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# Experiences of belonging and discrimination among LGBTIQ+ individuals in male single-sex schooling environments

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# Experiences of belonging and discrimination among LGBTIQ+ individuals in male single-sex schooling environments

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A research report submitted to the University of Witwatersrand, Faculty of Humanities, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Masters of Arts in Clinical Psychology (Coursework and Research Report)

University of the Witwatersrand, 2019

**Abstract**

This research explores the experiences of queer individuals who attended single-sex male schools, and the possible effects single-sex schooling have on supporting or subverting homophobia and transphobia in South Africa. With the advent of post-apartheid schooling in South Africa, legislation has become very progressive, but questions remain about whether policy enactment on the ground has moved too slowly, and whether, in many cases, could be skirted by institutions reluctant to embrace change.

This research aims to unpack the sometimes traumatic and sometimes resilience-building experiences queer participants had in male single-sex schools. This is done within a framework of intersectionality analysing data through narrative analysis.

Single-sex schools are shown to impact adolescent identity formation when it comes to gender identity and/or sexual orientation. School and peer cultural perceptions were found to be deeply connected to peer-group belonging, friendships and incidences of violence related to bullying and discrimination for these individuals. All participants were found to have been witness to violence – whether directly or through the visible homophobia that targeted more openly queer learners at the schools.

The process of this research highlighted the isolation many queer learners feel within the male schooling system and necessitates future engagement with the way these schools run. The overtly hyper-masculine and racist cultures being enshrined in these schools are found to often marginalise queer learners, especially queer learners of colour. This research concluded that single-sex male schools cannot hope to become an active part of the South African transformation agenda while such toxic cultures are still being perpetuated in building future generations of South Africans.

It is hoped future research could use this work to expand interest into the voices of queer South Africans and their experiences of the schooling system to facilitate constructive discussion around change and inclusivity moving forward.

**Keywords:** LBGTI, queer, youth, school, single-sex schooling, South Africa

## Declaration

I declare that this research report entitled "Experiences of belonging and discrimination among queer individuals in South African male single-sex schools" is my own work. All sources that I have drawn on or quoted have been referenced. This report is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology (Coursework and Research Report) at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signed on the _____ of _____ 2019

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## Notes on Terminology

BISEXUAL: Refers to individuals who are attracted to, and may form sexual and romantic relationships with, two sexes (usually male and female) or two genders (usually men and women), but not necessarily at the same time or equally (Meer, 2014; Qmunity, 2013).

CISGENDER: Used to describe persons whose gender identity and/or gender expression fits with the sex and/or gender they were assigned at birth (Meer, 2014; Qmunity, 2013).

COMPULSORY HETEROSEXUALITY: Coined by Adrienne Rich, this term is used to refer to the way lesbian and other queer experiences are negated and discriminated against in societal discourses (Rich, 1980). This idea is used to encompass the prestige given to heterosexual relationships at the expense of all other experiences (Rich, 1980).

GAY: A self-chosen label or identity for men who are attracted to other men. It is possible for men to have sexual and romantic feelings for other men but not identify as gay. Moreover, some men may identify as gay without acting on their feelings for other men. It can also be used as an umbrella term to refer to all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people (Meer, 2014; Qmunity, 2013).

GENDER BINARY: The gender binary is used to describe the assumption that sex and gender fall between the two poles of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’, or ‘male’ and ‘female’ without any middle ground (Card, 1994).

GENDER EXPRESSION: A term used to describe the way one presents oneself to the world, as either masculine or feminine, or both or neither. This can include dress, posture, hairstyle, tone of voice, gestures and other behaviours (Meer, 2014).

GENDER IDENTITY: A term used to describe a person’s internal and psychological sense of oneself as male, female, both, in between, or neither, which may or may not match the sex

assigned at birth. This can include refusing to label oneself with a gender birth (Meer, 2014; Qmunity, 2013). Gender non-conforming, gender variant, or genderqueer are often used to describe people who may not feel they fit into the categories of 'male' or 'female' included in more gender binary thinking (Qmunity, 2013).

HETERONORMATIVITY: A term used to refer to social roles, structures and systems that reinforce the idea that heterosexuality is the presumed norm and is superior to other forms of sexual orientation (Meer, 2014; Qmunity, 2013).

HETEROSEXISM: Related to compulsory heterosexuality, this notion describes discrimination that targets anyone who is not heterosexual (Sanger, 2010).

HETEROSEXUALITY: A term used to describe sexual, emotional, and/or romantic attraction to people of the 'opposite' sex or gender; also sometimes referred to as being 'straight' (Meer, 2014; Qmunity, 2013).

HOMOPHOBIA: Used to describe fear or hatred of, aversion to, and discrimination against sexual minorities. There are many levels and forms, including cultural/institutional, interpersonal, and internalised homophobia. Homophobia results in a number of adverse consequences for sexual minorities, including exclusion from social spaces, stigma, discrimination, abuse and violence (Meer, 2014; Qmunity, 2013).

HOMOSEXUALITY: A term used to describe sexual, emotional, and/or romantic attraction to people of the 'same' sex or gender. Given that this term is used as a pejorative epithet, some queer persons are uncomfortable with its use (Meer, 2014; Qmunity, 2013).

INTERSEX: Intersex people may have external genitalia that do not closely resemble typical male or female genitalia, or have the appearance of both male and female genitalia; the genitalia of one sex and the secondary sex characteristics of another sex due to a number of biological and/or environmental factors (Qmunity, 2013).

LESBIAN: A self-chosen label or identity for women who are attracted to other women. It is possible for women to have sexual and romantic feelings for other women, but not identify as lesbian. Moreover, some women may identify as lesbian without acting on their feelings for other women. Sometimes the term 'gay women' is used instead (Meer, 2014; Qmunity, 2013).

LGBTI+: An acronym used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex persons. There are a number of variants of this acronym, for example LGBTQI, which also includes questioning and intersex persons. Like the term queer, most variants of this acronym are intended to include all persons, excepting those who identify as heterosexual and/or cisgender (Meer, 2014; Qmunity, 2013).

PANSEXUAL: An individual who is attracted to, and may form sexual and/or romantic relationships with men, women and people who identify as any other gender identity not encompassed by binary gender terms (Qmunity, 2013).

QUEER: In the context of this research, the term queer is used to refer to both *orientation* queer persons (individuals attracted to people of the same gender) and *gender* queer persons (individuals – irrespective of sexual orientation – who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth) (Stryker, 2008). The term is intended to include all persons, except those who identify as heterosexual and/or cisgender. However, it is important to note that queer is a reclaimed term that is also used as a pejorative epithet and, as such, some people feel uncomfortable with its use. This term is often used instead of the LGBT acronym (Meer, 2014; Qmunity, 2013).

SEXISM: Discrimination against individuals based on their sex, most often directed towards those not identifying as male (Reddy, 2002).

SEXUAL MINORITIES: Used to describe persons whose sexual orientations or sexual activities do not adhere to mainstream notions of heterosexuality – ie lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer persons (Meer, 2014).

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: A term used to refer to a person's physical, romantic, emotional, and/or spiritual attraction to another person, which they may label as lesbian, gay, heterosexual, bisexual, queer, asexual, etc. Many people experience sexual orientation fluidly, and feel attraction or degrees of attraction to different genders at different points in their lives. Sexual orientation is defined by feelings of attraction rather than behaviour (Meer, 2014; Qmunity, 2013).

TRANSGENDER (OR TRANS): Refers to a wide range of people whose gender identity and/or expression differs from conventional expectations based on their assigned biological birth sex. This term may include, for example, persons on the male-to-female or female-to-male spectrums, those whose gender identity and/or expression falls outside of the male/female binary, and persons whose gender identity and/or expression is fluid. Importantly, identification does not depend on criteria such as surgery or hormone treatment status (Meer, 2014; Qmunity, 2013).

TRANSPHOBIA: Discrimination against trans people based in fear, including name-calling, jokes, rejection, exclusion and violence (Qmunity, 2013).

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

South Africa is facing an education crisis, one that hamstrings young learners based on class and access lines that mirrors the country's racial segregation history (Spaull, 2015). The crisis is particularly acute in government schools, the most elite of which still often operate in the single-sex model inherited from English coloniality (Morrell, 1994, 2000). Until 1990, many single-sex schools followed a whites-only policy: most were private and relatively well-funded. As wealthier schools have been shown to produce more skilled learners (Spaull, 2013), they have become bastions in South African education. This has translated into high demand for children to have access to these privileged schools.

Most of these schools have long histories in South Africa, based on colonial education models brought from England a century ago and often founded in religious and single-sex schooling ideologies (Morrell, 2000). This colonial model of education has been associated, in England and later in South Africa, with elite education spheres. They are either private or 'previously model-C'[1] schools, which are government schools but with higher fees and better pass rates (Morrell, 2000). Many are close to or over 100 years old, with entrenched cultures and legacies. Many of these schools promote an internal ideal of what it means to truly belong there, which works to honour the school's aspirations for its graduates.

Single-sex schooling is founded on the assumption that developing adolescents, male or female, are more likely to perform well academically in a single-sex environment compared to co-educational environments (Morrell, 2000). For girls, a single-sex school environment is also assumed to keep them safe from gender-based violence. This educational ideology reinforces a gender binary and serves to perpetuate many assumptions around femininities and masculinities (Bhana & Pillay, 2011).While, women do experience higher rates of gender-based violence due to societal sexism, this has been interrogated to have more to do with societal performances of masculinity than anything innate to male individuals (Bhana & Pillay, 2011; Msibi, 2011). Due to current societal sexism, men still retain more power than women in society, and social relationships take place within a

[1] These are public schools which are administered, and partially funded by, a governing body of parents and alumni as well as standard governmental funding that all public schools receive (Mostert, 2015).

gendered hierarchy of power (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This means that while women are seen to be at risk of male violence, this is not confined to schools and is found in all spaces of society, including families, universities and workplaces (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

The power implicit in certain kinds of masculinity (variable depending on individual contexts) is known as hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Certain kinds of masculinity are given the most currency in hegemonic societies, and individuals who embody these behaviours enjoy the most power and influence as a result (Connell, 1987; Morrell, Jewkes, & Lindegger, 2012). The assumption is that men are straight and embrace traditional forms of masculinity, such as being the provider in the home, or the head of the family (Morrell et al., 2012). Reaching the pinnacle of hegemonic masculinity then becomes the way to achieve societal power. However, embodying hegemonic masculinity becomes increasingly difficult as more and more behaviours are disallowed. In the end, only a Superman figure could reach this pinnacle, endowed with power, beauty and bravery. All other masculinities become subordinated, as examples of what 'real men' should not do (Morrell et al., 2012), with femininities featuring lower on the hierarchy and identities ascribing to neither gender the lowest group of all. This process must begin in the place most learning happens, the schooling environment. As such, masculinity is not seen to be something innate, but rather something learned (Morrell, 1998; Msibi, 2011), and the context of the school environment can make this learning process most evident.

The costs of hegemony have been well-documented in broad fields such as criminology (e.g. Messerschmidt, 1993), education and teaching pedagogy (e.g. Martino, 1995), the violence of contact sports (e.g. Messner & Sabo, 1990) and, importantly for later discussion in this research, the oppression of gay men (e.g. Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985). Hegemonic masculinity has also been extensively documented in South African research, notably because its application to power relations between groups of men addresses the racial tensions still present in post-apartheid South Africa (Morrell et al., 2012). Morrell's work (1994, 1998, 2000, 2002) emphasises tension in South Africa between men along class, race and location lines, not only gender ones.

Implicit in hegemonic masculinity is an assumption that men engage in intimate relationships with women. This means that gay men or trans women threaten this deeply-held assumption of the 'natural' roles of the sexes. Gay men, in particular, are regarded as outside of hegemonic expectations and, as a result, often derided for being "not man enough" by failing to meet the hegemonic criteria for masculinity (Carrigan et al., 1985). This culture of sexuality and gender policing is enacted on a macro level: among peer groups, families, institutions and broader society (Butler, 2011). Schools form a pivotal transition here between family life and emerging into society as an adult. Schools thus become an important bridge of learning for children of what is expected from them as they grow and what is most accepted by broader society.

Given that admission to single-sex schools is defined by sex barriers (put bluntly, what genitalia a child has), each school acts as a gatekeeper on gender. Moreover, these schools embrace certain ideals of the type of 'men' or 'women' they hope to produce (Morrell, 2000; Spaull, 2013). This can be particularly violent in spaces where hegemonic masculinity is more prevalent. The nature of the kinds of behaviours that are validated or punished within hegemonic masculinity in schools is significant for what children and adolescents learn about what society accepts (Connell, 1987). These behaviours become part of what each child and adolescent is taught as constituting acceptable gender performance (Butler, 2011). Yet, this is the culture enacted within these schools. In male single-sex schools, hegemony is present and, as a dominant reinforcing dynamic, encourages violence (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). For those not subscribing to these ideals, notably queer learners, the consequences can be violent – from peers, teachers and school administration (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Tomsen, 2002; Warwick & Aggleton, 2014).

Male spaces, like single-sex schools in South Africa, can be institutions of intolerance where only certain kinds of masculinities (heterosexual and cisgendered) are permitted, whether overtly through violence or more subtly through victimisation and discrimination. As such, queer youth may be subject to the harmful nature of this type of discrimination in adolescence. However, harmful violent masculine cultures are under-researched, especially in terms of the impact on a developing adolescent's later self-concept and personal history. The implications for well-being and mental illness need to

be further explored to either challenge or support cultures operating within single-sex male education spaces in this country. Despite extensive research into moral education and the role teachers play in perpetuating problematic ideologies (see Blake, 2016; DePalma & Francis, 2014; Francis, 2012; Mostert, Gordon, & Kriegler, 2015; Shefer, Kruger, Macleod, Vincent, & Baxen, 2015), little has been explored on the role of peer groups and school cultures within this structure during adolescence in South Africa. Single-sex schools could not exist without some broad assumptions about what sex and gender are, namely that these notions are fixed and easily distinguished. However, what has not been researched is how queer youth may experience this kind of rigidity and categorical thinking within the schooling space, at a time when identity as a sexual and gendered being is at its most formative (Erikson, 2014).

Existing research on single-sex schools is mostly found in Western foreign spaces, notably America and Australia. Research by Martino (2000) in Perth, Australia, found perceived sexual orientation influences the way masculinity is policed in a peer group of 16- and 17-year-old boys at a particular school. Normalising hegemonic forms of masculinity becomes a valid currency among peer groups, and affects how boys are targeted by bullying because of their sexual orientation (Martino, 2000). This research showed that targeted boys began to question their own worth. Pascoe (2005) links the creation of masculinity among adolescent boys with the positioning of homosexuality as the antithesis of a truly masculine identity in his research based in America. His research links the idea of sexual practices among gay men to relinquishing male privilege and power. Homophobia thus becomes a central theme in the organisation of adolescent male identities, with those seen as homosexual often being demoted in hegemonic hierarchies. The formative nature of this period for psychosocial and sexual orientation cannot be discounted, and the role peers can play in this system has been widely documented (Erikson, 2014). The ways in which gender and sexual orientations are subsequently performed is very strongly linked to experiences during this time (Butler, 2011).

This brings the discussion back to how queer communities are policed in certain societies. The state of minority rights in South Africa leaves much to be desired, despite being enshrined in a progressive constitution. Gay marriage, for example, is legal in South Africa, and our constitution prohibits discrimination based on sexuality (Cock, 2003), but

many same-sex couples have faced discrimination from officials at the Department of Home Affairs when trying to register their marriages (Dano, 2018). The effect of the constitution on the ground is hampered by ongoing homophobic conservatism (Mostert et al., 2015). Lived experiences for most individuals who are gay or transgender is one of intense scrutiny. In fact, some researchers have questioned whether constitutional protection has meant anything in practice when so many queer individuals continue to face high levels of discrimination (Mahomed & Trangoš, 2016).

Violence in the daily lives of queer students continues to pervade mainstream media. News of homophobic attacks and murders is reported almost daily in South Africa (Mkize, 2018; Mugo, 2018; Rannard, 2018). However, there is no research on how violence may be encountered in a school environment by queer individuals themselves. The violence that can accompany certain kinds of masculinities, collectively referred to as hegemonic masculinity (Morrell et al., 2012), needs to be addressed as, statistically, more violence may be prevalent in male-single sex schools (Pascoe, 2005) than in female-saturated spaces.

Being marginalised in this pivotal period can be a debilitating experience for queer adolescents, and students who are victimised are at much higher risk of mental illness, suicide, substance abuse and dropping out of school altogether (Eliason, 2010; Idemudia, Kolobe, & Tsheole, 2015; Perales, 2016; Russell & Joyner, 2001). Students of colour from economically-deprived backgrounds are most likely to experience marginalisation, often in the forms of hate speech and/or violence (Reddy, 2002). The impacts for long-term well-being have been examined in many papers, including those discussed above. Apart from the negative effects on mental health, queer individuals are more prone to 'minority stress', a state of being continually marginalised and discriminated against, which impacts mental health, job status, as well as social and home relationships (Nadal, Skolnik, & Wong, 2012).

The presence of these risks underscores the importance of examining how discrimination occurs and whether intervention is possible to support queer learners. Identifying how peer cultures, language and oppressive school legacies impact queer adolescents while attending these schools and afterwards will be very useful in contributing to the discourse on broader societally oppressive practices.

**Key concepts in this work**

This research has been undertaken using some broad assumptions about certain terms related to gender and sexuality. Queer, as noted, will refer to individuals who identify as part of the queer community. Because this research focuses on male single-sex schools, lesbians will not be included and thus the LGBTI+ acronym is not appropriate for use throughout the research. The term queer may be used as an umbrella term to refer to all LGBTI+ individuals, but is not meant as a homogenising or classifying term, with emphasis on individual identity descriptors kept sacred.

The term sexual orientation will refer to an individual's sexual and/or romantic desire for someone of the opposite and/or same biological sex. This can include the labels of being straight/heterosexual, gay/lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, asexual and others. Gender identity will be taken to mean an individual's feeling that they are a man, woman or neither, and does not need to be taken to match biological sex. Gender identity can therefore refer to an individual being a man, woman, non-binary, genderfluid and many more. The term cisgender will refer to someone whose gender identity matches the biological sex they were assigned at birth. The term transgender will refer to anyone whose gender identity and/or expression differs from conventional expectations based on their assigned biological birth sex (Qmunity, 2013).

The research will be also conducted from the framework of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). Ideally, this framework seeks to acknowledge the different social identities one individual may hold, and how each holds a position of tension within a global identity constellation. The intersections can hold important points of conflict and tension for an individual in terms of the ways they are allowed to belong or the ways they are discriminated against. I will look at this from the position of intracategorical complexity, as advanced by McCall (2005), which seeks to challenge the boundaries and construction of identity categories themselves, while acknowledging them as real and impactful in the lives of those who inhabit them.

The notion of compulsory heterosexuality is also vital to this research, from a specific gender theory stance (Butler, 2011). Essentially, this is taken to mean that all interactions and norms in society are governed by a pervasive culture of heterosexuality, and that this is enforced through the way people are allowed to be or not to be. This can include elements

like policing the way gender is expressed, sexual partners a person is expected to have (with the expected norm being one man and one woman), and the way gender identity can be defined. Within a culture of compulsory heterosexuality, the straight male is at the top of the hierarchy, with all other identity combinations falling below him (Butler, 1993). This straight male is, of course, also expected to be white and, as such, forms of racism and race bias must be accounted for in the research's broader frame of intersectionality.

Gender performativity is another Butlerian concept I will be using (Butler, 1993, 2011). By this, I mean the idea that while sex may be the physical genitalia an individual is born with, the gender this individual has is expressed by conscious choice and is not static. This research will be conducted under the belief that both gender and sexuality are self-defined. Prescribing identity on participants risks reinforcing hierarchies of what it means to enact the 'correct' gender or sexuality and will avoided as much as possible (Butler, 2011; Msibi, 2012).

**Aim and objectives**

The aim of this study will be to explore the experiences of queer individuals who attended single-sex male schools, and the possible effects single-sex schooling have on supporting or subverting homophobia and transphobia in South Africa. Research has been conducted on the effects of the current lack of inclusivity in sexual education as well as the negative effects of teacher bias (Bhana, 2014; DePalma & Francis, 2014; Francis, 2012), but no research has yet been conducted on the nature of peer systems and institutional cultures themselves in the many male single-sex schools that operate in South Africa. This research will be conducted within a framework of intersectionality using narrative analysis as the method of data analysis.

**Research questions**

This research will seek to investigate: i) what are the experiences of queer individuals in male single-sex schools; ii) how did a single-sex schooling experience impact adolescent identity formation when it comes to gender expression and/or sexual desire; iii) did school and peer cultural perceptions impact peer-group belonging, friendships and incidences of violence related to bullying and discrimination for these individuals.

**Chapter outlines**

The first chapter of this work explored the setting and broad outline of this work, including and introduction to the context, subject matter and purpose of the research project.

The second chapter of this work will explore the theoretical framework of intersectionality that underpinned this research, both in the planning, execution and interpretation stages.

The third chapter will include an exploration of literature on topics critical to the current work. This entailed exploring the South African constitution and queer inclusivity, the history of South African education, and the specific context of single-sex schooling in South Africa.

The fourth chapter will include an exploration of the methodology of poststructuralism, narrative analysis, as well as outlining the different processes involved in data collection and analysis.

The fifth and final chapter will analyse and discuss the data gathered in participant interviews related to the broad themes uncovered during data analysis including single-sex schooling, patriarchy and sexism, identity and socialisation, intersectional discrimination, and finally resilience and growth.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This research was guided by three key theoretical frameworks, namely post-structuralism, narrative theory and intersectionality. The broad umbrella of postructuralism was used to avoid any categorical assumptions and facilitate an understanding of all concepts relevant to the research (e.g. compulsory heterosexuality as not implicit but learned through reinforcement for children of certain behaviours and the punishment of others) as socially constructed. From the perspective of post-structuralism, individual identities are seen as fluid rather than static (Tamboukou, 2008). The research also drew on narrative theory, operating under the belief that individuals tell stories to make meaning and understand their life experiences (Munyuki & Vincent, 2017). Finally, intersectionality was used to facilitate understandings of narratives that take account of the context in which each participant exists.

Post-structuralism is rooted in French philosophy, most notably in the works of French theorists Jacques Derrida (1978), Michel Foucault (2002) and Jacques Lacan (2006). Within this body of work, these theorists began to interrogate the categorical reasoning previously characteristic of structuralism – asking not what someone's identity is, but rather how and why someone comes to hold multiple identities and what social contexts may be at play. Post-structuralism asserts that no one perspective is defined as 'truth', just as no one experience can apply to all those who may identify with it. It engages with essential questions of the very make-up of human subjectivity and how structures, agency and power may impact the identity-formation process (Howarth, 2013).

This essentially means that individuals live their own creation-making process, creating an identity within a broader macro context that may pressure them to conform to certain broader narratives that hold power (Carbin & Edenheim, 2013). These broader narratives or psychosocial processes include issues like relationships, friendships, family, culture, religion, class, etc. The interaction between psychological and social processes is complex and fluid, where the motivations and/or internal needs of the psyche are influenced by an individual's surrounding environment. Mental well-being may be supported by external factors, or similarly, a poor environment may promote mental illness when an individual does not find support or safety in social institutions like family or their local community. This could include historical factors such as an individual's family history of

poverty, racial oppression or community segregation leading to present-day distress. This idea is summed up by Karl Marx: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx, 1997, p. 329). This allows for some aspect of free will in identity creation, but also accounts for a historical context that must be unpacked to fully explore the weight of subjectivity. While subjective free will cannot be fully disavowed, the social constraints that limit individual identity creation are ever present (Butler, 2005, 2011).

An examination of the identity-creation process as evidenced in poststructural thought in turn necessitates an interrogation of language and the role it may play in broader societal systems that empower or disempower certain identities (Howarth, 2013). This means that language can be seen as a tool to support certain structures of human subjectivity. Consequently, language is neither value-neutral nor static, but fluid and dependent on the shifting power dynamics at play in any given context. To communicate, individuals use this layered language to express aspects of themselves in narratives.

A narrative is defined in this research as a sequential ordering or representation, particular to an individual. To express a life story is seen by narrative researchers as a kind of language, with implicit meanings underlying the surface-level facts and structure. Narratives are seen as a communicated experience but, due to the limitations of language, cannot ever fully allow subjectivity to emerge. Narratives do, however, allow local knowledge (i.e. understandings particular to individuals, times and places) to emerge and hold a unique place for previously silenced or oppressed narratives to be given the space to be articulated. The singularity of any narrative to an individual makes these stories relevant for local knowledge, or in other words, the knowledge held by a person, group or community that is in some ways unique to those who create it (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013). This is seen to underlie how narrative identities are created and how stories can play an important role in articulating personal identity and agency (Brunner, 1990). The idea that an individual can create knowledge based on their own lived experience is essential to operating in a post-structuralist framework. This influenced the research as narratives were seen to hold aspects of participant identities, the cultures and contexts in which they are embedded, and the ways they have worked with or against

mainstream narratives. Narratives are thus seen to exist relationally, within broader social processes of power and knowledge creation (Tamboukou, 2008).

While the validity of an individual narrative must be acknowledged, the broader societal structure that governs such an individual is always at play in how they may experience their everyday life (Carbin & Edenheim, 2013). These societal structures may include: where an individual lives; the government's stance and policies towards citizens; the global impacts of war and trade; and the individual's community context, including socioeconomic factors, class, race, gender and biological sex (Crenshaw, 1991). Not only do these external social constructions influence individual ones, but individuals exist inside 'meta-narratives' within these constructions: the narratives we tell about ourselves and our lives that are influenced by sometimes contradictory or vague accounts. Therefore, even in negotiating, redefining and retelling one's story/self, the individual is always caught up in an intertwined relationship of refusing, embracing and reconfiguring meta-narratives (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). The inclusion of both external and internal factors allows an individual narrative to be contextually situated within broader societal constructions. Moreover, this inclusion ensures the unique qualities of such narratives are not reduced, serving to highlight the broader forces that may enable or hinder individual choice.

This can be viewed as a multilevel model of narrative and seeks to examine the intersectionality of an individual's life that addresses the multiple categories of being to which any individual may ascribe. In this research, the embedded nature of identity was seen to be layered in power dynamics between different identities an individual may hold. This expresses the multilevel nature of identity and mirrors the complexity of society (Carbin & Edenheim, 2013). As such, intersectionality was used to problematise essentialising ideas of narratives as narrative theory has been criticised when applied broadly or without close examination of the context of each participant. While this research is focused on the issue of sexual and gender identity, it must account for the additional identity categories at play for each individual, including race, culture and class factors that impacted where each individual went to school. Essentialising identity to one category, for example sexual orientation, risks obscuring the complexity of society that does not allow identity categories to operate autonomously (Carbin & Edenheim, 2013).

Intersectionality posits that identity categories are integrated and mutually constitutive (Politics and Gender, 2007). Intersectionality was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the intertwining categories that meant women are oppressed differently depending on their economic means and race (Crenshaw, 1991). The differences in intragroup discrimination Crenshaw first noted among women has since been applied to many heterogeneous groups to look at differences in lived experiences. The full extent of this research cannot be fully accounted for at present, but some South African intersectional research includes looking into the lived experiences of gay and transgender students in university residences (Jagessar & Msibi, 2015; Kiguwa & Langa, 2017; Munyuki & Vincent, 2017; Nduna & Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2015), homophobia among teachers (Bhana, 2014), homophobia in South African schools (Msibi, 2012; Nel, 2003; Reygan, 2016) and explorations of South African masculinities (Morrell, 1994, 1998; Morrell et al., 2012; Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005; Ratele, 2006).

Intersectionality is theoretically important to note to position subsequent research and further data analysis in a macro context that acknowledges all factors at play when an individual experiences discrimination. The theoretical stance of this research is to interrogate assumptions to investigate what may be underlying accepted constructions.

## Chapter 3: Literature Review

The previous chapter outlined the theoretical underpinnings of this research, while this chapter will explore the literature in similar fields in South Africa and internationally. This will include the history of single-sex schooling in South Africa, the nature of the constitution and government, as well as school-based research on teachers, cultures and/or peer groups in terms of sexual and gender orientation.

### The South African constitution and queer inclusivity

While South Africa implemented a progressive constitution with the advent of the post-apartheid government, society has yet to fully embrace inclusivity when it comes to the queer community (Jagessar & Msibi, 2015). The constitution (1996) stipulates that no one may be unfairly discriminated against for any reason including their race, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin, colour and sexual orientation. Same-sex civil unions have been legal since 2006 as per the Civil Union Act 17 2006, and South Africa is the only country in Africa (at November 2018) to do so. However, the all-encompassing protection supposedly enshrined in the constitution has not necessarily translated into similarly progressive social and institutional attitudes.

Home Affairs government employees have been known to use their own religion as justification for refusing to perform same-sex marriage ceremonies, an issue that is currently being addressed in a new amendment bill (Maphanga, 2018). A trans prisoner has taken the government to court for refusing to allow her to express her female identity in prison, citing verbal abuse from prison guards and the violence she has endured by being placed in a male facility (Pitt, 2018). Access to healthcare for trans individuals wishing to have gender-confirmation surgery has been shown to be slow and marked with pitfalls. Trans individuals are often denied the right to reproductive healthcare due to lack of information, discrimination, mistreatment by officials, and the significant financial costs of trans healthcare that are often not supported by the government or private medical aids (Husakouskaya, 2013). Police have been accused of not taking violent crime against queer South Africans seriously (Obose, 2018), with a report by the Hate Crimes Working Group

in February 2018 revealing two out of three hate crimes are not reported for fear of victimisation and homophobic responses from police (Collison, 2018).

Despite South Africa's progressive legislation, homophobic and transphobic rhetoric is pervasive in the country and has given rise to particularly punitive social structures. Such rhetoric against queer individuals is frequently based in religious and cultural doctrine, with queer individuals often called 'devils' or 'sinners' (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy, 2015), or 'un-African' (Human Rights Watch, 2011). The South African government has appeared reluctant to speak out against other African countries who are less accepting of LGBTI+ individuals, and this has been seen as a kind of fence-sitting that tacitly condones hate crimes across the African continent (Nel, 2014).

These instances are seen as a reflection of the broader culture of compulsory heterosexuality, where norms are underpinned by silencing queer individuals who do come forward to report instances of discrimination and victimisation, and visibly warning those who have not what may happen to them should they open up (Sanger, 2010). This broad governmental silencing of queer individuals has infiltrated all departments, not only Home Affairs and the police. Legislative policies and official institutions are thus constantly embroiled in governing citizens' most private worlds. Similarly, the government can sanction the configuration of love, desire, intimacy and relationships.

Michel Foucault argues that state governance is rooted in a process he termed biopolitics, part of governmentality, or the process by which governments control their citizens (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy, 2015). This means that elements of social life, including sex and gender, become invested in powerlessness when the state controls certain aspects like who can get married, how your gender is recorded on documents and what kinds of sex and gender are 'good' or sanctioned, and which are 'bad', or socially and legislatively difficult (Sanger, 2010). This means that the private becomes socially imbued with meaning so that certain sexualities are seen as acceptable (and therefore those who embody them are seen as acceptable citizens), whereas others are seen as deviant (and, as such, considered unruly or ungovernable citizens) (Nyanzi, 2011).

Governmentality thus sits at the nexus between self-governance of what subjectivity the individual feels able to inhabit, and what external forces regulate that individual's behaviour and sense of belonging to the community (Foucault, 2003; Nyanzi,

2011). Policies are therefore directly implicated in individual self-expression, and sexual and gender identity. As an arm of the government, the education system is part of this external regulatory system, and the silent homophobia implicit in this system is well-documented and very pertinent to the current research, as will be explored presently.

**The history of South African education**

The constitution has played an important role in influencing the present curriculum for school learners in South Africa. Pre-1994, apartheid-era education was very conservative and no religious, racial or gender tolerance was accepted in state teaching spaces (Nduna, Mthombeni, Mavhandu-Mudzusi, & Mogotsi, 2017). South African schools embraced a staunch macho-patriarchal culture in the apartheid regime, similar to that of American masculinity which "conjures up notions of power and legitimacy and privilege" and symbolically represents "the power of the state and…uneven distributions of wealth" (Halberstam, 1998, p. 2). The masculinity valued by the state influenced what was allowed to be taught in schools. This was perceived to contribute to a kind of academic suppression, where teachers and academics felt obligated to preserve the apartheid system and its ban on homosexuality in the Immorality Amendment Act 21 1950 (which also banned interracial marriage) (Bunting, 2006). When the democratic government assumed power in 1994, legislation became very progressive, but policy enactment on the ground has moved far slower.

Research that has been conducted in South Africa notes widespread violence in the country's schools, with almost all research in this area indicating a pervasive experience of discrimination and bullying among queer learners (Bhana & Pillay, 2011; Jagessar & Msibi, 2015; Msibi, 2011, 2012; Nel, 2003; Ratele, 2006; Reddy, 2002; Reygan, 2016). Butler and colleagues found that peer harassment, harassment by teachers and administrators, and rejection and isolation were experienced by most queer learners they interviewed (Butler, Alpaslan, Strumpher, & Astbury, 2003). They found that discrimination in schools is so rampant that it violates the constitutional right to safety and education for queer learners. This study highlighted prevalence in South Africa, but also concurred with international studies in the USA (Ungar, 2000) and the UK (Warwick &

Aggleton, 2014) that similar discrimination is happening in Western countries (Butler et al., 2003).

Studies in Australia found similar patterns of compulsory heterosexuality and cultures of bullying and homophobia not addressed by school structures (Martino, 2000; Pascoe, 2005). Research focusing on transphobic bullying in London schools found that most discrimination towards queer learners fell into 12 categories: micro aggressions present in misgendering trans individuals; assumption of a homogenous transgender experience; exoticisation; discomfort or disapproval of queer experiences; denial of the reality of transphobia; assuming sexual or biological pathology; aggression towards families; denial of individual transphobia experiences; denial of privacy; derogatory language; endorsing heterosexuality and binary gender; and physical violence (Nadal et al., 2011). While this study only looked at trans adolescent experiences, the pervasive violence encountered has implications for how queer learners fare in school more broadly.

Research focusing on the experiences of queer learners has often neglected to account for other aspects of their identities that may place them at the receiving end of harassment. Few studies explicitly identify learners' race or class, leaving those elements of subjectivity relatively invisible in the esearch base in South Africa and internationally (Msibi, 2012). Researchers in queer theory were already asking in 2005 where more intersectional research lay when looking at queer issues (Eng, Halberstam, & Muñoz, 2005), and while more intersectional research exists now, it is still comparatively thin compared to more general gender and sexualities research. Much research exists highlighting the way society is currently structured to favour white, cisgender men and a dearth of research on how that affects cisgender women (Butler, 1993, 2011; Halberstam, 1998; Rubin, 1998). However, research into what that *means* for those who live in such an unequal world, such as people of colour or queer individuals, is still fairly thin.

Intersectionality, as noted previously, was the first framework to look into how women of colour experience discrimination across both gender and racial lines (Crenshaw, 1991). Although the necessity to document more broadly how patriarchy and racism affect individuals has increased research in this area, such research is undertaken primarily in the global North among feminist scholars (Carbin & Edenheim, 2013). The power intersectionality has in South Africa is significant given the country's history of racial

segregation, which has meant that current economic inequalities are often clustered around racial and gender factors (Kiguwa & Langa, 2017; Mkhize, Bennett, Reddy, & Moletsane, 2010; Nduna & Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2015; Nduna et al., 2017). Intersectional research into queer issues in Africa is very sparse, however this is changing, and many active researchers, like those cited above, are making considerable contributions to the field.

For this research, intersectionality allows for a contextual view of the current way education is structured in South Africa. During apartheid, racial segregation allowed for the white supremacist government to cling to power (Bhana, 2014). This included public spaces, neighbourhoods and, most importantly for this research, schools. South African citizens had already been racially classified according to the Population Registration Act 30 1950. This allowed the government to control all people of colour and essentially legalised race-based oppression (Nel, 2003). White children were legally mandated to attend school while black and coloured children were either uneducated or forced in 1953 into the model called bantu education – an inferior and discriminatory model designed to oppress and denigrate everyone who was not a white South African (Morrell, 2000; Msibi, 2012).

Bantu education prioritised obedience and loyalty from black South Africans (Nel, 2003). In 1975, R644 was spent on the average white child's schooling, while a mere R42 was spent on schooling a black child (Morrell, 2000; Ndlovu, 2011). Schools for children of colour were purposely overcrowded, underfunded and centres for racism, with children made to clean the schools and most government funding cut to force local communities to fund the schools themselves (Ndlovu, 2011; Nel, 2003). This was not enforced without strong resistance. The most influential demonstration took place in 1976 when over 20 000 people marched in Soweto to protest bantu education – especially the medium of education being Afrikaans, the language of the ruling minority, and not English or one of the languages spoken by the majority of South Africans, such as isiZulu or isiXhosa (Ndlovu, 2011). Guided by many of the politically active and aware teachers in township schools who had studied at liberal and diverse institutions like the University of Fort Hare, students took to the streets only to be met with undue violence, leaving 176 dead and hundreds injured when state police opened fire (Msibi, 2012; Ndlovu, 2011).

The history of unequal and inferior education for black South Africans meant that when the African National Congress (ANC) came into power in 1994, equal education was a priority of the new government (Nel, 2003; Spaull, 2013). However, the decades had taken their toll and rural schools were still massively ill-equipped and understaffed (Spaull, 2013). With the repeal of racial segregation, many people of colour returned to urban business centres, able to live and work in areas previously kept whites-only. This meant that more schools were being opened to ethnic groups previously excluded on race or being geographically too far away to access them (Spaull, 2015).

The best schools were inherited from British colonial rule and kept whites-only under apartheid. This meant that white schools were often modelled on British schooling with many being boarding schools, Christianity-based, and single-sex institutions (Morrell, 2000). Along with the model for schooling, many colonies in Africa, including South Africa, outdated colonial era laws and rigid beliefs around normative values (Nel, 2014).

Single-sex schooling was associated with elite ideas of what school was, modelled after places in England like Eton College or St Paul's Girls' School. These schools were kept whites-only until the 1990s or the formal dissolution of the apartheid government in 1994 (Morrell, 1994, 2000). As such, elite education facilities were now open to black South Africans. Given the history of bantu education and the continuing failure of township and rural schools to adequately educate students, formerly white-only schools became highly coveted by most parents looking to give their children the best education and means of success. While race is not ostensibly a barrier to education in post-apartheid South Africa, historical racial oppression and the current class divides in access to resources mean that the best schools are still predominantly white and/or middle-class (Msibi, 2012; Reygan, 2016). Learners from lower-income groups continue to perform worse academically and are shown to become trapped in poverty by their limited access to affordable, good-quality education (Spaull, 2013, 2015).

In a survey on the top 100 schools in South Africa in 1999, almost one-third (32) were boys-only (Morrell, 2000). Single-sex schools for girls were recommended by a Gender Equity Task Team (GETT) set up after the advent of the democratically elected government that advised girls-only spaces would be safer and more conducive to

empowering South African girls (Morrell, 2000). The impact on boys is under-researched, but some instances exists which will be explored in the following section.

**Single-sex schooling culture**

Broadly, this work will focus on adolescence, the period between entering puberty at 12 or 13 years and leaving school around age 18. This includes the physical changes accompanying puberty such as body and pubic-hair growth, genital development and growth spurts (Connell, 2005; Lanyado & Horne, 2009). This developmental stage is also characterised psychologically by identity formation and exploration (Erikson, 2014). Successful negotiation of adolescence is often seen to be accompanied by strong feelings of self-worth and purpose as the adolescent progresses into early adulthood/late adolescence. Identification with peers, as opposed to parents, takes centre stage as adolescents start to develop some kind of independence. The biological changes that accompany puberty can be seen to be particularly chaotic, and contribute to the volatility of the period as adolescents also explore their identity, sexuality and gender (Lanyado & Horne, 2009).

Adopting a masculine or feminine identity is said to be consolidated during adolescence as individuals explore, mirror and internalise behaviours, values and norms from peers and from observing what is socially acceptable (Connell, 2005). It is also the time where sexuality is seen to be 'awakened', characterised by social preoccupation with others' sexual experiences, especially among teenage boys, and becomes "a claim to masculine honour" (Connell, 2005, p. 14). Research shows that this period is when hegemonic masculinity is learned, as well as the notion of heterosexuality being compulsory (Connell, 1987, 2005). It is important to conceptualise this formative period before looking at adolescence and sexuality in a South African context.

The success rate of single-sex schools has meant many South African adolescents are educated in this segregated environment. Adolescents go through such schools in a predominantly gendered environment, often accompanied by the elite culture inculcated into these spaces where the focus is on aspiring to wealth (Brandt, 1986; Nel, 2003). The effects of single-sex schooling, however, have not been broadly researched, with very little

focus on the role this climate can play in perpetuating normative ideas on sexuality, gender identity and gender expression.

These schools are steeped in Western capitalism, which often subtly obscures colonialist ideals about what constitutes progress and success (Brandt, 1986). This means that these schools often encourage students to pursue lucrative career paths and assimilate to Western constructs of language and culture (including English accents and social patterns of interaction) (Nel, 2003). The culture endorsed by these schools mirrors the culture that brought the model to South Africa: English, Christian and patriarchal (Bhana & Pillay, 2011; Morrell, 1994). The GETT report discussed above reinforced the creation and maintenance of girls-only schools and, by extension, single-sex boys schooling, as violence in schools has been deemed a problem of masculinity (Bhana & Pillay, 2011; Morrell, 2002). Bhana and Pillay (2011) describe this notion as one that essentialises patriarchy, and can also bolster racist stereotypes about black working-class boys being violent and sexually aggressive. Their research shows how single-sex girls' schools are not utopias for empowering femininities, but rather full of conflict, often entwined with conflict around race, class, sexuality and ethnicity.

The idea of a single-sex school further enforces a language of gender binaries where boys and girls are considered to be biologically determined and easily categorised (Bhana & Pillay, 2011). This precludes the existence of multiple femininities and masculinities – effectively pigeon-holing adolescents. The current focus on establishing ways to more ethically educate South African adolescents means it is now also time for research to examine which contexts best suit healthy identity creation and expression, and highlight how single-sex schooling may not be conducive to such a project (Bhana & Pillay, 2011; Bigler & Signorella, 2011).

The presumed value of single-sex schooling is frequently based on the assumption that splitting boys and girls decreases the distraction of sexual desire, leading to improved academic performance, and prevents girls from experiencing violence. However, research suggests such assumptions are flawed (Bhana & Pillay, 2011; de Lange, Mitchell, & Bhana, 2012; Morrell, 2000). Rather, single-sex schools have been shown to increase the risk of eating disorders among girls (Davey, Jones, & Harris, 2011), do not change the rate of violence among either boys or girls (Bantjes & Nieuwoudt, 2014; Simmons, 2011) and

reinforce heterosexuality and limited definitions of femininity and masculinity (Bantjes & Nieuwoudt, 2014; Bhana & Pillay, 2011; Bigler & Signorella, 2011; Carrigan et al., 1985; DePalma & Jennett, 2010; Hanson, 2015; Langa, 2015; Martino, 2000; Msibi, 2012; Nel, 2003). Other key work in this area of school violence includes Morrell (2002), who found that violence in schools needs to be looked at systemically, since a school may function as a site and producer of violence, as well as the starting point for ending violence. Research by McArthur (2015) found that in schools in the Northern Cape, homophobic violence is pervasive, and that the boys interviewed experienced routine discrimination on the grounds of sexual identity. Solutions created by participants in this study aimed at promoting a culture of tolerance and respect both inside the school and in the broader community.

Within the broader schooling context in South Africa, schools mirror the culture of patriarchy and rigid gender roles of this society (Msibi, 2012). The patriarchal culture in South Africa privileges male individuals and is present across ethnic and cultural groups, playing a significant role in perpetuating and even creating violent spaces (Shefer et al., 2015). This includes continued use of violence against women, corrective rape perpetuated against lesbians, and homophobic hate crimes (Bhana, 2014; de Lange et al., 2012; Human Rights Watch, 2011).

The country's ex-president, Jacob Zuma, was famously acquitted of rape (Sanger, 2010) and was infamously heterosexist, often denouncing gay black men as people he would "knock out" and that same-sex marriage was "a disgrace to the nation and God" ("Zuma earns wrath of gays and lesbians", 2006). The adoption of more progressive legislation in the constitution and amendments to the marriage bill to explicitly include same-sex unions has not yet meant everyday interactions are no longer steeped in homophobia and heterosexist discourse (Dano, 2018). This affects schooling, as legal protections have failed to redress the violent masculinities and homophobia of South Africa's past (Msibi, 2012). Schools have been shown as key areas in targeting heteronormative and violent sexual and gender practices, and the role of targeting prejudice in these spaces cannot be overlooked (DePalma & Jennett, 2010; Shefer et al., 2015).

Research by Bhana (2014) highlighted the way compulsory heterosexuality permeates most teachers' classes, and the way teachers themselves felt pulled to uphold homophobic cultural values instead of inscribing more tolerant views. Teachers in this

research were aware of homophobic bullying but felt unable to intervene to assist victimised queer learners. Their views were found to be deeply rooted in heterosexual social and cultural practices and to either support violently homophobic spaces at worst or, at best, demonstrated a failure to disrupt such practices. Bhana (2014) found that for education to be moral and address systemic injustice based on race or sexuality, teachers would need to be supported in learning about homophobia and cultural practices that mean certain learners are marginalised, to make schools a safer space. The lack of diversity training and support from management in allowing teachers to address sexuality in the classroom means many schools become support structures of societal homophobia that threatens the lives of queer South Africans (Bhana, 2014).

Teachers have been shown to generally favour freedom of expression and the enforcement of zero-tolerance policies towards bullying on the basis of sexual orientation or any other identities. However, while mostly supportive of the right to safety and freedom of expression for students, most teachers indicate they are unaware if discrimination happens among learners (Mostert et al., 2015). In some cases, teachers have been shown to consciously ignore such discrimination should they see it happening (Francis, 2012), leaving most push-back to minority sexually diverse teachers. who are often the few voices actively voicing concern over discrimination and cultural practices that discriminate against queer youth in schools (Brown & Diale, 2018). The existing life orientation curriculum has been shown to either exclude issues of diversity or sexuality, or to reinforce the stigmatisation of anything other than heterosexuality (DePalma & Francis, 2014; Shefer et al., 2015). Given the sometimes-intolerant teaching styles, which endorse heterosexuality as the norm and anything else as deviant, many students begin to associate other sexual identities as a matter to be kept secret or separate to school life (Francis, 2012).

In the United Kingdom, Warwick and Aggelton (2014) found that in all-boys' schools, the word 'gay' was used as a negative slur, and often a precursor to physical violence directed at boys seen not to be masculine enough or openly gay. Terms such as

*moffie*[2], *stabane*[3] or *skesana*[4] have been shown to be used in South African schools to oppress queer learners as tools of sexism and homophobia – a form of hate speech explicitly criminalised by the constitution (Msibi, 2012; Reddy, 2002; Reygan, 2016). Research by Mostert and colleagues (2015) in South Africa highlights how valuing heteronormativity in schools results in homophobia and contributes to the hostility queer learners often encounter at school.

Homophobia in schools is not limited to language. It can include physical violence and cyber-bullying through the internet and social media (Warwick & Aggleton, 2014), as well as social punishments like being isolated or public humiliation (Nel, 2003). Bullying in boys' schools has been shown to reinforce power inequalities, with the most masculine, heterosexual boys perceived as the most powerful, and boys who display femininity, homosexuality or are part of marginalised groups in terms of race or class becoming targets (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Hearn et al., 2012). This power inequality means there are very few boys who can occupy powerful positions, while the majority become at risk of being targeted for anything that is not performative of hegemonic and violent masculinity (Connell, 2005). Acceptable behaviour and feelings are kept in a rigidly narrow zone, and violence against those who deviate from this zone can be particularly severe as perpetrators often feel they are preserving male honour (Tomsen, 2002). Anything related to alternative gender performances, homosexuality, being helpless or powerless, or being emotionally vulnerable is seen to violate this male honour and thus deserve punishment in a hegemonic system (Carrigan et al., 1985; Connell, 2005; Hearn et al., 2012; Rich, 1980). All masculinities not part of hegemony are subordinated masculinities (Carrigan et al., 1985). Powerful forms of masculinity and compulsory heterosexuality are often filtered into institutional practices and become embedded in much broader concepts such as the healthcare system, legal system and, most pertinently, education (Rich, 1980).

[2] Afrikaans homophobic slur
[3] isiZulu term, used historically for intersex individuals and more recently applied to gay individuals as well (Reygan, 2016)
[4] isiZulu homophobic slur

Little research exists on these institutional cultures in South African single-sex schools, with most research focused on university or co-educational spaces. However, some research does demonstrate the operation of hegemonic masculinity in South African boys' schools. Research by Bantjes and Niewoudt (2014) investigated an incident at a private monastic boys' school when matric learners vandalised the school after-hours (including damage to property, defacing property with pornographic, heterosexist and homophobic graffiti, and insulting behaviour towards teachers). This disruptive behaviour is characterised by the researchers as representative of the culture of hegemonic masculinity espoused by the school and thus entrenched in its sociocultural practices. Connell (1987) terms these practices part of a gender regime that is embedded within an institutional culture, such as a school.

Msibi (2012) found that queer learners in township co-educational schools often experience school life negatively and are bullied and harassed by students and teachers. Similar research by Langa (2015) found gay boys were isolated and seen as deviant or un-African by other learners and perceived as a threat to the Christian heterosexual family unit. This research also identified fear by heterosexual boys that they could be 'contaminated' by queer classmates, thus threatening their own tenuous hold over hegemonic masculinity. Queer classmates were policed in their style of speaking (with too-soft or high tone of voice seen as effeminate) and in male spaces where queer learners were accused of sexually harassing heterosexual learners.

South African researchers have also examined the experiences of queer youth in university contexts, which warrants discussion since it relates to individuals shortly after they leave high school. Graziano (2004) found queer students often keep their sexual orientation a secret to avoid victimisation and violence, with residences being seen as a hotbed for harassment and discrimination between students. Similarly, Jagessar and Msibi (2015) found this had not changed since Graziano's research ten years earlier, with residences still being experienced as unsafe and violent spaces for queer students. The hegemonic masculine student culture endorsed by residences is part of what keeps queer students marginalised, isolated and afraid (Munyuki & Vincent, 2017; Nduna & Mavhandu-Mudzusi, 2015).

This homophobia has been argued to be steeped in gender practices informed by South Africa's broader patriarchal and misogynistic cultural practices (Kiguwa & Langa, 2017). Cisgender gay male students are seen to be at the receiving end of the most violence for defying the hegemonic masculinity South African males are expected to espouse (Kiguwa & Langa, 2017). The normalisation of heterosexuality in university spaces means that acts of homophobia and violence are often silenced by administration or students themselves, who fear further recrimination if they speak out (Jagessar & Msibi, 2015; Kiguwa & Langa, 2017).

Jagessar and Msibi's (2015) research suggests that when queer students live in environments that promote homophobia, individuals often accept and excuse victimisation, a form of internalised homophobia and assimilation that can be distressing. University students who are queer have been shown to be denied access to support from university systems meant to protect all students (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy, 2015). This discrimination is believed to contribute to queer learners struggling to find work, experiencing higher rates of mental illness (namely anxiety and depression), and being at higher risk for suicide compared to their heterosexual peers (Idemudia et al., 2015). In South Africa, research has linked lowered self-esteem and frequent experiences of hate crimes as risk factors for the emergence of depression in queer individuals (Polders, Nel, Kruger, & Wells, 2008).

In these cases, male students often felt justified by their power within the patriarchal culture to regulate others' identities across gender and sexuality lines. This regulation is frequently enforced through direct or secondary violence (e.g. exclusion, humiliation and degradation) (Galtung, 1990). Research shows that students enact violence through a kind of mob culture, targeting others deemed different together, creating a form of public witnessing, and promoting a culture of fear of violence and deviance (Jagessar & Msibi, 2015). As such, this communal culture or institutional tradition enforces inclusion by adhering to a strict heteronormative framework.

However, the negative theme of most of this research has been critiqued for failing to allow for positive accounts of resilience and diversity of experience among queer youth (Galupo, Krum, Hagen, Gonzalez, & Bauerband, 2014; Kiguwa & Langa, 2017; Msibi, 2012). Queer learners at school and in universities have been shown to be resilient, a means

of resisting the oppression they face and remaining positive to enforce their own agency within a violent system. This resilience is a key strength many queer learners rely on to regain power by, for example, refusing to be silenced or keeping a positive self-image despite bullying or harassment (Msibi, 2012). Research into homophobia in schools shows similar resilience patterns. Martino (2000) shows that boys targeted by homophobic bullying are more likely to question hegemonic masculinity. Boys in this study used their violent experiences to make sense of cultural practices and how this impacted their lived experiences (Martino, 2000).

This has also allowed for active resistance to instances of discrimination. The constitution has enabled a more protective legal framework that has, in many cases, allowed queer individuals to legally charge perpetrators of hate speech or violence (Nel, 2003). This queer visibility has been highlighted in the growing support for movements such as Johannesburg Pride (Igual, 2018) and student groups, societies or organisations operating in most universities that provide friendship and support for queer learners (Graziano, 2004). Groups have been shown to allow participants a stronger self-image and higher self-esteem due to the benefits of queer visibility and the support of others who can identify with personal experiences (Graziano, 2004; Jagessar & Msibi, 2015).

Despite a lack of comprehensive research in this field, the research that does exist highlights the absence of specific studies on male single-sex schools, especially in South Africa. How this contributes to broader discussions about sexism, gender-based violence and queer learners is important to investigate, positioning this research in that gap to explore the intersection of these fields.

## Chapter 4: Methods

This research was exploratory and poststructuralist as explored in Chapter 2. It was conducted using a narrative of data collected through individual interviews with participants. This chapter will discuss the methodological assumptions underpinning this research, before outlining the different processes involved in data collection and analysis.

### Sampling

Young adults over the age of 18 who attended single-sex boys' high schools were sampled, using both snowball and purposive sampling. The time gap was allowed for participants to have had some time to process high-school experiences and possibly feel more secure in talking about them. A call was put out for participants on the social media platform Facebook via my personal profile and those who shared the post, and shared by individuals in the research network. Participants either directly approached me or were directed to the research by early participants. Participants were initially approached by email, followed by meeting in person once they agreed to participate and had read through the information sheet (Appendix B). Eight respondents comprised the final participant pool. All participants were two or three years out of high school (age 20 or older) to allow for time to process some of their schooling experiences. While a race quota was not enforced, I attempted to seek out fewer white participants and more participants who identified as black to allow the sample to be representative of South Africa's demographics, so white participants who contacted me after I had started interviewing the initial four white participants were not pursued for this research. I cannot say participant sampling was done in an exact way, since my sampling was not random or statistically-based, but I trust this approach enabled a diverse sampling process. The final sample pool consisted of three white gay men; one white heterosexual trans woman; one gay Indian man; one black bisexual man; and two black gay men.

### Method of data collection

Data was collected through open-ended, semi-structured interviewing (see Appendix C for interview schedule), with each participant providing elicited narratives on the topic of schooling and any impacts they believed emanated from this period. This type of

interviewing style is seen to elicit experience-based narratives (Squire, 2008). While broad questions were sometimes used to open up conversation on participant backgrounds, the primary method of data collection was a semi-structured form of interviewing to focus on themes of belonging, sexual orientation and gender identity. Interviews were not timed but most took approximately an hour.

Data from the research was audio-recorded after consent was given by participants. These audio-recordings were subsequently transcribed and the file stored in a password-protected laptop for future reference. The transcriptions use pseudonyms chosen by participants or their real names, depending on their preference, and any salient identifying features (like school or place of work) were redacted if I felt it was necessary to protect participants from being identified. It was important to safeguard the identity of participants to avoid discrimination, especially if the participant individual had not, or does not want to 'come out' or reveal sexual or gender orientations to others.

**Method of data analysis**

All data was analysed through a post-structuralist qualitative framework, addressing the data collected as narratives of experience. Importantly, analysis was informed by an understanding that lived experience and the world we inhabit are socially constructed. Ideally, this perspective is, at its core, one of fluidity: the idea that truth is intangible and cannot be separated from the ways truths come into being (Tamboukou, 2008).

The way narratives are constructed can, at times, be seen to be at odds with the idea of post-truth, post-structuralist approaches. Traditional narrative approaches prioritise individual subjectivity and agency, while more modern approaches prioritise the shaping nature of power and construction, essentially negating individual agency in storytelling. The nature of the narrative is debated too, in terms of whether an individual focuses on an event or an experience. Events-focused narratives focus on vivid memories for participants, good or bad, and are assumed to encompass something that has a chronological beginning and end (Andrews et al., 2013). This research was done from an experience-based approach, that assumes certain experiences cannot be temporally organised in the mind and focuses on the emotions attached to an experience, as well as the events themselves (Squire, 2008). While broader societal themes are discussed, the agency was allowed to remain with

the participant and, as such, narratives were taken to be evidence of the participant's life experience and respected (Andrews et al., 2013).

Data from participants was documented in the form of individual narratives reflecting on their time at school. Narratives were analysed using the framework outlined by Ricoeur (1988), which looks at narratives as experiences that have become part of consciousness and identity. I will adhere to the belief that narrative is rendered from an individual, within a societally constructed context, but with agency ultimately resting in the individual.

Narratives are, in this theoretical view, shaped by broader frameworks. This framework is taken from Squire (2008) with reference to Ricoeur's initial theoretical framing (1988). Narratives are mostly sequential, with inherent meaning, and represent a kind of individual language of experience. They represent something that is inherently human and, while being experiential, in their retelling these narratives are also a way to reconstruct the past while expressing a story in the present. This allows for past experiences to shape present retellings, and can reveal themes of both present and past meaning-making and identity-creation processes that contribute to participant subjectivity, in this case around sexuality and gender identity.

**Dissemination of data**

The research report will be read by my research supervisor and could be read by others in the Clinical Supervision team. Since this research was done as part of a degree-requirement, the research report produced will be added to the University's WIReD Space, an online site offering free access to South African university students' work. The research report may also be published in broader conferences or scholarly publications in time.

**Ethics**

Before the research began, it was approved by the non-medical ethics committee at the University of the Witwatersrand. This was done as per university policy to safeguard participants from undue harm (or non-maleficence), as many members of the queer community face continued danger due to discrimination and violence. Participants could be harmed by being identified as a result of their participation in the research, and by potentially being triggered by the subject matter in the interview process. Experiences of

being discriminated against in school may have been difficult for participants to talk about, and it was acknowledged that reliving some of these experiences of adolescence could evoke painful and traumatic feelings for participants. As such, containment and debriefing processes were used during and after the interview to mitigate these risks. The risk of longer-term psychological distress was addressed during the data-collection process. The Emthonjeni Centre at the University of the Witwatersrand was made aware of the research being done, and all participants were able to seek counselling for free if needed to debrief on any emotionally distressing experiences related to the interview process. All necessary phone numbers were included in the participant information sheet (Appendix B) which was printed and participants took home with them following the interview.

The nature of the interview process was built on a foundation of mutual respect and was focused on participants: their strengths, insights and ability to bring their own story and lived experience to the research process without fear of judgement or harm. This was enabled by the open-ended nature of the interview process, which included detailed participant information and informed consent sheets given to participants and discussed at length before interviewing began. The consent form included the proviso that all participants could withdraw from the research at any point, until the research is submitted to the university or to external sites for further publication. Participants were encouraged to choose their own pseudonym to enable them to inhabit the research without fear of identification. They were also asked to self-identify their own gender and sexual identities to allow their individual voices to speak to the data as much as possible.

After the data-collection process, individuals were kept updated on the research and all will have access to the final document. In this way, the inductive, participant-centred nature of the research is supported by following the participant through their own narrative in a non-directive and unconditionally accepting way. Narratives, therefore, become a point to explore an individual as a "nomadic narratable self" (Tamboukou, 2008, p. 9), a self under construction, one that cannot be assumed to be any one thing and needs the full dignity of self-expression to be explored in its full complexity and contrariness. The power relations behind how a narrative may be expressed require a researcher to attempt to limit their own interjections of bias and prejudice. I attempted to do this, to the best of my ability, by following the participant instead of directing them with close-ended questioning.

Additionally, I tried to maintain an authentic exchange with each participant in such a way that each interview was about that participant, and not my own aims in the research.

This methodology was important in the nature of the research to embrace the intersectional and non-maleficent underpinnings that guided the exploratory nature of data collection and analysis. The following chapter introduces the data itself and subsequent analysis.

## Chapter 5: Results and Discussion

This chapter analyses and discusses the data gathered in participant interviews. The research questions were kept in mind and reiterated here for convenience: i) what are the experiences of queer individuals in male single-sex schools; ii) how did a single-sex schooling experience impact adolescent identity formation when it comes to gender expression and/or sexual desire; iii) did school and peer cultural perceptions impact peer-group belonging, friendships and incidences of violence related to bullying and discrimination for these individuals.

The analysis process highlighted key themes in the narratives they shared, and only the most relevant quotes from these interviews are explored in the most detail for the sake of brevity. Some participant quotes have been lightly edited for grammar. Key themes that emerged from the narrative analysis were schooling and school cultures, identity and social experiences, effects on sexuality and gender identity, intersectional forms of discrimination, and resilience and growth. Words or phrases that were particularly illustrative of the themes have been emphasised in quotes and noted each time.

As this research is narrative-driven, I considered it illustrative to describe each participant to give their words subjective weight in their historical, cultural and racial contexts that influence the ways they inhabit their narratives. They are presented alphabetically and those who chose pseudonyms are asterisked.

**Danica (25).** Danica is a statuesque woman who attended an all-boys' high school in Pretoria before her transition. She is white and describes herself as a heterosexual trans woman. She is bubbly and charismatic.

**Devon (23).** Devon matriculated from a well-known boys' model-C school in Johannesburg after attending a co-educational primary school. He is engaging, often pausing to reflect before speaking with clarity and self-assuredness. He describes himself as a cisgender white gay man.

**Jason (23).** Jason came across as very genuine and light-hearted. The product of immigrant Portuguese parents, he grew up in Johannesburg and attended a model-C school in Johannesburg with Devon. Jason describes himself as a white gay man.

**Juan* (25)**. Erudite and articulate, Juan speaks quickly and poetically. Raised in a Muslim and Christian home, he attended a monastic private boys' school in Johannesburg. He describes himself as an Indian gay cisgender man.

**Kabelo* (23).** An earnest speaker, Kabelo was born and raised in a small town in Kwa-Zulu Natal and attended a reputable model-C boys' school in the province as a boarder. He describes himself as a black gay man.

**Luvuyo* (24).** A very expressive individual, Luvuyo was born and raised in the Eastern Cape and attended an independent boys' school in Port Elizabeth for most of his schooling career. He describes himself as a black gay cisgender man.

**Sabelo (23).** Sabelo is an expressive and very eloquent young black bisexual isiZulu man who attended a private monastic boys' school in Kwa-Zulu Natal.

**Simon* (26)**. A thoughtful and reserved person, Simon was raised as one of two brothers in a white Afrikaans and English Christian family in Johannesburg. He attended a monastic private boys' school in that city.

**Schooling and school culture**

That the experience of single-sex schooling had an impact on participants is undeniable. All participants felt they were deeply affected by the nature of single-sex schooling, although the effects differed. Each participant felt there were negative effects associated with single-sex schooling, albeit to varying degrees. The culture participants felt existed in the schools was a hyper-masculine one, passed on through violent initiation rituals and prioritisation of a masculine identity that is heterosexual and sports-focused. Legacy cultures in the schools have perpetuated this culture, where boys are encouraged to return to the school after matriculating to work or simply be involved in running the school. The aim is also for subsequent generations of boys to be sent to the school by alumni. This section also discusses the role of sexist language, and teachers and management.

**Initiation rituals.** All participants described vividly what initiation to their high school was like. Jason felt a violent masculinity was aggressively instilled, saying "[the school] had this thing where we'll ***make you tough*** by being tough on you" (p. 8, emphasis added). Luvuyo echoed this in his experience in Port Elizabeth, saying "[The school] prides itself on initiation processes and that you have to toughen up" (p. 8), which led to him being

physically pushed in corridors and verbally abused by teachers and pupils alike, feeling that it became a "never-ending cycle of physical and emotional battery" (p. 11).

Most participants experienced some form of camp or bonding exercise where grade 8 boys are quickly inducted into the expectations of the school. This typically involved sleep deprivation and intense exercise, but Jason and Devon also experienced a memorable initiation camp at the school. Devon felt this introduction to the school was a very macho environment for him, full of fear and panic, without any teacher supervision:

> They were always like this very macho kind of group of people [*referencing the matrics who ran the camp*] […] Obviously it was really early in the morning, I'm pretty sure it was like 3 or 4 o'clock on the first night and we woke up and obviously none of us had our running shoes on, nothing. And we got woken up and ***everyone was just shouting and you just panic so you run out barefoot and there's thorns everywhere because you're in the middle of nowhere, and you're doing push-ups in the sand and there's like thorns and you don't know where you're going.*** (p. 2, emphasis added)

Panic was not the only defining element of initiation camps. The fear-mongering and peer hierarchy was also very forcefully instilled, with grade 8s quickly learning that respecting their elders was vital for safety. This culture of respect was violently reinforced in all the schools participants attended. Simon recalled this period as full of verbal abuse. He later recalled forgetting a matric boy's name on camp and the repercussions:

> S: Because in grade 8 you have to know all your prefects' names, so the one time we were on the grade 8 initiation camp, and there as well they make you run through rivers late at night, wake up at 3 in the morning and then hike a mountain, that sort of thing. I remember I didn't know the one prefect's name and I whispered to someone next to me, 'What's that guy's name again?' and as I did… it's like that situation where everyone goes quiet and then you ask your question. So everyone was around a fire and talking and then I asked, 'what's that guy's name again' and they lost their shit. Like they took me into

the woods by myself and they were all like '***how dare you'*** and '***you've got no respect',*** that sort of thing.

R: Did they leave you in the woods or..?

S: No, no, they took me back, but they just had a go verbally, but it's – I don't know. As a kid I was very rule-abiding […] so if you told me I broke the rules I would be like […] oh my God, I'm so sorry and cry. So when I was there ***I was shaking like, what's going to happen?*** (p. 16 & 17, emphasis added)

At such a crucial junction, just as the boys were introduced to the school, this hyper-masculine culture was pivotal in introducing what was, and what was not, expected of the boys to truly belong to their new school. Simon describes this succinctly, saying, "Anyone that didn't ascribe to the set of values presented to us was immediately shunned" (p. 5). For Kabelo, adjusting to school was also a challenge:

> It was a bit of a challenge with the whole […] hyper-masculine environment and I wasn't a guy's guy *per se*, do you know what I mean? I played sports and stuff but I wasn't like obsessed with it and it's sort of like this culture there so it was a bit of a tough change. (p. 3)

This ideal of being the sportsman is something all participants raised and warrants further discussion.

**Being the sportsman.** All participants felt that the school culture served to instil expectations of the 'model' learner. Jason, coming from a conservative Portuguese immigrant family, felt that it was clearly shown what type of boy was regarded as the most emblematic of his school's model learner:

> They want this all-rounder, but not all-round kind of vibe because you need to do sports and academics […] but if you play rugby you are a ***king*** in that school. And if you are in the first team of most sports you are praised […] And then […] ***you owe the school*** for kind of ***making you a man.*** (p. 8, emphasis added)

The emphasis on sport is highlighted by all participants, but Jason connects sporting ability to a kind of royalty status in the male single-sex school culture. He felt that during his time at school, academics came second to sports, especially violent sports like rugby. Sport is seen as a site of masculinity formation (Connell, 2005), where the more violent the sport, the more hyper-masculine status is bestowed on the player. The single-sex male schools in this study esteem these sports for endowing their students with a masculine identity, or in Jason's words, making learners "a man". Simon, who attended an elite private boys' school in Johannesburg, felt it was reinforced by making rugby matches compulsory: "And for [the school] as well as a huge part of the culture since it's compulsory to go to your rugby teams' matches every Saturday or whenever they played […] So it's this whole jock mentality" (p. 14 & 15). This was difficult for him since his interests lay in academics and karate outside of school. He felt this was part of what "fuelled a lot of the bullying" (p. 14) he experienced, for not being sporty or 'macho' in the expected sense.

Luvuyo felt this alienation more keenly as a black teenager trying to navigate a predominantly white space in Port Elizabeth. One of few black learners, Luvuyo felt he was expected to be a sports star, despite his obvious academic strength:

> I think when we matriculated in a grade of almost 200 there were no more than 20 black people. […] So just by virtue of that already […] the school really made it clear that they were keeping numbers pretty low in terms of the number of people of colour that they were admitting but also within that space you were forced to conform to these outdated standards […]. So if you're a black student, you were expected to be brilliant at sport. (p. 2)

Luvuyo felt very isolated from this culture in the school, in addition to being in the Afrikaans home-language class:

> So I went from being a minority and then went into an even more marginalised space as doing something like Afrikaans home language where every single person that I did that subject with […] played either for the Stormers, the Cheetahs or Southern Kings [*prominent provincial club teams*]. (p. 3)

The way single-sex schools are operated under colonial cultures, means that queer students of colour or often doubly or triply discriminated against in a system not designed to promote healthy self-expression for these learners.

**Legacy cultures in schools – "The cycle of macho".** The hyper-masculine culture is not only found in the focus on sports and male hierarchy within the school, or as Kabelo describes it "patriotism but at a school level" (p. 4). It is also found in the 'legacy' endorsed by most of the single-sex boys' schools where emphasis is placed on the prestige of being an 'Old Boy', hiring Old Boys and having subsequent generations attend the school. Sabelo speaks about how the boarding house at his school demonstrated this legacy culture first-hand, saying it was:

> Almost like nepotism in a sense. Like the guys who had a friend in the house or who had older brothers or whatever had a guardianship almost […] and that protection then manifested in terrible behaviour because those guys end up being the guys that were instigators, bullies or whatever. (p. 12)

The boys with connections in family members or friends, according to Sabelo, have a prestige that is unshakeable in the school's culture, over and above the intrinsic hierarchy based on age and status:

> It's like the system is made clear on the day you arrive. […] it is a complete hierarchy and it's exclusively a hierarchy. They weren't hiding it – the school tells you that hey, you boys have got to come in as a junior and he's going to do chores for his matric [and the matric] should be a mentor […] ***the structure was overt and the structure was toxic***. (p. 9, emphasis added)

Jason noticed this in the implicit encouragement given to boys to study teaching and come back to the school: "it's like a stock-standard boy they want – and if those boys go out and study education and come back and teach, oh glory be to God, they are happy, you know what I mean" (p. 19). The culture of hiring Old Boys is implicit in this power dynamic, endorsed by the idea of a legacy culture, as Devon points out. In his time at school he

found:

> Most of the staff are Old Boys and I think that is one of the biggest issues as well because ***this cycle of macho, it just carries on***. Because you've got grade 8 to matric, Old Boy comes back, teaches grade 8, and that cycle is constantly there. (p. 9, emphasis added)

This was not only implicit in ensuring the school culture is passed on to the next generation of students, it also directly affects policy at the school. Sabelo remembered this effect distinctly during his time at school:

> I remember a boy who had […] committed some offence or whatever that probably would have been expellable and he still managed to finish matric and more than that, that infraction led to the board (and this boy's father was on the board) led to [the headmaster] being pushed out of the school […] Because the parents held more power than the teachers. (p. 9)

These legacies, according to participants, both contribute to who has power in the school while there, and who has a say in running the school after. Luvuyo describes it as essential to the survival of many of the schools: "I think these schools unfortunately still survive maybe because of the funding that they get from donors and from Old Boys" (p. 7). Sabelo remembers this created a culture of fear: "Obviously because of the heritage of the school and because of the clientele or whatever, you had like overtly ignored or a stepping around as a means to please the people that were paying the bills in a sense" (p. 4). This has created a cycle in the schools participants attended where supported behaviours are passed on to subsequent generations of learners, the "cycle of macho" as Devon calls it. This is part of what draws many parents to these schools in fact, as Sabelo notes, "I think the allure or what one gains out of a school like that is not necessarily academic prowess or whatever, it's like access, access to means, ***access to privilege in the form of connections***" (p. 6, emphasis added).

These legacies contribute not only to a macho culture within the schools. Their

histories have meant their colonial roots are present in some of the participants' experiences at the school. Luvuyo recalls his experience of some enshrined rituals at the school: most notably cadets, and continued use of the apartheid-era South African flag:

> L: Someone wrote in to the newspaper […] and said that we have […] a thing called Trooping the Colour, so similar to England where they salute the English flag, and the old South African flag …
>
> R: What?
>
> L: Someone wrote in to say look, this is not okay, this colonial fad should be discontinued. And literally one of the directors at the school said, ag, she was just grumpy about the traffic build-up on her way to come and watch.[…] I think ***it alienates students of colour*** even more because how do I relate to cadets? I mean last time I checked my people were going to the border and fighting uMkhonto weSizwe. So I think [for] me as a black person, I don't relate to the colonial traditions of the school. I mean we had sokkie[5] […], we had Afrikaans Week where literally the entire week everyone has to speak Afrikaans […]. (p. 6, emphasis added)

The colonial legacies of the schools means they have been elite spaces from their inception in South Africa (Morrell, 1994, 2000). This has meant inheriting exclusive and violent practices towards those seen to transgress supposed moral values, on the basis of sexuality, gender, race, and class (Judge & Nel, 2018).

Despite calls from the post-apartheid government for inclusion and reconciliation, the schools participants attended appeared to praise their colonial and segregated histories, failing to grapple with some of these more uncomfortable inherited systems, leading to students feeling uncomfortable in challenging these legacies. Luvuyo says this culture of preserving colonial and racist legacies led to the school feeling distinctly unwelcoming for him: "So just that lack of awareness or – I believe – the disinterest in wanting to engage or wanting to be aware just because of, I think, how privileged they are and how ***they regard***

[5] In the Afrikaans tradition, a mandatory informal dance event.

***colonialism to be a good thing***[…] (p. 6, emphasis added), meant that Luvuyo felt, "I didn't have any sense of belonging, I didn't feel like I belonged and it was made very clear to me that I didn't belong in that space, over and beyond me actually being outed as queer (p. 7).

This resistance to grappling with uncomfortable legacies, and rather embracing and enshrining them, has led to the single-sex boys' school participants harbouring some distinctly foreign and uncomfortable practices in the 'new' South Africa. Resistance to engaging with this was felt by participants across the board, echoing Luvuyo's sentiment that schools can seem 'disinterested' in change or constructive debate.

**Sexist language.** The ways boys in the school talk to each other was also based in sexist and demeaning constructions of women. Danica felt this keenly:

> I obviously didn't like [school] at all because can you imagine being a girl surrounded by 1500 boys, you get to see what boys are like when they're not faking it for women and it's quite siff[6], it's kind of gross […] It was the macho, bravado, misogynistic kind of patriarchal vibe. (p. 8)

She adds "And there was no-one there to tell them that it was wrong, there was no-one around to object to that kind of behaviour, so it normalised it, I think" (p. 18). Juan felt that his schooling set the boys up to treat women more as objects than anything else, since there was no exposure to girls in the school:

> Putting a whole lot of men together and expecting them to learn how women work, no, it's not going to happen, no. It's definitely no wonder that we have rape culture and patriarchy when you don't have them ever actually properly speaking to women as subjects in their own right. It's always, 'Well this is just what women would think, this is how things must be'. And then obviously none of that's ever right, you think you just let women decide for themselves (p. 23).

It is clear that while boys are maturing in the school, the lack of presenting alternative

[6] Afrikaans slang for 'gross' or 'disgusting'.

masculinities and objectified views of women led to more internalised patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity that can be violent to both the individual and between the boys (Connell, 2005). The way gender roles are solidified happens during adolescence psychologically and it is clear that male single-sex schooling contributes to a distorted and inherently sexist way of thinking about women, as well as homosexuality and gender identity (Morrell, 2000). The construction of these masculinities within the legacy culture and hyper-masculine environment of the single-sex schooling system supports unequal power relations and implicit sexism that may never be unlearned once students leave.

**Teachers and management.** The cycle of macho is present not only among Old Boys and school culture. Many teachers, often Old Boys themselves as noted above, endorse what behaviour is allowed and what is not at the schools. Teachers are known in co-educational spaces to normalise heterosexuality and devalue alternative sexual and gender identities (Bhana, 2014; Francis, 2012), and the participants express similar views in their own narratives. Luvuyo experienced explicit harassment from teachers for his supposedly effeminate way of walking: "I remember [teachers] always made sure that I did extra push-ups and extra running […] to toughen me up because I sound too much like a woman and all that, I sound too much like a girl" (p. 9). This homophobic culture is implicit in the school cultures, systems and employees such as teachers who then enforce it on the ground and reinforce homophobic bullying between the boys. Luvuyo felt this became institutionally supported:

> R: It sounds like I'm hearing it (*referencing L's experience of verbal abuse*) from the teachers, I'm hearing it from the principal, I'm hearing it from the students?
>
> L: […] very much supported and, at the end of the day, I'm realising how conservative, also how toxic the space is altogether. […] I still haven't made peace with that chapter of my life, I think I would rather keep it closed. [p. 12]

Simon felt teachers did not question the homophobia or bullying present in the school:

> I would say teachers didn't really do anything because I know when I got bullied teachers would sometimes hear it and they would just say, 'Oh behave' or something like that, and then it's fine, the abuse would still happen. (p. 22)

Jason felt teachers would sometimes actively participate in bullying students seen as different:

> So grade 11 camp, there was like a whole thing we had to do like morning fitness, God knows why, but that was a whole thing. I obviously did not enjoy that. And then we were put into pairs and there was like these benches and you had to do push-ups against them but you had to put all the weight on someone else. So now I was putting my weight on someone else and the teacher came to me and I don't know, personally when I think about it I feel like it was aimed at me but maybe I was just being sensitive, but he was screaming at me like, 'Put all your weight […], ***there's no faggots around here***. So that was a teacher, you know. (p. 14, emphasis added)

Sabelo felt that even if teachers wanted to challenge the institutional culture, the students and legacy culture would prevent it:

> So I think there was very much a culture of the boys that the teachers couldn't necessarily penetrate because that's how the school is structured. And the teachers that did say anything or that did speak out against things by and large didn't have the power to enforce any change because, if the change was going to come, it had to come from the boys and the boys were never going to change (p. 8).

Implicit homophobia and a culture of compulsory heterosexuality was also felt in the content of classroom teaching, with most participants feeling sexuality and gender identity were not addressed in any formal way in the classroom. This has been noted in several studies, with researchers finding curriculums are geared towards enshrining compulsory heterosexuality (Blake, 2016) and endorsing abstinence for adolescents over other safe

means of contraception (Shefer et al., 2015). Simon remembers asking a question very tangentially related to same-sex relationships in a biology class:

> I remember though, in biology, I asked in matric – we were doing genetics and I was like, what if you take the nucleus from a sperm cell and replace the female's nucleus and then put that in the egg cell and then combine the two, could you get a baby, that sort of thing. And even that everyone was – even the teacher was like, what the fuck (p. 13).

This reaction suggests an implicit silencing of discussion on same-sex relationships, even from more academic points of view, never mind when related to the lived experiences of queer students as they navigate puberty and early sexual intimacy.

Institutional cultures within the single-sex schools clearly prioritised the creation of a certain kind of hyper-masculinity: ideally a straight sportsman. The use of a legacy culture contributes to the continuation of problematic masculinities and harmful ideologies, like sexism and homophobia, as Old Boys are often part of the teaching staff or teachers are subject to the power of the Old Boys, parents and administration looking to continue the school's traditions and historical ways, while being very resistant to any discussion of change.

**Identity and social experiences**

The schools' cultures are seen to have had implicit effects on the participants' self-esteem and ability to connect socially and find safety in exploring and establishing their identity during adolescence. Over and above the schools' macho and legacy cultures, many participants experienced direct repercussions on the social front, leading to feelings of shame and isolation while at school, which is discussed in more detail in the following sections.

**Friendships and isolation.** Social ties are vital for all adolescents establishing semi-independence from their parents in their teenage years and finding their way towards an identity (Erikson, 2014; Lanyado & Horne, 2009). School has been shown to use social conventions to shape and influence adolescent identity and usher adolescents into social

participation in broader social norms and practices – essentially allowing the literal and metaphorical playground to become the sphere for interaction between micro- and macro-social processes that will shape children and adolescents for the rest of their lives (Nel, 2003). This has key ties to the performance of gender and sexuality for adolescents (Butler, 1990). Having friends in high school supports healthy self-esteem, identity creation and mental well-being, allowing adolescents to explore and integrate aspects of others into their own identities through peer mirroring (Lanyado & Horne, 2009). Being socially isolated, on the other hand, is a risk factor for suicide, depression, anxiety, poor self-esteem and substance abuse (Galupo et al., 2014). Friends contribute to a sense of social belonging and, without this, school can feel alienating, as Luvuyo remembers:

> So […] at the end of our matric year, we have a matric dinner and I remember not knowing where to sit, not knowing who to sit with because I was the chump who didn't have a date. […] it was maybe you're too much of a girl, you're too much a faggot, you're too much of a moffie and my parents told me to not be friends with you anymore […] You'll make me into a moffie (p. 9).

> There was no sense of belonging […] at our valedictory I just remember watching everyone crying and not understanding, why are you guys crying, I've spent 12 years in this institution and there were people who were crying who only were there for two years. I felt nothing and I still feel nothing, it's empty when I think about that, those 12 years (p. 10).

Luvuyo's experience stands in stark contrast to the support someone could have from a close group of friends. Sabelo remembers his adjustment to his school very differently since he had attended a feeder primary school and moved to the same high school with many of his established friends:

> So I arrived and immediately had a community in a sense, there were people that I could lean on. And I mean, at least for a while before high school dynamics took over, it was easy to […] not to feel stressed about the new environment because it

> wasn't that I'd grown up in the area, my school was just down the road. Some of my best friends from that time came to the same school as me so it was like we were all there together you know (p. 3).

Not all participants felt they were supported socially in their new high schools. Many did not move into the school with a group of friends like Sabelo did and this could at times feel isolating for some participants. Jason felt this quite keenly:

> But it was just the whole new school, I didn't know people […] there was just maybe five or six of us that came from our primary school that went to [school name removed] and it wasn't like I was friends with them. And they had already involved themselves in the school with sports so they already had friends in the school. So it was ***scary*** in grade 8. (p. 6, emphasis added)

The lack of social safety contributed to a difficult space for queer learners to navigate their own ways through identity exploration. Sabelo found it created social expectations that stunted their normal development in many ways:

> We were bound by the structure that existed and we didn't have the space and we couldn't create that space for ourselves to feel safe in discussing certain things for fear of being ostracised or fear of being marginalised or whatever […] it's not as great as it could have been […] if I was allowed to express and explore all the dimensions of my personality and my being without restriction. (p. 4)

This meant that the ways participants could perform their gender and sexual identity became very narrow within the confines of what was safe within the more rigid same-sex school environments (Butler, 1990). Sexual identity was often conflated with gender identity, with gay or bisexual learners being accused of being 'less' masculine, or less acceptable in the single-sex schooling culture. This conflation of sexual and gender identity lead to many viscious dehumanizing bullying experiences for participants, often in the form

of exclusionary othering. For Sabelo, social exclusion became very personal when a close friend faced the brunt of this practice for not conforming to what was expected:

> I remember the first six months of my experience vividly because a very good friend of mine and a person who we clung together through the experience was a very liberal white male, not very sporting – didn't fit the mould of 'a [school name removed] boy' or whatever and was ostracised, he was completely bullied. Anyone that didn't ascribe to the set of values that was presented to us was immediately shunned and because you live there and you wake up there and you eat there, and you live and breathe it there, you are pushing against more than just a bully or a group of people, you are pushing against the system. I think it was for me very palpable that thing, of like there's ***them*** and there's ***the others.*** (p. 5, emphasis added)

The give and take of social currency and friendship vs exclusion can be incredibly powerful social forms of conditioning, laying down clear boundaries for what is accepted in terms of sexuality performativity and inflicting harsh punishment on those who transgress those boundaries. This is especially true of the very rigid boundaries of hegemonic masculinity and compulsory heterosexuality, especially when expectations for gender and sexual identity become confused and rigidly defined. For Jason, this was vividly demonstrated:

> J: I was walking with [my friends] and we had just gone to the tuckshop and I was eating an ice lolly and we had walked past this guy and his friend and then they started saying some sort of faggots, something, something and then I obviously was ignoring them and then again they were insulting my friends as well, not just me, because we were together. And then he said something like, ah it's a little faggot on his period, so I [felt like being a] super hero, so I turned around and I threw my ice lolly at his face and I was like 'Shut the fuck up'. But I might add, when I walked away, I felt very bad. Firstly I had lost my ice lolly and now I was worried that I bruised this guy's face, to the extent that the next day in class every time the door

opened I thought, okay, I'm going to the principal now. That was the only time I really reacted.

R: But it sounds like, even then, you were scared to be punished for defending yourself, not for what he said to you?

J: […] I never felt there was a safe space kind of thing. Again because most of the teachers were Old Boys, I feel like they all had that same mentality. I think they do have that same mentality because they're all the jocks, manly man. (p. 13)

This bullying extended beyond corridors and between classes for Jason. He remembered moments it came right into the classroom in front of teachers:

R: There's no discussion. No discussion about sexuality or anything like that?

J: No, no. And if there was, it was maybe a minute, or it was a joke conversation, or someone would shout gay in class. You know what I mean, things like that […] And then I never felt like most of the teachers would be approachable with it, but again I look back I don't know what I would have said. Maybe I should have said something, I maybe should have said I'm being bullied but I think I felt like, if I did, I would have become more of a target. Perhaps, I don't know. […] maybe it was just me, but I don't feel like there were many people who were getting bullied for being different. (p. 14)

For participants, direct or observed bullying contributed to instilling a strong sense of what was allowed and what would lead to social exclusion. For many participants, this created an internal sense of fear and shame about being themselves for fear of being ostracised.

**Shame and self-esteem.** This internalised fear and shame affected many participants during and after leaving school. Simon felt that even when interviewed eight years after leaving school, he was still grappling with the sense of shame he had learned in his time at school.

R: It sounds like that took a long time for you as well in terms of that internalised shame as well.

S: Ja, ja.

R: Is that still something you feel like you're dealing with now?

S: The shame? I think it's very hard for gay people to get rid of the shame, like I see it in my friends as well, we all have our little nuances that let the shame shine through.

R: What do you mean by that?

S: Some people they'll bottom shame, like the very effeminate gays they'll shame or – what else could they do? The rage as well. I don't know. Like getting enraged over small issues, I think it's a lot to do with the shame as well that we've experienced, I don't know. […] back in the day I was very on edge, not towards other people but to my parents I would snap, and my brother I would snap and it's still something I'm working on but I think that's also to do with the shame part.

Simon also said that this led to some dark moments for him at high school, "I remember in high school towards grade 10, 11 and 12, I was thinking about suicide and all of that stuff. But I think it can rightly go any way for some people. I don't know" (p. 17). The risk for queer learners of mental illness is higher than for most adolescents, discussed in chapter 3, due to the isolation and trauma they experienced. This is made visible in Simon's depression during high school. While Danica did not suffer with suicidal thoughts, she did feel it happened in the school as a result of bullying:

> I think you can let it make you stronger or I think it could crush you, because I know a lot – well not a lot, but there are people who've committed suicide in [the school] from being bullied, not necessarily because people thought that they were gay or – just bullied in general. (p. 7)

For Juan, the internalised shame from homophobia led him to seek help from someone he trusted could provide some guidance:

J: […] on one of the Christian camps, because, as I said, I was very Christian, even at an Anglican school I became less Catholic more Anglican, more sort of – a little

less uptight you can put it but I was still very, very deeply spiritual and I confessed to the chaplain on this Christian camp and he said 'Oh, have you done anything with anyone?', and I said, no, and the other thing with Christian camps is you're very emotional, it's an emotional moment, it's a moment of trust with this person who's a spiritual leader and everything, and you have been taught to trust this person. And, in hindsight, obviously it was possibly emotional manipulation and he said it was an evil spirit or something that was dragging my soul into the swamps and mires blah, blah and he then exorcised me.

R: [loud intake of breath] On the camp?

J: And then a few months later it turns out it didn't work, who could have thought, and I told him and he did it again. And I told him it didn't work again and ja, I slowly had to move away from religion. I was still very deeply spiritual and felt like I had to be spiritual, but just after matric I realised for my own safety and my own wellbeing, I had to move away from religion a bit because I was – like you know the usual self-hate kind of stuff, ja.

R: That must have been so deeply hurtful to have somebody you trusted like that ...

J: The thing is I saw what he was doing as good. Only now looking back […] like I'm angry and everything […] it was just something that happened I guess. But back then, I genuinely thought he was doing the right thing and was good – and I mean the whole thing, the reason why I told him was because I felt like there was something fundamentally wrong with me.

R: Okay.

J: And every time it didn't work, I felt like there was something deeply, deeply, fundamentally wrong with me, that I was basically irredeemable. That coupled with bipolar disorder led to some rough times.

The religious nature of the school left Juan incredibly conflicted about his own sexual orientation, and contributed to the sense of shame he internalised about feeling his sexual desires were wrong or sinful. This is encapsulated in him expressing he felt 'irredeemable', and very deep and painful expression of shame. This aspect of schooling was not addressed

by management while Juan or Simon were at the school. Instead, Simon felt the religious culture of the school made him feel watched or observed:

> S: […] the boys I went to school with, there were some religious ones but the majority they weren't really – they were a bit disrespectful like with the bibles and stuff in church, they would position them so you would sit on top of the bible that sort of thing after you'd sung the hymns. So I wouldn't say they were too religious, but we had a priest at the time who was very anti-gay, so he would talk a lot about scripture and all of that stuff, about how it's wrong. And he was the type of person – because we had bible study every week – who would ask you to close your eyes and then he would ask some morality question like who here masturbates or something and then put up your hand, don't worry, no-one's looking but then he's busy gathering notes about who's …[intervention].
>
> R: Wow.
>
> S: I remember at one time he did ask who here thinks they're gay and I was so tempted, so tempted, but I'm always thankful I didn't because, oh no, that man was […].
>
> R: Did it feel like he could use that against you, like he was keeping tabs?
>
> S: Ja, it felt like he was keeping tabs and also I suppose like a power dynamic, like I've got juice on you, that sort of thing. (p. 9)

The religious aspect of the school Juan and Simon attended contributed to a culture of fear and internalised shame. The religious dogma of homosexuality's sinfulness added to some of the legitimacy behind the bullying participants faced at school.

The strain of this bullying and social isolation was highlighted as a major contributing factor for participants who struggled with their mental health at high school. Even those who did not experience direct homophobic or racist bullying felt that they were forced to hide themselves to avoid it. Kabelo describes this feeling, saying:

> By high school I already knew I was gay and stuff, and it was almost a case of the environment wasn't conducive to being openly gay. Obviously that was going to present its challenges, having to pretend to be someone you're not. (p. 6)

Devon felt this process of hiding himself extended so far inwards it felt almost like a split self or personality in a way:

R: And did that affect how you felt in terms of belonging to the school? How did it feel to know that you were gay and also at [that school]?

D: I think I got to a point in grade 9 where I was just like, okay, ***it's two separate lives, that's it***. So outside [of school], when I went out on the weekends and stuff, yes great, I'm me. When I'm at [school], I'm the sports guy who's friends with the sports guys kind of thing.

R: So you almost have to have this kind of false identity to survive?

D: Ja, I really managed to completely detach both of them.

R: And how did that feel after school when you had the liberty? Did you feel it was easy to become one again or did you still feel like there was two?

D: I think when I matriculated that's when I was just like, okay well, F you. Because at that point I knew I'd never see flipping anyone again, I didn't care about – these people weren't my friends. And even people who were my friends went down to Cape Town for Stellies [Stellenbosch University] and UCT [University of Cape Town] and so, to me, it was like well I'm never seeing these people again, they can't do anything. And when I went on matric vac[7], I came out to the one friend I went on matric vac with and, two days later, he came to me and was like, listen I'm also gay. […] I think for the first time ***I was just like, okay, I don't have to separate this anymore, I'm out of an all boys' school, that's it.*** (p. 4 & 5, emphasis added)

[7] Matric vac is a colloquialism for the period after matriculants finish final examinations and many choose to go on holiday together to the coast to celebrate. Festivals are held in Ballito and Umhlanga near Durban and Plettenberg Bay in the Western Cape.

Devon's feeling that he became two selves, a palatable version that could pass, or go undetected in school, and a truer, more authentic version outside of school was also a notable part of how participants expressed managing their identities during school. This was expressed in either a observable coming out or a process of hiding in order for the participants to feel safe.

**Coming out and hiding away.** The feeling that safety was contingent on the ability to go unnoticed was a theme that emerged throughout participant narratives. There has been work troubling the idea of 'coming out' or being 'in the closet' in the South African context, as the concept emerged from more Western cultures (Francis & Reygan, 2016). The idea of the closet in South Africa has classist and racial connotations in South Africa that cannot be ignored (Francis & Reygan, 2016). In this research this perception was troubled as coming out was viewed as an experience of exerting agency, and not a passive action (Francis & Reygan, 2016). Coming out in a Western sense can be too individualistic and essentialises the often complex and interwoven environment and individual finds themselves a part of (Francis & Reygan, 2016). Participants often made decisions based on safety and personal values, and coming out, whether this was something the individual had expressed doing, was unique to each participant. Nevertheless, experiences for participants of being seen publicly as gay or bisexual, versus not disclosing to others is something that was meaningful to many of the participants. Those like Jason or Luvuyo who were more outwardly 'camp' or flamboyant were often targeted, regardless of having openly acknowledged their sexual orientation or not. For those who could pass[8], this became essential for survival in the social setting of the school. As Danica notes, "people are a lot more inclined to accept you if you are very passable, which is very sad" (p. 4). Being visibly gay or trans has immediate effects as Jason and Luvuyo's testimonies about bullying attest. The threat of being outed was used to keep behaviour within heteronormative boundaries. Juan remembered a time another boy in the school was 'outed'[9]:

[8] Passing entails a queer individual not being readily recognised as someone belonging to the queer community (Qmunity, 2013).

[9] Being outed implies having one's sexual orientation publicly revealed without permission and often with the intention to humiliate the outed individual.

> Turns out there had been a school-wide scandal where he'd been outed and the ***whole school had basically rejected him, ostracised him*** etc, etc. Once I heard that – and he was the only person in the entire school who was out, I suppose he was only out because he was outed. (p. 6, emphasis added)

Simon, being at the same school but not in the same grade as Juan, remembers the same incident and the harassment the learner endured afterwards:

> S: I just remember seeing his abuse, like if he's standing in a line and someone would start pretending to dry hump him from behind and everyone else is like ha ha, no, but he'll enjoy that, that sort of thing. I think he was a strong guy as well because he never openly cried, which I sort of admired from him. At the time, I was a bit ashamed because I was quiet towards his abuse but then, for me, I was purely protecting myself because I knew if I jump in there, shew, ja.
> R: What do you think would have happened?
> S: No, people would probably have thought I was gay. (p. 22)

The fear of bullying and being ostracised led many participants to embrace parts of their identity that more closely aligned with the hegemonic masculinity enshrined by the schools. For many, this involved participating in sport and seeking refuge in friendship groups. Devon explains that, for him, sports and the safety this provided allowed him to escape questions about his sexuality:

> I mean, I suppose there was also this question hanging over me with the other guys as to whether I was or whether I wasn't. And I was in grade 8 and I started noticing it a lot, so I started affiliating myself with people who were higher in the hierarchy so that people kind of stopped paying attention anymore. (p. 4)

He even found himself policing Jason's expression to avoid bullying for both Jason and himself in school: "like if he did something dramatic in class I'd be like, listen, just tone it

down" (p. 6). For both participants this violent homophobia felt harden to escape in the single-sex environment where there did not feel like a break from the violent masculinities being enacted within the school's culture. This internalised homophobia is something he still grapples with now:

> I definitely think my attitude towards gay people – even as a gay man myself, like when I was at high school and the feminine, flamboyant gays to me were just too much, you know. And I don't know if that was because I was brought up in an all-boys' school or what it is, I still try and think about it today. And I did, I struggled from when I came out to even like sometimes now, but I think my attitude has changed a lot, not only towards gay people but to myself, to my friends, to my family… (p. 8)

Luvuyo also found himself policed by male friends who feared becoming targets of bullying:

> And I remember having two other friends in public literally saying […] would you please just stop being such a faggot, […] he's uncomfortable with your faggish ways and you need to stop altogether ***or we will have to stop being friends with you.*** (p. 8 & 9, emphasis added)

For Jason, it meant finding social support in a space entirely outside of the abuse he endured at school:

> Because I remember, when I was in high school, I met a lot of people I'd identified as gay on Twitter, and again that any time I knew someone from my school [on] Twitter, I would […] block them so they could not find – because that's actually the point that I can talk about. That Twitter was a space where I was myself, where I would post my pictures, I would talk about my love for Lady Gaga and Adam Lambert and little gay happy old me, you know. (p. 19)

Jason expressed missing his female friends from primary school, comparing the single-sex environment to a more punitive and inescapable masculinity he felt unable the escape. He linked some of his struggles directly to the single-sex context he found himself in:

> And I think I would have been more comfortable with myself earlier in my life. I think I would have done a lot more because I didn't have many friends so I didn't do many high school things like parties and things like that so I think if I – again because I think I would have had more friends that were girls I would have had more friends and done more high school things. But ja, primary school it wasn't bad but I do remember there were times and then high school was the cherry on top. (p. 6)

For all the participants, bullying at school by other boys affected their journey into being open about their sexualities. Most delayed coming out to those close to them. Simon only told his mother during a particularly stressful exam period in grade 11, and Juan took the opportunity of matric vac to come out to his friends, saying he "didn't want [his] school time being compromised" (p. 11). For Kabelo, the fear of coming out felt incredibly real, feeling that "the scariest person to ever come out to is a straight guy" (p. 7).

All participants felt they had to make compromises in terms of their identity expression, either by adopting an identity that was more socially accepted or accepting the consequences of being open about themselves to others boys in the school. Sabelo felt this was suffocating for him, saying to survive he felt "there's a portion of my identity and my expression that I had to repress and subdue in order to exist in the space" (p. 14). As Danica describes, it felt like either being punished for being yourself, or hiding who you are:

> I wasn't about to start playing sport and acting like someone I wasn't, and because of that I think I got a lot of shit and I think a lot of it was because people were kind of jealous in a way, like not necessarily of me but of the fact that ***I was so unafraid to be myself.*** And I think a lot of people wanted that for themselves and couldn't because they just didn't want to be judged. And obviously I was like the poster child

> for what would happen if you were yourself, so everyone was like, okay, well I'm just going to keep playing rugby. (p. 6, emphasis added)

For participants, navigating the social plane of a single-sex high school as a queer individual was fraught. The cost of not belonging or ascribing to the culture of masculinity held up by the boys and the school meant isolation, or hiding anything about their queer identity to pass under the radar. This felt more extreme in the single-sex environment where much of the violence was tacitly condoned by management in the ethos of 'making a man'. This contributed to some participants feeling they wore masks of identity – one to fit in at school; another, more authentic one outside of school. This had some major effects on mental well-being, with some participants experiencing mental illness and suicidality, and some feeling it engendered internalised shame and diminished their self-esteem. It affected all participants in their ability to come out. Those who could not pass were often outed and/or bullied. Those who could pass felt they needed to hide their sexuality until they were able to leave school.

**Effects on sexuality and gender identity**

All participants felt their experiences in a single-sex boys' school affected their sexual and gender exploration. No one came out openly during their school years. Danica began her gender transition just after leaving school and, when asked about how being at a boys' school affected her, says:

> Had it been a co-ed school, I think I would have started a lot sooner in terms of experimenting with style and make-up and maybe I could have started growing my hair a lot sooner. Maybe I could have gone on hormone blockers, who knows. […] And I think that the school culture would have stopped a lot of people from coming out or being themselves. (p. 9)

Juan's schooling forced an active decision on his openness about his sexuality:

J: After I came out the end of matric, I said I would never lie about it again.

R: Okay.

J: I'd made that much of an oath to myself, thankfully I've been able to keep that because I know if times were hard I would have to go back to lying, but it was the kind of culture where things weren't ever said. (p. 12)

For Sabelo, his ability to experiment sexually during adolescence was severely limited because of his schooling environment:

> Obviously I am queer, I am bisexual […] obviously – you're in your teens, your sexuality is burgeoning so I had crushes and whatever and I couldn't understand why it was okay for me to have a girlfriend but not to have a boyfriend at school. And you hear these stories […] of oh no, these two gay guys that [got] expelled because they were having sex, whatever, and it's like this overt culture of, 'No, don't be like that'. […] ***The school never facilitated the space to be okay,*** saying 'Look, there are all these identities that exist but let's speak about it, let's express it, let's make a space for it to be said, and we're going to speak about it, we're going to navigate it and we're going to protect you in the case that someone wants to hurt you or whatever for that identity because that's who you are, that's who you are'. And it's a strange thing of having gone to a school that says its primary aim is to give these kids a sense of identity […] like a lot of guys, even guys that weren't necessarily queer, or even guys that didn't necessarily experience racism but ***just felt that something was wrong in the spirit of the school***, like something was wrong in a way that the structure existed. (p. 12 & 13, emphasis added)

Sabelo highlights a critical point that many participants raise, of not feeling able to explore their sexual and/or gender identity because the school did not allow a safe space to do so. Although sexuality and gender is a core part of the identity exploration that occurs in adolescence, exploring this openly did not feel safe in the all-boys environment. So much so that, for Devon, who passed while at school, sexual exploration became a means of keeping himself safe:

D: I think what was very interesting though, and I think that's also why I managed to stay out of the limelight in terms of being gay, obviously a lot of people had the inkling I was and when they used to be like, 'Oh you're gay, you're gay' I used to turn around and say, 'I don't know, I haven't tried it yet'. And they didn't know what to do with that response so they just stepped away. Because they were like 'I don't know what is happening here, like whoa'. And funny enough the one night I was sitting at home and I got a message from a guy and he was like, 'hey bro listen you know, I'm not gay but could we try things?' And I was like, 'Okay cool, fine', and we did it and then it was like, 'This will never be spoken of again, ever.' And that was it. Once, done. And he was one of the jocky 1st team hockey players […]. And then two other guys did it as well after him …

R: Messaged you?

D: Ja. So it got to a point where I was like, 'Mess with me and I've got everything on you'. So all these jocks kind of stood up for me in a way you know. (p. 14)

Without open and safe avenues for sexual exploration, participants used covert means of exploring sexual desire, or more technical ones. Both Juan (p. 5) and Kabelo (p. 7 & 8) used the internet to learn about being gay. With participants acknowledging that safe homosexual sex was not a topic of conversation inside or outside the classroom, it is safe to assume this meant that certain aspects of sex were left up to the students to educate themselves about. Effectively, students were not equipped with adequate knowledge about safe and enjoyable sexual experiences beyond the heteronormative binary (Blake, 2016).

**Intersectional forms of discrimination**

The discrimination participants faced at school was layered, and some experienced it in multiple ways due to the intersectional nature of power dynamics at the school. Sabelo felt there was an obvious kind of boy who held the most power in the school: "Unless you were a rich, straight, white man, there were restrictions to your experience" (p. 4). The racist nature of many of the school dynamics, as explored in chapter 3, descend from the apartheid racial histories of the schools, with most reserved for white South Africans until the late 1980s/early 1990s. This stands in contrast to the policy decisions of the post-

apartheid government to try and heal the violent divides left by colonisation and apartheid, and this is relevant when looking at how little attention hate crimes still receive from law enforcement on the ground and in the courts (Breen et al., 2016) Some of the participant narratives suggest that racist culture operated subtly but was evidenced in various ways, such as who was chosen as prefect or allowed to challenge teachers in class. For Luvuyo, racism in the school environment was very overt and the internal guilt was hard for him to manage, given the knowledge that his parents had intended him to have the best education possible:

> I didn't realise the connotation of ***being called a monkey*** and […] for so long I never told my parents of the bullying and […] because for them it was they're just trying to do their best to give me an education. (p. 9, emphasis added)

He remembers an example of this after challenging a teacher in class and his parents were called in:

> […] my parents were called in to school just because I challenged the teacher's qualifications because she was realistically unfit to teach …[She] wasn't qualified enough to teach me and I was told that I actually should be grateful that I am at this institution because my parents actually have a sub-grade education. (p. 4)

This despite both his parents having significant tertiary education and being well-respected professionals in their fields. This is clearly a remark based in racist and classist assumptions about the nature of black intelligence and success in South Africa. Luvuyo did not feel supported by the school, and often felt punished if he retaliated against racist remarks, saying "I think for me what made the experience more sour is being called the K[10] word, and almost getting suspended for beating up the guy" (p. 5). Sabelo was contacted after leaving the school by current learners of colour in the school asking for help:

[10] Relating to the slur taken from the Arabic *kaffir,* meaning 'unbeliever', this term was the strongest pejorative for people of colour during and after apartheid.

> I recall recently a group of boys that were there after I had left saying, 'Look, it's not just the boys that are racist but the teachers are racist, what the fuck do we do?' Like they were reaching out to all Old Boys of colour to be like, 'Please change something.' (p. 10)

In addition to the schools harbouring sexist and racist ideologies (whether openly or more covertly), other ideologies also affected the participants in compounding ways. The religious backgrounds of some schools were used to promote homophobia, using the Christian dogma that homosexuality is a sin. This is evidenced in, for example, Juan's experience of being exorcised by the school priest where he claimed Juan was possessed by an "evil spirit" (p. 7).

It is clear that participants of colour experienced the most discrimination, from teachers to school management and from peers. Compounded with religious homophobia, the intersection of these ideologies within the schools made things much harder for the participants of colour, most especially for Juan, Luvuyo and Sabelo.

**Resilience and growth**

While it is clear all participants had negative experiences during their time as queer learners at a single-sex boys' school, some have made positive meaning from difficult experiences. Danica and Jason were especially optimistic individuals and both believed that the extreme bullying they faced helped to build resilience[11]. Danica found it gave her strength when facing transphobia in her life: "I'm definitely not advocating being bullied to harden, to toughen up, but that's what it did for me. ***I got a little taste of how the world can be***, you know what I mean?" (p. 7, emphasis added). She felt that school was long behind her and she had been open-minded to the possibility that her peers have changed:

> It was seven years ago, I have moved on, I'm happy now. I've got my own life, I've got people who do care about me, do love me. And a lot of the people that were really

[11] Resilience refers to the ability to quickly recover and often surpass previous functioning before the difficult or traumatic experience (Msibi, 2012).

> shitty to me in school actually gained a lot of respect for me when I started transitioning. (p. 7)
>
> But also high school people, for a lot of the reasons I mentioned, they're also immature. Who has all the answers when you're 17 and in high school? I don't harbour any negative feelings towards anyone from high school, I hope that they've grown up, I hope that they are better and I'm sure the majority of them are. (p. 8)

In her time at school, she found some teachers and peers were very supportive and even recounted a very identity-affirming experience with her principal:

> So I confided in [two teachers] and somehow it got to […] the principal, and at valediction he said to me, I would be honoured to have you back as my first old girl. (p.10)

Jason found the discrimination he experienced enabled him to embrace positive coping mechanisms:

> J: High school was an experience, it was. I sometimes pat myself on the shoulder because I'm like, Jason, you did that. And then also I'm kind of proud of myself that I didn't become angry, it's kind of lame but optimism kept me going. I have this whole keep-smiling thing that started in high school and just – it was keep smiling and it's black string[12]. When I was feeling like this is too much, I would just play with the string and be like 'It's okay, you've got this, you can do this'.
> R: Is that the same black string you've worn since then?
> J: I don't think it's the same one I've worn but, since the first day I put it on, I've always had a black string, ja. Perhaps it's holding onto the past but I think it's just a reminder of what I've gone through and that I can get through anything. That and the whole keep-smiling thing.

[12] Jason showed me a piece of black string and referenced this several times during the interview. He wore it around his wrist under his watch.

R: Ja.

J: So optimism, don't get me wrong, it is tough, actually in grade 10 there was a point where I was like I have to move schools, I remember. And my parents were willing to but, I don't know why, but I just didn't because I felt like maybe it would be even more tough for me because now I'd have to start all over again at a new school.

Over and above developing resilience, participants showed an ability to overcome what they had experienced in high school. Most showed an ability to look beyond feelings of not belonging or having to hide to fit in. For most, just being able to express what they went through has been healing in many ways. For Jason, it's part of his outlook on life:

> I don't want to say 'share my story' because is it a story? I don't know? But [I just want to] kind of tell people that it will be okay, as lame and clichéd as that sounds, and that you've just got to [find the] light like that, even if it's small, it's there. Hold onto that. (p. 24 & 25)

For Sabelo, it has given him the motivation to drive change in the school that he still credits with providing him a solid education:

> I still think it's a fantastic school and I still think that the core, the real core, of what the school should be serving (not what people are interpreting it to be) is there, but it's behind all of this gunk and this waste in the school telling itself it has to hold itself to the way it's been before as opposed to finding a new way of being. I believe that the school can still be a beacon, it can still be a light, it can still be an example of the modern-day boarding-school experience. And I was just sad that largely because my feeling of maybe powerlessness in the space, I couldn't have made that step then, but I definitely can make that step now, you know, and ***hopefully one day it will be the school that I wish I had gone to***. (p. 16, emphasis added)

However, this motivation was not felt across the board. Kabelo felt overwhelmed at the idea of voicing opposition as an Old Boy:

> But I think certain things – I would probably voice my opposition to it but certain things I don't think I'd be able to change or speak about in terms of masculinity, sort of the old definition and understanding of masculinity and stuff, because it's almost like the foundation of a lot of the culture and traditions, so I don't think I'd be able to have a meaningful influence. (p.12)

For Luvuyo, his strength comes from making the decision to turn his back on his school: "And to this day, and I stand by it, I will never step foot at that school again" (p. 5). Luvuyo also stated:

> I refuse to interact with [Old Boys], I refuse to greet them, they do not exist, I do not associate myself with that school. It's just because of how intolerable they made the experience of being in that space and to just point out how out of touch [the school] is with the rest of the world or the rest of South Africa. (p. 6)

Luvuyo seems to imply that his refusal to associate with Old Boys and the school serves as a kind of indictment of the school culture and trauma he experienced while attending. All participants expressed a feeling that their schooling experience was something they survived. The undercurrent throughout their narratives was that their time at school served as a kind of endurance race, a means of overcoming difficult times to come out the other side. For those like Danica or Jason, it gave them an optimism they use to inspire and help others. For Sabelo, it has motivated him to seek change in the school. For Luvuyo, it meant closing his mind on that chapter of his life to forget some of what he experienced. All participants expressed in some way or another a desire for the school they attended to change and implement more inclusive spaces that facilitate open discussion and belonging for queer students.

The data-collection process was emotive to witness as a researcher, and analysing the narratives from participants I felt the pain they all expressed particularly noteworthy.

Having found a gap in the literature indicating this is a field that needs more research, this initial research has highlighted for me how much there is to investigate in queer learners' schooling experiences in the South African context.

## Chapter 6: Researcher Reflexivity, Limitations of the Study and Questions for Future Research

It is worth interrogating my own participation in the research. For a number of years, this subject has been of personal interest to me and I believe is worth exploring briefly in this section.

### Reflexivity

As much as a researcher may hope to provide a blank slate on which data can be objectively gathered, this is impossible while still being an individual person with both a history and positionality. I see myself as a bisexual, white, cisgender woman and I attended a single-sex girls' school in Johannesburg for most of my schooling. These identities mean I can access some of my participants' experiences, and while I may not be able to fully immerse myself in that participant's life, I believe an intersectional position allows me open curiosity with which to approach my data. Where I may have experienced oppression in my own life (such as being a woman or having been a queer learner at a single-sex school), I can then apply that understanding to the lives of others to get a grasp on what other experiences of oppression may be like. I can bring this to my research, while allowing my participants to explain concepts and life experiences that may be new to me, such as the different experiences in a single-sex boys' school.

Participants of colour, non-binary gender identities, and cisgendered male experiences are some of the areas where I embraced curiosity and openness to experience in order to try and understand the narrative being expressed by individuals with identities dissimilar to my own. While I cannot claim to have full access to any of my participants' narratives in unpacking what they told me, I can say that we co-created open and honest spaces where discussion was authentic and open-minded. I was profoundly touched at the depth of the engagement participants felt safe enough to share with me, and the open and honest way we were able to communicate. I also allowed the participants to speak freely, even if what was discussed was unexpected or contrary to the research questions.

My own view of knowledge as constructed may also influence the way I interact with what participants bring to the process. My own ideological view allowed me to interrogate contradictions and constructions behind the story being told, but I cannot deny that I do

have an ideological positioning in seeing all knowledge as constructed, and identifying as an intersectional feminist, this may have impacted on the research process. I kept a research document with me on my cellphone during interviews to record my experiences of each participant, which allowed me to engage with my own assumptions and subjective emotions during the data-collection process. To encourage further reflexivity in this research process, I relied on supervision, debriefing sessions with a therapist, and my electronic journal. This helped me to process any emotions that arose in the process.

The honesty I felt participants brought to the interviews meant I tried to transcribe their words exactly. However, where grammatical errors in spoken text made reading difficult, I did edit quotes lightly for ease of reading. Some technical difficulties affected the accuracy of transcribing certain audio files, due to poor sound quality when Skyping participants who lived in other parts of the country.

**Limitations and recommendations**

The sample pool only included eight participants and research into the experience of transgender learners at single-sex schools would be valuable to expand the depth of the discussion. Being a qualitative study, it is not statistically-based and can only speak to the experiences of these participants. Further qualitative work could highlight whether queer learners experience similar issues across South Africa and in many of the single-sex schools within its borders. More work needs to be done exploring more broadly the local literature violence, gender and sexual diversity in the South African school context in terms of teacher practices and higher institutional bodies, including curriculum, policy and at the state level.

Having only one trans participant, who was also white, did exclude the voices of trans women of colour; it would be useful for future research to explore their experiences. I hoped to include as diverse a participant sample as possible, but the narrative analysis structure required a depth of engagement with fewer participants, and the use of snowball sampling meant only those who reached out were included in the study. Fewer participants of colour or trans participants expressed interest than initially hoped for and it would useful for future research to explore the experiences of these persons. It is hoped future research could use this work to expand interest into the voices of queer South Africans and their

experiences of the schooling system to facilitate constructive discussion around change and inclusivity moving forward.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter summarises my research process and touches on answers to my original research questions. This research aimed to explore what the experiences of queer individuals in male single-sex schools were. I investigated how a single-sex schooling experience impacted adolescent identity formation when it came to gender identity and/or sexual orientation. What I found confirmed for me that school and peer cultural perceptions impact peer-group belonging, friendships and incidences of violence related to bullying and discrimination for queer individuals.

### The experiences of queer individuals in male single-sex schools

In exploring queer learner experiences in male single-sex schools, I discovered that all participants felt their time in these schools affected them to varying degrees. All felt it had a profound impact on their ability to safely explore their sexuality and gender identity at school. For some, this led to traumatic instances of peer bullying and intense feelings of isolation and fear. This was in many ways supported by the perceived macho culture of the boys' schools, emphasised in the prestige placed on sports' participation, as well as the legacy culture that influences who teaches there and how much power parents have in school decisions. The schools all reinforced sexist behaviour between boys and cultures of hyper-masculinity were not addressed while participants attended these schools. Management and teachers were often complicit in reinforcing bullying, especially homophobic bullying that targeted boys seen to be 'different' or who did not seem to fit into the gender binary or heterosexual norm.

Religious frameworks in certain schools impacted feelings of self-hatred for some participants, who felt this set them up as deviant or inherently sinful. Often-violent initiation rituals and hierarchies in the school supported a kind of violent hyper-masculinity that participants felt hindered any discussion around sexuality, masculinities or ways of being that did not conform to a dominant, straight, cisgender, white, male archetype. This

was especially violent for participants of colour who experienced racist as well as homophobic and often classist discrimination and victimisation.

**The impact of a single-sex schooling experience for adolescent sexuality and gender identity**

The schooling culture led many participants to hide their sexuality to avoid bullying, or risk becoming common targets for discrimination and victimisation if they were seen as too openly queer. For some participants, like Devon, this meant adopting a school self and a self outside of school who was able to be more freely gay. Many strategies were used by participants to survive their schools. Those who could not pass, like Devon, felt comfort in social support outside of school, like Jason did, or in older networks like Sabelo's primary school friends. Some focused on their other abilities that could help them belong in some way, like Simon prioritising his academic successes. The social pressure affected all participants in terms of their friendships and self-esteem, often leading to feelings of shame due to their sexual and/or gender identity. For some participants, this led to depression and suicidality, and some, like Luvuyo, needed a complete self-isolation from anything related to the school to find healing after matriculating. All participants only felt safe to explore their sexuality and gender identity after leaving the single-sex school environment.

**The effects of school and peer cultural perceptions on peer-group belonging, friendships and incidences of violence**

All participants were witness to violence – whether directly or through the visible homophobia that targeted more openly queer learners at the schools. This created a culture of fear where participants felt afraid to express themselves or seek help as school management and teachers were often seen to be supportive of homophobic and/or racist cultures within the schools. The participants of colour definitely faced more compound discrimination, with Luvuyo's experiences being the most exemplary of how unsafe being both black and queer felt in a colonial school setting. The extreme racism and homophobia he experienced at a school supposedly part of the post-apartheid South Africa was incredibly unsettling and raises the question of how much some of these schools have truly transformed in a cultural and ideological sense in a country where transformation is both

governmental policy and a national priority. While some participants were able to find positive meaning from very difficult experiences that allow them to help others or find forgiveness for those who bullied them, some have felt their only option is to dissociate with their school to move on from troubled pasts. All experienced moments of isolation and discrimination, some of which have settled more deeply into the participants' perceptions of themselves.

**Concluding remarks**

In being able to answer all proposed research questions, I found a depth of pain I was not expecting. The isolation many queer learners felt within the male schooling system necessitates future engagement with the way these schools run and engagement with the cultures being enshrined that marginalise queer learners, especially queer learners of colour. The schools cannot hope to become an active part of the South African transformation agenda while such toxic cultures are still being perpetuated in building future generations of South Africans.

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**Appendix A**

UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

# Participant Consent Form

**Research Project:** Experiences of belonging and discrimination among LGBTIQ+ individuals in male single-sex schooling environments

**Name of researcher:** Jordan du Toit

I …….. agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve.

| | (please circle) |
|---|---|
| I agree that my participation will remain anonymous | YES NO |
| I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in the research report | YES NO |
| I agree that the interview may be audio recorded as long as tapes are securely stored and my identity is protected | YES NO |
| I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously by other researchers following this study | YES NO |

…… (signature)

…… (name of participant)

…… (date)

**Appendix B**

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

# PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:** Experiences of belonging and discrimination among LGBTIQ+ individuals in male single-sex schooling environments

**PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER:** Jordan du Toit
**ADDRESS:** School of Human and Community Development
Emthonjeni Centre
Office X
**EMAIL ADDRESS**: jordan.du.toit@gmail.com
**CONTACT NUMBER:** 0836532734

**SUPERVISOR:** Dr Peace Kiguwa
**CONTACT NUMBER:** +27 11 717 4537
**EMAIL ADDRESS:** (Breen, Lynch, Nel, & Matthews, 2016)

Good day,

My name is Jordan du Toit and I am a Masters student in Psychology at Wits University in Johannesburg. As part of my studies I have to undertake a research project, and I am investigating experiences of belonging and discrimination among LGBTIQ+ individuals in male single-sex schooling environments. The aim of this research project is explore participant experiences in these schools and whether it had an affect on an individual's sexual and/or gender identity.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research. Should you agree to participate, I will be doing a one-on-one hour interview with you using some broad questions on your experience of school. It is really focused on *your* experience. I only want to hear your story and hear from you about your experience so please do not feel anything specific is expected from the interview. With your permission I will be recording the interview for research purposes, which will be destroyed once transcribed and made anonymous after the interview.

You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and there are no penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will be completely confidential and anonymous as I will not be disclosing or using your name or any identifying information, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation in my final research report. The information we discuss may be upsetting for you. If you experience any distress or discomfort, we will stop the interview or resume another time. If you need some support or counselling services following the interview, these are available free of charge at the Emthonjeni Centre.

This study has been approved by the **Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Witwatersrand** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the Psyhology Society of South Africa (PsySSA).

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the

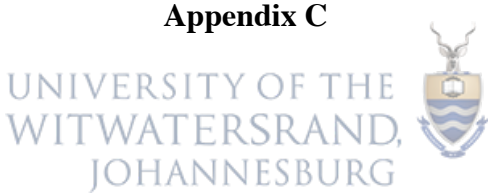
university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you upon request. If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), telephone + 27(0)11 717 1408, email hrec-medical.researchoffice@wits.ac.za/ Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za **or** my supervisor Dr Peace Kiguwa (details at the top of the page).

Yours sincerely,
Jordan du Toit

_____ _____

**Researcher** **Participant**

## Appendix C




**INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:** Experiences of belonging and discrimination among LGBTIQ+ individuals in male single-sex schooling environments

**Paradigm**

Since this research will be conducted according to narrative analysis, the emphasis is on the life story brought by the participant to the research. As such, there will be little to no direction given by the researcher, unless participants feel uncomfortable and would prefer the structure provided in some broad questions. Possible questions are listed below but will be used according to the individual and rapport established with each individual organically in the research process.

**Introductory questions on record:**

- invite participant to give some of their background, with emphasis on schooling history
- exploration of gender and/or sexual orientation up to this point
- is there anything about the research that concerns you or you would like clarity on before we begin?

**Exploration of experiences of being in school as an LGBTIQA+ individual. Some possible questioning to provide direction may include the below:**

- Tell me about a moment when you felt you fit in to your school?
- Tell me about a moment when you felt you did not fit in to your school environment?
- Was there a moment when you felt your sexuality was something you worried about in your school environment?
- Have you personally ever come out? Is that something you felt/would feel comfortable doing?
- When did you come out?
- Do you feel your school impacted your sexuality journey in any way?
- In retrospect did your school address sexuality or not? Do you feel they handled it correctly?
- In hindsight, is there anything you wish your school had done differently?