman that's just, I can't explain it.” (Gcina)

“Probably the sex, the sex was the best. Sex is the best. It's a big highlight.” (Refilwe)

“Then I started meeting more queer people who were so proud and unapologetic and they just started flocking into my life and you know? Even in their photos they would write hashtag queer or whatever or they would post up pictures with their boyfriend or it be a young man wearing a dress and he wouldn't care. You know what I mean? And I just realized how possible it is to literally just do what the fuck you want to do. And I loved that.” (Busi)

These narratives were accompanied by the following photo-stories:



Yibanathi: “Layla (they/them) is my girlfriend. We met at a RainbowUCT conversational gathering sometime in March. Safe to say, my life would be drastically different if it weren’t for RainbowUCT.”



Refilwe: I am a complicated combination that concludes in a deeper meaning.

As shown above, participants spoke about and took photographs of the various things that brought them joy as black queer people. Pumla found that going to her first Cape Town Pride

Festival was a satisfying experience. Later on her interview Pumla goes on to talk about how enjoyable it was for her to have and see so many queer people in one space who also did not judge her for her identity. Yibanathi shows admiration for spaces such as RainbowUCT which helped them meet their girlfriend. Similarly, Busi shares that coming across people who were comfortable in their queer identity also helped her to feel that she did not have to be apologetic about being open about her sexuality. Gcina and Refilwe touch on how relationships and intimacy have been the best part of their experiences as black queer individuals. Finally, in Refilwe's picture, we are once again reminded of the complexity that comes with this identity, however, not all is lost as it "concludes in a deeper meaning." All of these varying positive perspectives are important to show because despite the fact that the literature does not mention them, queer people's experiences do not begin and end with discrimination and victimization.

Summary

The outcomes of this research project reflect the ways in which black queer students at UCT have chosen to represent and discuss their experiences of gender and sexual identity. Some of the participants anticipated that UCT would be a space that is welcoming of LGBTQI+ people and understanding of LGBTQI+ matters. This expectancy was driven by factors such as LGBTQI+ campaigns and the general assumption that universities are liberal spaces. Despite the promising image of UCT, participants give numerous accounts of discrimination and victimization from peers and in residences which is consistent with the literature by Gibson and Macleod (2012), Graziano (2004) and Rolfe and Peters (2014). Also present in the literature and my findings is the notion of homosexuality being unAfrican and the manner in which racial identity intersects with and complicates the sexual identity (Nkabinde & Morgan, 2005; Crenshaw, 1991). Furthermore, race emerges as a factor that shapes some queer friendships and communities. Though it is not presented or covered extensively in literature, the study presents findings about the interfering manner in which people question and comment on the sexual orientations and experiences of queer students which is rooted in heteronormativity and male entitlement. We are also presented with the multiple ways that these participants derive satisfaction and companionship.

We are able to reflect on and answer the research questions posed at the beginning of this project. The findings of this study show us how black queer students at UCT represent their gender and sexual identities in various ways that can be understood through two broad narratives. The one narrative illustrates how the black queer individual's rejection of heteronormativity is met with a backlash from other students and sometimes friends. In some LGBTQI+ spaces, they are excluded on the basis of race. The other narrative illustrates how black queer students use their identities to form communities and draw strength from the positive aspects of their lives. We are once more shown that black queer students experience discrimination, sexual assault but also comradeship and joyfulness as a result of their sexual identities at UCT and in their lives more broadly. Finally, participants challenged the existing stereotypes about their lives. They did this by producing photo-stories that revealed the pride, pleasure and partnership that these students experience as a result of their gender and sexual identities which contest the notion of black queer individuals as people who only experience victimization.

Significance of study and limitations

The texts that I had come across for my literature often separately addressed the issues that I was investigating in this study. For example, there was an abundance of papers on the LGBTQI+ community, the experiences of black students at university or young black lesbians in high school, however, these topics were never studied altogether. It is important to merge these topics together because there are young, queer black individuals who have to negotiate their gender and sexuality according to the spaces (home, university, Cape Town) they occupy. Therefore, I believe that the substance of this study will stem from the fact that there was a space for such a group to share their stories. In addition, foregrounding the participants and their own telling of their lives and identities allowed for an opportunity for them to provide stories that challenge dominant narratives of their lives and those of queer black people.

On the other hand, this study had limitations but I will expand on two of the biggest ones. Firstly, advertisements to join the project were only sent through online mediums. Due to the diversity in class and other factors, not everyone has access to a computer or had access to a computer at the time that this study was being conducted. In the future, advertising should be done in a way

where everyone is able to see it and therefore participate. Secondly, the study initially called for queer women therefore most of the participants were cisgender women. Only two of the seven participants were not cisgender and I was not able to engage gender identity as I would have wanted to. Trans*, intersex and other non-conforming individuals should be involved in future studies so that we are able to gain fuller perspectives on LGBTQI+ experiences.

Conclusion

This study investigated the how black queer individuals at UCT represented and negotiated their gender and sexual identities at UCT. Through personal interviews and photo-stories composed by the participants, various narratives emerged. It was revealed that there is was unexpected homophobia and discrimination from other students on campus and within residence spaces. It was also found that participants found themselves in positions where they were asked questions or heard commentary about their sexual orientations that they were not necessarily comfortable discussing. The narratives move in a slightly different direction as they begin to talk about friendship and the importance of community as black queer people who are navigating through UCT, however, this sense of community is dependent on race and finding spaces that are accommodating to them. Finally, participants share narratives about the various parts of black and queer identity that they are able to draw joy from despite the negative undertones that always follow LGBTQI+ persons.

References

- Adamu, F. L. (1999). A double-edged sword: Challenging women's oppression within Muslim society in Northern Nigeria. *Gender & Development*, 7(1), 56-61. doi: 10.1080/741922934
- Arndt, M., & De Bruin, G. (2006). Attitudes toward lesbians and gay men: Relations with gender, race and religion among university students. *Psychology in Society*, 33, 16-30. doi: 10.1080/00918369.2011.555672
- Baird, H. (2010). *Same-sex sexuality in the North-West Province*. Community report on outcomes of a research project. Pretoria: UNISA Centre for Applied Psychology.
- Barker, M., & Langdridge, D. (2008). Bisexuality: Working with a silenced sexuality. *Feminism & Psychology*, 18(3), 389-394.
- Bowleg, L., Huang, J., Brooks, K., Black, A., & Burkholder, G. (2003). Triple jeopardy and beyond: Multiple minority stress and resilience among Black lesbians. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 7(4), 87-108. doi: 10.1300/J155v07n04_06
- Cape Town Pride 2016 criticised for excluding lesbians and black LGBTI people. (2016, February 19). Retrieved from <http://www.mambaonline.com/2016/02/19/cape-town-pride-criticised-excluding-lesbians-black-lgbti-people/>
- Collins, P. H. (1993). Black feminist thought in the matrix of domination. *Social theory: The multicultural and classic readings*, 615-625.
- Collins, P. H. (1996). What's in a name? Womanism, Black feminism, and beyond. *The Black Scholar*, 26(1), 9-17. doi: 10.1080/00064246.1996.11430765
- Collins, P. H. (2002). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Routledge.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299. doi: 10.2307/1229039
- Department of Education. (2008). *Report of the Ministerial Committee on transformation and social cohesion and the elimination of discrimination in public higher education institutions*. Pretoria, South Africa: Department of Education Printing Offices.

- Diamond, L. M. (2008). *Sexual fluidity*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Ellis, C. S., & Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject.
- Ellis, S. J (2009). Diversity and inclusivity at university: A survey of the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) students in the UK. *Higher Education*, 57, 723–739. doi: 10.1007/s10734-008-9172-y
- Fraser, N. (1997). Transformation and student life at UCT: Overview of surveys of student climate. *Justice Interrupts: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition*, 1-23.
- Gibson, A., & Macleod, C. (2012). (Dis) allowances of lesbians' sexual identities. Lesbian identity construction in racialised, classed, familial, and institutional spaces. *Feminism & Psychology*, 0959353512459580.
- Graziano, K. J. (2004). Coming out on a South African university campus: Adaptations of gay men and lesbians. *Society in Transition* 35(2), 273–286. doi: 10.1080/21528586.2004.10419119
- Hancock, B., Ockleford, E., & Windridge, K. (1998). *An introduction to qualitative research*. Nottingham: Trent focus group.
- Horn, S. S. (2007). Adolescents' acceptance of same-sex peers based on sexual orientation and gender expression. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 36(3), 363-371.
- Jeffreys, S. (2014). *Gender hurts: A feminist analysis of the politics of transgenderism*. Routledge.
- Kaczorowski, C. (2004). Gay, lesbian, and queer Studies. *GLBTQ: An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Culture*.
- Kessi, S. (2013). Transforming historically white universities: Students and the politics of racial representation. *New Agenda: South African Journal of Social and Economic Policy*, 50, 53-56. doi:10.5964/jspp.v1i1.64
- Kiguwa, P. (2004). Feminist critical psychology in South Africa. In D. Hook (Eds.), *Critical psychology* (pp. 278-315). South Africa: Juta and Company Ltd.
- Kindon, S., Pain, R., & Kesby, M. (2008). Participatory action research. *International encyclopaedia of human geography*, 90-95. doi: 10.1016/B978-008044910-4.00490-9
- Lewis, D. (2005). Against the grain: black women and sexuality. *Agenda*, 19(63), 11-24. doi: 10.1080/10130950.2005.9674561

- Louise Barriball, K., & While, A. (1994). Collecting data using a semi-structured interview: a discussion paper. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 19(2), 328-335. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.1994.tb01088.x
- Mack, N., Woodsong, C., MacQueen, K. M., Guest, G., & Namey, E. (2005). Qualitative research methods: a data collectors field guide.
- Madriz, E. (2000). Focus groups in feminist research. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2, 835- 850.
- Malherbe, N., Cornell, J., & Suffla, S. (2015). *Taking pictures, telling stories and making connections: A photovoice manual*. Johannesburg, South Africa: Institute for Social & Health Sciences. University of South Africa.
- Matebeni, Z. (2011). *Exploring black lesbian sexualities and identities in Johannesburg*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg).
- Middleton, L. (2011, March 8). 'Corrective Rape': Fighting a South African scourge. Retrieved October 19, 2011, from <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2057744,00.html>
- Mwambene, L., & Wheal, M. (2015). Realisation or oversight of a constitutional mandate? Corrective rape of black African lesbians in South Africa. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 15(1), 58-88. doi: 10.17159/1996-2096
- Nkabinde, N., & Morgan, R. (2006). 'This has happened since ancient times... it's something that you are born with': Ancestral wives among same-sex sangomas in South Africa. *Agenda*, 20(67), 9-19. doi: 10.1080/10130950.2006.9674693
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2005). Women's bodies: Violence, security, capabilities. *Journal of Human Development*, 6(2), 167-183.
- Ratele, K. (2009). Apartheid, anti-apartheid and post-apartheid sexualities. *The prize/the price: Shaping sexualities in the new South Africa*, 290-305.
- Rest, J. R. (1994). *Moral development in the professions: Psychology and applied ethics*. Psychology Press.
- Richardson, E. (2006). Researching LGB youth in post-apartheid South Africa. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education*, 3(2/3), 135–140. doi: 10.1300/J367v03n02_15.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Sage.
- Roberts, D. E. (1993). Rape, violence, and women's Autonomy. *Chi.-Kent L. Rev.*, 69, 359.

- Rolfe, L., & Peters, S. (2014). *Through the rainbow lens: A participatory photovoice study of LGB students at UCT*. (Master's thesis, University of Cape Town).
- Sexual Minorities Uganda (2014). *Expanded criminalisation of homosexuality in Uganda: A flawed narrative*. Uganda: SMUG.
- Sithole, S. (2015). Challenges faced by gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (glbt) students at a South African university. *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, 11(4), 27. doi: 10.4102/td.v11i4.54
- Smuts, L. (2011). Coming out as a lesbian in Johannesburg, South Africa: Considering intersecting identities and social spaces. *South African Review of Sociology*, 42(3), 23-40. doi: 10.1080/21528586.2011.621231
- South African Government. (1996). *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996*.
- Steinar, K. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Studentlitteratur, Lund, 8.
- Stuart, O. (1992). Race and disability: Just a double oppression? *Disability, Handicap & Society*, 7(2), 177-188. doi: 10.1080/02674649266780201
- Tetreault, P. A., Fette, R., Meidlinger, P. C., & Hope, D. (2013). Perceptions of campus climate by sexual minorities. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 60(7), 947-964.
- Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 24(3), 369-387. doi: 10.1177/109019819702400309
- Weeks, J. (1981). *Sex, politics and society: The regulation of sexuality since 1800*. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.
- Yoshino, K. (2000). The epistemic contract of bisexual erasure. *Stanford Law Review*, 353-461.
- Zway, M. (2014). *Lesbian adolescents' representations of gender and sexuality: a participatory project*. (Unpublished master's research report). University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa.
- Zway, M., & Boonzaier, F. (2015). "I believe that being a lesbian is not a curse": Young black lesbian women representing their identities through photovoice. *Agenda*, 29(1), 96-107. doi: 10.1080/10130950.2015.1013784

Appendices

Appendix A – Study Advertisements

A. Advertisement used for SRPP Vula Site



B. Advertisement used for Flourish/Rainbow UCT recruitment.

HELLO

I am doing a photovoice project on the experience of queer black women at UCT. Currently, I am looking for 6-8 participants to help me with this and I can provide further information if you are interested. Comment or message me if you are willing to participate.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Appendix B - Interview Schedule

Tell me about a little bit about yourself. What are you studying? What is your background?

Could you tell me about your gender/sexuality? How you identify? Why?

Could you tell me about how you negotiate your identity as a LGBTQI+ student on this campus?

What does the term 'intersectionality' mean to you as a queer black person?

What have been your best and worst experiences as a queer black person?

What story do you aim to tell about being a queer black person in your photo-story?

Do you have any final thoughts/comments that you would like to share?

Appendix C – Ethics Approval

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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'J. Louw'.

Johann Louw PhD
Professor
Chair: Ethics Review Committee

	RESEARCH ACCESS TO STUDENTS	DSA 100
---	--	----------------

NOTES

- This form must be **FULLY** completed by all applicants who want to access UCT students for the purpose of research or surveys.
- Return the fully completed (a) DSA 100 application form by email, in the same word format, together with your: (b) research proposal inclusive of your survey, (c) copy of your ethics approval letter / proof (d) informed consent letter to: Moonira.Khan@uct.ac.za. Your application will be attended to by the Executive Director, Department of Student Affairs (DSA), UCT.
- The turnaround time for a reply is **approximately 10 working days**.
- NB: It is the responsibility of the researcher/s to apply for and to obtain **ethics approval and to comply with amendments that may be requested**; as well as to obtain approval to access UCT staff and/or UCT students, from the following, at UCT, respectively: (a) **Ethics**: Chairperson, Faculty Research Ethics Committee' (FREC) for ethics approval, (b) **Staff access**: Executive Director: HR for approval to access UCT staff, and (c) **Student access**: Executive Director: Student Affairs for approval to access UCT students.
- Note**: UCT Senate Research Protocols requires compliance to the above, **even if prior approval has been obtained from any other institution/agency**. UCT's research protocol requirements applies to all persons, institutions and agencies from UCT and external to UCT who want to conduct research on human subjects for academic, marketing or service related reasons at UCT.
- Should approval be granted to access UCT students for this research study, such approval is effective for a period of one year from the date of approval (as stated in Section D of this form), and the approval expires automatically on the last day.
- The approving authority reserves the right to revoke an approval based on reasonable grounds and/or new information.

SECTION A: RESEARCH APPLICANT/S DETAILS

Position	Staff / Student No	Title and Name	Contact Details (Email / Cell / land line)
A.1 Student Number	MKHLIN023	MS Linda Mkhize	0820862478 / liindamkhize@gmail.com
A.2 Academic / PASS Staff No.			
A.3 Visitor/ Researcher ID No.			
A.4 University at which a student or employee	University of Cape Town	Address if <u>not</u> UCT:	
A.5 Faculty/ Department/School	Department of Psychology		
A.6 APPLICANTS DETAILS If different from above	Title and Name	Tel.	Email

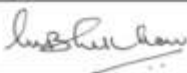
SECTION B: RESEARCHER/S SUPERVISOR/S DETAILS

Position	Title and Name	Tel.	Email
B.1 Supervisor	Ms Floretta Boonzaier	021 650 3429	floretta.boonzaier@uct.ac.za
B.2 Co-Supervisor/s			

SECTION C: APPLICANT'S RESEARCH STUDY FIELD AND APPROVAL STATUS

C.1 Degree – if applicable	BSocSc (Hons)
C.2 Research Project Title	The negotiation of gender and sexual identity amongst black queer women at the University of Cape Town.
C.3 Research Proposal Attached:	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
C.4 Target population	Black (Black/Coloured/Indian) Queer Persons at UCT
C.5 Lead Researcher details	If different from applicant:
C.6 Will use research assistant/s	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If yes- provide a list of names, contact details and ID no.
C.7 Research Methodology and Informed consent:	Research methodology: Individual Interviews and Focus Groups Informed consent: Will be obtained, voluntary participation
C.8 Ethics clearance status from UCT's Faculty Ethics in Research Committee /Chair (EIRC)	Approved by the UCT EIRC: Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> With amendments: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (a) Attach copy of your UCT ethics approval. Attached: Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> (b) State date / Ref. No / Faculty of your UCT ethics approval: 13/04/2014 Ref./Faculty.: Psychology

**SECTION D: APPLICANT/S APPROVAL STATUS FOR ACCESS TO STUDENTS FOR RESEARCH PURPOSE
(To be completed by the UCT - ED, DSA or Nominee)**

D.1 APPROVAL STATUS	Approved / With Terms / Not (i) Approved <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (ii) With terms <input type="checkbox"/> (iii) Not approved <input type="checkbox"/>	* Conditional approval with terms (a) Access to students for this research study must only be undertaken <u>after</u> written ethics approval has been obtained. (b) In event any ethics conditions are attached, these must be complied with <u>before</u> access to students.	Applicant's Ref. No.: MKHLIN023/ MS Linda Mkhize
D.2 APPROVED BY:	Designation <i>Executive Director – Department of Student Affairs</i>	Name <i>Dr Moonira Khan</i>	Signature 
			Date of Approval <i>30 May 2016</i>

Appendix D – Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



Department of Psychology

A study on the experiences of queer black women using photovoice.

1. Invitation and purpose

You are invited to take part in an empowerment research project on the experiences of queer black women. I am a researcher from the Department of Psychology at University of Cape Town.

2. Procedures

You will take part in a Photovoice project and where we will be asking you to take photographs regarding the topic at hand and then use these to tell a story.

If you agree to take part in the study, this is the process:

- I. We will have a one-on-one interview for approximately 60 minutes.
- II. At the end of the interview, you will be a camera and photography training. This training should help you use the camera and assist with giving ideas for what photographs to take to tell your story.
- III. You will keep the camera for two weeks. In these two weeks you will take as many as you wish and add a short description behind each picture.
- IV. The cameras will be returned after two weeks.
- V. After this we will have a focus group to further discuss the photographs you have taken which should take 60 – 90 minutes.
- VI. We will then for an exhibition sometime during the second semester.

3. Inconveniences

We don't expect that you will be distressed by the interview but if it does become distressing or uncomfortable you may stop participating at any time without any negative consequences. If you become distressed we will refer you for counseling, if necessary.

You may withdraw from the research at any time and your withdrawal will have no negative consequences for you or your participation in (name organization).

4. 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.

5. 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 interviews will be digitally recorded and these files will be stored on the principal researcher's computer and will be protected by a password.

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

6. 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.

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

Linda Mkhize – 082 086 2478 / liindamkhiize@gmail.com

Dr Floretta Boonzaier: 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 interview.

Participant Signature: _____

Should you feel that you require counselling or support, below is a list of organizations which could be contacted:

The Triangle Project

3 Caledonian Road

2nd Floor
Elta House
Mowbray
7700

Counselling: (021) 686 1457

OR

Gender DynamiX

Email: info@genderdynamix.org.za

Call: +27 (0)21 447 4797

Life Line

Services:

24 hour telephone counselling service

Rape, trauma, face-to-face, HIV/Aids counselling

Payment: services free of charge

Contact: Office: (+27 21) 461-1113

Crisis: (+27 21) 461-1111

Email: info@lifelinewc.org.za